
Queen Victoria's Visit to Falkirk in 1842

with a note on the Avenue at Callendar House.

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In Volume 3 of Calatria Thomas McGrouther noted that a myth had grown up since 1937 concerning the location of the [sale of Callendar House in 1783](#). It seems to have been about this time that another legend was born about the arrangements that were made for the visit of Queen Victoria in 1842. The legend would have it that the "Avenue" that leads northward from Callendar House towards Callendar Road was cut through the Antonine Wall for the Queen to look down to view the house from that road and hence is often referred to as the Queen's Avenue. However, there is sufficient information available to show that it was actually executed within a few years of 1680.



Illus 1 : The Avenue looking south to Callendar House.

The Avenue was part of a much grander design which encompassed the laying out of much of the present-day park and included ponds and ha-has. As such, it was part of the second Earl of Callendar's reconstruction of the house and grounds after their destruction by Cromwell and the neglect which ensued with the Parliamentary occupation of Scotland. The bold, newly accomplished, plan for the immediate setting of the new house is described in Michael Livingstone's poem "Patronus Redux" of 1682:

*"Here in the shade of a well peopled wood,
Where Nature's choristers have pleasant shroud,
A Garden where the glitt'ring flowers do bud,
And a spring talking, musically loud.*

*Lo, here are flowrie walks and laughing meads,
These feed the body, and the eyes thir feast;
With pon'drous Fruit, here each Tree hangs its head,
Able to tempt the eye, and please the taste.*

*His Palace, bord'ring with the common Rode,
Seems, hospitably, for its guests to call;
And by his pains, repaired alamode,
Outbraves the Shadow of the Roman Wall.*

*The ancient Towre, which was by the English storm'd,
And by them suffer'd an unbribed death;
Behov'd, by levelling, to be reform'd,
And to be purg'd from the Usurper's breath.*

*He means his dwelling publickly to shew,
Removing lets, which might obstruct the eye;
So Drusus House was built in open view,
That all the City might his life survey."*

The late seventeenth century saw a remarkable flourishing in garden and house design in Scotland in general. This, in part, stemmed from the now obvious realisation that only the King had the necessary resources to provide fortifications capable of withstanding all but the briefest of sieges. Dwellings could be built for comfort rather than defence. With the serious damage to the original structure at Callendar, the patron and his architect were free from the constraint of utilising and recommissioning an older building, and work began afresh on a grander extension on its east side. Many of the Scottish nobles in the seventeenth century had taken the opportunities available to travel to continental Europe. The First Earl of Callendar had spent many years of his life in military service there. So it is not surprising to see continental styles developing in Scottish architecture at this time and extending tastefully into the gardens. In France, the provision of avenues to create vistas was in vogue, a style copied on a grandiose scale at Alloa at about this time by the Earl of Marr.

The Avenue at Callendar House was centred on the main entrance to the building, which occupied the same relative position as the present entrance. The 17th century doorway was less impressive or elaborate than its Victorian successor but an idea of the effect can be gained by looking down the tree-lined avenue to the relatively plain contemporary doorway at Kinneil House. As the basic concept of the Avenue was to provide a vista from the House it is unlikely that a high stone park wall would have been placed across its northern end adjacent to the public road. Had this been the case, it would also have been impossible for those travelling along this road to have seen the house, contradicting what is said in the poem Patronus Redux and by the Anonymous Traveller, who in 1697 says of Callendar House:

"This is a noble fabrick. The visto to it is cut through the Roman Wall, through which you have a pleasant prospect of this house, and a tall, shady wood, which, standing at a little distance from it, overtops it and set it off very much." (Portland Papers - Historic Manuscripts Commission.)

