

St Denis' church and churchyard / nature reserve
Update for 17th January 2023 meeting of
Hatley Parish Council

St Denis' church

Christmas

Joyce Denby arranged greenery in the font and displayed a plaque on the stove with John Betjeman's poem '[Christmas](#)' which has the apposite first verse:

The bells of waiting Advent ring,
The Tortoise stove is lit again
And lamp-oil light across the night
Has caught the streaks of winter rain
In many a stained-glass window sheen
From Crimson Lake to Hookers Green.

Forthcoming talk to Wrestlingworth History Society by Peter Mann, 16 March 2023

Peter will be presenting a talk to Wrestlingworth History Society entitled 'Rescuing a ruin: St Denis', East Hatley and its prominent people', 7.15 pm for a 7.45 pm start, 16 March in Wrestlingworth Memorial Hall, Church Lane, SG19 2EU.

General

The display boards with photos and sketches of the interior of St Denis' from early times to the present day are still on show. The church is open every day; visitors are welcome to take a hand-out of '39 things about St Denis' to look for as they walk round.

Thanks to Joyce Denby for the Christmas displays and, as always, thanks to Peter Mann for keeping an eye on the church and for opening and closing it daily.

St Denis' churchyard / local nature reserve

On 30 October the western edge of the churchyard was tidied up by cutting back overhanging branches, trimming brambles and weeding graves. Thanks are due to the party of volunteers, Ruth Chan, Joyce Denby, Peter Hayward, Nicola Jenkins, Peter Mann and Charlie Norman for their hard work.

The elm trees in the southern 'hedgerow' between the churchyard and Sebastian Kindersley's property have been lowered to a manageable height of about seven feet. This allows more light into that side of the nature reserve which is important as species-rich grassland. Half a dozen healthy trees have been left at their full height and the dead elm has been reduced to about ten feet.

The job was accomplished in three sessions, the morning and afternoon of 27 November and the morning of 8 January. Mark Wilsher chain-sawed the trees and cut the larger trunks into logs, tackling the trees on the churchyard side of the metal fence first, then in January the more difficult task of those on Sebastian's side. (The boundary might be the fence but could possibly be the ditch.) Alastair Smith helped Mark for two sessions, Mike Casey, Steve Greenhalgh, Peter Hanlon, Peter Mann and Charlie Norman for one. Steve, Peter H and Peter M dragged the cuttings to the chipper in the corner of the churchyard; Charlie, Alastair and Mike did the chipping. Joyce Denby and Nicola Jenkins cleared the brush.

Nicola subsequently stacked some logs into woodpiles (to be finished soon) in three corners of the nature reserve, for the wildlife.

We are extremely grateful to everyone for working so hard and conscientiously. The task would not have been possible without Mark's expertise and the use of his chain saws and chipper. Nicola asked around for helpers, aided by Peter who advertised the sessions on flyers, Hatley Facebook and WhatsApp.

Peter has made good use of some wood chippings by spreading them over protruding tree roots on the footpath (12) into the churchyard, to prevent people tripping.

Nicola will finish the wood piles once some logs have been cut into smaller lengths. She will then offer and arrange to distribute to those who have worked in the churchyard the remaining logs for woodpiles or scattering in their gardens for wildlife, or, as a very last resort, for burning, and the chippings for pathways or a mulch to suppress weeds. We may have to assess removing the remainder of wood chippings if they are not wanted.

We need to clear the logs and chippings before the first mow of the year (optionally in March, or in late April/early May).

Nicola Jenkins and Peter Mann / 16 January 2023