

St Mary Magdalen

St Guthlac



KNIGHTON



Benefice Magazine

Spring comes to Knighton



Vicar's letter

Friends,

"In fiction: we find the predictable boring. In real life: we find the unpredictable terrifying" according to Mokokoma Mokhonoana, South African philosopher, satirist, social critic, and author.

If he's right, then predictability would seem to be something that we need, to make life manageable and to feel safe. But many people also praise the ability to be spontaneous, to act without over-analysing, to take ourselves and each other by surprise: *"Only in spontaneity can we be who we truly are"* says John McLaughlin, the English guitarist and composer.



Perhaps in truth, we need something of both: enough predictability to know, more or less, how this day will go and how the people we meet will behave, but also enough opportunity and courage to do something differently or take a chance and see what happens. Probably each of us has a natural disposition to lean in one direction or the other, and we have to work at achieving a healthy balance.

There's a healthy balance to be struck in our church life together as well. The predictable patterns of worship, of Sunday mornings, of our favourite hymns, of the church's seasons, have all served us well and ensure we feel reassured and comfortable. Yet without the new ideas, challenges, innovation and surprises of doing things differently and doing different things, we could easily become sedate and apathetic. On the other hand, a lack of organisation and planning might just lead to aimlessness and shallow church services.

If this thought itself is a challenge to you, it might help to remember that these two aspects are both found in God himself. Firstly, He is the God of faithful promises – the Bible reminds us time and time again that God orders the future and *"not one word has failed of all the good promises he gave"* (1 Kings 8.56). Secondly, Jesus tells us that the Holy Spirit of God is like the wind: *"You cannot tell where it has come from or where it is going"* (John 3.8), and God speaks through Isaiah saying *"See, I am doing a new thing! Now it springs up; do you not perceive it?"* (Isaiah 43.19)

So now we have a basis to contemplate the changes in the world and in the church. We don't have to be anxious because we can trust in the goodness and faithfulness of God, who will maintain everything that is truly and eternally good. Equally, we can

let go of what is passing away because God himself is in the business of the new and the growing.

Karl Barth, the twentieth century theologian, was quoted as saying that *"the Holy Spirit is completely reliable and entirely unpredictable"*, which should lead us to be thankful and to trust God, with a sense of positive anticipation about all that is to come.

Yours in friendship and Christ's service.

Adrian

Here lieth ...

Concluding (for now) our series exploring some of the more noteworthy burials in St Mary's churchyard

Isobel Barnett

Isobel, Lady Barnett, popularly known as Lady Isobel Barnett, was a doctor, radio and television personality who enjoyed a high profile during the 1950s and 1960s. She died on 20th October 1980 and is buried in the churchyard.

She was born Isobel Morag Marshall on 30 June 1918 in Aberdeen, Scotland, the daughter of neurologist, Robert McNab Marshall, and Jane Minty. Her father was a respected physician in Glasgow who was serving in the army during World War I. Following in her father's footsteps, she studied medicine at the University of Glasgow and qualified as a doctor in 1940.

She worked as a general practitioner in Leicester during World War II, where she met and, in 1941, married solicitor and company director Geoffrey Barnett, later Lord Mayor of Leicester, who was knighted for political and public services to the city of Leicester in 1953.

She gave up her medical career in 1948, and for the next 20 years was a Justice of the Peace.



In 1953 Lady Barnett arrived on BBC television as a member of the popular panel game, *What's My Line?*, which made her a household name. She was regarded by audiences as elegant and witty, the epitome of the British aristocracy, although her title actually came from the fact that her solicitor husband had been knighted; the



The What's My Line Panel in 1954: David Nixon, Isobel Barnett, Barbara Kelly, Gilbert Harding

form *Lady Isobel Barnett* suggested she possessed a courtesy title, but she was not an aristocrat, nor had she married into the aristocracy.

She also made regular appearances on the BBC radio series *Any Questions*, on the radio panel game *Many a Slip* and on the women's discussion series *Petticoat Line*.

Her husband, Sir Geoffrey, died in

1970.

In her last years, Lady Barnett became reclusive and eccentric. In October 1980 she was found guilty of shoplifting. Sadly, four days later on 20th October 1980 she took her own life at her home in Cossington.

Lady Barnett and her family left a very generous bequest to St. Mary's Church.

If you would like to read more about Isobel Barnett her autobiography, *My Life Line*, was published in 1956.

Sue Siesage

Another trip to Scotland - Knoydart

A further extract from Charles Metcalfe's account of climbing all the 282 hills in Scotland over 3000 feet high, known as "Munros". Charles achieved this feat in 71 trips between 1994 and 2022.

