



The Falkland Society

Scottish Registered Charity SC017201

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Falkland Society Newsletter, February 2024

Dear <<First Name>>,

This month we have a talk by my good friend of many years, Stephen Couling, who will tell us about his work at Dundreggan, and the rewilding of the Highlands: more details below. As usual this meeting will be held online only – please use the link below to join the meeting – and if you have friends who might be interested in the topic, please encourage them to sign up using the form at www.falklandsociety.org.uk/contact.shtml so they can receive their own invitation.

Notice has been given before but I hereby confirm that the Society's Annual General Meeting will be on Wednesday 13 March, at the Stables on the Falkland Estate, immediately after Lady Erskine has given her talk on the Walled Garden and Stables on the Erskines' Cambo Estate near St Andrews. The woodland walks and other parts of the Estate are especially wonderful in February/March on account of the fantastic and famous drifts of snowdrops of many different varieties. To prepare for the AGM, the Committee has decided to have a longer-than-usual preparatory meeting on Saturday 24 February. We shall review the written reports from office-holders and try our best to think deeply about the future. Expect impressive news about our Publications Programme.

The arrival of snowdrops is always an exciting moment because we know that, however many twists and turns the winter may still have for us, spring cannot be that far away. So the Editor and I have every confidence in wishing you all a very happy new season as the days grow warmer and longer.

With best wishes from

Peter Burman (Chair)

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February Meeting

Stephen Couling, property manager of the Dundreggan rewilding estate in the Highlands, will be our speaker on **Wednesday 14 February** at the usual time of 7 p.m. He will be telling us about the Trees For Life project which aims to create environmental change in the Scottish Highlands and restore the ancient Caledonian Forest.

Please join us by Zoom from 6:45 p.m. onwards on the 14th, at
<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/89909889601>

You can also join by phone on **0203 481 5240, 0131 460 1196**, or **0208 080 6591** quoting the meeting ID: **899 0988 9601**

Stephen Couling



Stephen with Baz, his Australian Sheep Dog (Kelpie)

Stephen Couling began his working life as a young officer in the Royal Navy, joining whilst an undergraduate at the University of Durham (University College, graduated 1982). On leaving the RN in 1989 he joined the office of HRH the Prince of Wales to co-ordinate the first Prince of Wales's Summer School in Civil Architecture. This, and the next Summer School, in 1991, led to the founding of the Prince of Wales's Institute of Architecture (PoWIA) which is now part of the King's Foundation. Our Chair, Peter Burman, met Stephen through his work at the PoWIA and invited him to join the MA course in Conservation Studies at the University of York.

That MA course (completed 1994) became Stephen's passport to Australia where he was offered a post of Conservation Projects Manager with Design 5 Architects, a small but highly regarded general architectural practice specialising in the conservation of places of cultural significance, with a quietly charismatic leader in Alan Croker. (Design 5 Architects are the Conservation Architects to the Sydney Opera House, St James's Church Sydney (the oldest church in Australia) and winners of a number of significant Heritage Awards awards.

In the years that followed Stephen undertook other interesting projects, roles and adventures including being the CEO of the oldest charity in Australia – the Sydney Mechanics' School of Arts – worked for a national Australian Refugee Advocacy Organisation, spent a year as a Novice Franciscan Friar, took a Permaculture Design Certificate, and spent two years designing, creating and running organic market gardens. His final project for the NSW Government was to convert the redundant Ships' Pilot Station

in Sydney Harbour into a Boating Safety Education Centre.

He returned to the UK in the summer of 2015. The move to Scotland came quite unexpectedly: he volunteered with Trees for Life on one of their Conservation Weeks in September 2015. So inspiring was this week that he decided to "buy a caravan, move to Scotland and work for Trees for Life".



