



The Falkland Society

Scottish Registered Charity SC017201

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Falkland Society Newsletter, September 2023

Dear <<First Name>>,

Welcome to our new season of Falkland Society events!

We're putting together a full programme for 2023–24 – more details next month, but meanwhile I'm delighted to announce that the first meeting will be addressed by Sarah Brown, on Wednesday 13 September (see below).

A reminder that annual subscriptions are now due. Warm thanks to those who have already renewed their membership. If you've not yet renewed, but would like to support the work of the Falkland Society, please download the form at

www.falklandsociety.org.uk/flyers/membershipform2023-24.pdf

and return it to us with your subscription.

Much looking forward to meeting you all again during the new season, in person or online.

Peter Burman (Chair)

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September Meeting

Our next Falkland Society meeting will be on Wednesday 13 September, starting at 7 p.m., when the speaker will be **Sarah Brown**, on "**Being Sarah Brown**".

This meeting, like all our meetings, will be available online by Zoom: But this will be a 'hybrid' meeting, meeting, so you can also come and hear Sarah Brown in person, at **The Stables, Falkland Estate, KY15 7AF** at 6:45 for 7 p.m. on Wednesday 13 September. Space at The Stables will be limited, so to ensure your place please email news@falklandsociety.org.uk as soon as possible but at the latest by Monday 11 September. No charge, but donations to Theirworld very welcome.

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/81676900794>

ready for a prompt start at 7 p.m. (no need to book)

You can also join by phone on **0203 481 5240**, **0131 460 1196**, or **0208 080 6591** quoting the meeting ID: **816 7690 0794**.



Choosing and inviting speakers for the annual programme of lectures of the Falkland Society is something which gives Ross Burgess and me a great deal of pleasure. We aim, on behalf of the Falkland Society, to make a relationship with all the speakers – friendly and collaborative on both sides. In relation to Sarah Brown our journey has been one of utter delight. First of all, we have for some years felt so proud to be living in a Fife which contains two such dedicated people – warm, friendly, open and effective in their roles – as Sarah and her husband Gordon, former Prime Minister of the United Kingdom, and now a statesman of international renown, celebrated for his fierce integrity, his generosity of time and talents, his power as a thinker and his passionate articulacy both as a speaker and as a writer. Sarah fully shares in these qualities. They are an amazing partnership.

We were introduced to Sarah by one of last year's speakers who is very dear to us, Mary Contini, author of several brilliant books about the Italian community in Scotland as well as cookery, and part of the family which owns the inimitable food shop and café in Leith Walk, Edinburgh, called Valvona & Crolla. Mary wanted us not only to know Sarah Brown but also to know of the inspirational work she is doing as Chair of her charity Theirworld – see <https://theirworld.org> – which, to express it briefly, is committed to campaigning and raising funding for, and running programmes for the education of children, especially children who live in lands torn by

aggressive wars, civil wars, religious extremism, famine or any of the other tragic circumstances to which humanity is prone. Sarah is also Chair of the Global Business Coalition for Education – see <https://gbc-education.org> – which draws in a great deal of support for Theirworld.

As a first step, Sarah came herself to Falkland to talk to us, bringing with her Peter, a new member of the staff team which she and Gordon have both in Scotland and in London, where they also necessarily live part of the time. We were so impressed by what she told us that we both made the charity Theirworld beneficiaries under our Wills, modest enough in all conscience, but remembering that ‘many a mickle makes a muckle’.

Ross and I are both Companions of John Ruskin’s Guild of St George, founded in 1871, and there seems to us to be a strong correlation between Ruskin’s vision of a future and the vision of service and encouragement to humanity as practised by Sarah and Gordon Brown. Like them, Ruskin abhorred violence; believed passionately that women should be equal to men, and should have the same opportunities of education and meaningful employment as men; and he saw appreciation of the beauty of the natural and cultural worlds as indispensable to leading wholesome and satisfying lives.

We were delighted to learn that Sarah has had a long connexion with Falkland. In her childhood her parents spent something like six years in Dar Es Salaam, East Africa, but retained a Scottish base at No. 2 Royal Terrace, Falkland where they went for summer holidays. An image of this charming, but tiny, cottage is shown below.



