



# THE VISION

## Newsletter of the Robert Burns World Federation



Issue 71 – March 2025

Many from our RBWF community have been dismayed at the decision by the Scottish Qualifications Authority (SQA) to remove Robert Burns as a standalone author for Scottish pupils taking Higher exams. This dismay has also been expressed beyond Auld Scotia's shores, with some poignant remarks from academia and Burns/Scottish associations abroad. On page 4 & 5 of this edition, I have published an opinion piece on this situation by Professor Gerry Carruthers from the Centre for Robert Burns Studies at the University of Glasgow, and a comment on behalf of Burns Clubs across Canada and the USA by Robert Burns Association of North America (RBANA) President, Mark Ferguson. Updated comments on this topic are also shared by Peter Pringle in his 'President's Message'.

Upcoming May 8<sup>th</sup>/11<sup>th</sup> 2025, is the RBANA Conference in Atlanta, Georgia. A main feature of the conference will be the events hosted by the Burns Club of Atlanta at its replica Burns Cottage. A fantastic weekend is planned to go along with that renowned southern hospitality. I have been advised that it's not too late to register. Additional information can be found at [www.RBANA.com](http://www.RBANA.com) or by email to [rbana2025agmc@gmail.com](mailto:rbana2025agmc@gmail.com)

Editor: Ronnie O'Byrne 

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### Burns and March

#### "Does Haughty Gaul Invasion Threat?"

In an atmosphere of fear from French invasion, the Dumfries Volunteers were formed on 31st January 1795 when the inaugural meeting was held in the Dumfries Court House and attended by Robert Burns.

Burns was among 59 members who took the Oath of Allegiance and signed the Rules, Regulations and By-Laws on **28th March**.

The governing committee consisted of officers and eight corps members. Burns served on this committee for a three-month term starting 22nd August 1795.



*Does haughty Gaul invasion threat?  
Then let the louns beware, Sir;  
There's wooden walls upon our seas,  
And volunteers on shore, Sir:*

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## President's Message, Peter Pringle:

**Greetings to all the Burns communities and to our friends of 'The Bard'.** My congratulations are extended to the clubs, societies and associations for honouring Robert Burns in recent months, and my sincere thanks to the organisers of these events. I can assure you that your efforts are valued by everyone within RBWF and club members around the world.

### **Membership enlargement and engagement:**

In my inaugural address at the AGM, I set out my ambition to increase the membership of the Federation, and a personal target of recruiting 20 new members. I am pleased to advise that this task has now been achieved.

As an organisation, we are continually seeking new sponsorship and revenue streams, but, in the short term, any increase in membership income can help keep the Federation's costs in the black. If everyone was able to recruit one new member, just think how that would help. So, PLEASE, share this edition of 'The Vision' far and wide, and whenever possible, highlight the RBWF membership advantages that the editor has detailed on page 25.

One of the successful key elements of our recent recruitment drive, is the **'Box O' Burns', Dementia Project**. This is being presented to new members, and on almost every occasion, they are eager to learn more about how they could support and contribute to this fantastic initiative.

The 'Box O' Burns' is the brainchild of RBWF Director, Grace McKelvie, and there has been some very exciting new developments. Working together, we identified the need to increase promotion of the project and provide evidence of those inflicted, being more present and cognizant (unlocking long-term memory) when a Burns poem or Scots song was played. The thought being, that we could create a repository of recordings for families to access from the internet, that they can then use in the comfort of their homes to engage more with their loved ones. To enable this, Grace has created a very successful teaching pack for this project, how to deliver a workshop, and this has been followed up with an instructional video on delivery techniques.

There is already an abundance of material available from RBWF, but we felt that we could improve and combine this with my second objective, in bringing younger people to Burns through media arts and student engagement.

The students selected, have media, film and TV production skills, and this indirectly provides a helpful awareness of the project among the student bodies, as you will see in the later reports from Grace and her support team.

This student engagement has provided a partnership platform for us to work with the University of West of Scotland. Secondly, we have managed to secure sponsorship funding to run the engagement model by involving funding partners such as Rotary and Trades organisations, thus creating additional partnership models and overall project awareness. This has been cost neutral to the Federation and has significantly raised Federation partnership profiles.

The other successful student project was the commissioning of the West College Scotland honours degree students to create a modern piece of theatre on Burns and Jean Armour. I held preliminary discussions with lecturer, Una McDade, on the feasibility of incorporating the idea as part of their degree submission for the Applied Theatre Degree Project, and I'm pleased to report that there was an enthusiastic response from the college and students. After some additional consultation, we agreed that the most feasible option was to engage the services of the legendary Jane Brown. To come to Paisley and mentor the students; ..... **what they have created and now performed, is outstanding!**

JVP, Paul Kennedy, provided an external proofread of the play, and Jane gave the students her on-hand feedback and direction. Big thanks to Jane Brown for inspiring the students to create this fine piece of highly imaginative theatre. Early indications suggest that this is heading towards being credited in the first-class award category.

Isabel Lind, and SVP, Jean Abdulrahim, attended the first performance, and Isabel kindly provided a critique and well-crafted review of the work, thanks to both for your assistance and support.

Also in attendance was the Deacon of The Paisley Hammermen, Ross Aitkin, and Clerk, Harry Paton. Both were so impressed that they gave each student a small financial incentive and an invite to The Grand Paisley Hammermen Dinner in the Town Hall. SVP, Paul Kennedy kindly paid their £65 meal ticket to attend that event. Thanks, are also extended to Houston Menswear and outfitters of Paisley, who provided dinner suits and highland dress free of charge to the students – **a superb gesture!**

*Editor's note: Rather than cram in small thumbnail photos of the students' performances, I have added a larger sized selection - along with Isabel's review of their play - to Page 39 of this edition.*

**Schools Convener, Beth Kerr**, has done a sterling job in organising the International Schools essay competition, and particularly the coordination of the essays she received from both Russia and the Ukraine. This was no easy task and worthy of a special mention in her ability to manage the workload and observe a sensitive and diplomatic presence, great job Beth! A special mention is also sent to Past President, Henry Cairney, who led and chaired the judging panel of Helen Morrison and myself.

Personally, I felt privileged to read such well-crafted work from these children and was greatly inspired by their stoicism and courage. I have used a summary of their work in my Immortal Memories recently and received great feedback for sharing their stories. This has helped raise awareness of the difficulties some of these youngsters are currently experiencing.

Thank You - Beth, Henry and Helen.

**To summarise:** If we are to engage younger students to Burns, they may not join a club, but they ARE willing to help promote Burns and help provide the Burns communities with good media and marketing materials. Our vision is to reimagine Burns and to attract younger interest and we must work with the media tools that they are skilled in deploying so successfully.

**Education:** I'm sure by now, given the news coverage, that you are all aware of the downgrading of Burns literature by the Scottish Qualifying Authority and the effect this decision has had on the Burns community. Please be assured that steps are in place to engage with Senior Scottish Government officials on this matter. Several initial discussions have taken place to date with key academics and we have been preparing a joint discussion strategy on how we can engage and work with the Scottish Government on this matter.

We have examined the strategic elements of the social, economic, and political impacts this decision has on the global diaspora, as well as its impact within schools. I'm heartened and confident from our early discussions that we can present an argument for the creation of a *New Paradigm* that allows for strategic options to be realistically explored and achieved, to ensure Burns continues to be held in highest regard as a literary genius.

Warm regards to all,

*Peter Pringle*, RBWF President

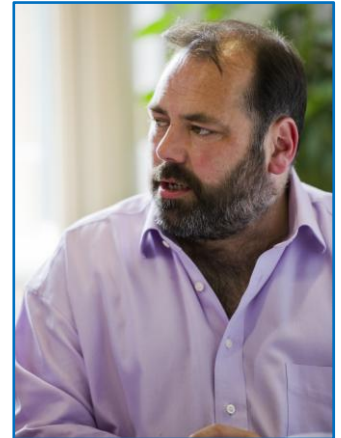




*In response to the SQA decision to remove Robert Burns as a standalone author for Higher exams. The following were received by the editor.*

**From Gerard Carruthers, Professor of Scottish Literature at the University of Glasgow.**

The Scottish Qualifications Authority (SQA) is the 'national accreditation and awarding' body for secondary schools and some further education (including vocational skills). Soon, it will have a new name, Qualifications Scotland and whether this represents simply a sharpening of brand identity or betokens anything more deeply philosophical remains to be seen. By and large, the SQA has provided a context for teachers and learners doing very good things over many years. As for education 'services' everywhere in the world, though, one might question the wisdom of all it has done. Has all it has undertaken always been pedagogically sharp and well-informed by credible research? Has it always avoided dancing too fast to the tune of political masters as well as self-interested careerism? Probably not.



Recently, the SQA has come in for flak over the downgrading of the teaching of work of Robert Burns. In a first major refresh since 2018 and after consultation, SQA is dropping Robert Burns as a standalone text for the Higher English assessment (taken in the fifth year of secondary school and elsewhere by adult learners). Burns is not alone: other highly canonical works such as novels, Lewis Grassic Gibbon's *Sunset Song* (1932) and Robin Jenkins, *The Cone-Gatherers* (1955) as well as John McGrath's play *The Cheviot, the Stag and the Black, Black Oil* (1973) have also been relegated from 'set text' status. Refreshing things is good and necessary, although one might argue that we have here a large swathe of literature of Scottish historical importance being fiercely chopped down in one fell swoop.

The SQA tells us that out of 35,000 students taking the Higher English assessment in 2024 only 83 answered on Burns. So there is, clearly, a problem. It would be interesting to know the figures for other authors answered. Anecdotally, and speaking to my niece and others I know of Higher-sitting age, there is a huge emphasis by teachers on, for instance, the estimable Jackie Kay and Carol Ann Duffy. Hard-pressed teachers tend to teach the same thing over many years (true often in universities as well as schools and FE colleges). Are we 'simply' seeing a generational changing of the guard where Gibbon, Jenkins etc speak less to younger teachers than Kay and Duffy? Are text-choices more about these teachers' more limited knowledge and experience?

We are told that new texts for Highers will include Ely Percy's novel, *Duck Feet* (2021) about working-class adolescence in Renfrewshire Scots, the poetry of Pakistani-born Glaswegian, Imtiaz Dharker, a very thoughtful writer whose work is often about the difficulty of community and belonging and Donald S. Murray's Gaelic play in translation, *Sequamur* (2014), which deals very poignantly with World War I — and which personally I like very much. Debate has raged quite fiercely over 'politically correct' choices being made by the SQA, but we should keep in perspective as we can see — even from the brief descriptions of texts above — that interests in language, history and identity remain continuously available from the 'old' to the 'new' in the Higher English assessment and elsewhere. Diversity, broadly, is a good thing, and interrogating 'Britishness', 'western-ness' and even 'Scottishness' is something fruitfully available via literary study (and as long as we are also and at the same time hanging on to a sense of common, universal humanity).

However, cultural warriors on both sides of 'the divide' do not help. As well as those who stupidly attack (proper, liberal) multi-culturalism, there are those also who mindlessly advance issues of marginalisation at every turn. .... **continued on page 5**



Here, I must confess to being a dissenter from the 'Decolonising the Curriculum' approach, which crudely advances single-issue cultural politics to the disadvantage of true intellectual exploration.

