



## FROM THE PARISH ARCHIVES

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### What's in a Name

Welcome to the seventh edition of "From the Parish Archives". We hope that you will enjoy reading about the history of the Parish. This is especially so with the 150th anniversary in 2011. This version was slightly revised in September 2011.

The "From the Parish Archives" aims to be factual. However, any opinions expressed are personal and may not be necessarily shared by other parishioners.

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### Introduction

I am confident in saying that all of us at St Margaret's enjoy our patronal festival and all things Scottish – although for some, bagpipes excepted. All Anglican churches are named in honour of some saint or in the name of Christ himself or some important event in the life of Christ. Our former centre at Panton Hill was named in honour of the Apostle Matthew. Our former centre at Research was known as The Church of the Transfiguration. The Montmorency church was named in honour of (Saint) Faith. We are confident today that our church is dedicated to the Scottish Saint Margaret, but this has not always been so. Over the 150 years of the Church at Eltham it has not always been known as St Margaret's and there has been confusion about which Margaret it is anyway. Is it Margaret of Scotland or Margaret of Antioch? What does our archival evidence tell us?

### Christ Church Eltham

The earliest evidence from a Specifications for roofing of the Church drawn up by Henry Dendy and dated July 22 1861 speak of "*specifications of work required in roofing a portion of a Church at Eltham for the Trustees of St Margaret's Church...*". An associated General Conditions of Contract also refers to St Margaret's. In a Petition to the Bishop of Melbourne dated February 1864 it refers to "*consecrated by the name of St Margaret*".

However, a Subscription List dated March 17 1868 is for a parsonage for Christ Church Eltham. Again, letters in June 30 1869 and August 1870 refer to Christ Church Eltham. More interestingly a letter dated November 30 1870 from the Bishops Registry, expressed surprise that on a return sent to it, *“the church is called Christ Church when the church at Eltham is registered here as St Margaret’s”*.

We may tentatively conclude that the Church was registered from the start in the name of St Margaret. However, some years later, say circa 1868, it is widely referred to as Christ Church. It would appear that consideration was undertaken to officially change the name from St Margaret to Christ Church. On the back of a letter dated March 23 1871 from W B Morris, Bishop’s Registry, to W B Andrews Secretary Eltham Church he notes, *“if the church name from St Margaret’s to Christ Church then if they will return the licenses on which the former name is written, the Bishop will make the desired alteration”*. We do not know why this did not proceed because on May 16 1876 the Church was consecrated in the name of St Margaret by the Right Reverend Bishop Thornton of Ballarat. Further investigation is required of the Diocesan Archives to ascertain if there is evidence that it was Margaret of Scotland.

### **Margaret of Scotland**

Which Margaret was the Church named in honour of? Was it Margaret of Scotland or Margaret of Antioch? A preliminary investigation of the Parish archival evidence, to confirm our present understanding that it was the former reveals little. The best evidence is a 1918 Faculty dated January 30 from Archbishop Henry Lowther admitting *“two stained lights in memory of the late Mr and Mrs Wippel”*. These are the pair of stained glass windows on our east wall one representing Margaret and one representing Paul. The critical evidence is that Margaret like Paul wears a halo of sainthood but also wears a crown. She is royal and we may tentatively conclude that she is indeed Margaret of Scotland. Again, preliminary inquiries with the Diocese reveal no mention of St Margaret of Scotland as the patron saint of the Eltham church.

Margaret is an unusual Saint, especially from the perspective of Roman Catholicism. Queen Margaret stands alone as the happy mother of a large family, a mother who reared sons and daughters in the Christian faith and she died surrounded by her children. Other female saints belong to the cult of the Virgin, like Margaret of Antioch or were Holy Sisters as is Mary McKillop. Margaret of Scotland strove to be like Christ and this can be seen through one example. Her charity was unbounded and she cared for her poorest and most vulnerable subjects. Each morning just after dawn nine little orphans were brought to her. She had already spent many hours in prayer and the saying of Psalms. She was brought up in the Benedictine tradition of an ordered life of prayer and work. The Anglo Saxon Chronicle states that *“when the little ones were carried to her, she did not think it beneath her to take them upon her knee and to get their pap ready for them and this she used to put into their mouths with the spoon which she herself used...”* Anyone with a slightest knowledge about the history of European royalty can only conclude that

Margaret was an extraordinary Queen, a loving mother and wife, and, a true hero of the faith.

