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The Falkland Society

Scottish Registered Charity SC017201

www.falklandsociety.org.uk

www.historicfalkland.scot

www.falkland.wiki

news@falklandsociety.org.uk

Chair: **Peter Burman** (until 31 August), **Alan Graham** (from 1 September).

Secretary: **Ross Burgess** (until 31 August), **Darryl du Plooy** (from 1 September).

Treasurer: **Robeena Dhar**

Committee members: **Marietta Crichton Stuart**, **Robin Bell**, **John Fletcher**.

Publications Sub-Committee:

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

Falkland Society Newsletter, August 2026

Dear <<First Name>>,

As usual, the Society has been taking a break from formal meetings in July and August.

But we have a special **Celebrating Falkland!** event on Saturday 29 August, at Falkland Parish Church, when we will be offering guided viewing of the church, sale of Falkland Society Publications, and the launch of our new *Guide to Falkland and its Historic Buildings*.

Our programme of lectures resumes under new management Wednesday 9 September, with Joe Fitzpatrick, Chair of the Falkland Stewardship Trust, updating us on recent archaeological discoveries on the East Lomond Hill.

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)

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Celebrating Falkland!

On **Saturday 29 August** we will be welcoming members, friends, and anyone interested in Falkland and its history to a special event in Falkland Church:

10:30 a.m. to 1 p.m., Saturday 29 August 2026

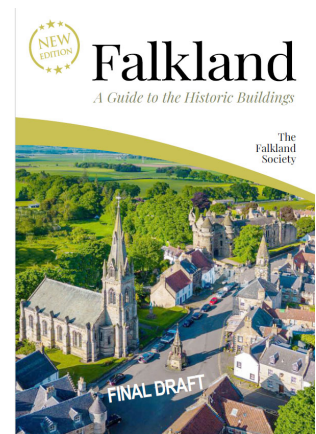
Falkland Parish Church, KY15 7BU

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All welcome, no charge, donations very welcome.

- Informal talks about the church
- Background organ music by Robin Bell
- Tea, coffee and cakes
- Information about the Society and its activities
- Exhibition of historic items from our archives
- Sale of Falkland Society literature
- Launch of our latest publication:

Falkland: A Guide to the Historic Buildings



Next meeting: Joe Fitzpatrick

Our next meeting will be at 7 p.m. on Wednesday 9 September, when Joe Fitzpatrick, Chair of the Falkland Stewardship Trust, will talk about recent archaeological discoveries on the East Lomond Hill.

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 9th, at
The Craig Room, Falkland Parish Church, KY15 7BU

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All welcome, no charge, donations very welcome.

Or you can join us online by Zoom at:

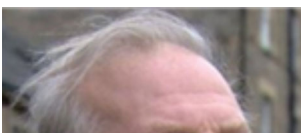
<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/83071855510>

You can also join by phone on **0203 481 5237, or 0131 460 1196**,
quoting the meeting ID: **830 7185 5510**



Joe Fitzpatrick FSA Scot is Chair of the Falkland Stewardship Trust which has responsibility for significant parts of the Falkland Estate. He also leads the archaeological work on the Estate, which concentrates on the East Lomond Hill, with its important prehistoric, Iron Age and Pictish connexions. Since 2022, the annual excavations on the hill have been conducted jointly by the Trust and Aberdeen University. Joe's talk will highlight some of the major finds from the 2026 dig.

Last meeting: James Simpson



Our speaker for June was the distinguished conservation architect and architectural campaigner, James Simpson, joint founder of the



Edinburgh-based architectural practice Simpson & Brown. He spoke eloquently about the principles needed for successful conservation projects, illustrating them through three case studies in which he had been deeply involved:

Law's Close, Kirkcaldy - where under James's supervision the outstanding stone and lime practitioner Rory Young led the team in repairing the external facades, and the fine 16th-17th century plaster ceilings were renovated. It was one of the earliest buildings in Scotland to have the full 'lime-based' treatment, repairing rather than replacing the worn stonework. There has since been a revolution in understanding the importance of using soft lime-based mortars and renders, the results of which can be seen in Falkland and in Fife generally.

