

Falkirk Archives

Droving and the Falkirk Tryst

The Trysts at Falkirk were large cattle markets where cattle from the highlands were sold to dealers and buyers from all over Britain. From there, the cattle were transported on to markets in the south. The first few trysts were held in Reddingmuir and then near Roughcastle but by 1785 they settled in Stenhousemuir where they continued annually until about 1900. Hardy highland black cattle was brought by drovers from across the north of Scotland to Falkirk (and to the other great tryst at Crieff). The major sale days were the first Tuesdays of August, September and October. The need for such a large market declined once the railways provided direct transport from the highlands to the south, and also as cattle were bred for better meat, they became less able to sustain the long walk to Falkirk.

Alongside the cattle market, the Tryst attracted travelling shops, services and activities to entertain and sustain a large influx of people. It was a busy, noisy, smelly event – something like the Royal Highland Show of today but probably less organised.

There are a few photographs in Falkirk Archives which can be seen on the Collections Browser <http://collections.falkirk.gov.uk/>

Activities

On the next page you can see a photograph of cattle and sheep being driven along Camelon Main St in about 1900. You can also see a painting of Falkirk on a Tryst night in about 1800. Imagine you are at the Tryst. Write a description of what it is like? What do you see and hear and smell? How busy is it?



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Camelon Main St in about 1900

A painting by James Grosart showing what Falkirk would have looked like during a Tryst in about 1800.