Sarah is not only a passionate advocate for global education but also for global health, and for both these causes she has taken many bold and fruitful initiatives. I am currently reading, with immense pleasure, her 2011 book *Behind the Black Door*. The ‘Black Door’ represents not only the three years during which she lived and worked at No. 11 Downing Street, when her husband was Chancellor of the Exchequer, but then especially at No. 10 Downing Street when he was Prime Minister. In that book I am finding the seeds of what she is doing now through her charitable work while, at the same time, running what sounds like a very busy household which includes their two teenage sons. Their family home has been, for many years, at North Queensferry; their loyalty to Fife, and to the people of Fife, was first vivid to me when I heard

Gordon give a brilliant speech to celebrate the 20th anniversary of the Fife Historic Buildings Trust. It is even more vivid to me now that I am reading Sarah's book.

Theirworld is a global children's charity committed to ending the global education crisis and unleashing the potential of the next generation. Since its formation 20 years ago it has delivered ground-breaking programmes and built global movements for change to realise the right of every child to go to school and learn, without discrimination or danger. By reflecting on the situation in Ukraine, Iraq, Syria and many other countries we can immediately see what a Herculean task the charity has set for itself. Theirworld's 11 million signature petition led to a successful campaign to support funding for education in emergencies, announced at the World Humanitarian Summit in 2016. The charity has also led the way in the innovation for Syrian refugee children to provide a 'double-shift' schooling system in neighbouring countries. This allows hundreds of thousands of refugee children to attend school which would otherwise be quite impossible for them. Most recently, the charity has facilitated new Education Centres on Greek Islands, to accommodate refugee child arrivals.



As Executive Chair of the Global Business Coalition for Education, Sarah Brown steers a coalition of more than 100 companies from across the world to bring the voice and support of the business community together for greater social impact in advancing high-quality education for the world's children and youth.

I am constantly finding memorable paragraphs in reading *Behind the Black Door*. There are many occasions when Sarah is able to establish friendly rapport with politicians across the globe such as an occasion when she finds herself sitting next to Rahul Gandhi at a dinner party in New Delhi:

Knowing that the day may come in the not too distant future when Rahul leads his party, and even his country, I ask him what he thinks would make the difference to India in order to see its real growth as an economic force AND to see the quality of life improve for its citizens. He gives me a simple and, to my ears, welcome answer: *Women's empowerment*. (p.90).

I have learned also of the vital importance of tackling maternal mortality in countless countries across the world. So many women die either in childbirth or soon afterwards. As Global Patron of the White Ribbon Alliance, Sarah convened a huge coalition of health professionals, business leaders, high profile champions and youth activists to halve maternal deaths worldwide.

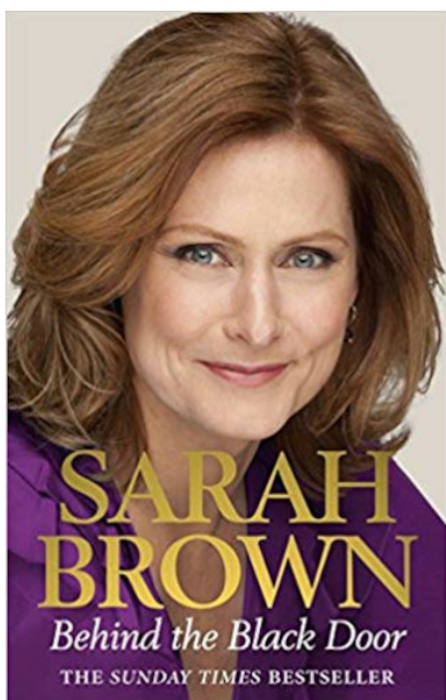
As part of this campaign, Sarah addressed world leaders of the G7/G8 countries, took to the stage of both the World Health Organisation's Annual Assembly and the International Confederation of Midwives, and chaired a United Nations Special Meeting that heralded the end of healthcare user fees for pregnant women in 16 countries. As an ongoing commitment to maternal, infant and child health, Sarah helped to establish the Jennifer Brown Research Laboratory at the University of Edinburgh, named after their first child who lived for a very short time.

Sarah's contribution to world health has been recognised by Honorary Fellowships from both the Royal College of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists and the Royal College of Paediatrics and Child Health. She has received Honorary Degrees from the Universities of St Andrews, Edinburgh, Wolverhampton, Brighton, Roehampton and the Open University.

