

St Denis' church and churchyard / nature reserve

Update for 24th July 2024 meeting of
Hatley Parish Council

St Denis' church

East window

Aidan McRae Thomson, who the Friends of Friendless Churches has commissioned to design and make a new stained glass east window, visited the church on 30th May with Rachel Morley, director of FoFC, and Stephanie Norris, the FoFC's architect on this project, to look at the window. Joyce Denby, Peter Mann and Nicola Jenkins were also present.

Aidan's proposed design was also discussed, largely to reiterate the points made a few weeks before in our written comments. As this was his first visit to St Denis', he was also able to see, and admire, from the few pieces incorporated in one of the replacement south windows, the quality of the circa 1880 stained glass by Alexandar Gibbs. Aidan was shown the few remaining pieces of glass, kept by Joyce and Peter – he took them with him to incorporate as much as possible in his new window.

Internal scaffolding for the east window will be erected by Lodge & Sons (Builders) Ltd on the morning of Monday 5th August, using the public footpath, FP12, for access. It will remain for two weeks during which Aidan will survey the window and Stephanie will survey the stonework. The church will be open every day as usual.

Rising damp

Damp is once again visible on the pulpit platform and steps and on the tomb slab of Robert Castell. In some lower areas of the nave and chancel walls more plaster is bubbling and bits have fallen off. Lodge & Sons and Stephanie Norris will have opportunity to see this deterioration on their visits.

Bats

Rachel Bates visited on 9th June and 23th June to count the brown bats emerging from the church vestry to contribute to the National Bat Monitoring Programme. She recorded videos of the bats with an IR camera. Al Smith, Linda Hudson and Nicola between us have counted them on six occasions at approximately weekly intervals. Numbers are increasing, from 21 to 28.

This Sunday 28th July, residents are invited to an evening to count the bats. Meet any time after sunset, 8.57 pm. Bats tend to emerge about 30 minutes after sunset over a period of about 30 minutes.

Cave spiders

The short item by Nicola Jenkins about the cave spiders under the church has been published in the June 2024 issue of FoFC's magazine as part of an article entitled 'Heavenly habitats' about various wildlife in, under and around five of FoFC's churches. A copy is currently in the church and an A5 leaflet based on Nicola's article is in the church.

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.

St Denis' Churchyard / Local Nature Reserve

Scything

Scything sessions took place on 20th and 22nd July with another planned for 25th July. Thanks very much to the scythers Revd Hilary Young, Peter Condon and Nicola Jenkins and to Angela Steel for raking. Cuttings are left for a few days to allow seeds to drop and mammals to hopefully a new habitat. The majority of the south side will be left uncut, in accordance with the management plan (on display).

Footpaths

Thanks to Peter Mann for mowing footpaths.

Flora and fauna

The summer flowers include: yellow rattle, agrimony, lady's bedstraw, bugle, oxeye daisy, speedwell, meadow vetchling, meadow salsify (Jack go to bed at noon), red and white clover. Some mice and voles escaped our scythes. Ants in some ant hills we've skirted round in scything will help the food web. To contribute to the ['Big butterfly count'](#) on 19th July, two large white and six meadow browns were counted, sadly less than usual.

Nicola Jenkins and Peter Mann / 23rd July 2024