Rather, there would have been an intricately worked ornate wrought iron screen with gates here. These would have stood towards the north side of the cutting through the east-west ridge which carries the Roman wall, as in the seventeenth century the highway was located slightly further to the south than it is now. It was probably at this



Illus: Map by General Roy, c1760.

time that elm trees were planted along the side of this road so that future generations approached Falkirk from the east under a tunnel of foliage. On the far side of the highway, in what became known as the Pikes, some 220m northwards, stood a large square doocot. It lay just to the west of the line of the Avenue and would typically have faced south-east, so that the birds flying to and from it would have formed a pleasant scene from Callendar House, with the Forth and the Ochil Hills in the background.

Other tree-lined avenues were created in the grounds. One still runs past the north-east corner of the Factor's house. The main one ran from the south of the House, across a bridge, to a summerhouse where a sundial dated 1677 stood (RCAHMS 1963, 351). Another sundial with the Fifth Earl of Linlithgow's coat-of-arms on it was placed at the south end of the bridge. Roy's map of c1760 shows this avenue marching up the hill right up to the estate boundary at Hallglen, mirroring that to the north.

It is therefore quite clear that by the time of Queen Victoria's visit on the 13 September 1842 that the Avenue had already been there for well nigh 160 years. Nor did the Queen travel along that part of Callendar Road bordering Callendar Park on that occasion. The Queen's party entered the grounds of Callendar House at the west end, passed directly in front of the house, and then exited by way of the East Lodge. There are several official accounts of her visit to Scotland, all of which are very similar and only differ in such minor detail as the presence of a particular nervous horse. It is therefore only appropriate to reproduce here the Falkirk section of one of these records and to add the report printed in the Stirling Journal and Advertiser which gives a different perspective of the proceedings of that day.

NATIONAL RECORD OF

THE VISIT OF QUEEN VICTORIA TO SCOTLAND, 1842

"From an early hour on Tuesday morning, the whole population of Falkirk were on tiptoe, eagerly looking out from every part whence a view of the approach of the Royal party could be obtained; and as the hour of her Majesty's arrival was uncertain, on the appearance of each successive horseman, "the cry was still, they come." About half-past one, a vedette of mounted men galloped hastily through the town, causing every heart to beat with expectation; and, in a few minutes more, the first of the advanced guard of cavalry were seen trotting sharply up, and followed at military distance by the remainder of the Royal escort, in immediate advance of the Royal carriage.

On entering the town, the pace was slackened; and as the Queen and the Prince passed slowly through the long street in their open carriage, all eyes were gratified by a view of the youthful Royal pair; and when her Majesty observed every window and door tastefully decorated with flowers, and called the attention of the Prince to the circumstance, and to the Triumphal Arches in the street, and to the hundred banners floating in the air, it was not surprising that she cast a gratified eye on the tens of thousands assembled to behold her, nor that she replied with gracious bows and condescending smiles to acclamations which responded from the classic Torwood to Graham's Dyke. The crowd here was greatly augmented by large numbers who had come from every district in the west early in the morning by the Edinburgh and Glasgow Railway.



Illus: Queen Victoria in 1845 with her eldest daughter, also named Victoria,

At [Carbrook](#), her Majesty was met by the tenantry of Lord [Dunmore](#), headed by Mr Salmon, his Lordship's factor, who escorted her Majesty on horseback to [Callendar](#). This body afterwards dined together in the Blue Bell Inn, Falkirk.

Passing through Falkirk, the Royal party wheeled suddenly to the right, about half-a-mile east of the town, and entered the grounds of Callendar, the princely seat of [Mr Forbes](#), the Member for the County. The party was followed by nearly the whole tenantry of the west and middle districts of Stirlingshire, on horseback. The number of mounted men must at this time have been at least five hundred; while the pedestrians, scampering through every part of the ground to get in advance of her Majesty, formed altogether a most picturesque and enlivening spectacle. A party of the Fifty-Third was here drawn up, and presented arms on the arrival of the Queen, who entered into conversation with her host and several other gentlemen during the four minutes the carriages were drawn up for the purpose of changing horses. Her Majesty entered at the West gate, and came out at the east gate, near [Laurieston](#) toll-bar. Mr Wilson, [South Bantaskine](#), walked in procession, with upwards of a hundred of his workmen, with banners and a band of music. It was now precisely two o'clock, and the Royal party again set off at a rapid pace. Multitudes of persons were assembled at every part of the

