The main topic for this newsletter is the wonderfully successful Federation Annual Conference held in the Grand Central Hotel in Glasgow. The highlight of the weekend was the inauguration of a new President when Mrs Jane Brown took over office from Mr Bob Stewart after his outstanding year in post. It may come as a surprise to some that Jane is actually the sixth female President because many are under the impression that the ‘Burns Movement’ is an exclusively male domain. It can only be hoped that Jane’s year in office will see more lasses being encouraged to take on prominent positions within the Federation. On that note, the saddest part of the Conference was the announcement that the Office Administrator Corinne Buivenga will be leaving in November because she is moving out of the area. I wish to record my heartfelt thanks to her for her support and encouragement. We will all miss her cheery presence in the office.

President Jane Takes Over

The Federation’s Annual Conference was held in the very impressive setting of the Grand Central Hotel in Glasgow over the weekend of 6-8 September. In addition to the AGM, two splendid dinners, a ceilidh and a dance, the main event was the inauguration of the new President of the Federation Jane Brown. During the handover Jane was generous in her praise of the work done by outgoing President Bob Stewart. He had been a fantastic ambassador for the Federation during his year of office and guided it through difficult financial times and led its emergence as a revitalised and dynamic organisation. In response he acknowledged the tremendous support he had received from everyone but, most especially, from his charming wife Frances.

Song Composed in August

Now westlin winds and slaught’ring guns
Bring Autumn’s pleasant weather;
The gorcock springs on whirring wings
Amang the blooming heather:
Now wavering grain, wide o’er the plain,
Delights the weary farmer;
The moon shines bright, as I rove by night
To muse upon my charmer.

by Robert Burns
The Bard in New Zealand

As an added extra to the annual conference a ‘President’s Gathering’ quiz was held in Glasgow; it which was won by the Past Presidents of Ayrshire Association of Burns Clubs, and a social with contributions from the gathering. One turn which went down particularly well was a poem The Search Goes On recited by Jeanette McFarland pictured right with her husband Travis. Jeanette, from Auckland, was attending the conference with the aim of picking up ideas for the Robert Burns Pacific Rim Association Conference due to be held in Auckland in 2014. The opening verse read:

I'm searching for a man - not any man will do
I've a short list of applicants that I am sifting through
some are so inferior
they don't fit my criteria
I have my standards - he's got to tick the box
there seems to be a shortage: are we running low on stocks?
   am I right to be so fussy
I'm no Gorgeous Gussie
   - and it's true a man's a man for a' that and a' that...
   but ah, how my starved heart yearns
   for a real man like Robbie Burns

The poem was written by Barbara Hawthorn from Auckland for a Burns Society function in 2008. While Barbara admits that she does not have “a single drop of Scottish blood”, her husband cherishes his Scottish roots and is deeply involved in Scottish society activities within New Zealand. Barbara says she always feels honoured to be included as “an alien in the midst of the tartan throng” She is a retired maths teacher and is a prolific poet, well worth a read, who publishes her work on her blog: www.behwordz.blogspot.co.nz The remaining verses of the The Search Goes On can be found on the website under her January poems.

Honorary Presidents

One of the highlights of the Annual General Meeting was the announcement of the award of ‘Honorary President’ to three stalwarts of the Federation. On the left of picture are George and Enez Anderson, both past Presidents, who continue to give outstanding support. Second from the right is the much-loved ex-Chief Executive Shirley Bell who continues to offer her guidance and support. Also in the picture are Alex and May Crawley from Canada who had received their awards during the Robert Burns Association North America conference earlier in the year.

‘Burnsong’

Burnsong, which ran its first programme of events in 2005, was conceived in response to the then First Minister’s call for innovative ways to celebrate Robert Burns, his heritage in Scotland and beyond. Focusing on songwriting, Burnsong has continued to support songwriters from Scotland, and further afield, through workshops, competitions, and tuition.

Burnsong pioneered the songwriting "hothouse" - a retreat where songwriters from differing genres spend a week writing new material, but instead of writing in isolation, they
tested their skills (and sometimes their comfort zones) by writing in collaboration with another songwriter.

The "Gathering" has continued - an open invitation, generally once a year, which selects two or three of Scotland's best current songwriters to attend a songwriting retreat. Songs are submitted anonymously, selected by a panel of experts, and the winners go on to attend a tutored retreat.

