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The Falkland Society

Scottish Registered Charity SC017201

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Committee for 2024–2025: **Peter Burman** (Chair), **John Smith** (Depute Chair), **Ross Burgess** (Secretary), **Robeena Dhar** (Treasurer), **Alan Graham** (Archivist), **Marietta Crichton Stuart**, **Robin Bell**, **John Fletcher**.

Falkland Society Newsletter, April 2025

Dear <<First Name>>,

We have a very special meeting this month: please come along to Falkland Parish Church next Wednesday (9 April) to see and hear Robin Bell presenting in words at music on the organ.

Peter Burman (Chair)

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April Meeting

Our monthly meeting for April will be an in-person only event, next Wednesday (9 April), in association with [Church Music Scotland](#), when our Committee member **Robin Bell** will be presenting **Pull out all the Stops** – an illustrated, interactive tour of the Falkland pipe organ, with music from Scotland and France – the 'Auld alliance'.

7 p.m., Wednesday 9 April

Falkland Parish Church, High Street, Falkland KY15 7BU

Entrance free, donations welcome



A native of Airth, Robin Bell was educated at Larbert High School and Glasgow University (holding the post of Organ Scholar) from where he graduated with Honours in Music. Robin has been organist in churches in Linlithgow, Grangemouth and Dunblane. He was also assistant organist to Herrick Bunney at St. Giles' Cathedral, Edinburgh and is currently organist at Stenhouse & Carron Parish Church, Stenhousemuir, Falkirk. Robin taught music at Falkirk High School, Alloa Academy, Madras College and St Leonards in St Andrews. He was administrator of SCOTS (Scottish Churches Organist Training Scheme) for almost twenty years, conductor of Cupar Choral Society for five years and accompanist to the East Fife Male Voice Choir for almost fourteen years. In 2009 he received an honorary award from the Royal School of Church Music (RSCM) at a special service in Salisbury Cathedral in recognition of his contribution to Scottish church music. He is Chair of the Friends of the Caird Hall Organ and contributes to the Church Music Scotland Team and the Falkland Society.

Programme

1. **Prelude to the *Te Deum*** (arr. Lane): Marc-Antoine Charpentier (1643-1704)

- **Talk on the pipe organ:**
- louds and softs, highs and lows

2. **Tierce en Taille** (from the *Messe pour les Convents*): François Couperin (1668-1733)

3. **Ballade en mode phrygien**: Jehan Alain (1911-1940)

4. **Scherzo** (from *Clavier Sonata*): John Purser (born 1942)

- **Talk on the pipe organ:**
- mechanism and management

5. **Wedding Introit**: James MacMillan (born 1959)

6. **Polwart on the Green** (from *A Sonata of Scots Tunes*): James Oswald (1710-1769)

7. **Farewell to Stromness**: Peter Maxwell Davies (1934-2016)

- **Talk on the pipe organ:**
- Falkland Church
- Accompanying hymns and songs
- Church Music Scotland research
- Play The Organ Year 2025

8. **Toccata** (from *Douze Pièces*): Thèodore Dubois (1837-1924)

The pipe organ was built in 1930 by the firm of Hill, Norman & Beard of London. Some pipes are made of wood, while other pipework is made of zinc rather than plain metal. With careful maintenance and careful monitoring of the humidity levels in the building, the organ could continue to function reliably for centuries, as many continental organs have done already.

A visit to Newhaven and Trinity

“Adaptation of beautiful old buildings has been happening for centuries but today more than ever we should be looking to recycle buildings rather than destroying them” – Peter Burman 1 April 2025

The truth of this statement of mine was borne upon us afresh on the afternoon of Sunday 30 March when we decided to explore the Trinity and Newhaven districts of northern Edinburgh. We reached Newhaven late in the afternoon and were intrigued to see a long low building on the keyside, which turned out to be the Victorian fishmarket, a stone-built double shed on the harbour edge, with a roof covering of traditional Scottish slates. Its open arcades have made it very suitable for recycling as a series of enterprises including restaurants, fish a speciality but produce from the land offered as well.



