

Report to Hatley Parish Council Annual Meeting 2026 From Hilary Young (Parish Priest)

This will be my last report to Hatley PC. This would have been the case anyway as my retirement was due in January 2027, however it has now been announced for the end of July this year, brought forward due to personal circumstances. With that in mind the status of the churches in the Hatleys is worth confirming.

East Hatley St Denis' church is redundant, has been deconsecrated and is no longer part of the Church of England, and not therefore available for any regular Anglican services, including weddings. The building is in the care of Friends of Friendless Churches, and has been restored and made a great place to visit, thanks to the work of a few local people working with the Friends. St Denis' church building is in the parish of Gamlingay and the Hatleys and the churchyard is open (ie available for parish burials) and continues to be the responsibility of Gamlingay PCC, delegated from the Diocese of Ely. See below

The church in Hatley St George is a designated Chapel of Ease dedicated to St James the Great. It is within the parish which includes Gamlingay as confirmed through the Diocesan Registry, from where a copy of the scheme document was obtained. The scheme formally combined the parishes of Hatley and Gamlingay on July 21st 1999 and set out the process of appointment of clergy. The parish is combined with Everton to form a two parish Benefice. Hatley St George church continues to be a consecrated place of worship within the parish, where Church of England weddings, funerals and baptisms can take place, as well as any other services as arranged to meet the needs of the local community within the resources available.

Burials and memorials in both churchyards in the Hatleys are controlled by the Diocesan Registry through delegated responsibilities discharged by the Parish Priest, or in the case of a vacancy, the Archdeacon, via the churchwardens.

Church building

Stephanie Norris was appointed inspecting architect for Hatley St George church and carried out the Quinquennial inspection. Micky Astor kindly was on hand to meet Stephanie, and her report has been shared with him as well as with the PCC. A meeting is being arranged with myself and the Gamlingay church warden with Samuel Pedlar from the Diocesan Buildings team who has offered to help with planning for the future of the building.

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. The PCC is hugely grateful to Micky Astor for help with caring for the churchyard at Hatley St George. Similarly there is much gratitude to the team who care for the churchyard at East Hatley, a designated wildlife area. Nicola Jenkins has been most helpful in coordinating the group, which has been formalised as a designated task group of Gamlingay with Hatley PCC, with myself as chair and PCC link. Nicola will be reporting in more detail.

Personnel and governance

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 two parishes of the Benefice (Gamlingay with Hatleys and Everton) took place some weeks apart this year, receiving reports from the year ending December 2025 and electing representatives for this year. Last year's PCC members were reelected, with the addition this time of church wardens at Everton and an additional PCC member coopted there. Both PCCs have fewer people than would be allowed. There is much gratitude to those who are willing to serve in this way, for the work they take on in supporting the administrative work of the parish, fund-raising and enabling the parishes to meet legal commitments as charities. Ann Davis continues to serve as the only Church Warden for Gamlingay with Hatleys. There is no PCC representation from the Hatleys.

There is great thanks to Penny Hewlett for her continuing commitment to Hatley St George church, despite considerable limitations due to personal circumstances. Penny has continued to help coordinate and has significantly contributed herself to cleaning and caring for the 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.

There have been fewer services this year due to limitations of availability of leaders and congregation, however the services that have taken place have all been enjoyed by those who attended. The customary carol service was again a hi light.

Finance

Hatley continues to be subsidised by Gamlingay to cover insurance, heating costs and other incidental expenses. In 2025 the anomalous increase in share request due to Deanery problems meant that the parish did not achieve the requested amount. This year the request was adjusted downwards, but there will still be difficulties in raising the funds needed.

Future planning

The PCCs are working with me and the Archdeacon to manage both the present situation in transition, and the vacancy itself which will begin in August. There is much to be done to ensure as far as can be, that momentum is not lost in the coming months. My hope and prayer is for well being of the Church in the places that I am currently serving in - we shall not be far away (Godmanchester) at least in the foreseeable future, and hope not to lose touch, at the same time as allowing new ministries to emerge and flourish.

Many blessings and much gratitude
Hilary
May 2026