



Spring is on the way!

Falkland Society Newsletter, February 2021

Dear member/Dear supporter,

Our series of monthly lectures continues with the online talk on Wednesday 10 February by Marietta Crichton Stuart, well known to most of you, who will talk about **"*Falkland and its People 1901–1913, some stories from the book*"**. See the invitation below. And don't forget if you missed any of our previous Zoom lectures you can view the recordings at <https://falklandsociety.org.uk/recordings.shtml>.

In place of my Tree of the Month articles, I've started a new series about craftsmanship, beginning this month with **Public Lettering** – see below.

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

Peter Burman (Chair)

February Meeting

**Your invitation
to the Falkland Society meeting for February 2021**

Marietta Crichton Stuart on

"Falkland and its People 1901–1913, some stories from the book"

Marietta is no stranger to succeeding seasons of Falkland Society lectures. She is a leading local historian, and also archivist to the Falkland Estate and her branch of the Crichton Stuart family. Consequently, Tom Playfair and Ross Burgess were delighted when she became a consultant to the book which we published in December. She read it twice with great care and made many valuable suggestions, and has also contributed a Foreword.

She will be relating some of the many stories in the book about local people, of all classes of society, and maybe telling us a bit more as to how their lives continued afterwards.

18:45 for 19:00, Wednesday 10 February
Meeting ID: 811 2596 1848

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

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/81125961848?pwd=ejhZcEhJcy9YNTZjVUhkUFJaUXlFUT09>

From 18:45 on the 10th.

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: **811 2596 1848**

and the passcode: **035764**

**And if you haven't yet got your own copy of the book, why not order it now – just
download the form at**

<http://www.falklandsociety.org.uk/flyers/OrderForm.pdf>

and send it to us with your cheque.

Progress on the Wiki

We've been getting on with our wikipedia-style database about Falkland's Historic Buildings - we now have an entry for every listed building in the village, and several that are not listed - but several of the entries need further improvement, and they don't all have photos as yet.

So we need your help to improve the site - may we ask you all to visit the Wiki at <https://historicfalkland.scot/wiki/> and look around - perhaps search for your own home, or a place you know, and tell us of anything that's wrong or needs expanding.

We're also starting to include information from other sources and we need your help on this too. The little book by Watters and Gelendinning about the NTS's Little Houses Improvement Scheme mentions **"Thatched Cottage (also Peggie's House), 52 High Street West"**— but where's that? I can't tie it up with any house I know (and do houses in High Street West actually have numbers?).

And Glen L. Pride, in his book *Kingdom of Fife: An illustrated Architectural Guide*, mentions: **"Hollyben"** — but again I can't link that to any house that I know of (although I have my suspicions!)

Answers by email, please, to ross@foxeearth.net.

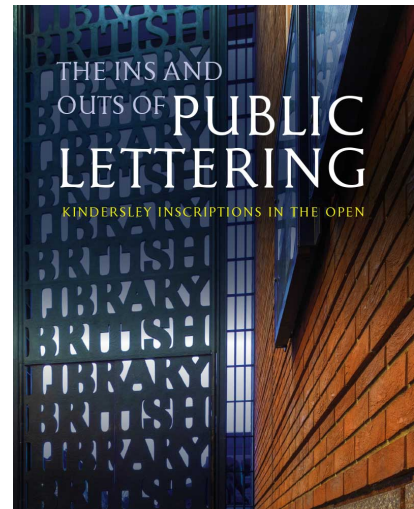


Public Lettering

During 2020 I wrote every month about trees, a subject dear to my heart, and topical during the time many of us were taking daily walks in the surrounding landscape. During 2021, I propose to explore themes relating to craftsmanship. Sometimes, as now, this may take the form of a review of a book which is relevant and which I have particularly enjoyed; sometimes I may write about a particular craft or craftsman; sometimes I might write about a particular example of craftsmanship which has caught my attention.

Today I have been feeling inspired by reading, for the second time since it was published six months ago, a book with text by a friend of mine, Marcus Waithe. He is a literary historian, a Fellow of Magdalene College, Cambridge, and has the marvellous role of being Pepys Librarian, responsible for the collection of rare books left to the College by an alumnus, namely Samuel Pepys, the great diarist of the Restoration period in the late 17th century. Five years ago, in 2016, I persuaded him to give a talk at the first of five Craft Symposia I have organised in Falkland. He has therefore been to Falkland and indeed spent the whole three days of the Symposium with us.

The book is entitled *Ins and Outs - PUBLIC LETTERING, Kindersley Inscriptions in the Open*, published by Cardozo Kindersley, Cambridge 2020. [It can be ordered](#) from the Cardozo Kindersley website.