The Trees for Life Rewilding Centre on the Dundreggan Estate

Stephen has worked with and for Trees for Life for the past 8 years. In this time he has led 44 weeks of volunteer groups working to restore the Caledonian Forest at the conservation estate of Trees for Life at Dundreggan in Glen Moriston, 6 miles west of Loch Ness and the Great Glen. He has also assisted in the planning and preparation of these weeks. Since August 2022 he has been the Property Manager at Dundreggan with responsibility for the care and maintenance of 7 buildings, 6 polytunnels, nursery infrastructure, the drives and paths and one scheduled ancient monument (a mediaeval motte). Included in this list is the new Rewilding Centre (the first of its kind in the UK) and a 20 bedroom accommodation block.

The mission of Trees for Life was originally to restore the Caledonian Forest. Six thousand years ago this mighty forest, named such by the Romans (Sylva Caledonia), covered much of Scotland. Scarcely 1% remains. In the now eight years since Stephen joined, Trees for Life has grown greatly in scope and size. The mission now is to "Rewild the Highlands" and it is a leading force in Rewilding Scotland – itself now declared a "Rewilding Nation".



Stephen (left) and the team at the end of a planting project

Stephen's talk will tell the story of his journey to Trees for Life, the inspiration he holds from the founder (Alan Watson Featherstone) and which he continues to experience from his colleagues, volunteers and places in which he works. He will discuss the nature of Rewilding (not always a clear concept) and how Trees for Life is leading the movement to repair the damage done by the activities of human beings over many millennia to the natural world, our true home.

In these times when all the news can seem bad and sad, this is a story of hope and inspiration, dedication and drive, vision and joy.

Succession

It is very difficult for members of Boards or Committees or other such roles to persuade everyone involved of the importance of succession. The implication is that we will all go on until we drop!

But it so happens that this summer the Chair (that's me), the Vice-Chair (that's John Smith) and the Secretary (that's Ross Burgess) will all be 80 years young. We all three love the Falkland Society, its achievements and its potential, but we feel we should be handing over our responsibilities – though not all at the same moment. For myself, I would be happy to continue in office until 31 December 2024, which would suit our committee's recommendation that our governance year should be the same as the calendar year (which is the same as our financial year).

But I would ask every member or friend of the Society who cares about its future to give serious thought as to whether they themselves would be interested in a committee role or whether they know someone who might be, and whom they could nominate at the AGM.

Peter Burman

Lecture Programme

From March to June we revert to meeting at the Stables on the Falkland Estate where the facilities are excellent. The Zoom platform enables us to hold our meetings as "hybrids", so they can be enjoyed in person or from the comfort of your own home and computer. They are also normally recorded and put up afterwards on our website to join our growing collection of excellent lectures.

Here is the rest of the programme as far as June; further lectures, after the usual summer break, will be announced before long.

- 13 March 2024: **Lady Catherine Erskine**, *Cambo Walled Garden and new life for its 18th-Century Stables*. To be followed by the ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING OF THE FALKLAND SOCIETY.

The lecture and meeting will be held in the Stables ([///dressings.destroyer.football](http://dressings.destroyer.football) – see below for explanation!) on the Falkland Estate.

- 10 April 2024: **Craig Thomas**, *The Dukes of Buccleuch and their Palace at Dalkeith*.
- 8 May 2024: **Frank Glynn, violinist**, *George Thomson's Fiddle*. The lecture and demonstration will be given in the Stables on the Falkland Estate.
- 26 June 2024: **Philip Thomas**, *A Small Phoenix Rising* – how he and his husband have rescued and conserved Knedlington Old Hall (1649-1660), returning its integrity, adding contemporary beauty, creating a suitable setting and adding layers of new significance for our own day. The lecture and our summer drinks party immediately afterwards will be held at the Stables on the Falkland Estate.

Forthcoming Publications

Our Publications Sub-Committee, comprising Alan Graham (Convenor), Marietta Crichton Stuart, and myself, has been working hard on the three publications we aim to issue during 2024:

- A book about Falkland during the First World War and its aftermath (1914 to about 1920)
- A much-revised edition of our book about Falkland in the Victorian era (1837 to 1900)
- A new, expanded edition of our Falkland Guide

Much more about all these in later Newsletters - but be warned that we will be soliciting sponsorship for the Victorian volume, as we did for Falkland and its People 1901-1913.