All of the foregoing is a kind of musing aloud about concerns and issues that remain to be properly addressed (with thorough investigation, research and also over time). With regards to Burns, why apparently have so few teachers been offering the option of studying Burns? Are more modern poets, the 'easy' option? Do we need to provide teachers with more resources and might these exist already to a large extent only with a lack of awareness. At the Centre for Robert Burns Studies at the University of Glasgow, for the past decade we have been offering two award-winning online courses, Robert Burns: Poems, Songs, Legacy', a three-week MOOC version (which has garnered over 30,000 enrolments) and a longer eight-week 'blended-learning' version of this course. We have numerous other resources also available on our various websites, including specially commissioned versions of Burns' songs, documentaries and other digital content.

<https://www.gla.ac.uk/schools/critical/research/researchcentresandnetworks/robertburnsstudies/courses/poemssongsandlegacymooc/>

CRBS and others perhaps need further to advertise what we and Burns offer, including the fact that as well as being of undoubted historical importance (as a Scottish poet, as a Romantic and as a World Writer), Burns also lends himself very well to the contemporary world. Issues of race, gender, class, conflict and many others can all be insightfully accessed via Burns' works and life. Recently, CRBS has been developing a new strand of research, with the announcement that the University of Glasgow is funding a doctoral scholarship (to be filled in 2025) on the Environment. This scholarship as part of a wider CRBS interest in 'Eco-criticism' which, with work on aspects of studying the poet in the digital age, makes Burns a critical-study hot-topic for the twenty-first century. Robert Burns is a great writer whose historical importance is augmented by the fact that the resources exist not only to see him in this important light but in the most modern of complexions too. We need to get the word out there. And let's have some proper debate about the teaching of Burns, free of the enervating culture wars in which too often our society becomes mired.

***Gerard Carruthers is Francis Hutcheson Professor of Scottish Literature at the University of Glasgow, and General Editor of the Oxford University Press multi-volume edition of the Collected Works of Robert Burns. His edited The Oxford Handbook of Robert Burns was published in 2024.***

### **From the Robert Burns Association of North America (RBANA)**

The Board of RBANA is deeply dismayed by the Scottish Qualifications Authority's regrettable decision to diminish Robert Burns' status in the Scottish schools' curriculum, relegating him from a standalone poet to merely one among others. Burns' genius remains of immense significance to the Burns Clubs and individual members of RBANA across the United States and Canada. Our unwavering enthusiasm in celebrating his works is a testament to his enduring relevance—just as vital today as in the 18th century. Rather than see this as a setback, we are working in close collaboration with Robert Burns World Federation (RBWF) to transform this unfortunate decision into an opportunity. We will seek a meaningful partnership with the Scottish Government to reaffirm and showcase the timeless importance of Burns—not only to Scotland, but to the world, now and forever.



*Mark Ferguson* RBANA President

**Irvine Lasses Burns Club** celebrated St Andrew's Day on 5th December, a few days after the Saint's special day. Guests at the concert in Irvine's Wellwood Burns Centre & Museum included the Provost of North Ayrshire, Anthea Dickson, who proposed the Toast to Scotland. President of the RBWF, Peter Pringle, and President of Irvine Burns Club, Iain McPhail.

The entertainment was provided by Ayrshire folk group 'Tanninzie'. Peter Pringle congratulated the Lasses as they approached their 50th anniversary in February 2025.

Pictured are Irvine Burns Club President, Iain McPhail, Lasses President, Margaret Greenlees, Lasses Immediate Past President, Margaret McDougall, NAC Provost, Anthea Dickson, and RBWF President, Peter Pringle.



### Perth Burns Club – Celebration of St Andrew's Day

The twentieth day of Scottish Life and Culture, an annual event organised by Perth Burns Club in celebration of St. Andrew's Day, was held in the Soutar Theatre at Perth's A.K. Bell on Saturday, November 30. A well-attended gathering heard three forty-five-minute talks by leading Scottish authors and historians. First to take the stage was Dr. Darroch Bratt from Drumnadrochit who gave an enthralling presentation on the social and cultural aspects of whisky in the highlands. The second speaker was the author, historian and BBC television presenter Fiona Watson with an intriguing look at Robert the Bruce, that covered many details of the Bruce's life, not generally known.

Following a short break for tea and coffee, the final presentation of the afternoon came from the well-known expert on Scottish paranormal activity, Malcolm Robinson, whose talk on the Sauchie Poltergeist held the attention of both paranormal sceptics and non-sceptics.

The afternoon's events were opened by Xander McDade, Provost of Perth and Kinross, and chaired by Alan Telfer, President of Perth Burns Club. A vote of thanks was proposed by the club's vice-president, Joe Giacomuzzi.



Fiona Watson, - Alan Telfer - Malcolm Robinson - Darroch Bratt - Provost, Xander McDade

It was a night of mixed emotions at the Mother Club's St Andrew's celebration at Greenock Town Hall on Friday 29<sup>th</sup> November 2024.

The company gathered to celebrate St Andrew and Scottish culture, but as a good number of members had attended ninety-four-year-old Past President, June Forbes' funeral earlier in the day, her memory was still in the minds of many.

The evening opened with RBWF President, Peter Pringle, paying tribute to June, and then her dear friend and Past President, Billy McCready, piped several tunes in June's memory. Additional tributes were paid by President, Isabel Lind, who also apologised for the fact that June had never been made a Life Member in recognition of her dedication and contributions to Greenock Burns Club.

There was also an acknowledgment of June's significant work and support of the World Federation and her assistance to Senior Vice President, Jean Abdulrahim. June was a regular at the RBWF Conference in September each year, and every July would take her 'holiday' in Kilmarnock to work at the RBWF First Edition Festival.



*June Forbes (1930-2024)*

After these tributes to June, the night continued with the 'Glenpark Dancers' who are trained by Helen Cunningham and gave a beautiful display of country dancing.

The President's plan for evening was to showcase the three languages of Scotland.

Past President, Christine Currie, contributed to that with a memorable performance of the Scots Ballad 'Edom O Gordon' and later in the evening, Christine was joined by her daughter Lynsey Mitchell, 'a gifted star' was how Isabel Lind referred to her, and the duo performed an extract of 'The Kindled Lowe' written by James L Dow, who was the club bard for eighteen years from 1959-1977. The play was co-authored by Ray Lynn Craig, and the scene performed outlined a conversation between Robert Burns and his mother. It was quite marvelous!

The main toast to St Andrew and Scotland was proposed by Dr. Jennifer Kirkwood from Edinburgh University, which began in Gaelic and continued in both Scots and English. It was a tour de force and made everyone reflect on the significance of St Andrew's Day celebrations in the 21st century.

The musical director for the evening was Alistair Iain Paterson, who accompanied the singing in Gaelic and Scots. Beth Sharp sang 'Fear a Bhata' and Alasdair MacPhee sang 'Teann A' Nall' and both provided the company with beautiful renditions. The following night, Alistair was part of folk band 'Skipinnish' and was nominated for Musician of the Year at Trad Awards in Inverness.

Sharon Tucker had not known that June Forbes' favourite Burns song was 'A Red, Red Rose' and it was so fitting to sing it in the memory of a woman who was a stalwart of Greenock Burns Club, the Burns Federation, and is greatly missed. The Mother Club's St Andrew's Night was indeed an evening which celebrated Scots Culture..... and remembered June Forbes.

To highlight further the Mother Club's ability to embrace modern technology, Senior Vice President, David Brown, called for the assistance of Artificial Intelligence in producing a Burns style Vote of Thanks. **It was an evening to remember.**

**Submitted by Greenock Burns Club (The Mother Club) President, Isabel Lind**

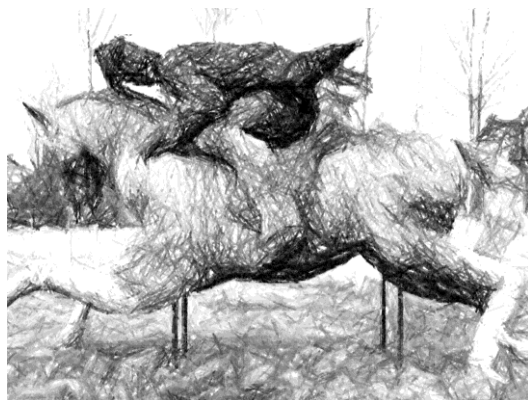




**SJCS Celebrates Samhain with Celtic Lore and a Spirited Reading of Tam o'Shanter.**

On 25<sup>th</sup> October 2025, the South Jersey Celtic Society (SJCS) invited the public to the Burlington County Lyceum in Mount Holly, NJ, to experience Robert Burns and a Celtic Halloween, a celebration of Samhain, the ancient Celtic holiday marking the end of the harvest season and the onset of winter. Samhain, often called Celtic Halloween, is steeped in rich traditions and is a time to honour the dead. According to ancient lore, the veil between the living and the spirit world is at its thinnest during Samhain, allowing spirits to visit our world—a belief that inspired many Halloween customs still practised today, such as wearing costumes to ward off evil spirits and carving Jack-o'-lanterns, traditionally made from turnips.

As bagpipe music by Doug Conner filled the air, guests arrived in festive costumes, eagerly awaiting an evening of history, folklore, and music. SJCS member Paul Kennedy, Jr., captivated the audience with a reading of Robert Burns' famous poem Tam o'Shanter, immersing listeners in a world of ghostly gatherings and supernatural adventure. On the heels of this eerie tale, SJCS founding member Paul Kennedy Sr., joined his son in the spotlight to sing haunting renditions of traditional Celtic folk songs. With Sr. on the acoustic guitar and Jr. on the violin, the pair performed Molly Malone, the sad story of a young fishmonger whose spirit haunts the streets of Dublin and The Ghosts of Molly McGuire, a song about Irish immigrant minors who lost their lives in the coal mines of Pennsylvania.



The performance was followed by an enlightening presentation by SJCS President John Adams, who shared the Celtic roots behind Halloween's most enduring legends. Attendees learned that the headless horseman figure, often recognized in the United States through The Legend of Sleepy Hollow, originates from the Irish and Scottish tale of the "Dullahan," a headless rider symbolizing death. They were also intrigued to discover that the practice of carving Jack-o'-lanterns comes from the tale of "Stingy Jack," who, after tricking the Devil, was condemned to roam the earth with only a hollowed-out turnip lantern for light.

Samhain, traditionally celebrated on October 31st through November 1st, is marked by customs like lighting bonfires to keep away evil spirits and setting out candles to guide ancestral souls. Mantles are often adorned with harvest items, such as apples, gourds, and autumn leaves to symbolize the season, while friends gather to share spooky stories. According to John Adams, Robert Burns and a Celtic Halloween is a perfect annual event to showcase these traditions and advance the mission of the South Jersey Celtic Society.

"Our Samhain celebration offers a festive occasion where members of the community can learn about the heritage, traditions, language, art, music, and culture of the Celtic people," Adams said. "We look forward to sharing this event with our local community for years to come."

**Submitted by Ms. Angela Collom**



Some news from **our Burns friends in Portugal** tells us that "Burns around the WORLD never stops".

A Portuguese translation of Burns' epic narrative tale 'Tam o' Shanter' was recently released.

It's available on YouTube and can be seen using link below.

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8\\_W00a\\_C6zM&t=215s](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8_W00a_C6zM&t=215s)

It was originally translated between 2001 and 2003 by the Portuguese historian António Robalo and William Riach, a Scottish engineer, painter and teacher. It remained unpublished until it was performed in November 2024 by Carlos Oliveira Santos, the past president of The Cascais Burns Club.

Carlos is also a translator of Burns, published in his 2024 book '**Aye, Scottish Poems**' with a preface by Billy Kay. An original copy of the Portuguese text of the Tam o' Shanter translation was donated by Robalo and Riach to the Robert Burns Birthplace Museum in Alloway.



