

St Olave's Church, Gatcombe

September 2026



And so, my good friends, as many of you are now aware, I am to leave St Olave's Church towards the end of September. So, this is my final piece for our Newsletter.

My final service at St Olave's is on Sunday 13th September at 11am. This will be a jointly led service with my colleague and friend Revd Emma. Emma is also, by pure coincidence, leaving at the same time, to take up an appointment in the Diocese of Blackburn, up near Lancaster. Her new parish covers the villages of Galgate and Ellel, which lie just off the M6 motorway.

Our final service is to be held at Newport Minster on Sunday 20th September at 10:30am. This special service is a benefice wide service which will involve jazz no less! So, if you appreciate jazz and/or you want to come along to say farewell, please feel free to. It will be lovely to see you and say '*au revoir*.'

My new parish is at St Paul's Church, Hooton, which is on the north west edge of Ellesmere Port, just south of Liverpool.

It really has been a joy to spend these past, nearly 5 ½ years, getting to know you. And sharing in this wonderful adventure that we call life. To serve as a Parish Priest is the most wonderful role, I have ever had the privilege to undertake. Sharing in your life's adventures, your sadnesses, your joys and enabling one another to live the best life we can, is a beautiful thing indeed. And I can only offer you my deepest gratitude for supporting me so that I can support you.

In many of my sermons, I have offered my thoughts and reflections on what it means to live the best life we can. And I firmly believe that Jesus Christ came to demonstrate how we might do so. Firstly, by believing in ourselves and in our ability to make the world a better place. We may not be able to bring peace to places such as Iran or Ukraine personally, but we can bring peace to our own hearts by building positive relationships with others and enabling people to see the best in one another. For Christ indeed calls us to love one another as we love ourselves. He doesn't discriminate between cultures or traditions; he simply calls us to love. And that is something I have built my life upon. And as I do so, so my own life has been enriched beyond measure.

So, as I bid '*au revoir*' to you all, let me personally thank you for loving me in the way you have. For supporting me as I discover the joys and challenges of ministry for myself. And for developing me, so that I take forward the love you have offered me, to a new parish in theirs and my new chapter in life.

With my deepest gratitude and love,
Revd Steve xxxx



In Your Prayers...

Dear Lord,

As we come to the end of this glorious summer, we thank you for this wonderful world you have created for us to enjoy with family and friends.

Also in our thoughts are those less fortunate, that they may one day be able to enjoy the peace that we have. *Amen.*

Carol Denness



Time to Say Goodbye

By now, many of you will be aware that the Reverend Steve Sutcliffe has been appointed by the Bishop of Chester as Vicar of St Paul's, Hooton, on the outskirts of Ellesmere Port, in the Diocese of Chester.

Steve has served the benefice as Team Vicar for the past five and a half years, with responsibility for St Mary's, Carisbrooke, and especially for us here at St Olave's, Gatcombe. During this time, he has touched the lives of many people in the parish. He has brought joy to his ministry, offered time and care to all, and borne faithful witness to the Gospel in service to the whole community. Steve will, of course, be greatly missed. However, the Lord has called him to another parish, and we wish him every blessing as he prepares to move away from the Island, a place he has called home for over 40 years. We give thanks for the time we have shared with him and keep Steve and his family in our prayers.

Steve's final service at St Olave's will be Holy Communion at 11am on Sunday 13 September. He will be joined by the Reverend Emma Cooksey, for whom this will also be her last service at St Olave's before she takes up her new position as Vicar of Ellet St John's and Shireshead St James, on the outskirts of Lancaster, in the Diocese of Blackburn. No doubt many of you will want to say goodbye and give them both a fitting send-off, so please do put the date in your diaries. The service will be followed by a Bring and Share lunch at 1pm in St Mary's Church Hall, Carisbrooke. Everyone is warmly welcome.



Steve and Emma's final service in the Benefice will be the Jazz Eucharist at 11am in Newport Minster on Sunday September 20th. There will be no service at St Olave's that day so please make every effort to attend this very special service, arriving early is recommended as it is sure to be very well attended.

