

Falkland 1900-2000

Year 1923

(As researched by Jack Burgess)

25th August 1923

Articles in *The Fife News*:

French Scouts Visit Falkland – Cementing International Friendship

“The inhabitants of Falkland were on the brink of expectation on Monday, in anticipation of a visit from the party of French Scouts, who, accompanied by Comte Marty, the International Commander, are at present making a tour of Scotland. It was understood that the boys, who were marching from Bridge of Earn, would arrive in Falkland early on Monday morning, but it was early evening, about 6.15, as a matter of fact, that they put in an appearance. There were only two of them, their ranks having been depleted, as was explained by Comte Marty, by illness and other circumstances. Their lengthy programme comprised a great deal of 'hiking', and the causes of delay can readily be understood. They are quite fit, though perhaps a little tired after their 'travel', to use the translation in this part of the world for a long tramp.

A party of Falkland Boy Scouts, under Scoutmaster J. Baillie, British Linen Bank house, and accompanied by Piper John MacKay, Falkland, met the French boys at the burgh boundary, and escorted them to Falkland Palace, in the grounds of which they were accorded the privilege of camping for the night, through the kindness of the Hon. Mrs Maule Ramsay. A large crowd had assembled at the Palace gates, and the visitors were accorded a rousing cheer, as they passed into the precincts of the historic building. They were welcomed here by Mr Gavin, factor, and also by Provost and Mrs Hopkins and Baillie Hunt. Provost Hopkins, on behalf of the citizens

of Falkland, expressed pleasure that Comte Marty and the Boy Scouts had found time to visit the ancient burgh of Falkland. The associations between the two countries had always been pleasant, and there was no doubt that that visit from the younger generation would help to cement the friendship between the two countries, more than the influence of politicians could.

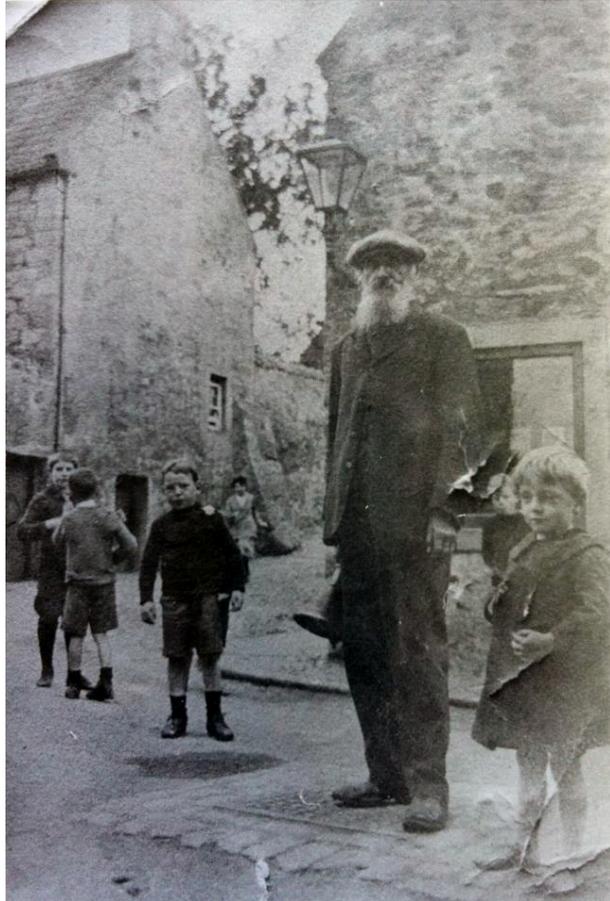
Comte Marty said they were very pleased indeed to come there. He hoped that the Scottish boys would pay a visit to France in the near future. It gave them a chance of seeing different customs and ways of living.

After shaking hands with the boys, Mr Gavin and Provost Hopkins showed them the spot where they might pitch their camp for the night – under the shelter of a fine old tree, close to the foundations of the banqueting hall.

