1999

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AULD LANG SYNE.

We sick boat o'er the burn
Free weering we till dawn
But was between us breast by heart
So auld lang syne

1999
THE ROBERT BURNS WORLD FEDERATION LIMITED

Motto — "A man’s a man for a’ that"

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Twelve short months ago I was propelled into what, many people consider to be an enviable position, that of being installed as President of the Burns Federation. From the moment the chain of office was placed on my shoulders I found that I had, in some ways, stepped back in time and I was once again a student of life, a learning experience that even my working career within the Police service had left me totally unprepared.

The past year has been a truly wonderful experience and I have been humbled by the amount of genuine people that I have had the pleasure to be associated with. During my extensive travels I have attended countless functions each of which has had its own special uniqueness, but the most memorable and rewarding have to be those functions involving schoolchildren. Our Schools Committee's handling of Burns Competitions and National Festivals are indeed a credit to our organisation, as are our Schools Burns Clubs and their involvement indeed indicates that our future heritage and history are to be left in capable hands.

Our organisation has made some gigantic steps over the past year with our change of name to The Robert Burns World Federation Ltd. and the implantation of full Charitable Status, changes undertaken to allow our future survival within a very competitive world. **Support, understanding, encouragement and commitment** are some of the key elements now required from our membership in order to achieve our aims and I trust that we shall be collectively committed to developing the full potential of the legacy left to us by Robert Burns.

> Then catch the moments as they fly  
> And use them as you ought man  
> Believe me happiness is shy  
> And comes not ay' when sought man

May I thank all members and clubs for their support during my year as President and I would forward to my successor my good wishes for a successful and pleasurable term in office.

Robert Dalziel

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FROM THE EDITOR

This is the last edition of the Burns Chronicle this century, a special ‘Millennium Edition’ dated 2000 will be published later that year. Within that issue I would like to record any special Millennium events related to Robert Burns that took place during the year. One of the aims of The Robert Burns World Federation Limited, through their various publications is to ‘Stimulate the Development of Scottish Literature, Art and Music.’ This does not mean that articles appearing in our publications are restricted to those connected with Robert Burns, his family and associates. Commencing with this issue are a number of articles with no reference to the Poet, but are distinctly Scottish with a literary or musical connotation.

From time to time the Federation are in receipt of a number of gifts - books, prints etc. One such gift The Illustrated Family Burns published by William MacKenzie, Glasgow in 1866 was received from Ayrshire born 80 years old Mrs. Jean Kelly who received the book from her grandfather who came from Coylton. Mrs. Kelly herself who now resides in Slough was married at Belston outside Ayr.

The year 2000 (25th January) will commence with the presentation of the largest and most important collection of Burnsiana material related to Robert Burns and his ancestry donated by Lawrence Ruxton Burness, a distant relative of the Poet and an Honorary President of the Federation.

The collection presently housed in the Dumfries Archive Centre comprises over 400 fully documented items, the following being an example:- The Begg Correspondence, Correspondence of Lawrence Ruxton Burness (9 volumes), The Family of Burness Press Cutting Books (14 volumes), Typescript Extracts of Birth, Marriages and Census Entries (10 volumes), The Genealogist’s Magazine (15 volumes), The Scottish Genealogist (10 volumes), The New Zealand Genealogist (27 volumes), Framed stamps, banknotes (with a Burns connection), Genealogical Tables of the Family of Burness, Heraldic Shields, Books on Robert Burns, his Ancestors, other items too numerous to mention. The Federation are deeply indebted to Lawrence and Mrs. Kelly for their valuable gifts and assure them that they will be cared for and have found a good home.

LARGEST EVER WORKS ON BURNS

My work on The Illustrated Companion to Robert Burns is progressing to the extent that I have now completed over 4000 A4 pages in what I believe will be the largest ever printed works on Robert Burns, his family and associates. Many items have come to light that have never been in print before, including letters, songs and poems. I am anxious to trace any of the Poet’s manuscripts which are in private hands, any information will be much appreciated.

In closing I would like to thank all contributors to our publications, and welcome new ones.

Peter J. Westwood
FROM THE CHIEF EXECUTIVE

THE MILLENNIUM RESOLUTION

"LET THERE BE:-
RESPECT FOR THE EARTH,
PEACE FOR ITS PEOPLE,
LOVE IN OUR LIVES,
DELIGHT IN THE GOOD,
FORGIVENESS FOR PAST WRONGS,
AND FROM NOW ON - A NEW START."

© New Start 2000 Ltd

The millennium resolution reflects the philosophies and writing of Robert Burns, and sits comfortably with the aims and objectives of The Robert Burns World Federation Ltd.

The Burns Federation has distinguished itself over the years as being the custodian of all things “Burnsian”, and a source of information relating to the Bard and his works. With the tremendous strides in information technology this role has been somewhat diminished, although we still receive many enquiries for help from those who do not have instant access to the Internet, therefore it is important that we retain the status as the first point of contact for all things relating to Robert Burns.

The man and his writings are closely bound up, his greatness and weakness have fashioned the masterpieces left to posterity. For that very reason it is natural that those who revere his genius would wish to know more of his personality.

This is as good a reason as any for supporting The Robert Burns World Federation in keeping alive the Immortal Memory of Robert Burns through its main aims and objectives, contained in the Memorandum of Association, which are:-

To advance the education of the public, without distinction of sex or of political, or religious opinions about the life, poetry and works of Robert Burns and in furtherance thereof:

(1) to encourage and arrange competitions among the general public, students and/or schoolchildren to stimulate the teaching and studying of Scottish Literature, history, art, music and language.

(2) to stimulate the development of Scottish literature, art, music and language.

(3) to conserve buildings and places associated with Robert Burns and his contemporaries, and

(4) to strengthen the bond of fellowship amongst members of Burns Clubs and kindred societies throughout the world by encouraging Burns Clubs and kindred societies to honour the memory of Robert Burns and his works.

Shirley Bell
Together, everything’s possible.

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President Bob Dalziel pictured with his top table at the Annual Conference of The Burns Federation, from left to right: Junior Vice-President Jim Gibson and Mrs. Gibson, Mrs. Skilling and Senior Vice-President John Skilling, Mrs. Dalziel and President Bob, Mrs. Campbell and in-coming President Joe Campbell, Mrs. Pollock and Mr. Alex Pollock (BT Scotland, Sponsors of the Federation's Schools Competitions).
Extract from a letter from George Thomson to Robert Burns, August 1793.

“Mr. Allan has made an inimitable drawing from your John Anderson, my Jo which I am to have engraved as a frontispiece to the humorous class of songs; you will be quite charmed with it, I promise you. The old couple are seated by the fireside. Mrs. Anderson in great good humour is clapping John’s shoulders while he smiles and looks at her with such glee, as to show that he fully recollects the pleasant days and nights when they were ‘first acquaint’. The drawing would do honour to the pencil of Teniers.”
I. WHO WAS JOHN ANDERSON?

This study was prompted by two reports ([KC1], [KC2]) of a ceremony held in the summer of 1998 at the cemetery of Fort Augustus. A plaque was placed on the grave of a man called John Anderson. The plaque reads:

JOHN ANDERSON, MY JO
FRIEND OF ROBERT BURNS.
CHARACTER OF ONE OF
THE MOST TOUCHING OF
BURNS' SONGS...

The inscription on the headstone reads in part:

SACRED
TO THE MEMORY OF
JOHN ANDERSON
WHO DIED AT INVERGARRY
THE 4 MAY 1832
AGED 84 YEARS
ALSO HIS DAUGHTER
CATHERINE, WHO DIED
AT INVERGARRY, THE 20 DECEMBER
1832 AGED 52 YEARS...

The following additional information is given in [KC1]: "John Anderson, a native of Ayrshire (where?) a carpenter by trade, is reputed to have made Robert Burns's coffin at the poet's request years before his death. John Anderson to whom Burns was warmly attached went to Inverness-
shire after his wife’s death to reside with his daughter Kate (Catherine) who had married an innkeeper at Invergarry, some eight miles from Fort Augustus."

These lines must have been taken from Grant Smith’s book [SG] where we read: “John Anderson, the hero of this song, lies buried in the churchyard of Fort Augustus, a quiet spot embosomed in hills, and sloping down towards the wide expanse of Loch Ness. He was a native of Ayrshire, a carpenter by trade, and is commonly said to have made Burns’ coffin, at the latter’s own request, many years before his death. Anderson, to whom Burns was warmly attached, went to Inverness-shire, after his wife’s death, to reside with his daughter Kate, who had married the innkeeper of Invergarry, some eight miles from this village. There he spent his declining years; and thither the Poet, on one of his visits to the Highlands, came to visit his humble friend. He rested for a night at his house; and local tradition still tells how his pony wandered astray during the night, and points out the spot, in the wildest part of the romantic glen of Garry, where it was found and restored to its master. From Invergarry Burns rode over the hills to Foyers, where he penned, or rather pencilled (as he tells us himself) the well-known lines with which the sight of the majestic falls inspired his muse.”

The only other reference to John Anderson, the carpenter, that I could find, was the following note in [McM]: “In the far corner of Fort Augustus’s Protestant Churchyard is the grave of John Anderson, a carpenter who died here in 1832. He was an old friend of Robert Burns, and is said to have made the poet’s coffin. Anderson’s name lives in the poem “John Anderson, My Jo.”

There is no indication anywhere as to the source of the information about the relationship between Burns and Anderson, the carpenter. He is not mentioned in any of the major biographies of Burns: not in the works by Dr. Currie, R. H. Cromek, Allan Cunningham, Robert Chambers, William Scott Douglas, Henley and Henderson, Franklyn Bliss Snyder, James Kinsley, and not in the monumental biography of Burns by James McKay where six different people named Anderson are noted, but not John Anderson, the carpenter. Not one of over 350 extant letters of Robert Burns is addressed to his “old friend” to whom the poet was so “warmly attached.” There is a deafening silence in Burns’s journal of his tours to the Highlands about John Anderson, his daughter, and about the night he was supposed to spend with them in Invergarry.

The theory that Burns’s song was about John Anderson, the carpenter, presents irreconcilable difficulties. At the time when Burns visited the falls of Foyers (or Fyers), that is, on Wednesday, 5 September, 1787, Anderson’s daughter Kate was at most seven years old. She could not have been married to her innkeeper then, and her father could not have gone to live with them at Invergarry. In fact, Kate was barely sixteen when Burns died in 1796. According to Burns’s Highland Tours Journal [BR], the poet spent the night of Tuesday, 4 September, 1787, at the Ettles Hotel in Inverness from where he wrote the following letter to Baillie William Inglis (Letters 133):

“Mr. Burns presents his most respectful compliments to Mr. Inglis - would have waited on him with the inclosed, but is jaded to death with the fatigue of today’s journey - won’t leave Inverness till Thursday morning.

Ettles Hotel, Tuesday Evening [4th Sept. 1787]”

Burns dined with the Inglis family on Wednesday 5th September, as an inscription in the lobby of Kingsmills House (now Kingsmills Hotel) at Culcabock Road testifies. Burns could not have been in Invergarry, some 30 miles from Inverness, on Tuesday night or on Wednesday night.

Burns’s song “John Anderson, my jo” first appeared in print in the third volume of The Scots Musical Museum [SMM], where the Preface is dated “February 2 1790.” Thus the song could not have been written later than in 1789 when carpenter John Anderson was about 41 years old, hardly an elderly man whose “brow is beld” and whose “locks are like the snow.”

What makes the theory that John Anderson, the carpenter, was the hero of Burns’s song utterly incredible is that several versions of “John Anderson, my jo” had been popular many years before Burns composed his song, and Burns was well acquainted with these early versions.
II. PRE-BURNSIAN VERSIONS OF “JOHN ANDERSON, MY JO”

The tune of “John Anderson, my jo” appears in the Skene Manuscript of c. 1630. It was probably associated with words of a fragment sent by Lord Hailes to Bishop Percy which appear in Percy’s Reliques, published in 1765 ([PT], Fig. 1):

REL I Q U E S
OF
ANCIENT ENGLISH POETRY:
CONSISTING OF
Old Heroic Ballads, Songs, and other Pieces of our earlier Poets,
(Chiefly of the Lyric kind.)
Together with some few of later Date.
VOLUME THE SECOND.

LONDON:
Printed for J. Donsley in Pall-Mall,
M DCC LXV.

Fig. 1 The title page of Reliques [PT]
JOHN ANDERSON MY JO
A SCOTTISH SONG

WOMAN.
John Anderson my jo, cum in as ze gae bye,
And ze sall get sheips heid weel baken in a pye;
Weel baken in a pye, and the haggis in a pat:
John Anderson my jo, cum in, and ze’s get that.

MAN.
And how doe ze, Cummer? And how doe ze thrive?
And how mony bairns hae ze? WOM. Cummer, I hae five.
MAN. Are they to zour awin gude man? WOM. Na,
Cummer, na;
For four of tham were gotten, quhan Wullie was awa’.

It has been suggested by Bishop Percy and others that the tune was a piece of sacred music in the Roman Catholic times of Scotland, and that the song is a satire on the Church of Rome and its Sacraments. In later editions of the Reliques this idea was carried even further: the woman now had seven bairns, presumably representing the seven Sacraments of the Roman Catholic Church of which only two (representing the Sacraments of Protestant Churches) were legitimate. However, there is no evidence that the tune was actually used as Church music. In any event, the matter is not relevant to our discussion.

It should be noted that Burns’s song “John Anderson, my jo” has nothing in common with the quaint fragment in the Reliques except the title which recurs in the first and the fourth lines of the first stanza. Did Burns know the fragment in Percy’s Reliques? Indeed he did. He used the second stanza of the fragment in stanzas 4 and 5 of his song “Gudeen to you kimmer.” They read:

How’s a’ wi’ you, kimmer,
     And how do ye thrive;
How mony bairns hae ye?
     Quo’ kimmer, I hae five.

Are they a’ Johny’s?
     Eh! atweel no:
Twa o’ them were gotten
     When Johny was awa.

There are some differences between the two versions. In Burns’s song Wullie’s name becomes Johny (Johny Anderson? - probably not), and only two of the five bairns are “gotten when Johny was awa”. However, there can be no doubt that Burns was well acquainted with the Reliques version of “John Anderson, my jo” and he may have found the title “exceedingly expressive.” There is a direct, corroborative evidence that Burns knew the Reliques. In his letter to Dr. John Moore of 28th February, 1791, Burns writes: “The Ballad on Queen Mary was begun while I was busy with Percy’s Reliques of English Poetry.” Now, it is known that “Queen Mary’s Lament” was completed in June 1790 (see the letter of 6th June 1790 from Burns to Mrs. Dunlop) but it is not known when exactly Burns began to work on this ballad. It may have been sometimes in 1789, or possibly even before 1789. It follows that 1789 is terminus ad quo for the poet’s contact with the Reliques version of “John Anderson, my jo.”
However, apart from the title and the refrain, Burns did not adopt anything from the Reliques version. It appears that Burns’s song was actually drawn from a stanza in a popular and licentious song “John Anderson, my jo” dating to the first half of the eighteenth century. Versions of this song appeared in Philomel in 1744 ([PHL], Fig. 2), in The Masque in 1761 and in 1768 ([MSQ], Fig. 3), and in The Convivial Songster in 1782 ([CS], Fig. 4).

**PHILOMEL.**

**BEING A SMALL COLLECTION OF ONLY THE BEST English Songs.**

**LONDON:**

Printed for M. COOPER, at the Globe in Pater-noster-Rew. 1744.

Fig. 2. The title page of Philomel [PHL].

**THE MASQUE.**

**A NEW and selected COLLECTION of the best English, Scotch, and Irish Songs, Catches, Duets, and Cantatas, in the true Spirit and Taste of the three different Nations.**

Collected from all the numerous Books of this Kind that have been published since the first Appearance of such Works to the present Time, including every celebrated Song that has been sung at the public Gardens and Theatres, either the Left or any preceding Society.

With a great Number of VALUABLE ORIGINALS,

Being an Attempt to Improve upon others in the same Species of Social Music and good Fellowships, without forsaking the Respect that is due to the Present.

To which is added,

A complete Collection of the various TOASTS, SENTIMENTS, and LICENSIOUS Songs now in vogue.


Not from, my soul I the genial Bowl
Where flows the Spirit New

Ingredients chief, above to blend,

The laughing God, the Wine below. Young.

**LONDON:**

Printed for RICHARDSON and URQUHART, under the Royal Exchange. 1768.

Fig. 3. The title page of The Masque [MSQ].

Fig. 4. The Convivial Songster, pp. 306-307 [CS].
We give below all three versions in type facsimile. Stanza numbers are inserted here in order to facilitate discussion. They do not appear in the originals.

JOHN ANDERSON, MY JO.

PHILOMEL,
Song CCl.

(Roman numerals indicate stanza numbers.)

I

JOHN Anderson, my jo,
I wonder what you mean;
To rise so soon at morn,
And sit up so late at e'en:
You'll blear out all your eyne,
John; and why will you do so?
Gang sooner tull your bed at e'en,
John Anderson, my jo.

II

I wit it is a bonny thing
For to look o'er the dyke;
But yet it is much bonnier,
John, to feel your hammer strike:
To feel your hammer strike, John,
And riggle to and fro;
So wall I like your chaunter-pipe,
John Anderson, my jo.

III

I'm sided like a salmon,
I'm breasted like a swan;
My wem is like a downy cod:
Fye, John, gin ye come on.
Fro' my top-knot to my toe,
Is like the driven snow;
'Tis aw for your conveniency,
John Anderson, my jo.

IV

When I begin to snort, John,
See that you gird me fast;
When I begin to snort, John,
See that you gird me fast:
See that you gird me fast, John,
Till I cry oh and oh;
Your back shall crack, e're I cry that,
John Anderson, my jo.

THE MASQUE,
Song 316.
Sung by the Choice Spirits.

(Arabic numerals indicate original stanza numbers.)

I

JOHN Anderson, my Jo, John,
I wonder what you mean,
To rise so soon in the morning,
And sit up so late at e'en;
You'Il blear out a your eyn, John,
And why will you do so?
Come sooner to your bed at e'en,
John Anderson, my jo.

5

O! 'tis a fine thing
To keek out o'er the dyke,
But 'tis a muckle finer thing
To see your hurdies fyke, John,
To see your hurdies fyke, John,
And wriggle to and fro;
Tis then I like your chaunter pipe,
John Anderson, my jo.

6

I'm backed like a salmon,
I'm breasted like a swan,
My wyme is like a down cod:
My middle you may span;
From top unto my toe, John,
I'm like the new fawn snow;
And 'tis a' for your conveniency,
John Anderson, my jo.

4

When you come on before, John,
See that you do your best, -
When you begin to haud me,
See that you gripe me fast:
See that you gripe me fast, John,
Until that I cry oh!
Your back shall crack e'er I cry slack,
John Anderson, my jo.
John Anderson, my jo,
Is a right good honest man;
And had as good a tait-tree
As any in the land:
But now it's waxen wain, John,
And wallops to and fro;
There's twa go-ups, for ane go-down,
John Anderson, my jo.

John Anderson, my jo, John,
When first you did begin,
You had as good a tail tree
As any other man —
But now 'tis waxen weak, John,
And wriggles to and fro;
I gie twa gae ups for ane gae down,
John Anderson, my jo.

John Anderson my jo,
You're welcome when you please,
Either in the warm bed, John,
Or else upon the claeths;
Or you shall have the horns, John,
Upon your head to grow;
And that's the cuckold's malison,
John Anderson, my jo.

THE CONVIVIAL SONGSTER
Song CLV
(The stanzas are arranged in two columns, in the same order as in PHILOMEL.
Arabic numerals indicate original stanza numbers.)

John Anderson, my jo, John,
I wonder what you mean,
To rise so soon in the morning
And set up so late at e'en.
You'll blear out all your een, John;
And why will you do so?
Come sooner to your bed at e'en,
John Anderson, my jo.

When you come on before, John,
See that you do your best;
When you begin to ha'd me,
See that you grip me fast;
See that you grip me fast, John,
Until that I cry Oh!
Your back shall crack e'er I cry slack,
John Anderson, my jo.

Oh! It is a fine thing
To keek out o'er the dyke,
But 'tis a muckle finer thing
To see the hurdies fyke:
To see the hurdies fyke, John,
And wrigg'lt to and fro;
'Tis then I like your chaunter-pipe,
John Anderson, my jo.

I'm backit like a salmon,
I'm breasted like a swan,
My wame it is a down cod,
My middle you may span.

John Anderson, my jo, John,
You may play, whene'er you please,
Either in the warm bed,
Or else aboon the claeths:
6 - contd.
From my top unto my toe, John,
I'm like the new-faw'n snow;
And 'tis a' for your conveniency;
John Anderson, my jo.

3 - contd.
Or you shall have the horns, John,
Upon your head to grow;
That is a cuckold's malice on
John Anderson, my jo.

The song has been variously described as bawdy, gross, immoral and vulgar. It is certainly licentious but it does have some merit: it is humorous, and it is written with vigour and technical skill. It is a monologue of a wife complaining to her aging husband about his sexual impotence.

There are only minor differences between The Masque and The Convivial Songster versions, whereas the differences between the Philomel and The Masque versions are substantial. The Masque version has an additional stanza, and stanzas are in different order in the two versions. The metre in the Philomel version is similar to that in The Masque but it is somewhat irregular in places.

In what follows “stanza n”, where n is a Roman numeral, will designate the nth stanza in the Philomel version or the parallel stanza in The Masque or the The Convivial Songster.

Stanza I is introductory and quite weak. The metre in line 6 of the Philomel version of stanza I is unbalanced by “John” at the beginning of the line. There is nothing explicitly bawdy in this stanza, although the essence of the wife’s complaint in lines 3-4 seems to be that John is unwilling to come to bed with her. In spite of its innocuousness, or perhaps because of it, this stanza if often inserted in later “clean” versions of the song.

The most significant textual differences between the two versions occur in lines 4 and 5 of stanza II, in line 4 of stanza III, in several lines of stanza IV and in line 2 of stanza V. Stanza II is carelessly put together in all three versions. As a result the metre is very shaky. “John” is missing in the opening line and is unnecessarily inserted in line 4, at the beginning of the line in the Philomel version, and at the end of the line in The Masque version. Thus line 4 in the former version becomes a tetrameter whereas the first line in the latter is an awkward dimeter begging for the end “John”.

Stanza III is usually regarded as the best of the song. However, the first quatrain of that stanza is not original. It was borrowed from the second stanza of an old version of “Annie Laurie” composed by William Wallace of Fingland a few years before 1710 when Annie Laurie decided to marry another suitor [FR]:

[ANNIE LAURIE by William Wallace]

She's backit like the peacock,
She's breistit like the swan,
She's jimp about the middle,
Her waist ye weel may span...

[JOHN ANDERSON, MY JO]

[Philomel] [The Masque]

I'm sided like a salmon
I'm backed like a salmon,
I'm breasted like a swan;
I'm breasted like a swan,
My wem is like a downy cod
My wyme is like a down cod,
Fye, John, gin ye come on...
My middle you may span...

It is rather surprising that The Masque version of the quatrain is closer to the original than the earlier Philomel version. However, there is no doubt that this quatrain in either version was plagiarized from Wallace's song.

The first two couplets of stanza IV in the Philomel version are identical. Is this repetition
intentional or is it just an error in copying the stanza from some *Urtext? Nescimus.* Certainly in neither of the other versions are the two couplets identical. Line 4 in stanza IV is repeated twice in all three versions, with "John" added at the end of line 5. Lastly, we note that line 7 in stanza IV of the *Philomel* version has an unpatterned internal rhyme *back / crack*:

Till I cry oh and oh;  
Your back shall crack, e’er I cry that.

In the corresponding lines in the other two versions there is a triple internal rhyme *back / crack / slack* which produces a somewhat comical effect, but spoils a more effective humour of the *Philomel* version in which the wife assures her husband that his back shall crack before she cries oh and oh.

Stanza V in the *Philomel* version, or more likely the corresponding stanza in *The Masque,* served as a model for Burns’s "John Anderson." The first four lines of this stanza speak of the happy past and the second quatrains describes the not so happy present. All the lines are iambic trimeters, except line 7 which is a tetrameter. Lines 1, 3 and 5 have feminine endings, and the even numbered lines have masculine endings. Lines 2 and 4 rhyme as do lines 6 and 8. Burns used the same stanza pattern and a similar past-present mode, and produced his masterpiece.

**III. ‘JOHN ANDERSON, MY JO’ BY ROBERT BURNS**

The beautiful and tender song "John Anderson, my jo" by Robert Burns is a monologue spoken by an elderly wife talking to her husband. The wife recalls their happy, youthful years together, expressing her pride in her husband, and contrasting it with their present old age, still showing tenderness and affection. The song consists of two octave stanzas. Each of them is in the past-present mode adopted from the second stanza of *The Masque* version of the song. Burns sent his song "John Anderson, my jo" to James Johnson sometimes in 1789, probably in April. It was published in February 1790 in [SMM]. It is the finest song of its kind, a most beautiful hymn to mature, married love. The words fit the air exactly. The song has a Mozartian quality in the sense that it seems to be perfect, so that any change would only spoil its excellence.

**JOHN ANDERSON MY JO**

By Robert Burns [SMM]

JOHN Anderson, my jo, John,  
When we were first acquaint;  
Your locks were like the raven,  
Your bony brow was brest;  
But now your brow is beld, John,  
Your locks are like the snow;  
But blessings on your frosty pow,  
John Anderson, my Jo.

John Anderson, my jo, John,  
We clamb the hill the gither;  
And mony a canty day, John,  
We’ve had wi’ ane anither:  
Now we maun totter down, John,  
And hand in hand we’ll go;  
And sleep the gither at the foot,  
John Anderson, my Jo.
Burns’s “John Anderson, my jo” has been much admired and praised by most critics. An exception is Legman who in [LG1], pursuing his own agenda of promoting erotic folklore, objects to any expurgation of bawdy songs. In his opinion “it is almost cruel to compare any stanza of the original with Burns’s ‘tender rewrite’.” Well, it may be cruel, but perhaps not in the sense that Legman means it. It is ironic that after two centuries of being criticised for his penchant for the bawdry Burns should be accused of prudishness and “sentimental expurgations.” Chacun à son goût.

IV. POST-BURNSIAN VERSIONS OF “JOHN ANDERSON, MY JO”

In 1794 appeared a chapbook Captain Death [Ch1] containing a poem “New John Anderson my Joe.” The poem consists of six four-line stanzas. Stanzas IV and VI are the two stanzas of Burns’s song, with very minor differences. Stanza I is a copy of the first stanza of the Philomel or The Masque versions of “John Anderson, my jo.” It seems to be out of place here. The other three stanzas are new.

At the end of 1795, or possibly in the beginning of 1796, Glasgow publishers Brash and Reid published an eight-page pamphlet [Ch2] (see Fig. 5) which contains a version of “John Anderson, my jo” consisting of all the six stanzas of the 1794 edition and two additional stanzas. The publishers called it “improved” without making it clear whether they claim that the song was improved by Robert Burns himself or merely that their version is an improvement on the original.

*DOMESTIC HAPPINESS EXHIBITED.*

**IN**

*JOHN ANDERSON, MY JOE: IMPROVED.*

**BY ROBERT BURNS.**

**AND**

*THE FIRESIDE.***

**A POEM.**

**BY DOCTOR COTTON.**

**GLASGOW:**

PRINTED FOR AND SOLD BY

Brash & Reid.

Fig. 5. The title page of the Brash & Reid pamphlet [Ch2]
We give the 1794 and the Brash & Reid versions in type facsimile. The stanzas of the former are not numbered in the original. They are numbered here for convenience.

From “Captain Death” (1794) [Ch1].

NEW JOHN ANDERSON MY JOE

(Arabic numerals indicate stanza numbers.)

1. John Anderson my joe, John, I wonder what you mean; and why should you
   rise so soon in the morning, and sit up so late
You’ll blear out a’ your een John, and why should it
be so . [my joe. 
go sooner to your bed at e’en, John Anderson

2. John Anderson my joe, John you were my first conceit
and ye need nae think it strange John that I ca’
ye’ trim and neat; [believe it’s so,
There’s some folks says ye’re auld John but I scarce
for I think ye’er ay the same to me, John Anderson
my joe.

3. John Anderson my jo, John we’ve seen our bairns’ bairns;
and yet my dear John Anderson I’m happy in
And sae are ye in mine John, I’m sure ye’ll ne’er
say no, [son my jee.
Tho’ the day’s awa’ that we hae seen John Anderson

4. John Anderson my joe, John, when we first
acquaint, [was brent.
your locks were like the raven your bonny brow
But now ye’re turn’d bald John your locks are like
the snow; [son my jee.
but blessings on your frosty pow, John Anderson

5. John Anderson my joe, John; from year to year
we’ve past; [us to our last,
and soon that year may happen John that’ll bring

From Brash & Reid (1795/6) [Ch2].

JOHN ANDERSON, MY JOE

(IMPROVED)

(Roman numerals indicate original stanza numbers.)

1. John Anderson, my joe, John, I wonder what you mean,
To rise so soon in the morning, and sit up so late at e’en,
Ye’ll blear out a’ your een, John, and why should you
do so, 
Gang sooner to your bed at e’en, John Anderson, my joe.

III. John Anderson, my joy, John, ye were my first conceit,
And ye need na think it strange, John, tho’ I ca’
ye trim and neat;
Tho’ some folk say ye’re auld, John, I never think
ye so, 
But I think ye’re ay the same to me, John Anderson, my joe.

IV. John Anderson, my jee, John, we’ve seen our bairns bairns,
And yet my dear, John Anderson, I’m happy in
your arms, 
And sae are ye in mine John, I’m sure ye’ll ne’er
say no, 
Tho’ the days are gane that we hae seen, John Anderson, my jee.

VI. John Anderson, my jee, John, when we were first
acquaint.
your locks were like the raven your bonny brow
was brent, 
But now your head’s turn’d bald, John, your locks
are like the snow, 
Yet blessings on your frosty pow, John Anderson, my jee.

VII. John Anderson, my jee, John, frae year to year
we’ve past, 
And soon that year maun come, John, will bring
us to our last,
But let not that affright us John, our hearts were ne'er our foe, while in innocent delight we liv'd John Anderson my joe.

John Anderson my joe John, we clamb the hill thegither, and mony a canty day John we've had we ane now we maun totter down John, and hand in hand we'll go, and sleep thegither at the foot John Anderson my joe.

(Note. In both versions words written between lines, on the left, follow the preceding line. In the 1794 version, words written between lines, on the right side of bracket [, follow the line below.)

But let na' that affright us John, our hearts were ne'er our foe, While in innocent delight we liv'd, John Anderson, my joe.

John Anderson, my joe, John, we clamb the hill thegither, And mony a canty day, John, we've had wi' ane anither; Now we maun totter down, John, but hand in hand we'll go, And we'll sleep thegither at the foot, John Anderson, my joe.

II
John Anderson, my joe, John, whan nature first began To try her canny hand, John, her master-work was man; And you amang them a' John, so trig frae tap to toe, She prov'd to be nae journey-work, John Anderson, my joe.

V
John Anderson, my joe, John, what pleasure does it gie, To see sae mony sprouts, John, spring up 'tween you and me, And ilka lad and lass, John, in our footsteps to go, Makes perfect heaven here on earth, John Anderson, my joe.

The main differences between the two versions are their stanza orders and the two additional stanzas in the Brash and Reid version. The stanza structure in both versions is essentially the same as in The Masque and in Burns's song. The first stanza of each version is a copy of the opening stanza of The Masque version, with very minor changes, and is unrelated to stanzas that come after it.

Stanzas 2, 3 and 5 (and the corresponding stanzas in the Brash & Reid version) are modelled on Burns's stanzas, and have some merit. However, line 2 in stanza 2 seems to be there only in order to produce the rhyme. The last two lines in stanza 5 are very weak and produce an unintended, somewhat comical effect. Indeed line 3 is cited by several critics ([CJ]) as a proof definite that Burns could not have been the author of this stanza.

There are two additional stanzas in the Brash & Reid version. Stanza II is a rather ingenious imitation of Burns's praise of the lasses in the fifth stanza of "Green grow the rashes," where the Nature "her prentice han' she try'd on man, an' then she made the lasses." Here, "when nature first began to try her canny hand... her master-work was man;... she prov'd to be nae journey-work,..." In Stanza V of the same version the author elaborates on stanza IV. Unfortunately stanza V precedes the first stanza of Burns and it suffers by comparison.

It is generally accepted that both versions, except the first stanzas and Burns's stanzas, were composed by William Reid (1764-1831), the junior partner in the Glasgow publishing firm Brash & Reid. Apparently Reid was an early friend of Burns although there is no letter extant from Burns
to Reid. It appears also that Reid specialized in adding lines to existing poems. Apart from the "improved" version of "John Anderson, my jo" Reid added sixteen lines to "Of a' the airts the wind can blaw" as well as lines to other songs current in his day. In William Motherwell's estimation several original poems of Reid in the Scots dialect merit preservation. Reid's "Monody on the death of Burns" was printed in a Glasgow newspaper a few days after Burns's death. Reid was a competent poet but he attempted the impossible: he tried to "improve" a masterpiece that did not require any improvements. Nevertheless Reid's stanzas were accepted by some nineteenth century editors as Burns's own work.

Since 1796 Burns's "John Anderson, my jo" has been included in virtually every collection of Burns's work, sometimes with one or more of the other stanzas from the "improved" Brash & Reid version. Here is a sampling of editions containing one or more of William Reed's stanzas.

In 1797 Scots Magazine published all eight stanzas of the "improved" Brash & Reid version, in the same stanza order [SM].

Dr. Currie in the 1800 edition of his Works of Robert Burns [CJ] included Burns's version of "John Anderson" and, in a footnote, the complete Brash & Reid version without any modifications. He added the following remarks:

"The stanza with which this song, inserted by Messrs Brash and Reid, begins, is the chorus of the old song under this title; and though perfectly suitable to that wicked but witty ballad, it has no accordance with the strain of delicate and tender sentiment of this improved song. In regard to the five other additional stanzas, though they are in the spirit of the two stanzas that are unquestionably our bard's, yet every reader of discernment will see they are by an inferior hand; and the real author of them, ought neither to have given them, nor suffered them to be given, to the world, as the production of Burns. If there were no other mark of their spurious origin, the latter half of the third line of the seventh stanza, our hearts were ne'er our foe, would be proof sufficient. Many are the instances in which our bard has adopted defective rhymes, but a single instance cannot be produced, in which to preserve the rhyme, he has given a feeble thought, in false grammar..."

In Thomson's "Select Collection of Original Scottish Airs" [SC] the song "John Anderson, my jo" consists of four stanzas: stanzas 2 and 3 from the Brash & Reid version with the two stanzas by Burns. The second of these stanzas differs substantially from Reid's original in [Ch2]. It reads:

"John Anderson, my jo, John, ye were my first conceit, I think nae shame to own, John, I lo'ed you ear' and late: They say ye're turning auld John, and what though it be so, Ye're ay the same kind man to me, John Anderson, my jo."

However, Thomson did not suggest that Burns was the author of this curious pastiche of four stanzas. Indeed he explicitly stated in a subtitle: "The two last stanzas written by Burns," implying that the other two were not by Burns.

The Morison edition [MJ] contains the Brash & Reid version of "John Anderson my jo" with the subtitle "improved, by Robert Burns." The following footnote is added: "The ingenious Dr. Currie, Editor of the works of Burns, is decidedly of opinion that this song is by an inferior hand from that of Burns." This is followed by Currie's note (see above.) Thus the editor of the Morison edition seems to have left the question of the authorship open. However, in the following two editions it is unequivocally asserted that the Brash & Reid version was "improved" by Burns himself.

The Oddy edition of 1810 [OS] contains the Brash & Reid version under the title "John Anderson my jo. Improved by Robert Burns." This certainly implies that it was Burns who "improved" his original version of the song.

"The Lyric Muse of Robert Burns" of 1819 [SJ] contains "John Anderson, my jo" by Burns, as well as the Brash & Reid version under the title "John Anderson my jo. [Improved by Burns.]" (The italics are in [SJ].) Professor Wilson observes in [WP] that "in a collection of poetry published
by Brash and Reid of Glasgow, is given what is called an improved version of this song, said to be from the pen of Burns.”

“John Anderson, my jo” appeared in several chapbooks. We note two of them: “Roy’s Wife of Aldivalloch,” [Ch3], and the chapbook “John Anderson my Jo” [Ch4]. The two versions are almost identical. They consist of the Brash & Reid version without the first stanza, and with the other seven stanzas in an altered order. The two stanzas of Burns are the first and the last in these chapbooks and the remaining five stanzas are in the same relative order as the corresponding stanzas in the Brash and Reid version. The chapbook stanzas are set in octaves but otherwise they differ little from the original.

In 1867 P. Hately Waddell wrote [WH]: “…the beautiful stanzas now before us were written by Burns to supersede a gross old immoral rhyme, forgotten since; and that all other variations or additions whatsoever, purporting to be by Burns are spurious…. Some of these are avowed imitations, one by Mr. Reid (of late Brash and Reid), Glasgow, being of superior merit and of great length, published, it is said, with Burns’s consent or knowledge… Burns afterwards honoured Mr. Reid not only with his correspondence, but with permission to make additional verses to some of his own songs - ‘John Anderson, my jo,’ for example….” No evidence was offered in support of this improbable assertion. Indeed it is as inconceivable that Reid should have the hardiess to ask, as that Burns should have given, any such permisscion [EJ].

Allan Cunningham writes in [CA] that in the “curious miscellany” of Brash and Reid “the song is said indeed to be ‘improved’ by the great Robert; but though there is an occasional boldness of expression which reminds us of his hand, there is also such feebleness and want of propriety as he has nowhere else exhibited.” Cunningham proceeds to assert that the second stanza in the Brash & Reid version “has a Burns-like sound,” but “in the feeble warp” of the first and the seventh stanzas “there is no weft of gold.” Of course, as we noted above, the second stanza imitates a stanza in Burns’s “Green grow the rashes,” the first stanza was borrowed in toto from earlier bawdy versions, and the seventh stanza displeases just about everybody.

George Virtue’s edition of “The Complete Works of Robert Burns,” of c. 1842 [VG], contains the Burns version of “John Anderson” with the following note: “Soon after the death of Burns, the very handsome Miscellanies of Brash and Reid, of Glasgow, contained what was called an improved John Anderson, from the pen of the Ayrshire bard; but, save the second stanza, none of the new matter looked like his hand.”

American editions of Burns in the mid-nineteenth century, such as [WC] and [OB], contain Reid’s “improved” version of “John Anderson, my jo.”

The opinions of later editors about the “improved” Brash and Reid version of “John Anderson, my Jo” are not favourable. William Wallace comments on Burns’s song in [WW]: “Improved from an old indecent song. Additional verses, by William Reid of Glasgow, appear in Poetry Original and Selected, but are worthless.”

Modern anthologies of Burns, other than derivatives of The Merry Muses of Caledonia [MCC], contain the Burns version of “John Anderson, my jo,” whereas edition of The Merry Muses either contain forms of the song derived from the bawdy versions in [PHL], [MSQ] or [CS], or do not include “John Anderson, my jo” at all. This is not surprising since the raison d’être of these publications is to present “bawdy verse written and collected by Robert Burns.” Of course, Burns’s song is not bawdy, and bawdy versions of “John Anderson, my jo” were not written by Burns.

It is commonly believed that all post-1799 editions of Merry Muses, especially those “dated” 1827 are derived from [MMC]. This is certainly not true as far as “John Anderson, my jo” is concerned. We quote in type facsimile the versions of the song in [MMC] and [MM27], and compare them with that in [MSQ] (see pp. 7-8 above.) The stanza numbers are inserted here in order to facilitate discussion. They do not appear in the originals.
JOHN ANDERSON, MY JO

[MMC]
(In both versions Arabic numerals denote stanza numbers.
Roman numerals indicate the numbers of the corresponding stanzas in [MSQ].)

1 (I)
JOHN Anderson, my jo, John,
I wonder what ye mean,
To lie sae lang i' the mornin',
And sit sae late at een?
Ye'll bleer a’ your een, John,
And why do you so?
Come sooner to your bed at een,
John Anderson, my jo.

2 (II)
John Anderson, my jo, John,
When first that ye began,
Ye had as good a tail-tree
As ony ither man;
But now its waxen wan, John,
And wrinkles to and fro;
I've twa gae-ups for ae gae-down,
John Anderson, my jo.

3 (III)
John Anderson, my jo, John,
Ye're welcome when ye please;
It's either in the warm bed.
Or else aboon the claes:
Or you shall hae the horns, John,
Upon your head to grow;
An' that's the cuckold's mallison,
John Anderson, my jo.

4 (IV)
When ye come on before, John,
See that ye do your best;
When ye begin to haud me,
See that ye grip me fast;
See that ye grip me fast, John,
Until that I cry, "Oh!"
Your back shall crack or I do that,
John Anderson, my jo.

5 (V)
O it is a fine thing,
To keep out o'er the dyke;
But it's a meikle finer thing,
To see your hurdies fyke;

[MM27]

1
JOHN Anderson my jo, John,
I wonder what you mean,
To rise so soon in the morning,
And set up so late at e'en?
You'll blear out all your e'en, John,
And why will you do so?
Come sooner to your bed at e'en,
John Anderson my jo.

2
John Anderson my friend, John,
When first you did begin,
You had as good a tail-tree
As ony ither man.
But now 'tis waxen auld, John,
And it waggles to and fro;
And it never stands its lane now,
John Anderson my jo.

3
John Anderson my jo, John,
You can f— where'er you please,
Either in our warm bed,
Or else aboon the claise;
Or you shall have the horns, John,
Upon your head to grow;
That is a cuckold's malison,
John Anderson my jo.

4
So when you want to f—, John,
See that you do your best,
When you begin to s— me,
See that you grip me fast;
See that you grip me fast, John,
Until that I cry Oh!
Your back shall crack, e'er I cry slack,
John Anderson my jo.

