



Keeping you updated!

Supplement to the Falkland Society Newsletter, April 2021

Dear member/Dear friend,

We normally like to send out a reminder a day or so before our monthly meetings, but this month we've had more than usual to report mid-month, so this is by way of a Supplement to the Newsletter you should have received on the 1st of April. You'll remember from the Newsletter that we had to postpone May's visit to the Wemyss School of Needlework, for Covid reasons. Well we're now happy to announce a replacement event: Alexandra Lotz will be talking to us on 12 May about 'Horse Heritage', and the Wemyss visit is now scheduled (Covid permitting) for 14 July.

In the Newsletter we mentioned that the Society had joined the **Scottish Local History Forum** and we're listed on their directory of organisations. The latest news is that our book, *Falkland and its People 1901–1913*, can now be ordered through the SLHF website – see www.slhf.org/books – this should bring it to the notice of many more people throughout Scotland with an interest in local history, and if you've not yet bought the book yourself this will be an easy way to order a copy.

As previously announced, our speaker for tomorrow (or today, whenever you receive this: Wednesday 14 April) is **Karen Dundas of Scottish Wall Paintings Conservators** - see below.

And don't forget if you missed any of our previous Zoom lectures you can view the recordings at falklandsociety.org.uk/recordings.shtml.

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

Peter Burman (Chair)

April Meeting

**Your invitation
to the Falkland Society meeting for 14 April 2021**

**Karen Dundas,
Scottish Wall Paintings Conservators**

Karen lives in Dunfermline, Fife, and has lately become involved with the painted decoration which is one of the special features of the House of Falkland. She leads a long-established group of conservators who work on wall paintings and painted decoration, of all periods, in churches, cathedrals, country houses, town halls, schools, universities – in short, wherever they are to be found.

Karen's current project is the wooden ceiling of 1522 in St Machar's Cathedral, where remarkably the painted decoration still includes the papal coat of arms! Was it just was not recognised by the Protestant reformers, or was it too difficult to access? The current conservation programme has had to wrestle with the heavy-handed restoration of the 1860s and with a further restoration by Historic Scotland in the 1990s.



Karen says it's important to be on the look-out for paintings that have been over-painted or plastered over by a later generation but may come to light again many years later when buildings are being restored or adapted for re-use. An example is the dining room in Lews Castle, Stornaway, Isle of Lewis, where a delicious scheme of painted decoration has come to light and been restored: a mixture of careful conservation and re-creation, of feathery trees with branches that look like ferns, and the cornice decoration of trailing cotoneasters. The castle was given to the town of Stornaway by its last private owner in 1923 and has always been something of an albatross round its neck: a more sustainable approach has been funded by the Heritage Lottery Fund and others so that it will become a revenue-earning hotel as well as a museum and heritage centre.

Another example is the Radisson Collection Hotel at 302–304 Lawnmarket, Edinburgh, where the early 17th century painted ceilings have been revealed, conserved and brilliantly presented as aspects of modern hotel rooms.

A local example is the work that Karen did with her partner Fiona Allardyce, now

retired, on the three beautiful heraldic shields on the gatehouse of Falkland Palace, dating no doubt from the third Marquess of Bute's time in the 1890s. More recently the Falkland Stewardship Trust has employed Karen for emergency fixing and temporary covering of painted decoration in Lord Bute's Study in the House of Falkland (now happily the Headmaster's Study of Falkland House School).

Another triumph for the National Trust for Scotland has been the early 17th century painted ceilings in Gladstone's Land, again in the Lawnmarket in Edinburgh. The house was scheduled for demolition in 1930, but the NTS, founded in 1936, was able to rescue it. There have been several phases of restoration and it will be exciting to visit the house again now that a further phase of work has been carried out. The presentation and partly adaptive re-use of the house has been carefully thought-out by the Trust.