Early on, under the direction of Professor Nigel Osborne, a course for songwriters on how they might approach formal teaching in a school or college setting provided both information and confidence for a group of ten songwriters. A further development, *Teach, Write, Create* is the educational pack, a resource for teachers or songwriters on planning, delivering and celebrating new songs written by school children. The pack was written from an educational standpoint, to mesh with the school curriculum, and it has supported a series of "Burns and Rivers" projects in schools, which start with Burns' own work on nature, and move on to inspire new work from the children.

Adult songwriters, either emergent or established, have enjoyed retreats in the Galloway countryside, from which the new songs have come in huge numbers. Burnsong has hosted at least ten, and the average number of songs created is never less than thirty, which means that the world is richer by over 300 songs.

The most recent event was in partnership with the University of Bath Spa, under the direction of Prof. Joe Bennett, head of the songwriting school, and is the second to be held at Shennanton House, Wigtownshire; participants from Scotland, England, Norway, Switzerland, USA and the Netherlands were grouped with leading songwriters including Jez Ashurst, Andy White and Boo Hewardine. Between them something like forty new songs have been crafted, started, and many of them sung with panache at the two sharing gigs at Bladnoch Distillery. The buzz in the room, and later across social media, has been in direct relation to the energy on stage at the gigs - considerable.

Perhaps the best accolade has come from Ian Green, of Greentrax, who posted on Facebook "when you see bands like Kilmarnock Edition coming out of Burnsong, you realise how important it is". For Burnsians, the focus on contemporary songwriting in many styles is a tribute to Burns' own interest in song, and his understanding that the song carries the message almost more powerfully than anything else.

[Submitted by Jennifer Wilson, Hon Secretary, Burnsong. For further information see www.burnsong.org]

**Thornhill Burns Club 10th Anniversary**

On Saturday the 20th July Thornhill District Burns Club held a Burns Supper and incorporated celebrating the club's tenth anniversary. The club was established in Thornhill 1925-39 and re-established in 2003. Top table were from left to right Kate Kaye who replied to the toast to the lassies, Stephan Hastie delivered the immortal memory, the club's president Ronnie Cairns, publicity officer Halina Cairns, William Crawford proposed the toast to the lassies and Rev. Ella Pennington the grace. The haggis was piped in by William Prentice carried by Geoff Martyniuk and addressed by Iain Rogers. We had songs from Victoria Hastie and Les Byers and were also entertained by Nathan King, Mhari Dalgleish and Catherine Anderson. The VOT was by Peter Moran.
Annual Brow Well Gathering

Burnsians from all parts of Scotland assembled at the Brow Well near Ruthwell on the evening of 17th July when President Mrs. Jane Brown of the Southern Scottish Counties Burns Association welcomed the company. The official party of Burns Club presidents and delegates were piped to the well by Pipe Major Callum Watson.

The Rev. Gerald Moule, the locum minister of the combined congregations of Cummertrees, Mouswald and Ruthwell, led the devotions and read from scripture after which the assembly sang the 23rd Psalm. Mr. Robert Stewart, president of the Robert Burns World Federation, delivered a stirring oration, tracing the story of the poet's final illness and his attempt on a “cure” on the shores of the Solway. He returned to Dumfries on 18th July 1796 and was dead by the 21st. Mrs Frances Stewart placed a floral tribute at the well and a lament on the bagpipes was played by Pipe Major Callum Watson. A vote of thanks was moved by Mr. Mike Duguid, Junior Vice President of the SSCBA, and the company returned to Dumfries for a buffet and social gathering at the Cairndale Hotel with entertainment from guests and locals, MC’d by John Caskie, secretary of the SSCBA.

Calgary and Irvine Burns Clubs

Tony Grace, a Past President of the Calgary Burns Club visited the Irvine Burns Club at Wellwood House and presented his research on 'Burns the Exciseman' to the monthly Director’s Meeting. The talk was very well received and the remainder of the evening was taken up with interesting details of the Calgary Burns Club’s activities and impressive achievements including the club's singers performing at the 2009 Edinburgh Tattoo and having around 850 diners at their Annual Burns Celebration meal in the Calgary Convention Centre!

