



Knights of Saint Mary of Bethlehem

Bulletin 9th March, 2025.



Overview.

Economic Pressures and Impact

Rising employer National Insurance rates are forcing fundraising teams to focus intensively on cost efficiency and net financial contribution. The ongoing economic squeeze has created a challenging environment where charities must carefully balance service delivery with financial sustainability.

Funding Landscape

Major funding disruptions are occurring across multiple fronts:

International aid faces significant cuts, with the UK government announcing approximately 40% reduction in aid budget

Public sector grants and contracts are experiencing widespread cuts similar to 2023 patterns

The Chancellor's growth budget appears to be underperforming, suggesting potential further departmental budget reductions

Adaptation Strategies

Charities are responding through:

Increased focus on optimising mailing lists and donor targeting using AI tools

Prioritising retention of existing donors over acquisition of new ones

Diversifying income portfolios, especially for organisations previously reliant on government funding



Digital Transformation

Financial pressures are accelerating digital adoption:

Advanced analytics and AI tools being leveraged for campaign refinement

Growing investment in data-driven decision making

Increased use of digital platforms for fundraising and donor engagement

Global Economic Risks

Several external factors threaten sector stability:

US trade tensions with major partners affecting global economic trade

Concerns over US economic health potentially impacting global markets

Continued cost-of-living pressures affecting both charitable giving and demand for services

Recovery Outlook

The sector showed signs of recovery in 2024, but remains vulnerable to government policy changes and economic shifts. Organisations focusing on efficiency, digital transformation, and diverse funding streams are better positioned to weather ongoing economic challenges .



Walk the bridge.

In Leicester members of the ambulance service, a bike group, and members of the emergency services, nursing and mental support charities will be joining us on the walk on March 16th in Abbey Park, further invitations may be responded to.

Scotland is having its walk the bridge event on the 27th of April at 11:00 at Lochore Meadows Country Park, Lochore, Fife.

Richard is planning a walk the bridge event in Bognor Regis, again emergency services are being invited to attend.

Liverpool is also being planned for an event.

More details will be released as and when they are confirmed.



The Knights Templar Goodwill Charity



In a landscape where compassion and community support have never been more crucial, the Knights Templar Goodwill Charity of Scotland stands as a transformative force. Founded by three steadfast veterans in March 2021, this charity has fast become a major player in addressing poverty and supporting vulnerable populations across Scotland. Achieving charitable status less than a year later, in May 2022, the organisation has rapidly expanded its reach and impact, driven by an unwavering commitment to community service.



Recently, the charity welcomed Alexander Stewart MSP and Cllr Darren Watt - Cowdenbeath Ward, for an insightful visit. This event was nothing short of remarkable, providing a unique opportunity for community leaders to engage directly with the charity's dedicated staff and the vital work they do. Led expertly by Katie, Kevin, and April, the tour showcased both ongoing and new projects, illustrating the dynamic initiatives that the Knights Templar charity has implemented in response to the growing needs of the community.

The Vital Work of the Charity

The day was highly productive, emphasising the charity's commitment to tackling issues such as homelessness, poverty, and mental health. Each initiative highlights the organisation's innovative approach to support those in need, from care packages to food drives and social engagement programs. Whether it's the Veterans Section, aiming specifically to assist those who have served, or the broader community outreach efforts, the impact of the charity is both profound and wide-reaching.

These visits from prominent figures like Alexander Stewart and Cllr Darren Watt are vital not just for gathering support, but for raising awareness of the pressing issues faced by many. By seeing the operations up close, community leaders gain a tangible understanding of the charity's impact, which they can advocate for at various levels of government and public discourse.

A Heartfelt Thank You

A heartfelt thank you is due to Alexander Stewart and Cllr Darren Watt for taking the time to engage with the charity and lend their support and to the volunteers of the charity. Their presence underscores the importance of collaboration between local government and charitable organisations in effecting real change. Additionally, the overwhelming dedication and hard work of the entire team at the Knights Templar Goodwill Charity were evident and greatly appreciated.



