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The Falkland Society

Scottish Registered Charity SC017201

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Alan Graham, **Marietta Crichton Stuart**, **Ross Burgess**, **Elizabeth Jackson**.

Falkland Society Newsletter, June 2026

Dear <<First Name>>,

We had another good turnout for our meeting on 13 May, when Craig Cameron gave a fascinating talk about the history of the Teasses Estate.

Our next meeting, on Wednesday 10 June, features James Simpson, founder of the Simpson and Brown architectural practice, telling us about three major restoration projects he has been involved with. This will be the last meeting of the current season – we start again in September. More about this below.

And there are still places available for our visit to Reediehill Deer Farm **this Saturday (6 June)**. Please email darrylgduplooy@gmail.com for directions and to book your place.

And a reminder to those who've not paid your Falkland Society membership for 2026 that we very much rely on your subscriptions to keep the Society going.

Peter Burman (Chair)

In this issue:

- [June meeting: James Simpson](#)

- [A Summer visit to Harthill](#)
- [Last month's meeting: Craig Cameron](#)
- [Fife Climate Festival](#)
- [Two Figures: a sculpture travels from Falkland to Cambridge](#)
- [Falkland Palace lecture series](#)
- [Future Programme: a Summary](#)

June Meeting: James Simpson

Our next meeting will be at 7 p.m. on **Wednesday 10 June**, when our speaker will be **Dr James Simpson OBE**, Conservation Architect of Edinburgh, joint founder of the architectural practice Simpson & Brown.

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](https://www.what3words.com/wooden.backpacks.recipient)

All welcome, no charge, donations very welcome.

Or you can join us online by Zoom at:

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/84680641153>

Meeting ID: 846 8064 1153

One tap mobile: +442080806591,,84680641153# or +442080806592,,84680641153#



*James Simpson (centre) talking to our Secretary, Ross Burgess,
at the Rosehaugh Estate on the Black Isle*

Our speaker at the June meeting of the Falkland Society is the distinguished conservation architect and architectural campaigner, James Simpson. He will speak about the principles which, through deep thought and long practical experience, he believes to be necessary for successful conservation practice, and he will illustrate his handling of those principles through three exceptionally exciting case studies, namely:

1: Law's Close, Kirkcaldy, the exterior of which will be known to every Fifer – but not necessarily either its history or the treasures of art and craftsmanship which it contains. In the 1980s it became a beacon of good conservation practice when this mainly 16th- and 17th-century building was archaeologically studied and an extensive programme of repair and restoration work carried out. Under James' direction the outstanding stone and lime practitioner Rory Young oversaw lime-based repairs to the ashlar frontage. At the same time the fine painted beam and board-and-plaster ceilings were restored. A wall painting of a 17th-century ship and painted panelling were uncovered and re-integrated into the decoration of the rooms. The ship and a 17th-century naval chart of the Gulf of Finland found beneath a floorboard were evidence that David Law, whose house this was in the 17th century, was trading from the Firth of Forth to the head of the Baltic.



Law's Close - before and after

2: The Botanic Cottage in Edinburgh's Royal Botanic Garden – In about 2010, James was first shown this remarkable late 18th-century house, built about by John Hope, Regius Keeper of the Royal Botanic Garden, then in Leith Walk. It was surrounded by tenements and half sunk below the road, which had been raised.



Botanic Cottage – as it was, in Leith Walk

Conservation in situ was clearly impossible and James suggested, not seriously at first, that the only way of saving it would be to take it down stone by stone and timber by timber, numbered and stored, until a long-term solution could be found. That solution, almost miraculously, has turned out to be its re-erection in the present Royal Botanic Garden, facing inwards towards the diploma students' gardens and outwards to Inverleith Place. Sufficient evidence existed to guide the re-provision of the typical Palladian side pavilions which provide pleasant and useful teaching rooms for the Botanic's teaching and learning programmes. For one of them a delightful inscription survived and could be re-used.