Ross Burgess

The Falkland Historic Buildings Project

Back in August 2020 we launched the **Falkland Listed Buildings Survey**, and distributed forms to all the listed Buildings within the old Royal Burgh, asking residents to tell us about their houses and their history. The information we gained from this survey, plus published sources both online and in book form, enabled us to create an online encyclopaedia, in a format similar to Wikipedia, the Falkland Wiki – <https://historicfalkland.scot/wiki/> – which now has over 460 pages, most of them about individual buildings, but also streets, maps, architects, etc. We're no longer limiting the Wiki to listed buildings, and we've extended our coverage to the whole of the old

The Church in Falkland



The interior of the church, looking towards the pulpit

Since 1620 there has been a church in the centre of Falkland village. In the 1830s the Rev J. M. Taylor described it as an “old barn-looking church with its outside stair and brown shuttered windows”. By 1845 it compared poorly with the new Free Church (built very soon after the 1843 "Disruption" when many ministers and their supporters broke away from the "Established" Church of Scotland) which stood proudly above the far end of the High Street. The Session minutes recorded the kirk's “wretched condition ... the seats are badly patched and some are lying in fragments on the ground. Many of them are too narrow to be occupied in comfort.” The floor was mud and was considered dangerous to the health of the elderly of the congregation in the cold damp weather. Joint responsibility was with the Kirk Session and the Heritors; any cost was likely to be great.

The chief Heritors of the Parish were Onesiphorus and Margaret Tyndall Bruce. In 1826 Margaret had inherited extensive lands including Falkland Estate (with the Palace) and a large fortune from her uncle Professor John Bruce. The couple had recently moved into their new country mansion, the House of Falkland, designed by the prominent Edinburgh architect William Burn. No expense had been spared in its furnishing and the landscaping and the overall cost was estimated to be about £30,000. The Bruces took their local duties seriously and in 1848 offered to finance a new church for Falkland, to be built on the same site.

They turned to Burn's partner David Bryce, with whom they already had dealings for their new house built between 1839 and 1844. Bryce had designed the chimney piece in the entrance hall and the candelabra. He was to become Scotland's leading Victorian architect, responsible for

producing designs for over 230 buildings including St Mary's Dalkeith, Fettes College and Torosay Castle on Mull. He worked in many styles, but is best known for his Scottish Baronial work.

To accommodate the new church more land had to be purchased. Falkland resident Mr Charles Sharp negotiated with the Estate Factor Francis Howden to sell part of his garden and for Mr Tyndall Bruce to pay for the east gable of his house to be reduced to the same height as the west gable. This was all agreed. The previous two churches on the site had faced east–west, but Bryce designed the new church facing on to the High Street and aligned north–south. It was to dominate the Royal Burgh.



The Kirk and the Fountain



Statue of Onesiphorus Tyndall Bruce

The old kirk was demolished by 1848. Quantities of bones were uncovered in its foundations; possibly the remains were from the families of the Lundies of Drums and Carmichaels of Balmbrae. The story goes that the bones were placed in a wheelbarrow and buried elsewhere. During the building of the new church, services were temporarily held in the Royal Stables in the Palace grounds.

Built between 1848 and 1850 the new church is described as “Early pointed, 4-bay rectangle with 5 bell tower, lucarned [windows] and pinnacled broach spire: stugged [roughly dressed with a chisel] ashlar, slated”. The modern architectural historian John Gifford in his *Buildings of Fife* sums up the building as: “Very competent, but the grey stone’s texture makes it unlovable. Standard mid-C19 Presbyterian rectangle, the bulk disguised by gabled buttresses. Against the S gable, steeple with a lucarned spire, its profile a distinctive feature of the town seen from a distance. Impressive interior.”

