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© THE ROBERT BURNS WORLD FEDERATION LIMITED
For someone who loves the works of Robert Burns there can be no greater thrill or honour than to be invited to be the President of the Federation founded in his name in 1885. So it was that in September, 1999, I experienced that thrill and honour which was soon to be replaced by a feeling of humility and responsibility as we entered a new millennium with all the opportunities and challenges it offers.

The Burns Federation of 1885 is very similar to the Robert Burns World Federation of today in many ways. It is still sustained by men and women of passion and of love for the works and the life of the poet, but the world has changed dramatically over the years. Communication is instant creating new accessibility to all sorts of cultural and other pursuits, and because of these and other factors, we had to change our structure, never an easy thing to do given the history of the Federation. However, now we are officially a world wide organisation with full charitable status and I have no doubt that the next few years will prove to be fruitful as we access that same old world through our website.

Without question the indelible memory of my years as your President was the joy of meeting so many good people in various parts of the country. It is difficult to believe that anyone who studies and appreciates the words of Robert Burns could be anything other than a good person and so it has proved in my experience. The nineteenth century saw the birth of the Federation, the twentieth saw it mature into a potent force, and I believe the twenty first will witness it become a global company taking the works of Robert Burns to ever increasing millions and bringing honour to the land of his birth.

Thank you for the great privilege you bestowed on me and your friendship.
FROM THE EDITOR

This being the first issue of the *Burns Chronicle* in the new Millennium it is with much pleasure that we mark an historic occasion within the world of Robert Burns by featuring the forth-coming Bi-Centenary of the founding of Greenock Burns Club. The Club very much alive today met for the first time on 21st July, 1801 and held their first supper the following year. Sadly in the 1920’s the pages of the Club’s first minutes disappeared and this has led over the years to a controversy as to whether or not the Club was in fact founded in 1801.

Fortunately some of the contents of the first minutes have been recorded and appear throughout the editorial feature of the Club’s history which commence on page 7.

The ‘lost’ minute book was on public display at the Burns Exhibition held in Glasgow in 1896 and appeared in the official catalogue as follows:- Lent by Greenock Burns Club, Number 1222 – Minute Book of Greenock Burns Club 1801-1884 3 Volumes [MS]. If further proof was necessary the Club possess the original minutes of 21st July, 1826 which states:-

“The Burns Society of Greenock met in the Tontine Hotel on 21st July, 1826 to commemorate the death of Robert Burns and to celebrate the 25th anniversary of the founding of this institution which has now reached its twenty-fifth years of existence, having met for the first time on the 21st July, 1801 and celebrated the birth of the poet for the first time in the year 1802.”

The four page minute goes on to state:-

“…Mr. Crawford addressing the late secretary said he had now a very pleasant duty to perform in the name of the Burns Society of Greenock namely the presentation of a handsome silver snuff box as a token of respect and admiration for Mr. Campbell and as a mark of appreciation of his effort in the interest of the Society, extending over the long period of 15 years during the greater portion of which time he had acted as a clerk in a manner which both to his own credit and that of the Club.

The snuff box which is of solid silver of a chaste design was supplied by Mr. George Buchanan, Jeweller and bear this inscription:-

*Mr. Arch Campbell

For fifteen years an office bearer in the Burns Soceity of Greenock on the occasion of his leaving town on this the 25th anniversary of the Foundation of the Society, 21st July, 1826. When Mr. Campbell rose to receive…”

The late Robert Peat, a former President and Librarian of the Club had the minute authenticated by experts as to it being genuine, both ink and paper were found to be of the correct period.

It is inconceivable to believe that anyone in Greenock would make-up a story as to the age and foundation of the Club. Many distinguished gentlemen having visited and took part in the Club’s functions over the past 200 years, I need only to quote one such
distinguished Scotsman Andrew Carnegie writing from New York in 1889 stated: “You don’t know how happy you make me by enabling me to do something for the oldest Burns Club in the world”

The Club based in Greenock, itself with many Burns Connections are Number 21 on the Role of the Robert Burns World Federation and from their foundation have been a most active and supportive Club in all matters related to the aims of the Federation and the Robert Burns Movement in general. We wish them continued success and joyous Bi-Centenary celebration.

Throughout the year a number of events to mark the Club’s Bi-Centenary will take place in the town of Greenock. A birthday party in July followed by the main event - Conference, Gala Dinner and Dance and Church Service during the weekend 15/16th September, 2001.

At the recent Annual General Meeting of the Robert Burns World Federation concern was made about the decline in the sales of the *Chronicle* which has reached its lowest level since its foundation in 1892. To those of you who subscribe and read the *Chronicle* I ask you to encourage others to do likewise. Editorial contributions are welcome and need not necessarily be on the subject of the life and works of Robert Burns, but on any Scottish literary subject.

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Copy of a Certificate of Membership of the Greenock Ayrshire Society on display in the Greenock Burns Club Library made out in the name of Hugh Crawford Junior and dated 3rd February, 1795. It was as a result of this Society that the present Greenock Burns Club first met on 21st July, 1801.
Missing: Bill Hewitt, Alex Francis, Iain Shaw, Colette Shaw, Isabella Lind, Harry McGilp, Jim Sinclair, Bill Watson.
The Greenock Burns Club, of which it is here proposed to give a short historical account, dates from 1801, when the Poet was but five years in the grave. Several Greenock gentlemen, some of whose names and poetical productions have been preserved, constituted themselves in that year into a Burns Society, holding their deliberations in a tavern conducted by a Mrs. Cottar, a circumstance which gave rise to a witticism of the time, jocularly describing their weekly gatherings as Cottar’s Saturday Nights. That Burns worship in Greenock should thus early have a local habitation and a name, might reasonably be expected when it is known that fully 50 copies of Creech’s Edinburgh Edition were purchased by Greenock subscribers; and that the Poet himself (as the diligent antiquary, Weir, relates) was, during his single visit to Greenock, surprised and overjoyed to find that his fame had preceded him, and that his book had a ready sale at all the shops. Weir’s historical sketch was published in 1829, and in his volume he mentions it as a well-known fact that Greenock was the first place to establish a society specifically named after Robert Burns. Intellectual conversation, and the fostering of a taste for the poetry of the country, were represented as the objects of this earliest of Scottish Burns Clubs. Acting, probably, on the principle that imitation is the sincerest form of flattery and homage, the members were in the habit of writing verses, good, bad, and indifferent, in the favourite metres of Burns. The first meeting of the Club of which any account is extant, was held on the 21st of July, 1801, and on that occasion Mr. Neil Dougal, a well-known local musician and poet, read a lengthy poem to the memory of Burns, which he had himself composed, and which is not devoid of considerable merit. The first Anniversary meeting was held on 29th January, 1802; forty members were present, and the customary ode specially composed for the occasion was recited from the chair. On Saturday, 29th January, 1803, the bulk of the members remained in Greenock to celebrate the anniversary in the White Hart Hotel, while a detachment travelled by coach to Ayr, in order to join other admirers of the Poet from all parts of the country in celebrating his anniversary in the cottage where he was born. As the result of an examination of the registry of births for the parish of Ayr, it was, in that year, discovered that the 25th, and not the 29th, was the correct natal day of the Bard. This discovery does not, however appear to have caused the members in the succeeding years to confine their anniversary to the 25th, for we find various dates in January (evidently chosen mainly for convenience) given in the minute-book as the evenings of celebration.
Below: Extract from a minute in the Club’s possession indicating that the Club first met on 21st July, 1801.

The Burns Society of Greenock met in the Tontine Hotel on July 21st, 1826 to commemorate the death of Robert Burns & to celebrate the 25th anniversary of the founding of this institution which has now reached its twenty-fifth year of existence, having met for the first time on the 21st July 1801 & celebrating the birthday of the Poet for the first time in the year 1802.

Translation
“The Burns Society of Greenock met in the Tontine Hotel on July 21st, 1826 to commemorate the death of Robert Burns and to celebrate the 25th anniversary of the founding of this institution which has now reached its twenty-fifth year of existence, having met for the first time on the 21st July, 1801 and celebrated the birthday of the poet for the first time in the year 1802.

Very full reports of many of these early anniversary celebrations are to be found in the local paper of the town, and corroborate the lengthier records of the official minute-books. The Club, even in the early period of its existence, was evidently a power in the town, and, besides numbering on its roll some of Highland Mary’s kin, it also included many of the leading citizens of Greenock in its active membership. Mr. Galbreath, president in 1812, proposed at one of the meetings in that year that a subscription should be opened for the purpose of erecting a monument to Mary Campbell. The substance of his eloquent remarks are still to be seen in the carefully collected “Notes on Renfrewshire Topics,” excerpted from the files of the old Greenock journals by Allan Park Paton, Esq., the famous Shakesperian scholar.
In the early, as in the later years, of the Club’s history, special efforts were made to spend the anniversary evening in as splendid and discreetly hilarious a style as possible. At the seventh celebration the members seem to have outstripped all their previous doings. Over sixty gentlemen sat down to supper, and the celebrated band of the Ayrshire Militia was brought to Greenock specially for the occasion, and regaled the members with a “superior musical performance” with great applause. Considering the means of transit then available, and the season of the year at which the meeting took place, it cannot be said that the members of the Club were lacking in enthusiasm or enterprise. On another of the early anniversaries held when this century was just in its teens, a motion was proposed and carried “that a correspondence be entered into with the friends and admirers of the National Bard in Ayrshire, requesting them to set apart a subscription to erect a monument to his distinguished memory at the place of his birth.” In subsequent reports of the proceedings this matter is frequently referred to and emphasised.

With the exception of certain outstanding events, the history of the Club during the five decades after 1820 is not of such great importance as to require very minute chronicling. The present work of the Club must call for more copious details. The Greenock Club is strongly of opinion that it is by present and actual services for the promulgation of literature that any Burns Society, deserving of the name, must base its claims to regard. January 25th, 1842, is, however, worthy of commemoration. On that day — the christening day, as the papers relate, of the Prince of Wales — the foundation stone of the monument to Highland Mary was laid in the corner of the Old West Kirkyard. The procession, consisting largely of “brethren of the mystic tie,” and enthusiastic devotees of Burns worship, from all corners of the land, proceeded with due reverence to the hallowed spot where the imposing ceremony was performed. So many years thus elapsed for the proposition of Mr. Galbreath had practical issue. The celebration in the great year of ‘59 was a magnificent affair. The Provost of the time — Mr. Duff — presided over a gathering of more than 200 gentlemen, and there was no lack of rhetoric and brilliancy. The speeches delivered on the occasion are well preserved in the official records of the centenary. The president of that time — Mr. Macfarlane — did much good work which is not yet forgotten.

It is not from any want of materials in the shape of recorded speech, deliberation, and song, that we hasten to give an account of the present work of the Club, rather than utilise our small available space in transcribing minutes, which, though often shrewd and witty,* have mainly but a parochial interest. Everywhere in the records we read of nights of social glee, copiously seasoned with intellectual conversation; of able critical papers minutely commented on by the assembled members; and of happy gatherings unsurpassed in the records of sociality. Of more importance that those evenings of rational enjoyment must be mentioned the publication of an edition of Fergusson, the poetic predecessor, and,

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*Under 26th December, 1861, we read:— “Mr. Kenneth M’Lauchlan, the poet-policeman, was appointed treasurer in room of Mr. Sword, retiring; after which the members entered into a general conversation, which was becoming instructive when that political bugbear, Forbes MacKenzie, entered his veto against having any more of it. The members, one and all, however, protested in loud and unmistakable terms against the interference of a fellow like him, who was not a member of the Club.”
in some respects, inspirer of Burns. This edition, now very scarce, is marked by shrewdness of selection, and though, in our day, rendered obsolete by the careful editions of Mackay and others, it is yet an honour to the town.

The ordinary membership roll of the Club, as at present constituted, contains 300 names, including the Sheriff, the Provost, and most of the leading Magistrates, clergy and literary men of the town. There are also life membership and honorary membership lists. One member, Mr. Archibald Campbell, has a marked place of honour at the meetings, and this is rightly so, for he is a nephew of Mary Campbell, that pure and lovely Highland lass, whose beauty, and whose pathetic death, called forth from Burns’s heart those imperishable lines which have made the simple girl’s story familiar over the whole civilised world. Mr. Campbell is now well stricken in years; but few lovers of literature visiting Greenock fail to have an interview with him, and anon make a pilgrimage to the spot in the Old West Kirkyard, where lies the dust of Mary Campbell, marked out by a graceful monument in a portion of the churchyard, zealously tended by the special supervision of the Club. One gentleman, a president of the Club more than forty years ago — Mr. Colin Rae-Brown — is well known in Burns circles all over the world for the ardour of his Caledonian zeal. Mr. Rae-Brown is universally famed for his extraordinary efforts in connection with the great and successful centenary celebration

Perhaps the most noteworthy item recorded at the first meeting of the Club was an Ode on Robert Burns, composed by Mr. Neil Dougal — for long a well-known poet and musician in Greenock, and composer of “Kilmarnock” and other popular tunes in Scottish Psalmody — and recited by him on 21st July, 1801, at the meeting of the Greenock Burns Club and Ayrshire Society held, very appropriately, in Mrs. Cottar’s Tavern on a Saturday night, from which fact the meetings were jokingly called “Cottar’s Saturday Nights.” Mr. Dougal composed the poem a few days after the poet’s decease in 1796. The following three verses give an idea of its quality:

Ye Scottish Bards, where’er ye be This simple boon, O grant to me,
Lay bye your books and pens awee,
The news gae read;
An’ there in dolefu’ lines ye’ll see,
Rab Burns is dead.

While he was shrewd in his address
To zealotts of a certain class,
But what o’ that? To real distress
He freely gied
A part o’ what he did possess,
But now he’s deid.

Rise, Scotia, rise! and loudly claim
To record his immortal name,
That place within the Beuk o’ Time
His merits plead;
Insist on’t bauldly, ne’er think shame
O’ him that’s deid.
of over 30 years ago, and for his consuming interest in every movement connected with our National Bard. Other gentlemen, resident in Greenock, and worthy of mention in connection with a Burns Club, are Mr. Jas Tannahill, next-of-kin to the sweet and ingenious poet of Paisley, and Mr. Adam Patrick, son of Willie Patrick, Burns’s herd laddie at MossgIEL.

Along with a considerable number of Burns Clubs in Scotland, the Greenock Club has for some years conducted annual competitions in Scottish Literature, open to the school-children of the town. The success of these in Greenock has been most astonishing, and thoroughly encouraging to the Executive of the Club. Since the inauguration of these examinations, the Club has spent some hundreds of pounds in the shape of medals and prizes awarded to the successful candidates in Recitation and Scottish Literature. In the latter subject, the candidates belong to the higher Standards, and by means of printed examination papers, containing questions on Scottish Authors, previously intimated, are searchingly examined as to their detailed knowledge of the subjects prescribed. The answers of the successful candidates are bound and inserted in the library of the Club. The quality of the answers submitted to the Club’s examiners has been yearly increasing in excellence; and has fully justified the Club inaugurating other competitions of a more advanced type for the pupil-teachers of the various years who are in the service of the Greenock School Board. In the Recitation Competitions some thousands of children have competed, — in 1891 there were over 500 candidates — and when it is remembered that for the tests in this branch, certain selected poems of Burns must be carefully committed to memory and appropriately recited to the Club’s examiners, it will be seen that the Greenock Burns Club is not lacking in successful zeal for the propagation of Scottish Literature in the community. The Bursary Committee — to which the conducting of these examinations is delegated — is certainly the hardest wrought of the many committees of the Club. It contains twelve members, among whom are four B.A.’s of London University, and for fully a month in the summer the members are busy each night conducting the competitions, superintending the written examinations, and correcting the papers handed in. The members of the Greenock School Board — three of whom are also members of the Club — together with the various clergymen of the town, have given their hearty co-operation and aid, thereby greatly lightening the labours of the Club and widening its influence. Encouraged by the success of the literary efforts made on such a large scale, the Club has of later years instituted, also through its Musical Committee, a series of competitions, in which the successful singing of songs, from Burns and other Scottish lyrists, has been rewarded by medals and other substantial prizes. By such means the usefulness of the Club has been meritoriously extended, and the musical as well as the literary faculties of the school children fostered in a manner distinctly national. When, towards the end of June of each year, the results of the various examiners in recitation, singing, and literature are published, the pupils heading the lists in the several competitions give a display of their abilities in the Greenock Town Hall, at the public presentation of the prizes by the Honorary President of the year.* A small sum is charged for admission and the proceeds handed over to some of the

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*It ought to be mentioned that the Greenock Magistrates give the Town Hall free of charge; and that the Club, by subscribing to the Hospital, secures the right of nominating cases for a certain number of the Wards.
local charities. The various medals awarded are struck from a special die made for the Club, and the book prizes are similarly impressed by the Club-stamp and the Poet’s armorial bearings. For the purposes of the Club’s examinees, the members of the Bursary Committee are at present engaged in the production of a volume, which will embrace selections from the Scottish poets, prior to Burns, and be enriched with critical and illustrative annotations.

There is yet another direction in which the educational energy of this Club has been expended. The Wild Flower Competition for school-children was instituted, and is now supported, by members of the Club, conjointly with the Royal West Renfrewshire Horticultural Society. One very interesting result of these labours was recently shown in the display of collections, sent in by school-children, of flowers mentioned by Burns and Tannahill in the course of their works.

In connection with these competitions, it may be stated that a sum more than equal to that required to erect a statue of the Poet has been expended in educational and charitable objects. While believing that their efforts in these latter directions, testify their love for Burns in as eminent a degree as the erection of a memorial in bronze, the members of the Club have not lost sight of the desirability of raising a statue to the memory of the Poet whose name they bear. They have also been at a considerable pecuniary outlay in the tending of Highland Mary’s monument, and, it may be added, they paid for one of the panels in the Glasgow Statue — “The Vision” — the terra-cotta replica of which is in the Club room and cost an additional five guineas.

The Club has been fortunate in securing the services of a series of Honorary Presidents, who have done much by their speeches and actions to encourage the systematic study of the literature of the land. Such are the Rev. John Barclay, author of a beautiful poem on the bard; Sheriff Nicholson, LL.D., a voluminous writer on northern lore; Prof. Blackie, author of numerous works on Scottish topics; and Dr. Andrew Lang, poet-laureate of “gowf,” and author of the most recent Edition of Burns. The Honorary President, who takes the chair this month, is the well-known friend of Carlyle — Prof. David Masson — who possesses a European fame for geniality, learning, and critical acumen. It is not too much to say that the list of Honorary Members would also serve as a present-day list of British celebrities in art and literature. To mention but a few names: — Science is represented by Sir William Thomson, P.R.S., and Prof. Jack; Literature, by Dr. Underwood, Dr. Oliver Wendell Holmes, Lord Tennyson, and Mr. A. J. Balfour; Art by Sir Noel Paton, and Sir F. Leighton; the Drama, by Mr. Henry Irving; and Music, by Mr. Hamish MacCunn, a native of Greenock, and intimately connected with the family of Highland Mary.

On Friday, 29th January, 1802, the Club held their Anniversary Celebration of the Birth of the Bard. About forty members sat down to a sumptuous repast in the White Hart Hotel, under the Presidency of Mr. John Wright. Mr. Wright proposed the toast of the poet, and read a long ode to his memory. The poem begins with these lines: —

‘Ah! brother, thou hast gone
Across the stream,
The sad and rueful stream,
Whose name is Death.’

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Across the stream,
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Whose name is Death.’
The Club is probably unique in possessing a handsome suite of rooms in Nicolson Street provided with a splendid portrait-gallery of the various Presidents and Honorary Members. What perhaps strikes the eye of the visitor even more than the varied relics of Burns and Highland Mary, is the handsome library of Scottish Literature recently enriched by donations from many of the honorary and ordinary members. It is the intention of the Club still further to extend their collection by placing on their shelves, works and MSS. illustrative of Scottish Literature and History of every period. The handsome manner in which honorary members have aided, and are still aiding, the Library Committee in giving completeness to this interesting collection is worthy of all praise.

While the various Committees — Musical, Library, Bursary, &c. — are constantly at work during the whole year, there are quarterly meetings of the aggregate Club, to which the work of the committees is delegated, and at which necessary business, such as election of new members, is carried out. Perhaps the most important — certainly the most attractive — parts of the programme of these quarterly meetings are the papers and lectures on Scottish Literature delivered by the members, and dealing with subjects drawn from the entire range of national history. A scheme is at present in process of formulation, by which it is proposed to institute a series of public lectures to be delivered by members of the Club, who are specialists in particular departments of national literary criticism.

No account of the Club would be complete which did not make mention of the series of beautiful menu-cards, which, with many humorous and attractive embellishments, detail the names of the speakers on the anniversary evening. Appropriate selections from Burns, wittily characterising the various Scotch dishes of the dinner, together with clever sketches illustrating the various quotations, combine to make the annual menu-card a valuable...
work of art and a lasting memento of the occasion. The signatures of all the members present at the meeting held previous to the anniversary are ingeniously reproduced on the last page. The 500 extra copies of the menu-card for ‘91 — the work of Mr. Peter Kerr, artist, a member of the Club, who has also designed the sketches of all the others — were eagerly bought up by Burns Clubs in all quarters of the world.

Below: Greenock Burns Club, North Pole Branch – A sketch which appeared in the Club’s 1894 menu card.

---

1996 BICENTENARY

Ye fowk wha deify ma wraith
Your eulogies tae say,
Whit ken ye o’ the fearfu’ darg
Tae thole the live-lang day?

Whit ken ye o’ the luve that scars
That sets your bein’ afire
Whane’er ye meet a bonnie lass
That wad your sowl inspire?

Whit ken ye a’ o’ poortith’s pangs
That blude tae watter turns
Whan even Nature gin ye strives
God help puir Robert Burns!

The Muse that drove me to excess
Hoo mony hae it read?
Or dae ye, fulsome, praise ma verse -
Just because I’m dead?

Mabel A. Irving

The people who founded the Ayrshire Society of Greenock in 1795 could not have dreamed they would be remembered two centuries later for also establishing what was to be called The Mother Burns Club.

The initial purpose of the society, after all, was charitable rather than cultural – to assist those in need, young and old, from their country. Members included those displaced from the land by agricultural reforms who came to the booming port for employment in ship-building, sugar and timber trades.

Robert Burns’ tragic death the following year, however, was followed by increased national interest in his poetic works. In Greenock, it led to the formation of a Burns group within the Ayrshire Society, weekly gatherings, jocularly called Cottar’s Saturday Nights, and visits to Burns’ birthplace in Alloway.

Such Ayrshire men, according to some records, called themselves Greenock Burns Club and Ayrshire Society and dated their foundation from 1801. In 1804, it would appear, the two parts took their separate ways.

The Greenock men, therefore, have been at the forefront of Burns Club establishment along with those at Paisley (founded 1805), Kilmarnock (1808), Dunfermline (1812), Dalry, Ayrshire, and Alloa (1825), and Irvine, Leith and Peterhead (1826).

Greenock citizens’ acquaintanceship with Burns goes back even farther. Some members of the Ayrshire Society had come to know the poet well personally. Notably among them was Captain Richard Brown, who had first encouraged the young ploughman to “endeavour at the character of the poet”. Also in town was Jean Markland, one of the famous “Mauchline Belles”, now the wife of excise officer James Findlay. Greenock folk had bought at least 50 copies of Burns’ Edinburgh edition.

Today, Greenock Burns Club claims an unbroken existence from its establishment and is looking forward to the celebration of the bicentenary next year. Since it’s beginnings, it has fostered interest in the poet, not just in the town but nation and world wide.

Among its many highly proactive members was Colin Rae Brown, president for three years. Later, when he was in London, Mr Brown’s enthusiasm for the bard saw to the foundation of the London Club, of which he was president.

The members, to the number of sixty-seven, met in the White Hart Inn to celebrate the natal day of Robert Burns instead of on Saturday, the 28th January, 1804 the 25th being the actual day of his birth.

Mr. George Dempster was in the chair, as at first intended, and as this was the last occasion upon which the Ayrshire Society would be associated with the Burns Club at these anniversary meetings, it was decided to make a special night of it; and Mr. Dougal, at the request of his friends, brought forward a most efficient chorus of his friends to render the songs of Burns in parts.
for 12 years. The Greenock man would be one of the guiding hands in seeing to the establishment of a statue to Burns on the Thames embankment and the formation of the Burns Federation. It was Mr Brown also who suggested that the Federation undertook the publication of the Federation’s highly valued magazine, the *Burns Chronicle*.

Regarded as of the highest priority in the club’s activities has been its efforts to encourage students of all ages in the reading, writing, recitation and singing of Burns poetry, as well as a wide interest in Scottish literature generally. This has been done by the establishment of schools competitions and the awarding of prizes.

Six evenings of entertainment are held by the club throughout the year, a St Andrew’s night being regarded as equally important to the poet’s anniversary. There is also an annual church service in the Old West Kirk.

The club also sponsors a junior celebration held in rotation by one of the 10 secondary schools in the town (when the toasts are given in Irn Bru). Upwards of 140 youngsters take part in these events and the quality of their performance is said to be “frighteningly good”. The recent recitation by one young girl of “A man’s a man” was a talking point among club members.

So also, from an international point of view, was the singing of a Burns song by a Finnish girl in the town on an exchange visit. In 1996-97 the club presented a copy of the recently published complete works of Robert Burns to every school in Inverclyde.

Ladies have played a prominent part in the club since they were first admitted to membership in the late 1970s and three have held the position of president. Mabel Irving, a local school teacher, was the first lady member, became the first lady president and is currently the club’s official bard. Jane McGlip was president in 1990-91. Headmistress Isabella Lind, was president in 1996-97, secretary is Ailsa Anderson, wife of former president Allister Anderson, the current president is Jean Allan.

Members of the club – currently totalling 200 – come from all walks of life.

Of special interest to the club is the story of Burns’ “Highland Mary”, who died of typhus in Greenock in 1786 – 15 years before the Greenock Club was set up. Scarcity of hard facts, uncertainty even of her identity, has added to the fascination of this nursemaid, dairymaid. Now believed to be Dunoon-born Margaret, not Mary, Campbell, just over 20 years old at her death. She has been described variously as: “a tall girl, fair, with blue eyes; a gentle girl, interested in her bible”; also, a Gaelic-speaking girl, with a Highland accent.

It would seem that in 1786 or later, the now married poet dared not publicly acknowledge her, even if he could not forget her, was compelled to write verses about her but obscured her identity and time of friendship. The hardest evidence of the affair is the two-volume bible given to the lass by the bard, bearing his name and tantalising inscriptions in his writing.

On one volume was written, “And ye shall not swear by my name falsely, I am the Lord.” On the other, “Thou shalt not forswear thyself but shalt perform unto the Lord thine oath.” And three years after, on the anniversary of her death, there was his melancholy poem containing the words, “O Mary, dear departed shade.”

In 1842, the club erected a monument to “Mary” at the graveyard of the town’s Old West Kirk. When that graveyard was taken over for shipyard expansion in 1920, the monument and the remains were reverentially removed to the town cemetery. At this disinterment, an infant’s coffin board was discovered. It gave cause
for speculation that the young woman had died in childbirth although the child could have been buried there many years later.

Archive material of the club – books, papers, photographs, relics of many kinds accumulated over nearly 200 years – crowd the walls and cupboards of a room in Watt Library, Greenock. (See pages 18 and 20).

Here again is found the interest in “Highland Mary” with a special corner devoted to her story. The desire to cling to any tangible reminder of her is revealed in the three wooden bearers used to transport her coffin in 1920 and an egg cup made from the wood of a rowan tree that grew near her grave in the old kirk yard.

What is not to be found in the archive room to the great regret, and some embarrassment, of members is the club’s original minute book dealing with the years 1801 to 1810. The inside of this book has “gone missing”, since about 1926, although convincing references to it and quotations from its contents are to be found in later records. (See references in the previous article).

All that remains now are the covers of the book and a photograph of writing on fly leaves which states as follows:

“This book was found in the house of the late Mr Robert Burns at his demise and presented to the Burns Club of Greenock by Adam Pearson Esquire of His Majesty’s Excise, Edinburgh, AD1801 Greenock Burns Club and Ayrshire Society.”

An illustration which appears in full colour in one of a number of books produced to record the names and signatures of those attending the Clubs Annual Celebration. In this example Dr. Ian Grimble proposed THE IMMORTAL MEMORY.
Robert Wilson was born at Cambuslang on 2 January, 1907. His boyhood and youth were spent at Newarthill, where his parents had moved to when Robert was aged three. From an early age he loved to sing, and a local choirmaster, James Lauder, persuaded him to have his voice professionally trained. By 1933 he was a principal tenor with the D'Oyly Carte Opera Company. He left them four years later to pursue his career as a solo artist. Norrie Paton here looks at the Burns songs that Robert Wilson included in his repertoire from the early stages of his long career.

On Sunday, 23 January 2000, Robbie Shepherd in the BBC Radio Scotland programme, *The Reel Blend*, announced his intention of paying his tribute to the anniversary of the birth of our national bard, Robert Burns, by going back to the early 1930's for a recording of *The Silver Tassie*: “as recorded by Robert Wilson, showing his strong voice at the time”. The Parlophone Record Company had engaged the services of Robert Wilson, who was then a member of the D’Oyly Carte Opera Company, to cut several songs for them; however, *The Silver Tassie* was never issued. Only two of Robert Wilson’s 78 rpm records on the Parlophone label were made available to the public: Catalogue No E4050, *Ae Fond Kiss*, with, *The Lass of Ballochmyle* on the reverse side, and Catalogue No. E4051, *Invocation* (A Prayer for Mary) reversed with, *Charming Chloe*.

The connection with Robert Burns is quite obvious; of the five listed songs, four have been attributed to him, whilst one, *Invocation*, had, for many years, passed as Burns’s work until a chanced viewing of the lyrics in an old magazine, resulted in the verses being struck from the Burns canon. The reason for withholding *The Silver Tassie* is not known, but at least the original recording has been preserved, and, for those who now remember Robert Wilson as the singer of catchy little Scottish ditties in the variety theatres and on TV’s *White Heather Club*, in the late 1950’s, the difference in his voice was quite remarkable!
The choice of songs in these early Parlophone recordings is worthy of further comment. *The Silver Tassie* was, undoubtedly, one of the finest songs Burns ever wrote. As with that other superb production, *Auld Lang Syne*, Burns decided to draw a veil of mystery over how much the song had been borrowed from old verses, and how much had been his own composition. The two songs were actually presented to Mrs Dunlop in the same letter, penned from Ellisland farm, 7 December, 1788. After copying out *Auld Lang Syne*, Burns added: “Now I am on my Hobby-horse, I cannot help inserting two other old Stanzas which please me mightily.” The Stanzas opened: “Go fetch to me a pint o’ wine…” – a fact that is frequently overlooked, and the song incorrectly titled: *Gae Bring Tae Me a Pint o’ Wine*. Burns, be it noted, used the title, *My bony (bonnie) Mary*. He also finally acknowledged that the song was his own, save for the first half-stanza, but even here some doubt arises; no such lines have ever come to light from a reliable source. The claims of Peter Buchan (1828) that he had discovered them to be the work of Alexander Lesley, written in 1636, can certainly be dismissed as utter nonsense. *The Centenary Edition* (Henley & Henderson) gave the following quatrain taken from Sharpe’s *Ballad Book* of 1823.

\[
\begin{align*}
Go & \text{ fetch to me a pint o’wine,} \\
Go & \text{ fill it to the brim; } \\
That & \text{ I may drink my gude Lord’s health,} \\
Tho’ & \text{ Errol be his name.} \\
\end{align*}
\]

James Kinsley (1963) rightly pointed out that these lines were taken from a recitation in 1803, and more than likely influenced by Burns’s song. James Mackay stated that, *The Silver Tassie* was an old Jacobite ballad, but offered no further source of reference material to sustain his reasoning. Unless some definite proof emerges (and this would seem most unlikely) to link the opening half-stanza with another author, the only logical conclusion is to assume that, *The Silver Tassie*, in its entirety, was the work of Robert Burns.

The tune to which Burns set the lyrics of *The Silver Tassie* never fully pleased him. He found it in Oswald’s *Universal Harmony* (1745) entitled, *The Stolen Kiss*; now more often referred to as, *The Secret Kiss*. Burns suggested to George Thomson that it might be that the verses would adapt better to a tune called, *Waes my Heart that we Should Sunder*. Thomson – not unusual for him – disregarded this suggestion, and set the verses instead to, *The Old Highland Laddie*. When communicating the song of Thomson, in 1793, Burns, incidentally, informed him that the verses were his own – no mention whatsoever, of a half-stanza from another source! In the Robert Wilson recording, c.1933, backed by piano accompaniment, the melody follows the original Burns selected tune.

The story of *Ae Fond Kiss* is so well known that it hardly merits repeating. The emotional parting of Burns and Nancy McLehose in December 1791, prompted the composition of the verses. James Mackay astutely noted that, a letter from the poet to Nancy written almost four years earlier, may have contained the genesis of the song: “Can I wish that I had never seen you? That we had never met? No; I never will!”

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{Never met – or never parted – } \\
\text{We had ne’er been broken-hearted.} \\
\end{align*}
\]
The air of this song, *Rory Dall’s Port*, was taken, by Burns, from the *Caledonian Pocket Companion* (1756). Rory Dall was a collective name given to those harpists who were attached to the Macleods of Skye; a port being a Celtic air of the Highlands and Islands of Scotland. This particular tune however, was not used by Robert Wilson for the song, and he chose instead, a melody written by Alfred Scott Gatty who composed numerous light operas, and is also remembered for supplying the air to D M Mutlock’s song, *Rothesay Bay*. Whatever the merits of Gatty’s work, allied to the sheer quality of Wilson’s superb singing, the song is not at all improved by divorcing it from Burns’s choice of melody.

On the reverse side of *Ae Fond Kiss* Robert Wilson has chosen to present *The Lass O Ballochmyle*, or as James Kinsley titled it in his edition: *Song. On Miss WA. (Wilhelmina Alexander)*. Burns, as he frequently did, exposed the prevalent class divisions in his verses, making it clear that, Miss Alexander as a member of the gentry was most unlikely to seek a peasant poet as her suitor and companion in life. His assessment of the situation hit the true note – Miss Alexander was not at all enraptured by the measure of his poetic charms, and completely snubbed him: “She was”, Burns sarcastically declared: “too fine a lady to notice so poor a compliment.” In truth, it has been said that Wilhelmina was no beauty and she may have felt offended by the extravagant language of Burns’s praise. She spent her life as a spinster, living into her ninetieth year, and it is known that, in her declining old age, among her most cherished possessions, she held dear a letter and a song she had received from Scotland’s bard.

The song was initially written to the tune, *Ettrick banks*, but in common with so many other vocalists, Robert Wilson sang it to the melody composed by William Jackson (1828-76) a music hall accompanist and ballad writer. Maurice Lindsay, in the *Burns Encyclopaedia*, referred to Jackson’s composition as: “a somewhat indifferent setting”. Robert Wilson also made a much later, and noticeable inferior recording of the song on the Thistle label.

The second of the Parlophone recordings by Wilson was *Invocation – A Prayer for Mary*, with, *Charming Chloe*, on the reverse side. The former song, according to Mary Campbell’s biographer, Archibald Munro, drew the admiration of George Thomson as being: “one of the finest the poet ever penned.” Well yes, but the only penning of it done by Burns was in copying it straight from the pages of the *Edinburgh Magazine* (1774), and merely changing the name Serena to that of Mary. It was given in the magazine as a translation from Euripides, the Athenian dramatist. (480 – 406 BC).

When Scott Douglas was working on his renowned six-volume edition of Burns (1877-79), he was alerted to the fact that a young librarian had discovered the text of the song *Invocation* in the *Edinburgh Magazine*, and it therefore could not possibly have been written by Burns – it was, thereupon – struck from the canon. The song had been given in James Johnson’s *Museum* (Fifth Volume – No. 460) as a secondary piece to a song of the same air, given by the title of *Blue Bonnets*. The tune to which Robert Wilson sang it however, was written by a Falkirk organist, W A Henderson who, in the late 1920s published several of the poet’s works as: *Burns-Henderson Art Songs* – he was also involved in a musical setting of *The Jolly Beggars* for a BBC Radio programme.

There is no doubt that the song *Invocation* was a great favourite with Robert Wilson and, along with, *Thou Lingering Star*, one of Burns’s posthumous songs from Mary Campbell, it was often included in his repertoire for the concert hall at the outset of his
career. Indeed, Robert’s son, Carey Wilson, regards it as the finest of his father’s early recordings.

The song, *Charming Chloe*, is another one which falls into the category of being edited and polished-up by Burns, and by no means an original composition. He did, on this occasion, admit that he had borrowed much from old verses in Ramsay’s *Tea-Table Miscellany*. A comparison can be made by checking Allan Ramsay’s opening stanza, below, against that given in an edition of Burns:

*It was the charming month of May,*  
*When all the flow’rs were fresh and gay,*  
*One morning by the break of day,*  
*Sweet Chloe, chaste and fair;*  
*From peaceful slumber she arose,*  
*Girt on her mantle and her hose,*  
*And o’er the flow’ry mead she goes,*  
*To breathe a purer air.*

In all probability Burns was attracted to the song by the name Chloe – at that particular period of his life, November 1794, he was infatuated by Jean Lorimer, for whom he wrote more love-songs than for any other heroine, and, of course, he gave her the artificial name of Chloris – something he later regretted! Chloe, being a derivative of Chloris, and the fact that it slotted into the same time as Burns’s own Chloris compositions, prompted James C Dick to include *Charming Chloe* within the group of songs inspired by Jean Lorimer – and this is generally accepted. This song, incidentally, usually takes its title as per the opening line: *It was the charming Month of May.*

In supplying the song to George Thomson for his Select Scottish Airs, Burns Wrote: “You may think meanly of this; but take a look at the bombast original, & you will be surprised that I have made so much of it.” This opinion, however, has not been shared by many literary critics and editors! The song, as given by Allan Ramsay, was listed to be sung to a tune named as, *The Happy Clown*. Burns, being aware that Thomson wanted words for the air, *Dainty Davie*, offered *Charming Chloe* as the solution to this particular problem. Robert Wilson, however followed the soprano, Elsie Suddaby, who had recorded the song in 1926, by singing it to a melody composed by Sir Edward German.

Those Parlophone recordings present Robert Wilson as a young tenor of true operatic quality – the voice comes across clear and strong; masculine, yet fully capable of imparting a tender emotion into the lyrics precisely as required, with an impassioned, compelling Lanarkshire accent that remained throughout his career. His singing of Scottish songs was invariably delivered with a genuine intonation that soon established his reputation as the voice of Scotland!

Sadly, no records were made by Robert Wilson during the period when his voice would have been at its peak in the late 1930’s, He was, at this time, employed by the D’Oyly Carte Opera Company as a principal tenor, and Muriel Dickson, the Metropolitan Opera soprano, who began her own career with the company recalled that, when Robert went on stage the rest of the cast, the staff, stagehands et al would gather in the wings and stand in awe listening to him sing. The Pye Recording Company, in 1973, compiled an LP album
of sixteen songs by Robert Wilson which they had transferred from the sound-track of the ‘Pathe Pictorial’ film features, in which he took part, between 1937-44. The only Burns song which appears in this collection is, *Ye Banks and Braes*, and it is sung superbly!\(^8\)

In 1943 Robert signed a contract with HMV who were anxious to portray him predominantly as a singer of Scottish songs. The initial record they issued, however, was the Stephen Foster classic, *Jeanie with the Light Brown Hair*, coupled with, *Heaven Alone*; thereafter, came the flood of Scottish material, with only a few exceptions. The Burns connection probably should have been more prominent than what ensured: *A Red, Red Rose* (1944); *Afton Water* (1946); *Lovely Polly Stewart* (1949); and *Green Grow the Rashes O* (1950)\(^9\). His singing of *Afton Water* however, deserves special mention as surely one of the classics of Scottish recordings. Robert’s diction and breath control are simply beyond criticism; the singing of the concluding lines:

\[
\begin{align*}
&\text{My Mary’s asleep by thy murmuring stream} \\
&\text{Flow gently, sweet Afton, disturb not her dream!}
\end{align*}
\]

arguably, is unsurpassed in the realm of Scots recording song.

The only other Burns song recorded by Robert Wilson was *The Lea Rig*, on the Thistle label. The recording quality, alas, was not particularly good, and Wilson’s voice was past it’s best when he made it. No doubt, in his long career in radio, TV, variety theatres, and the concert platform, Robert Wilson sang many more songs of the bard thus generating the reflections: “If only he had put them onto records”. He appeared at the Albert Hall, London, on 4 February, 1939, in a show billed as: ‘Burns Night in London’s greatest Hall’, leaving the correspondent of *the Edinburgh Evening News* to comment:

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{The Albert Hall Festival was a particularly successful affair this year. It had been fading out of late years. This year it was the biggest and most enthusiastic I have ever seen. The concert was also one of the best I have heard at this Scottish revel…} \\
\text{But there was a new singer to me. Mr Robert Wilson, a tenor, from Lanark. He was the surprise of the evening. He seemed to bring the wind of the north hills with his song, and with an ease and charm that was a joy to ear and heart.}
\end{align*}
\]

In the December before this Albert Hall concert Robert had appeared at the Lanark Choral Society; the local newspaper being full of praise for a performance which had concluded in an encore with the rendition of a popular Burns song:

\[
\begin{align*}
&\text{Of Mr Robert Wilson, whose reputation as an accomplished artist is well known in Lanarkshire, It is hardly necessary to say more than that he lived up to his reputation. His choice of songs provided him with an opportunity to display his fine voice in all it’s aspects. He opened his programme with two Handel songs, followed them with songs by Charles and Edward German, and finished his programme, to the great delight of the audience, by singing as an encore, *Bonnie Wee Thing*, a song that has been massacred}
\end{align*}
\]
by songsters for far too long; but which, when finely sung, as it was by Mr Wilson, is among the very best of the many lovely Scots songs that are now heard with decreasing frequency.