**Carlos Oliveira Santos ..... in full flow**  
**"And, vow! Tam saw an unco sight!"..... in Portuguese!**

**Annan Ladies**, the oldest Ladies Burns Club in existence, recently had a lovely day trip to Ellisland Farm & Friars Carse. The visit to Ellisland began with a welcome from Ailsa, and a video of Robert Burns' time there. The ladies were then free to explore the farm and have a wander through the rooms to get a feel for the place where Burns produced some of his most famous works.

After Ellisland, the Ladies went to Friars Carse for a scrumptious afternoon tea. Our honorary member David Gillies gave us a wonderful history on Friars Carse and the connection to Robert Burns. A special thanks to Heather at Friars Carse for helping me arrange the trip. A lovely afternoon was had by all.

**Submitted by Fiona Evans (President Annan Ladies)**



## 50 years of Irvine Lasses Burns Club

Founded on 5th February 1975 by Rosalind Keyte, Anne Gaw, and 31 other ladies, **Irvine Lasses Burns Club** has been celebrating its Golden Anniversary. Celebrations commenced in January with an afternoon tea when current and former members from across the 50 years enjoyed an afternoon of reminiscing about the fun and friendship they found at the Lasses.



The Club's Anniversary Dinner was held at the Riverside Lodge where Kirsteen McCue of Glasgow University, proposed the Immortal Memory. Other speakers were Provost Anthea Dickson, North Ayrshire Council, who toasted the Lasses Burns Club. New President of Irvine Burns Club, Donald Wilson, toasted the "Golden Lasses", and Lasses President, Margaret Greenlees, toasted the Founder Members.



President of the Ayrshire Association of Burns Clubs, Lorrie Headley, thanked the Lasses for their support to the Association over the 50 years, and presented the Club with a special Certificate from the AABC. Immediate Past President, Margaret McDougall, said Grace and Lasses Member, Marie Sommerville, provided the Vote of Thanks.

Two young people from Irvine, Melissa Anderson and Riley McClory, entertained the guests with some of Burns poetry. Both have competed successfully at Ayrshire and National Schools Competitions. Christopher Haggerty and Sam Prescott provided the music. Jimmy Cook was Piper for the evening and his mother Margaret, a Past President of the Club, addressed the Haggis. Both are Honorary Members of the Lasses, and at the Lasses Club meeting on 6th February at the Wellwood Burns Centre & Museum, it was Margaret who cut the Anniversary Cake. **Here's to the next 50 years!**



## Dalry Burns Club's Bicentennial Concert

'**The Twa Fiddles**' concert is a celebration of Dalry Burns Club's **TWO** hundredth Burns Supper.

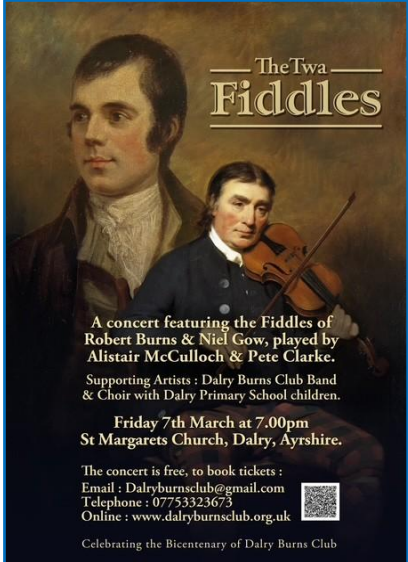
The event features Alistair McCulloch and Pete Clark, who will be playing the Burns Gregg fiddle and the Niel Gow fiddle.

Friday, 7th March, St. Margaret's Parish Church, Dalry at 7pm.

The concert is **FREE** to attend, seats **must** be booked on Eventbrite:

<https://www.eventbrite.co.uk/e/dalry-burns-club-bi-centennial-concert-the-twa-fiddles-tickets-1205532523229?utm-campaign=social&utm-content=attendeeshare&utm-medium=discovery&utm-term=listing&utm-source=wsa&aff=ebdsshwebmobile>

Submitted by Armour Hamilton - on behalf of **Dalry Burns Club**



**The Twa Fiddles**

A concert featuring the Fiddles of Robert Burns & Niel Gow, played by Alistair McCulloch & Pete Clarke.

Supporting Artists: Dalry Burns Club Band & Choir with Dalry Primary School children.

Friday 7th March at 7.00pm  
St Margarets Church, Dalry, Ayrshire.

The concert is free, to book tickets:  
Email: [Dalryburnsclub@gmail.com](mailto:Dalryburnsclub@gmail.com)  
Telephone: 07753323673  
Online: [www.dalryburnsclub.org.uk](http://www.dalryburnsclub.org.uk)

Celebrating the Bicentenary of Dalry Burns Club

## Winnipeg, Manitoba

On Thursday, January 23, at 9PM. Winnipeg's Community Radio Station - CJNU 93.7 - provided an hour of music and song dedicated to the '**Legendary Robert Burns**' on their Sounds of Scotland show.

Hosts, Garry Moir and Dwight MacAulay, were joined by Charles Cameron, the Past President of the Winnipeg Burns Club along with station controller Adam Klym.

**L to R: Charles Cameron, Garry Moir, Dwight MacAulay, Adam Klym.**



Page 8 - The Camperdown Chronicle, Friday, January 24, 2025



A Celtic birthday: Residents watched highland dancing in the Botanic Gardens to celebrate Scottish bard Robert Burns' birthday last Sunday. 2025

### Large crowd celebrates Bard's birthday

THE Australian summer sun did not deter residents from celebrating Scottish bard Robert Burns' birthday over the weekend.

The Camperdown Botanic Gardens hosted over 100 people at the Burns Birthday event last Sunday with a variety of Celtic-themed activities.

Robert Burns Celtic Festival coordinator Catherine O'Flynn said the event took place at the original site of the Robert Burns statue, where it sat for 100 years before being restored and relocated to the Corangamite Shire Council office in town.

"Sunday saw over 100 people enjoy a Scottish afternoon celebrating all things 'Burns' with Dr John Menzies playing the pipes in the gardens and leading the Haggis Parade, with concert goers then enjoying Haggis," she said.

"Highland dancers performed, followed by the Robert Burns Celtic Choir singing a selection of songs including the Wellman song and crowd pleaser the Sky Boat Song. "Camperdown's own The Twa Bards, Don Grieve and Angela Preiss also performed."

"Andrew O'Flynn recited Holy Willie's Prayer, a well-known Robert Burns poem.

"Universal Music Group, the final act accompanied the Highland Dancers and then played a great selection of Celtic tunes."

Ms O'Flynn extended her gratitude to emcee Simon Bucherri, as well as to those who donated raffle prizes for the event.

"The afternoon was a wonderful way to spend a warm summer's day in a beautiful setting," she said.

Dr Menzies OAM said the event kicked off the 2025 Robert Burns Celtic Festival, with the main event scheduled for June.

Dr. John Menzies from **Camperdown, Victoria**, sent in a copy of the Camperdown Chronicle's report on the bard's birthday celebrations.

This annual event draws crowds to Camperdown's Botanical Gardens for an afternoon of haggis, dance, music and song.

As reported: *The afternoon was a wonderful way to spend a warm summer's day in a beautiful setting... and kicks off the 2025 Robert Burns Celtic Festival.*

<https://camperdownburnsfestival.com.au/>



## The Sanquhar Black Joan Burns Club

(Fed 629) held their annual Supper on Friday 17th January in the Nithsdale Wanderers Pavilion. Chairman Stewart Park welcomed everyone along to what proved to be another fantastic night. Grace was given by Gilbert Herries before an excellent and hearty meal was provided by Libby Clark and her team from The Crown Inn. The haggis was piped in by Andy Williamson and "humped" by Norman Clark before being addressed in an excellent fashion by Club Secretary Stephen Hastie.



The Principal Speaker for the evening was Hugh McHarg, from New Cumnock. Hugh is well known on the Burns circuit, but this was his first time proposing the Immortal Memory. It won't be his last! Hugh provided an intelligent, thought-provoking Immortal Memory, straight from the heart. This was well received by the company and fully deserved the standing ovation.

The Toast to the Lasses was provided by another New Cumnock worthy, Iain Burgoyne. This was an excellent toast, full of witty stories poking fun at many of the audience members and coupled with appropriate Burns quotes, which delighted everyone in the audience. The Toast to the Drouthie Cronies was provided by the "weel-kent" Rab Wilson. His stories were full of wit and delivered in his unique style, delighting everyone in the audience. Rab is well-known and in demand on the Burns circuit all over Scotland and it was clear to see the reason why.

The songs for the evening were provided again by John Caskie MBE. Unfortunately, Willie McRobert was unable attend, and we wish him well. As always, the audience was enthralled by John's selection of songs and is already looking forward to hearing them both again next year. Club stalwarts Jim and Tom Gold provided the music. Their musical input was a joy to behold, and everyone hopes their support for the club continues for years to come. The readings were provided by Graham Wight, Past President of New Cumnock Burns Club, and once again these were of an excellent standard. His knowledge and understanding of Burns was clear to see.

The final performer for the evening was Chris Lyon from Dumfries. Chris has been a great supporter of the club for some time, and he presented the Toast to the Contributors. His toast was laced with humour and he comprehensively thanked everyone involved for another excellent night.

Special mention should be given to the Chairman, Stewart Park. He kept the night flowing smoothly in his usual inimitable style. Special mention was given to two stalwarts of the club, Duncan Close and Osbourne McMinn, who sadly passed away this year. Both played a huge part in building the reputation of our club and it is only fitting that both were recognised on the night. The evening closed in traditional manner with the singing of Auld Lang Syne. Sanquhar Black Joan Burns Club holds a very high reputation for the excellence of its Anniversary Dinners, and once again produced a Supper of outstanding quality. Auld acquaintances were met, and the cronies are already looking forward to next year's supper.

**Largs Cronies Burns Club** met in the Willowbank Hotel on Thursday 23rd January to hold their 35th Annual Dinner commemorating the life and works of our National Bard, Robert Burns. President Angus Middleton welcomed the gathering and introduced the principal speakers.

Following Grace by Club member and local Church of Scotland Minister, Rev David Watson, a superb meal was served up by the Willowbank Hotel, during which the Haggis was piped in by Club Piper, Allan Wilson and addressed in great style by Committee member Renwick Adam.

The Principal Speaker for the evening was Committee member, Jimmy Law, who delivered a very humorous and informative "Immortal Memory", whilst Club member, David Caldwell, proposed the "Toast to the Lasses". The evening's entertainment included recitations from George Whitestone (McPherson's Farewell) and Jimmy Law (John Barleycorn). Our Musical Director, Rev Jonathan Fleming, entertained the company with a varied selection of Burns' songs.

The Secretary, Brian Jackson, read the fraternal greeting cards received from kindred Burns Clubs and Past President Robert Honeyman proposed the "Toast to the Largs Cronies Burns Club".

The raffle, organised by Committee member, Renwick Adam, raised over £200 which goes towards the Annual Schools' Competition.

A most enjoyable evening was concluded with a "Vote of Thanks" given by Past President Raymond Connal, followed by rousing renditions of "The Star of Robbie Burns" and "Auld Lang Syne".



### Top Table and Entertainers

*(Front Row left to right)*

Past President, **David Galt** - Past President, **Raymond Connal** - **David Caldwell** – President, **Angus Middleton** - **Jimmy Law** - Secretary and Past President, **Brian Jackson** - Past President, **Dr. Tom Clark**

*(Back Row left to right)*

**Renwick Adam** – **Rev. Jonathan Fleming** – **Rev. David Watson** - Past President, **Robert Honeyman** - **Allan Wilson**.