Then at the end of February three of us set off for Knoydart. The famed "Rough Bounds" - backpacking wilderness *par excellence*. We stayed at Linton's the night of 24 Feb and set off early on 25th to drive to Kinloch Hourn. The final 22 miles was on a tortuous switch-back single-track road. Then we had a wonderful 8 mile walk along the beautiful loch-side to Barriesdale Bay, camping as it was getting dark.

Next morning we set off and made our way up Ladhar Bheinn (pronounced “Larven”). Following route 36 of Ralph Storer’s “100 Best Routes on Scottish Mountains”, but in reverse. Ralph Storer is one of the most respected authors of hillwalking books in Scotland. Together with many others he considers this Munro to be the most beautiful mountain in the British Isles. The route was challenging in the winter conditions and the “steps” below Stob a’ Chearcaill were just frozen waterfalls where our ice-axes and crampons were essential.



Looking back down Loch Hourn from near the top of Ladhar Bheinn
“The mountains reserve their choice gifts for those who stand upon their summits”

(Sir Francis Younghusband)

We made camp soon after the “waterfall steps”(picture right). The day had been tiring and the tough conditions meant we were now 4 hours behind schedule. Several inches of snow fell during the night and when we woke our tents were covered in the white stuff.



Not only were we so far behind schedule, but as we walked to lower levels, we found the snow and rain had swollen the streams and rivers to such an extent, that we couldn’t make



the crossings and route we had intended. Our only option was to make our way back to the car the best we could, necessitating a large detour and meaning slow progress. It was a long, tough walk back, jumping from rock to rock in the mountain streams and wading through fast flowing torrents at lower levels. Another

wild camp at low level and in boggy ground was needed. Finally we “walked out” and put our rucksacks in the car, ready to head home. As we did so a couple of hikers came up – they were intending to walk the 22-mile single track road back to civilisation and it seemed only right to offer them a lift which they accepted. Poor Linton had to share the small rear seats of the car with them and the switchback road did not provide for a comfortable journey! But another very successful and enjoyable trip!

Charles Metcalfe

Deafness Awareness

The earliest documented use of sign language in Church registers in the UK was in 1576. Church records from St Martin's Church in Leicester (now Leicester Cathedral) show that sign language was used in a marriage ceremony between two people named Thomas Tilsye and Ursula Russel on 6 February 1576.

Transcript of wedding certificate:

'Thomas Tillsye and Ursula Russel were married: and because the sayde Thomas was and is naturally deafe and also dumbe, so that the order of the forme of marriage used usually amongst others which can heare and speake could not for his parte be observed ... the sayde Thomas, for the expression of his minde instead of words, of his own accorde used these signs...

First he embraced her with his armes, and took her by the hande, putt a ring upon her finger and layde his hande upon her harte, and held his hands towards heaven; and to show his continuance to dwell with her to his lyves ende he did it by closing of his eyes with his hands and digging out of the earthe with his foote, and pulling as though he would ring a bell with divers other signs approved.'

Jeanette and I with our assistance dog, Poppy, recently attended a service at the cathedral which commemorated the first use of sign language 450 years ago. The service had input from the Church of the Good Shepherd, which is for the Deaf Community who use sign language and they performed hymns silently in sign language. This I found rather disappointing, as I think it would have been better if the rest of the congregation could have sung alongside, giving a feel of cohesion. There was an opportunity too to learn a bit of sign language and join in. Jeanette and I were directed to seats where the loop system was effective as we both wear hearing aids. The area had a sign 'For Sign Language Users Only'. Whoops!

Use of Sign Language was banned for children for about 100 years and was only used in the Missions for the Deaf. Children were supposed to learn to lip read. I come into that category. I would not be considered part of the Deaf Community. Consequently I have always felt neither a part of the Hearing world nor the Deaf world, which is quite isolating. Lip reading and even relying on hearing aids is hard work and requires concentration, so fatigue and frustration set in, and even a lack of confidence and a desire to stop mixing with people. I have realised that there is a third group of people who may be experiencing similar difficulties. Older people whose hearing begins to fade may also have additional factors to bear such as widowhood and generally being more isolated. Younger people may have sharper brains [I am 85!] and may find it easier to adapt.

Deafness is a hidden disability, and sadly when you are deaf you face hostility and rudeness. There is stigma.

People seem to resent being told that you can't hear them. You are seen as nuisance. So you have to be nice and apologetic and hide your hearing aids or the fact that you are deaf.

I was fairly lucky growing up. At school classrooms were quiet and orderly and the language of the day was BBC English - there wasn't much choice on the radio, just the Home Service and the Light Programme. Teachers spoke BBC English {RP} and we children had elocution lessons at Junior School and later for me Grammar School.