The true criterion of Robert Wilson’s greatness is to be found in his role as an outstanding ambassador for the music and song of his native land. His own love of Scotland is clearly reflected in the manner of his singing, and of the efforts he made to take his message across the seas to exiles Scots in Canada, America, New Zealand, and Australia, on countless tours. His trips abroad, and also his touring around Scotland, England and Ireland brought to the fore many young performers who subsequently found their niche of fame on stage, radio, and television. He encouraged them all, and thankfully, most of them expressed their gratitude to him in tribute and compliment after his death in 1964.

Where does Robert Wilson stand today in the legend of Scottish entertainers? His admirers will claim for him the highest spot, and argue the case that, at his best, Robert had the most pleasing tenor voice ever gifted to a Scottish singer. Admirers of Joseph Hislop, Sydney MacEwan, and Kenneth McKellar will, doubtless, contest this no less passionately, - but let them ponder the thought that, nobody else, either before or after Robert Wilson, has ever strolled jauntily onto a stage unchallenged, as, the Voice of Scotland. He has received many accolades, the more so since his untimely death; however, the one from Sheena Wellington, who electrified the nation with her singing of A Man’s a Man for a’ That, at the opening of the Scottish Parliament, will surface as a special acknowledgement to his memory:

Robert Wilson was the Voice of Scotland for a whole generation. In the post war years he epitomised a culture that was distinctive and different, With a clear and strong tenor voice with an uncommonly rich lower register he had the ability to deliver a song with passion and total conviction. This was true even when singing material not of the strongest. His Down in the Glen can still bring a tear to my eye redolent as it is of my childhood vision of the beloved country.

SOURCE NOTES
4) BURNS’ HIGHLAND MARY, by, Archibald Munro. Paisley (1896) p.109
6) Tea-Table Miscellany, by, Allan Ramsay. Dublin (1796) Song: CXIII, p. 386
9) Robert Wilson’s recordings of A Red Red Rose, and, Afton Waters are available on CD/Cassette: WESTERING HOME, from Memoir Classics, Pinner, Middlesex, HA5 2SA.

FOR SALE IN GOOD CONDITION A QUANTITY OF ROBERT WILSON’S 78 GRAMAPHONE RECORDS - TEL: 01772 612597
I recently came across a copy of a previously unpublished letter from John Murdoch (who taught the Poet and his brother), to Gilbert Burns, dated London 14th August, 1802, on the subject of a visit he had had from a ‘so called’ Robert Burns who claimed to be the son of the Poet. The P.S. referred to had been written on one of the margins of the paper, in very small print. Robert the eldest son of the Poet after completing his education in Scotland went to London where he was employed as a clerk in the Stamp Office, Somerset House, at the time of the following story he was 16 years old, and still in Scotland.

Hart Street, Bloomsbury Square, London, August 14th 1802

My Dear Friend,

The story I have now to tell you is to both of us, somewhat interesting and rather curious.

On Thursday the 5th instant, about noon, a young man came into our shop desiring to see me. Mrs Murdoch called me, and when I went into the shop he expressed a high degree of satisfaction in becoming acquainted with me; and, while holding me by the hand, asked if I could trace any features in his face that were familiar to me. Hearing him speak with a strong Caledonian accent, I answered that it was no way likely that I could be acquainted with his face; for he must have been born since I left Scotland.

He asked if I observed no sort of resemblance of a face with which I was once acquainted. I could not recollect. He told me he was young Burns the son of the Poet. Indeed there was in his face a very great likeness to the print that we have as a fronticepiece of the book. There was one great difficulty, however to be surmounted, namely his age. The youth appeared both to my wife and me to be full twenty.

He said he was near eighteen and that Dr Currie, to gain the benevolence, and move the sympathy of the public in their behalf, had represented the children as considerably younger than they really were.

It was hardly possible, knowing the Doctor’s probity, to think him capable of this; but as it appeared but a kind of pious fraud, intended to maintain the cause of the widow and fatherless, I was inclined to regard it only as a venial sin, or a failing leaning to the side of virtue; - and the more we looked the more resemblance did we find between the face and the print.

The object of his journey to London, was the next thing to be enquired about. He told us he was come up under the auspices of Mr Dundas, who had given him money to pay
his expenses, and desired him to be here by the ninth of the month.

He spent the remainder of the day with us, and almost the two following. On Saturday after dinner, he took leave promising to breakfast with us the next morning; then we were to go to the chapel, and afterwards to dine with Major and Mrs Crawford of Doonside whose civilities to me deserve more than parentistical mention, but about eight o’clock I received the following note, which set me a thinking and rather puzzled me.

Mr Burns is extremely sorry to inform Mr Murdoch that he can not enjoy the pleasure of his and Mr Crawford’s company to-morrow owing to circumstances Mr B did not forsee previous to his making the engagement. Mr B has a letter for money upon a Mr Cowley of Chesterton Street, upon which he depended, but unfortunately Mr Cowley will be out of town for a month, and his people at home can not answer the demand, and Mr B is unable to pay Mr Wright the bearer, his bill for his cloaths, which amounts to £3.18.6; and if Mr Murdoch will pay either the money, or pass his word for it to Mr Wright, which will singularly oblige Mr B.

Saturday 5 P.M.

Answer sent by Mr Wright at 9 o’clock same evening.

*Mr Murdoch’s Compliments to Mr Burns* - is exceedingly sorry that he has it not in his power to comply with his request, but hopes to see him to-morrow at breakfast, when they will concert some method of having that little matter settled. - Hart Street, Bloomsberry Square.

He did not come on the Sabbath; on Monday received the following card by express.

*Mr Burns presents the best respects to Mr Murdoch, is extremely sorry he should have addressed him on a subject he should have hesitated to comply with, but now is happy to inform him that he is this day liberated from every incumbrance by receiving an order from Mr Dundas who is to be in town this day fortnight.*

Angel Inn, Monday 5 P.M.

*Mr Burns would be exceeding happy to have the pleasure of Mr Murdoch’s company to supper to-night at nine o’clock when he Mr B will endeavour to excuse himself from waiting on Mr M. yesterday morning.*

I did not go to supper, but next day sent the following letter by two-penny post.

Sir,

I heartily congratulate you upon your success, but could not make it convenient to see you last night otherwise perhaps I should have brought with me an intimate acquaintance of yours and of the family with whom you resided last winter. He* arrived yesterday from Edinburgh and would be very happy to see you as he lives just by, I will accompany you to his lodgings when you call, and then we shall visit some of the principal of the persons in London who have taken a fatherly charge of your family and all your money matters.

They would certainly be very sorry to learn that you are labouring under pecuniary inconveniences. I have it not in my power to serve you in this respect, but Robert Burns the Second shall always be a welcome guest at my humble board, and at all times command such services as are in my power.
I am sincerely yours.
Hart Street, Bloomsbury, August 9th 1802.

*The person alluded to above told me he had seen nephew Robert last winter in Edinburgh, and that he was about fourteen, and no way remarkably stout for his age. Mrs Perochon, to whom I had the honour of being introduced yesterday, by Major and Mrs Crawford, assured me that when she was on a visit, three years ago to her mother Mrs Dunlop, at Dunlop your eldest nephew was not more than eleven years of age. If so, this man must be a pretender.

Pray write me soon concerning this and let me know if you received my last by Mr Ainslie, to whom please present my respects. Here, for want of more time I must end abruptly. Pray, write as soon as possible. I am,

Dear Sir,

Sincerely Yours

John Murdoch  P.S. See margin.

P.S. This was intended to be sent by favour of Major Crawford however it was thought safer to send it by post. Young Burns told us he had taken leave of you at Edinburgh the week before he set off, that he generally saw you once a fortnight but that he had never been at your house at Moreham, that he had come to Liverpool by sea but that he had not called to see Dr Currie, at which circumstance we wondered not a little — We have not seen him since Sat. 7th inst. which we think another indication he is not the man. We understand however that he still lodges in the Angel Inn, St. Martin’s le Grand. I was much pleased with your letter to the worthy Doctor. It is congenial to my open ideas throughout, particularly the transportation business. I am very sensible of the kind mention you have made of me in it and instead of receiving your recommendation with a self complacency and conceitedness I regard it as a pressing exhortation to double my diligence and to render the evening of my life as useful to society as I can. J.M.
As you stroll through the High Street of Falkirk, you will eventually arrive at a newsagents shop, surprisingly called Mauchlines. On the wall, high above the shop is a plaque that reads

‘Robert Burns poet
slept here
25th August 1787

The bust on the plaque was cast at the Grahamston Foundry in Falkirk in 1889.
This is all the tourist to the town will find about Burns in the High Street, apart form another plaque restating the fact that he stayed in what was known in those days as the Cross Keyes Inn, which is now the actual papershop.

He had begun a Tour of the Highlands and was accompanied by William Nicol, the Edinburgh schoolmaster. His room was in the centre portion of the second floor, and it was here that he penned the first entries into his Journal of his Highland Journey. According to an article in the *Fifeshire Journal* of the 4th November 1847, Burns used a diamond stylus to write the following words on the window of the Cross Keyes Inn,
‘Sound be his sleep and blyth his morn,
That never did a lassie wrang,
Who poverty ne’er held in scorn,
For misery ever tholed a pang’

This verse has never actually been verified.

As someone who has lived in the Falkirk area since 1977, and someone who is not by birth a ‘Falkirk Bairn’, I decided to find out what Robert Burns did do when he actually visited my adopted town or indeed, was there any other connection with Burns and Falkirk.

There have been two battles fought near Falkirk, which in their own way had a bearing on the course of history. The first in 1298, ended in defeat for Sir William Wallace at the hands of the army of Edward the First, and was instrumental in Robert Bruce setting out on his quest to forge the Scots as a nation. The second battle was fought on Falkirk Muir on the 17th Jan 1746. The Jacobites commanded by Lord George Murray were victorious against the Crown army of General Hawley. On April 16th of that same year, many of the men who fought at Falkirk were at Culloden supporting ‘Bonnie Prince Charlie’, and many of the Crown troops supported the Duke of Cumberland. The Battle of Culloden and its aftermath are deeply imbedded in the Scottish psyche.

It is the first Battle of Falkirk that is of interest in terms of the visit, of Burns to the town. Sir John De Graeme, one of Wallace’s Commanders fell in the battle and was taken for burial to the Old Parish Church, where today there is a monument over his grave. In a letter to Robert Muir, on the 26th Aug 1787, Burns wrote, ‘I left Auld Reekie yesterday morning, and have passt, besides my excursions, Linlithgow, Borrowstouness, Falkirk and here I am undoubtedly. –This morning I kneel’d at the tomb of Sir John the Graham, the gallant friend of the Immortal Wallace…’ Wallace was one of the heroes of Robert Burns and kneeling so close to this tomb would almost certainly have raised his emotions. In his Journal he remarked ‘Sunday 26th August – Falkirk, nothing remarkable except the tomb of John the Graham, over which in the succession of time has… been four stones laid.’

Falkirk was on the route that Burns was taking on his tour of the Highlands, and so he needed to pass through Falkirk to get to Stirling. In the same letter to Muir he mentions, ‘and just now from Stirling Castle I have seen by the setting sun the glorious prospect of the windings of Forth through the rich carse of Stirling and skirt the equally rich Carse of Falkirk’. He also mentioned the Carses of Falkirk and Stirling in a letter to Gavin Hamilton dated 38th Aug 1787.

To the west of Falkirk lies the community of Camelon. This area of Falkirk is very near to where the Jacobite battle was fought and is bordered by the Forth and Clyde Canal, Camelon, according to James Mackay was the ancient capital of the Picts, and Burns mentions Camelon in his poem ‘Caledonia’, the fifth stanza begins,

‘The Cameron – savage disturb’d her repose,
With tumult, disquiet, rebellion, and strife;
Provok’d beyond bearing, at last she arose,
And robb’d him at once of his hopes and his life;’
Top left: Grave of John de Graeme in the Old Parish Churchyard. Top right: Entrance to the Carron Ironworks, Falkirk. Left: Monument to the second wife of James Bruce in the Old Church, Larbert.
He also mentions Camelon in his Journal ‘Cameron, the ancient metropolis of the Picts, now a small village in the neighbourhood of Falkirk’.

There is a little pub on the side of the Forth and Clyde Canal at Camelon called the Canal Inn, nicknamed the ‘War Office’, due to the fact that it was the recruiting office for the area during the 1st world war. Since discovering that Camelon was mentioned by Burns in one of his poems, many of the clientele of the Inn say that Burns actually passed through Camelon on his way to Stirling. This is highly possible because after mentioning Camelon in his Journal he then stated ‘Cross the Grand Canal to Carron’. The Forth and Clyde Canal can be crossed at Camelon. Whether he did or not, the Bard has given great source for debate in the Canal inn.

Robert Burns was born in the year 1759, and in that same year saw the founding of the great Carron Ironworks which were situated to the North of Falkirk. Falkirk and the Carron Ironworks are synonomous, and it was from here that many products found their way to the four corners of the globe. The works are no longer as vast as they were in their heyday, but there is still a presence in Falkirk. Indeed, outside the original entrance to the works, which can be seen today, is a display of canon, made at the works, which were used at the Battle of Waterloo.

On Sunday the 26th Aug 1787, Burns and Nicol arrived at the Carron Ironworks, fully intending to be taken round the site. The porter at the gates refused them admission because no visit was allowed on Sundays, which the works strictly adhered to, neither Burns nor Nicol had a ticket of admission anyway, and Burns for his own reason had decided to use a fictitious name! Such was the price of fame!

Burns and his companion, whether in anger or otherwise, decided to cross over to the Carron Inn where Burns using his diamond stylus scratched the following on the window pane,

‘We can na here to view your warks
In hopes to be mair wise,
But only, lest we gang to hell,
It mae be nae surprise;
But when we tirl’d at your door,
Your porter dought na hear us;
Sae may, should we tae hell’s yetts come,
Your Billy Satan sair us.’

An enterprising clerk at the works, by the name of Willie Benson copied the words from the window, and then wrote them into the Companys’ order book. There is a very nice postscript to this story, because an amateur poet by the name of Alexander Benson, blast furnace manager at the works wrote a reply,

‘If you came here to see our works
You should have been more civil
Than to give a fictitious name,
In hopes to cheat the devil,
Six days a week to you and all,'
We think it very well;
The other if you go to church
May keep you out of hell.’

Burns and Nicol continued their journey to Stirling and on route visited the old Church of Larbert. In the churchyard they would have seen the monument over the grave of the second wife of James Bruce of Kinnaird, the famous explorer and one of the finest ambassadors of freemasonry. Bruce was nicknamed ‘Abyssinia’ after his exploits in trying to find the source of the Nile. His wife was Mary Dundas of Carronhall. The monument had been cast at the Carron Ironworks. His Journal for the visit reads very strangely’ Come passt Larbert and admire a fine monument of cast iron by Mr. Bruce, the African traveller to his wife. N.B. he used her very ill, and I suppose he meant it as much out of gratitude to heaven as anything else’ in the painting’ Burns at Sibbald’s Library’ by William Borthwick Johnson, the tall shadowy figure of James Bruce of Kinnaird can be seen lurking in the background. There are many other noted people of the time in the painting. Burns and Nicol then left the Falkirk district and continued on to Bannockburn. Their journey took them passed Denny Village, ‘The pleasant seats of Herbertshire”, Denovan and ‘Down the way to Dunipace’. They dined with John Munro at this Auchenbowie Estate where Burns ever one for the lassies wrote in his diary’ Miss Munro an amiable, sensible sweet young woman, much resembling Mrs. Grierson.’

It is said that Burns returned to the Carron Ironworks in October 1787, this time accompanied by James Adair. He recollected in later years that the Poet and himself ‘visited the ironworks at Carron, with which the Poet was forcibly struck. The resemblance between that place, and its inhabitants to the Cave of Cyclops, which must have occurred to every classical reader, presented itself to Burns’ there is no account of this visit anywhere within the records of the Carron Ironworks.

Products made at the Carron Ironworks came into Burns life in later years, namely the Carronades he tried to send to the French Revolutionaries. This occurred when he was an Exciseman in Dumfries. The Carronade was a gun manufactured at Falkirk, which had a very successful reputation as a weapon. Having confiscated them from the ‘Rosamond’, a smuggling ship on the Solway waters, on the 29th February 1792, Burns seemingly retrieved the weapons from the ship and endeavored to send them in support of the French. France in 1792 was in revolutionary turmoil. The sale of the Carronades was on the 19th April of 1792, nine days after Burns had been made an honorary member of the Royal Companys of Archers.

In 1788, Burns decided to lease Ellisland Farm near Dumfries from Patrick Miller of Dalswinton. It was this miller that had secretly left ten guines for Burns in Sibbalds’ bookshop when Burns first arrived in Edinburgh. Patrick Miller was a director of the Bank of Scotland and was also a director of the Carron Ironworks, where he became personally involved in the production of the Carronade. Miller was also involved with William Symington in his experiments with steamboat construction. Symington eventually built the ‘Charlotte Dundas’ at Grangemouth near Falkirk. According to some sources, Burns was a passenger on a maiden voyage of an early steamboat on Dalswinton Loch in 1788, along with Miller and Symington. Once again there is a connection here, since in 1788 and 1789, Symington built an engine at the Carron Ironworks to be used on a
boat on the Forth and Clyde Canal.

In the past few years, I have become a Friend of Ellisland, and have struck up a friendship with the curator, Les Byers. On trips on business to Dumfries, if I have a spare moment, I visit the farm and I am always made welcome. In Conversation with Les one day he pointed out another Falkirk and Carron Works connection. The kitchen range, which Burns bought for Jean Armour, was manufactured at the Carron Ironworks. Jean cooked food on the range, made by the company that refused access to her husband to view its’ works! Fate is indeed fickle. The range is in excellent condition at Ellisland Farm.

It is my opinion that the association that Burns has with Falkirk should be recognised by more than just a plaque on a wall. This Scot of the Millennium, Scotlands’ National Bard has left a poem regarding his visit, the birth of the Carron Ironworks coincides with his birth, and even his last farm has a product made in Falkirk. The Council, and indeed the many Burns Clubs in the district should get together and erect a statue to the Bard. He is just not Scotlands’ Bard, he is ‘The Bard’.

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20th-22nd JULY, 2001

Hosts: Burns Club of Atlanta

Above: Replica of Burns Cottage, Alloway, Headquarters of the Burns Club of Atlanta, open to delegates during the conference.
RE-DEDICATION OF THE
LOUDOUN SPOUT - 2000
Historic Event at Mauchline

As part of Mauchline Community Council’s Millennium celebrations on 24th June, 2000 the historic Loudoun Spout was re-dedicated in front of one of the largest gathering of residents of the town and surrounding countryside seen for many a long day.

The official opening of the refurbished Spout was carried out by Miss Stroma Hamilton-Campbell and Bolton Lancashire born, Fred Dibnah (Steeplejack) of television fame.

Mrs Margaret Skilling (President Ayrshire Association of Burns Clubs) and senior vice-president of the Robert Burns World Federation John Skilling pictured at the Loudoun Spout after the official opening. John became president of the Federation at the Annual Congress, Peebles 2000.
The Address given by Miss Stroma Hamilton-Campbell
(A direct descendant of the Loudoun Campbells)

“It is a great pleasure to be here to-day for Mauchline’s Millennium celebration and Gala day. Many of you here will be fairly new to the village and you may not know very much of it’s history. The name for instance, means in Ancient Gaelic: Plain with the Pool or Meadow of the Springs. It was once famous for its box ware and curling stones and latterly its coal mine but most of all for Robert Burns. You may also have noticed some or all of the gates which used to be the entrances to the grounds of Netherplace House which stood there for 350 odd years. Netherplace had 4 drives, each with a lodge at the entrance, which we named by their positions - the Loudoun drive being just here. There were also Ayr, Kilmarnock and Mauchline. Campbells had lived on this land since the 16th century. Before Netherplace was built it is said that there was a house called High Cowfieldshaw in the field now belonging to Bogwood, between the railway line and the drive which we called the Ayr drive. There was a round of trees, now cut down, where the house is said to have been, but sadly no records exist.

We are Loudoun Campbells, cadets of the Campbells of Argyll, and in 1577 the then Earl of Loudoun granted the land known as Tenshilling side, to Hew Campbell of Cowfieldshaw, who built Netherplace, completed in 1620. As a child, I heard of a legend that says there was a tunnel running from Netherplace to Mauchline Castle and thence to Loudoun Castle - rather an impossibly long way I would have thought! I remember exploring the cellar in the expectation of finding the entrance, which I never did of course.

The first Campbells to live in the house were Covenanters and the flag which now hangs in the Kirk was found in the house during renovations in the early 1900s. The house was also extended at the end of the 19th century.

The main road from Glasgow to Dumfries used to run past the front of the house and along the Back Causeway, leading from Loudoun Street Toll Bar to Kilmarnock Road and Robert Burns used this route into Mauchline from Mossgiel. He was often to be seen, book in hand walking past the house or down one of the quiet drives. The Poet would water his horse at St. Michael’s Well. The well was also used by the cattle drovers and the mess created upset the Campbell family, resulting in a gate being placed across the drive at Loudoun Street and it is believed that this is when the Spout was installed. A toll of one farthing was charged for each drover using the Spout until the cost had been recovered.

This was a time when Robert Burns is said to have been at his most prolific. There was a falling out between the Campbell family and the Poet who wrote 3 rude epigrams which were withdrawn after the first edition - one was entitled Epitaph On A Henpecked Squire.

15 of the 18 Campbells of Netherplace were Christened Mungo, the last being my father. One particular Mungo found by the Earl of Eglinton on his land and accused of poaching, shot him dead. “Accident” - said Mungo, who had tripped and fallen, discharging his shotgun - “murder” said the Earl’s retainers, and he was subsequently found guilty and hanged in Edinburgh in 1770.

In 1845 the name Hamilton was joined to Campbell when William Campbell of Netherplace died without issue leaving the house and estate to his cousin Charles Vereker Hamilton of Cairnhill, now Carnell on condition that he took the family name. Charles was the second son of John Ferrier Hamilton of Cairnhill. William Campbell had two sisters,
and one, Lilias set up a Trust with a bequest of £800 - quite a lot in the 1840s, to be used for the poor of the Parish. £300 for the care of the old men and £500 for the old women.

Charles, now Hamilton-Campbell, was my great grandfather and he fought in the Sikh Wars with the 12th Frontier force. His wife is the last member of the family to have been buried in the churchyard.

My grandfather, William, fought in the Boer War where he caught the T.B. that eventually killed him. He married an Angus from Ladykirk and they had 3 surviving children, my father and his 2 sisters. He died when my father was 5 years old. My father Mungo, who some of you will remember, fought with the Ayrshire Yeomanry in the Second World War taking over command in 1944, the 4th generation of his family to do so. He married my mother Every Finlayson, in 1937, she, now Every RoosmaleCocq, is here to-day and is a member of the Loudoun Spout Committee which has done such a wonderful job.

It was after the sudden death of my father in 1953 aged just 41, that the upkeep of the estate came to be too much and we had to sell up and leave. The estate was sold to Sir Claude Alexander and in due course was acquired by Mactaggart and Mickel, in whose houses many of you will be living and who have been most generous to-wards this project. They have provided generous funding and the use of equipment and manpower to search for the source before new pipes could be laid, which they also undertook. Much of the old pipe is now inaccessible being under houses or gardens and it took a year of detective work to trace it back and to find the old well, buried under the Mauchline Community Centre Car Park! And to think it all started because Captain Anderson made a chance remark on leaving the Loudoun Arms one evening about the near demise of the Spout and took up Jim Davidson’s (secretary of the Loudoun Spout Society) challenge to do something about it!

This is a short history of Netherplace on whose land the Artesian Well known as St. Michael’s Well springs and feeds the Loudoun Spout. It is believed to be one of the oldest wells in the country and has been used by many generations of Mauchline people and will hopefully be used by many more, and is of course the focus of this Millennium Celebration.”

**EPITAPH OF A HENPECKED SQUIRE**

*As father Adam first was fool’d,*  
*A case that’s still too common,*  
*Here lies a man a woman ruled -*  
*The Devil ruled the woman.*
The Loudoun Spout in by-gone days from a photograph courtesy of J.M. Jamieson, Mauchline.

HISTORY OF THE LOUDOUN SPOUT

The history of the Spout goes back to the times of cattle drovers passing through Mauchline. At that time the Kings Highway from Ayr came via Gowkthorn and up Barskimming Road to the town entrance of Netherplace next to McLellands Inn (Loudoun Arms). Drovers proceeded to drive their cattle along the drive and past Netherplace House - built in 1620 - before reaching St Michael’s Well (opposite the former North Church) where the cattle were watered.

Increasing frequency of cattle drives caused the inhabitants of Netherplace House to become unhappy with the mess made on their driveway and of the area around St Michael’s Well. Therefore they closed access to Netherplace at Loudoun Street, requiring the drovers to turn right up Loudoun Street, then down Castle Street (Back Causeway) and out onto Kilmarnock Road.

By piping water from St Michael’s Well (within the grounds of Netherplace) to an area adjacent to the McLellad’s Inn (where building started in 1719) a watering place could be established at that point for the use of estate workers and livestock. It is believed that the Spout and trough were later additions installed about 1763. A toll charge of one farthing was made for each drover using the Spout until the cost had been recovered. Further evidence has shown that the supply pipes were made from wrought iron. The Spout would have been a popular watering place for horses in the time of Robert Burns (no doubt while their owners partook of a refreshment within McLellands Inn!).
With the advent of the industrial revolution the Spout became a regular watering point for all forms of agricultural transport - horses, steam engines and tractors, and later a suitably placed supply of water for motor vehicles after they had driven up from Ayr.

In recent years the Spout has been used by householders as a pure, clear supply of drinking water. Every day you can see folks filling up containers at the Spout for use in making a simple cup of tea or to be combined with a dram.

In this age, where conserving water has become a daily necessity in some areas, the sandstone rock below Mauchline provides a constant source of high quality drinking water. The Loudoun Spout is now the only remaining working artesian spring in Ayrshire.

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1. INTRODUCTION

In this paper we study an extant fragment of an unpublished letter (hereinafter designated as “the fragment” and “the letter,” respectively.) The fragment, which measures 3½” x 2¼”, is undated and unsigned. There is no indication as to the identity of the person to whom the letter was written. A previous owner of the fragment mounted it on a matte together with an engraved portrait of Sir Walter Scott (see Fig.1) evidently believing that the fragment was written by Sir Walter. We shall show that this indeed is the case, and we shall estimate the date of the letter and discuss its background.

Fig. 1 A portrait of Sir Walter Scott. Engraving after Henry Raeburn, 1808.
There are several indications that the fragment was written by Sir Walter Scott. Scott’s autographs are seldom easy to read. Those dating from the last years of his life are nearly illegible. Our fragment certainly belongs to that category. The reader may test this assertion by attempting to decipher the inscription on the fragment (Fig. 2), without consulting the transcription below.

![Image of the fragment]

**Fig. 2.** The fragment.

The fragment reads:

```
address to me under cover
to Charles Scott Esq and inclose
that in another cover to Right
honble Lord Howard
de Walden Foreign Office White
hall London
```

A preliminary examination of the fragment prompts the following observations. Although the first letter in the first line of the fragment seems to be a majuscule A, it cannot possibly indicate the beginning of a sentence, and therefore it should be regarded as a minuscule. The last word in the second line should be read “inclose” rather than “enclose”. In fact, the former spelling appears often in Sir Walter’s writings. The abbreviation “Honble” for “honourable”, in the fourth line, was used by Scott in other letters as well (see, e.g., the postscript to Scott’s letter to J. Fenimore Cooper (Letters¹.X.437).) Lastly, we note the total absence of any punctuation marks, other than periods, which is characteristic of Scott’s writing.

¹ See ABBREVIATIONS at the end of the paper.
Several aspects of the inscription on the fragment indicate that it was written by Sir Walter. The handwriting, as we shall show, bears a very close resemblance to that Sir Walter’s hand in the late 1820’s. The references to “Charles Scott Esq,” “Lord Howard de Walden,” and to the Foreign Office in the inscription directly relate to the circumstances existing in the spring of 1828 when Charles, the younger son of Sir Walter, became a clerk in the Foreign Office, and Lord Howard de Walden was the Under-Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs. Lastly, the instructions contained in the fragment detailing how to send mail via the Foreign Office are almost the same as Sir Walter’s suggestions to several of his correspondents that their mail may be conveniently sent to London under cover to Lord Howard de Walden or to the Earl of Aberdeen (see Section IV, below).

2. HANDWRITING

Scott’s handwriting is composed of hurried, nearly illegible undulating scribbles which represent letters or groups of letters. This shorthand notation enabled Scott to speed up his handwriting in order to cope with his extensive writing programme, particularly in the last years of his life when his bad health limited his dexterity. Thus minuscule t’s in Scott’s autographs are mostly uncrossed, and minuscule i’s are invariably undotted. As a result, his t’s are often indistinguishable from his i’s and the i’s from r’s or e’s. His o’s and even a’s are mostly opened at the top, and his e’s often have loops, and resemble undotted i’s. All these characteristics and peculiarities of Sir Walter’s handwriting are clearly seen in the inscription on the fragment.

We compare the handwriting on the fragment with that in four excerpts from Scott’s Journal, written in his own hand during the period December 1825 – March 1826, the time of Sir Walter’s financial crash.

[Transcription: “Lady Scott is incredulous and persists in cherishing hope where there is no ground for hope. I wish it may not bring on the Gloom of Spirits which has given me such distress If she were the active person she once was that would not be. Now I fear it more than what Constable or Cadell will tell me this evening – To that my mind is made up.”]

Fig 3. Facsimile from the entry in Scott’s Journal of 18th December 1825.
Went to the funeral of Chevalier Yelin the literary foreigner mentioned on 22nd. How many & how various are the ways of affliction. Here is this poor man dying at a distance from home his friend heart-broken his wife and family anxiously expect ing letters and doomd only to learn they have lost a husband and father forever”

Fig 4. Facsimile from the entry in Scott’s Journal of 24th January 1826.

Mr Laidlaw dined with us. Says Mr. G – n told him he would despair of my affair were it any but S.W.S. No doubt – so shoud I and am well nigh doing so at any rate –”

Fig 5. Facsimile from the entry in Scott’s Journal of 9th February 1826.

Mr Gibson came suddenly in after dinner. Brought very indifferent news from Constables House. It is now not hoped that they will pay above 3/ or 4/ in the pound. Robinson supposed not to be much better.

Mr. G. goes to London immediately & is to sell Woodstock to Robin son if they can otherwise to those who will. John Murray

Fig 6. Facsimile from the entry in Scott’s Journal of 29th March 1826.
Note the high degree of similarity between words or groups of letters in the fragment inscription (Fig.2) and in the above excerpts from Scott’s Journal. Compare the following: *ress* in *address* in line 1 of Fig. 2, with that in *distress* in line 3 of Fig. 3. In particular, observe the use of the long *s* in double *s*;
*to* (with uncrossed *t*, and *o* open at the top) in line 1 of Fig. 2, with the same word in lines 4 and 5 of Fig. 6;
*me* in line 1 of Fig. 2, with the same word in line 5 of Fig. 3;
*und* in *under* in line 1 of Fig. 2, with that in *ground* in line 2 of Fig. 3;
*ver* in *cover* in lines 1 and 3 of Fig. 2, with that in *forever* in line 6 of Fig. 4;
*to* (with crossed *t*) in line 2 of Fig. 2, with the same word in line 1 of Fig. 4;
*Ch* in *Charles* in line 2 of Fig. 2, with that in *Chevalier* in line 1 of Fig. 4;
*Scott* in line 2 of Fig. 2, with the same name in line 1 of Fig. 3;
*and* in line 2 of Fig. 2, with that in *husband* in line 5 of Fig. 4;
*inc* in *inclose* in line 2 of Fig. 2, with that in *incredulous* in line 1 of Fig. 3;
*that* in line 3 of Fig. 2, with the same word in lines 4 and 6 of Fig. 3;
*in* in line 3 of Fig. 2, with the same word in lines 1 and 3 of Fig. 6;
*other* in *another* in line 3 of Fig. 2, with that in *otherwise* in line 6 of Fig. 6;
*igh* in *Right* in line 3 of Fig. 2, with that in *nigh* in line 3 of Fig. 5;
*ble* in *Honble* in line 4 of Fig. 2, with that in *Constable* in line 5 of Fig. 3;
*L* in *Lord* in line 4 of Fig. 2, with the same majuscule in *Lady* in line 1 of Fig. 3;
*How* in the crossed out *Howard* in line 4 of Fig. 2 with *How* in line 2 of Fig. 4;
*oreign* in *Foreign* in line 5 of Fig. 2, with *oreign* in *foreigner* in line 1 of Fig. 4;
*whi* in *White* in line 5 of Fig. 2, with that in *which* in line 3 of Fig. 3;
*ha* in *hall* in line 6 of Fig. 2, with that in *has* in line 3 of Fig. 3;
*ll* in *hall* in line 6 of Fig. 2, with *ll* in *well* in line 3 of Fig. 5;
*London* in line 6 of Fig. 2, with the same word in line 5 of Fig. 6.

Careful examination of the handwriting shows beyond reasonable doubt that the inscription on the fragment was written by the same hand as Scott’s Journal.

3. DRAMATIS PERSONAE

The letter of which the fragment was a part was written by Sir Walter Scott. Only two personae, Charles Scott and Lord Howard de Walden (1799 – 1868), are explicitly mentioned in the inscription on the fragment. Lord Dudley (1781 – 1833) and Earl of Aberdeen (1784 – 1860), who are not mentioned in this inscription but are referred to in related letters of Sir Walter, complete the cast.

Charles Scott was born on 24 December 1805, the younger son of Sir Walter Scott and Lady Scott. Charles was rather a sickly child. However, in his father’s opinion “little Charles seems to be the cleverest of the party and indeed exceeds any child of his age” (*Letters*, II, 536.)

In the autumn of 1813 Charles entered the Edinburgh High School, following in his father’s footsteps. Four years later Sir Walter observed that his “youngest boy is a very sharp little fellow” (*Letters*, V, 33). In July 1818 Sir Walter confided in his friend Joanna Baillie, a Scottish dramatist and poet: “…your greatest admirer… is little Charles who
makes a manual of the plays on the passions and has them and Shakespeare all by heart” (Letters, V, 175). In 1820 Sir Walter sent Charles to John William’s school in Lampeter, Wales, to get him thoroughly grounded in classics. Charles studied under Williams till 1823. In 1824 he entered the Brazen Nose College in Oxford. He took there his bachelor’s degree in June 1827.

Sir Walter pondered for months about a suitable career for his younger son. He suggested to Charles a diplomatic career or the choice between the English and Scottish bar (Letters, X, 5), but it seems that Sir Walter made up his own mind even before Charles graduated. Indeed in June 1827 he wrote to Sir William Knighton, the private Secretary to George IV: “My old friend Lord Dudley would be perhaps not averse to receive my son into his department” (Letters, X, 223). On 1 December 1827 Sir Walter received a letter from Lord Dudley, announcing that his Majesty “has condescended in the most gracious manner to intimate his pleasure...that...Charles should be provided for in the Foreign Office”(Letters, X, 324). On 11 February Sir Walter noted in his Journal: “My son Charles left us this morning to take possession of his situation in the Foreign Office. He has been very lucky.”

Lord Dudley was the Foreign Secretary in Canning’s Cabinet, from April to September 1827. He continued in the same position in Goderich’s Cabinet from September 1827 to January 1828, and in Wellington’s Cabinet from January to the end of May 1828 when he resigned his position and was replaced by the Earl of Aberdeen. Thus at the beginning of Charles’s career in the Foreign Office his Chief was Lord Dudley who was an old friend of Sir Walter’s, as was the Earl of Aberdeen (Letters, X, 429). Nevertheless when Sir Walter contemplated using a Foreign Office frank for Charles’s correspondence he asked Charles, in his letter of 27 February 1828 (Letters, X, 390), to ascertain if Lord Howard de Walden’s frank could be used with propriety to protect Charles’s correspondence. Lord Howard de Walden was the Under-Secretary of State and probably Charles’s direct superior, but there is no evidence that he was on personal terms with Sir Walter.

Lord Howard de Walden had a long and distinguished diplomatic career. He served as the Under-Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs under two Foreign Secretaries, George Canning and Lord Dudley, and four Prime Ministers, from 26 May 1823 to 30 May 1828, when he resigned his position together with the other Canningites in Wellington’s Government. The D.N.B. records that in January 1826 Lord Howard de Walden was sent by Canning as attaché to Lord Stuart de Rothesay in his special mission to Rio de Janeiro, and that he got married on 8 November 1828, after his return from Brazil. However, there is an unexplained gap in the résumé of Lord Howard’s career in the D.N.B. from the above date until 2 October 1832 when he was appointed minister plenipotentiary to the court of Stockholm. In his letter of 27 November 1828 to Mrs. Carpenter (Letters, XI, 50-51) Sir Walter refers to Lord Howard de Walden as “the British Ambassador.” No other source mentions Lord Howard’s appointment as an ambassador to France. It is not clear whether Sir Walter actually meant that the Lord Howard held the position of an ambassador or he just used this designation as a courtesy title. It is also possible that Sir Walter confused Lord Howard de Walden with Lord Stuart de Rothesay who apparently became French Ambassador in June 1828. Indeed June Lockhart, Sir Walter’s daughter, wrote to her father on 18 June 1828 that she knows “the new French Ambassador Ld Stuart de Rothesay” (Letters, X, 435).
4. MODUS OPERANDI

The inscription on the fragment contains twenty-seven words arranged in six lines giving precise directions how to address three successive covers, to Sir Walter Scott, Charles Scott and Lord Howard de Walden, and how to enclose the item to be mailed, so that it would reach Sir Walter. It is not clear what exactly was the purpose of this somewhat bizarre and not entirely comme il faut operation involving the Foreign Office mail and presumably using the Under-Secretary’s frank. Was it to ensure safer and speedier delivery, or merely to save postage?

Sir Walter suggested in letters to other correspondents that they may use the Foreign Office mail to reach him in London or in Scotland. The first mention of this modus operandi appears to be in a letter of Sir Walter to Charles, dated 27 February 1828, less than a fortnight after Charles took his position in the Foreign Office. Sir Walter wrote:

…You must let me know if Lord Howard de Waldens frank can be with propriety employd to protect your domestic correspondence. You are aware we would not willingly be intruders in a matter of that kind. It is of less consequence to me than to another for I have Sir Francis Freling & Mr Croker to give me a frank now and then.

Sir Francis Freeling (1764-1836), Secretary to General Post Office, London, was a friend of Sir Walter’s. A baronetcy was conferred on him on 11 March 1828, and Sir Walter wrote a congratulatory letter to Freeling on the same day that he wrote the above quoted letter to Charles. “Mr. Crocker” probably refers to John Wilson Croker (1780-1857) who was the Secretary to the Admiralty from 1809 to 1830.

On 24 June 1828 Sir Walter wrote to J.Fenimore Cooper (1789-1851), the American novelist, at the time a nominal American consul at Lyons (Letters, X, 439):

…When you favour me with a line the general address of Edinburg will always reach me. Or if put under cover to my son Charles Scott Foreign Office Lond. & that again inclosed to Right Honble the Earl of Aberdeen will go by any British ambassadors bag. The similarity between the above paragraph and the inscription on the fragment is striking. In particular, the spelling of “inclosed” and “Honble” is identical in the two letters.

On 15 November 1828 Sir Walter wrote to Charles (Letters, XI, 39):

I sent a packet to you under Lord Aberdeens cover with letters &c for Walter & a letter to Lord Aberdeen himself…

Lastly we quote from a letter of Sir Walter to Mrs. Carpenter, the widow of Charles Carpenter, Lady Scott’s brother. The letter was written in Edinburgh on 27 November 1828 (Letters, XI, 50-51):

…Any letter or parcel of letters which you may wish to send to Britain may be put under the cover of the said Charles: these under cover to the Right Honble the Earl of Aberdeen
Foreign Office Whitehall & the whole under cover to Lord Howard de Walden the British Ambassador: if sent to his Hotel they will go in his bag post free & with certainty.

As stated in the preceding section, we have no clue as to the whereabouts of Lord Howard de Walden in November 1828, except that he and his bride were enjoying their honeymoon at the time.

There may have been other occasions when Sir Walter recommended to his friends or other correspondents that they use a frank of the Foreign Office to forward letters, etc., to him or to other members of his family, but these suggestions may have been made orally or in letters that are not extant, or are still unpublished, like our fragment.

