

# St Margaret's Chapel Guild Newsletter

January 2026 Issue 49

[www.stmargaretschapel.com](http://www.stmargaretschapel.com)

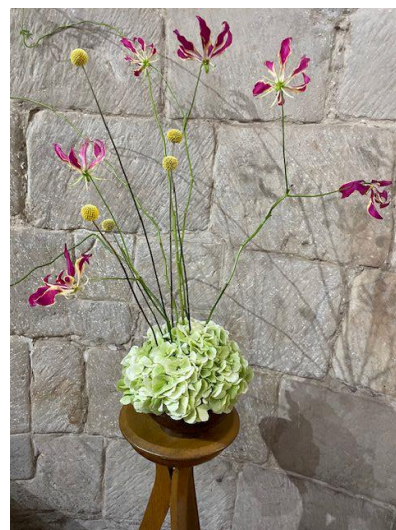
## *St Margaret's Chapel Flowers*



*photo credits SMCG*



We welcome more volunteers to place flowers in the Chapel. It is such a special and positive experience and some months we are struggling to fill the rota. Please continue to send photos of your arrangements to Flower Supervisor, Margaret Clark [clarks.edinburgh@btinternet.com](mailto:clarks.edinburgh@btinternet.com)







## St Margaret's Day Celebrations 2025

As the newly elected Convenor, I was delighted to see so many of you at our St Margaret's Day celebration on Monday 17th of November last year. We welcomed six special guests and friends from Queen Margaret University, along with 62 members of the Guild. Grateful thanks to all those who helped make it such a successful day.

We now have twelve new members who were introduced at the AGM; five were present on the day to receive their certificates from Hazel Dunn, the outgoing Convenor.

A presentation was made to Hazel on her retiral as Convenor, a position she had held since 2019 and has served on the Executive Committee for 14 years. Hazel thanked the President, previous Committee members and the current Committee. The daisy necklace "chain of office" was then presented to me. Hazel will be a hard act to follow. I look forward to working with the Committee and our members.

Other new members of the Committee are Margaret Crawford, Membership Secretary, and Margaret Clark, Flower Supervisor and Sarah M James, former Secretary, has been elected Honorary Vice President.

Thank you all for your support. I look forward to meeting some of you at our monthly coffee mornings at the Johnnie Walker Experience Rooftop Café, Princes Street and, for those too far away, I look forward to hearing from you. **Fiona Margaret Pigott, Convenor**



*Fiona M Pigott and Hazel M Dunn,  
photo credit SMCG*

**How to join the Guild** We always welcome new members of **all ages**, if your first or middle name is Margaret or a derivative of it, and organisations. To apply, contact our membership secretary: **Margaret Crawford** ([busyweebie@btinternet.com](mailto:busyweebie@btinternet.com)) Members, please do keep us notified if your details change.

## AGM Matters

Monday, 17<sup>th</sup> November was a lovely afternoon of friendship, with many members seeing each other for the first time since last year's AGM! The flower supervisors provided beautiful arrangements for the tables as always.

We are aware that some members had issues with receiving the paperwork however we wanted to outline some steps we can take together to prevent future issues.

Firstly, it's helpful to make sure the Secretary's email address is in your "safe sender" list. It will help make sure your inbox doesn't file it into the junk folder.

We'll also look to make the email size smaller this year, which might have been an issue for some inboxes before. This might mean some of the papers are in the same file but don't worry, we'll clearly label them.

We'll also flag the proposed date we'll get the AGM papers out in the June newsletter so you can make a note in your diary to check in with us if nothing appears a week or so after that. Please don't hesitate to get in touch if you are unsure, however, we had lots of Margarets do that this year and it was genuinely lovely to chat and, in some cases, meet members I'd never spoken to before!

We do send some sets of papers out in the post, and I wanted to flag this in case you knew of any members who aren't on email or don't have access to a computer. We are a charity, and postal prices are soaring, however we can arrange for copies to be sent out to those who have a need so, if you know someone who doesn't read this newsletter, please do flag this to them.

We will continue to look at ways to make the AGM process smoother for both members and the Committee to cut down on admin. I'm grateful to people who have sent suggestions already and we'll be looking into an MS Form for this year's applications. Putting the papers on the website also worked very well for those who, for whatever reason, couldn't receive the email and we're very lucky to have that functionality for the future, too. **Holly Margaret Williams, Secretary**

## 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. Email the Flower Supervisor Margaret Clark ([clarks.edinburgh@btinternet.com](mailto:clarks.edinburgh@btinternet.com)) to discuss dates, transfer of money and for more information.



photo credit SMCG

## Next Coffee Morning: Monday 16<sup>th</sup> February 11am

The Guild meets every month at the Johnnie Walker rooftop café at 145 Princes Street (the former site of Fraser's). We have a table reserved from 11am unless otherwise notified by email. Everyone is welcome, but newer members or those who have not attended in the past are particularly welcome!