'How now brown cow'

She sells sea shells on the sea shore'

Peter Piper picked a peck of pickled peppercorns'

All these greatly improved people's clarity of speech. Even the accentless early TV programmes in black and white could be understood without subtitles.

Accents are difficult for deaf people. I remember when I first moved to Leicester I was having some work done on the house and the handyman, who was smoking, said

'Ah yuh gorra ush truh?' in broad Leicester.

I said 'Pardon'

'Yoo deaf?' he asked and repeated it louder. I factored in the cigarette as the penny dropped and I gave him a saucer, for as a non-smoker I didn't have an ash tray. Broad Leicester accents have modified over the years, perhaps with the arrival of many different nationalities who all want to be understood and understand.

Later on, as hearing aids improved and subtitles and loop systems came into being, things were a bit better, but none of these are a substitute for normal hearing. I first heard a complete church service when I was 50! Throughout my life I have found that some people could be helpful and others very much the opposite. When I started work in the Civil Service, older colleagues who had lived and worked through WW2 and had supported each other on fire watching duties looked after me and answered phones, which I couldn't, even though they had not had Deaf Awareness training.

Sometimes today I think people are more selfish and disinclined to help and support each other. We seem to have gone backwards. Some years ago, I gave talks about coping with hearing loss to MU groups and I was disappointed that so many were struggling to hear in church because of a lack of awareness, and even an attitude that it takes too much time! In other words, deaf people are seen as a nuisance.

That is why I wish that we could all be part of the Deaf Community and support each other to educate the Hearing World as to our needs. At the moment it seems that the Deaf World taken as a whole is divided into three parts.

When I embarked on an Open University degree back in 1986, they did get all deaf people together by having residential weekends for new students and special weeks at Summer School, the only disabled group thus honoured. One of the students was Scottish. Her first language was sign language, her second Gaelic and her third English. She said that her father had told her that it was good manners to speak English to English people, which she did with just a trace of a Scottish accent. On the last evening we all had a party and after learning some language we all joined in with a hearty rendering of 'Swing low sweet chariot' - everyone supporting one another with no divisions. Perhaps the Open University realised that deaf people faced problems not encountered by others. Note takers, Sign language interpreters, radio microphones were all provided, and best of all they provided us with a mantra:

'You are entitled to hear.'

Entitled! What? No more hiding away. They did suggest that it is always better to ask nicely - well, that is just good manners.

I just wish

I am delighted to hear that Leicester Cathedral is having a year of looking at access for disabled people. Access for deaf people doesn't really cost anything. All that is needed is a bit of thoughtfulness.

Margaret Young

COFFEE MORNING

On Saturday 9th May 2026

From 10 am - 12 noon

*In St Mary Magdalen Church,
Brinsmead Road, Knighton,
Leicester LE2 3WG*

*Stalls to include
Plants, Cakes,
Books, Jigsaws,
Gifts & a Raffle*

*Just come along
Everyone welcome*

Contacts

Benefice Ministry Team

Vicar: Revd Adrian Jones <i>(rest day normally Friday)</i>	0116 270 4268 or 07584 954414	adrian.jones@zoho.com
Curate: Revd Cecilia Adjadje <i>(rest day to be confirmed)</i>	07425 705221	cadjadje@yahoo.com
Revd Aphro McCullough	0116 283 7887	aphro.mccullough@btinternet.com
Revd Janet Gasper	0116 288 9646	janet.gasper@hotmail.co.uk
Reader: Fiona Wingate		Fiona.wingate@talktalk.net

Please notify the Editor if any of the details below need to be updated.

St. Guthlac's

Church Wardens
David Hunt, Tina Jarvis
churchwardens@stguthlac-knighton.co.uk

Parish Administrator
Jane Wright
administrator@stguthlac-knighton.co.uk

Deanery Synod
Vacant

PCC Secretary
Lesley Meakin

PCC Treasurer
David Hunt

Sacristan
Steve Bowyer

Parochial Church Council
The Vicar, the Curate, the Church Wardens, the PCC Secretary, the PCC Treasurer; and Chris Bullough, Jean Cox, Anne Hunt, Caroline Richards, Ann Swanson, Fiona Wingate, Jane Wright

Children and Vulnerable Adults
Advocate
Tina Jarvis

Child Protection/Safeguarding Adults
Co-ordinator

Anne Hunt

safeguarding@stguthlac-
knighton.co.uk

Mark & Steph
07525 000511

Diocesan Safeguarding Officer
Rachael Spiers
0116 2616341
rachael.spiers@leccofe.org