Mrs Maule Ramsay, Miss Ismay Crichton Stuart (her daughter), Miss Vera Ramsay (her sister-in-law), and Miss Preston (her cousin) came from House of Falkland shortly after the French boys arrived, and expressed their pleasure in the visit. Mrs Maule Ramsay chatted with the boys and Comte Marty for several minutes, and they were then shown round the chapel and the Palace. All the French party could speak English fluently, but they were obviously grateful for the fact that the associations of the ancient ruins were explained to them in French by Miss Ismay and Miss Vera Ramsay. They were deeply interested in all that they saw, and fascinated by the wonderful history of the Palace and its precincts. In honour of the Scouts, Miss Ismay and Miss Ramsay wore the uniform of the Girl Guides. The former is a member of the Falkland Girl Guides, and the latter is Captain of a London corps.

Falkland and its Royal Palace

There is probably no place in Scotland so intimately associated with the Stuart Kings as the old burgh of Falkland. Even today, after the lapse of many centuries, it retains its mediaeval aspect. The streets are rough cobbled, narrow, and winding, just as they were in the time of James V or Queen Mary.



Rotten Row (circa 1920's)

Many of the houses have the old-time crow-stepped gables with thatched roofs. Outside stairs with walls built instead of railings are frequent, and remind one of those days when such stairs formed convenient resting places for gossips, or were used as points of vantage for witnessing jousting matches or processions. Behind the burgh, the green slopes of the Lomond Hills rise steeply, forming a picturesque background, while away to the north stretches the plain where once lay the Forest of Falkland, the favourite recreation ground of the Stuart Kings for hundreds of years. The most charming bit of Falkland is the square, just in front of the Palace.



Falkland Square from the Palace (circa early 1900's)

One is struck at once by the similarity of design to part of Holyrood, and the resemblance is not accidental. Both were designed at the same time by Sir James Hamilton of Finnart, a natural son of the Earl of Arran.

James V., Palace Builder

Probably James V stands out less conspicuously than any of the Stuart Kings. Yet it is to him that we owe the Palaces of Holyrood, Falkland, and Linlithgow. His desire was to renovate the existing buildings, and to make them less like fortresses and more in keeping with their character as Royal residences. James selected Sir James Hamilton to carry out the work. Hamilton relieved the long stretches of walls with ornamental pillars and buttresses. These he decorated with figures. The remains of the architectural treatment may be seen on what exists of the external walls and inside on the two sides that are still standing. The ornamental work is somewhat defaced, but one can form a fairly good idea of what the place looked like in those days. The two circular towers at the entrance gate with the battlemented cornices and conical turrets were added to Falkland Palace, probably from Hamilton's original designs, following, no doubt, what he had seen in his extensive travels on the Continent. Similar circular turrets exist at Holyrood.

Hamilton's natural abilities made him a great favourite of the King, and he rapidly became a person of considerable importance. He was appointed to the post of Superintendent of the Royal Palaces, and up to the year 1539 had the ear and

confidence of his Sovereign. In the following year, he was conspiring with the Douglases to overthrow the King, and appropriated funds intended to be spent on the Royal Palaces. James V died two years later, a broken-hearted man, after hearing of the defeat of his forces at Solway Moss. It was when lying in Falkland on his death-bed, that the news was brought to him of the birth of the babe who was afterwards Mary Queen of Scots. "it cam' wi' a lass", said he, alluding to the Stewart Crown, "and it will gang wi' a lass."

The Duke of Rothesay's Murder

The most romantic story connected with Falkland Palace is that of the death of the Duke of Rothesay, son and heir of Robert III. The real ruler of Scotland was the King's brother, the Duke of Albany, the King himself being weak and easy going. As the King's eldest son grew up, he formed about him a party of young noblemen, who determined to thwart the ambitions of Albany. Rothesay had plenty of enemies and faults of his own, and Albany persuaded his brother to allow Rothesay to be confined in Falkland for a time. In fifteen days Rothesay was dead. The story goes that he was starved to death by his uncle, and, it will be remembered, this is the view taken by Sir Walter Scott, who has so skilfully woven the romance into the 'Fair Maid of Perth'. But it is fair to add that both Albany and Douglas were tried for the murder and acquitted. The old King was sufficiently suspicious of his brother, however, to send away for safety to France his second son, James. But on the way James was captured by the English and kept in captivity for 23 years. The news of the capture killed the poor King. He died three days after the information was brought to him.

