

HISTORY MADE ALIVE

In December 1986 Canon Fred Wilkinson published a letter written by Mr William Allen of Basford, Crewe, whose grandfather, Mr G. E. Barnsdale, worked on the stonework of St. John's Church and who carved, as a labour of love, the designs in the strip of stonework that runs around the Sanctuary. Mr Barnsdale's daughter, Mabel, is remembered on a plaque on the South wall of the Church.

We often wondered who the person was who died in Chile and the following helps us to visualise her from this picture supplied by Mr Allen.

The plaque reads:-

IN LOVING MEMORY OF
MABEL MARGUERITE LOVING BARNSDALE
DIED APRIL 5th 1923
AT CHOLCHOL, CHILE
AGED 32 YEARS
A WORKER IN THIS PARISH
*"Father in Thy gracious keeping
Leave we now Thy servant sleeping."*

Mr Allen lent Canon Wilkinson a copy of the letter sent to his mother's eldest sister, Mabel Barnsdale's sister, by a friend of Mabel's in Chile which tells of the circumstances of her death. It is a most moving letter and gives an insight into the character and the deep faith of Mabel Barnsdale. When you next look at the plaque on the South wall please remember the courage and devotion of the person named and thank God for her witness in Chile so many years ago and also pray for all who work in God's name in poor, unhealthy countries.

The letter reads:

Dear Miss Barnsdale:

Long before this letter reaches you, you will have heard of the "Home Call" of your dear Sister. Mrs Simpson wrote to you twice telling of the illness; I who was your sister's chief friend in Chile had the great privilege of being with her to the last.

Never in all my nursing experience had I nursed one so sweet, patient and grateful as your sister. I was sent for on about the third day of her illness and even then her fever was high. She talked quite clearly for the first few days at intervals but all through her illness she seemed conscious of the fact that she would never be better in this world. The thought of going to be with her Saviour whom she loved and served was a great joy to her.

No matter what I did -- cold packs or bathing, she smiled and said "if it makes you happy dea, just do it, but I know it will make no difference to me. It is the right thing to do but it will not make me better". Noone



Mabel Barnsdale

could persuade her that she would get better. My one great regret is that, although she so wanted to settle up everything belonging to her, she never remained conscious long enough to be able to think things out. Several times she asked for paper and pen, as she said she must write, but she would almost immediately slip into semi-consciousness. She was unable to give any instructions as to what she wished done with her belongings. I feel sure that she would have liked many of her clothes to be given to some of her old friends amongst the natives, but will leave everything intact until I hear what you would like to be done in the matter.

She will be sorely missed by us who loved her and by those amongst whom for Christ's sake she laboured so faithfully and unselfishly. She was laid to rest in a most glorious spot on a hill with a lovely view of the mountains in the distance. She herself was so fond of going to the cemetery and often remarked how she loved funerals so much better than weddings. She believed that death was the beginning of real life.

For your dear sister's sake I cannot grieve for I know that she is enjoying the rest which she so longed for, but I mourn my own great loss, and that of her loving relations and friends in the homeland. Our loss is certainly her gain and that thought should comfort us all. The great number of beautiful wreaths and flowers from rich and poor, British and native friends, told how much she was loved and respected by all who knew her.

May our loving Father comfort your heart and mine in our great loss, as He alone can. With loving prayers for yourself and all her loved ones in the homeland.

Yours very sincerely,

F. M. Thompson.

P.S. The enclosed photo was the last taken of her during her holiday at Capitan Pastene where she drank water which was the cause of her illness.

Mr G. H. Barnsdale
father of Miss Mabel
Barnsdale.

Mr Barnsdale was
responsible for carving
the stonework in the
Sanctuary and some
other items.