The most *modern* painted decoration to be conserved by Karen and her colleagues is a vibrant scheme of painted decoration of 2005 in the Fraser Noble Building of the Engineering Department of the University of Aberdeen. Karen and Fiona were able to consult the original artist, which is a rarity in the field of wall painting conservation.

Karen has graciously offered her contact details: wallpaintings@gmail.com, mobile number 07943 630571. If anyone comes across an unknown or newly appreciated wall painting or piece of painted decoration, she is most likely the very best person to contact in Scotland. She is also very happy to answer any questions.

18:45 for 19:00, Wednesday 14 April

Meeting ID: 836 6641 2324

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

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/83666412324>

From 18:45 on the 14th.

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 **836 6641 2324**

Our meeting for May: Alexandra Lotz on Horse Heritage

During the time, 2007–2012, that I was Professor of Cultural Heritage Management at the Brandenburg Technical University, Cottbus, Department of World Heritage Studies, Alexandra Lotz was a most valued friend and colleague. She had researched and written the dissertation for her Master's degree on the House of Falkland, so she is no stranger to Falkland, nor to Falkland people. She felt very welcome here and received encouragement and support from Marietta Crichton Stuart, our leading local historian, and others in the community of Falkland and at Falkland House School. Her dissertation was excellent and most enjoyable to read.

Since then she has become a leading authority on all aspects of horse heritage and runs her own consultancy. These aspects range from landscapes modified by centuries of horse breeding and nurture, through the intangible skills of horse-breeding and management, to the artefacts associated with the 'heritage of the



horse' – horse harness including saddles, textiles, carriages, and the whole vast subject of architecture expressly designed for horses.

With her I have visited a number of the numerous historic horse studs in Europe. We don't have one in the United Kingdom but everywhere I have been in the horse heritage world people say to me,

approvingly, 'But you have HM The Queen'. The Queen is deeply respected everywhere in the horse world for her knowledge, her skills as a horsewoman, and the way in which the horses on the Royal Estate are looked after and housed. At this moment we would not wish to forget that HRH the Duke of Edinburgh was a virtuoso driver of horse-drawn carriages.

I felt extremely proud of knowing Alexandra about three years ago when I went to a lecture by her at the Wallace Collection in London (incidentally my favourite art museum since I was a student). I have asked her to unfold to us how horse heritage is everywhere if you know where to look for it, because up to 100 years or so ago anyone who needed to move around had to do so with the aid of a horse!

If you are remotely interested in this vitally important aspect of human culture, i.e. our relationship with the horse historically and still today, then you will not want to miss this talk!

Peter Burman

Our July meeting: a day on the Wemyss estate

Because of Covid, I have negotiated a change of date with Fiona Wemyss, who runs the incomparable Wemyss School of Needlework about twenty minutes' drive from Falkland. We are invited for an inside-of-a-day visit to the Wemyss Estate, which will run something like as follows.

We may well need to divide into two groups in which case we shall, in time-honoured fashion, 'swap over'. There will be a mid-morning time of arrival; then half of us will visit the School of Needlework and half of us will be welcomed by Fiona's sister-in-law, Charlotte Wemyss, to the Wemyss Castle's far-famed gardens. We will probably opt to take picnics and there will be tables and chairs provided for us, and loos of course. Then in the afternoon we will 'swap over'.

With the June Newsletter we shall be sending out the booking form, so I will not go into further detail now, but I do hope that everyone who would like to come will make a note of the date (Wednesday 14 July)! Of course, it is all dependent on the nature of the regulations which will be in force at the time. But it seemed to be worth the risk that it might, just, have to be postponed. But let us hope not, as we have not had a Falkland Society outing for a very long time. We have plenty of good ideas for more!

Peter Burman

Future meetings

- 14 April: Karen Dundas, Scottish Wall Paintings Conservators
- 12 May: Alexandra Lotz: Horse Heritage
- 9 June: David F. Wilson, community artist
- 14 July: visit to Wemyss Castle Gardens and the Wemyss School of Needlework

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

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

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