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The Falkland Society

Scottish Registered Charity SC017201

www.falklandsociety.org.uk

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Committee for 2025–2026: [Peter Burman](#) (Chair), [Ross Burgess](#) (Secretary), [Robeena Dhar](#) (Treasurer), [Alan Graham](#) (Archivist), [Marietta Crichton Stuart](#), [Robin Bell](#), [John Fletcher](#).

Falkland Society Newsletter, December 2025

Dear <<First Name>>,

This month we are again holding a hybrid meeting, in Falkland Church and online: we're still trying to iron out some of the technical issues, so please come along (or join us online) to hear Marietta Crichton Stuart next Wednesday. By the way the recording of last month's talk (slightly tidied up) is now available:

<https://falklandsociety.org.uk/videos/2025-11-12-Judith-Roebuck.mp4>

Once again, to view this Newsletter the way we intended it, we strongly recommend clicking the "View this email in your browser" link above.

Peter Burman (Chair)

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December Meeting

Our next meeting will be at 7 p.m. on [Wednesday 10 December](#), when **Marietta Crichton Stuart** will be talking about “**Mausoleum, Mansion and Monuments**”: a virtual walk through the Falkland Estate in times gone by. This will be a hybrid meeting: online via Zoom, and in person at Falkland Parish Church.

Please join us from 6:45 p.m. onwards on the 10th, at

[The Craig Room, Falkland Parish Church, KY15 7BU](#)

what3words: [///wooden.backpacks.recipient](#)

All welcome, no charge, donations very welcome.

Or you can join us online by Zoom at: <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/88569963976>

or one-tap mobile:

<http://+442039017895,,88569963976#>

Marietta Crichton Stuart grew up in Falkland Palace and is the great-grand-daughter of the third Marquess of Bute, who bought the Falkland Estate in 1887.

She is a trustee of the Falkland Stewardship Trust and has an unparalleled knowledge of the House of Falkland, Falkland Palace and the nineteenth and twentieth century histories of her family.

Formerly on the production staff of *The Guardian*, Marietta has devoted her energies since retirement to her work as Archivist to the family and Estate papers and as a historian. She is a long-standing member of the Falkland Society Committee and of its Publications Sub-Committee.



In Praise of Friendship



Wall paintings at St James, Goldenacre: Photo by the late Paul Turner

During the last few days of November and the first few days of December Ross and I were thinking much about what to put in our annual *Christmas & New Year Letter*. Ross loves to write it, and I get to make a few suggestions and amendments, so that - in the end - we are both satisfied with it. My plan for this short essay is to review what we have written, or what it tells us about our stewardship of time during 2025, and to share some thoughts, both sad and joyful, along with some images.

We must begin on a note of distinct sadness. We have lost two dear friends this year, the second quite recently, someone who will be known to many members of the Falkland community and the Falkland Estate.

Paul Turner, a highly skilled photographer who had been recording our community (many of you will remember his exhibition at the Stables last January, or will have bought his little book of red squirrels), died quite suddenly in early November.



We show here his photograph on the front cover of the 'celebratory' guidebook to Falkland parish church, a masterpiece of High Victorian architecture by the architect David Bryce, 1849–50, as seen from the hill. It shows so well how a parish church can look like a mother hen with her chickens – the houses – gathered around her.

The image at the top of this article is of the long narrative mural on the south side of the chancel of the church of St James's Goldenacre, Inverleith, a short walk from the Royal Botanic Garden, Edinburgh. The photograph was exceedingly difficult to take, needing special lighting, and one of a set which we commissioned from Paul for the guidebook to St James's for which Ross has written the text.



On 13 March this year we lost following a stroke **Clive Wilmer**, who had been a fellow student of mine at King's College, Cambridge. Not only was he a literary critic and historian of great distinction but he was also a poet. We knew him additionally as the



inspirational Master of Ruskin's Guild of St George; his ten-year term included the hundredth anniversary of Ruskin's death, celebrated with a

marvellous exhibition at 2 Temple Place, London.

One of Clive's poems is called *The Advent Carols*. This is such a perfect fit with the present moment that I give the full text of it below. I recommend reading it aloud, slowly and carefully:

I look from afar. We stand in darkness.

A people in exile, shall we hear good news,

Who toward midnight, in mid-winter sing?

Sing words to call a light out of the darkness

To thaw dulled earth, to unfold her fairest bud;

Our song holds faith that the Word will be made flesh.