5. DATING THE FRAGMENT

The contents of the fragment imply that at the time when the letter was written both Lord Howard de Walden and Charles Scott held there respective posts in the Foreign Office, and Sir Walter at the time was either in London, or expected to be there shortly. Now, Charles Scott left for London on Monday, 11 February 1828 (Journal, 479), and was expected to arrive there on Thursday, 14 February (Letters, X, 384). Although Charles could have reported to the Foreign Office on Friday it is unlikely that he did start there earlier than on the following Monday. Thus 15 February 1828 is terminus a quo for the date of the fragment. Lord Howard de Walden held his office of the Under-Secretary from 26 May 1824 to 30 May 1828. Hence the latter date is terminus ad quem for Sir Walter’s letter. In other words, the fragment could not have been written earlier than 15 February 1828 nor later than 30 May 1828. These termini place the date of the fragment within a 106 day period. However, they can be improved.

Sir Walter would not have sent his definite instructions to the addressee of the letter before receiving Charles’s affirmative reply to his letter of 27 February 1828 in which Sir Walter inquired about the propriety of using Lord Howard de Walden’s frank (see above). Usually it would take five days for a letter mailed in the South of Scotland to reach the South of England, or vice versa (see, e.g., Letters, IX, 176-180; X, 310, 324-325); or possibly only four days (see, e.g., Letters, IX, 464-467; X, 298-300, 353-354; 458-462; XI, 151). However, occasionally the mail would take as many as seven days (see, e.g., Familiar II, 266; Letters, X, 172-175; 433); or even eight or nine days (see, e.g., Letters, IX, 377-480; X, 479). Thus it would take at least ten days for Sir Walter’s letter to reach his son, for Charles to respond, for the response to reach Sir Walter in south Scotland, and for Sir Walter to write the letter that contained the fragment. It means that 8 March 1828 is terminus a quo for the date of the fragment.

Sir Walter embarked on the trip to London on 3 April 1828 (Journal, 506), arriving there six days later (ibid., 511). He left for Scotland on 27 May, 1828 (ibid.541). As late as on 22 March Scott was still reluctant to go to London. The entry in his journal for that day reads (Journal, 501-502):

The thought more than once pressed on me, why go to London? I shall but throw £150 or £200 which were better saved. Then on the other hand it is such a gratification to see all the children that I must be tempted.
It is fairly safe to assume that if Scott wrote the letter containing our fragment before he left Scotland for London then he must have done so after 22 March 1828; and therefore 23 March 1828 is *terminus a quo* for the date of the fragment.

Now let us suppose that Sir Walter wrote the letter in London. As we noted above, a letter from London to the South of Scotland would take on average four or five days, and sometimes as many as seven or eight, or even nine days. Sir Walter would not have sent the letter from London so late that the reply would arrive in London after his departure from the city. In other words, he would not have sent the letter later than 18 days before his “retreat from London” (*Journal*, 27 May 1828); that is, not later than on 9 May 1828, which is therefore *terminus ad quem* for the date when the fragment was written.

We can conclude that the letter, and thus the fragment, was not written earlier than on 23 March 1828 and not later than on 9 May 1828.

6. CONCLUSIONS

In the preceding section we showed that Sir Walter Scott wrote the letter sometime between the 23 March 1828 and the 9 May 1828. We also discussed the purpose and the method of mailing recommended by Sir Walter in the fragment. We do not know whether Foreign Office franks and addresses were commonly used for private mail or was it special privilege restricted to a few specially connected individuals.

The identity of the correspondent to whom Sir Walter’s letter was addressed is not known. It may have been addressed to any Sir Walter’s numerous correspondents, but the most plausible conjecture seems to be that the addressee was Robert Cadell, Scott’s publisher. Sir Walter finished his novel *Chronicles of the Canongate, Second Series*, on 29 March 1828, only a few days before he was to leave for London. He expected to receive proofs of the novel on April 2, before he departed for England. When they did not reach him by the departure time, Sir Walter directed Cadell to send the proofs to his daughter’s address in London by Sir Francis Freeling’s frank. The proofs reached him in London on 12 April. He finished reading them two days later, and returned the corrected proofs under Freeling’s frank. It is not likely therefore that Scott would use also Lord Howard de Walden’s frank for communicating with Cadell. However, it is interesting to note that before Scott left for London he established at least two communication lines, one with Cadell, using Sir Francis Freelings frank, and the other with the unidentified correspondent to whom the letter containing the fragment was addressed, using the *modus* described in the fragment. But who was that correspondent? We do not know.

**ABBREVIATIONS**

*Corson*  

*D.N.B.*  
*Dictionary of National Biography*.

*Familiar*  
*Familiar Letters of Sir Walter Scott*. 2 Volumes.  

*Journal 1950*  

*Journal*  
*The Journal of Sir Walter Scott*. Edited and Introduced by W.E.K.
A little bit of Burnsian life in Dumfries has been stashed away for the benefit of future generations. The Burns Howff Club of Dumfries installed a Time Capsule at the Globe Inn Close in Dumfries, on 21st July, 2000, marking the 204th anniversary of the death of Robert Burns. The club hopes it will be opened in 100 years’ time when future members can add their own pieces of memorabilia to the collection. The stainless steel canister is encased in a two tonne slab of Galloway granite from Creetown Quarry.

The canister contains a stack of club memorabilia including a set of coins, commemorative items from the 1996 Burns bi-centenary, photographs, dinner, menus and toast lists, a bottle of Globe Inn whisky, a copy of the club centenary history book compiled by the late Bill Sutherland, past president and honorary librarian, a brick from the Globe Inn, minutes from the executive committee meetings and a club tie.

Mr Sutherland’s widow, Eunice, unveiled the slab, part of the club’s millennium celebrations.

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John Roddick, Senior Vice President, Gordon Johnston, Junior Vice-President, Mrs Eunice Sutherland, Chris Lyon, President.
Robert Burns, Scotland’s national bard, was for a time until his death in July 1796 a member of a Volunteer Corps called the Dumfriesshire Volunteers. Their inaugural meeting was held in the Dumfries Court House on the 31st January 1795, and amongst the inhabitants who attended was Robert Burns. On the 3rd February another meeting was held where an offer of service was drawn up to be sent to the Lord Lieutenant of that area, attaching notes of the terms of service. There were 12 proposals, number 12 being: “That the Corps request to be allowed to assume the name of ‘The Royal Dumfries Volunteers’; and their uniform to wear a blue coat half lapelled with red cape and cuffs, and gilt buttons with the letters R.D.V. engraved on them; a plain white Cassimere vest, with small gilt buttons; white trousers made of Russia tweeling, tied at the ankle; white stockings; a black velvet stock; hair to be worn short, or turned up behind; a round hat turned up on the left side with a gilt button; a cockade, and a black feather; their shoes to be tied with black ribbon; and the only distinction between the officers and privates, in point of dress, is that the Major Commandant and two Captains are to wear two epaulettes, and the other Commissioned Officers one.” These proposals were signed by 64 members including Burns, who was to be a private in that unit.

A meeting held on the 20th February elected “That Colonel de Peyster shall be Major Commandant of that Corps, who, being present, accepted thereof.” The Colonel stated that this was a great honour, and to show her appreciation Mrs. de Peyster would provide for the Corps a flag to be embroidered “with such figures and emblems of loyalty as the Volunteers shall suggest.” The colours were presented to the Corps on the Square of Dumfries, on the King’s Birthday in 1795. On the 28th February Colonel de Peyster commissioned a hundred muskets from Birmingham and the accoutrements from London, the muskets to cost thirty eight to forty shillings each. Also at this meeting it was decided that the Rev. Dr. W. Burnside, minister of St. Michael’s Church was to be the chaplain to this Corps, and that Dr. John Harley was to be made surgeon to the Volunteers.

At the meeting on the 21st March the Captains and Lieutenants were elected: John Hamilton, David Newall and Wellwood Maxwell, Captain and Lieutenants to the first company respectively. For the second company the Captain was John Finnan, Francis Shortt and Thomas White, Lieutenants. Burns was one of the 75 members who voted for John Hamilton. It was laid out in the proposals that there was to be two companies of infantry, not exceeding fifty men each, including the Commissioned and Non-Commissioned Officers. The Volunteers having agreed to serve without pay for the duration of the war, but were not obliged to march more than five miles from the town. They also formed an organizing committee comprising all the officers plus eight other
members, the committee to be changed every three months.

In the Old Assembly Rooms of the Court House on the 28th March, 59 members including Burns took the Oath of Allegiance and signed the “Rules, Regulations and Bye-Laws for conducting themselves in a military capacity which they fully considered.” The regulations were issued to the ‘Dumfriesshire Volunteers,’ they were listed under that name in the Auxiliary Forces lists until they were disbanded in 1802. But it should be made clear that the volunteers in Dumfries called themselves ‘The Royal Dumfries Volunteers’ right up to 1802, according to information obtained from their Minute Book. There were 26 instructions which give a good idea on how the Corps may have conducted itself, and how they dressed. Instruction 3 stated: “The dress of the Corps shall remain as fixed in the offer of service – at least no alteration shall be made therein without concurrence of four/fifths of the Corps – and as an exact uniformity in this respect is obviously necessary, no deviation from it can be permitted, excepting that white Cassimere breeches, buckled at the knee, and half gaiters conform to a pattern now shown by Colonel de Peyster, shall be substituted in place of white Russia tweel trousers, as formerly agreed on.”

Instruction 4 said that the Corps shall wear the above uniform (their “full dress” uniform), on general field days, public occasions, assemblies etc. No. 5 mentions the units “undress uniform”, a short blue jacket with red shoulder straps, cape and cuffs, to be worn in the mornings or on ordinary occasions, with white vest and nankeen trousers buttoned at the ankle. This uniform was almost certainly worn as it appears in the regulations, this had to be bought by the Volunteers themselves, and Burns was to receive a bill for £7/4 shillings. Instruction 6 agreed with proposal No 12, that the only difference in uniform between the officers and the other ranks is that the officers shall wear epaulettes. It stated that the officers shall wear epaulettes and swords; and the sergeants, drummers and fifers, swords only.

When taking proposal No. 12 and instruction No. 3 together it would suggest that the Volunteers wore a blue regimental “full dress” uniform, but all units of the Dumfriesshire Volunteers wore red jackets with yellow collars, lapels and cuffs. At the moment the only known uniform of this Corps still in existence is in the Dumfries Burgh Museum. The jacket belonged to a grocer from the town of Moffat, twenty miles from Dumfries, it is the uniform of a Lieutenant. The uniform is as follows: (figure 1) shows the front view of the jacket, a scarlet coat with yellow collar, lapels and cuffs. All the buttons are flat, gilt and comprise of two seizes; $\frac{1}{2}$” and $\frac{4}{5}$”. The
buttons on the collar and the two fastening buttons on each sleeve are $\frac{1}{2}''$ in diameter. The remaining buttons, the nine on each lapel and the four on each cuff (only three can be seen) are $\frac{4}{5}''$ across. The lining of the coat is white i.e. the inside of the collar, the tails and the turnbacks. All the ‘slits’ on the collar and the cuffs, and all the buttonholes are edged in white thread, the top three buttonholes on each lapel are in fact imitation. On the right shoulder there can be seen a small strip of scarlet material on which is sewn some yellow and gold thread, it may be assumed from this that the epaulette was gold. One thing that is not shown in the drawing is that there is a very thin white edging round the bottom of the collar and round the edge of each lapel.

(Figure 2) shows the rear view of the jacket. From this drawing details such as the back of the collar, the pockets and the tails of the jacket can been seen. The two buttons on the back of the collar are $\frac{1}{2}''$ in diameter, for what purpose these buttons were used for I have as yet been unable to find out. The tails are $11\frac{1}{2}''$ long with white turnbacks and ‘silver’ thistle, all the buttons on the tails and pockets are of the larger size of buttons. As can be seen in the drawing there is a white stitching line coming from each button in the centre of the tails, there is also four imitation buttonholes next to these two buttons.

(Figure 3) shows a more detailed view of the pocket, turnback and thistle. The pocket flap is the same colour as the jacket and edged in white, with four large buttons.

Both the flap and the buttonholes are imitation, the button-holes being edged in white thread. The pocket is in fact behind the flap and has a depth of 8”. Where the white turnbacks meet on the tail there can be seen the ‘thistle’. The thistle is made up of silver coloured sequins sewn into the shape of a thistle on to a piece of yellow cloth.

(Figure 4) is a detailed drawing of the type of button worn on this jacket, both
sizes of buttons comply to this design. A flat, gilt button with a crown over a thistle and the name ‘Dumfriesshire Volunteers’.

Show in (figure 5) is the left cuff of the jacket. The cuff is slightly over 3” wide with a white edging along the top and also along the edge of the ‘slash’ in the sleeve. As already has been mentioned all the buttonholes and ‘slits’ on the cuffs are edged in white thread.

As to the headgear. There were several similar versions that the Volunteers could have worn. First: the hat mentioned in the proposals, a low, rounded coachman’s flat topped hat, curly brim, turned up on the left hand side, gilt button, black plume and cockade. Second: the same hat but with a “fur crest” over the top similar to a tarleton helmet. Third: a bowler type hat with a “fur crest”, plume, cockade, curly brim turned up on the left hand side. These types of headgear were common to Volunteer units and details of the type of hat worn by the Dumfriesshire Volunteers are not very clear. British Volunteer units despite their regulations dressed very much as they liked, within the fixed limits of military uniforms. But it appears that the Dumfriesshire Volunteers took the running of their Corps very seriously and may have followed these regulations. The red regimental uniform, accoutrements, weapons etc. were issued by the Colonel who received an allowance from the Government to do so. It would not be right to say that this is Burns’ uniform, as it is no longer in existence, but gives a good idea of what he might have worn.

On the 30th March the two Captains balloted for the men who were to serve under them. Captain John Hamilton drew the names of 33 privates, Captain John Finnan drew the named of 35 privates including such names as John Lewars, Dr. John Harley, John Syme and Robert Burns. It was also decided at that meeting that David Sampson would be drill sergeant, Andrew Roddick would be the drummer, and Robert Lock the fifer to the first company. That brought the total complement of the company to 39 officers and men. For the second company the drummer was Samuel Johnston, the names of the drill sergeant and fifer are as yet unknown. That brought the strength of the company up to 41 officers and men.

In April 1795, Burns published for the Volunteers his patriotic song “Does Haughty Gaul Invasion Threat” in the Dumfries Weekly Journal, which became popular throughout Britain. On the 22nd August at a meeting attended by 60 members, Burns was elected to serve on the committee, this appointment proves that Burns was a highly respected and trusted member of the Volunteers. In the Minute Book of the Volunteers on the occasions on which the attendance roll is taken, Burns’ name frequently appears. At another meeting held on the 24th August, Burns was there to help impose fines on members who had offended against the rigidly enforced rules. The last recorded meeting at which
Burns attended was on the 5th November 1795, the year that ended in his fatal illness. Robert Burns died on Thursday, July 21st 1796 and was buried on the following Monday. Arrangements were quickly made for a military funeral. The Dumfries Weekly Journal carried this report: “The Military here, consisting of the Cinque Ports Cavalry and the Angusshire Fencibles, have hamesomely tendered their services, lined the streets on both sides to the burial ground. The Royal Dumfries Volunteers in uniform, with crapes on their left arms, supported the bier. A party of that Corps, appointed to perform the military obsequires, moving in slow time to the “Dead March in Saul”, which was played by the military band preceded in mournful array, with arms reversed. The principal part of the inhabitants of this town and neighbourhood, with a number of particular friends of the bard from remote parts, followed in the procession - the great bells of the churches tolling at intervals.” Three volleys were fired by the Volunteers over the grave.

For further reading
Robert Burns as a Volunteer by William Will. This book contains all the Proposals and Regulations of the Royal Dumfries Volunteers.

Acknowledgements: I wish to thank Mr. A. E. Truckell of the Dumfries Burgh Museum for allowing the taking of photographs of the officer’s uniform, and for information from the Minute Book of the Volunteers. Many thanks also to Mr. W. A. Thorburn of the Scottish United Services Museum for information on the Volunteers.

Mr. McKay has subsequently added a short postscript for this article:
“There is one point I would like to clear up, and add another point of interest. The part that deals with figure 2 says that there are two buttons on the collar 1/2” in diameter, for what purpose these buttons were used for I have as yet been unable to find out. I am sure that I can now remedy that situation. When the jacket is worn the two buttons are in line with each shoulder and the button on the right shoulder is probably to secure the epaulette to the jacket. The button on the left is possibly just for show.

From the diary of a W. Grierson, A Draper by profession who witnessed the funeral of Robert Burns, the following extracts are taken: ‘The firing party which consisted of 20 of the Royal Dumfries Volunteers… in full uniform with crapes on their left arm marched in front with their arms reversed, moving in a slow and solemn time to the Dead March in Saul which was played by the Military Band belonging to the Cinque Port Cavalry… the Bier supported by 6 of the Volunteers who changed at intervals… the procession closed with a guard of the Angusshire Fencibles… the funeral party formed two lines and leaned their heads on their firelocks pointed to the ground. Through this space, the Corpse was carried forward to the grave - the party then drew up along side of it and fired three volleys over the coffin when deposited in the earth.’

I hope that this information will be of further interest to readers of the above article.”
Scotland’s National Bard, Robert Burns has returned to what would be for him a familiar and welcome sight, in the town of New Cumnock, Ayrshire. He appears on the gable-end of the Castle Inn (See front cover of this issue) as the centre-piece of a large historic mural, painted by Pamela Ramage, a muralist and decorative artist from Carluke in Lanarkshire.

A self-taught artist, Pamela produces artwork for a variety of customers and is involved in interior decoration in the form of decorative paint effects, paintings and murals for homes, restaurants, hotels and leisure complexes.

The idea behind the mural came from Councillor Jimmy Carmichael of East Ayrshire Council who also specified the main subjects to be illustrated, all of which having some connections with New Cumnock. Pamela took three weeks to complete the work which included some ‘rained off’ days.

ROBERT BURNS AND THE CASTLE INN

An extract from ROBERT BURNS and NEW CUMNOCK by Chris Rollie, published in 1996.

There has always been a strong local tradition, recorded in various accounts, that Robert Burns often stopped at the Castle Inn on his frequent journeys between Ellisland and Mauchline, and that he occasionally spent the night there. Until now there has been nothing in writing to establish a definite link. However examination of the MS letter from the poet to his friend John Logan of Laight, 7 August 1789, reveals that Burns sent the letter care of a Mrs More [sic], and recently further information has come to light which confirms a strong Logan family link with Mrs Moore and the Castle Inn.

The story begins with one Gilbert McAdam (or Macadam), born in 1724, son of James McAdam of Waterhead of Deuch and Margaret Reidl, heiress of Merkland near Sorn. Gilbert had a distinguished military career and became Captain in the 62nd Regiment
(‘Loudoun’s Regiment’) and Aide-de-camp to John, Earl of Loudoun, when he was Commander-in-Chief of all His Majesty’s Forces in North America. On Prince Edward Island in 1757 he married Sarah Kilby, a grand-daughter of a natural daughter of Oliver Cromwell. Captain McAdam and Sarah had four children, one of whom, Martha, was born in New York in 1760, and in 1779 became the wife of the poet’s friend, John Logan. Captain McAdam returned from America in 1762 and bought the lands of Laight, Carcow and Ashmark in the parish of New Cumnock from Gordon of Earlstoun. In 1767 he became a founder member of the Ayrshire County Turnpike Trust, and assisted in planning the construction/upgrading of the ‘great road’ form Ayr to Dumfries (via New Cumnock). Whilst the present house at Laight was being built the Captain lived at Glaisnock, but soon took up residence in his new house where Mrs Moore became his housekeeper for a time.

On 18 January 1781, all of Captain McAdam’s landed property was sold for the behoof of his creditors, and he moved into the Castle Inn, which was then kept by Mrs Moore, his former housekeeper at Laight. The Captain, uncle to the illustrious John Loudoun McAdam of ‘tar macadam’ fame, was himself a bit of an institution in Ayrshire and New Cumnock in particular, and it could be said that he ‘held court’ in the Castle Inn for some years. Known in the village simply as ‘the Captain’, he managed to retain considerable influence, and more than once came into conflict with Rev. Young, Burns’s ‘Jamie Goose’ of ‘The Kirk’s Alarm’. New Cumnock diarist, John Muir, in 1788 recorded that he ‘saw a man with a waxen coat at Capt. McAdam’s - I suppose the first oil-skin waterproof seen here’.

Although it cannot be proved, it is possible that the Captain acquired the Castle Inn through Mrs Moore, thereby possibly avoiding bankruptcy complications. No additional information on Mrs Moore is available, although there is perhaps more than a possibility that she was related to Robert Moore J.P. of Blairstoun, who granted a warrant to the Procurator Fiscal and finally decided the case in respect of the alleged irregular marriage of John Logan to Martha McAdam (the Captain’s daughter). It is perhaps interesting to note that Robert Moore was also a Turnpike Trustee and would therefore know both the Captain and John Logan through this connection.

Of course, having studied law and worked in Ayr with his lawyer uncle William, John Logan would be well acquainted with the various twists and avenues of the subject, and whatever deals were involved, if any, there is no doubt that in 1781 he borrowed money to buy his father-in-law’s new house from the trustees of McAdam’s estate. Logan moved into Laight on 24 August 1782, and would obviously have a strong link with the Castle Inn, where his wife’s father, the Captain, now resided. This explains Burns sending his letter care of Mrs Moore, and also the earlier apparent confusion suffered by some writers as to the respective roles of Castle Inn and Old Mill (where Burns also stayed) in the Burns and New Cumnock story. In fact, as we have seen there is a connection with both places.

Captain McAdam died suddenly in Dalmellington church on St Andrew’s day, 1788, though Mrs Moore continued on in the Castle Inn for a few more years, perhaps until it was taken over by the McKnights of Old Mill in 1804. It is not konwn if the Captain’s wife, Sarah Kilby, followed him into the Castle In, but it is perhaps unlikely.
Towards the south-west corner of the Bristo Place there is an inscription cut high up on the wall of a house, “Site of Darien House, Built 1698.” There ought to be another inscription under it, “Here died Robert Fergusson, the poet, October 16th 1774.” The old Darien House witnessed other follies than the ill-fated expedition, as its grim popular designation The Schells (cells) shows. It was the public mad-house of Edinburgh; and it was here as a patient that Fergusson ended his short and brilliant career at the age of four-and-twenty.

Robert Louis Stevenson says that Fergusson has been “most unrighteously forgotten.” His own memorial in his native city is the plain tombstone which Robert Burns erected at the cost of five pounds ten shillings over the poet’s grave in the Canongate Churchyard. I visited it the other day, and though the Canongate was full of tourists, there was no one in the churchyard save myself and the grass-cutter. It is not surprising, perhaps, that the stranger within our gates knows nothing of him, when we have almost forgotten his memory. Fergusson, however, has never wanted staunch admirers; the Poet’s prayer, “Fit audience find though few,” has been abundantly fulfilled for him.

“O thou, my elder brother in misfortune, By far my elder brother in the Muses,” wrote Burns in a lady’s copy of Fergusson’s poems; and R. L. Stevenson, in a letter to Mr Craibe Angus, says:- “I believe Fergusson lives in me. I do. But ‘tell it not in Gath.’” Admirers of Burns would be astonished to find how much their great Poet owes to his elder brother, if they would only take the trouble to read Fergusson’s works. But admirers of Burns are more intent to prove their idol a sort of literary Melchisedec, “without father, without mother, without descent, having neither beginning of days nor end of life.” This, of course, is an error; for perhaps, not even Shakespeare, borrowed more freely from his predecessors than Robert Burns. A great genius can dispense with originality. “If a man were to discover the art of transmuting the baser metals into gold, we ought not to ask too nicely if the lead he employed was stolen.”

Fergusson, let it be granted, was not a great poet. He lacked many things; the lyric note is rarely heard in verses. He lacked even “the gall to make oppression bitter,” otherwise he might have been a great satirist, facit indignatio versus. He had, however, a very keen vision, though very narrow in its range. His eyesight deserted him when he got outside human habitations. He had an intense gusto for life,
especially its humours. He had, moreover, a marvellous mystery in Doric Scots of “fitting apatest words to things.”

“Is Allan risen frae the dead? 
Na; Fergusson’s come in his stead 
To blaw the whistle!”

Exclaims a contemporary admirer. While modestly deprecating such a compliment, Fergusson says of his muse:

“I’ll grant that she can find a knack 
To gar auld world wordies clack 
In hamespun rhyme, 
While ilk ane, at his billy’s back 
Keeps gude Scots time.”

“THE LAUREATE OF AULD REEKIE.”

For Edinburgh folk Fergusson has a peculiar importance. Scott is less “the minstrel of the Borders” or Burns “the Ayrshire Bard” than Fergusson “the laureate of Auld Reekie.” He was born within hearing of the Tron Kirk Bell, almost under the shadow of the Tron steeple, for the Cap and Feather Close where he first saw the light (Sept. 5, 1750) lay somewhere along the North Bridge where Patrick Thomson’s shop now stands. As a child his playground was the Plainstanes and causey. He was a High School boy, though a name-bursary took him afterwards to Dundee Grammar School and St. Andrews University to prepare him for the ministry. Fergusson was not the stuff of which ministers are made, moreover his father’s death and res augusta domi recalled him to his widowed mother and sister in Edinburgh. He lived with them at Warriston’s Close and Jamieson’s Land. He found employment as a writer in the Commissary Clerk’s office; this brough him hard work and little money, but put him in touch with the very heart of Edinburgh life in Parliament Square. The young writer’s eyes watched greedily all that passed there, and his deft hand has left an unrivalled picture of what he saw.

Stevenson says, somewhat sourly, “A Scot of poetic temperament and without religious exaltation drops as if by nature into the public-house.” Fergusson, like his great contemporary in London, found “a tavern chair the throne of human felicity.” He excused himself to sober friends by saying “O sirs, anything to forget my poor mother and these aching fingers!” But—

“When auld St. Giles at aught o’clock 
Gars merchant loons their shoppies lock, 
There we adjourn wi’ hearty foulk 
To birl our bodles, 
And get wharewi’ to crack our joke 
And clear our noddles.”

He was not “a vicious white-faced drunken boy,” as some have represented him, but he was all his days something of a street urchin, who loved all that passed on the High Street or Cowgate. The frequent references in his verses to “the Black Banditti the City Guard” are enough to prove this. The Police do not figure largely in the imagination of those who wear “gude braid-claith,” but they hold a very high place in the Pantheon of the gamin.

Fortunately these hours of Fergusson were not utterly lost, “with genial clamour sent from many a tavern door.” Ruddiman’s Weekly Magazine opened its pages to him; and from February, 1771, till December, 1773, few issues wanted a poem by him. Some of these — his English poems — are nought, faint echoes of echoes; but
his Scottish poems proved that a genuine singing voice was heard in the land. Edinburgh was their provenance; their very titles read like a calendar of her festivals. The Daft Days, The King’s Birthday, Hallow Fair, The Leith Races, The Election,

The Sitting of Session, The Rising of Session. They depict what Mr. John Buchan calls “the dirty, drunken, picturesque, and incurably snobbish Edinburgh of his day.” And yet, what an Edinburgh! The Edinburgh of the great memoir writers; the Edinburgh of the Litterati; the Edinburgh of Hume, Robertson, and Adam Smith; the Edinburgh of Kaimes, Moboddo, and Hales; the Edinburgh which Gregory and Cullen physicked, and to which Blair preached; the Edinburgh round which Bozzy led his Bear the year before Fergusson died; the Edinburgh in which Sir Walter Scott was born!

**The Litterati**

Fergusson did not belong to the *Litterati*. He had no place at the Attic suppers in St. John Street, or the Epicurean dinners at St. David Street. His only literary friend was Dr. Wilkie, of St. Andrews University — the quaint author of *The Epigoniad*, poet, philosopher, and farmer — but he was dead ere Fergusson wrote. Fergusson presented a volume of his poems to James Boswell, of Auchinleck, “the Friend of Liberty and the Patron of Science,” but the genial Bozzy took no notice of it. He dedicated “Auld Reekie” to Sir William Forbes, the literary banker, but the great man found “metal more attractive” in the Aberdeen minstrel, who wore the robes of an Oxford D.C.L., not the rags of a High Street singer.

“Ye wha are fain to hae your name
Wrote i’ the bonny book o’ fame
Let merit nae pretension claim
To laurell’d wreath,
But hap ye weel, baith back and wame,
In gude Braid-Claith.”

Fergusson’s highest public honour was to be Sir Precentor of the Knights of the Cape.

Yet Fergusson tells us more of the Edinburgh in which the *Litterati* lived and moved and had their being than any of the memoir-writers have done or could do. His only rival is Sir Walter Scott in *Guy Mannering* and *Redgauntlet*. To read Fergusson is to be back in Edinburgh a century and a half ago. When I wander through Greyfriars’ Churchyard, where so many of the great men of eighteenth-century Edinburgh rest from their labours, Fergusson tells me that there—

“Georgie Girdwood mony a lang day
Houkit for gentles’ banes the humble clay”;

that “Indian Peter,” Peter Williamson, and his resetters “dispersed the burial letters”; that “daft Jamie Duff” played his fantastic part at their interment. When I look down from the South Bridge
into the Cowgate I remember I am just above a favourite haunt of Old Edinburgh worthies—

“When big as burns the gutters rin,  
Gin ye hae catcht a droukit skin,  
To Lucky Middlemist’s loup in  
And sit fu’ snug  
Owre oysters and a dram o’ gin  
Or haddock lug.”

The reader who cares for Old Edinburgh can find much in Fergusson’s slender volume—

“I was never out of England; it’s as if I saw it all.”

Despondency and Madness

Even those who care little for poetry and antiquities may spare a thought for human suffering and sorrow when they look at the site of the Old Darien House. Early in 1774 the Weekly Magazine told its readers that Mr Robert Fergusson had been suffering from a severe illness. The illness was mental; some biographers attributed it to a serious conversation in Haddington Churchyard with John Brown, the author of The Self-Interpreting Bible; but this conversation, if it took place, must be dated 1772. Others tell us that a cat came down the chimney at midnight and seized a tame starling that hung in the poet’s room, and the fright he experienced upset his reason. Stevenson says his “damnatory creed” does not figure either in Fergusson’s writing or the memorials of those who knew him. Like a greater poet who lived before the “damnatory creed” was invented, the poor lad might have said—

“Timor mortis perturbat me.”

A weak constitution, too severe work, unwise conviviality, may explain his malady. He rallied, and the Weekly Magazine announced his recovery. Then a relapse followed, occasioned by a fall downstairs when coming out of a friend’s room. He became unmanageable, and his mother was forced to have him removed to the Schells. Here violent mania and mild melancholy alternated; at times he was a king, and ordered Jupiter to snuff the moon; then his early ambitions for the ministry asserted themselves. He told Forrest, the keeper, “You will see me a bright and shining light yet.” Forrest courteously replied, “You are one already.” “You mistake me, I mean a minister of the glorious gospel.” His friends visited him, and they thought he was recovering, but the poor worn body was too weak to stand the strain it had endured. October set in damp and chill. One evening when his mother and sister visited him he complained of being very cold, and asked his mother to wrap the bed-clothes round him and sit on them. “O mother,” he said, “this is kind.” Then, turning to his sister, “Might you not frequently come and sit by me thus? You cannot imagine how comfortable it would be — you might fetch your seam and sew beside me.” The only reply was a sob. “What ails ye? Wherefore sorrow for me? I am well cared for here, I want for nothing — but it is cold — it is very cold. You know I told you it would come to this at last.” “O, do not go yet, mother. I hope to be soon… do not go yet — do not leave me!” Next day a rumour passed through the Edinburgh streets that the poet whose verses had been on everybody’s lips was dead. Like so many eighteenth-century poets, Swift, Collins, Smart and Cowper, he died insane.

“We poets in our youth begin in gladness,  
But therefore come in the end despondency and madness.”
B EETHOVEN

By Rainer Lenk

Beethoven born in Bonn, 16 December, 1770; died in Vienna, 26th March, 1827, aged fifty-six. The family originated in Flanders. The composer’s grandfather arrived in Bonn in 1733. Both grandfather and the father served as musicians in the chapel of the Elector – the former becoming Kapellmeister and the latter a tenor chorister. Of the seven children born to Johann and his wife only three survived infancy. Ludwig and his two younger brothers, Karl and Johann. Both parents (in later years) suffered from alcoholism, and as the eldest son, Ludwig was early called upon to direct family affairs. His only education was in the craft of music, and he received lessons in pianoforte, organ, violin and viola. Any other schooling had ceased before he was twelve, but he picked up rudimentary French and Italian. In 1787 he was sent to Vienna, and according to tradition received a number of lessons from Mozart, yet – almost immediately – he was summoned home to his mother’s death bed. Two years later his father was dismissed and thus at 19 the young composer was solely responsible for himself, his father and his two brothers. His friends in Bonn helped him greatly and in many cases remained intimate with him to the end of his life – even in Vienna, hence he moved in 1792, with financial assistance from the Elector Maximilian Franz (1756-1801).

More than any other composer he deserves to be called the Shakespeare of music, for he reached the heights and plumbed the depths of the human spirit as no other composer has done, and it was his own ambition to be called “Tone-Poet”. In him were combined the power to feel both passionately and tenderly and the mastery of musical resources necessary to express his feelings in the most direct and vivid way.

Beethoven was first asked to do folk-song settings by the publisher George Thomson in 1809 (Haydn had earlier done many for him) and by November that year
he had made a start on a set of 43 melodies supplied by Thomson. By July 1810 he had completed the set of forty-three and also an additional ten. These 53 were despatched that month, and 9 more were sent in February 1812. Thomson acknowledged that all 62 settings were ‘marked with the stamp of genius, science and taste’ but complained that nine of the accompaniments were too difficult, and asked Beethoven to simplify them. Beethoven refused to change them at all, blaming Thomson for not specifying how easy they should be. Nevertheless he provided new settings of the nine melodies. The nine replacements were despatched in February 1813 with 21 new songs. By November 1818, 118 melodies were recorded as having been sent, and a few more added in 1819 and 1820. Initially all the songs were British, but in 1816 Beethoven began setting continental ones too.

Attogether Thomson published 125 of Beethoven’s British settings, but he omitted 25 others, including all ten duplicates. It is sometimes stated that Beethoven received £550 altogether for the settings, but he actually received much less. He was paid only 3 ducats per setting up to 1814 and 4 ducats thereafter; even if he had been paid 4 ducats each for all 177 settings, the total would have been barely £350.

It is widely assumed that all the texts were insetted by Thomson only after Beethoven had set the melodies. This is true for the first set of 53 songs, but Beethoven complained that he needed the texts to make good settings and in 1812 threatened to stop doing them if texts were not supplied. Thomson explained that he commissioned new poetry to add to old tunes after settings had been made; but this was not always the case, and from 1813, some texts were sent. In all settings Beethoven took considerable trouble to create something unexpected and effective. The introductions and codas show great skill in developing a prominent motive from the melody. Thomson’s verdict on the settings is entirely valid: ‘Original and beautiful are these arrangements by this inimitable genius Beethoven.’

*Some of this information has been excerpted from “The Beethoven Compendium”, ed. by Barry Cooper/Thames and Hudson, 1991.

### SCOTTISH FOLK SONG ARRANGEMENTS
Robert BURNS, George THOMSON and Ludwig van BEETHOVEN
Alphabetical Index to Titles and First Lines

n.b.: titles are followed by Thomson Group and Reference No.

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*In some instances, songs have more than one title — in which case both are included in this alphabetical list.*
Chronological List

Each group covers a period: songs are listed in their original numberical order – which is likely to represent their order of composition. The number of each song within a group is followed by its number in Thomson’s Edition; the Editions are identified by their year of printing, and its opus number - e.g. 108, WoO 152-8, or Hess. Next comes the title (and the opening words, if different), then the author. In our case it is, of course, Robert BURNS (only). Thus No. 3, 6 and 9 are the only Burns settings in Groups III, IV and VI; evidently, some Groups have no Burns settings at all.

This list has been extracted from Barry Cooper’s “Beethoven’s Folksong Settings” (Clarendon Press, Oxford, 1994).

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<tr>
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<th>No.</th>
<th>Year</th>
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<td>155/22 CONSTANCY (‘Tho’ cruel fate should bid us part’)</td>
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<td>1814/3</td>
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<td>—</td>
<td>(1810)</td>
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<td>Group III</td>
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<td>Group IV</td>
<td>6</td>
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<td>Group VI</td>
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<td>156/6 HIGHLAND HARRY (‘My Harry was a gallant gay’)</td>
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<td>Group VII</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>—</td>
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<td>157/7 HAD I A CAVE</td>
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<td>Group VIII</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1818/210</td>
<td>(1816)</td>
<td>108/8 THE LOVELY LASS OF INVERNESS, or DRUMOSSIE MUIR also FINGALS LAMENT</td>
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<td></td>
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<td>1818/22</td>
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<td>Group XII</td>
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<td>1818/219</td>
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<td>108/17 O MARY, AT THE WINDOW BE, or MARY MORRISON</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>9</td>
<td>1818/201</td>
<td></td>
<td>108/9 BEHOLD, MY LOVE, HOW GREEN THE GROVES</td>
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George Thomson: Negotiations
With Ludwig van BEETHOVEN

There was a voluminous correspondence between George Thomson and Beethoven. From our records it appears that Beethoven wrote 16 letters (mostly in French) to Thomson, between October 1803 and May 1819, as follows:

Contract

Of further interest is an agreement, set up in Vienna on 18th November 1818, as follows:-

To George Thomson, Edinburgh

I, Mr. Louis van Beethoven, composer of music residing in Vienna, acknowledge that I have received from Mr. George Thomson of the city of Edinburgh in Scotland by the hand of Mr. Fries and Co., Bankers of Vienna, per order of Mr. Thomas Coutts and Co., Bankers in London, one hundred and forty ducats in gold for composing variations for the pianoforte upon twelve themes or national airs with an accompaniment for the flute, and also for composing ritornels, a symphony and accompaniment for the pianoforte, violin, flute and violincello to eight Scottish airs, and for composing voice-part to the same for singing and trios.

And I formally declare and certify to all whom it may concern that the aforesaid twelve themes with variations and the sighs*, (*meaning perhaps ‘expression marks’; or mistake in transcription) the harmonies are the sole and abolsute property of the said George Thomson, his heirs and assignees, in perpetuity, without any reservations whatever.

And I further declare that all the ritornellos or symphonies and accompaniments which I have before at different times composed for Scottish, Irish and Welsh melodies, that is, for one hundred and eighteen of those melodies sent to me by the said George Thomson together with the additional voice part as harmony composed by me for those melodies are also and absolute property of the said George Thomson, his heirs and assignees, in perpetuity without any reservation.

– And lastly I declare that the ritornellos or symphonies and accompaniments which I composed for twenty five melodies of continental nations are likewise his sole and absolute property in perpetuity to the said George Thomson having through the aforesaid Messr. Fries and Co. paid to me the full price which I demanded for the composition of those works for the pianoforte and as above. Given under my hand at Vienna this eighteenth day of November one thousand eight hundred and eighteen.

Joseph Muller
Witness
C. W. de Brevillier
as witness
Louis van Beethoven


Note: For anyone with further interest in Beethoven’s Folksong Settings (including the Scottish ones) I would refer them to the excellent survey on Chronology, Sources and Style by Barry Cooper (“Beethoven’s Folksong Settings”; Clarendon Press, Oxford, 1994).

For the very first time, ALL Beethoven’s Folksong Arrangements have been issued on 7 compact discs by “DGG – Deutsche Grammophon; Complete Beethoven Edition, Vol. 17. 453 786-2. At the present time discs are not available separately.
I live only in my music… letter writing was never my “forte”. Such was Beethoven’s own admission, and those who read his letters to Thomson will certainly find in them no cause for disputing the assertion. For the majority of non-musical people – and for not a few hard-worked musicians as well - the main interest of the correspondence will probably lie in the composer’s hard-headed insistence upon a fitting remuneration for his work. These letters furnish a striking commentary on the story told of Beethoven that, while lying ill before his death, he tried to read Scott, and could not enjoy the author because he ‘wrote for money’. As a matter of fact both Scott and Beethoven ‘wrote for money’, with this difference only, that Scott – at the outset at any rate – wrote for the luxuries, while Beethoven wrote for the necessities of life. An important distinction. We must remember the peculiarly difficult circumstances in which he was placed at the time, and in fact throughout his whole life.

The son of wretchedly poor parents, he was himself in a chronic state of poverty, His deafness, which had begun to give him serious trouble three years before Thomson first sought his aid, prevented him from taking pupils, and if it had not, his temper and eccentricities would as surely have prevented pupils from taking him. He could not make money as a public performer, nor could he accept engagements as a conductor. Thus, almost the only source of revenue left to him was his compositions. (‘My whole income,’ he wrote in 1815, ‘is derived from my works’); and composition in Beethoven’s day seldom paid at all. It is true that a trio of rich nobles had settled on the composer an annual allowance of £400, but this was not until 1809, and moreover the excessive issue of bank notes had so depreciated the value of money that the nominal £400 did not really amount to more than £210. Nor must we forget – what is referred to more than once in the letters — that the war with Napoleon had laid upon artists, in common with all their compatriots, pecuniary burdens unusually heavy and distressing. This fully explains the readiness of Beethoven to accept Thomson’s proposals. Thomson’s payments must have been of very material assistance to him, small as he in some cases considered them. At the lowest estimate he can hardly have received less than £600 for his share in the various publications, whilst he probably made something out of the same works when issued in Germany. No doubt he gave full artistic value for the payments made to him; and however much it may be regretted that the Scottish songs no more than covered their cost, it is impossible to believe that Beethoven was overpaid.
The first of the Beethoven letters is dated from Vienna, October 5, 1803. At this time the composer was in his thirty-third year, but he had as yet done nothing very remarkable, with the exception of the First Symphony, produced in the year 1800, and his first great choral work, “The Mount of Olives”, performed in this same 1803. So recently as 1794 he had been taking lessons from Haydn, whom he was now to supplant with Thomson, and his individuality had hardly had time to assert itself. But he was undoubtedly the ‘coming man’, and Thomson had too keen an eye for coming men to miss the chance of securing his services for his Edinburgh collection. Thomson had written to him on the 5th of July, suggesting the composition of some sonatas based upon Scottish airs, of the same kind as those already supplied by Pleyel and Kozeluch. Beethoven agreed to prepare the Sobatas; but as the peculiarly national character of the compositions would practically limit their sale to the United Kingdom, he was obliged to put a price upon them which Thomson could not accede, and the matter eventually fell through, after several attempts to arrange it.

