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The Falkland Society

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Falkland Society Newsletter, June 2023

Dear <<First Name>>,

Well it seems that Summer may be here at last! We will be taking a break from Falkland Society meetings during July and August, but we have one final meeting, on 14 June, when the speaker will be our Secretary, Ross Burgess. More about this below.

Meanwhile we are already working on plans for the new season starting in September, and will be inviting those of you who so wish to renew your memberships (or sign up if not already a member).

Peter Burman (Chair)

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June Meeting

Our next Falkland Society meeting will be on Wednesday 14 June, starting at 7 p.m., when the speaker will be our Secretary, **Ross Burgess**, on **"Reflections of the Ancient World in Scotland"**.

This will again be a hybrid meeting, conducted both live and on Zoom. So please join us at The Stables on the Falkland Estate. If you can't make it there in person you're invited to join us from 6:45 p.m. onwards at

https://us02web.zoom.us/j/89016863712

ready for a prompt start at 7 p.m.

You can also join by phone on **0203 481 5240**, **0131 460 1196**, or **0208 080 6591** quoting the meeting ID:**890 1686 3712**.



Ross at the Caledonian Railway, Brechin, May 2023

Our lecturer in June, the last of this annual sequence from September 2022 to June 2023, is Ross Burgess, our Secretary and Webmaster of the Falkland Society, known to almost every member of the Society for his modest efficiency, his kindness and generosity to all and the sheer hard work he puts into the affairs of the Society, far beyond the call of duty.

His modesty meant that he was rather reluctant to be interviewed but I was determined to treat all our speakers equally and to give them all the same chance to tell us something of their background, their interests and enthusiasms, and how they came to be doing whatever it is that they are doing.

Ross spent his childhood and youth growing up in Hastings on the south coast of England, in the historic county of Sussex. Who has not heard of the Battle of Hastings? In fact, though, the battle was fought at a place which thereafter has been known as Battle – a charming little town in its own right – and one of our first outings together was to see Battle Abbey, a property of English Heritage. At his historic local Grammar School, he developed a passion for languages, both Latin and Greek but also French and German, and also the study of languages, their structure, sounds and meaning.

He attended church regularly and part of our shared heritage is that both of us attended churches in the Anglo-Catholic tradition of the Church of England, and both of us were trained to be ‘servers’, that is attendants or assistants to the clergy when they were celebrating the Mass or Eucharist as it was variously known. The south coast is famous for this tradition and most of its

churches are of the mid-to-late nineteenth century, by distinguished or at least good architects, with wonderful furnishings and works of art which were meant to remind us – and did – of the beauty of holiness. Ross also developed a Ruskinian concern for the legitimate needs of people for livelihood and shelter, especially those disadvantaged in this world, and this led him for a while to consider a career in politics. In fact, while still at university he stood for Parliament and learned much from the somewhat bruising process, including a determination not to tread a political path.

From school he won an Open State Scholarship and was elected a Scholar of Oriel College, Oxford. Oriel is famed for its beautiful early seventeenth-century architecture. Oxford, moreover, is almost the best place in the world to study fine and historic architecture with outstanding works from the twelfth to the twenty-first century. Like all Cambridge and Oxford colleges, Oriel has hosted as both Fellows and students men and women who have made their mark locally, nationally or internationally. At this point he hesitated, but after beginning with the study of Modern Languages he changed to PPE (Philosophy, Politics and Economics), as have many Prime Ministers. Nevertheless, as his bookshelves abundantly show, he has retained a passionate love of languages and the study of them. Later, 'for fun', and to make good use of train journeys, he took a degree in Pure and Applied Mathematics at the Open University.

In his mid-twenties, the world of computers was just opening up and for a bright young man like Ross this was an opportunity he was delighted to grasp. He became first a Programmer and later a distinguished Consultant – the Ministry of Defence was one of his clients – and there exist several substantial tomes which pay testimony to his knowledge and skills, some written jointly and several written on his own. In his very active retirement, therefore, it has been natural that he should turn to the design, editing and writing of books and other extended pieces of writing including some very good short stories (see www.peterandross.uk/ross-works.shtml).