**Dates for your diary: Monday 16<sup>th</sup> Feb**

Monday 16<sup>th</sup> March, Thursday 16<sup>th</sup> April,

**Please note: Saturday 16<sup>th</sup> May only, meet at Portrait Gallery instead**

Tuesday 17<sup>th</sup> June, Thursday 16<sup>th</sup> July

Guild members can request to use the Chapel for **Baptisms and Weddings** at no charge. Should you wish to investigate the possibility of using the Chapel, please contact our Convenor, Fiona Pigott in the first instance by emailing [fpigott19@gmail.com](mailto:fpigott19@gmail.com)



## Flower Festival at Dunfermline Abbey in May: invitation to participate

The Scottish Association of Flower Arranging Societies (SAFAS) is celebrating their 70<sup>th</sup> Anniversary with a flower festival themed Nostalgia at Dunfermline Abbey and Nave on **Friday/Saturday 8<sup>th</sup> and 9<sup>th</sup> of May 2026**.

Guild Member Margaret Strachan will be constructing a special arrangement of flowers upon the Shrine of Queen Margaret in the grounds of the Abbey and is inviting Margarets from the Guild to join her in preparing this exciting project on **Thursday 7<sup>th</sup> May**.



“My plan is to make and place a large crown on the shrine and arrange a border of flowers around the top ledge of the shrine. I would welcome help with the flowers and the logistics of the preparation,” said Margaret.

To find out how you might become involved in person or make a donation towards the materials for the floral arrangement, please contact Margaret Strachan on 0131 665 6686 or mobile 07449 139381 **as soon as possible**.

Entry to the festival is free to the public with refreshments available and donations welcome.

*The shrine where the SAFAS arrangement will be constructed, photo credit SMCG*

## The Guild's 85<sup>th</sup> Anniversary: invitation to join a team

2027 will soon be upon us when the Guild will celebrate its 85<sup>th</sup> anniversary!

Do you have any memories to share with others?

We are setting up a group to combine all our archives to create a visual history through the ages. We would like to form a small team of members who would prepare the display and work on the format of the celebration. **We are also looking for someone to serve as archivist for the Guild to oversee our collection.**

Please get in touch with me if you'd be happy to be part of this group.  
Fiona Pigott (fpigott@gmail.com)



*Child's silver mug left in the chapel anonymously and given to the Guild by the Ministry of Works in 1950, photo credit SMCG*



*Chapel candlestick used during ceremonies, photo credit SMCG*

## Chapel Candlestick

The Committee arranged for the name of former Guild Treasurer Margaret Allan, who died in 2024, (treasurer 1971-1997) to be added to the one remaining space on the candlestick in the Chapel. The candlestick was made by Ratho Forge in 2000 to commemorate former Guild Convenor Margaret Macaulay and former Guild Secretary Margaret Mackenzie, both of whom died in 1998.

Mrs Macaulay (convenor 1958 to 1993) was the daughter of Lord and Lady Russell, and she took over from her mother when Lady Russell died in 1958. Mrs Margaret Mackenzie was the Guild secretary from 1972 until 1979, when Joanna M Milne took on the role.



*Commemorative name plates, photo credit SMCG*

## Charitable donations

In the spirit of St Margaret, we use the donations that we receive to support charities who support education, religious interest and people in disadvantaged circumstances. Due to an increase in donations on the tap and pay device from visitors to the Chapel and the inclusion of Gift Aid and accumulated interest, we have been able to increase our annual donations this year. Our customary charities received £1000:

QMU Study Abroad Programme, Edinburgh City Mission, ABF The Soldiers' Charity, Canongate Kirk, The Princess Anne Charities' Trust and £500 to the Pitcairn Trust (in lieu of Examiner's fee).



The Committee also approved £500 to each of the following nominated charities this year: Mary's Meals which provides a nutritious daily meal served at school to some of the world's poorest societies that not only satisfies a child's immediate hunger, but encourages children to attend consistently, improves their ability to learn and gives them better opportunities through education. [Mary's Meals](#)

Big Noise Sistema Scotland which is a high-quality music education and social change programme that works intensively with children, young people and families within targeted communities.

### [Big Noise Sistema Scotland](#)

STEKAskills is a Scottish charity partnered with Malawian charity STEKA (Step Kids Awareness) that collaborates with and supports STEKA's ambition to build a Centre for Vocational Skills & Community Enterprise in Blantyre, Malawi, using a unique and award-winning model of critical dialogue to ensure everybody's voices are heard. [Stekaskills](#)

Dunfermline Food Bank which provides nutritionally balanced emergency food and support to local people in crisis. [Dunfermline Food Bank](#)

A further 7 charities nominated by members and approved at the AGM each received £350: Leuchie House, MND Scotland, Strathcarron Hospice, Ravelrig Riding for the Disabled Association, Horatio Garden, Veterans Housing Scotland and the Grassmarket Community.