Now we bear candles eastward, bear them into

Inviolable dark the Word should occupy:

Light disembodied swells the sanctuary

Where an old dream in mimesis, without conviction,

Over again. I look from afar. Our sung words

Are herald angels, and they announce his name,

But lay no fleshly mantle on the King.

The one Word. And yet, in the song's rising

Is rapture, and dayspring in the mind's dark:

For the one sanctuary, now, is the word not

Made flesh – though it is big with child, invaded

By the dumb world that was before it was.

*[Clive Wilmer, New and Collected Poems, Carcanet 2012,
but originally in the collection called Devotions, 1982]*

Another friendship celebrated this year was the publication of a big new edition of a book called *Holkham: an English Treasure House and its Landscape*. The celebratory book launch at Holkham, Norfolk, on a cold evening in March, was a happy and splendid occasion. The new edition was skilfully brought together as editor by Leo Schmidt, one of the principal influences on my academic life, as we collaborated so often together on conferences and publications, and through whom I ended my academic life as a professor in Germany, at Cottbus, not far from Berlin, for five enriching years.

We have been to London on a couple of enjoyable occasions. The first was for a conference at the Courtauld Institute, on the study and conservation of *medieval wall paintings*. The second

was a major conference on the **future of churches** at the Victoria & Albert Museum, on 21 October: an essay by me was printed in the programme booklet. I was particularly pleased to catch up with Emily Gee, my current successor as head of the Council for the Care of Churches and the Cathedrals Fabric Commission for England.

During this visit Ross and I attended a meeting at the **Art Workers' Guild** (I have been a member since 1974); we visited the Cathedral & Abbey Church at **St Albans** and were pleased to see that they had been influenced by the Conservation Management Plan I had researched and written for them twenty years before; we visited William Morris's **Red House**, Bexleyheath, where we noticed an interpretive panel thanking people for their contributions to understanding the significance of the house – to our amazement one of the half-dozen names was mine! However, it is true that I had been a trustee years before, and was deeply involved in helping to work out a viable future.

We have been to **Cambridge** twice this year, in May and October. The October visit was to agree with King's College, my alma mater, where we should place the sculpture by Martin Jennings which I am giving them. We all agreed that it should be placed in the Fellows' Garden, in a spot where many people will see it as they walk a well-established path to or from the University Library; other visitors to the garden will have the opportunity of a more reflective experience of the sculpture, called *Two Figures*).

Our friend **Nic Boyes**, a sculpture conservator of great expertise and reputation, is going to conserve the sculpture lightly and deliver it to site in February, for a formal dedication and unveiling in April, which we hope the sculptor, Martin Jennings, will be able to attend.

Nic Boyes was a generous and lively collaborator in helping us organise a memorable weekend for members of **Ruskin's Guild of St George** during a weekend of flawless weather in July. Nic also guided us all round the outside and then the inside of Rosslyn Chapel (our photo shows him pointing out a feature of the carving).

In October, Nic (as conservator) and Krystyna Pitasz (as architect and structural engineer) took us on a memorable visit to

12th and 13th century ruined churches on the Kintyre peninsula, where I was invited to become Patron of the **Medieval Kintyre** conservation project. The churches in question have an astonishing wealth of carved stone memorials.





Medieval carved stones in one of the ruined churches

I want to end by saying that all our enterprises and initiatives are as special as they are because of the willing participation of our friends. We offer a special word of thanks to the circle of friendship which is the Falkland Society committee and all those who attend our lectures and visits. We also thank all our members and all our speakers, who make all the hard work of organisation worthwhile.

PETER BURMAN, 4 December 2025

Future Programme

Wed 10 December: Marietta Crichton Stuart (**see main article above**)

Wed 21 January 2026: Ross Burgess – *Falkland's Historic Buildings*

Wed 11 February: John Fletcher – *Local deer, climate change and the environment; followed by the Falkland Society AGM*

Wed 11 March: Robin Bell: *Falkland: its people in Music*

Wed 8 April: Carron Tobin, Director, Rural Solutions and founder of SCOTO – *Community-led tourism*

Wed 13 May: Craig Cameron, formerly Head Gardener and now Factor of Teasses Estate, Ceres. His talk on the revival of the Estate may be followed up by a visit to the outstanding gardens.

Wed 10 June: James Simpson: *Highlights of his architectural career* (to be confirmed)

July - August: Summer break

Wed 9 September: Joe Fitzpatrick: *Recent archaeological finds in Falkland*

Wed 14 October: John Gilbert: *Hunting with Mary Queen of Scots*

*Look out for more details of all these events on our website
and in our future Newsletters.*

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