



St Margaret's Chapel Guild Newsletter

January 2025 Issue 47

www.stmargaretschapel.com

St Margaret's Day Celebrations 2024



Canongate Kirk, photo credit SMCG

The 82nd St Margaret's Day celebration may have followed a slightly different format to usual, but the sense of fellowship was if anything enhanced by being together for the very special service that was held at Canongate Kirk on the 16th November 2024.

Our President, Reverend Neil Gardner, chaired our AGM, where we thanked Sarah James for her sterling work in her time as Secretary of the Guild, and welcomed her replacement, Holly Williams.



Sarah James, photo credit SMCG

We were able to welcome six of our thirteen new members in person. One of particular note was Ava Williams, Holly's



Ava receiving her certificate from Hazel, photo credit SMCG

five-year-old daughter. Ava was wearing one of the Guild pendants that were made for the St Margaret's 900 celebrations in 1993. Holly was a recipient of one of them, and it was lovely to see it being worn by Ava on her special day.

At the service, we were joined by friends and family of Guild members. These individuals often do much to support the work of the Guild and it was good to be able to extend them an invitation to join us.

Representatives from a number of schools and churches with links to St Margaret and St David were in attendance also, as were members of the public who came along as part of the Edinburgh 900 programme. One attendee has now joined the Guild as a result.

The St Margaret's Singers were a very welcome addition to the service, and they performed three pieces beautifully. You can listen to a recording of the whole service by following the link on the Guild page of the [website](#).

It wouldn't be a Guild event without flowers, and thanks are due to Margaret Hunter for creating the beautiful pedestal at the Canongate.

While we will return to our usual format and location for this year's celebration (Monday 17th of November), there was something special about our 2024 event.

My thanks to all who were involved in making the day such a success.

Hazel M Dunn
Guild Convenor



photo credit SMCG

St Margaret's Chapel Flowers photo credits SMCG





Why not celebrate your special occasion at the Chapel with flowers?

As a number of our members live outside our local area, we are offering the opportunity to have flowers placed in the Chapel on behalf of any member who is celebrating a birthday or special occasion. This would be dependent on the date being available. The initial step would be to email the Flower Supervisor to discuss dates and transfer of money. The Supervisor would then contact a flower arranger to place the flowers in the Chapel and send photographs. For more information, please contact Fiona Pigott at fpigott19@gmail.com

Lieutenant of the Royal Victorian Order

The Guild would like to congratulate our president, the Reverend Neil Gardner, MA BD DL, Domestic Chaplain to His Majesty the King in Scotland and Parish Minister of Canongate Kirk, on becoming a Lieutenant of the Royal Victorian Order (LVO). The Royal Victorian Order is an order of knighthood awarded by the sovereign of the United Kingdom and several Commonwealth realms and is granted personally by the monarch on recognition of personal service to the monarchy, the Royal Household, royal family members, and the organisation of important royal events.



A Rising Generation of Margarets

When one of our members found a daisy brooch in a local charity shop, she purchased it, requesting it be given to a Guild member. After some consideration the committee agreed that baby Maggie Fowler, who you may remember joined in 2023, would be a suitable recipient.



Maggie's mother, Andrea, sent us this lovely picture of her wearing the brooch. We hope that in the coming years we will see Maggie at another St Margaret's Day celebration wearing her re-gifted reminder of the Guild.

This photograph was sent in the Summer and I imagine Maggie must have grown since then. We hope that "daisy" and "flower" are now in her vocabulary.

Hazel M Dunn *photo credit SMCG*

Major General Alistair Bruce, Governor of Edinburgh Castle 2019-2024

Our Convenor, Hazel Dunn and I were delighted to attend the Return of the Key ceremony at the Great Hall in Edinburgh Castle to mark the departure of our Honorary Vice President, Major General Alistair Bruce, as his tenure as Governor of the Castle came to an end. The position is one that can be traced back to 1108.



Alistair Bruce on the right, pictured with The Honourable Adam Bruce, CStJ, WS – Marchmont Herald and Hugh Hall, Chair of the Board for Historic Environment Scotland, photo credit SMCG

Alistair, also known as Bruce of Crionaich, took on the role with great gusto and undeniably made it his own, his character shining through at every turn.

