



Convenor's Report for 2025 AGM

It seems strange to be writing this, my final report as Convenor. I am however delighted that I leave the Guild in such good shape and in such capable hands. It has been an absolute pleasure to work with the current Committee members this year. Much has changed in the fourteen years since I joined the Committee, but you, the Guild members, have been a constant source of help and support throughout.

A summary of the year follows.

Chapel Usage

The Chapel is available to be used for ceremonies for eight months of the year (the busy period from June to the end of September is excluded). There have been twenty-six weddings (five military and twenty-one civilian), and seven baptisms (five military and two civilian). It is the Guild's arrangements that grace the Chapel for these special celebrations.

We can request the use of the Chapel for Guild members up to six times a year, at no cost for a christening, and at the military rate (currently £200) for a wedding. Please contact the Secretary if you would like to use the Chapel for a wedding or baptism.

Guild Income

The electronic payment system that was introduced last year has significantly increased the amount we receive in donations at the Chapel, despite some reliability problems with the power socket in the Chapel. To mitigate these, the donation box and tap-to-pay device have been moved temporarily to be nearer the altar. Members of the Committee are able to check the status of the device online and can thus detect when there is an issue. We plan to meet with representatives from Historic Environment Scotland to review the location of the device and the accompanying Guild information poster.

We continue to receive cash donations, although as anticipated these have reduced. As a result, the money does not need to be collected as often; additionally, age restrictions on the money collectors have been imposed by our insurance company, so the Executive Committee made the decision to disband the money collection teams in August. The money is now collected by a member of the Committee on an ad hoc basis.

Following a visit by the Committee to the Chapel in May, the booklets were reintroduced. This has not led to an appreciable increase in donations, and we anticipate that the current stock of approximately 6,500 booklets will be exhausted in the coming months. We are currently investigating how to make the information about St Margaret available online instead.

Guild income has also benefited from a focus on claiming Gift Aid. This year shows a marked increase, due to the fact that two years of claims were included in this financial year (this will not be the case in future years). We would encourage any of you making a donation to the Guild who are UK taxpayers to complete a Gift Aid form.

It should be mentioned that while the amount the Guild has received in donations has increased, it is still less than the historic peak, and a degree of caution should be exercised when making plans for the future.

Donations by The Guild

With the increased monies received, the Committee propose increasing the amount we give to charities to £10,000. Please let us know if there are charities you think we should consider supporting over and above those that we give to on an annual basis, by providing details on the AGM response form. The Committee will review these suggestions ahead of the AGM.

Royal Patronage

I am delighted to report that HRH The Princess Royal has extended her patronage of the Guild for a further three years. We apply to have it renewed, however it is not a given that it will be extended, particularly given all the other charities that the Princess is involved with. The good wishes of the Guild on the Princess's seventy-fifth birthday were conveyed by our President, Rev Neil Gardner, in our application.

Guild Events and Keeping in Touch with Members

We produced two newsletters which were sent to all members. These were packed with articles that we thought would be of interest to Guild members wherever they may be. We are always seeking articles, so please get in touch if there is something you think may be of interest to the other members.

The monthly coffee mornings in Edinburgh continue. They take place on the 16th of the month (the 17th, if the 16th is a Sunday) from 11am to 12.30pm at the rooftop café in the Johnnie Walker venue on Princes Street. We usually have around ten members attending, and it is a great way to meet other members. There is a WhatsApp group which is used to notify attendees if there are any changes. Fiona Pigott can add you to the group (07874 282480).

To mark the contribution that the money collecting teams have made over the years, a tea party was held for the current cohort. Their recollections were recorded, and will feature in an article in the next newsletter.

In July a group of thirteen Guild members visited the reopened St Margaret's Cave in Dunfermline, followed by a tour of Dunfermline Abbey conducted by Guild member Margaret Dean. We placed flowers on St Margaret's Shrine, before retiring to a local hotel for lunch. Those attending found the day both informative and enjoyable.