Botanic Cottage – as it is, in the new Royal Botanic Garden

3: The third case study will be Mavisbank House, designed and built in the 1720s by the lawyer and landowner Sir John Clerk of Penicuik “under the correction” of William Adam, father of Robert and James, son of a mason in Kirkcaldy and Scotland’s leading architect of his day. Clerk is a grossly underestimated figure. Like many Scots he studied in Leiden, after which he spent time in Rome, where he extended his interest in architecture and studied music under Corelli, becoming Scotland’s leading composer of classical music in the early 18th century and said have been “a better player of the harpsichord than became a gentleman!” He went on to study law, became a Commissioner for the Union in 1707 and then a Baron of the Court of Exchequer. He was widely consulted on architecture and landscape and designed the villa at Mavisbank, from which he could live his own cultural life and commute to the city on horseback more easily than from Penicuik, and its semi-formal landscape. The history of the house in the 19th and 20th centuries was complex: it came very close to being demolished several times and has only very recently been saved for restoration by the Landmark Trust.

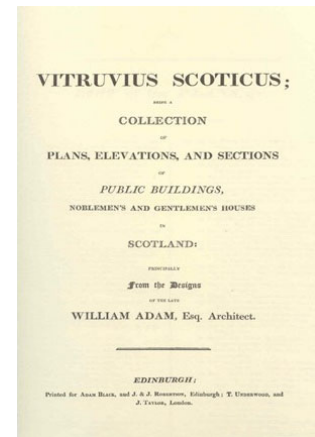


Mavisbank – a scene of devastation

Sir John Clerk's extraordinary intellect and sense of the future is illustrated by the inscription he placed on the pedestal of the right hand column, which in translation from the Latin ends: “. . . and may what the numerous ages erode be restored intact, and may it be granted that the older you are, the more beautiful you may shine.”

James Simpson has been one of the key people holding on to the future of Mavisbank through thick and thin and will be able to give us an exciting glimpse into its recent history and new hope for its future.

Biographical note: James was born towards the end of the second World War; he grew up in Duns in Berwickshire where his father practised as an architect. He was sent away to school. At a crucial moment in his life, following his father's death, he decided to study architecture rather than pursue the military career that had been his and his parents' expectation. He studied at the Edinburgh College of Art where he chose for his dissertation an unusual kind of topic for an aspiring architect, namely studying *Vitruvius Scoticus*, a set of Scottish architectural drawings prepared by William Adam (1689-1748), published in 1812 as a set of plates with no text. James contributed a description of all the plates and an elegant introduction, published in 1980. He received his BArch (Hons) from Heriot-Watt University and amongst a number of other publications he was the author of *The British Standard Guide to the Principles of the Conservation of Historic Buildings* (1998).



Crucial to his formation as an architect were his periods of early career employment by Ian G. Lindsay (who began the process of listing buildings of architectural and historic importance) and later by Sir Bernard Feilden who invited him to Norwich where he assisted in the work of supervising major repairs to Norwich and St Paul's Cathedrals. On returning to Edinburgh in the mid-1970s James continued to work with Feilden on the High Kirk of St Giles, and taught Architectural Conservation at the Edinburgh College of Art.

In 1977, at a one-day conference about the future of the Tron Kirk, he met another talented young architect, Stewart Brown; together they formed in an inspired moment of insight the architectural and now multi-disciplinary practice of Simpson & Brown. James has now retired from practice but the work of the firm goes on from strength to strength and has provided a training ground for young architects and others seeking a career in the insightful care and treatment of historic buildings. It is one of the key architectural practices focusing on historic buildings in the whole of the UK.

James has been a trustee or committee member of many of the most important heritage organisations of Scotland, including the Ancient Monuments Board and RCAHMS (the Royal Commission on the Ancient & Historic Monuments of Scotland) in a long and distinguished career. Year after year he participated in the annual international conservation conferences that I organised every summer for twelve years at the University of York. We also served together on the Historic Environment Advisory Council for Scotland (HEACS) in the early years of this century. HEACS did sterling work, not least into the nation-wide concerns about the future of Scotland's churches, and it

is a matter for regret that Scottish Ministers paid so little attention to our recommendations.

James's lectures are always meticulously prepared and delivered with eloquence and passion and so members of the Falkland Society and their friends are in for a rare treat on 10 June 2026.

Peter Burman

A Summer Visit to Harthill: Gardens, Deer, and Good Company

Join us on **Saturday 6 June at 2pm** for a special afternoon at Harthill, Reediehill Deer Farm, the home of John and Nichola Fletcher, just outside Auchtermuchty, as featured in John's talk at our February meeting.

We'll begin with a short welcome before you're free to explore a truly distinctive garden—one that shifts from carefully tended borders near the house into something much wilder and more natural as you wander further out. Along the way, you'll find colourful planting, productive growing spaces, and quieter corners shaped as much by wildlife as by design.