5
Oh! but it is a fine thing,
To keek out o'er the dyke,
But 'tis a muckle finer thing,
When I see your hurdies fyke;
To see your hurdies fyke, John,  
And hit the rising blow;  
It's then I like your chanter-pipe,  
John Anderson, my jo.

When I see your hurdies fyke, John,  
And wriggle to and fro,  
'Tis then I like your chaunter-pipe,  
John Anderson my jo.

3 (VI)  
I'm backit like a salmon,  
I'm breastit like a swan;  
My wame it is a down-cod,  
My middle ye may span:  
Frae my tap-knot to my tae, John,  
I'm like the new-fa'n snow;  
And its a for your convenience,  
John Anderson my, jo.

6  
I'm backit like a salmon,  
I'm breasted like a swan,  
My wame it is a down cod,  
My middle you may span;  
From my crown until my tae, John,  
I'm like the new-fa'n snow;  
And 'tis a' for your conveniency,  
John Anderson my jo.

We compare the above two versions with [MSQ]. There are many differences. We discuss the most significant of them.

The first stanzas in all versions are very similar. However, whereas lines 3-4 in [PHL], [MSQ] and, with a slight difference in spelling, also in [CS] and [MM27], read:

"To rise so soon in the morning,  
And sit up so late at e'en;"

the corresponding lines in [MMC] are:

"To lie sae lang i' the mornin’,  
And sit sae late at een."

Here the editor of [MMC] seem to have missed the humour in the earlier versions in which the wife is complaining that her aging husband is reluctant, perhaps even afraid, to lie with her in their conjugal bed. That complaint agrees with the tenor of the other stanzas. In the corresponding lines in [MMC] the wife merely rebukes the husband for staying too long in the bed. This is tantamount to accusing him of laziness, and it is not relevant to the wife’s main complaint.

Line 6 of the second stanza of [MMC], “and wrinkles to and fro,” does not make sense. It may be just a careless error in copying “And wriggle to and fro.” However, it seems that the editor of [MMC] did not like the same line in stanza V of [MSQ] (that is, stanza 4 in [MMC]) where he replaced “And wriggle to and fro,” the line used in all the other versions, with “And hit the rising blow.” Again there is no clear reason for this change.

There are only minor differences in spelling between stanza III in [MSQ] and stanza 6 in [MMC]. The corresponding stanza in [MM27] is much the same except that here the editor decided to enliven his version by replacing “You’re welcome when you please” with “You can f— where’er you please.” In the following stanza he continues this invigorating process by replacing “When you come on before” with “So when you want to f—, John” and “When you begin to haud me” with “When you begin to s— me.” The meaning of the lacuna words is made clearer in [MMY] where they are spelled “f-k” and “sh-g,” respectively.

We have already noted that there is a triple inner rhyme in line 7 of stanza IV of [MSQ]: “Your back shall crack e’er I cry slack,” producing a rather comical effect. The editor of [MMC] changed the line to: “Your back shall crack or I do that” which has nearly the same meaning but loses the special effect. In his analysis of the [MMC] version of the song Legman [LG1] asserts that the inner rhyme suggests a later hand, but this cannot be true in this case since [MSQ] is much earlier than [MMC].
The stanza order in [MM27] is the same as that in [MSQ] and [CS], but the order of stanzas in [MMC] differs from the stanza order in [MSQ] and from that in [PHL]. It is not clear why the last four stanzas in [MMC] are in the reverse order of the corresponding stanzas in [MSQ].

Apart from the lacunary words, the [MM27] version is much closer to the [MSQ] version than is the [MMC] version. This is surprising because it is generally believed that [MM27] is derived from [MMC] which was published at least 73 years earlier. However, it is explicitly stated on page 114 of [MM27] that "John Anderson my jo" was taken from a song-book published in 1782. It is very likely that this book was The Convivial Songster [CS].

V. CONCLUDING REMARKS

"John Anderson, my jo" had a long and varied history. A fragment of its first version dates back to the end of the sixteenth or the beginning of seventeenth century. It was preserved in Bishop Percy's Reliques [PT]. Burns's song of the same name has little to do with this quaint verse, except for its catchy trimeter title. Burns was familiar with Percy's Reliques and with later bawdy versions of "John Anderson, my jo." These facts alone would render improbable any conjectures connecting Burns's "John Anderson, my jo" with a carpenter named John Anderson, even if the latter were a personal friend of the poet.

But who was John Anderson? The John Anderson of the earliest versions of the song was, if we may rely on a uniform and constant tradition, the town piper of Kelso, an amorous wag in his day [SW]. If this is the case then it is not likely that Burns had any particular married couple in mind as the personae in his song. Burnsians are naturally fascinated by characters in Burns's poems and songs and try to identify them with specific people known to the poet. This may lead to some very doubtful identifications. On the other hand, it is known that Burns sometimes used in his poems fictitious, invented names that suited his poetic expression. It really does not matter whether John Anderson of Burns's song was a piper or a carpenter or a purely fictitious character.

The song "John Anderson, my jo" underwent several metamorphoses. The second stage of the song were the bawdy versions in Philomel, The Masque, Convivial Songster, and possibly in some chapbooks. These are monologues of a wife complaining about her husband growing too old to satisfy her sexually, and recalling their happier past. It is this juxtaposition of a happy past and the present old age that Burns used for his exquisite version in which the wife expresses her pride in her husband in his early manhood, and her love and tender feelings for him in their present, advanced age.

The two-stanza song of Burns was extended by Reid to an eight-stanza somewhat tedious elaboration on the same theme. This "improved" version or parts thereof made frequent appearances in nineteenth century editions of Burns.

According to [MM79] there is reason to think that the [MMC] version of 'John Anderson, my jo' "is (and always has been) better liked and more commonly sung in Scotland than Robert Burns's well-known expurgation, the one that appears in all 'respectable' anthologies of his poetic works." There is no shred of evidence offered in support of this statement. There is no explanation given why over last two hundred years there have been about two thousand editions of the 'respectable' anthologies containing Burns's version, and only very few 'privately printed,' 'not for sale' editions containing the 'better liked and more commonly sung version.' Legman in [LG1] tries to reinforce his arguments about bawdy folk songs by disparaging Burns's beautiful version of "John Anderson, my jo" with derogatory epithets: "sentimental expurgation," "tender rewrite" and "sentimental stinker." These cannot be fair characterizations of one of the loveliest of Burns's creations which is described by Daiches as a production of high quality in which Burns avoids sentimentality [DD1]. In [DD2] Daiches emphasizes "the unsentimental tenderness of 'John Anderson My Jo,'" the song which, according to Snyder [SJ], "Burns rescued from absolute dispreputability, and touched to undying beauty." Chacun à son goût.
REFERENCES


[Ch1] Chapbook: CAPTAIN DEATH. To which are added, NEW JOHN ANDERSON MY JOE, etc. Printed in the year 1794. Pp. 6-7.


[Ch3] Chapbook: ROY'S WIFE OF AIDLAVOCH: To which is added, JOHN ANDERSON, MY JOE, etc. Glasgow: Published by R. Hutchison, Bookseller. 1823. Pp. 5-7.


[MM27] THE MERRY MUSES, a choice collection... by Robert Burns. Privately printed. 1827 [predated]. Pp. 113-115. This is Edition 4, State 1, in the classification of [RGR].


PHILOMEL. Being a small collection of only the best English songs.

[PERCY, THOMAS.] RELIQUES OF ANCIENT ENGLISH POETRY:

ROY. G. ROSS. THE '1827' EDITIONS OF ROBERT BURNS'S MERRY MUSES OF CALEDONIA.

THOMSON, GEORGE, A SELECT COLLECTION OF ORIGINAL SCOTTISH AIRS FOR VOICE.

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Pp. 251-252.


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On the subject of who made the Poet's coffin, see foot of page 9, I have in my collection a copy of the receipt for coffins supplies for members of the family of Burns:-

The Trustess of the late Robert Burns
To Tho. Boyd.

1796
July  To a full mounted coffin for Mr. Burns  £6.6
1799
April 25 To a coffin for his child  1.1
1803
July 11 To a coffin for Mr. Francis Burns  5.5

£12.12/-

Editor
THE CINQUE PORTS CAVALRY

Period 1794 - 1797

This is a brief history of the Cinque Ports Cavalry whose Members escorted the funeral of Robert Burns in Dumfries on the 25th July, 1796.

In 1794 the nation had been greatly shocked by the terror of the Revolution across the Channel along with the massacre of the Royalist prisoners in September 1792. Popular feelings were so inflamed by the execution of King Louis 15th in January 1793, that the French Ambassador was handed his passport and told to leave Britain – and then France and England were once again at war!

Early in 1794, owing to the fear of invasion, the government invented various methods for raising extra troops, including a large body of Cavalry and Infantry recruited by voluntary enlistment for whole-time service on regular pay in defence of the Realm! Members of this new force were to be known as FENCIBLES. This was an abbreviation of the word DEFENCIBLES which would have indicated their military role more clearly. (This smells more of a politician ploy!!!)

The CINQUE PORTS were a group of ports with ancient privileges on the south east coast of England, namely, Hythe, Sandwich, Dover, Romney and Hastings.

The plan was to raise two Regiments of Light Dragoons to meet the danger from the French Armies, namely, The Cinque Ports and the New Romney Fencible Cavalry. They were Local Volunteers and a few Regular Troops of the Gentlemen and Yeomanry.

Letters of Service for the Cinque Ports Cavalry were dated lst May 1794. It was commanded by a very young man, (23 year old) Colonel, the Hon. Robert Banks Jenkinson. The uniform consisted of:- Red Jacket, Yellow Facings, White Flannel Waist-Coat and Leather Breeches. An oval silver plate with the Inscription - Cinque Ports Light Cavalry - was worn by the Officers on their cross-belt which was worn over the right shoulder.

Being part-time soldiers, they came under lots of criticism, not much different from today. When hand bills were being distributed for recruiting purposes there were various nasty poems and articles circulated. One in particular by a so-called friend of Colonel Jenkinson, who was amused that such a young person should be in Command, wrote the following excerpt from a long poem:-
“Tis the bold Colonel Jenkinson calls you to Arms
And solemnly swears you shall come to no harm.
We’re no common Dragoons, made of Tailors and Barbers
But true Cinqueport Horsemen the pick of five Harbours.

Their hair shall be decently plastered with Tallow,
On their helmets three feathers of Red, Black and Yellow.
Their jackets shall reach half way down their back,
And those jackets shall be Red, Yellow and Black.

The Colonel, however, though young in age, had shown a practical interest in military affairs, having studied closely the Prussian and Austrian armies in action against the forces of the French Revolution. Hence he was better qualified than many to Command such a regiment of Fencibles.

Recruits were to receive a bounty of five guineas each and any person introducing one, a guinea for himself. By October 1795 the regiment had been increased to six troops of 80 N.C.O.s and men.

They were stationed in and around the South coast until May 1796 when they were ordered to amalgamate near Staines, to quell possible insurgent happenings in Scotland because of the friendliness of the Scots towards the French.

On the morning of the 13th of May 1796 The King, reviewed the Regiment of The Cinque Ports Cavalry in Hyde Park.

The Regiment, resplendent in their Red Jackets and gay feathers soon rode away on their long march of some 300 miles towards Bonnie Scotland, via Kettering and Carlisle, where they arrived on the 13th of June. Each trooper was given a penny for beer money and four pence for marching money per day.

By mid July they were stationed at Dumfries. There, on 25th of July, they kept order at the funeral of our Bard — Robert Burns. They played the Dead March of Saul. They fired a volley over the grave of Robert Burns. It is still a mystery as to why Robert should receive a Military Funeral as he held the lowly rank of private in the Dumfries Volunteers which was also a Territorial Unit similar to the Cinque Ports Cavalry. Further-more it has been written that Colonel Jenkinson “disliked the business” as he always considered Robert Burns to be a revolutionary! and had refused to make his acquaintance! That evening an Assembly was given in the town out of Compliment to the Officers of the Cinque Ports.

The local press and diaries give vivid pictures of the lavish hospitality enjoyed by the Officers at that time, of which during August their Colonel wrote:— “The style of living here is rather gross, though very hospitable. The servants are few, and very dirty; but there is a great quality of meat upon the table, and the bottle passes rather quicker than I like.”

However, it is on record that:- When the Cinque Ports Cavalry lay in Dumfries, Mr. Syme (a close friend of Robert Burns) kept what is called an open house for Officers. The “Honourable Colonel” made good use of this hospitality at Rydale, this being reported in the London Quarterly.

By November the Regiment left Dumfries and were quartered in Piershill Barracks in Edinburgh. In 1797 fear of revolution, of famine and financial ruin prevailed in England and no wonder this was called England’s Darkest hour.

While the Cinque Ports Cavalry were stationed in Edinburgh some of their sergeants acted as Instructors to the Royal Edinburgh Volunteer Light Calvary, a Class Corps of local gentry then in the process of formation. Their origin owed much to the enthusiasm of Walter Scott, who had been elected as their Quartermaster, Secretary and Paymaster.

During the early months of 1798 the Cinque Ports Cavalry made their way out of Scotland and by April were back in Carlisle. During the summer months they were dispersed along the south coast of England once more.

Compiled by JOhn C. Paterson, for the Literature Committee of The Robert Burns World Federation Ltd.

November 1999.
LONGEST SERVING MEMBER OF THE AUSTRALIAN LABOR PARTY

THOMAS G. PATERSON

(HON. PRESIDENT THE ROBERT BURNS WORLD FEDERATION LTD.)

THE FOLLOWING TRIBUTE BY BOB CHYNOWTH APPEARED IN THE AUSTRALIAN LABOR HERALD SEPTEMBER, 1999

Tom was born in Mauchline, Scotland in 1908. In his own words he was “born at the right place at the right time” close to the home of Kier Hardie and opposite Poosie Nancie’s Tavern where Robbie Burns is said to have composed Auld Lang Syne. Kier Hardie was the founder of the Scottish Labor Party (the first to be formed in the UK) at the first Labour MP. Tom has fond memories of Kier Hardie, who was his inspiration to join the party at fourteen.

Just “doon the road” is Crosshouse where Andrew Fisher, three times Prime Minister of Australia was born. And within a hop-step and jump is Alloway, birthplace of Robert Burns. Tom is a life member of the Melbourne Burns Club. He was appointed an Honorary President of the Robert Burns World Federation Ltd. in 1992. When Tom was 12 years old he visited Glasgow and listened to a group of Labor speakers at “Glesca Green” called the Clydesiders. It was led by Jimmy Maxton. He was so impressed that he joined the Labor Party in Kilmarnock in January 1922 and heard such historic figures as Lloyd George, Stanley Baldwin, and Ramsey MacDonald British Labor’s first P.M., speak at a bi-election in his home town. In 1923 as a Colour Sergeant in the 4th, Kilmarnock Company of Boys’ Brigade he was the first in Ayrshire to win the newly instituted “King’s Badge” the highest award for all-round efficiency.

The 1926 miners strike in Lanarkshire was the trigger for the general strike and one of the reasons Tom’s family decided to migrate to Australia, arriving in 1927. Sadly, his father died just a few months later. Tom played soccer for Scotland as a schoolboy international goalkeeper and later represented Australia. He worked for Siemens as a cashier and during the Depression held two jobs from 9 am to midnight to support the family. He then went to Holeproof Ltd as an assistant accountant, later becoming secretary. The company had a staff of more than 1,200 and Tom began one off the first industrial welfare schemes in Australia, instituting canteens, rest rooms, football teams, sports clubs, nursing facilities and midday dancing to their own band. He was a strong advocate of industrial democracy, emphasizing that the biggest thing in industry was not machinery, materials or markets but people.

In 1939, while working for Holeproof helped to arrange part of the City of Brunswick’s centenary celebrations, that raised thousands of pounds and helped establish the Brunswick Health Clinic. During this time, Tom was also Victorian and Australian debating champion. Maurice Blackburn MP was his political mentor and Tom was prepared to stand for parliament when Blackburn retired, but war was declared and he was seconded to the Commonwealth for the duration of the war. There, he served on the National War Road Transport Committee, as Controller of Materials for the Commonwealth Aircraft Corporation, and as Acting Controller of Hostels. He worked with such notables as Ben...
and Appeals Director for the St. Andrew’s Hospital and Freemasons’ Hospital Building Appeals and in his “spare time” organised and conducted tours to all five continents. He also founded a Masonic Public Speaking Lodge which at one time had 300 members and met at Melbourne University. He is currently a Past Senior Grand Warden of the Grand Lodge of Victoria and is due to receive a 70 Year Service Medal in 2000, if he can last the distance.

Tom has had a very full 91 years, 77 of it as a member of the Labor Party. He received life membership of the Victorian Branch that is presented after forty years and includes free membership. Tom being a true canny Scot claims that we will have to pay him for his second life membership! His greeting to party members is “Ceud Mile Taing”, Gaelic for A hundred thousand thanks. His burning ambition is to receive the ALP’s 80 Year “True Believers” Award in 2002 from Kim Beasley who he predicts, will then be Prime Minister of Australia.

Bob Chynowth

Can I become a member of the
ROBERT BURNS WORLD FEDERATION LTD
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Discount on a number of items sold by the Federation.
ANOTHER BURNS COTTAGE
by Thomas Keith

The 'Auld Clay Biggin' is still one of the most famous and frequently visited buildings in the world and its image, which began to appear very shortly following Burns' death, is familiar in countless reproductions from beautiful engravings and sculpture to every kind of souvenir imaginable. There have also been at least five replicas of Burns Cottage, or parts of it, in full scale models in the United Kingdom and the United States. A brief history of the cottage is now familiar to most Burnsians; the poet's father, William Burnes, built the original structure and owned the property from 1757 until 1781 when it was sold to the Incorporation of Shoemakers in Ayr. Around 1800 the cottage was turned into an ale house which it remained until the Alloway Burns Monument Trustees took possession in 1881, caretaking the property and opening the museum which exists to this day.

The colorful illustration from the cover of the May 1930 issue of Your Home magazine depicts "an American adaptation of the poet's birthplace" with the title "The "Bobby Burns" Cottage" and adds to the number of architectural tributes to the Bard created in the U.S. and the U.K. The home of one Mr. J.C. Elliott in Westfield, New Jersey, USA, the house was designed by architect Bernhardt E. Muller. Not meant to precisely replicate Burns Cottage, but rather as a tribute (albeit a practical one), the N.J. house naturally needed a second floor for the family which lived there and which the original cottage was naturally built without. Architect Muller's solution was to extend the roof high enough to accommodate another floor with second story windows placed only on the sides of the building giving the impression of a one-story cottage from the front view. Weathered and split shingles apparently created the illusion of a thatched roof, and though the interior and furnishings were basically contemporary American in style, the cover article refers to the floor plan for the second floor where it says: "Note the Scotch economy, however, in the ingeniously utilized eaves' space closet with iron-hinged door."(!) Whether or not the structure is still standing in Westfield, New Jersey has yet to be determined. One is reminded by the cover illustration that even as Burns is known in the diminutive as 'Rabbie' in Scotland, and though it may sound tinny to a Scots ear, from as early as the 1820s on the other side of the pond, including Canada, Burns has often with affection been called 'Bobby.'

The first attempt at an accurate replica of the Burns Cottage was built for the 1904 World's Fair in St. Louis, Missouri. That exhibit was funded by hundreds of subscribers (including President Theodore Roosevelt) and it turned out to be one of the most popular exhibits at the Fair. Placed conspicuously near the entrance to the "Place of Nations," the cottage was unveiled with a ceremony of pipers and speeches on "Bannockburn Battle Day," June 24, 1904. Another ceremony was held there on "Scottish Day," August 15, Sir Walter Scott's birthday, included a reading of Lines to Burns, a poem inspired by the cottage replica and read by the author Chang Yon Tong, the Chinese Imperial Commissioner. Furnished with antiques and relics from the collection of William K. Bixby, one of the principal organizers of the cottage fund, the World's Fair cottage and the "Burns Cottage Fund" became the catalysts for the founding of the Burns Club of St. Louis. The contents of the cottage were later transferred to the Club's meeting room at the Artist's Guild. Items a visitor to the St. Louis cottage would have found there included a table from Burns' house in Dumfries, a table from the Tam O'Shanter Inn in Ayr, a stool reportedly used by Burns as a child, an Armour family spinning wheel and Jean Armour's iron holder and 'girdle' for baking cakes. After the St. Louis World's Fair closed, the cottage was moved to Portland, Oregon for the Lewis & Clark Centennial Exposition in 1905 but, according to the Oregon Historical Society, must have been dismantled at the end of that event along with the other installations as its whereabouts afterwards have never been known.

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In 1909, the Imperial International Exhibition in London boasted another replica of the Burns Cottage. It was placed in an installation called “The Scottish Village” and is illustrated here on the postcard from the event. This cottage was not as precise in measurement and style as the St. Louis cottage, but was also filled with period items that might have been found in the Burns family homestead back in the 18th century.
The Burns Club of Atlanta, as is now widely known, had an exact replica of the cottage built in 1910 on land they purchased for their headquarters on Confederate Avenue. Unveiled in 1911, the Atlanta Burns Cottage was designed by architect and club member Thomas H. Morgan and the construction was supervised by club member and stone mason Robert M. McWhirter. For his design, Morgan utilized plans and measurements acquired from the Alloway cottage. McWhirter chose Georgia granite instead of fieldstone and sod for the walls and floor, and the cottage even has the same curve which William Burnes followed along the road at Alloway when he was building the original. The Burns Club of Atlanta still uses the combined byre, barn and ben of their cottage
replica as meeting room and dining area, while the front room serves as the kitchen. The Atlanta Burns Cottage has been placed on the National Register of Historic Places.

If readers are aware of any other replicas of Burns Cottage or architectural tributes to Burns, please contact Thomas Keith c/o the Burns Chronicle.

The Atlanta Burns Cottage circa. 1920

The Burns Cottage in the Scottish Village, London Imperial International Exhibition, 1909
A remarkable example of vernacular furniture has been discovered on the South Coast of England: a Robert Burns mausoleum or shrine. Nothing is known about its provenance. The structure has been in the domestic setting of a house in Hampshire for some 40 years. The furniture (above comprises a lower unit (height appr. 36”/920mm, depth appr. 14”/360mm, width appr. 48”/1220mm) and an upper structure (height appr. 62”/1570mm, depth appr. 7”/180mm, width appr. 48”/1220mm.)

The construction is in oak. It is devoid of utilitarian features (shelves or storage space) and can only be described as a commemorative shrine. The excessive carved decoration is principally on panels mounted in a structural framework. In the centre is a brass nameplate, carrying the following text:

Robert Burns  
Born Jan’y 25 1759  
Died 21 July 1796  
W. Barrett. Sculp

It can only therefore reasonably be assumed the craftsman producing this furniture is known and the furniture was probably commissioned by or for a Burns Society. The carved decoration can be deemed to be in the Romantic Revival style of the late 19th century.

There are a number of well carved works in bas relief in Scotland, depicting Robert Burns and scenes from his poetic works, notably a fireplace in this manner, in the Royal Zoological Society in Edinburgh. Also at the entrance way of Belleisle House, Ayr, the former seat of the Glentanner family, the latter work commissioned from German craftsmen. The manner of the carving of this shrine could suggest a possible association with Robinson (Newcastle), the Warwick School of Carving or the Hospitalfield School of Woodcarving (1860) run by Patrick Allan Fraser. It is obviously a regional manufacture. The iconography of this shrine is probably entirely associated with Scotland’s Premier Poet:

- The Burns image surround by a laurel wreath at the summit appears to be after the Alexander Nasmyth portrait bust of Robert Burns, as almost all portrayals are and is one of the few authentic portraits with a provenance.

- The chain-mail figure in the small left hand panel may relate to the Scots patriot, William Wallace, Robert Burns’ hero.

- The small panel on the right, wearing a ‘tammy’ or Kilmarnock bonnet has a facial similarity to the central panel relief and is possibly Tam himself, or Graham of Shanter farm as he was known.
- The long top panel would depict Tom on his horse being pursued across the bridge by evil spirits.

- The seated figures in the main central panel could well be related to John Anderson My Jo, an old couple’s love story.

- The small panel to the right of the brass plate appears to have a rose motif suggesting the subject of Robert Burns’ poem ‘My love is like a red red rose’ or a daisy from ‘To a mountain daisy’.

- The two dogs on the base section possibly refer to the Burns poem ‘The Twa Dogs’, the dogs being a Newfoundland and a Collie, Luath and Caesar by name; in a conversation between an upper class dog and a lower class dog.

- The centre of the base is a curtained alcove, again containing a stylised wreath.

Tenuous it may be, but it has been alluded that Patrick Allan Fraser of Hospitalfield School of Carving has a middle name connection with Burns. Relations of Burns’ were called Allan, originating in Ayrshire of the Allan Shipping Line. Whilst the link between Robert Burns and the above furniture is evident and even the name of the carver is known.

The ‘Shrine’ was offered for sale at Romsey Auction Rooms on 11 January, 2000 The Auctioneers, 86 The Hundred, Romsey, Hampshire. SO51 8BX.

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RARE LITHOGRAPHIC PRINTS ILLUSTRATING SONGS BY ROBERT BURNS

The coloured illustrations on the cover of this issue and on pages 38-40 are reproduced from the originals in the Broughton House Museum, Kirkcudbright (By courtesy of The National Trust for Scotland). They form part of the vast collections of Burnsiana material collected by the late E. A. HORNEL.

The prints were published circa 1830/1840’s by William Spooner, 337 The Strand, London.

Artist (On stone) J. Bouvier.


Little is known about these beautiful coloured prints, other than they appear to be extremely scarce. Any information on them would be welcomed by the Editor.
STEVEN & HIS HIGHLAND LADY

The loving looks of youth, how well
The eye bestows its beauty on the cheek.
Yet more, the smile, the look of love,
That brightens the cheek, and warms the cheek.

Words by Allan Ramsay

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BETTY BURNS THOMSON
A Reminiscence, by One Who Knew Her.

It is pretty well known that a daughter of our national poet resided for nearly the whole of her married life – upwards of sixty years – in Pollokshaws or immediate neighbourhood – Langside and Crossmyloof Glasgow. Adopted when two years old by Mrs Burns, the poet’s wife, she remained with her kind protectress till she reached womanhood, and only left her hospitable roof to become the wife of John Thomson, a very respectable man, and at the time of their marriage a soldier in the Stirlingshire Militia, then quartered in Dumfries. Mrs Burns, however, never forgot her protégé, and although they met seldom afterwards, she frequently sent letters and small gifts as a remembrance to her adopted daughter. Betty Burns bore a stronger resemblance to her father than did any of his other children. With features rather large and somewhat phlegmatic in repose, and sallow complexion, her face to a stranger presented little that was interesting, except the eyes, which were large and dark, and had a luminous aspect which I have never seen in any other eyes except Mr Gladstone’s, and in animated conversation they seemed as if a light were behind them. She was a woman of great goodness of heart – a most exemplary wife and mother, and had tastes and aspirations not common among the class in which her lot was cast.

My first introduction to her was in 1859 – centenary year – although I knew her family long before, and from that period till her death my relationship with her was of the most intimate character. As Burns died when Mrs Thomson was about four years of age, she could remember very little about him. The most distinct impression she had was seeing him one day come home with some jargonelle pears in his pocket, which he distributed among the children, and she got her share with the others, and she remembered quite well of her father and Mrs. Burns speaking earnestly to each other as they looked at her munching her pears in a corner. In speaking of her unfortunate birth, which she said was by far the greatest stain on Burns’s character, she mentioned this circumstance, which could only have been related by Mrs Burns, that the family, including Mrs Burns, had got new dresses, and that she, with perhaps a pardonable pride, desired to show the new “rig out” to her friends in Mauchline, and it was during her absence of several weeks, when Burns had no society at home, that his visits to the Globe Tavern, Dumfries were too frequent and prolonged. Mrs Thomson always maintained – and this opinion must have been received from Mrs Burns rather than formed from her own recollection – that in the portraits of Burns the features are too small and fine – that both head and face were more massive, and indicated greater force or power than the portraits convey. Some people thought that her son, Robert (1817 – 1887), was very like his grandfather; but, although he had his mother’s dark eyes and similar confirmation of brow, his complexion was wholly that of the father – pure red and

James Glencairn Thomson, grandson of Robert Burns.
white, and his features very regular and handsome. Everybody pronounced him a "Brawman," and the roses in his cheek remained to his dying day. I think James (1827 - 1911), who still lives, has a stronger resemblance to his mother, both in features and complexion, as he certainly has in temper and disposition. Mrs Thomson had a keen appreciation of her father's poetry, and in her younger years use to sing many of his songs with great feeling and expression, a gift which has descended especially to her son James and the youngest daughter, Maggie. All the Thomsons, however, were musical. Robert was an excellent teacher of music — could play on several instruments and led the psalmody in Eastwood Parish Church for many years. I used to admire the quiet, humorous way Mrs Thomson brushed aside unpleasant remarks, in which her husband occasionally indulged. For John Thomson, though a very praiseworthy man had a sarcastic stroke in him, and, like Carlyle, was sometimes gey ill to pit up wi'. It was pleasant to witness her intercourse with her family, and especially when any of the married ones came with their children to see her — quiet motherly tenderness and solicitude for everybody’s comfort were the characteristics of her feelings and conduct. The centenary in “59 necessarily caused Mrs Thomson’s name to be known outside the small circle in which she had hitherto moved, and for a year or two after many persons in good positions in life went to see her, or invited her to their houses, and at no period of her life did her native good appear to greater advantage than on these occasions. She knew that it was not on account of her own intrinsic merits that this attention was paid her, but on her father’s, and, while it was not devoid of gratification to her even on that ground, she justly estimated its evanescent character, and never seemed in the slightest degree elated thereby. Mrs Thomson was kept in remembrance by her brothers — Robert, William, and James, sons of the poet — more especially William who was in the habit for many years of sending her annually at Christmas, a kindly greeting which she highly prized. The last visit paid by William and James was in 1862, when she resided in Hope Cottage, Shawlands. In later days many agreeable persons came to her, some of them very clever if a little eccentric, like the late J. Kelso Hunter, C.P.B., cobbler, painter, and biographer. Hunter painted her portrait, concerning which I would rather not give an opinion. Hunter's sketch of his own life and work is a very interesting book, but not half so interesting as his conversation, and what could be more comical than his habit of standing outside the door and singing "O, are you sleeping, Maggie?" This was to apprise Maggie (1833 - 1896), Mrs Thomson’s youngest, and the cleverest of all her daughters, that he was there. The lady thus apostrophized remained with her mother till her death, and subsequently became the wife of David Wingate (1828 - 1892), the collier poet. The money subscribed for Mrs Thomson’s benefit at the period of the centenary added greatly to her comfort in declining years. She died at Woodside Place, Crossmyloof, in 1873, old and full of days, to use the beautiful language of Scripture, and was buried in the old churchyard, Pollokshaws.

Glasgow Weekly Herald 1894
BURNS and KOSSUTH
(From a press report April 1892)

A native of Dumfries, now residing abroad, has generously resolved to offer a Gold Medal as a Prize for the Best Poem written on the subject of M. Louis Kossuth at the Grave of Robert Burns. Fully thirty years ago, when the fame of the ex-Governor of Hungary was resounding throughout Europe, he delivered an eloquent lecture in Dumfries in advocacy of his country’s liberation from the tyranny of the House of Hapsburg. The Mid-Steeple bells welcomed him with a joyous peal, and all classes of the Inhabitants combined to render honour due to the illustrious Patriot.

On the day after the Lecture M. Kossuth, accompanied by his Aide-de-Camp, Colonel Ihaz, the Rev. Dr. Julius Wood and Bailie John Payne, proceeded to St. Michael’s Churchyard. “Mr. Kossuth,” says the Standard, “entered the Mausoleum with reverent step, and as if absorbed by the intensity of his thoughts. He gazed long in pensive sadness at the figure of the ploughman poet and of Coila; and then earnestly conversed with his Hungarian companion in their own Magyar tongue, that possibly being the language in which he could best give vent to his pent-up feelings. Kossuth at the grave of Burns - the patriot chief dropping a tear over the dust of the patriot bard! What a subject for a poet! Will no lyre awake under the influence of such a theme?”

Louis Kossuth was born in 1802 and died in 1894. During his stay in Scotland he paid a visit to the Poet’s Cottage at Alloway and wrote the following in the visitor’s book: - *From Louis Kossuth in exile, to Robert Burns in immortality. - The man o’ independent mind, Is king o’ men for a’ that.*

AGNES BURNS COTTAGE
and Visitor Centre
KNOCKBRIDGE, DUNDALK, Co. LOUTH, IRELAND

The project costing in excess of £500,000 is nearing completion and will be opened officially in the Spring of 2000. The Cottage has been restored to its original 1800’s style to the time when the poet’s sister Agnes lived there with her husband William Galt. Galt was employed by the local landowner, Lord Fortescue, who owned Stephenstown Estate. Fortescue employed William Galt to build him two man-made ponds to provide water to the estate for the hundreds of acres of orchards and lands. So satisfied was Lord Fortescue with Galts work that he offered him a permanent position as his confidential manager to the estate. Agnes worked on the continued on page 70
The following article by the late John McVie (1888 – 1967) has been taken from the ‘ill-fated’ Scots Chronicle which had taken the place of the Burns Chronicle in 1951. Copies of this ‘Chronicle’ have now become scarce and are much sought after. The following announcement appeared in that issue:-

“In the last number of the Burns Chronicle (1950) our new name was advertised as “Unicorn.” It has been decided to retain the word “Chronicle,” to keep SCOTS CHRONICLE in line with the old Burns Chronicle.

Our policy is to hold a balance between work in English, Scots, and Gaelic. A popular theme for propagandists has been the frustration of writers in Lowland Scots. The Saltire Society has given publicity to their work by publishing selections. It is writers of poetry in English who now feel frustrated in Scotland by the growing monopoly of a Scottish Renaissance too narrowly defined.”

The policy referred to above proved very unpopular and as a result the Burns Chronicle was restored the following year.

The Editor

Dr HANS HECHT
By the late John McVie

Professor Franklyn B. Snyder, Vice-President and Dean of Faculties, North-western University, Chicago, published his “Life of Robert Burns” in 1932. It was a sheer delight to read with its wealth of documentation, and on the day I got my copy I was hurriedly glancing over it when I came to an item in the bibliography which was new to me – Hans Hecht’s “Robert Burns,” published at Heidelberg in 1919 – with this note:-

“Without doubt this may be called the best brief life of Burns that has yet appeared – accurate, reliable, and free from the time honoured mass of gossip and anecdote. It is regrettable that the volume has not been translated into English, for it is just the sort of biography that the general reader should have readily available.”

I had just finished reading the note when Mrs Burgoyne* (Jane Lymburn) entered the room. I handed her the book, drew her attention to the note and said: “There’s a job for you”! She read the note carefully and replied: “I’ll think about it.” Two days later I had a postcard from her saying: “I have got the ‘Hecht’ and am started on the translation.” That was our introduction to Professor Hecht, and we are indebted to Professor Snyder for it.

Born at Mannheim (Baden) on 16th July, 1876, Hans Hecht was the eldest son of Felix Hecht and Helene Bamberger. His father, LL.D. and hon. D.C.L. of Utrecht University, and Privy Counsellor to the Grand Duke of Baden, was widely known as a practician and theoretician in banking and political economy. His mother, who was still alive in her 84th year in 1938, was descended from a family of bankers of international reputation.

Hecht attended the customary elementary school courses and the “humanistische Gymnasium” (with Latin and Greek) till 1894, when he came to Oxford and matriculated from Balliol College. He matriculated at Heidelberg University and remained there from 1895 to 1897, when he went to Berlin.

* Jane Burgoyne (1898-1989) First Lady President of The Burns Federation.
His active academic work was started in 1905 at Berne, Switzerland, and in 1908 he got an extraordinary Professorship for English Language and Literature at Basle, which in 1912 was commuted into an ordinary state professorship. In 1902 he had married Hanna M. E. Lindberg, a lady of Swedish descent, and a Licentiate of Philosophy of Helsingfors University. She died in 1909 after a long illness, and in 1911 he married Hannah M. Meinhold of Bonn, daughter of a Professor of Old Testament Theology. From these two marriages he had four children, now scattered all over the world.

After four and a half years’ absence during the Great War, in which he was a Captain of Artillery, he was allowed to resume his work at Basle University, the post-war atmosphere there being rather turbulently anti-German and demanding a great deal of reticence and circumspection from a German ex-officer in Swiss civil service.

In 1922 he was appointed to the chair of English at Göttingen where he remained till 1935, when he resigned voluntarily. In 1936 he left Göttingen and settled down in Berlin.

In due course Mrs Burgoyne finished her translation, and it was submitted to a publisher, who kept it for months before finally deciding not to proceed with it. The manuscript was then submitted to the late Mr Harry Hodge, who was a German scholar himself, and who, after obtaining a very favourable opinion on it from Catherine Carswell, decided to publish it.

Through the Heidelberg publishers, Mr Hodge got in touch with Professor Hecht, who was delighted with the prospect of his “Burns” being published in English. He came over to Edinburgh in 1935 with a view to bringing the work up to date and seeing it through the press, and I shall always have very happy recollections of our many talks that summer, of his charming personality and of his amazing knowledge of Burns and Scottish literature in general.

“Robert Burns, the Man and his Work” was published in 1936 with what success every Burns lover knows, and fully justified Professor Snyder’s high opinion of it.

In September the following year, Dr. Hecht was present at the Annual Conference of the Burns Federation at Newcastle-on-Tyne, where he was elected an Honorary President and delivered a memorable speech in proposing the toast of “The Burns Federation” at the luncheon (The speech is reproduced at the end of this article).

On 16th December, 1938, Hecht wrote to Professor Dover Wilson, of Edinburgh University, describing the condition in Germany. The following is an extract from that letter:-

“Since 1935, the year of the Nürnburg laws, things have moved from bad to worse, until they have become unbearable. I am not certain that the full impact of these measures has been realised. Their aim is the destruction of those parts of the population against which they are directed and they are carried out with the utmost brutality, without the slightest possibility of protest or appeal. Although I am convinced that the weapons employed will be finally directed against their inventors, we are unable to predict the term of liberation, and between it and the present day there may occur a European cataclysm of unprecedented dimensions.

Regarding myself, I have not only been deprived of my rights as a German citizen, in spite of service in the war for four years in important functions and as the incumbent of the chair of English Language and Literature at Göttingen for another twelve years, but latterly also of the fundamental privilege of working in any of the public libraries and institutes of Germany, so that I am unable to continue my research work. Although I am still receiving my salary, certain enactments of the last days create the impression that this too will be discontinued in the near future.”

In another letter, of 3rd January, 1939, he wrote:

“Although I am anxious to completely disjoin my connexions with Germany as soon as possible, I am not, at present, considering emigration. On the contrary, relying upon the fact that I still belong to the staff of Göttingen University, I continue to keep up official and not unfriendly relations with the respective authorities. What I am asking for as a temporary
solution is the possibility of inserting a sufficient distance between myself and the effects of their mischievous enactments, and of finishing the books I have in hand, especially my work on Shakespeare's Dynamics, free from disturbing and highly enervating impacts. I believe this statement should facilitate results, although even so I am the last to underrate the difficulties of the situation. But after all I have spent my life in the service of English culture, have in many cases assisted scholars of British nationality and during the long term of my occupancy of the Chair of English at Göttingen, have worked steadily and not unsuccessfully in establishing a basis of mutual appreciation between German and British academic circles. Where should I turn, now the hour of need has arrived, but to those who have taken interest in my work and with whom I feel myself mentally affiliated?"

Professor Dover Wilson did his utmost to arrange with the University authorities that Dr Hecht should be invited over to take up a position in this country, but Edinburgh was in the same position as other Universities, who had all their own problems of displaced German scholars, and it was found impossible to do anything in the matter of securing even a temporary honorary post for Hecht.

Meantime he had crossed over the Swiss border on 7th February, to spend a few weeks with friends in Basle, "for some rest and a change of air," and it was decided to let him know that it was quite hopeless for him to earn a living here and that he would be better to remain in Switzerland and work in the libraries there. This was a bitter blow to him. In his reply to me of 23rd March, 1939, he began -

"After my flight across the border in constant danger of discovery and arrest - this is no pleasure-trip - I was put up by reliable friends and am still taking advantage of their hospitality."

After narrating at length what he had planned to do, he went on-

"Disappointment does not exactly describe my reaction... John is the name of Burns positively no more than an empty sound, a subject for toasts and high-flung annual protestations? Is it really void of obligations, when the common laws of humanity are viciously trodden under foot? On German soil I cannot fight - as yet. There, truth, freedom, justice have been smashed to smithereens, and brutal force, nothing but the most abject, despicable meanness impresses upon an unwilling and deeply disappointed nation the stamp of its own depravity. Why should a man, who, like myself, has always done his best for the propagation of British ideas and for their spread in Germany be left to perish in the foul atmosphere of a doomed system, instead of being welcomed to the front of those who before God and the world are responsible for the defence of everything worth cultivating and fighting for? My passport is in order and has the British visum. Be very careful to direct any communications to me via France. They are in danger of being opened on their passage through Germany."

He finally decided to come to Britain, firmly believing that he could achieve by personal interview what others had been unable to do. Mr Harry Hodge, Mrs Burgoyne, Dr Henry Meikle of the National Library of Scotland, and I formed ourselves into a Committee to raise sufficient money to help Dr Hecht on his arrival here, until he could make arrangements for maintaining himself by tutoring, lecturing, &c., for the remainder of the two years or so which might be necessary for him to complete his work. Dr Meikle wrote to Professor Snyder, who issued an appeal to the Burns Clubs in the United States, asking not only for contributions to the fund but also for information as to any professional opening that Dr Hecht might fill. I am glad to record that every member of the Burns Federation to whom I wrote readily subscribed to the fund, which very soon reached £120.

Hecht returned to Germany and after arranging matters for his wife with the Foreign Office and Ministry of Education he left Hamburg on 1st June, 1939, and arrived at Leith on the following day. He was a very welcome guest at my house for a fortnight, during which time he made several
contacts with University friends, but all to no purpose. He went on to Glasgow for a few days to see among others Mr J C Ewing, and then proceeded to London.

