

ROBERT BURNS WORLD FEDERATION EXECUTIVE MEETING
ALLOWAY SATURDAY 19TH March 2011

At 1.30 pm President David Baird opened the meeting and extended a welcome to all delegates present.

Sederunt as per attached list.

Intimation was made of the death in the previous week to this meeting of Jenny Burns of Dumfries Ladies No.1 Club.

A note had been received from Mr Ballantine advising that Jock Smith a well known Burns person in Milwaukee has now been moved to hospice care.

Apologies were received from Brian Keenan

The President wanted to bring to everyone's attention that the details of a dispute between the Federation as employers and an employee was still in process and following closely the laid down procedures of ACAS. The process takes due recognition of the fact that there are issues of dignity involved on both sides of the dispute and in fairness to everyone it is inappropriate to share any detailed information at this time.

This morning in visiting the committees in operation he found very positive attitudes to the many tasks in hand and he was particularly pleased with the generous gesture instigated by the Ayrshire and District Burns Association in extending an invitation for this Executive Meeting being called in these excellent premises.

For future meetings of this nature invitations to attend at other locations would be most welcome and there is already a potential location pending.

The Minutes of the November meeting had taken an extraordinary time to be prepared and circulated due to many factors and he wished to apologise for this delay

This afternoon notes would be taken for compilation into a record of the meeting.

Matters arising from the November Meeting?

A question was asked as to the current position of having a meeting with the Scottish Government in pursuance of funding.

The President stated that this matter was in hand and that representations would be made by the Senior Vice President and the Junior Vice President taking appropriate action.

A question was asked as to whether the quarterly meetings were now going to be back as before.

The President replied that this, depending on the re-action and response of members, would be the pattern for the future and re-iterated the need for invitations from Districts to act as hosts.

Isa Hanley, Schools Convenor gave the following report.

SCHOOLS' COMMITTEE MEETING

SATURDAY 19 MARCH 2011

The main discussion was the national festivals to be held in Lockerbie Academy as follows:

Secondary Festival Saturday 30 April 2011

Primary Festival Saturday 14 May 2011

Choral Festival Saturday 7 May 2011 (Peebles HS)

Arrangements are in place for the national secondary and primary festivals and the catering has been booked for both days.

Stewards will be provided from Dumfries Burns Howff Club and SSCBA members. They are familiar with the local event and are always very willing to help when requested. We are very grateful to them.

Entry forms ought to be returned to the Convener by the end of March so that the programmes can be made up

Most of the trophies have been returned and we will be chasing up the remainder.

Certificates and adjudication sheets will be ordered this week and quotations for medals are being followed up at the moment.

Duties for each committee member were sorted out for each of the days.

Adjudicators are in place and a decision will have to be made regarding fees.

The Choral Festival is arranged by Dave Scott, our schools' sponsor. This will be held in Peebles High School, as last year. It was a very successful day and thanks go to Dave for his meticulous organisation. I am sure the same will apply this year.

The ongoing issue of in-school certificates came up and it was agreed that next year there must be a better and more efficient system in place.

A visitor from Canada, Mr Jack Jackson, gave us a short talk on school work being undertaken in Ontario, mainly thanks to May Crawley and her team. The schools are being encouraged to enter various competitions, including knowledge of Scotland. There was a folder on display showing us some of the work in which the children are involved.

Helen Morrison gave us an update on the International Literature report and said a copy of the winning essay was available if anyone wished to read it.

Willie Gibson, a committee member, told us of his visit to see the Greenshields statue in Camperdown, Australia, which is now kept under cover. Gordon Ashley of course told us about this during the Aberdeen conference last September.

Helena Anderson Wright was going to be asked to assist with the programme production Marketing had asked for comments and views on the possibility of having Junior Members and this was open for further discussion and decision. Anyone wishing to comment on this were being requested to contact the Marketing Committee.

In response to an enquiry about attendance numbers at Schools Competitions there was varied responses with increased numbers in some areas and decreased in others.

It was not possible to draw any conclusions from this.

President David Baird said that the Federation as a whole were most appreciative of the work being done.

Conference Committee

Convenor Joe McGinty reported that a very successful meeting had been held and one of the items arising therefrom was the question of bookings for accommodation at Peebles Hydro Hotel. He asked for a show of hand to indicate from those present as to how many were intending to go to Peebles but had not, as yet, made a booking at the Hotel. From the assembled delegates it appeared as if at least 14 were still to action a booking. This information would be relayed to the Hotel.

A strong candidate for the year 2012 subject to Board approval would be Harrogate and taking place at the Cairn Hotel.

Following an observation about possible clash of dates with another major event it was advised that the Conference being held from the 14th to 16th September would be suitable.

