

[View this email in your browser](#)



Happy New Year!

Falkland Society Newsletter, January 2021

Dear member/Dear supporter,

Our series of monthly lectures continues with the online talk on Wednesday 13 January by our webmaster Ross Burgess, who will talk about **Falkland's Historic Buildings** a project which was prompted by his work editing our new book ***Falkland and its People 1901–1913***. More about this below.

There's no Tree of the Month this time, but I've included an article about a Cupar-based book designer whose work deserves to be better known, and a new project by the Cupar Development Trust, plus a Venetian update, following on from my "Venice: Heart City" lecture last month. If you missed this, or any of the previous online lectures, you can now view the recordings at:

<https://falklandsociety.org.uk/recordings.shtml>.

In this issue:

- January meeting:
 - [Invitation to the Zoom meeting](#)
 - [Ross Burgess: "Falkland's Historic Buildings"](#)
 - [The new book - an update](#)
 - [George Mackie, Book Designer \(1920-2020\)](#)
 - [A Venetian Update](#)
 - [Old Scots Language in Cupar and District](#)
 - [Future meetings](#)
-

A reminder that this Newsletter comes to you from **The Falkland Society**, Scottish Registered Charity SC017201, www.falklandsociety.org.uk.

Peter Burman (Chair)

January Meeting

You are invited to a scheduled Zoom meeting.

**Topic: Falkland Society Meeting for January 2021:
Ross Burgess on "Falkland's Historic Buildings" (more details below)**

**18:45 for 19:00, Wednesday 13 January
Meeting ID: 851 6832 9070**

To join the Zoom Meeting, click on the following link:

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/85168329070?pwd=MVZhYWVlYlNGTGFiYVo3djBzaFB5QT09>
from 18:45 onwards on the 9th.

If you can't join from your computer, you can dial in by phone on
0131 460 1196 or **0203 481 5237** or **0203 901 7895**,
and then quote the meeting ID: **851 6832 9070**
and the passcode: **260647**

Ross Burgess on "Falkland's Historic Buildings"

Our speaker for January is Ross Burgess, Falkland Society committee member and webmaster.

Ross's work on editing our new book, *Falkland and its People 1901–1913*, led him to look for pictures and information about the buildings and places mentioned in the book, and trace what has happened to them since. This ought to be easy – many of the buildings in question are now Listed Buildings, and information about them is maintained by Historic Environment Scotland – but the records on the HES web portal are not easy to use: the listings took place around 1970, when many of the houses don't seem to have had anything we would today recognise as an actual address. Most of the descriptions are very brief, and have not been kept up to date with later developments, and in a few cases are actually wrong. Even the map on the HES web portal shows some of the properties in the wrong place.

To try and improve our knowledge about our historic buildings we launched the Falkland Listed Buildings Survey last summer, and a photographic competition in August. We're using the results, together with existing information, to build up what aims to be a comprehensive database of Falkland's built heritage

But how to record the information for posterity? Ross's solution has been to create a Wiki – an online encyclopaedia along the same lines as Wikipedia, and using the same software. So the results of our project will be available to view by anyone round the world, not just those who are able to visit the Falkland Library or study the Big Book of Falkland at the Stables, and we hope

that anyone who has ever used Wikipedia will find the new site easy to navigate around. And best of all, perhaps, it will be very easy to add to or update as new information comes to light.



Falkland Historic Buildings

- Main page
- Recent changes
- Random page
- Help
- Tools
- What links here
- Related changes
- Upload file
- Special pages
- Printable version
- Permanent link
- Page information

WikiSysop Talk Preferences Watchlist Contributions Log out

Page Discussion
Read Edit View history More
Search Falkland Historic Buildings

Rosebank

Rosebank is a private house in [West Port](#), Falkland.

