



The Falkland Society

Scottish Registered Charity SC01720
www.falklandsociety.org.uk

Minutes of the Annual General Meeting, held at The Stables, Falkland Estate, and online by Zoom at 7 p.m. on Wednesday 14 September 2022

Present

Peter Burman (Chair); John Smith (Depute Chair); Ross Burgess (Secretary); Robeena Dhar (Treasurer); Betty Gilchrist and Tom Playfair (committee members); 12 other members and supporters, plus 14 others attending via Zoom.

Apologies

Marietta Crichton Stuart, Alan Graham.

Minutes of previous AGM

The minutes of the AGM held on 9 September 2020 had been made available on the Society's website and distributed at the meeting. John Smith proposed that they be approved as a true and accurate record, this was seconded by Kenny Lumsden and approved by those present.

Chair's Report on the year 2020-21: Dr Peter Burman

My first duty is to thank all members of the Society for their support. I also express my heartfelt thanks to those Committee members whom I have called upon for support and advice.

General Overview since the AGM in September 2021

We have had ten monthly lectures since this time last year, nine by Zoom and one – the final lecture – in person, namely Marietta Crichton Stuart's masterly lecture on *John Patrick Crichton-Stuart, Third Marquess of Bute, and his impact on Falkland and St Andrews*.

Review of the Constitution

Marietta Crichton Stuart and Ross Burgess had been deputed by the committee to be a 'Task & Finish' Group to review the Constitution and advise how it might best be updated. The committee thought that the review should consider whether we should seek to become a Scottish Charitable Incorporated Organisation (SCIO), a structure established by OSCR for just such small charities as ours. However, Marietta and Ross are both exceedingly busy people and they have not yet been able to get together to consider the matter: it is not an urgent matter but it would still be useful if such a review could be carried out 2022–23.

Gift-Aid Registration

This is one of our privileges as a small charity. The Committee has agreed that Ross Burgess and Robeena Dhar should form a Task & Finish Group to implement Gift-Aid Registration.

Programme of Lecture Meetings and Visits for 2022–23

The programme for 2022–23 is already complete and we are giving thought to how to publicize the whole series and plan ahead for 2023–24.

Personally speaking, I enjoyed all the sessions during 2021–22. Every visiting lecturer gave of their best. We varied the format somewhat so, for example, at the December meeting Josh Davie showed his film *Voices of Falkland* and in April Ninian Stuart (Chair, Falkland Estate Trust) and Joe Fitzpatrick (Chair, Falkland Stewardship Trust) gave a presentation about *The Unfolding Future of the Falkland Estate*. Another local speaker was Community Councillor Kieran Allan, one of our younger members, who gave a moving and deeply researched talk on the Italian community in Scotland, *The Tricolore and the Saltire*. I gave a talk on John Ruskin's *Guild of St George*, founded by Ruskin in 1871, which is an educational charity working through artists and craftspeople, making contributions to the well-being of communities (especially in Bewdley, Birmingham and Sheffield) through a commitment to rural economies. The Guild, of which I am a Director, has extensive artistic and mineral collections which are housed for us by the Sheffield Museums Trust.

Participation in Local Planning and Listed Building Consent Matters

John Smith and I, both of us Community Councillors, from time-to-time comment in detail from a strong local heritage perspective on applications notified by Fife Council. We believe that this is a worthwhile activity for the Society. I am currently a Nominated Community Councillor, nominated by the committee of the Falkland Society, and expected to speak up about local planning and listed building consent matters.

I wrote during the summer expressing strong support in principle to the proposal, by Scotch Whisky Investments, to develop the former factory site on the south-east side of the village of Falkland. The local representative of SWI is Keith Rennie, who has already shown his mettle in repairing and providing uses for the former Town Hall of the Royal Burgh of Falkland. Ross and I were given a presentation of the proposals, which currently are at the concept stage. We liked such features as:

- the way the new development would appear to be an extension. at the lower end of the steep slope, of the two north-south village streets
- the idea of a village green and a garden producing fruit and vegetables
- the possibility of an ambitious water feature, a large pond or small lake with fountains and perhaps sculpture
- the idea of two restaurants for visitors and guests, and a modest amount of guest accommodation
- and at the top of the site there would be a headquarters building and a museum of whisky whose exhibits would include the oldest bottle of whisky in the world (1843).

The whole development promises to be 'world class', to use a term that sometimes seems rather dubious, but could in this case actually become true.

Fife Churches at Risk – 53 churches proposed for closure

Ross Burgess and I have begun a modest research programme on behalf of the Falkland Society concerning not only the future of the parish church of Falkland but also the wider context of church redundancy leading to closure. Congregations have been becoming smaller; fewer and fewer women and men are offering themselves for ordination as Ministers in the Church of Scotland; and the other Christian denominations are suffering similar diminutions.

Our research programme entails making a personal visit to every church on the list for closure; reading, attending meetings and conferences; photographing the churches and their principal contents, and the more significant tombs, mausolea and burial aisles in the churchyards. The aim is to be able to write and speak from a basis of first-hand knowledge about the churches which are down for closure so as to be able to contribute as a Society in the formulation of policy and to make knowledgeable contributions to discussions about the future of particular buildings.

As always, feedback and comment would be most helpful.

John Smith proposed that the Chair's report be accepted and this was approved by those present.

Treasurer's Report: Robeena Dhar

Robeena Dhar had taken over as Treasurer during the year, succeeding Dionatas Vargas who had resigned owing to pressure of work.

For the last financial year (ended 31 December 2021) the Society's receipts totalled £2,535 (including £950 from sales of the new book) and expenditure totalled £712.50. The closing balance at the end of the year was £2,425.73, an increase of £1,822.50 on the financial year 2020.

The current balance (part way through the year) is £2,910.73.

Secretary's Report: Ross Burgess

Membership

There are 26 paid-up members for the 2022–23 season [and 8 more signed up during the meeting].

Publicity

We had again produced a tri-fold card giving details of the Society's activities and listing the speakers for the season. These had been sent to all current members and distributed around the village.

The Society had a stall at the 'Sell your stuff' event at the Falkland Community Hall on 6 August 2022, giving out information and selling books and bric-a-brac in aid of our funds.

Internet presence

Our website at www.falklandsociety.org.uk contains information about the society, including coming events, the books, and how to sign up to our mailing list.

The Historic Falkland website, www.historicfalkland.scot, maintained by the Society, contains a miscellany of items about Falkland's history.

The Falkland Wiki, www.falkland.wiki, is a Wikipedia-style online database of Falkland Parish and its buildings. Ross is constantly on the look-out for new or overlooked information about the built history of the parish of Falkland.

We send a monthly Newsletter by Mailchimp, currently to 278 people.

Publications

Our most recent publication, *Falkland and its People 1901–1913*, is still available to purchase.

Possible future publications could include a similar volume on the First World War, and new editions of *Falkland during the reign of Queen Victoria* and *A Falkland Guide*.

Election of Office-Bearers and Committee

The Depute Chair, John Smith, took over the chair and proposed that Dr Peter Burman be re-elected as Chair. This was seconded by Ross Burgess and approved by the meeting.

Peter Burman resumed the chair, and announced that Alan Graham had offered to join the Committee, while Kieran Allan and Fiona Lawrenson wished to demit from the Committee.

The following were duly elected to serve for the year 2022–23.

- Chair: Dr Peter Burman
- Depute Chair: John Smith
- Secretary: Ross Burgess
- Treasurer: Robeena Dhar
- Committee members:
 - Betty Gilchrist
 - Alan Graham
 - Thomas Playfair
 - Marietta Crichton Stuart