President Roger Griffith asked Tony to pass fraternal greetings from the Irvine Burns Club to his club and to extend an invitation for the membership to visit the Irvine Burns Club & Burgh Museum if they visit Scotland. The photograph shows Director Ian Dickson (left), Tony Grace and Irvine Burns Club President Roger Griffith (right).
Burns Encyclopaedia Launch

The latest edition of the ultimate reference book on Scotland’s National Bard has been revealed at the Robert Burns Birthplace Museum in Alloway. Originally published in 1959 by Maurice Lindsay, the first edition included a preface by the President of the Federation J. B. Hardie who prophesied, “I have no doubt but that it will go through many editions over the years.” However, although it has now been updated for the fourth time, this is the first revision since the 1980s.

It provides students of Scotland’s favourite son with a comprehensive reference of his life and works, with contributions by prominent academics and written for twenty first century study. Every aspect of the Burns’ biography and literary canon are covered, as are his correspondence and contemporaries, much of which is set against the backdrop of Enlightenment Edinburgh. The eminent team who worked on the Encyclopaedia consisted of Professor David Purdie, seen here (above right) at the launch with co-editor Professor Gerard Carruthers, Director of the Robert Burns Centre at Glasgow University. The other is Dr Kirsteen McCue, who is one of those leading the ‘Editing Robert Burns for the 21st Century’ Project at Glasgow University. [To keep track of the development of the project and read the latest podcasts about Burns’ death just go to their website: http://burnsc21.glasgow.ac.uk ]

The Encyclopaedia is now available from the Federation shop on the website rbwf.org.uk at a very advantageous price and would make a superb Christmas gift. During the book launch President Bob Stewart gave a pithy speech in which he commented on the value of the Encyclopaedia as a source of information to anyone interested in Burns. He passed on the compliments of the Federation to the editors for their excellent work in updating the book.

Celebration Day with Edinburgh and District Burns Club Association

On the 20th July 2013 Edinburgh and District Burns Club Association (EDBCA) played host to a Celebration of the life of Robert Burns. The event started at the Burns Monument on Calton Hill where Burnsians were joined by Edinburgh’s Deputy Lord Provost, Deirdre Brock. Jim Shields (left), President of the EDBCA, welcomed everyone.

The entertainment included poems by Willie Horne, Gordon Jamieson and Margaret Anderson, renditions of There Was a Lad and Scots Wha Hae by the company and Ralph Balfour, Treasurer of EDBCA, providing an informative history of the Burns Monument.

Wonderful singing was provided by Lucie Keenan and her sister Anna (above) who won the last year’s Robert Burns National Secondary S6 Schools Burns Singing Competition. Deirdre Brock gave an interesting
EDBC Celebration (cont’d)

talk about the important part Edinburgh had played in the life of Robert Burns. She was impressed with the talent on display and assured the EDBCA and the Burns World Federation of her continued support.

The Company sang “A Mans a Man”, before returning by bus back to the Liberton Lodge for a Poetry Competition for the Tom McIlwraith Trophy featuring a wide selection of poetry including: *A Dream, Address to the Deil, Epistle to a Young Friend, The Tw a Dogs, Holy Willie’s Prayer, Man was Made to Mourn* and *Epistle to Davie*.

The judges were Robert W. M. Stewart, President of the World Federation, Helena Anderson Wright from Aberdeen and last year’s winner Bobby Jess. When they retired to deliberate, the guests were treated to songs and poems from Jim Weatherston, Margaret Anderson and Gordon Jamieson. The competition was won by Cameron Goodall representing EDBCA reciting *A Dream*; second was Ian Buick, representing Scottish Borders, reciting *Man was Made to Mourn*, and third was Craig Rodger representing Fife, reciting *The Epistle to a young Friend*.

Robert W. M. Stewart, President of the World Federation, presented the winner’s quaiche and certificates to first, second and third. After a break the company gathered for a meal, Charlie Beaton from the Grampian Association addressed the haggis and the company then tucked into the traditional fair of Haggis, Neeps and Tatties. The day ended with Jim Shields, President of the EDBCA, thanking everyone for making this a very successful day. [Gordon Jamieson; Secretary EDBCA].

