



The Falkland Society

Scottish Registered Charity SC01720

www.falklandsociety.org.uk

Minutes of the Annual General Meeting, held online by Zoom on Wednesday 9 September 2020

Present

Peter Burman (Chair); John Smith (Deputy Chair); Gerardine Clark (Treasurer); Ross Burgess (Webmaster & Publisher) and about 20 other members, from Falkland and around, France, and Florida.

Apologies

Katy Jack, Jenny Garrett, Alison Page and Marjon Esfandiary.

Minutes of previous AGM

Members indicated by raising their thumbs their approval of the minutes of the AGM held on 11 September 2019 as a true and accurate record; there were no immediate matters arising.

Report on the Year 2019–2020 from Dr Peter Burman

At our previous AGM on 11 September 2019, none of us could have imagined that our lives would be dominated by a dangerous and infectious virus. We had an ambitious programme of lectures planned. We intended to complement the lectures with special visits to Charles Rennie Mackintosh's The Hill House, and to Myres Castle. But by early March we realised that physical meetings were no longer responsible for the foreseeable future. We reluctantly postponed Marietta Crichton Stuart's lecture on the 3rd Marquess of Bute.

However, by March we had already enjoyed six out of the ten lectures planned: Scott McIntosh on Steel Wheels and Iron Rails; Bryan Dickson on The Hill House – conservation challenges of a modern masterpiece; Joe Fitzpatrick on the East Lomond Hill – revealing a long-last archaeological settlement; Professor David Munro on the new book by himself and David Anderson on the history of the firm Smith, Anderson; Dr Nicola Small on Jacobite Clans and their stories; and myself on the topic of Why Orkney Matters.

Joe Fitzpatrick's talk was to have been given jointly with the consultant archaeologist to the Falkland Stewardship Trust, Dr Oliver O'Grady, who had given us two brilliant lectures, one with 77 people present, in previous years. For Joe as for me, Oliver had become a friend, and a much-valued professional colleague, and it was devastating to hear of his sudden death, leaving behind a wife and two small children, earlier this year.

Our aim with our lecture programme is to reveal and deepen our knowledge of history, archaeology, architecture, art and craftsmanship – paying attention to Falkland, to Fife, and to Scotland further afield. Sometimes our lectures even have an international reach.

In spite of all that has happened this year, we can truthfully say that the Falkland Society has lived up to the challenges and has grown in stature. What have we done instead? First, we re-grouped our lectures, went online and delivered by Zoom. Marietta Crichton Stuart spoke about Falkland Palace and I spoke about Padua. Both these lectures are still available at the touch of a button through our website. Second, we established an online Newsletter which now has a circulation list of around 150 individuals, an impressive achievement starting from zero! We will try to keep this going – the feedback we have received is very positive and it keeps us all together. We welcome contributions from others. Two of our three new committee members (Marietta and Jake Bonnett) have made contributions to it. Please let us know if you would like to contribute an article on a topic of interest to other members.

The third area of activity, which has taken literally hundreds of hours, is the preparation of the new book entitled Falkland and its People 1901-1913. Towards the printing and publication costs we have received a grant of £500.00 from the Falkland War Memorial Trust and 11 individuals have sponsored the publication to the tune of £50.00 each. We could do with many more such sponsorships, please, as it spreads the cost and the risk over many pairs of shoulders rather than a few. Come what may, we intend to have the book printed in November and so it should be available before Christmas. We will hand deliver, with pleasure, to all those who have become sponsors. I want to offer our thanks to Thomas Playfair for initiating the book and for doing the archive and newspaper research, to Ross Burgess for his editorial skills and for adding so much more to the book (an introduction to provide context, index, dramatis personae, 54 illustrations and their captions) which will now have 560 pages. We also want to express a special thank you to Marietta Crichton Stuart who has scrutinised the entire text and written an insightful Foreword. She has added immeasurably to the book's substance and usefulness. Above all I can say, having also been asked to read it, it is an enjoyable book to read: it is one of those books which you can read straight through or section by section, putting it down and taking it up again later.

As if all this were not enough, Ross Burgess has devised the Falkland Listed Building Survey – he will give our January lecture on this topic, so I will say no more about it here. But what I can say now is that since 1987 the Falkland Society has been one of the ‘guardians’ – or as we say in Falkland ‘stewards’ – of the special character of the place which is so much valued not only by those of us lucky enough to live here or near here but by literally tens of thousands of visitors from the rest of the British Isles and from other countries across the globe. What is it we value about Falkland? To be able to give a precise answer we need above all to record our built heritage – a kind of snapshot of how it is now – and that is what, with the support and involvement of many of the owners, the Survey is doing. Again, as with the book project, it is taking literally hundreds of hours. More about it in January.

