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The Falkland Society

Scottish Registered Charity SC017201

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www.historicfalkland.scot

www.falkland.wiki

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Committee for 2023–2024: **Peter Burman** (Chair), **John Smith** (Depute Chair), **Ross Burgess** (Secretary), **Robeena Dhar** (Treasurer), **Alan Graham** (Archivist), **Marietta Crichton Stuart**.

We need additional Committee members as some of us will be standing down at the next AGM!
Contact peterburman@btinternet.com if you think you could help.

Falkland Society Newsletter, July / August 2024

Dear <<First Name>>,

We normally take a summer break at this time of year, but we've have arranged a very special event at the beginning of August:

CELEBRATING FALKLAND!

This will be a two-day event held in, and celebrating, Falkland Parish Church and its context, together with the publication of a new book about the church and its history. .

Much more about this below.

Ross Burgess (Secretary)

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CELEBRATING FALKLAND!

Two days to celebrate the past, present and future of our historic town, with talks, guided tours, and exhibits from the Falkland Society's archives. A Falkland Society event, in collaboration with the Kirk Session.



The Parish Church in its context, from a photo by Paul Turner

10:30 to 17:30, Friday and Saturday, 2–3 August 2024

Falkland Parish Church

Entrance free, donations welcome

Alan Graham, our archivist, has been reviewing the content of the Society's archives, and revealed a wealth of interesting information. This prompted us to plan an exhibition featuring material from the archives, together with some of the historic artefacts we have inherited, which have been stored for several years in the basement of the Parish Church. The event will feature talks and presentations, celebrating the town of Falkland and in particular the 174-year history of the church, which now faces a dramatic change in its function and status.

The event will include a rolling programme of short talks throughout the two days, including:

- the archaeology of the Falkland landscape
- highlights from the history of Falkland
- the buildings of Falkland
- the work of artists and craftspeople, past and present
- Story-telling and the sharing of memories.

There will also be guided walks through the historic streets of Falkland, guided tours of the inside of our magnificent Parish Church, and a special programme for children on Saturday afternoon.

Subject to a few essential things being put right with our historic organ, we hope to end both days' programmes with an organ recital by noted local organist, Robin Bell.

Full details of the programme to be published nearer the date.

As a lasting legacy of the event, our new Celebratory History of Falkland Church (see below) will now be on sale at a special launch price of £3.

PETER BURMAN

Publications

Publications Sub-Committee:

- Alan Graham (Convenor)
- Marietta Crichton Stuart
- Ross Burgess.

New book

Falkland Parish Church is facing a new future, and a radical change to its status within the village where it has been an iconic feature for over 170 years. It therefore seemed a good time to launch a new publication, celebrating the Church's past and looking forward to its future. *Falkland Church: A Celebratory History*, will be launched on 2–3 August, appropriately within the church itself, as part of the **Celebrating Falkland!** event

It's a 20-page booklet, with 14 colour photographs and one line drawing, and will sell for £5 – with a special price of just £3 for the two days of **Celebrating Falkland!** The main text is by Marietta Crichton Stuart, edited with additional material by Ross Burgess and photographs by Edinburgh-based photographer Paul Turner.

Falkland Church a Celebratory History



The Falkland Society

Other forthcoming publications

Work on the new book has taken priority in recent weeks, but we will shortly be resuming work on three further books:

- a new, completely restructured, edition of *Falkland in the Reign of Queen Victoria*
- a new edition, expanded and in full colour, of *A Falkland Guide*
- a totally new book about Falkland in the First World War and its aftermath

Existing publications:

Copies of *Falkland and its People 1901–1913* are still available. £20 including postage and packing, or £10 for local deliveries or if you collect in person from Brunton House or at a Falkland Society event.

The Society's Archives

When my wife Brenda and I came to live in Falkland in January 2018 a neighbour told us on the first full day in our new house that the Falkland Society were holding a meeting in the town hall and immediately we decided to go there in the evening once we had unpacked as many boxes

as we could. Ninian Crichton Stuart was the speaker and we learned a lot about the Falkland Estate. Having attended a lot of talks in the months since, I decided to join the committee of the Falkland Society in late 2022 and soon after decided to volunteer as their archivist.

I have no professional qualifications as an archivist but I do bring enthusiasm and some knowledge of history and record keeping to the job having gained a BA in History from the Open University in 1985 when I was aged 32. The first thing that impresses you about the archive is the wonderful collection of black and white photographs prepared by Fred Womack in 1983 (the mounted copies in the archive had all been taken from originals) – what an enormous undertaking by Fred as there are 632 photos and according to the index which I found there are 40 photographs missing so keep your eyes open for them next time you have a spring clean. The photographs are nearly all of Falkland people and buildings and are an important record of the history of the village. The Falkland Society welcomes donations of photographs or any information about the history of Falkland and its neighbouring villages.

Also in the archive are books, papers, cassette tapes and display material used in previous exhibitions. As you would expect we do have a manuscript copy of the *History of the Falkland Estate* by the late Pamela McIlroy and some information on Falkland families (Bonthrone, Deas, Storrar, Bruce and Gulland et al), a full record of the activities of the cricket club including a book on the club, and information on the local farms and businesses. Pamela McIlroy was archivist of the Falkland Society from at least 1995 until 2014 and did a lot of research for the archive during her period of office for which I am very grateful.