On the day of his departure I showed him a paragraph about himself in that morning's press, which stated that he had been removed from his post at Göttingen University, deprived of his pension rights and rendered almost destitute. As will be seen from his letters quoted above, the facts were that he resigned voluntarily, was still drawing his salary, and was by no means destitute though he could not take his money out of Germany. He had in fact a secret private account with a bank in Basle known only by its number – 2540

When he read the paragraph he turned white as a sheet and remarked “Heaven save me from my friends! This is enough to put me in a concentration camp.”

In London he made an unsuccessful attempt to secure a grant from the Society for the Protection of Learning. The official whom he approached was “quite friendly at first, but rather stand-offish later on.” On the other hand, Mr A. G. Erskine Hill, M.P., Mr D L Grey, Secretary of St. Louis Burns Club, and the American Consul General were all very sympathetic. His contact with the American Consulate was made following an invitation he had received, no doubt through the good offices of Professor Snyder, to go to the Folger Library in Washington. While he would have preferred to stay in this country, he agreed that it would be better to go to U.S.A. and take advantage of this offer, but to get a visa for America he had to go back to Berlin.

On 20th July, 1939, ten days before he expected to return, he wrote me his last letter with the ominous news that he had been summoned back to Berlin by a letter from his wife, written at the instigation of the Gestapo. He ended his letter thus: “Before leaving let me again assure you of my deep and unalterable gratefulness to all the donors and to the Committee. It was a great thing to do and I thoroughly appreciate the idea and the sentiment. It has of course cemented the life long bonds which tie me to Scotland.”

That was the last communication I had from him, but a friend, whom he had asked to send me the balance of cash he had in his possession, informed me later that he had received a postcard from Dr Hecht saying that the authorities had only wanted to see him on some minor matters of no importance.

There was a balance of £83 in the “Hecht Fund,” which with the outbreak of war could not be used for the purpose for which it was subscribed. The “Committee” therefore, with the approval of the subscribers, decided to hand the balance over to the Burns Federation as a donation to the fund for providing a copy of Burns’s Poems for each Scottish child who was sent abroad under the Overseas Reception Scheme.

During the war it was impossible to get any information about Hecht’s whereabouts, but on 1st October, 1945, Mr Harry Hodge received from London an envelope addressed to him and containing a pencilled note saying “Prof. Hecht is still alive, living in Berlin, Lichterfelde-West, 27 I Tietsenweg.” This note was written by Hecht himself.

In 1947 I asked a friend on the Control Commission in Berlin to make inquiries as to Hecht’s fate. It proved to be a difficult task. After years of Gestapo rule one can appreciate the suspicion with which people regarded any inquiries made about other people. Various visits had to be made to the address given in the pencilled note, and at last the officer gained the confidence of a Doctor who had been Hecht’s friend and neighbour. They had had a terrible experience when the Russians entered Berlin. Hecht and the Doctor had to organise the defence of their block of flats. Several of their friends were killed and they had to bury them in their garden. There was no evidence that Hecht had ever been in a concentration camp, but his experiences and privations during the war had affected his heart, and he died from natural causes in February, 1946 (not 1947 as stated in Burns Chronicle, 1949, p.55). His wife died a few days after him.
SPEECH OF PROFESSOR
HANS HECHT

In proposing the toast of “The Burns Federation” at the luncheon which followed the Annual Conference of the Council in Newcastle-on-Tyne 1937

With heartfelt gratitude I acknowledge the great and entirely unexpected honour that the Burns Federation has conferred upon me in electing me one of its Hon. Presidents, the only one, as far as I am aware, who is not of Anglo-Saxon descent. I take it that my sins in daring to write a “life” of your National Poet have been graciously forgiven me by his countrymen, and that, whatever I have been amiss in the intimacy of my appreciations, the love and the admiration I felt for the subject of my long protracted and frequently repeated endeavours were allowed to be thrown into the balance.

True that Burns only once in his life, and for a very short time, visited Newcastle, but concerning the visits of poets, regardless of duration, there is a fine passage in Goethe’s “Tasso” which you will allow me, for beauty’s sake, to quote in the original German. It runs thus:-

“Es ist vorteilhaft, den Genius
Bewirten: gibst du ihm ein Gastgeschenk,
So lässt er dir ein schöneres zurück.
Die stätte, die ein guter Mensch betrat,
Ist eingeweiht; nach hundert Jahren klingt
Sein Wort und seine Tat dem Enkel wieder.”

(Meaning: it is advantageous to welcome genius. Tender him a gift and he will repay you with one of greater value. The house that has been entered by a good man is sanctified; after an hundred years his word and deed resound still to his descendants.)

Notice how Goethe here, as elsewhere, identifies genius with goodness, meaning apparently a transcendent kind of goodness, an inkling of God’s benignity, without which no creative work of real greatness has ever been perpetrated; on the other hand, where creative genius is at work we may be confident that in the long run the alloy of frailty, that is man’s heritage, will be reduced to insignificance in the melting-pot of fate. To understand all is to forgive all. Burns shared this conviction of his great contemporary, and in one of the self-confessional stanzas of “The vision” has expressed it in his own perfectly clear and powerful manner:-

“I saw thy pulse’s maddening play,
Wild-send thee Pleasure’s devious way,
Misled by Fancy’s meteor-ray,
By passion driven;
But yet the light that led astray
Was light from Heaven.”

Understanding-Light from Heaven; Reason-Faith: - it is with these profound conceptions in our minds that we now, without further delay, approach the subject of this toast, “The Burns Federation” – its present state and the expectations we may connect with its future activities, the future being, as always, indissolubly entwined with the present.

Excepting Shakespeare, there is not one poet in the whole compass of British literature whose
actual, whose astonishingly persistent, influence can be compared to that of Robert Burns. I am not alluding to official scales more or less convincingly laid down by professors of literary history, although even there I believe myself not to be wide of the mark. What I mean is something different, as you will see in a minute.

The very existence of the Burns Federation, including not far from 300 affiliated Clubs and Societies, is in itself a sign demanding respect and wonder. It proves how far the fame of Burns has spread and how consistently it is expanding itself. Its branches, like those of a mythical tree, reach all over the world, while its roots are firmly grounded in Scottish soil. Their names, speaking allegorically, are Vitality and Love: Love everlasting and by no means confined to the changing tastes of literary minorities, but, as we all know and feel, cherished by the nation in its entirety from one generation to the other; and Vitality beyond the limitations of human existence, shattering the bondage of Death and breaking the confinements of the grave.

Facing these facts, there can be no doubt as to the duties and the responsibilities of the Burns Federation. Parts of it are self-evident. Faith is being repaid by faithfulness in carefully attending to the whole complex of Burns research, extending from the preservation of the Birthplace, and the magnificent collection of manuscripts and books attached to it, to the embellishment of the Mausoleum; from the collecting and judiciously interpreting of the available biographical details to the establishment of a complete and perfectly reliable text of the Poems, the Songs, the Journals, and the Letters; from the study of the poet’s individual existence to the actual and relative importance of his colleagues, friends, and adversaries; from the atmosphere of the cottage at Alloway to the social and historical background as furnished by his people, by Great Britain, by the spiritual and political life of contemporaneous Europe. Much has been done, as the voluminous library of Burns literature testifies, but, as it always happens with really representative men, whatever has been accomplished seems only to lead to new beginnings.

This is the place to speak gratefully of the organ of the Federation, the Burns Chronicle, and of the merits of its devoted, circumspect, and sharp-sighted editor, J C Ewing. While remaining true to one of its undoubtedly meritorious missions, viz. to report proceedings and to establish connecting links between the Burns Clubs all over the globe, this family-life of the Federation has, under his care, been enriched by essays, surveys, publication of new materials which are year by year adding to its scientific value, and which make it an indispensable tool in the hands of every lover of, and every worker in, Burns. I noticed that its sale has decreased, at any rate in 1936. This is not as it ought to be, and I hope that the present editor will be spared to see the day when not only each Burns Club but each individual member will have become a subscriber to the Chronicle. This is the least we can do to show how highly we appreciate his work. I for one am a firm believer in the future possibilities of the Chronicle, and if I may venture a suggestion it is this – that, while the Chronicle must always remain the centre of Burns investigation, it may, in the course of time, by enlarging its scope, become a receptacle of the results of each year’s work in the whole field of Scottish national literature.

For such is the stimulative force of genius that there are, of necessity, many ways which, while they begin with him, yet lead beyond his immediate presence. One of the sign-posts points to the sturdy of what is conventionally called the Scottish language, the need of its codification and of collecting of even its minutest details and shades of meaning in all the dialects of Scotland, to the most remote parish of the country. It is an undertaking of the utmost difficulty, but, at the same time, highly promising and absolutely indispensable. The Scottish National Dictionary and its courageous editor, Dr William Grant, should never be forgotten when the members of the Burns Federation are convened to consider its duties and the objects most deserving its moral and practical assistance. I think the Lanarkshire County Council were quite right when they described the Scottish National Dictionary as “a notable contribution to Scottish literature for all time.” Not only to literature. Literature, whatever its driving forces may be, nearly always recedes and must recede into the honourable but stabilised world of bookshelves. It is different with this Dictionary. If the
life of a language is contained in its dialects, the dialects themselves wield the keys to the life of the nation; so that the dictionary is more than a contribution to national literature: it is a notable contribution to the interpretation and intensification of the life of the Scottish people itself.

Last, but by no means least, I think we ought gratefully and approvingly to remember the efforts of the Federation to encourage the teaching of Scottish literature in schools and to facilitate this study by furnishing a series of graded school text-books of Scottish literature. Surely, much good may be done by creating a Scottish atmosphere in schools – and by no means in schools only, but far beyond this throughout the generations which constitute the living unity of the nation. As long as it is kept within its proper bonds, patriotism is both a blessing and an inspiration; only let us remember that while we may be proud of the soil under our feet, our heads are raised towards the firmament, and that heaven is nobody’s privileged and particular property. This, too, was the conviction of Burns; it formed part of the enlightened conceptions of its age, and let us hope that it will adorn again the spiritual horizon of times to come.

There is, as you are aware, no end of the important tasks entrusted to the activities of the Burns Federation and to all the Clubs and Societies affiliated to it. Our thanks are sincere, our hopes are great, and we are all proud to belong to it. When the heart of Robert Burns ceased to beat in his outworn body, the throb of his pulses, all that was great, vital, immortal in it, was absorbed by an entity of much stronger constitution. The heart of Burns continued to beat in the heart of Scotland. May it never cease to do so! May the Scottish nation, and with it the Burns Federation, prove faithful guardians of this precious inheritance, conscious that not only Scotland but the whole world is in dire need of its purifying influence!

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**BURNS STATUE FOR EDMONTON CANADA**

Designed by John Weaver of Hope, British Columbia. See report at foot of page 177.
The parentage of genius is a subject which can never fail to interest ordinary common-place humanity. It excites within us an insatiable curiosity somewhat akin to that which impels us to investigate the origin of some brilliant luminary, or to trace to its source a mighty flowing river. Probably there is no instance in which this interest has become more pronounced, at least in Scotland, than in regard to the parentage of our National Poet, Robert Burns. Nor is this exceptional interest in his parentage at all difficult to account for. His characteristics, both as a man and as a poet, are in themselves so extremely phenomenal, considering the lowly and uncultured life in which his lot was cast, that we are compelled to look rather to the principle of heredity than to the mould of worldly circumstances for the raison d'être of his striking and exceptional individuality.

There is apparently an assumption that mental gifts and graces are more generally transmitted through the mother that through the father, and in Burns’s case it may be that he inherited from the gentle, practical, womanly nature of his mother, Agnes Brown, (1732 - 1820), his impulsive generosity of heart and tender sympathy of feeling, his exquisite sense of humour, and his love for the romantic and poetical. There can scarcely be a doubt, however, that it was to his worthy old father, William Burnes (1721 - 1784), practical common-sense, and his inherent conception of true propriety and fitness. Burns himself, in the autobiographical notes which he furnished to Dr Moore (1729 - 1802), recognises his father as the true source of that inherent principle of integrity which enabled him to weather storms, which, at the very outset, would otherwise have made shipwreck of his career. “My father,” he says, “was of the North of Scotland, the son of a farmer, and was thrown by early misfortunes on the world at large, where, after many years’ wanderings and sojournings, he picked up a fairly large quantity of observation and experience to which I am indebted for most of my little pretensions to wisdom. I have met with few who understood men – their manners and their ways – equal to him; but stubborn ungainly integrity and headlong ungovernable irascibility are disqualifying circumstances, consequently I was born a very poor man’s son.”

William Burnes was undoubtedly a man of very exceptional worth, and of decided and marked superiority to the sphere of society in which he moved. His humble lot in life was one of unremitting ill-rewarded toil, and of constant mental anxiety and care; and when in his sixty-third year he felt himself after a lingering illness called upon to lay aside his earthly burden, it was amid the gloom and anguish of impending poverty. Of the many anxious thoughts and cares which darkened the close of his life, not the least depressing was the knowledge that he was leaving his widow and children not only unprovided for, but actually involved in a vexatious and expensive litigation with his landlord. Hard as his fate was, and sad as the closing days of his life must have been, William Burnes never seems to have swerved or faltered. He went on the even tenor of his way in spite of obstacles and difficulties which would have crushed any man of less sturdy moral fibre, rigidly rendering unto Caesar the things that were Caesar’s, and unto God the things that were God’s; and he resigned his weary toilsome life as he had borne it throughout, in a spirit of unshrinking faith, and unmurmuring resignation and contentment. Upright and consistent in his character, rigidly strict in his principles, deeply devotional in his every thought, and acutely conscientious in the discharge of his every duty.
and responsibility, he presents to us a noble instance of genuine Scottish individuality of the truly good old stamp.

He was the third son of Robert Burnes, tenant of the farm of Clochnahill, a farm of about sixty acres, situated in Kincardineshire, and belonging to the Keith-Marischals of Dunottar. By his wife, Isabella Keith, of the family of Keith of Craig, Robert Burnes had four sons and six daughters. The family were in fair circumstances, but the disastrous winter of 1740 seems to have reduced them to considerable pecuniary straits, and the father was obliged to give up his farm and retire with his three unmarried daughters to a cottage in the Parish of Dunottar. In consequence of the family reverses, William (the Poet's father), along with his elder brother Robert, felt themselves compelled to leave their paternal home in search of a livelihood elsewhere, and they turned their faces southwards. The parting of the two brothers took place on a rising ground overlooking the home of their childhood — Robert setting out in one direction, and finding his way ultimately into England: while William, after varied wanderings and experiences, settled in Edinburgh, and found employment there for some years as an ordinary out-door labourer. He must have been in Edinburgh during the time of the young Chevalier's residence in Holyrood in 1745, and, considering the political leanings of the family, and that they had for generations been associated as tenants under the Earl Marischal who was attained for his share in the Jacobite rising of 1715, it is not improbable that William Burnes may have more or less identified himself with Prince Charlie's ill-fated attempt to regain the throne of his ancestors. Be that as it may, we lose all trace of William Burnes for fully ten years, and when he at length settles in the quiet, law-abiding neighbourhood of Ayr, it is somewhat suggestive that he takes the precaution to provide himself with a parochial certificate testifying "that he had no concern in the late wicked rebellion."

His occupation in Ayrshire seems to have been in the capacity of gardener, first to the Laird of Fairlie, and afterwards to Mr. Crawford of Doonside. Shortly thereafter he feued seven acres of land near to the town of Ayr, converting the land into a nursery, and erecting with his own hands the "auld clay biggin,'" which has since become an object of such deep and powerful interest to every Scottish heart. Here, in the end of 1757, he brought his young bride, Agnes Brown, from her grandmother's house in Maybole; and here, on the ever-memorable 25th of January, 1759, was ushered into the world their illustrious first-born, Robert Burns.

William Burnes continued to reside in his cottage on the banks of the Doon for fully seven years after the Poet's birth, and in the interval his family was increased by the birth of his second son, Gilbert, born in 1760; his eldest daughter, Agnes, born in 1762; and his second daughter, Annabella, born in 1764. At Whitsunday, 1766, he was induced to take on lease the farm of Mount Oliphant, extending to about 60 acres, and forming part of the estate of Doonholm, situated about a couple of miles distant from his former residence. Here he removed his wife and children, and here he toiled with all his natural energy and indomitable perseverance for a period of eleven long toilsome years, only to find that the farm was a barren and unprofitable subject.

An interesting and graphic delineation of William Burnes's personality is furnished to us by Mr John Murdoch (1747 – 1824) who acted as teacher to the Poet and his younger brother Gilbert, and who was a frequent inmate of
William Burns’s household, both at the cottage near Ayr and at Mount Oliphant. He thus relates his experiences of the Burns family, after he himself had removed to Ayr and his visits had necessarily become more brief and occasional. “I was a frequent visitant at his (the Poet’s) 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 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 the French language, &c., and the father, who had always rational information in view, had still some questions to propose to my more learned friends upon moral or natural philosophy, or some such interesting subject. Mrs Burns, too, was of the party as much as possible,

“But still the house affairs would draw her hence,

Which ever 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 more marked attention than to anybody 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 guid-man’ had said. This worthy woman, Agnes Brown, had the most thorough esteem for her husband of any woman I ever knew. I can by no means wonder that she highly esteemed him, for I myself 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 even his failings leaned to virtue’s side.’

He was an excellent husband if I may judge from his assiduous attention to the care 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 in driving them, as some parents do, to the performance of duties to which they themselves are averse. He took care to find fault but very seldom, and, therefore, when he did rebuke, he was listened to with a kind of reverential awe.”

According to Dr. Currie (1756 – 1805) William Burnes is described by one who knew him personally in the later years of his life, as above the common stature, thin and bent with labour. His countenance was serious and composed, and the scanty locks on his head were grey. He was of a religious turn of mind, and, as is usual among the Scottish peasantry, he was a good deal conversant with speculative theology. As evidence of these facts, reference may here be made to the “Manual of Religious Belief,” which he composed for the use of his family, and which was published some years ago as a contribution towards the ever-increasing mass of Burns Bibliography. The Manual is in the form of a dialogue between a father and son, and it displays not only great ease, dignity, and lucidity of expression, but also a marvellous faculty for logical reasoning. It exhibits, too, in the benevolence of spirit in which the then generally accepted Calvinistic tenets are softened down in their rigidity, a liberality of sentiment far in advance of the age in which he lived.

Owing to the failure of the farm of Mount Oliphant, William Burnes, at Whitsunday, 1777, removed to a somewhat more promising farm, situated in the parish of Tarbolton, and called Lochlea. By this time the family had been still further increased by the birth of two additional sons, William and John, and of his youngest daughter, Isobel (Isabella)*, afterwards Mrs John Begg, who within the last forty years occupied along with her two daughters a picturesque cottage on the Banks of the Doon, and whose dignified form, and calm, self-possessed bearing must still be in the recollection of not a few of my readers.

The farm of Lochlea was larger than that of Mount Oliphant, and the lease seems to have been adjusted on terms apparently favourable to the tenant. Burns himself says of it, “that the bargain was such as to throw a little ready money into my father’s hand at the commencement, otherwise the affair would have been impracticable.” For four years William Burns and his household enjoyed at Lochlea comparative comfort. Their life, it is true, continued to be one of hard and unremitting toil, but it was undergone in a spirit of thorough contentment and of single-hearted devotion to the common family interest. Dr Robert Chambers (1802 – 1871) in his biography of Burns, in treating of the Lochlea experiences, says, - “It was a time of comparative comfort for the Burnes family, although marked not less than any other by extreme application to labour. The family was a remarkable one in the district. They kept more by themselves than is common in their class. Their superior intelligence and refinement, and a certain air of self-respect which they bore amid all the common drudgeries of their situation, caused them to be looked upon as people of a superior sort. Country neighbours who happened to enter their family room at the dinner hour, were surprised to find them all – father, brothers, and sisters – sitting with a book in one hand, while they used their spoons with the other.”

William Burnes himself was now verging on sixty years of age, and his health was beginning to fail, but he was ably aided in his industrious efforts by his loving and devoted wife and children. Robert, then in his nineteenth year, and Gilbert, aged seventeen, were a great assistance to him in his agricultural labours, and although the Poet in after life graphically characterises his experiences at this period “as the cheerless gloom of a hermit, with the unceasing moil of a galley slave,” it is clear that there was mingled with their care and toil a considerable amount of genuine domestic comfort and happiness. Even the younger members of the household had each his or her appropriate and suitable part to bear in the family industry, and Mrs Begg, then a mere child of ten years, had her special duty assigned to her, and after a lapse of fully four-score years, she

* When Isabella died in 1858, she was buried in her father’s grave in “Alloway’s Auld Haunted Kirkyard”.
used to recall with delight the happy experiences
of her youthful days at Lochlea. One of these
reminiscences as related by her to the late Dr.
Robert Chambers, presents the Poet's father in
an exceedingly pleasing light. "Her main
occupation," Mrs Begg said, "was one suited
to her tender years, that of 'herding' the cattle
in the field. Her father would often visit her, sit
down by her side, and tell her the names of the
various grasses and wild flowers, as if to lose
no opportunity of imparting instruction. When
it thundered she was sure he would come to her,
because he knew that on such occasions she was
apt to suffer much from terror."

Graphic sketches of the family life at
Lochlea are to be found scattered over the pages
of the various editions of the Poet's Life and
Works, and not the least interesting of these is
furnished by the following characteristic letter
addressed by William Burnes himself, within
three years of his death, to his nephew, James
Burnes (1750–1837), Montrose. (See also page
57.)

"Dear Nephew, - I received your
affectionate letter by the bearer, who
came five miles with it to my house. I
received it with the same warmth you
wrote it, and I am extremely glad you
express yourself with so warm regard
for your parents and friends. I wish you
much joy of your wife and child. I would
have been glad had you sent me their
names, with the name of your brother-
in-law:

I have a family of four sons and three
daughters; two of my sons and two of
my daughters are men and women, and
all with me in the farm way. I have the
happiness to hope they are virtuously
inclined. My youngest daughter is ten
years of age. My eldest son is named
Robert; my second, Gilbert; the third,
John; the fourth, William. My eldest
daughter is named Agnes; the second,
Anabella; the third, Isobel.

My brother lives at Stewarton, by
Kilmarnock. He has two sons and one
daughter, named John, William, and
Fanny. Their circumstances are very
different.

I shall be happy to hear from you
when it is convenient, when I shall write
to you from time to time. Please give my
respects to your brother and sister in the
kindest manner, and to you wife, which
will greatly oblige your affectionate
uncle,

William Burnes
Lochlea, 14th April, 1781

The reminiscences of Mrs Begg, the
youngest member of William Burnes' householf, of the early period of her life which
she passed at Lochlea, continued to be a never-failing source of deep and genuine happiness to
her during her lengthened existence of nearly
fourscore and ten years. These were of too sacred
a character to be alluded to except within the
limits of her own family circle, or to some
specially favoured and sympathetic listener; but
when she was indured to speak of her father she
never failed to express the profoundest reverence
for, and devotion to, his memory. Proud as she
naturally was of her illustrious eldest brother,
and fondly as she clung all her life through to
her every recollection of him, she was still
prouder of, and clung more fondly and tenderly
to, her memories of her father. Him she regarded
as a far higher object of admiration, and her
favourite delineation of his personality was to
point to him as the veritable original of "the saint,
the father, and the husband," so reverently
depicted by her brother in "The Cotter's Saturday
Night."

From Mrs Begg's reminiscence we derive
the deeply interesting information that her father
had, from a very early period of the Poet's
childhood, discerned the exceptional gifts of his
eldest son, and had expressed to his wife the
solemn prediction - "Whoever may live to see
it, something extraordinary will come from that
boy." From the same source, too, we have the
information that the Poet's father actually lived
to realize in some measure, and probably not
without a mysterious blending of parental pride
with parental anxiety, the truth of his own
prediction. Some of the earliest effusions of his
son's marvellous genius he actually lived to read
and to appreciate very highly, and among these
be especially admired the exquisite simplicity
and tenderness of sentiment in the matchless
pastoral song “My Nanny, O!” Mrs Begg, too, used to relate with much enjoyment, a domestic incident at Lochlea, which revealed her austere father and his gifted son in a very real and characteristic light. In the winter of 1781 - 82, while Burns was paying court to the first of his innumerable successive divinities – Ellison Begbie, a sweet and interesting girl, who dwelt on the banks of the Cessnock, about two miles from Lochlea – his father naturally became much concerned at the lateness of the hour at which his son occasionally returned to the parental roof, and in order to administer a fitting rebuke to the “rover,” he one night insisted on sitting up to await his return. When, therefore, the youthful bard arrived at Lochlea, he found his father awaiting him in his severest admonitory mood. On being asked the reason for his detention to such a late hour, the son, at once in his gayest and happiest strain, began to give his father so humorous and fanciful a description of his experiences and difficulties in his journey homewards, that the father not only forgot the intended rebuke, but actually became so interested in and amused at his son’s recital, that he continued sitting at the kitchen fireside for fully two hours enjoying his son’s fascinating conversation.

The operations on the farm of Lochlea seem to have been of a more than usually arduous character, for there was a house and barn to build, and waste land – referred to in William Burnes’s jottings as “the loch,” extending to 21 acres – to drain and dress with lime, so as to make it suitable for cultivation. These operations seem to have extended over the earlier years of the occupancy of Lochlea, and before they were fully completed a dispute seems to have arisen between William Burnes and his landlord, Mr McLure, and impending misfortune like an ever-darkening cloud began to gather around the household. This vexatious and troublesome matter seems to have painfully harassed and distressed William Burnes, and his health becoming more and more undermined, he, after a lingering illness, departed this life on the 13th February, 1784, in the 64th year of his age. Mrs Begg has left a touching and graphic sketch of the melancholy scene around her father’s bedside on the day of his death. “She remembered being at her father’s bedside on that morning with no other company besides her brother Robert. Seeing her cry bitterly at the thought of the impending parting, her father endeavoured to speak, but could only murmur a few words of comfort, such as might be suitable to a child (she was then only twelve years of age), concluding with an injunction to walk in virtue’s paths and to shun every vice. After a pause he said there was one of his family for whose future conduct he feared. He repeated the same expression when the young Poet came up and said, ‘Oh, father, is it me that you mean?’ The old man said that it was. Robert turned to the window with tears running down his cheeks, and his bosom heaving as if it would burst from the very restraint he put upon himself.”

Actuated by that strong attachment to locality, which forms so marked a characteristic of the Celtic race, the Burns family resolved to inter their father’s remains in the burying ground attached to “Alloway’s Auld Haunted Kirk,” the burying ground of the parish in which William Burnes and his wife had spent the first years of their wedded life. Accordingly at considerable expense and inconvenience, the funeral procession wended its weary way over the eight miles which intervened between Lochlea and the place of interment – the coffin, according to the then prevailing custom, being supported by two horses, placed one after the other. On the tombstone, shortly afterwards erected to mark
the site of his father’s grave, Burns inscribed the following genuine and touching tribute to his father’s worth—lines which, inartistic as they are, express more sincerely the true sentiments of his heart, that the most impassioned stanza he ever composed:—

“O! Ye whose cheek the tear of pity stains,
Draw near in pious rev’rence and attend!

Here lie the loving husband’s dear remains,
The tender father, and the gen’rous friend,
The pitying heart that felt for human woe,
The dauntless heart that feared no human pride,
The friend of man, to vice alone a foe,
‘For e’en his failings leaned to virtue’side.’

I received your affectionate letter
the bigger who came mile with it to my house. I received with the same warmth your writt it and I am extremely glad you express yourself with so warm regard for your parents and friends I must mak Joy on your wife and child I should have been glad had you sent me their name with the name of your brother in law
I have a niece of four sons and three
daughters two of my sons and two of my daughter are men and women and all with me in the same way I have the happiness to hope they are virtuously inclined any youngest daughter is ten years of age my eldest son is named Robert the second Gilbert the third William the fourth John my eldest daughter so named Sophia the second Annabella the third Young My Brother has all Stewart only Kelma he has two sons and one daughter names John William and Tanny their Armour is very different

Extract from a letter by William Burnes (The Poet’s father) to James Burness, Schoolmaster at Montrose, dated Lochlie, 14th April, 1781 in which he makes reference to the members of his family.
It is interesting to recall the generous services rendered by Sir James to the family of the poet. He took upon himself the task of collecting subscriptions in London for the widow and children, of Robert Burns himself contributing £100, while a like sum was obtained from Sir Francis Burdett. The total sum raised by him was about £1200, with which stock was purchased and handed over the Provost and Bailies of Ayr, £800 to be appropriated to the use of Mrs Burns and her three sons, and £400 to the use of the poet’s two natural daughters, each of whom received £200 at marriage or on attaining the age of twenty-one years. Subsequently Sir James was also the patron who obtained cadetships for two of Burns’s sons in the Indian Army. The natural daughters referred to above were both named Elizabeth. The first, borne by “Betty Paton” at Largie-side Tarbolton, in 1784, became the wife of John Bishop, a land-steward, to whom she had several children; the second, borne by Ann Park, at the Globe Tavern, Dumfries, in 1791, was reared by Mrs Burns as one of her own family, and afterwards married John Thomson, Pollokshaws, to whom she had two sons and five daughters, the youngest daughter becoming the wife of David Wingate, the well known Scottish poet. The following letter was addressed in 1799 by Alderman Shaw to Mr John Woodburn, tenant of Aird farm and Shawsmill in this neighbourhood:

“Dear Miller, - I thank you for your friendly information about Millrigs; it is not a place that would suit me, was I inclined to purchase, which at present I am not, as I really think lands are much too high, and will fall when peace takes place. At the same time, if any neat little place, with a good house upon it, with a freehold qualification, a view of the sea, or on the banks of a running stream, should offer itself on terms that would pay an interest. I might be inclined to take a run down and look at it; but places of this description are rare, and consequently fetch more money that I would be inclined to give. Accept, my friend, my hearty congratulations, and be so kind as to offer the same to Mrs Woodburn on your union; may it be long and full of happiness. I think Mr Gilbert Burns is still your neighbour. Will you be so good as acquaint him that I have succeeded in raising amongst my friends a pretty handsome sum for the benefit of the poet’s widow and children, and as soon as I can make it up to £500 – 3 per cents. – I mean to put it in the hands either of the Magistrates of Air or Kilmarnock, to be applied to their use. Mr Thompson of Dumfries, I understand, takes some charge of the Scots funds, but the London money is intended to be put under the guardianship of proper persons in Ayrshire. I see by the papers, the Colonel [Colonel Woodburn, another of Mr Shaw’s protégés] had got to India and was appointed to succeed a Col. Scott at Cawnpore. I hope he was well when you heard from him. David desires his compliments; he is in great good health, as is, Dear Miller; yours,

London, 9th May, 1799.
Mr John Woodburn.

Some years later, Mr Woodburn received the following communication from the Provost of Ayr with reference to the money collected by Mr Shaw, who had in the interval been raised to the position of Lord Mayor of London: -
"Sir, - Some time ago I received a letter from Alderman Shaw, now Lord Mayor of London, informing me that he had made, from further subscriptions raised by him, an additional purchase of stock in the 3 per cent. Reduc'd annuities, for the benefit of the family of the late Poet Burns, as before in the names of the Provost and Bailies of Ayr. The whole amount of stock now in that fund is £1200 Os and the interest to be divided as follows: £800 Os to be appropriated to the use of the widow Burns and her three sons, and £400 Os to the use of the two girls, for which sum they are considered as heiress, one moiety to be paid to each on marriage or before she arrives at twenty-one years of age, the moiety of the deceased to go to the survivor. I understand one of the daughters (I see they are both Elizabeth's) lives with the widow, and as you draw for the widow's money, if you include her part in the draught it will be paid at Hunter and Co. office here, as the dividends from that stock come up. The other daughter, I am informed, lives with her mother at Mr Woodburn of Aird's. If by any means you could point out some proper person to draw her money it will be paid at same time. I am, sir, your obt. Servt.,

"William Bowie, Provost"

Mr William Thompson, writer, Dumfries."

Ayr 21st Nov. 1805

Sir - As I understand the young woman alluded to in the former letter lives with her mother, who is a servant in your family. I trouble you with the preceding copy of a letter sent of this day, as directed. It perhaps may be advantageous to the young woman to know that she has a fortune at her disposal; it may help her to a husband; and at any rate be of service to her. She is entitled to £3 twice a year, to be paid her where she may think proper; and if she wishes it paid in Kilmarnock, by sending me notice it shall be so ordered. - I am, sir, your obedient servant.

"William Bowie"

"Mr John Woodburn."

As above stated, the first born of the two Elizabeths lived with her mother, as a marriageable young woman, on the farm of Aird, near Crossroads, about four miles from Kilmarnock. The cottage occupied by them (which has long since been removed) stood in the field on the left-hand side of the road leading from the main highway at Crossroads to Aird and Shawsmill. In a letter to Dr Chambers, Miss Isabella Begg records what her mother (the poet's sister) had told her about Elizabeth Paton and the daughter who (as above stated) sojourned with her on the banks of the Cessnock:

"She (Elizabeth Paton) was an exceedingly handsome figure, but very plain-looking; so active, honest, and independent a creature that she had become a great favourite with her mistress, who, when her situation became known, was most anxious that Burns should have married her, but both my aunts and uncle Gilbert opposed it. The girl herself acknowledged he had broken no promise to her. They thought the faults of her character would soon have disgusted him. She was rude and uncultivated to a great degree, a strong masculine understanding, with a thorough, (tho' unwomanly) contempt for every sort of refinement... My mother says she does not believe that ever woman loved man with a more heartful devotion that that poor creature did him. She married, some time after, a farm servant lad named Andrew, and made a most excellent wife. In fact, except that one instance, her behaviour was exemplary. It is to her Burns alludes in 'Tibbie':

There lives a lass in yonder park,
I wadna gie her in her sark, &c.

Burn's affection for her had been very different from hers for him; but he never treated her unkindly, and when he was about to marry Jean Armour, he offered to take the little girl... When Burns went to Ellisland the child Elizabeth Burns came to Mossgiel to my grandmother and attended
school at Mauchline till the poet's death. Her mother took her home, where she lived till she was married to John Bishop, who acted as land-steward to Baillie of Polkennet. She was a good, upright creature, and when she died, the minister of the parish wrote a beautiful character of her to my grandfather."

Mrs Bishop died in 1817, aged 32, and was buried at Whitburn Churchyard, where a monument stands to her memory.

"Kilmarnock Standard", 1898

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Above:- Engraving of Sir James Shaw in a copy of "Memoir of the late James Fillans"
Sculptor by James Paterson 1854.
Patrick Miller (1771 – 1815)
Friend of Robert Burns

Patrick Miller was born in Glasgow in 1771. He was the youngest son of William Miller, Esquire of Glenlee, in the Stewarty, and brother of Sir Thomas Miller, who was created a baronet and lord-president of the Court of Session in 1788.

A considerable portion of his youth was spent at sea as a sailor, a circumstance that may have helped to stimulate his genius in the direction of propelling sailing vessels by steam. On leaving the sea, he began business as a banker in Edinburgh, where, by diligence in business and sheer force of character, he soon rose to the highest rank in his honourable profession.

He often declared that he began life without even the proverbial sixpence, but was endowed with an excellent education wherewith to make his way in the world. Having realised a handsome fortune, he purchased the estate of Dalswinton, in the fertile valley of the Nith, where, on his retirement from business, he lived and worked for the benefit of the human race.

Scotland owes much to its types of the laird of Dalswinton – landlords who resided on their estates and improved the lands they held in trust, making “two blades of grass to spring where only one grew before!”

Dalswinton, originally one of the chief strongholds of the ancient regulé or lords of Galloway, was at the end of the eighteenth century only a heap of ruins, the massive blocks of masonry appearing above the ground testifying to the great strength of its walls. Here in the thirteenth century the Red Comyn held sway. It was his grandson that met his death at the hands of the Bruce in the Minorite Convent of Dumfries, when Kirkpatrick, in doubt as to the consummation of the tragedy, went into the sacred edifice to ‘mak’ siccar!”

Dalswinton Castle was afterwards burned to the ground by Robert Bruce, and the lands were handed over to Sir Walter Stewart.

The Romes succeeded the Stewarts in possession of the domain, and the Maxwells held it from the Romes. So it was from the Nithsdale Maxwells that Patrick Miller bought the ancient keep and lands of Dalswinton. Miller’s first improvement on taking up his residence in the modern mansion of Dalswinton (built on the mount and near the ancient castle) was the construction of a large, beautiful loch where
previously existed a marshy swamp. It was on this loch that the first tiny steamboat was launched. McDiarmid, writing of this historic event, says—“A very beautiful little vessel developing sufficiently the principles of an art which created a new era in the history of commerce, which was increased prodigiously the facilities of communication, which has imparted to navigation a certainty and speed unknown before, which has bridged, it may almost be said, the most distant coasts and given nations a new dominion over winds and waves, which stimulates their industry in times of peace and renders rapidly available their resources in inventive genius and practical application of the principles of steam to navigation— their names stand out clear in the history of our country—Taylor, Symington, and Miller. Patrick Miller had already tried the result of a paddle wheel as a propelling force for vessels, but the wheel was driven by a capstan and required the energies of four men, and he soon saw the necessity for some other means of propulsion. About this period he met Mr Taylor, with whom he discussed the subject in all its bearings. Taylor suggested the use of the steam engine as the force to drive the paddle wheels. This idea was favoured by Mr Miller, and in his search for a times of war.” Surely a great achievement this rude little forerunner of the monster leviathans that connect the nations of the earth at the present day! It is interesting to learn that the first steamship had at least one passenger whose name and fame have more than equalled the event itself. Burns, at that time Mr Miller’s tenant in Ellisland, accompanied the inventors in the trial voyage of the novel steamer.

We do not propose entering upon the much disputed point of who was the first to propel vessels by the aid of steam. The controversy that raged, less or more, down through the last century failed to place the bays of success on any one particular head; but we have, at least, three men who deserve honour for their practical engineer to work out the scheme he was introduced by Taylor to William Symington, of Wanlockhead. Thus, Taylor with his mathematical drawings, and Symington with his practical knowledge, and Miller with his inventive energy and benevolent disposition, were brought together, and the mighty result of that great tribune is before us to-day. The inventor’s claim has been made for Taylor, and a book has been written to prove Symington the father of the steamship, but the natural modesty of Patrick Miller prevented the world from ever knowing how much it owes him in this matter of steam navigation. Certain it is that he spent a liberal amount of his large fortune in his search and experiments in this direction. Mr Miller
invented a gun called "a Carronade"—so named from its being cast at the Carron Foundry. He generously offered it to his own Government, as he patriotically thought he ought to do; but the new gun was not accepted by that august body, and he accordingly presented it to the King of Sweden, Gustavus III., who gratefully acknowledged the gift in an autograph letter enclosed in a magnificent golden box. Along with the letter of thanks the box contained a small package of turnip seed, sent out of compliment to Mr Miller as an enterprising agriculturist. The seed was sown for several years and carefully preserved until there was sufficient for distribution. The little packet of turnip seed—like the Dalswinton steamer—became the earnest of the countless acres of turnips now under cultivation throughout the country.

On the 12th April, 1801, a deputation of gentlemen waited on Mr Miller at Dalswinton for the purpose of presenting him with two handsome silver cups of the Etrurian form. The reasons for this signal recognition of the laird of Dalswinton were so well set forth by the Rev. Mr Wightman, who acted as spokesman for the deputation, that we gladly give it a place:—

"Sir, - When you retired from other useful and honourable stations, and fixed your residence in this parish, you formed an era in its prosperity. You devoted your talents to improvements in agriculture, a science well worthy of your attention, and which you conducted on the most enlightened and liberal plans. Your neighbours and other saw, admired, and imitated the judicious methods you adopted in the cultivation of the soil, and the various branches of rural economy. They not only saw your improvements, but occasionally learned from yourself many particulars which they could not have obtained had you been less accessible in your person, or less condescending in your manners. The inhabitants of this parish, impressed with a sense of these things, have agreed, in one collective body, to present you with a small testimonial of their respect for the patriotism as well as the benevolence of your character, and especially for your eminence in rural science, and your liberal views as a landed proprietor. They have honoured us, the ministers of religion in this parish, who they knew had a place in your regard, with a commission to express to you in the most respectful manner their sentiments towards you, and to solicit you in their name to accept this mark of their respect. We do this most cheerfully, because we ourselves feel those sentiments which we are deputed to express. We are convinced that your character does not depend upon our humble voice. The name of Mr Miller will be known and dear to posterity. It will continue fresh as the beauty of his fields, and fragrant as their flowers, when we shall have been gathered to our fathers."

A few years previous to the foregoing pleasing incident Mr Miller had been admitted a burgess of Dumfries. A minute, dated 29th September, 1789, sets forth:—"Patrick Miller, Esq., Dalswinton,. . .was admitted a burgess in the usual manner, . . . And promised to keep a sufficient gun and sword in defence of the town when called for." Other honours came to him, but the greatest reward was the splendid results of his rural economy and the improved conditions of the estate he so dutifully held in trust. When he entered Dalswinton, oats ready to cut were sold at 25s per acre upon holm grounds. After fifteen years' improvement on these poverty-stricken holms he was able to realise £40 per acre, though it is right to mention that 1800 was the famine year. Mr Miller spared neither pains nor money to bring cultivation up to the high level which it attained under his energetic and fostering guidance.

