View this email in your browser

The Falkland Society

Scottish Registered Charity SC017201
www.falklandsociety.org.uk
www.historicfalkland.scot
news@falklandsociety.org.uk

Falkland Society Newsletter, September 2022

Dear <<First Name>>,

Thak you for signing up to receive our Newsletters, and welcome to our new season of talks, which begins on Wednesday 14 September with our Annual General Meeting and a talk by our Chair, Peter Burman. More details below.

A reminder that membership subscriptions for the 2022-23 season are now due. You don't have to be a member to take part in Society events, but we would very much encourage you to become a member to help support the ongoing work of the Society. If you'd like to join, please download the membership form at

https://falklandsociety.org.uk/flyers/membershipform2022-23.pdf

and return it to us with your subscription. Many thanks.

Ross Burgess (Secretary)

In this issue:

- September Meeting
- AGM Agenda
- Use them or lose them: Fife churches at risk
- New Archaeology Partnership starts off...
- Arandora Star commemoration

September Meeting

Our next Falkland Society meeting will be on Wednesday 14 September, starting at 7 p.m., when our Chair, Dr Peter Burman, will speak on the subject: *Use them or lose them: Fife churches at risk*, following a brief Annual General Meeting. More details below.

This meeting will be held in person at **The Stables, Falkland Estate KY15 7AF**, by kind invitation of the Falkland Stewardship Trust.

We are again hoping to make this a 'hybrid' event, so that those unable to get to The Stables will be able to view it remotely. You're invited to join us from 6:45 p.m. onwards at

https://us02web.zoom.us/j/87387761128

ready for a prompt start at 7. There's no charge. Please note the meeting will be recorded as usual (and apologies to those who failed to log on last time: we don't expect this technical issue to happen again).

You can also join by phone on **0203 481 5240**, **0131 460 1196**, **0208 080 6591** or **0330 088 5830**, quoting the meeting ID: **873 8776 1128.**

Please DO NOT copy these details to Facebook or other social media.

AGM Agenda

Notice is hereby confirmed that the Falkland Society AGM will take place by Zoom at 7.00 p.m. on Wednesday 14 September 2022. Immediately afterwards, at not later than 7.30 p.m., a lecture entitled *Use them or lose them: Fife churches at risk* will be given by our Chair, Dr Peter Burman.

The Agenda will be as follows:

1. Minutes of the previous AGM held by Zoom, Wednesday 15 September 2021 – see https://falklandsociety.org.uk/flyers/AGMminutesSeptember2021.pdf
2. Chair's Report on the year 2021–2022 – Dr Peter Burman
3. Treasurer's Report – Robeena Dhar
4. Membership Report – Ross Burgess
5. Publisher and Webmaster Report – Ross Burgess
6. Election of Office Bearers and Committee.

The current Office Bearers and Committee are as follows:

- Chair: Peter Burman
- Depute Chair: John Smith
- Secretary: Ross Burgess
- Treasurer: Robeena Dhar
- Committee members:
    - Kieran Allan
    - Betty Gilchrist
    - Fiona Lawrenson
    - Thomas Playfair
    - Marietta Crichton Stuart

All the above are willing to continue.

Use them or lose them:

Fife churches at risk

At the age of 11 or 12, I was living on our family farm in Warwickshire about twelve miles north of Stratford-on-Avon. A cousin of my father, Sir John Burman, had written two books about the history of our family so I knew that we were very much a family of 'Stratford and around', intermarried with the Arden family, the family of William Shakespeare's mother, Mary Arden. The churchyard at Shottery has many tombstones with our family name cut into the stone. Another link was with a late seventeenth-century sculptor called Thomas Burman (1618–1674).