There is also more detailed information such as the Division of the Commonty of the Lomonds (when the common land to the south of the village was divided up in 1815). The division was into 83 separate blocks or fields although more than 200 people are named as having rights or joint rights to at least one of the blocks. Among the many occupations recorded in the Division document there at least 29 weavers, 7 manufacturers, 3 brewers and 3 shoemakers not to mention the clockmaker, excise-officer and surgeon. Although most of those given rights to a block were from Falkland (74) or Newton of Falkland (17) many other places of residence are named including one person who resided at Baltimore, North America!

I will be showing some of the archive at the forthcoming event *Celebrating Falkland* in Falkland Parish Church on the 2nd and 3rd of August so you are welcome to come along and have a chat about Falkland's history, its estate and the palace or just look at the pictures, maps and books.

*Alan Graham, archivist and chair of the publications
sub-committee, Falkland Society*



GO Falkland: An exciting and visionary event on the Falkland Estate 17–18 July 2024

It is striking how much is happening in and around Falkland this summer, starting with the event called **GO Falkland** which I found both a learning experience and an inspiration. The thrust of the event was to inform us about and to encourage 'restorative' farming. Commercial farming is surely now against the temper of our times – it has been and still is unduly exploitative of Mother Earth. It is all about taking as much as possible out of the long-suffering soil, aided by the use of chemicals, and is geared to maximising profit. What we need is to put something back. The need, and the challenge, are incredibly urgent.

The location for GO Falkland was the 'Field of Learning' on the Falkland Estate, which has had earlier disguises as a playing field for Falkland House School and as an overflow car-park. It is a pleasant spot, with views of the East Lomond Hill to the south and a backdrop of trees to the north.

The first thing to say about the event is that it was thronged with people. They included the small army of speakers, a smaller army of stall-holders, and those who had paid to attend as active participants, enjoying and profiting from the many inspirational talks which were on offer.

The ingredient in the programme which most excited me was the launch of The Falkland Blanket, the work of Newburgh Handloom Weavers Jimmy Hutchison and Erika Douglas. They weave on pre-industrial wooden handlooms made by Thomas Kennedy of Galashiels.



Erika Douglas holds up The Falkland Blanket

Why is it called The Falkland Blanket? Because the wool is from organically reared sheep from the Falkland Estate. There are two beautiful colours, a gentle grey and an off-white, and they enable beautiful patterns to be created by the weavers. I was told that the journey from lamb to blanket was as follows:

- A flock of lambs was born on the Estate
- Their fleeces were first shorn when they were around 16 months old
- The fleece was prepared and sent to a mill to be 'scoured' – thoroughly cleaned – and the wool was spun and plied
- The resulting yarn was sent to the Newburgh Handloom Weavers. Samples were made; the blanket was designed, warped and woven
- Each blanket has been hand-knotted, hand-woven and hand-finished by Jimmy and Erika.

The result is a blanket which celebrates the natural undyed colours of the fleece, the skill and passion of farmers, spinners and weavers, and the connexion between the land and its people. It is as fine an example of contemporary craftsmanship as any of us could hope to find.

The challenges were as follows:

- To re-value wool, which has been depreciating in value for decades in spite of its amazing

qualities – warmth, softness, breathability and durability. These are all the qualities I like to have in a pullover, and of course the same goes for a blanket.

- To create a sustainable and ethical alternative to the mass-produced and synthetic textiles that dominate the market.
- To revive and support an industry which is rooted in our locality and has hundreds of years behind it.
- To bring together the farmer and his land, in this case the Falkland Estate, in concert with the spinner and the weaver.

The blanket is a beautiful product, an example of good design, traditional skills and using the local raw product. It certainly deserves to be celebrated.

For me the weaving tent was the great high point, but I also met many other people who were running their stalls and sharing knowledge about their organisations and the contributions they make to our contemporary culture and lives.

It is hugely worthwhile getting to know about organisations and initiatives which most of us not working the land would normally not know about. In fact, it is a real privilege to be able to extend our knowledge in this way. For example, I had an enjoyable chat with the team running SEFARI (Scottish Environment, Food and Agriculture Research Institutions) a Scottish Government Strategic Research Programme (SRP).



'This SRP is the mid to long term research component of the Scottish Government's Strategic Portfolio. In addition to the SRP this includes the underpinning of national resources and, in partnership between SEFARI, Scottish Universities and Agencies, the policy facing Centres of Expertise.' I find this kind of language quite difficult to cope with, so this was a greatly valued opportunity to meet people who can *tell* what actually goes on. It is by no means a small enterprise: last year it supported 268 PhD students; there was an income from industry of £12.5 million; and there were 226 scientific outputs, chapters of books, software, databases and apps.

I must confess to having a soft spot for farming-related machinery. There were two magnificent machines on display and my eye kept returning to one of them.



An eye-catching machine developed for the more efficient distribution of seeds

Highly sympathetic to me was the explanation of the work of the Rare Breeds Survival Trust (RBST). Their Watchlist 2024–25 shows where we are with the risks of losing rare breeds under the headings of Sheep; Cattle; Equine; Pigs; and Goats, each category divided into 'Priority' and 'At Risk', Just to give the flavour of this, under Sheep there were four breeds listed as 'priority' (Lincoln Longwool; North Ronaldsay; Whitefaced Woodland; Welsh Mountain Pedigree) and twenty-three listed as being 'at risk', one of which was the Soay sheep, a couple of which were penned nearby, handsome creatures.



Soay sheep enjoying the Falkland turf, their wool can be either black or brown

It was breeds of Sheep that seemed to be most 'at risk', another worryingly being the Bagot sheep which are a great choice for designed landscapes where 'movement in the landscape' has, since the 18th century, been greatly valued.

Under Cattle I was pleased to see that Red Poll cattle had an asterisk by the name, recording