Botanic Cottage, Royal Botanic Garden, Edinburgh – this charming historic building, now to be found close to the northern perimeter of the RBGE, had been the entrance to the Garden in its previous location at the top of Leith Walk. At James's suggestion it was taken down stone by stone and timber by timber, every component numbered and stored and effectively archived while funding was being raised for its re-erection. It now plays an important visual role in the Garden and its rooms are used for educational classes and as a base for the volunteers who work in the Garden.

Mavisbank House – built in the 1720s, it was in such a dangerous condition after a fire that Midlothian District Council marked it for destruction. The Landmark Trust has described it as one of the most important 'buildings at risk' cases in the country. James has been a passionate advocate for the preservation and rescue of this wonderful building for, literally, decades and has always encouraged a multi-disciplinary approach which now seems to be about to bear fruit. We all hope that the rescue of the house by the Landmark Trust will come now to a successful conclusion. What an inspiring talk!

Peter Burman

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

Familiar faces in the Fringe

Your retiring Chair and Secretary (Peter Burman and Ross Burgess) are both taking part this year in the Edinburgh Fringe - specifically in the Exploring Sacred Space section of the Festival of Sacred Arts



**EDINBURGH
FESTIVAL OF THE
SACRED ARTS**

- see <https://www.edinburghsacredartsfestival.org/programme>. Unfortunately their two appearances at the Magdalen Chapel in the Cowgate are both fully booked, but tickets are still available for Sunday 16 and Monday 17 August at St James, Goldenacre (3 p.m. each day, free admission, but you're recommended to book via Eventbrite to ensure your

place). Ross is the author of a guidebook to the church, and Peter is a member of the Vestry.

Parliament of the Trees

The Parlament der Bäume (Parliament of Trees) 'Art and Nature against War and Violence', is one of the protected sites of the Berlin Wall Foundation.

From 21-30 June, Ross Burgess and I were in Berlin visiting historic sites around Berlin and Potsdam and visiting friends. One of our longest friendships is with the Director of the Berlin Wall Foundation, Axel Klausmeier, a distinguished architectural and garden historian. Some members of the Falkland Society may remember the deeply moving lecture he gave us, on the work of the Berlin Wall Foundation, in the Chapel Royal at Falkland Palace in April 2019. Many members of the audience that evening were close to tears.



Axel Klausmeier with his personalised cycle rack

We made several visits this time with Axel but were mystified to be invited to a picnic breakfast at a place tucked away in the Governmental Quarter, not far from the *Reichstag* or Parliament building, near the main railway station, with this curious title: *Parliament of Trees against War and Violence*. The address given was in *Schiffbauerdamm* or Ship-Building Quay.



The Government Quarter

The site was first established in 1990 by artist Ben Wagin. He effectively took possession of the site, planting trees in a townscape that has very few of them, to commemorate the victims of the Berlin Wall. In Germany they have a very strong law of *Denkmalschutz* or 'monument protection' and in 2017 the 'Parliament' site in its current form was added to the list of protected monuments in the State of Berlin (Berlin has a double status, both as a City and as a *Land* or State). Discussions followed and in 2021 the Berlin Wall Foundation became responsible for the maintenance and interpretation of the monument.



The Parliament of the Trees in 2010



Ben Wagin (1930-2021) was an art activist and nature lover – an artist without intending to be an artist, a leading personality of the West Berlin alternative art scene which continued to flourish after the Wall came down in November 1989. Like John Ruskin in his time (1816-1900), the relationship between nature and mankind was a recurring theme of his activism and of his art. He also took a forthright stand against the destructive impact of war-time violence: how appalled he would have been by the unvarnished use of destructive force in Gaza, Lebanon and Ukraine (and other parts of the world) in the past four-five years.



The gingko tree, symbolising hope for peace, became Ben Wagin's trademark. He planted them in many parts of the city.

At its heart the monument reads as an artist's studio, one where the actual stones from the Berlin Wall and the inscriptions and slogans are all of significance. The Foundation encourages the holding of art workshops and projects to animate the site. It is available from April to October and the shelter is minimal. The current programme is available to see on the [website](#) of the *Stiftung Berliner Mauer*.