Earlier in her career, Sarah was Managing Director of one of Britain's most dynamic independent communications companies and subsequently led a global arts PR firm. Her interest in the arts is both wide and deep and a chance remark of hers at our second meeting caused us to go immediately afterwards to spend a couple of hours at the Grayson Perry exhibition at the National Gallery of Scotland on The Mound. I intend to write an article for the next Falkland Society newsletter on that exhibition, and its witty satires of modern life in Britain, and strongly commend the exhibition to 'all our readers'. It continues until Sunday 12 November and we shall certainly be going again!

We also recommend Sarah's podcasts under the title *Better Angels*: 'Featuring stories from globally renowned activists, campaigners, comedians, youth and world leaders – Sarah Brown champions the activist spirit':

<https://podcasts.apple.com/gb/podcast/better-angels-with-sarah-brown/id1171042556>



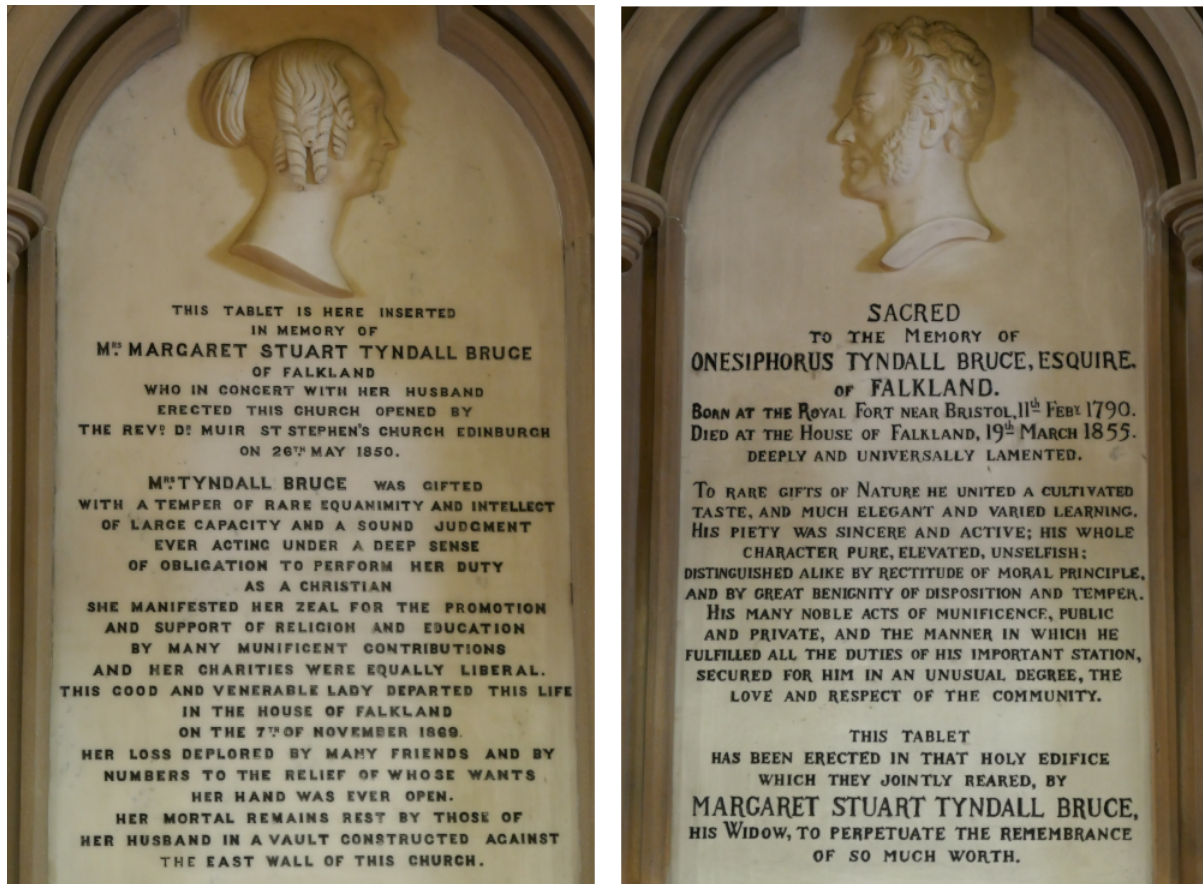
I hope I have said enough to whet your appetite for what can only be a wonderfully inspiring talk by Sarah Brown, our fellow Fife citizen, on Wednesday 13 September 2023, 6.45 p.m. for 7.00 p.m. In this instance we are joined in presenting Sarah's talk by the Falkland Stewardship Trust which has the lease on the Stables and other cultural assets of the Falkland Estate.