Beyond the garden lies the deer park, home to a remarkable herd of red deer. You may meet Licketysplit—a famously friendly stag (featured in *Outlander*)—as well as a rare group of striking white red deer. Early summer is a particularly special time to see them, with antlers in velvet and growing rapidly.

You're welcome to wander at your own pace—perhaps looping through the more formal garden, then heading uphill into the wilder areas, or simply settling with tea, coffee and cake to take it all in. There will also be a selection of plants for sale.

All proceeds from plant sales and donations will support the [Tim Stead Trust](#), with a contribution also going to the Falkland Society.

£8 for members, £10 for non-members, with donations very welcome.

Please email me at darrylgduplooy@gmail.com to let us know if you're coming—we'd love to welcome you.

Darryl du Plooy

(This item also appeared in our May Newsletter)

Last month's meeting



Our May lecture was given by **Craig Cameron**, factor at Teasses Estate since 2023.



Craig Cameron, who trained at the Royal Botanic Garden Edinburgh, is one of the leading figures of the younger generation in the heritage world of Fife. Working closely with the owning family of the estate since 2015, he has been first Head Gardener and now Factor or overall manager of the estate.

Craig's talk revealed his passion for archaeology and for country house archives and history. He has used the few surviving estate papers to study and then illuminate for others the largely forgotten history of the estate. Every document can be made to give up its

hidden secrets and thereby illuminate the history and specialness of place. However, he looks outwards as well as inwards and has a special passion for and interest in India where he is trustee of a school. His freshness of approach to the opportunities of a country house, gardens and wider estate was a delight and an inspiration.

You can see and hear the recording of Craig's talk [here](#).

Peter Burman

Fife Climate Festival



Fife Climate Festival is a celebration of community climate action across Fife, rooted in culture, creativity and connection.

This year's festival runs throughout June 2026. Look out for events across Fife, inspiring people to come together in action on climate emergency and make our communities fairer, healthier and more vibrant places to live.

There are fun and interesting events for everyone, and any group can take part, from football clubs to gardening groups whether you're already working on climate issues or just starting out. Events can include workshops, film nights, walks, cycle rides, talks or creative sessions. Support is available for participating groups. You can add your event to the festival programme through the Fife Climate Hub website.

Fife Climate Festival is led by Fife Climate Hub with support from Climate Action Fife and funded by the Scottish Government.

More information at fccan.org.uk/fife-climate-festival-2026.

Two Figures

Two Figures is a major and beautiful sculpture commissioned by Peter Burman in 1984 to celebrate a particular relationship in a way that could be relevant and inspiring to any or all human beings and to speak, in a sense, to all our loving relationships.



On 15 May 2026 Ross and I performed the final stages of an ambitious project, namely to give and dedicate a substantial piece of sculpture to my *alma mater*, King's College, Cambridge. "Once a Kingsman always a Kingsman", as the saying goes. It is part of the genius of Colleges at Cambridge and Oxford that our loyalty is as much or more to the College which has been our home for three, four or more years than to the University. Both relationships are important, but the depth of the relationship varies from person to person.

My first experience of Cambridge was at the age of 14 when, as a student of Ancient Greek, the headmaster of my grammar school took about twenty of us there to experience the "Greek play". Every other year the Arts Theatre mounts a play by one of the great Greek playwrights of antiquity. In our case the play was *Antigone*, by Sophocles, which we had been studying as part of an approach to learning

Ancient Greek by conversational or direct techniques just like learning modern Greek or any other language.

Before the play we had our picnic lunch and then, on that beautiful sunny April day, our headmaster took us on a walk, threading to and fro amongst the gardens and paths of the riverside Colleges, collectively known as "The Backs". The "fronts" of the Colleges, mostly marked by monumental gatehouses like castles or country houses, open on to a continuous street variously called King's Parade, Trinity Street or St John's Street.



The classic view of the Chapel and Gibbs Building from the bridge over the river

“The Backs” are the areas either side of the river Cam which are more about gardens and landscapes than about buildings, and provide the setting for those buildings which contain living accommodation for students and elected Fellows of the College, teaching rooms and always, since the foundation of the Colleges, Dining Halls and Chapels for our collective lives as a residential community.

King's College, famously, has perhaps the most striking of these Chapels, built over about eighty years from the late 1440s, started by King Henry VI and completed lavishly by King Henry VIII. As a 14-year-old schoolboy, learning to play the organ, I looked for the first time at this Chapel and thought “This is where I want to study, and to begin living a purposeful grown-up life. I absolutely have to come here, to King's, as a student”. How I achieved that juvenile ambition is another story.



