



The Falkland Society

Scottish Registered Charity SC017201

www.falklandsociety.org.uk

www.historicfalkland.scot

news@falklandsociety.org.uk

Falkland Society Newsletter, January 2022

Re-sending as there were a couple of errors (fairly obvious ones, perhaps) in the previous version

Dear <<First Name>>,

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I hope you all had a good Christmas and Hogmanay! Now that the festivities are over may we remind you that we've got a very interesting [line-up of events](#) during 2022 and we very much hope you'll be joining us – online and possibly later in person.

It gives me great pleasure that this month's speaker, Kieran Allan, is a young man who lives in Falkland and has made it his special study to research and write about the Italian community living in Scotland. He has called his talk 'The Tricolore and the Saltire', evoking the national flags of Italy and Scotland. More about this below!

And a reminder – if you missed last month's meeting, with Josh Davie's film, you can see the recording at <https://falklandsociety.org.uk/videos/2021-12-15-Voices-of-Falkland.mp4>; recordings of previous meetings, back to June last year, are always available [here](#).

Peter Burman (Chair)

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January Meeting

(date below corrected)

Our first Falkland Society meeting for 2022 will feature **Kieran Allan**, on '**The Tricolore and the Saltire**', the story of the Italian community in Scotland.

Kieran Allan is a researcher on the story of Italian immigration and the Italian community in the UK. He has been analysing the history of the Italian community in Scotland, 1860–1950.



Please join us (via Zoom as usual) at 19:00 on Wednesday, 12 January. The online 'meeting room' will be open at <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/83666412324> any time from 18:45 on the 12th.

You can also join by phone on **0203 481 5240**, **0131 460 1196**, **0208 080 6591** or **0330 088 5830**, quoting the meeting ID: **836 6641 2324**.



Kieran Allan

“My name is Kieran Allan, and I am currently writing a book on the Italian community in Scotland from 1860 to 1950. Due to my study, I have become extremely passionate about the Italian communities past, present and future. I am a member of several Italian charities and societies whose aim is to support the Italian community, Italian culture and Italian heritage in Scotland. I am also establishing an Italian history society and arranging an exhibition on Italian Scots in the future.

“I shall be addressing why Italians left Italy en masse in the ‘great Italian diaspora’ in the 19th and 20th centuries and their migration to Scotland. I shall examine the struggles Italians encountered in their new country, their cruel arrest and internment in 1940 and the ‘forgotten tragedy’ of the *Arandora Star*.”

The Scots Italians or the Italian Scots

My first introduction to Scots Italians was through becoming a regular customer of Valvona & Crolla, the iconic Italian food shop and café in Elm Row, Edinburgh, towards the top of Leith



Mary Contini in the shop

Walk. For fifteen years I lived about ten minutes' walk away and my Saturday morning routine was to go to Valvona & Crolla for breakfast and then to sit with a cappuccino and read my way through *The Guardian*. Hence, I got to know the shop's owners Mary and Philip Contini, and bought, as they came out, Mary Contini's brilliant books of family history: *Dear Francesca* (2002), *Dear Olivia* (2006) and *Dear Alphonso* (2017). At home in Falkland we make frequent use of her cookery book *Valvona & Crolla: A Year at an Italian Table*. I also used to make a point of attending sessions of the Edinburgh branch of the Slow Food Movement when they were held at Valvona & Crolla and I remember as being especially memorable a demonstration about Italian cheeses (and how to handle them) from the Professor of Cheese at the Slow Food Movement's University of Food near Turin.

Another valuable work of Scots-Italian literature, which has an excellent bibliography of shared