Re-focusing on Burns in Dalkeith

A Facebook campaign is bringing the plight of a memorial fountain to Robert Burns back into focus in Dalkeith and prompting local action. Funded by public subscription initiated by a local Burns Club, the fountain was erected in the High Street, Dalkeith to commemorate the centenary of the Bard’s death. Old photographs (left) show the fountain as a central landmark in the historic market town. By the mid-1960s, the fountain was considered a traffic hazard and its cast iron canopy was moved to the King’s Park, Dalkeith. Once there it was out of sight to most for almost 40 years. In 2003, it was re-sited in Komarom Court, Dalkeith. In this relatively quiet part of town, it remains largely unnoticed.

In May 2013, Del Hanlon began a campaign on Facebook arguing that the fountain ought be relocated to a more central position again and restored to its original state. Since then, a local Councillor has become involved and the restoration and repositioning has become part of a bid to the Scottish Government to improve Dalkeith’s Town Centre. The sharing of old photographs over the Facebook page and other research has contributed to understanding of the fountain’s history and features over the years which will be helpful in restoration work. Del has also used the page to promote Burns’ connections locally. He and some of the Facebook page followers are planning a sponsored walk re-tracing the steps of Burns and the artist, Alexander Nasmyth from Edinburgh to Roslin, through Dalkeith and back to Edinburgh. Del has planned the walk for 14 June 2014 in aid of Older Adults in Dalkeith.

The page has benefited from the steady support of RT Burns Club’s Rose Marie and Reg Tait. For details of the campaign the link is: [https://www.facebook.com/PoeticJusticeForBurnsInDalkeith?fref=ts](https://www.facebook.com/PoeticJusticeForBurnsInDalkeith?fref=ts)
‘Rabbie’s Girls’ Burns Night

The Royal Blind is a Scottish charity which runs Edinburgh’s iconic Royal Blind School as well as number of different services for blind and disabled people throughout the UK.

They are going to be holding a very special ‘Rabbie’s Girls’ event – a hugely entertaining Burns Night just for ladies, taking place at Edinburgh’s gorgeous Balmoral Hotel on Friday 31st January 2014.

Rabbie’s Girls is being hosted by hilarious comedienne Jo Caulfield (star of Radio and TV shows including ‘Mock The Week’ and ‘Have I Got News For You’), and on the night guests will be treated to:

• A super-glam champagne reception with Loch Fyne oysters • A sumptuous 4 course menu with complimentary wine • A fabulous goody bag full of treats • Traditional Burns Night speeches with a feminine twist • Unique surprise auction, with incredible prizes to be revealed on the night • A special balloon raffle where everyone is a winner! Tickets are on sale now (£75 per person or £750 for a table of 10). By joining in the fun you can help improve lives and at the same time have a truly fantastic night! For more information, contact the organiser Gemma Gillespie on 0131 229 1456 or email gemma.gillespie@royalblind.org or buy directly from the Royal Blind ticket shop: www.royalblind.org/shop/Rabbies-Girls.html

Dover and East Kent Scottish Society

One very active club, with 124 members, is the Dover and East Kent Scottish Society which formed in 1887. However, it was only in 1973 when Harry Hutchison was the Society President that the club joined the Federation. Their website www.thescottishsociety.co.uk shows the sort of activities they get up to.

“Does haughty Gaul invasion threat” the first line from a Robert Burns poem would have been more appropriate in reverse as the threat of invasion was in the opposite direction as a group of 44 revelers from the Society headed off to France recently. Organised and led by President Neil Farquhar, the group enjoyed the annual Cruise a la Carte jaunt across the channel aboard the new P&O flagship ferry, The Spirit of Britain. Treated to a Champagne reception in the Club Lounge, including canapés, snacks and other refreshments, plus homemade tablet, courtesy of president’s wife and Society Treasurer, Veronica, followed by some whisky tasting by the connoisseurs (left). This was followed by a 3 course dinner. The P&O staff, under the watchful eye of Food & Beverage Manager William Lang all did us proud. (It helps that William is a proud Scot and fellow member of the Society!)

President Neil presented the ship’s First Officer, Louise Steer with a copy of our Special Edition Magazine which we published last year to celebrate our 125th Anniversary. Although Louise hails from Winchester, she has spent time in Ayr. Also pictured are former captains, Gordon Skedd and Laurie Quigley. [Submitted by Graham Hutchison above centre next to father Harry in red blazer]
Renovation of the Trysting Thorn and Highland Mary's Monument at Failford, Ayrshire.