Some of the craftsmen who worked on the Bruces' House of Falkland were also used for the new church; these included the plasterers James Annan and Son, Edinburgh, the glaziers J&J Baxter of Edinburgh and Thomas Bonner the painter. George Page the builder served on the Parochial Board of the Parish of Falkland with Tyndall Bruce and had built the Temple of Decision for the Bruces in 1849, cost £140, and the Fountain, both designed by Alexander Roos. Later his nephew William Page also a builder (and a one time Falkland Provost) was responsible for much of the estate building including the Castle Shotts Bridge and the curling pond house in the Palace grounds.

The breakdown of the £5,750 costs for the Church was:

- Builder George Page, Falkland £2,731 12s 5d
- Plasterer James Annan and Sons, Edinburgh £119 16s 6d
- Joiners Charles and John MacGibbon, Edinburgh £1,818 9s
- Ornamental Painters Bonnar and Carfrae, Edinburgh £245 13s 6d
- Plumbers Hay and Addis, Edinburgh – guttering etc £109 8s 8d; Installation of a water closet £8 17s 6d
- Bellcasters (Whitechapel Bell Foundry) Charles and George Mears, London £86 3s 5d – the cost of shipping the bell to Kirkcaldy on the *Pazelle* was £1 10s
- Founders James Learmont & Co for two cast iron beams £7 10s and gates and railings £61 14s 9d
- Gilder Charles MacFarlane £93
- Glaziers J & J Baxter, Edinburgh £73 10s
- Clerk of Works William Spottiswoode £133 12s
- Architect David Bryce £263 17s 6d

A two-storey church with spire, plans were drawn up to allocate pews for a congregation of up to 850 worshippers. The centre pews would convert into long communion tables. Communion tokens were issued to those who had received instruction and been received as full members of the church. The linen-fold pattern on alternate wood panels pays tribute to the importance of weaving (hand and later power loom) in the Royal Burgh.

The Tyndall Bruces who paid for the building also ensured that their contribution was not forgotten – their carved monograms and the rampant lion of their crest and motto “Fuimus” are on the front of the Laird’s gallery facing the pulpit.



Carvings on the Laird's gallery – the Tyndall Bruce coat of arms in the centre, and the crests at either end

On the exterior above the main entrance is a pink marble plaque – it obscures the middle of the three windows. Its text in Latin roughly translates as “The church before you, newly built, was at the expense of the caring Onesiphorus Tyndall Bruce and his esteemed wife Margaret Stuart Bruce. Lest posterity hide their devotion to God and their generosity to their neighbours, Falklanders mindful of such benefit have erected this tablet.”

The *Fifeshire Journal* reported on 10 May 1849 that the New Parish Church “has arisen proudly before us, and now stands an ornament to Royal Falkland. The liberality of O. Tyndall Bruce Esq. has shed a widely felt influence around the district. His charitable disposition and Christian conduct, which are truly worthy of example, have been appreciated to good purpose. By his munificence has this edifice been erected, and a very splendid ornament it stands among the many churches in this land. The spire has a very conspicuous appearance, and adds much to the effect of the building, which, when finished, will not be equalled in many parishes.” Of course, the coverage does not mention that the finances were actually those of Mrs Tyndall Bruce rather than her husband!

The consecration and inaugural service of the new parish church took place on 26 May 1850, a wet day. It was opened by the Rev. Dr Muir of St Stephen’s Church, Edinburgh. His text was from John 1:16 “Of his fullness we have received and grace for grace”, the church choir sang “Blessed, Blessed be Jehovah”. There was an afternoon service by the Parish Minister the Rev. Andrew Wilson whose text was from Psalm 87:2 “The Lord loveth the gates of Zion more than the dwellings of Jacob.”

After a period of ill health, Onesiphorus died at the House of Falkland at 5 a.m. on 19 March 1855, he was 65. The *Fifeshire Biography* noted that “on that day all work seemed suspended in the district, the plough stood idle in the furrow, the loom was motionless, the hammer of the smith was still.”

David Bryce’s plans had included a crypt for the Tyndall Bruces on the eastern side of the church. On the day of the funeral, 28 March, six estate workers carried the coffin between the House of Falkland and the Church. It was followed by the Magistrates and Town Council of Falkland, the Magistrates and Town Council of Auchtermuchty, the Presbytery of Cupar, the tenants of the estates and the noblemen and gentlemen of the county. From the gates of Falkland Estate to the church the streets were lined with townsfolk paying their last respects. After the service there was a cold collation for guests who had travelled a distance.