With ongoing and new projects on the horizon, there is no question that the Knights Templar Goodwill Charity is steadfast in its mission to make a difference. Visits like these not only provide motivation but also serve as a rallying call for the community to get involved. As the charity continues to grow and evolve, it remains focused on fostering connections and providing essential support to those who need it most.

Strong decisions are where decisive action is born and nurtured - the Knight Templar Goodwill Charity is a sterling example of what can happen when just three people make a strong decision. Many times our actions can seem futile and hope can diminish, over time with persistence what was seemingly impossible comes to pass, Strong decisions and persistence are the true currency in any achievement. We can learn a lot from the example of Knights Templar.

Midlands activity

Edward has made contact with a local group in Derby who support the homeless on the streets in a practical manner, positive dialogue has been entered into and Edward may be joining them on one of their outreaches and taking things further as required. Goodwill and respect has been given and received and a foundation for going forwards to the benefit of both has been created - more updates as and when developments occur.



Investiture Weekend, dates finalised.

Saturday, 24th May, 2025. Investiture at 11AM, Location TBC. In the evening we will be doing a fundraising event of a big sleepout in Stockport.

Sunday, 25th May, 2025. We will be doing a Walk the Bridge in Stockport starting at Woodbank Park finishing at Stockport Sea Cadet unit, then in the evening we will be doing an outreach care pack distribution in Stockport centre.

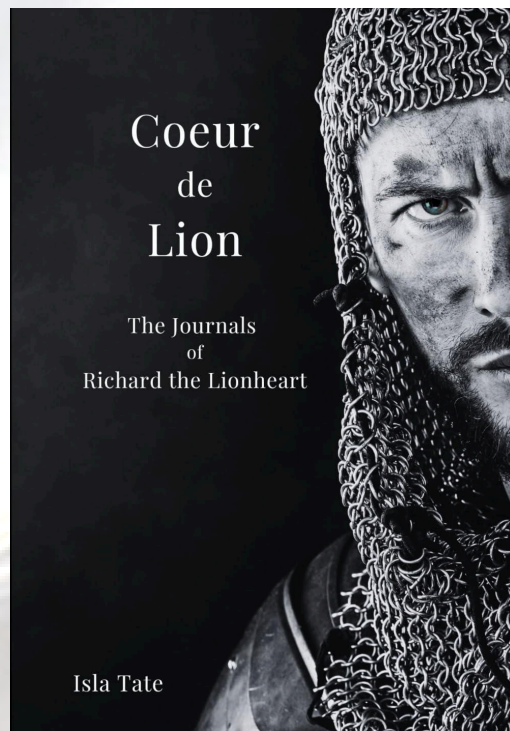
Monday, 26th May, 2025. We will be taking part in the Whit Walks in Manchester City Centre, this will be in the morning finishing around lunchtime.

The travelodge in Stockport is the usual venue of choice for this event. Their site is [HERE](#), alternatively [booking.com](https://www.booking.com) may give a cheaper price.

Mobile Phone appeal

Keith has been very busy with his mobile phone appeal where an old mobile phone is sent to Keith, wiped, repurposed and then given to a vulnerable person, he has just sent out his last phone, if ANYONE can have a look for an old phone in the house, someone, somewhere would be highly appreciative of it.





COEUR DE LION: The Journals of Richard the Lionheart by Isla Tate

A review by James Cater

Isla Tate's **COEUR DE LION: The Journals of Richard the Lionheart** offers a gripping and imaginative exploration of one of history's most iconic figures. Through the format of fictional journals, Tate invites readers into the mind of Richard I, providing a vivid portrayal of his thoughts, struggles, and aspirations during a tumultuous period of medieval history.

