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The Falkland Society

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Falkland Society Newsletter, February 2023

Dear <<First Name>>,

Good to see the first snowdrops in bloom - Spring's on its way! A good selection of articles for you this month.

Peter Burman (Chair)

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February Meeting

Our next Falkland Society meeting will be on Wednesday 8 February starting at 7 p.m., when the speaker will be **Arjun Shivaji Jain**, talking to us from Delhi.

His subject will be **"The state of contemporary craftsmanship in India".**

You're invited to join us from 6:45 p.m. onwards at
https://us02web.zoom.us/j/85497035593
ready for a prompt start at 7 p.m.

You can also join by phone on **0203 481 5240**, **0131 460 1196**, **0208 080 6591** or **0330 088**

5830, quoting the meeting ID: **854 9703 5593.**



Arjun Shivaji Jain

Arjun and I are both ‘Companions’ (members) of John Ruskin’s Guild of St George. He is our *Young* Companions Representative on the Board and has been making an invaluable contribution in that role, thanks to the ubiquity of Zoom. His full-time job is as Director of a cultural centre in the south of Delhi which he calls Red House in homage to the house which Philip Webb designed (1859–60) for William and Jane Morris. Arjun's Red House offers high-quality film screenings, workshops, poetry readings and art exhibitions. He describes it as an ‘Arts & Crafts establishment attempting to put into practice the economic and artistic ideals of John Ruskin, Mahatma Gandhi, and Leo Tolstoy.’

His educational background embraces both the arts and the sciences. He has studied in London at Central St Martins, University of the Arts, London, and the Indian Institute of Technology, Roorkee, where he studied for an MSc in nuclear physics.

The first time he communicated with me I was astonished at the beauty of his apartment in Chittaranjan Park, New Delhi, and my amazement was compounded when I learned that, while clearly an intellectual, he was also a skilled craftsperson and had built his apartment himself. In fact, he is well experienced in brick construction, mortars using either cement or lime, carpentry and domestic paintwork.



Arjun's apartment: the seven windows are an echo of John Ruskin's house at Brantwood

He already has three books to his credit, in Hindustani and English, in verse and prose, on the subjects of national language, family relations and immigration laws. He has exhibited original paintings at The Laundry, in London; and he has been an intern at the National University of Singapore under Professor John Baez, widely credited as being the inventor of blogs. He has travelled in Nepal, Singapore, Russia, Italy, Spain and Poland and lived in London. You can download his interesting and diverse CV (PDF file, set in his own adaptationof a classic typeface) from the Falkland Society website.

Arjun has been visiting craft institutions in Delhi, as well as markets, both organised and informal, to engage with craftspeople directly – with the triple objective of creating his inspiring talk for us; putting together a Ruskin Week to reflect Ruskin's passion for traditional craftsmanship; and working towards his his long-term desire to establish a crafts workshop at Red House or elsewhere.



Poster for a Red House event

Arjun proposes to divide the talk broadly into three sections, following a Gandhian top-down approach.

1. **How craft is looked at in India:** drastically different from the British view, also touching on the current and projected political scenario in India. In India just as in the UK, the political establishment places undue emphasis on 'growth', meaning economic growth, without acknowledging that the kinds of growth they have in mind are not sustainable and that will most likely add to global warming' and all that that entails, and widen still futher the gap between the seriously rich and the seriously poor.
2. **Delhi, perhaps the fastest growing metropolis in the world:** its status as an ancient city, including its Mughal past, its peculiar religiosity, the status of craftspeople today, traditional building materials, traditional flora, and the role of refugees in the city's modern make-up; the city as a 'window to the world'. Arjun feels that Delhi has no particular character as compared to other centres of art and architecture such as Jaipur or Calcutta, but Arjun has found some worthwhile contenders to be considered true crafts of Delhi.
3. **Arjun himself,** in the context of his family history in Delhi, the history of the Jain community and its foundational role in the art and crafts traditions of the nation; his own experiments with architecture and what he is trying to do at Red House. He will talk about the prospects for a distinctive Delhi style, and his own efforts to bring this about; certain 'restorations' which he has been responsible for; his aspirations for the Ruskin Week he is planning; and four or five specific crafts:
    - using lime as a building mortar
    - brickwork, including the construction of domes, arches, and lattices (*jalis*);

- ‘Chik’-making – window shades and blinds, traditionally made of bamboo and the local-to-Delhi ‘sarkanda’ grass, which featured heavily in the poetry of the Mughal era
- Zardosi – literally, ‘sewing with gold’.