Vienna, 5th October 1803. DEAR SIR, — I received with much pleasure your letter of the 5th July. I concur readily with your proposals, and beg to inform you that I am prepared to compose for you six sonatas of the kind your desire, introducing the Scotch airs in a manner which the Scottish nation will find in the highest degree favourable and in keeping with the genius of its songs. As to renumeration, I think that 30 ducats for the six sonatas will not be too much seeing that in Germany I get that sum for the same number of sonatas, though in that case without accompaniment. I must tell you that you will do well to come to an early decision, for so many engagements are being proposed to me that before very long I shall perhaps not be in a position to comply immediately with your request. Having a genuine liking for Scotch airs, I shall take peculiar pleasure in the composition of these sonatas… and you will be abundantly satisfied. – Yours, &c., Louis VAN BEETHOVEN.

Thomson having replied that the remuneration did NOT meet his views – that in face he could offer only half the sum asked – the correspondence with Beethoven seems to have dropped for a time. It was resumed in 1806, when certain alternative proposals were made to the composer. Writing from Vienna on the 1st of November, in reply to a letter of Thomson’s dated July 1, Beethoven says:

‘I hasten to send you my remarks and decisions on the proposals you were good enough to make to me. In doing so, I shall use all the frankness and explicitness I myself like in business matters, for this alone prevents complaints on other side.’ A long numbered list of comments follow, as well as explicit instructions as to when and how payment should be transmitted by Thomson. A postscript may be quoted in full: ‘I am willing to meet your wishes as regards harmonising some little Scotch airs, and I await on that matter a more explicit proposal, knowing, as I do, that Mr. Haydn has had £1 of British money for each air. You will notify me at the same time about the date on which each volume will be published by you, so that I may arrange accordingly with the publishers who will issue the same compositions in Germany and France.’

Here we have the first indication of Thomson having proposed to Beethoven that he should undertake the arrangement of Scottish airs for his collection. Up to this time Haydn had been doing most of the work; but he had considered Thomson’s pay as niggardly, and was conscious that his powers were failing. Thomson naturally courted the new
luminary. The above letter was written in 1806, and it is not until 1809 that we again hear of the matter. On the 23rd November of that year Beethoven writes: ‘I will compose the ritornelli (i.e. the introductory and concluding symphonies) for the 43 little airs, but I ask £10 sterling or 20 ducats of Vienna in cash, more than you have offered; thus instead of £50 sterling in cash I ask for £60 sterling or 120 ducats of Vienna in cash. This work is furthermore one that gives little pleasure to the artist; nevertheless, I shall always be ready to do it for you, knowing that it has some utility in a business point of view… As to the songs, I have already begun them, P.S. - once again I beg you to send me the words of the songs, as they are very necessary if one is to give the proper expression.

Beethoven was evidently not at first aware that Thomson was procuring new words as well as new accompaniments for his airs. More than once he insists on the necessity of having the words before him if his work is to turn out successfully. In a letter of 20th July 1811 he remarks that without the words ‘one is not in a position to satisfy connoisseurs, or to compose an accompaniment worthy of a good poem’; and on the 29th of February 1812 he is so emphatic on the point that he threatens to cease work entirely unless his wishes in the matter are complied with. “I cannot comprehend,” he says to Thomson, “why you are not able to understand that I should produce utterly different compositions if I had the words at hand; and the songs cannot possibly turn out perfect productions unless you send me the words; and you will compel me in the end to decline your further commissions”. It was in answer to this protest that Thomson informed him that the words were as yet hidden in the brain of the poet; (Burns) it is perhaps strange that Beethoven never once remarks on the matter again. From his whole attitude it is clear that there was no lack of conscientiousness about his work for Thomson.

It is of course doubtful, whether he could have fully caught the spirit of the songs in a Scottish form. He could not read English, much less Scots, and even under the hands of the best translators poetry loses its fine individual flavour.

On the 17th of July 1810 Beethoven is able to send Thomson the Scottish airs, which, he observes, ‘I have composed “con amore”, with the wish to give a mark of my esteem to the Scotch and English nation by doing homage to their national songs.’ A letter of July 20, 1811 is of some length, and, as usual, a great part of it is devoted to the eternal question of terms. Beethoven had a fixed idea that Thomson was not dealing so generously by him as he had formerly dealt with Haydn. In a letter dated 29th February 1812, he begins by pleading for an additional ducat for each air. This letter did not reach Thomson until early in December of the same year. The political disturbances on the Continent rendered transport hazardous and uncertain, and letters and packages from Vienna actually reached England by way of Malta. Meanwhile Thomson had written to Beethoven on August 5 and October 30, and a third written in reply on December 21. On October 30 he acknowledged the receipt of nine more airs, and cannot find words to express his delight with them. ‘But, my dear sir’, he continues, ‘there are some which are much too difficult for OUR public. There is not one young lady in a hundred who will so much as look at an accompaniment if it is ever so little difficult’. He insists that a simplicity which is manifest at once to the eyes is of the utmost consequence if the work is to succeed. ‘otherwise all my care, all my trouble, the money I have spent, the years I have waited for you, will end for me in nothing but loss and disappointment. Don’t think that what is easy to you is easy to us also; for in music you are in very truth a giant, and
we are but pygmies’. In his letter of December 21, Thomson remarks that ‘the taste of the English is utterly corrupted by the wretched little compositions of inferior artists, and the most contemptible music has, as a rule, the greatest success!’

These letters of Thomson will enable us to understand the abruptness of Beethoven’s letter of February 19, 1813. He begins” Mr. George Thomson at Edinburgh. I have received your three letters of 5th August, 30th October, and 21st December last. I observe with much pleasure that the 62 airs I composed for you have at last reached you, and that you are satisfied with them, with the exception of the nine which you mark, and of which you wish me to alter the “ritornelli” and the accompaniments. I regret that I am unable to oblige you. I am not accustomed to tinker with my compositions. I have never done so, being convinced of the truth that every partial modification alters the whole character of the composition. I am grieved that you are out of pocked through this, but you cannot lay blame on me, for it was your business to make me more fully acquainted with the taste of your country and the meagre abilities of your performers.”

But though Beethoven will not patch, he will create anew. ‘Now, primed with your instructions, I have composed them all over again, and, as I hope, in a way that will fulfil your expectations. Believe me, it was with great repugnance that I prevailed on myself to stretch my invention on the rack, which I should never have agreed to do if I had not reflected… the great trouble and expense you have put yourself to obtain a complete work.’

Thomson was constantly harassed by his uncertainty as to whether his letters and packages reached their destination safely. Many of his letters, indeed, were sent in duplicate by different routes.

Then there was the continual matter of money. On March 20, 1815 Thomson burst out in notes of exclamation over Beethoven’s ‘extortionate demands’. ‘Two years ago,’ he cries ‘you asked 25 ducats for six original airs; now you demand nearly three times that sum!’ Declaring that he cannot afford so much, he continues: ‘For the six airs, in regard to the poetry for which I have given myself an infinity of trouble, I will give you 35 ducats; and that, solely to gratify my own taste, for it is extremely uncertain whether the sale of these airs when printed will ever recoup my outlay, what with the expenses of engraving, printing, paper, &c. If you will not accept 35 ducats, I must ask you to have the goodness to put all the verses I have sent you on the fire.’

Beethoven had apparently addressed his last letter to “George Thomson, music-seller”. ‘Don’t call me “music-seller”, retorts Thomson; ‘I am an amateur; I sell nothing but my national airs, and those wholesale.’

The correspondence discloses no answer from Beethoven. The unlucky “six airs” occur only in Thomson’s last letter to the composer (see anon). There follows various correspondence in connection with the possibility of Beethoven composing other than airs, i.e. sonatas, overture and the like. We will not dwell on these. Another work on offer from the composer, but eventually not taken up by Thomson was “The Triumph of Wellington”.

We have seen that from the first Thomson had stipulated for EASY ritornellos and accompaniments, and that Beethoven had frankly confessed how the condition was not to his liking. As time went by, the editor found more and more occasion to complain that the condition was not being fulfilled. On November 12, 1814, he writes: ‘I return one of the three airs you have forwarded, in the hope that you will have the goodness to rewrite
it in a more simple and cantabile style, because our ladies here would refuse to touch so chromatic and accompaniment. In truth, they would not be able to sing the air and at the same time play such a part for the left hand’.

On January 1, 1816, in acknowledging the receipt of more work, he expresses himself better pleased; but next year he complains that some of Beethoven’s accompaniments are ‘too elaborate, too fantastic’; in December he says, ‘I have got your magnificent trio in B minor: I have never seen anything so charming and so wonderful; but it is terribly difficult’. On June 22, 1818, he writes: ‘Alas! my good sir, in this country one finds your works much too difficult; and only a very few masters of the first rank can play them. My songs with your ritornelles and accompaniments do not sell! Tell me, my dear sir, is it not possible for you to display the enchantments of your art in a simpler form? Could not your genius condescend to the composing of music equally superb, but less difficult of execution, so that amateurs could share in so delicious a feast? Is it not true that in all the arts the highest beauty is in general found united with the most perfect simplicity? And is it not such works that obtain the most permanent and universal admiration?’

Nearly a twelve month period was to elapse before Beethoven’s bottled-up impatience found an outlet. In the meantime Thomson had engaged him in a new project, which in due course he regretted having meddled with. On January 1, 1816, he wrote to the composer asking for some specimens of the national airs of certain foreign countries he named – Germany, Poland, Russia, the Tyrol, Venice and Spain. He offered four ducats for each such air to which Beethoven would supply the inevitable ‘ritornelles and accompaniments’. Beethoven seems to have found this commission to his liking, for on July 8 we find Thomson acknowledging the receipt of 19 foreign national airs, with which he professed himself much pleased. Yet a note of weariness creeps into his letters: ‘I heartily wish that I could induce our public to feel their great beauty, but alas,” that can only be a work of time. If you were in England for one or two seasons, giving public performances of your superb pieces, people would no doubt soon lose their taste for the poor, contemptible music to which at present they are devoted, and would come to love what is truly original and fine.’

In his next letter of October 20 he writes: ‘I am compelled to tell you that, after having put myself to endless trouble in the endeavour to get English verses written for the 19 airs of different nations which you have sent me, I have had to abandon my design in regard to these songs, because the measure and the singular style of them suits neither the form nor the genius of English poetry. The efforts of our poets to fit English verses to them have all been in vain.’

What else could have been expected? Beethoven had more than once told Thomson that he could not supply truly appropriate accompaniments unless he were furnished with the words as well as the melodies and Thomson’s correspondence with verse-writers ought by this time to have taught him that it is at least as difficult – even more difficult – to invent words to fit music. He proceeded: ‘The question is, what am I to do with these airs and your beautiful accompaniments? As I find it impossible to make songs of them, perhaps you could arrange them as pot-pourri overtures for the pianoforte, and that I might publish them in that form with success. I should be glad if you would arrange the 19 airs in six overtures, in whatever manner seems best to you, interweaving them with ideas and passages of your own according to your inimitable genius… In the list of prices you
sent me last winter you ask 12 ducats for a new and original overture. Now I hope that you will not ask more than half that price for arranging these national airs as overtures. Even at that price they will be very expensive, for I have already paid you 76 ducats for the 19 airs. Allow me to suggest that each overture should begin with an introduction and end with a Finale from your pen. The valse is very popular in our country, and you will perhaps be able to write some of the finales in that style. When you consider how embarrassed I am in regard to these 19 airs, and the loss I suffer on their account, I am sure that you will take a little trouble to render them serviceable to me.

This could not have left a good impression with the composer. Beethoven had simply fulfilled his commission, and should not have been saddled with any part of the consequences of his employer’s rashness. In any event, Thomson’s idea would be amusing were he dealing with any other than a supreme artist. On December 20, 1816 he writes again to Beethoven, having received no answer from him. On January 24, 1817 Thomson writes again, pressing for a reply to his last two letters. Beethoven’s reply has been lost; but in it he had evidently asked 124 ducats for the six overtures desired by Thomson. On June 25 Thomson replied: …it is utterly impossible for me to pay you such a price, you are so variable in the prices of your work. Since you will not accept this proposal, I make another: select 12 airs of different nations – those that appear to you best for adapting for variations; and if you compose not more than 8 variations to each air, for the pianoforte, in a pleasing style and not too difficult, I will pay you 72 ducats. It will be a very simple matter to write variations on twelve themes already composed. I need not tell you with what enthusiasm I admire your works. There is nothing in the world I desire so much as to make a pilgrimage to Vienna to see you, and to hear your Masses, Sonatas, Symphonies, and Quartets performed by the great musicians of your country; for alas,’ the greater part are too difficult for Edinburgh. In Vienna I should fancy myself in heaven.’ What a pity that Edinburgh to Vienna is so long a road.

Beethoven’s reply to this letter was written on February 21, 1818. This time he addresses Thomson as ‘my dear friend’. ‘It was impossible to reply to your letter of June 25. I was too busy, and still on the sick list. Be assured that I always deal with you as with a friend, but I am powerless against circumstances. I assure you that I very often put my reputation in my pocket solely that I may serve you on the easiest possible terms.

When Beethoven’s ‘themes with variations’ came to hand, Thomson as usual complains that some of them are much too difficult. ‘Our Scotch ladies can’t surely be as strong as yours’, he writes on January 8, 1819. In April, while sending more airs to be accompanied, he writes: ‘I am sorry to tell you that one of them in despair, having found them too elaborate and terribly difficult. It will be useless for me to publish the work; a great pity.’ The great man had endured this sort of thing very patiently. Surely he would at last explode in wrath. On May 25, 1819, however, he writes as follows: “MY DEAR FRIEND, – You are always writing “easy”, “very easy”; I do my best to satisfy you, but – but – the fee will have to be more “difficult”, or I might say ponderous. The fee for a theme with variations I fixed in my last letter to you – not less than 10 ducats – is, I solemnly assure you, only so low out of mere favour to you; for I have no need of troubling myself with such trifling things. I wish you may always have a real taste for true music; if you cry “easy”, I shall retort with “difficult” for your “easy”. Your friend, BEETHOVEN.

This is the last letter from Beethoven to Thomson. In it the true man speaks out as
perhaps never before in his correspondence. There is the dignity of the complete artist disguising itself in a humorous condescension, for friendship’s sake, to the limitations of a smaller man. We cannot tell precisely what led to the cessation of the correspondence. In November 1819 Thomson passes more strictures on the variations. In June 1820 he writes that no one asks for the variations he has published, and all his outlay (he puts the total at £94) is quite thrown away. He offers to make them over to any Vienna music-seller Beethoven pleases, in exchange for settings of those luckless six English songs he had sent so many years ago. After that, not a word on either side, and seven years later, Beethoven was no more.

In the winter of 1860-61 there appeared in Germany a selection of the Scotch songs from Beethoven’s MSS, edited by Franz Espagne. ‘The songs printed in Thomson’s collection’, says the editor in his preface, ‘are, both as to text and music, not only incorrectly printed, but wilfully altered and abridged’. These charges were groundless, with a lack of knowledge. It is sufficient to say that they were completely refuted in the Vienna “Deutsche Musikzeitung” of November 23 and December 28, 1861. The national themes with variations were purchased from Thomson for £50 in 1830, by Messrs. Paine & Hopkins, of London, after having been offered to several other music-sellers.

Summary of BEETHOVEN’S letters to George THOMSON
(1803-1819)


Of a total of 16 letters, 12 were written in French the remainder were in German (there were 2 additional contract documents).


BOOK REVIEW

TOMMY’S BURNS TUNES
By Joyce McIver.

Published by Cute Cats Music 1999 available from Book Shops price £2.00.


This book, one of a new series, introduces children to Scotland’s famous poet Robert Burns and takes them through the stages of a Burns Supper, from the first entry of the Haggis to the final “Auld Lang Syne”. Selected traditional tunes encourage children to learn some of the songs of Burns while having fun with their cute cat friend Tommy McTavish (illustrated below).

The contents include: Ye Banks and Braes, Ae Fond Kiss, There was a Lad, A Man’s a Man, My Luve is Like a Red, Red Rose and Auld Lang Syne.
In 1878, James Thomson Called a meeting to lay the foundation of the Hawick Burns Club and was elected its first President. For the 1879 Burns Supper he wrote the new song, “The Star o’ Robbie Burns,” with music by James Booth, a song too well known to quote here. Thomson was also responsible for the following lines to commemorate the unveiling of the Burns Statue at Dumfries on April 6th, 1882:

I see the noblest of the earth  
Bend low to him of humble birth;  
I see a vast enraptured throng  
Pay homage to the chief of song,  
And place a garland round his brow,  
And kiss the hands that held the plough.

In 1996, from June 8th until September 15th, the Royal Museum’s summer exhibition held jointly with the National Library of Scotland and in collaboration with the National Galleries of Scotland took the form of a National Burns Exhibition, under the title Pride & Passion. The Exhibition offered a most apropos quotation from Andrew Carnegie, who eulogized Burns as “The great democrat who, proclaiming the Royalty of Man, struck down Rank with one hand and the old hard Theology with the other, dispelling the false conception of a Heavenly Father who sent ‘ane to heaven and ten to hell a’ for his glory,” and added, “There cannot be too many statues erected to the memory of Burns.” [Italics mine] The Exhibition opened with a reproduction in miniature of the commemorative statue of Burns commissioned from James Pittendrigh Macgillivray in 1894 by the Town Council of Irvine; the statue was unveiled in 1896, celebrating the 100th anniversary of the Bard’s death.
I am sure that both within and outwith Scotland new statues of the Bard have been erected or are in the planning stages to commemorate the new millennium. I am proud to relate that the Edmonton Burns Club’s plans to erect a statue on January 25th, 2000 have come to fruition, and would like to share some of our thoughts and experiences with readers of the Chronicle.

Statues of the Bard can be found throughout Scotland, in England, Ireland, the USA, Canada, Australia and New Zealand. Edinburgh has two – the well-known one in the Scottish Portrait Gallery and another in Leith, near Constitution and Junction Streets, which was set up in 1898 under the auspices of the Leith Burns Club. I well remember a dear old colleague at the University of Alberta telling me once, “Burns never went to London – but then, he didn’t have to!” There is, nevertheless, a statue of the Bard there, a bronze one by John Steell which was unveiled by the Earl of Rosebery in the Victoria Embankment Gardens on July 26th, 1884. It is fascinating to read the following comments offered in John Blackwood’s London’s Immortals: The Complete Outdoor Commemorative Statues (1989):

Do the English find the creative imagination hard to handle, at least in public? Unlike the Latin Americans, they do not appoint their best poets to ambassadorships; instead, they ignore them and frequently drive them into exile. Unlike the French and the Italians, they do not make pre-eminent national heroes of their great painters, writers and philosophers; instead, they have tended to treat the inspired creator as someone faintly embarrassing, less than fully heroic and unhelpful to the State… Moreover, a closer examination of the list reveals an overwhelming debt to the country’s Celtic periphery, Byron, Carlyle and Burns were Scotsmen – and the Scots, as exemplified by the statue of Burns in the Victoria Embankment Gardens, clearly find inspiration no embarrassment.

In 1992, the Robert Burns Club of Milwaukee brought out Mither Wit and Native Fire: The Genius of Robert Burns, edited by Priscilla J. Kucik. Dr. Jim Connor of London, Ontario, former President of the Burns Federation, contributed a fascinating photographic essay entitled, “Looking Up to Burns.” With the help of his son, Alan, Jim reproduced photographs and information from Leonard Goodwillie’s now rare and out-of-print The World’s Memorials of Robert Burns (Detroit, 1911). Memorials were reproduced from Alloway, New York, Albany, Barre (Vermont), Falls River (Massachusetts), Denver, Chicago, San Francisco, Milwaukee, Boston and Dumfries. Of course, the selection could not be anything other than random and highly selective because of the nature of the original publication. In my review of Mither Wit in the Chronicle, I lamented in my chauvinistic way that the statue in Union Terrace, Aberdeen by Henry Bain Smith (erected in 1885) was not included; nor was the statue of Burns in Cheyenne, Wyoming made by Henry Snell Gamley RSA and erected in 1928 (too late for Goodwillie). A miniature of the Cheyenne statue, in which Burns stands erect with a book under his left arm, is on display in Ellisland.

Canadians already have Burns statues in Winnipeg, Vancouver, and Victoria. In the office of the Federation in the Dick Institute there hangs (opposite a print of Ted Tilby’s cover for my own book on Burns) a modernistic picture of the Vancouver Burns Statue and its city surroundings painted by Marko Lytviak of the Vancouver Club; the statue
overlooking the marina in Stanley Park was unveiled by Ramsay MacDonald in 1928. The Winnipeg statue is downtown by the Legislature, while the surprisingly small one of Burns and Highland Mary in Victoria has stood in Beacon Hill Park overlooking the golf-course and the ocean since 1900. Until now, Alberta lacked a Burns statue, although one member of the Edmonton Burns Club says that there is (or, at least, was) a bust of Burns in Lethbridge, in a park across from the Marquis Hotel. When the Edmonton one was unveiled on January 25th, it could certainly be considered the first full-figure statue of the Bard in Alberta, and hopefully the first statue to go up anywhere in the world in the new millennium.

The Edmonton Burns Club was founded late in 1919, and the first Burns Dinner was held in the Hotel Macdonald on January 25th, 1920. The Club has three simple objectives: To honour and perpetuate the memory of the Scottish Bard, Robert Burns, by commemorating the anniversary of his birth each January 25th and in whatever other way the Club deems fitting; to cultivate a better knowledge and understanding of the life and works of the poet; to foster among the members and their associates the spirit of friendship and goodwill which was dear to the heart of the Bard.

The Club members felt that this mandate could best be carried out through the erection of a new statue of Robert Burns at the start of the third millennium.

The Club’s annual dinner is recognized as one of the City’s major cultural and social events, with an annual attendance of close to five hundred. Over the years, money raised from the dinners has accumulated, and the bulk of these funds has been directed towards the statue project, together with contributions from kind donors. The site was arranged with the Oliver Family, the Hotel Macdonald and the City, and the sculptor John Weaver cast the statue. Money was, of course, the problem; a total of at least $60,000.00 was needed for statue, base and plinth, and not all of this necessary sum has so far been raised. The members of the Club pulled together to support the project, and special tribute must be paid to Alex Halliburton, in whose capable hands all artistic matters were safely placed.

The easiest of these matters was the choice of sculptor. John Barney Weaver of Hope, British Columbia, is a distinguished Canadian sculptor of international acclaim. After graduation with distinction from the Art Institute of Chicago in 1946, John Weaver worked for the Layton School of Art in Milwaukee and was sculptor and curator of the Montana Historical Society. From 1966 to 1971 he was the sculptor for the Provincial Museum of Alberta, after which he began a new, free-lance career and founded the John Weaver Sculpture Museum. His work graces the National Statuary Hall and the Smithsonian Institute in Washington, DC; Lincoln Museum, Springfield; Battleship North Carolina Museum, Wilmington; Naval Academy Museum, Annapolis; Canton Art Institute, Canton; New York State Museum, Albany; Madison County Courthouse, Virginia City, the impressive list is a lengthy one. In Alberta he has work on display in Calgary, and in Edmonton his art figures most notably in the Provincial Museum, the Centennial Library, the Rotary Park, the Jubilee Auditorium, the Chamber of Commerce, and the Coliseum (now Skyreach Centre). Locally, his best-known works are The Stake, The Pronghorns and the Orientation Gallery Frieze at the Provincial Museum, Edmonton Traders outside the Public Library, and Wayne Gretsky at the Skyreach Centre. Art, to Weaver, is basically communication, “a way of life, a profession which should serve people, not an ivory
tower retreat of self-fulfilment.”

Weaver’s bronze sculptures are created by the ancient, traditional *cire perdue*, or “lost wax” method. This means that each sculpture is unique (although modern methods can now produce duplicate casts if necessary), which helped settle discussions within the Edmonton Club. There was no need to shudder at the idea of making a second cast which could be sold to the Calgary Club to help defray expenses, or of making one to sell overseas and distant from Edmonton. No, the Edmonton statue is unique! The plaster cast went from the studio in Hope to the fine art bronze foundry in Cochrane for casting, and the completed statue was shipped to Edmonton early in January for storage at the Scanplast plant until its placement just before January 25th.

The next question, of course, was how the statue would look. It was decided that the life-size figure of Burns would be shown kneeling, notepad and possibly anarchonistic pencil in hand, gazing at the wee mouse’s ruined nest while composing *To A Mouse*. (Better the pencil, of course, than a quill pen, which could be so easily snapped off; the Aberdeen statue has the poet holding a daisy, and the City’s Links and Parks Department always has to hand a box of replacement daisies). Since the statue serves not only to mark the poet’s life and work but also to recognize the contribution of Scottish pioneers in Albert, simplicity was called for. This consideration ruled out elaborate decorations, such as the Stonehaven bust’s with four heads: “Gathering her brows like gathering storm,” “Kings may be blest, but Tam was glorious,” “The Souter told his queerest stories,” and “The Landlord’s laugh was ready chorus.” The new Burns statue unveiled by Festival 1996’s Honorary President, the Princess Royal, in the centre of Kilmarnock at the Cross has two figures on it, Burns and the printer John Wilson (1759-1821), but also has small statues of Apollo and Hermes; these Classical deities did not find a place in Weaver’s conception.

All Burnsians think we know what Burns looked like, but do we? Our postcards, portraits, and stained-glass windows are based on the known Burns portraits: the chalk drawing by Archibald Skirving (who never set eyes on the Bard), the silhouette by John Miers, the Alexander Reid miniature, the Swinton portrait, the Peter Taylor painting (which may be of *Gilbert*, not Robert Burns) and, of course, the Alexander Nasmyth likenesses. Nasmyth painted the bust portrait in 1787 at the request of the publisher William Creech to illustrate the first Edinburgh Edition, and the portrait was given by the poet’s son, Colonel William Nicol Burns, to the National Gallery for Scotland; Nasmyth’s two duplicates now grace the National Portrait Gallery in London and the Kelvingrove Art Gallery, Glasgow. Forty years after the poet’s death, Nasmyth converted his bust portrait to a full-length study for Lockhart’s *Life of Burns*. Nasmyth was, however, not the portrait painter Sir Henry Raeburn was, and in his later years concentrated on landscapes rather than portraiture. And the situation with statues is similar, for statues of the Bard bear a distinct family likeness, all seeming at least to derive from the statue of Burns in Ayr, which bears the inscriptions “J. Moore founded“ and “G. A. Lawson Sc 1811” and which looks as if it took its clue from Nasmyth *et al.* Do we imbibe our impression of Burns’s appearance from perhaps shaky notions? That such is, indeed, the case is put forcibly by Sir Walter Scott.

Recounting the occasion when as a lad of fifteen in the winter of 1786-87 he drew himself to the attention of Burns in Sciennes Hill House, the Edinburgh home of Professor Adam Ferguson, by being able to identify for Burns the lines below a Banbury print as
Langhorne’s, Scott goes on to give a striking verbal portrait of the lion of Edinburgh society:

His person was strong and robust: his manner rustic, not clownish; a sort of dignified plainness and simplicity, which received part of its effect perhaps from one’s knowledge of his extraordinary talents. His features are represented in Mr. Nasmyth’s picture, but to me it conveys the idea that they are diminished as if seen in perspective. I think his countenance was more massive than it looks in any of the portraits. I would have taken the poet, had I not known what he was, for a very sagacious country farmer of the old Scotch school — i.e. none of your modern agriculturalists, who keep labourers for their drudgery, but the *douce gudeman* who held his own plough. There was a strong expression of sense and shrewdness in all his lineaments; the eye alone, I think, indicated the poetical character and temperament. It was large and of a dark cast, and glowed (I say literally *glowed*) when he spoke with feeling or interest. I never saw such another eye in a human head, though I have seen the most distinguished men in my time.

This reminiscence was printed by Lockhart in Vol. I of his *Life of Scott* (1857) and reprinted in *Burns As Others Saw Him*, ed. W. L. Renwick (Edinburgh, 1959). It is important because it makes clear that Scott did not find the Nasmyth bust portrait (and, by implication, all representations derived therefrom) particularly convincing.

Accordingly, John Weaver had the courage to swim against the tide of Nasmyth-derived pictures and statues, and struck out on his own to offer the Edmonton Club his individual and fresh vision. What *did* Burns look like in November of 1785? As guides, Weaver had descriptions such as those found in *Burns As Others Saw Him* and the measurements of the poet’s skull taken when the body was reinterred in St. Michael’s Kirkyard, Dumfries but in the main he relied upon his sound artistic instincts. When a maquette and then slides of the completed statue were shown to the Club, first reactions were predictable; one member joked, “Even the moose disnae look like himsel!” (There is no mouse with the statue.) But now a fierce pride in Weaver’s courage and innovation holds sway in Edmonton.

Particularly when seen in profile, the Weaver statue bears a close resemblance to a profile plaque of Burns placed at the bottom of the garden in Alloway when the Auld Clay Biggin’ was renovated a few years ago. A younger-looking Burns, one sharper of feature, is also to be seen in the portrait of the 18-year-old Burns which I last saw hanging in the Burns Tower at Mauchline; on a subsequent visit to the Tower, however, all I saw was a display about coal. The Mauchline Tower and its contents are owned by the Cumnock and Doon Valley District Council, who are to appoint someone to have care of the museums; I do not know what happened to the items on display previously. The portrait may be spurious, but many consider it to be of Burns and to have been painted by Sir Henry Raeburn. For a change the *right*-hand side of Burns’s face is shown, and the face is at once younger and thinner than our usual impression would have it — and more like Weaver’s conception.
NEW PATRONS CLUB

In a line-up of 37 Corporate Patrons of the Robert Burns World Federation Limited the following have recently become members of this unique Club, which is restricted to 37 members, one for each year of the Poet’s short life:-

EAST AYRSHERE COUNCIL, DUMFRIES & GALLOWAY BURNS TRUST, BT SCOTLAND, EDINBURGH CRYSTAL, ISLE OF ARRAN DISTILLERS and Dr. and Mrs. JIM CONNOR (Canada). Companies and Individuals interested in joining the Club should contact Mrs. Shirley Bell (Chief Executive) at Dean Castle Country Park, Dower House, Kilmarnock, KA3 1XB, Tel/Fax: 01563 572469.

We are delighted to announce that the Isle of Arran Distillers Ltd., has agreed to become a member of The Robert Burns Patrons Club.

Harold Currie who was previously Managing Director of Chivas Brothers Ltd., and House of Campbell set up the company in 1992.

The distillery, located in Lochranza, was opened in 1995 re-establishing a tradition of whisky production on the Island, which had been dormant for some 150 years. According to a number of 19th century commentators the Arran Malt of the past was among the finest whiskies produced in Scotland.

The first malt spirit that flowed from the new distillery’s stills was described by experts as “excellent” and people were keen to see how the malt matured.

In 1997 a visitor centre was added to the distillery and this was officially opened by Her Majesty the Queen. The centre has since won awards from the Scottish Tourist Board and has an excellent restaurant which is rated among the best on the island. It has also been the location for a number of wedding ceremonies. The most recent being the marriage of a young couple from the USA.

In late 1999, some casks were selected as having matured beyond expectation in spite of their relatively young age and these were bottled as the first official offering of the Arran Malt. It would appear that the distillery’s geographical location and mother nature have been kind to us, as the whisky appears to be maturing at a faster rate than one would normally expect. As a result, the first malt released has received critical acclaim from the recognised whisky experts and many have said that on the nose the malt could be mistaken as being of an older vintage.

The Ayrshire connection with the company continues as the founder Harold Currie is still resident in Mauchline and the current Managing Director, David Boyle was raised near Kilmarnock.

On the subject of the Burns Patrons Club, Managing Director David Boyle said, “I had been looking at the possibility of creating a whisky which was officially endorsed by The Robert Burns World Federation and when we opened dialogue with Chief Executive Mrs. Shirley Bell and she explained the idea of the Patrons Club it seemed a perfect match. Being the nearest distillery as the crow flies to the birthplace of Robert Burns were are delighted to be involved in this project. Although Burns never visited the island there must have been many times that he gazed across at it, and given the many references in his work to the “Bold John Barleycorn” who knows, he may even have tasted the legendary spirit from the island.

Boyle continued, “we intend to create a blended whisky and also a limited edition malt whisky which will be on offer initially to Burns World Federation Members. At Isle of Arran Distillers an emphasis is placed on quality and we will endeavour to create products that are worthy of being linked to our National Bard.”
The products will be available in the UK domestic and Duty Free Markets and should be launched in December. Isle of Arran Distillers have pointed out that although the Federation members may be able to order the products through the company’s website www.arranwhisky.com. Members resident in the USA and Canada for legal reasons are unable to be supplied through this route. The company will be trying to find ways to overcome this problem, but meantime their advice to interested members is to have a personal friend take a bottle with them if they are visiting either of these markets from the U.K.

We all look forward to raising a glass or two of these exciting new whiskies at future Federation Burns suppers.

PRESENTATION TO BT SCOTLAND

Above: Joe Campbell, President of the Robert Burns World Federation Presenting a Patron’s Scroll to Alex Pollock. The event took place in the Burns Room, Mitchell Library, Glasgow on 13th September, 2000. BT Scotland are holders of the year 1760 in the Patrons Club.
Above: President Joe Campbell handing over the Member’s Scroll to William Service of the Dumfries and Galloway Burns Trust which was set up by the former Dumfries and Galloway Regional Council. The ceremony took place in the Mill on the Fleet, Gatehouse. The Trust are holders of the year 1796 which represents the year of the Poet’s death which took place in Dumfries.
NEW FEDERATION HEADQUARTERS

Dower House, Dean Castle Country Park, Kilmarnock, new home of the Federation.

CEREMONIAL KEY PRESENTATION

Federation President Joe Campbell accepting the ceremonial key to the Federation’s new offices from Provost James Boyd of East Ayrshire Council, Friday 21st July, 2000.

VISIT TO MILL on the FLEET, GATEHOUSE
During the visit to Gatehouse to present the patrons scroll to Dumfries and Galloway Burns Trust, President Joe Campbell and Shirley Bell paid a visit to the Burns Tableaux within the Mill. Pictured from left to right (opposite) Alf Hannay, (John Syme), Joe Campbell, Shirley Bell, (Robert Burns), Provost John Forteath and Bobby Carson (President Gatehouse Burns Club).
POET’S ANCESTOR VISITS DUMFRIES

Dumfries was the first stop for Robert Burns’s Great, Great, Great, Great Granddaughter Mrs. Fiona Brent (Gowring) on her visit to Scotland. Tuesday 27th June, 2000 to see for the first time historic places connected with her famous ancestors. Pictured above in Burns House from left to right - Chronicle Editor, Peter J. Westwood, Wilson Ogilvie, Fiona (holding a letter from the Poet’s granddaughter) and her husband Peter.
FEDERATION BURNS SUPPER EDINBURGH

Above: Groups of participants, including some from overseas who attended the first Robert Burns World Federation’s Supper in the Royal Museum of Scotland, Edinburgh.
Accordingly, John Weaver eschewed the formal pose and had Burns dressed for work, kneeling and looking natural. I sent him a draft of this article, and in reply he wrote as follows:

I like the article very much. You have defended my more rustic and vigorous Burns better than I could do. Portrait painters of the period made their living trying to make aristocrats look more aristocratic. *I could not hear the words that Burns wrote coming from the lips of the Nasmyth painting.* [Italics mine]

I was interested in what Tom Phillips had to say about similar circumstances surrounding a new statue of Sir Edward Elgar. “Notes in the Post,” BBC *Music Magazine* (September, 1999), read in part as follows:

Elgar was always willing with march or anthem to serve his country. He has now been recalled to keep what may well be his final watch over the £20 note. However, this time he serves his country with his distinctive moustache as much as his music. It is that luxuriant growth, engraved in a thousand curling lines, that is to outwit the counterfeiter. We learn as well that Malvern Council, after years of prevarication, has at last commissioned a statue of the composer, who so loved the town and surrounding hills. Is statuary of the dead itself now dead as an art form? One might think so on the evidence of the 1980 Elgar sculpture by Kenneth Potts, which overlooks shops near Worcester Cathedral. The composer who made poetry out of landscape, who wrote, as he said, what the trees sang, is hardly evoked by this leaden headmaster. Its formulaic dullness and brutality of texture traduce the nature of Elgar’s music and his own fastidiousness of dress. This is the epitome and exemplar of the English country gentleman; no nuance of attitude or costume is absent. It is a study in tweed and rough wool set against high collar, cravat and tiepin, completed by the obligatory stick and pipe in kidgloved hand. Public sculpture does not have to be left to clumsy artisans, as proved by David Mach’s huge brick train hurtling out of a northern hillside near Darlington or Antony Gormley’s brooding landmark *Angel of the North*. Luckily Malvern’s announced choice of artist is both wise and bold. A native of Malvern, Rose Garrard was once the international *enfant terrible* of feminist performance art. Her work has gained in scope and depth in recent years and her commentary on one of Britain’s greatest dead, white males should be fresh, startling, and, I suspect, rather grand.

Quite so — ‘nuff said!

The next question dealt with the inscriptions to be put on the granite base of the statue. It was agreed that the front would read simply thus, over a ploughing motif:

**ROBERT BURNS**

January 25, 1759 – July 21, 1796

Then an opposite quotation had to be chosen, which proved to me not so easy a
task. I include the suggestions in the hope they may prove helpful to others in the same predicament:

Epitaph on Wm. Muir in Tarbolton Mill: To a Mouse:
If there’s another world, he lives in bliss;
If there is none, he made the best of this.
Wee, sleekit, cow’rin, tim’rous beastie,
O, what a panic’s in thy breastie!

Epitaph on my Honoured Father:
The pitying heart that felt for human woe,
The dauntless heart that fear’d no human pride.
The best-laid schemes of mice an men
Gang aft agley.

Address to the Unco Guid:
Then gently scan your brother man,
Still gentler sister woman.
The Cotter’s Saturday Night:
From scenes like these, old Scotia’s grandeur springs,
That makes her lov’d at home, rever’d abroad.

Epistle to Davie
The heart ay’s the part ay
That makes us right or wrang.
To a Louse:
O wad some Power the giftie gie us
To see oursels as ithers see us!

Epistle to J. Lapraik:
My Muse, tho hamely in attire,
May touch the heart.
The heart benevolent and kind
The most resembles God.

Elegy on the Death of Robert Ruisseaux: A Man’s a Man for a’ That:
Then wi a rhyme or sang he lash’d ‘em,
And thought it sport.
The rank is but the guinea’s stamp,
The man’s the gowd for a’ that.

Apostrophe to Fergusson:
Why is the Bard unfitted for the world,
Yet has so keen a relish of its pleasures?
The pitch o sense an pride o worth
Are higher rank than a’ that.

Auld Lang Syne:
We’ll tak a cup of kindness yet,
For auld lang syne!
Rantin, Rovin Robin:
He’ll hae misfortunes great an sma
But ay a heart aboon them a’.
The choices were whittled down to the obvious three, those from *Auld Lang Syne*, *A Man’s a Man for a’ That*, and *To a Mouse*. Informed that a two-line epitaph would be easier to engrave than a three-line one, the Club voted by ballot to use the only three-line suggestion:

\[
\begin{align*}
&\text{It’s comin yet for a’ that} \\
&\text{That Man to Man, the world o’er,} \\
&\text{Shall brithers be for a’ that.}
\end{align*}
\]

The rear panel carries the names of the Past Presidents of the Club, the present members, and all who have contributed to the cost of the project. Getting all the names correct, sorting the names in alphabetical order, deciding about honorifics, and marking certain names *in memoriam* turned out to be a massive task, one not lightly to be undertaken by anyone who contemplates a similar fund-raising approach.

After much deliberation, a fine site was selected and approved by all parties concerned. The statue was placed in Frank Oliver Park, immediately south of the main thoroughfare, Jasper Avenue, and NW of the Hotel Macdonald. Frank Oliver was the founder and editor of the first Edmonton newspaper, the *Edmonton Bulletin*. He was a strong Liberal, and had an on-going dispute with Sir John A. Macdonald in the 1880s in the paper — it was the usual Liberal vs Conservative struggle. Oliver became MP for Edmonton in 1905 when Clifford Sifton (minister of the interior) resigned from the Laurier government following a dispute over the Alberta and Saskatchewan Acts (the two provinces wanted a non-sectarian educational system, but Laurier wanted the dual system of public and Catholic schools). Frank Oliver then became minister until 1911. The Oliver family are delighted to have the Burns statue in the park, needless to say, as ever enjoying the irony of the park’s being adjacent to the hotel named after Sir John A. Macdonald!