We have already called attention to the presence of the national poet on the Dalswinton estate, where at first he appears to have been on the best of terms with Mr Miller, his landlord, but later on the bard seems to have transferred his regard to Major Miller, the son of the laird. It is on record that Patrick Miller offered Burns the choice of three farms—two on the east side of the Nith and Ellisland on the west side, with about a hundred acres of mixed fertile and stony land. "Burns made a poet's choice," says a charming writer on The Burns Country, and although the old cottage has been pulled down "the stackyard is the same as that in which, one clear October night in 1789, the poet lay on a heap of straw with his eyes fixed on a beautiful
planet the while his soul was stirring by sad, 
sweet memories and his heart was singing this
undying strain —

_Thou lingering star, with less’ning ray,
That lov’st to greet the early morn._

Mr Miller’s first connection with Burns
began with the publication of the Kilmarnock
Edition, his attention being drawn to the poet
through a reference made to his father and his
property in “The Vision” —

_Through many a wild romantic grove,
Near many a hermit-fancied cove,
Fit haunt for friendship or for love,
An aged Judge, I saw him rove
Dispensing good._

A Fortnight after the poet’s arrival in
Edinburgh, and after meeting Mr Miller at a
Masonic gathering, the latter sent him
anonymously £10. To this kindly interest the
laird added the offer of a farm on Dalswinton
estate on the poet’s own terms. Mr Miller’s son
is referred to in the “Five Carlins” as a candidate
for parliamentary honours —

_He wadna hecht them courtly gift,
Nor meikle speech pretend,_

_But he wad hecht an honest heart,
Wad ne’er desert a friend._

It was the same Major William Miller, yr.
of Dalswinton, who, as Provincial Grand Master,
St. Andrew’s Lodge, Dumfries, delivered the
address at the laying of the foundation-stone of
the Mausoleum erected to enshrine the mortal
remains of the nation’s poet.

A little over a century ago the fear of
invasion from the Gallic host with the much-
dreaded Bonaparte in its van was the source and
cause of a great wave of patriotism throughout
the country. Nithsdale was no exception to the
other provinces who awaited the dread arrival
of “Boney,” nor was it any exception to the other
countries in its splendid preparation to resist
invasion come when it might. Money flowed in
from all sources, and the clergy vied with the
gentry in making preparation as perfect as
possible. It is in this connection that we discover
the munificence and patriotic character of Mr
Miller. Subscriptions were being solicited for the
sinews of war, when Mr Miller addressed the
following letter to the Deputy-Lieutenant of the
county:— “Dalswinton, 24th Aug., 1803 — Sir,
Having expended, in a long course of hazardous
experiments, ten thousand guineas, with a view
to benefit mankind, I am now, perhaps, not so

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_Dalswinton House_
rich as I was; but I am more careful of what I have — I am a greater economist. As such, I wish to insure my property, my share in the British Constitution, my family, myself, and my religion, against the French invasion. As a premium, I offer to clothe, and arm with pikes, 100 volunteers, to be raised in this and any of the neighbouring parishes, and to furnish them with three light brass field-pieces, ready for service. This way of arming I consider as superior with infantry for either attack or defence to that now in use; but as to this Government must determine. I am too old and infirm to march with these men, but I shall desire my eldest son to do so. He was ten years a soldier in the foot and horse service. In case of an invasion, I will be ready to furnish, when required, 26 horses, 16 carts, and 16 drivers; and Government may command all my crops of hay, straw, and grain, which I estimate at — 16,700 stones of hay, 24 lbs to the stone; 1400 bushels of peas, 5000 bushels of oats, 5080 bushels of barley. You will please to transmit my offer to the Lord-Lieutenant of the country.

If the French are rash enough to land on our shores, they will find, to their cost, that riches acquired by useful and honourable means have not the effect to enervate a people; on the contrary, riches so obtained are sure proofs of a happy Constitution, and of a mild protecting Government, to which all wise and good men must necessarily be attached. — I am, dear Sir, yours sincerely, (signed) PAT. MILLER.

Mr Miller spent over £30,000 upon his inventions, experiments, and agricultural improvements, and he passed away without any acknowledgments from the Government of the great services he had rendered to the cause of civilisation and the cultivation of the soil. His wealth and energy were not spent in vain, for a new impetus was given towards a more scientific treatment of the cultivation of land, the fruit of which is seen to-day in smiling corn fields and lush grass lands where in previous times the gorse and heather held sway. Mr Miller’s death took place at Dalswinton on Saturday, 9th December, 1815, in the eighty-fourth year of his age, and his remains were interred in the family burying-ground in Greyfriars’ Churchyard, Edinburgh. He had married early in life, and had several children, of whom three sons and two daughters survived him, viz:— Patrick, member of Parliament in 1789-90 for Dumfriesshire; William, an officer of the Royal Horse Guards (Blue); Thomas Hamilton, an advocate at the Scottish Bar; Janet, married to John Francis, 15th Earl of Mar; Jean, married to Leslie Grove Jones, an officer of the Grenadier Guards.

We cannot do better than conclude this brief sketch of a true Scottish gentleman with a quotation from an obituary notice which appeared at the time of his death in the pages of the Dumfries Courier: — “Mr Miller was well known for his enterprising and public spirit, and his unabating ardour in endeavouring to promote the welfare of society and the prosperity of his country. The powers of his mind were capacious, vigorous, and active, and were cultivated by an extensive intercourse with men of all ranks, and by a frequent and intense application of thought to almost every branch of political and rural economy. His moral character was sustained by the most respectable and amiable qualities. He was guided by inflexible integrity in his diversified transactions with mankind, and a warm benevolence and generosity of heart rendered him the friend of the afflicted and a father to the poor. He was a man, and nothing which concerned the happiness of man was uninteresting to him. These estimable and gentle qualities made Mr Miller the object of general respect and esteem, and have rendered his death a cause of deep regret to his numerous friends and acquaintances, in whose affection his memory is embalmed, and will be cherished with a lasting remembrance.”

From an article in The Gallovidian
SCOTLAND IN AUSTRALIA

By Dr Ian Howie-Willis Ph.D., M.A.


The first Scots to settle in Australia arrived with Governor Arthur Phillip in the First Fleet. The motley collection of 1,487 people making up the fleet comprised 759 convicts (plus 13 of their children), 252 marines (plus wives and children), 210 Royal Navy seamen, 233 merchant seamen, and 20 officials. There were probably Scots in each of these categories.

The most prominent First Fleet Scot was John Hunter (1737-1821), captain of HMS Sirius, Phillip’s flagship. A Leith man, he succeeded Philip as the second governor in 1795. His name survives in the Sydney suburb, Hunter’s Hill, and in the Hunter Valley, the rich coal and wine producing region of the Newcastle hinterland. One of the marine captains was George Johnston (1764 – 1823), from Dumfries. He later transferred to the New South Wales Corps and among other adventures commanded the troops that suppressed the Vinegar Hill uprising of Irish convicts in 1804, led the officers who deposed Governor Bligh in 1808, and was twice sent back to the UK to appear before courtsmartial. In later life he became an extensive property owner, naming the property he lived on Annandale, after his birthplace. It is now a Sydney suburb.

Scots formed only a small number of the First Fleet convicts. Among them was Margaret McKinnon, a woman of Skye transported for burning down a neighbour’s house in a fit of jealous rage. Comparatively few Scottish convicts ever came to Australia. In the whole 80-year period of transportation, only 8,700 or 5.4% of the 160,000 convicts sent to Australia were Scottish. Scottish criminal law was relatively more humane than English, and Scottish courts were generally more reluctant than those of England, Ireland and Wales to impose heavy penalties such as hanging and transportation. Consequently there were always proportionately fewer convicts from Scotland than from other parts of the British Isles, and generally only the more hardened of Scottish convicts were sent to Australia.

Nor did many Scottish free citizens come to Australia, at least not during the first 40 years of white settlement. Among those who did were some of the colony’s most notable figures. Three of the first six governors were Scots: as well as Hunter there were Lachlan Macquarie (1762 – 1824), an Ulva man who was governor 1809-21, and his successor, Thomas MacDougall Brisbane (1773 – 1860) from Largs, Governor 1821 – 25. Macquarie brought his own regiment, the 73rd, also known as the Perthshire, was a Scottish regiment, and so most of its members were Scots. A Scot also led the colonisation of the other side of the country. James Stirling (1791 – 1865), from Drumpellier in Lanarkshire, as commander of HMS Success in 1827.
established the short-lived northern outpost, Raffles Bay, on the Coburg Peninsula east of present-day Darwin. In 1829 he led the expedition which established the Swan River colony at present-day Perth, and served there as Lieutenant-Governor and then Governor until 1839.

Ironically, of the all the Scots who came to Australia in the period up to the 1820s, the most renowned in Scotland were not the colonial governors but two famous groups of convicts. These were the so-called Scottish Martyrs of 1792 and the Scottish Radicals of 1820, all of whom were political exiles. The Martyrs were a group of five agitators who, inspired by the French Revolution, had been preaching political reform. Charged with sedition by a government fearful that their views might spread, they were tried in Edinburgh in 1793 - 94. Their trial aroused great public interest, as did the severity of their sentence. The government, determined to make an example of them, rejected pleas for clemency in the House of Commons and insisted on their transportation to Sydney, Robert Burns himself was one deeply concerned by their fate. He alluded to them directly in his poem 'Fragment - Epistle from Esopus to Maria', in which he included these lines in reference to both himself and the martyrs:

The shrinking Bard adown the alley skulks
And dreads a meeting worse than Woolwich bulks –
Though there, his heresies in Church and State
Might well award him Muir and Palmer’s fate.

The case of Thomas Muir, Thomas Palmer and the other martyrs is also said to have inspired Burns’s great nationalist anthem ‘Scots Wha Hae Wi’ Wallace Bled’. Only two of the five martyrs were actually Scots – Muir (1765 – 99) and William Skiving (born about 1754, died 1796). Arriving in Sydney in October 1794, both were treated leniently by the acting governor, Major Francis Grose*, on instructions from the British government. Allowed to live as free settlers, they each acquired small farms. Muir, a lay preacher and lawyer trained at the University of Glasgow, is said to have conducted the first Presbyterian service of worship in Australia. He escaped from the colony aboard a US trading ship in February 1796. After many adventures he fell into Spanish hands and was taken to Spain. As his vessel was approaching Cadiz, it was fired on by a British warship. He suffered severe facial wounds, including the loss of an eye. With the help of the French Foreign Minister, Talleyrand, he made his way to Paris in December 1797.

The Scottish Radicals were a group of 19 agitators who had been sentenced to death for high treason, and then sent to New South Wales after their sentences were commuted to transportation. They had taken part in an insurrection at Bonnymuir near Stirling on 5 April 1820, when a group of workers protesting against poverty, hunger and unemployment had rebelled. Under the slogan ‘Scotland Free – or a Desert’. They had proclaimed a ‘Provincial Government’ for Scotland’. The government swiftly suppressed the revolt and brought the leaders to trial. Two were subsequently hanged in Stirling and the remaining 19 transported. In exile, most went on to become respectable citizens. One, John Anderson, became the headmaster of a Presbyterian school on the Hawkesbury. Thomas McCulloch became a publican and landowner before eventually returning to Scotland. John McMillan worked successively as a blacksmith, tool – and instrument-maker before becoming a publican and landowner. Allan Murchie, whose fiancée was allowed to follow him to the colony, also became a publican. Andrew Dawson became Principal Overseer of Works at Newcastle. Alexander Hart, who worked for many years as

*Son of Robert Burns’s Friend Captain Francis Grose (1731-1791).
a cabinet maker in Sydney, later wrote home that he and his wife "both like[d] the country well and would be satisfied to end our journey here".7

Apart from such satisfied Scottish convicts and the few Scottish officials and military officers who decided to remain in Australia when their period of service had ended, Scottish people did not generally regard settlement in Australia as an option until the 1830s. As one scholar observes, "Australia was not a part of the Scottish consciousness", and so North America remained the favoured destination of those seeking to settle overseas. During the 1830s, however, Australia became a more attractive alternative because of various 'push' influences in Scotland working with 'pull' factors in Australia. Scottish manufacturers, whose enterprises developed rapidly in the post-Napoleonic decades, sought to expand their trade with Australia. The high cost of renting Scottish agricultural land gave allure to Australia's seemingly unlimited cheap acres. At the same time, the continuing displacement of the Highlands rural population through the 'Clearances' together with the consolidation of farms and the introduction of new machinery in the Lowlands rural sector were creating agrarian labour surpluses. Industrial change caused displacement in the towns as well, particularly in craft trades such as handloom weaving, where mechanisation rendered many traditional skills redundant.9

Many of the displaced workers gravitated towards Scotland's rapidly expanding industrial cities. Here the overcrowded, unsanitary housing and recurring epidemics of typhoid and cholera condemned most to a squalid life. What Australia offered seemed preferable despite the distances and time required to get there. At the same time favourable reports came back to Scotland from those doing well in Australia, where, unencumbered by the rigidities of the Scottish class system, they were taking advantage of greater ease of social mobility and a wider range of commercial and financial opportunities than Scotland offered.10 Not surprisingly, as assisted migration to Australia became available through the 'bounty' scheme during the early 1830s, increasing numbers of Scots sought a new life in Australia. Over 9,000 Scots arrived in New South Wales as bounty immigrants in the period 1837-42, and perhaps another 7,000 came unassisted. Scots made up a fifth of the bounty migrants and a quarter of those paying their own way.

The increasing popularity of Australia owned much to the labours of Rev Dr John Dunmore Lang (1799-1876). Lang, ordained at 22, came to Sydney in 1823 to establish Presbyterianism in New South Wales. A contentious character of strong religious and political convictions, he was perturbed at both the moral condition of the colony and the prospect of the Irish influx resulting in a predominantly Catholic Australia. Convinced that Scottish settlement was the answer in each case, he began sponsoring assisted immigrants in 1831. Over the next 18 years he chartered some 18 boats, bringing mainly Scottish migrants to Australia, some assisted and others unassisted. (Among the latter, incidentally, were my great-great-grandparents, who were among a party of 196 brought to Geelong aboard the Travancore in 1849). Lang's motives in promoting Scottish immigration were perhaps mixed. Operating as an entrepreneur within the bounty system, he gained financially through helping some 5,000 Scots settle in Australia. Despite that the majority of those coming aboard his boats were probably well pleased with their country of adoption, and with the opportunities he had opened to them.11

Among the Lang immigrants with good cause for satisfaction were Angus McMillan (1810-65) and Niel Black (1804-80). McMillan was the fourth of 14 children of a Glenbrittle, Skye, farmer. He arrived in New South Wales in 1838 and, finding a way through the Snowy Mountains, became the explorer of eastern Victoria. He then settled on the Bushy Park station near Stratford and pioneered the pastoral industry of Gippsland. He called the region 'Caledonia Australis', a name too ostentatious to survive for long. McMillan later served a short term in the lower house of the Victorian parliament, was president of the Caledonian Society of Victoria, and built the road across the Alps connecting Gippsland with Victoria's northeast. There was a dark side to McMillan's character, however, for during the 1840s he led
various massacres of the Kurnai, the Aboriginal people of Gippsland. Among them were 150 killed near Orbost (one of several Gippsland towns named after places on Skye). McMillan's public positions included an appointment as Protector of Aborigines for the Region.  

Black, son of a tenant of the Duke of Argyll, reached Port Phillip in 1839. He, too, became a pastoral pioneer, in Victoria's Western District. He acquired a 17,000-hectare property between Terang and Camperdown, which he named Glenormiston after the Peeblesshire home of one of his Scottish-based business partners. He went on to become a leading representative of squatter interests in the upper house of the Victorian parliament, and a co-proprietor of the Camperdown Chronicle. He and fellow Western District Scottish squatters founded this newspaper in 1875 to advocate free trade and to counter the influence of the Melbourne Age. The latter under its great proprietor-editor, David Syme (1827-1908), a Scottish emigrant from North Berwick, was militantly perfectionist.  

The opportunities Australia offered these and other Scottish immigrants were also evident in the case of George Russell (1812 - 88), the younger son of a tenant farmer of Clunie Mains, East Fife. Russell left Scotland in 1830 to join his older brother, Philip, who had emigrated to Tasmania. In 1836 he took a flock of sheep across Bass Strait to the new settlement at Port Phillip and established himself on the Moorabool River about 15 km west of Geelong. Soon afterwards he was appointed manager of the Clyde Company, recently formed by a group of Scottish settlers in Tasmania who, backed by Glasgow financiers, wished to develop pastoral interests in the Port Phillip District. In 1839 Russell moved his operations further west to the company's Golf Hill station (named for the Glasgow home of the company's backers, the Denistoun family) on the Yarrowee (Leigh) River about 40 km, west of Geelong. By 1848 the company held some 53,000 hectares stocked with 60,000 sheep. After the Clyde Company was dissolved in 1857-58 Russell bought its Golf Hill station, consisting of 3,400 hectares of freehold land, which he subsequently increased to 11,300 hectares. He also acquired the 5,200-hectare property Leslie Manor (further west on Lake Corangamite) and interests in various other prime sheep stations of Victoria's Western District. The rise of Russell, McMillan and Black into the 'squattocracy' - Australia's landed gentry - was paralleled by many other young Scots of humble origin who settled in Victoria during the late 1830s.  

Outstandingly successful Scots like these tended to attract other Scots. In the Moreton Bay district (southeast Queensland) half the squatters were Scottish during the 1830s and 40s; in the Port Phillip district (Victoria) the proportion was two-fifths; and in New England and the Darling Downs it was a third. The Scottish squatters in such areas usually preferred to employ their own countrymen and countrywomen, and depended on 'Home' links for engaging those they needed to operate their sheep runs. Substantial Scottish communities consequently developed in these districts during the 30s and 40s, and they in turn drew further Scottish settlers with the various trade skills in demand in expanding settlements, for example bookkeepers, mechanics, printers, wheelwrights, builders and masons. As the next chapter indicates, the Canberra district was one where this pattern of Scottish settlement and migration was repeated.  

The gold rushes of the 1850s greatly increased the outflow of people from Scotland to Australia. During the 'golden decade' some 90,000 Scots arrived in Australia, making up 15% of all immigrants. The power of gold as a 'pull' factor was evident in their destinations: the great majority headed for Victoria, where the goldfields were the richest. Scots made up 24% of all assisted immigrants reaching Victoria (compared with 11% in New South Wales and Tasmania, 10% in South Australia and only 3% in Western Australia); and four-fifths of all assisted Scottish immigrants went to Victoria. (Among them were my wife's great-great-grandparents from Skye, who were among 782 passengers arriving in Melbourne from Inverness aboard the Wanta in 1852.) Despite the lure of the goldfields, many ended up in towns, where their trade skills were in demand in the burgeoning industries springing up to supply the mines.  

Many of the new arrivals came with the assistance of emigration societies. Various
schemes for alleviating Scotland’s economic, social and demographic problems through mass emigration operated from the 1830s to the 1850s. The best know of these was the Highland and Island Emigration Society, a semi-official and partly philanthropic body active between 1852 and 1858 which assisted people who would otherwise be too poor to emigrate. Operating under Royal patronage, its source of funds were public subscriptions, contributions from colonial governments (including those of Victoria, South Australia and Tasmania) and a levy on landlords sending away their tenants via the scheme. In this last connection it became an instrument for furthering the Highland clearances. In its seven years it sent some 5,000 emigrants to Australia, mostly in family groups. Its efforts were supplemented by Australian organisations such as the Highland Emigration Society of Melbourne. Similar bodies were established by particular Scottish villages. One such was the Fenwick Emigration Society, formed in a small village near Kilmarnock to raise funds for shipping abroad its poor and under-employed. Many of these were handloom weavers and shoemakers made redundant by the introduction of machine-made wares, and farm workers no longer needed because of reductions in the number of local farms. Active 1839-57, it produced ‘a constant stream of departures for Canada, America, Australian and New Zealand’. (Among these was my great-grandfather, William Howie, who arrived in Geelong in 1852.)

Following the gold rushes, Scots with rural skills were well placed to benefit from the land selection movement, as the earlier extensive sheep runs were subdivided for closer settlement during the 1860s and 70s. Again, strong concentrations of Scottish settlers developed, with Scots comprising half the population of some districts. Among those with particularly large Scottish populations were Victoria’s Western District, the Naracoorte-Penola-Mount Gambier area of South Australia’s far Southeast, Queensland’s Moreton Bay, and the Hunter Valley and Illawarra districts of New South Wales. Similarly, some cities had much higher proportions of Scottish immigrants than others. Melbourne and Geelong were widely regarded as ‘Scottish’, at least by the Scots living there. There was justification for them in thinking so: as Table I indicates, by 1861 more than three-fifths of the Scots in Australia were living in Victoria, where they amounted to 11% of the population, and Victoria was the only colony where the Scottish-born comprised more than a tenth of the total.

AGNES BURNS COTTAGE (continued from page 43)

estate also, as a dairymaid. In the restored Agnes Burns Cottage, both the life of Agnes as she grew up in Scotland with her brother Robert and family and the last years of her life as she lived in Stephenstown, Knockbridge, near Dundalk are interpreted.

VISITORS CENTRE

Adjacent to the cottage, a newly erected Visitor Centre provides the visitor with home baked hot scones with jam and cream and freshly brewed coffee. Also housed in the Visitor Centre is a multimedia interactive animal display, which is used for educational and environmental purposes with schools and other educational initiatives. The Belfast Burns Association have been actively involved with the Stephenstown Pond Trust Ltd., and are to be congratulated. For the many Scots visiting Ireland a visit to the Agnes Burns Cottage is a must. For more about the cottage and centre contract Anne Allen on 01232 489342 or Declan Breathnach at 00353-42-9377470 (home) and 087-2697638 (mobile) Geraldine McCullagh at 00353-42-9333472 (home) and 087-2677777 (mobile). Marketing and Events Co-Ordinator, Donna Taylor at 00353-42-9374077.

Please Note: The project team would greatly appreciate any information or memorabilia that you might have and be prepared to make available (a copy would suffice) in relation to Agnes Burns/Galt or the Col. Blair connection.
Table 1
Scottish - born population of Australian colonies, 1861

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Colony</th>
<th>Scottish-born population</th>
<th>Proportion of Australia's total Scottish-born population</th>
<th>Total population*</th>
<th>Scottish-born as proportion of total population</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Victoria</td>
<td>61,584</td>
<td>63.35%</td>
<td>538,628</td>
<td>11.43%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Queensland</td>
<td>2,508</td>
<td>2.58%</td>
<td>30,059</td>
<td>8.34%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tasmania</td>
<td>6,591</td>
<td>6.78%</td>
<td>89,977</td>
<td>7.33%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>South Australia</td>
<td>7,712</td>
<td>7.93%</td>
<td>126,830</td>
<td>6.08%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>New South Wales</td>
<td>18,254</td>
<td>18.78%</td>
<td>350,860</td>
<td>5.20%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Western Australia</td>
<td>562</td>
<td>0.58%</td>
<td>15,752</td>
<td>3.57%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Australia</td>
<td>97,211</td>
<td>100.00%</td>
<td>1,152,106</td>
<td>8.44%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Total Australian population before 1971 generally excluded people of full Aboriginal and some of part-Aboriginal descent.

We need to keep such figures in perspective, however, for the Scottish-born have always been a comparatively small minority among Australia’s ethnic groups. Even in that year when the Scots were a relatively large group, 1861, there were others much larger. By then the Australian-born were easily the largest group of all – 37% of the Australian total, as Table 2 indicates. Next were the English, with almost 30%, and the Irish, with 15%. The Scots were the fourth largest group, and well ahead of the next largest, the Chinese (3%) and Germans (2%), but they would never again be such a relatively large section of the Australian community.

Table 2
Country of birth of the populations of the Australian colonies: proportion of the total of the largest ‘national’ groups, 1861

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country Of birth</th>
<th>New South Wales</th>
<th>Victoria</th>
<th>Queensland</th>
<th>South Australia</th>
<th>Tasmania</th>
<th>Western Australia</th>
<th>All Australia</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Australia</td>
<td>46.95</td>
<td>29.17</td>
<td>32.74</td>
<td>39.3</td>
<td>46.98</td>
<td>32.56</td>
<td>37.23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>China</td>
<td>3.71</td>
<td>4.66</td>
<td>1.80</td>
<td>0.03</td>
<td>0.03</td>
<td>0.13</td>
<td>3.36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>England</td>
<td>24.03</td>
<td>31.93</td>
<td>28.49</td>
<td>34.76</td>
<td>30.77</td>
<td>39.59</td>
<td>29.76</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Germany</td>
<td>1.56</td>
<td>2.01</td>
<td>7.11</td>
<td>7.04</td>
<td>0.20</td>
<td>0.22</td>
<td>2.40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ireland</td>
<td>15.67</td>
<td>16.43</td>
<td>18.53</td>
<td>10.09</td>
<td>13.60</td>
<td>21.11</td>
<td>15.40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>2.88</td>
<td>4.36</td>
<td>3.00</td>
<td>2.69</td>
<td>1.09</td>
<td>2.82</td>
<td>3.41</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Scotland</td>
<td>5.20</td>
<td>11.43</td>
<td>8.34</td>
<td>6.08</td>
<td>7.33</td>
<td>3.57</td>
<td>8.44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total*</td>
<td>100.00</td>
<td>100.00</td>
<td>100.00</td>
<td>100.00</td>
<td>100.00</td>
<td>100.00</td>
<td>100.00</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Total possibly excluded people of full Aboriginal and some of part-Aboriginal descent

After the high point of the early 1860s, the Scottish-born declined steadily as a proportion of the total Australian population. By the early 1980s they were only 1.0% of the total population, and by the 90s they had dipped below that. The following graph indicates the trend. However, as the graph also shows, the actual numbers of Scots in Australia increased, with several fluctuations, to a peak of about 160,000 in the early 1970s. This was 1.6 times as many as a century before.
In the early 90s the Scots were still a considerable presence in Australia. Indeed, with 156,638 Scottish-born people residing in Australia at the 1991 census, they ranked fifth of all immigrant groups behind the English (909,043) New Zealanders (276,062), Italians (254,776) and Yugoslavs (161,064) and were ahead of the Greeks (136,331), Vietnamese (122,347), and Germans (114,909). By this time, however, they were only one among 150 or more other ‘ethnic’ groups and there were other groups fast rising to prominence. With an increasing flow of non-European immigrants into Australia, it seems unlikely that they will ever again be the significant fraction they were in the gold rush era, whatever their absolute numbers might be.

A flood the Scottish immigrants might never have been, but Scots have always done more than simply boost Australia’s population. They have integrated readily into Australian society, and many have quickly risen to prominence within it. This has been very obvious in politics. In Victoria, for example, men of Scottish birth comprised no less than seven of that colony’s 16 Premiers in the period 1863-1900. On a basis of a proportional ‘fair share’ for each ethnic community, there should have been no more than two. Among those who held the position was Sir James McCulloch (1819-93), a Glasgow-born merchant who arrived in Victoria in 1853. He was Premier no less than five times. In Queensland, too, seven of 14 Premiers between the 1860s and 1900 were Scots. They included a Glasgow-born solicitor, Arthur Macalister (1818-83), and a railway construction engineer from Ayr, Thomas McIlwraith (1835-1900), each of whom held office three times. As late as the 1920s half of the Victorian Cabinet could be described as ‘pure Scottish’, that is of Scottish birth or full descent.

Following Federation in 1901, two of the first five Prime Ministers of Australia were Scottish-born – George Reid (1845-1918) and Andrew Fisher (1862-1928). Reid, born near Paisley and another of John Dunmore Lang’s immigrants, had already served a term as Premier of New South Wales, and had been the first leader of the federal Opposition. He became Australia’s fourth Prime Minister in a little over three and a half years in 1904, leading an unlikely anti-Labor coalition of Free Traders and Protectionists. The coalition fell apart after less than eleven months, and Reid resigned. He spent several more years as Opposition Leader, and was then appointed as Australia’s first High Commissioner in London, a position he held for six years. He was then offered the seat of St George’s Hanover Square in the UK House of Commons, to which he was elected unopposed in a by-election in January 1916. He held the seat until his death.

Fisher, a coalminer from Crosshouse, Ayrshire, was Prime Minister no fewer than three times in the seven years 1908-15, serving a total of four years and 10 months in the position while also holding the Treasury portfolio. It was Fisher who thus gave Labor its first sustained experience of office in Australia. During his second period in office his government took the decision to create Australia’s federal capital in the Limestone Plains area of southern New South Wales, centering it on a small, sparse rural settlement known locally as Canberra. And it was his government that arranged the gala event there.

*In 1920 Andrew Fisher was appointed an Honorary Member of Irvine Burns Club.
on 12 March 1913, when Lady Drennan, the Governor-General’s wife, announced that Canberra would be the name of the city to be built there. Fisher, too, it was who during the course of the 1914 electoral campaign made one of those epigrammatic, rash promises by politicians for which later generations remember them. ‘Australia will stand beside the Mother Country to help and defend her to the last man and last shilling!’ he affirmed as war erupted. That was before the shock of the losses at Gallipoli and the even greater carnage in Flanders. Had he known the toll such promises would exact, and the near destruction of the Labor Party following the conscription controversy of 1916-17, his commitment might not have been so complete. In 1915 Fisher left the Prime Ministership to become High Commissioner in London, replacing Reid in the job. He remained in the position until 1921. Despite his earlier ‘last man, last shilling’ boast, in his first year in London Fisher refused a request by his successor as Prime Minister, W.M. (‘Billy’) Hughes, the fervent promoter of military conscription, to sign a public statement supporting the proconscription side of the debate. Fisher continued representing his adopted country with a statesmanlike dignity that contrasted greatly with Hughes’s rambunctious performances in international forums. In 1922 he sought Labour preselection for the Kilmarnock seat in the House of Commons. Unsuccessful in this bid to follow again where George Reid had trod, he lived in seclusion in London until his death six years later. Sadly, he is probably better remembered in Ayrshire than Australia.

Fisher was the last among Australia’s 25 Prime Ministers up until 1995 to have been Scottish-born. However, three among the five Prime Ministers who have been the most successful electorally have been of part Scottish descent – Alfred Deakin, Robert Menzies and Malcolm Fraser. Two others, Stanley Melbourne Bruce and John McEwan, were also of Scottish descent, and so of Australia’s 25 Prime Ministers over a quarter have had Scottish ancestry.

Scots and people of Scottish descent have been at the forefront in many other endeavours. During the nineteenth century phase of inland exploration, as Europeans learnt what lay beyond the bounds of settlement, the Scots were prominent. Among the first was Allan Cunningham (1791-1839), English-born of Scottish parents, a botanist who led a series of expeditions to northern New South Wales 1823-28, eventually finding a land route to Moreton Bay, and meanwhile exploring the Darling Downs. Hamilton Hume (1791-1873), a squatter near Yass and the Australian-born son of a Scottish father, led the 1824 expedition which discovered an overland route to Port Phillip (which he mistook for Westernport Bay). Thomas Livingstone Mitchell (1792-1855), from Craigend in Stirlingshire, as surveyor-general of New South Wales led the 1836 expedition to Portland Bay which resulted in the lands west of Port Phillip being opened to squatters like Niel Black and George Russell. A multi-faceted character with considerable artistic, scientific and literary talent, he was also highly disputatious. In 1851 he fought a duel with Stuart Alexander Donaldson (1812-67), Australian-born of Scottish ancestry and the first Premier of New South Wales. (The duel was stopped after the exchange of several shots, without injury to either contestant.) There were numerous other Scottish explorers of Australia, but the greatest was John McDouall Stuart (1815-66). From Fifeshire, he led the 1861-62 expedition across Central Australia to the north coast (east of present-day Darwin), the extreme rigours of this journey leading to his premature death four years later. His achievements are now commemorated in the coast-to-coast highway that bears his name and follows his route. Central Mount Stuart, the geographical centre of the continent, which he had reached on an earlier trip, in 1860, also preserves his memory.

Not all Australian Scottish immigrants were stouthearted pioneers. One historian of Scottish settlement in Australia has argued that, while the Scots were disproportionately represented among colonial Australia’s politicians, Scotland gave Australia ‘less that her fair share of bushrangers’. That may be so, and, more arguably, it may also be true, as some have claimed, that in Australia the Scots more than any other immigrant group came to represent quintessentially middle class values.
Nevertheless, among the few Scottish bushrangers were two who were not the usual run-of-the-mill ruffians who took to banditry – Francis McCallum (1822-57) and Alpin McPherson (1841-95).

McCallum, from Inverness, called himself ‘Captain Melville’, and under that name lives on in legend as a refined, considerate gentleman robber. The truth is somewhat different. Of little schooling and a thief from the age of 12, he was transported at 16 to Van Diemen’s Land, where he proved an habitual re-offender. In 1851 he made his way to Geelong, and for the next few months robbed travellers and homesteads across western Victoria. Captured near Geelong, he received a 12-year sentence, and was imprisoned in the Hobson Bay prison hulks. Two years later he and a companion escaped briefly, the latter killing a guard in the process. He was recaptured and, after conducting his own defence, was sentenced to hang. Agitation by a Citizens’ Committee formed for his support then won him a reprieve. Two years later he was found strangled in the Melbourne Gaol. Whether he had suicided or been murdered was never established. A plausible confidence trickster given to outbursts of rage, he was also capable of occasional magnanimous gestures towards his victims. He spent about 22 of his 35 years in detention, and perhaps exemplified the manner in which the penal system debased convicts.

McPherson, also from Inverness, migrated to Moreton Bay with his family in 1855. He did well at school, acquired both French and German, was apprenticed to a builder, attended night school and became an accomplished debater. Tiring of the sedate life, he ran off to become a stockman at 21. Calling himself ‘The Scotchman’, he later committed a series of robberies in Queensland before moving into New South Wales with the idea of joining Ben Hall’s bush rangeing gang. He was captured reading a book on the banks of the Lachlan River before achieving his aim, and was then shipped back to Queensland for trial. He escaped, however, and began robbing mail coaches in the Maryborough district. Recaptured in 1866, he was sentenced to 25 years’ gaol. His sentence was remitted in 1874 as a result of a public petition for his release. He then settled down to working as a stockman, married and had six children. In later years he proved an able raconteur, entertaining listeners with tales of his bush ranging days. The novel *Robbery Under Arms* is said to have been partly based on his experiences. Scotland also gave Australia two of its most controversial convict camp commandants. The first, Patrick Logan (1792-1830), an army officer, took charge of the Moreton Bay penal colony in 1826. He undertook local exploratory work and had erected various buildings which still survive, among these the windmill which later served as the Brisbane Observatory. He also earned the reputation of being the most bestially cruel of all convict superintendents in the entire 80 years of the transportation system. It was said Logan had men flogged to death for the pleasure of watching them die. Whether that was true or not is uncertain, but he certainly resorted to the lash more than most in his position. The few surviving records indicate that in just one nine­-month period he ordered 11,100 lashes in 200 floggings – an average of 56 lashes per sentence and about one flogging for each working day. It was also alleged that, as a deterrent against Aboriginal attacks, he shot an Aborigine and hung up the stuffed skin in a cornfield like a scarecrow. Shortly before he was due to depart the colony he was speared by hostile Aborigines while making a last journey of exploration. So hated was he among the convicts that they claimed credit for the murder; saying they had arranged the spearing with the Aborigines.

If the virtues of convict superintendents may be measured along a continuum stretching between the punitive and the reformative approaches to penal administration, Alexander Macconochie (1787-1860) stands at the opposite end of the scale to Logan. A naval officer from Edinburgh who had been foundation secretary of the Royal Geographical Society, he went to Van Diemen’s Land in 1836 as secretary to the governor. He subsequently wrote a damning report of the convict transportation system, and went on to develop advanced ideas on its reform in three books. In 1840 he was placed in charge of the Norfolk Island penal colony, dumping ground for the most intractable of convicts. Thus given the opportunity of proving the efficacy of
his rehabilitative ideas, he struggled for four years against the scepticism and hostility of his critics. He was eventually dismissed for excessive leniency. His methods were said to be lessening the convicts' dread of transportation, thought to be the essential element of the penal system. 35

Scotland certainly sent Australia its share of miscreants and misfits, but it also sent a disproportionate quota of nation builders. The roll call of eminent Scots-Australians goes on almost indefinitely, and in most spheres of enterprise. In commerce there is the Glasgow-born Robert Philip (1851-1922), Premier of Queensland 1899-1903 and 1907-08. In 1875 he and James Burns (1846 – 1923), from Polmont near Edinburgh, founded the Burns Philip company. 'BP' operates a shipping line and has extensive plantation and retail trade interests in the southwest Pacific Islands. There is also Thomas Elder (1818-97), the Kirkcaldy-born pastoralist who in 1866 brought to Australia the camels and their Afghan handlers that became the basis of the Central Australian transport system. His name survives in Elder Smith, the giant agricultural firm he founded in 1854. Other Scottish names to become Australian icons were those of William Arnott, who in 1865 founded a bakery which eventually became the nation’s best known biscuit manufacturing firm, and Macpherson Robertson, a confectioner whose brand of chocolates won for him a fortune which enabled him to become one of the nation’s most generous of philanthropists. 36

In journalism and publishing the list is also long. It includes David Syme, mentioned above, proprietor of the Melbourne Age newspaper for 52 years, and James Harrison (1816-93), founder of the Geelong Advertiser, later proprietor of the Bendigo Advertiser and Co-proprietor of the Age, and also the inventor of refrigerated sea transport. George Robertson (1860-1933) and David MacKenzie Angus (1855-1901) in 1886 founded a bookshop and publishing firm. The latter, by specialising in Australiana and producing the works of Australian authors, had far-reaching effects in fostering a separate Australian sense of identity. Then there is the Murdoch dynasty. Keith Murdoch (1886-1952), son of a Scottish-born Presbyterian minister, became a war correspondent and editor of note before building the Herald and Weekly Times company into a national newspaper and magazine publishing empire. His son Rupert (1931-) created his own publishing empire, extending it globally until it included newspapers, book publishing and retailing, television, film, air and road transport, and then international satellite communications. 37

Keith Murdoch’s Pitsligo-born uncle, Walter Murdoch (1874-1970), was a sometime journalist and newspaper columnist in addition to being foundation Professor of English at University of Western Australia and later it’s Chancellor. He was also Australia’s pre-eminent essayist from the 1930s until the 60s, and Western Australia’s second university commemorates his name. Walter Murdoch was one of many Scottish scholars to have figured prominently in the development of Australia’s university system. Other Scottish-born university and college heads have included George Currie, Vice-Chancellor of the Universities of Western Australia and New Zealand, Louisa MacDonald, first principal of Women’s College at the University of Sydney 1892 – 1919, and William Bridges, the first commandant of the Dunroon Royal Military College 1910-14. In this distinguished company belong Mungo MacCallum, foundation Professor of Modern Language and Literature at the University of Sydney 1887-1920 and John Anderson, Professor of Philosophy there 1926-58. The Scottish commitment to excellence in education which such figures represent has also been obvious in the numerous educational institutions sponsored by the Presbyterian church. Among these are some of Australia’s most prestigious schools and colleges, including Melbourne’s Scotch College (founded 1851) and Presbyterian Ladies College (1875), Geelong College (1861), Sydney’s Presbyterian Ladies College (1888) and Scots College (1893), and the university colleges of St Andrew’s (Sydney, 1874) and Ormond (Melbourne, 1881). 38

Financially successful Scottish immigrants often gravitated towards political conservatism in Australia. Aligning themselves with the Anglo-centric Establishment, they sought to
preserve the position of privilege to which they had risen. Others, however, remained loyal to their humble origins, and spent their lives working for social reform. One such was Catherine Helen Spence (1825-1910), from Melrose. After working as a governess, she wrote two novels before writing books and articles on electoral reform and the reform of the child welfare system. In later life she became a leading advocate of women’s suffrage, on which she lectured in the USA and the UK, and in 1897 became Australia’s first female political candidate when she stood (unsuccessfully) for election to the Federal Convention. Another was her namesake, William Guthrie Spence (1846-1926), an Orkneys-born miner who became a pioneer of the Australian trade union movement. He was secretary of the Amalgamated Miners Association 1882-98, president of the Amalgamated Shearer’s Union 1886-93 and president and general secretary of the Australian Workers Union 1894-98. A leader of the great maritime and sharers’ strikes of 1890 and 1891, he served a term in the New South Wales parliament before entering the new federal parliament in 1901. He was a member of Andrew Fisher’s Cabinet 1914-15, and was Vice-President of the Executive Council in the Hughes National ministry 1916-17 after being expelled from the Labor Party during the 1916 split over conscription.

Second-generation Scots-Australians, those born in Australia of Scottish parents or of largely Scottish descent, have made distinguished contributions in virtually every sphere of Australian society and culture. Among them is the once obscure nun who now seems set to become the most famous Scots-Australian of them all – Mary Helen McKillop (1842-1909). Founder of the Sisters of St Joseph of the Sacred Heart and beatified by the Pope at a ceremony in Sydney in January 1995, she has become Australia’s first candidate for sainthood. Others elevated to the status of folk heroes have been the singers Helen Mitchell, better known as Nellie Melba (1861-1931), Gladys Moncreiff (1892-1976) and, in a later era, Joan Sutherland (1926-), whose earliest public appearances included regular performances at the concerts of the Highland Society of New South Wales.  

Numerous other Scots have been prominent in the Australian labour movement. Bringing with them a commitment to the class struggle learnt at home, they have often formed its radical cutting edge. Among the more militant was William Orr (1900-54), from Bellshill, Lanarkshire, who left school at nine to work in the local coalmines. After serving in World War I and briefly studying to become a Presbyterian missionary, he migrated to the Lithgow coalfields in New South Wales. There, and later at Wollongong-Port Kembla, he became a missionary for a different cause. Turning to Marxism, he rose to prominence in various Communist Party organisations, including the Unemployed Workers Movement, the Militant Minority Movement and the Mineworkers Council of Action. He wrote for the Communist newspaper Red Leader, attended the Red International of Labour Unions in Moscow in 1932 and in 1933 was elected president of the Australasian Coal and Shale Employees [i.e. Miners] Federation. Under his leadership the union became one of the nation’s most aggressive. Though a judicious combination of strike action and use of the arbitration system, he did much to improve the appalling health and safety conditions under which Australian coal miners worked, and gained them the 40-hour week and highly favourable retirement and pension entitlements. In later life he served as the federation’s representative on the Commonwealth Coal Board and the Pension Tribunal.

Australian poets of Scots descent have been legion. Their number includes Adam Lindsay Gordon (1833-70), Andrew Barton (Banjo) Paterson (1854-1941), Mary Gilmore (1865-1962), Will Ogilvie (1869-1963), John Shaw Neilson (1872-1942), Hugh McRae (1876-1958), Dorothea Mackellar (1885-1968), Alec D. Hope (1907-), Douglas Stewart (1913-85), David Campbell (1915-79), Judith Wright (1915-) and Les Murray (1938-).