Listing description [\[edit\]](#)

Early 19th century, altered later 2-storey and attic 3-window with painted stop chamfered margins; slated 2 canted and gabled dormers, later timber porch; single-storey wing and outbuildings on west.^[1]

Previous uses [\[edit\]](#)

Previously used as a holiday cottage for the Estate. A "Mr Anderson" (?) had a wee market garden here.^[2]

Special features [\[edit\]](#)

1973 on roof stones.^[2]

Extensions [\[edit\]](#)

Attached to the main house is a smaller house part of which is derelict. It had an upstairs at one time and house a family called the Heggerts. There was also a picket fence at the front of the main house. Large garden 1/3 acre. An old map shows either toilets or coal cellars up by the fence bordering the field.^[2]

Former residents [\[edit\]](#)

The Sharps.^[2]

Notes [\[edit\]](#)

- [↑] [HES web page](#).
- [↑] [2.0 2.1 2.2 2.3](#) Information from occupier

Gallery [\[edit\]](#)

[Click on a picture below to see the image full-size]




The house

Porch and house name

Building details	
Name	Rosebank
Address	West Port, Falkland
Postcode	KY15 7BW
Date	Early 19th century
OS grid ref	NO 24960 7374
Latitude & longitude	56°14'59"N 3°12'13"W
Listing	Category C
Listing ref	LB31349
Listing name	Rosebank, West Port

Categories: [Category C listed buildings](#) | [Royal Burgh of Falkland](#) | [Falkland Conservation Area](#)

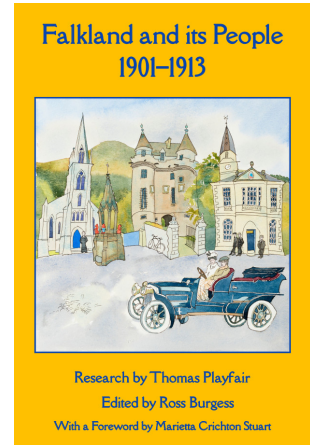
A typical page from the Wiki

The wiki is hosted at our associated website, <https://historicfalkland.scot/>, which also contains other sources for Falkland's history, currently including Jack Burgess's year-by-year chronicle of Falkland life, a timeline of local history, and Bert Allan's account of the early years of Falkland in Bloom.

Ross's talk will describe the progress of the project to date, some of the more interesting facts that have emerged, and what remains to be done and how you can help.

The new book – an update

As you probably all know by now, the printed copies of our new book have arrived. We received a pallet-load of boxes containing 500 copies of *Falkland and its People 1901–1913* and we've been busy sending them off to contributors, sponsors, and people who've ordered them, plus the copies required by law for the six Legal Deposit Libraries (British Library, Oxford, Cambridge, Aberystwyth, Dublin and of course Edinburgh). If you haven't yet got your own copy, please download the order form from www.falklandsociety.org.uk/flyers/OrderForm.pdf and send it in with your cheque.

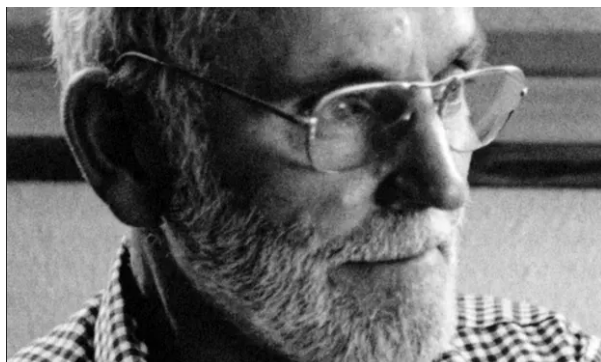


We hope to institute online payment, perhaps by PayPal, but this is held up by the remarkable inefficiency of the Bank of Scotland in processing our change of treasurer. Meanwhile we welcome payment by cheque or cash. We've also delivered stocks of books to Courtyard Books in Cupar and are negotiating with booksellers in St Andrews.

George Mackie, Book Designer (1920–2020)

We like to think of our villages in North-East Fife as looking towards Cupar, rather as chickens look to their mother hen, for centuries of protection, efficient historic administration of the civic aspects of our lives including the justice system, and a rich and varied spectrum of businesses, craft skills and shopping culture. This historic background of Cupar constantly crops up in our new and ambitious Falkland Society book, *Falkland & its People 1901–1913*. Even today, when the 'offer' of so many of our small-to-medium sized historic towns has been homogenized and impoverished, Cupar does not disappoint. It is still a culturally rich town, from which we all benefit.

It is also of interest to consider what remarkable and gifted men and women have had their origin in Cupar or in our villages, over the centuries, to remember them and to celebrate them.