“Some days you’re the pigeon, some days you’re the statue,” runs the old saying, which reminded the Edmonton Burns Club of the apocryphal story of the Scots inventor who came up with a salve which brought statues to life. He tried it on the one of Burns in Ayr and, sure enough, the Bard climbed somewhat stiffly down from his plinth. “What’s the first thing you’re going to do?” he was asked. “I’m going to murder me a couple of million pigeons!” Fortunately, the City of Edmonton will be responsible for maintenance of the statue, the pavement, the park — and the pigeon droppings. The Club must, of course, carry public liability insurance on both the sign and the statue.

The site is also fitting because of the long association of the Club and the hotel. The first Edmonton Burns Supper was held in the Hotel Macdonald on January 25th, 1920 along the lines of the traditional Scottish dinner, and that format continued over the years. In the last decade, following renovations, the hotel has become the Canadian Pacific’s flagship Edmonton hotel, but the Club had to move elsewhere in the late eighties when the hotel was closed for the renovations and the new layout did not provide the accommodation required by the Club. Yet the long association persists, and the traveller coming up Bellamy Hill will delight to see the rays of the Western sun shine on the statue of Burns in its magnificent setting by the striking Hotel Macdonald.

On October 15th, the Club unveiled a sign on the site which announced to the world our intention to erect the statue of Burns. The Club piper led the dignitaries to the sign.
which was draped in the Saltire Flag, I said a prayer of dedication, then the Club President, Graeme Young, and Frank Oliver Jr. unveiled the sign amidst much media interest. Now we keenly awaited January 25th, when the weather could have been less clement than it actually was (-30° is common at that time of year), and we repeated the process in a snell wind with spirits undiminished. The dignitaries were quick-marched by the piper to the statue, and members of the Club stood in a semi-circle round these principal players. The President, Graeme Young, spoke briefly to introduce the sculptor, then our speaker, Rev. Fraser Aitken of Ayr St. Columba spoke on the significance of our statue and said a prayer of dedication. Graeme Young invited Rev. Aitken and our Honorary President, George Reid, each to pull a cord and unveil the statue from its covering flags. We then all sprinted for the warmth of the Hotel Macdonald and lunch in the Wedgewood Room with our spouses, leaving the dignitaries to have pictures taken in the cold and to address the media. It was great fun for everyone but them! At the lunch, Fraser Aitken produced three Burns memorabilia which he particularly treasures and which added to the atmosphere in the hotel that day — a snuff horn which Burns gave to John Rankine, a red wine glass from Burns’s Lochlea days, and a toddy ladle from his time in Dumfries.

Each February the Edmonton Burns Club holds its Greetin’ Meetin’ at which members express their opinions on the success or otherwise of the Annual Dinner — and this time we also had the statue and the ceremony on which to pass judgment. The consensus was, however, that we had a fine and unique statue of the Bard erected in time for the dedication ceremony on January 25th of the third millennium, and that everyone involved had done us proud — John Weaver, Alex Halliburton and the Statue Committee, Fraser Aitken… the list is a long one. When the Club met at the same time in 1999, the agony and the ecstasy of the statue still lay ahead of us; now that Angst was behind us, the problems of the money, the granite, the plinth, the inscription, were receding from our awareness, and we have a magnificent statue in Edmonton. A retrospective look at what we have achieved rightly places particular emphasis on how unique and courageous is John Weaver’s vision.

I know that the minds of Burnsians were focussed on their own celebrations on January 25th, 2000 but I hope they also spared a thought for their hardy Edmontonian fellows as knees grew blue but hearts remained warm while we tried to bring to life once more those words of James Thomson:

I see the noblest of the earth
Bend low to him of humble birth;
I see a vast enraptured throng
Pay homage to the chief of song,
And place a garland round his brow,
And kiss the hands that held the plough.
NEW TITLE FOR N.A.A.F.B.
THE ROBERT BURNS ASSOCIATION OF NORTH AMERICA CONFIRMED AT THE ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

The North American Association of Federated Burnsians held its 20th Annual Conference at the Four Points Hotel Sheraton, London, Ontario, Canada. June 9th-11th, 2000. This being the fourth time, that it had been held in the Forest City of London.

It was the unanimous opinion of all the Delegates, that this Conference rated among the best. The weather was wonderful, the Hotel was excellent and in a great location, and had all the facilities to complement this event.

The Conference was organized by a Committee of Burnsians, since no Club was forthcoming to host this event for the year 2000. Co conveners were Elma Connor and Joan Turner, and the Committee comprised of Jim Connor, Jim and Jean Cunningham, Jack and Janet Mann, David and Elsie Adamson. All worked very hard and with great enthusiasm to make the weekend, the success that it was.

There were over one hundred (100) Delegates registered from all over North America, representing seventeen (17) Clubs. We were also very happy to welcome Mrs. Nan Vinnel, a Patron of the Canterbury Burns Club, Christchurch, New Zealand. Of course, everyone present was absolutely delighted, that Mrs. Shirley Bell had taken time from her busy schedule, to make the trip for a third time to join us at a N.A.A.F.B. Conference. Shirley is a wonderful Ambassador for The Robert Burns World Federation Ltd. The total number of miles travelled by the delegates from all over the World, to reach London, Ontario, was thirty three thousand (33,000) miles, nearly one and a half times the circumference of the Earth. Pretty impressive!

Many of the delegates gathered at the Hotel, on the day before the Conference, and this gave everyone a chance to catch up on the news, and to renew friendships and meet “auld acquaintances.”

Friday was a very busy day for everyone, starting with the Annual Golf Tournament, organized by Joan Turner. The Conference Registration commenced at 3.00 p.m. followed by a “Social Time” with refreshments served in the Hospitality Suite.

The evening programme got underway with cocktails, followed by an excellent dinner complemented by white and red wine, which had been made and bottled by some members of the committee, and labelled with the Logo of N.A.A.F.B. 2000. A very popular souvenir! David Adamson gave a stirring “Address to a Haggis” then everyone present was astonished to hear the Haggis reply to David’s Address! The Haggis had a few words to say on its own behalf and on behalf of all Haggai (is the plural of Haggis?) It wanted everyone to know that all Haggai were getting a little bit fed up with all the abuse that
has been perpetrated on them over the years, such as being stabbed by everything from a dirk, kitchen knife an occasional skein dhu and even a Swiss army knife, and also for the
criticizism of their facial features. This was a unique turn of events, much to everyone’s amusement and surprise.

The Piper for the evening, Miss Eileen Robertson accompanied by Miss Kelly Stoddard on drums gave added enjoyment to the evening.

The evening’s entertainment comprised of many lovely Songs of Robert Burns, delightfully sung by Miss Barbara Gracey, accompanied by Mr. Angus Sinclair. Barbara’s rendition of “The Star o’ Robbie Burns” was greeted by a standing ovation and cries for an encore, to which Barbara willingly acceded.

Mr. Fred Moyes and his Electronic Ensemble, entertained throughout the evening, interspersed with “party pieces” from the guests. Mr. Jim Cunningham was Master of Ceremonies, and kept the party going with gusto. All in all, it certainly was a very enjoyable evening, with the dance floor being a popular area.

The winners and the runners up of the Golf Tournament were awarded their prizes amid much applause and catcalls! Mr. Leslie Strachan, from Virginia, was the “Star o’ the Links.”

Saturday’s programme was very varied. After breakfast, the Annual General Meeting got under way. This was a very momentous AGM, as changes to the name of our organisation and to the Constitution and Bylaws, were the main focus. It was a very good meeting and a very positive one indeed. The Minutes indicate that things went well, but of course with a few differences of opinion, which is always to be expected. It would never do if everyone agreed all the time. The outcome was very positive which means that we can now expand in North America, and also advertise the benefits of becoming members in The Robert Burns World Federation Ltd. Our organisation in now known as “The Robert Burns Association of North America,” which offers membership to Non Federated Cubs and Individuals. Saturday afternoon offered a variety of events for the interest and pleasure of the delegates. A huge Shopping Mall across from the Hotel, was a great enticement for the ladies. There was a Cultural afternoon programme entitled

Left:- David Adamson, addressing the Haggis. Centre:- Constable Renzo Cariato and Shirley Bell. Right:- Joan Turner presenting Leslie Strachan with his golf prize.
“Notes on Burns. Melodies, Musings, and Memorabilia of Robert Burns,” presented and organised by members of the Bicentenary Discussion Group. A tour of London on a Red Double Decker Bus was very popular.

Prior to the Gala Banquet in the evening, we arranged for the delegates to participate in a photographic session, with a very handsome young Constable of The Royal Canadian Mounted Police, in full “Mountie” uniform. Donations for this privilege went to a charity “The Bethany Hope Foundation.” Bethany was a little five year old, stricken with a condition called Leukodystrophy. She required round the clock nursing care at home, where she lived with her seven siblings. There is no known cure for this disease. A total of $500.00 from the delegates was contributed to this worthy cause. Bethany’s father is a S/Sgt. in The Royal Canadian Mounted Police and it was thought appropriate to support a local charity. The cheque was presented to Bethany’s mother, Lindey McIntyre, and we were able to see Bethany and hold her hand. Unfortunately Bethany lost her battle with this incurable disease, and died five days later. We can only hope that a cure will be found for this tragic disease, towards which Bethany’s mother and father, Lindey and Dave McIntyre continue to work.

Cocktails and chatter preceded the top table guests being piped into the Banquet hall by Eileen and Kelly. Jim Connor was the Master of Ceremonies for the Official Banquet. Toasts were given, and responded to, and then the evening’s entertainment commenced. Fred Moyes, once again, was on hand to entertain throughout the evening, interspersed by The Canadian Celtic Choir, who enthralled everyone with its wonderful programme of Robert Burns Songs, and a medley of popular Scottish songs. Once again the dance floor was crowded with the Lads and Lassies eager to “trip the light fantastic.” The evening ended with the singing of “Auld Lang Syne.” For sure, a good time was had by all.

Sunday morning came around too fast, and our weekend of fellowship and merrymaking was coming to an end, but there still was the Church Service, which took the form of “The Kirkin’ o’ the Tartan,” held in the Hotel. This was very well attended. Barbara Gracey was the soloist once again, singing a lovely psalm to the tune of “Ae Fond Kiss.” She also accompanied the singing of the hymns. The kilted bearers of the flags and tartan banners preceded by the Piper was a very impressive sight. Shirley Bell gave a reading from the Old Testament, and Elma Connor, President of R.B.A.N.A. gave a reading from the New Testament, and Jack Man delivered a prayer in the auld Scots tongue. Ther service was efficiently organised by Joan Turner, and Jim and Jean Cunningham.

After partaking of a light lunch, everyone said their “Goodbyes” and went their various ways. The weather which had been so beautiful, suddenly took a turn for the worse, the heavens opened and the rains came. In spite of the three day deluge, everyone arrived home safe and sound.

Submitted by Elma Connor.
August 30, 2000.
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The Official Opening of the Agnes Burns Cottage and Visitor Centre at Knockbridge, Dundalk, was held on Sunday, 20th August, 2000. This project was started after a meeting between the Belfast Burns Association and the Stephenstown Pond Trust way back in 1997. At that time the actual cottage had only four walls with grass growing feet high inside and out, but with lots of enthusiasm and forward thinking, we all agreed it was a challenge which should be taken on board.

Mr. Declan Breathnach and Miss Geraldine McCullagh did the “spade work” by applying to various Funding Agencies for grants to start the project. We all knew this was going to be hard, constant work, and eventually there was enough money available to appoint the Architect, etc. It was therefore, wonderful to see the fulfillment of the Project on Sunday, when around 1,000 people attended the Opening Ceremony.

The total cost of the Project was over £500,000 and thanks were expressed to the International Fund for Ireland, Co-operation Ireland and all the Agencies around the immediate area and beyond, as well as the very generous donations from the local people of Knockbridge and the surrounding villages.

It was good to welcome Mr. Joe Kennedy, from the Federation Memorials Committee, Joe has, in fact, watched the progress of the work over the years, as he and his wife have holidayed in the area, so he was pleased to bring greetings from the President and Chief Executive. The President of the Belfast Burns Association, Mr. Wilson Logan, said how pleased we all were to be part of the project and hoped that the friendships we had made over the years would be a continuation of Cross Community achievements. The Presbyterian, Church of Ireland Ministers and the local Parish Priest all took part in a short service of Dedication prior to the opening. We were entertained to Scottish Dancing by children from Belfast and Irish Dancers from Knockbridge, a Soloist and Violinist.
On the whole we had a most enjoyable day and we look forward to the Pond and the Cottage and Visitor Centre becoming a tourist attracting to help offset the outstanding debt of £30,000.

We hope that many members of the Federation and Burnsians throughout the country and, in fact, worldwide will visit the area.

Geraldine McCullagh, Stephenstown Pond Trust.
Anne Allan, Belfast Burns Association.

SOUTHERN SCOTTISH COUNTIES BURNS ASSOCIATION

Annual Commemorative Service at Brow Well

A large gathering of Burns enthusiasts from all over Dumfries and Galloway and beyond attended the annual service at the Brow on 19th July, 2000. President of the Robert Burns World Federation, Joe Campbell delivered the oration and spoke of the unique legacy left by Burns to mankind. Prayers were offered by the Rev. Jim Williamson of the Parish of Ruthwell, who also read from “Lorrimer’s Bible”. A wreath was laid at the well by Mrs Campbell. SSCBA president Ted Murray presided and John Lauder, senior vice president, proposed a vote of thanks. The piper was Calum Watson. The Federation was also represented with both vice presidents John Skilling and Jim Gibson accompanying the president and for once, the weather was clement.

Pictured below: Officials and Burns Club delegates line up after the annual service.
TWO FRAGMENTS OF LETTERS BY ROBERT BURNS

Many years ago when my now husband was a student and working in an antique shop in Aberdeen, he came across two fragments of letters he believed to be the originals by Robert Burns.¹ Given the antique dealer’s questionable literacy and literature appreciation, the young student fell heir to the precious fragments of manuscripts presented below:

Fragment 1. To Robert Ainslie:

Ellisland, 14 June, 1788

This is now the third day, My Dearest Sir, that I have sojourned in these regions; and during these three days you have occupied more of my thoughts than in three weeks preceding: in Ayrshire, I have several Variations of Friendship’s Compass, here it points invariably to the Pole. – My farm gives me a good many (…) I have all along, hitherto, in the warfare of life, been bred to arms among the Lighthorse, the Piquet-guards of Fancy, a kind of Hussars and Highlanders of the Brain; but I am firmly resolved to sell out of these giddy Battalions who have no ideas of a battle but fighting the foe, or of a siege, but storming the town: cost what it will, I am determined to buy in among the grave Squadrons of heavy-armed Thought or the Artillery corps of plodding dullness.

It should be noted that these two fragments are one and the same letter written rectoverso and that Cromek, 1808, was correct in combining them. They were later separated by J. De Lancey Ferguson.² There are, also, certain variations with the original manuscript: all my italicised words or letters are in upper case in Burns’s letters. They are in lower case in the Ross Roy edition. Moreover, the word dullness of the original replaces ‘contrivance’ of the Ross Roy edition. The manuscript, while fragile, is in relatively good condition.

Fragment II. To Robert Ainslie, dated November 3 (postmark)

I long to hear from you, how you come on – not so much in Business as in Life. – Are you pretty well satisfied with your own exertions & tolerably at ease in your internal reflections? It is much to be a great character as a Lawyer, but beyond comparison more to be a great character as a Man. — That you may be both one and the other is the earnest wish, and that you will be both is the firm persuasion of, My dear Sir, Robt. Burns.

The italicised letters are again in upper case in the Burns manuscript. The poet’s signature is also present. It was quite customary, of course, for authors in the eighteenth century to capitalize the first letter of significant words in their letters and literary works. In France and in Britain, to name but two countries, this was common narrative usage. Besides the obvious function of drawing the reader’s attention to the significance of the chosen words, it also gives dramatic import to the writer’s rhetoric. It short, it can be a passionate rhetorical device and especially when the poet in question is Robert Burns.³

¹ These fragments were kindly authenticated, in August 2000, by Mr. Keneth Dunn and Dr. Ian Brown, The National Library of Scotland.
‘My Passions when once they were lighted up, raged like so many devils, till they got vent in rhyme’.4 Burns’s letters are infused with ‘passion’ and his style reflects this fiery and inspired state of mind. Upper case letters are everywhere and are an intrinsic part of the poet’s dramatic art of writing. They are, thus, significant and it is wise for copiers to retain them.

The manuscript of Fragment II is fragile and has numerous tears. It is, however, still readable.

Both fragments bear the hallmark of Burns’s dynamic style. The sustained military metaphor in Fragment I lightly veils the deep and serious philosophical desires of the writer while at the same time satirizing the aspired to ‘plodding dullness’ of his supposed intellect. The philosophical considerations in Fragment II are provocative, if we accept, as K. G. Simpson does, that the ‘other’ in Burns’s letters are a projection of the self.5 That the correspondent, Ainslie be both ‘a great character as a Lawyer’ and ‘a great character as a Man’ reflects uncannily the poet’s personal aspirations:

To know myself had been all along my constant study. — I weighted myself alone; I balanced myself with others; I watched every means of information how much ground I occupied both as a Man and as a Poet: I studied assiduously Nature’s DESIGN where she seemed to have intended the various LIGHTS and SHADES in my character.6

The ‘know thyself’ theme of Ainslie’s letter could easily read ‘know myself’. The similarities between the two letters persuade me that the expression of the wish-fulfilment in the letter to Ainslie could readily be interpreted as a wish-fulfilment for the self. This is not to say that the evident benevolence inherent in Burns’s letter directed at his friend is insincere. Quite the opposite. The wish-fulfilment for Ainslie is a conscious wish while the underlying self-fulfilment wish of the same letter is clearly unconscious.

The contents of these fragmented manuscripts bear witness to the humour, sincerity and writing genius of the Scottish poet, Robert Burns. In addition, the manuscripts have a rich travel history. From Scotland, they spent a short period in England and from there to Vancouver, British Columbia, where they remained for the best part of twenty-five years. As a Scot, I am happy to bring back the manuscripts, reported as ‘missing’ in the Ross Roy edition, to the Scottish Bard’s own land where they remain in my home, in Glasgow, as a constant source of interest and enlightenment.

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5 Simpson, op. cit. p. 165.
6 Quoted in Simpson, op. cit. p. 187.
Towards the end of July, 1913, the literary world was startled when it leaked out through the Press that the Directors of the Liverpool Athenaeum had sold the Glenriddell MSS., which had been in their custody since 1853. Immediately the Burns Federation, the leading Burns Clubs and Burnsians everywhere bestirred themselves and preliminary action was taken by the Solicitors of the Burns family to prevent the sale being consummated.

At a Public Meeting of delegates from Burns Clubs and other Scottish Societies in Glasgow and the West of Scotland, held in the Lecture Room of the National Burns Club, Glasgow, on Wednesday evening, 30th July, 1913, the following resolution and accompanying memoranda were unanimously adopted. The resolution was moved by the Chairman of the meeting, Mr. Alexander Pollock, President of the Glasgow and District Burns Clubs Association, and seconded by Mr. George Neilson, LL.D., and supported by Mr. Thomas Killin, Glasgow Mauchline Society, Mr. C. R. Cowie, Partick Burns Club, and others.

RESOLUTION

That this meeting of representatives of Burns Clubs and other Scottish Societies in Glasgow and the West of Scotland has learned with the greatest surprise and deepest regret that the directors of the Liverpool Athenaeum have decided to sell the Glenriddel MSS. of the Poems and Letters of Robert Burns which were given to them to preserve by Mrs. William Wallace Currie, on 6th December, 1853, and it hereby records its protest against such sale as being an unwarranted perversion of the gift, and it respectfully suggests that the Lord Mayor of Liverpool and other public representatives of that City take such steps as may be deemed advisable to have the sale stopped, or, if already completed, recalled and rescinded.

In support of this resolution the following points are submitted for consideration:-

I. The terms of the letter from Mrs. William Wallace Currie announcing the gift of the MSS, clearly show that the volumes were given to the Liverpool Athenaeum for preservation “in the Library.” This indeed
has not been disputed. Consequently the volumes are not the property of the directors to sell.

II. The sale, if allowed, will inevitably prevent possible donors from giving to public or semi-public Museums and Libraries, similar relics and rare volumes, as they will be doubtful if their intentions will be observed by successive directors or trustees.

III. Such doubts will create a feeling of irritation and resentment on the part of trustees of Libraries and Museums all over the Kingdom, and may
lead to resignations and refusals of trusteeships by the most respected men in the Country.

IV. Our action of protest has been inspired solely by our strong feeling that the sale of the MSS, would be an outrage of the responsibilities and the reliance on public trustees, an insult to Scotland and to the innumerable admirers and students of Robert Burns.

ALEX. POLLOCK, Chairman of Meeting.
J. JEFFREY HUNTER, Secretary.

The following resolution was afterwards submitted to the meeting and unanimously adopted on the motion of Mr. Hugh M’Coll, President of the Rosebery Burns Club, seconded by Dr. William Cullen, President of the Albany Burns Club:

“That copies of the resolution just adopted, with the memoranda attached, be sent to the Lord Mayor of Liverpool, the Principal of Liverpool University, the Aldermen of Liverpool, the Members of Parliament for the various divisions of Liverpool, the Directors of the Liverpool Athenaeum, the Liverpool Burns Club, and other similar representative bodies in that City.”

ALEX. POLLOCK, Chairman of Meeting.
J. JEFFREY HUNTER, Secretary.

GLASGOW
30th July, 1913.

During this period the Burns Federation received many letters of support for the campaign for the return of the Manuscripts, the following was received from a Great Grand Niece of Robert Riddell.

Dear Sir,

On page 8 of today’s Standard there is a short article on the Burns MSS - Strange Sequal to Liverpool Sale, stating that Miss Annie Burns Burns is the direct descendant of Burns and has a legal claim to the MSS but that up to the present Miss Burns Burns has not declared her intentions.

May I beg you kindly to forward the enclosed note to her, as I presume the writer of this article knows her address.

I am keenly interested in this matter - Being a great grand niece of the Robert Riddell of Friars’ Carse I share the indignation felt in Scotland at the Directors of the Liverpool Athenium selling these valuable MSS without giving either Scotland or the Burns’s or Glenriddell descendants of the chance of purchasing them.

If Glenriddell and Friars’ Carse had been ? on heirs male my father would have had the property and it could not have been sold to W. Currie.

The original MS of “The Whistle” which was contested in Robert Riddell’s house, (Friars’ Carse) is up in the Crichton Asylum near Dumfries. I thought that Dr. Currie had bought it with Friars’ Carse – Query – was it one of Burns’s MSS lent to him and which should have been returned
The Manuscripts comprised two volumes, the first containing 57 poetical compositions and the second containing 27 letters, selected by Burns for presentation to Robert Riddell of Glenriddell. At the time of Riddell’s death only Volume I had been handed over to him, and this was returned to the Poet at his own written request.

Soon after Burns’s death in 1796, the two volumes were sent to Dr. James Currie, who had offered to write a life and to edit the works of Burns for the benefit of the Poet’s widow and family. Currie made use of the volumes for his edition of the Works of Burns published in 1800, but the MSS. were not returned to Mrs. Burns. When Currie died in 1805 they passed to his son, Wallace Currie, whose widow presented the two volumes to the Athenaeum in 1853. She could never have contemplated that the volumes would ever be sold, for she wrote “I shall feel gratified by their finding a place in the Athenaeum.”

Copy of letter from Mrs. Currie to the Directors of the Liverpool Athenaeum.
The sale of the MSS, had actually taken place on the 3rd of June and that the volumes were on their way to the United States of America. However, by the generous and public-spirited act of Mr. John Gribbel of Philadelphia, they were rescued and became the property of the Scottish people.

This was made known by Mr. Gribbell himself on 30th November, 1913, at a meeting of the St. Andrew’s Society of Philadelphia. “Two weeks ago,” he announced, “I was astonished beyond measure by having a dealer come to Philadelphia and submit to me for sale the missing manuscripts. Having an aversion to the possession of property of a certain class, I refused to consider them as any possible possession of my own, priceless though they are. But, gentlemen, here they are, sold as merchandise in the market place, and in my possession, but with a purpose which I am sure you will approve. Very largely influenced by my association with you, these precious writings go to Scotland to stay therein for ever and protected by a Deed of Trust, as a Gift to the People who gave to the world — Robert Burns.”

Mr. Gribbel had been in communication with Lord Rosebery, the Hon. President of the Federation, firstly on 21st November, 1913 informing him he had purchased the manuscripts and in May, 1914, the following letter was sent to his Lordship by Mr. Gribbel:-

“Honoured Sir,

I have delayed writing you further in the matter of the provisions for the custody of the Glenriddell Manuscripts on account of your recent indisposition. I join in the universal satisfaction expressed over your recovery.

I give the two volumes known as the Glenriddell Manuscripts to the people of Scotland for ever.

I have come to the conclusion that it would be very fitting that Edinburgh, with her historical qualifications, should be represented in the trust to be formed for the custody of the Glenriddell Manuscripts.

Glasgow, by reason of the action in that city and the continued efforts put forth to prevent the loss of the Manuscripts from Great Britain when the sale by the Liverpool Athenaeum became known, has shown unmistakably the proper appreciation and the capacity that qualifies her for participation in the trust.

I direct, therefore, that the trust consists of three Trustees.

In view of your pre-eminent fitness, I beg that you accept designation as one of these Trustees; that the Lord Provost of Edinburgh, ex-officio, accept the second; and the Lord Provost of Glasgow, ex-officio, accept the third. The continuity of the trust to be secured by providing authority for the remaining Trustees to fill a vacancy at any time occurring except that the Lord Provost of Edinburgh for the time being and the Lord Provost of Glasgow for the time being shall come into the trust by virtue of their office. The trust to continue upon the lines set forth until a National Library shall be established in Scotland, whereupon such Library, when and where established, shall become the ultimate and permanent Trustees of the gift.

During the existence of the triple Trusteeship, provided the cities of
Glasgow and Edinburgh shall provide for the insurance and suitable safe and fireproof protection for the housing of the Manuscripts wherein they shall not deteriorate by any avoidable exposure, the Manuscripts shall
be deposited by authority of the Trustees in the cities of Edinburgh and Glasgow for alternate periods of five years each.

If the above proposal commends itself to your judgment, I would be indebted to you if you will take up the matter with the Lord Provosts of Edinburgh and Glasgow, and have the Deed of Trust drawn in such form as shall be acceptable to the proposed Trustees.

For your valued counsel and advice in this matter I am your debtor.”

Faithfully yours,
JOHN GRIBBEl.

The Trusteeship suggested was adopted. A Deed of Trust was executed and is now in the Register House, Edinburgh, where it was registered in the Books of Council and Session on 27th October, 1914.

It was only natural that the Burns Federation should at once propose to recognise Mr. Gribbel’s handsome generosity. It was decided to present him with an Address, together with an Album of specially executed sketches by Scottish artists depicting scenes associated with Burns’s life and poems, and, in addition, a “Historical Note” giving the story of the Manuscripts from their inception in 1791 to the occasion of their gift to Scotland in 1914. The Album also contained a specially prepared print of Archibald Skirving’s drawing of the Poet’s head.

Mr. William Stewart wrote the Address, Mr. J. C. Ewing was responsible for the “Historical Note,” and the Album contained the following Drawings, in colour and in black and white, with descriptive notes supplies by Messrs. T. C. F. Brotchie, Stewart and Ewing:-

2. “In Burns’s Country.” R. B. Nisbet, R.S.A., R.S.W.
6. “Alloway Kirk by Moonlight.” James G. Laing, R.S.W.
11. “I’ll be a Brig when ye’re a Shapeless Cairn.” Archibald Kay, R.S.W.
13. “Soutar Johnny.” A. S. Boyd, R.S.W.
14. “The Surly Blast.” David Fulton, R.S.W.
27. “My Heart’s in the Highlands – Ben Lomond.” Walter McAdam.
29. “Stirling Castle and Wallace Monument, from the Field of Bannockburn.” Henry Morley.
31. “Bruce’s Birthplace.” T. C.
Unfortunately war broke out and the presentation ceremony had to be postponed indefinitely. It was not until 1920 that Mr. Gribbel was able to cross the Atlantic and receive the heartfelt thanks of the Burns Federation for his generous action and his munificent gift to Scotland. Under the guidance of the Office-bearers of the Federation he was taken all over the Burns country of Ayrshire and Dumfriesshire, and accorded a hearty welcome everywhere by the Admirers of Burns.

The Dinner and Presentation of the Album took place in the Grand Hotel, Glasgow,

BURNS FEDERATION

HON. PRESIDENT—RIGHT HON. THE EARL OF ROSEBERY, K.G., K.T.
HON. VICE-PRESIDENTS—WILLIAM WALLACE, ESQ., LL.D.; PROFESSOR LAWSON, C.B.
SIR ALEX. GIBBIE, G.B.E., G.B.E.

PRESIDENT AND EDITOR—
W. A. MUNRO, J.P.

SECRETARY—
THOMAS AMOS, M.A.,
10 GLEN ROAD,
KILMAUR.

TREASURER—
Major G. A. HOOD, M.B.E.,
LANARKSHIRE DRIVE,
KILMARNOCK.

KILMARNOCK, 15th July, 1920.

Dear Sir,

At a meeting of the Executive Committee held in Glasgow on the 10th inst., it was agreed to entertain Mr. John Gribbel to dinner, and at the same time present to him the Gribbel Album, in recognition of his generosity in restoring the Glenriddel MSS. to Scotland.

The Dinner will be given in the Grand Hotel, Charing Cross, Glasgow, on TUESDAY, 27th JULY, at 5.45 p.m. The Committee earnestly request a large gathering of Burnsians, and all federated Clubs are most cordially invited to send delegates.

TICKETS FOR THE DINNER are £1 EACH (exclusive of Wine).

As arrangements must be made beforehand, would you kindly bring this circular before your Club members as early as possible, and let me know before THURSDAY, 22nd inst., how many delegates intend to be present? In sending your order, please enclose the money, and on receipt of your remittance I shall forward the tickets.

Yours faithfully,

THOMAS AMOS, Treas. Secy.

Above: Invitation to the Dinner.
and there was a large and representative gathering presided over by the President of the Federation, Mr. Duncan McNaught, who made the presentation.

The Address, which accompanied the Album, was read by the Secretary, Mr. Thomas Amos, and was in the following terms:-

“

“To John Gribbel, Esq., Anstell Hall, Wyncote, Pennsylvania, U.S.A.

“Sir,

“The Burns Federation, representing many thousands of the admirers of Robert Burns throughout the world, take the occasion of your visit to Scotland to offer you their heartfelt thanks for your generosity in restoring to Scotland the great collection of the Poet’s writings known as the Glenriddell MSS.

“These precious relics seemed irretrievably lost to Scotland till they came into your hands, when you unhesitatingly showed your appreciation of the most fitting place for their permanent preservation and your wisdom in the arrangements for making them available for inspection and study in Edinburgh and Glasgow.

“Your generous action has evoked throughout Scotland feelings of the warmest gratitude. We here seek to express that gratitude in a volume containing besides this Address, drawings of scenes associated with the life and writings of the Poet — the works of eminent Scottish artists. We ask you to accept the volume, accompanied by the earnest hope that it will be cherished by yourself and your descendants as a reminder of a nation’s gratitude called forth by your munificence.”

“Signed on behalf of the Burns Federation—

ROSEBERY, Hon. President.

Wm. WALLACE,

ALEX LAWSON,

JAMES SIVEWRIGHT,

\{ Hon. Vice-Presidents. \}

Members of the Album Committee—


Kilmarnock, Scotland,

17th September, 1914.

Mr. Gribbel paid another visit to Great Britain in 1934, and looked forward to having an opportunity of repeating the experience, but it never came. He died on 25th August, 1936, and by his death the Burns Federation lost their most distinguished Hon. President.

the two volumes of the Glenriddell MSS. to the National Library, and they were accepted by Sir Herbert Maxwell, Chairman of the Board of Trustees. The Burns Federation was not represented at this meeting.

To John Gribbel, Esq.
St. Austell Hall,
Wycombe, Pennsylvania, U.S.A.

Sir,

The Burns Federation, representing many thousands of the admirers of Robert Burns throughout the world, take the occasion of your visit to Scotland to offer you their heartfelt thanks for your great generosity in restoring to Scotland the unique collection of the Poet's writings known as the Glenriddell Manuscripts.

These precious relics seemed irretrievably lost to Scotland till they came into your hands, when you unhesitatingly showed your appreciation of the most fitting place for their permanent preservation and your conspicuous wisdom in the arrangements for making them available for inspection and study.

Your generous action has evoked throughout Scotland feelings of the warmest gratitude. We here seek to express that gratitude in a volume containing, besides this address, drawings of scenes associated with the life and writings of the Poet - the work of eminent Scottish artists.

We ask you to accept the volume, accompanied by the earnest hope that it will be cherished by yourself and your descendants as a reminder of a nation's gratitude called forth by your munificence.

Signed on behalf of the Burns Federation,

[Signatures]

Kilmarnock, Scotland,
17th September, 1914.

[Signatures]
The two volumes known as the Glenriddell Burns Manuscripts are made up of transcripts of compositions in verse and prose of Robert Burns, the National Poet of Scotland. These transcripts were written partly by Burns himself and partly by an amanuensis. They were made at the request of the Poet's friend and patron, Captain Robert Riddell of Glenriddell and Friars' Curse, and were designed for presentation to Riddell and his wife, as a "tribute of gratitude for the many, many happy hours the Author has spent under their roof." After Captain Riddell's death in 1794 the one volume that had been completed and presented was at Burns's own request, returned to him; and both volumes were in his possession at the time of his death in 1796. They formed part of the material sent in 1797 by Burns's Trustees to Dr. James Currie of Liverpool, who had undertaken to write the Life and edit the Works of the Poet. They appear to have been retained by Dr. Currie after the publication of that work in 1800, and to have passed to his son, William Wallace Currie, whose widow presented them in 1853 to the Liverpool Athenaeum. In 1915 the proprietors of that institution, by what was believed in Scotland to be a gross breach of trust, caused the volumes to be sold privately, an action that evoked great indignation and strong protest. The manuscripts were taken to the United States of America, where they were offered to Mr. John Gribbel of Philadelphia, who acquired them "in order that, subject to the terms of an appropriate Deed of Trust, I might present them as a gift to the Scottish Nation, to be deposited and to remain for ever in Scotland." In fulfilment of this determination the volumes were in 1914 sent to Scotland, under a provision that they should be placed on exhibition in Edinburgh and in Glasgow for alternate periods of five years, pending the establishment of a Scottish National Library, in which they will find a permanent home.
On July 31, 1786, the first edition of Robert Burns poetry, known as the Kilmarnock edition, was published. For the first time in his life, Burns had money to spare. Typical of his character, he used it to honor another poet, Robert Fergusson, whom he considered Scotland’s greatest poet, by putting a decent tombstone on his grave. The receipt for this stone is at the Lady Stairs House in Edinburgh and the grave is in the yard of Canongate Kirk in the same city.

In 1787, 300 copies of the second edition, known as the “first Edinburgh edition” (or the “stinking haggis” edition due to a misprint in “The Address to the Haggis”) was published. Again, Burns had some extra money and this time he was able to finance a personal desire – a vacation (actually, a series of four mini-vacations called “tours”) throughout Scotland and England. These travels were a combination of pleasure and business and were as much a psychological and spiritual journey as a physical one. Moreover, according to James Mackay –

*The best analogy would be to liken these tours to the gigs of today’s pop groups who have to go on the road to maintain faith with the fans who buy their records.*

Robert Burns was under many pressures, both financial and personal. Not knowing that he had less than ten years to live, he felt he had to make major decisions about his future. He was restless, unsatisfied, and searching for answers.

On the financial front, he made repeated attempts to recover money owed him from the infamous William Creech. May Cameron was pursing him for child support by aggressive legal means. He was considering buying land. He briefly considered the military and seriously planned emigrating to Jamaica.

His personal life was a mess. He was recovering from the death of “Highland Mary” Campbell and still disgusted with Jean Armour’s “betrayal” of him (although not disgusted enough to stop sleeping with her). On the second tour, he makes the enigmatic statement that he must never marry. By the fourth tour, he is contemplating a happy marriage with

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1 The Robert Burns Club of Milwaukee was founded on the 200th anniversary of this event.
2 A copy of this edition is in the Rare Book Vault of the Golda Meir Library at the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee.
Margaret Chalmers, not the again pregnant Jean Armour or the recently delivered May Cameron. For the latter two, he felt that a financial settlement was all he owed them.

He was at odds. He knew his Edinburgh success (these four tours occur between his two Edinburgh winters) was short lived. And he was not a city person nor a high society type, anyway. But he had outgrown the narrow intellectual confines of the farming community. Edinburgh still saw him as an inferior; the country people now saw him as different and above them. He was always seeking a balance. He described one host’s perfect hospitality – “I find myself very comfortable here, neither oppressed by ceremony nor mortified by neglect”. He liked his women to be responsive once he made the first move but did not like to be aggressively pursued.

Robert Burns craved new experiences – new places, new people, new loves. He was well read for his time and travelled vicariously through reading. It is interesting that the book Burns said, “I prize next to the Bible” and had worn out two copies carrying it in his pocket was Henry MacKenzie’s *The Man of Feeling*, a sentimental novel popular in the eighteenth century. The hero, Harley, a man of feeling, travels and meets people. There is crying on every page, by some character, for some sentimental reason. One editor even indexed the tears* (chokings, etc. didn’t count) by page. The unashamed expression of emotion appealed to Burns, as did the book’s gentle satire on the pretensions of social classes and the hero’s constant education on people and life. (Henry’s wife said he was the opposite of the hero and had feeling “only on paper”). MacKenzie was unaware of Burn’s admiration for him when he made the first public mention of the Kilmarnock edition in the *Lounger*. Life was about to imitate art as Burns commenced his vacations with great, if vague, expectations.

Although the trips weren’t planned down to the last detail, some advance planning was necessary. His companion had to arrange for time off work. Burns wrote letters in which he told where he could pick up mail at various points in his journey. Daily progress was influenced by the weather and the time it took to recover from the night before. He stayed in homes, taverns, and castles. He bought gifts for his family (silks for his mother and sisters). He tried (unsuccessfully) to get a berth for one of his brothers. He dropped off copies of his poetry to be delivered to subscribers. He indulged in his love of graffiti, from etching poetry on windows to inscribing the Bible of the woman next to him in church. He saw historic sites, prayed in a Druid temple, and was “knighted” by a strong-minded lady descended from Robert the Bruce. He sang, danced, discussed politics and religion, caught a cold, had his horse impounded for grazing in an unauthorized area, and found time to contribute to James Johnson’s *Musical Museum*. He was obsessed with cramming as much experience as he could into these few precious months, not knowing if he would ever again have such an opportunity.

His first and third tours are fairly well documented - he kept a journal and letters survive from both him and others. Public records help round out the story. The second and fourth are more mysterious – a few vague undated letters and a lot of silence. He deliberately didn’t record his actions, indicating that the journey may have been more of a psychologically one. He emerges from the four tours stronger and more sure of himself.

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The first tour took place May 5 to June 9, 1787. He travelled with Robert Ainslie, both of them on horseback. This is known as the “Border Tour”; they did cross the border into England twice, but did not consider seeing London. Their route was somewhat rambling and backtracking. Both Burns and Ainslie were womanizers and paid more attention to the lassies than the historic sights or various Masonic and burgess honors. Burns even paid a surprise visit to Jean Armour after several months absence. He had resented her parent’s previous attitude that he wasn’t good enough; now their “mean servile compliance” disgusted him. This tour was more whim than planning and he returned to his old life less content than ever. Burns’ “Edinburgh Journal” (Second Commonplace Book, 1787-90) survives, minus nine pages. Forty-five years later, Ainslie’s recollections embellished it, as did Currie and other biographers, using it basically as a “rough draft”. Several dated letters supplement the information.

Robert Burns deliberately kept his second tour a secret. The dates are uncertain, probably mid-June to July 1, 1787. A drunken accident with his horse made him use the month of July to recover from his injuries. He kept no journal and his letters are vague on details. It is on this trip he makes the statement that he must never marry, leading many to believe that he made a pilgrimage to Highland Mary’s grave, which was in the area. However, there is no proof this happened.

His third tour was the big one – August 15 to September 16, 1787. It was an extensive tour of the Highlands and Stirlingshire – Burns said he travelled 22 days and 600 miles. His journal started with good intentions of being a detailed account but soon became “buzz words” and phrases, perhaps with the hopes of using it as a rough draft and expanding it when he returned. He was more concerned with actually doing things rather than recording them. On his first tour, he summarized his activities at the end of each day; on the third, he wrote “catch phrases” throughout the day. His documentation of the first and third tours makes everyone even more curious why he was so secretive about the second and fourth ones. His travelling companion this time was William Nicol, a poor, brilliant scholar but somewhat lacking in social skills. The last quality caused some difficulties and Nicol did get on Burns’ nerves at times, but Burns saw him as honest, kind-hearted, and never boring. Nicol was fifteen years older than Burns and they did this tour in a chaise; Burns was only too happy to give up the “joys” of horseback riding by this time. Burns was unimpressed with the farm land and technology in this area, showing that the Jamaica trip was still competing with the idea of having a farm in Scotland. In his letters, he mentions drinking alone as well as socially; drinking alone usually indicates a troubled mind and this trip also had some depressing moments.

