



**Minutes of the Annual General Meeting of St Margaret's Chapel Guild
Canongate Kirk, Edinburgh
Saturday 16th November 2024, 10am**

Present: The President, Rev Neil Gardner, and the following Guests:

The Governor of Edinburgh Castle and Honorary Vice President of the Guild, Major General Bob Bruce; the Moderator of the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland and Honorary Vice President of the Guild, represented by Very Rev Colin Sinclair; the President of the Bishops' Conference of the RC Church in Scotland and Honorary Vice President of the Guild, represented by Archbishop Leo Cushley; The Primus of the Episcopal Church in Scotland and Honorary Vice President of the Guild, Rev Mark Strange, represented by Bishop John Armes; President Emeritus of the Guild, Rev Charles Robertson; Independent Examiner of the Guild's Accounts, Mr Neil Steven and 44 members of the Guild.

1. Welcome and Apologies

The President welcomed everyone present on this St Margaret's Day and gave a special welcome to all gathering at Canongate Kirk marking the Guild's participation in the city-wide Edinburgh 900 celebrations. A service will be held immediately following the AGM at which Guild members, members of the public and invited guests will be present, including QMU Students Mlle Lison Chaillou and Mr Ross Glen; Scotland's Churches Trust, represented by Mr Adam Cumming and Ms Lesley Cumming; representatives from St Margaret's Church, Davidson's Mains; representatives from St David's High School and St David's Primary School, Pilton; Dunfermline Abbey, represented by Frances McCafferty. Guild members the St Margaret's Singers will be performing at the service.

We remember those unable to be present today.

2. Minutes of AGM of 16th November 2023

The Minutes of the meeting of 16th November 2023 had been circulated to all. No actions were outstanding. The President invited a Proposer and Secunder from the floor. The Minutes were proposed by Sheila M McTaggart and seconded by Maggie

Wheeler. The Minutes were approved unanimously by members on a show of hands with no abstentions.

3. President's Report

Greetings had been exchanged with the Patron and her best wishes to the Guild were passed on to everyone.

The Convenor's report on the year had been circulated to all.

It has been a busy year for the Guild, and there is much to celebrate. At the invitation of City of Edinburgh Council the Guild has been involved with the city-wide Edinburgh 900 programme. Our decision to hold the St Margaret's Day celebrations at the Canongate Kirk under the theme 'Meet the Margarets' reflects this and will, we hope, enable members of the public to get a glimpse of Guild life and an insight into what is regarded as a venerable and respected Edinburgh institution.

The flowers in the Chapel continue to be admired by the many visitors that enter the Chapel each day. As the previous Governor of the Castle said "The One O'Clock Gun may provide a regular heartbeat to the Castle's life but, like fresh flowers in any home, your fresh flowers bring life and warmth to the heart itself".

The only cloud on the horizon is that donations to the Guild have reduced; however, there is a plan in place to address this, described in more detail below.

The Chapel is available to be used for ceremonies eight months of the year (the busy period from June to the end of September is excluded). There have been twenty-nine weddings (nine military and twenty civilian), and five baptisms (three military and two civilian). Three Guild members used the Chapel for celebrations. Holly Gilfether married Mark Williams in December. Jessica Whitten's son Ralph was christened there in January, and Gillian Frazer's daughter Maeve Margot (also a Guild member) was christened in the Chapel in March. We can request the use of the Chapel for Guild members up to six times a year. Please contact the secretary if you would like to use the Chapel for a wedding or baptism.

Although visitor numbers to the Castle have increased, donations in the Chapel are down. We believe this is due to a number of factors:

- Few visitors carry cash these days.
- Although we have partially addressed that by the introduction of an electronic payments system, there have been some early reliability issues with this system.
- Due to the volume of visitors and how busy the Chapel is, most of them spend just a few minutes there, so are unable to appreciate its serenity and tranquillity, nor may they even see the opportunity to donate.

After the AGM last year we decided to remove the booklets from the Chapel temporarily to stem the flow of booklets being taken without payment whilst we considered how we might maximise the average donation per booklet, and that too is likely to have had an effect on the overall level of donations.

We recently updated the electronic payments system with one which is able to accept foreign cards and after we have assessed the impact of doing that we intend to re-introduce the booklets into the Chapel. We hope that thereafter the donations will

increase once more. However, it seems unlikely that, moving forward, donations will reach their historic peak, and we should factor this in when making plans for the future.