The part such Scots-Australian writers played in helping define an Australian sense of identity is evident in several poems which became early emblems of Australian nationalism. ‘Advance Australia Fair’ by the Glasgow-born Peter Dodds McCormick (1834...
– 1916) eventually became the official national anthem. Its first public rendition was at a St Andrew’s Day concert in Sydney in 1878. Paterson’s ‘Waltzing Matilda’, the song most people overseas probably recognise as Australian, is thoroughly Scots-Australian: the day Paterson wrote it another Scots-Australian, Christine MacPherson, the daughter of the Scottish-born squatter with whom Paterson was staying, set it to an old Scottish tune, ‘The Woods of Craigie Lea’. When given a chance to indicate their preference for a national anthem at a referendum in May 1977, Australians opted for ‘Advance Australia Fair’ above ‘Waltzing Matilda’ by a margin of 43.2 per cent of votes to 28.3 percent, with ‘God save the Queen’ coming in a poor third at 18.6 per cent but ahead of ‘Song of Australia’ fourth on 9.6 per cent. Despite its comparatively poor showing in the referendum, ‘Waltzing Matilda’ nevertheless enjoys a special status as an unofficial national song.

Another poem of far-reaching influence in shaping the sense of identity of successive generations of Australians was Dorothea MacKellar’s ‘My Country’. MacKellar, the granddaughter of immigrants brought out by John Dunmore Lang, wrote ‘My Country’ in 1908, when she was only 23. It taught successive cohorts of Australian schoolchildren that although they might be city-dwellers theirs was a land about which they ought to be passionate. Three of its six verses are enough to indicate its line of argument:

I love a sunburnt country,
A land of sweeping plains,
Of rugged mountain ranges,
Of droughts and flooding rains;
I love her far horizons,
I love her jewel sea,
Her beauty, and her terror –
The wide brown land for me!...
Core of my heart, my country,
Her pitiless blue sky,
When, sick at heart, around us
We see the cattle die;
But when the grey clouds gather,
And we can bless again
The drumming of an army.

The Australian landscape had enchanted an earlier Scottish-Australian poet, the tragic Adam Lindsay Gordon, whose ‘Hark! The Bells!’ was another poem learnt by heart by generations of Australian schoolchildren:

Hark! the bells on distant cattle
Waft across the golden-tufted wattle,
Music low and strange;...
Onward to the Southern Ocean
Glides the breath of Spring,
Onward, with a dreamy motion
I, too, glide and sing...

Adam Lindsay Gordon was the inspiration for another Scottish-Australian poet, Will Ogilvie, who arrived in Australia 19 years after Gordon’s suicide on the beach at Brighton, Melbourne, in 1870. Though he only remained in Australia for 12 years, Ogilvie continued writing bush ballads for years after his return to Scotland. That he came away little impressed by some of his countrymen in Australia was obvious in his satire ‘A Scottish Night’:

When the plot begins to thicken and the band begins to play,
When every tin-pot chieftain has a word or two to say,
When they’ll sell a Queensland station for a sprig of native heath,
When there’s one Mac on the table and a dozen underneath,
When half of them are sleeping and the whole of them are tight,
You will know that you’re assisting
At a (hic!) Scotch Night!
When the last big bottle’s empty and the Dawn creeps grey and cold,
And the last clan tartan’s folded and the
Last d...d lie is told,  
When they trotter down the footpath  
In a brave unbroken line  
To the peril of the passers and the  
Tune of 'Auld Lang Syne'.
You can tell the folk at breakfast as they  
Watch the fearsome sight,  
They've only been assisting at a braw Scots  
Nicht!

Quietly as rosebuds  
Talk to thin air,  
Love came so lightly  
I knew not he was there...
Quietly as tears fall  
On a wild sin,  
Softly as griefs call  
In a violin;

Without hail or tempest,  
Blue sword or flame;  
Love came so lightly  
I knew not that he came.

For the present author, John Shaw Neilson is the most attractive among the Scottish-Australian poets. A poor farm labourer from Minimay in Victoria's Wimmera district, Neilson composed many of his verses while ploughing. He later wrote them up by candlelight in his parents' slab hut, ruining his eyesight by doing so. He never married and probably remained celibate; but wrote many love poems - sweet lyrics as soft and sensitive as those of Robert Burns himself. 'Love's Coming' indicates how well Neilson developed his untutored skills:

Neilson struggled and eventually failed to make a living from the land, but many of his best poems are about the joy it brought him. In the Wimmera landscape he found subtle beauty everywhere. That was reward enough, as 'The Poor, Poor Country' suggests:

Copy of a letter from Andrew Fisher; Australian Prime Minister accepting Honorary Membership of Irvine Burns Club.
Oh 'twas a poor country, in Autumn in was bare,
The only green was the cutting grass and the sheep found little there.
Oh, the thin wheat and the brown oats were never two foot high,
But down in the poor country no pauper was I.

My wealth it was the glow that lives forever in the young,
'Twas on the brown water, in the green leaves it hung.
The blue cranes fed their young all day – how far in a tall tree!
And the poor, poor country made no pauper of me.

I waded out to the swan's nest – at night I heard them sing,
I stood amazed at the pelican, and crowned him for a king;
I saw the black duck in the reeds, and the spoonbill on the sky,
And in that poor country no pauper was I.

The only offering I could bring to the treasury of home
Was the green eggs of the mountain duck and the slabs of honeycomb;
'Twas little that we ever grew and little we could buy,
But I spoke so much to waterbirds – no pauper was I ...

The New Year came with heat and thirst and the little lakes were low,
The blue cranes were my nearest friends and I mourned to see them go;
I watched their wings so long until I only saw the sky.
Down in that poor country no pauper was I.

While Neilson enriched Australian culture but not himself, many other Scots prospered in their adopted land. If Scots have been at the forefront of so many endeavours, as previous paragraphs have argued, the question arises 'Why have they done so well?'. Different observers have answered this question in different ways. Most point to the Scottish mindset. Among factors said to be important here are the habits of thrift and frugality learnt in a harsh home environment, the moral and intellectual seriousness of Scottish Presbyterianism, the Calvinistic attitude towards the virtue of industry, and a firm belief in the rewards flowing from self-reliance and self-improvement. The Scottish immigrant, so the argument goes, arrives in Australia steeped in the so-called Protestant work ethic, and is accordingly predisposed towards success in the new environment. Other observers detect the influence of the Scottish education system. At once more liberal, more equalitarian, more practical and less preoccupied with classical 'high' learning than was the education available elsewhere, it is said to have equipped the Scots with skills in demand in Australia. Still others see the effect of Scottish energy, vigour and social cohesion. They argue that wherever the Scots settled in Australia (and other countries of immigration) they promptly founded their own churches, schools and community organisations, thus providing an institutional framework through which their members could advance. A parallel claim is that the Scots have a stronger consciousness of their identity, and a greater determination to preserve it, than do other immigrant groups, and that this has driven them to found institutions to maintain their Scottish values.

Whatever the force of such arguments, the fact remains that the Scots have been remarkably successful in establishing organisations to maintain their national customs. There is indeed a joke expatriate Scots tell to illustrate the point. I heard it from Danny Lamb, a Scottish-born director of the Canberra Highland Society and Burns Club:

Two Scots and two English people who were shipwrecked found their way to a desert island. They survived there for a month before being rescued. The Scots survived very, very well. On the first day they established a Presbyterian church and a Scottish Academy, on the second a Caledonian Society and a Gaelic League, on the fourth a pipe band and a Highland dancing group, on the fifth soccer and rugby clubs, on the sixth a branch of the Scottish
National Party and a Scottish National Assembly, and on the seventh they held a Highland Games gathering, and their plans for a St Andrew's Day meeting and a Burns Night were well advanced. Conducting all these activities kept them busy for the remaining three weeks they spent on the island. The English pair did not survive so well, and were nearly demoted when the rescue boat arrived. They had formed no organisations and had shared no activities together. In fact they hadn't even spoken, their problem being that they hadn't yet been introduced.  

And so, in Australia Burns Clubs and Caledonian Societies abound, whereas Shakespeare Clubs and Anglian Societies are almost unheard of. Scottish clubs, clan societies, pipe bands and troupes of Highlands and Scottish country dancers are still found in most parts of Australia, despite the increasing diversity of Australia's ethnic mix. Arguably, they are as popular with Australians having no Scottish descent, as they are with those of the first generation. They have certainly been among the most durable of 'ethnic' organisations. The oldest of them date from the 1850s, and one of these, the Highland Society of Maryborough, Victoria, has been conducting an annual Highlands Gathering each New Year's Day since 1857.  

The Scottish legacy in Australia is pervasive. It is seen in the names of public figures. Burnet, Campbell, Dowd, Elliot, Farquharson, Gorton, Hardie, Kerr, Knox, MacCallum, MacDonald, MacFarlane, Mack, McKinnon, McLachlan, McLennan. McNicoll, McNeil, McPhee, McPherson, Murray, Oliphant, Peacock, Pringle, Reid, Sinclair, and Sneddon are just a few to have been household names in recent years. It is also seen in first names. Aileen, Bruce, Cameron, Catriona, Craig, Donald, Douglas, Duncan, Elspeth, Fiona, Gordon, Graham, Grant, Ian, Janet, Jean, Keith, Kenneth, Lachlan, Leslie, Lindsay, Malcolm, Maxwell, Ronald, Ross, Scott and Stuart come in and out of fashion but are so widely known that their Scottish origin is often overlooked. It is evident in place names, for example Abbotsford, Aberfeldie, Aberfoyle, Ainslie, Allendale, Appin, Applecross, Armadale, Ayr, Balmoral, Balranald, Bannockburn, Ben Lomond, Berwick, Blair Athol, Blairgowrie, Bonnyrigg, Bothwell, Braidwood, Branxholm, Breadalbane, Brigadoon, Buchan and Burnside, which are only some of those beginning with just the first two letters of the alphabet.

The legacy is also obvious in the imprint of the Presbyterian Church, which has not only given Australian many of its most respected schools and academies but institutions such as the Australian Inland Mission and the Royal Flying Doctor Service. The Church also bequeathed to Australia Scottish architectural and liturgical styles. The neo-Gothic, plainly furnished Presbyterian churches built in nearly every Australian town and suburb until the 1950s were so ubiquitous that most citizens probably assumed they represented a vernacular Australian form of ecclesiastical architecture. During the 1980s and 90s the church took a sharp Right turn toward theological fundamentalism. Ironically, by doing so it helped popularise the theology of Peter Cameron, one of its most distinguished critics. After a career as a cleric in Edinburgh, Cameron came to Australia in 1991 as principal of St Andrew’s College at the University of Sydney, but within two years a church court had convicted him of heresy. His ‘sin’ had been to criticise in sermon the church’s decision to ban the ordination of women, an action deemed to constitute a denial of Biblical authority. Since then he has emerged as a populariser of liberal theology who challenges the constraints of institutional Christianity.  

And so, generation-by-generation, the Scottish leavening of Australian society continues. To measure its extent would probably be impossible, but, as the foregoing paragraphs suggest, Scotland’s influence on Australia amounts to much more than the genes of the six million people among Australia’s 18 million who, whether or not they are aware of it, have Scottish ancestry.
Notes:

9 ibid.
10 ibid.
11 Prentis, ‘Lowland Scottish Immigrants until 1860’.
13 For a brief discussion of McMillan’s career see ‘Those Who Make Money are Generally Scotchmen’ (author’s name not given) in HM Stationery Office, op. cit., p93; and Prentis, The Scots in Australia, pp. 65, 89; and The Australian Encyclopaedia (4th edition 1983) vol. 6, p. 177. The Australian Dictionary of Biography series (Melbourne University Press) also contains short but authoritative biographies of McMillan and all the other Scots mentioned in this chapter.
16 Prentis, ‘Lowland Scottish Immigrants until 1860’.
17 Ibid.
18 E. Richards, op. cit.
23 Graph derived from C.A. Price, loc. cit., with relevant figures from the 1991 Australian census added. The figures on which it is based as follows:
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Estimated Number born in Scotland</th>
<th>Total Australian population</th>
<th>Scottish-Born as Proportion of total population</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1861</td>
<td>97,200</td>
<td>1,152,100</td>
<td>8.44%</td>
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<tr>
<td>1871</td>
<td>99,800</td>
<td>1,662,600</td>
<td>6.00%</td>
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<tr>
<td>1881</td>
<td>99,300</td>
<td>2,250,100</td>
<td>4.41%</td>
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<tr>
<td>1891</td>
<td>125,000</td>
<td>3,174,400</td>
<td>3.94%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1901</td>
<td>102,700</td>
<td>3,773,800</td>
<td>2.72%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1911</td>
<td>94,350</td>
<td>4,455,000</td>
<td>2.12%</td>
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<tr>
<td>1921</td>
<td>109,600</td>
<td>5,435,700</td>
<td>2.02%</td>
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<td>1933</td>
<td>132,800</td>
<td>6,629,800</td>
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<tr>
<td>1947</td>
<td>103,100</td>
<td>7,579,400</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>1954</td>
<td>123,700</td>
<td>8,986,500</td>
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<tr>
<td>1961</td>
<td>132,900</td>
<td>10,508,200</td>
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<tr>
<td>1971</td>
<td>160,000</td>
<td>12,664,000</td>
<td>1.26%</td>
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<tr>
<td>1981</td>
<td>152,000</td>
<td>14,807,000</td>
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<tr>
<td>1991</td>
<td>156,600</td>
<td>17,292,000</td>
<td>0.91%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Total Australian population** before 1971 generally excluded people of full Aboriginal and some of part-Aboriginal descent.

30 Prentis, *The Scots in Australia*, p. 287
To every lover of Scottish Song and story, and to all students of our national literature, the life and writings of Allan Cunningham, poet, biographer and critic, present an attractive field. Therein is found so much of interest, that it is impossible, within the limits of a short sketch, to attempt more than to outline some events in the Poet's career, and refer briefly to a few of the products of his genius.

Descended from an Ayrshire family, one of his ancestors, we are told, took part in Montrose's rising and was present at the battle of Philiphaugh. Fearing the consequences, the Cunninghams sold the estate to which they gave their name, to escape forfeiture. Thereafter they became tenant farmers, and the Poet's father, John Cunningham, turned his agricultural experience to account also, in the capacity of land-steward on certain estates in the South of Scotland.

Allan Cunningham was born in Keir parish, Dumfriesshire, on the 7th of December, 1784. No "auld clay biggin" is preserved as his birthplace, but a stately yew tree marks the site of his father's cottage, on the right bank of the Nith, near Blackwood House.

About two years after Allan's birth, his parents removed a short distance southward, John Cunningham having been appointed land-steward to Patrick Miller of Dalswinton. Here the family took up their abode at Sandbed Farm.

The late Rev. David Hogg, minister of Kirkmahoe, has left us an interesting biography of the Poet. (Dumfries: John Anderson & Son, 1875) We may, however, note one or two events which do not seem to have been mentioned therein. The advent of Burns to Nithsdale took place in 1788, when he became tenant of Ellilsland, of which Miller of Dalswinton was landlord. The latter gave the Bard the choice of certain other farms superior from an agricultural point of view. It was at this time that Robert Burns made the acquaintance of Allan's father, who remarked with reference to Burns's selection of a farm, that he had "made a poet's but not a farmer's choice."

In the autumn of the same year followed an event of which Burns himself appears to have taken no notice in any of his writings. This was the launch of the first steamboat, on the little loch of Dalswinton - an achievement which has led to results which would then have been deemed incredible. Miller of Dalswinton, and Wm. Symington of Leadhills, were authors of the enterprise. The
former supplied the capital; the latter superintended the construction of the engines. At the trial trip were present Robert Burns,* Alexander Nasmyth, the painter; Henry Brougham, a future Lord Chancellor; and, of course, Miller, Symington, and John Cunningham. Present also was little Allan, whose sister Mary carried him on her back from Sandbed to see the experiment.

During Burns' tenancy of Ellisland, he was on terms of friendly intimacy with the Cunninghams. Ellisland and Sandbed are barely a mile apart as the crow flies, but the Nith separates them and prevents direct communication. Burns, however, was a welcome, if not a frequent visitor at Sandbed, and a surviving daughter of Mary Cunningham's tells how her mother used to speak of his "great, glowerin' een," and of the Bard's having once presented the Cunninghams with "the biggest cheese she ever saw."

At Sandbed, too, Burns first recited his matchless "Tam O'Shanter," while little Allan stood in the ingle neuk "amazed and curious." Cunningham thus describes the scene, which, as one may well imagine, made a deep impression on his young mind. "I was then a child," he writes, "but his looks and his voice cannot well be forgotten' and while I write this I behold him as distinctly as I did when I stood at my father's knee and heard the bard repeat his 'Tam O'Shanter.' He was tall and of a manly make, his brow broad and high, and his voice varied with the character of his inimitable tale, yet through all its variations it was melody itself."

In the small hamlet of Quarrelwood, in Kirkmahoe parish, was a dame's school kept by a Mrs Gray. Here Allan got all the tuition he ever enjoyed. When barely eleven years old he was apprenticed as a stone mason to his eldest brother James, who lived in the village of Dalswinton. With an ardent thirst for knowledge, Allan became thereafter a self-taught man. In the year following the beginning of Allan's apprenticeship the death of Robert Burns took place (21st July, 1796). Cunningham describes his own visit to the house of mourning, and also the incidents which impressed him in connection with the funeral. After paying the last tribute of respect to Scotia's Bard, he remarked to one of his sisters that, while he saw some affected to tears as the funeral cortège moved along, there were not so many as there should have been.

It will readily be seen how poets became the objects of his hero-worship and verse his favourite study. "After the labours of the day were over", his biographer tells us, "as well as at the mid-day hour, he read with avidity every book within his reach, listened eagerly to every snatch of old ballad he heard sung, treasured up every story told - his own imagination amply supplying any omission in the narrative, or any failure, too, in the memory of the narrator."

Boys will be boys, however; in spite of his literary turn, he was full of fun and frolic, and in his teens given to practical joking. He found a kindered spirit in George Douglas McGhie – a young weaver of Quarrelwood – his life long friend and correspondent. To instance one of their escapades. During a time of apprehended French invasion, the inhabitants of Kirkmahoe were one morning startled to find that every door was numbered in a strange and suspicious manner - the only theory which, it was thought, could account for this being, that the French had secretly landed and had sent their advance parties to make arrangements for a sudden attack. A guard was therefore mounted, and sentries posted and relieved in due form; but after another day and night had come and gone, in peace and quietness, it dawned upon the parishioners that a hoax had been perpetrated. The indignation excited was great, and was voiced by one Thomas Raining of Townhead, who announced his firm resolve to punish the offenders. To make matters worse, a humorous placard was secretly posted, offering a reward of £50 for such information as might lead to the discovery of the guilty parties – "apply to Thomas Raining, Townhead." The perpetrators of the joke and the authors of the placard were, of course, Allan Cunningham and George McGhie, who, although suspicion may have rested on them,

* There is no evidence that Burns was present on this occasion, and he does not refer to it in any of his correspondence, although he was believed to have been at Ellisland on the day of the event.
were never discovered; and not until shortly before his death did McGhie tell the secret.

Allan was apprenticed early, as we have seen; but, by the time he became a journeyman, his songs were already popular among the peasantry of the district. It was shortly after this that his first meeting with James Hogg, the Etrick Shepherd, took place. Hogg was at that time employed on the farm of Mitchelslacks, in the parish of Closeburn. Thither Allan and his eldest brother James repaired one summer’s day for the purpose of making his acquaintance. They found Hogg on the side of Queensberry Hill, engaged in his duties of shepherd. Hogg saw them approaching and has given a characteristic account of their meeting. James Cunningham first introduced himself, and told the shepherd how he could get no peace with Allan till he consented to go with him to see Hogg.

“I then stepped down the hill,” says Hogg, “to where Allan Cunningham stood with his weather beaten cheek towards me, and, seizing his hard, brawny hand, I gave it a hearty shake, saying something as kind as I was able, and, at the same time, I am sure, as stupid as it possibly could be.”

In a hut which Hogg had erected for shelter, the afternoon was spent. Allan and the shepherd repeated many of their songs and ballads. “Thus began,” adds Hogg, “at that bothy in the wilderness, a friendship and a mutual attachment between two aspiring Scottish peasants, over which the shadow of a cloud has never passed.”

Hogg has in his Jacobite Reliques borrowed at least one song from Cunningham, which he duly acknowledges – a song full of pawky Scotch humour, “The wee, wee German Lairdie.”

“Allan Cunningham’s youthful admiration for Walter Scott was intense. While working as a stone mason at eighteen shillings a week, he purchased the Lay of the Last Minstrel, costing twenty-four shillings, and afterwards committed the whole work to memory. A copy of this noble poem may now be had for a copper of two; but in those days books were books, and no doubt Cunningham derived more benefit from the transaction that if he had become, like “Dominie Sampson,” custodian of the “prodigious” collection of a Bishop.

When Marmion appeared his enthusiasm was so great, that he immediately set out on foot for Edinburgh, a distance of seventy miles, in order to behold the author. His object was achieved, he was fortunate in seeking Scott, and, without seeking an introduction to him, immediately retraced his steps to Nithsdale. In after years a warm friendship existed between Sir Walter and himself.

We now find him contributing some pieces to Literary Recreations, a London periodical, under the nom-de-plume of “Hidallan,” and in that journal he is referred to in the following terms: - “We really feel proud in having the pleasure of ushering to public notice the effusions of such a self-taught genius as ‘Hidallan.’”

In the Rev. Dr Wightman, minister of Kirkmahoe, Allan found a sympathetic “guide, philosopher, and friend,” who at his earnest request mapped out for him an extensive and varied course of reading.

Work having become scarce with his brother James, Allan found employment with a Dumfries builder, and, being skilful and artistic, was employed on stone-carving and ornamentation.

Among his youthful acquaintances was Bonnie Mary Allan, of Gateside, Newabbey – aa young lady endowed with great personal attractions and possessed of an extensive repertoire of songs and ballads. While working near New Abbey Cunningham was frequently at Gateside. Miss Allan, when receiving visitors, was usually to be found at her spinning wheel, an occupation at once thrifty and graceful, and it is recorded how Allan and some of his friends put the genuineness of her industry to the test. It
should be explained that the “rock” appeared to them never to suffer diminution – like the widow’s cruse of oil and meal barrel which failed not. In the young lady’s absence they, therefore, hid a dram-glass in “the wee pickle tow” and awaited results. Weeks afterwards one of their number withdrew the glass from its hiding place on the whisky bottle being produced for the refreshment of callers. The heroine of this little interlude afterwards became Mrs Copland of Dalbeattie, and was a literary correspondant of Allan’s for several years.

Following the course of Nith to Solway, the parish of Kirkbean adjoins that of Newabbey. There, while taking part in building the mansion-house of Arbigland, he met Jean Walker, who afterwards became his wife, and whose charms he celebrated in the poem, “The Lovely Lass of Preston Mill,” of which the opening stanza read thus:

The lark had left the evening cloud,
The dew fell saft, the wind was lowne;
Its gentle breath among the flowers
Scare stirred the thistle’s tap o’down,
The dappled swallow left the pool,
The stars were blinking owre the hill
As I met, amang the hawthorns green,
The lovely lass of Preston Mill!”

Though we would fain linger in fair Nithsdale, among the scenes of his youth, we must hasten to consider an event which influenced his whole future career. Mr R H Cromek, furnished with a letter of introduction to Cunningham, called upon him in the summer of 1809, and asked to see some of his poetry. Peter Cunningham, who published an edition of his father’s poems in 1847, describes what passed between the latter and Cromek after some poems had been read. “I have heard my father tell,” he says, “with great good humour, imitating Cromek’s manner all the while – ‘Why, sir, your verses are very well, but no one should try to write songs after Robert Burns unless he could either write like him or some of the old minstrels.’ The disappointed Poet nodded assent, changed the conversation, and talked about the old songs and fragments of songs still to be picked up among the peasantry of Nithsdale.

‘Gad sir!’ said Cromek, ‘if we could but make a volume – Gad Sir! See what Percy has done, and Ritson, and Mr Scott more recently with his Border Minstrelsy.’ The idea of a volume of imitations passed upon Cromek as genuine flashed across the Poet’s mind in a moment, and he undertook at once to put down what he knew, and set about collecting all that could be picked up in Nithsdale and Galloway. Cromek foresaw a volume of genuine verse and entered keenly into the idea of the Nithsdale and Galloway publication. A few fragments were soon submitted. ‘Gad Sir! These are the things,’ and, like Polyphemus, he cried for more – ‘More, give me more; this is divine!’ He never suspected a cheat, or, if at all, not at this time.”

On Cromek’s return to London, a frequent correspondence followed. Allan kept him plied with songs and ballads until enough to fill a fair sized volume had been sent on Cunningham was then urged to come to London to assist him in preparing the work for publication, and in the Spring of 1810, in spite of the remonstrances of his friends, Allan sailed from Leith, arriving in London on April 9th. He was the guest of Mr Cromek until The Remains of Nithsdale and Galloway Song were ready for the press. He then took to his trade, and obtained employment with one Bubb, a sculptor. The Remains were published in November, 1810, having been dedicated to Mrs Copland, Dalbeattie, to whom reference has been made. The work proved popular and Cromek gained much credit. Some, however, as Peter Cunningham tells us, were too competent judges to be deceived. Bishop Percy pronounced the poems too good to be old. Sir Walter Scott, James Hogg, and Professor Wilson agreed in ascribing to Allan Cunningham all that was best in the collection. His brother James and his friend George McGhie were also certain as to the authorship. To McGhie he wrote thus: - “You edify me by your opinion on The Remains of Nithsdale and Galloway Song. The critics are much of the same mind as yourself. Your conjecture is not very far wrong as to the authorship. To McGhie he wrote thus: -

“You edify me by your opinion on The Remains of Nithsdale and Galloway Song. The critics are much of the same mind as yourself. Your conjecture is not very far wrong as to my share of the book... Pardon the confession and keep it a secret.”

The pecuniary circumstances of Mr Cromek, who died about sixteen months later, prevented him from making Allan any remuneration, but
the latter always spoke of him in terms of sincere friendship.

Cunningham’s impressions of London and the English after a residence of five or six months in the city are interesting. From a letter to James we give the following extract:-

“The English have not that vehement warmth, that vigorous originality which the Scottish peasants have. Scotland is an age or two behind in corruption, and she has hitherto preserved her ancient character from villainous foreign intermixture.” It is instructive to compare this with Mr W E Henley’s description of the Scotch peasantry. Most of us will be inclined to prefer and endorse Allan Cunningham’s appreciation of a class with which he was so familiar.

It would have been surprising had he not suffered occasionally from homesickness and pined for the freshness and beauty of his native district. We can imagine him repeating the lines of one of his own songs—a great favourite, be it noted, of Sir Walter Scott, and which used to be sung with much spirit by Mrs John Gibson Lockhart. The song to which we refer is:-

“Hame, hame, hame! O hame fain wad I be,
Hame, hame, hame, to my ain countrie”
There’s an e’e that ever weeps, and a fair face
will be fain,
As I pass through Annan water wi’ my bonnie
band again,
When the flow’r is i’ the bud and the leaf upon
the tree,
The lark shall sing me hame in my ain countrie.”

The record of his life in London is one of cease’ess industry. Not content with a hard day’s work, his pen is never idle in the evenings. His letters, too, to his family and friends are long and affectionate. For a short time, indeed, he devoted his whole time to journalism. In a letter to McGhie he alludes to this, and a few days later he writes to his brother James describing his enforced nocturnal habits.

On the 1st July, 1811, he married the “Lovely Lass of Preston Mill” (Jean Walker). The union, which proved a most happy one, was solemnised in the Church of St. Saviour, Southwark, where, as Cunningham himself reminds us, James I, the poet King of Scotland, had been married also. Mrs Allan Cunningham, while adorning her husband’s hearth and home, was unanimously pronounced charming by the circle of his friends.

Finding the late hours entailed in the reporters’ gallery of the “House” were telling on his health, he now entered the studio of Francis Chantrey, a rising sculptor, in whose employment he remained as master of works, and to whom he also acted as secretary and amanuensis.

The engagement was advantageous on both sides. Chantrey regarded him more as an intimate friend than a servant; and Cunningham, through his literary connections, was able to embrace many opportunities of advancing his master’s interests. He had now more leisure to devote to writing, but prudently formed the resolution, which he afterwards kept, not to count upon the produce of his pen in supplying the family needs—except as an auxiliary.

Having given “hostages to fortune,” his industry became, if possible, more indefatigable than ever. In a letter to Professor Wilson some years later he says:-

“My life has been one continued struggle to maintain my independence and support my wife and children; and I have, when the labour of the day is closed, endeavoured to use the little talent which my country allows me to possess, as easily and as profitably as I can. The pen thus adds a little to the profits of the chisel, and I keep my head above water, and on occasion take the middle of the causeway with an independent step.”

We may well say of Allan Cunningham that he thoroughly realised and acted upon the principle so beautifully and simply stated by Robert Burns—

“To mak’ a happy fireside clime
For weans and wife,
That’s the true pathos and sublime
Of human life.”

In 1813 he published a volume entitled *Songs Chiefly in the Rural Language of Scotland*, in the introduction to which he says:-

“I have attempted to preserve inviolable what I conceive to be the primitive rules of lyrical
composition, and associate with the emotions of love the rural imagery of my native land. Cunningham was a regular contributor to the London Magazine and several others, among which was Blackwood, wherein appeared from 1819 to 1821 a series of tales from his pen entitled "Recollections of Mark Macrabin, the Cameronian," containing many vividly descriptive and humorous stories of the social life of rural Scotland at the close of the 18th and beginning of the 19th centuries. In the village of Quarrel-wood the ancient Covenanting sect were numerous, including the McGhies and many others with whom Allan had been intimate. When the Cameronian Church (now deserted and roofless) was erected at Quarrelwood, a number of the more extreme refused to enter the building, saying "We were driven to the hills, and on the hills we shall remain." Their uncompromising attitude inspired a short poem from the pen of our Poet called, "The voice Lifted up against Churches and Chapels."

When Walter Scott visited London in 1820, Allan called to request him to sit to Chantrey for a marble bust. The meeting between the two Scotchmen was cordial in the extreme, and Scott at once agreed to the proposed bust. In due time a clay model took its form under the skilful hands of Chantrey. The latter, however, was not satisfied with the pose, and said to Allan - "I shall never be able to please myself with a perfectly serene expression, I must try his conversational look, take him when about to break out into the some sly, funny, old story."

"As Chantrey said this," adds Cunningham, "he took a string, cut off the head of the bust, put it into its present position, touched the eyes and mouth slightly, and wrought such a transformation that, when Scott came to his third sitting, 'Ay' ye're mair like yourself! now! Why, Mr Chantrey, no witch of old ever performed such cantrips with clay as this.'"

Cunningham's next literary venture was the drama Sir Marmaduke Maxwell, the scene of which was laid at Caerlaverock Castle and neighbourhood. The manuscript was submitted to Scott and invoked his friendly criticism and advice. He suggested that Allan should consult his friend Terry, the actor, as to what was likely to be suitable for staging. In the introduction to The Fortunes of Nigel, in a supposed dialogue between the author of Waverley and "Captain Clutterbuck," an amusing reference is made to this play and its composer, in which the author of Waverley says of him, "Honest Allan, you are a credit to Caledonia."

Cunningham had again the pleasure of meeting Scott when the latter returned to London in 1821 to attend the Coronation of George IV. While sitting to Chantrey for the finishing touches to his bust, an amusing conversation took place which Allan afterwards related to Lockhart. "Well, Allan, Scott said, when he saw me at this last sitting, 'were you at the Coronation? It was a splendid sight'. 'No, Sir Walter,' I answered; 'places were dear and ill to get. I am told it was a magnificent scene; but, having seen the procession of King Crispin at Dumfries, I was satisfied!' I said this with a smile. Scott took it as I meant it, and laughed heartily. 'That's not a bit better than Hogg,' he said. 'He stood balancing the matter whether to go to the Coronation or the Fair of Saint Boswell - and the Fair carried it!'

With Sir Marmalade Maxwell were published twenty songs - of the latter, "My Nanie O" reminds us of Burns' "Behind yon hills where Lugar flows," and Allan Ramsay's "Nanie O."

This is Cunningham's version:-

**MY NANIE O**

"Red rowes the Nith 'tween bank and brae,
Mirk is the night and rainie O,
Through heaven and earth should mix in storm,
I'll gang and see my Nanie O;
My Nannie O, my Nannie O,
My Kind and winsome Nannie O,
She holds my heart in love's dear bands,
And nane can do't but Nanie O.

"In preaching time sae meek she stands,
Sae saintly and sae bonnie O!
I cannot get ae glimpse of grace,
For thieving looks at Nanie O;
My Nannie O, my Nannie O,
The world's in love wi' Nanie O.'
That heart is hardly worth the wear,
    That wadna love my Nanie O.

“My breast can scarce contain my heart,
    When dancing she moves finely O;
I guess what heaven is by her e’en,
    They sparkle so divinely O;
My Nanie O, my Nanie O;
The flower of Nithsdale’s Nanie O;
Love looks free ‘neath her long brown hair,
    And says, I dwell with Nannie O.

“Tell not, thou star, at gray daylight,
    O’er Tinwald-top sae bonnie O,
My footsteps ‘mang the morning dew,
    When coming frae my Nannie O;
My Nannie O, my Nannie O,
Nane ken o’ me and Nannie O;
The stars and moon may tell’t aboon,
    They winna wrang my Nannie O.”

Shortly afterwards he published in two volumes *Traditional Tales of the English and Scottish Peasant*1, which were for the most part reprinted from the *London Magazine*, in which periodical appeared in 1824 his remarkable essay on “Burns and Byron.” In the same year was also published his greatest undertaking up to this time, *The Songs of Scotland Ancient and Modern*, with an Introduction and Notes, Historical and Critical, and Characters of the poets. One of the songs contributed by himself was the well-known and popular ditty -

“A wet sheet and a flowing sea,
    A wind that follows fast,
And fills the white and rustling sail,
    And bends the gallant mast.
And bends the gallant mast, my boys,
    While like the eagle free,
Away the good ship flies, and leaves
    Old England on the lee.”

We have hitherto made no mention of Allan’s children — four sons and one daughter — who on their merits deserve more than a passing mention.

Mr Lockhart tells how, when breakfasting with Cunningham one morning, Sir Walter Scott exclaimed — “What are you going to make of all those boys, Allan? What does the eldest point to?” “The callant would fain be a soldier, Sir Walter, and I have the promise of a commission in the King’s army, but I wish rather he would go to India.” Scott let the subject drop, but immediately afterwards succeeded in obtaining two cadetships for the two eldest, Joseph Day and Alexander Cunningham, who in due time sailed for India, and were followed some years later by the youngest son Francis, who also embraced the career of a soldier. All three distinguished themselves, and all did valuable literary work. The second son, afterwards Major-General Sir Alexander Cunningham, R.E., K.C.I.E, C.S.I., who survived the other two, had a remarkable career of 50 years in the Indian service, of which the *Royal Engineers Journal* of 1st March, 1894, contains a detailed account. From the pen of this distinguished officer came many valuable works on the Architecture, History, Physical Features, Geography, and Coinage of India. Peter Cunningham, the third son, entered the Civil Service, and also occupied his leisure in the pursuit of literature. He published a *Handbook of London, The Story of Nell Gwynne, The Life of Drummond of Hawthornden*, also an edition of his father’s poems. Allan’s only daughter Mary was the subject of some of her father’s poems, and is frequently referred to in his letters in terms which show her place in his affection.

From what has been said regarding his family it is evident their care and education must have been no light matter, and during all these years, as we have seen, the chisel and pen alternated daily with never-ceasing assiduity.

From 1825 to 1829 he turned his attention to fiction — *Paul Jones, Michael Scott, Lord Roldan*, and the *Maid of Elvar* being the titles of his novels. In these, it must be confessed, he does not appear at his best. They were followed, however, by a work of enduring merit and value, *The Lives of the Most Eminent British Painters*, conceived somewhat after the plan of Johnson’s *Lives of the Poets*. “These biographies,” says Christopher North, “are full of a fine and an instructed enthusiasm. He speaks boldly but reverentially of genius, strews his narrative with many flowers of poetry, disposes and arranges his materials skilfully, and is, in a few words,
an admirable critic on art and an admirable biographer of artists.” For a task of this kind Allan possessed special qualifications. He was moving in literary skill with which few artists are gifted, or have opportunities to cultivate.

His friends were numerous and sincere. Many of the more illustrious of his fellow countrymen were of the number. Among them, too, were the celebrated Mrs Hemans, Mr and Mrs S C Hall, Tom Hood, who said he used to "look up to Allan Cunningham, who was formed tall enough to snatch a grace without the reach of art"; and Robert Southey, Poet Laureate, who addressed a metrical epistle to him in which the lines occur—

"Alan, true child of Scotland;
Thou who art
So oft in spirit on thy native hills,
And yonder Solway shores; a poet thou."

Cunningham had, indeed, been "oft in spirit" in his native Nithsdale. After the constant strain of twenty-one years in London, he well merited a holiday in Scotland, and a visit to his own kith and kin, and his aged mother, not to speak of the friends of his youth. Mrs Allan Cunningham, too, must have been hungering for the sight of Criffel again. In the summer of 1831 the worthy couple found themselves on the banks of the Nith once more.

The good people in Dumfries were not behind in their welcome, and, on the 23rd of July, a public dinner was held in honour of the poet in the "Prince Charlie" room of the Commercial Hotel, Dumfries. A number of prominent men of the district were present, and he received a right hearty ovation. Allan, with characteristic modesty, briefly expressed his gratitude. Later in the evening, he was called upon to receive the freedom of the incorporations of the town — "In testimony of the regard they bore him as a man of genius, an honest man, and one who was a credit to his country.” This honour was quite unexpected, no previous intimation having been given him. Allan was much touched and gratified to think that, like his father and grandfather, he had been made a freeman of Dumfries. He “was pleased to think he had worked as a mason in her streets and public places. He could still recognise the marks of his chisel on many an edifice.”

This gathering was also remarkable as the occasion of the first public speech made by Thomas Carlyle, then at Craigenputtock, who said that he "had come down from his retreat in the hills to meet Allan Cunningham at a time when scarcely any other circumstances could have induced him to move half-a-mile from home. He conceived that a tribute could not be paid to a more deserving individual, nor did he ever know a dinner being given which proceeded from a purer principle. When Allan left his native place, he was poor, unknown, and unfriended — nobody knew what was in him, and he himself had only a slight consciousness of his own powers. He now comes back, his worth his known and appreciated, and all Britain is proud to number him among her poets.”

Carlyle then proposed the immortal memory of Burns, and ended by exclaiming “Alas, that we can only reflect, while we are thus celebrating Allan Cunningham’s worth, that Burns was never so honoured while in life!” We have pleasure in knowing that the Rev. Dr Wightman of Kirkmahoe was also present at the function, and recited a poem he had composed in honour of his former protégé.

On the day after this dinner, Cunningham proceeded to Dalswinton House, on the invitation of Mr Leny, the proprietor. He saw Sandbed, and rambled among the scences of his boyhood, often, as his biographer tells us, with the tears running down his cheeks. He remarked to Mrs Leny that evening that he should like to spend his closing years on Nithsdale, with a cot, a kale-yard, and a cow, when that lady immediately replied— "Only come once more among us, and these, I assure you, you shall have.” On returning to London, he sent some verses to Mrs Leny relative to this conversation, entitled "A farewell to Dalswinton,” of which the first stanza is as follows:-

“A cot, a kale-yard, and a cow,
Said fair Dalswinton’s lady,
‘Are thine,’ and so the Muse began
To make her dwelling ready.
She reared her walls, she laid her floors,
And finished roof and rafter;
But looking on her handiwork,
She scarce refrained from laughter.
A cot sketched from some fairy's dream,
In fancy's strangest tintin',
Would mock the beauteous banks and streams
Of thee, my loved Dalswinton."

Greatly benefited by his holiday, he resumed work in London, and soon busied himself with his *Works and Life of Burns*, which, when published, extended to eight volumes instead of six, as originally designed, so much had the material increased. The *Life* was undoubtedly one of the best published up to that time. Subsequent biographers have been indebted to it, while profiting by the knowledge of other facts regarding Burns, which later years have brought to light. In the last volume, Cunningham takes farewell of the Bard in lines modelled on the familiar "Scottish stanza" of Fergusson and Burns—a measure which he does not elsewhere use—thus,

"My task is ended—farewell Robin,
My prentice muse stands sad and sobbin'
To think thy country kept thee scrubbin'—
Her barmy barrels,
Of strains immortal mankind robbin',
And thee of laurels."

The sale of this work was so rapid that a second edition was brought out a year later. Cunningham seems, however, to have been disappointed that more copies were not sold in Nithsdale; a remark made in an unpublished letter to his sister Mary (Mrs Pagan of Curriestanes) shows this.

Mention may now be made of another circumstance unrecorded by his biographer. In 1835 the editorship of a local newspaper had been offered him. An extract from his reply shows his straightforward and independent nature. He writes:—"I am sorry I cannot see the offer of the committee in a light to justify my acceptance of it. No doubt much leisure would be afforded for original writing, and the place and society would be wholly to my mind; but these advantages would be more than met, I fear, by removing from the headquarters of literature and by breaking up many valuable connexions and friendships. It is true, as you surmise, that I desired to purchase the *Dumfries Journal* five or six years ago; the price asked was absurdly high, and when the paper came into the market again, it was disposed of in a private way and for a smaller sum than I would have willingly risked. But then, to be both owner and editor is one thing, and to be editor under the control of a committee is another. In the former, I moved free and unfettered, answerable only to myself for acts of folly or forgetfulness; in the latter I should have less of that pleasant thing they call self-will, and, with all respect be it said, my acquaintance with committees on matters of art hinders me from feeling more than desirous of acting for committees on politics or news. This is freely and respectfully said. When the paper is started I shall be glad to contribute something."

Allan's employer, Mr Chantrey, was now at the zenith of his fame, and the two men were always busy. So often were they seen together, that they were dubbed "the inseparables" by the people of the neighbourhood.