It is also considered that Burns travelled on the Ocean twice (a ship along the “wild

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7 For a detailed account, see Robert Burns’s Tour of the Borders, 5 May-1 June, 1787 by Raymond Lamont Brown (Totowa, N. J.: Rowman & Littlefield, 1972).
8 For a detailed account, the following three books are helpful:
  1) Journal of a Tour in the Highlands Made in the Year 1787 by Robert Burns, ed. by J. C. Ewing (London and Glasgow: Gowans and Gray Ltd, 1927). This is a facsimile of the journal with a (Thank God!) typed transcript.
9 The North Sea (also known as the Germanic Ocean) is an arm of, and technically part of, the Atlantic Ocean.
rocky coast” at Montrose and a ferry from Queensferry to Edinburgh), adding to his travel adventures.

Robert did not keep a journal of his fourth tour with Dr. James M. Adair in early October 1787 but his friend did. The trip was less than two weeks. Robert Burns spent eight happy days with Margaret Chalmers. They did not get married but Adair met her friend, Charlotte Hamilton, and they did marry. Adair was open in his gratitude to Burns for this serendiptious event.

As important as these tours seem to have been to Robert Burns, they are not mentioned as much in his poetry as one would think. Perhaps it was too personal an experience.

It’s easy to get bogged down in the details of Burns’ four vacation tours – names, dates, persons met. Much has been written about records of events that seem not to have happened (Masonic and burgess honors) and the absence of mention of more notable events. After Burns’ death, literally everyone was eager to give some details of his life, whether or not they were true. Some of the accounts of Robert Burns sound like they are describing a lab rat rather than a human being. Sifting through the details could be a lifetime of scholarly research.

But the real “fun” part is following the journeys with Robert Burns, the human being. He and his friends indulge in juvenile antics and clowning around – preaching hellfire and brimstone in an empty church while the other stands on the fornication stool, kneeling down right before sunrise and invoking the Sun to appear (well fortified with drink during the vigil), and other good natured fun. Flirting played a great part. Some women responded too well (such as Nancy Sherriff who pursued the panic-stricken Burns on horseback) and some are strangely silent (such as Euphemia Smythe, who in later years said she only remembered something about him reciting a poem after supper). Drinking and parties, of course, led to many adventures, including a disabling drunken horse race. But there were serious, reflectful moments. He wrote some insightful letters about his dilemmas, wrote some poems, and thought seriously about his future. The options he considered all involved money – and he was still trying to collect past due money from William Creech and being pursued by numerous paternity suits. He was eager to give his life stability with a happy marriage but wasn’t sure which woman was the right one. Sometimes the landscape caught his attention more than the people; other times, the people were so interesting he forgot to mention historical sites or honors given to him. He was 28 years old and the burdens of life weighed heavily upon him. Many people recognized him from his portrait but few knew him as a person. However, it seems that knew himself better by this time and like the majority of humanity, put one foot in front of the other and went on with his life.
FROM THE LITERARY EDITOR

I found quite encouraging the remark made at dinner at the 1999 Peterhouse Gathering by the master, Sir John Meurig Thomas: “Making a speech is just like embarking on a love affair – any fool can start one, but it takes a wise man to know how to end it.” And he added, “The best audience for a speech is intelligent, well educated, and just a little drunk- so thank you for coming tonight!” This sounded to me a decent start to an Immortal Memory, and all seemed set fair for another good Burns year until the usual calumnies in the media forced themselves upon the awareness.

A relatively mild start with this item, “King Arthur and Camelot in Scottish Borders”:

A book by a Scottish author Alistair Moffat claims that the legendary King Arthur and his knights of the round table did not come from Tintagel and the south-west of England but from the Scottish Borders, based at Roxburgh Castle. After centuries of wars between Scotland and England, little remains of the 12th century castle. The new book claims that Arthur (a prince, not a king) died fighting the Picts at the battle of Camlann in AD582. Other historians and archaeologists were sceptical about the claim – one suggested that as references to Arthur only appeared hundreds of years after he is supposed to have lived, any books on King Arthur should be displayed in the fiction section.

Possibly so- but what fiction! Even if the “genuine” Arthur was simply a dux bellorum in the 5th or 6th century leading a handful of mounted Romano-British resistance fighters out of the mist to savage a Saxon baggage train, his legends have inspired some of the world’s greatest stories in a variety of languages and literatures throughout the centuries: Tristan and Isolde, Launcelot and Guenevere, Gawain and the Green Knight, Galahad and the Holy Grail…

It is a short step in the popular imagination from King Arthur to William
Wallace and Robert Burns, as shown in “Celluloid fate for Scottish Bard”:

The Celluloid world is looking to inflict on Scotland’s most famous poet a fate similar to that meted out by Hollywood to that Scottish Warrior hero William Wallace. The life of Rabbie Burns – womaniser, drunkard and national bard - is to be told in a twenty-million-pound production by Alloway Films. The home-grown star, Ewan McGregor, is being lined up to play the bard, but he has competition from the American actor, Johnny Depp.

The film will chart the unrequited love Burns held for Clarinda, a society poet. Although he fathered numerous children, in and out of wedlock, and slept with women across much of Scotland, Burns never managed to bed Clarinda. This was the pen-name of Agnes McLehose, a witty Edinburgh intellectual separated from her lawyer husband. She met Burns at the court of session and corresponded with him as Clarinda to avoid scandal. He was Sylvander. Agnes never gave in to his advances, and he married Jean Armour. Emma Thompson has been approached to play Clarinda.

Burns was never rich, but his poetry readings often drew up to 1,000 people, and some 30,000 turned out for his funeral. His celebrity will be a key element of this film. “A lot of purists will be going crackers, but we are going to put Robert Burns in the context of one of the most famous people of his day – a pop star of his time,” said the executive producer, Edward Crozier. Alloway Films, who after Braveheart’s success have international ambitions for their film, have earmarked Robert Carlyle for the role of Gavin Hamilton, Burns’s friend and lawyer. The Earl of Caithness has helped the company to raise the £20 million. The film will be shot in Ayrshire, Dumfries, Edinburgh and at Pinewood studios this summer.

Possibly so- but what poetry! Even if the “genuine” Sylvander could not bed his Clarinda, what great poetry the literary affair produced! Let us pray that come it may that the young Jedi in training who is to portray the “womaniser, drunkard and national bard” will be able to do justice to the verse.

As William McGonagall went from bad to verse, so does the reader go from bad to worse when attention is turned to the hallowed pages of The Times for January 25th and “Scots could die of Burns”.

For professional Scots worldwide, tonight is the biggest of the year: the 241st anniversary of the birth of a poor tenant farmer who brought romance to a cloudy country then on the fringes of civilisation. More than a thousand Burns societies from Canada to New Zealand will sit down in jovial patriotism to what the Burns Foundation calls “an encomium to the genius of Scotland’s greatest son”. Or that, at least, is the spin. In fact, in the words of Burns himself, things “gang aft a-gley”. Haggis will be scraped off walls, vomit off floors, while the streets of distant cities will be defaced by the sight of kilts being lifted at buses. Burns
Night is an excuse for boorish behaviour. It is also a vehicle for attacking the English, a Scottish version of the St Patrick’s Day parades, when New Worlders who have never visited their motherland can thumb their noses at everything Anglo-Saxon.

If only Burns had shared this pride in Scotland. In fact he started writing poetry in order to raise money to emigrate. Only when his work proved successful did he choose to stay. Even so, it was a patronising audience of Edinburgh professional which championed his bawdy, sub-literate language: the same people who developed the clipped Morningside accent for their own use. It says something about a country when the lowlife author of lines such as “Freedom and Whisky gang thegither” is public hero number one, above it’s many great doctors, lawyers and engineers. Scotland is a nation whose own voice struggles to be heard above that of the wassailing expat.

I do not know who the author of this calumny, one Ross Clark, may be, but the pity is that this latest attack on “the Burns cult” in The Times, that noble stablemate of The Sun, is available not only in newsprint in Britain but also world-wide on the internet. Clark’s piece was printed below a picture of the Burns statue in Dumfries; I am glad he did not have a photo of the new Edmonton statue available to him! As Burns told John Lapraik:

Your critic-folk may cock their nose,  
And say, ‘How can you e’er propose,  
You wha ken hardly verse frae prose,  
To mak a sang?’

But, by your leaves, my learned foes,  
Ye’re maybe wrang.

The gentleness of this rebuke brings us back to where we should have been all the time, with Robert Burns making songs.

I read a book entitled, The English Sense of Humour – it was a very short book… But it contained a story about Burns which I didn’t know. In England on Customs business, exhausted and famished, Burns came to a roadside inn with a sign reading George and the Dragon. He knocked. The innkeeper’s wife stuck her head out of a window. “Could you spare me some victuals?” The woman glanced at his shabby, dirty, clothes. “No!” she snarled. Burns knocked again. “What now?” the woman screeched. “D’ye suppose,” he asked, “that I might have a word with George?” Now, this story has more holes in it than a second hand Skoda, for Burns was seldom in England; in Carlisle his horse, Jenny Geddes, was given a parking-ticket my the mayor, who impounded the animal but, when informed of the name of the beast’s owner, ordered her release with the words, “Let him have it, by all means, or the circumstances will be heard for ages to come.” Which prompted a notable reply from the poet:

Was e’er puir poet sae befitted?  
The maister drunk, - the horse committed:  
Puir harmless beast! Tak’thee nae care,  
Thou’lt be a horse when he’s nae mair!

I knew I was back in Canada when I read a news item about a two-seater ‘plane crashing in a graveyard in Newfoundland; “so far 267 bodies have been recovered, with more expected.” And my location was confirmed by the Edmonton Journal of November 23rd which read “Wayne Gretzky was led into the Hockey Hall of
Fame on Monday by a bagpiper, but this honour seems to have escaped his notice. He was inducted into the Hockey Hall of Fame along with veteran referee Andy van Hellemond and the former NHL chief of officiating, Scotty Morrison. Unlike Scotty Morrison, Gretsky was not wearing a kilt. ‘Thank God I’m Polish,’ he said. The only comeback I have is the thought that the Edmonton Burns Club’s supper on January 25th is the one night in the year that 30 Scotsmen persuade 500 Ukranians to pay $85.00 each to eat Haggis.

We stand today on the threshold of not only a new year but also a new century and a new millennium. The Book of Ecclesiastes gives us a world vision in which a person is merely another animal, merely *primus inter pares*, first among equals, and first only because of having a sense of the cyclic nature of the universe and a sense of the passage of time. In the world view, people are the only truly mortal animals because they alone can sense there was a past time in which they did not exist and that there will be a future time in which they will die: ‘There is a time to be born, and a time to die.’ This view is put most eloquently by the poet of the month of January, Robert Burns, when he addresses a fieldmouse whose home he and John Lambie inadvertently ploughed under at Lochlea Farm in November, 1785:

> But Mousie, Thou art no thy lane  
> In proving foresight may be vain!  
> The best-laid schemes o’ mice and men  
> Gang aft a-gley  
> And lea’e us nought but grief and pain  
> For promised joy.

> Still Thou art blest, compared wi’ me!  
> The present only toucheth thee:  
> But, och! I backward cast my e’e  
> On prospects drear!

> And forward, though I canna see,  
> I guess and fear.

Addressing an animal with whom he shares a common mortality, Burns compares himself to the mouse *to the mouse’s advantage* because the mouse is unaware of the past of unhappiness or the future of fear.

But Burns the poet of the New Year, knows that this is not the whole story. If the message of Christmas tells us ought, it is that amid disturbance there is peace and there is *promise*, the *hope* of blessedness to come. We are not just creatures of time, but we have in us the spark also of the divine, of the eternal. So Burns at the New Year puts alongside Ecclesiastes’ gloomy conclusion that ‘there is no new thing under the sun’ the triumphant words of the Beadsman of Nithsdale:

> Let me, O Lord! From life retire,  
> Unknown each guilty worldly fire,  
> Remorse’s throb, or loose desire;  
> And when I die,  
> Let me in this belief expire –  
> To God I fly.

In his *Sketch. New Years Day. To Mrs. Dunlop* (1789) Burns continues this line of thought:

> The voice of natural loudly cries,  
> And many a message from the skies,  
> That something in us never dies:  
> That on this frail, uncertain state,  
> Hang matters of eternal weight:  
> That future life in worlds unknown  
> Must take its hue from this alone;  
> Whether as heavenly glory bright,  
> Or dark as misery’s woeful night –  
> Since then, my honour’d first of friends,  
> On this poor being all depends;  
> Let us th’ important now employ,  
> And live as those who never die.
The past is not dead, yesterday is still with us. All that we are now is the product of our past, just as our future will be shaped by our present behaviour. What we are today, on the threshold of the new year, the new millennium, is what we have become through our past good deeds, our loves and our relationships, our acts of piety and of charity. The present is therefore the result and the expression of the past, and the future, likewise, will be what we make of ourselves as we are now. Yesterday is history, tomorrow is a mystery, today is a gift – that’s why we call it the present.

As we enter a new century and a new millennium, we will always have Burns with us to teach us common humanity, charity, pride and worth, in poetry whose appeal is not just Scottish but also universal. It is almost two and a half centuries since the birth of Burns, and over two centuries since his passing. We do not have the man, we no longer have the life, but we do have the poetry without which the world and the hearts of its people would be immeasurably poorer, the poetry of the human heart and its essential liberty.

At the 2000 Burns Supper in the University of Alberta Faculty Club, I somewhat rashly entrusted the Toast to the Lassies to a lawyer friend, Tim McRory (yes, an Irishman, but one has to take the rough with the smooth). My choice of Tim might not have been the most appropriate one, since Burns’s dislike for lawyers was well known, and on some occasions well founded. He held a lawyer accountable for the death of his father, quite apart from his natural distrust of any group predisposed to pomposity, and described lawyers as “Rapacious hell hounds that growl in the kennels of justice.” But Tim struck the right note when he quoted from a book on the life of Burns by Ian McIntyre, from a chapter entitled “Dirty & Deity” (p. 444):

… but one stanza from ‘A Drunk Man Looks at the Thistle’ cries out to be displayed at every top table:

*Rabbie, wad’st thou wert here –
the world hath need,
And Scotland mair sae, o’ the likes o’ thee!
The whisky that aince moved your lyre’s become
A laxative for a’loquacity.*

For those who prefer not to make the commemoration a matter of quasireligious observance, there are always the poems and the songs. He is not Dante, and he is not Pushkin. It was not given him, as it was to Shakespeare, to illuminate our moral universe. He does not, all that often, make us think. But he makes us laugh, and he makes us cry, and in doing so, most precious of all poetic gifts, he heightens the sense we have of our common humanity. And this is why the lad who was born in Kyle belongs not just to the keepers of the flame but to the whole world.

*Lang hae we parted been,
Lassies my dearie,
Now we are met again,
Lassie lie near me.*

*A’that I hae endur’d,
Lassies my dearie,
Here in thy arms is cur’d
Lassie lie near me.*

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THE GEDDES BURNS

It is without doubt the most interesting and valuable copy of the Poet’s first Edinburgh edition of poems, published in 1787. This individual copy has become to be referred to as The Geddes Burns from the fact that it originally belonged to the Rev. John Geddes, a Roman Catholic priest, in whose praise Robert Burns wrote to Mrs. Dunlop of Dunlop, and of whom also Mrs. McLehose “Clarinda” spoke highly of in one of her letters to the Poet.

At the beginning of the volume is inserted the long original letter that was sent along with the book when the Poet, had it that he might fill the blanks in the print and add some poetical pieces in his autograph on the blank leaves at the beginning and end, returned it to its owners. These additional poems are twelve in number, filling 27 pages.

This volume — one of the earlier or “skinking” issue, — was reproduced in facsimile by the Bibliophile Society of Boston, Mass., in 1908. The edition was limited to 473 copies, for members of the Society only, so it must always be an uncommon book. The facsimile of the “Geddes Burns” is undoubtedly a wonderful reproduction — portrait, print, and manuscript; even the armorial bookplate of Bishop Geddes is reproduced inside the front board. The paper throughout is water-marked “Bibliophile Society — Made in Holland,” and the volume is bound in calf and enclosed in a slip case. Prefixed is a note telling the history of the volume from the day on which it was forwarded by Burns at Ellisland to Bishop Geddes at Edinburgh till it was purchased by the late W. K. Bixby, Hon. President The Burns Federation.

The original copy is now owned by the Huntington Library, San Marino, California. The following is taken from the introduction in the copy of the facsimile in the Burns Cottage Museum, Alloway, by kind permission of the Trustees.

“The history of the book from the time it left the author’s hand until it passed into the hands of Mr. Bixby appears more like a romance than a reality. The pathetic story narrated in the accompanying address and the succeeding correspondence contain the last chapter of the record, except that after Mr. Black’s death the book was purchased from his widow by the present owner, and was exhibited at the Burns cottage at the Louisiana Purchase Exposition in 1904. In this connection, these words from the address which follows appear singularly prophetic: “The book is not for sale; that alternative, Got wot, must only happen in the event to me of a similar fate to that of
poor Dr. Goadby.”

The following remarks by Mr. James Black, addressed to the members of the Burns Club of Detroit, Michigan, on May 1, 1867, furnish a concise history of the volume up to the time it came into his possession:

“Mr. Chairman and Gentlemen of the Burns Club — Many of you are aware that I am the fortunate possessor of one of the most invaluable relics of the poet Burns extant. As there could be no more fitting occasion than the inauguration of a club in honour of his name and fame to exhibit the darling treasure to the delight and veneration of the members, I take great pleasure in accepting the present opportunity of doing so. It is no common relic I bring before you — not an auld quaich, for instance, sair gizzened for lack of its accustomed libations of the genial ‘mountain dew,’ nor a punch-bowl, which, in its old days of temperate repose, is devoted to contain dry rose-leaves, by way of fragrant sacrifice for many an ancient browst of more potent odor; neither is it a sneishin mull of polished horn, with a pungent modicum still remaining of the very Maccaboy, bean-scented, from which the convivial minstrel took his last pinch! It is a literary relic, but neither a diamond nor an illuminated copy of his works, wherein, the genius of modern art exhausts itself in the refinement of pictorial illustration and embellishment. But, on the contrary, it is simply an unostentatious copy of the first Edinburgh edition of his poems, bound in honest calf, containing twenty-seven closely written pages in the handwriting of the poet, besides his original letter to the owner of the book, the Rev. Dr. Alexander Geddes, afterwards Bishop Geddes, carefully stitched within the cover. How such a precious memorial of the bard and bishop should have found its way to these western regions, and fallen into my possession, cannot but be a matter of curious interest to every admirer of Burns. Dr. Geddes, at the time of its publication, was a Catholic clergyman in Edinburgh, well known by his translation of the Bible and some polemical writings; but better known by his Presbyterian countrymen as the author of the song Lewie Gordon, and that humorous ditty called the Wee Wifuckic.

“Burns in his intercourse with the few songwriters of his day had not a particle of rival jealousy. He rather sought than avoided every opportunity to court their friendship and correspondence. This was one of the most amidale features of his character. His heart glowed with that ‘frater feeling strong’ which he so pathetically expresses in the Bards Epitaph towards all his brother poets, and which he so beautifully and philosophically exemplifies in his epistles, especially those addressed to Davie and Lapraik. From the confiding nature of his letter to Dr. Geddes — had he been making confession as a devotee to the jolly priest he could not be more confidential — a congenial intimacy must have existed between them. This would account for his having written with his own hand so many of his then unpublished poems on the blank leaves of this volume. It appears he borrowed the book from Mr. Geddes when leaving Edinburgh on his memorable tour to the Highlands, with the promise that he would jot down by the way whatever might occur to his muse he thought worthy of his reverend friend’s perusal. The result proved how faithfully he kept his word. Several of these manuscript poems grew out of the romantic incidents of this trip, and they number twelve in all complete. The order in which they are written and the titles he prefixes to each are as follows:-
“1. ‘On reading in a newspaper the death of John M’Leod, Esq., brother to Miss Isabella M’Leod, a particular friend of the author’s.’

“2. ‘On the death of Sir J. Hunter Blair.’

“3. ‘Written on the blank leaf of my first edition, which I presented to an old sweet-heart, then married — I was then on the tip-toe for Jamaica.’

“4. ‘An Epitaph on a Friend.’

“5. ‘The humble petition of Bruar Water to the noble Duke of Athol.’

“6. ‘On the death of Robert Dundas of Arniston, Esq., late Lord President of the Court of Sessions.’

“7. ‘On seeing some water-fowl in Loch Turit, a wild scene among the hills of Oughtertyre.’

“8. ‘Written at the Hermitage at Taymouth.’

“9. ‘Written at the Fall of Friars.’

“10. ‘Written in Friars’ Carse Hermitage on the banks of Nith, June, 1788.’

“11. ‘The same altered from the foregoing, December, 1788.’


“Appended to the last named poems are these words — ‘The foregoing three pieces are the favor of the Nithsdale muses.’

“After the poem on the death of Lord Dundas, the poet writes the following characteristic note, expressly for the eye of Dr. Geddes:

‘The foregoing poem has some tolerable lines in it, but the incurable wound of my pride will not suffer me to correct or even peruse it. I sent a copy of it with my best prose letter to the son of the great man, the theme of the piece, by the hand, too, of one of the noblest men in God’s world, Alexander Wood surgeon when behold, his solicitorship took no more notice of my poem or me than I had been a strolling fiddler, who had made free with his lady’s name over the head of a silly new reel! Did the fellow think I looked for any dirty gratuity?’

“In the original the word ‘fellow’ is erased, and that of ‘gentleman’ interlined, as upon reflection he must have thought the contemptuous epithet a little too severe. By the change, however, it will be observed he has succeeded only in turning the meaning from contempt into the bitterest irony.

“Allan Cunningham in his edition of our bard introduces this poem on Lord Dundas by these remarks: ‘At the request of Advocate Hay, Burns composed this poem in the hope that it might interest the powerful family of Dundas in his fortunes. I found it inserted in the handwriting of the poet in an interleaved copy of his poems which he presented to Bishop Geddes;’ and then follows the above surly note, as he calls it. We have here, therefore, the most conclusive and satisfactory evidence, without the shadow of a doubt, that this volume now in my hands is the identical interleaved copy referred to.

“To avoid the probable risks, I suppose, of a suit for defamation of character, it was customary to print all the early editions of his works with only the initial letters of the names of individuals satirized or ridiculed, Burns took the pains to fill up these blanks in writing with the names in full throughout the book, that his friend might know the heroes of the ‘Ordination,’ the ‘Holy Fair,’ ‘Death and Dr. Hornbook,’ ‘The Calf,’ and even the doomed victims of his epitaphs! Also at the end of ‘Tam Samson’s Elegy’ he has written the following verse with an asterisk to note its proper place in the poem:

Here low he lies in lasting rest:  
Perhaps upon his mouldering breast  
Some spitefu’ moo fowl bigs her nest,  
To hatch an’ breed.
Alas, nae mair he’ll them molest!
Tam Samson’s dead!

“These admirable serio-comic lines, in memoriam of the spot of the hunter’s rest, must have occurred to the poet among the heather on the braes of Athol, and, probably, within the arch view of the very bird which he canonizes, he penned them then and there!

“I would also mention to the curious in matters of heraldry, that the bishop’s coat of arms appears pasted on the inside of the cover, quarterly with the arms of his see — the cap, the mitre, and the cross — with the motto, ‘Ambula coram Deo et esto perfectus,’ upon a scroll over the name of John Geddes. There is another interesting circumstance connected with the volume which must not be overlooked — viz., a printed catalogue of the original subscribers prefixed to the poems, containing the names of some fifteen hundred of the best people then in the land. The number of copies subscribed for, when over one, is set down opposite the names, and runs from two to fifty copies — a pleasing proof silently expressive of the general estimation of the work. There is a touching lesson in the reflection naturally suggested here, that probably not one of these early admirers of the Bard of Coila is now living to witness the world-wide extent of that inimitable fame of which it was their happy fortune to be among the first fore-runners!

“But, after all, the chief feature of intense interest in connection with this volume is the bard’s autograph letter returning it to the owner, it is dated at ‘Ellisland, near Dumfries, 3d of February, 1789,’ and addressed to the ‘Rev. Mr. Geddes, care of Dr. Gregory, wt. a Book.’ The volume itself is in excellent preservation; but the leaf is very fragile, showing that it must have been often handled by the curious, if not more than once by the printers. Dr. Currie was the first to publish it to the world, and it is not unworthy of remark that in his, as in all subsequent editions, this letter is not always given verbally correct. In one respect, however, they invariably agree — the two unfortunate blanks are to be seen in them all. This circumstance arises from the corner at the bottom of the leaf being cut away by the bishop to destroy the effect of an expression at the close, which he must have deemed too severely sarcastic for the eye of decorum. As the missing corner was written on both sides, the two ellipses that occur in the printed copies will be readily understood.

“And now a word or two as to how the book was brought to this country, and got into my possession. Henry Goadby, M.D., author of the Text Book of Vegetable and Animal Physiology, Fellow of the Linnaean Society of London, and formerly Dissector of Minute Anatomy to the Royal College of Surgeons of England, was the faithful custodier of the relic for twenty years. He was residing at Detroit at the time of our centennial celebration, and our late townsman, Dr. Cowan, being aware that Dr. Goadby owned a rare copy of Burns, asked me one day to come along with him, and he would introduce me with a view of getting a sight of it. I eagerly accepted the invitation. We found the professor of microscopic atomies in his room, closely intent upon dissecting an insect, the nervous system of which he showed us ingeniously exposed upon a piece of fine glass. I felt at the moment he might easily have exposed mine too without dissection, for I was visibly nervous with anxiety to see the wonderful book. On telling him the object of our visit, he soon produced it from the bottom of a trunk in his closet. He strictly held it in his own hand, turning the leaves as if they were those of a sensitive plant, and would
not grant me the privilege of taking it into mine at all. He spoke with scientific ardor on the corrosive nature of the human touch. My poor fingers, he said, were the book passed into my hands. The tone of her last letter giving it up is sufficiently mournful. If she were bequeathing it to me as a legacy in her last will and testament, she could not be more pensive or complimentary.

“And now, gentlemen, I have told you the story of the ‘Geddes Burns,’ tracing it down from the hands of the venerable bishop till it fortunately fell into mine. I have also attempted a brief review of its rare contents by way of substantiating the certainty of its being genuine beyond the possibility of a doubt. I have no pecuniary object to subserve in the recital; the book is not for sale; that alternative, got wot, must only happen in the event to me of a similar fate to that of poor Dr. Goadby. My chief desire is to introduce it to the patriotic homage of this club as an authentic memorial of the author of priceless value; representing, so to speak, the living, palpable presence, or Eidolon, amongst us of him whose name has become the synonym for all that is glorious and dear to us in the character of our native land, and whose matchless lays of enduring harmony will ever continue to astonish while they captivate reply in due course, which revealed a sad change in his circumstances, and which finally led to my becoming owner of the ‘Burns.’

The Text Book of Vegetable and Animal Physiology, in which he had concentrated the studies of a lifetime, failed as a pecuniary speculation; it was too scientific and abstruse for the use of our common schools; and his means and his hopes also were alike absorbed in its failure. He at length fell ill, and was obliged to dispose of his most cherished valuables to meet current expenses; but the ‘Burns’ became the property of Mrs. Goadby. He assured me, however, that she would not be accessible to part with it except as a bona fide sale.

“I opened a correspondence at once with Mrs. Goadby, which continued at intervals for nearly two years. Her reverence for the ‘Burns’ was even more intense and emotional than her husband’s. My offer for its purchase was a liberal one; but, although the absolute necessity for her making the sacrifice was not unlikely to come round in time, she still declined to accept it. The dreaded pressure at length came, and was not to be longer resisted. On the 12th December, 1863, the hearts of his countrymen throughout the world.”

The following correspondence, which accompanied the book when it came into Mr. Bixby’s hands, is sufficiently self-explanatory. The persistent energy with which this treasure was pursued, and the sad conditions under which it was finally captured are the notable features:

Milwaukee, 26th Nov., 1861.
Jas. Black, Esq.,
Dear Sir,
— I regret that I cannot meet your wishes, but the book you require, together with all that I had in the world, has gone to pay debts I could not otherwise liquidate.

The ‘Burns,’ however, and some other little things, were transferred to my wife in a deed of gift by the gentleman who received them from me; but I know she would not be accessible to part with it except as a bona fide sale. I am totally ruined!

With respects, truly yours,
Henry Goadby

Detroit, Dec. 4, 1861.

Dr. Henry Goadby,
Milwaukee.
My dear Sir, — Your kind note reached me in due time, and you cannot imagine how melancholy it made me. Believe me
you have my most cordial sympathies, and if you think I can be of any service to you, please command me. That beautiful branch of the Fine Arts which you profess, and in which you so much excel, finds but little encouragement in a country like this, where the only Art appreciable is that of Civil War. I do hope your health has not suffered in proportion to your fortunes.

I am truly glad Mrs. Goadby remains in possession of the “Burns,” and if she should at any time incline to pledge the book… she can do so with me. I shall take the most conservative care of it till she wishes to redeem it. It cannot be in safer hands than mine, be assured, as much on account of its intrinsic value, as of my almost idolatrous reverence for the memory of the Bard.

I presume the letter to Bishop Geddes and the other autographic relics are still in the book. I am, my dear sir,

Yours very truly,

James Black

Milwaukee, Wis., December 7th, 1861.

James Black, Esq.

Dear Sir,

—I feel sincerely grateful for the kind sympathy you extend to me in the midst of my distress, and still more for the offers of service you are good enough to tender me, of which under existing circumstances I fear I cannot avail myself.

My health has suffered worse than my pocket for I have been subject, for the last three years and a half, to very severe attacks of neuralgia which paralyze me so that I have almost lost the use of my limbs. The right side is almost dead and having just been subject to another attack it is impossible for me to write this letter.

I will submit your proposition about the “Burns” book to my wife, although I doubt that she will accept it, because, like myself, she dislikes borrowing money…

The letter to Bishop Geddes, which I regard as the most valuable part of the whole, because it authenticates the rest, is of course there, nor has the book been seen by any, save one man, since you saw it. I suppose there is no other such book in existence and every day adds to its value. I have no doubt that if offered for sale in London it would realize one hundred pounds sterling.

I am, my dear sir, very faithfully yours, Henry Goadby

Milwaukee, Wis., December 22nd, 1861.

Dear Sir, — My wife is residing in Rochester, New York, and she has just sent me a newspaper containing an account of the “Burns” book, which I enclose to you. I find that frequent mention is made of this book by Allan Cunningham and Robert Chambers in their respective editions of Burns’ poems, although it is quite impossible that either of these men could ever have seen it as it left Edinburgh long before their day.

There can be no doubt that all the subsequent editions of the Poet owe a great deal of their excellence to this particular volume, as Burns inscribed in it with his own hand the names of all the individuals who figure in his earlier poems.

In this book, too, he added another verse to “Tam Samson’s Elegy,” which in all subsequent editions is invariably placed at the bottom of the page with an asterisk instead of being inserted between the verses where the poet intended it to appear.

I am, very truly yours, Henry Goadby

Jonesville, Mich., Nov. 15th, 1862.

Mr. James Black,

Dear Sir, — While I was in Rochester, N.Y., Dr. Goadby sent me a letter from you, containing an offer of a loan on the volume of Burns that I have.
I felt a great reluctance to part with it then, but now if you are in the same mind I would be glad to accept your offer.

I am, very truly yours,

Mrs. Goadby

Jonesville, Mich., Nov. 29th, 1862.

Mr. James Black,

Dear Sir, — Since writing you, the necessity that prompted me to address you has been relieved from an unexpected source, and while I beg your pardon for disturbing your mind unnecessarily with regard to it, the pressure being removed that impelled me to make you the proposition, I must still decline to part with “Burns,” for the present, or until some more imperative want demands the sacrifice, which I fear is likely to occur.

My veneration for the bard, and the exceeding rarity of this particular volume (which, by the way, is as perfect as when you saw it) must be my excuse for clinging to it so pertinaciously.

In answer to your kind inquiries after Dr. Goadby, he is still in Milwaukee with his daughter — his health is much improved but owing to misfortunes and want of employment, without which we are, of course, unable to procure the necessaries of life — he is obliged to live there, while I am compelled to return to my friends in this place.

Repeating many apologies for what must appear to you unpardonable caprice,

I remain, yours very respectfully,

Mrs. Henry Goadby

Detroit, Feb’y 24, 1863.

Mrs. Goadby,

Dear Madam, — In common politeness I should have acknowledged the receipt of your last interesting note intimating that the necessity for accepting a loan on “Burns” had luckily passed.

I may mention here that I shall be happy either to renew my proposition at any moment you may feel called upon to accept it or, if you preferred to part with the book entirely to make you an offer for its purchase.

Please let me hear from you, and I am, dear madam,

Very respectfully yours,

James Black

Jonesville, Mich., Feb/ 16th, 1863.

Mr. James Black,

Dear Sir, — In reply to your note of the 2nd inst., I would say that at present, I am not prepared to part with “Burns”. I am exceedingly averse to selling it unless a very strong necessity should compel me to do so. As I am not at all certain but such a necessity may occur, and that at no very distant period, and as you seem so much interested in the volume, of which I am by chance the fortunate possessor, I will give you this assurance that whenever I am accessible to part with it, I will inform you first of such intention, before offering it to any one else; thereby giving you the first opportunity of purchasing if you feel disposed.

I might, even now, be tempted to part with it, if a sufficient sum was offered for it.

I am, yours very respectfully,

Mrs. H. Goadby
of course extrinsic and imaginary, and only to be estimated by a comparison with what kindred documents are in the way of bringing when they occasionally change hands. Some twenty-six original MSS. of Burns’ songs were lately disposed of in London for at most one third the sum you name. Your copy of the Bard would be all the more valuable if it contained his numerous after works consisting of many of his best poems, and from two to three hundred of his songs which were written subsequent to the first Edinburgh edition of which I believe yours is one.

When at leisure, and you should feel disposed to give me the number and titles of the poems and songs in the Poet’s handwriting in the volume, besides his original letter to Bishop Geddes, and also the particulars as to how the book came into the Doctor’s family, you would add to the great pleasure I have already derived from this correspondence. I never had the book in my hand but once, and you may recollect the Doctor would not give me the privilege to hold it a moment, warning me from his profound microscopic experience that my poor fingers were natural files, calculated to quicken the decay of its leaves! I could have wished them cat’s paws shorn of their claws or any other downy substance at the time, only to have been permitted to examine the book.

Very respectfully yours,

James Black

Cleveland, Ohio, Nov. 11th, 1863.

Mr. James Black,

Dear Sir, — I promised sometime ago, you will doubtless remember, to notify you of my intention to part with that valuable volume of Burns’ Poems of which I happen to be the fortunate possessor.

The time has now arrived which renders it necessary for me to part with it; it is a luxury that I cannot afford to indulge in, and I now again offer it to you for purchase.

It is perfect as when you saw it; I have allowed no one to handle it and scarcely to look upon it. Besides the letter to Bishop Geddes it contains twenty-seven closely written pages and throughout the volume we are continually reminded of its being once in the possession of the Poet, by the filling out of names whose initials only are printed, in his own hand for the benefit of his friend the Bishop, — the addition of an entire verse to “Tam Samson’s Elegy,” with a star to note where it should come in, &c. Hoping to hear from you soon, I am

Very truly yours,

Mrs. Goadby

Please direct,

Mrs. Goadby,
Box 1361, Cleveland, Ohio.

My dear Mrs. Goadby, — Your esteemed favour of the 11th inst is at hand, intimating your wish to part with that dear old volume of Burns for… I will give you… for it in “Green Backs.” If you are willing to accept this sum, please send me the book to me by the American Express, and I will remit the money by return express to your address at your residence. The Express will give you a receipt for it, designating the parcel as a “volume of Burns.” I should like you would send me also your notice and description of it which appeared in the Rochester paper, or any other memoranda you may possess in relation to it.

You state “it contains 27 closely written pages,” but do not mention if they are in the handwriting of the Bard? I think they are, as far as I recollect.

I had occasion to be in Cleveland about two months ago, and if I had known you had been there then I should have tried to find you. I cannot believe you
passed here on your way to that city from Jonesville, otherwise you surely would have called upon me. Our little epistolary correspondence would have been sufficient to warrant that at least.

Your very truly,
James Black

_Cleveland, Ohio_, Dec. 7th, 1863.

Mr. James Black,

_Dear Sir_, — Your last communication is received. Upon inquiry at the Post Office, I am unable to find your first letter. From your last, I understand you to offer… I suppose I must let it go at that sum — you will be kind enough in reply, to direct in what manner it shall be sent and the transfer shall be made without delay.

I remain, very truly yours,
Mrs. Goadby

Direct to me Box 1361.

_Cleveland, Ohio_, Dec. 12th, 1863.

Mr. James Black,

_Dear Sir_, — In consigning to you the accompanying volume, my only consolation in parting with it is in knowing that with you it will be fully appreciated. I could not bear to have it pass into the hands of a person who might be unmindful of its merits. I believe I am safe in saying that you will appreciate it to its fullest extent and I am therefore happy in intrusting it to your care.

I must have omitted what I intended to say, if I neglected to mention “the twenty-seven closely written pages” are in the poet’s own handwriting; they are, as you will readily see on examining them.

The published accounts, with the exception of the one in the back part of the book, I regret to say, have not been preserved.

I now say farewell to it and to you, and if you only experience half the pleasure in possessing it that I have done you will feel yourself amply repaid. I remain, my dear sir, with every sentiment of respect and esteem,

Very truly yours,
Mrs. Goadby

—— — — — — —

BISHOP GEDDES AND ROBERT BURNS

In “The Catholics of Scotland” (p. 447), by the Rev. Æneas M’Donell Dawson, LL.D., F.R.S., there is an interesting passage in reference to Bishop Geddes’s appreciation and patronage of the immortal Burns at a comparatively early stage of the Poet’s career, and which will serve to illustrate the disposition of the famous Bishop. The author observes:— “We seldom read in the history of our Bishops of their taking any concern in matters beyond the sphere of their ecclesiastical duties and occupations. Hence it gives all the more pleasure to find the accomplished Bishop Geddes expressing his appreciation of a rising author who came, in due time, to be recognised as the Poet of Scotland. Genius only is the judge of genius; and we set down the words of no ordinary critic when we record the opinion which Bishop Geddes entertained of the poetical ability of Robert Burns. The capital of Scotland was, at the time, 1787, a seat of literary taste and fashionable society. The Ayrshire Bard had just emerged from his rural privacy, and was a welcome guest in the brilliant circles of the time. Bishop Geddes, writing to Mr. Thomson, the agent of the mission at Rome, thus spoke of the youthful poet who was destined to become so celebrated:—

“One Burns, an Ayrshire ploughman, has lately appeared as a very good poet. One edition of his works has been sold very
rapidly, and another, by subscription, is in the press.’ Repeating the news to the same correspondent, the Bishop says:— ‘There is an excellent poet started up in Ayrshire, where he has been a ploughman. He has made many excellent poems in old Scotch, which are now in the press for the third time. I shall send them to you. His name is Burns. He is only twenty-eight years of age. He is in town just now, and I supped with him at Lord Moboddo’s, where I conversed a good deal with him, and think him a man of uncommon genius; and he has, as yet, time, if he lives, to cultivate it.’ The good Bishop, moreover, showed his appreciation by taking an active interest in the young Poet. In the subscription list prefixed to the Edinburgh edition of Burns’s poems, published in 1787, are to be found the Scotch colleges and monasteries abroad, beginning with Valladolid, of which Bishop Geddes had been so long Principal. No other than the kindly Bishop could have caused them to be inserted. The Poet was not ungrateful. He addressed a very interesting letter to the Bishop, in which is preserved the memory of this obliging act, as well as of the friendship that had arisen between the Bishop and the Bard. We learn also from the same letter that, at the time it was written, the Bishop’s copy of the poems was in Burns’s possession, for the purpose of having inserted some additional poems in the Poet’s own hand. It is also stated that Burns looked forward to the pleasure of meeting the Bishop at Edinburgh in the course of the following month.”

**DATES FOR YOUR DIARY**

**NATIONAL SCHOOLS COMPETITION FINALS**

GREENOCK HIGH SCHOOL

PRIMARY SCHOOLS – 5 MAY, 2001
SECONDARY SCHOOLS — 28 APRIL 2001

170,000 SCHOOLCHILDREN ENTERED FEDERATION SCHOOLS COMPETITIONS IN 2000

**BT Scotland**
When birds are mute, an’ wuds are bare,  
An’ Januar’ winds are whistlin’ dreary,  
Contentment, peace an’ hamely fare,  
Wi’ blazin’ ingle, keeps us cheery.

To court the muse when driftin’ snaw  
Pitpatters on the window lozzen,  
Or o’er the catgut draw the bow  
When finger ends are nearly frozen.

Instinctively my memory turns  
To genius and misfortune blended  
In the brief chequered life of Burns  
With brilliant hopes so early ended.

Oh Son of song, old Scotland’s bard,  
In pathos sweet or doric canter  
With fond remembrance and regard  
Wha can forget thy Tam o’ Shanter.

The banks an’ braes o’ bonny Doon  
Thy bonny Jean and Highland Mary,  
The deil cam fiddlin’ through the town,  
The soldier waitin’ at the ferry,  
The bonny braes o’ Ballochmyle  
Fair Mary’s dream by Afton Water,  
The rovin’ lad was born in Kyle,  
The jolly beggars’ songs and clatter,  
The waefu’ wife that Willie had,  
Wha’s nose an’ chin they threaten’d ither,  
There’s naething said about her dad  
But tinkler maggy was her mither.