I suppose this family feeling was one of the things that attracted me to historic churches in my early teens. I found myself drawn to churches and the wonderful treasures which they often contain; to my amazement I found that nearly every village in a wide compass around our farm had an ancient and interesting church – containing beautiful old woodwork, stained glass of all periods, remarkable old textiles, sculptured monuments with wonderful inscriptions giving graphic summaries of the lives of the persons commemorated, and so on. From the age of 14, I began to learn to play the organ and that was an added reason for visiting churches on Saturdays and in the school holidays: I would go to the vicarage and ask for the key to the organ loft, and I don't remember a single occasion when the vicar said no. Sometimes they would come across to the church with me, and I enjoyed meeting them and the information they were able to give me.

So it happened, that after reading for a degree in the History of Art & Architecture I found myself applying for the post of Assistant Director of the Council for the Care of Churches and the Cathedrals Fabric Commission for England. For twenty-two years I rose through the ranks and for twelve years I was the Director. During that time my friend Marcus Binney and I were commissioned to organise a major exhibition at the Victoria & Albert Museum called *Change & Decay, the Future of Our Churches*. I was given the time to do this, very generously, and we had a two-year lead time during which we visited countless churches which were trembling on the brink of redundancy or closure. Often you could see the reason for it. Perhaps a town or suburb had been industrialised, and there might be very few people actually living there. Many historic town centres were almost abandoned at that time, so far as people living there were concerned.

All denominations have had to face up to the closure of churches during the past half century. But the Church of England had developed a particularly good way of dealing with them. First of all, there had to be a report on the 'architectural, archaeological, historic and artistic aspects' of any church being considered for closure. These reports, in the early days often written by me, also gave focused advice on what might be the future of the building. Many churches are listed buildings and very few of those have been demolished since the legislation of the Pastoral Measure 1968 came into operation. A considerable number have found good, even excellent, new uses for cultural or community purposes: and, as we see everywhere in Scotland including Falkland, small country churches imaginatively converted make very attractive and unusual homes. The third possibility, which is one of the unsung achievements of our time in the heritage world, is that the really important churches – architecturally, archaeologically, artistically and historically – can be vested in a body called the Churches Conservation Trust which, by now, has almost 400 churches vested in it.



The communion table and sanctuary of Inglesham church with medieval painted decoration

The image above shows the church at Inglesham, in Wiltshire, which is now vested for preservation – and to be seen and enjoyed with the doors always open for visitors – conserved and managed by the Churches Conservation Trust. This was William Morris's favourite country church and he personally paid for its repair in the 1880s. It is the epitome of the sort of churches I loved to visit as a schoolboy, with beautiful old woodwork, ashen with age, and even considerable traces of medieval mural paintings. It was a great joy to revisit it in early July this year with a dear friend who lives nearby.

In my talk on 14 September, the opening lecture of the Falkland Society's new season 2022-2023, I want to show that church closure has its positive as well as its negative sides. But closing a church is almost always hurtful to local people, and to close a church without very deep thought and the strongest of reasons often seems to me counter-productive.

What solutions can we propose? The short answer is that, except for the small country churches that make nice houses, every possible use will depend first on the character of the building itself and then on the context. In the case of Falkland Parish Church many of us can see that it might make the perfect hub for the whole of the village, open to all, and to a certain extent able to pay its way as a community and cultural centre. The insertion of a floor between the galleries would provide a wonderful performance or gathering space, like the upper hall in The Hub, in the Old Town of Edinburgh, just below the Castle. There is a splendid organ in the west gallery, and the potential for music, dancing, and all kinds of meetings. Below there could be a number of smaller spaces but I want to suggest that one ingredient might be a well-designed exhibition telling 'the story of Falkland'. Falkland is inundated with visitors but there is nowhere they can go to learn something of the fascinating history of the burgh, the evolution of the burgh, the Palace and its successive families, the Estate with the House of Falkland, the schools, the industries, in fact the whole history of the place which adds up to something so special.



Other churches could have a dual purpose, both secular and sacred: the church at Yarpole, Herefordshire (pictured above) remains in use as a church while incorporating a shop and post office); yet others could be ‘pilgrimage churches’ (St Monans is an obvious possibility) or ‘festival churches’.