In addition, there has run throughout his life like a silver thread a real and well-informed interest in architecture. He is a Companion of John Ruskin's Guild of St George and a member of the Society for the Protection of Ancient Buildings, Architectural Heritage Society of Scotland, English Heritage, Historic Scotland, the National Trust for Scotland, the Friends of Friendless Churches and other organisations. He is a great 'joiner' and we share the benefits. Through more than five decades Ross has retained in his book collection a book on Nicholas Hawksmoor, the most notable follower of Sir Christopher Wren, which I gave him for Christmas in 1970. On 8 June 2019 we plighted our troth to one another in the roofless but still fine Crichton-Stuart Memorial Chapel on the Falkland Estate before a hundred witnesses. Amazing!

Wherever we go, we are always looking at architecture and Ross is intrigued by the way in which Greek (especially) and Roman architectural language became transmuted on Scottish soil. I know that he has been working very hard to put some of his well-observed material into a talk for us all, and I feel sure you will all enjoy it.

Peter Burman

Teresa Kilbane, 1936–2023

Many members of the Falkland Society and the wider Falkland community were present in the

Chapel Royal of Falkland Palace on Wednesday 31 May.for a Service of Thanksgiving for the life of Teresa Kilbane. The Chapel Royal was absolutely packed with relatives and friends, so much so that the Royal Pew was occupied and many attendees were standing beyond the superb wooden screen in the Ante-Chapel.



The Chapel Royal

Teresa and her husband Jimmy (Hamish) Kilbane were both faithful members of the Chapel Royal congregation for more than half a century. The love and respect for Teresa was palpable. In a fine address, the parish priest linked the Gospel for the Day with the specific ministry of Teresa, and also spoke of the love they shared for walking, both together daily, and with the spirited walking group of which they were keen members. It was noticeable that the members of the walking group had turned out in strength. Also strongly represented were the Scouts, an organisation which they warmly supported. Remembered also is Teresa's staunch support of the Lunch Club, a remarkable example of social outreach and support for members of the local community, to which she contributed her energy and skills for a quarter of a century.

The Service took the form of a Requiem Mass and funeral while being also a heart-felt thanksgiving for a life well-lived by a true and supportive citizen of the Royal Burgh. No wonder the community turned out in such force. The hymns were all rightly positive in tone beginning with 'All things bright and beautiful' and concluding with the ancient and well-loved hymn which begins with the words 'Hail, Queen of Heaven, the ocean star' and includes the following stanza:

Sojourners in this vale of tears,
Blest advocate, to thee we cry,
Pity our sorrows, calm our fears,

And soothe with hope our misery.
Refuge in grief, Star of the Sea,
Pray for the mourner, pray for me.

The interment took place in Falkland's Cemetery and was followed by a crowded Reception in the Community Hall.

"The Church", Dublin
A short story in ten captions

(The former St Mary's Church, in Mary Street, Dublin, has become a bar, café and restaurant, simply called "The Church" – https://www.thechurch.ie.)



Ross Burgess, our Secretary and our speaker for June, being brought a cappuccino by the cheerful Salvo, from Torino, at the Tram-Car Café in Wolfe Tone Square in Dublin.



Wolfe Tone Square is the former historic burial ground; in one area the ledger stones and headstones have been preserved and the ground around them gardened beautifully.



The church stands in St Mary's Street, running east-west a short distance north of the river Liffey, and at the intersection with Jervis Street. The bold new addition, cylindrical in form, respects the principle that while we should hesitate to 'take away' from anything of cultural value and beauty we have inherited from the past, it is often justified to make an addition, especially if it makes the

building more apt for its chosen new purpose.



Changes should always somehow be signed and dated. The cylinder bears the text explaining that in 2007, 'following a sensitive restoration by DMOD Architects, St Mary's re-opened as a bar and restaurant'. It became known simply as 'The Church' in 2007.



On the south side there is a sensitive addition in the form of a conservatory, somewhat like a cloister, a delightful place for lunch on a sunny day. Our photo also shows one of the three noble holm oak trees which give it shade all year round.