"At length I reach'd the bonie glen,
Where early life I sported.
I pass'd the mill and trysting thorn,
Where Nancy aft I courted.

(Extract from The Soldier's Return)

The above poem tells the story of a soldier returning from the wars to his home in Ayrshire near Coylton. The meeting with his early love is beautifully described by Burns with mention of the Trysting Thorn where they had frequently met.

The declining condition of the Trysting Thorn has been a constant concern for Burnsians, in particular for members of the Ayrshire Association of Burns Clubs. So a small but enthusiastic band of the Association set out to clean up the site but it was obvious that a huge makeover was required.

John Skilling, P.P. of the Federation and prominent member of Alloway Burns Club applied his usual vigour to acquiring funding for the project and convinced South Ayrshire Council to provide the necessary amount which was much appreciated.

The working party (from left to right) was Willie Dick, John Skilling, Jim Gibson and Angus Middleton.

Members of Alloway Burns Club plus friends also recently spent some time at Highland Mary's Monument removing moss and weeds from the stonework and cutting back the trees, nettles and brambles threatening to take over the path. The fence on either side of the path and surrounding the monument will also be given a fresh coat of paint, sometime soon, and the stone will be treated with a protective chemical. The monument is in a good state of repair and is well worth a visit. [Submitted by Jim Gibson P.P.]

Coila

The Highland Mary monument overlooks the spot on the Fail burn where Burns and Highland Mary reputedly passed their bibles over running water in an irregular marriage service. About a half mile distant is the field where, according to legend of 16th century, Fergus defeated the Britons led by their king Coilus, who was killed. The field formed part of the Montgomerie Castle grounds where Mary worked at Coilsfield House. There is a burial chamber about 20 yards from the farm where Coilus/King Cole is said to be buried. Burns knew the story of Coilus and the legend of Old King Cole as we can see in the opening lines of his poem The Twa Dogs:

Twas in that place o’ Scotland’s isle,
That bears the name o’ auld ‘King Coil’
Coila (cont’d)

In a note to his poem *The Vision* Burns wrote, “Coilus, king of Picts, from whom the district of Kyle is said to take its name, lies buried, as tradition says, near the family seat of the Montgomerries where his burial place is still shown. In the same poem, he called his own poetic muse ‘Coila.’

A stunning new statue of Coila has just been unveiled in the grounds of the University of West of Scotland Ayr Campus which was opened last year. Alexander Stoddart, Sculptor in Ordinary to the Queen in Scotland was commissioned to produce a work of art for the campus and has produced one of the most important pieces of statuary in the West of Scotland.

President Bob Stewart attended the unveiling of the statue and considered the event to have been one of the highlights of his whole year as President.

Ayr Flower Show

When Eric Budgell and Peter Hughes were manning the Federation stall at the Ayr Flower Show they were delighted to meet Cynthia Leitch, current Vice President of Irvine Lasses Burns Club who told them about her father’s Burns rug and two Burns Mugs which she had generously passed on to RBWF and which now formed part of the display.

Also displayed at Ayr Flower Show was this Tam O’Shanter Quilt which was subsequently donated to the Federation by Barbara Dillett of Prestwick. An avid quilter, she produced this whilst waiting at the Beatson Cancer Centre in Glasgow as her husband was having treatment for cancer. Barbara and her husband very kindly came in to meet with the office staff for a cup of tea and a chat and to hand over the beautiful quilt. It depicts various scenes from Tam O’Shanter based on the weather vanes at the Birthplace Museum designed by Sarah J Coleman of Inky mole. Hours and hours of stitching, padding and quilting went into this wonderful creation. It was displayed in Dumfries and is seen here at the RBWF Conference before being returned to the Federation office.