In many of Chantrey's compositions, poetic touches were suggested by Cunningham. In the monument known as "The Sleeping Children," in Lichfield Cathedral, an instance of this occurs—thus, in the hand of the younger child in this marble is a bunch of snowdrops, beautifully typical of purity and innocence. Francis Chantrey was knighted by Queen Victoria in 1837. About this period Cunningham's use seems to have somewhat deserted him. He complains of this in a letter to Mrs S C Hall, who had asked him for a poem. "Dear Mrs Hall," he writes, "I will do anything for you, but my Muse, poor lassie, has lost much of early readiness and spirit, and finds much more difficulty in making words clink and lines keep time; but she will work for you, and as she loves you, who knows but some of her earlier inspiration may come to her again? For you must know, I think, her strains have lost much of their free, wild nature since we came from the land of the yellow broom and the blossomed heather. Yours ever and ever, - Allan Cunningham."

If his poetical effusions become now less frequent, his letters to his mother and sisters continue to be numerous and affectionate, and contain many references to his sons in India.
In an unpublished letter to his sister Mary, dated 5th July, 1841, there are so many interesting passages, that we cannot refrain from giving a few extracts. In expressing his pleasure in hearing of his niece Helen's engagement to the Rev. William Begg, minister of Falkirk, he says: - "Mr Begg, we are told, is a very able and meritorious minister, and his kirk one of the wealthiest in the land. Give our love to the young lady and her spouse." Then follows a reference to the work and dangers of his sons in India. "We had a call from Col. McLeod of Bengal Engineers the other day," he continues, "who knows and loves all our boys; he says Francis is the finest looking young fellow of them all, and very handsome in his regimentals - my wife is pleased with this!" Next comes an account of his literary work at that time. "Here, while all is strife and contention, and the devil holding the balance in which his Blackness is weighing the merits of political parties, I am quietly writing the life of that most quiet and graceful and delightful of all rural poets, James Thomson, and collecting materials for that of my dear and admirable friend, Sir David Wilkie. This you may have seen in the newspapers, but you could not have seen that the father of Sir David Wilkie and our excellent father were both natives of Ratho, or, to speak like a biographer, of Upper Gogar and Nether Gogar. This I learnt by conversation one day with Sir David, and it was confirmed to me lately by his brother, Thomas Wilkie, who, with his sister, has preferred me for this undertaking to several men of merit. The life of Thomson is for a beautiful edition of The Seasons, now printing with engravings in London, and that of Wilkie will be published by that prince of all booksellers, John Murray. It will likely extend to three volumes, for he has left many curious letters and valuable memoranda; besides, he was the greatest of all our painters South as well as North."

In addition to the death of Sir David Wilkie, which happened on 1st June, 1841, and on whose biography, as he told us, he was now at work, Cunningham a few months later suffered the loss of his eminent master and attached friend, Sir Francis Chantrey. This was a severe blow to him. He was asked to carry out the commissions with which Chantrey had modelled. When erecting a mausoleum for himself some years before, the great sculptor had offered to provide room in it for Allan Cunningham; the latter, however, replied, "No, no, I won't be built over, but he buried where the daisies will grow upon my grave, and the lark sing above my head."

Sir Francis bequeathed him an annuity of £100, with a reversion to his widow, and, had Cunningham lived long enough, we would no doubt have had a biographical tribute to his master's memory. This was not to be accomplished, however. The bereavements he had suffered, and his long years of days and nights of ceaseless toil had told upon his strong frame. He only completed the Life of Sir David Wilkie the day before his own came to an end. He died suddenly on the morning of the 29th October, 1842, aged 57. He was buried in Kensal Green Cemetery.

Of his literary work, as we have seen, there was high appreciation and friendly criticism from the majority of those best qualified to appraise its value. Of adverse critics, he had, like others greater than himself, his share. The poet Motherwell was, from no reason apparent to us, one of the most hostile. All, however, could respect the man.

Among his true friends, Cunningham was fortunate in being able to number Thomas Carlyle. The New Letters of this great thinker, published last year (John Lane, London, 1904), contain a reference to the subject of our sketch with which we shall conclude. In a letter to Dr Carlyle, dated Chelsea, 2nd November, 1842, we read: - "You have doubtless noticed the death of poor Allan Cunningham in the newspapers. I have heard it till yesterday afternoon; and then, as you may fancy, with a painful shock. I went up directly to leave a card for the poor widow. It was then after dark; in an upper window behind white curtains glowed a light very visible from the street; there, I said to myself, lies the mortal hull of my poor brave Allan! The widow, I was told by the servant, bore up resolutely, and was as well as one could expect, Dr Cunningham continuing with her. Alas, it is but a week since I stopped Allan near his own house, and spoke to him, little thinking it was the last time! He
died instantly, they say; he had just finished the Life of Wilkie; his brother the Doctor was speaking with him — suddenly Allan ceased. I shall miss him here; many will miss him. He was a rugged, true mass of Scotch manhood; had far more talent in him, far more worth in him than he ever got developed — much as he had developed of both."

The “Gallovidian” Vol. VII, 1905

SONG BY ROBERT BURNS,

Junior

The oldest son of our national poet, also named Robert, was the author of several convivial and amatory songs. He was a member of the Dumfries Kilwinning Lodge of Freemasons, and among the papers of that lodge there has been discovered the following verses in manuscript, written by him in honour of the visit of the Queen and Prince Albert to Edinburgh in 1842, which were sung at a meeting of the Lodge, and ordered to be engrossed in the minutes; but that was not done. It is entitled “The Gathering of the Race of Dermid (the Campbells) to Welcome the Queen,” to be sung to the air “The Campbells are Coming”:

*Ye sons of Clan Dermid, away! Away!*
*Ye sons of Clan Dermid, away! Away!*
*The beacons are blazing, from Forth to Tay;*
*Ye sons of brown Dermid, away! away!*

The Lady of Kingdoms comes bright on her path,
Let the banners wave proudly o’er mountains and strath;
Let the Sunbeam of Dermid* exult in the gale

That sweeps the grey mist of the morn from the vale!
Ye sons, &c.

The Queen of the Islands comes from her throne;
Her realms are an hundred; her people are one,
At the halls of her fathers, by bonnie Tay side,
Clan Hay and Clan Drummond receive her in pride.
Ye sons, &c.

Decend from the hills of the swift bounding roe;
But not for the battle, with spear and with bow;
Descend in the tartan that knows not a stain,
With liberty’s fervour and loyalty’s flame.
Ye sons, &c.

Let the steel of your sires gleam on Tay’s morning wave-
The steel of the mighty, the steel of the brave;
From, stately St. Johnstone to bonnie Dundee,
Clan Dermid, Clan Murray, the fearless and free!

*The standard of the chieftain, Macculloch More.
While it is well known that Robert Burns visited the Stewartry on numerous occasions, his connections with the area and in particular with many of its residents are not as well known, for indeed they were numerous.

He made many visits to the Stewartry not only in a private capacity but also in his role as an Excise Officer, and was in correspondence with a number of local estate and landowners prior to his arrival at Ellisland Farm near Dumfries in 1788, many of his close friends had connections in the Stewartry.

One of the most important of these being his loyal friend and travelling companion, John Syme (1755 – 1831) who was born at Barncailzie, Springholm some five miles from Castle Douglas. Owing to the failure of the Ayr Bank his father had to sell the estate and John Syme moved into the town of Dumfries. When the Poet likewise moved to the town to a house in Bank Street Syme occupied the rooms immediately below those of Robert Burns and his family. The house is still occupied today. John Syme accompanied the poet on his tour of Galloway in 1793. Details of which were fully covered in a letter from Syme to Alexander Cunningham, dated 3rd August, 1793.

Burns was familiar with many of the villages and towns in the Stewartry, and lodged overnight in Castle Douglas, Kenmure Castle (New Galloway), Gatehouse of Fleet and Kirkcudbright. The following places in the Stewartry were known to Burns, some of them visited by him, others referred to in correspondence:- Airds of Kells, Arbigland, Ardwall, Balmaghie, Barncleuch, Barncrosh, Bennan Hill, Buittle, Cally House, Cardoness, Carsethorn, Cavens, Colvend, Corbieton, Craigengillan, Craigmuchie, Cree, Criffel, Fingland, Garlies, Glenkens, Glenlee, Kempleton, Kirkbean, Kirkennan, Kirkpatrick Durham, Kirroughtree, Laurieston, Lochenbreck Inn, Lochrutton Manse, Parton House, Redcastle, Ryedale House, St. Mary’s Isle (Kirkcudbright), Southerness, Southwick House, Torrs, Urr and Woodhall.

Of his stay in Castle Douglas where he wrote letters to his Edinburgh friend, Mrs Agnes McLehose (Clarinda) (1759 – 1841) and his patron and lifetime correspondent, Mrs Dunlop of Dunlop, (1730–1815) he started:- To Agnes McLehose on 25th June, 1794 – “Here am I set, a solitary hermit, in the solitary room, of a solitary inn, with a solitary bottle of wine by me – as grave and as stupid as an owl – but like that owl, still faithful to my own song,” and to Mrs Dunlop on 25th July, 1794 – Castle Douglas, “here in a Solitary inn, in a solitary village, am I set by myself, to amuse my brooding fancy as I may.”

Burns was a prolific correspondent and over 600 of his letters have survived, it is therefore not surprising to find a number of these letters written to some of his Stewartry friends.

Writing to David McCulloch (–1825) of Ardwall, Gatehouse of Fleet on 21st June, 1794 – “I shall be happy to take a draught of McKune’s best with you – Collector Syme will be at Glens about that time, and will meet us about dish-of-tea-hour”.

To Helen Craik (1750-1825) of Arbigland, Kirbean from Ellisland on 9th August, 1790 – “Some unlooked for accidents have prevented my doing myself the honor of a second visit to Arbigland, as I was so hospitably invited, and so positively meant, to have done – However, I still hope to have that pleasure before the commencement of the busy days of the harvest.”

On 12th January, 1792 he wrote the following to Miss Clark – “Now that I have, by my removal to town, got time and opportunity I shall often intrude on you with my assurance, how sincerely
Part of a map circa 1776 showing the position of Carlingwork Inn which may have been the “Solitary Inn” referred to by Robert Burns.

and respectfully I am, Dear Madam, your obliged and obedient servant.” – Robert Burns.

John Paul Jones (1747-1792), founder of the American navy was born in a cottage on Arbigland estate.

To Margaret Chalmers (1763 – 1843) who was born at Fingland in 1763, her father having to sell the estate and subsequently leased a farm near Mauchline, Ayrshire:- “I am so impatient to show you that I am once more at peace with you, that I send you the book I mentioned directly, rather than wait the uncertain time of seeing you.”

On the afternoon of 27th July, 1793 the Poet dined with the Glendinning (Glendonwyne) family at Parton House and in the evening made an excursion to Airds, at one time the home of John Lowe, (1750-1798) a minor poet, best remembered for his “Mary weep no more for me”. Later that night he arrived at Kenmure Castle and stayed with the Gordon Family. John Gordon (1750 – 1840) was the grandson of the 6th Viscount Kenmure, who lost his title for his part in the Rebellion of 1715.

While visiting the Gordon’s at Kenmure Castle the Poet and company took part in a sail on Loch Ken in the barge Glenkens. The boat ran aground before reaching the landing-place at the Boat-o-Rhone where the traveller’s horses were waiting. From this point the Poet and John Syme travelled on to Gatehouse of Fleet via New Galloway.

Prior to the arrival at Kenmure Castle, Mrs Gordon’s little dog Echo had died and she asked the Poet for a suitable epitaph.

He agreed and produced the following:-

In wood and wild, ye warbling throng,  Ye jarring, screeching things around,
Your heavy loss deplore:  Scream your discordant joys:
Now half extinct your powers of song –
Sweet Echo is no more.

Now half your din of tuneless sound
With Echo silent lies.

While in Gatehouse of Fleet there is no record that he visited Cardoness, home of David Maxwell (Sir) (- 1825), but he was known to the poet. In a letter to Mrs Dunlop of Dunlop dated June, 1793 he enclosed an epigram stating:- “The following is an epigram which I made the other day on a stupid, money-loving dundertate of a Galloway laird-Maxwell of Cardoness:-

Bless Jesus Christ, O Cardoness,
With grateful, lifted eyes;
Who taught that not the soul alone,
But body too shall rise.-

For had he said, the soul alone
From death I Will deliver:
Alas, alas, O Cardoness!
Then hadst thou lain forever!

Over the years many stories have been circulated about the Poet, most of which cannot be confirmed or denied. One such story eminates from Joseph Train (1779 - 1852) (Supervisor of Excise at Castle Douglas) concerning a Jean Dunn of Kirpatrick-Durham. She saw the Poet and his Excise colleague, Robertson approaching her house in the village on the morning of the annual fair, and slipped out of the back door to avoid them, leaving her young daughter and a servant to meet the Excisemen.

“Has there been any brewing for the fair here today?” asked Burns as he entered the cottage. “Oh no, Sire,” replied the servant, “we hae nae licence for that,” “That’s no’ true!” cried the child, “the muckle black kist is fu o the bottles o yill that my mother sat up a’ night brewing for the fair.” “Does that bird speak?” asked Robertson, pointing to one in a hanging cage. “There is no use for another speaking-bird in this house,” commented Burns, “while that lassie is to the fore. We are in a hurry just now, but as we return from the fair we’ll examine the muckle black kist.” Thus warned, Jean Dunn managed to get her stock of beer out of the house before the Excisemen returned.

During a journey from New Galloway to Gatehouse of Fleet the weather had been unkind for that time of the year, Burns and Syme travelled through most of the journey in torrential rain, resulting in them being thoroughly soaked on their arrival at the Murray Arms. The Poet’s new boots in particular being completely ruined. Such was their state of mind, that John Syme recorded that Burns insisted on them both getting utterly drunk. After a stop overnight in the Murray Arms they travelled the next day to Kirkcudbright and lodged in the Heid Inn, in the High Street. In the evening they were joined for dinner by John Dalzell of Barncrosh, who was well known to the Poet, according to Mrs Dalzell Burns had been a regular visitor to their home.

That evening they had accepted an invitation to visit the Fourth Earl of Selkirk (1722-1799) at St. Mary’s Isle, and arrived just as the Earl and his guest were concluding dinner. Syme later recorded:- “We enjoyed a very happy evening – we had really a treat of mental and sensual delights – the latter consisting in abundance and variety of delicious fruits etc. – the former you may conceive form our society – a company of 15 or 16 very agreeable young people.”

A guest at the Isle at the time was the Milanese singer and composer Pietro Urbani (1749 - 1816), and during the evening the Poet was asked to recite his poem Lord Gregory.

The visit to the Isle has been connected with the Selkirk Grace which Burns is said to have recited, although by the time Burns had arrived, dinner had been finished, it is quite probable that he could have been asked to say a grace. It is strange that John Syme does not mention it, although he records most of the other proceedings in which Burns was involved.

A number of biographers on the life and works of the Poet state that he did say grace when asked by the Earl of Selkirk. It is a known fact however, that Burns did not write the Selkirk Grace. It has also been recorded that while in the Murray Arms in Gatehouse of Fleet he wrote Scots Wha Hae, John Syme told Alexander Cunningham: - “I told you in the midst of the storm on the wilds of
Kenmure, Burns was rapt in meditation. What do you think he was about? He was engaged in the same manner on our ride from St. Mary's Isle, and I did not disturb him. Next day he produced me the following address of Bruce to his troops, and gave me a copy for Dalzell – Scots, wha hae wi' Wallace bled &c."

It was mentioned earlier that Burns had written to his friend David McCulloch of Ardwall, the letter was concluded as follows: “Syne goes also to Kirroughtree, and let me remind you of your kind promise to accompany me there – I will need all the friends I can muster, for I am indeed ill at ease whenever I approach your Honourables and Right Honourables.”

At Kirroughtree they met Patrick Heron, (1736-1803), whom the Poet was later to support in the Election Campaign in the spring of 1795. The Whigs backed Patrick Heron against the Tory candidate Thomas Gordon of Balmaghie. Burns composed three Election Ballads which enjoyed a wide circulation, and may have played a large part in the Tory defeat.

James Murray (1727 – 1799) of Broughton, the MP for Wigtownshire, whose principal residence was Cally House, Gatehouse of Fleet supported Thomas Gordon, his nephew.

The Parliament was desolved in May of 1796 and Burns wrote his fourth Heron Election Ballad. His old adversaries, Murray of Broughton, Gordon of Balmaghie, Maxwell of Cardoness, the Ministers of Buittle and Urr, together with the Laird of Redcastle, were targeted again. Sadly, Robert Burns did not live long enough to see Heron’s success in retaining his seat in Parliament.

The poet’s four Ballad’s on Mr Heron’s Election of 1795 and 1796 abound with names and places within the Stewartry apart from those contesting the Elections. Sir William Douglas (1745 – 1809) of Castle Douglas, Walter Lawrie of Redcastle, Rev. James Muirhead (1740 – 1808) of Urr Church, Rev. George Maxwell (1762 – 1807) of Buittle Church, William Copland of Collieston, John McAdam of Craigengillan, Thomas Goldie (1748 – 1823) of Goldielea and Alexander Birtwhistle the Provost of Kirkcudbright.

There are many other instances which relate to the Poet’s connections and interests in the Stewartry, but the foregoing is suffice to show the extent of his involvement.

Castle Douglas 25th June 1794

Here, in a solitary inn, in a solitary village, am I set by myself, to amuse my brooding fancy as I may. Solitary confinement, you know, is howard’s favorite idea of reclaiming sinners, so let me consider the by what fatality it happens: that I have
MEMORIALISING ROBERT BURNS

By Dr Ian Howie – Willis Ph.D., M.A.


Politics is a tough, skilled craft, and parliamentarians are professional practitioners. The Council members of the early Canberra Highland Society and Burns Club were not even amateur politicians. That is, they were not the type of people who rise through the ranks of the bureaucracies which manage large and complex organisations like government departments and instrumentalities, trade unions, educational institutions, business corporations, churches and sporting federations. Most were artisans who were in Canberra to help build the city. They worked in the trades, which gave the town its physical amenities, rather than in its principal industries — politics and administration.

The political inexperience of the Council members lost them the splendid Burns Memorial Hall of their dreams. The professional political craft of their parliamentary friends were their undoing. They had honestly but naively believed that an alliance with politicians of Scottish background would help them build the grand clubhouse their Society was still too young and too small to afford. Nationalist sentiment, they fondly thought, would draw them all together in common cause. They misjudged the politicians, who saw in their scheme an opportunity to cut costs while still giving Canberra a monument to Scottish achievement. Unlike their parliamentary friends, the Council members were untutored in political craft. They did not earn their living by exercising skills such as lobbying, caucusing, prearranging the ‘numbers’ and swaying a vote, adroitly blending wit and rhetoric to obtain a desired outcome. And so they lost, game, set and match, in their first encounter with the politicians. The latter, polished performers of the craft had won so easily there had hardly been a contest.

Once politics had determined that Canberra’s Burns memorial would be a statue not a hall, the politicians took control of the project. The Canberra Burns Memorial Fund was given responsibility for raising the money required to install the statue, and this was a body dominated by politicians. Four of its initial six members were politicians and the Society’s only representative was the secretary, Alex Stuart. Of the 13 other people subsequently associated with the Memorial Fund, nine were politicians and only four were members of the Society’s Council. Thus, of the 19 people making up the group two-thirds were politicians and the Society’s representatives comprised only a third.

The Memorial Fund group came together only spasmodically. It met once in 1928, once in 1929, and after that it did not meet for another three years, in March 1932. This third meeting took the form of an interstate conference to review interest in the project. It was held in the rooms of the Highland Society of New South Wales in Phillip St., Sydney, with 29 delegates attending.

The convener of the conference, the Memorial Fund chairman, James Murdoch, informed delegates that donations to the Fund had doubled in the three years since his group had last met. The amount in the Fund was now £2433, most of which was invested in Commonwealth Bonds at 6%. This was an impressive sum, the equivalent to about $133,00 in the values of the mid-1990s, but it was still only a fifth of the revised target figure. In acknowledging the effects of three years of depression, Murdoch said he “fully recognised the difficulties facing the (Scottish) societies in the present time with so many unemployed”, but he hoped a visit he planned to make to Melbourne might revive the waning interest in the Fund there. His comments suggest that by this time the fundraising was largely a Sydney-
Canberra effort. Apart from the disappointingly slow progress with the fundraising, Murdoch had some positive news: he had a design for the proposed statue, which he tabled, but said he wanted no decision on designs until he was sure the Fund held sufficient money for work to begin. The site subcommittee, which the Memorial Fund group had appointed in 1929, also had positive news. Despite the change of federal governments (from Bruce’s National-Country Party coalition to Scullin’s Labor), which had occurred, since it had begun negotiations over sites, the subcommittee was able to report some progress. In November 1930 the government administrator of Canberra, C.S. Daley, had advised Alex Stuart that the Canberra National Memorials Committee had considered the Memorial Fund request for a site for statue and hall, and was prepared to grant one of three sites the Fund subcommittee had nominated. The National Memorials Committee ruled out two of these sites altogether — one on Edinburgh Avenue near the present domed building of the Australian Academy of Science (because a building there would obstruct the line of vision between the Institute of Anatomy and Capital Hill, site of the future parliament house), the other in the so-called ‘parliamentary triangle’ (the suburb of Parkes), an area reserved for monuments ‘associated definitely with the establishment of Federation’. That left the one approved site — in the suburb of Forrest, on the southeastern intersection of National Circuit and Canberra Avenue, directly opposite the Hotel Wellington and diagonally opposite St. Andrew’s Church. It was one that pleased the Canberrans. As Murdoch McGregor (now Society president) pointed out, even though it was then relatively remote from central Canberra, among the paddocks over a kilometre behind Parliament House, within a few years it would form ‘the eastern gateway to the city’.  

A further interstate conference was held in Sydney fifteen months later, on 26 June 1933. The Fund had reached £3004, which, although only a third of the target, was about enough for the sort of statue the Fund committee was now contemplating. Murdoch displayed a model produced by a Scottish-born sculptor, John...
designs for a tile company for another five years. He then worked as a teacher for a year before gaining a position as the instructor in modelling and casting at the Working Men’s College (later the Royal Melbourne Institute of Technology). He held the position until his retirement 35 years later. He had only recently retired when Murdoch, probably relying on his network of fellow expatriate Scots, recruited him for the Canberra project. Davie’s model borrowed heavily from the Scottish-American war memorial in Spring Street, Edinburgh, presented to the people of Scotland by American citizens of Scottish descent. The latter depicted a Highland soldier in bronze seated on a stone pedestal backed by a stone curtain wall bearing an extended bronze panel in bas-relief showing a troop of kilted Scottish soldiers marching behind a pipe and drum band. In place of the soldier, Davie’s model showed a contemplative Robbie Burns leaning forward with legs crossed, right elbow propped on right knee, and chin resting on the right hand; and in place of the bronze backing panel, Davie had four separate panels showing scenes from Burns poems – ‘John Anderson My Jo’, ‘To a Mouse’, ‘Tam O’Shanter’ and ‘The Cotter’s Saturday Night’. The meeting accepted the Davie model, and appointed a ‘Site Selection Committee’ to make arrangements for the site and to call for tenders. This consisted of Murdoch, Riley, Plain and Guthrie, Alex Stuart and S. Kerr from the Canberra Society, plus T. M. Shakespeare MLC, proprietor of the *Canberra Times*. ³

The Site Selection Committee met twice. At its first meeting, three weeks later in the Hotel Canberra, it agreed to apply for a quarter of the building block on the approved site in Forrest. It also considered a letter from John Davie offering to produce a full-size clay model of the statue and backing panels for a total of £1000 (equivalent to $56,320 in 1996). Choosing to accept his offer, it entrusted to Murdoch the task of liaising with him over casting his model in bronze. At the second meeting in Sydney on 29 January 1934, Murdoch tabled designs for the masonry which had been drawn up by his architect, Shedden Adam. This provided for the use of either terrazzo or granite. The committee accepted the design and specified pink granite. Murdoch advised that Davie was making good progress with the clay models, and that the former Memorial Fund treasurer, James Stewart, who had returned home to live in Scotland, had been making inquiries with bronze casting foundries about the cost of translating the models into metal. The quotations varied from A £962 (= $54,180 in 1996) from the London firm, which had cast Sydney’s Burns statue, through A £862 from an Edinburgh firm to a bargain price of A £632 (= $35,600) from Chiurazza & Son of Naples, Italy. The Chiurazza quotation was accepted, and Davie’s clay models were subsequently shipped there for casting. In early September 1934 Murdoch wrote to the Society in Canberra to say the model had gone to Italy, and that the Chiurazza foundry would make every effort to have the job done and the completed bronzes shipped back to Canberra for an unveiling ceremony on Burns Anniversary Day 1935. ⁴

Though no record survives to indicate when work on the masonry started, this must have occurred during the closing months of 1934 because the next we hear about the project is a letter from Murdoch to the Society in early December 1934. This asked for the annual Burns Supper to be held on Saturday 26 January 1935 instead of Friday 25th to coincide with the unveiling of the statue. The Society agreed to this request, and busily set about making arrangements for both events.⁵

With the possible exception of some of the Highland Gatherings, the twin events of 26 January 1935 were the Society’s greatest undertaking in its ten-year history. The Society chartered a special train from Sydney to bring in the Sydneysiders who wished to attend. Others came from Melbourne, Brisbane and elsewhere in New South Wales. Due no doubt to Shakespeare’s interest in the proceedings, the Canberra Times publicised both events in advance. Its edition that day requested people attending the unveiling to assemble outside St Andrew’s at 2:40 p.m. to march the 300 metres to the memorial. It asked people going on to the Burns Supper to be at the Albert Hall by 6.00 p.m. because ‘broadcasting of the proceedings over all national (radio) stations will commence almost at once and everything must proceed
'With all the colourful spectacle and fervent national spirit that characterises the race,' it began, 'the Scotch community of Australia on Saturday made national history for the Federal Capital when it handed over a statue of Rabbie Burns – Scotland’s national poet – to the Prime Minister’. The Prime Minister was Joseph A. Lyons, who had been in office for only three weeks, his newly formed United Australia Party having defeated J.H. Scullion’s Labor government in an electoral landslide six weeks previously. 

The ceremony began at 2.50 p.m. when the large crowd of local citizens and visitors assembled in the grounds of St Andrew’s. The place at which they gathered was a rowan tree surrounded by a fence. The rowan (Sorbus aucuparia), also called the mountain ash in Europe, is indigenous across much of Europe and Asia, but the Scots regard it proprietorially. With its distinctive creamy-white flowers and scarlet berries, it arouses among them emotions similar to those the golden wattle and river red gum evoke among native-born Australians. The St Andrew’s rowan tree occupied such a special place in the early life of the Burns Club that we will digress to consider it. Its planting was a joint effort of the Highland Society of New South Wales and the Burns Club, though it was possibly the former which first thought of such a project. The two organisations had imported the tree from Scotland together with a crate of Scottish soil. The planting, on Saturday 11 September 1926, had been a duly solemn rite. It began at 10.00 that morning at the Canberra Hotel, where the Highland Society contingent had stayed overnight. The Burns Club party, led by their president and secretary, Jim McKinnon and ‘Sandy’ Stuart, supported by various local dignitaries, introduced themselves to the Sydney group. Then, as the Federal Capital Pioneer Magazine later reported, three pipers from the Goulburn Piper Band supported by a Burns Club piper, Robert McKay, ‘in kilts and tartans made Scotsmen feel it was a “braw Scotch day” (by) skirling a welcome on the lawn before a large gathering’. The combined parties then drove to a point near the site of the present Pavilion Hotel, from where, led by a Mr W. Tillie holding aloft the red lion royal standard of Scotland and escorted by the four pipers, about 30 men, a few women and several children marched about a hundred metres across a bare windswept paddock to the planting site. The hole for the tree had already been excavated, and the ceremony began when the Scottish soil was tipped into it by the presidents of the two organisations, Duncan Carson of the Highland Society of New South Wales and Jim McKinnon of the Burns Club. 

Who had then planted the rowan tree is now uncertain, for there appears to have been something of a demarcation dispute over that honour between the Highland Society and the Burns Club. The records of the Burns Club indicate that Col. Harold Jones (1878-1965) performed the planting but the Federal Capital Pioneer Magazine reported that it was Duncan Carson. If it were Jones, he was an odd choice. He was the director of both the Commonwealth Investigation Branch and the Special Intelligence Bureau, the federal government’s security and counter-espionage organisations. Partially of Scottish descent and born in Victoria at Beveridge (the same village as Ned Kelly), he had played football for Essendon, represented Victoria in lacrosse and had won the state amateur sprint championship before joining the Australian Army Intelligence Corps in 1910. As the nation’s chief spy of the day, his main work was to keep Communists, Irish nationalists, militant trade unionists and various left-wing organisations and individuals under surveillance. How all this qualified him to plant the rowan tree is not clear, unless it was just another case of the Burns Club courting powerful officials. Carson’s credentials for the task were the more...
substantial: he was a prosperous merchant and keen promoter of Scottish-Australian causes. *The Federal Capital Pioneer Magazine* quoted his planting speech at length. Among other predictable platitudes on such occasions, he said that the Scots are ‘a dour, hardy race but underlying their stern characteristics is a great deal of noble sentiment, and to this underlying sentiment the planting of a rowan "frae Auld Scotia" with Scottish soil at its roots strongly appeals’. After that, the *Magazine* went on, ‘the company led by Mr R Christie sang “The Rowan Tree”, the well-known Scotch ballad’. Regardless of who had the honour of planting the tree, thereafter it became a Burns Club responsibility. In 1933 the Club placed a fence around a tree, and until the Burns statue was unveiled the tree was the locus for a short ceremony to honour the poet each Burns anniversary day. After the installation of the statue this ritual shifted across the road to the memorial. Unfortunately a box of Scottish soil could not sustain the tree: after its roots had reached Canberra’s hard and dry red clay it eventually died. (During the late 1980s another rowan was planted in its place. Whether that will fare better than its predecessor remains to be seen. 

Returning again to the unveiling of the Burns statue, while the crowd assembled at the rowan tree the 40-member Dulwich Hill Junior Pipe Band played various marches and Scottish tunes. There were some notable absentees among the gathering throng. Three of these were eminent Scots-Australians who had helped guide the project in its early years – Duncan Carson, Donald McKinnon and John Newlands. Each was now dead. Still alive but not present was the Queensland soldier-politician Sir William Glasgow, who had lent his eminent name as well as his energy to the Memorial Fund. Perhaps the saddest absence was that of Walter Scott, the Burns Club foundation president, who had been persona non grata since his removal as president several weeks after the initial conference in the Canberra Hotel. He may have been present among the trainload who had travelled down from Sydney, but if so neither the Society’s records nor the *Canberra Times* report give any indication of this, and after the first conference he had no more to do with the Memorial Fund.

After the crowd had gathered, the procession set off behind the pipe band for the short march to the monument, where the master of ceremonies was Edward Riley MHR, whose amendment at the conference seven years previously had ensured that a statue rather than a memorial hall would now be inaugurated. Once there, they were introduced to the notables present, who included Sir Donald Cameron and H.M. Russell MLA (representing the Queensland Caledonian Society), James Boyd (for the Victorian Scottish Union), Captain Patrick (president of the Highland Society of New South Wales), Dr D.C. Henry (president of the Canberra Burns Club), John Davie and Sheddon Adam (the sculptor and architect), and the consul-general for Italy, the Marquis Ferrante (representing the country in which the bronze had been cast). Led by a choir, the crowd joined in singing ‘There was a lad was born in Kyle’, and then Riley called on the speechmakers. First came the main speaker, Sir James Murdoch. His lengthy speech recounted the history of the project. Quoting the poet’s lines,

*We’ll hae misfortunes great and sma’,
But aye a heart aboon them a’,*
In accepting the statue on behalf of both the federal capital and the Commonwealth, the Prime Minister delivered a speech so unctuous he must have written it himself. Lyons said he had ‘worshipped at the shrine of Scotland’ all his life—a strange claim for someone who, although Tasmanian-born, was a fervent Irish nationalist. He was, he said, ‘a lover of the Scottish people, their heroes, and particularly their music’. The love of country ‘demonstrated throughout all their history was an example to the Australian people’, he averred. Australia’s future would be assured ‘if we can inculcate in the minds of Australians patriotism as fine as that of Scottish people’. His patriotism as fine as that of Scottish people’. His admiration for Scots thus established, the Prime Minister addressed himself to the gift he was accepting, which was indeed the first public statue erected in Canberra. (As the Prince of Wales had impishly observed in 1920, the new city already had ample foundation stones. Until Robbie Burns took his Canberra seat atop a granite pedestal, however, there had been no statues.) Lyons said the statue would remain citizens ‘of the wonderful part that the Scotch people played in the development of this great country’. It would also ‘add interest and beauty to the already beautiful Federal Capital’. Adding emphasis to the Prime Minister’s tribute to Scottish nationalism, the choir sang Burns’s stirring nationalist anthem, ‘Scots wha hae wi’ Wallace bled’. Then another speaker, Robert Vicars, formally thanked the sculptor, architect and contractors, each of whom made speeches in reply. And so it went on for a whole two hours until 5 o’clock, when the ceremony closed with the poet’s most frequently sung lyric, ‘Auld Lang Syne’.

The unveiling thus concluded, the visitors, guests and Society members probably milled about, jostling each other in their eagerness to inspect and admire the handiwork of John Davie, whose only other major work had been the statue of Queen Victoria in the Geelong Botanic Gardens. Even though some observers think the head of the statue is disproportionately large, what Davie wrought is technically competent, suggesting that if he had devoted his talents to practicing rather than teaching his craft he might have been more famous. The poet’s facial

Canberra Burns Memorial Programme
SATURDAY, 26TH JANUARY, 1935
2.50 p.m.:
Assemble and march from Kurrajong Tree to Memorial Site, led by Tom O’Shanter and the Dulwich Hill Pipe Band
3 p.m.: Chairman’s Remarks
3.10 p.m.: Patriotic Song: ‘There was a Lad’—Choir
3.15 p.m.: Unveiling Ceremony: Sir James Murdoch, K.B.E., G.O.M. (Chairman, Canberra Burns Memorial Fund)
3.25 p.m.: Address by—
Capitalist, representing New South Wales. Mr. James Beard, representing Victoria.
Mr. Henry, representing Federal Territory.
4.3 p.m.: Pipe Band Selection—Dulwich Hill Junior Pipe Band
4.15 p.m.: Presentation of Statue to Federal Capital
4.25 p.m.: Reply—The Rt. Hon. A. J. Lyons, P.C., Prime Minister
4.35 p.m.: Patriotic Song: ‘Scots wha Hae’—Choir
4.45 p.m.: Vote of thanks to the Sculptor, Architect and Contractors—Mr. Robert Vicars
4.50 p.m.: Reply by Mr. Robert Davie, Sheldon Atkins and Representatives of Contractors
5 p.m.: ‘Auld Lang Syne’—A Body

The program for the Burns statue unveiling ceremony, 26 January 1935.

features closely resemble the surviving portraits. He is portrayed in plain clothing keeping with the public’s fond view of him as the unaffected farmer-poet. He wears sturdy breeches buttoned below the knee, shirt, cravat, waistcoat, unbuttoned coat, stockings and laced shoes. He is seated on a bronze pedestal shaped to represent a rock. Larger than life, seated he measures about 1.8 metres (6 feet) from head to foot, which means that standing he would have stood 2.9 metres (9 feet 7 inches) tall. The figure is secured to a granite plinth measuring 1.5 metres tall and 1.4 metres square; and so the whole work is 3.3 metres high. The inscription on the face of the plinth reads simply,

Burns
Born 1759 Died 1796

This is followed by the first four lines of the concluded verse of his poem ‘To a Louse’:

O was some power the giftie gie us
To see ourselves as others see us!
It wad frae monie a blunder free us,
An foolish notion.
Each of the four bas-relief bronze panels of the curtain wall of granite is inscribed with a verse from the poem, which the panel depicts. The left pediment of the wall is inscribed 'Erected 1935' and the right pediment has the inscription 'Unveiled by the Hon. Sir James A. Murdoch KBE CMG on 26th January 1935'.

The inspection completed, the crowd probably adjourned to various watering holes - the elite to the Hotel Canberra, perhaps, and the hoi polloi across the road to the Hotel Wellington - to while away the time until the doors of the Albert Hall were opened for the Burns Supper at 6.00 p.m. It all ended some five hours later with a joyous rendition of the second 'Auld Lang Syne' for the day, followed by the departure of the Sydney contingent to catch their midnight train back home. During his Burns Night speech the Society president, Dr Henry, said that his members were 'striving to erect a hall for themselves, where they might meet more frequently and promote Scottish ideals'. But apart from that, few present seem to have appreciated the irony of a large sum having been spent on a statue while the clubhouse remained a hope for the future. In the euphoria of the occasion the continuing lack of permanent Club premises seems not to have been a matter for regret.

The full amount spent on the statue and its supporting masonry is now unknown. While the sum at the disposal of the Memorial Fund committee was £3080 (equivalent to about $168,000 in 1996), it is uncertain if all that were expended. We know that the combined sculpting and casting costs amounted to £1632, but how much the shipping, architect's fee, site preparation, masonry works and installation costs totalled has been forgotten. If we add to that the £360 loss incurred as a result of the Burns Supper, the likelihood is that the committee had little left in the fund once all accounts were paid. Whatever amount the statue finally cost, the sum was clearly substantial. Had it been devoted to a building fund it might have taken the Canberra Highland Society and Burns Club a long way towards the goal of a hall of its own. On the other hand, if the project had been for a hall rather than a statue the money might never have been raised. Perhaps the politicians had been correct in thinking that Scots around Australia would give their money for a statue of their national poet but not for a hall named after him. Whatever viewpoint is correct here, the ultimate effect for the Society was to delay the erection of its hall for another 21 years.

Looking back over the campaign to give Canberra a Burns monument, it is probably safe to infer that the project generally failed to enthuse Society members. Despite the general rejoicing over the unveiling, the statue represented the frustration of their ambitions, for they had wanted a meeting place not a statue. Much, if not most, of the money for the project had come from outside Canberra, and so the statue properly belonged to the wider sphere of Burns admirers across Australia than to the local community of Scots in Canberra. The only member of the Society to serve continuously on the Memorial Fund committee was the secretary, Alex Stuart, and the Canberrans were always in the minority among its delegates. The impetus for the project had not come from them but from Murdoch and his fellow politicians. The unveiling of the statue had, of course, been a great day in the life of the Canberra's Scots and of the Society representing them. However, the unveiling and the tumultuously joyful Burns Night, which followed it, had also been events for the wider Australian Scottish community. The local Canberrans had been relatively minor players, and Murdoch had been the star at both events. The day had belonged to him and his Memorial Fund committee rather than to the Society.

Every Burns Anniversary Day for six years thereafter the Society conducted a ceremony at the statue, at which Canberra's Scots dutifully gathered. For those who had lived through the campaign to install it, the statue signified unfinished business. Despite the money spent on it, it constituted only the decorative first stage of a two-stage project. The Memorial Fund committee had promised that once the statue was in place Murdoch and his team would devote their energies to raising funds for the second stage, that is the memorial hall. These were promises soon forgotten, however. Murdoch, who had personally contributed a sixth of the money raised for the statue, had also been the
chief fundraiser, using his prestige in Scottish organizations around Australia to rally interest in his two Canberra projects – the statue and the building of St. Andrew's church. It seems safe to assume that after eight years and a calamitous depression, fundraising for Scottish symbols in the national capital had left him exhausted. And so the addition of the memorial hall was left to the Society.

While members of the Society might have been half-hearted about it, the statue soon became a local landmark. Until the surrounding suburbs were built up, it sat incongruously in its treeless paddock, provoking surprise among all visitors to Canberra who passed by. Why have a Burns statue in such a sparsely settled town as Canberra, and why so remote from the town center? In response to such queries Society members developed a stock reply: the statue had been precisely located so that Robbie would feel at ease, forever contemplating the world comforted by the familiar symbols of his twin obsessions - the Scots Kirk of St Andrew's and religion on one side, and the Wellington Hotel and boozing on the other. In time, too, the statue became the subject of an affectionate urban myth, which Canberrans repeated to illustrate the complexity of Walter Burley Griffin's town planning in the suburbs south of the Molonglo. Here, where the street design consists of a maze of concentric and intersecting circles and circuits intersected by spokes radiating out from Capital Hill, visitors are forever getting lost, literally driving in circles for hours. The myth takes various forms. One version, which I heard from my Scots Australian kinswoman, Enid Shann, featured a visitor from Scotland who returned home mightily impressed by the loyalty of Canberra's Scots. In one short drive around Canberra, he reported, he had seen no fewer than six statues of Robbie Burns. Another version I heard from the late Sir Kingsley Norris, who as Australia's chief commissioner for the St John Ambulance Brigade attended the opening of the St John Ambulance national headquarters with a group of interstate colleagues in May 1968. The headquarters building occupied the site adjacent to the Burns Club, which had been built on the site behind the statue in 1956. Norris claimed that after driving around Forrest for twenty minutes without finding the new building, one of his companions exclaimed, 'This must be the only city in the world with sixteen statues of Robbie Burns!'

The protracted events leading up to the unveiling invite present-day observers to contemplate the uses and the meanings of monuments like the Burns statue. Why have them? What do they signify, both for the generation that installs them and for those, which follow? Burns died just eight years after the First Fleet had reached Sydney Cove. He might have been surprised that the cult, which developed around his name, would one day lead its devotees to erect shrines to his honour in faraway cities which did not exist during his lifetime. He could never have guessed that his effigy, set in bronze, would one day stare at skyscrapers from across the parks of the many dozens of cities now boasting Burns memorials. If the poet himself would not have understood the cult and its shrines, what are we to make of them?