The Forest of Falkland

The Forest of Falkland was the great attraction that the place held for the Royal residents. Mary Queen of Scots spent many happy days at Falkland hunting. It was while out hunting that James VI was met by one of the Gowries and lured to Perth, and was mixed up with that mystery which has never been solved – the Gowrie House conspiracy. The forest itself occupied a very large area, probably well over to the other side of the plain and up the sides of the Ochils. The Forester of Falkland was an important Court functionary, and was responsible for keeping the place in a suitable condition.

Will the Queen visit Falkland?

Echo of Holyrood Garden Party

“A rumour was circulated by a Dundee morning newspaper on Saturday that the King and Queen were to visit Falkland Palace on certain alternative dates this month, after the Queen had finished her stay with Lord and Lady Elphinstone at Carberry Tower, Musselburgh. Apparently the King was to come down from Balmoral where he is now.

This statement naturally excited the people of East Fife and of Falkland in particular. Auchtermuchty claimed a share of the honour of the supposed Royal visit. But the rumour is based on rather slender grounds, and there is nothing definitely fixed in regard to visiting Falkland. How the rumour arose is as follows.

At the garden party at Holyrood Palace in July, the Queen, while chatting with the Hon. Mrs Maule Ramsay, House of Falkland, and Provost Hopkins, Falkland, said she was interested in Falkland Palace, and might pay it a visit when she came to Midlothian. The fact that she is now about to visit Carberry Tower gives colour to the idea that she may find time to pay a hurried visit to Falkland. Provost Fowlis, Auchtermuchty, at the garden party told the King that Auchtermuchty was close to the Royal Palace of Falkland, and it was observed that His Majesty was familiar with the history of the Palace, though he had never seen it. The last Monarch who occupied the Palace was Charles II. No definite arrangements have been made, and nothing can be known about the Queen’s plans until she comes to Carberry Tower this (Friday) evening.

Hard Worked Guide

Meantime crowds of visitors are taking up their stay in the historic burgh, and the guide to the Palace, Mr W. Bruce, is, as he expresses it, footsore with tramping round the precincts of the Palace, and worn out with pointing out the innumerable features of interest. It is evident that he is completely master of his subject, and knows the history of every stick and stone of the place.

A special effort is being made to render even more beautiful the gardens and policies of House of Falkland, so that, should Her Majesty’s visit materialise, she will carry away with her a good impression of Falkland.

As has been pointed out, the direct ancestress of the Royal family, Princess Elizabeth, eldest daughter of James VI, was born in Falkland Palace. She married the King of Bohemia, and her daughter Sophia, married the Elector of Hanover. It was through Sophia that the present line came to the British Throne.

A Local Lay

A local poet, so stirred by the belief that he is soon to see the King and Queen at his own door, has burst into verse. (Tune – ‘Sing a Song of Sixpence’)

Now, you folks at Falkland, just listen to this lay,

*You've half a day of sunshine to make a lot of 'hay',
Before the end of August, the eyes of half the world,
Will focus the proceedings about to be unfurled!*

*The King and Queen will visit you on their journey from the North,
And they won't want to inflict themselves with the smell of 'oily cloth',
The Palace with its history quite entitles you to pride,
But don't forget the 'Muchtly man who drew the veil aside!*

*Now wash your hands and faces and put on your Sunday clothes,
Or people round about you will turn up their eyes and nose,
You cannot make the sun stand still about the hour of noon,
So have a bonfire on the hill, and so outshine the moon!*

*The King and Queen are Sovereigns – keep them safe and sound,
And thank your lucky stars you've two sovereigns in your 'pound',
As Sovereigns they wear, sometimes, a Crown on heads that throb,
The vulgar might then whisper they're 'Five and Twenty Bob'!*

*But the song about a sixpence and blackbirds in a pie,
Will give the tip to Falkland how to please the Royal eye,
And when the show is over, and all settled in the head,
Thank the Royal Burgh, 'Muchtly, for what its Provost said!
'Shelty'.*