From the outset, Tate's writing is both lyrical and engaging, capturing the essence of the 12th-century world with rich descriptions and historical detail. The journal format allows for a personal connection to Richard, presenting him not just as a king or a warrior, but as a complex individual grappling with his duties, his faith, and his legacy. Readers witness his internal conflicts, his moments of doubt, and the fierce determination that drove him on the Crusades.



One of the book's strengths is its character development. Richard emerges as a multifaceted leader—brave yet vulnerable, noble yet flawed. Tate skilfully balances historical accuracy with creative interpretation, adding depth to secondary characters and bringing to life the political intrigue and personal relationships that shaped Richard's reign. The interactions with figures such as Eleanor of Aquitaine and his rival, Saladin, are particularly compelling, highlighting the intricate web of alliances and enmities that defined the era.

Tate's meticulous research shines through, providing context and authenticity to Richard's experiences. The journals touch on significant events, such as the Third Crusade, while also delving into the personal aspects of Richard's life, including his love for adventure and his deep sense of duty to his kingdom. The emotional weight of these entries resonates, making historical events feel immediate and relevant.

However, the pacing at times can feel uneven, with some entries more captivating than others. A few sections may linger too long on minute details, potentially losing the reader's momentum. Despite this, Tate's ability to evoke the sights and sounds of the medieval landscape keeps the narrative grounded and immersive.

Overall, *COEUR DE LION* is a compelling read for both history enthusiasts and those new to Richard the Lionheart's story. Isla Tate has crafted a thoughtful and engaging portrayal of a legendary figure, making history accessible and relatable. This book not only entertains but also prompts reflection on leadership, legacy, and the human condition. Highly recommended for anyone interested in historical fiction that combines rich storytelling with a deep dive into the psyche of one of history's most fascinating leaders.



Conclusion

In the early spring of 2025, as financial challenges echo across the charitable landscape, a remarkable story of resilience unfolds. The Knights of Saint Mary of Bethlehem stand not merely as observers but as architects of change, weaving together threads of innovation and tradition into a tapestry of hope.

Across Britain's diverse communities, from the historic streets of Leicester to the coastal winds of Bognor Regis, a movement stirs. Emergency service workers, nurses, and mental health professionals join hands with our members in symbolic bridges of unity. These "Walk the Bridge" events, far more than mere gatherings, represent the physical manifestation of our commitment to connecting communities and bridging divides.

In Scotland, the Knights Templar Goodwill Charity writes its own chapter of inspiration. Born from the vision of three veterans just four years ago, their story exemplifies how determination can bloom into transformation. Their halls now echo with the footsteps of parliamentarians and local leaders, each visit affirming the power of grassroots action to effect meaningful change.

Meanwhile, in Derby, Edward's quiet diplomacy with homeless support groups illustrates the gentle art of building trust and fostering collaboration. Keith's mobile phone initiative transforms discarded devices into lifelines of hope, one handset at a time.

As May approaches, Stockport prepares to host an investiture weekend that promises to blend ceremonial tradition with practical outreach. From the solemnity of the investiture ceremony to the humility of the big sleepout, each event embodies our dual commitment to heritage and service.



The economic headwinds may blow strong, but our response grows stronger. Through digital innovation, strategic reconnaissance and adaptation, and unwavering dedication to our mission, we forge ahead. Like the medieval knights whose name we bear, we face challenges not with resignation but with resourcefulness and resolve.

As we look to the horizon, our story continues to unfold. It's a narrative written not in grand gestures but in daily acts of kindness, in persistent effort, and in the quiet victories of lives touched and communities transformed. In an age of uncertainty, we remain steadfast, proving that the greatest strength lies not in avoiding challenges but in rising to meet them with courage, compassion, and unwavering hope.

This is not merely our story - it is a testament to the enduring power of human kindness and collective action, a reminder that even in challenging times, the light of service continues to shine bright, illuminating the path forward for all who follow.

To you with respect and gratitude, always.

Privy Chamber.



References

APPENDIX: REFERENCES

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