Throughout the church, including the galleries, staircases and crypt, the historic monuments which tell the story of those who have lived and worshipped here have been retained. This seems also a good principle. Sometimes, as here, it produces unexpected juxtapositions – sacred and secular, one might say. But why not? The modern use is all about good food and drink, hospitality and celebration, and these can be spiritual gifts if treated properly.



Imaginatively, there is a modern plaster-cast of a portrait sculpture of Arthur Guinness, who was married here in 1761. He founded the Guinness brewery, which has slaked the thirst of millions and is still a powerful presence in Dublin, indeed world-wide. Many other notable people were christened, married or buried here. The dramatist Richard Brinsley Sheridan was christened here in 1751.



There is no longer an altar at the east end of The Church, which is, after all, no longer a church. The central bar has been designed to be elegant and, although quite sizeable, as inconspicuous as possible. The net of delicate metalwork enables us to see across the church from every angle. The dining tables are under the galleries and *in* the galleries.



A view of the restaurant at gallery level, a superb environment for lunching and dining.



There is widespread anxiety about the future of organs from closed churches; nationwide, there are many challenges presented by these valuable and beautiful instruments. This organ is by the late seventeenth-century London organ-builder, Renatus Harris. It has been retained as an important feature of a listed church. At the moment it is not in playable condition, but that can be remedied in due course.

Ross and I were in Dublin for an international conference on the late sixteenth-century woman painter, Lavinia Fontana, at the National Gallery of Ireland. But that is a whole other story, and we are preparing a lecture on the subject as she was such a fascinating personality and a brilliant artist who was highly successful in her profession. On the final morning we had most of the day to please ourselves and our hotel didn't serve breakfast. So we checked out and headed in the direction of "The Church", whose story had intrigued us. One of the most serious heritage issues in the British Isles today is the number of churches that are closing: many will be demolished; some will be vested in a variety of bodies such as the Scottish Churches Trust, Friends of Friendless Churches, Churches Conservation Trust; but probably the largest percentage of 'closed churches' (gloomy phrase) will be adapted to other purposes, ideally catering to the needs of communities, whether local or national/international. Many of them, like the Tron Kirk in Edinburgh's Royal Mile, will serve the needs of visitors/tourists.

The conversion of St Mary's Church to 'The Church' has been done with particular skill, keeping almost all the artistic and historic aspects such as monuments, painted decoration, stained glass, galleries and the magnificent organ.

In the early middle ages, the spiritual needs of the north side of Dublin was served by the parish of St Michan and the abbey of St Mary. A distinct parish of St Mary was founded in 1697. The church was designed in the same year by Sir William Robinson (1644–1712) who from 1671 held the office of Surveyor General of Ireland. He was an architect equal to his high standing and designed or added to or adapted a number of exceedingly important buildings including the Royal Hospital Kilmainham (thought erroneously at one time to be by Sir Christopher Wren),

various works at Dublin Castle, and St Michan's church as well as St Mary's. His inventive use of a 'Baroque-Gothic' style for window tracery is attractive and unusual. He was buried in the crypt of St Martin-in-the-Fields, the royal parish church in London, which is still very much a church in use – with a notable ministry to the homeless and disadvantaged of central London – but with many other facilities at crypt level in spaces released by the removal of the hundreds of coffins.

It is a good question what happens to the bodies of those who had originally been buried in the vaults below city churches – this was a source of revenue for centuries to the parishes concerned, and land for burials was scarce in the cities. There have been some notable instances of this being carried out during the past 30–50 years, the work of removal and study of the remains being executed by archaeologists. In the case of St Mary, Dublin, the process was supervised by Dublin Corporation Environmental Department and by the central office of the Representative Body of the Church of Ireland. The bodies were later cremated and placed at St Michan's.

Peter Burman

Last month's meeting

There was a problem with some of the illustrations for Catherine Rice's talk on 10 May, but she has kindly prepared a new version of the text and images for ther presentation – you can now view it here (PDF file).

Ross Burgess

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