Wreath Laying at Kilmarnock Cross on 28th July

Many eminent Burnsians, including the Federation’s President Bob Stewart, S.V.P. Jane Brown and J.V.P. Jim Thomson, attended the event to commemorate the printing of the ‘Kilmarnock Edition’ on 31st July 1786. This popular event is organised by The Howff Burns Club, Kilmarnock. Wreaths were laid by the Federation President, the deputy Provost of East Ayrshire Council and representatives of Ayrshire clubs.
Irvine Lasses

The theme for Irvine Lasses Burns Club float in this year’s Marymass Parade in Irvine was Burns’ lasses and poems. Scott Cook (grandson of one of Irvine Lasses ex-Presidents) was Burns and Lasses' member Julie Holden and her sister Melanie were two of his Lasses. The Club won 2nd prize in the Community Float Category and 1st prize in the Novelty Float Category. The aim was to raise the profile of the Club and Burns in Irvine and encourage new members. The following day the Club took its prizes along to the annual Marymass Church Service in the Old Parish Church.

The previous week President Annie Small and a group of Lasses led Harbourside Heritage Walks as part of the Marymass celebrations. Irvine Burns Club, together with North Ayrshire Council and Irvine Bay Regeneration group, supported by Lottery Funding, had erected plaques in various areas of Irvine Harbour to commemorate individuals who had been associated with the Harbour in the past. Some had connections with Burns, such as Captain Richard Brown. The Walks provided information on the individuals. Local primary schools have adopted some of the plaques and are working on projects associated with the individual. [Reminder - next year's Federation conference will be held in Irvine]

New York Visitors

Members of the Burns Society of the City of New York came to Scotland to present a christening plate to the NTS Robert Burns Birthplace Museum and kindly added a visit to the Federation Headquarters to their agenda. They were hosted by Murdo Morrison and joined by President Bob Stewart, JVP Jim Thomson, Provost Jim Todd, and Past President Jimmy Gibson. During the visit Murdo enlightened them on the good work of the Federation before a visit to the Garden of Remembrance in Dean Park and a quick tour of the castle where they were fortunate enough to enjoy some original Burns manuscripts on display.

Summer Burns Supper in Houston TX

The Heather & Thistle Society Burns Club held its 25th Annual Burns Supper on July 20th. There were several reasons for the unlikely choice to hold such an event in the middle of the hot Houston summer.

Just a couple of days earlier the latest newsletter of the Robert Burns World Federation in Scotland pointed out in the very first paragraph that Burns Supper or indeed any celebration of the Bard’s life and work can be held at any time of the year.

Also, our Club missed having our Supper in February this year, so we were due.

Then, the Rose Garden in Hermann Park will soon be closing for major remodeling. Our Robert Burns Bust, as well as all the others there, will be relocated to a new display and will not be accessible next January. July 21st is the date Burns died 217 years ago, so meeting at the Bust as we usually do the day after a Burns Supper, was perfect timing.
Houston (cont’d)

But the most important reason for having this event now was to mark the assumption by the Burns Club of the Heather & Thistle Society name, Federation membership, and the role of providing events formerly run by H&T. Sadly, H&T was wound up in March after sixty years, so we wanted to run an event to reassure members that the Society and Burns Suppers will still be around, and of course there will be another as usual in January.

Robert Boyd welcomed 45 members and guests at the Supper. The haggis was borne by Tommy Crockett and addressed by Sheila Helme. Linda and Ed Biddle proposed toasts to the Queen and the President. The Immortal Memory was given by Archie Begg, president of the Bonnie Jeanne Burns Club. Walter May toasted the Lassies and Cheryl responded. Jack and Guida Hume jointly toasted the Land of Our Birth and Our Adopted Country. Helen Mann gave a recitation. Entertainment was provided by Dave Hutton’s group Simply Scottish and a mini band from the Houston Highlanders – Ian Martin, Phil Young and Casey Kempf. The next day Robert Boyd, Sheila Helme, Ted Hirtz and a few other stalwarts held a short ceremony in 100 degree heat at the Society’s Robert Burns Bust.