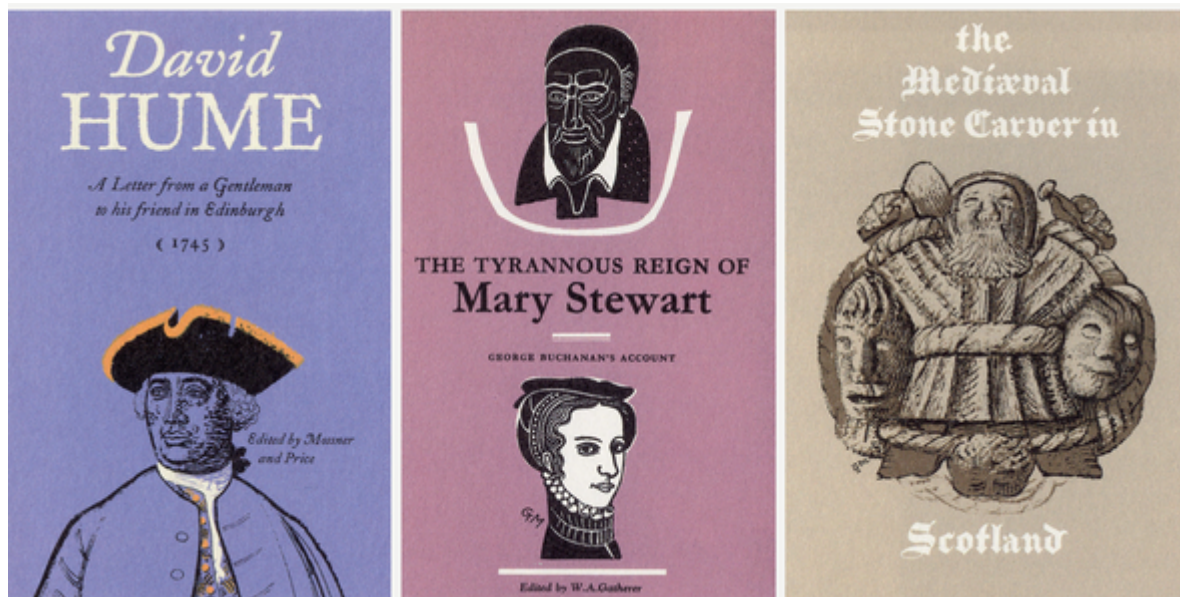


It is in that spirit that we wish to remember and celebrate a centenarian who was born in Cupar on 17 July 1920, George Mackie, book designer and artist, who died on 3 October 2020. Ben Campbell's fine obituary of him in *The Guardian* for 23 December 2020 says 'He brought an artist's sensibility and a craftsman's care to his work, but never forgot that its chief aim, "the congenial readability of continuous text", as he put it, is rarely improved by stylistic flourishes.'

George Mackie's father and grandfather were both saddlers. As recently as a century ago it would have been unthinkable for a town like Cupar to be without skilled craftspeople in many fields, including saddlers and tailors. In Falkland one of our more notable houses is called Saddler's House, which was both residence and craft workshop for a succession of saddlers.

George Mackie went to school in Cupar but then studied at the School of Art in Dundee. In 1940 he enlisted in the RAF where he 'wondered at having been entrusted with the training of flyers when he was still relatively inexperienced himself.' After the war he decided to continue his artistic training at the Edinburgh College of Art but found the experience unsatisfactory and left 'without instruction or regrets'.

From the early 1950s to the late 1980s he worked on more than 400 titles for the University of Edinburgh Press. His work had early on caught the eye of Archie Turnbull, Secretary of the Edinburgh University Press from 1952 to 1987. The commissions began by being for the covers and title pages of books but fairly quickly led on to his being commissioned to design every aspect of the books entrusted to him. From 1956-80 George Mackie was head of the Department of Design and Crafts, working on his book design projects at home at weekends and evenings.



Three of George Mackie's book covers for Edinburgh University Press.

To conclude with a further quotation from the obituary: 'A friend advised him that to get best results he should arrive at the printing works as soon as they opened in the morning to talk to the compositors who would be putting his designs on press. This was the beginning of a self-education in the techniques and history of printing, and designing for print, which gave him his deep knowledge of all the processes needed to take a typescript and turn it into a printed book.'

There is so much to be learned and celebrated by knowing and reading about the lives and achievements of fellow Fifers. We invite readers of this Newsletter to contribute short accounts of notable Fifers, especially from our 'constituency' of Cupar and the villages that encircle it, rich in culture and in history. This could form the basis for a publication of notable local lives and achievements. We also invite readers to look at any books they may have collected published by Edinburgh University Press and see if any of them, published between 1952 and the late 1980s, were designed by George Mackie. Please let us know if so!