Peter Burman

New Archaeology Partnership starts off...

Archaeological work on East Lomond has been in abeyance since the untimely passing of Dr Oliver O'Grady and the onset of the Covid pandemic. However, after patient negotiation and planning, The Falkland Stewardship Trust and Aberdeen University commenced a new chapter of discovery with a community archaeology project at the beginning of August.

Following a call for community volunteers on the estate website, 28 individuals signed up to participate in these fresh excavations led by joint Directors Joe Fitzpatrick, Stewardship Trust Chairman, and Dr James O'Driscoll of Aberdeen University.

Joe explained that the primary focus of the dig was to obtain secure soil samples from underneath the outer annexe wall of the hillfort which could be successfully dated in the laboratory. He said 'It took a few patient days digging in very windy conditions to reach the wall underground, clear away tumble, and identify the inner and outer faces of the wall - but we did it! We opened two 10m x 4m trenches on different parts of the hillside and achieved all of our agreed objectives - soil and charcoal samples collected for dating and the foundation of the outer annexe wall identified.'

In addition and unexpectedly five hearths were also discovered sitting just within the wall and some small finds recorded.

Feedback from the University was very positive and generous, describing the Falkland team as 'the best they've ever worked with', and saying how much they enjoyed working on East Lomond. They are now actively processing the samples and will be working on an Excavation Report for the Trust. Once received, the Stewardship Trust hope to arrange a local talk in order to share the findings and any new knowledge about our local hill. Two photos from the dig are shared below for everyone's interest.





Arandora Star visit: 2 July 2022

On 12 January 2022 Kieran Allan, an enterprising Falkland resident, now also a Community Councillor as well as a member of our committee, gave the Falkland Society a memorable lecture, *The Tricolore and the Saltire – The story of the Italian community in Scotland*, including an account of the sinking of the Arandora Star by a German torpedo on 2 July 1940. The ship, formerly a luxurious cruise ship, was crammed with hundreds of Scots Italians who, following the entry of Italy into the War on the side of Hitler, were being transported to internment camps in Canada.

On 2 July 2022, Kieran led Ross Burgess and me to a no less memorable commemoration of that unspeakable tragedy at the Catholic cathedral of the Archdiocese of Glasgow, dedicated to St Andrew. The cathedral, always an architectural landmark, was internally re-ordered with superb panache in 2010–11 by Archbishop Mario Conti working with an outstanding Glasgow architectural partnership, Page & Park, and with the artists and craftspeople whose contributions are handsomely acknowledged and celebrated by the cathedral. As Archbishop Conti himself has said: ‘The grey-painted plaster that hid its inherent grandeur for almost 200 years has disappeared, and Glasgow’s first post-Reformation Catholic church, on the banks of the River Clyde, has gone from gloomy to glorious.’

The cathedral is situated on the north bank of the Clyde, with a busy road between the cathedral

and the river. Seen from the far side of the river the vast St Enoch Centre forms a kind of backdrop to the cathedral. Recent tall buildings on the west side of the cathedral do it no favours.



Yet the cathedral, built as St Andrew's Catholic Chapel in 1814–17, sits comfortably into its urban space. The stonework has been cleaned and conserved, largely by using traditional lime mortar for the pointing. On its east side is a quite large cloister-like area with large granite panels of lettered texts telling the story of the cathedral. The centrepiece of this area, commemorating those who perished on that ill-starred voyage on the Arandora Star, takes the form of an extensive installation which deploys both mirrors and water, highly original and effective.



The Arandora Star memorial, designed by an Italian architect, Giulia Chiarini, 2011

The Cathedral's architect was James Gillespie Graham (1777–1855), who designed a similar large chapel, now St Mary's Cathedral in Picardy Place, Edinburgh, at much the same time. He used the Decorated style of the fourteenth century, introducing a new and welcome high

standard of archaeological correctness into nineteenth-century Scottish architecture.

