

Living Lomonds Landscape Project, The Stables, Falkland Estate, Fife

THREE-DAY FALKLAND CRAFT SYMPOSIUM

Friday 19 August, Saturday 20 August and Sunday 21 August 2016

John Ruskin: 'Cherish, above all things, local associations and hereditary skill', *The Eagle's Nest*.

Introduction

This event is the culmination of three years of exploration of both traditional and contemporary skills of craftspeople locally, in and around Fife, and further afield. There are many talented people working in Scotland although, at the same time, there is a distinct shortage of skills in some areas. Real efforts are being made to grow those skills so that the crafts can continue to bring joy into our lives while providing a livelihood for those who have dedicated their lives to particular crafts.

Three overlapping themes have been chosen – Traditional Building Crafts, Local Craft Traditions, and Home & Country Crafts.

Lunch will be provided at 1:15 p.m. for all registered participants.

We will be glad to welcome visiting members of the public and especially the local community who wish to look in to see what is going on, to listen to a lecture or watch a particular craft activity.

Open Studios North Fife will be present at the Symposium and are actively recruiting makers and artists who wish to open their studios for the weekend 29 April-1 May 2017. See www.openstudiosfife.co.uk.

On all three days there will be a privileged late afternoon visit for registered participants.

It will be possible to register for one, two or all three days or to drop in.

Each of the three days will have one or more Champions.

Craft Symposium Co-ordinator: Dr Peter Burman MBE FSA, Arts & Heritage Consultant, Chairman of Falkland Stewardship Trust

DAY ONE - TRADITIONAL BUILDING CRAFTSMANSHIP

Quotation:

Champions: Bryan Dickson, Head of Buildings, National Trust for Scotland; Fiona Fisher, Conservation Officer, Fife Council; Craig Frew - Falkland Stewardship Trustee, independent historic buildings and materials consultant; Jonathan Gotelee, architect for the House of Falkland and the Temple of Decision; Carsten Hermann, Chairman, Society for the Protection of Ancient Buildings in Scotland; Dr David Mitchell - Acting Chief Executive, Historic Environment Scotland.

Introduction:

Falkland Estate and the royal burgh of Falkland embrace buildings from the 16th to the 21st centuries with a preponderance of traditional materials which creates a sense of lasting harmony: stone, timber, pantiles or stone slate roofing (formerly often thatch), mortars and renders traditionally

made of lime and sand or even earth, and some metals. In order to maintain this harmony – which draws countless visitors every year - it is important that we continue to develop an understanding of these materials and how to repair them. As with food, the more local the materials are the better – both for the environment and for a sense of continuity with the past. We need ‘Slow Building’ and ‘Slow Craftsmanship’ as well as ‘Slow Food’. This demands a courageous turning back to the cherishing of local associations and traditional skills.

10.00 Coffee and Registration

10.30 Keynote Talks:

- Craig Frew, Conservation Consultant, Fife’s traditional buildings: materials, craftsmanship and character
- John McKinney, Member of Fife & Tayside Traditional Buildings Forum and Scottish Representative of both National Federation of Roofing Contractors and Stone Federation GB (15 minutes)
- Fiona Fisher, Conservation Officer, Fife Council, Communities Caring for their Heritage (15 minutes)
- Dr David Mitchell, Acting CE Historic Environment Scotland, repairing traditional park railings, gates and ornamental features
- William Barsley, Founder & Project Coordinator of *Carving Countries*, exploring traditional carving skills in foreign lands on a bicycle

Workshop activities before and after lunch at 13.15:

1. Breathing new life into the Falkland Stables I – the four gate piers, balustrading and gates of c.1844 at the entrance into the Falkland Estate will have just been conserved by Alex Kelly of Eden Architectural Conservation, who is both a conservator and experienced in traditional stonemasonry skills. He was lead conservator throughout the recent four-year programme of conserving the external stonework of Rosslyn Chapel. During the Symposium Alex Kelly will be conserving the rear wall of the 1823 Stables as a ‘living exhibit’, prolonging its life into the future by using traditional materials and skills.
2. Breathing new life into the Falkland Stables II - George Watson, Falkland Estate Building Manager, to take a group (maximum 6-8) round recent repairs, improvements and changes to the Stables and courtyard.
3. Breathing new life into the Falkland Stables III: James McKeen, local furniture maker, who trained with Tim Stead and carried on his workshop, to take a group (maximum 6-8) through the process of being commissioned, evolving the design and making the new seating for the new welcome and craft areas of the Stables.
4. Leigh Bradley, letter-cutter and letterer, will be demonstrating the art of letter-cutting and inviting those who would like to try their hand to have a go.
5. Douglas Hastings, a Scottish sculptor who lives between Thailand and the UK, and is an ordained member of the Triratna Buddhist Order, will demonstrate carving in wood.
6. William Barsley of *Carving Countries* will demonstrate carving in stone or wood [tbc]

15.45 Tea Break

16.00 Special Guest Lecture by: Dr Marcus Waithe, Fellow & Librarian of Magdalene College, Cambridge, author of *Ruskin & Craftsmanship*, published by Ruskin's Guild of St George (2015), whose talk will inaugurate an era of collaboration between the Guild of St George and the Falkland Centre for Stewardship.