Ross and I also revisited the main site for the commemoration of the Berlin Wall and the tragedies that ensued on account of its vicious existence. The whole apparatus of death strip, interval towers, and ways in which escapes across the Wall were prevented is on display.

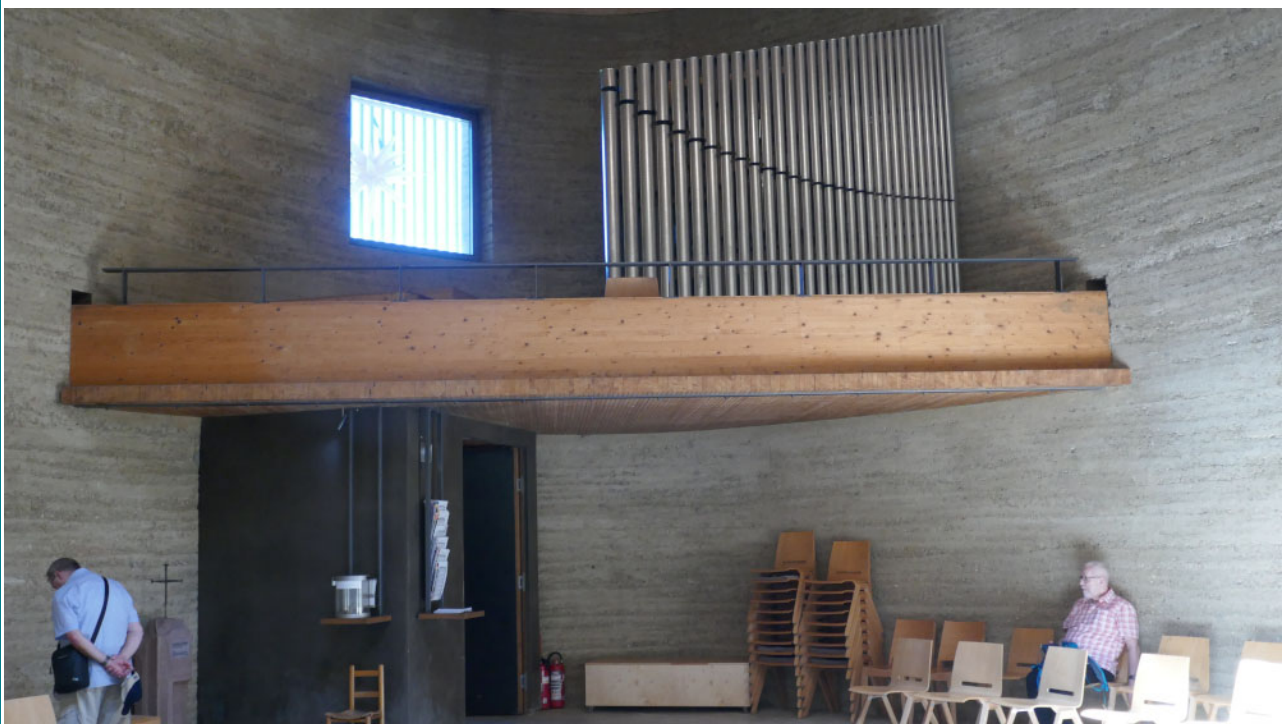
We made a special visit to the Church of the Reconciliation, constructed of rammed earth.



Within the church are preserved some of the historic fittings from the 19th century church on the site, which had been deliberately blown up by the Communist authorities of the German Democratic Republic. We witnessed the daily reading of the biography of someone who had been murdered at the Wall. In fact, we were the only witnesses that day and had an interesting conversation later with the woman who had given the reading.



A curiosity is that the organ, in a west gallery, contains pipework from the four countries constituting the 'Allies' in the post-World War II settlement: United States of America, Britain, France and Russia. Russia certainly does not look like an ally now.



If any member of the Falkland Society is intending to visit Berlin, please consider visiting at least one site of the Berlin Wall Foundation. The administrative centre, in the former

Parish Centre, has a semi-permanent exhibition about the Wall and its consequences. But do consult the website as suggested above and if we can help in any way we should be only too delighted.

PETER BURMAN & ROSS BURGESS, July 2026

Falkland Society Future Programme: a Summary

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: Speaker and subject to be announced.

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.*

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