Peter Burman

Falkland Parish Church and its future, the story continued

On 24 August Ross and I were delighted to have a visit from Revd Susan Thorburn, Minister, responsible amongst many other things for the parish church of Falkland. She asked us whether the Falkland Society, through us, might be willing to support and assist her in preparing interpretation panels, accurate but accessible, which would assist visitors to understand the

history of the church within the wider context of the history of Christian worship in Fife and Scotland.



Memorial tablets in the church to Margaret and Onesiphorus Bruce, who commissioned its building in 1848–50. They are both buried in the church.

In Scotland, every Presbytery has prepared a Mission Plan, which is not only about buildings: nevertheless, the future of buildings and land is a major aspect of the plans that have been announced. The property of the Church of Scotland, all or most of which is vested in the General Trustees of the Church of Scotland, consists of churches, church halls, burial grounds, manses or parsonages, and glebe land.

Of the various possibilities mentioned in the Fife Presbytery Plan, an *Area Team Ministry* ('adapted and created to reflect the requirements of ministry and mission over multiple communities and/or over a large geographical or rural area') is emerging as one of the solutions which might keep the parish church of Falkland in ecclesiastical use, not as a *parish* church, serving a territorial area or community, but as a church which would have a mission to visitors and worshippers alike, with services on some Sundays but also perhaps once a week on a weekday, recognising that for some families a Sunday may not be the most convenient day to go to church. Key words to describe the concept would be 'heritage' and 'retreats'. In short, it is recognised that the church building has stories to tell: some will be about the building itself, its architecture and history, and some will be about the evolution of the Christian story in this place. Of retreats, Susan Thorburn suggested that they could take many forms but she has in mind 'snapshot retreats' of less than a day's duration. This seems similar to an idea I first had many years ago when I propounded the idea that the great ancient cathedrals could be regarded as 'momentary monasteries'. We have seen this idea in action very recently when visiting the cathedrals of Canterbury and Rochester, where visitors are caught up in awe by the majesty, sheer beauty and sense of ancientness of the place. People arrive as tourists but leave, very

often, as pilgrims – or at least with a sense of pilgrimage.

It is widely recognised that Falkland church is a 'master work' of the mid-19th century by a major architect, David Bryce, who had been apprenticed to William Burn, the leading architect of the previous generation and incidentally the designer of the House of Falkland, 1838–43. But a recent visit by representatives of the General Trustees of the Church of Scotland, including architectural historian Dr Judith Roebuck, highlighted that the church is also of great interest from an ecclesiological point of view. It retains a very complete set of furnishings, including 'Communion pews' which can be turned into special seating for Communion Sundays: there are said to be only twelve examples of such pews surviving in Scotland, and only two in Fife.



Left: The rich High Victorian interior, stunningly complete, looking eastwards.

Right: The interior looking westwards, with the fine pipe organ in a gallery.

The space of the nave has great potential if the pews (other than the Communion Pews) could be removed.

Susan Thorburn's background lies in education and she is acutely conscious of the stories which churches, including Falkland church, can so vividly tell.

It would be wonderful if this new vision for the future of the church could come to fruition. Its prominence in the rural and historical landscape of Fife is becoming more clearly understood. The idea would be to keep the church open for the instruction and enjoyment of visitors from the beginning of April to the end of October every year. There has been a real effort this summer to keep the church open as much as possible, 'sowing seeds for the future', and we have taken our own visitors there on a regular basis. This opening of the church to visitors is a critical first step. Our visits have usually been facilitated by local resident Winston Moll, who is deeply knowledgeable about the church and its history and something of an authority on church organs, of which the church of Falkland has one of the notable examples in Fife.

Inevitably there are also some challenges, including the state of the roof and the recent failure of the boiler and heating system, the pipes for which are clad in asbestos. Nevertheless, the church community has resources and feels that it could tackle the challenges with aplomb.



One of the sumptuous capitals of the cast-iron arcading which supports the galleries and the ceiling

The tentative plan at the moment is that the Eden Tay Cluster of rural parishes will in future have one full-time 'Word & Sacrament' Minister, with a part-time Ecumenical Chaplain based in Newburgh, while Susan will be Mission Development Minister, working across the whole area.

We wish Susan Thorburn, the Session Clerk and all members of the congregation and their friends good fortune as they explore this way forward. Naturally, we shall do all we can to encourage and to help.