### All Change at Irvine Burns Club

In Irvine on the 2<sup>nd</sup> June 1826, twelve men resolved to meet annually to celebrate the life and works of Robert Burns, and on 25th January 2025 men and women met in the Volunteer Rooms in Irvine for Irvine Burns Club's 199th Annual Celebration.

President, Iain McPhail, delivered his Immortal Memory. Vice President, Donald Wilson, Toasted Bonnie Jean, and Vice President Elect, Peter Latham, proposed the Toast to Scotland.

On Sunday 26th January, members of the Club attended morning worship at Irvine Old Parish Church, the church which Burns attended during his time in Irvine, 1781 – 1782. Later that day Provost, Anthea Dickson, of North Ayrshire Council, representatives from other organisations in the town and Burnsians from across North Ayrshire joined the Club to lay floral tributes at the Burns Statue on Irvine Moor, the only outdoor statue of Burns in North Ayrshire. Everyone was then invited to the Wellwood Burns Centre & Museum for refreshments.

Each year the outgoing President has an opportunity to propose Honorary Members, and one of Iain's last acts as President was to present Honorary Member Certificates to local Burnsian and Councillor Donald Reid, and to Michael Leveridge, a respected Associate Professor of Urology and Oncology at Queen's University, Toronto. Michael Fitt, the author of children's books written in Scots, and Olympian and Head of UK Sport, Dame Katherine Grainger, had accepted Honorary Membership but were unable to attend the event.

Following a very successful and busy year as President, Iain handed over the President's Chain to Donald Wilson, who in turn presented the Vice President's chain to Peter Latham. Donald will chair the 200th Annual Celebration and Peter will preside over the Club's 200th Anniversary on 2nd June 2026.

**Well done Iain!** and **congratulations to Donald and Peter** (Submitted by Margaret Greenlees)



Iain McPhail

Donald Wilson

Peter Latham

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**The RBWF Essay Competition** has been going since 2004, and once again pupils from Ukraine have surpassed previous entries. This year there were 27 essays submitted for adjudication by the schools in Ukraine. From these a top 10 were selected by the Ukraine schools and then sent on to the RBWF adjudication team of **Helen Morrison, Peter Pringle** and **Henry Cairney**.

The theme was taken from 'A Mans a Man' and the students' English and understanding of the Scot's language were clearly demonstrated. As were the quality of their work, dedication and love of Scotland's National Bard. Congratulations go to all entrants, their teachers, and parents.

The top three in 2024 were.

**First Place:** **Mariam Terteryan** (Photo)  
Predslavynska Gymnasia 56

**Second Place:** **Anna Strokosh**  
Tlumach Lyceum 2

**Third Place:** **Kristina Savchenko**  
Predslavynska Gymnasia 56



*Editor's Note: Beth Kerr who coordinates the competition as the RBWF Schools Convenor, sent me a copy of Mariam's winning entry and a couple of personal notes from the entrants. I thought they were **fantastic** and worth sharing with readers – THANKS BETH – GREAT JOB!*

**The Winning Entry** from **Mariam Terteryan**, 15 years old, Predslavynskiy lyceum 56, Kyiv, Ukraine  
Teacher: Iryna Horlushko

**He was the voice of the people**, describing the simple joys and hardships of peasant life, a man who from the depths of divergence and cruelty raised justice and brotherhood. He is not just a Scottish poet, he is a fighter for equality among all people, the rights of every human being. Robert Burns ...

A man who left his mark not only on the literature of Scotland and the broader United Kingdom, but also far beyond its borders. His quotations over time became winged phrases, proverbs, sayings. He confirmed the idea that a deeply national literature is interesting to mankind. Johann Wolfgang Goethe called Burns "one of the greatest poetic geniuses put forward by the XVIII century". Burns wrote always for the people. In his poems, he traced great feelings, deep thoughts, worries. In his poetry, he touches and reveals the soul of the people, merits of laborers, their desire for a happy and free life. Robert Burns lays a piece of himself in every word of his poem, which symbolizes the "wind of change", inspiring the struggle for justice and proclaiming freedom for everyone. The melody of the soul of the public is mirrored in the canvases of his manuscripts. It was Burns who became a guide to the world of unity and dignity of the common man, opened the door to the world of social problems, revolutions, and the basic values of humanity with his poetic key.

The poet was born in 18th century Scotland where he grew up in the family of a peasant farmer. At the age of 22, he entered the Masonic lodge, in the charter of which he was attracted by the paragraphs on equality and mutual aid of all brothers. He was inspired to write poems and lyrics which turned out to be masterpieces of world literature by society, political problems, social conflicts. At that time there was class inequality - a hierarchy dividing people into higher and lower classes. Aristocrats had more power, the majority of peasants rented land from them, had limited rights. The common people experienced the consequences of revolutions, injustice, inequality, the family of Robert Burns being one of them. That is why his poetry sounds like the "voice of freedom", calling for equality and reminding everyone of their right to be respected.

Robert Burns was also a patriot of his country. For him, his people, national values and traditions were always paramount. He believed that the Scottish dialect was no worse than English, so his pen was enveloped not only in the magic of the English language, but also in his native dialect.

The great poet always wanted very much for goodness and justice to reign in society. That is why he wrote in one of his letters: "God knows, I'm not the thing I should be, Nor am I even the thing I could be, But twenty times I rather would be An atheist clean, Than under gospel colours hid be Just for a screen.". His feelings about truth and falsehood, dignity and lowliness, good and evil inspired him to write the song 'A Man's a Man For A That'. Reading it, one can see the comparison of two completely different worlds. Robert Burns pays great attention to the inequality between classes, injustice in life, stupidity and lies hiding under the cloak of wealth and orders.

In every stanza of the song Burns condemns the division of society by social and material criteria. He glorifies honest poverty: 'Is there, for honest Poverty That hings his head, and a' that; The coward-slave, we pass him by, We dare be poor for a' that!'; the value of man himself, not his material wealth: 'The rank is but the guinea's stamp, The Man's the gowd for a' that.'. It is necessary to judge a person not by his appearance, but by his actions: 'Their tinsel show, and a' that; The honest man, though e'er sae poor, Is king o' men for a' that.' With his words Burns opens the key to human dignity, his main qualities: 'But an honest man's aboon his might, Gude faith he mauna fa' that! For a' that, and a' that, Their dignities, and a' that, The pith o' Sense, and pride o' Worth, Are higher rank than a' that.'

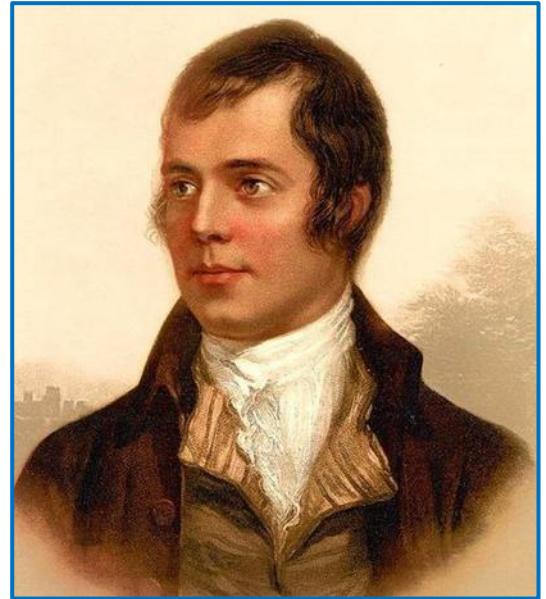
This work is like a light giving hope at the end of a dark tunnel for a better future, when there will be only peace, goodness and unity among people: 'Then let us pray that come it may, As come it will tor a' that, That Sense and Worth, o'er a' the earth. Shall bear the gree, and a' that. For a' that, and a' that, Its comin yet for a' that, That Man to Man the world o 'er, Shall brothers be for a' that.'

Robert Burns' poetry bridges the gap between eras. After all, the problems that he reflected in his poem are still very relevant today. The genius of world literature hoped that the day would come when justice would prevail, other values would appear. But even three centuries later people haven't unfortunately changed. Now there is no obvious division into social classes. But while reading the poem, I often drew parallels with my real life. I would like to emphasise that people are still considered by their status and wealth, society rarely cares about the inner core of a person, his or her heart and soul. I believe that some problems have even worsened: the world has been growing all this time, the standard of living continues to grow too, but moral values, unfortunately, have not grown at the same rate. Material values now come to the forefront, shading the spiritual values of humanity.

So, the poetry of Robert Burns is a real treasure trove with multi-faceted diamonds among the ocean of treasures. The works of Burns not only reveal social and political problems, injustice, evil, but like an eternal fire they also warm the soul and give hope for a better future.

I would like to end with a poem I wrote under the impression of Burns' poetry:

Wandering lost in weariness and sorrow,  
Seeking that value he entrusts his fate to borrow,  
One he trusts as he would God above,  
He sees a silhouette he knows well,  
In the hidden lines of a page, torn from the book of life,  
Within lie secrets of falsehood and strife,  
Of inequality and orders stern,  
Gazes from mountain peaks high,  
Yet it's all just a cloak, a disguise,  
Awards, riches, glory in a show,  
The true faces of fools, don't you know?  
While poverty's frowned upon these days,  
Who needs honesty, reason, or kindness, they say?  
These are swept beneath dust's decay,  
And there, all truth is unveiled,  
For ages past, mankind chose to remain the same,  
So here we are, bound to live on as before,  
In poverty and inequality's yoke once more.  
Yet hope... in the end, it comes alone,  
Like a torch's flame forever bright,  
Guiding our steps toward that light,  
Where the clear day dawns,  
Where truth's ray shines,  
Where we're all brothers, our souls aligned.



**Feedback from Mariam:** Participation in the English writing competition dedicated to the work of the great poet Robert Burns was not only a test of my language skills, but also an opportunity to immerse myself in the rich and incredible world of his work. This experience helped me not only to improve my skills, but also to feel the depth and relevance of the themes that Burns raised in his works. Participation in the contest also allowed me to develop my creative potential, and Burns' poetry inspired me to new creative achievements. I am sincerely grateful to the organisers of the competition for such a unique opportunity and for the high appreciation of my work!

**Feedback from Kristina:** My name is Kristina, and I got 3d place in the Robert Burns essay competition. It was such an amazing and interesting experience for me, because I've never done it before, so writing my essay for this competition was kinda challenging, but I really enjoyed it. Honestly, I didn't know much about Robert Burns and his masterpieces, but thanks to this competition I've learned a lot of new information, and I'm glad that I got acquainted with the poetry of such a wonderful writer as Robert Burns. Also, his position on equal rights of people really means a lot to me, and I completely agree with it, and I saw how much energy and soul was put into Robert Burns' poetry, which pushed, inspired and motivated me to write my essay, and it became a great honor to become a part of his culture. I am very grateful to the organizers of the competition for supporting the work of Robert Burns and thanks to this competition more and more young people learn about him around the world, which is very important in my opinion for all people and their cultural and spiritual education. I also want to say thank you for the opportunity to express myself through this essay and try something new, this experience is priceless for me! Warm regards, Kristina Savchenko





**Club President Mike Duguid introducing the top table: Jane Brown, Janet Brennen, and Fraser Sanderson**

The **Gatehouse of Fleet Burns Club** held its annual Burns Supper in the Masonic Arms on Friday 7th February. The recitations from the prize winners at the Gatehouse Primary School competition are always one of the highlights of the evening and this year they were exceptional.

Eden Cowan, the P1-4 winner won the Bobby Carson Memorial Shield; Jess Swalwell, the P5 prize; Zara Elliot the Hugh Fingland Quaich and, Hamish Wilson the Harry Dawson Trophy. We were delighted to welcome Harry's daughter Emma who had travelled up from London that day to say a few words about her dad and how much Burns had meant to him.