Before his death Onesiphorus and his wife had commissioned Alexander Roos to design a fountain to stand in the centre of Falkland in front of the new church. This was erected in 1856. After considerable discussion on its decoration, lions holding shields with the arms and mottos of both the Bruces and the Town of Falkland were added.

Margaret was a regular church-goer. Apparently her husband had specified in his will that “should she survive him, she was to continue to drive, as before, with no less than four horses. The story goes that the horses knew the sound of the church bell: “at the first toll of the bell they touched noses, pawed the ground and waited at attention for the coachman’s signal. Some thought that these horses could have conveyed their lady to and from the church and returned to the stable yard without anyone holding the reins.”

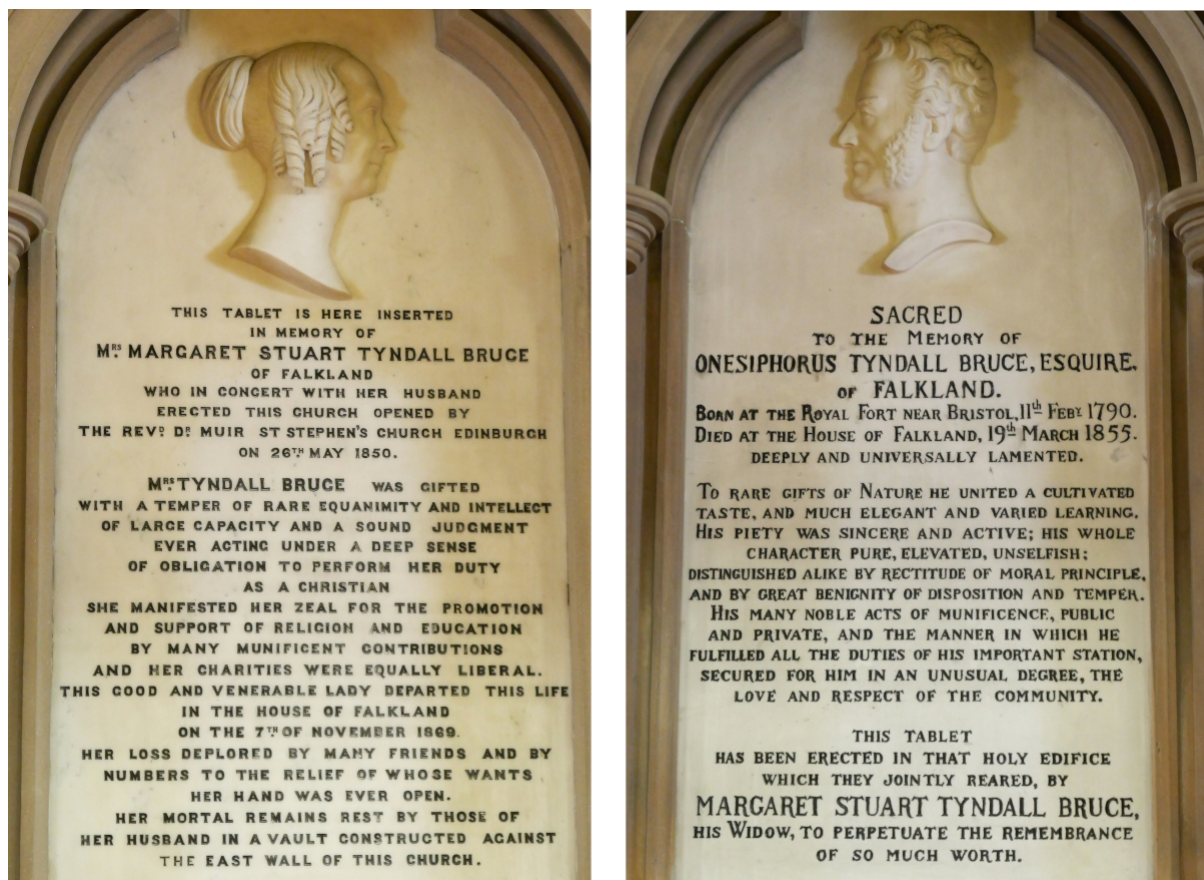
In December 1858 a marble tablet with a portrait of Onesiphorus was put up in the Parish Church

over the crypt. The work was by John Howie, an Edinburgh based sculptor who came from Ceres.