Peter Burman

A Venetian Update

I very much appreciated the positive feedback received after my December lecture entitled

'Venice, heart city', which focused first on the love that Venetians have for their city and second on the dangers that currently beset it: the need to protect the city and the lagoon from rising sea levels; managing tourism towards acceptable levels; reversing the steep population decline; and banning multi-storey cruise ships. Over and above all is the need to make sure that Venice can remain a living, breathing city for many generations to come. This will not come about through a superficial embrace of fashionable aspects of 'modernity', as has happened in many British cities, but through a sensitive regime of management which will respect the materials and craft skills of the historic city while stylishly adapting the city's buildings for contemporary living.

I know that these are not empty words because for the whole of my life I have lived in listed buildings and conservation areas – my childhood home in Warwickshire, Cambridge, London, Kirkbymoorside, York, Edinburgh (where the entire square was listed Category A) and now in Falkland where our historic early seventeenth-century house is also listed Category A and is part of a delightful ensemble of characterful and varied houses of many different periods in our exceptional Conservation Area.

With regard to Venice, I have continued my contact with those NGOs in the city that are campaigning for the sustainable survival of the city and grappling with the challenges mentioned in my first paragraph. On Monday 21 December I attended by invitation a meeting of committee members of one of the most vigorous of these organisations, called *No Grandi Navi!* – in other words 'No' to the resumption of allowing huge cruise ships, with between 2,000 and 3,000 passengers, to sail out from the Venice sea terminal through the Guidecca Canal. It beggars belief that politicians in Rome are considering allowing these ships to resume such a route, which remains closed since Covid-19 hit the city in early March 2020. This decision will not be implemented while the pandemic continues: meanwhile we have a breathing space during which consultations and negotiations can take place. It needs no great technical knowledge to realise the immense damage which is being done, cumulatively, to the banks of the canal, to the buildings on the banks which have been constructed for centuries on myriads of slender wooden piles, and the quality of the air and the environment generally.



*A mid-16th-century painting in the Accademia, Venice,
showing the form of the gondola at that time*

Out of the blue a friend of a friend of ours, Nigel Davies, who lives in Dover, has sent us a box of books about Venice which he collected while a student studying Italian almost half a century ago. Some of the books were already old when he bought them and I want to share with you a delightful passage about gondolas in a book published in 1913 called *Things Seen in Venice* by the Revd Lonsdale Ragg (Prebendary of Buckden in Lincoln Cathedral, and author of another book called *Dante and his Italy*) and Laura Ragg, author of *The Women Artists of Bologna*. If anyone reading this Newsletter has either of those two books we should be very interested in borrowing and reading them. Meanwhile on pages 176 to 183 of *Things Seen in Venice* we especially enjoyed the following passage:



*Detail of a painting by Canaletto in the collection of HM The Queen
– on the right the prominent prows, seemingly of metal, of the best-quality gondolas of the mid-18th century; behind is the Doge's magnificent state barge, the Bucentauro*

'The gondola is apt to be "taken for granted" after the initial pleasure and surprise of introduction. But it merits study. In the first place, it is an essentially Venetian boat, the child of the Lagoon, gradually evolved in the course of ages by successive stages, many of which can still be traced. It is the lineal descendant of the light skiff which Cassiodorus, secretary of Theodosius, saw tied to the doors of the rude Venetian dwellings of the early sixth century. These skiffs probably resemble most nearly the little boat now called *barchetta*; and Mr Horatio Brown ... has traced the gradual evolution of the perfect gondola of today from this rudimentary *barchetta* form. Visitors to the Accademia will observe in the Venetian scenes by Bellini and Carpaccio a middle stage in this development depicted. The early sixteenth-century gondola resembles the modern one in many points – but it lacks the *ferro* – the picturesque polished iron beak which gives it much of its swan-like quality. The *felze* – the little wooden house in which the gondola passengers are enclosed when protection from the outer elements or human gaze is desired – is itself the outcome of a long process of evolution. At one time it was made a subject of excessive display, and many sumptuary laws were passed to restrain the extravagances of wealthy citizens. The Government found it very difficult to enforce the regulation that every *felze* was to be covered only with coarse black cloth; but they persevered, only relaxing the law in favour of foreign ambassadors, with the funereal result that is visible in the *felze* today. By the middle of the

eighteenth century the gondola of contemporary pictures was like the present one – long, for speed, with one *felze* hatchet-shaped, and a black *felze* with door and windows.