Hamish Wilson's recitation of the 'Address to a Haggis' in the school competition had been so good he was invited to perform the trenching duties at the supper itself, much to the enjoyment of the company. Glen Cunningham piped in the beastie and later led the singing in a rousing rendition of Scots Wha Hae.

The Immortal Memory was proposed by Janet Brennen of Barholm Castle near Skyreburn. It was beautifully crafted and delivered and, by using the poet's influences as the theme, it was perfect for both Burns aficionados and those who were attending their first Burns supper.

The Toast to the Lasses was delivered by Fraser Sanderson, a stalwart of the Dalbeattie Burns Club for almost forty years. His talk was pitched exactly right for the occasion and his amusing stories had the audience in fits of laughter as he teased, but also praised, the ladies.

The evening was rounded off splendidly by the irrepressible Jane Brown, past president of the Robert Burns World Federation and ex-manager of the Globe Inn in Dumfries, who replied to Fraser's toast with a witty reflection on the many endearing qualities of the lasses, all of which appealed to Burns himself.



**Hamish Wilson  
Addressing the Haggis**

It is with sadness that we announce the death of past president of the RBWF, **David Wilson Ogilvie**, known to all as Wilson, on 24 October 2024 at Dumfries aged eighty-nine. A memorial service was held at Maxwelltown West Church in Dumfries on 14 November 2024 and was well attended by the Burns community, with David Baird and Jane Brown paying special tributes on behalf of the Burnsians around the world

As well as being president of the RBWF (1985-86), Wilson was a past president of Dumfries Burns Club, convener of the Southern Counties Burns Association and an honorary member of Dumfries Burns' Howff Club. Wilson and Irene were well known at the many Burns conferences they attended over the years in Scotland and overseas and loved the fellowship of the Burns community.

Wilson hailed from Huntly in Aberdeenshire and, after completing national service with the RAF regiment, he graduated from Aberdeen University and moved to Fetlar in Shetland with his wife Irene where he was the school domine and missionary on the island of approximately 120 souls for 3 years.

Wilson's teaching career then took him to Crudie on the Aberdeenshire/Banffshire border, followed by Stonehaven in the Mearns (with its connections to Burns' father) and finally to Dumfries in the summer of 1976.

Dumfries was the perfect location for Wilson to indulge his great passion for Burns and he travelled far and wide in Scotland and beyond, toasting the Immortal Memory of the Bard from Lockerbie to Lagos.

Aside from Burns, Wilson had a great love of Scottish literature in general, with a particular interest in Ramsay, Fergusson, Hogg and McDiarmid, and he promoted the Scots tongue to his pupils during his teaching years. He was a kirk elder and a reader in the Church of Scotland, delivering services in many kirks over the years, from Fetlar, throughout the Northeast and in Dumfries and its lovely surroundings. Wilson was a long-time member of the Rotary Club being a past President of Dumfries Rotary Club and a District Governor and, as with Burns, enjoyed many conferences and other Rotary gatherings.

Wilson was a knowledgeable ornithologist, having developed a love of birdlife at a young age, and was a keen athlete in his younger days gaining a half blue for basketball from Aberdeen and regularly participating in competitive athletics, football, and cricket. Wilson was also a qualified junior football referee and was regularly linesman at Highland League matches, then as now, not a role for the faint hearted. Wilson was a local history authority and wrote several tourist pamphlets and guides in Stonehaven and Dumfries and conducted guided tours of Dumfries and its surrounding areas after his retirement from teaching.

Wilson is buried at Towie kirk graveyard in Upper Donside and is survived by his beloved wife Irene, his son David and daughter Yvonne and his grandchildren Cameron, Jackson, and Harris.



**David Wilson Ogilvie** M.A., F.S.A., Scot  
(1935-2024)  
RBWF President 1985-86





**The Top Table:**

Standing (left to right) - Elliott Boyle (Club Secretary), Forbes Gauld, Alan Telfer (Club President), Donald Paton (Honorary Life President), Piper Martin Bristow.  
Seated (left to right) - Linda Boyle, Lesley Riddoch, Lara Haggerty.

The annual dinner of **Perth Burns Club** was held in the Salutation Hotel, Perth on Saturday, 25th January when a gathering of around 125 were treated to an evening of quality speeches, songs, music and verse.

The principal speaker was the well-known broadcaster and journalist Lesley Riddoch, who proposed an inspiring Immortal Memory. Perthshire farmer Forbes Gauld gave a humorous toast to The Lasses which was ably replied to by Lara Haggerty, Keeper of Books at the historic Innerpefferay Library near Crieff.

As the club was delighted to welcome fifteen members of The Haggis Society of Norway to the event, a toast to Norway was proposed by the Perth club's honorary life president Donald Paton, and replied to by Rolf Kjonnerud, from the Norwegian club.

The songs of Burns were sung by Paul Vaughan and Fiona Brownsmith accompanied by Edna Auld; fiddle selections were provided by Douglas Sime, and the piper was Martin Bristow. Verse speaking was in the hands of Donald Paton (Tam o' Shanter) and Alan Telfer (Holy Willie's Prayer).

The evening was under the chairmanship of the current club president Alan Telfer who also addressed the haggis. The Rev Geoffrey Hall gave the Loyal Toast. A vote of thanks to the speakers and artistes was proposed by past president Jim Calderwood before the evening ended with the traditional singing of Auld Lang Syne.

Sitting by the banks of "Sweet Afton", the **New Cumnock Burns Club Cairn** is the perfect and peaceful spot to sit and hear a "murmuring stream". The cairn was erected in 1973 to mark the club's 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary, and when being built, the club put a time capsule inside. On a recent visit and meeting with club members, Douglas McKenzie, Jim Wilson and the inimitable Willie Dick, the guys have promised me a full report on the 50-year-old capsule they recently opened, and what they have put away for others to find in 2073....more in the next edition.





A date for your diary: May 24<sup>th</sup> – May 31<sup>st</sup> – **Mauchline Holy Fair**

For updates and details: <https://mauchlineholylive.com/2025-2/>

<b>2025</b>	<i>Mauchline Holy Fair</i>	<b>2025</b>
<b>New for 2025! A week of activities throughout the village.</b>		
<p>Saturday 24 May <b>Murder Mystery Night</b> Fairburn Hotel</p> 	<p>Sunday 25<sup>th</sup> May Historical Football Match Re-enactment. Authentic Rules - Authentic Dress Kick Off 2.00pm</p>  <p>Followed by presentation and post-match entertainment in the Mauchline Club</p>	<p>Monday 26<sup>th</sup> May <b>Mossiel Talk</b> To'a' Mouse Poosie Nansie's Inn</p> 
<p>Tuesday 27<sup>th</sup> May <b>Quiz Night</b> Test your knowledge of Burns and Local History Black Bull Inn</p> 	<p>Thursday 29<sup>th</sup> May <b>Songs for All</b> Bring their wonderful performances of traditional Scottish music and song. Mauchline Church Hall</p> 	<p>Wednesday 28<sup>th</sup> May <b>'Burns Women'</b> A Play with Songs and the stories. Featuring the Burns Bachelors Mauchline KS Club</p> 
<p><b>Mauchline Holy Fair</b> 31<sup>st</sup> May 11.00am to 5.00pm</p> <p>Parade, Pipe Band Opening Ceremony</p> <p>Market Stalls-Fun Fair-Kids Play Area Street Acts, Uncle Billy, Face Painting, Balloons Art Competition, Song &amp; Music Writing Sessions Vintage Vehicle Display</p>		
<p>Friday 30 May <b>Cosy night in the Snug</b> of <b>Poosie Nansie's Inn.</b> Celebration of the songs and poems of</p> 	<p>The Main Stage Featuring Top Acts Full Programme TBC</p> 	<p>Nance Tinnock Stage Music Song and Poetry from the Burns Bachelors</p> 
<p>The Folk Stand Performances from leading Ayrshire Folk Acts</p>	<p>Saturday Night Final Fling Dance the night away Mauchline Club 7.30pm till Late</p>	<p>Mauchline Church Traditional Music from our Local artists</p>

**Coming to you Live from 'The Gaiety' in Ayr**

The editor of this newsletter was delighted to discover that his recent visit to Scotland coordinated with a performance of **"The Song and The Story"** at the Gaiety Theater in Ayr.

Fortunately, he had purchased a ticket in advance, which was just as well, as both the afternoon and evening performances were **sold out**.

It's a short performance piece giving the story of Robert Burns, through the women who influenced his life, poetry and song, and after attending the show, the editor has no hesitation in recommending – its fantastic!



Written and performed by the **'Burns Batchelor Performers'**: **Jolyn Crawford, Joan McDade, Cathy Costello, Tracy Anne Harvey, Samantha Brown, Pauline Vallance and David Hunter.**

David Hunter put the bones of the show together and provides a pallet for the ladies to shine with their own unique styles and interpretations, CONGRATS TO ALL! - it was a pleasure to attend.

Saturday 15<sup>th</sup> February was the date of the **Dumfries & Galloway Schools Competition**, which turned out to be a fantastic event with over 300 competitors. **It was a great day!**

Below is a link to the Facebook page with the full results and additional photos from the event.

<https://www.facebook.com/share/1BNqssDspu/?mibextid=wwXIf>

The competition was held at St Joseph's College and St Andrews Primary School, Dumfries. This would not have happened without the support of both schools and the marvelous assistance of Dumfries and Galloway Council. Special thanks to Gillian Brydson, the director of education, who came along to lend her support. Over 300 children and young people took part, competing in recitation, singing, instrumental and bagpiping. This is a much-loved event which gives children and young people the chance to perfect a performance and have their efforts recognised.

The Schools Burns competition also informs and educates children and young people regarding the works of Robert Burns. Past school's convenor Mrs. Isa Hanley presented the class trophies, and we were honoured to have The Lord Lieutenant of Dumfries, Fiona Armstrong, present the overall prize winners at the closing ceremony. D&GBA President, Stephen Hastie, thanked everyone for their attendance; the committee, stewards and adjudicators for their hard work, and the competitors for a fantastic day celebrating the words of Robert Burns and Scottish Culture.

Best wishes and congratulations to all involved.

**Fiona Evans – Convenor, D&GBA Schools Competition**



The Winners and Runners Up will now go forward to represent Dumfries & Galloway at the National competitions, Secondary on Saturday 22nd March 2025 and Primary on Saturday 14th June 2025.



**Isa Hanley** reports that the **Dumfries Burns Club - Anniversary Dinner** was held in the Cairndale Hotel on Friday 31<sup>st</sup> January.

A good night was enjoyed by the assembled company, with great speeches, good food and excellent entertainment.

In attendance – Left to Right were, Club President, **David Baird**

Vice President, **Judith Hewitt**

**Peter Pringle**, RBWF President, who delivered the Immortal Memory, with his wife **Morven**

**Maureen McKerrow**, Reply to Toast to the Lasses

**Ron Matthews**, SVP Burns Howff Club, Recitation

Provost **Maureen Johnstone**, Toast to Dumfries

**Callum Watson**, Toast to the Lasses

**Gregor Grierson**, Piper.



**New Items Added to the RBWF Catalogue**

For a copy - please email [admin@rbwf.org.uk](mailto:admin@rbwf.org.uk)

Or access online at <http://shop.rbwf.org.uk/>



The New Jersey Monthly Magazine had a great feature piece called 'Pass the Haggis' on the **South Jersey Celtic Society's annual Burns Supper**.

The magazine explained the unstuffy touches that the SJCS brings to a 220-year-old tradition ... and that tickets go fast!