### **Margaret of Antioch**

It would seem from the period of the 1930s through to the end of the 1970s priest and people at Eltham identified the Margaret with the saint from Antioch. The Advertiser Friday July 24 1936 has an article about St Margaret's Eltham celebrating its 75<sup>th</sup> Anniversary and it states "*from Sunday 19<sup>th</sup> July to 26<sup>th</sup> July S. Margaret's Church is keeping its 75<sup>th</sup> Patronal Festival*". The 20<sup>th</sup> July is the anniversary of Margaret of Antioch's death. The anniversary of Margaret of Scotland is November 16. There is clear evidence that throughout the 1950s, 1960s and the 1970s, it was Margaret of Antioch that was considered as Patron Saint. The evidence is found primarily in The Way the Magazine of the Parish. The June 28 1958 issue advertises the Patronal festival for July 13<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup>.

Further, the July 1958 issue advertises that, "*the Reverend J F Gibbins who was Vicar of the Parish prior to our present Vicar will be preacher at Evensong on Sunday, July 20 which is also St Margaret's day*". It also includes a feature article on Margaret of Antioch. The July 1959 issue states that the, "*festival of St Margaret July 19-26. St Margaret, the Virgin Martyr of Antioch, is Patron saint of our Parish church at Eltham...*" The July 1960 of The Way refers to the induction of a new vicar Rev William J Carter on St Margaret's Day 20<sup>th</sup> July at 8pm by his Grace the Archbishop.

We find that Margaret of Antioch is still regarded as our Patron Saint in the 1960s and 1970s. The July 1962 issue advertises, "*St Margaret's Patronal Festival. St Margaret Virgin and Martyr 3<sup>rd</sup> 4<sup>th</sup> centuries Antioch*". The June 1964 issue advertises "*the Patron Saint St Margaret on Monday 20<sup>th</sup> July...*". A Pew Leaflet dated July 1971 advertises St Margaret's 110<sup>th</sup> Patronal Festival on the 18 July with 20<sup>th</sup> July as St Margaret's Day. However, we have a host of current parishioner witnesses, including the author, that certainly from the 1980s to the present day it is Margaret of Scotland who is regarded as our Patron Saint. The earliest archival evidence is a 1978 Pew Leaflet that refers to the Scottish saint. An issue of Megs Mag circa 1982 that advertises November 16 as St Margaret's day.

### **Conclusion**

So what's in a name? For most of our 150 years the Church at Eltham has been named in honour of St Margaret. For a short time it appears it was unofficially considered by some to be Christ Church. Of course Christ is our "Supreme Patron", as he is of all gathered believers as the local body of Christ.

The ancient tradition of naming a Church in honour of one of the great heroes of the faith is sound theologically. Anglicans believe wholeheartly in the "communion of saints" and "therefore with angels and archangels and with all the company of heaven ...proclaim your great and glorious name, for ever praising you...". We are united with Margaret and all the saints in the

unceasing praise of God Almighty. To use the 1662 Prayer Book terms –the “church militant” and the “church triumphant” united.

For at least 50 years it would appear we identified Margaret of Antioch as our Patron, hardly a temporary aberration. However, it is great we rediscovered in the 1980s a great hero of the faith, Margaret of Scotland, Queen and Mother. It would be good if we fully honoured her by reverting to celebrating our Patronal Festival again on November 16.

### **Postscript –Margaret of Antioch**

To quote, The Way July 1958 concerning Margaret of Antioch, *“there are few accurate historical facts available about St Margaret, who is also known as Marina. She was born at about the end of the third or beginning of the fourth century, at Antioch, in Syria...According to legend, St Margaret was secretly taught to be a Christian by her nurse, but when her father heard of this they were both banished from his household and forced to find a living as shepherdesses. An important official struck by St Margaret’s beauty, determined to marry her; but when she refused, stating that she would devote her life to Jesus Christ, he caused her to be imprisoned and tortured. She was subsequently beheaded for her faith”*. Thus, she is Virgin and Martyr of the faith.

A most famous church dedicated to Margaret of Antioch is the Anglican Church in the grounds of Westminster Abbey on Parliament Square. It is the Parish Church of the House of Commons of the United Kingdom. More research is required to confirm what were the intention of our founders concerning our Patron.