*The Chapel of King's College, Cambridge,
one of the great sacred buildings of the world*

During the first post-graduate period of my life, from age 23 to 46, I was working for the Council for the Care of Churches and the Cathedrals Fabric Commission for England, learning to be an architectural historian and an architectural conservator, spending further time studying at the International Centre for Conservation in Rome (ICCROM), enjoying my work hugely. My godmother, Judith, who was a great encourager of others, said to me once: "Peter, the zest with which you do everything you do, is one of your greatest assets". I think she was right!

At the CCC I was responsible for running our Register of Artists & Craftspeople. We held this Register because cathedrals and churches were and still often are the commissioners of beautiful work by craftspeople and artists in many fields – textiles, metalwork, carving in wood or stone, sculpture, furniture, lettering in different media, mural painting and painted decoration and stained glass, to list only the most obvious. Organ-building alone brings together several fields of craftsmanship using both traditional and modern materials.

It was necessary that someone somewhere should be knowledgeable about such things and could give useful and clear advice on all aspects of commissioning from artists and craftspeople. So, I made myself that person for that moment in history. Conserving, restoring and maintaining cathedrals and churches was and is hugely important too, as for all historic buildings.

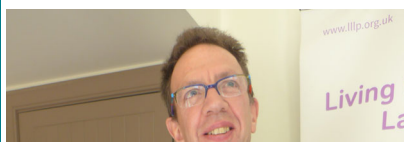


The West Front of Wells Cathedral, conserved using lime-based technology, 1974–1986

I began to acquire related roles and areas of expertise and sat on various boards including the Court of the Royal College of Art, the Advisory Council of the City & Guilds of London School of Art and membership of the Art Workers' Guild (of which I am now one of the longest-serving members: it now encompasses a hundred different craft skills).



The Art Workers' Guild, Queen Square, London, "cradle of the Arts & Crafts movement". William Morris was the second Master.



Handling all this advice-giving required time, energy and enterprise. I loved the many personal contacts involved and



the opportunities for giving young artists and craftspeople introductions to commissions that would enable them to grow and develop in their chosen field;

In 1983 I commissioned a silver teapot from the young silversmith Rod Kelly, now living in the Shetland islands. The photo shows him with the teapot at a Falkland Craft Symposium in 2016. It is now another of the treasures of King's College.

I also began to formulate methodologies for handling commissions in ways that would enable cathedrals and churches to make informed choices, and give artists and craftspeople opportunities both to earn a living from their work and to continue to develop their skills and ideas. In cathedrals and churches they would be adding something of significance which could be expected to remain there for a long time, perhaps centuries, and be seen by large numbers of people.



The sculpture of "Our Lady of Lincoln" in Lincoln Cathedral by Aidan Hart (right in the picture). In the Middle Ages not only the Cathedral but the City of Lincoln were dedicated to the Blessed Virgin Mary.

Giving lectures at the City & Guilds of London School of Art in Kennington taught me that there are still exceptionally brilliant carvers of stone or wood around. They simply need to be given the opportunities, and they will do the rest. I noticed that Martin Jennings, a student at the School then bravely setting up his own business, had a real gift for letter cutting. So when the Holst Trustees asked for my advice as to who should carve and cut letters on a headstone for Imogen Holst (1907–1984, daughter of Gustav Holst), a gifted composer, conductor, and music teacher in her own right, I recommended him. We were all impressed that he drove all the way from Oxford (where he had his studio) to Aldeburgh (where Imogen had lived and died) to see what kind of stone would be sympathetic in a Suffolk churchyard. The resulting headstone is placed close to those for Benjamin Britten and Peter Pears, all part of the same circle of musical friends, where it holds its own against the work of very senior and at that stage more famous letter cutters.



In the same year, wanting to give Martin another immediate job to help him grow his skills and his business, I asked him to produce a work for our garden in Hackney: the photograph shows its arrival there on 15 September 1984.

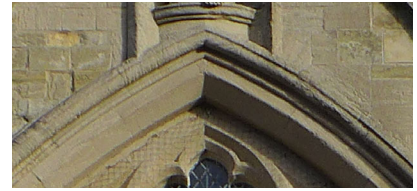
From the beginning, we have always called the sculpture “Two Figures”: they are not representations of actual people, for example my then partner Dana and myself, though they are relevant to our story and to the stories of some of our friends. But their message of mutual tenderness and openness is relevant to all loving couples. Nevertheless, it is only fair to say that some of my visitors over the years have often seen very different

significances in the way in which the two figures relate to one another.