The supper, hosted in Burlington County, closely follows the typical Burns supper traditions while also attempting to create a fun and unstuffy atmosphere, offering live music throughout the night, gifts, and slightly more liberal attire than other more formal Burns suppers.

"People that come for the first time, especially in the last 10 or 15 years, continue to be seen showing up time and time again," says Paul Kennedy, committee chair for the SJCS Burns Club and junior vice president of the Robert Burns World Federation. "We have to cut it off at 120 attendees because we sell more tickets than space allows."

The SJCS supper originated with about 30 people meeting in the upstairs of a bar. The organization is now set to host its **sold-out** 20th annual Burns supper in February 2025. For tickets in 2026 – you should check out the society's website for updates. <https://sjceltic.org>



Please **DO** circulate this newsletter far and wide, and when the opportunity presents itself, make sure your family, friends and contacts are aware of the benefits of being a MEMBER of The Robert Burns World Federation. Just in case you need a reminder, all the RBWF Membership options are available online at <https://www.rbwf.org.uk/membership>

### What's Included:

**FREE copy of the Burns Chronicle** - our flagship academic publication, recognised as the leading periodical about Robert Burns' life and works.

**FREE quarterly Newsletter 'The Vision'** - with general information on club activities and Burns-related articles from our worldwide membership.

**Contribute to the Newsletter** – members are actively encouraged to submit articles, photos and news items to 'The Vision' - to boost your own clubs' activities and visibility.

**Increased knowledge** - learn more about the incredible life and works of Robert Burns and his contribution to Scottish identity, literature, music, culture and history.

**Federation fellowship** – opportunities to connect with fellow Burnsians worldwide at conferences, events and online resources.

**Volunteering opportunity** - work with RBWF to promote Burns across the globe.

## Membership Options



Individual  
Membership  
£47



Family  
Membership  
£55



Club & Association  
Membership  
£85

### Additional Membership Categories

Associate Member of RBWF £175  
School/Junior Membership (no voting rights) FREE



For membership enquiries email RBWF Office at [admin@rbwf.org.uk](mailto:admin@rbwf.org.uk)  
Call the RBWF Office on +44-(0)1563-572469  
Visit <https://www.rbwf.org.uk/membership>

### Introducing Margo Ferguson



Margo is our new **Office Manager**; she has been in the post since November 2024 and is looking forward to working with you all. Her office hours are on Mondays and Tuesdays, from 9-3pm – and she asks that you feel free to contact her.

Margo is married with two boys and lives locally to the Kilmarnock Office. She is a keen historian and has extensive experience as a family historian with a Post Graduate Certificate in Genealogical, Paleographic and Heraldic Studies.

Margo is continuing to advance her knowledge on the functions and management of the Federation office, and of Burns himself. We wish her every success and warmly welcome her to our family.



The annual **Edinburgh & District Burns Club Association (EDBCA)** wreath laying ceremony took place at the Scottish National Portrait Gallery in Edinburgh on Sunday 26 January 2025.

10 wreaths were laid by local dignitaries, including Andrew Raeburn - EDBCA President, Neil McNair - RBWF Immediate Past President and Joyce Goldie - President, Allanton Jolly Beggars BC.

The gathered company was entertained by music from Cammy Goodall and Jim Weatherston with Sum Leung, Young Burnsian 2023, playing the fiddle. The formal event was closed with the company singing 'A Man's A Man'. A harmony then took place at the Abbotsford restaurant nearby, with further song, music and poems. A great afternoon was had by all!



**Seton Burns Club** held its **two annual suppers** this year again in the Cockenzie & Port Seton Royal British Legion. Both were well attended and the Immortal Memories delivered by Michael Archibald and then Jim Tait were both entertaining and informative. All artistes contributed to two excellent evenings of entertainment and the Committee is grateful to ALL for their contributions.





**Box O' Burns:** As explained in Peter's opening comments, we welcomed twelve participants to the Beacon Arts Centre, Greenock on Saturday 18th January 2025 to record their song or recitation for our Box O' Burns project.

Based on research and lived experiences, our Box O' Burns involves working in partnership with our 250 member clubs, dementia resource centres and dementia groups to stimulate memories, feelings and thoughts by providing activities, based on the literature and songs of Robert Burns to help people living with dementia engage and enjoy participating along with their families and carers. The Box O' Burns will provide resources and guides for sessions which are friendly, inclusive, safe and rewarding for both families and participants. The project not only helps those who run, support but also contributes towards reducing social isolation by involving volunteer club members who will help deliver our sessions to support their local dementia group. The project will be rolled out across the whole of Scotland and internationally: wherever there is a Burns club.

Each session is themed around Burns and will include a poem or song, traditional Scots songs, recitations and participatory sensory activities to stimulate conversation and elicit responses.

Each Box O' Burns will contain run, project resources: session plans, song lyrics, poems, activity guides, books, sensory objects, digital recordings, craft and art resources etc..

**The recording session:** We aim to involve RBWF members, celebrities and young people to record their favourite Burns Poem or song professionally, to create a repository of music as an integral resource for the project and were delighted that, thanks to a **£1,200 donation from Paisley Rotary** (see [back page photo](#)) we were able to hire the Studio Theatre in the Beacon Arts Centre and involve the Digital and Media students from University of The West of Scotland Ayr Campus.

This was the first recording session we have been able to run, and it was thrilling to be part of such a professional setup. The entire production, from the lighting to the microphones, cameras and sound mixing desk, was very impressive and the UWS students were so professional and encouraging. The studio had a three-camera setup in a semi-circle around the stage area with a mini mixer to record and mix the performances "as live" through fixed mics, two shotgun mics and a Zoom recorder into a sound desk.

### Feedback:

*"This project is a fantastic opportunity to record a track professionally and I'm sure it will greatly help people living with dementia unlock memories through listening and singing the recorded tracks."*

– **Parent of participant**

*"This fantastic project is keeping the poems and songs of Robert Burns alive."*

– **Parent of participant**

*"Working with the RBWF was a pleasure; everyone we worked with was a bundle of joy, and their passion and love for the art they were reciting was clear to all. This event was organised perfectly; it allowed my crew to set up without rush, and they gave us plenty of run time between sets so we could work on technical issues before the next act came to perform. It was a well-organised event and a marvelous experience for us students."*

- **4th year Filmmaking and Screenwriting student at UWS and project manager of the University's Studio Lab group.**

You can view the rushes of the videos in the Gallery page of our website. Once edited, these will be included in the final Box O' Burns. <https://www.rbwf.org.uk/gallery>

For more information about the Box O' Burns

<https://www.rbwf.org.uk/poems/a-box-o-burns>

Or contact

Grace McKelvie

[gmckelvie@rbwf.org.uk](mailto:gmckelvie@rbwf.org.uk)



## Burns and Nature – a Connection

I am often asked "why is Burns relevant today?"  
I found one answer in a most unlikely source.

Just by accident, I listened to a BBC Radio 4 programme 'Book of the Week' and heard author Chloe Dalton talk about her book 'Raising Hare'

In February 2021, during lockdown, she had stumbled upon a newborn hare—a leveret—that had been chased by a dog. Fearing for its life, she brought it home, only to discover how impossible it is to rear a wild hare, most of whom perish in captivity from either shock or starvation. Through trial and error, she learned to feed and care for the leveret with every intention of returning it to the wilderness. Instead, it became her constant companion, wandering the fields and woods at night and returning to her house by day. She was saddened by how many leverets were being killed on a regular basis by modern farm machinery.

I was spellbound by the story so wrote to the author enclosing a copy of Burns' poem '*On Seeing a Wounded Hare Limp by Me.*' The origin of the poem came as he was out walking one day in spring when he heard a shot and saw a wounded hare limping past. He was absolutely furious and when he met the perpetrator he threatened to throw him in the River Nith. Instead, he put pen to paper and wrote the poem. The focus of disdain was on the fact that it was the breeding season.

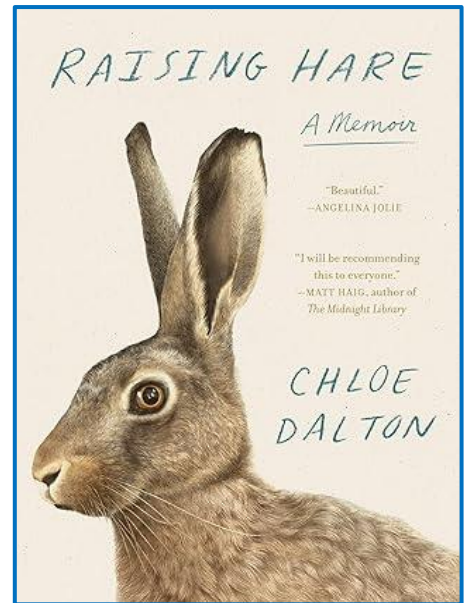
*INHUMAN man! curse on thy barb'rous art,  
And blasted be thy murder-aiming eye!*

I was surprised and delighted to receive the following reply from Chloe:

*"Thank you so much for your kind words and the interesting references. I didn't know the poem, and so, I was very happy to read it. It is so humane, and relevant today. It made me wonder what Burns would make of the fact that hares are the only 'game' species in England and Wales that it is still legal to shoot at any time of the year, including the breeding season, which causes the death of many orphaned leverets. I am working with a small group of Parliamentarians and conservationists to try to introduce a 'close season' for hares, mirroring protections that have been in place in Scotland for some time."*

I had the strong impression that she will use the poem as ammunition in her cause. Burns would have been flattered. The book has been shortlisted for several awards, and I would be very disappointed if it didn't win some of them. The link below shows her talking about her story.

<https://www.amazon.com/Raising-Hare-Memoir-Chloe-Dalton/dp/0593701844>



## On Seeing A Wounded Hare Limp by Me.

*1: INHUMAN man! curse on thy barb'rous art,  
And blasted be thy murder-aiming eye;  
May never pity soothe thee with a sigh,  
Nor ever pleasure glad thy cruel heart!*

*2: Go live, poor wand'r'er of the wood and field!  
The bitter little that of life remains:  
No more the thickening brakes and verdant plains  
To thee shall home, or food, or pastime yield.*

*3: Seek, mangled wretch, some place of wonted rest,  
No more of rest, but now thy dying bed!  
The sheltering rushes whistling o'er thy head,  
The cold earth with thy bloody bosom prest.*

*4: Oft as by winding Nith I, musing, wait  
The sober eve, or hail the cheerful dawn,  
I'll miss thee sporting o'er the dewy lawn,  
And curse the ruffian's aim, and mourn thy hapless fate.*



### The F&C Burns Club Supper - Honours Adam Welsh

Fauldhouse and Crofthead Burns Club was delighted to welcome 82 Members and Cronies to their Annual Burns Supper on 14th February.

It was, as always, a fabulous night celebrating the memory of Robert Burns with a fantastic Immortal Memory delivered by Ronnie O'Byrne visiting from Canada.

During the evening, President John McEwan was delighted to present an Honourary Past President medal to one of the club's elder statesmen, **Mr. Adam Welsh**.

At 94 YEARS YOUNG, Adam is still a regular supporter of not only the F+C Club, but other organisations where his legendary "walks with Burns" mesmerize the company.

Adam was both surprised and delighted with this honour, thanked the members for their kindness, and had the company join in the singing the Club Song, **The Auld F&C**  
*Submitted by Bobby Kane*



*President, John McEwan with Honourary Past President, Adam Welsh*



### Burns and Fitba?

When touring Scotland and between games, the Australian National Under 16 and under 18 football teams took the opportunity to enjoy their first Burns Supper at the Glasgow Hilton Hotel, Glasgow Airport.