Why do I think that everyone who cares about the beauty and interest of our villages, towns and cities should read this book? Good lettering matters, first in order to provide clear communication in a public context and secondly because good lettering – in this instance *letter-cutting* - has the capacity to provide an immediate sense of harmony and well-being across a wide spectrum of contexts ranging from the name of a street to a poignant memorial whether of an individual or a whole community of individuals such as the war memorial on the west wall of the chapel of Trinity College, Cambridge, illustrated on pages 104-105. This memorial was carried out in 1951 by David Kindersley and his assistants, it was cut in situ in Portland stone, and it comprises 4050 letters. Literally a *tour de force*, but then the same could be said of many of the examples given in this masterly little book.



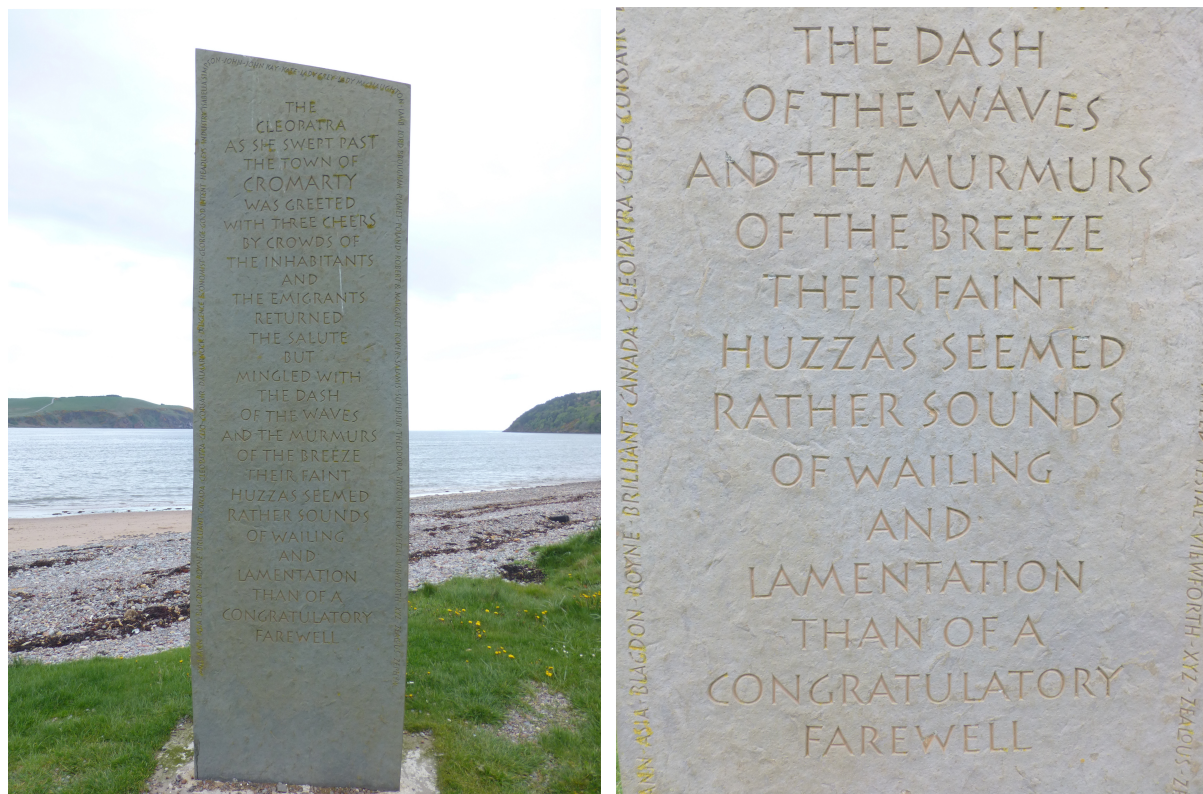
Sometimes the tersest inscriptions are the most eloquent, in this case the entry point into the Maspie Den, a much-loved and

Who was David Kindersley (1915-1995)? He was a prodigiously gifted sculptor and letter-cutter, apprenticed to Eric Gill (1882-1940) in 1934, setting up on his own after two years. Following the second World War he established a new Workshop in 1946, in Barton, Cambridgeshire, later re-establishing the present Workshop in a former infants' school on the edge of Cambridge. His widow, Lida Lopez Cardozo Kindersley, continues to run that Workshop, and to train apprentices, aiming always for the highest standards in design and execution. I had the great joy of

Fabric Commission for England. During the whole of that time, I nurtured our *Register of Artists of Craftsmen* and organised an annual conference which we called *The Creative Artist and the Church*. David, then, and Lida, now, continue to inspire me to grasp whatever opportunities come our way to encourage the survival, revival and active flowering of craftsmanship today.