Alistair often spoke of the special place in his heart for St Margaret and the Chapel Guild. As a descendant of King Robert the Bruce, it can't be lost on him that his ancestor ordered the destruction of the Castle in 1314, whilst ordering that St Margaret's Chapel be saved.

Soon after his appointment, Alistair invited 20 members of the Guild to the Governor's House for tea to get to know us. He faithfully attended St Margaret's Day celebrations within the Castle each year. I remember him mentioning the joy he took watching from Governor's House the early morning trips to the Chapel by Margarets to place flowers.

On leaving the Castle, Alistair said, "Being the Governor of Edinburgh Castle, it's just the greatest privilege any Scot could have".

We wish Alistair well in all his future adventures, of which I'm sure there will be many.

However, the 'Bruce' legacy will continue, as the Castle now welcomes Major General Bob Bruce as the new Governor and Honorary Vice President of St Margaret's Chapel Guild. Those attending the AGM at the Canongate Kirk had the opportunity to meet Bob Bruce. I'm sure he'll have plans to put his own stamp on the role of Governor.

Margaret Williamson, SMCG Treasurer

Next Coffee Morning: Monday 17th February



The Guild meets every month at the Johnnie Walker rooftop bar at 145 Princes Street (the former site of Fraser's). We have a table reserved from 11am in February and 10am from March. Everyone is welcome, but newer



A goodly gathering of Margarets on 16th January, photo credit SMCG

members or those who have not attended in the past are particularly welcome!

Dates for your diary:

Monday 17th March

Wednesday 16th April

Friday 16th May

Monday 16th June

Blythe Family connection to St Margaret's Chapel

The family of Jim and Mhairi Blythe have a particular affection for St Margaret of Scotland and her Chapel that travels through several generations. Our story begins, Act 1, in December 1982 when Jim was commanding a company of Royal Scots on the Armagh border in Northern Ireland and Mhairi was in Edinburgh for a routine check-up when young James arrived unexpectedly at 25 weeks' gestation!

Mhairi was rushed to the Simpson Memorial Maternity Pavilion in the old Royal Infirmary . . . just in time! That night, the hospital Chaplain, Reverend Stewart McGregor, suggested to Mhairi that if she wished James to be baptised, there and then would be the place and time. James was baptised William James Blythe in the family tradition although, in tribute to the skill, dedication and compassion of all the hospital staff, they subsequently added Simpson to James's Christian names.

Of course, in the early hours of 11th December 1982, only James, Mhairi and Stewart McGregor were involved so, once James had grown and gained strength, they asked Stewart to conduct a blessing in the company of family and friends. Stationed at Kirknewton by this time, they were eligible for the privilege of this being held in St Margaret's Chapel.



photo credit Jim Blythe

Act 2: Time passed, and young James became a piper, played rugby and graduated from university to become a film maker and . . . he met Sophie.

After three years or so, he brought her to Edinburgh Castle and recruited two of the senior stewards to admit James and Sophie into St Margaret's Chapel, allow the existing visitors out but no more in. The scene was set, the stage managed and once James and Sophie were alone, James proposed marriage and Sophie accepted. They were duly married in Sophie's home village in Berkshire.



photo credit Jim Blythe

Act 3: In 2018, Isla Rose Mhairi Blythe was born and was baptised in Berkshire but was blessed by our current Chaplain and President of the Guild, the Reverend Neil Gardner in St Margaret's Chapel. Isla was subsequently joined by William and Jessica, both likewise baptised in the south and

also blessed together by Neil at St Margaret's Chapel in October last.

Epilogue: We hope that in the years to come, the young Blythes will return to the Chapel and celebrate their connection there.

(story adapted from the original by Jim and Mhairi Blythe)

The King's Garden Party at the Palace of Holyrood House

Gillian Margaret Frazer and Margaret Bennett cheerfully represented the Guild at the Royal Garden Party this year on 2nd July 2024.

At this annual event the King and Queen host thousands of people from all walks of life to celebrate their contribution to Scottish culture, achievement and community. Among the crowds that day, Gillian said, "meeting up with Margaret Bennett was a bit like finding a needle in a haystack!".