Steve Denness (Churchwarden)

**The Wedding of
Francesca Fraser & Sebastian Kristensen
took place on
Saturday July 4th at
St Olave's Church, Gatcombe**

**The Funeral of
Lynette Carver
took place on
Wednesday July 8th at
St Olave's Church, Gatcombe**

**The Wedding of
Megan St John & Bailey Garlick
took place on
Saturday July 25th at
St Olave's Church, Gatcombe**

**The Funeral of
Valerie Rose Paynter
took place on
Monday August 10th at
St Olave's Church, Gatcombe**

**The Wedding of
Amy Sparrow & Matthew Hankin
took place on
Saturday July 25th at
St Olave's Church, Gatcombe**

**The Funeral of
Stephen John Tutton
took place on
Wednesday August 26th at
St Olave's Church, Gatcombe**

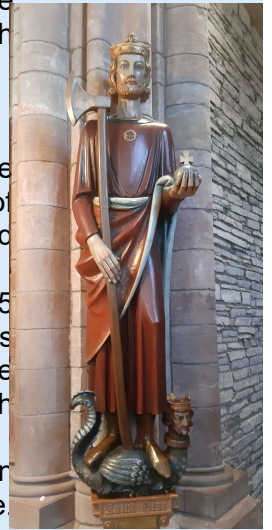
Services at St Olave's in September

Sunday 6 September	11am	Service of the Word <i>Please stay afterwards for coffee and cake</i> Vision Sunday	Sunday 20 September	No Service	
Sunday 13 September	11am	Holy Communion Give & Serve Sunday	Sunday 27 September	11am	Holy Communion

St Olave's Connections to Scotland

On a recent tour of Scotland's islands, we were delighted to come across several unexpected links with St Olave. They offered a vivid reminder of how deeply the Norse-Viking world shaped the Christian story of northern Scotland through trade, settlement, pilgrimage, and Norwegian rule across the northern isles and parts of the mainland coast.

One of the most striking discoveries was at St Magnus Cathedral in Kirkwall, Orkney, where we found a statue of St Olave. It was presented by Grimstad Borough, Agder, Norway, to mark the 850th anniversary of the cathedral's foundation. That small encounter opened up a much wider story linking St Olave, St Magnus, and the early Christian life of Kirkwall.



St Magnus, also known as Magnus Erlendson, was Earl of Orkney in the early 1100s. He was killed while praying after an uprising and was canonised in 1135, following reports of miracles at his grave in Birsay. His nephew later claimed the earldom and vowed to build a "great stone Minster" that would become a place of pilgrimage.

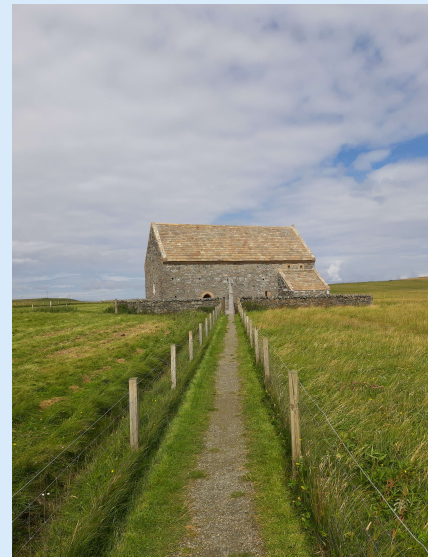
Before the cathedral was built, St Magnus's relics were brought to Kirkwall around 1135 and placed in St Olaf's Kirk, then the town's main church. When the new cathedral was consecrated in the 1150s, the relics were moved there permanently, and St Olaf's continued as a parish church.

Little of the original Kirk survives today, but its southern doorway remains in the wall of a private residence. Other fragments, including the "Credence", can be seen in the present St Olaf's Scottish Episcopal Church.



A further connection emerged while visiting Stornoway on the Isle of Lewis, where our tour included St Moluag's Episcopal Church in the small village of Eoropaidh. Set some distance from the road, at the end of a narrow track through a crofter's field, it is one of the most remote Christian outposts in Europe. There is no electricity or running water; the interior is lit by

candle and oil lamp. Although the present building dates from the 12th century, the site is believed to have been consecrated in the 6th century and is traditionally associated with the first preaching of Christianity on Lewis. St Moluag was a companion of St Columba, and this Church has long been linked with pilgrimage and healing, especially in prayers for those suffering from mental illness and skin diseases. Yet the dedication of the church has not always been fixed. Over the centuries it has been known by several names, including St Olaf's, giving this remote place an unexpected link with the wider story of St Olave.



The church itself is laid out on a T-plan, with a rectangular nave and flanking chapels. The southern chapel, built as a lean-to, is reached only through an external doorway, though an opening in the wall allowed those inside to see the altar. It is said to have been used by people with infectious diseases, enabling them to worship apart from the main congregation. Inside the church are a roughly carved font bowl and a wooden poor box bound with heavy iron straps, while outside stands a finely crafted war memorial in the form of a Celtic cross. For us, these discoveries brought history close to home: a reminder that saints, churches, and communities have long been connected across land and sea, and that the story of faith is often woven through journeys, friendships, and places of prayer.