17.15 Special visit to the Temple of Decision led by Jonathan Gotelee, Architect to House of Falkland and Temple of Decision - where a first-stage conservation project is in progress the better to understand the significance of the ruined temple designed by Alexander Roos in 1849 – a key element in the designed landscape – to carry out repairs to stabilize it, to reflect on and debate what might be done in any future stages if further funding becomes available. The walk will be preceded by a short talk.

The day will finish with a glass of wine in the Stables courtyard.

DAY TWO - LOCAL CRAFT SKILLS

Quotations: 'Beauty will save the world', Dostoyevsky, in *The Idiot*.

'To tune in, without reverence, idly – but with real inward attention. It is to be had for the feeling ... you can extract the essence of a place once you know how. If you just get still as a needle, you'll be there.' Lawrence Durrell, *Spirit of Place: Letters and Essays of Travel* (1969).

Champions: Caren Gilbert, who runs the monthly craft market in Falkland, a former poet-in-residence at the Falkland Centre for Stewardship; **John Smith**, trustee of Falkland Stewardship Trust and Chair of Falkland & Newton Community Council, who trained as a tanner.

Introduction:

Imagine Falkland as it was two hundred years ago, around 1820, a moment of great activity on the estate and royal burgh. Walking down the main street there would have been movement and bustle everywhere: the whirring sound of looms, for nearly every cottage had a loom; the shoemakers busy at their lasts; the tailors sewing their seams and buttons; the clanging of the blacksmith's hammers; the joiners and the wheelwrights; the shopkeepers purveying almost everything that was needful for daily life; everywhere and all times the gentle clip-clopping of horses' hooves.

Superficially, Falkland still seems to be the same place. It is the activity of *making things* that has largely – but not quite – disappeared. A craftsperson is above all a 'maker'. But, calling on the resources of craftspeople far and near, we aim over the three days of our symposium to bring back into the royal burgh and estate some of the traditional local crafts activities of a Fife village.

10.00 Coffee & Registration

10.30 Keynote Talks:

- Peter Ananin, responsible for the 'Woodworks' programme of activities, Falkland Centre for Stewardship, on his vision of Falkland as a revived Craft Village
- John Smith, Chair of Falkland Community Council, who trained as a tanner, on the rise and demise of the leather industry in Fife
- Jennifer Roy, Master Saddler of Springfield, on the manufacture of saddlery and harness

- Peter Beaven, of Strathmiglo, on dyeing, spinning and weaving

12:15 – workshop activities before and after lunch:

1. Weaving at a hand-loom – Peter Beaven
2. Spinning wool from local sheep - consult Peter Beaven
3. Making historically accurate headgear, armour, shoes, &c, as for *Outlander* series - Andy Bates
4. Manufacturing saddlery and harness – Jennifer Roy, Master Saddler, of Springfield, near Cupar
5. Making a basket – Jan Hendry
6. Growing sculpture in the Falkland Ceremonial Garden Landscape - Charlie Poulsen, sculptor in lead and wood and specialist in Growing Sculpture
7. Lettering – Leigh Bradley, a letter-cutter of distinction, will be demonstrating her art and inviting those would like to try their hand to have a go
8. In-lay work using exotic hardwoods and other materials e.g. mother of pearl, with reference to the panelling designed by Robert Weir Schultz for the Drawing Room of the House of Falkland - James McKeen who uses precious and unusual woods as inlay in his own work
9. Lime pointing and stone repairs to the gate piers at the entrance to the Falkland Estate, Alex Kelly, Eden Conservation
10. Spinning nettles with drop spindles and an Asford wheel – Birte Ford of Nettlecraft will demonstrate and invite participants to ‘have a go’
11. Peter Ananin, Woodworks, Falkland Centre for Stewardship, will demonstrate tanning deer-skin and talk about the many uses to which deer-skin has been and is being put, e.g. for armour, clothing, shoes

13.15 Lunch for participants

14.00 Workshop activities continued:

All the makers are eager to explain to you what they are doing, to answer your questions, maybe to let you have a try.