The 'Ins and Outs ...' of the title refer to entrances and departures, and 'Out' perhaps also refers to the fact that the examples are mostly but not entirely in outdoor public places. The most public of all lies in the names of the streets of Cambridge. One morning in 1947 David Kindersley 'woke to find the unique and characterful cast-iron street names being replaced by a particularly bad sample of Ministry of Transport lettering – equally badly spaced.' David Kindersley, with his sharp 'seeing eye', surely influenced by John Ruskin, had the insight to realise that it was not only the letters but the spaces between them that were important. The whole story is told in another Cardozo Kindersley publication, *Optical letter spacing*, 2001, but suffice it to say here that because of David Kindersley's insight and passion for lettering the city of Cambridge has what is most likely the clearest and most satisfying street signs in the world, though undoubtedly it has had a widespread influence elsewhere.

David's influence on lettering has been profound, not only through what has come through the Workshop but also because of the apprentices who have learned their skills from him and then Lida. One of David's apprentices was his son Richard Kindersley, who set up his own workshop in London, and whose work may be seen in and around St Paul's Cathedral and many other sites. Richard has also run, year after year, a summer school in stone carving at Cromarty on the Black Isle where is one of his finest works, the Emigrants' Stone.



The Emigrants' Stone

At this point I would like to pay tribute to the design of the book, which makes it very easy and pleasant to follow the points that Marcus Waithe, a Companion of the Guild of St George, is making in his text. Pages 17 and 18 are a good example of that. The text is explaining how many and how varied are the notable institutions for which Cardozo Kindersley have provided the lettering. On the opposite side there is a fine image of Lida with the architect Sir Colin St John

Wilson, designer of The British Library (close to St Pancras Railway Station), with the gateway to the Library behind them: on the sandstone arch the first letter 'T' is two metres high. Within the sandstone archway the metal gate has 'British Library' in letters which have wide spaces between them at the top and then become progressively narrower as they descend, tier by tier, with the words 'British' and 'Library' alternating. Looking back to the text page there are two tiny precious archive images of the letter-cutting in progress, on scaffolding high up on the structure.

There is great emphasis on the Workshop's practice in cutting letters in situ. This must entail an element of risk, not least from the British weather, but must also promote a deep engagement with the project on the part of every member of the Workshop team. On p.47 Marcus Waithe memorably refers to 'the kinds of exposure – including the bracing effects of wind on a chisel grip – to which public letters and letterers are subject.'

To give the flavour of Marcus Waithe's insightful and harmonious style of writing it is essential to provide an example, and since I want to promote the use of fine lettering in public places, I have chosen the following observation inspired by the frieze of a handsome Memorial Hall in Pickering, Yorkshire:

Inscriptions that fulfil public functions need to be concise, direct, legible, and in several ways incisive. But letters in the open do more than convey information; or, at least, they communicate across a broader spectrum than the literal meaning of a text. This comes down to an expanded idea of what reading actually is. The best inscriptions give us permission to slow down. Our eyes are detained by qualities of material, by the varied depth of cut, by a sense of delight or surprise in the setting. They resist the usual informational tug propelling us toward the end of a sentence. Reading in the open becomes, in this way, an act of contemplation. The same applies at the level of the making, so that cutting letters in stone becomes a kind of meditative practice ... (pp.25-29).

A work well known to me is the circular commemorative stone (actually a sea-green slate from Kirkstone) towards the west end of Orford church where Benjamin Britten's *Noyes Fludde* and four 'church operas' were first performed. It was cut by David and Lida in 1982 and is a great masterpiece in its own right, though easily susceptible to damage. David used to say that 'the floor is a great unexplored area'. Therefore, in villagescapes and townscape, it represents something of an opportunity whereas in churches and cathedrals we are already used to seeing ledger-stones set in the floor, often with superb lettering and carved heraldry. My all-time favourite from the Workshop is the immense ledger-stone commemorating the medieval abbots of St Albans Abbey in the Choir of what is now the Cathedral & Abbey Church of St Alban.