Chiks



Zardozi

I believe this will be a really special lecture for all of us, shining a light by comparison on what we have and what we lack in Scotland, or the UK.

Arjun himself is an accomplished poet but it is so typical of him that he has sent me a poem, in this case by that fascinating character Rabindranath Tagore (1861–1941), which I cannot resist using here to conclude this introduction to Arjun Jain himself – an original, vital, engaging personality who I am sure will inspire us all.

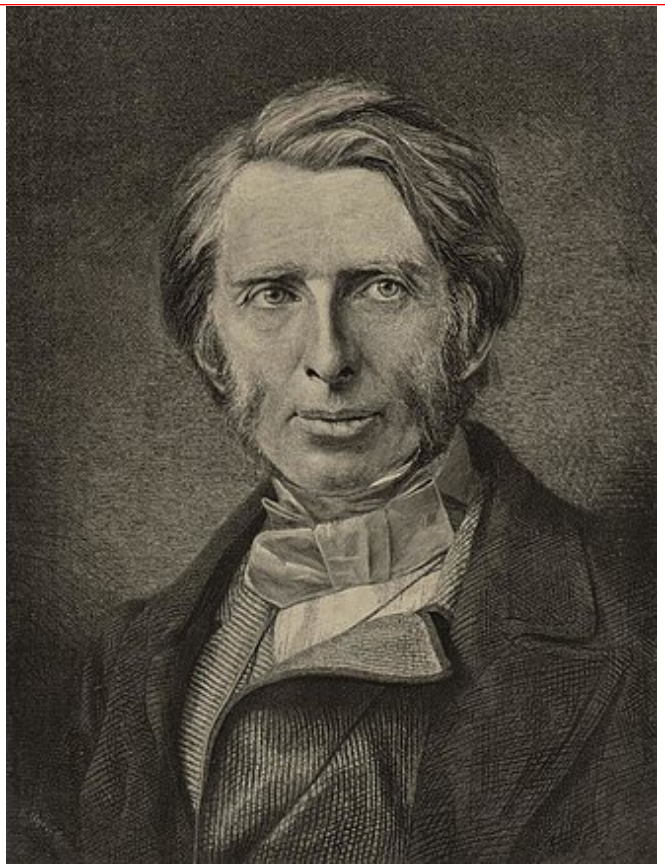
Gitanjali 35

Where knowledge is free;
Where the world has not been broken up into fragments by narrow domestic walls;
Where words come out from the depth of truth;
Where tireless striving stretches its arms towards perfection;
Where the clear stream of reason has not lost its way into the dreary desert sand of dead habit;
Where the mind is led forward by thee into ever-widening thought and action
Into that heaven of freedom, my Father, let my country awake.

Peter Burman

Ruskin and the Crafts

The Guild of St George, founded by John Ruskin in 1871, is a charity for arts, crafts, and rural economy.



John Ruskin c. 1860

The guild is currently organising a series of online readings on "Ruskin and the Crafts", as follows (all 6 p.m. on Fridays):

- 9 December 2022: Architecture, carving and sculpture
- 13 January 2023: Textiles
- 17 February: Mixed media, including ceramics, plasterwork and silversmithing
- 10 March: Craftspeople of Venice

The readers include several people whose names you will know as past or present speakers at Falkland Society meetings, includiong Rory Young, Nic Boyes, Tess Darwin and Arjun Jain, plus our own chair, Peter Burman, a Director of the Guild, who had the original dea for the events.

All the readings are being recorded: you can access the December and January rcordings via the Ruskin and the Crafts page on the Guild of St George website.

The February and readings will be free to view via Zoom: click this link from 5:45 p.m. on 17 February: we'll be sending you the March link next month.

Visit to Fife Cultural Trust

A reminder that we are invited to visit the Fife Cultural Trust ('OnFife)' based at the Fife Council Offices at Bankhead, Glenrothes, next Wednesday 8 February.