The question has no ready answer, but in attempting to find one we need to consider the functions of large-scale statuary. First and foremost, the Burns statues – indeed any large statues – are of little practical use. Statuary attests the artistry of the sculptor and satisfies certain human aesthetic needs, but apart from that it serves few utilitarian purposes. Statues on the monumental scale, like most of those of Burns, cannot be carried from place to place, and cannot therefore decorate homes and offices. Nor is there a commercial market for them, as there is for paintings and small-scale sculpture. They simply stand upon their massive masonry waiting to attract the interest of the dedicated aesthete and occasional passer-by. Why, then, do the patrons of sculpture pay dearly to have large statues created? The commemorative function provides the clue, for the grand dimensions of monumental sculpture celebrate the heroic stature of the subject. The patron pays to impress upon citizens of succeeding generations the superhuman qualities attributed to the one the statue depicts and also the ideals the latter supposedly represents. And so it is with Burns. His many statues preach a secular sermon: the poet himself was a humble Scot but his poetry is universal, transcending the human,
temporal and geographic limitations of his life, his era and his homeland. He himself might have been the homespun farmer-poet of legend, as his Canberra statue depicts him, but (to borrow words from the ‘Tam O’Shanter’ verse quoted on one of the plaques behind the statue) his poetry ‘was glorious, o’er the ills of life victorious’.

The answer also lies in Scottish nationalism and pride in Scottish attainment, a point we appreciate if we consider where the monuments are located. Burns memorials have been erected in many cities, nearly all in either the UK or the English-speaking nations, which developed from British colonies. The range of memorial types is wide: as Ian McIntyre’s biography of the poet points out, it includes

Burns seated, Burns standing to attention, Burns leaning on a stick, Burns sprawled on the fork of a tree. Life-size in Adelaide, eleven feet tall in San Francisco. Burns in plaid and breeches, Burns in the Fox livery of buff and blue; bareheaded and shirt-sleeved in Barre, Vermont, in Auckland he is got up in a tailcoat and a Kilmarnock bonnet. In Aberdeen his expression is stern and dignified, in Central Park it is pained; he looks earnest in Ayr, vacant in Dumfries. Burns in the act of composition, Burns gazing at the evening star. The range is truly eclectic.13

At least 99 statues of the poet in bronze, stone or fiberglass are known to exist, their number almost rivaling those of Queen Victoria. There are also many, many dozens of Burns busts, plaques, bas-reliefs, tablets, cairns, pedestals, obelisks, columns, towers and replicas of the Burns family’s Alloway cottage. There are some 15 monuments commemorating the various women in the poet’s life (Jean Armour, Mary Campbell, Agnes McLehose, Jean Lorimer and Isabella Burns) and 17 for characters mentioned in his poetry (Tam O’Shanter, Souter Johnny, the Jolly Beggars, Cutty Sark, and so on). Then there are countless stained glass windows, murals, frescoes, statuettes and paintings. Scotland, of course, is the great repository of Burnsiana, and has no fewer that 45 Burns statues. Next is the USA with 19, then come England with 10, Canada and possibly Australia with nine each, New Zealand with four, Ireland with two and France with one (in Paris). The earliest of these, in Dumfries, was erected in 1818; the latest, in Boston, in 1980.14 Wherever they are, and whenever they were installed, the various memorials may be ‘read’ as a tribute by expatriate Scots to the role their homeland has played upon a world stage through the export of talented citizens. And so with Canberra’s Burns statue. Erected at the insistence of Scottish-Australian federal politicians, who were determined that in the new capital the Scots would get in first with Burns’, it symbolized the unduly heavy influence people of Scottish descent had exerted on the political life of the nation, and in virtually every other sphere of human activity as well.

As mentioned, Australia has possibly had nine Burns statues. Whether it still has that many is uncertain. Seven are still in location, one has disappeared and another was never installed. Those presently sitting on their pedestals are in Adelaide (installed 1894), Ballarat (1887), Brisbane (1932), Camperdown (in Victoria, the first in Australia, 1883), Canberra (1935), Melbourne (1904) and Sydney (1905). The missing one was Melbourne’s second. This was a life-size figure of the poet donated to the Melbourne Burns Club in 1932 by the club president, J. Roy Stevens, as a memorial to his son, who had drowned in the Gippsland Lakes. Of what material it was made has been forgotten, though surviving photographs indicate that it was remarkably like—if not a direct copy of—Sydney’s Burns statue. It used to adorn the club’s headquarters in Queens Road, South Melbourne, but what became of it when the club vacated the premises in 1963 remains a mystery. An extensive search during the 1980s failed to locate it. The statue never erected was Perth’s. A local sculptor, James MacLeod, apparently sculpted a model for a life-size bronze statue. The statue was to have been cast at Wunderlich’s Foundry in 1937, and may even have been completed. It was to have been erected in King’s Park on a stone pedestal to be built at a cost of £1200 (=$62,260 in 1996 values), but when the local Scots could not raise that sum the installation was postponed. The project eventually lapsed during the Second World War. What
subsequently became of the model or statue is unknown. Somewhere, then, there are possibly two missing Burns statues – Melbourne’s second and Perth’s. We can only wonder whether they are languishing forgotten, lost amidst other junk in storage somewhere, or secreted away in the hordes of private collectors, or broken up and recycled as scrap, or perhaps lying beneath metres of overburden at former landfill sites.”

Sixty years after its unveiling, Canberra’s Burns statue has receded into similar obscurity. During the 34 years (1956-90) in which it formed the frontispiece of the Burns Club eventually built behind it, it perhaps expressed the permanence of the Scottish tradition locally and in Australia. But then the Club relocated in 1990-91, moving to grand new premises 10 kilometres away (as the currawong flies) in outer suburban Kanbah, leaving the statue isolated – a curiosity for passing motorists once again. In the new, multicultural Australia of the 1990s, when the Scots are simply one among many dozens of national groups to have contributed to Australia’s development, the Scottish nationalist statement the statue once proclaimed is passé. Many ethnic groups may now claim to have helped build Australia, and if they all erected monuments around Capital Hill the statues would have to jostle each other elbow to elbow.

Ironically, the vast majority of the 14,000 people who were members of the Club in 1996 were probably unaware of much that Burns signifies. Playing the Club’s 300 gaming machines, obtaining good quality food at competitive prices and having a drink in sociable surrounds would have been their main interests. The Society gave up conducting annual ceremonies at the statue on Burns Anniversary...
Day after the move to Kambah. For a year or two it chartered a bus to transport members from the clubrooms to the statue. Apparently they tired of squinting and perspiring under Canberra’s fierce midsummer sun, for the last time the bus ran, in 1992, only six people turned up. After that the ceremony was held within the air-conditioned comfort of the Kambah building. (Some Scots did maintain the faith, however: the Canberra City Pipes and Drums, a pipe band not connected with the Burns Club, conducted annual ceremonies there from 1990). Those attending the major anniversaries, the Burns Night and St. Andrew’s Day dinners, hear the poet’s name extolled and listen to recitations of his verse. Most will be mystified by the unfamiliar dialect in which he wrote, and most will be puzzled by the reverence with which the Scots-born member preserve his memory, How many would be able to locate the statue erected to commemorate his name in the capital is uncertain, but comparatively few would know who built it, when, why or how. By 1995, then, the statue had become part of the Society’s, and of Canberra’s, forgotten history. It therefore stands as much as a monument to the perceptions of themselves which Scots-Australians held in the 1920s and 30s as to the memory of the long dead poet.

NOTES:-
1 Canberra Burns Memorial Fund (CBMF) Minute Book, 21 March 1932.
2 C.S. Daley (Department of Home Affairs), letter to Alex Stuart, 28 November 1930; and CBMF Minute Book, 21 March 1932.
4 CBMF Minute Book, 15 July 1933 and 29 January 1934; and CBC Minute Book 1924-1936, 8 September 1934.
5 CBC Minute Book 1924-1936, 6 December 1934.
6 Canberra Times, 28 January 1935.
8 Ibid; and CBC Minute Book 1924 – 1936, 10 September 1927, 2 February 1933; and notation on a contemporary photograph. Biographical details for Jones are from Australian Dictionary of Biography vol. 9.
9 Canberra Times, 28 January 1935.
10 Ibid.
11 Ibid.
12 Ibid.
13 CBMF Minute Book, 29 January 1934.
16 Personal communication, Stuart Bryan, Melbourne, 19 February 1995.

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OBITUARIES

MAY DICKIE

(Hon. President The Burns Federation)

Died August 7 1999

I first met the remarkable May Dickie in the early 1970s, when I welcomed her as a new member of the Scottish Society and Burns Club of Australia. Her sister Margaret, who was already here, advised her when she came to this country, to get out and about in this new life, meet people, find new friends and take up other interests. This was an amazing stroke of good fortune for our organisation and I think created a lasting interest and a widening of horizons for May.

An allied interest was Scottish Country Dancing and she shared her leisure time with us and the Dancers. At that time we were in desperate need of a secretary and here was May with all her professional skills plus the diligence and breadth of vision that we needed. As secretary she kept exemplary records and compiled a monthly newsletter that became a model for such publications.

She expanded a wide field of international contacts, attended Robert Burns conferences in several countries and made people aware that the expatriate Scots in Australia were people to be reckoned with. May started and maintained correspondence with Burns associations in Scotland, England, USA, Canada and other places.

She served some years as secretary, an invaluable right hand for at least three presidents.

The time came when we desperately need a president. Who else but May. She gave us three remarkably successful years in that role. During that time was the only occasion I can recall when May asked for help. Our big annual event, the Burns Supper had been arranged at one of Sydney’s leading hotels.

Costs had been finalised, ticket prices adjusted accordingly and over three hundred bookings paid for when hotel management decided to put the price up. This would have been a financial disaster for us so May arranged a meeting with the hotel management. At our committee meeting she reluctantly said, maybe it would be better if I had a man with me.

I was nominated, changed from my builder’s overalls into a suit and tie and met May in town. We confronted the manager and actually I didn’t have to say anything. I sat there in brooding silence while May negotiated skilfully with this quite young manager. He was no match for May and the outcome was, no price rise.

We went on to have an all time record number of guests – 450. It was undoubtedly the highlight of May’s presidency. Then of course she went back to being our super-efficient secretary. This was when we felt she deserved wider recognition for her contribution to the Scottish-Australian community and we nominated her for the highest honour that the Robert Burns Federation can bestow – Honorary President.

The nomination and supporting letters were sent off and I really think the reaction among the hierarchy in Scotland was, what on earth took you so long. They were just as aware of her value as we were so that is what she became – Honorary President of the Robert Burns Federation.

May was a positive person who got things done – in the Burns Club, in her personal life and at work. At least one company could hardly believe their luck at getting such a capable person as May. She and I didn’t always see eye to eye on controversial matters but we forged a strong and trusting friendship that lasted for the nearly thirty years that she lived in Australia.

Family life meant a great deal to May. I remember her telling me that she was the seventh child of a seventh child – a circumstance of great significance in her birthplace. She took on adult responsibilities at an early age. Her mother died when she was a teenager and she found herself
taking care of her father and the family members who were still at home.

She did all that while working and developing her secretarial skills.

After the death of her father she emigrated to this country, again for family reasons. Her sister Margaret was already settled here and there was a natural wish to be together.

May adopted a lifestyle that suited her. She lived alone but was in constant touch with family. With nieces and nephews here and overseas, brothers and sisters wherever they were, particularly Margaret and Dick's children, Fiona and Hamish. They occupied a special place in May's life and the interest she had in them and her love for them was as great as if they were her own children. It was a pleasure to hear her speak of them with unaffected pride and such strong affection.

May was a devout, unpretentious, practicing Christian. In her retirement years she found fulfilment at St. Matthew's Anglican Church at Manly. Here, again she formed rewarding friendships and had the continuing interest of voluntary work in the church coffee shop. Visitors from all over Australia and distant parts of the world called in and enjoyed the Christian fellowship of May and her co-workers.

I was aware for some time of the seriousness of her illness but she didn't want it to be widely known. In the many long phone conversations we had over the past couple of years she was always outgoing, forward-looking, cheerful, positive and optimistic.

It was only in recent weeks that I was aware that her voice and her resolve were weakening. In the last conversation I had with her – and that was just a couple of weeks ago - her closing words were, say a prayer for me.

We can all say a prayer for May. A prayer of thankfulness for having known her and for sharing some part of her life.

Charles Murray

May had many Burnsian friends around the world, and I had the good fortune of knowing her and spending time in her company on a number of occasions. In my role as editor of the Burns Chronicle we corresponded regularly, and May was never content on just sending news of Robert Burns interest, if there was a Scottish connection relating to news in Australia, May would pass on the information.

Her passing is not only a great loss to the Scottish Society and Burns Club of Australia, but to the Robert Burns movement in general.

Peter J. Westwood, Editor

ROBERT BURNS THOMSON WHITBREAD

Passed away peacefully on Saturday, June 19, 1999 at the Grace General Hospital with his family at his side.

Robert was born in Pretoria, South Africa on April 6, 1906 and was very proud to be a direct descendant of the poet Robert Burns. He came to Canada from England with his family in 1920, graduating from the University of Manitoba in 1926. He then was employed by the T. Eaton Company retiring as Comptroller of the Western Division. He later became Financial Advisor with Salisbury House and until his death handled many estates.

Robert was predeceased in 1986 by his beloved wife Margaret (McLaughlin); also, his parents, Mr and Mrs E J Whitbread; sister Anne and brothers, Frank (Fort Wayne, Ind.) and John (Victoria, B.C.). He is survived by his loving daughter Eleanor (Alex) McLellan; granddaughter Heather (Robin) Shore, Wendy (Bruce) MacDonald, Robert, Brent (Sherry) and James McLellan; his great-granddaughter Cassidy MacDonald; his sister Lily and many nieces, nephews and cousins.

Robert served on the Board of the University of Winnipeg, the Blue Cross, the Victorian Order of Nurses and the Children's Hospital Foundation. He was a patron and member of the Winnipeg Robert Burns Club, also a member of the St. Andrews Society of Winnipeg, Niakwa Country Club, the Winnipeg Winter Club and longtime member of St. Andrew's River Heights United Church.
THE FOUNDER’S MEMORIAL CHAIN

(As worn by the President of The Robert Burns World Federation Ltd)

Much has been written about the history of the Burns Federation and how this unique body was instituted, in a determined effort to perpetuate the name and works of Scotland’s premier poet.

It is a remarkable story by any stretch of the imagination and ably captured in Dr. J A Mackay’s. THE BURNS FEDERATION 1885-1985 which could be considered almost compulsory reading for any newcomer to our organisation, as the reader is certainly promised much of considerable interest.

The concept of a world-wide Federation of Burns Clubs impressively accomplished and bequeathed to the many admirers of Burns, can be directly attributed to the vision and enthusiasm of a few good men, who after their preliminary meeting in London, contracted to hold the inaugural meeting of the Burns Federation in the George Hotel, Kilmarnock on the 17th of July 1885.

Those proclaimed founding fathers of Colin Rae Brown, David Sneddon and David McKay are certainly deserving of the gratitude of Burns enthusiasts everywhere, for their ambitious yet inspired contribution to the cultural affairs of Robert Burns and Scotland.

Yet surprisingly, it was not until the Conference of the Council held in the Burgh Hall Municipal Building’s Glasgow, on 2nd September 1911 some twenty six years later, that their enthusiasm and dedication was readily recognised, for it was there that a formal proposal was made by Mr. J Jeffrey Hunter, a former Secretary of the Tam O Shanter Burns club Glasgow and Past President and founder member of the National Burns Club, that a small committee was appointed to consider and report on the expediency of establishing a memorial in their memory.

The general opinion of those involved at that time was that the memorial should not take the form of stone and lime, the proposal was readily seconded by a Mr Thomson of London and unanimously adopted. The Founders committee as it was called were appointed and consisted of D. McNaught, then President T. Amos Federation secretary, Provost Smith, Mr McColl, Mr James Ballantyne, Ex Provost Wilson, Mr Sulley, Mr Joseph Martin, Mr Thomson and Mr J Jeffrey Hunter. The committee arranged to meet on several occasions to discuss the various options open to them, however it was on a suggestion by Mr D McNaught, at their meeting of the 2nd of March 1912 that a chain of office as an official decoration for the President, would perhaps be the most suitable memorial.

The Committee’s agreement being reached the proposal as such was to be placed before the Conference of the Council at Carlisle on the 7th September 1912. Where it was unanimously accepted, Mr James Watt J.P. of Knowefield Carlisle subscribing the first guinea, thereafter the Honorary Secretary wasted no time in dispatching a circular to the Burns clubs on the Federation role soliciting further subscriptions for the intended purpose.

To my knowledge no copy of this circular has survived extant, nevertheless one can perhaps assume the contents from an extract of the minute taken at a meeting of The Paisley Burns Club and dated the 3rd October 1912 Globe Hotel Paisley. Which read “a letter was submitted from the Burns Federation requesting subscriptions from the clubs in the Federation towards the purchase of a chain of office as an official decoration for the President” and the minute concludes, “the clerk was instructed to contribute one guinea” a princely sum indeed in 1912, when one considers the monetary value of the time.

The total as finally subscribed by the various clubs remains elusive however, although it is on record that by the 26th of June 1914 a total of £54.17 shillings had been subscribed towards the proposed chain.
Nevertheless, it appears that sometime before the 3rd October 1914 the necessary finance was in place. Designs had by then, been submitted by Messrs, Brown and Bishop, The Co-operative Society of Glasgow and Mr John Newlands of Kilmarnock, after due consideration and by a vote of 4 to 3 it was agreed by the committee that the manufacture and commission of a gold chain and badge to which the names of the three founders were to be engraved, be placed with local jeweller, Messers. John Newlands who at the time was residing at 16 Dean Terrace and whose place of business according to the Kilmarnock Directory of 1913-1915 was at 24 Portland Street, Kilmarnock.

John Newlands from all accounts was a man of many parts, native of Kilmarnock and well noted for his literary, musical and artistic talents, as well as being a regular contributor to the Kilmarnock Standard, he was a keen Burns enthusiast and a Past President of the Kilmarnock Burns Club No. 0.

To a man of sense and worth like John Newlands this order must have been considered a labour of love, not just the mere processing of an order and the rendering of an invoice for the sum of eighty pounds.

Seventy eight pounds of which being the price of one 9ct Gold chain, with two pounds attributable to the cost of the carrying case, an incredible sum when one considers that 84 years on the chain can be thought of as almost priceless at least to the Burns Federation.

The information gleaned from the Assay marks on the obverse of the Founders chain consisting of The numerals 9-375 an Anchor, the letter P followed by the initials W.H.H. Is that is was Assayed in Birmingham as indicated by the anchor emblem, not Edinburgh as one might suppose, the numeral 9 signifying that it is of 9ct Gold with the numerals 375 the British 9ct Gold registration number, the letter P-the year of manufacture, in this instance 1914 together with the initials W.H.H. being that of W.H. Hasler Limited who were listed in Kelly's Directory of Birmingham 1914 as Jewellers-manufacturing of 8-25 Hylton Street, TA' SOLKETS'; TN Jewellers and based in the city's Jewellery quarter.

Unfortunately there is no further reference to the company in the Directory after 1972, which would suggest that the company had been dissolved around that time. The Assay office, Birmingham Metropolitan Library and the Federation records prove no assistance, in providing further information on the company. Nevertheless the work must be viewed, as it is a splendid testament to the skills of the artisans who created it.

It is a richly ornamented piece with thistle motifs at each of the link intersections, the terminating links bridged with a badge containing the Federation initials held by supporters. Below which is an eight pointed star containing the saltire and from a jump ring a massive pendant bearing as engraving of Burns bust within a beaded oval inside an outer clasp decorated with an Aolian harp and plough, the whole terminated by a foliate thistle. A fitting memorial to those far sighted gentlemen founders, a marvel of exquisite craftsmanship, which almost eclipses the wearer by its splendour.

Initially, the presentation of this superb chain should have taken place at the London Conference of 1914, unfortunately the outbreak of the great war prevented this from happening and the presentation deferred to 1915 at the Annual meeting of the Burns Federation held on Saturday 4th September in the National Burns Club, 93 Douglas Street, Glasgow.

Provost Smith, of Kilmarnock, in making the presentation of The Founders Memorial Chain to President Duncan McNaught, said, “Ever since the day that Pharaoh placed the chain of gold round the neck of Joseph as a symbol of respect and authority, similar ceremonies have always been interesting and significant”. How right he was, for that was indeed a significant day for the Federation.

President Duncan McNaught in response, thanked the members for their magnificent recognition of the labours of the founders, saying “no one but an actual participator in that work could realize the difficulties and discouragement’s which had to be surmounted before it became the great Burns power, it undoubtedly was” and so it remains to this day. Thanks to successive office bearers who have given so generously of their time and expertise, willingly and without personal gain.
This decoration which had draped the shoulders of successive Presidents and weighing in at 24/2 oz avoirdupois of 9ct gold, has been worn proudly, by those who have had the privilege of doing so and with it the equal weight of responsibility in presiding over the organization and its well-being.

In recent years, there has been the odd murmur and suggestion that the chain of office should become a museum piece, as the existing links filled with the names of past Presidents. It is pleasing to note that the significance of this presidential decoration has not been lost to the membership and that as recent as 1998 the Executive committee felt compelled to take the decision, to commission a further twelve link addition of gold plates to accommodate the names of future Presidents, confirmation that the Burns Federation was looking to its future as it proudly proclaims itself the oldest literary society of its kind in Scotland, recognizing the achievement of those founding fathers.

The name and fame of Robert Burns deserves distinction as do the names of those who by their foresight, dedication and effort encouraged the birth and growth of the society, it would therefore seem most appropriate to borrow a few lines from the Poet in recognition of them.

As we look to our future and continued prosperity under the new title of The Robert Burns World Federation Ltd.

No sculptured marble here
Nor pompous lay
No stories urn
Nor animated bust

Purely, simply and magnificently splendid a memorial chain of office which I am sure will meet with the approbation of Burns admirers, everywhere that the chain is worn, displayed and admired, as it in turn honors those who Founded the Burns Federation.

A McKee
Past President
HIGHLAND MARY
Campbeltown Girl became the secret Love of Robert Burns
(Published in the Campbeltown Courier).

Mary Campbell died in October 1786, the conjectured date being the 20th of that month. On the third anniversary of her death Robert Burns wrote THOU LINGERING STAR, and, three years later HIGHLAND MARY was composed to commemorate the anniversary. NORRIE PATON looks at the short lifespan of the girl who has fascinated Burns scholars for two centuries, and assesses some of the controversies that still surround her name.

It was the year 1786 and several autumn weeks yet remained when Captain Archibald Campbell set sail from Dalintober jetty bound for the Clydeside town of Greenock. He carried on board his daughter Mary and son Robert, both leaving home to seek employment in other airts - a familiar enough theme down through the years. It proved to be a fateful voyage; within a short time of their arrival at the home of their mother's cousin in Charles Street, first Robert, then Mary went down with a raging fever. Mary nursed her younger brother through his crisis, but she succumbed to the illness, and was buried in a lair belonging to her Greenock relatives, in the Old West Kirkyard.

A few days after her death a letter from Greenock was handed in at Mossgiel farm near Mauchline, addressed to Robert Burns. His youngest sister, Isobel, vividly recalled the incident many years later, stating that, as she watched him read over the paper, a look of anguish had flashed across his countenance; he crumpled the letter tightly into his pocket, and strode from the room. Its contents he never divulged, but Isobel Burns reminisced that her famous brother had, on that day, been notified of Mary Campbell's death. She was equally sure that it had been Robert's intention to marry her. What then, is really known about the girl from Dalintober, and what was her relationship with Robert Burns?

Mary Campbell was born in the vicinity of Dunoon, and baptised there in 18 March 1766. Her parents moved down to Campbeltown when she was two years old, and three further children were born in the town. The family settled into a cottage at the head of the Broom brae on ground now occupied by Dalintober Infants School. Mary attended lessons in a small school in Watson's Row - both school and row have long since gone - their location identified as being directly opposite the Glen Scotia distillery in Dalintober's High Street. At the age of twelve Mary was employed as a domestic servant with a family in Kirk Street; her mother, however, objected to the long hours she was compelled to toil, and insisted on her quitting the work. Mary certainly enjoyed the area around her home, including a holiday at Bellochantuy in a small dwelling which stood on the site of the present Argyll Hotel.

In her late teens Mary obtained a domestic position in Ayrshire with the Montgomeries of Coilsfield. A certain Katherine Arbuckle who had Campbeltown connections had married into this family, and she appears to have been instrumental in taking Mary there. It is known that, during her time in Ayrshire, Mary also worked as a nursery maid at the home of Gavin Hamilton, a lawyer in Mauchline. Hamilton's dispute with the local Kirk had served as the inspiration for the renowned satirical poem, HOLY WILLIE'S PRAYER, and the lawyer was much to the fore in encouraging its author that the verses he was producing, were of quite outstanding literary merit. As the year 1786 opened before him, however, the farmer/poet, Robert Burns, found himself embroiled in a period of undoubted emotional stress.

His involvement with Jean Armour had reached the stage whereby she was compelled to inform her parents that she was now Mrs Robert Burns, and was expecting his child. They had married in secret and she had lines from her new husband to prove it! Her father, however, exploded in rage,
and the marriage lines were taken to a lawyer in Ayr, Robert Aiken, who mutilated them, an action which seemed to satisfy James Armour that Burns, whom he thoroughly disliked, was no longer his son-in-law. Aiken, incidentally, was highly respected by Burns, honoured as his first patron, and had the poem, THE COTTER’S SATURDAY NIGHT, dedicated to him. Jean Armour, meantime, had been sent off to an aunt in Paisley, while her distraught parents remained tight-lipped amidst the gossiping tongues of Mauchline.

At this stage Mary Campbell appears to have entered into Bum’s life by forming a serious relationship with him; the facts, however, are far from clear. Burns made no mention of her, was never knowingly seen in her company, and most of his poems and letters of the period carry references to his feelings for Jean Armour. On the 14 May, in a secluded spot close to the banks of the River Ayr, Mary Campbell and Robert Burns parted for the last time. She returned to Campbeltown and remained there until her father took her across to Greenock in early October. Her only sister, Annie, said that Burns sent Mary letters enclosing songs he had written for her, but two songs are all that have survived – MY HIGHLAND LASSIE, O and, WILL YE GO TO THE INDIES, MY MARY. The Campbells destroyed Burns’s correspondence after Mary’s death; he, however, preserved these two songs. Although he had ideas about emigrating to Jamaica at this particular time, there is no definite evidence, despite the title of the latter song, that he wanted Mary to sail with him to the Indies.

The last day of July in 1786 saw the publication of the KILMARNOCK EDITION, and Robert Burns was on the road to fame. By the end of the year he had abandoned his planned emigration, and went instead to Edinburgh, where he was proclaimed as Caledonia’s Bard. He renewed his union with Jean Armour in April 1788 in a civil ceremony in a Mauchline office, and set up home with her at Ellisland Farm near Dumfries. In November 1789, however, he sent his correspondent, elderly Mrs Dunlop, a copy of a song he had written titled, THOU LINGERING STAR, and asked her opinion of its merits. This was followed by a semi-hysterical letter to the same lady in which he blurted out his yearning to believe in a world beyond death: “There should I, with speechless agony of rapture, again recognise my lost, my ever dear MARY, whose bosom was fraught with Truth, Honor, Constancy & Love. –

My Mary, dear, departed Shade!
Where is thy place of heavenly rest?
Seest thou thy lover lowly laid?
Hear’st thou the groans that rend his breast!”

What Mrs Dunlop was supposed to make of this impassioned plea is anybody’s guess! The girl from Dalintober had, however, by virtue of this song and letter, now taken the first firm step on an incredible journey to sweeping immortality. It was the inception of a cult movement – Mariolatry – that soared to unbelievable levels of adulation throughout the Victorian era. – Indeed, the most famous Mariolater of all, was the Queen herself! Among the statues that were raised to Mary’s memory was one in Buckingham Palace, where to this day, it still adorns the Guard Room. It was the creation of Benjamin Edward Spense, in 1853, and was presented to Queen Victoria by Prince Albert, as his personal birthday gift of that year.

There seemed no bounds to Mary Campbell’s fame. She was hailed, with little trace of serious opposition, as the heroine-in-chief; the supreme love; the inspirer of the poet at his best, and the White Rose among his passion flowers, wherever and whenever, mention was made of Burns’s name. She effortlessly eclipsed all the other women to whom the poet had paid compliment. The situation was, of course, absurd, and when the age of sentimentality began to wane, Mary began to look a little shaky on her hastily erected pedestal.

A real blow to Mariolatry was stuck by the revelation of a long suppressed document known as the Train manuscript. Bum’s one time crony in Mauchline, John Richmond, long after the poet’s
death, gave out information that Mary had been a young woman of loose character; that she was utterly deceitful to Burns, having been the kept mistress of Lord Eglinton’s brother. According to Richmond he had actually given Burns “ocular proof” of Mary’s infidelity. Although some Burns scholars have taken Richmond’s testimony seriously, applied commonsense strips it of any credibility, and leaves it exposed for what it is: a complete fabrication, and tissue of lies, from start to finish!

Likewise, the persistent gossip that Mary died in childbirth, falls on the stony ground of inconclusive evidence. At the time of her death in the autumn of 1786, she had left her home to take up employment with a Glasgow family – this would have made little sense if she knew herself to be at least five months pregnant. The board of an infant’s coffin found close by Mary’s grave in 1920, and Burns’s track record as a sexual animal, simply did not justify the harsh charge against the poet that his “lawless love” may have cost Mary Campbell her life. As it so happens, a registered claim suggested that the infant’s coffin was that of six week old Agnes Hendry, who died in 1827 – nothing to so with Highland Mary!

There is no doubt that the song, THOU LINGERING STAR, with its oft used alternative title, TO MARY IN HEAVEN, did much to foster the fame of the girl from Dalintober. The companion piece, written three years later, is however, of much better quality. Burns had long liked the tune of a song titled, KATHERINE OGIE, but he thought the lyrics deplorable, the six stanzas concluding with the prosaic Ogie in rhyme with such nondescript words as dogie, bogie, and fogie. The melody was, in fact, somewhat older than the song with which Burns was familiar; it was an English dance tune, LADY CATHERINE OGLE, named after the youngest daughter of the Duke of Newcastle, who died in 1691. The lyrics which Burns fitted to this tune was the only occasion in which he addressed the Campbeltown girl as HIGHLAND MARY – the fourth (final) stanza, was a fitting tribute to her memory:

\[
\begin{align*}
O, \text{ pale, plaie now, those rosy lips} \\
I \text{ aft hae kiss’d sae fondly;} \\
\text{And clos’ed for ay, the sparkling glance} \\
\text{That dwait on me sae kindly;} \\
\end{align*}
\]

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{And mouldering now in silent dust} \\
\text{That heart that lo’ed me dearly!} \\
\text{But still within my bosom’s core} \\
\text{Shall live my Highland Mary.}
\end{align*}
\]
The person to whom Burns addressed his "Reply to a Trimming Epistle", was Thomas Walker, a tailor who lived at Poole on the river Lugar, a few miles from Ochiltree. He has been described as "a respectable character for sobriety, honesty and glee". He courted the Muse and was on very friendly terms with William Simpson, schoolmaster at Ochiltree, who was a man of education and no mean versifier, although he constantly refused to allow his poems to be published. Tradition has it that Simpson received a copy of Burns's "Twa Herds" and was immediately prompted to send a complimentary poetical epistle to the poet. This was quickly answered by Burns in May, 1786, who sent Simpson a rhyming epistle in return. In the poem the poet expresses his great love of nature and his desire to celebrate Ayrshire in his poems, and includes his famous comment on his psychology of composition:

\[\textit{The Muse, nae poet ever fand her,} \\
\textit{Till by himsel' he learn'd to wander,} \\
\textit{Adown some trottin' burn's meander,} \\
\textit{An' no think lang:} \\
\textit{O, sweet to stray, an' pensive ponder} \\
\textit{A heart-felt sang!} \]

\[\textit{The warly race may drudge an' drive,} \\
\textit{Hog-shout, jundie, stretch, an' strive;} \\
\textit{Let me fair Nature's face descrive,} \\
\textit{And I, wi' pleasure} \\
\textit{Shall let the busy, grumbling hive} \\
\textit{Burn ower their treasure} \]  

(CW 109)

Simpson was no doubt delighted to have drawn an epistle from Burns and showed it to Walker, who thought that he might be equally fortunate if he sent the poet a brotherly epistle. Accordingly he strung together a dreary performance of twenty-six stanzas in "Standard Habbie", Burns's favourite measure, and sent it to Mossgiel. Several weeks passed and still there was no answer from Burns. Walker could not account for the silence of the poet and had more than once expressed his disappointment to his friend Simpson, who had seen the production before it was forwarded to Mossgiel. With the publication of the Kilmarnock Edition, Walker thought that it might be an opportune time to renew his attempt to extract a reply from Burns. He changed his approach, however, and to try and rouse the poet he adopted the role of moral censor. Fortunately he showed his production to Simpson, before despatching it, on whose advice the epistle was reduced from twenty-one to ten stanzas. This required considerable rearrangement and alteration which the schoolmaster managed with so much skill that one writer has suggested that Burns himself may have been the author of the "Trimming Epistle" as well as the "Reply". It is generally believed, however, that Simpson had as much to do with its composition as had Walker. Since the text of the "Trimming Epistle" is not easily accessible it is printed here for the benefit of readers.
EPISTLE FROM A TAILOR TO ROBERT BURNS

What waefu' news is this I hear,  
Frac greeting I can scarce forbear,  
Folks tell me ye're gaun aff this year  
Out owre the sea,  
And lasses, whom ye lo'e sae dear,  
Will greet for thee.

Weel wad I like war ye to stay,  
But, Robin, since ye will away,  
I hae a word yet mair to say,  
And maybe twa:  
May he protect us night an' day,  
That made us a'.

Whare art thou gaun, keep mind frae me,  
Seek Him to bear thee companie,  
And, Robin, whan ye come to die,  
Ye'll awboun,  
An' live at peace an' unity  
Ayont the moon.

Some tell me, Rab, ye dinna fear  
To get a wean, an' curse an' swear,  
I'm unco wae, my lad, to hear  
O' sic a trade;  
Could I persuade ye to forbear,  
I wad be glad.

Fu' weel ye ken ye'll gang to Hell,  
Gin ye persist in doing ill –  
Wae's me! Ye're hurlin' down the hill  
Withouten dread,  
An' ye'll get leave to swear your fill  
After ye're dead.

Burns’s “Reply” can be found in all the standard editions of his works.

It has been argued by a number of writers that the “Reply” was not the work of Burns, but of Simpson, who imitated the poet’s handwriting and despatched it to Walker by a circuitous route. It is also suggested that Walker fell for the hoax but was so horrified by its blasphemy and bawdry that he consigned it to the flames. This may well be true as no original manuscript has survived.

The case for Simpson as the author is based mainly on a report that not long after the “Reply” was written, Simpson met Burns and informed him of the liberty he had taken with his name. “You did well”, said the poet, laughing; “You have thrashed the tailor much better than I could have done”.

Against that story, however, is the fact that the “Reply” was first published by Thomas Stewart of Glasgow in 1801 as the work of Burns. This was fourteen years before Simpson died and he did not contradict it. It is also argued that Simpson could not have known in such detail of Burns’s
appearance before the Session. It is interesting to note that Thomas Stewart was a cousin of John Richmond of Mauchline, who was a bosom cronie of the poet. It is thought that Burns passed a copy of the tailor’s “Rhyming Epistle” and his “Reply” to Richmond and it was from this source that the documents came into the possession of Stewart.\(^5\)

Most biographers are of the opinion that the work is unmistakably Burns as the quality of the verses is up to the poet’s high standard. Scott Douglas is of the opinion that the text as published by Stewart attributing the “Reply” to Burns is “a fact as proclaimed by the verses themselves”. Another source attests that they were written by the same hand as wrote the “Epistle of John Rankine”.\(^6\)

It seemed that Simpson and Walker were in the habit of exchanging verses. In one of the poems addressed to Walker, who had been complaining of the absence of the Muses, the dominie, who obviously had the measure of Walker, mentions Burns in the last verse.

\[
\begin{align*}
I & \text{ send up these lines by J.W. from school,} \\
& \text{To you, Mr Walker, head tailor in Poole,} \\
& \text{Who makes on the Muses this mournful complaint} \\
& \text{Because they look on your productions asquint} \\
& \text{While off to Mosgiel from Parnassus they canter} \\
& \text{Whenever Rob Burns but plays cheep on his chanter.}
\end{align*}
\]

It appears that Walker had a squint in his eyes. He is reported as saying that he could fix one eye on the seam and look about him with the other.\(^7\) Simpson makes reference to this in the forth line of the above verse and also in the following four lines taken from another poem addressed to the tailor entitled “To Tom Walker in Affliction”.

\[
\begin{align*}
Ye're & \text{ nae sae very scant o' grace} \\
& \text{Whate'er's the dispensation} \\
& \text{As ere set up your squinting face} \\
& \text{An' fret at tribulation}
\end{align*}
\]

Walker was rather sensitive to his affliction and replied to Simpson in the following quatrain:

\[
\begin{align*}
& \text{For a' the Kirkland's e'er was born,} \\
& \text{Had but my case been yours,} \\
& \text{I wadna planted sic a thorn} \\
& \text{Amang sic bonnie flowers.}
\end{align*}
\]

Another local poet with whom Walker was on very friendly terms was James Fisher (no relation of “Holy Willie”), who came to Ochiltree about 1788. He was blind, almost from birth, but was a fairly accomplished musician which was his chief means of earning a living.\(^8\) In the verses of Fisher and Walker there is evidence that they embraced the truly orthodox doctrines of the period and looked with disfavour on the irreligious and immoral tendency of Burn’s writings.\(^9\) In his first episode to Walker, the blind poet makes reference in one verse to the tailor’s “Rhyming Epistle” to Burns.

\[
\begin{align*}
& \text{Wow man! Ye hae some unco turns;} \\
& \text{I heard some things ye sent to Burns,} \\
& \text{In whilk ye gae him gay ill purrs} \\
& \text{To red, I think;} \\
& \text{But what they were, my muse adjourns} \\
& \text{To tell distinct.}
\end{align*}
\]
In his reply Walker writes:

Saints now-a-days may weep and mourn,
To think how ages yet unborn,
Will see religion turn’d to scorn
By Robin’s books;
An’ a’ the Bible ref’t an’ torn
By clergy fouks.

Not much is known of Walker other than he was a tailor, who lived at Poole and dabbled in verse. He was born about 1751 and died at Sorn Bridgend in 1833 at the advanced age of 82 and is buried in Sorn Kirkyard. He is understood to have published a religious pamphlet entitled, A Picture of the world, which later gained him some fame and was widely distributed.

NOTES
1 James Paterson, The Contemporaries of Burns, 1840, p 142
2 Chambers/Wallace, The Life and Works of Robert Burns, 1896, Vol 1, P177
4 Paterson, op cit, p71
5 W Scott Douglas, op cit, Vol. 1, p 349
6 Chambers / Wallace, op cit, Vol. 1, p 402
7 Paterson, op cit, p 73 n
8 Paterson, op cit, p 135
9 Paterson, op cit, p 137
10 A. M. Boyle, The Ayrshire Book of Burns Lore, 1986, p111


SOUTER JOHNNIE’S COTTAGE

MAIN ROAD, KIRKOSWALD, SOUTH AYRSHIRE. KA19 8HY.
TEL: KIRKOSWALD (01655) 760603

The home of John Davidson, village souter (cobbler), who was the original Souter Johnnie of Robert Burns’ Tam o’ Shanter. Life-sized stone figures of the Souter, Tam, the innkeeper and his wife are in the restored ale-house in the cottage garden. The thatched cottage, recently refurbished, contains period furniture, Burns relics and a reconstructed souter’s work-shop.

OPEN: GOOD FRIDAY TO 30 SEP, DAILY 11.30-5; WEEKENDS IN OCT, 11.30-5
(LAST ADMISSION 4.30)
A STRANGE COMPOUND:
The Cast of the Skull of Robert Burns

R B Longmore and D W Purdie

Robert Burns died aged 37 in July 1796 and was interred in St Michael’s Churchyard, Dumfries. Some 18 years later, following the erection of a mausoleum funded by public subscription, his remains were exhumed and transferred to the vault of the mausoleum. He was not to rest in peace. In 1834, the remains were to undergo further disturbance. On the night before the funeral of his wife Jean, a resolute group of Dumfries citizens disinterred the poet with the express purpose of taking a plaster cast of the skull for phrenological examination.

Phrenological observations on the skull (plaster cast) were presented to the Edinburgh Ethical Society in 1834 by Robert Cox and a further description of the “Phrenological character” of Robert Burns was given by Robert Fowler, ‘Practical Phrenologist”, in Dumfries in 1864.

A cast of the skull was presented to the Perth Burns Club in 1874 in whose possession it remains. In 1980, one of the present authors (DWP), prior to giving the “Immortal Memory” address at a Burns Supper in Perth, was shown the cast of the skull by John Kidd, President of the Burns Federation. He suggested that, not knowing the history of the cast or the reasons for which it was taken, the cast should be subjected to anatomical examination and the cast was passed, with the permission of the Perth Burns Club, to the Department of Anatomy in the University of Dundee for study. (Fig 1).

This present account records the history of the taking of the cast and the phrenological and anatomical opinions which it has engendered.

The Perth Phrenological cast.
THE FIRST EXHUMATION

On the 19th September 1815 Burns' grave was opened. A contemporary report describes the macabre process:-

"There lay the remains of the great poet, to all appearances entire, retaining various traces of recent vitality, or, to speak more correctly, exhibiting the features of one who had recently sunk into the sleep of death. The forehead struck one as beautifully arched, if not so high as might reasonably been supposed, while the scalp was rather thickly covered with hair and the teeth perfectly firm and white. Altogether the scene was so imposing that the commonest workmen stood uncovered, as the late Dr Gregory did at the exhumation of the remains of King Robert Bruce, and for some moments remained inactive, as if thrilling under the effects of some undefinable emotion while gazing on all that remained of one 'whose fame is wide as the world itself'. But the scene, however imposing, was brief, for the instant the workmen inserted a shell beneath the original wooden coffin, the head separated from the trunk and the whole body, with the exception of the bones, crumbled into dust'.