RBWF President, Peter Pringle attended the event and provided the 'Address to a Haggis' - although he did admit that he used his posh drama school voice to make sure the young visitors could understand him.

The event was organised by new RBWF Member, Terry Loughrin, who should be congratulated for a job well done!





**Edinburgh & District Burns Clubs Association** is celebrating its centenary this year, and to help mark this achievement, is proud to present an afternoon dedicated to '**Burns in Edinburgh**'.

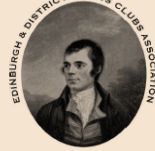
A selection of top-quality speakers is ready to discuss Burns' friends and acquaintances, the Crochallan Fencibles, his masonic links and Nancy McLehose. This promises to be a popular and entertaining afternoon!

The date is **Friday 14th March** from **2pm** and is being held at **The Lodge of Edinburgh (Mary's Chapel) No.1, 19 Hill Street, Edinburgh.**

Tickets at £10 can be reserved by contacting David Morgan, EDBCA Secretary, at [d65morgan@gmail.com](mailto:d65morgan@gmail.com) Payment will then be cash at the door.

Other centenary events are being planned and will be communicated in due course. It's an exciting year for all at EDBCA and we hope to see lots of our Burns friends at our events throughout this special year!

Edinburgh and District  
Burns Clubs Association  
Federation No. 378



EDBCA Centenary Celebration - Burns in Edinburgh

Friday 14<sup>th</sup> March 2025  
2.00pm to 5.30pm

The Lodge of Edinburgh (Mary's Chapel) No.1, 19 Hill Street, Edinburgh, EH2 3JP  
then  
The Hanover Tap, 112 Hanover Street, Edinburgh, EH2 1DR  
5.30pm to 8.00pm

**Guest Speakers**

- Who were his friends and acquaintances? Professor Gerry Carruthers
- Burns and The Crochallan Fencibles Cammy Goodall
- What the Craft in Edinburgh did for Burns *Freemasonry expert TBC*
- Burns and Nancy McLehose Professor Pauline Mackay

Tickets - £10

Reserve yours by contacting the EDBCA Secretary  
David Morgan [d65morgan@gmail.com](mailto:d65morgan@gmail.com) / 07718 919361

**Don't hang about – this will be a popular and entertaining afternoon!**

**Aberdonians and Burns in Lisbon:** Carlos Oliveira Santos, the Past President of The Cascais Burns Club, reports that there are no frontiers for our poet Robert Burns.

For several years, the **Abrdn Group**, a company founded in Aberdeen, Scotland, has held their Burns Night in Lisbon, Portugal, joining Scottish, Portuguese and Spanish partners in a beautiful old palace. This year was no different and was a night to remember.

With Carlos acting as master of ceremonies and ensuring all the requirements of an authentic Burns Supper were enjoyed, the guest soaked up the Scottish atmosphere and shared the joy.



## St Andrews Burns Club Local Schools' Burns Competition 2025

Once again, I had the privilege, on behalf of the St Andrews Burns Club, to co-ordinate the Primary Schools Competition in which, this year, seven (7) local schools participated.

Adjudicators, comprising members of St Andrews Burns Club, assisted me at each of the venues and, while each was truly inspired and thrilled by the talent and standards achieved by all age groups from the youngest (age 5) to the eldest (age 11), it seventy-two be reported that some pupils had aspired and had indeed attained standards of which the judges were in awe.

In total, two hundred and seventy-two (272) pupils participated and were awarded certificates for their efforts. It was said that last year's numbers (165) were a record for Fife; this has obviously set the bar somewhat higher!!

The best in each school, as ever, was selected and the **Charles Alexander Trophy** (best overall) was awarded to Leuchars Primary 7 pupil - **Unaisi Saulilailai** - who recited *'To A Mouse'*.

The **Iain Lochhead Trophy** (outstanding achievement prize) was awarded to Lawhead Primary 6 pupil, **Iskriana Ustiuhoa**, who recited *'Address to a Haggis'* in what is her second language.

The **Bert Dawson Trophy** – awarded to the best performance in Lawhead Primary School – was won by Primary 7 pupil, **Clara Lovett**, who recited *'Tam o' Shanter'* in its entirety!! (Mr Google assures me that this poem has 228 lines!)

The recently retired President of the Robert Burns World Federation, Mr Neil McNair, and I attended an assembly at Lawhead Primary School and the pupils received their trophies proudly in front of the entire school.

Tribute must be paid to the head teachers, class teachers and parents for the obvious enthusiasm, encouragement and commitment with which the pupils had been prepared. This series of competitions is improving in popularity year on year and the introduction of them by long-standing members of the St Andrews Burns Club, ie Bert Dawson, Iain Lochhead and David Joy must be recognised and appreciated - the objective of course is that the works of Robert Burns be introduced to school children of all ages and stages of education.

For my part, I know without doubt, and for all the members who assisted this year, that the Club's objective is being achieved ever more successfully within the local schools in St Andrews and long may it continue.

**ALL IN ALL - ANOTHER COMPLETE SUCCESS.**

*Marilyn Rowan February 2025*



*'To a Mouse'*  
performed by....  
**Unaisi  
Saulilailai**

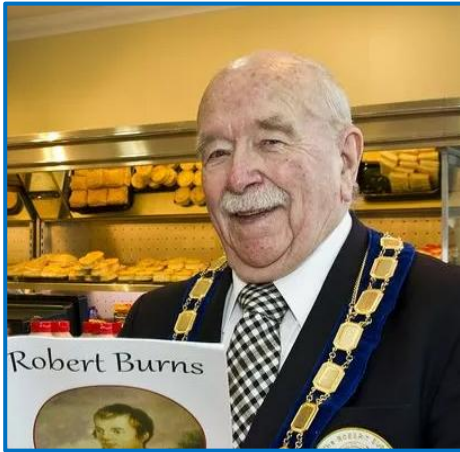


*'Address to a Haggis'*  
performed by....  
**Iskriana  
Ustiuhoa**



*'Tam o' Shanter'*  
performed by ....  
**Clara  
Lovett**





We knew Murdo for a good number of years during which time we found him to be the gentleman from the islands that you would expect from knowing that he was born and raised in a small community at a time when respect, propriety and observance of the natural order was taken for granted. His life had been a cornucopia with many aspects relating to service, not only on behalf of his community but his country, culture, the promotion of the Gaelic language and of course his adherence to the ethos of the Scottish poet Robert Burns. It is from this perspective that we were qualified to endorse his qualifications relating to the movement which promotes and perpetuates the works of the Ayrshire poet, but being Murdo, things would have to be taken a bit further than the parochial attitudes of the Scottish populace.

In his capacity as a board member from 1993 at which time he was elected to the post of Junior Vice President, subsequently achieving the President's post in 1995, he worked tirelessly to deliver the message of the poet Burns of Love, Friendship and Equality for all. At the time of his retirement from the Presidential chair in 1996, his remit became convener of the marketing committee where his expertise ensured that any opportunity to promote the RBWF and in consequence generate the necessary funding to run an organisation which exists purely as a result of the good will of others and to which he dedicated his time until the conference of 2017. During this period of almost 25 years, Murdo developed relationships across the five continents and in consequence as president of the Allanton Jolly Beggars Burns Club, our monthly bulletin is sent to Canada, USA, Australia and New Zealand, South Africa, Europe, Turkey and of course many recipients in the UK.

Further, Murdo has often used his connections within the Burns group to support charitable causes, including Alzheimer's, Meningitis and sepsis amputees, local church and age groups, and of course, schools. He was never too far away when it came to putting his hand in his pocket and encouraging others to do likewise, was highly regarded across the spectrum and it was not uncommon that having his friendship would open doors for individuals who would most likely be unable to gain access to, or have their voice heard in many circles.

During his time working with Burns associated projects, he was instrumental in the formation of the Association of past presidents, an organisation which is on hand to offer information and guidance to the current board of Federation directors, the guild of Robert Burns speakers, a group numbering thirty seven, the number of years in Burns life, and formed to guarantee the quality of representation of the Burns movement through speeches and performances at the various events nationally and internationally.

For as long as we knew Murdo, we had never heard him say no to anyone who needed help with a project and while there are many others who operate within the circles of cultural, language and literary promotion, Murdo rose above them all as an inspirational and truly unique figure.

In a further demonstration of his charitable credentials, Murdo had recently written a book, the proceeds of which will go to the island community he left and as a younger man and will further the projects which are in desperate need of funding.

Sadly, ill health forced him to retire from the post at AJBBC in 2024.

Joyce and I were sad to hear of his passing, but we are hopeful that his contribution to the wider Burns movement and his tenure of the RBWF presidency will be acknowledged by the worldwide Burns family through the medium of this Robert Burns World Federation publication.

**Brian Goldie, President, Robert Burns World Federation. 2019/20.**

**Joyce Goldie, President, Allanton Jolly Beggars Burns Club.**



Our RBWF President had a fantastic 'Burns Lunch' with the **Rotary Club of Carlisle** and had some great discussions with the group on the activities of the Federation, particularly the 'Box o' Burns' dementia project. Peter will give an update on several aspects of this project in the next edition of 'The Vision;' for now, he would like to thank the Rotary Club of Carlisle for its hospitality during his visit.



## Glasgow Afghan United Burns & Rumi Supper



As in previous years, the RBWF President, Peter Pringle, attended this high-profile supper at the Glasgow City chambers.

The **Glasgow Afghan United Burns & Rumi Supper** is a fantastic event, and Peter reports that the kids received a standing ovation from the audience of over 200 people, as they sang a moving and fitting rendition of 'A Mans a Man'.

Peter intends to follow up with a feature piece in the next edition of 'The Vision', where he will explain the aims and objectives of the Burns/Rumi supper, as he believes it deserves more detailed coverage, and acknowledgment of its place in the culture of Scotland.



The Annual Burns Supper of **Wishaw Old Parish Church** took on an international flavour with guests from Nigeria and South Africa attending their first Burns Supper.

The principal speaker, Peter Pringle, set the tone with a stimulating Immortal Memory enshrining the "Brotherhood of Man", based on the St. Petersburg connection with the women of Coatbridge.

He detailed how the support from Scotland developed into a long lasting and mutually beneficial relationship, that continues today.

Peter was joined by Eric and Lily Budgell from Larkhall Burns Club who toasted and replied for the lasses. Robert Nimmo, appearing for the 35th year, proposed a humorous and comprehensive Vote of Thanks. Harry Watson regaled the company with a spirited rendition of Willie Wastle; Roland Russell charmed the audience with the songs of Burns and piper Douglas Forrest earned a standing ovation for his contribution.

During the evening, Peter Pringle accepted a cheque for £150 from the Men's Club towards the RBWF Dementia Project. This donation was gifted in memory of Murdo Morrison and Peter Nevans, two gracious supporters and contributors to the event over many years. In his thanks, Peter referenced the success of the project.



## 2025 Robert Burns Humanitarian Award

The Robert Burns Humanitarian Award (RBHA) for 2025 was awarded to **Canadian, Gareth Knox**.

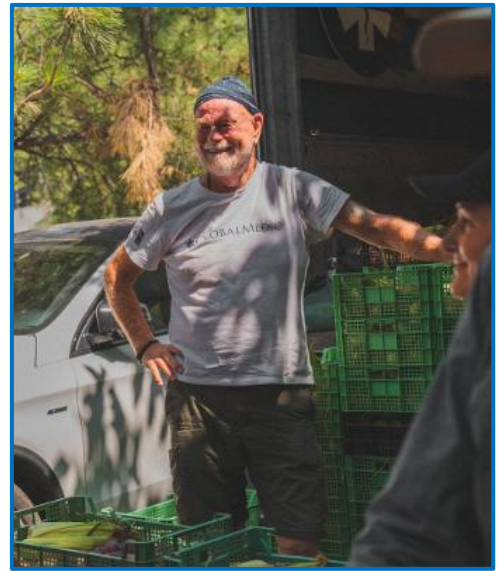
Gareth is a devoted volunteer with the disaster relief organisation GlobalMedic and received the prestigious award during a special online ceremony on 25 January 2025, coinciding with Burns Night.