From the end of December 1858 the church was no longer a cold place of worship as John Danskin, a plumber from Leven, had installed a heating system. In 1905 fundraising was required to defray the costs of installing a system of hot water pipes into the church.

In 1861 Margaret gifted to the Church communion plate consisting of two silver cups and a flagon.

Margaret outlived her husband by fourteen years, dying at 10:03 p.m. on 7 November 1869 aged 81. Unlike her husband there are no accounts of her funeral; she lies in the crypt of Falkland Church next to her husband. A marble tablet with a portrait of her in profile as a young woman was erected by her heir Colonel Walter Hamilton Tyndall Bruce. It was similar in design to that of her husband. The newspaper said "it is from the hands of Mr Steele of Edinburgh."



The plaques to Margaret and her husband

By early 1879 there were some changes in posture for worship in the church, the congregation were permitted to stand during praise and kneel during prayer.

Music was important in the parish: the *Fife News* of 28 March 1874 advertised a "Sacred Concert" in the Parish Church of Fawcett's oratorio to be produced by Falkland's Musical Association on Friday 10 April. There was to be a chorus of upwards of 60 voices with harmonium accompaniments. The conductor was Mr Watson. The press reported the audience was large and highly receptive, many attracted from the surrounding district.

In 1885 influential members of Falkland Church met and agreed to raise subscriptions for a harmonium. They were later to visit the music saloon in Edinburgh before making a decision. A

vote was taken on the three different instruments that they had heard – a Trayser Harmonium; a Mason and Hamlin American Organ; and a Bauer Organ. By a large majority they voted in favour of the American organ, to be ordered from Messrs Paterson of Edinburgh at a cost of £155. They agreed to raise further monies for future expenses. The installation of the new organ required some alteration of the pews to accommodate it and the choir. This required consultation with the Heritors who agreed. It was also proposed to install a gas light under the instrument to protect it from damp. The organ was insured against fire to the extent of £150. The Psalmody Committee agreed: to place two gas jets, one on each side of the organ; to cushion or cover the organ stool; to contract with an organ constructor to tune and repair the organ; and to purchase copies of the *New Hymnal* for the Choir. At the same time the salary of Mr Milne, the organist, was to be increased to £28.

In 1886 the Established Church Choir gave a recital of the sacred cantata *Daniel*. The conductor was the Precentor Mr W. Milne and the organist Mr Charleston of Kirkcaldy. Three years later a grand concert was given in the church by the Choral Society who performed Bradbury's cantata *Esther the beautiful Queen*. There was also a children's choir.

In January 1877 the *Fife News* reported that "a number of ladies of the Established Church congregation ... have kindly exerted themselves for the benefit of the industrial education of the young women of the town. A meeting was held in the vestry on Monday evening, at which a class was organised, there being upwards of forty young women. The class is to meet in future in the vestry twice a week and the evenings are to be devoted to learning and improving in the various branches of sewing, knitting and cutting out, most useful in a family."

Nearly fifty years after the Church had opened there was a proposal to have stained glass installed in the north windows. A committee under the Town Clerk Charles Gulland was set up and subscriptions collected. The windows were installed in May 1897, the work of Messrs Ballantine and Gardiner, of George Street, Edinburgh. They depict the Nativity, Resurrection and Ascension. The cost was £300, of which £157 4s 6d had been collected. The new owner of Falkland Estate (also a principal heritor) the Catholic Marquess of Bute, had given £105 and a collection had raised £16 13s 10d. Bute and his factor Major William Wood had been asked to be notified by Mr Gulland of the financial position. There was a shortfall of £21 1s 8d and correspondence suggests that the Church was hoping that Lord Bute would make up the difference. These windows were restored in 1988 "in memory of the Rev. J. K. Russell, MA, BD, Minister of this Parish 1912–1949". In 1895 Ballantine and Gardiner had been responsible for fixing ten new stained glass windows in the Chapel Royal of nearby Falkland Palace.