Literature

Convenor Bill Dawson intimated that he would be stepping down from this convenorship at next Conference. A new Convenor would therefore be required.

Burns Chronicle

There were a great number of ideas in regards to the Chronicle and he advised that his term as interim editor comes to a close with the publication of the summer Chronicle.

A small sub group was being formed to investigate possibilities for the Chronicle in terms of web use and also the possibility of having the compiled Index available on the web.

Also consideration has to be given to establishing any spin off possibilities via other web sites and interaction from others on to our web site.

The meeting had been a good one with a lot of positive energy emerging.

Question from a delegate raised the issue of how much does the printing of the Chronicle cost now as opposed to previous costs.

Convenor Bill Dawson responded that there were too many variables in terms of number of pages, use of colour etc to be able to give a definite answer

A subsequent observation was, in view of the financial considerations, about the costs of sending out by first class Mail and the explanation for this was that it was all part of an agreed cost package.

Another observation was made that the current Chronicle being heavily dependent on use of colours made the end product most difficult to read and this comment was noted.

On the subject of Directors being identified with contact numbers and e mails in the Chronicle this would now be again part of the Chronicle.

David Scott requested action in getting an out of date picture removed from the advertisement page and assurance were given that this would be done.

Bill Dawson stated that many messages of congratulations had been received and one adverse communication. This latter was in a comment about the grammar being used but Bill Dawson emphasised that this had occurred in material that he had not inserted.

The Board had emphasised that the Editor has sole responsibility and control of content.

This present week end was the deadline for any submissions.

In the absence of Convenor Walter Watson David Smith gave the heritage report.

Heritage Committee

Minutes of the meeting held at Alloway Parish Church Hall on Saturday 19th March 2011, at 10.00am
Sederunt

Donald Ross, Tom Morrall, Bill Duncan, John Skilling, Rev. Ella Pennington, Joe Kennedy, Alex Mackenzie, David R. Miller, David Smith.

Apologies

Walter Watson

Chair

Chair occupied by David Smith deputising for convenor Walter Watson.

Minutes

Previously circulated and agreed correct.

Business

Highland Mary Monument, Greenock.

Reported that Greenock Burns Club is applying to Lottery Heritage Fund for grant aid towards major refurbishment and essential repairs for safety reasons. The club have requested the convenor to write in support of the application, on behalf of the RBWF. Unanimously agreed to accede to the request as a matter of urgency. Noted that monument is currently fenced off for safety reasons. Club is keeping a watch.

Statue at Bathgate.

Reported that the damaged statue of Burns and Highland Mary at Bathgate is to be repaired by Bathgate Historical Society but no information available regarding where and if to be displayed. Agreed to contact local club, Fauldhouse and Crofthead to approach Mr. Joe Welsh of the Historical Society and ascertain details.

Failford Highland Mary Monument.

No further progress reported in securing funding for repairs. It was confirmed that the tree growing from the top has been removed but the site was fenced off for safety reasons.

St. Michaels Kirkyard, Dumfries

Reported that D&G Council have repaired the plaque at the site of Burns' original grave. Unfortunately, the Council have declined to remove the disabled access ramp and CCTV pole at the Mausoleum. Noted that the ramp provides no access to the building for wheelchair users. Reported that the shabby appearance of the Mausoleum giving cause for concern. Agreed to accept an offer from a professionally qualified local delegate to approach the Council's Conservation Officer and make representations. Sederunt

Donald Ross, Tom Morrall, Bill Duncan, John Skilling, Rev. Ella Pennington, Joe Kennedy, Alex Mackenzie, David R. Miller, David Smith.

Mitchell Library

Confirmed that Burns Room at the Mitchell Library is open but clubs seeking access are recommended to arrange for visits in advance as casual callers would not normally be entertained.

Robert Burns Birthplace Museum

Various opinions were expressed on the new attraction opened in January. Although the consensus opinion was favourable, it was noted that the space allocated to commercial aspects was disproportionate to the exhibition area. It was accepted that the interactive terminals were aimed at young people rather than mature Burns enthusiasts. Disappointment was expressed that the layout and presentation of exhibits in Burns Cottage which detracted from the original charm of the "Auld Clay Biggin" and Ayrshire Association have written to NTS in protest but no satisfactory reply received. Accepted that influence over NTS is limited. Reported that a guide was overheard telling a visitor that Burns' mother was buried in Dumfries. Further representations would be made by Ayrshire Assn.

Burns Monument, Alloway

Reported that monument, opened in 1823 was in poor repair with water ingress in interior. Regret was expressed at removal of information boards. Agreed to consider making representations to NTS.