*Detail of a painting by Canaletto in the collection of HM The Queen
– showing the simpler form of a barchetto*

'Besides its metals – iron, steel and brass – sometimes as many as five different kinds of wood enter into the composition of the gondola – walnut, cherry, elm, pine and oak, not counting the beechwood of the oars. And every piece is most carefully selected; it must be “well-seasoned and without knots”. When the boat is finished it is a joy to look upon, as well as a luxury to sit in; but its graceful lines are not without a certain subtle want of symmetry. Nor is this unsymmetrical build the product of happy-go-lucky methods such as seem to belong to certain types of Italian work; on the contrary it is carefully and deliberately planned.

'The boat is without helm; it is to be guided and propelled by a single oar, and that in face of wind and tide; it must be ready to respond to the slightest motion of its oarsman, to advance in a straight line, to negotiate any angle, to spin round, if required, on its own axis. It is built with a perceptible list to one side, to balance the weight of him who stands on its poop, and to counteract the bias of his one oar's impetus it is built with one side longer and more curved than the other.

The result is the “Swan of the Lagoon”, the most graceful and the most comfortable carriage that can be conceived.'

Peter Burman

Old Scots Language in Cupar & District

Thanks to our enthusiastic member and supporter Bill Pagan, who is Chair of Cupar Development Trust, I have some exciting news to impart about a series of online talks on Old Scots Language in Cupar & District.

The Falkland Society exists with a very broad remit to encourage the study and awareness of

our area's rich culture. That culture is not about the past only but also about the present and the infinite possibilities of the future covering the whole gamut of our interests: building culture; landscape, whether wild or cultivated, ornamental or productive; the artistic contribution of artists and craftspeople; the composing and performance of music, whether traditional, popular or innovative; and, last but not least, literature.

In the summer of 2021, the Cupar Development Trust (<http://www.cupardevtrust.org.uk>) is promoting the theme of *Poetry, Theatre and Literature of our area in the 16th century*, focused on the work of two Lindsay cousins from Fife, Sir David Lindsay of The Mount (pictured at right) and Robert Lindsay of Pitscottie. Sir David wrote Scotland's first-ever play, *Ane Satyre of the Thrie Estates*, which some members of our community recall seeing when it was last revived. It looks as though we shall soon have a further opportunity of seeing it, next summer. Robert Lindsay of Pitscottie was the author of the first History of Scotland, written in Old Scots, entitled *Chronicle of Scotland*.



I had not realised until sometime during 2019 that the expression 'Cupar & District' is considered to be the entire catchment area of Bell Baxter School and its feeder primary schools, thereby including such villages as Falkland and Ceres, both of them rich in culture and history. There is a wonderful opportunity for us all to work together to present, year by year and month by month, a rich programme of talks and other events.

Thanks to the Cupar Development Trust's advocacy, the cultural societies in our area are being offered the opportunity to participate in a series of online talks and lectures which are to be given by speakers from the University of St Andrews and the Scots Language Resource Network. Dates are being canvassed but the talks and lectures seem likely to be given during February and March. We shall therefore hope to include details of them, dates and titles and how to join in, in the Falkland Society Newsletter for 1 February 2021.

Peter Burman

Future meetings

- 13 January: Ross Burgess on Falkland's Historic Buildings
- 10 February: Marietta Crichton Stuart on *Falkland and its People 1901–1913* – some stories from the book
- 10 March: Tom Christian, Consultant Dendrologist
- 14 April: Karen Dundas, Scottish Wall Paintings Conservators
- 12 May: Fiona Wemyss of the the Wemyss School of Needlework (to be confirmed)
- 9 June: David F. Wilson, public artist

For more about these meetings, see <https://falklandsociety.org.uk/2020-21programme.shtml>.

And if you missed any of the previous lectures in this series there's information about them at <https://falklandsociety.org.uk/2020-21programme.shtml> with links to download the recordings.

[Back to top.](#)



Copyright © 2021 Falkland Society, All rights reserved.

Want to change how you receive these emails?
You can [update your preferences](#) or [unsubscribe from this list](#).