road, and at [Polmont](#), where a Triumphal Arch was thrown across the road, the Earl of Zetland's tenants, ninety in number, decorated with favours were drawn up on the road, and, instantly wheeling into the rear, formed no inconsiderable addition to the immense multitude, every moment augmented by crowds issuing from the crossroads with which the country is intersected. Generally, the tenantry of each particular estate were assembled in a body, most of them having bands of music; and every house, even to the meanest cottage, was adorned with flowers and banners. The party pushed on at an accelerated pace, giving one no inadequate idea of a hunting field, till its arrival at Linlithgow Bridge, where the carriages halted for a moment to afford her Majesty a view of the splendid Railway Viaduct over the Avon, on which a train had that moment halted to afford the passengers a sight of the Royal party. The winding nature of the road was here admirably adapted to show off the immense procession accompanying her Majesty: the magnificent structure erected by the Railway Company, with the peculiar effect of a train of carriages then drawn up near its centre, and the beautiful river and quiet valley beneath, all went to form a picture on which her Majesty contrived to gaze for a few minutes in evident delight. The Earl of Hopetoun, who was accompanied by the Honourable Charles Hope, M.P. for the County of Linlithgow, and by the County gentlemen, received her Majesty when she crossed the Bridge and entered the County

of West Lothian. The road was also lined by the tenantry on horseback. After accompanying the Royal cavalcade as far as Linlithgow Bridge, Mr Forbes' tenantry returned to Callendar, where dinner was prepared for them, to the number of one hundred and eighty."



Illus: The Avon Viaduct from Linlithgow Bridge.

STIRLING JOURNAL AND ADVERTISER: FRIDAY 16TH SEPTEMBER 1842.

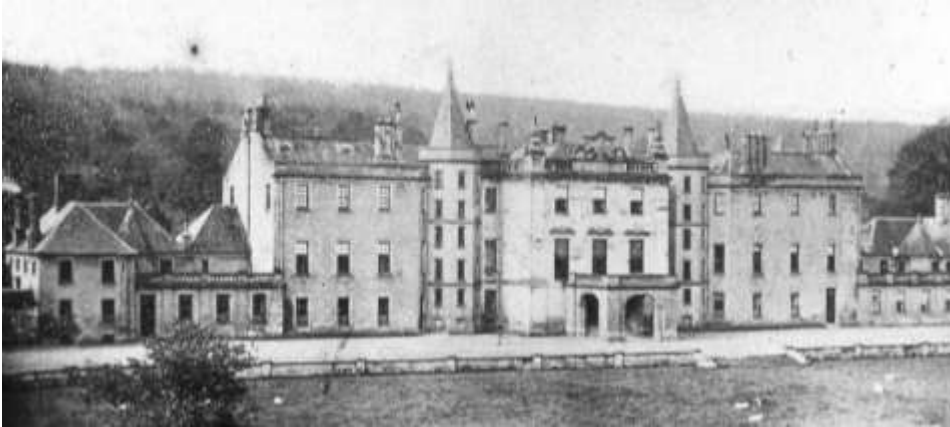
"Her Majesty was welcomed with every demonstration of loyalty and respect by Mr. Stirling of Glenbervie. A triumphal arch of laurel was suspended across the road, and fastened to two gigantic oaks, remains of the ancient Torwood forest. - Above the arch a banner was displayed, having "Welcome" in large characters inscribed upon it, while beneath was hung V.A. in dahlias. Mrs. Stirling and family, surrounded by the domestics, and above 100 labourers on the estate, were stationed near the arch to await the approach of her Majesty. Mr. Stirling himself, at the head of 12 stalwart ploughmen mounted on splendid farm horses, and dressed in neat livery, met her Majesty at the march of the property, and escorted her for some distance along the road.