As an adjunct to the Listed Buildings Survey, Ross Burgess has also organised our Photographic Competition. The participants have each submitted ten photographs of the built heritage in Falkland. The judge will be the Master of the Art Workers’ Guild, art historian and painter Alan Powers, who will be spending three days in Falkland next week in connexion with the project we have given him to design the cover of ‘the book’.

I conclude by thanking all members of the committee for their support for our aims and objectives. I want to make an especially warm ‘thank you’ to our Treasurer, Gerardine Clark, who has been a real anchor in the affairs of the Society. She and her husband are going to live in Yorkshire – God’s own country, as we know – but we shall miss them greatly for their involvements across the community and especially for their commitment to the Society.

I am delighted to report that we have three new candidates for serving on the committee. We will have both the experience and wisdom of continuity and the new ideas and energy of new members. A warm ‘thank you’ to them also, and I am looking forward to working with them all, old and new members of the Committee.

Remembering Dr Oliver O’Grady, Consultant Archaeologist for the East Lomond Hill

Joe Fitzpatrick, Chair of the Falkland Stewardship Trust, delivered a deeply-felt eulogy for Oliver O’Grady. Afterwards, the meeting kept a silence during which we offered our appreciation for all that Oliver had achieved ‘on the hill’, and our sadness at his sudden death.

The Treasurer's Report

Gerardine Clark presented the annual accounts for the year ending 31 December 2019, showing a surplus on the year of £442.88, giving a balance at the end of the year of £2,980.41. She also indicated that the present state of play, having taken account of the sponsorship receipts, showed £4,009.45 standing in the Falkland Society bank account.

The Chair thanked The Treasurer for all she had done for the Society during her good stewardship of the role of Treasurer. She and her husband Dave had been staunch supporters of the Society and would be greatly missed. They would shortly be moving to Yorkshire.

Membership Report

Gerardine Clark report that there are now 47 members, compared with 33 on 11 September 2019.

The Chair said that it was important to remember that we have 150 subscribers to the Newsletters and clearly have many 'supporters' who are not actually members. However, we will shortly have a membership drive, partly to remind existing or lapsed members to renew their subscription and partly to encourage supporters to become members as well. The committee will discuss the level of subscription which is arguably too low.

Publisher and Webmaster Report

Ross Burgess reported on encouraging progress with the substantial new book Falkland and its People 1901-1913. It has been a huge team effort in which Thomas Playfair, Ross himself and Marietta Crichton Stuart had all played their parts admirably and with generosity.

Ross Burgess also reported on the Listed Buildings Survey, still continuing with interesting results, which will be the subject of his talk in January. He also explained how the Newsletter had evolved and how there had been excellent and appreciative feedback. The website was improving in usefulness by leaps and bounds.

Election of Office Bearers and Committee Members

The following had held office during the past year and offered themselves for re-election:

- Chair: Dr Peter Burman
- Deputy Chair: John Smith
- Secretary: Fiona Lawrenson
- Publisher and Webmaster: Ross Burgess

- Committee Members, Betty Gilchrist and Thomas Playfair

The following did not wish to seek re-election:

- Gerardine Clark, Treasurer (leaving Falkland)
- Katy Jack (stepping back for the time being).

The following had been nominated to join the committee:

- Dionatas Vargas (to become the new Treasurer), nominated by Peter Burman and seconded by Ross Burgess;
- Marietta Crichton Stuart, nominated by Ross Burgess, seconded by John Smith;
- Jake Bonnett, nominated by Peter Burman, seconded by Katy Jack.

All candidates offering themselves were duly elected or re-elected.

Lecture

The meeting concluded with a memorable talk from artist Peter Jones who told of his growing up in Newcastle but with much time spent at his grandparents' home in Kirkcudbright, which became the subject of his first adventure in recording the houses of a specific historic town. Falkland has been his most recent project and it has resulted in an exhibition at the new gallery in the Falkland Stewardship Trust's Gallery at the Stables and in a delightful book which is readily available through Peter's online shop, the link to which is on the Society's website. The Chair said how fascinating he had found it to hear of the journey through which Peter had become a professional artist and how striking it was that all his projects led to friendships and further commissions, not least in Falkland. He concluded with a quotation from John Ruskin's *The Eagle's Nest* which he urged us all to ponder: 'Cherish, above all things, local associations and hereditary skill'.

Peter Burman, 10 September 2020

A recording of this meeting is [available to view online](#).