Gillian reports the gardens were much larger than she had expected and she was surprised by how many were in attendance. "We were treated to a fantastic afternoon tea" and enjoyed music from regimental bands



King Charles with his Royal Company of Archers at the garden party during Royal Week in Edinburgh. Photo credit Gillian Frazer.

and the Royal Scottish Pipers Society. "The weather could have been better, but it didn't stop us from enjoying an ice cream!"

While they didn't meet any of the Royals, Gillian managed to catch a glimpse of the King and take a snap of him among the plumes and tooried bonnets of The Royal Company of Archers who have been the King's official bodyguard in Scotland since 1822. Given her advantage of height, she says she relayed a running commentary to Margaret

Bennett! Thanks to our Margarets who say it was their privilege to represent the Guild at this event.



Margaret Bennett and Gillian Frazer wisely sporting broolly fashion accessories at Holyrood Palace gardens. Photo credit Gillian Frazer.

Donations & Gift Aid

I'd like to thank all members for their generous donations to St Margaret's Chapel Guild in the run up to St Margaret's Day AGM and Celebrations

2024. As you can see, claiming Gift Aid greatly adds to our donations. If any member is unsure if they are eligible to complete a Gift Aid Declaration form, details on this can be found by clicking this link: <https://www.gov.uk/donating-to-charity/gift-aid>

If any member is unsure if they have already completed a Gift Aid Declaration, please don't hesitate to get in touch. I can very quickly answer this for you. I'm always delighted to hear from members who'd like a Gift Aid Declaration forwarded. Again, thanks for your ongoing support. **Your donations allow us to continue supporting our agreed charities in the name of St Margaret.** Margaret Williamson, Treasurer SMCG m.doig@hotmail.co.uk



photo credit SMCG

As announced at the AGM, the committee has now installed a tap & pay machine in the Chapel for donations. This makes it easier for the many people who visit the Chapel, many of whom are from abroad, to make a donation. The machine is working well and the donations have increased. The device sits alongside the original cash slot, so those who have cash can also still donate.

Donations & Gift Aid Overview	AGM
2024	
Total members donations	£3,241
Amount eligible for Gift Aid	£2,159
Gift Aid claimed	£ 540

Just a Reminder! Please send us updates of your current contact details!

Send updates to Guild Secretary at hollygilfether@hotmail.co.uk

St Margaret's Day Celebrated in Niagara Falls



photo credit Mina McGean

New member to the Guild, Mina M McGean sent us a photo of flowers placed in Christ Church, in Niagara Falls, in celebration of St Margaret's Day on 16th November 2024.

Mina visited the Chapel in 2012, on her first visit to Scotland with her Dad. She said, "it was an immensely beautiful experience to be in the chapel, and it felt that St Margaret was in that beautiful place. I left it, feeling the peace of the chapel, and it has been with me since. The flowers, for me, are a most suitable tribute to St Margaret, as well as embracing her spirit of giving joy and comfort to others".

St Margaret in Rio de Janeiro

We welcome a new corporate member to the Guild from Brazil. João Marcos is the coordinator of the chapel dedicated to **Capela Santa Margarida da Escócia**, Saint Margaret of Scotland, in the Campo Grande neighbourhood, Rio de Janeiro, Brazil. He tells us the congregation are delighted to join the Guild and to learn more about their patron saint from Scotland!



The congregation of Capela Santa Margarida da Escócia, photo credit CSME



The statue of St Margaret in their chapel surrounded by beautiful flowers, photo credit CSME

Fiona Pigott joined Holly Williams and other flower supervisors at the **Castle Family Christmas Carol Service**, which was a wonderful event.



photo credit SMCG

Photography Permissions

As part of the Executive Committee's commitment to ensuring best practice and governance within the Guild, we are seeking all members' written permission to use any photographs members appear in at Guild-related events or work. We're very grateful to those who have returned the forms that were sent out via email in September 2024. If you haven't yet had the chance to complete then you can find a copy of the form on the members section of the website alongside a short Q&A that aims to answer some frequently asked questions. Please complete and return it to the Guild Secretary at hollygilfether@hotmail.co.uk