Steve Denness (Churchwarden)

St Olave's Patronal Service

Each year we celebrate the Patronal Festival of St Olave as near to July 29th as possible. This year we held a Holy Communion on Sunday July 27th and had the pleasure and privilege of using the church's Tudor chalice, from after St Olave's time, of course, but one of our church's treasures. The chalice is kept under lock and key at the Minster in Newport but comes to us on special occasions. Sadly the congregation was small but we decorated the church with extra flowers and served coffee and cake after the service to mark the occasion.

It is always hard for whoever is preaching to find something nice to say about St Olave. He was not a saint renowned for peace and prayer. He is always depicted holding his Viking axe and with his longboat. His boat is carved on our choir stall ends and depicted on the cushion on the Bishop's chair in the sanctuary. The church was dedicated to him in 1292 although there is little written evidence of the event.

It was a chapel for the Estur family, built as a manorial chapel. The Estur family owned the Gatcombe estate. Olave was king of Norway and brought his country to Christianity. There are other churches dedicated to him in London and the south but no reason is found as to why this saint was chosen for Gatcombe. He fought alongside King Ethelred in the 11th Century and it was thought he was holding London with the king against another invading Viking army and he burned London Bridge to stop them taking the city. London Bridge is burning down? It was very much *Be a Christian* or else and his battle cry was 'Forward, forward, Christ men Cross men Kings men.' He brought Norway to Christianity, more by force than by prayer, it is thought.



Revd Steve managed to link St Olave in his sermon this year, with Moses. We have been following the Bible reading over the past Sundays about the life of Moses. Both strong leaders, leading their people and both strong believers in God. It is proposed to link with the other churches on the mainland dedicated to St Olave next year for his millenium. *Harriet Robinson*

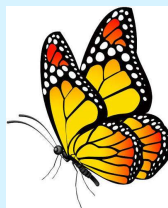
Butterfly Walk

Our first free social event of the summer was a Butterfly Walk, kindly organised by Richard Smout, on a very warm Monday morning on July 20th. Although attendance was small, Richard led an interesting and informative walk around the churchyard and its extension as part of the Big Butterfly Count, organised by Butterfly Conservation. Running from 17 July to 9 August, the annual event encourages people to spend just 15 minutes recording the butterflies they see, helping to build a national picture of how these important pollinators are faring.

Beforehand, Richard completed a timed walk and recorded two red admirals in the main churchyard and two meadow browns over the mown grass.

In the lower cemetery, near the boundary hedges, longer grass and wildflower area, he recorded eight gatekeepers, (mainly on ragwort), five more meadow browns, a green-veined white and two other unidentified white butterflies.

During the more leisurely group walk, we saw similar species and had time to study them in greater detail. We also saw dragonflies: an emperor dragonfly over the wild area and two migrant hawkers across the road from the lower cemetery, along with three types of bumblebee. Afterwards, tea and biscuits were served in the church. *SD*



Bat Walk

The second event was a Bat Walk on the evening of Friday 7th August, attended by around 24 people. The idea grew out of the Spaces for Nature mapping walk in the spring, and the event was organised by Hazel Makepeace of the Isle of Wight Bat Group. We gathered in the church at 8pm for tea and cake while Hazel introduced the bats we might encounter and shared background information about them. As dusk fell, we were given bat detectors and the search began.

Almost as soon as we stepped outside, the detectors picked up the bats' high-pitched calls and bats began darting across the sky. We split into smaller groups to explore the churchyard and its extension, while members of the Bat Group recorded calls at different frequencies. In due course, we will receive a report confirming the species detected.



As the sky darkened, bat activity gradually decreased, and the evening ended at around 10pm. It was a fascinating and enlightening evening, proving that we certainly have "bats in the belfry", so to speak.

Both events clearly showed that rewilding the lower part of the churchyard extension is benefiting wildlife. Even in the evening, the grass is full of moths and other insects, providing valuable food for the bats. *SD*

Pimms, Puddings & Jazz.... And a Strawberry Cream Tea

Two very successful social events were held over the summer. St. Olaves was transformed once again into a jazz club for our Pimms and Pudding evening, filling the church with music and laughter on the warm, balmy evening of 18 July. The Jim Thorn Quartet, featuring Lauren Thorn on vocals, entertained everyone with a lively mix of jazz and even had some of us dancing in the aisles. The Pimms and puddings were just the thing as the temperature rose. A special thank you goes to everyone who helped make the evening such a success by providing puddings, serving refreshments, and tidying up afterwards. Thanks to your generosity, we raised £270.00. The quartet was so well received that we are planning a Soul and Motown 70s-themed buffet evening next March, with more details to follow nearer the time.