Scottish-Italian interest, is Terri Colpi's *Italians' Count in Scotland: The 1933 Census* (Saint James Press, 2015). The title relates not to a regular UK government census (later this year we'll be able to see statistics from the 2021 census and examine the detailed family records from that held in 1921) but to a survey or *Censimento* initiated by the Italian Consulate General in Edinburgh in the early 1930s when the power and influence of the Fascist Movement was growing in Italy, which clearly had international implications and likely consequences for Italian nationals living in countries opposed to fascism. The Censimento enumerates nearly 6,000 men, women and children (this includes Italians born in Scotland, unlike the figure of 5,216 people born in Italy according to the official 1931 census) and provides a very rich source of information about Italians living in Scotland; there's no equivalent source for England, where the records were destroyed or returned to Italy. Tim Ellis, then Keeper of the Records of Scotland, points out in his foreword to Terri Colpi's book that not every member of the Italian community chose to complete the census, but 'more than enough survives, from 1400 named individuals, to give a snapshot of generations of immigrants who made a huge impact on their new homeland: musicians, shop-keepers and restaurant owners, waiters, ice-cream sellers, workers in mosaic and terrazzo, hairdressers, teachers and academics. ... From Dumfries to Orkney, and from Stornaway to Dunbar, they left a lasting legacy wherever they settled.'

Migration from Italy to Scotland has been predominantly from the provinces of Lucca and Frosinone. There has also been significant emigration from Isernia, La Spezia, Pistoia, Parma, Latina, Massa-Carrara and Pordenone. The majority of the Scottish-Italian community settled in the Glasgow area, most of those being of Tuscan origin. The smaller Italian community in and around Edinburgh is predominantly from the province of Lazio. Throughout the period of settlement from around 1875 onwards commitment to and contact with the places of origin in Italy remained strong.

In her final chapter, Terri Colpi records that: 'Today some 12,400 Italians are registered at the

Italian Consulate in Edinburgh and estimates of the “community” stand somewhere between 30,000 and 80,000 people. Italian immigration to Scotland continues, with new waves of young professionals and other young job seekers currently adding yet further layers and chapters to its evolution and history. That the earlier Italian migrants arrived, survived and prospered is in no doubt; that the community went on to achieve an unparalleled position of not only acceptance and integration but also of status and recognition in Scotland, is unquestioned today.’ (*Italians’ Count in Scotland*, p.144)

Italy and the United Kingdom were allies in the First World War, but in the Second World War the Fascist Government of Italy allied itself with Hitler’s Germany. This had a traumatic effect on the Italian community in Scotland. All adult males were interned. The wives and children left behind struggled to survive economically but also had to contend with the mistrust and discrimination of neighbours whom they had previously considered to be their friends. Of those men who were imprisoned, many found themselves held in Northern Ireland or the Isle of Man. Others were employed on the Orkney archipelago, at Scapa Flow, to construct a barrier against German U-boats. Famously, some of those men had considerable craft skills and artistic gifts and the ‘Italian Chapel’ at Lambholm, constructed of all kinds of abandoned materials, is now one of the most popular visitor attractions on Orkney. It is a place of memory, certainly, but also a place that celebrates the skills and unquenchable spirit of Italian people.



The Italian Chapel, Orkney

A second trauma, which profoundly affected the Italian community in Scotland, was the sinking of the former cruise ship the *SS Arandora Star* on 2 July 1940, torpedoed by a German U-boat off the west coast of Ireland with large loss of life, 805 people in total. What became the ship’s last voyage was the transport of 734 Italian and 479 German internees who had been detained under Defence Regulations. The Wikipedia entry for the ship gives an account of its earlier war service as well as of the fateful last voyage, and describes how an aircraft dropped emergency supplies and circled overhead for several hours until a Canadian destroyer arrived and rescued

868 survivors of whom 586 were detainees.

A memorial chapel was constructed in Bardi, home town of 48 of those Italians who had died, and an annual commemorative Mass is celebrated there. In Lucca, in 2004, a monument was unveiled in the courtyard of the museum of the Paulo Cresci Foundation for the History of Italian Emigration. The commemoration of those Scots Italians who died was finally achieved in Scotland on 2 July 2010, the 70th anniversary of the sinking of the ship, when Mario Conti, then Archbishop of Glasgow, and Alex Salmond, then First Minister of Scotland, dedicated and opened a memorial garden adjoining the Roman Catholic Cathedral of St Andrew in Glasgow. The centrepiece of the garden, itself influenced by Italian garden design, is a silver-mirrored monument designed by Roman architect Giulia Chiarini. Archbishop Conti said at the ceremony that the central monument had been designed 'to encourage people to reflect on the great mysteries of life, death and resurrection'. The costs of the garden and monument had been raised by the Scots Italian community. It has become, quite simply, a place of pilgrimage. It can also be seen, like the 'Italian Chapel' on Orkney, as a celebration of Italian design and crafts skills.