An annual event in the village calendar over many years was the "Kirkin of the Town Council", when the Provost and Magistrates met in the Town Hall and marched to the Church behind the Town Officer. In the afternoon they paraded to the Free Church: an indication that the Church was at the very centre of the community.

In 1910 a brass plaque was mounted on the north west interior wall, it reads:

In memory of James William Barrack. Only son of the late Rev John Barrack MP formerly minister of this parish. District Surgeon, Kuantan, Pahang, who, whilst heroically defending a friend against Chinese gang robbers at Gambang, Pahang, lost his own life on the 15th July 1908 aged 33 years, and whose mortal remains lie buried at Kuantan.

This tablet was erected as a mark of their great esteem by his fellow academics and friends serving in the Civil Services of the Federated Malay States and Straits Settlements.

Lighting was challenging in the large kirk building – the Session had turned down the offer of additional stained glass windows stating they would darken the light in the church. This was possibly Mrs Barrack who, in 1910, had approached Lord Ninian Crichton Stuart (son of the late Marquess of Bute), one of the principal heritors, seeking his support for installing a stained glass window in addition to the memorial tablet. In 1912 the gas lighting was deemed “totally inadequate” and was to be replaced by a “set of Beys inverted burners.” In 1927 it was the Women’s Guild who offered the necessary funds to install electric light in the Church. This was installed by Messrs Oliver Melville, Kirkcaldy and cost £138 9s 3d. In 1964 the coal-fired boiler was converted to oil burning.

After the Great War Falkland decided on a Memorial Institute to remember the men of Falkland lost in the Great War; after much fundraising a house off the Back Wynd was purchased: it opened in October 1920 (and later became a Youth Hostel and then the Smart Cookies nursery). The same month a grey granite memorial was erected in the church porch, reading “To the glory of God and in grateful memory of those who gave their lives for their country in the Great War, 1914–1918.” It lists 34 names. The work of James Taggart, Aberdeen, it was gifted by the minister, the Rev. J. K. Russell, BD, and a few private subscribers. In 1960 additional panels were erected either side with 16 names of World War Two casualties.

A stone tablet on the wall in the east porch lists the names of the members of the first Free Kirk congregation who contributed to the building of their church at the time of the 1843 Disruption. This was taken into the kirk when the Free Kirk building was sold in 1994.

As early as 1879 the Kirk Session had been complaining about the unsatisfactory state of the church bell, but it was left to the heritors to take action; this didn’t happen until 1920 when the bell was re-cast by John Warner & Sons, a London bell foundry, in business between 1739 and 1949. The church bell is hung in the space at the base of the spire and rung from a room immediately below.

The American organ of 1885 was replaced in 1930 by an organ installed in the Laird’s gallery of the church, it was from Hill & Son and Norman & Beard; the specifications were drawn up by the firm’s Scottish manager, Joseph B. Blossom of Glasgow, and it was donated by ex-Provost Charles Jackson in memory of his parents. He also made an endowment to bring the salary of the organist up to £60 per year and to cover tuning, upkeep and insurance.



The former Laird's Gallery in 2019 with the Craig Room below and the organ being played above

Other gifts dedicated included a communion table lectern, gifted by the family of the former Falkland Estate Factor Major William Wood and his wife; brass communion table flower vases from Mr and Mrs G. B. Duncan, Newton of Lathrisk; a lectern bible from Miss Grace C. Bonthron from the Newton, a cork carpet for the church aisles from Mr and Mrs James Jackson of Chapelyard; chairs, gallery railing, and platform for communion table from ex-Provost Charles Jackson.