James Gillespie Graham was not only a scholarly architect but a prolific one. For example, the index of the *Fife* volume of the *Buildings of Scotland* series contains no less than 19 references to him, including the nave of Inverkeithing parish church, the Old Jail (currently a building 'at risk') in Cupar, the local government centre in St Catherine Street, Cupar and the extensive re-modelling of Crawford Priory, a country house south of Cupar now in a state of ruination.

The cathedral has been brilliantly re-ordered, keeping or reviving some of the later nineteenth-century works of art or decoration but, working through the agency of craftspeople and artists, introducing a layer of beauty and interest of the early twenty-first century. It is a joy, for example, to encounter the superb marble baptismal font placed carefully in the very centre of the nave, symbolically on the way towards the altar, filled with water, and with a finely lettered inscription on its west side and exquisite small-scale carvings round the rim.



The font (sculpted by Tim Pomeroy, 2011)

On first entering into the cathedral the visitor is struck by the Porch Mosaic, an unusual and sympathetic innovation, incorporating the coat-of-arms of the Archdiocese of Glasgow. It was designed by Netta Ewing and crafted in Bethlehem at the studio of Hani Mourad. It incorporates the title bestowed on Scotland by Pope Alexander III, *Specialis Filia Romanae Ecclesiae*, 'special daughter of the Roman Church'.



The Porch Mosaic

The cathedral is brilliantly lit by huge modern *coronae*, of the same moment as the general re-ordering of 2010–2011. They are an important element in the artistic decoration of the interior which is also notable for the medieval-style painted decoration on arches, pillars and ribs in bright well-chosen colours. Archbishop Mario Conti was well aware that the architecture of the Middle Ages was invariably a *painted* architecture, in which it followed on from the ancient civilisations of Egypt, Greece and Rome and the painted decoration he introduced is a subtle and effective way of reviving that use of vibrant colour.

The High Altar was originally in the shallow three-sided apse where now are placed the stalls of the Canons of the cathedral. The current marble altar and ambo were apparently designed by Archbishop Conti himself and are closer to the congregation in accordance with the principles laid down at the second Vatican Council as long ago as 1962-5.

The right-hand side aisle in the Chapel of Our Lady, which makes brilliant use of both nineteenthcentury and early twenty-first century sculpture. The left-hand side aisle culminates in the Blessed Sacrament Chapel which includes a very powerful painting of St John Ogilvie by Peter Howson, 2010. Peter Howson (who was born in 1958 and studied at the Glasgow School of Art) has a formidable reputation as one of the leading British figurative painters of today.



The Blessed Sacrament Chapel, with painting of St John Ogilvie



The Lady Chapel, unusually with beautiful doors to the sacristy instead of an altar

I can't resist adding that I was present in the Basilica of St Peter in Rome on 17 October 1976, to witness Pope Paul VI carry out the complex ceremonial of canonisation of St John Ogilvie. I found myself, as a representative of the Church of England, sitting in the same row as HRH Princess Alexandra of Kent and her husband Sir Angus Ogilvy (a distant relative of the saint). It was a deeply moving ceremony. St John Ogilvie was a fascinating and seemingly complex character who had been brought up as a Calvinist Protestant but, having been sent to study abroad, he became a Catholic, was later ordained as a Jesuit priest, and returned to Scotland to serve the beleaguered Catholic community. He was betrayed, tortured and martyred at Glasgow Cross, by hanging, on 10 March 1615. He is the only post-Reformation *Scottish* saint, and so it is very appropriate that he should be remembered and honoured in Glasgow's Catholic Cathedral.

Peter Burman

[If you missed Kieran's talk in January you can view it at https://falklandsociety.org.uk/videos/2022-01-12-Tricolore-and-Saltire.mp4]

Back to top.

Copyright © 2022 Falkland Society, All rights reserved.

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