Another way in which we can maximise the value of the donations received is via Gift Aid, as explained elsewhere, and we would encourage any of you making a donation to the Guild who are UK tax payers to complete a Gift Aid form.

This year we are recommending that that we only give to those charities we support on an annual basis, to take account of our current decline in income.

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 10am to 12 noon at the rooftop café in the Johnnie Walker venue on Princes Street. This new location has proved very successful.

A flower demonstration was held in April, with the focus on floral-foam-free arranging. Around twenty-six members attended on-line and in person to watch Margaret Hunter create some beautiful arrangements that would be suitable for the Chapel. An on-line talk about the St Magnus Cathedral graffiti project took place in February. Being on-line enabled some members that live in the United States of America to join in. The event is available on the Guild website for those that missed it.

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. The Guild has been represented at the following events throughout the year:-

Edinburgh Castle Family Carol Service (Margaret Gordon read a lesson)

Queen Margaret University's (QMU) production of 'Charley's Aunt'

QMU's Costume Showcase

QMU's Filmcase event

QMU Principal's Festive reception

The Scotsman Fringe First award ceremony (a QMU sponsored event to recognise new performance writing)

The Royal Garden Party at Holyrood

Sistema's Big Noise event in Wester Hailes

Sistema event at the Usher Hall (the RNSO were joined by Big Noise) Launch of the Edinburgh 900 programme held at the City Chambers and attended by the Duke and Duchess of Edinburgh

The Presentation of the Keys Ceremony, where the King is presented with the keys to the Castle. The Queen was present too

A reception at the Castle to celebrate Maj. Gen. Alastair Bruce's time as Governor of the 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.

Holly Gilfether (now Holly Williams) married in the Chapel in December 2023.

Sadly, Margaret Wardrop and Margaret Allan are no longer with us. Margaret Allan was the Guild Treasurer for twenty-six years and played a significant role in the commemorations held in 1993 to mark 900 years since the death of Queen Margaret. Maggie Wheeler and Joanna Milne represented the Guild at her Funeral.

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.

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.

We held a Strategy Day in February which was very helpful in setting out some longer-term objectives for the Guild. 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. It also highlighted the need to review our compliance with the latest regulations that apply to charities, which we are now working on.

Additionally, we have started to centralise the documents the committee use.

Our Secretary, Sarah James, having completed a second term of office is not seeking re-election. Sarah has been an invaluable member of the committee; her legal background was particularly helpful in rewriting the Guild Constitution. We are delighted that Holly Williams has agreed to stand for election to the position. Holly has been working on the Guild Social Media strategy, and has been working with Sarah since being co-opted onto the committee in June.

A new job meant that Yvonne McAulay felt unable to spend as much time on Guild matters, and she resigned from the position of Treasurer in June. Margaret Williamson stepped in and has done a great job preparing this year's accounts. Margaret is standing for election to the position of Treasurer, which we welcome.

These changes present an opportunity for the current committee members to change roles.

Catrina McGillivray will take on responsibility for editing and producing the newsletter. Angela Casey will continue as Membership Secretary, as Gillian Frazer has indicated she is not currently able to stand election for this role.

Thanks are extended to the members of the Executive Committee, the monthly supervisors and the money collectors for all the time, energy and enthusiasm that they have given over the past year. They are all essential to the smooth running of the Guild and much appreciated by us all.

4. Admission of New Members to the Guild

The President read out the names of the following new members who were welcomed to the Guild. Those present shook hands with the President and the Convenor and received their Certificate of Membership:

In person:

Margaret Crawford
Susanna Margaret Isla Escott
Margaret Falconer
Margaret Humbrecht
Ava Margaret Williams (aged 5)

In absentia

Margaret Carslaw
Antonia Margaret Chambers
Margaret Doran
Louise Margaret Jones
Margaret Kircher
Alison Margaret Moodie
Mina Margaret McGean
Margaret McKnight

5. Election of Executive Committee members

Holly Williams was proposed as Guild Secretary by Margaret Ann Crawford and seconded by Gillian Frazer.

Margaret Williamson was proposed as Guild Treasurer by Margaret Dean and seconded by Claire Heyes.

The elections of the Executive Committee members were approved unanimously by Guild members on a show of hands with no abstentions.

A presentation was made to Sarah James on her retiral as Guild Secretary, a position she had held since 2019. Sarah had served on the Executive Committee since 2015. The Convenor paid tribute to Sarah's years of service to the Guild which were greatly appreciated and presented her with tokens of gratitude on behalf of the Guild.

