

# **Report to Hatley Parish Council Annual Meeting 2024 From Hilary Young (Parish Priest)**

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 under the care of the Rector of the parishes, I (Reverend Hilary Young) have been responsible for the Benefice since August 2018, first as Priest in Charge and now Rector since January 2023 (a change of title to do with technical difference of appointment processes which has little material difference 'on the ground').

## **Buildings and churchyards**

St Mary the Virgin in Gamlingay is the main parish church for the combined parishes. The Chapel of St James the Great (as Hatley St George Church is now correctly titled) is a 'chapel of ease' within the parish. It is a place licensed for worship in the combined parish, although there is no obligation for weekly worship to take place there as would be in a parish church. It primarily serves the people of the two Hatleys for worship and it's care is the responsibility of the PCC which serves the wider (combined) parish, and therefore has responsibility for two buildings. The third church building in the parish is St Denis Church, which is the once-ruined, now restored redundant and deconsecrated church in East Hatley.

It is anticipated that the church in Hatley St George will needs serious (and costly!) attention to drainage systems, and the electrical system is coming to the end of its life. The task group that did some great work pre-pandemic will need to be re-convened, to work with the PCC to take forward this work following the Quinquennial (5 Yearly) Inspection now due. The PCC has decided to appoint Stephanie Norris (Architect for Everton as well as St Denis) as inspecting architect in the place of Gethin Harvey of Caroe Architects who is the architect for Gamlingay St Mary the Virgin, the Parish Church. This is both because of Stephanie's local connections and for financial reasons, as Gethin's firm requires additional funding over and above what the Diocese provides for QIs.

**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, and is cared for by dedicated volunteers alongside the building itself (see below) and with advice from Cambridgeshire Wildlife Trust - we are indebted to Nicola

Jenkins and Peter Mann, with several others, for past and ongoing work and a helpful detailed report on what is happening there. A meeting towards the end of 2023 clarified the formal mechanism through which work can be (hopefully not too constricted by formalities) carried out while meeting the existing regulations. Thank you to Nicola for her work in supporting that meeting.

### **Personnel, governance and finance**

The responsibility for parish matters, including care of buildings, is held jointly between the Parish Priest, the Church Warden(s) and the PCC (Parochial Church Council) of which Priest and Wardens are members ex officio and to which others are elected at the Annual Parochial Church Meeting (APCM). The number on the PCC depends on numbers on the Church Electoral Roll. This Roll contains the names of those who choose to be on it who are either resident in the parish, or who worship in one of designated places of worship in the parish. The Roll is revised annually and completely renewed every five years – the next renewal takes place in 2025.

The PCC for the combined parish of Gamlingay and Hatleys could have up to nine elected members plus up to five ex officio (Rector, Church Wardens and Deanery Synod representatives). The offices of Treasurer and Secretary are usually held by elected members, but need not be.

In 2023 elections took place at the APCM in April according to the regulations which are technically law of the land. There is now only one Church Warden for the parish (provision is for two) and four elected members of the PCC, plus four (soon to be three) ex officio members, so responsibility for the church buildings, worship, mission and ministry fall on relatively few people.

The PCC has adopted a system of Task Groups to enable those who do not qualify for, or (more the case) do not wish to serve on the PCC to contribute areas of expertise in support of the work of the PCC.

Most relevant to Hatleys are the task groups for Hatley St George Church Building and Churchyard (which needs reviving) and Hatley St Denis Churchyard which was formally convened in November 2023.

A Task Group has at least one PCC member, who takes responsibility for coordinating with the PCC, reporting to PCC meetings and ensuring compliance with all the relevant regulations and permissions. The Task Groups operate within their delegated responsibilities on behalf of the PCC, and are thereby covered by church insurance and safeguarding regulations. Significant decisions must be made and acted on with the knowledge and consent of the PCC, which remains the responsible body.

Chris Miller and, more recently, Sandra Macrow, have both been licensed to the Benefice as Licensed Local Ministers (LLMs) – Sandra has a special responsibility for ministry with children and families. LLMs are able

to conduct most services but not Holy Communion, Baptism, or Weddings, although they can preach and lead prayers at these services.

A retired priest, Rev Lucy McKeown, moved into Gamlingay at the end of 2022. Having obtained permission to officiate in Spring of 2023 with great enthusiasm for being involved in the worship and pastoral life of the parish, Rev Lucy conducted a much-appreciated Remembrance service in Hatley along with other services in the rest of the Benefice. However after a bout of ill health before Christmas, Rev Lucy has now chosen to base her ministry in Potton parishes (in the neighbouring Diocese of St Albans).

### **Church services**

In the last year there have been more 'normal' church services across the Benefice after Covid 19 disrupted things. However the very small regular congregation at Hatley St George has dwindled even further due to ill health and this, combined with shortage of personnel, has meant no congregation for a weekly service at Hatley St George, although there remains a commitment to services for festivals, and the intention has been for once a monthly service where possible. Last year Easter, Harvest, Remembrance and Christmas were all celebrated well locally.

On the 5th Sunday in June the 9am Benefice Holy Communion service (the only Communion service in the Benefice that day) will take place in Hatley St George. That service will have elements of thanksgiving for the community and will be one of three in the Benefice.

There was a wedding at Hatley St George last year, and a baptism of a baby born to that family is planned for June this year. The couple live abroad but qualify for marriage in the parish through Sophia's parents' residence.

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 on a weekly basis, and decorations at festivals, as well as opening to visitors – as 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.

Reverend Hilary Young  
Rector, Parish of Gamlingay, Hatley St George and East Hatley