If you are involved in a charity which you think might benefit from an association with our Guild, please contact Margaret Williamson our Treasurer by email [m\\_doig@hotmail.co.uk](mailto:m_doig@hotmail.co.uk) with your reason for suggesting it. Each year we announce to whom donations have been made at the AGM and we profile them in the newsletter, too.



*Presentation to Ravelrig RDA at a recent event, with Guild members Margaret Lindsell, Margaret Tait, Margaret Mackay, Margaret Alexander and Convenor Fiona Pigott, photo credit SMCG*

## Royal Garden Party 2025 Attendance

On a beautifully sunny afternoon on 1<sup>st</sup> July, Catrina McGillivray and Fiona Pigott (from the committee), joined Sheila Margaret MacTaggart at the Royal Garden Party at Holyrood Palace. It was a very exciting and grand day out, especially knowing that the sun was going to shine. We managed to see the King and Queen Camilla from afar, along with Princess Anne, who is our Patron. Although we didn't get a chance to speak to royalty, the visit to the tea tent was an event in itself! It was indeed a celebratory day!



*3 members of the Guild in their Palace outfits, photo credit SMCG*

## Greetings and Goodbyes

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, Margaret Valerio, Margaret Anne Walsh, Marilyn Margaret Eggleton, Margo Fraser and Margaret Irvine. Our thoughts are with their families and friends.





## Tea and reminiscences with the Chapel money collectors

With the installation of the tap & pay machine and the declining use of cash, the Chapel's cash box is not as full as it used to be. As a thank you to the team who for many years collected the money on a regular basis, the committee held a tea party and enjoyed listening to the Margarets' memories of their time heading up to the Chapel. There was plenty of lively discussion and laughter, remembering stories from their time collecting. Thank you to all the money collectors for your efforts and dedication. Here is a snapshot of some of the memories:



*Cakes fit for a queen, photo credit SMCG*



*Money collectors sharing memories, photo credit SMCG*

"The first time I collected money I went home to my husband and he asked me how I got on and said, 'How much did you collect, about £200?' and I said '£1400!'"

"I remember going up early to the castle and I was walking up the Lang Stairs in the dark and suddenly I heard loud sounds of horses and cries and I nearly jumped out of my skin. But then I realised it was the exhibition starting!"

"I was at Camera Obscura one time and we were in the camera itself and looking at Edinburgh Castle and the tour guide said, 'The Chapel is managed by the St Margaret's Chapel Guild and they are a really scary society!' So I said, 'Ahem, I am a member and we are not scary!' Though maybe that sounded a bit scary."

"We used to go to the Royal Bank in St Andrew Square and you could park and they came and gave you a cup of coffee. That wouldn't be possible now."

"We used to find things in the box, like sweet papers and safety pins. People must have just emptied their pockets!"

"Last November I went to collect and I put the money into the sack and I knew there were a few notes in it, but it wasn't until I emptied it and realized there were twelve brand new £50 notes in it!"

"I was busy in the chapel one time, when somebody behind me said, 'Hello Margaret' and I jumped as I didn't know how they could know me. But then, of course, the penny dropped!"

*And from our new Flower Supervisor, Margaret Clark:* "Although I am not a fashionista, I always felt a little odd carrying the large creamy white handbag similar to one my grandmother had. Among its contents were a key, a pass, a bank deposit book and bags for depositing money in the night safe. Money was emptied into a handmade shoe bag which was frequently full enough to be quite heavy to carry. The amounts varied, and also the number of bus tickets and foreign coins, but I remember one August day collecting over £500. For the first few years when I collected money, we had to take it to the VIP room in the Castle for counting. Every penny and half penny was listed on a form and the total tallied up. I loved driving right up to the main door of The Royal Bank in St Andrews Square and parking immediately outside. Inside this beautiful building we were very well looked after. One day I was shown into a room on the right of the entrance area to see some of the bank's valuable works of art, including paintings by Elizabeth Blackadder and Stephen Wiltshire. It was very exciting when they first got a cash counting machine which signalled the end of counting coins and adding up."

*And finally, someone captures the essence of why we do what we do:* "It was always a privilege to go out there first thing in the morning. No one else was there, just vans coming in and people arriving for work. Then looking down over the city and thinking what a privilege it is to be here."

In celebration of their 150th anniversary, Queen Margaret University hosted a public talk on 13 November enjoyed by many Margarets of the Guild.

