

## Church Report To Hatley PC AGM May 2023

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The villages of Hatley St George and East Hatley are in the combined parish 'Gamlingay with East Hatley and Hatley St George'. This parish is part of the \*Benefice of 'Gamlingay with Everton' which includes the parish of Everton with Tetworth.

*\*A Benefice is formed by joining more than one ecclesiastical parish - in this case there are two but it is possible for there to be many more parishes in one Benefice. The point of being a Benefice is the sharing of leadership, in this case one priest looks after two parishes (three churches and an additional redundant church with an open churchyard) but there are many other ways of organising a Benefice.*

2022 was a challenging year, as things continued to adjust following the heights of the pandemic, despite superficial appearances in some situations, we are not returning to where we were before the pandemic, but much is happening again, which is to be celebrated.

The Hatleys are in an unusual position in being part of Gamlingay parish but with two church buildings. The redundant church at East Hatley in the care of Friends of Friendless Churches, and enjoys the interest and support of several local people, including Nicola Jenkins who will be reporting elsewhere. This support has enabled valuable conservation and restoration to the building and the care of the churchyard nature reserve. The building remains redundant, ie not licensed for worship (so the wedding request I received this year could not be met) but the churchyard is open for burials of which we have had two or three in recent times. There is no record of previous burials that I can find, but the churchyard has a number of marked graves, any new burials have to take these and the high likelihood of other unmarked ones into account.

The chapel of St James the Great in Hatley St George is officially a 'chapel of ease' where worship takes place as part of Gamlingay Parish for the convenience of local people. The building has a number of (probably expensive) issues, chief being the electrical system and drainage. The aged electrical system has failed a couple of times when in use, meaning the church has been cold in winter, and we are expecting expensive works to the drainage system to be required at the next five year inspection (which is due this year). As the inspection has to be paid for by Gamlingay PCC, which also has a similar inspection at Gamlingay to fund, there will be financial problems this year. However the inspection has been provisionally booked, I am very grateful to Micky Aster for his willingness to be involved. The working group set up to take care of the church at Hatley St George has not met for some time - Covid stalled what had started with some good work, and since then time and availability of personnel has meant relatively little progress.

A group of people have taken on sharing arranging flowers and cleaning, which is a great positive and much appreciated.

I remain committed to supporting worship in Hatley St George church, there are good congregations for some 'special' services such as harvest and Christmas Carols, but it is not clear as to whether the current undertaking for a service for every church festival and a service a month will continue to work, as there are now no regular worshippers from the Hatleys although two or three from outside the communities do attend sometimes, and one or two how attend when personal circumstance allow. Penny Hewlett deserves special mention for her commitment to the building and worship there.

A long-planned worship survey could well be helpful in establishing what pattern of worship, within the bounds of what is possible, would serve the local community in the Hatleys best.

### **Plans for the rest of the year**

Flower Festival on the weekend of June 25/6th - part of a Benefice event.

Quinquennial Inspection and review of costs and options

Worship survey

Shared planning of Remembrance, Harvest and Christmas celebrations

*Hilary Young*

Rector of the parish of St Mary the Virgin Gamlingay with East Hatley and Hatley St George