Our Strawberry Cream Tea was held on Saturday 15 August. Once again, the weather was excellent and the church was very warm. More than 50 parishioners, family members, and friends filled the church with cheerful conversation while enjoying a generous spread of scones, jam, cream, cakes, and plenty of tea—perfect refreshment on a hot afternoon. Together with the raffle, we raised £377.00 for church funds. Our thanks go to everyone who helped and provided tray bakes and raffle prizes, with special thanks to Donna and Carol, who made more than 100 scones in very challenging conditions as the heat made the mixture difficult to handle.

It is wonderful to raise much-needed funds to help keep St Olave's a beautiful place of worship, but above all these events are about community: relaxing and enjoying time with family and friends in the sight of God.

Steve Denness (Churchwarden)



Ride & Stride Day supports the fabric of our Churches & Chapels in Hampshire and the Isle of Wight and is

a national fund-raising event. 50% of the sponsorship money for a nominated church is returned to them. The Trust is run entirely by volunteers so almost all the money raised goes to our churches as grants for the maintenance, preservation and restoration of our church heritage

St Olave's, along with the other churches in the benefice, will be supporting Ride and Stride again this year. The church will be open, and simple refreshments will be provided for any participants that visit.

In addition, this year I plan to do my own pilgrimage; starting from The Minster I will walk to St Olave's, dropping into St John's and St Mary's *en route* for a moment of prayer and meditation plus of course the odd biscuit or cake - just to keep me going, of course!

Please consider sponsoring me in my efforts to support this worthy charity and St Olave's. I will have my sponsor form with me at church on the next few Sundays, or feel free to ring or text me to pledge on 07850 779544 and remember to Gift Aid your donation.

Steve Denness (Churchwarden)

Coffee, Cake & Chat!

On Saturday October 3rd the church is hosting the Saturday Market & Coffee Morning at Chillerton Village Hall between 10 am and noon.



Do join us and meet old friends and make new ones. Looking forward to seeing you there.

Does any one have any good quality bric-a-brac or plants or books for sale on our sales table? Please have a bit of a clear out. Give me a ring if you would like it collected or it can be left at the back of the church or bought on the morning.

Harriet on 07833 311674

Newchurch Male Voice Choir

will be performing a concert at St Olave's on Saturday October 17th at 4pm.

This is a free event; refreshments will be served, there will however, be a raffle and retiring collection on behalf of Church funds.



Chillerton & Gatcombe Show

It does seem a long time ago but the Chillerton and Gatcombe Horticultural Show was, as always, a great success. The weather was very hot, so sunburn, rather than getting soaked, was the worry this year. The entries in the tent were amazing and there was a variety of stalls too.

The church had their 'Water or Wine' stall again, which proved a great success. The congregation was very generous in providing full bottles of wine, and a thank you to Donna Dempsey for storing all the empty bottles from last year so we could reuse them. Hilary, Lyndon and Michael helped 'man the stall' and did all the heavy lifting, storing the empty bottles afterwards in the boiler house at the church for next year.

Michael also donated jars of honey which were, as always, very popular. The honey made £108, the bottle stall £198 making a grand total for church funds of £301. *Harriet Robinson*



Quiz Question. Did we have a good evening on Friday 14th August? Answer. Yes we did!!

St Olave's took its turn running the monthly village quiz at The Gallybagger Inn as it does every year and, despite the melting heatwave conditions and a couple of teams dropping out, a very good time was had by all.

The nine rounds of questions were written by members of the church congregation and supporters, and varied from extremely difficult to good fun, and ended with the picture round of old postcard views of the Island that had to be identified.

I had the honour of being the question master, aided and abetted by Michael Terry who had the task of scoring and keeping us all in line, and by Leonie Terry who sorted out the raffle, organised the music round and was my much-needed glamorous assistant for the evening.

Thank you to all involved. Everyone seemed to have fun and we made £144 for church funds. *Harriet Robinson*



Contact Us

Team Rector:-
Revd Chris Bradish:
07985 427930

chris.bradish@cofeheartofwight.org

**Team Vicar, with Special
Responsibility for Gatcombe:-**
Revd Steve Sutcliffe:

01983 520884 or 07563 247480
steve.sutcliffe@cofeheartofwight.org

Churchwardens:-
Donna Dempsey
07701 306729
Steve Denness
07850779544

PCC Secretary & Newsletter Editor:-
Jill Webster
(01983 721483 or jill.webster@outlook.com)



St Olave's

Team Vicar:-
Revd Emma Cooksey:
01983 653166

emma.cooksey@cofeheartofwight.org

Team Vicar:-
Revd Abbie Lynch:
07741 014541

abbie.lynch@cofeheartofwight.org

Safeguarding Officer:-
Louise Parsons:
01983 721804

Please send your news to:-
Harriet Robinson
(01983 721766 or spottydogs@hotmail.com)

St Olave's Website
<https://stolaves.church/>