We maintain a list of members and their contact details. We review and update the list throughout the year. Please do keep us notified if your details change.

Events Attended by The Guild

The Guild has been represented at the following events throughout the year:-
Edinburgh Castle Family Carol Service (Holly Williams read a lesson)
Queen Margaret University's (QMU) Costume Showcase
QMU's Filmcase event

QMU Principal's Festive reception
Unveiling of the QMU sculpture to commemorate the institute's 150th anniversary
The Scotsman Fringe First award ceremony (a QMU sponsored event to recognise new performance writing)
The Royal Garden Party at Holyrood (Fiona Pigott and Catrina McGillivray represented the Guild)
Sistema's Big Noise event in Wester Hailes
The installation ceremony of Maj. Gen Bruce as Governor of Edinburgh Castle

We receive a number of invitations throughout the year where we can put forward names of members to attend on behalf of the Guild. If you would like to be at some future event, please get in touch.

Salvete et Valet

Former Flower Supervisor Gillian Frazer gave birth to a baby boy, Hamish John, in February - a brother for Guild member Maeve.

We have been advised that the following members are no longer with us. Margaret Balfour, Donna Taylor-Smart, Margaret Butler, and Margaret Valerio. Our thoughts are with their families and friends.

Please do let us know about any announcements, whether happy or sad, that you hear of. This will allow us to contact the member, or where appropriate, the family, in question, and also ensure that the membership list we have is current.

Committee Matters

Most of the Executive Committee meetings have been held in person this year, with the option to join on-line. This allows us to accommodate the busy lives of the committee members.

The Committee undertook their biennial inspection of the Chapel in May. The Velcro used to hold the newer, blue altar cloth in place was found to be becoming detached through repeated fastening and unfastening. Guild member Margaret Studley has been reviewing possible solutions to the problem to ensure the cloth can continue to be used for many years to come.

The Committee decided that former Guild Treasurer Margaret Allan's name should be added to the candlestick in the Chapel. The candlestick, which was made by Ratho Forge in 2000 to commemorate former Guild Convenor Margaret Macaulay and former Guild Secretary Margaret Mackenzie, had one remaining space. Pete Hill, who now runs the company, undertook a refurbishment of the candlestick (which was made by his father-in-law) at the same time, and it was returned to the Chapel in July.

The Guild website has been updated to run on a new platform. The changes mean that it is easier to maintain and update. Further updates can now easily be made by Committee member Angela Casey. We have updated and expanded the information contained in the Members Section of the website, and hope that it will be used as a reference source by our members (a reminder that the password for the members section is 10daisy93).

We held a Strategy Day in February which was very helpful in looking at the way we communicate both internally and externally. Our regular committee meetings focus more on the immediate matters that need to be addressed, so it was good to take a step back and consider the bigger picture.

Committee members have been attending webinars to increase the knowledge that is required as a Trustee of the Guild, and further work has been done to ensure that we comply with the latest regulations that apply to charities.

Having served two terms as Convenor, I will not be standing for a third term. Following consultation with the membership in February / March, Fiona Pigott, who is currently Flower Supervisor and Acting Vice-Convenor, will stand unopposed for election as my successor at the AGM and she has the full support of the Executive Committee.

Given Fiona's new role, there will be a vacancy for the Flower Supervisor. I am delighted to report that Margaret Clark, the very experienced February Flower Supervisor, will stand for election as Flower Supervisor at the AGM.

With Angela Casey spending more time on the Guild website, the Committee co-opted Margaret Crawford to the position of Acting Membership Secretary in February. Margaret brings a wealth of experience from her involvement with the Woman's Rural Institute (which faces similar challenges to the Guild), and considerable mastery of databases as a result of her time working for the Tourist Board in the Highlands. We would like to formalise Margaret's position as Membership Secretary at the AGM.

Other nominations for Flower Supervisor and Membership Secretary should be made on the reply form.

I very much look forward to seeing many of you on the 17th of November in our usual venue of the Castle.

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