

Report to Hatley Parish Council Annual Meeting 2025 From Hilary Young (Parish Priest)

To start with a reminder that the Communities of Hatley St George and East Hatley are in the Church of England Parish of Gamlingay and Hatley St George and East Hatley (sometimes shortened to Gamlingay and the Hatleys, but this is confusing, as Cockayne Hatley is not in the parish, or even in the same Diocese).

The parish is joined with the parish of Everton with Tetworth, forming a single Benefice (Gamlingay and Everton) under the care of the Rector of the parishes. Currently this is myself, with expectation to continue to retirement at 70 in January 2027. See below for possible effects of this.

Buildings and churchyards

Stephanie Norris has been appointed inspecting architect for Hatley partly because she is known for her excellent work for St Denis' church, partly because she is known to the Benefice as inspecting architect for Everton in this Benefice, and considerably because she is willing to inspect for the available Diocesan fee which the firm Caroe which look after Gamlingay is not.

Stephanie was due to visit in the spring but things have been delayed due both to her work schedule and the demands of the rest of the Benefice on my time. Micky Astor as kindly offered to be on hand for the inspection, and see what can be done to remedy the damp issues. Micky has also seen to repair of a broken gutter and his team keep the churchyard tidy, a huge help in every way.

The churchyards of both churches in the Hatleys are open, which means they are available for burials for people of the parish plus others agreed by policy, and under the jurisdiction and subject to the regulations of the Diocese of Ely. Much responsibility is delegated to the Parish Priest and PCC, but this is in applying the Diocesan regulations and is subject to faculty rules and permissions.

St Denis Churchyard is a designated wildlife area but under the responsibility of the PCC. Nicola Jenkins and Peter Mann, together with others now designated as a 'Task Group' of the PCC, meeting as necessary to agree and plan work needed. Nicola will report more fully on the churchyard, I am most grateful to her for her work in supporting the group, keeping communications going and recording meetings and decisions.

Hatley St George churchyard is looked after by the Astor estate as mentioned above.

Personnel, governance and finance

The register of Church members (Electoral Roll of the parish) was renewed this year and now numbers 56, not all of whom attend church and only three of whom are resident in the Hatleys.

There is a shortage of personnel in the Benefice generally, in common with many other village parishes and benefices. The Annual Meetings (APCMs) for the parishes of the Benefice re-elected last year's PCC members, both PCCs have few people than would be allowed, which puts a lot of work on to those who do agree to stand for election (no elections if there are not enough candidates, simply an appointment.).

There is much gratitude to those who are willing to serve in this way, for the work they take on in fund-raising and supporting the ministry of the parishes. Ann Davis continues to serve as the only Church Warden in the Benefice, elected by Gamlingay with Hatleys PCC. There is no PCC representation from the Hatleys.

Licensed lay ministry (LLMs) has suffered in the last year. Sandra Macrow LLM Children's Ministry is now serving in other parishes in the Deanery, and although it is good to have welcomed Chris Miller (LLM Reader) back to conducting services, and he is able to help considerably, Chris is not able to do all he used to and indeed is thinking of his own retirement.

Authorised Lay ministry (ALMs) has also sadly reduced with the death of Gerry Brunt. Valerie Miller continues to support the pastoral care of the parishes but has not been formally re-authorised. This situation will be addressed when the Diocesan support for LLM training is in place. The failure to appoint a Diocesan bishop puts a significant strain on resources, we hope someone will be in place around next Easter.

There is great thanks to Penny Hewlett for her continuing commitment to Hatley St George church, helping to coordinate and significantly contributing herself to cleaning and caring for the building and coordinating efforts at festivals, as well as opening to visitors (Penny holds the key).

Thank you also to the people who help to clean and decorate the church – I don't know who all are and have no means of contacting directly, but Penny organises people and passes on my thanks.

With regard to finance, Hatley continues not to cover the cost of running its building, however this is subsumed into the costs of the parish as a whole, so Gamlingay in effect subsidises Hatley. Both parishes of the Benefice paid their share to the Diocese last year, but only by dipping into scarce reserves.

This year there is much consternation about the fact that the lack of a Deanery treasurer has meant that the Deanery share has been allocated to churches/Benefices of the Deanery on the basis of the costs of a full time minister (which includes housing and on-costs so is much more than a stipend) divided by the time the minister is allocated.

In the past a formula was used that no one can remember the origin of, which meant that some parishes have been paying for more ministry time than they get, while others have been paying less. Gamlingay and Everton have a full time minister at the moment, on the new calculations this has results in an over 22% increase in the Deanery allocation to the Benefice, which is not realistically achievable as it would require a dramatic increase in parishes' incomes for which there is no obvious capacity.

Discussions have at last been inaugurated between parishes, as some have seen a noticeable drop in a share they were managing to pay, which one or two others have seen significant increases, though none as much as ours.

There will be more information on this issue as things progress, but it is an indicator that the parishes here are unlikely to have a full time priest after the present incumbent retires.