Sometimes I have known or suspected that, probably because of the nakedness of the two young men, there has been some resistance to the sculpture. From London I moved to teach at the University of York and bought a house with a garden which curved gracefully round at the rural edge of the village, and so Two Figures made what I thought of as a fine visual impact. One Saturday morning while I was cleaning my car a small boy appeared and stood at the gate, watching me work, as people do. After a while he pronounced, with great emphasis on the first word, “I like your statue”, and then disappeared. I never saw him again. But he had alerted me to the fact that there were some, at least, in the village who



disapproved of the sculpture. I believe that “making an impact” with art or craftsmanship almost invariably risks irritating somebody. The naked image of St Peter by Simon Verity, high up on the West Front of Exeter Cathedral, may have caused some raised eyebrows. At the same time the same concept or detail will delight many others.



So far the sculpture has lived in private gardens: Meynell Crescent, Hackney, London; The Petch House, Kirkbymoorside, North Yorkshire; Belle Vue Terrace, York; Brunton House, Falkland. But now it lives amongst the hallowed glades of the historic Fellows' Garden of King's College, Cambridge, the place of my first enlightenment on many matters, the place where I found the thread that has led me with a real sense of pilgrimage through the journey of my life in which spirituality, art, architecture and music have all played such a large part.



Fiona Boyd of Cardozo Kindersley (letter-cutter), Martin Jennings (sculptor), Peter Burman, and Ross Burgess (Peter's husband) in the Fellows' Garden, Kings

On 15 May we performed a modest ritual, standing in a semi-circle around the sculpture. I addressed Professor Robin Osborne, Pro-Provost of the College, with the following words:

I offer with love and admiration this sculpture of two intertwined loving figures, by sculptor, Martin Jennings, here present. I also offer the accompanying plaque,



designed in the Kindersley Workshop and cut by Fiona Boyd, also here present. I hereby give and dedicate them to the Provost, Fellows, Scholars and Members of the King's College of Our Lady and St Nicholas, here in Cambridge, for the further beautification of the gardens of the said College.

The Pro-Provost graciously accepted the gift on behalf of the College. I then spoke an invocation to the spirit of the sculpture as follows:

May this sculpture, carved by Martin Jennings, and these letters, cut by Fiona Boyd, be a joy and inspiration for all who pass this way or who seek peace and refreshment in this garden.



— to which all who were present responded “This is our wish and our hope.”

I then named eleven people who had contributed variously to the project including the artists; and after a moment's reflection I added the names of my husband, Ross Burgess, and myself who had “lived the project” for many months.

It was a joy to work with all the representatives of the College and in particular Amy Ingle, Development Officer, Stephen Coghill, Head Gardener, and James Earl, Facilities Manager. I especially appreciated the text of an email from Paul Hibbitt, stonemason, who had worked with Roxanne and Vincent Kindersley on the fixing of the sculpture only three days before:

I must say this sculpture really has intrigued me. Having it in our Yard, prepping it, handling it, and fixing it into position has been a beautiful process. At first it was just another job ... then, occasional passing glances revealed its details, facial expressions, and postures. When we came to stand it up in its new position, it came “alive”. The chosen setting is perfect, and as Nicky^[1] said, the twisting paths give different views of something quite intimate and haunting. I am sure the sculpture will make many people stop and stare!

Peter Burman

[1] Professor Nicolette Zeeman, Curator of Works of Art at King's College, Cambridge, and a leading supporter of the project.

Falkland Palace Lecture Series

We've been told about a lecture series in the Chapel Royal at Falkland Palace, on Friday and Saturday evenings between now and 9 August.

For more details and to book, see the Eventbrite page:
<https://www.eventbrite.com/o/falkland-palace-garden-33795368115>

Falkland Society Future Programme: a Summary

Sat 6 June: John and Nichola Fletcher invite us to visit *Harthill Deer Farm* (see article above).

Wed 10 June: James Simpson – *Highlights of his architectural career* (see article above).

July–August: Summer break

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

Sat 26 September (2 p.m.): visit to *Rossie Farm, Auchtermuchty*. Details to follow later.

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

Wed 11 November: James Storrar of Rossie - *History all around: a square mile of Fife*

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

[Back to top.](#)

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