

St Denis' church and churchyard / nature reserve
Update for 15th October 2024 meeting of
Hatley Parish Council

St Denis' church

East window

On 5th August, Lodge & Sons (Builders) Ltd erected internal scaffolding for the east window, using the public footpath FP12 for access. On 13th August, Aidan McRae Thomson who has been commissioned to design the new stained-glass window visited the church for a second time, along with Stephanie Norris, the architect, and two maintenance employees of Lodge & Sons who removed the plywood security boards. Peter Mann and Joyce Denby were present. Aidan took measurements to refine his design.

Stephanie surveyed the stonework around the window and emailed this report to Rachel Morley, director of the Friends of Friendless Churches:

A quick update after my survey visit with Aidan this morning [13 August 2024].

Lodges were unable to remove the internal board at the top over the tracery as it is firmly wedged in place by the resin anchored steel bars. They were able to remove the outer board via ladders, which has revealed that the tracery sections are in worse condition than we were aware. Up until now, from what could be viewed internally, I knew the stone arch needed pinning in sections, but thought the tracery was relatively intact.

From Aidan's point of view, he has been able to measure the main lights in order to refine his design and ensure the right proportions, and has taken some overall dimensions of the tracery for the same. But he won't be able to template until the stonework is all repaired and reinstated where missing. It means he can progress his design to a level that will be relatively finalised in terms of drawings for Trustee approval and then LBC, but the final cartoons won't be able to be done until the templates are taken. He thinks it could take him 12 months from templating to complete the windows ready for installation.

From discussions this morning with Aidan, we think an overall provisional programme could therefore look like:

- By end of October 2024, Aidan completes his design for Trustee approval.
- Subject to that approval being forthcoming, Stephanie will prepare and submit the Listed Building Consent (LBC) application, including the stonework repairs (provisionally by Christmas 2024).
- LBC statutory period Jan – Feb 2025.
- Phase 1: Internal and external scaffold and stonework repairs by Lodges May/June 2025.
- Aidan to template at the end of Phase 1 while access is in place.
- Scaffold is removed and lighter weight temporary protections put in place across the window openings.
- Phase 2: Scaffold back up, with Lodges as prime contractor and window installed June/July 2026 (with window guards through Lodges).

The scaffolding was removed on 16th September 2024.

We hope the new window will be in place in time for the Heritage Open Days in September 2026.

Bats

Counts of the brown long-eared bats emerging from the church vestry were carried out on three more evenings, bringing the total number of counts made between 9th June and 4th September to eleven. Numbers decreased from a maximum of 32 on 16th August to 14 on the last count. Rachel Bates of Cambridgeshire Bat Group is submitting results to the National Bat Monitoring Programme.

A pleasant evening was spent on 28th July by eleven from East Hatley, including three enthusiastic children, and two from Gamlingay who counted the bats, with Rachel recording them with an IR camera and chatting to the group. We were lucky to have clear skies and warm weather. Twenty brown long-eared bats were recorded.

Rachel compiled a list of the species of bat emerging from the church and foraging around the churchyard which she recorded with her camera on 9th and 23rd June and 28th July:

- Brown long-eared (roosting)
- Common pipistrelle (all three visits)
- Soprano pipistrelle (all three visits)
- Nathusius' pipistrelle (first visit)
- Barbastelle (all three visits)
- Noctule (second and third visit)
- Serotine (third visit)

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

A few more short sessions completed the scything, raking and stacking of cuttings by 5th August. Peter Condon, Nicola Jenkins, Kate Laugharne and Mark Wilsher did the scything and Angela Steel helped with clearing. Thanks to all those, and to Peter Mann who went over the scythed area with his ride-on mower and has kept the footpaths mown.

Meeting of St Denis' Local Nature Reserve Management Group

A meeting has been arranged for 26th October to discuss the work to be done over the autumn/winter and other things.

Nicola Jenkins and Peter Mann / 14th October 2024