The RBHA, with support from South Ayrshire Council's Destination South Ayrshire service, honours remarkable acts of bravery, dedication, and humanitarian efforts from people across the globe, irrespective of their nationality, race, age, or gender.

Garth has dedicated over four decades to volunteering with charitable organisations. Since 2011, he has been a key member of GlobalMedic, an Ontario-based Non-Governmental Organisation specialising in disaster relief.

He is the only volunteer in the organisation's history to relocate permanently, spending nearly 1,000 days in Moldova by the end of 2024 to support Ukrainian refugees and host families affected by the ongoing conflict. For more information you can read the whole story here:

<https://www.south-ayrshire.gov.uk/article/79704/Canadian-Volunteer-Wins-2025-Robert-Burns-Humanitarian-Award>



## Calgary Burns Club Burns Supper 2025

The Calgary Burns Club's 49th Annual Burns Supper, held on Friday January 24, 2025, was a remarkable celebration of Scottish heritage and the enduring legacy of Robert Burns. The event took place at the Hotel Arts with **370 guests** attending.

The evening commenced with a warm welcome from Club Vice President and Master of Ceremonies for the evening, Steven Campbell, setting a convivial tone for the festivities. The Haggis Ceremony featured Calgary Police Pipers, Emma MacPherson and Stephanie West, along with guards, Rob and Colin Pinkerton, Haggis Bearer, James Dahl and Club Steward, David Currie. The haggis was then addressed with vigour and style by Henry Cairney.

Grace was delivered by James Dahl and the 'bill o' fare' that followed was an exceptional five-course culinary delight, highlighting the best of traditions. From a smoked salmon starter, followed by cock-a-leekie soup, to haggis, neeps and tatties, prime rib of Alberta beef, a boozy sherry trifle ended the meal, plus, a selection of wines and whisky that flowed throughout the night. Guests and members were impressed with the dining experience and ambiance created.

Unique to the Calgary suppers', is a gift for all attending of a memorial Glencairn whisky glass and an opportunity for one guest at each table to take home a thirteen-inch-high gloss finished plaster statue of the poet himself, made by the Calgary club members.

Entertainment for the evening was tremendous. The Calgary Burns Club Singers performed a selection of Burns' songs and other traditional Scottish melodies, captivating the audience with their harmonious renditions. The Calgary Police Pipe Band gave rousing performances of several sets with their pipes, drums and dancers and Past President, Dr. Sandy Paterson performed Burns poem, 'To a Louse', followed by Thomas Farquharson delivering the 'Loyal Toast'.

After the intermission, the top table was piped in by Thomas Farquharson, and Steven Campbell handed over the chairman's duties to Past President, Henry Cairney, who stood in for President, Jamie Osborne, who was present, but nursing a sore throat on the evening.

The 'Immortal Memory' was delivered by Ronnie O'Byrne who gave a stellar speech that was moving, and powerfully relevant, providing insights into Burns' life and enduring influence in Scotland and Canada.



Henry Cairney



The Calgary Burns Club Singers



The 'Toast to the Lassies' was presented in fine style by Past President, Jim Hutchens, and 'The Reply' was eloquently delivered by CPSPB Piper, Emma McPherson.

The last toast at the Calgary supper is the 'Toast To Absent Friends', this was given by Past President, Jim Osborne, and with the night ending, the company sang 'Auld Lang Syne'.

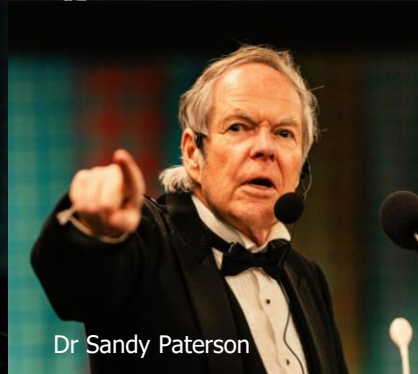
The Calgary Burns Club's dedication to preserving and promoting Scottish culture was evident throughout the night. The meticulous organization and heartfelt performances made the 49th Annual Burns Supper a memorable occasion for all attendees. For those interested in future events or learning more about the club, information is available on their official website.

[www.calgaryburnsclub.com](http://www.calgaryburnsclub.com)

Submitted by Steven Campbell, First Vice President  
Calgary Burns Club (Est. 1976)



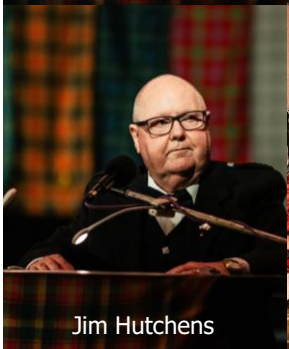
Ronnie O'Byrne



Dr Sandy Paterson



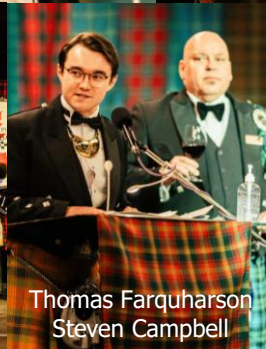
Jim Osborne



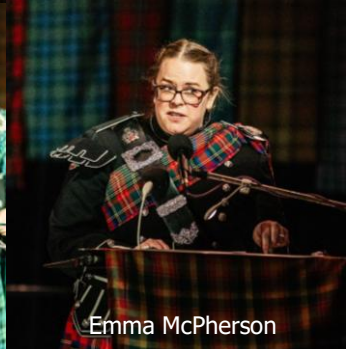
Jim Hutchens



Calgary Police Pipe Band



Thomas Farquharson  
Steven Campbell



Emma McPherson

## 'Burns for Bairns' and The Royalty Burns Club

### A Legacy, and a Future Hope

In 2022, I was invited to deliver 'The Reply to the Toast to the Lassies' at the Royalty Burns supper at Oran Mor in Glasgow. I was warmly welcomed; it was a wonderful evening and of course an honour to speak – but I noticed throughout the evening that there was a very specific reason mentioned for fundraising activities – the purchase and distribution to schools of a book called '**Burns for Bairns.**' My curiosity was peaked.

The Royalty Burns Club has a long and august history. Established in 1892 by members of Glasgow's Licensed Trade Organisation, the club was always associated with the hospitality sector, which is why its yearly supper is always on a Thursday evening. Tennent's, Whyte and MacKay and Belhaven breweries regularly attend and are great supporters of the club.



In 2015, membership was opened to those outside the sector, and it continues to thrive. The name of the club comes from the name of the pub – 'The Royalty' - the founders drank in on West Nile Street – not, as many believe, having an association with the monarchy. The pub was demolished in the 1960s, but the name endures.

In 1989, Irving Miller, Burns and Scots Language enthusiast and active club member, proposed that a book of Burns' work be written and published by The Royalty Burns Club with children in mind – to promote a love of the bard and use of our native tongue. He himself wrote and produced the first ever edition of 'Burns for Bairns' in 1990, but sadly didn't live to see the revised 2nd Edition in 1994. What a tremendous legacy however, for the man who conceived the idea of opening the world and words of Burns to children, that these books are still being distributed thirty-five years on.

Since 1990, the Royalty Burns Club has raised money for 'Burns for Bairns' at their Burns Suppers, concerts and social events with the goal of putting thirty copies – a class set – into every primary school in Scotland. President Alex Stuart has, in recent times, distributed around 1000 books a year, stretching from the islands to the borders, and continues his sterling work to this day. There is usually an auction, raffle and a request for donations at club events – and all the money raised has been used directly in the publication and distribution of the 'Burns for Bairns' books.



I became a member of The Royalty after that dinner in 2022. For a club to have such a worthy, straightforward mission that is so effective in promoting the works of Burns was hugely inspiring to me personally, as it is to all those who hear of it.

An Ayrshire native, I was stunned upon moving to Glasgow for university that other children hadn't had access to Burns' work in the same way we had, given his cultural and literary significance. While schools' competitions are undoubtedly still the heart and soul of Burns in primary schools, not every school participates, and Alex Stuart and The Royalty have played a significant role in reaching those children not able to take part - bringing Burns TO Bairns.



The preservation of the Scots Language is also a cause close to my heart, having lived abroad on and off throughout my 20s I always missed my 'mither tongue' and firmly believe that in an increasingly global world our unique mode of expression should be preserved as far as possible. 'Burns for Bairns' is a way for children, with the help of beautiful illustrations, to access and enjoy that language at a level they understand.

Royalty President Alex and I have become great friends over the last few years – our common love of music, performance and community – and our wish to promote and preserve the work of Burns being central to our relationship. Alex asked me, and after speaking to his committee, if I would become his first lady vice-president. I was already heavily involved with Sandyford Burns Club as president, but my answer had to be a resounding 'yes.' To assist The Royalty with such an incredibly worthy and practical endeavour, to continue Irving Miller's work and legacy, and to share the work of a poet and lyricist who has inspired countless statues, countless communities and countless friendships the world over, is the very highest honour.

Next week, Alex and I will be visiting a primary school in East Kilbride, where we're going to speak to the kids about Burns and teach them all a wee song, we can all sing together. We will, of course, leave them thirty copies of 'Burns for Bairns,' but we hope to leave them with more than a printed book.

We hope to leave them with a sense of fun and enjoyment, with curiosity, and with seeds of interest in the bard and his works.



Robert Burns and the language of Robert Burns are all of Scotland's legacy – and The Royalty Burns Club will continue to strive to preserve and promote that legacy through the distribution of these beautiful books to children all over our 'native land.'

**If you know of any primary schools who would like to receive a visit and a class set of beautiful books, please contact:**

Alex Stuart: [alexstuart@btopenworld.com](mailto:alexstuart@btopenworld.com)

Kerry Burley: [kerryburley@hotmail.com](mailto:kerryburley@hotmail.com)



### 'The Heart o' a Bonnie Lass'

The premiere of this play took place on November 22, 2024, at the **West College Scotland**.

The play had a strong start and was set in the present day, with the character Jo, giving an engaging and powerful introduction to the age-old angst of young love.

As the action unfolded, the Burns characters were introduced, with Jean Armour mirroring the confusion and difficulties faced in the present day by Jo. Both women are very convincing, and the emotion of the piece comes over well. Love and loss and the messiness of what love can be, is well portrayed, with Jo finding inspiration in the character of Jean.

Parental tensions and relationships (Jo with her mother, and Jean with her father) is also a feature of the play that is well crafted and feels familiar, despite the difference in the centuries.

Lighting is well used in the production, and costumes felt appropriate, to the story being told. The pace of the piece moves well and holds the attention of the audience throughout.

Having now seen the piece and considered my review, I would be eager to see it again, and I hope that it may feature as part of the Kilmarnock First Edition Festival, in July, or at the RBWF Conference in September. Consultant to the young cast was Jane Brown, Past President, RBWF. Jane was able to give assistance and encouragement to the students and to provide context and background to Burns and Jean Armour. This is a fine example of partnership working. *Review submitted by Isabel Lind.*

West College Scotland - Honours Degree Students  
Wrote and performed **'The Heart o' a Bonnie Lass'**  
A modern piece of theater on Robert Burns and Jean Armour







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