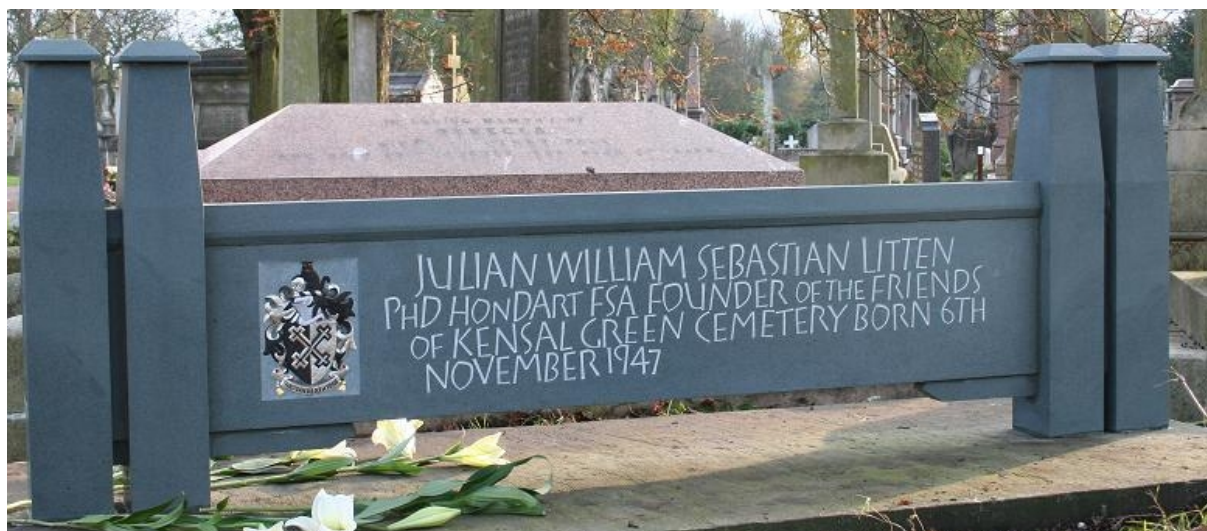
There are references to John Ruskin here and there, as one might expect from a Companion. The Workshop furnished the external inscription on the former Ruskin Gallery, Sheffield, with letters of marine plywood stating 'Founded 1875 The Ruskin Gallery Reopened 1985'. Inside, now in the Millennium Gallery in Sheffield, is an inscription on green slate of stupendous magnificence with the words 'The Ruskin Gallery' interwoven with a floriated pattern worthy of a medieval manuscript, which was one of Ruskin's great interests as a collector, and from which he considered – rightly – that we could still draw rich inspiration.

Colour and gilding are conspicuous in the work of the Cardozo Kindersley Workshop, as they have been since Greek and Roman antiquity. The Ruskin Gallery stone just mentioned is an example of the lavish use of gilding which prompts Marcus Waithe to observe that it hints 'at an overbrimming joy in learning. Entering in this way becomes a mode of re-thinking, redolent of the Delphic admonition.'



Examples are also chosen to show how letter-cutting can transform the humblest of buildings such as the long lintel stone over the doors of a barn on the Isle of Colonsay, Argyll, and a relief carving for Aldrich's Brush Factory, in Diss, Norfolk. I constantly observe how an inscription can tell us in a few words the historical significance of a place, and we are given the example of the enclosing wall of the Memorial Court of Clare College, Cambridge, which tells (what had been almost entirely forgotten) that 'Here in the first Eastern General Hospital 70,000 casualties were treated between 1914 & 1919.' An element of beauty, interest and significance has been added in 2016 which relates to the years around 1916. The letters were cut into the existing wall – which should often be possible – and painted dark red, with gilded marks between each word.

The last major topic raised is that of the Workshop's memorial work. I have long been a patron of an organisation originally called *Memorials by Artists*, and one of the inspiring ideas behind it is the dialogue between the bereaved and the artist, sculptor or letter-cutter, so that what is executed is a grave marker which is individual to the person commemorated, in a material appropriate to that location, and as Marcus Waithe puts it, 'letters that respect valuable materials by harnessing the qualities of stone to the full. Whether exuberant or restrained, a unifying feature is the complete absence of morbidity. Good design is essential, but so too is a willingness to gesture towards character, to register what the deceased cared about.' A wonderful example is the ledger over the recently established burial place of the poet William Blake in Bunhill Fields, executed in 2018 in Portland stone, a stone much used in the City of London.



The unusual 'bedstead' memorial above was commissioned from letter-cutter Charles Smith by someone who is still very much alive! Few care to go so far. But Charles Smith has enriched our own lives with the nameplate for Brunton House, and with the table (below) on which we have lunch outdoors when the the weather makes it possible.



Marcus Waithe concludes his essay by saying that 'when the contract between patron and maker exceeds its usual bounds' it produces 'a kind of radiant wealth'.

I can only urge anyone who reads these words to buy this book, to give it as a present, and to mention it with affection and enthusiasm wherever you go. Others in the series have also given me immense pleasure over the years. But this skilful marriage of words and images makes it one of the very best.

Peter Burman

Future meetings

- 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.

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