But noo my muse is at an end,  
It may return wi’ simmer weather,  
When bird an’ bee their music blend  
‘Mang flow’ry wuds an’ bloomin’ heather.

As year by year this day returns  
We meet not here as Whig or Tory  
But to respect the birth of Burns  
The Bard of Song, Auld Scotland’s glory.

John Brown

Published Glasgow : Thomas D. Morison  
London : Hamilton, Adams & Co  
1883
NORTH AMERICAN TRIBUTES TO BURNS

As Ogden Nash has pointed out, “[Burns] wrote like an angel and lived like a man.” This theme was never better illustrated than by Senator George F. Hoar in Boston in 1901. His address is not so well known as Emerson’s, but it is most eloquent. The following is his spirited reply to the suggestion that Burns’s life was a failure.

Do not be too sure, my sanctimonious friend, that the life of Robert Burns was a sad one. God gave him of his choicest blessings. He gave him humour; he gave him a tender and pitying heart, where dwelt together like twin springs the fountain of laughter and the fountain of tears. Burns had a humour that could make fun of Satan himself and a kindly humanity that could pity him. God gave him the love of common things, of flowers and birds, of home, of father and mother and woman and child, the love of country, and above all a country worth his love. Did the poems that have brought such good cheer to all humanity bring no cheer to their author? Do you think that when those mortal children were born there was no lofty joy of fatherhood? If ever poet knew the heart of poet, Wordsworth knew the heart of Burns. It was no figure of sorrow or despair that appeared to that sure and divine vision, but the figure of one “in glory and in joy, following his plow upon the mountain side.” If to man of woman born was ever given, not one, but a thousand glorious hours of crowded life, each worth an age without a name, they were given to him… Do you think there was no rapture, that there was no sweet consolation and comfort when the light of that star that shone over Mary’s grave burst upon him in the silence of his prayers, as the planets break out upon the twilight?

And the conclusion to the Senator’s address were difficult to better:

Since he was born into the world you can hardly think of the world existing without him. You expect for him an eternity like that of nature herself. While the morning and the evening rejoice, while the brook murmurs, while the grass grows, and water runs, while the lark sings and bobolink carols, and the daisy blossoms and the rose is fragrant, while the lily holds up its ivory chalice in the July morning, while the cardinal flower hangs out its red banner in August, while the heather blooms in Scotland, so long the songs of Burns shall forever dwell in the soul, “Nestling,” as Lowell says, “nestling in the ear because of their music and in the heart because of their meaning.”

Robertson Davies, writing for The Folio Society, wrote as follows of the joys of reading:

I once wrote an essay about books and reading named A Call to the Clerisy, and I defined that unusual and almost obsolete word like this: “The clerisy are those who read for pleasure, but not for idleness; who read the pastime but not to kill time; who love books, but do not live by books.” The clerisy are not professional critics or scholars, tirelessly assessing books, or bound by their work to read a lot of books.
But still the music of his song rises o’er all, elate and strong,
Its master chords are manhood, freedom, brotherhood,
Its discords, but an interlude between the words.

And the governor of Pennsylvania, Gifford Pinchot, wrote of Burns as follows:
Robert Burns was a great poet, because he kept his head in the sky and his feet on the earth. At a time when other poets were writing about gallant knights and fair ladies in medieval castles, Burns chose a field mouse for his subject and made a poem that will live forever. His was the cause of humanity, and the common people meant more to him, as they do to us today, than did kings and lords. It is a close approach to genius to be able to accompany a reference to a lady in church with a louse on the lady’s bonnet and make us feel sympathy for the louse. Work and poverty and love and the common cares of the common people were his great theme, and back of it all and reflected from it all is the sublime idea of God.
William Olson, a charter member of the Robert Burns Club of Milwaukee (No. 1070) served as Secretary until he retired to Washington Island, Wisconsin in 1989. In 1992, he published a book of poetry entitled North of Death’s Door in which appeared his tribute to the memory of Burns.

**THE BARD**

In Scotland long ago there lived  
A bard whose name was Robin.  
His poetry was loved by all  
From castle fine to cabin.  

His fame soon spread thru all the world,  
His works translated simply.  
This homespun verse in language plain  
Won hearts and minds quite amply.

He spoke of common things, you see,  
So all could understand him.  
In language of the time and place,  
No high-falutin maxim.

His words spoke kindly of his friends,  
Of many men and women.

Thru even dogs and sheep and mice  
He caused our eyes to open.  

In them we see our faults and sins  
And also see our goodness  
In such a pleasant sort of way  
We laugh or weep with fondness.

So when we sing of “Auld Lang Syne”  
Or “Ae fond kiss…forever”  
Or “best laid schemes o’ mice and men”  
Our wonder will ne’er waver.

Misfortune made his life too brief.  
It was superb, however.  
And all who read him praise the name  
Of Robert Burns forever.

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**ROBERT BURNS WORLD FEDERATION**

**ANNUAL CONFERENCE**

ATLANTA, GEORGIA, USA  
20th-22nd JULY, 2001

Hosts: Burns Club of Atlanta

Above: Replica of Burns Cottage, Alloway, Headquarters of the Burns Club of Atlanta, open to delegates during the conference.
It has been recorded that William Nicol Burns the Poet’s second oldest surviving son was educated at Dumfries Academy and the Graycoat School in London, as was the case of his brother James Glencairn Burns.

William Nicol was in fact educated entirely at Dumfries Academy and was the last of the Poet’s three sons to leave home in Dumfries. Correspondence has recently come to light which confirms this, and furthermore that he spent just over a year at sea before eventually going to India to commence his career. The following letter from Alderman Shaw, (the first Scot to become Lord Mayor of London) to Gilbert Burns gives details of an opening which he had made for William to join the Navy. The proposal was made in 1803 but according to a letter from William Nicol to his close friend James Aiken in Liverpool he did not go to sea until the middle of February, 1808 some five years later. On 7th May, 1810 he again wrote to James Aiken that I have been obliged to knock off the sea not having enough money, or interest enough, to go forward in that line. William Nicol sailed for Madras, India as a Cadet later that year.

Letter from Gilbert Burns to William Thomson, writer, Dumfries (secretary to the trustees of the poet’s family)

Moreham 17th October 1803

I have this moment received the following letter from Alderman Shaw of the date 13th curt.

I was concerned to find from the papers some time ago that the Poet’s second son Francis Wallace had died of a fever at Dumfries, and William Nicol being too young to proceed to the Cadetship I was promised for him but of an excellent age for the Navy. I have been considering for some time since the war broke out of a patron of rank and influence that would take charge of the boy in the mean time and take him by the hand for promotion when his six years are out - that patron and friend have found in my Lord Keith, Commander in Chief of the North Sea Fleet who has kindly undertaken to take the charge of William and to put him on board of the Honorable Captain Flemings or Captain Adams Frigate. These gentlemen are nephews of Lord Keith, both gallant enterprising young officers, and Commanders of two of the finest Frigates in His Majesty’s service. Captain Adams Frigate being in the Leith Roads will probably be more convenient for the youth’s outfit, and should he be occasionally stationed there for his improvement in his education under your own superintendance. — I enclose Lord Keith’s letter which you will return, you will at the same time let me know which ship you wish your nephew to be aboard of that I may get a letter of introduction for him from his Lordship. — Little James has been but poorly with his eyes, he is now pretty well again and busy in his class making up for lost time, he is a smart fine boy.
William is not too young for the Navy - Lord Nelson went to sea at 10 years of age and I know several youths of the same age that have been in the service above a twelve month. Copy of Lord Keith’s letter inclosed in the foregoing. —

Dear Sir,

When I returned here I was favoured with your letter respecting the young Burns - Your attention to that family is laudable in a high degree. I knew the father well and should be glad to do anything for his son.

As an Admiral I can do nothing till his six years was fully served and in my present Command I am necessary engaged on Shore Superintending the different points of duty and defence, consequently a boy will not get much advantage on my own ship. A Frigate is a better situation with a Captain who will and can give some of his time to the youth. If you send me the lad, I will look out for a good ship for him. I have two nephews commanding Frigates, either will take him with pleasure.

Captain Fleming is at Spithead, Captain Adams at Leith Roads.

I hardly know whether I ought to congratulate you or not but I do to the City that you are Sherriff and am most sincerely your obedt. and obliged, Keith.

Broadstairs, October 12
Directed James Shaw Esq.
High Sherriff of London.

I send you the above that you may consult William and his mother and the other Trustees of the family on the matter as soon as is convenient for you and let me know what is required and that I may write Mr Shaw without loss of time.

I feel myself a good deal at a loss what to determine I think William not sufficiently advanced in his education nor sufficiently vigorous or ripe in his facultys to be sent to anything nor do I think him very suitable for that line of life, but he may acquire the necessary habits.

I am much inclined however to think that it would not be prudent to send him to sea at present but Mr Shaw has proceeded so far in the business that it is a little difficult to know how to act.

You and the other gentlemen who interest themselves in the concerns of the family are better able to determine what is proper and I will patiently wait till I hear what you think of it. Will you be so good as write me what and how Robert is doing of whom I have heard nothing since I saw you.

I desired Mr Candlish to enquire for a proper place where Robert might be boarded in Glasgow but I have not heard from him since.

I hope Mrs Thomson and family are well and beg to be remembered to her.

I am dear sir yours sincerely,
Gilbert Burns.

William Thomson Esq., Writer, Dumfries.
Dear Editor,

I wonder if any reader of the Chronicle can advise me about the poem, *Why Should We Idly Waste Our Prime?* For many years I have puzzled over the history of these verses which were once attributed to Burns. James Mackay, in his concordance, *Burns A – Z*, lists Cunningham (1834), Chambers (1838), and Scott Douglas (1876), as sources. *(See, The Complete Word Finders, p. 731).*

Unfortunately I do not have the Cunningham 1834 edition, but checking it out in the library, I failed to find the poem in the index, and also in a search through each of the eight volumes. It does appear in Chambers, who refers to it as: “Some specimens of an unpublished poem given by Mr Cunningham”. In the second of the three stanzas Chambers omits the last two lines for some reason. Scott Douglas noted in his edition: “We overlooked this while giving the group of Burns’ pieces first collected by Cunningham.” He does not say how the poem was, therefore, brought to his attention; the second verse is slightly altered from Chamber’s text. If he “overlooked it” in Cunningham’s edition, it indicates that it must have been obscurely located – if given at all!

In addition to the sources given by James Mackay, it is also in the *Centenary Edition* (Henley-Henderson) who wryly reflected: “But Cunningham’s authority is worthless.” *(See, Vol. IV, p107).* James Barke’s popular edition of 1955 also carries the poem. *(See, p.326).* Barke’s edition is not annotated; however, his final book in the quintet of novels based on Burns’s life gives a make-believe version of how the poet passed-on a copy of the verses to George Haugh, the Dumfries tinsmith with whom he was on friendly terms. *(See, The Well of the Silent Harp, pp. 89-90).*

John S Clarke, one-timer Labour MP for Maryhill, claimed that, “the manuscript of this poem is in the handwriting of Burns” *(See, The Story of Robert Burns, p.10).* This is surely nonsense! There is no extant MS of the poem, either holograph, or in the hand of another. It is possible that Clarke was here thinking of a poem in a similar vein, *The Tree of Liberty*, in which Chambers stated that he used a copy borrowed from James Duncan of Mosesfield (Springburn) for his edition of 1838.

It is quite a mystery. The poem seems to have originated in some form or other from Allan Cunningham – has anyone, perchance, come across it within the text of his 1834 edition?

Yours sincerely,
Norrie Paton.
THE GENTLE ART OF
THE SCULPTOR:
THE MAKING OF THE
EDMONTON STATUE

Can storied Urn or animated Bust
    Back to its mansion call the
fleeting breath?
Can Humour’s voice provoke the silent dust,
   Or Flatt’ry sooth the dull cold ear
of Death?

Perhaps in this neglected spot is laid
    Some heart once pregnant with
celestial fire;
Hands that the rod of Empire might
    have sway’d,
Or wak’d to ecstasy the living lyre.

These stanzas excerpted from
Thomas Gray’s Elegy Written in a
Country Churchyard threw the
gauntlet firmly down before the members
of the Edmonton Burns Club as we
contemplated our millennial project of
erecting a statue of Robert Burns in the
capital city of Alberta. It had been these
selfsame stanzas, after all, which the Bard
chose to echo as he sought to pay homage to
his “elder brother in misfortune” and “elder
brother in the Muse,” Robert Fergusson
in his Inscription for the Headstone of
Fergusson the Poet:

No sculptured Marbled here, nor pompous
lay,
    No storied Urn nor animated Bust:
This simple stone directs pale Scotia’s way,
   To pour her sorrows o’er the Poet’s
dust.
She mourns, sweet tuneful youth, thy hapless fate:
Tho all the powers of song thy fancy fir’d,
Yet Luxury and Wealth lay by in State,
And, thankless, starv’d what they so much admir’d.

This humble tribute, with a tear, he gives,
A brother Bard - he can no more bestow:
But dear to fame thy Song immortal lives,
A nobler monument than Art can show.

Thus mindful of Andrew Carnegie’s injunction, “There cannot be too many statues erected to the memory of Burns,” we set about a task beset by pitfalls and pleasures alike. The full story of our agony and ecstasy is told elsewhere in this
periodical, but it is hoped that a glimpse behind the scenes into the conception and prosecution of the Edmonton Club’s project may afford some guidance to others who may be contemplating similar enterprises.

The first thing to do is, of course, to strike a committee and to find the right chairman for it. Here we were most fortunate to have in the Club a highly-talented local artist whose guidance was a godsend and whose modesty would seek to prevent my naming him — Alex Halliburton. Aided, abetted, and occasionally hindered by his committee, Alex laid out what had to be done:

1. the project had to be begun a couple of years before its completion, and the completion date had to be set.
2. a suitable site would have to be found, and the City’s permission to erect a statue obtained.
3. fund-raising, would have to be undertaken the minute a realistic budget could be drawn up.
4. the right sculptor had to be found and commissioned; the sculptor would produce a maquette for critical inspection; a full-size statue would be cast in plaster; then the statue would be forged in bronze in the foundry, brought to Edmonton, and placed on its plinth.
5. an engineer and an architect would be required to design the plinth and set it in place.
6. the granite facing for the sides and top of the plinth would have to be obtained, shipped to Edmonton, and suitably inscribed.
7. suitable inscriptions would have to be selected, along with a fitting epitaph.
8. the site would have to be dedicated.
9. the statue would have to be dedicated and unveiled with suitable ceremony.
10. publicity would have to be extensive so that media coverage could be guaranteed.

This list is by no means an exhaustive one, for research would have to be carried out to be sure that in all matters the spirit of Burns could smile benevolently and approvingly on our efforts.

It was agreed that we would aim to have our statue in place for dedication on January 25th, 2000 and many possible sites were explored before Frank Oliver Park was selected and permission to erect a statue there obtained. It can well be imagined how much time, effort and lobbying lay behind the brevity of the preceding sentence!

Then there came the fundraising. The Club determined to finance the statue project by ourselves, without city or government grants, without income-tax incentives for donors. It was decided that a plaque on the plinth would carry the names of the Club’s past and present presidents and members, and that donors giving $100 or more would have their names listed also; corporate donations in excess of $500 were similarly noted. Human nature being as it is, there were those whom one would have thought would be keen to donate who refused our requests or simply left messages unanswered, and there were those who gave willingly and sacrificially what little they could spare — the value of the latter class of donation was much more than monetary, as Burns would have been the first to note. The Club is proud that all the necessary funds have been raised, and extends warm thanks to all the kind donors.

Leaving the sculptor and the making of the statue for the fuller discussion later, let us pass to the work of the engineer, John Newbie, of the architect, Jack Gardiner, and of the contractor, Bob Heron. All these did a sterling job of preparing the site, erecting a notice months ahead of time, and designing a plinth whose proportions would accord with those of the statue,
whose specifications would take the weight of the statue and withstand the rigours of Edmonton’s climate, whose top and sides would take the granite facings, plaque and relief, and whose own proportions and aspect would be pleasing. It was no easy task to set the heavy plinth in place, to cure the concrete in the coldest of winter weather, or to put the statue on its base, but it was accomplished.

The granite facings proved somewhat problematic. While some on the committee thought grey granite would match the façade of the Hotel Macdonald, the majority inclined towards a warm, roseate Balmoral Red granite. Now this granite had to be procured in Canada, and prices of granite and shipping proved high; some compromises had to be made with respect to the thickness of the granite facings, but the rose hues of the finished result are most pleasing. Thanks are due to Garry Kokolski of Edmonton Granite Memorials Ltd. for his help with cutting and inscribing the granite, and to Rick Beliveau of Scan-plast Metalgraphics Ltd. for storing the finished statue and preparing the donations plaque.

Various inscriptions were proposed, but simplicity seemed most suitable for a statue of Burns. A ploughing relief is complemented by Burns’s signature and this simple inscription:

**ROBERT BURNS**
January 25, 1759 ~ July 21, 1796

The choice of an apposite quotation as epitaph was debated by the Club at length until the votes came down in favour of the lines from *A Man’s a Man for a’ That*. Discussion of several editorial variants followed: *comin* or *comin’, man to man* or *Man to Man*, *warld* or *world*, *brithers* or *brothers*; and what about Mackay’s comma after *world*? In the end, for better or worse, the following choice was made:

*It’s comin yet for a’ that*
That Man to Man, the world o’er, 
Shall brothers be for a’ that.

In November of 1999, a sign made in the bowels of First Presbyterian Church was erected on the site. In a brief ceremony, the Club piper led the members from the hotel to the notice, I dedicated the site, the President told the media of our project, and Frank Oliver, Jr. expressed his delight. A much more elaborate ceremony attended the unveiling of the statue on January 25th, of course. Good publicity attracted a large crowd of onlookers despite “biting Boreas, fell and doure;” the pipers did their duty splendidly; John Weaver’s presence was warmly acknowledged by the President; our speaker for 2000, Rev. Fraser Aitken, spoke eloquently of the significance of the Club’s project before dedicating the statue with prayer; then the President, Graeme Young, invited Fraser Aitken and our Honorary President, George Reid, to pull aside the cords holding the saltire standards and to reveal the statue to the admiring gaze of the whole assembly.

A consideration which took many members of the Club by surprise was the need to cover the notice and then the statue with third-party insurance. Such safeguards are in place to cover the annual dinner and our guests, of course, and now coverage extends to the statue lest it fall on anyone, or lest anyone fall on it!

Were Mrs. Beeton planning a statue, she would surely observe, “First catch your sculptor!” Here Alex Halliburton made an excellent and obvious choice – John Barney Weaver. Weaver said that he wished to eschew the imitation of existing paintings and statues of Burns in order to present his own, unique vision of Burns at work rather than striking an heroic, pseudo-aristocratic, 18th century classic pose. Most appropriately, he concentrated on Burns at work in the field in November, 1785 and sought to portray the poet musing on the upturned mouse-nest and those best-laid schemes o’ mice an men that gang aft agley. Burns was not alone on that occasion, but was working with John Lambie, “A Stevenston thatcher who, when interviewed by Grierson, claimed to have ‘led the Plough when Burns turned up the mouse’ at Lochlea. It had ‘an uncommonly large nest.” (Maurice Lindsay, The Burns Encyclopedia, p. 209).

In addition to the description of Burns by Scott rehearsed elsewhere in this issue, there are others offered in James Mackay’s Complete Works:

Robert Anderson, who first met Burns in the house of David Ramsay, printer of the Edinburgh
Courant, wrote to Dr Currie in 1799: ‘I was struck with his appearance, so different from what I had expected in an uneducated rustic. His person, though neither robust nor elegant, was manly and pleasing; and his countenance, though dark and coarse, uncommonly expressive and interesting… He worse his hair, which was black and thin, in a queue, without powder. (p. 20)

Josiah Walker described Burns’s countenance as ‘not of that elegant cast which is most frequent among the upper ranks, but it was manly and intelligent, and marked by a thoughtful gravity which shaded at times into sternness. In his large dark eye the most striking index of his genius resided. It was full of mind, and would have been singularly expressive, under the management of one who could employ it with more art, for the purpose of expression. (p. 23).

Basic to the artistic conception of the statue is the sculptor’s vision of Burns and his concept of himself as creative artist. John Weaver was trained in his early years by his father, who was painter, sculptor and teacher. This experience along with later study with Albin Polasek and Emil Zettler, as well as work with scientists at the Smithsonian Insitution, have made him think of art as a way of life, a profession which should serve people, not as an ivory tower retreat of self fulfilment. Art as a creative imaginative means of communication should be in an understandable form if it is to be true communication. This desire to do work of beauty which has meaning to people results in an art which is not concerned with the vogue or style of the day. He feels that art, to be truly timeless, should rely on quality workmanship and basic aesthetic principle. Perhaps then it can stand with the art of any period.

Having conceived the pose, Weaver now made a maquette, that is, a small preliminary model from which the sculpture would later be elaborated. The maquette came to the Club for scrutiny and comment, and members at first were somewhat taken aback at the unique nature of the pose; now the courage of John Weaver and the thrilling result of his conception have won over even the diehards.

The statue was made by the cire-perdue, or lost wax process, a technique of bronze casting which was highly developed in the Shan Dynasty in China (1766-1122 B.C.); in the West, its use during the Italian Renaissance likely also reflects ancient Greek and Etruscan techniques. A core of crushed brick and plaster was coated with a layer of wax in which the sculptor did his modelling, then the wax in turn was carefully clad in a mixture of fine pipe clay the consistency of cream which when it hardened reproduced every detail of the wax figure. Layers of coarser material were added to form a thick, firm shell. The whole mass was heated so that the wax melted and ran away through vent holes, leaving a space between the shell and the corse which was the mould into which the molten bronze was poured. I had better leave further description of the method to John Weaver:

The cire-perdue, or lost wax process as used today has the primary difference that more than one cast can be made. The process is actually more lengthy and complicated. The artist now models in clay or plasteline which allows for great
freedom and even changes in design. The finished clay is cast into plaster (in itself a lengthy process) and the plaster cast serves as a model for the bronze moulder. He prepares a negative gelatine or rubber mould, encased in a plaster jacket for stability. In this negative mould, which shows all of the details of the model in reverse, a coating of molten wax is brushed and built up to the desired thickness of the finished bronze, about 1/8 inch. When the flexible gelatine mould is removed, there is a hollow wax duplicate of the original clay sculpture. This can be worked on by the artist if desired, and we are now back to the ancient technique except that the core is poured into the wax rather than the reverse.

The finished statue is 51” tall (including the base) and a maximum of 20” wide. The base is 40” long and 3” thick. And the relief is 36” long and a maximum of 16” tall. The whole is, of course, a masterpiece of which John Weaver and the Edmonton Burns Club have every right to be proud.

We hope, too, that Burns would approve the result of our efforts. He was most unselfish in his desire to see appropriate homage paid to others such as Fergusson. Burns did not need to wait for Thomas Carlyle to be told that “The inventor of a spinning jenny is pretty sure of his reward in his own day; but the writer of a true poem, like the apostle of a true religion, is nearly sure of the contrary.” Here is Burns pleading Fergusson’s cause fervently (Mackay, Letters, p. 265):

To the Honorable the BAILIES OF THE CANONGATE, Edinburgh.

Edinburgh, 6th February 1787 Gentlemen,

I am sorry to be told that the remains of Robert Ferguson the so justly celebrated Poet, a man whose talents for ages to come will do honour to our Caledonian name, lie in your church yard among the ignoble Dead unnoticed and unknown. — Some memorial to direct the steps of the Lovers of Scottish Song, when they wish to shed a tear over the “Narrow house” of the Bard who is now no more, is surely a tribute due to Ferguson’s memory: a tribute I wish to have the honour of paying. — I petition you then, Gentlemen, for your permission to lay a simple stone over his revered ashes, to remain an unalienable property to his deathless fame.—

I have the honor to be Gentlemen your very humble servant

Robert Burns

Burns struck the same note in his Apostrophe to Fergusson:

Curse on ungrateful man, that can be pleas’d,
And yet can starve the author of pleasure!
O thou, my elder brother in misfortune,
By far my elder brother in the Muse,
With tears I pity thy unhappy fate!
Why is the Bard unfitted for the world,
Yet has so keen a relish of its pleasures?

And as we know, Burns’s own death was a fate as unhappy as that of Fergusson. Carlyle wrote of Burns’s death, “And thus he passed, not softly, yet speedily, into that still country, where the hail storms and fire-showers do not reach, and the heaviest laden wayfarer at length lays down his load.”

There can be no doubt that Robert Burns merits all the statues Andrew Carnegie demands, and the Edmonton Club is proud to have erected the first statue of the Bard in Alberta and most likely the first one of the third millennium. In that millennium
there will be greater need than ever for the poet of laughter and love. The laughter of love is Burns’s independent guess at the secrets of the universe: learn first to laugh at yourself, then to laugh at life, and the corollary love will fill the heart and ward off the world’s blows and buffets from the invincible spirit which is within. Given this impregnable laughter of love, Burns could survive onslaughts that would have broken a lesser man, could survive poverty, could withstand ingratitude and envy while he sang as the lark in the clear Ayrshire sky of the dignity and destiny of mice and men.

When John Weaver proposed to sculpt Burns musing on the dignity and destiny of the wee mouse, the Burns Club agreed that no pose could be more appropriate; and when we selected the epitaph for the statue, the Burns Club agreed that no words summed up what Burns stands for as we enter the new millennium than his lines from *A Man’s a Man for a’ that*:

*It’s comin yet for a’that*

*That Man to Man, the world o’er,*

*Shall brithers be for a’that.*

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OBITUARIES

GRANT MacEWAN
1902-2000

It is with much sadness and a great loss to Burnsians world-wide that we report the passing of a much revered Honorary President of the Burns Federation.

“Alberta’s Gentleman”, “Death of a Legend”, and “MacEwan Led Incredible Life” were headline banners in Calgary, Alberta newspapers in reporting the passing of the Honorable Dr. J.W. Grant MacEwan, O.C., LL.D a former Lieutenant Governor of Alberta, Canada.

Grant who passed away at the age of 97 was a much respected and weel-kent Burnsian, not only in his beloved Canada but equally in many other parts of the world.

Patron of Calgary Burns Club and an Honorary President of the Burns Federation which was conferred on him at the Conference in Canada in 1979. He was a regular attender at Federation Conferences in the United Kingdom (The photograph above of Grant was taken while addressing the delegates at the York Conference in 1989).

A detailed account of the life of Grant by James A. Mackay appeared in the 1989 Burns Chronicle Page 45 entitled ‘No Ordinary Man’.

FROM THE CALGARY HERALD

Hundreds of Calgarians gathered on Thursday, 22 June, 2000 to pay tribute to Grant MacEwan one of Alberta, Canada’s most beloved figures.

In addition to family, friends and those who didn’t know but still admired Grant, were firefighters paying tribute to the man they made an honourary chief.

The commemoration at Central Memorial United Church was the final public observance of Grants life.

The 97-year-old icon was a former mayor and lieutenant-governor, historian, and author of some 55 books. A state funeral – the first in almost 40 years – was held on Tuesday 20th June, 2000 in Edmonton. Burial was later in Calgary.

In respect of their honorary chief, the Calgary Fire Department flew flags at half mast during the day.

Capt. John Conley said Grant authored the book Smoke, Sweat and Tears 1985 on the occasion of the department’s 100th anniversary.

“We’re just honouring him that way. He’s been a tremendous supporter of the fire department,” Conley said. “Because of his dedication and input into his book, we made him an honorary fire chief.”

With her father’s honorary Calgary fire helmets arrayed in front of her, Grant’s daughter Heather MacEwan Foran elicited chuckles as she thanked the fire department.
She said her father was glad to pen the department history for a fee— a jar of peanut butter.

“The bill was duly paid,” she said “Alberta, and indeed Western Canada, has lost a truly unique and amazing man. My father’s ideals will live on.”

With Grant’s beloved Calgary Burns Club as the choir, the skirl of bagpipes filled the sanctuary with the strains of Amazing Grace.

Mayor Al Duerr called Grant a complex man of “disarming simplicity” who kept his eye fixed on the future. “In a word preoccupied with wealth and status … walked a man tall and secure with his relationship with God and absolute in his belief that we are to share this world with all creatures,” Duerr said.

“Grant is gone. He is disappeared into the mists of time. The path he lit will continue to shine for future generations. “The history books will always remember Grant – partially because he wrote so many of them,” Duerr quipped.

Said Rev, Michael Ward: “If Christ had been living in Calgary and Grant has passed by, He would have said ‘Wow, there’s an Albertan.’”

GRANT MacEWANS CREED:

I believe instinctively in a God for whom I am prepared to search.

I believe it is an offence against the God of nature for me to accept any hand-me-down, man defined religion or creed without the test of reason. I believe no man, dead or alive knows more or knew more about God than I can know by searching.

I believe that the God of Nature must be without prejudice, with exactly the same concern for all His children, and that the human invokes no more, no less, or fatherly love than the beaver or sparrow.

I believe I am an integral part of the environment and, as a good subject, I must establish an enduring relationship with my surroundings. My dependence upon the land is fundamental.

I believe destructive waste and greedy exploitation are sins.

I believe the biggest challenge is in being helper rather than a destroyer of the treasures in nature’s storehouse, a conserver, a husbandman, and partner in caring for the Vineyard.

I accept, with apologies to Albert Schweitzer, a “revenue for life” and all that is of the Great Spirit’s creation.

I believe morality is not complete until the individual holds all of the Great Spirit’s creatures in brotherhood and has compassion for all. A fundamental concept of good consists of working to preserve all creatures with feeling and the will to live.

I am prepared to stand before my Maker, the Ruler of the entire universe, with no other plea than that I have tried to leave things in His Vineyard better than I found them.
JEAN ANNESLEY

It is with much regret that we have to record the death of one of our most enthusiastic members of the Belfast Burns Association, Miss Jean Annesley, on 22nd December, 1999.

Jean was a Past-President of our association and attended Executive meetings and Conferences until, due to her illness, she was unable to travel. Even though she could not attend our meetings she kept a keen eye on all the activities and was interested in the changes taking place within the Federation.

As well as being a Burnsian, Jean was a lover of birds and was happy to be outdoors Bird Watching, her other hobby was painting and she produced some very beautiful pictures. Scottish Country Dancing was another of her activities and she frequently attended the Annual Summer School at St. Andrews.

Jean is missed by all her friends at home and throughout the Federation.

A. Allan

PAUL L. WILBERT


He was born May 6, 1914, at Belleville, to W.E. and Myrtle Belle Richardson Wilbert Jr. He attended schools in Belleville, graduating from high school in 1932. He graduated from the University of Kansas in 1936 Phi Beta Kappa and the University of Kansas Law School Order of the Coif, in 1938. Mr. Wilbert moved to Pittsburg in 1938 from Lawrence.

Mr. Wilbert was the senior member of the Wilbert Law firm from 1960 until 1990, and was presently a senior associate of the Wilbert and Towner Law firm. He began his law practice in Pittsburg in 1938.

Throughout his busy life and membership of many important legal associations he had a great love of Robert Burns, his works and life.
For the greater part of my 58 years I have been and still am deeply interested in the life and works of Robert Burns, I have as most Burnsians visited the majority of monuments and buildings in Scotland that are in any manner associated with the great Poet’s name. As I was born in Glasgow, I am ashamed to admit there are a number of important monuments (Graves) in that city I have not visited until recently. The visits took place in order to report to the Memorial Committee of the Robert Burns World Federation on the state of repair of the foresaid monuments. At this point I would like to thank my good friend Mr Brian Keenan, President of Rutherglen Burns Club, for kindly accompanying and showing me the exact location of at least two of these memorials. On a second visit my son Douglas and cousin William Ross came with me to help execute any repairs and take photographs; it is always wise to have company when visiting most Glasgow graveyards!

The following information maybe of help to any interested parties.

MEMORIAL REPORT:-

Visited Gorbals old burial ground, Linn Cemetery and the Vennel Burying ground at Pollokshews (all Glasgow) for the first time.

The tombstone of Burns’s friend and supervisor Alexander Findlater was saved and re-erected in Linn Cemetery (Section 26) when his remains were exhumed from Anderston burying ground, to make way for the building of the Kingston Bridge. It is in excellent condition apart from the raised lead lettering which needs re-touched with black gloss paint, and the pointing between and around the base and headstone was broken or missing, but I replaced and repaired it on a subsequent visit. The cemetery is well cared for, but it would help if some type of metal plaque similar to those in Mauchline or Dumfries Kirkyards could be placed in front of this important memorial, which would make it easier for interested parties to find:-

Inscription on the Stone:-

To the memory of
Alexander Findlater
Supervisor of Excise at Dumfries
afterwards
Collector of Excise at Glasgow.
Born 1754 Died 1839.
The friend of Burns in life  
His vindicator after death  
Erected by  
Sandyford Burns Club 1923

Other members of the Findlater  
Family also are interred here.

NOTE:-
Since this report I have been in contact with Mr John Carmichael, secretary of Sandyford Burns Club, who has conveyed his clubs intent to erect a small plaque in front of this stone.

Visited the Gorbals old burying ground, Old Rutherglen Road, Glasgow, to inspect the tombstone of John Wilson – Burns’s ‘Dr. Hornbook’, it is set into the perimeter wall as are all the other head-stones, there are no free-standing headstones in this burial yard. The headstone in question and it’s incised lettering are in good condition except for the years of grime which has rendered most of it a greyish black colour. It would be a mistake to clean this monument, for it would almost certainly damage the weathered surface, apart from the fact it would stand out like the proverbial ‘sore thumb’, and possibly attract local vandals from this rather dubious area.

Inscription on Stone:-
No 487  
Erected by  
John Wilson  
Session Clerk of Gorbals  
In Memory of  
His daughter Campbell who died 28th April 1824 Aged 28 years
John Wilson
Died 13th Jan 1839 at 64 South Portland Street
Glasgow.

Note:-
Wilson was parish schoolteacher and shopkeeper at Tarbollon in 1785.

Lastly I made my way to the Vennel burying ground in Pollokshaws, Glasgow, where Mrs. John Thomson (Elizabeth “Betty” Burns) is buried. Her mother was Anna Park, niece of the Hyslops of the ‘Globe’ in Dumfries. Burns’s grandson lies there also. The long low tombstone and its incised lettering are in good condition, although it is stained by the usual Glasgow grime. Unfortunately this small burial ground has been neglected
and at the hands of vandals. The stone is inscribed with eight lines by Robert Burns Thomson for his mother Mrs John Thomson, the poet’s daughter.

There are many other places of interest in Glasgow for the enthusiastic Burnsian, as follows:- The Glasgow Art Gallery & Museum, Kelvingrove, which houses original silhouette portraits of Robert and Jean Burns, they are in storage but can be viewed by request. In the eighteenth century gallery (Scottish room) hanging side by side are the ‘Auchendrane’ portrait of Burns, by Alexander Nasmyth, 1758-1840; Thomas Faeds ‘Burns and Highland Mary’; also Kirkoswald – Tam O’Shanter’s grave’, by David O. Hill, 1802 – 1870. Next to these fine works (encased) are pieces of Burnsiana, i.e. decorative snuff boxes with Burns Scenes, and other pieces of Mauchline ware; Statuettes of Tam O’Shanter and Souter Johnie, by Clyde Pottery, Greenock; and a Masonic punch bowl that supposedly belonged to the Poet. There are also paintings of ‘The Cotter’s Saturday Night’ and Sam Bough’s Burns Cottage, they are in storage but can be seen by request. On the west balcony stands the fine bronze figure of Burns by Kellock Brown, entitled, ‘The Threasher’s weary flingin’ – tree, the lee-lang day had tired me’. In the Mitchell Library, North St, you can visit by request, the magnificent ‘Burns Room’, with it’s vast collection of Burns literature, original manuscripts and other Burnsiana. Around Glasgow’s George square stand many fine sculptures, amongst them, an excellent bronze of the poet by George. E. Irving. The bronze is nine feet high and stands on a twelve feet high base of Aberdeen granite, also designed by Irving. Thirty thousand people were in the square at it’s unveiling on the 25th January 1877. The money for this memorial was raised by James Hedderick, - editor and owner of the ‘Glasgow Evening Citizen’. After reading an article by John Brown, (a commercial traveller) complaining of the lack of a memorial to Burns in Glasgow, Hedderick appealed to the people of Scotland for subscriptions, and eventually, two thousand pounds was raised. Lastly a grand ¾ portrait of the Bard in stained glass (See Burns Chronicle, 1998) can be seen in the Bute Hall, (Hunterian Museum) of Glasgow University, Gilmorehill.
ADDENDUM

Since recording the above it has been brought to my attention by the editor of the ‘Burns Chronicle’ that the poet’s grand niece — Jean Armour (Died 11th March 1916 aged 87), her son — Robert Newall Armour (Died 6th April 1926 aged 71), and his wife — Janet Hutchinson Armour (Died 6th April 1926 Aged 76) are buried in Craigton cemetery, Glasgow. Armed with a Photostat of the headstone and accompanied by my son Douglas, I visited the cemetery to trace and examine its condition, which I found to be in good condition.

For those interested the lair number is HH244 and is situated to the right of the crematorium on entry from Berryknowes Road.

JOHN MURDOCH
by JAMES L. HEMPSTEAD
(Hon. President The Burns Federation)

An Act passed by the Scottish Parliament in 1694 decreed that there should be a school in every parish, but in many parishes throughout Scotland the Act often went unheeded. Although Alloway was within the parish of Ayr, where several schools had been established, it had to depend on private initiative to provide some form of education for the children of the village. For instance it is reported that a school was conducted in Kirk Alloway sometime between 1746 and 1757 but after a time fell into abeyance. In 1765 a school was established by Adam Campbell¹ at Alloway Mill, which was located near the mouth of the River Doon and about a mile from the village itself. William Burnes lost no time in enrolling Robert and Gilbert, where they were given the rudiments of reading and spelling, although it is probable that they had already received some tuition from their father. Unfortunately the school closed down after a few months when Campbell left to take up a more remunerative post as Master of Ayr Workhouse, which had been opened in 1756.

Obviously William Burnes was very anxious that another school should be set up as soon as possible, and in early 1765 he took the lead in finding another schoolmaster. He was on friendly terms with two of the masters of Ayr Academy and they recommended a certain John Murdoch as a suitable person to teach his children. Burnes arranged for Murdoch to meet him at Simpson’s Inn which was located close to the north end of the ‘Auld Brig’² and to bring his writing book with him. The interview proved satisfactory and Murdoch was engaged to teach Robert and Gilbert and the children of four other families in the neighbourhood. He was a solemn youth, some 12 years older than his famous pupil, having been born at Ayr on 25 March, 1747. His father, also John Murdoch, was teacher and session clerk at Auchinleck.³ Young Murdoch had been educated at Ayr Grammar School, then went on to complete his studies in Edinburgh before returning to his home town to look for a teaching post.

In a letter which Murdoch sent to the Irish antiquary, Joseph Cooper Walker, on 22
February 1799, and reproduced by Dr Currie, he gives an account of his meeting with William Burnes and the conditions of his subsequent employment:

In 1765, about the middle of March, Mr. W. Burnes came to Ayr, and sent to the school, where I was improving in writing under my good friend Mr. Robinson, desiring that I would come and speak to him at a certain Inn, and bring my writing-book with me. This was immediately complied with. Having examined my writing, he was pleased with it (you will allow he was not difficult); and told me that he had received very satisfactory information from Mr. Tennant, the Master of the English School, concerning my improvement in English, and in his method of teaching. In the month of May following, I was engaged by Mr. Burnes, and four of his neighbours, to teach, and accordingly began to teach the little school at Alloway, which was situated a few yards from the argillaceous fabric above-mentioned. My five employers undertook to board me by turns, and to make up a certain salary at the end of the year, provided my quarterly payments from the different pupils did not amount to that sum.

In the same letter he goes on to give an interesting account of the early education of Robert and Gilbert, the teaching methods which he employed and the school books which were most commonly in use. Of the two brothers it was Gilbert who impressed Murdoch as being the most likely to court the Muses, and what is even more surprising,
in view of later developments, is what transpired when he tried to teach the brothers a little church music:

My pupil, Robert Burns, was then between six and seven years of age; his preceptor about eighteen. Robert and his younger brother, Gilbert had been grounded a little in English before they were put under my care. They both made a rapid progress in reading; and a tolerable progress in writing. In reading, dividing words into syllables by rule, spelling without book, parsing sentences etc., Robert and Gilbert were generally at the upper end of the class, even when ranged with boys by far their seniors. The books most commonly used in the school were, the *Spelling Book*, the *New Testament*, the *Bible*, Mason’s *Collection of Prose and Verse* and Fisher’s *English Grammar*. They committed to memory the hymns and other poems of that collection, with uncommon facility. This facility was partly owing to the method pursued by their father and me in instructing them, which was to make them thoroughly acquainted with the meaning of every word in each sentence, that was to be committed to memory. By the bye, this may be easier done, and at an earlier period than is generally thought. As soon as they were capable of it, I taught them to turn verse into its natural order; sometimes to substitute synonymous expressions for poetical words, and to supply all the ellipses. These, you know are the means of knowing that the pupil understands his author. These are excellent helps to the arrangement of words in sentences, as well as to a variety of expression.

