

St Denis' church and churchyard / nature reserve
Update for 21st January 2025 meeting of
Hatley Parish Council

St Denis' church

East window

Aidan McRae Thomson, the stained glass artist engaged by the Friends of Friendless Churches (FoFC), submitted a revised design of the new window to the FoFC on 11th January for approval by the Trustees. This was later than scheduled, which in turn means Stephanie Norris, the architect for the project, has not been able to apply for planning permission. We are yet to be told whether this will affect the schedule for repairing the stonework and installing the new window – it was anticipated all would be completed in time to join the Heritage Open Days festival in September 2026.

On 8th January we were delighted to be given more pieces and fragments of stained glass from the original east window – part of the hoard Simon Damant picked up many years ago and stored all this time in his parents' loft. Joyce Denby is seeing how many pieces fit together. Peter Mann emailed Aidan the measurements of the larger pieces. Aidan suspects the pieces mainly originate from the tracery lights and suggested (as did Stephanie Norris) as it's not feasible to incorporate them in his design, they could be formed into a stand-alone panel:

"I suggest we can still display the better fragments in other windows with much the same effect as in the existing salvage window, though instead suspending leaded elements from the ferramenta, thus small irregular elements of stained glass could have copper wire soldered on in select areas which could then be secured to the metalwork. The fragments could thus simply be added to another chancel window without needing to compromise the perfectly sound new glazing already there, and would be completely reversible too should a different approach be desired later."

Christmas

Thanks go to Joyce Denby for the wonderful displays of greenery she arranged under the altar and in the font for the Christmas season.

Visitors

Thirteen visitors have signed the visitors' book since the last parish council meeting, including a family with the surname Hatley.

Bats

Results of the counts of bats emerging from the vestry of St Denis' between 9th June and 4th September 2024 have been submitted to the National Bat Monitoring Programme. These were collected over eleven evenings.

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 and visitors.

St Denis' Churchyard / Local Nature Reserve

Two sessions have been held in the churchyard this winter. On 22nd November a group of seven volunteers cut back brambles and suckers encroaching into the western border of the churchyard. They used the cuttings to make a dead hedge near the ditch on that edge. Mark Wilsher cut down four or five dead elms, permission having been obtained from Revd Hilary Young. Some logs were used in the woodpiles and around the churchyard.

On 19th January a group of seven volunteers cut the elm hedgerow back to the height it was cut two years ago and reduced its width slightly. Cuttings were moved to build up the dead hedge bordering the west edge. Mark Wilsher cut down two or three dead trees rooted on the field side of the ditch that were falling into the churchyard.

Sincere thanks to Mark and Joyce Denby, Peter Hanlon, Peter Hayward, Sofie Hooper, Nicola Jenkins, Charlie Norman and Al Smith. Thanks to Al for supervising and to Mark for use of his equipment.

Spindle fruits were plentiful and a beautiful colour this autumn. Snowdrops are beginning to come through. Badgers have recently been busy digging in the grass especially in the north west area.

Meeting about the churchyard, 26th October

A meeting was held on 26th October to discuss the work to be done in the churchyard over the autumn/winter and later this year and other related tasks. Hilary led the meeting which was attended by Nicola Jenkins, Sebastian Kindersley, Peter Mann, Al Smith and Mark Wilsher. It was agreed to rename the group as the 'St Denis' Churchyard Task Group'. Thanks very much to Sebastian for hosting the meeting.

Scything

An article was published in the January/February issue of the *Gazette* explaining the benefits of scything and encouraging more people to learn to scythe and get involved locally.

Haslingfield & Harlton Eco Group has launched a working group for Cambridgeshire residents who know how to scythe or are willing to help raking and who can be called upon to help community groups scythe when areas are ready. A free training day open to everyone will be held in Wellhouse Meadow on 30th March. Scything expert Jim McVittie will teach scything techniques and how to sharpen and peen scythes. Please contact Nicola Jenkins if you're interested in joining in. Nicola attended a training day in December and hopes to join this second one.

Nicola Jenkins and Peter Mann / 20th January 2025