15.45 Tea Break

16.00 Special Guest Lecture: *A total living environment – Charlie & Pauline’s Open Studio.* Charlie Poulsen and Pauline Burbidge are artists living and working in the Scottish Borders in Allanton, near Duns. in the Scottish Borders. They have been based there for twenty-two years and run an annual Open Studio that is a great success, attracting visitors from the region and indeed from across the globe. Charlie is a sculptor working mainly with lead. He also works with ‘growing sculpture’ and through magnificent, large-scale drawings. All these three parts of his practice are inspired by the natural world around him. Pauline, a textile artist, is also completely inspired by the natural world around her, drawing from the landscape around her home. Fabric collage, stitching, printing and rubbing form the main techniques of her work. Their richly illustrated talk will cover a glimpse into their working practices talking about the link with the natural environment and the way all this comes together at the Open Studio where their working lives are laid wide open and the art works are on view in the environment where they were made.

17.15 Special visit to the House of Falkland (not normally accessible), late afternoon, by kind permission of the Director of Falkland House School, for registered participants.

DAY THREE – HOME & COUNTRY CRAFT SKILLS

W. R. Lethaby, quote from his 1923 booklet *Home & Country Arts*

William Morris: 'We should have nothing in our homes that we do not know to be useful and believe to be beautiful'

Ralph Waldo Emerson: 'Every spirit build itself a house, and beyond its house a world, and beyond its world a heaven', *Nature*

Champions: Ylva Dhansjo, Head of Collections, National Trust for Scotland; Tess Darwin, who has worked for both Scottish Natural Heritage and the Falkland Stewardship Trust, practises local craft skills, and is author of *The Scots Herbal*, *The Plant Lore of Scotland*, Mercat Press (1996); Jan Hendry, visual artist, and coordinator of *The Woolly Tree Gang*; Wendy Purvis, Property Manager, Falkland Palace, Hill of Tarvit, Kellie Castle, National Trust for Scotland.

Introduction

This topic takes its cue from a small but infinitely precious book by one of the great figures of the British Arts & Crafts Movement, William Richard Lethaby, called *Home & Country Arts*, 1923. Such arts were practised unselfconsciously for many centuries in Britain, as in other countries and cultures. Often the line between professional and amateur was very blurred – many amateur practitioners were (and are) highly competent craftspeople, and more could be if we give them support, encouragement and opportunities in our own time. How to do this effectively is one of the topics for discussion at this Symposium.

10.00 Coffee & Registration

10.30 Keynote Talks:

- Annette Carruthers [tbc], on the 'Home Arts' and their role in the Scottish Arts & Crafts Movement
- Helen Wyld, National Trust for Scotland, on Falkland Palace – aspects of craftsmanship & conservation
- David Jones on Fife furniture, from the vernacular to the highly sophisticated furniture commissioned by the 3rd Marquess of Bute for the House of Falkland and Falkland Palace
- Tess Darwin, on *Telling the story of the Falkland landscape through the eye of a needle*

Workshop activities before and after lunch:

1. Liz Keltie and Karen Nicholson of *The Woolly Tree Gang* will be demonstrating a variety of skills and techniques using the needle for knitting and embroidery
2. Alison Docherty, leader of the Tapestry Conservation studio at Hopetoun House, and of the Hill of Tarvit Needleworkers' Group, will demonstrate tapestry weaving

3. Rod Kelly will demonstrate making a vessel in silver.
4. Jennifer Roy, Master Saddler, Springfield, near Cupar, will demonstrate the manufacture of saddlery and harness – materials, tools and skills
5. Peter Ananin (Woodworks, Falkland Centre for Stewardship) will demonstrate tanning deer-skin and talk about the many uses to which deer-skin has been or is being put
6. Alex Kelly - lime pointing and stone repairs to the gate piers at the entrance to the Falkland Estate and to the rear wall of the Stables
7. Leigh Bradley – letter-cutter and letterer of distinction, will be demonstrating her skills and inviting those who would like to try their hand to have a go

15.45 Tea Break

16.00 Special guest lecture by: Rod Kelly, silversmith, based in Norfolk and Shetland [tbc]

17.15 Special after hours visit to Falkland Palace, concentrating on the innumerable examples of fine craftsmanship and especially the great hunting tapestry; other textiles; furniture; ornamental woodwork; painted decoration. Our specialist guides will be David Jones [tbc] and Helen Wyld. Before entering the Palace we will pause to admire the new Deer Gate designed by Susan Thores, Acting Head Gardener and designer, made by Jim Shears, artist blacksmith based in nearby Auchtermuchty, and enter the range formerly thought to have been the Stables to hear about the dating and character of the roof structure and to see the beam decorated with emblems of trade crafts active in the royal burgh in the 1770s. On what better note could we end a three-day symposium on the crafts and craftsmanship – bringing together the past and the present!