Gilbert always appeared to me to possess a more lively imagination, and to be more of the wit than Robert. I attempted to teach them a little church-music. Here they were left far behind by all the rest of the school. Robert’s ear, in particular, was dull, and his voice untunable. It was long before I could get them to distinguish one tune from another. Robert’s countenance was grave, and expressive of a serious, contemplative, and thoughtful mind. Gilbert’s face said ‘Mirth with thee I mean to live’, and certainly, if any person who knew the boys had been asked which of them was the most likely to court the Muses, he would surely have never guessed that Robert had a propensity of that kind.⁶

Murdoch has often been mocked as a pedant, arising mainly from his description of William Burnes’s cottage as ‘an argillaceous fabric,’ ‘a mud edifice’ and ‘a tabernacle of clay’. James Mackay gives a possible reason for this when he writes that ‘he was writing, in relative old age, to a man of some rank in society and established literary reputation.’⁷

The little house then selected for use as a school was located on the roadside directly opposite the cottage. It was still standing a hundred years later but was demolished in 1878.⁸ The fees paid by the parents guaranteed Murdoch sixpence a day in addition to full board and lodging.

In his autobiographical letter to Dr. Moore, dated 2 August 1787, (CL 248), Burns, makes only casual reference to his early school days, but he dealt in more detail with the
effect his early reading, under Murdoch, had on him:

Though I cost the schoolmaster some thrashings, I made an excellent English scholar; and against the years of ten or eleven, I was absolutely a critic in substantives, verbs, and particles... The earliest thing of composition that I recollect taking pleasure in was 'The Vision of Mirza', and a hymn of Addison’s beginning, ‘How are thy servants blest, O Lord!’ I particularly remember one half-stanza which was music to my boyish ears –

‘For though in dreadful whirls we hung
High on the broken wave;’

I met with these pieces in Mason’s English Collection, one of my school-books.

In a letter which Gilbert sent to Mrs. Dunlop, many years later, and usually referred to as ‘Gilbert’s Narrative,’ he gives a further account of their early education.

The education of my brother and myself was in common, there being only twenty months between us, in respect of age. Under Mr. John Murdoch we learned to read English tolerably well, and to write a little. He taught us too the English grammar. I was too young to profit much from his lessons in grammar, but Robert made some proficiency in it, a circumstance of considerable weight in the unfolding of his genius and character; as he soon became remarkable for the fluency and correctness of his expression, and read the few books that came in his way with much pleasure and improvement; for even then he was a reader when he could get a book. Murdoch, whose library at that time had no great variety in it, lent him The Life of Hannibal, which was the first book he read (the school books excepted) and almost the only one he had an opportunity of reading while he was at school; for the Life of Wallace which he classes with it in one of his letters, he did not see for some years afterwards, when he borrowed it from the blacksmith who shod our horses.9

Of all the schoolbooks to which Burns was introduced by Murdoch, it was a Collection of Prose and Verse which exerted the most influence on his young mind. The book was the work of Arthur Masson (Burns and Murdoch both misspelt his name as ‘Mason’) and contained selections from Shakespeare, Milton, Dryden, Addison, Thomson, Gray, Akenside and Shenstone as well as a number of minor poets, whose works are now almost forgotten. It also contained an assortment of moral, didactic and historical prose; and a selection of moral letters by Elizabeth Rowe. The influence which this book had on the youthful Burns cannot be overstated. The numerous quotations which appeared later in his correspondence came from poems which he had obviously memorised from this anthology.

By the end of 1765 William Burnes found that the cottage at Alloway was becoming
too small for his steadily growing family. He was also anxious to keep his family together, rather than have them leave home to become hired servants on some distant farm. At Whitsun 1766, he took possession of the seventy acre farm of Mount Oliphant which lay two miles southeast of Alloway. For the next two years Robert and Gilbert continued to attend Murdoch’s school at Alloway until early in 1768, when Murdoch obtained a teaching post in Dumfries. Gilbert recounts how Murdoch visited the farm before he left the district to take up his new appointment:

Murdoch came to spend a night with us, and to take his leave when he was about to go into Carrick. He brought us a present and memorial of him, a small compendium of English Grammar, and the tragedy of *Titus Andronicus* and by way of passing the evening, he began to read the play aloud. We were all attention for some time, till presently the whole party was dissolved in tears. A female in the play (I have a but a confused recollection of it) had her hands chopt off, her tongue cut out, and then was insultingly desired to call for water to wash her hands. At this, in an agony of distress, we with one voice desired he would read no more. My father observed that if we would not hear it out, it would be needless to leave the play with us. Robert replied that if it was left he would burn it. My father was going to chide him for this ungrateful return to his tutor’s kindness; but Murdoch interposed, declaring that he liked to see so much sensibility; and he left the *School for Love* a comedy (translated I think from the French), in its place.¹⁰

Some years prior to Murdoch taking up the teaching post at Alloway, William Burnes had started work on a theological manual, which was designed to give religious guidance to his children. It took the form of a dialogue between father and son in which the son puts questions to the father. William’s *Manual of Religious Belief* was first published in 1875, almost a hundred years after his death, and shows that although it was compiled by him, it was transcribed by Murdoch. It would appear that Murdoch shared William Burnes’s liberal religious views and that the manuscript was transcribed during the schoolmaster’s stay in Alloway.

Many years later Murdoch recalled the happy hours he had spent with the Burnes family in the cottage at Alloway. ‘In this mean cottage, to which I myself was at times an inhabitant, I really believe there dwelt a larger portion of content, than in any palace in Europe. ‘The Cotter’s Saturday Night’ will give some idea of the temper and manner that prevailed there.’¹¹

William Burnes had apparently made a profound and lasting impression on Murdoch. In his letter to Walker he paid a moving and sincere tribute to William’s character and integrity:

I have always considered William Burnes as by far the best of the human race that ever I had the pleasure of being acquainted with – and many a worthy character I have known. I can cheerfully join with Robert in the last line of his epitaph – borrowed from Goldsmith:-
'And ev’n his failing lean’d to vitue’s side.’

He was an excellent husband, if I may judge from his assiduous attention to the ease and comfort of his worthy partner; and from her affectionate behaviour to him, as well as her unwearied attention to the duties of a mother.

He was a tender and affectionate father; he took pleasure in leading his children in the path of virtue; not driving them, as some parents do, to the performance of duties to which they themselves are averse. He took care to find fault but seldom; and therefore when he did rebuke, he was listened to with a kind of reverential awe. A look of disapprobation was felt, a reproof was severely so; and a strip of the tawz, even on the skirt of the coat, gave heart-felt pain, produced a loud lamentation, and brought forth a flood of tears.

He had the art of gaining the esteem and good-will of those that were labourers under him. I think I never saw him angry but twice; the one time, it was with the foreman of the band, for not reaping the field as he desired; and the other time, it was with an old man for using smutty innuendoes and double entendres. Were every foul-mouthed old man to receive a seasonable check in this way, it would be to the advantage of the rising generation. As he was at no time overbearing to inferiors, he was equally incapable of that passive, pitiful, paltry spirit, that induces some people to keep ‘booing and booing’ in the presence of a great man. He always treated superiors with a becoming respect; but he never gave the smallest encouragement to aristocratical arrogance. But I must not pretend to give you a description of all the manly qualities, the rational and Christian virtues, of the venerable William Burnes. Time would fail me. I shall only add that he carefully practised every known duty, and avoided every thing that was criminal, or, in the apostle’s word – ‘Herein did he exercise himself in living a life void of offence towards God, and towards man.’ O for a world of men of such dispositions! We should then have no wars. I have often wished, for the good of mankind, that it were so customary to honour and perpetuate the memory of those who excel in moral rectitude, as it is to extol what are called heroic actions: - then would the mausoleum of the friend of my youth overtop and surpass most of the monuments I see in Westminster Abbey.

Although I cannot do justice to the character of this worthy man, yet you will perceive from these few particulars, what kind of person had the principal hand in the education of our poet. He spoke the English language with more propriety (both with respect to diction and pronunciation) than any man I ever knew, with no greater advantages. This had a very good effect on the boys, who began to talk and reason like men much sooner than their neighbours.
In 1772, having taught for some years in a school in Dumfries, Murdoch returned to Ayr to succeed as English master, David Tennant, who had been promoted to Latin master. Gilbert recalls:

The remembrance of my father’s former friendship, and his attachment to my brother, made him do every thing in his power for our improvement. He sent us Pope’s works, and some other poetry, the first that we had an opportunity of reading, excepting what is contained in *The English Collection*, and in the volume of *The Edinburgh Magazine* for 1772; excepting also those excellent new songs that are hawked about the country in baskets, or exposed on stalls in the streets.

The summer after we had been at Dalrymple school, my father sent Robert to Ayr, to revise his English grammar, with his former teacher. He had been there only one week, when he was obliged to return, to assist at the harvest. When the harvest was over, he went back to school, where he remained two weeks; and this completes the account of his school education, excepting one summer quarter, some time afterwards, that he attended the parish school of Kirk-Oswald (where he lived with a brother of my mothers’s), to learn surveying.

During the last two weeks that he was with Murdoch, he himself was engaged in learning French, and he communicated the instructions he received to my brother, who, when he returned, brought home with him a French dictionary and grammar, and the *Adventures of Telemachus* in the original. In a little while, by the assistance of these books, he had acquired such a knowledge of the language, as to read and understand any French author in prose. This was considered as a sort of prodigy, and, through the medium of Murdoch, procured him the acquaintance of several lads in Ayr, who were at that time gabbling French, and the notice of some families, particularly that of Dr. Malcolm, where a knowledge of French was a recommendation…

Thus you see Mr. Murdoch was a principal means of my brother’s improvements. Worthy man!13

Murdoch himself has left an interesting account of this period:

In 1773, Robert Burns came to board and lodge with me, for the purpose of revising English grammar, etc, that he might be better qualified to instruct his brothers and sisters at home. He was now with me day and night, in school, at all meals, and in all my walks. At the end of one week I told him that he was now pretty much master of the parts of speech, etc, I should like to teach him something of French pronunciation, that when he should meet with the name of a French town, ship officer, or the like, in the newspapers,
he might be able to pronounce it something like a French word. Robert was glad to hear this proposal, and immediately we attacked the French with great courage. Now there was little else to be heard but the declension of nouns, the conjugation of verbs, etc. When walking together, and even at meals, I was constantly telling him the names of different objects as they presented themselves in French; so that he was hourly laying in a stock of words, and sometimes little phrases. In short, he took such pleasure in learning, and I in teaching, that it was difficult to say which of the two was most zealous in the business, and about the end of the second week of our study of the French, we began to read a little of the Adventures of Telemachus, in Fénélon’s own words.

Murdoch interrupts his narrative to record, in his quaint way, that Robert was obliged to return home to assist in the work of the harvest:

But now the plains of Mount Oliphant began to whiten, and Robert was summoned to relinquish the pleasing scenes that surrounded the grotto of Calypso, and, armed with a sickle, to seek glory by signalising himself in the field of Ceres – and so he did; for although but about fifteen, I was told that he performed the work of a man.

Although he had lost his prodigious pupil to the farm, Murdoch continued to keep in touch with Robert and the family and in his letter he pays tribute to the affection and devotion of Agnes Burnes.

Thus was I deprived of my very apt pupil, and consequently, agreeable companion, at the end of three weeks, one of which was spent entirely in the study of English, and the other two chiefly in that of French. I did not, however, lose sight of him; but was a frequent visitant at his father’s house when I had my half holiday, and very often went accompanied with one or two persons more intelligent than myself, that good William Burnes might enjoy a mental feast. Then the labouring oar was shifted to some other hand. The father and the son sat down with us, when we enjoyed a conversation, wherein solid reasoning, sensible remark, and a moderate seasoning of jocularity, were so nicely blended, as to render it palatable to all parties. Robert had a hundred questions to ask me about my French, etc, and the father, who had always rational information in view, had still some question to propose to my more learned friends, upon moral or natural philosophy, or some such interesting subject. Mrs. Burnes too was of the party as much as possible:–

‘But still the house affairs would draw her thence, which, even as she could with haste dispatch, She’d come again, and with a greedy ear Devour up their discourse.’
And particularly that of her husband. At all times, and in all companies, she listened to him with a more marked attention than to any body else. When under the necessity of being absent while he was speaking, she seemed to regret as a real loss, that she had missed what the good man had said. This worthy woman, Agnes Brown, had the most thorough esteem for her husband of any woman I knew.14

The house in the Sandgate where Robert lodged with Murdoch in 1773 was still standing at the beginning of the twentieth century, but was later demolished. A stone plaque was subsequently affixed to the south gable of the premises which took its place at 58 Sandgate, and this records that ‘Here stood the house of John Murdoch, schoolmaster, in which Robert Burns lodged in his fourteenth year and received lessons in English and French.’

In 1776 John Murdoch left Ayr under a cloud. As a result of a petition which was laid before the magistrate by James Neill, procurator fiscal, he was dismissed from his post on 14 February, 1776. The complaint set forth that he did ‘particularly within the house of Mrs. Tennant, inn-keeper in Ayr, as well as in the house of Patrick Auld, weaver in Ayr, utter the following, or such like, unworthy, base reproachful, and wicked expression - viz, that he, Dr. William Dalrymple, was as revengeful as hell, and as false as the devil; and that he was a liar, or a damned liar; that he the said John Murdoch, also called Dr. Dalrymple a hypocrite, or accused him of hypocrisy.15

It would appear that Murdoch was intoxicated when he made those accusations, as Gilbert records that ‘one evening that he (Murdoch) had been overtaken in liquor, he happened to speak somewhat disrespectfully of Dr. Dalrymple, the parish minister, who had not paid him that attention to which he thought himself entitled. In Ayr he might as well have spoken blasphemy’.16 The reverend Dr. William Dalrymple, who baptised Robert Burns, was the senior minister of the collegiate charge of Ayr and was held in high esteem by his parishioners.

Following his dismissal from his teaching post in Ayr, Murdoch went to London, where he set himself up as a teacher of English and French. Shortly after he had settled in the capital, he made a tour of France, no doubt to improve his pronunciation of the French language. When in France he made the acquaintance of Colonel Fullarton, who was then secretary to the British Embassy in Paris. On his return to London he began to teach English and French, and Colonel Fullarton introduced several foreigners of rank to him, who receive tutoring in English. Among them was the French statesman Talleyrand, who was then on a diplomatic visit to London. It is also of interest that one of his pupils in his old age was Mrs. Elizabeth Everett, granddaughter of the poet.17

In reply to a letter sent to Murdoch by Burns from Lochlie, on 15 January 1783 (CL 54), which took him almost five years to answer, he wrote:

If ever you come hither, you will have the satisfaction of seeing your poems relished by the Caledonians in London full as much as they can be by those of Edinburgh. We frequently repeat some of your verses in our Caledonian Society; and you may believe I am not a little vain that I have had some share in cultivating such a genius…
Pray let me know if you have any intention of visiting this huge, overgrown metropolis. It would afford matter for a large poem.

Burns never went to London, but his younger brother William, did, to work as a journeyman saddler. Burns wrote to Murdoch from Ellisland, on 16 July 1790 (CL 55) asking him to get in touch with Willim and gave him William’s employer’s address in the Strand. About a fortnight before the letter reached Murdoch, however, William had, by some means found Murdoch’s address and paid him a visit, when no doubt happy memories were revived of his early teaching days at Alloway.

The day after he received Burn’s letter, Murdoch, having heard that William was ill, called at his lodgings only to find that he had died three days earlier of a putrid fever. A few days later his remains were interred in St. Paul’s churchyard – Murdoch had the melancholy duty of acting as chief mourner at the funeral and sending to the poet news of his brother’s death.18

It would appear that, in addition to teaching French and English, Murdoch also had a shop and library in Hart Street, Bloomsbury, where he sold stationery and published books. He assisted John Walker, the lexicographer, in performing for publication the third edition of his Dictionary, which was published in 1802, and to have written the ‘Rules to be observed by the natives of Scotland for attaining a just pronunciation of English’, which are included in it. His own works are a Radical Vocabulary of the French Language 1783; Pronunciation and Orthography of the French Language 1788; and a Dictionary of Distinctions in Three Alphabets, 1811.19

Teaching French and English, compiling books and selling stationery, Murdoch seems to have done fairly well for a time, but the French Revolution flooded London with refugee priests, many of whom turned to teaching their native language for support. This cut heavily into Murdoch’s income and in his latter years illness reduced him to the brink of destitution. A small sum was raised for him by some admirers of the poet, but was barely sufficient and he died on 20 April, 1824 at the age of seventy-seven.20

That John Murdoch’s teaching had a profound influence on the education of Robert Burns there can be little doubt. His methods certainly encouraged the virtues of clarity and precision. As one writer observed ‘That Burns, in later life never had any difficulty in saying precisely what he meant, he probably owed to Murdoch’s severe drill’. His training in spelling and grammar were such that there never was a trace of the rustic in his speech, written or spoken. While it is true that Murdoch did not introduce Burns to any Scottish vernacular literature, he nevertheless, gave him a grounding in English literature, especially the poets from Shakespeare to Shenstone. Murdoch was also responsible for introducing Burns to the French language, although it would appear that the teacher also was in the learning process. In a letter which Burns sent to Murdoch dated 15 January 1789 (CL 54/55), he described Murdoch as ‘a masterly teacher’ and in the same letter wrote ‘I have not forgotten, nor never will forget the many obligations I lie under to your kindness and friendship’. Gilbert, as we have seen, confirmed that ‘Mr. Murdoch was a principal means of my brother’s improvement. Worthy man!’ John Murdoch certainly occupies a worthy niche in the life story of Robert Burns.
NOTES

1 Essay by John Stawhorn in *Burns Now* ed Kenneth Simpson, 1994, p. 29 (n 13), Stawhorn states that Burns’s first schoolmaster’s name was Adam Campbell and not William Campbell as erroneously given elsewhere.


5 Ibid.

6 Ibid.


10 Ibid.

11 Currie, *op cit*, Murdoch’s letter, p. 89.


17 Will, *op cit*, p. 64.

18 Will, *op cit*, p. 68.


20 Will, *op cit*, p. 68.


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AN AMERICAN POEM
ON THE POET’S POET
by Thomas Keith

In the 19th century dozens of poetical tributes were written for Robert Burns—many for Burns suppers, Burns birth and death anniversaries and some for the unveiling of monuments and statues erected to the memory of Burns. Some poems of identification were crafted by famous Scottish and English writers such as Byron, Campbell, Hogg, Tannahill, Keats and Wordsworth, while most were written by second and third tier writers whose work has long since been forgotten. Canada nurtured the sentiments of many immigrant Scottish poets such as William Murray, Dr. John Harper, Evan MacColl, Dr. John Massie and Alexander Wingfield, who came to find inspiration in their homeland and inevitably penned homages to her favorite poet. The United States produced its fair share of such poetic compliments, from the once popular and now obscure Fitz Greene Halleck’s *The Rose of Alloway*, to poems about Burns by Henry Wadsworth Longfellow, John Greenleaf Whittier, Oliver Wendell Holmes and James Russell Lowell.

In the 20th century it was not so much “Burns as Scotland’s National Bard” on which poets made their themes, as it was references to his personal life, his admirers, his enemies and to the incorporation of his songs and poetry into the vernacular of English speaking countries. Most of the 20th century poems which allude to Burns’ life or works were not surprisingly written by Scots and often contemplate the more serious implications of Burns’ influence on Scotland, as in Hugh MacDiarmid’s *A Drunk Man Looks at the Thistle*. North America did have a few representatives, most notably *The Haggis of Private McPhee* by Scottish-born Canadian poet Robert W. Service, boisterous and poignant by turns, and the smart parody on nicknames for Burns by American poet Ogden Nash, *Everything’s Haggis in Hoboken, or Scots Wha Hae Hae*.

Since the Burns Federation’s Annual Conference is being held in North America in 2001, at Emery University in Atlanta, Georgia, this seems a good time to have look at a poem by an American writer which is less widely known but bears regarding by Burnsians: *Address*: by William Carlos Williams. Of Welsh and Spanish lineage, Williams (1883-1963) was a medical doctor who practiced all his life in Rutherford, New Jersey. He gained fame, along with Ezra Pound, Gertrude Stein and others, as one of the modernists of American poetry, was posthumously awarded the Pulitzer Prize and his work is required reading today. Williams’ approach to poetry let go of traditional meters and rhymes while stressing simplicity, the visual shape of a poem and the ordinary in everyday life.

Obviously of a personal nature, *Address*: reflects Williams’ empathetic connection to the love between Jean Armour and Robert Burns. Although one allusion Williams makes is to the misnomer of Burns as a heavy drinker, his identification with Burns as a husband and father is undeniably moving. As for the use of the diminutive ‘Bobby’ (so amusingly dealt with by Ogden Nash), though it may still hit a sour old note for some, it is used here with sincere esteem.
ADDRESS:
by William Carlos Williams

To a look in my son’s eyes–
    I hope he did not see
        that I was looking–
that I have seen
    often enough
        in the mirror,
a stale look
    approaching despair–
there is a female look
to match it
    no need to speak of that:
        Perhaps
it was only a dreamy look
    not an unhappy one
        but absent
from the world–
    such as plagued the eyes
        of Bobby Burns
in his youth and threw him
    into the arms
        of women–
in which he could
    forget himself,
        not defiantly,
but with full acceptance
    of his lot

as a man
His Jean forgave him
    and took him to her heart
        time after time
when he would be
    too drunk
        with Scotch
or the love of other women
    to notice
what he was doing.
What was he intent upon
    but to drown out
that look? What
does it portend?
    A war
will not erase it
not a bank account,
    estlin,
    amounting to 9 figures
Flow gently sweet Afton
    among thy green braes–
    no matter
that he wrote the song
    to another woman
it was never for sale.

by William Carlos Williams, from COLLECTED POEMS 1939-1962, VOLUME II. Copyright ©1944, 1948 by William Carlos Williams. Reprinted by permission of New Directions Publishing Corp.
The following is the Tom Crook Memorial Lecture in memory of our late colleague Tom Crook who was a very knowledgeable Burnsian and who contributed much to our discussions and also to the discussions of other Burns clubs over the years. Tom was a man of great integrity. I hope that he would have enjoyed the following paper.

George Thomson was born in Limekilns in Fife in 1757, where his father was schoolmaster, but at an early age moved to Banff and then to Edinburgh. At age of 17 he started as a clerk to a writer to the signet, and transferred to another W.S. office a few years later. Due to the good offices of John Home, author of the play ‘The Douglas’, he obtained the post of junior clerk to the Board of Trustees for Manufacturing in the city of Edinburgh. The head clerk died shortly after and Thomson was made head clerk. He was with the board of Trustees for over fifty years and was still working there in 1838.

Thomson was an amateur musician playing the violin and singing in concerts at St. Cecilia’s Hall in Edinburgh. There, one night, he heard Scots songs sung as he had never heard them sung before, in a sort of classical setting, and commented that they were more beautiful than he had ever heard Scots songs and that they were being sung by an Italian.

This inspired him to decide to collect the best Scots songs and publish them in a collection. He was not a rich man, in fact his salary was stated to be about the same as Burns received from the Excise, so this was a huge undertaking for him financially, although he had some partners originally. He started this project, and in September 1792 wrote Burns, whom he had not met, and asked him if he (Burns) would help by improving the words of some of the songs, where these words were deemed to be not worthy of the music or too indelicate for polite society. Thomson suggested that about 20 to 25 songs would require to be rewritten or improved. In fact, by the time Burns died he had contributed 120 songs mostly original.

Burns reply to this letter was an enthusiastic acceptance and the offer of reasonable payment for each song was emphatically rejected. The published versions of this correspondence say that Burns wrote that payment would be a downright prostitution of the soul but it is suggested that the original letter said damnable prostitution of the soul.

In reply to that letter Thomson sent Burns 11 songs which Burns wrote new words for. The first one was the Lea Rig and it was followed by Highland Mary, Auld Rob Morris, Duncan Gray, Galla Water. Since English was replacing Scots at that time Thomson, who wished to preserve the tunes at all costs, had also asked an English poet Peter Pindar to write verses for some of these tunes but he found the metre so irregular that he had great difficulty writing the lyrics.
After receiving Burns contributions for the eleven tunes Thomson realised that it would be possible to expand the work and decided to include all Scottish songs he could find, and thus present a catalogue of most Scottish song. Burns endorsed that idea and not only returned songs Thomson sent but also collected more himself.

Thomson also enlisted the help of a Mr. Clarke to add a bass to many songs, which were only in the treble clef, so that they would be suitable for instrumental use if there were not a singer in the party. Since he had already arranged for Pleyel to orchestrate some, this was turning into a very ambitious project indeed for a clerk with a bobby in music.

Thomson also arranged for a Dr. Beattie to provide anecdotes about many of the songs. Burns also said that he would provide and addendum to Dr. Beattie’s stories as he knew the history of many of the songs and had made a point of visiting the location of all the songs except Lochaber and the Braes of Ballenden.

Burns included, in Scots, Lord Gregory which was the only verses which Peter Pindar had as yet produced for any of the tunes. This was followed by Mary Morison to the tune Bide Ye Yet. Burns describes these words as one of his juvenile works. Wandering Willie, Open the Door To Me, and Jessie to the tune of Bonnie Dundee, a tribute to Jessie Staig the daughter of the Provost of Dumfries, followed.

Thomson was delighted with these verses although he and the Hon. Andrew Erskine, a friend of both Burns and Thomson suggested a few changes to Wandering Willie to make it fit the music better. Burns accepted some of these suggestions and rejected others. This, of course, led to there being different versions of the song around. However it was very clearly understood that the final decision on the words belonged to Burns.

The list of songs goes on The Soldier’s Return and Meg o’The Mill were next. Burns asked Thomson not to let Pleyel, who was now doing accompaniments, alter one iota of the original Scottish airs; in the song department but to let our national music preserve its native features. It seems a bit odd to me that Burns was busy altering verses but was upset that anyone might alter the tunes they were written for.

Thomson’s answer that Pleyel also felt it would be absurd to alter any of the notes of the tunes reassured Burns. An interesting P.S. to this letter states “I wish you would do as you proposed with your Rigs o’Barley”. If the loose sentiments are threshed out of it I will find an air for it; but as to that there is no hurry. Apparently then some songs were written without a specific air in mind for them and fitted to a tune later, which is a more usual way of composing a song and Thomson was instrumental in performing this function on at least this occasion.

On July 1st 1793 Thomson sent Burns a copy of the first volume of the songs. This actually contained only six of the songs Burns had submitted. Thomson also enclosed a 5 pound note which he asked Burns to accept as a small mark of his gratitude and that he would repeat it afterward “when I find it convenient”. He wrote “Do not return it, for, By Heaven our correspondence is at an end; and though this would be no loss to you, it would mar the publication, which under your auspices cannot fail to be respectable and interesting.”

Thomson also mentioned that the business now rested solely with him as the gentlemen who had originally agreed to join the speculation had requested to be off.

Burns replied also in July 1793 “I assure you sir that you truly hurt me with your pecuniary parcel. It degrades me in my own eyes. However, to return it would savour of
affectation; but as to anymore traffic of that debtor, creditor kind, I swear by the HONOUR which crowns the upright statue of Robert Burns INTEGRITY on the least motion of it, I will indignantly spurn the by-past transaction, and from that moment commence entire stranger to you.”

Burns, however, then went on to talk about the list which was enclosed with the letter and volume. He praised the Flooers o’ the Forest and talked about Fair Helen of Kirkconnel and also about this time sent Bonnie Jean dedicated to Miss Jean McMurdo.

In August 1793 Thomson wrote that he had secured David Allan who had done a serious of illustrations for Allan Ramsay’s ‘Gentle Shepherd’ to illustrate some of the songs and the illustration for John Anderson my Jo, John was to be the frontispiece for the next volume.

So the flow of songs continued; some set to tunes suggested by Thomson others like Scots Wha Hae were collected by Burns himself. As he explained to Thomson there was a tradition which Burns had heard in many parts of the country that the air Hey Tuttie Tattie was Bruce’s march at Bannockburn and after hearing a performance of it he wrote the words of Scots Wha Hae. The sentence which follows the song in Burn’s letter to Thomson reads “So may God ever defend the cause of truth and liberty, as he did that day!- Amen.”

Thomson didn’t like the line “Welcome to your gory bed” and suggested it be altered to “honours bed” but Burns would have none of it although he did make a few other alterations. Thomson replied that he didn’t think any general would include a phrase like “gory bed” in case it scared some men. Burns, however, was adamant and the phrase remained in the song.

Not all the songs which Burns sent were accepted. In August 1794 Burns sent On the seas and Far Away and said, as he often did, that it might not be of the standard required for the collection. Thomson agreed that the poem was not up to the required standard. Burns replied that making a poem was like begetting a son in that you do not know whether you have a wise man or a fool, until you produce him to the world. The rejection of this poem, however spurred Burns to greater efforts and he wrote Ca’ the Yowes to the Knowes.

Burns next letter makes the statement that he felt it was better to have mediocre verses to a good tune than no verses at all. He said this philosophy had guided him throughout his contributions to Johnson’s Musical Museum. He also included a song She says she lo’es me best of a’ to an Irish tune Omagh’s waterfall.

Thomson loved the song and stated that at sing-songs which were popular in that era, when it was his turn to sing he would use that song as his. It would seem, therefore, that some Irish tunes may be included in this Scottish musical collection.

In October 1794 Peter Pindar eventually produced verses for all the songs he was asked. Interestingly Thomson makes no comment on whether the verses were good, bad or indifferent nor does he mention whether or how much Pindar was paid. It would be surprising if he were not paid. This could have been an argument to pay Burns for his contributions.

In reply to questions raised by Thomson, in October 1794 Burns wrote. ‘No! no! – Whenever I want to be more than ordinary in song – to be in some degree equal to your diviner airs – do you imagine I fast and pray for the celestial emanation. Tout au contraire!’
I have a glorious recipe; the very one that for his own use was invented by the divinity of healing and poetry, when erst he piped to the flocks of Admetus. I put myself in the regimen of admiring a fine woman; and in proportion to the adorability of her charms, in proportion you are delighted with my verses. The lightning of her eye is the godhead of Parnassus, and the witchery of her smile the divinity of Helicon.

Burns collected *Auld Lang Syne* from an old man singing it and wrote to Thomson that it had never before been printed or even in manuscript. In this statement he was in error as Allan Ramsay had included a version in Tea Table Miscellany and an even older version had been published in a broadsheet before 1700. There was also a complete second section published in Watson’s collection in 1716. However, the version Burns sent to Thomson is completely his except for the first line. So the flow of songs continued including, in January 1795, *A Man’s a Man for a’ That* which Burns said “I do not give you the foregoing song for your book, but merely by way of vive la bagatelle; for the piece is not really poetry.” In response to Thomson pointing out that many Scots tunes started low then went up in pitch Burns promptly wrote *O Philly Happy be that Day* — a duet between Philly and Willy. The same package contained *Contented wi’ Little, and Cantie wi’ Mair*, which was set to a tune called Lumps o’ Pudding.

The songs continued to flow including many favourites such as, *Last May a Braw Wooer, Ye Banks and Braes, My Nannies Awa’, O Lassie Are Ye Sleeping Yet, How cruel are parents*, and *Whistle and I’ll come to ye my Lad*.

Burns made a pause in the correspondence from June 1795 until February 1996. Thomson wrote expressing concern for Burns ill health and saying he still had about 10 or 12 airs which he would like verses for and hoping that Burns returning health would soon enable Burns to resume writing. He also included a gift for Mrs. Burns and a volume of Peter Pindar’s works for Burns. Burns replied thanking him for these gifts and enclosing *Hey for the lass wi’ the Tocher*. By April 1796 Burns was writing that his health had deteriorated and he didn’t know when he would be able to write again. Burns did send him *Jessy* (Here’s a health to ane I lo’e dear) at that time. This letter alarmed Thomson greatly. On 12 July from Brow on the Solway where he had gone to try the effects of sea bathing Burns was forced to write to Thomson asking for the loan of 5 Pounds to pay off a creditor who was threatening to have him jailed. The money was to be repaid by future poems after he regained his health. Enclosed in that letter was *Fairest Maid on Devon’s Banks*.

Thomson immediately sent the 5 pounds requested and has been criticised for not sending more but he may in fact have had to borrow the five pounds to send. He also made the very practical suggestion of publishing by subscription another book to Burns works. Be that as it may what I want to leave with you is that we owe Thomson a debt for the many tunes he sent Burns which stimulated Burns to write many of our favourite songs.
HOW I MET TAM O’ SHANTER
By Oswald Andrae

For more than twenty years I had derived an academic pleasure in transferring old English sea poems into Low German. Later I corresponded with a teacher and author from Newcastle and attempted then to transfer some of my own Low German texts into English. The point of this was to acquaint these English colleagues with my work. So it came to pass that we set off for England on the 12th of July, 1975 with our caravan in tow. It had actually been our wish for some time to travel together to England; my wife had worked there for a year shortly after the war. We went first to Newcastle. And in one of those comfortable pubs where the amusement flows like poetry, I was allowed to read my “Low German Poetry into English” aloud to some interested people. An announcement had appeared earlier in the local newspaper:

“Poetry reading. There will be poetry reading on Sunday by a German poet, Oswald Andrae, at Tanner’s Arms, New Bridge Street, Newcastle. His work has been published extensively in Germany in books, periodicals and newspapers. Admission is 10p.”

Among the listeners was Keith Armstrong, a young author and editor of the literature magazine Ostrich. He asked me for permission to publish my dialect texts in three languages in his magazine. That was on the 15th of July. On the 16th I read to a German class at Blakelaw School, one of the new English Comprehensives. From Newcastle our way led to Scotland. In fact, first of all to Edinburgh, where once in the house at No. 59 Castle Street lived the Scottish author Sir Water Scott; where at No. 17 Heriot Row the English (sic) author of fantastic adventure stories Robert Louis Stevenson lived; where once in Smellie’s Printing House the first Edinburgh Edition of the Scottish poet Robert Burns’ poems had been printed. I read in a brochure the slight hint – Burns had written dialect poems in the style of old ballads and songs. His work had been translated into German by Freiligrath. We travelled right across Scotland and collected many impressions to take home with us, including a bottle of whisky. I sustained myself for a long time on what I had seen and experienced. I wrote texts. I also wrote the song “Glenz un Bens”, which Helmut Dobus now sings. One day a friend who had studied English gave me a book he had brought from Britain… “Burns: Poems and Songs – edited by James Kinsley”. So I then translated with the help of my friend Detlev Pohl a Burns song which, written in the spirit of the French revolution, expresses the troubles and worries of the many ordinary people in Scotland. Freiligrath translated it very freely, or rather he worked this Burns song over and rewrote the text to reflect the situation of the ‘48 (sic) Rebellion. Hannes Wader sings it today: “In spite of all.” In contrast to the Freiligrath-treatment, I took pains to produce a Low German translation very close to the original; thus “For a’ that and a’ that” became “Für all dat un all dat.” That had become known. And one day, the 4th of January 1978, one of those Wednesday afternoons I spent teaching at the college in Emden, a young man came into our shop. He wanted to speak to me; to that Andrae as he put it, who had translated Burns into Low German. He introduced himself as Squadron Leader Davis of the Royal Air Force. He spoke an amazingly good German, having previously studied German in England (sic), as it turned out. He was planning to hold a Burns Supper and had come with a specific request. I was to translate the Burns
poems “To a Haggis” and “Tam o’ Shanter” into Low German. My wife told me all this that evening. I looked these texts up and was horrified: “Tam o’ Shanter” - 224 lines! I waited with baited breath. What’s the fuss, I thought; silly old fool that you are. But my friend the English scholar was excited. A few days later the Scotsman came back into our shop. We agreed on a first appointment: Thursday, the 12th January 1978 in the evening at his house in Wittmund. Whether it would succeed, I knew not. But one must try. So we sat down that Thursday with Whisky and water. The Scotsman and the Anglist translated painstakingly and accurately line for line into English then German, While I, with an eye on the original and an ear on the translators, made notes in Low German (ilka - elk). By 1.30 in the morning we had got to line 114. A week later the second session lasted until midnight. Then I got down to the delicate work. On the evening of Saturday 21.1.1978 I was finished, and since I knew that Dr. Joch en Schütt of Radio Bremen also studied English, I called him to see whether he might be interested in publishing it. “Tam o’ Shanter”? Yes, he had written a longish essay comparing “Tam o’ Shanter” with Klaus Groth’s “Hans Schander”. What’s that? Groth? I had to swallow hard. Jochen Schütt was very surprised that I had no knowledge of this poem of Klaus Groth. Groth had started off writing in High German, but as a result of studying the Scottish dialect poems of Burns he had taken to writing poetry in Low German. “Hans Schander” — after Robert Burns – was one of his early works so was at the beginning of “Quickborn”. Jochen Schütt wants to send me the essay. At first I was very frustrated. Hadn’t I said so straight away; a silly old fool. I wouldn’t have wasted my previous time on this exercise if I had known all that. Yet it had been a pleasure, and I had enjoyed the work all the same. A year earlier I had got 6 volumes of his works from the Klaus Groth Federation. I looked for “Hans Schander”, but didn’t find it. I was missing “Quickborn” Volume I. The book is out of print, so I asked the Institute for Low German if they could send me a copy of the poem. Now I’ve got it; “Hans Schander”. With all due respect to the old master Klaus Groth, but I would definitely not have recited this poem at a “Burns Supper.” I had meanwhile also received Jochen Schütt’s essay, a special printing from the “Commemorative Volume for Ferhard Cordes on the Occasion of his 65th Birthday” (Karl Wacholtz Verlag Neumünster, 1973):


Schütt writes:

“One of the few places you can find information about how a poem comes into being is in his “Life Sketch” first published in full in 1932. You can see from this the way in which Groth tried to overcome the difficulties he encountered: ‘But when I then set out to write in Low German, I realised to my horror that I could not escape from the pattern of My High German education. Rhymes, expressions, grammatical forms came out instinctively in High German, even with Low German words, Low German thinking. I didn’t know what course to follow, other than that I should take a foreign material with an inner form which approximated as closely as possible to Low German thinking, and use this as a frame on which to tack Low German vocabulary. The words should come from the head and not the heart, and the process had to continue until I became familiar with it. Burns helped me in this regard. At times it took me weeks of ceaseless work to produce a few lines that I was happy with. This was how I translated the first half of “Tam
Then I felt that I had conquered it. I now picked the thing up, transposed it into rhyme, composed the second half on my own, and from now on I had earned calm, regained the self control over my urges until they found the correct way to express Low German thoughts.

“So much for Klaus Groth as quoted by Jochen Schütt. I am of a different opinion. Klaus Groth did not find the ‘correct way to express Low German thoughts.’ Nor did he manage it with his rhyming tale “Hans Schander”. Burns’s pepper is missing; the irony, the powerful language of the narrator. As I have already implied, Hans Schander is too lame in comparison with “Tam o’ Shanter.” I neither wish nor am able to assess whether one can say that my so spontaneous effort at the request of a Scotsman has found the “correct way to express Low German thoughts”. At least it is closer to the original, line for line. I have to admit, though, that what to some today might seem a pointless exercise brought me a great deal of pleasure.

I was lucky enough in the late 70s to be spending a three year period of my life serving with the Richthofen Wing of the German Air Force. My wife and I had hosted a small Burns Supper in January 1977 that had proved a great success with those invited along. Even those whom I had persuaded to do the various speeches entered into the spirit of things with typical German thoroughness. The following year the persuasive boot was on the other foot, and I was prevailed upon to organise a full-scale celebration. Rather too close to the event for comfort. I learned that the optician in the neighbouring town of Jever, Oswald Andrae, was a Low German (plattdeutsch) poet of note, and that he was reputed to be interested in Burns. The rest of that tale I shall leave to Oswald to relate in his own way. My only comment is that he is particularly self-deprecating in describing how ‘Platt Tam’ took shape. There were times when Oswald behaved just as the original progenitor is reputed to have done as he paced the banks of the Nith with the muse upon him. Detlev Pohl, the German language expert on this project, and I had hardly agreed a translation for a few lines when Oswald had turned it into his own vernacular rhyme and rhythm. You don’t need to have any knowledge of German, Low or High, to understand that Oswald Andrae’s translation retains virtually every nuance of the epic original. Oswald did feel confident enough to recite his masterpiece at the ensuing Burns Supper. For once I could get some inkling of how the average Englishman (and probably one or two Scots, too, if truth be told) feels on hearing ‘Tam o’ Shanter’ for the first time.

Below: A short extract from Tam o’ Shanter in German by Oswald Andrae.

TAM O’ SHANTER
En Geschicht ut Schottland
von Robert Burns

Wenn de Stratenverköpers de Straten verlaat’t
un de döstig Kumpanen hör Frünnen noch draapt;
wen d’ Marktdaag ganz kien Ennen findt
un d’Lüü up’t Padd na Huus hen sünd;
man wi, wi sitt’t, wi drinkt uns Beer.
Dat duunt, – erst sinnig un denn mehr.
Wi denkt nich na, wu lang doch Schottlands Mielen sünd.
Dar ist dat Moor, dat Water un dat Klauterheck,
wat tüsken uns un uns Tohuus noch liggt,
wor Ji uns hibbelig verdreiht marl Wiewer findt.
Dat Unweer sitt in männich Angesicht.
Dar luurt se denn in’t Bett un brött’t Vergrelltheit ut.

“So is’t!” meen d’ehrbar Tam o´ Shanter.
He keem van Ayr bi Nacht na’t Land her.
(Stolt Mannsvolk, giff’t dat narn mehr,
un Deerns, noch fixer as in Ayr?)

**PROGRAMME**

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4.30 PANEL DISCUSSION

Fee for the Conference £18 (which includes a light lunch)

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