6. Adoption of Guild Accounts year ending 31st July 2024 (and Treasurer's Report)

The Guild's Independent Examiner, Mr Neil Steven was present today and the President expressed gratitude on behalf of the Guild for his hard work and professional expertise he had provided in the annual review of the Guild accounts. The Treasurer was invited to give her report.

The annual accounts had been approved by the Executive Committee and sent out to members. The Treasurer expressed her thanks to her predecessor Yvonne McAulay for her work and contribution to the Guild in her time in office. The accounts show a continuing decline in the level of donations received in the Chapel for the Guild booklets from £7,417 in 2023 to £3,309 in 2024. The Executive Committee has been working hard to understand and address this. We have learned that the National War Museum within the Castle were facing the same issue and that few people nowadays carry cash, opting to either carry debit/credit cards or smart payment devices (phones, watches, rings etc). It has been decided to install a Tap & Pay device in the Chapel, with guidance and approval from Castle staff and Historic Environment Scotland. This device takes payment from credit/debit cards from both local and international banks and replaces the QR code previously used. It will take time to see if the Guild's income will benefit from this and meantime the cash donations box will remain in place. The Guild's website is now also able to receive online donations.

Members were thanked for their generous donations made recently and throughout the year. The year ending 2023–2024 accounts show we received £3,090 in donations from members & organisations. From donations made in the previous years, £628 in Gift Aid has been reclaimed which will reflect in next year's accounts. Thanks to everyone who has already signed and returned the Gift Aid Declaration as this boosts each eligible donation by a considerable 25%.

In addition to claiming Gift Aid, we are now claiming Small Donations Gift Aid of 25% for the first time for donations made within the Chapel.

We are grateful to our overseas members for their support and donations.

Thanks were expressed to those members who faithfully collect and bank the donations from the money box within the Chapel.

Margaret Tait asked for clarification on the entry in the accounts titled 'Subscriptions'- Guild members do not pay subscriptions; She also noted that the expenses of the Guild's AGM appeared to have doubled and also asked for clarification on the status of the National Guild of St Margaret, mentioned in the accounts- could the donation made be spent at the discretion of the Guild's Flower Supervisor? It was explained to the meeting by the Independent Examiner that subscriptions were not an annual requirement but were payable by new members on joining the Guild. AGM expenses were acknowledged to have increased generally, and specifically the cost of minibus transportation from the Esplanade to the Queen Anne room had risen significantly, but was felt to be a real benefit to members in enabling their accessing the AGM. It was agreed to refer back the disbursement of the National Guild of St Margaret's donation back to the Executive Committee for further discussion.

The Committee later confirmed to Margaret that the donation made by the National Guild of St Margaret came with no restrictions and could be used however the Committee deemed appropriate.

The accounts were adopted by members unanimously on a show of hands with no abstentions.

7. Approval of Independent Examiner for 2024 Guild Accounts.

Neil Steven, an accountant and partner in the Edinburgh office of the firm Johnston Carmichael, has kindly indicated he was willing to continue to act as Independent Examiner of the Guild accounts for the coming year.

The appointment of Neil Steven as Independent Examiner was approved by members unanimously on a show of hands.

8. Approval of proposed donations to Charities

The following donations to charities were proposed and approved by members unanimously on a show of hands:

QMU Study Abroad Programme	£500
Edinburgh City Mission	£500
ABF The Soldiers' Charity	£500
Canongate Kirk	£500
The Princess Anne Charities' Trust	£500

In addition, members approved unanimously a donation of £500 to the charity chosen by the Independent Examiner of the Guild accounts, in lieu of a fee, namely to The Pitcairn Trust, a small local charity set up to manage and maintain a village park for the benefit of the Dairsie community in Fife.

9. Any Other Business

The Secretary had received notification of one competent item of business from Guild Vice President Joanna Milne regarding a proposed memorial to the late Margaret Allan, former Guild Treasurer. The President invited Joanna Milne to speak to the meeting. She advised that the death of Margaret Allan had occurred earlier this year. Margaret had served as Treasurer for 26 years and it was suggested that Margaret's name be added to the candlestick in the Chapel in memory of her service to the Guild. Guild Vice President Margaret Dean paid tribute to Margaret Allan's ability to bring Guild members together. It was agreed to refer this matter to the Executive Committee for discussion.

A plaque has now been added to the candlestick in memory of Margaret Allan. The refurbished candlestick was returned to the Chapel in July.

The President closed the meeting. An expression of thanks to the President and the Executive Committee was made by Margaret Dean on behalf of the Guild.