The old fishmarket, with the modern Western Harbour development behind it

Being by now tired, hungry and thirsty, we went at once to the first of these restaurants, called Pier House, and had one of the best fish suppers we have had in Edinburgh or Fife. It was simply delicious, washed down with good white wine from the Veneto region of Italy. With the sunlight dancing on the water of the harbour, and looking across to the lighthouse in one direction and to the tower and spire of a monumental stone-built church in the other, we could

almost imagine ourselves to be in Venice.



Peter in Pier House, with the church seen through the windows

The church was Old Newhaven Free Church, 1852, designed by J. Anderson Hamilton, re-cast and enlarged in 1883 with attractive-looking halls, one also in Gothic style, and a spire of real elegance, 37 m in height. It is a tremendous landmark in that part of north Edinburgh, but now another recycled building: as long ago as 1994 it opened as Scotland's first dedicated climbing centre with the name of 'Alien Rock'. Of course, being of stone, the church itself is of rock. It is known far and wide for its unexpected and unusual alternative use, but it is greatly appreciated by neophyte rock-climbers and its owners seem (rightly) proud of it.



*Old Newhaven Free Church with its accompanying halls, a fine group of buildings:
the elegant spire has little gables rising higher than the corner pinnacles.*

As the size of the old fishmarket might suggest, Newhaven is a former fishing village, but it was originally founded by King James IV as a ship-building dock when creating a Scottish navy. The old village centre has several sites of historic interest, and was designated a conservation area in 1977, regrettably too late to prevent many of the traditional cottages being demolished. Newhaven Harbour is now the starting point for a vast 20th-century extension forming one arm of Leith's Western Harbour.

Around five minutes' walk from the harbour is the northern end of Craighall Road, an important north–south route between immensely high retaining walls. On its east side is the former Newhaven Parish Church, opened in 1836, designed by John Henderson.



The west front of the former Newhaven Parish Church

The Buildings of Scotland *Edinburgh* volume, published in 1984 and last reprinted in 1991, speaks of the church as though it were still a church. But this is another example of recycling: church services now take place in the former church hall, and the church itself has been converted to apartments, so there is no longer public access, and presumably no longer an organ, pulpit or communion table. It is clear that the stained glass (by Ballantine & Son) has survived. Indeed, on being converted to homes for people to live in, former churches often retain their stained glass which generally looks highly attractive, whether seen from the inside or the outside, especially when lit at night. It would be good to know if the first World War Memorial of 1919 still survives. It was executed by the Glasgow-based firm of carvers called Hamilton who were famous for the quality of their work. The *Buildings of Scotland* authors describe it as being 'unusually happy, a bronze plaque framed in green mosaic and flanked by oak Gothic tabernacles with small figures of a soldier and sailor'.



*A sign outside Newhaven Parish Church confirms that there is still Christian worship on the site, but directs worshippers to the hall behind the church.
Another sign announces that the church itself is now apartments.*

Another kind of adaptive re-use is represented by Starbank Park, originally the north-facing garden of Starbank House, which still exists, a handsome villa of 1815, at the top of the site. The original owner was Alexander Goalen, a wealthy Leith ship builder and uncle of the great Victorian prime minister W. E. Gladstone. Alexander's son, Revd Walter Goalen, an Episcopalian clergyman, inherited the house and lived there until his death in 1889, when the extensive gardens were bought by Leith Town Council for use as a public park. There is a memorial fountain of 1910 by the architect George Simpson.

The garden was provided to the local community as a resource for children and adults; we are looking forward to Cherry Blossom Sunday (27 April 2025) when the tradition is to hold a community picnic and enjoy being there in the Spring sunshine. There is a strong band of volunteers who look after and manage the park for the public benefit and who also fund-raise, for example for keeping the railings and the splendid gates in good repair.



The wrought-iron gates of Starbank Park, laid out as a public park around 1890

The Trinity district (deriving its name from an ancient charitable institution) lies to the south of Newhaven, and was part of the land acquired by James IV for his shipbuilding venture. We have noticed on previous walks that the former Trinity Railway Station of 1843 is well preserved as a house, and so also is the former Episcopal Church, known as Christ Church Trinity. It was built and owned by the same Revd Walter Goalen, who sold it to its congregation in 1875, on condition that he and his family should be buried in a sealed vault below the house. It was later linked under one rector with St James, Goldenacre, the Episcopal church towards the top northern end of Inverleith Row, not far away, but closed in 1980 and became a private house. A little chapel at St James's was created in its honour. The *Buildings of Scotland* volume describes Christ Church as: 'A little Decorated [i.e. in the architectural style of the early 14th century] village church by Hay of Liverpool, 1854, of square Fife rubble with Craigleith dressings. South porch and transept. Steeple on the south-west. North aisle by Thomas Leadbetter, 1889. The conversion was carried out in a modern idiom by Gordon and Dey, 1980, retaining some decent stained glass and allowing the full internal height to be seen and appreciated at the two staircases.'