Lily Barnes, a Curator with the Trust, has invited us to come and view thir collections, with specil reference to the research project entitled *Flooring the World* – see
www.onfife.com/blog/get-involved-linoleum-workers-and-flooring-the-world

The focus of the project is on the linoleum industry in Fife and especially in Kirkcaldy. Ross Burgess and I had a very cordial initial meeting with Lily and she has agreed to be one of our speakers for the monthly lecture slot, and so is now on our draft programme for 2023–2024.

We should arrive at Bankhead just before 10:30, on Wednesday. At the end of the visit, we shall repair to the canteen to drink tea and have a chat with Lily and her colleagues about the work they are doing and the research project in particular. Such an opportunity promises to be memorable and full of interest. Lily advises that before heading into the stores, there will be a chance to drop any large bags and coats in the collections room. However, as the stores are quite chilly, she does recommend wearing an extra layer!

Please confirm by email (peterburman@btinternet.com) if you would like to come on this first visit/seminar. Car sharing seems to be the obvious solution.

Peter Burman

Coming events

Future Dates:

- 8 February, Tour of Fife Cultural Trust collection
- 8 February, Falkland society meeting: **Arjun Shivaji Jain**
- 17 February, Ruskin and the Crafts reading
- 8 March, Falkland society meeting: **Tom Addyman**, distinguished archaeologist, particularly of buildings, who lives in Strathmiglo
- 10 March, Ruskin and the Crafts reading
- 12 April, Falkland society meeting: **Nic Boyes**, Edinburgh-based consultant conservationist, advising nationally and internationally; he has advised trustees on how to handle repairs to the Temple of Decision on the Black Hill on the Falkland Estate
- 10 May, Falkland society meeting: **Catherine Rice**, a local author who lives in Perth, on Fife cottage gardens and gardeners ‘100 years ago’, which promises to be a fascinating insight into our garden culture

- 14 June, Falkland society meeting: **Ross Burgess** on ‘Reflections of the ancient world in Scotland’.

The May and June meetings will both be hybrid, that is we can attend them in person (at The Stables) or join with our computers.

Peter Burman

Fife Churches at Risk – ‘better together’

On 1 February Ross Burgess and I participated in visits to two churches in the East Neuk of Fife, Elie and Crail, which are among those churches – including almost all of those in the East Neuk – that have been proposed for closure. It is proposed to keep Kilconquhar church as the central and principal place of worship for Church of Scotland members in that very beautiful part of Fife.

At **Elie** we were welcomed by the Chair, Graham Johnston, the Secretary, Carol Birrell, and other members of the committee of the Elie & Earlsferry History Society, a registered charity, like the Falkland Society. We had never been inside the church before. But even from the outside it can be seen to be a fascinating building. Essentially it is a T-shaped building of 1639 (with later appendages) and a tower of 1726 which is set in the middle of the south wall facing the main street and an extensive burial ground.



Elie Church

At **Crail** we met the Sessions Clerk, Andrew Purves, Marjory Richardson (who lives in the splendid late 18th century Old Manse next door to the east), and Dr Kathleen Nightingale, an experienced Church Recorder. A Church Recorder is someone, usually a volunteer, who visits a church proposed for closure, by arrangement, and lists and describes not only the architectural features but also all furnishings and works of art, musical instruments (e.g. bells, organs, pianos), and monuments. It is very often the case that a church which is anything from one hundred to a

thousand years old will have furniture and works of art designed by well-known architects and made by first-rate craftspeople, and also works of art, craft and memorials with their inscriptions which together tell the ‘story’ of that particular parish and its church.

In our animated discussion over a cup of coffee after the visit to Elie, it emerged that the church is already being offered for sale. What could be its fate? Broadly there are two streams of possibility: it could be purchased by an individual or a business; or it could be purchased on behalf of the community, either by an existing charity such as the Elie & Earlsferry History Society or by a charitable trust specifically established for that purpose. Being surrounded by a historic burial ground crowded with tombstones of many shapes and sizes, it does not appear as though it would be attractive to convert it into a house. Use as offices or workshops or studios or as a gallery might be among the possibilities for adaptive re-use. A gallery could be a very attractive proposition. Either side of the pulpit is a magnificent window, each containing one large figure, but both ablaze with rich colours as we could see with the bright winter light streaming through them. At the east and west sides of the cross-bar of the T-shape are small windows with designs by Sir Edward Burne-Jones, the celebrated Pre-Raphaelite artist of the late 19th century, who was a close friend of both John Ruskin and of his exact contemporary William Morris.