The memorial at Glasgow Cathedral

The Wikipedia entry *Italian Scots* concludes with a list of 'Notable Italian Scots'. I decided to see how many of the names on the list – which is a long one – I had come across already and therefore could attach some meaning to (others, especially if keen on football, would make complementary lists): Nicola Benedetti, violinist; Peter Capaldi, actor, twelfth Doctor in *Doctor Who*; Jack Coia, architect, co-founder of one of the best Scottish architectural practices of the second half of the twentieth century, designer of notable churches; Mario Conti, Archbishop of Glasgow; Richard Demarco, art gallerist and impresario; Sophia Dussek, musician; Linda Fabiani MSP, former Culture Secretary in the Scottish Government; Charles and Rocco Forte, hoteliers; Sir Anton Muscatelli, Principal and Vice-Chancellor of the University of Glasgow; Sir Eduardo Paolozzi, sculptor; Jack Vettriano, painter.

Oddly, the list includes HRH Prince Charles Edward Stuart, who probably spent more of his life

in Italy than in Scotland; and David Rizzio, private secretary to Mary, Queen of Scots. I could add John Ruskin, who spent a good deal of his life in Italy, and whose three-volume *Stones of Venice* (1851-1853) was the first-ever study of a city from many angles, historical and cultural: his father, John James Ruskin, and ancestors going backwards hailed from Perth and other parts of Scotland. Ruskin, essentially, was Scottish. Such historical figures remind us that Italian culture has been a potent influence in Scotland for more than just the past 150 years or so, and that the influence has flowed in both directions. Long may the creative and personal links between our two countries continue to flourish.

It is probably too soon to consider the impact that Brexit may be having on Italian immigration to Scotland, or the other way round, but it can hardly be an encouraging moment in a story which has otherwise been so enriching for both Italians and Scots.

Peter Burman

Voices of Venice

It was good to see so many Falkland Society members at the Guild of St George event on 10 December, when our Chair, Peter Burman, took part in the first of a series of readings about Venice, from the works of John Ruskin.

The series continues on Friday 7 January at 5:30 p.m., when the two readers will be Arjun Jain, Young Companions' Representative to the Guild Board, and Ginevra Lo Sciuto, restorer and art historian from Sicily.



Arjun Jain



Ginevra Lo Sciuto

All are welcome to attend this event, but you will need to book in advance (no charge).

For more information, and how to book, go to

<https://www.eventbrite.com/e/voices-from-venice-2nd-of-4-readings-from-ruskins-writings-about-venice-tickets-200965020787>

There will be further readings on 11 February and 11 March (all Fridays) culminating in an all-day conference on Saturday 2 April. All the events will be on Zoom and available to all.

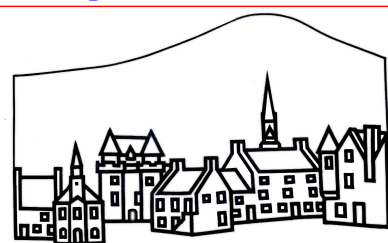
And a reminder that if you missed the event in December, with readings by Peter Burman and Clive Wilmer, you can now view the recording at:

[https://guildofstgeorge.us18.list-manage.com/track/click?
u=54e6b2bbcd58caa8909a2871d&id=fabec4738f&e=2b88abb52d](https://guildofstgeorge.us18.list-manage.com/track/click?u=54e6b2bbcd58caa8909a2871d&id=fabec4738f&e=2b88abb52d)

Falkland Historic Buildings

Many thanks to Jack for re-sending the old photos for the Wiki. I've incorporated one of them the home page (now retitled 'Welcome') at <https://historicfalkland.scot/wiki>. I intend to recycle the images on this page from time to time, so it continues to look fresh. I've also done a major upgrade to [the 'About' page](#), which describes some of the things we've been doing on the Wiki, and some things still waiting to be done.

The Wiki has grown a bit during December, including a number of new pages about Freuchie. In the better weather I hope to spend more time there, looking at and photographing its historic buildings. As always, if you have any good photos, or images or information about how things have developed over the years, I'd be delighted to hear from you.



Falkland Historic Buildings

Ross Burgess

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