The former Christ Church, now Church House, Trinity Road, a charming villa, in a street of charming villas

What is a 'villa'? It is a substantial single house, standing on its own – not in a terrace or a group of houses – often surrounded by a significant garden. There are many such in the Trinity area, but I end this month's rumination on historic buildings matters, including their adaptations for other purposes, with an example of an unusually large villa called Mayfield House in East Trinity Street, formerly the home of the Salvesen family who founded a shipping line. They gave part of their land for the building nearby of Earl Haig Gardens as housing for disabled veterans of World War I and a memorial to family members lost in action. The house has been sensitively divided into flats, and additional houses located in the grounds, as part of a development called Trinity Way.



Mayfield House today: to its left what looks like a top-lit billiard room; further to the left the former stable and carriage house, all important adjuncts of a substantial house towards the close of the nineteenth century.

It was often the case that the larger villas had gate piers at their main entrances and even lodges

which provided privacy and a degree of security for the people living in the 'big house'. Mayfield House's former lodge is an attractive survival which adds variety and interest to the street. Such lodges were often quirky and this one has strongly sculptural and eminently memorable chimneys, placed on the diagonal.



Mayfield House's characterful mid-nineteenth century former lodge of c. 1830

From the perspective of 'architecture spotting', Trinity and Newhaven are pleasantly diverse and enjoyable parts of Edinburgh to explore.

Peter Burman

John and Josephine Smith – news of a painful and traumatic accident

I am sure all members will share the Committee's deep concern for our Vice-Chair, John Smith, and his wife Josephine, who were nearing the end of their winter visits to Australia and New Zealand to spend time with their daughter and son and their respective families, a precious time with grandchildren growing up fast.

On 25 March, in their daughter's house in Sydney, John (who suffers from labyrinthitis) lost his balance and 'fell, in the dark, down a flight of concrete stairs'. John was bruised but fell backwards onto Josephine who has broken her kneecap and was admitted to hospital for surgery.

As we can all imagine, there has been a host of practical problems to resolve such as insurance, suitable accommodation without steps or stairs, dealings with doctors and hospital, and so on. It seems likely that Josephine will not be encouraged to fly for a while and so their return to Falkland may well be delayed.

I hope to have an update on how they are by the time of our lecture-recital meeting on 9 April, at

the parish church of Falkland.

PETER BURMAN



*Two images from Cambo:
Josephine (left) with Ross's cousin Ann; and John (right) with Ross*

Future Events

Wed 9 April Robin Bell: *'Pull out all the stops' – an illustration in music and story of the Falkland Church pipe organ* (in person, in Falkland Parish Church; see main article above)

Wed 14 May: Robin Evetts on *Cambo Estate – the rehabilitation and re-purposing of the Georgian Stables*, followed by the Society's AGM (hybrid meeting: by Zoom and in person).
(Dr Rory Lamb's talk has been postponed to a future occasion)

Wed 11 June: Falkland Society group visit to Culross, to celebrate its stewardship by the National Trust for Scotland

July and August: Summer Break

Wed 10 September: James Simpson, architect, joint-founder of Simpson & Brown, on *the rescue and restoration of Botanic Cottage, at the Royal Botanic Garden Edinburgh* (hybrid meeting: by Zoom and in person).

October onwards: Our programme of talks continues. Possible subjects under discussion include:

- **Universal Basic Income** – <https://www.basicincome.scot/>
- **Campaign for Borders Rail** – <https://campaignforbordersrail.org/>
- **SAVE Britain's Heritage** – <https://www.savebritainsheritage.org/>
- **Dr Judith Roebuck, Sanctuary Development Officer, Church of Scotland**

Look out for more details of all these events in our future Newsletters.

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