Markinch, St Drostan's Church

Those who take that admirable local newspaper *The Courier* will have seen the splendid coverage of St Drostan's church, Markinch, over two full pages (22–23) of the 16 August issue. The cover has a photograph of our member Bruce Manson examining precious layers of archaeology and architectural history with the caption 'Bruce Manson in St Drostan's Church, Markinch, where a doorway threshold hidden for hundreds of years has been uncovered'.

The significance of the new discoveries at Markinch is that the doorway's threshold was heavily worn indicating a substantial amount of footfall over time between the tower and the nave attic space. The three bar slots on the doorway were sited such that the door could only be 'locked' from inside the loft. The door arch and the tympanum were also designed to be admired from inside the lost. There was a plain lintel on the tower side.



Bruce has been studying the church for many years and has written scholarly papers on the church which I have greatly enjoyed reading. The gist of the matter is that, as the *Courier* article explains,

Hundreds of stonemasons' marks have already been documented in the walls of the structure and now, from beneath the 19th-century plaster, details of hidden architectural features are beginning to emerge. These include a once majestic archway originally linking the church – once referred to locally as MacDuff's Kirk – and the distinctive 12th-century tower, and now more recently, high in the wall, a doorway that had been hidden for hundreds of years.

The word 'majestic' caught my eye at once. The parish church of Markinch is, quite simply, one of the most magnificent historic buildings of its date in Fife, or indeed in Scotland. The tower can be dated to quite early in the 12th century. I often pick up friends who are coming to stay with us in Falkland at Markinch railway station and I immediately drive them past the church, magnificent in the sunlight but also magnificent in artificial lighting on a winter's evening. As so often in Scotland there is an significant 19th-century contribution to the architecture and history of the church: in this case the adjoining Session House designed by the great Arts & Crafts architect, Robert Rowand Anderson, dating from 1879.



The well-written article by Graeme Strachan goes on to explain that the evidence of the newly-revealed wall high up at the west end of the building suggests the existence of

a fairly spacious room above the church's nave. Similar structures are currently suspected at Dunning, Dunblane and St Magnus Church on Egilsay in Orkney. However, being constructed largely of timber, most have long rotted away. This discovery adds weight to the theory that Markinch Church was once a sizeable building incorporating defensible living quarters as well as being a church with a nave and chancel. The roof space may have been designed as safe and comfortable living quarters for senior members of the MacDuff family who had the added duty of officiating at major trials at nearby Dalginch.

What do the church authorities say about the recent studies and their interpretation? The Revd Dr Conor Fegan, current Minister of Markinch, is quoted as saying: 'The long history of St Drostan's Church continues to shape how it is today, both as an ancient place of Christian worship and as the centre of pride and activity for the local community'. That is beautifully put! But how sad it is to hear that the good people of Markinch are having to fight imminent closure of the church!

We can all understand the pressures of small congregations rattling around in over-large buildings and the small number of people who are offering themselves for the Ministry. But it is intolerable that, as a nation, we are not rallying round the ancient and beautiful and eloquent churches of our land. In England, when churches are 'declared redundant', as the unfortunate

phrase goes, there is at least the possibility – near certainty in the case of a church as important as St Drostan's, Markinch – that they could be vested for permanent preservation in the Churches Conservation Trust which now has more than 300 churches in its charge – still sacred places; still occasionally able to be used for worship (for example on the name-day of the church); but regularly used for music and exhibitions, and for the huge numbers of people who live to visit ancient and beautiful places of worship as a leisure-time activity. On a recent holiday in the Welsh Border country, Herefordshire and Powys, Ross and I visited 37 wonderful churches. Only two were found to be locked, and of those two the key for one was quickly and easily available by ringing a telephone number given in the church porch, which led to an explanation of where we would find the key hanging up (in a nearby barn).



It is high time that our MSPs and our Westminster MPs begin to tackle the support which historic churches need and deserve, before they disappear before our eyes. They may be vested in the General Trustees of the Church of Scotland but there is also a very real sense on which they 'belong' to the hearts and minds of the people of Scotland and are part of the rich heritage of buildings, archaeology, history, and incomparable landscapes which Scotland offers the British and international visitor.

STOP PRESS! There will be two Archaeology Days on Friday and Saturday, 15 and 16 September, at Markinch Church, 10.00 to 17.00 on both days.

Peter Burman

Future events

We're putting together a full programme of talks for the rest of the season – more next month, or check out the [coming events page](#) on our website.

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