A baptismal font was installed in March 1931, it read: "To the glory of God and in memory of his parents Charles Jackson and Janet Walker, Lomondvale, Falkland, and of his sister Euphemia. This font was gifted by John Walker Jackson, Meadowfield, Falkland, March 1931." It was carved by the local joiner Robert Millar of Westport.

In 1932 Falkland Parish Church became a registered charity.

In early 1939 on the retiral of the Rev. Matthew Leishman of the Falkland Free Church, a union of the two Falkland churches was proposed; it was agreed by the Presbytery of Cupar. In 1976 the Old Free Kirk which had become the Church Hall was sold by the Session (it is now a private house). The two churches had previously worked together, as a press report from 1915 noted that the Rev. Russell "intimated from the pulpit that he had sent his name in for service in the Field Ambulance Company of the RAMC and, if accepted, he had arranged with the minister of the United Free Church that he would occupy the Established Church pulpit in his absence and that both congregations would worship together." For a time there were joint services in the Parish Church at 11:15 a.m. and 2 p.m.

During the Second World War the area under the church was designated as an air raid shelter and an entry was formed from the vestry. Services were held regularly including a Battle of Britain commemoration in September 1943.

The Reverend J. K. Russell was minister between 1912 and 1949; he is commemorated in a pane of glass on the window above the manse pew.

By the late 1960s the size of the congregation was dropping and in 1967 the Session agreed to discontinue the evening services as they were only being attended by about a dozen members. The membership of the church stood at 555, a year-on-year increase of one, and there was already concern about the size of the congregation. Two years later it was decided to remove the pews from the front on the ground floor and to extend the platform to increase the area of the chancel. At the same time the sounding canopy was removed from the pulpit. Later the Craig Room was installed in the ground floor of the church for small meetings and social events.



The interior before the re-ordering

In 1970 Falkland was designated the very first conservation area in Scotland; there are now 48 in Fife and over 600 across Scotland. Fife Government reads "This denotes an area of particular architectural or historic value, the character or appearance of which it is desirable to preserve or enhance. The Council is keen to ensure that the quality of these areas is maintained for the benefit of present and future generations." Falkland's Church sits at the heart of the Conservation area.

In December 1971 the church was listed Category B. The 1865 statue of Onesiphorus Tyndall Bruce, carved by Sir John Steele on a pedestal designed by David Bryce, was moved from outside the south range of the Palace to the kirk grounds. Onesiphorus and his wife Margaret had paid for the Church in 1848. With the Fountain, there was now a trinity of buildings in the centre of the royal burgh connected with the Tyndall Bruce family, the work of significant craftsmen.

More change came in 1981 with the retiral of the Freuchie minister: the parishes of Falkland and Freuchie were linked, being part of the Presbytery of St Andrews rather than Cupar. After 177

years the old manse on the hillside outside Falkland (now Ladywell) was sold in 1984 and the minister lived in a house in the village.

With the general reduction in church attendance and the decline of weddings, the church took a further hit during the Covid lockdowns in 2020 and 2021; by 2022 the Falkland Church roll was down to 98 members with just one baptism and two weddings, costs were going up for the listed building and fundraising was limited. Fewer services were held in Falkland, with Freuchie becoming the main focus of the church's activity.

In 2015 it was estimated that in Scotland only 8.9% of the population attended church. By 2022 the Church of Scotland had 1,353 congregations and 270,300 members, and looked to rationalise the number of churches in its ownership. In April 2022 it published a full list of the 52 Church of Scotland churches and church halls in Fife planned for closure (38% of their buildings). in the Eden Tay cluster, the list included Falkland Church along with Strathmiglo Church, Kettle Church/Hall and Ladybank Church.



After 174 years Falkland's Church of Scotland which stands at the heart of the Royal Burgh is finally to close its doors.

Marietta Crichton Stuart

Previous events

A reminder that last month's talk by David Munro on the archives of Drumlanrig, and all our previous recorded talks, are available to view at www.falklandsociety.org.uk/recordings.shtml.

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