Elie Church: the pair of Burne-Jones windows, made by Morris & Co. came from the demolished Wood Memorial Church, sad loss of an Arts & Crafts building of the 1890s

If purchased by a charity on behalf of the community, the question would arise as to who or what is the local community? We were told that the resident population accounts for only 30% of those

who own houses in the burgh as Elie is so popular a place for holiday cottages, houses and flats. Is Falkland in danger of going the same way, we sometimes wonder?

However, we have recently come across a church which has been successfully taken into the ownership of a trust set up by the local community and that is **Abernethy Old Kirk**, close to Nethy Bridge in the Highlands. The earliest document referring to the church dates from 1187–1203. After various vicissitudes, there were re-buildings in 1767 and 1873. The church was closed in 2009, prompting the formation of the Abernethy Old Church Association, a registered Scottish charity (SCIO) and a company limited by guarantee, and the result is a building which can still be used for weddings and funerals – which means a great deal in a rural or village community – and also for the activities of local groups, concerts, plays and celebrations of various kinds. There is an income stream from such events but in addition specific fund-raising and social events are organised when there is a need to fund-raise for maintenance, repairs, insurance and improvements to the building or its facilities. Funding has also come from the Heritage Lottery Fund, a Cairngorm National Park Leader Grant and from Awards for All.

Crail is surely one of the most beautiful and historic churches of the whole of Fife, of national importance. It is also set in an extensive historic burial ground but here a number of the tombs are of outstanding historic and aesthetic interest. On a visit last summer we noticed that the late 16th century Lumsden monument was being conserved and on our visit this month we can see what a success it has been. The conservation programme has been a project of the Crail Museum & Heritage Centre Trust, also a Scottish charity.

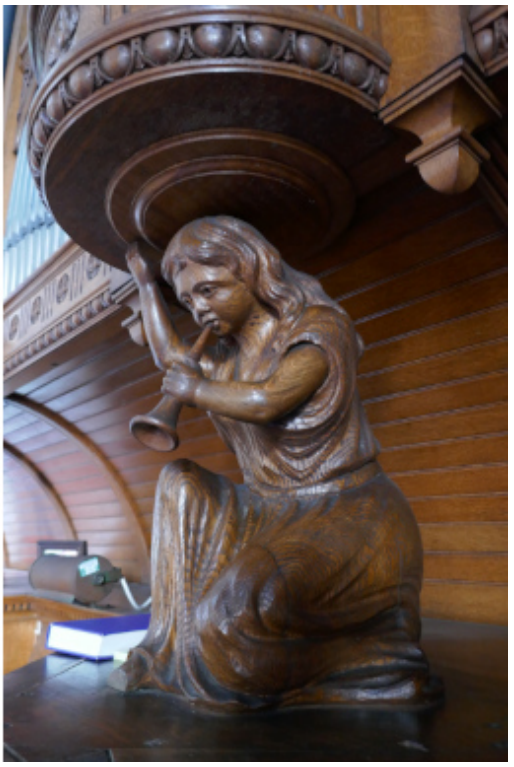


Crail Church, showing the big windows on the south front,
and the two upper windows, replacing two of the original clerestory lights

The chancel north wall is what visibly remains of the 12th century church, while the six-stage west tower is early 13th century. The west gable ends also seem to be 13th century and on the southern one is a clearly visible incised consecration cross and deep incisions which are thought to be where medieval inhabitants sharpened their weapons. Within the church are many beautiful and

eloquent objects, including re-sited early 17th century panelling at the east ends of the north and south aisles, and a panel from the former Seaman's Loft – one of a number of lofts dedicated to the principal Trades of the parish, but this panel is the only one to survive – and a beautifully carved Communion Table and pulpit, forming an ensemble.