St Mary's

Church Wardens
Sian Howard
07932 557 646
sian.howard@tiscali.co.uk

Planned Giving Scheme
David Hunt

Mick Gasper
mgasper1@hotmail.com

Electoral Roll
Jane Wright

Parish Administrator
James Gutteridge
office@knightonparish.co.uk

Environmental Champion
Fiona Wingate

Deanery Synod
Beryl Bonfield, Michael Gasper

Flower Rota
Cheryl Brewer

Church Group
Lesley Meakin

PCC Secretary
Nigel Siesage
07910 850 198
nigel.siesage@gmail.com
(Magazine business to
stmaryknighton.magazine@gmail.com)

Youth Group
Tina Jarvis

Holbrook Oasis
Tina Jarvis

PCC Treasurer
Amanda Beck
07732 020 023
adb567@hotmail.com

Knighton Players
David Hunt

Sacristan
David Ardley
0116 221 9604

Tea and Talk
Tina Jarvis

Organ studentship co-ordinator
David Hunt

Parochial Church Council
The Vicar, the Church Wardens, the
PCC Secretary, the PCC Treasurer, The
Deanery Synod representatives; and

Holbrook Hall Caretakers & bookings

Kate Adams, Beryl Bonfield, Tabitha Fogg, David Palmer, Ida Stanyer, Amanda Youngman

stmarysknighton.giving@gmail.com.

Children and Vulnerable Persons Advocate
John Astles
07976 391 558

Electoral Roll
Vacancy

Child Protection/Safeguarding Adults Co-ordinator
The Vicar

Music Co-ordinator and Choir Director
Vacancy

Bell Ringers
Rebecca Odames
c/o the Church Office

Flower Guild
Deborah Martin
0116 270 7525

Planned Giving Scheme
Simon Britton
07710 975 272

Magazine Editor
Nigel Siesage
07910 850 198
stmarysknighton.magazine@gmail.com

Magazine Distribution
Bernard Stone
0116 288 1306

PLANNED GIVING

Regular giving is an integral part of our church life, supporting our day-to-day costs, ministry and mission.

A good way to achieve this is through a monthly direct debit as part of St Mary's participation in the **Parish Giving Scheme** or by standing order to St Guthlac's.

Details of the two schemes can be obtained from Planned Giving Scheme contacts for each church, listed in the Contacts section. If you are a taxpayer and gift aid your giving, the churches can claim an additional 25%.

From the Editor

Normal service with the publication of the magazine has, I hope, now been resumed. Thank you to all those readers who have forborne to complain about the absence of an edition in January/February.

All being well, the next issue will appear in mid-June, but this depends not just on me but on readers' ability to supply me with copy. The closing date for the next issue will be **Friday 5**

June 2026, but you can send your contributions at any time to the usual address, stmaryknighton.magazine@gmail.com.

Articles do not represent the opinions of the Parochial Church Council of either church. Typographical and other errors (and the occasional omission) are the Editor's responsibility.



Nearly forty years in the field with Sir David Attenborough

Monday 27 April 2026

19:30 - 21:00

Hansom Hall, Leicester Adult Education College, 50-54 Belvoir St, Leicester LE1 6QL

In this lavishly illustrated lecture, Alastair Fothergill OBE will recall nearly forty years of close collaboration with Sir David that took them both from the North Pole to the South Pole, and many other global locations. Alastair Fothergill, WWF Ambassador, is a director and co-founder of Silverback Films. He joined the BBC Natural History Unit in 1983 and was appointed Head of the Unit in November 1992, aged 32. His collaborations with Sir David include 'The Trials of Life', 'Life in the Freezer', 'The Blue Planet', 'Frozen Planet', 'Planet Earth' and its companion feature film 'Earth'

Non-members of the Lit&Phil are welcome to attend. Guest tickets are £7 (students £3), but places are limited so advance booking is strongly advised. Scan the QR code or follow the link for details and to register/purchase.



Scan me!

<https://www.leicesterlitandphil.org.uk/event-6181294>



CHAPLAINCY
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THE BISHOP OF LEICESTER'S CHAPLAINCY LECTURE SERIES

Is God Back? What might the ancient wisdom of Christianity offer for today's turbulent times?

ELIZABETH OLDFIELD
AUTHOR OF *FULLY ALIVE*

Thursday 30th April, 6:00pm
Lecture Theatre 2
Sir Bob Burgess Building
University of Leicester, LE2 6BF



This free event is open to the public and will be followed by a drinks reception at the Chaplaincy Gatehouse.

Christmas Tree Festival - Craft Workshops

The popular and enjoyable craft workshops at St Mary's have now resumed, producing flowers in March and stars in April as illustrated in the pictures below.



The next workshop will be at 10.30 in St Mary's on Tuesday 12 May. All are welcome. Materials, tea, coffee, biscuits and conversation are all provided.