

12<sup>th</sup> June 2021

## Past

**“Join the company of lions rather than assume the lead among foxes.”**

*Talmud, Aboth. IV. 20*

Following hedgehogs yesterday, we begin with foxes today ...

Leicester City Football Club, winners of the English Premier League in 2015-16 and the FA Cup this year, are nicknamed *The Foxes*. An image of a fox was first incorporated into the club crest in 1948, simply because Leicestershire is known for foxes and foxhunting. The club mascot is *Filbert Fox* (after “Filbert Street”, the location of the club’s original ground).

Motherwell Football Club are nicknamed “The Steelmen”, because of the dominance of steelworks in the town, even though heavy industry has long since gone. Sheffield United carry the name “The Blades” because of the association of the town with the making of cutlery. West Bromwich Albion are known as “The Baggies”. Baggy shorts, perhaps? The Dumfries-based club, Queen of the South, have been called “The Doonhamers” since they were founded in 1919. Anyone know why?

We carry with us labels from the past, which may or may not be understood or justified in the present. In my first parish, I knew a man who attended church regularly, one of the most dedicated Christian men I’ve known. He and his wife produced the most gorgeous child, a product of a loving union and a real gift to the world. I had the joy of baptising this baby. Just before the baptism, someone took me aside to tell me the man had served time in prison. Why I was told, I don’t know. Perhaps someone just liked passing on tittle-tattle. But did it matter? Of course not. Like foxhunting for Leicester and steel production for Motherwell, it was an interesting fact from the past but said nothing useful about the present.

If redemption is important, and we are called to forgive, then what lies in the past might be interesting, and may inform who we are and how we live now, but it should never label us or define us completely. Those who once were foxes, may now be lions. Those who were once made of steel, may now be more malleable. Those who were once broken may now be restored to wholeness. Don’t assume. There may be much more you need to know. So, any idea about the “Doonhamers” label?

### **A prayer for today**

*Lord, I take the past with me, but it does not define me.*

*I learn lessons from the past and look to a future of wholeness. Amen.*

*An original reflection by © Tom Gordon*

Also available at <https://swallowsnestnet.wordpress.com>