But above all there is a large organ, set within a spectacularly beautiful and richly-carved case, by the famous Durham-based organ builders, Harrison & Harrison. This is truly one of the 'treasures of Fife', suitable for concerts as well as for accompanying services. In many European countries (e.g. Germany, the Scandinavian countries, The Netherlands, Italy and Spain) such an instrument would be protected by legislation and heritage policy. Sadly, not in the United Kingdom, though this is an aspect of heritage where Scotland might perhaps think of forging ahead and setting a good example to the rest of the UK.

Crail Church: the conserved Lumsden monument, and a detail of the organ case

The history of the organ is that it was commissioned by John Blyth (1843–1933), second generation of a family of successful Kirkcaldy linen manufacturers, for his home at Forth Villa, on Kirkcaldy's Loughborough Road. Described as a 'Grand Saloon Organ' in the firm's publicity, the instrument was completed in 1892 to a specification approved and signed for by John Blyth. His son, John Waldegrave Blyth (1873–1962) is remembered with gratitude by all of us in Fife for forming the most important surviving collection of Scottish colourist paintings, and for generously giving no less than 128 of them to Kirkcaldy's Art Gallery.

I guess that in England a church of such quality as Crail, in a setting so historic and so beautiful, would most likely be placed in the care of the Churches Conservation Trust, which now cares for and opens to visitors some 400 churches throughout England. In Wales it would most likely be placed in the care of the Friends of Friendless Churches. We have a similar magnificent organisation in Scotland, Historic Churches Scotland, whose Director, Victoria Collison, is a resident of Crail. But Historic Churches Scotland is shamefully starved of funds, receiving no Government money as in England and Wales, where the scale of the challenge has long been recognised. The least we can do is to draw the attention of our local MSPs and MP and Fife Council to this regrettable but reversible state of things. Victoria Collison and her trustees deserve

all our support.

Peter Burman

Falkland Society Publications

Following the successful launch of *Falkland and its Poeple, 1901–1913,* we have been giving thought to further publications. To that end, a Publications Group has been set up, with Alan Graham as convenor, plus Tom Playfair, Marietta Crichton Stuart and myself. Alan has planned a series of regular meetings over the next few months, to decide what our next publications should be, and how to go about getting them written, published and distributed.

Ross Burgess

Multiple Maries – Mary Queen of Scots and Falkland



Mary Queen of Scots: the portrait in the Drawing Room at Falkland Palace (National Trust for Scotland)

An exhibition “The Afterlife of Mary Queen of Scots” at Glasgow’s Hunterian Art Gallery has just closed. It described how, 400 years after her death, she continues to fascinate and to polarize opinion, she is an enduring presence in the history of Scotland and popular culture.There are multiple Marys – Happy Mary, Mary the Queen, Mary the Temptress, Mary the Catholic, Mournful Mary, Mary the Martyr, Mary the Myth – so multiple narratives meaning different things to different people and different times. Interest in Mary has resulted in numerous books, films and TV series.

The National Trust for Scotland believe that many visitors come to Falkland Palace “looking” for Mary, they are expecting a Stuart Palace and Queen Mary, but the current tour and presentation is somewhat confusing with a Victorian restoration of a Renaissance Palace, a 1950s family home

and the NTS's re-creation of rooms such as the King's Room.

The Trust wants to use Mary as the lure to Falkland and to refresh the story telling more about daily life during her time at Falkland, which was a place of recreation and relaxation. This would link into the story of Mary and her household and servants, the village, the forest of Falkland, and could look at husbandry, hunting, work and leisure.This would be a part of the Palace's long story. The Trust would also use Mary to highlight other, lesser known, women who, over many centuries, have been part of the strong feminine spirt in both the Palace and royal burgh.

Marietta Crichton Stuart

Last month's meeting



Tess Darwin

On 11 January we were enthralled by Tess Darwin's talk "Through the eye of the Needle" which showed her very sharp eye for the plants and flowers all around us, and her wonderful skill in rendering their forms and colours in needlework. If you missed the talk, or would like to see and hear it again, you can view the recording at:

https://www.falklandsociety.org.uk/videos/2023-01-11-Tess-Darwin.mp4

Ross Burgess (Secretary)

Plastics exhibition

If you were were educated or appalled by the pronlems of plastics, as so eleoquently described by Amy Woodson-Boulton in our December meeting, be sure to go and see the excellent exhibition "Plastic: Remaking our World" at V&A Dundee - but be quick: it closes this Sunday (5 February).

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