[click here to view the talk](#)

**Acting with Head, Heart and Hand: Margaret, Queen of Scots (d.1093), and Victorian Pioneers in Women's Education and Advancement: A Public Talk and Q&A**



*photo credit courtesy of QMU*

Dr Bill Aird explored the life and legacy of Margaret, Saint and Queen, after whom the university is named. He outlined the long-reaching impact of her choices in educating her daughters, and how she shaped the Scottish royal court, preparing the ground for her son, King David I to transform Scotland. Dr Bill Aird is a senior lecturer in medieval history at the University of Edinburgh whose work focuses on the European Central Middle Ages, in particular the Norman diaspora of the period, c. 900-1200. He is currently working on a biography of Margaret's sons, King Edgar (1097-1107) and King Alexander I (1107-1124).

Dr Lesley Orr then highlight the social movements that led to the creation of QMU, focusing on the inspirational female founders who campaigned for rights and worked to transform opportunities for women in the late 19th and early 20th centuries, both within the institution and well beyond. Dr Lesley Orr is an historian and activist for gender and social justice. She is an honorary fellow of the Centre for Theology and Public Issues at the University of Edinburgh and a visiting lecturer at QMU.

Following the presentations, Joyce McMillan chaired a Q&A session. Joyce McMillan is theatre critic of *The Scotsman* and also writes a political and social commentary column for the paper. She has been involved in many campaigns for democracy and human rights both in Scotland and internationally, and has been a freelance journalist living and working in Edinburgh for more than 40 years. She is an honorary graduate of Queen Margaret University, and was a Visiting Professor at the university from 2006-2010.



*Margaret Lindsell and Dr Aird,  
photo credit SMCG*

Among the many Margarets attending the event was Margaret Tait, who writes: "Dr Aird told our former Convenor Margaret Lindsell of his involvement with the text of our brochure that used to be available in the Chapel and is now being digitised for our website. He had happy memories of working with the Guild and was very pleased to hear news of our more recent activities." Margaret Tait also notes that Joyce Macmillan was "delighted to inform the audience that her middle name is Margaret!"

## Visiting Dunfermline in July



*Pilgrims on the road, photo credit SMCG*

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.



*Margaret Dean and Hazel  
Dunn, photo credit SMCG*



## Celebrating 775 years of St Margaret the Queen at Buxted

The Parish Church of St Margaret the Queen in Buxted, East Sussex is one of only five known churches in England dedicated to her. Standing in splendid isolation beside the historic manor house, it marks the site of the medieval village that was 'moved a mile down the hill' during the 1830s.

Tradition holds that the church was consecrated in 1250, the year in which Queen Margaret was canonised. This made 2025 a particularly significant year for Buxted.



*Parish Church of St Margaret the Queen, Buxted,  
photo credit Friends of St Margaret the Queen*

### Margaret of Wessex

#### The last Anglo-Saxon Princess

Margaret of Wessex was destined to become Queen of Scotland, a tamer of Kings, a champion of the church, a friend to the needy and a Saint.

Her journey to Sainthood was marked by adventure and adversity during troubled times. Her strong sense of charity and faith and her remarkable courage would set a shining example throughout the Christian world and help shape who we are today.



The Friends of St Margaret  
The Queen, Buxted  
**775** 1250-2025

To mark the occasion, the church hosted a three-day exhibition in October, celebrating the life of St Margaret and exploring the rich history of the church itself.

With some 40 large display boards, the exhibition ranged widely in scope. Visitors learned about the mysteries of medieval consecration ceremonies and traced the physical development of the church over the centuries. Displays explored the changing role of music and textiles in worship, as well as the symbolism found in church architecture and furnishings. The local primary school contributed wonderful artwork depicting St Margaret.

The lives of those who shaped the village were also brought to life. From notable families to ordinary parishioners, stories of Buxted's people over 775 years were revealed through old maps, church seating plans and archival material.

Any village's story is that of its people and, at its heart, the exhibition was about community. It seemed fitting that a celebration of a woman who devoted her life to nurturing Christian fellowship and care for others, should also tell the story of Buxted's own community. Over three days, the church buzzed with excitement as more than 1,100 visitors explored their church's history, renewing old friendships and forming new ones. A fitting way to bring the role of the church alive and pay tribute to a remarkable woman.

**Stephen Law, coordinator of the exhibition**

*Detail from the exhibition display, photo credit Friends of St Margaret the Queen*

Members may purchase **Silver Jewellery commemorating St Margaret** from our silver jewellery collection by contacting Guild Treasurer Margaret Williamson on [m\\_doig@hotmail.co.uk](mailto:m_doig@hotmail.co.uk).

**Current prices:** *Postage & Packing will be added to any items requiring shipping*



**Pendant  
and  
chain  
£60**



**Brooch  
£45**



**Earrings  
£54  
per pair**

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