

St Denis' church and churchyard / nature reserve

Update for 19th March 2024 meeting of
Hatley Parish Council

St Denis' church

East window

We heard the good news on 9th February that the Trustees of the Friends of Friendless Churches (FoFC) have decided on a theme for the design on a new stained glass east window. It will be a scene from the life of St Denis, and in a traditional Butterfield style of starry skies, jewel colours, rich fabrics, etc. (The opinions expressed by visitors in a questionnaire put out during the Heritage Open Days in September 2022 were incorporated in choosing the subject and style.)

Potential artists have been asked for initial sketches. They might come to the church to sketch and make measurements; the deadline for submissions is the end of this month – so far we've not met anyone. Once a suitable artist has been found, work can commence to develop the design.

Church information

Joyce Denby has put up in St Denis' a new information sheet she has written on church activities – this one is titled 'Sanctuary'. Thank you, Joyce.

Annual maintenance visit

Eric from Seion Church & Chapel carried out an annual maintenance check of St Denis' on 9th February. Peter Mann pointed out to him the several patches of damp stonework in the church and one area where the plaster is bubbling. The problems have been reported to the FoFC.

Visitors (1)

Six people have signed the visitors' book since the last report. Peter has been putting some of their comments on the Hatley website.

Visitors (2)

Peter posted this note on the Hatley WhatsApp on Sunday, 17th March:

Empty bowl – I was surprised / shocked when I locked up St Denis' church last night to find the 'donations' bowl was empty. Since May last year, when I put the bowl on the low table in the nave, there has been a small amount of cash in it to 'encourage' visitors to donate. I'm hoping someone in Hatley took the money for safe keeping – until now it's not been an issue. If this is the case, would they mind putting the cash back please.

Thanks, as always, to Peter Mann for keeping an eye on the church, for opening and closing it daily, and for liaising with the FoFC.

Contribution to an article on wildlife in FoFC's churches

Clare Kirk, FoFC's communications consultant and magazine editor, has asked for a short contribution to an article for the next issue of the members' magazine on wildlife at five of FoFC's churches. Nicola is preparing a draft.

cont'd.

St Denis' Churchyard / Local Nature Reserve

Species surveys

Lists of species of plants and trees recorded by Wildlife Trust Volunteer Officers Louisa Carlisle and Tate Outlon on 30th May and 13th July 2023, attached, were received on 29th February 2024 and forwarded to Revd Hilary Young. May's survey only marks species as 'present' but does separate the churchyard into north and south, the survey in July notes the abundance of the plants but takes the site as a whole. Species of birds and butterflies are also recorded. The lists will be added to the Hatley website in due course, together with the new management plan.

Scythe mower

It was decided, at the St Denis' churchyard/nature reserve meeting on 19 November 2023, to sell the 'St Denis' mower'. Peter Mann was advised by Ibbetts in Great Paxton that it was worth £250. Simon Saggars, who manages Wendy Nature Reserve, would like to buy the mower. We are grateful to Mark Wilsher for finding a buyer. As the mower technically belongs to Gamlingay and Hatley Parochial Church Council, Peter has asked Hilary Young and Nick Ingles (PCC treasurer) how payment should be made.

For the record, the AL-KO scythe mower, model BM5001R with 102 cm blade, was purchased in March 2013 with a grant from SCDC. It was blessed by Revd Steven Rothwell on 9th June 2023 (www.hatley.info/hatleys-churches/st-denis-churchyard/a-mower-blessed).

Work at the western end of the churchyard

On 2nd February Matthew Wright (who gardens for Nicola) cleared more brambles and suckers on the western border of the churchyard and, with Nicola, made a dead hedge with the cuttings, near to the ditch. On 10th February, a party of six residents continued the cutting back and dead hedging. Thanks to Janice and Trevor Bellars, Joyce Denby, Peter Hanlon, Nicola Jenkins and Alastair Smith for their hard work. Matthew pruned some low branches of trees and, with Nicola, laid more sections of dead hedging on 8th March. A few trees along this border need to be felled but this will not be done until the autumn.

The churchyard now

Primroses, violets, celandines, daffodils and grape hyacinths are in flower and the blackthorn is coming out. Fungi grow on the wood chips on the church path. Peter Mann extended the area of wood chippings by a metre or so at the church end of the path as it had become very muddy because of the immense amount of rain since November. Thanks to Nicky and Helen at 53 East Hatley for the chippings.

Nicola Jenkins and Peter Mann / 17 March 2024