Diversion of River Doon

John Skilling reported that widespread support for the appeal had been received since the proposals were published. The principle grounds were the risk to fish and tourism and fresh water mussels. He stated that the appeal could be accessed via www.savethedoon.com and asked for as much support as possible.

Agreed to monitor developments.

Greenshields Statue

Reported that the appeal by Gordon Ashley for repairs to the Burns Statue at Camperdown, Victoria, Australia is still ongoing. Delegates were again asked to contact their respective MSP's to bring pressure on the authorities in Victoria.

Globe Inn, Dumfries

Reported that the window panes with Burns inscriptions have been copied and it is hoped they will be on display later this year. The originals were removed from the Globe in circa 1830.

Other Business

Statue at New Cumnock

Reported that a handsome statue of Robert Burns had been sculpted life size in bronze and sited in the centre of the village adjacent to the Burns mural. The project had been financed by the Communities Regeneration Fund with help from New Cumnock Burns Club. The statue had been unveiled on 5th March by David Baird, president, WRBF.

Trysting Thorn

Bill Duncan reported that access to the site at near Coylton, the "Soldier's Return", was difficult as part of the roadway had collapsed and the cairn was fenced off. Unfortunately, the land was in private hands and it was not known if repairs would be undertaken. He would keep watch on the matter.

Alexander Anderson

Joe Kennedy reported that the plaque at Kirkconnell Railway Station had disappeared during refurbishments. This marked the work place of the Upper Nithsdale poet and author, known as the "Surfaceman" who was buried in Kirkconnell Kirkyard. He was notable for defending the character of Burns which had been attacked by an "Auld Licht" minister in Edinburgh. Dumfries delegates agreed to make enquiries and enlist the help of Sanquhar Black Joan Burns Club.

Members' responsibility

On behalf of Convenor Walter Watson, chairman asked members to "take ownership" for the monuments within their area and to use their initiative in pursuing any action necessary, whether to bring pressure on public bodies or to mount a media campaign and to report back on progress to future meetings.

Committee responsibility

The meeting terminated at 11.20am.

Codicil

At the presentation of the report to the afternoon plenary session, a delegate asked from the floor if repairs could be put in hand to the commemorative plaque marking the "9/11" terrorist incident in September 2001 in the USA. The plaque was located in the Rose Garden at Dean Castle, Kilmarnock. It was agreed to ascertain who was responsible for this.

Marketing

Murdo Morrison gave the following report.

With the approval of the Board Eric Budgell, Lanarkshire Association of Burns Clubs would stand in for him during his absence over the next few weeks.

Very little had happened since the last quarterly meeting due to various circumstances totally outwith the control of the committee.

The Board had identified two distinct tasks to be undertaken by Marketing and they were –
Creating and manning a shop at Conferences and other occasions/locations such as Schools competitions

Taking on responsibility for Membership and recruitment

At Conference there was an opportunity to target non members who were attending and get them into the fold.

With Board approval and approach could be made to the National Trust for a closer working relationship and exploring avenues of mutual advantage

Jane Brown of the Globe Inn who runs a series of Burns suppers is going to use these opportunities for getting more members.

A question arose as to why an application for membership sent in January to Dower House had not been answered. An explanation and apology was given and the matter would be attended to in due course and this was directly due to the current staffing situation.

Bob Stewart, Junior Vice President advised that he had extracted a quantity of big issue Book from the store room and all the items had been sold.

Overseas reports.

A report from May Crawley REPORT REQUIRED

There were no reports from USA or Pacific Rim

The President informed the delegates that in a two week period in January he had been in direct contact with over 75 Clubs and that covered a range of varied activities.

He had dates in his diary for visiting Canada and also Australia. DATES PLEASE

Intimation was made that with reference to the possible Junior Members being recruited that already existed in Ayrshire and information was available.

Marketing were asked to take on board a suggestion that every Council in Scotland should have corporate Membership of the Federation and this required to be actioned on an early basis

An enquiry was made about contact names and addresses for Club Secretaries and this was an ongoing issue which cannot be solved due to data protection via lists. Bill Dawson said that there was possible a way round this by publishing information on the web.

A question arose about the finances of the Federation. President David replied that we were at present solvent and able to trade normally. The exact amounts were not readily to hand but financial aspects were under control.

A delegate wished to know how books (The Big Issue) could be obtained and all were advised to contact Solway Offset and personal collection would avoid postage charges.

A proposal was made by Past President Murdo Morrison that the afternoon part of quarterly meetings should or could begin by having some local young people along to give a recitation or sing a song. This would remind all present that this is what we are all about – this proposal was agreed.

Senior Vice President James Shields proposed a hearty vote of thanks to President David Baird for his Chairmanship of the Meeting.