Since it became known that her Majesty would pass through Falkirk on her return to Dalkeith, the Provost and Magistrates took the most effectual precautions for the maintenance of order, and advised the best mode of exhibiting the respect and affection entertained towards her Majesty by the inhabitants of this ancient burgh.

Early in the morning strangers were moving towards the town, and as it approached to twelve o'clock the main street became very much crowded. The shops were mostly

closed, and the population appeared dressed in their holiday clothes. The town soon presented a very gay and cleanly appearance, - the front of all the houses being ornamented with flowers and evergreens tastefully arranged. A number of banners were also displayed, having devices and inscriptions complimentary to her Majesty. At the entrance of the house in Stirling road a triumphal arch was erected, adorned with evergreens, and surmounted by a crown having the inscription, "Welcome to Falkirk". Every window and place from which a view of her Majesty could be obtained was fully occupied, the ladies of course forming the great majority. About two o' clock a signal was given of her Majesty's approach, by the appearance of two of the Enniskillen Dragoons, who entered the town at a sharp trot. Immediately the division forming the escort appeared, preceding at a short distance the low-bodied phaeton in which her Majesty and Prince Albert have made their Scottish tour. The Queen was instantly recognised, and cordially welcomed by loud-cheering and waving of handkerchiefs. The cortege passed through the town at a brisk trot. In passing through Falkirk, out along the drawbridge, across the canal, which was tastefully lined with pink cloth, the ships were drawn up on each side, with their gay colours flying & c. and had a very rich and pleasing effect.

It having been arranged that her Majesty was to change horses within [Callendar Park](#), this, as might have been expected, was the great centre of interest. Mr. Forbes, the member for the County, with a liberality which does him the highest honour, threw open his princely demesne to all and sundry without exception. His tenantry, about sixty of them on horseback and double that number on foot, guarded the road, the former occupying the ground immediately opposite her Majesty's guard of honour, the 66th regiment of foot, who stood at the spot where the relay of horses was ready to be yoked to the Royal carriage. Every window and elevation of the streets were occupied, and the high grounds of Callendar Park presented a scene of life and bustle never before witnessed within this noble demesne. The anxiety of the multitude was now at its highest pitch, when about half past one o' clock, Mr. Ramsay of Barnton arrived, announcing the near approach of the Royal company. In half an hour more, the cheering outside proclaimed their arrival, and shortly after two o' clock the cortege entered the grounds. At this moment the crowds who had followed her Majesty through the town rushed into the western gate with a fury which no force could have opposed, every one running at the top of his speed towards the lawn before the house to get a second glimpse of the Queen. In this they were not disappointed, as the avenue is circuitous, and the pressure of the crowd on the Royal carriage such as baffled all the attempts of the yeomanry and the soldiers to keep back. The cheering from 15,000 voices was absolutely deafening. Mr. Forbes and the Earl of Zetland accompanied the Royal party; the former in the uniform of a Deputy-Lieutenant, the latter at the head of a large body of his tenantry. Her Majesty entered into conversation with her host, during the four minutes the carriages were drawn up for the purpose of changing horses and was graciously pleased to express to Mr. Forbes her acknowledgements for his attention. We may also mention, that Mr. Forbes had so provided himself with relays of horses, that he was enabled to attend on her Majesty throughout her whole progress from her entrance into the County at Lecropt, till her departure from it at Linlithgowshire. The Sheriff and Mr. Ramsay of Barnton, also attended her Majesty from her entrance till her arrival at Falkirk. The Royal cortege re-entered the public road by the gate at Laurieston Toll, which was, like the others, decorated with a magnificent floral archway. The soldiers then gave three cheers for the Queen, which was re-echoed by the vast multitude present, the Camelon band playing the Queen's anthem; and after accompanying the Royal cavalcade as far as Linlithgow



Bridge, Mr. Forbes's tenantry returned to Callendar, where dinner was prepared for them, to the number of 180."

Illus: Callendar House as it would have appeared in 1842 when the porte cochere was built.

Bibliography

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