Cape Town Burns Supper 2014

The Cape Town Burns Supper Club is hosting its 20th Annual Burns Supper, in the very fine setting of the Kelvin Grove Club, in Cape Town, South Africa on Saturday 8 February 2014. This event, which continues to focus on raising funds for a nominated charity every year, has become one of Cape Town’s most popular social gatherings for the local Scottish community. Next year they are hoping to attract Scots from the UK and anyone who may be visiting Cape Town in February 2014, or expats who may be currently living in the city would be most welcome. For further details please contact the organiser Donald Fraser Bett at donaldb@networld.co.za

Federation Beginnings

Oh, the dangers of copying images from the internet without engaging brain! Following my faux pas on showing a photograph of the Edinburgh Burns Monument when discussing the Alloway monument in the May newsletter I now have to confess to showing a photograph of the Burns statue in New York to accompany the article about the Burns statue (left) in London’s Embankment Gardens in the July newsletter. My paltry mitigation is that they were both sculpted by the renowned Scottish sculptor Sir John Steell. He also created the statue of Burns in the Octagon in Dunedin, New Zealand. Thanks to eagle-eyed Clark McGinn for spotting my error. The Burns Monument in Edinburgh is on Calton Hill and not Carlton Hill as I stated. It’s time I was sacked.

Robert Burns the Biker

When Murdo Morrison Marketing Convener was waiting for a new tyre being fitted he picked up a motor cycle magazine which had an article with an unusual title. The Robert Burns Motorcycle Race Circuits Centenary Run. The Robert Burns quoted was not the Bard but a Transport Company Owner who shares the same name. This modern day Robert Burns being a Motor Cyclist of considerable renown himself is sponsoring the event which is all in aid of the MacMillan Cancer charity.

Murdo met up with the actual sponsor and took along the Allanton Jolly Beggars “Robert Burns.” [Photo by Richard Bracegirdle]
Burns the Biker (cont’d)

The basic concept was for Motor Cyclists to visit the former Motor Cycle Circuits which were in great use and demand after the Second World War. They were all war time airfields and eventually they all reverted back to previous use with the exception of two, one at Knockhill in Fife and the other at East Fortune in East Lothian.

The Federation also helped in the event and provided information for the entry packs which included details about the Federation and also details of places where the Bard had visited. Through the generosity of the Globe Inn, Ellisland Farm and the Falkirk Wheel the participants could also obtain a discount on the opening weekend.

The idea of commemorating one hundred years of the Motor Cycle in Scotland was originated by Robbie Allan who was himself a keen rider and who had participated in Isle of Man TT Races. Age was not a drawback for him when, in his 60's he took part riding solo in the Dakar Rally. A man of great courage he set off across the vast dangerous desert - the Sahara. He survived and continued in his passion for motorbikes. Unfortunately he passed away shortly before this special Centenary event took place.

‘Year of the Haggis’ Launch

Many groups and associations around the world nominate a specific year with a Title. The year of the Dragon, the Year of the Lion and, awaiting events at Edinburgh Zoo, perhaps even the Year of the Panda...

With Board Approval and general consensus we, in the Federation are nominating 2014 as the Year of the Haggis. Our partner is the Perth-based Scottish Federation of Meat Traders Association (SFMTA) which carries out many duties to promote and protect their Members in 440 shops across Scotland. With their superb contacts they are getting sponsorship for the project from Grampian Oat Products and Scobie & Junor, well known suppliers to the trade.

Burns Clubs in Scotland are being encouraged to help by taking part in the events which will be taking place throughout the year. Many local butchers have close relationships with members of Burns Clubs as suppliers of haggis and this project will be an ideal opportunity to promote this liaison. The ‘Year’ applies only in Scotland and will be exclusively for members of the SFMTA.

2014 is a year of great significance to Scotland with a number of major international events being scheduled including the Commonwealth Games to the Ryder Cup, the Year of the Homing, Clan Gatherings and all attracting thousands of visitors.

We all know how closely Haggis is identified as a part of a Burns Supper and the Bard’s famous Ode to the Haggis is recited at every one. Now is indeed the Year for us all to promote Haggis, promote Robert Burns and promote the providers of this unique Scottish product.

The retail butchers source their ingredients from local places and there are no long supply lines crossing continents... this is good local loyalty which, no doubt, the Bard himself would endorse.

The Official Launch at Conference

Local Butcher Ian Fauld's haggis being presented by the Provost of East Ayrshire Council, Jim Todd (centre) Others, from left to right, are Murdo Morrison, Dr Tony Grogan, President Robert Burns Association of North America, Les Strachan, Houston - Director USA, Jane Brown Senior Vice President Robert Burns World Federation, Jim O'Lone (Australia - Director Pacific Rim). President Robert Stewart, RBWF, May Crawley Honorary President, Director Canada.