Amongst those present was one, Andrew Crombie who was to play a crucial role in the 2nd exhumation.

THE SECOND EXHUMATION

On the evening of the 31st March 1834, Dr Archibald Blacklock, surgeon of Dumfries together with John McDiarmid, editor of the Dumfries Courier; Adam Rankine, James Bogie and Andrew Crombie, acting with the permission of the Burns' relatives, opened the mausoleum and descended into the vault. Blacklock subsequently published a detailed and chilling account of the circumstances and gave an accurate description of the anatomy of the skull:-

"...Mr Crombie, having witnessed the exhumation of the bard’s remains in 1815, and seen them deposited in their present resting place, at once pointed out the exact spot where the head would be found, and a few spadefuls of loose sandy soil being removed, the skull was brought into view, and carefully lifted.

The cranial bones were perfect in every respect, if we accept a little erosion of their external table, and firmily held together by their sutures; even the delicate bones of the orbits, with the trifling exception of the os unguis in the left, were sound and uninjured by death and the grave. The superior maxillary bones still retained the four most superior teeth on each side, including the denes sapientiae, and all without spot or blemish; the incisores, cuspidati, &c. had, in all probability, recently droped from the jaw, for the alveoli were but little decayed.

The bones of the face and palate were also sound. Some small portions of black hair, with a very few grey hairs intermixed, were observed while detaching some extraneous matter from the occiput. Indeed nothing could exceed the high state of preservation in which we found the bones of the cranium, or offer a fairer opportunity of supplying what has so long been desiderated by phrenologists – a correct model of our immortal poet’s head; and in order to accomplish this in the
most accurate and satisfactory manner, every particle of sand, or other foreign body was carefully washed off, and the plaster of Paris applied with all the tact and accuracy of an experienced artist. The cast is admirably taken, and cannot fail to prove highly interesting to phrenologists and others..."

The skull was then enclosed in a leaden case and:

"committed to the earth precisely where we found it."

A more detailed account of the taking of the cast & the backgrounds of those involved has been described by Frazer. In this excellent report, 3 casts of the skull were made, to be supplemented in later years by further copies, making identification of the original casts difficult. The Perth cast differed from the sketches in the 1834 articles in that the left orbital margin & zygomatic arch were missing. However, sufficient fine detail of the cranial sutures were present to suggest that the moulding technique had been accurate enough to have been carried out on the actual skull given that the techniques used by James Frazer would have been somewhat primitive and relied on the use of gelatine moulding. The first cast made by Frazer is most likely to have been the most accurate with increasing loss of detail on subsequent mouldings.

**PHRENOLOGY**

Phrenology in the early 19th century was a reputable and expanding science based on the notion that the study of the structure and form of the skull could determine a person’s character and mental capacity. The basic principles of phrenology were developed by a German physician, Franz Josef Gall (1758-1828). The brain was the “organ” of the mind but did not operate as a single functional entity but rather in concert as a collection of smaller constituent “organs” representing the propensities, sentiments and faculties. These organs were located in specific parts of the brain, the size of each being indicative of its functional power. Gall believed that the brain organs got bigger with use and shrank if not used, causing the skull to rise and fall with organ development. Overlying bumps and indentations on the skull therefore reflected specific areas of the brain which determined a person’s emotional and intellectual functions and behaviour. He slowly increased the number of areas he attributed to specific localisation’s of cerebral functions which he thought were indicative of the underlying attributes of the
human personality and claimed some 26 "organs" on the surface of the brain which affect the contour of the skull, including, bizarrely, a "murder organ".

A younger colleague, Johann Spurzheim (1776 – 1832) adapted and developed Gall's work and discarded "theft organs and "murder organs", but introduced additional areas such as "benevolence" and "self-esteem". Spurzheim was largely responsible for the spread of phrenology to Britain and America. In Britain, it was promoted vigorously by enthusiasts such as George Combe (1788-1858) who founded the Edinburgh Phrenological Society.

Gall's early work had been with criminals and the insane, and his brain "organs" reflected this interest. As phrenology developed, interest spread to the crania of the more enlightened and upright.

**Phrenology of Robert Burns**

1. "An essay on the character and cerebral development of Robert Burns"

Robert Cox read an essay on the Burns' cast before the Edinburgh Ethical Society for the Study and Practical Application of Phrenology on 5th May 1834. The essay and additional comments by George Combe were published in the Phrenological Journal in the same year. Combe said that whilst the cast did not provide evidence of Burns temperament, information could be gleaned from study of his portraits.

"beaming energetic eye .. and the rapidity and impetuosity of his manifestations-"

confirmed that his brain was: -

"active and susceptible."

Combe also felt that the large skull indicated a brain of above average size again confirming

"the measure of mental power."

Combe included tables showing the dimension of the skull, which at 22½ inch circumference and 6 inches greatest breadth, exceeded the average of Scottish living heads. The scale of the "brain organs" showed that Burns was more than amply endowed with mental powers.

**Development of the Organs**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Organ</th>
<th>Scale</th>
<th>Organ</th>
<th>Scale</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Amativeness, rather large</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>18. Wonder, large</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Philoprogenitiveness, very large</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>19. Ideality, large</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Concentrativeness, large</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>20. Wit or Mirthfulness, full</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Adhesiveness, very large</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>21. Imitation, large</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Combative ness, very large</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>22. Individuality, large</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Destructiveness, large</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>23. Form, rather large</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Secretiveness, large</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>24. Size, rather large</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. Acquitiveness, rather large</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>25. Weight, rather large</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. Self-Esteem, large</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>27. Locality, large</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12. Cautiousness, large</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>29. Order, full</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13. Benevolence, very large</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>30. Eventuality, large</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14. Veneration, large</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>31. Time, rather large</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15. Firmness, full</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>32. Tune, full</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
16. Conscientiousness, full  15  33. Language, uncertain  
17. Hope, full  14  34. Comparison, rather large  
35. Causality, large

The scale of the organs indicates their relative proportions to each other; - 2 is Idiocy – 10 Moderate – 14 Full – 18 Large – and 20 Very Large

* The “organ” of language is situated around the left eye. It is striking, in the Perth cast, that the left orbital margin was missing.

After a detailed comparison of the size of the varying organs and a consideration of how these would function in combination, Combe concluded that:-

“Burns must have walked the earth with a consciousness of great superiority over his associates in the station in which he was placed; of powers calculated for a higher sphere than that which he was able to reach, and of passions which he could with difficulty restrain, but which it was fatal to indulge.”

Cox’s essay was even more detailed. After general observations on the dimensions of the cast and comments on the “quality” of the poet’s brain, Cox gave a very detailed analysis of the “Relative Development of the Three Great Divisions” of the brain. He used the common phrenologists’ classification of heads. These were:-

1. Heads where the “organs of the propensities and lower sentiments predominate over the organs of the faculties peculiar to man.” These included :- Amativeness, Combativeness, Destructiveness, Secretiveness and Cautiousness.

2. Heads where Benevolence, Conscientiousness, Veneration, Ideality and the Organs of Reflection were well developed. Heads in this second classification indicated a preponderance of “the moral feeling and reflective intellect.”

3. The third class were heads in which the two orders of organs were in balance.

Thus, individuals with heads in the first class were:-

“naturally endowed with base, selfish and violent dispositions, and fall into vicious practices in spite of the best education.”

Those in the second class:-

“in whom the organs of the moral sentiments and reflective intellect predominate, resists temptation to evil doing, and remains uncorrupted even among associates the most depraved.”

Cox concluded that Burns was in the third class with a slight leaning towards the first. Although the “animal” propensities were considerable, this was balanced by a great development of the intellectual faculties. This meant that the poet was:-

“indeed a strange compound of noble and debasing qualities.”

After a painstaking review of the individual organs, illustrating these with some poetical quotation or comment from a contemporary of Burns. Cox was convinced that:-

“I may be allowed to hope that the candid reader will agree with me in regarding the skull of Burns as a striking and valuable confirmation of the truth of Phrenology.”

A further phrenological assessment of the Burns cast was given by L N Fowler, “Practical Phrenologist”, in the Mechanics Hall, Dumfries on 25th January 1864. On this occasion;

“...a cast of the skull of Burns was presented to him by James Frazer, who took the same at the time the coffin was examined in 1834 on the death of the Poet’s widow.”

Fowler, in acknowledging the gift said;

“...he placed a high value upon it, which would have compensated him for coming to Dumfries, if it had only been to obtain the bust.”
The essay was eventually published in the Phrenological Magazine in 1881. Fowler commented on the unusually large size of the skull and considered the phrenological feelings.

The Animal Propensities indicated power and strength in the passions and impulses. On considering the Moral Brain, Fowler said that while it was "not defective":

"...if it had been more developed and about ½ an inch higher, there would have been a much better balance of mind and the passions and impulses would have been more under control"

Fowler gave a detailed comparison of the remaining "organs". Amongst these he noted:

- "self-esteem was not large in the part which gives pride, dignity and haughtiness, but very distinctly developed in the part indicating independence, sense and liberty."
- Alimentiveness was "very large" showing that Burns:

Enjoyed food and drink and if indulged, made it difficult to control."

ANATOMICAL EXAMINATION OF CAST

R. B. Longmore, Senior Lecturer in Anatomy, examined the original cast at the University of Dundee in 1980. The description given was that the cast was of a dolichocephalic (long and narrow) skull with a cranial capacity of 1500-1700ml. This was consistent with the cast having been made from the skull of a modern European and there was limited evidence from the form of the skull and the muscle attachments, which suggested that the cast was that of a male skull. Longmore noted that:

"In the absence of evidence from cranial sutures and the dentition, an estimation of age cannot be given save that is the skull of an adult."

It was also noted that a dimensional inaccuracy due to the setting expansion of plaster (up to 10%) would have been unavoidable.

An earlier anatomical opinion had been given by the anthropologist, Sir Arthur Keith, on the cast in the possession of the Royal College of Surgeons of London. This noted that the skull was broad but exceptionally long, characteristic of pre-Celtic peoples.

DISCUSSION

Phrenology is now a discredited "science". However, Gall & Spurzheim had been initially responsible, in their earlier excellent research, for establishing the principle of functional localisation in the cerebral cortex. They were scientists of some standing and reputation. Their approach had suggested that phrenology was a systematic and quantitative scientific method. The growth of phrenological societies in all parts of Britain and Ireland was indicative of the wide spread acceptance of phrenology. The support of leading figures in the church and medical establishments were in part responsible for this. No less a figure that Robert Hunter, Professor of Anatomy at Glasgow & one of the greatest British anatomists of his time, gave supportive lectures on the scientific basis of phrenology.

The phrenological analyses of Burns' skull confirmed, for the phrenologists, the validity of their science. They stressed the quite remarkable size of the Burns skull, equating this with a mental capacity consistent with his genius. Burns as a "strange compound of noble and debasing qualities" was confirmed by the rigorous assessment of the phrenological organs. These analyses were likely to have been influenced by accounts of Burns' character in biographies and contemporary reports. In turn, the phrenological report would have reinforced previous accounts of Burns' behaviour and character with the stamp of scientific authority.

Phrenology came to be discredited in the latter half of the 19th century by the substantial advances being made in neuroanatomy and neurophysiology. That group of earnest men who disinterred the skull had believed that phrenology as a science would confirm the genius of Burns. Their motive was laudable but misplaced. Phrenology let them down. Ultimately, it was not
phrenology but literary criticism which was to establish the poet's enduring fame. It was the products of that fertile brain, not its bony encasement, that were to ensure his acceptance, by modern critical scholarship, as one of the greatest lyric poets -- in the tradition of Catullus, Dante and Shakespeare -- who have graced the progress of mankind.

Acknowledgements: The authors are indebted to Messrs J Bateson, G McKenna, Royal Victoria Hospital, Belfast, Professor R R Sturrock, University of Dundee and Donald Nelson, Burns Collection, Mitchell Library, Glasgow.

References
1 McDiarmid, John "St Michael's Churchyard, Disinterment of Burns", in Sketches from Nature, Dumfries, 1830.
4 Combe, George, "Observations on the skull of Robert Burns", The Phrenological Journal, June 1834. 657-662
11 Notices of Meetings of Phrenological Societies, quoted in the Phrenological Journal, June 1834, op cit.

Bachelors’ Club

SANDGATE STREET,
TARBOLTON,
SOUTH AYRSHIRE, KA5 5RB.
TEL: TARBOLTON
(01292) 541940
DURING OPENING TIMES.

In this 17th-century thatched house, Robert Burns and friends formed a debating club in 1780. Burns attended dancing lessons, and was initiated into Freemasonry here, in 1781.

Period furnishings.
Robert Burns has a claim to fame in more than one area: author of what is considered to be the greatest short satire in the English language, "Holy Willie’s Prayer"; of what has been called the “Marseillaise” of Scotland, “Scots wha hae”; of lines which have become commonplace (“The best laid schemes o’ Mice an’ Men, gang aft agley” and “O wad some Pow’r the giffie gie us To see oursels as others see us”); of some of the greatest songs in the language, including what is the best-known nonpolitical secular song in the world, “Auld lang syne.” Burns is known as the National Bard of Scotland; his birthday is celebrated in hundreds of annual gatherings around the globe. Robert Burns also wrote bawdry, although there were persistent attempts to conceal this fact.

Burns led an uneventful life. The eldest of seven children, he became responsible for the family in 1784 at age twenty-five upon the death of his father, a tenant farmer. Robert and his brother Gilbert farmed Mossgiel in the parish of Mauchline in Ayrshire. In 1786 Burns decided that he would emigrate from Scotland to Jamaica, where employment was easy to find, in large measure because those who went out to oversee plantations rarely lived very long. Before going, though, he determined to publish some of the poems he had been writing for several years but none of which had ever been in print. Locally he already had a reputation as a rhymer, and the subscription bills were soon filled. In July his Poems, Chiefly in the Scottish Dialect appeared from the press of John Wilson of Kilmarnock in an edition of 612 copies. The book sold so well that in November Burns was unable to send six copies to Mrs. Frances Dunlop, who became his friend and confidante. Encouraged by the enthusiastic reception of his volume, he determined to extend his horizon and try a second enlarged edition in Edinburgh. He arrived there in December of 1786 and was immediately lionized by the literati and socially prominent until he left to take up farming at Ellisland in Dumfriesshire in June 1788. Not quite certain that he would make a good enough living as a farmer, Burns had taken instruction as an excise officer, and in September 1789 he began work at that calling also, riding up to two hundred miles a week. As he had feared, his farm turned out to be, as he called it, “a bad bargain,” so he moved to Dumfries in July 1790 to work as an excise officer in the port. He was to live there with his wife, Jean Armour, and their growing family for the remaining six years of his life. Never of robust health, Burns had been called upon to do the work of a man on his father’s farm while still only a boy and had gone on to do heavy work with his brother Gilbert on Mossgiel and then on Ellisland. After his death detractors had it that he died of drink, but the fact is that the cause of death was probably bacterial endocarditis added to rheumatic heart disease; those who claimed otherwise had their own moralistic reasons for tampering with the truth.

Robert Burns’s output divides naturally into two groups. Most of his early work consists of poems; most of his later creations are songs. The earlier period extends from 1774 (when he was fifteen) until the publication of the second edition of his poems in Edinburgh in 1787, and from then on he was mostly occupied with songs. But these tasks were by no means mutually exclusive: his first production was the song “Handsome Nell,” and he was well into his song-writing period...
THE MERRY MUSES OF CALEDONIA;
A COLLECTION OF FAVOURITE SCOTS SONGS,
Ancient and Modern;
SELECTED FOR USE OF THE CROGHALLAN FENCIBLES.

Say, Puritan, can it be wrong,
To dree plain truth in witty song?
What honest Nature says, we should do;
What every lady does,---or would do.

PRINTED IN THE YEAR 1799

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when he produced the immortal tale of diablerie “Tam o’ Shanter” in 1790.

Both the Kilmarnock and Edinburgh editions of Poems, Chiefly in The Scottish Dialect consist principally of poems. The 1786 volume contains only three songs, the 1787 volume six additional songs as well as “John Barleycorn,” which the poet noted was “partly composed on the plan of an old song.” Burns certainly wrote several songs during this period, but it was as a poet, not a songwriter, that he wanted to make his name at the time. Once the first volume had appeared he was hungry for wider recognition than his native Ayrshire afforded; by the time plans were going forward for the Edinburgh edition, he was looking beyond the borders of Scotland. We can deduce this by comparing the glossaries in the 1786 and the 1787 volumes. Poems and songs which appeared in the earlier volume were reprinted in the second edition, but the number of glossed words was smaller in the 1786 volume than in that of 1787. There are, of course, additional entries for the poems and songs which are new to the edition of 1787. Furthermore, Burns knew that his Edinburgh publisher William Creech had close ties with London and would be sending copies to his agents A. Strahan and T. Cadell. In fact by midsummer the Edinburgh edition had sold so well that despite a printing of probably 3,250 copies plans were going forward for Strahan and Cadell to issue their own edition, which appeared in November 1787. We are not certain if Burns knew that there were piracies of his poems published that year in Belfast and Dublin (and in Philadelphia and New York in 1788), but from his earliest edition he was conscious of being Scotia’s Bard. Not only did this not prevent him from seeking a wider audience, it quite possibly gave him increased impetus to have readers outwith the Kingdom of Scotland.

During his stay in Edinburgh the poet met a music engraver, James Johnson, who was working on a national collection of the songs of Scotland, The Scots Musical Museum, to which Burns was encouraged to contribute. By May 1787 he sent Johnson the first of at least 177 songs which he was to furnish, almost a third of the six hundred which appeared in the Museum between 1787 and 1803. Because not all of the correspondence from Burns to Johnson survives, there may be other works by Burns in the Museum which have escaped the notice of scholars. It must also be recalled that in Burns’s day there was an enormous body of folk song in the oral tradition and Burns, who was steeped in this material, carefully mined it for suitable matter. Publication of traditional poems and songs was at that time in its infancy (Thomas Percy’s Reliques of Ancient English Poetry had appeared only in 1765), and Burns, recognizing the importance of getting this disappearing lode into print, pioneered the assembling of it. The craftsman in Burns refurbished a good deal of what he came across in the oral tradition, rounding out a line, supplying a better line, sometimes using only a fragment of the original to be incorporated in a complete song. Bishop Percy had done this before, and Sir Walter Scott was to follow suit in his Minstrelsy of the Scottish Border at the outset of the nineteenth century. In this sense Burns was a creator, not a conservationist – his concern was to leave the world a work of art. There is still uncertainty about his contribution to some songs; there is no uncertainty about the quality of the product.

James Johnson was a humble man and readily deferred to Burns in editorial matters; in fact after the first volume, which was nearing completion when he became a contributor, Burns was virtually the editor. Two months before his death Burns wrote to Johnson, clearly treating him as an equal in the production of The Scots Musical Museum: “Your Work is a great one; & though, now that it is near finished, I see if we were to begin again, two or three things that might be mended, yet I will venture to prophesy, that to future ages your Publication will be the text book and standard of Scottish Song & Music.” Underlining Burns’s influence in the affair, the fifth volume of the Museum appeared shortly after his death, but without the poet’s enthusiasm the sixth and final volume did not appear until 1803. The work was a popular one; Burns mentions in a letter to Johnson that a Dumfries singing master has learned several songs from it “which he sings on all occasions.”

But Johnson’s Scots Musical Museum was not the only musical enterprise with which Burns became associated. In September 1792 Burns received a letter from George Thomson inviting him
to collaborate on a plan for “collating and collecting the most favourite of our national melodies for publication” and asking the poet to write “twenty of twenty-five songs” for which he offered to pay “any reasonable price you shall please to demand.” Thomson mentioned that the accompaniments were to be supplied by Pleyel, but before Thomson was finished music by Haydn and Beethoven had been added to what was to become *A Select Collection of Original Scotish [sic] Airs*. Whereas Johnson was a craftsman, Thomson was chief clerk to the Board of Trustees in Edinburgh and distinctly conscious of his social superiority to the poet. Burns felt this too and sometimes deferred half mockingly to him.

Nevertheless Burns was pleased and flattered by Thomson’s request and immediately accepted, but he was adamant in his refusal of any remuneration: “my Songs,” he wrote, are “either above, or below price.” And so began for Burns his second collaboration in song collecting, refurbishing, and writing. He continued to work with Johnson, frequently supplying the two editors with the same material.

During both his poetic and song-writing periods, Burns was composing underground material. As in every other literature, the Scots had a long tradition of bawdy poetry, much of it passed down in the oral tradition as song. The subject matter of these effusions was as diverse as life itself: the motif could be overtly or covertly sexual; it could be political or legal; it could deal with war or the martial arts. Because the Scottish Reformation had been quite vicious, it was not uncommon for Protestants to write obscene words to be sung to Roman Catholic airs, with the obvious intention of insulting their religious counterparts. Tavern life, with its predominantly male conviviality, played an important role in keeping such poems, and especially such songs, alive. Various clubs met in these taverns, including the one owned by Daniel Douglas, where the Crochallan Fencibles gathered. This club, of which Burns was a member, was founded by William Smellie, who printed the Edinburgh edition of Burns’s poems and was the editor and principal author of the first edition of the *Encyclopaedia Britannica*. Burns wrote a poem about Smellie, and referred to him in a letter as an “old Veteran in Genius, Wit and B[aw]dry.” Apparently only one letter from the poet to Smellie survivies, but according to Smellie’s biographer, Robert Kerr, several were destroyed as being “totally unfit for publication.” It is quite possible that Smellie had a hand in the production of the first edition of *The Merry Muses*.

There were two social Edinburghs when Burns was there in the late eighteenth century, the one Rabelaisian as noted above, the other that of the salons, where the literati shared tea with genteel ladies, although, of course, many men including Burns frequented both of these worlds. There was a third society which played an important role in the Scotland of Burns’s day, the Freemasons. Burns had joined St. David’s Lodge in Tarbolton in 1781 and remained a Freemason until his death. When he was in Edinburgh, he was made a member of Canongate Kilwinning Lodge, and the contacts he made there ensured his entry to the society of the literati.

Early in his rhyming career Robert Burns became aware of and began writing erotic poetry. This interest led him in two directions: he wrote bawdy versions of well-known poems and songs, but he also wrote “proper” words for older erotica. Perhaps the best-known example of this latter pursuit is “John Anderson, my Jo,” which Burns first published in volume 3 of *The Scots Musical Museum* (1790). This song was extant in Scotland in its unpurified version well before the poet’s time and was still alive in the oral tradition of Scotland after World War II. It appears in one of its older forms in *The Merry Muses*.

The earliest erotic poem Burns is known to have written dates from 1784. It opens:

*My Girl she's airy, she's buxom and gay,*  
*Her breath is as sweet as the blossoms in May;*

It does not appear in *The Merry Muses* and was not in print until 1938.

In addition to his membership in the boisterous Crochallan Fencibles, Burns made no secret of
his interest in erotica. There were the bawdy poems which he had circulated in manuscript, of course, but he was also open with his correspondents about this interest. In a letter of December 20, 1789, to Provost Robert Maxwell, Burns dismissed subjects which might be appropriate for a serious letter, deciding upon his topic by saying, “I intend to write BAUDY!” He then wrote out the text of “Auld Sir Symon,” after which he added, “You see, Sir, I have fulfilled my promise: I wish you would think of fulfilling yours, and come and see the rest of my Collection.” Thus we see that Burns was collecting what was to become The Merry Muses well over six years before his death. He was not furtive about the enjoyment he found in bawdy verse either. He sent his friend Robert Cleghorn a ballad of his entitled “Act Sederunt of the Session” with the comment, “Well! the Law is good for something, since we can make a B-dy-songof it... There is, there must be, some truth in original sin.—My violent propensity to B-dy convinces me of it.”

Burns was not prudish when it came to religion and bawdry either. In a letter to George Thomson he told his editor “at the Reformation, the Reformers burlesqued much of the old Church Music with setting them to bawdy verses... the common name for this song is, Cumnock Psalm.” The poet then transcribed the song in his letter and ended, “So much for the Psalmody of Cumnock.” To which Thomson added the note, “Delicate psalmody indeed.” Never one to let a good tune go to waste and knowing that Thomson could not publish the words he had sent him, Burns wrote new ones to the old tune and sent them to Johnson, who published them under the title “A Lassie all Alone” in The Scots Musical Museum in 1796.

The later eighteenth century was a fertile time for political satire, and Burns gleefully joined in by producing both standard and bawdy samples of the genre. One of the best known of the latter, sent to Thomson in July 1794, was built around the political situation in Europe at the time; the ever-cautious Thomson endorsed the song—“What a pity this is not publishable”—and so the song first appeared in print in The Merry Muses with the title “Poor Bodies do Naething but M-w” [fornicate], frequently known by part of its first line, “When Princes and Prelates.” Burns was by no means averse to sending copies of his bawdy productions to friends, so he made more than one copy, of which one contains an additional stanza that would certainly have landed the poet in trouble had it come to official notice that an officer of the excise would produce such a thing. It goes:

But truce with commotions and new-fangled notions,
A bumper I trust you'll allow
Here's George our gude king and Charlotte his queen
And lang may they tak a gude mowe!

This good-natured dig at the British royal family, tying them to Europe, would seem more natural in Scotland, where the disaster of Prince Charles in 1746 and the harsh treatment of Scots, particularly Highlanders, were by no means forgotten in Burns’s time, and it was not forgotten either that this was done under a monarch whose roots were Hanoverian.

An important document in the history of The Merry Muses is a letter the poet wrote to John M’Murdo, accompanying the manuscript of that collection. The letter is tentatively dated from Dumfries in February 1792, it reads:

John M’Murdo Esq: Drumlanrig
with a parcel

Sir,
'tis said that we take the greatest liberties with our greatest friends, & I pay myself a very high compliment by the manner in which I am going to apply the remark.—I have owed you money longer than ever I owed it to any man.—Here is Kerr's account, & here
is the six guineas; & now, I don't owe a shilling to man or Woman either.—But for these damned, dirty, dog-ear'd, little pages, I had done myself the honor to have waited on you long ago.—Independant [sic] of the obligations your hospitable kindness has laid me under, the consciousness of your superiority in the ranks of Man & Gentleman, of itself, was fully as much as I could ever make head to; but to owe you money, too, was more than I could face.—

I think I once mentioned something to you of a Collection of Scots Songs I have for some years been making: I send you a perusal of what I have gathered.—I could not conveniently spare them above five or six days, & five or six glances of them will probably more than suffice you.—When you are tired of them, please leave them with Mr Clint of the King's Arms.—There is not another copy of the Collection in the world, & I should be sorry that any unfortunate negligence should deprive me of what has cost me a good deal of pains.—

I have the honor to be,

Sir,
Your deeply indebted & ever grateful humble servt
Robt Burns

Dumfries
Monday six o'clock

The publication of this letter is interesting. It passed through the hands of James Currie, the editor of the first collected edition of Burns's works, which appeared in four volumes in 1800. Currie was preparing the edition for the benefit of the poet's widow and children, who eventually received a comfortable sum from it. Not wishing to offend any of the middle-class subscribers, the editor was very careful about what was included and what was silently dropped. Thus the edition includes none of the bawdy verse Burns had written, and letters were excised where this was deemed prudent. This Currie would have done, no doubt, with the passage about the poet's "Collection of Scots Songs," were it not, I believe, that he had heard of the publication of The Merry Muses in 1799 and so decided to retain the offending second paragraph in the letter. But he added the sentence "A very few of them are my own" after the words "five or six glances of them will probably suffice you," thus deliberately leading several generations of readers into the mistaken belief that Burns's disavowal was true.

As late as 1911 the Burns Federation, under the editorship of Duncan M'Naught, brought out an edition of The Merry Muses which carried the subtitle A Vindication of Robert Burns, in Connection with the Above Publication and the Spurious Editions Which Succeeded It. It is quite possible that M'Naught was unaware of the M'Murdo letter, but the whole tone of his "Introductory and Corrective," which he signed "Vindex," is such as to make the reader believe that Burns had very little to do with writing or collecting bawdry. My edition of The Letters of Robert Burns (1985) was the first to give the text of the letter in its correct form; the original manuscript is now in the G. Ross Roy Collection at the University of South Carolina. Without access to the correct text of the letter and the knowledge that The Merry Muses was published before 1800, it would not have been possible to draw my conclusion about Currie's reason for tampering with the letter. It is indeed fortuitous that the book and the letter now form part of the same collection.

A few words about the contents of The Merry Muses. The first thing that will be noted is that Robert Burns's name does not appear on the title page or elsewhere within the book. The first edition to use the poet's name is dated 1843, and even then the name is only on the running title, not on the title page. The first time Burns's name is printed on the title page is in the edition circa 1872, which is spuriously dated 1827; it reads: The Merry Muses. A Choice Collection of Favourite Songs Gathered from Many Sources, by Robert Burns. It is interesting to note that the words "of Caledonia" have been dropped at the same time that the poet's name has been associated with the
book. There were several reprints of this text at various dates, all claiming to have been issued in 1827.


There is no known compiler of the text of the original edition of The Merry Muses, and of course not all the songs are by Burns, nor are all of the bawdy productions by him included, as was noted above. Twelve of the songs which appear in The Merry Muses exist in the poet's hand, and there are another nine among the assembled poems which were collected but not written by him. Beyond this it becomes a good deal more difficult to say with assurance which of a number of poems and songs attributed to the poet are his; at the far end of the spectrum there are works which have been published as his which are known not to be genuine, and others which from internal evidence suggest very strongly another author. The last stanza of a poem entitled "The Bower of Bliss" which appeared in the 1799 volume should convince anyone familiar with Burns's writing that he would be incapable of penning anything this bad:

O! let my tender, trembling hand,
The awful gate of life expand!
With all its wonders feast my sight;
Dear prelude to immense delight!
Till plung'd in liquid joy profound,
The dark unfathom'd deep I sound;
All panting on thy breast recline,
And murmuring bliss that bower to thine.

Burns did send the text of this song to William Stewart in July 1788, claiming it to be "the work of a Revd Doctor of the Church of Scotland," but did not identify him further.

The Merry Muses then, it will be seen, is an uneven mixture of songs unmistakably bearing the stamp of Burns's genius and productions by others of considerably lesser quality. In addition to its value as a collection typical of the erotica of the time, it gives us an unequaled look at the type of poetry Burns knew, wrote, and collected.

The copy came into my possession in 1965. Until then the work was known in only one copy, which belonged to Albert Edward Harry Mayer Archibald Primrose, sixth earl of Rosebery (a copy of it is now in the National Library of Scotland), and was incomplete, lacking the half title and missing the words "The" at the top of the title page and "Printed in the Year 1799" at the bottom. At the end of that volume the table of contents (pp. 123-27) is also wanting. The last page of the present copy had a printer's name on it, but unfortunately the page was apparently deliberately defaced so that the name could not be read. When it came into my possession The Merry Muses had been bound about 1840 in tree calf with plates sewn in. That which was facing the title page is an unidentified pornographic engraving entitled "See School of Venus" the seven others are original Thomas Rowlandson erotic engravings, each with a bawdy poem. An additional plate had already been removed. As the bowdlerizing had nothing to do with the volume and particularly because I was to be interviewed by the British Broadcasting Corporation, which wished to zoom in on the title page, I had the plates removed and separately encased in a similar binding.

The volume turned up when Sydney Goodsir Smith was sitting in an Edinburgh pub in 1965 with a copy of a recently issued edition of The Merry Muses of Caledonia which he, James Barke, and J. DeLancey Ferguson had originally edited for publication by private subscription in 1959 to commemorate the bicentenary of Burns's birth. With changes in the law, this edition was allowed to be openly published in the United States in 1964 and in Great Britain in 1965. The Barke-Goodsir Smith-Ferguson volume has a frontispiece a reproduction of the mutilated title page of the
then only known copy of *The Merry Muses*. The book was being passed around when a working-
class drinker said that he had a copy like that at home. When challenged by Goodsir Smith, he left
and returned with the copy which I acquired shortly after. The story does not quite end there either.
Returning to the United States I was disconcerted when the customs officer at New York showed
considerable interest in books a colleague with whom I was traveling had purchased abroad. Mindful
that laws on pornography had only very recently been liberalized, I was particularly fearful of his
seeing the Rowlandson plates, but I was able to divert his attention from the book to purchases I
had made in the duty-free shop which exceeded my allowance.

With the transfer of my collection of Burns, Burnsiana, and Scottish poetry to the University of
South Carolina through a gift/purchase agreement, the 1799 edition of *The Merry Muses of Caledonia*
became the property of that institution. By good fortune the letter from Burns to John M’Murdo
reproduced in this article became available recently, and it has been added to the G. Ross Roy
Collection as an appropriate companion to one of the greatest and certainly the rarest of all Burns
books.

**Recommended Further Reading**

**Texts**

*The Merry Muses of Caledonia*. Ed. James Barke and Sydney Goodsir Smith, with a prefatory
note and some authentic Burns texts contributed by J. DeLancey Ferguson (Edinburgh: Printed by
M. Macdonald, for the Auk Society, 1959). Reprinted several times.

*The Merry Muses of Caledonia Collected and in Part Written by Robert Burns*. Ed. G. Legman
(New Hyde Park, N.Y.: University Books, 1965). This is a type-facsimile of the Rosebery copy of
the first edition, lacking the material noted in this essay. It contains an important 59-page introduction
entitled “Robert Burns and The Merry Muses.”

1968). This is the first collected edition of Burns to contain all the bawdy poems and songs.

**Criticism**

Kinsley, James, “Burns and the Merry Muses,” in *Renaissance and Modern Studies*, 9 (1965),
5-21.

Legman, G., “The Rediscovery of Burns’ Merry Muses of Caledonia,” part 2, pp. 131-236, of
*The Horn Book: Studies in Erotic Folklore and Bibliography* (New Hyde Park, N.Y.: University
Books, 1964). A discussion of a manuscript by Allan Cunningham published an eight-volume
edition of Burns’s works in 1834.

1965), 211-12. Discussion with illustrations of the present copy.

“‘1827’ Edition of Robert Burns’s Merry Muses of Caledonia,” in *Burns Chronicle*, 4th
THE TOM CROOK MEMORIAL PAPER, 1999

[Tom Crook was a founding member of the Bicentennial Discussion Group (Club 1139 of the Burns Federation) of London, Ontario. He died on March 7, 1999 at the age of 86. As a tribute it was resolved that the inaugural paper at the Club’s fall meeting each year should be called the Tom Crook Memorial Paper, and that the paper should be sent to the Burns Chronicle for consideration for publication. The 1999 Tom Crook Memorial Paper was given by Ian Hunter, Professor Emeritus in the Faculty of Law at the University of Western Ontario.]

WAYWARD GENIUS: CATHERINE CARSWELL and her LIFE OF ROBERT BURNS

Biographies of Burns are numberless, but few have been written by women. Foremost among these is Catherine Carswell’s The Life of Robert Burns, first published by William Collins & Sons, London, in 1930. This paper has a twofold purpose: first, to comment briefly upon Carswell’s remarkable biography; second, to comment briefly upon the scarcely less remarkable life of Catherine Carswell. Common to both is the theme of “wayward genius”.

(1) Carswell’s Life of Burns

Encouraged by two men - her husband, Donald Carswell, and her friend, D. H. Lawrence, whose life she would write in The Savage Pilgrimage (1932), Catherine Carswell set out in the nineteen-twenties to write a life of Robert Burns. It is not surprising that D. H. Lawrence encouraged her; Lawrence had begun, but abandoned, a novel based on Burns’ life. He told Catherine Carswell to be frank: “...You can’t know Burns”, Lawrence wrote in 1927, “…unless you can hate the Lockharts [John Gibson Lockhart’s 1828 life of Burns was still regarded as authoritative] and all the estimable bourgeois and upper classes as he really did - the narrow-gutted pigeons. Don’t, for God’s sake, be mealy-mouthed like them,”

If she heeded none other, Catherine Carswell took Lawrence’s advice to heart. When her biography of Burns was published in 1930 it was greeted by what Arnold Bennett called “…storms, cascades, cyclones of howling and protesting fury”. Several Scottish reviewers called for a boycott of the book. To their enduring shame, the Burns Federation had tried to get the publisher, Chatto and Windus, to suppress the book prior to publication; when the tactic failed, the Federation fell back on invective and abuse. The Burns Chronicle for 1932 published a review that must be unique for it’s vitriol: “…It is not far off from being the kind of record Satan might keep near the door of his dark abode, lest a repentant sinner might slip into higher places of peace after struggle, failure and victory - a book he might bring forward to prove a poor soul’s previous convictions, in some final Court of Spiritual Common Pleas... It is, in much, an undocumented libel on the dead ...

A Glasgow Member of Parliament went even further, calling Carswell “a body-snatcher” and accusing her of improperly interfering with “the ghoulsh remains of a great man”. One reader, who must have spurned the advice to boycott the book and who with no doubt inadvertent aptness signed himself “Holy Willie”, sent Carswell a bullet, and suggested that she finds a quiet place to use it in order “…to leave the world a better and cleaner place”.

Well, what was it about Carswell’s biography that touched off such a malevolent firestorm? The answer is simple, although still denied by some Burnsians: namely, Carswell was the first biographer to expose Burns’ dark side. She wrote a “warts and all” biography, a portrait of wayward
genius, a book that required more honesty of mind than some readers were willing to bring to it, a book that upset acolytes for whom Burns had become Saint Rab.

From Dr. James Currie’s four volumes published in 1800 forward, readers had been given a false Burns, the poet of love but not of lust, the dutiful husband but not the “whoreson, hungry appetites” of Rab Mossgie, the deity but not the dirt. Catherine Carswell gave the reader both sides, in a fuller, better researched (although later research has revealed errors), and lively account that only a minority of reviewers recognized for the ground-breaking work it truly was. The Daily Record’s reviewer was one of the rare critics to praise the book’s merits: “Never before has the poet been so convincingly or fully presented; she sees Burns as an artist in living - passionate, intent, wayward and various.” Today, with the benefit of half a century of hindsight, perhaps the best assessment of Carswell’s accomplishment was that of Arnold Bennett:

“Out of it arises gradually the personality of a great man... jolly, hard-living, dyspeptic and triumphant... the very archetype of the supreme creative artist. The spectacle of his career makes English poets seem only half-alive. Matthew Arnold was a great poet, but in the master-enterprise of being alive he was a timid grey amateur compared to Burns.”

Carswell’s biography is in five parts.

She opens with a thirty page “prelude” which outlines the economic and social conditions of Scotland in the early eighteenth century; conditions which had driven William Burnes out of Kincardine to Edinburgh, thence at the age of 36 to Ayrshire, and marriage to Agnes Broun of Maybole. The grinding poverty, the backbreaking and usually doomed struggle to cultivate marginal land, the periodic famines which wasted both man and animal, all these are evocatively described. William Burnes had more than once witnessed Scots reduced to feeding on rubbish and weeds. Yet amidst such penury and moil, Carswell demonstrates how the Scots remained “...sensitive towards the wrongs of others and stoical towards their own”.

Carswell’s biographical technique we would now consider dated; she is the omniscient narrator who does not hesitate to tell the reader what disparate characters are thinking or feeling. But when she turned to writing biography she was already an experienced and successful novelist, and she writes with a novelist’s sense of pace and timing. Sensitive and sometimes sentimental [for example, of Mary Campbell waiting for Burns in Greenock, she writes: “There she was established in modest supremacy, blooming sweetly and many-rooted as a daisy plant...”], Carswell exhibits a florid interest in human relationships. Yet she is perceptive and convincing when she writes about Burns and his father. By focussing on the father/son relationship, Carswell provides fresh insight into Burns’ character. The poet did not learn independence, thrift, dignity or diligence from books; all these qualities he observed in, and learned from, his father.

Part II, entitled “Mossgie”, covers the crucial years 1784-1786, the highpoint of which, of course, was the appearance of Poems, Chiefly in the Scottish Dialect, published by John Wilson of Kilmarnock. Burns did not set out to publish his verse; this was unthinkable to him, a ploughman lacking formal education. Rather he wrote satires, which circulated in broadsheet, first to friends and acquaintances, then more widely throughout the neighbourhood. Poems like “The Twa Herds”, which was first sent to Gavin Hamilton; or “Death and Dr. Hornbook” and “Holy Willie’s Prayer”, which began as satires on local figures, but were eventually passed from hand to hand until they were delighting readers in Maybole and Irvine and Kilmarnock, readers who did not know the originals being satirized. So numerous became the requests for copies that the poet was spending more time copying out these poems than he had taken to write them. Burns creative powers were capable of rendering even the most mundane and inconsequential event, like ploughing up a daisy or greeting his aged mare, into memorable verse. Friends who had enjoyed these poems agreed to become subscribers, and thus on July 31, 1786 the Kilmarnock edition appeared: 612 copies printed, three shillings, price stitched, 600 copies sold in the first three weeks, today one of the most valuable first editions in the world.
Carswell writes:

“It is not given to all to be creative, even for a brief space during their lifetime; to few is it
given to be creative for long. Perhaps the supreme test of human conduct - of simple goodness and
worth - may lie in our reception of this condition in ourselves and in others, when it exists. Its
recognition and welcome - perhaps nothing else in life is so important, seeing that life continues
only by new creation”.

Carswell was the first (but unfortunately not the last) biographer to assert that May Campbell
died at Greenock while giving birth, perhaps prematurely, to Burns’ child. There is little evidence
for this. Mary Campbell died in 1786. A century and a half later, the West Highland churchyard
where she was buried was needed for industrial expansion. So, on November 8, 1920 Mary
Campbell’s grave was dug up and opened. Among the remains was found what was believed to be
the bottom boards of an infant’s coffin, and this is the basis for Carswell’s hypothesis (which she
asserts as fact).

In reality three skulls were lifted from the grave. It was not uncommon for more than one
person to be buried in the same grave. And it emerged that a Captain Duncan Hendry’s wife in
1827 had buried a baby child in the same grave that “Highland Mary” Campbell occupied. Maurice
Lindsay, and others, have suggested that Captain Hendry’s claim is itself suspicious, but no hard
evidence ever refuted it. All one can say with certainty is that Catherine Carswell departed from
proven fact and entered the realm of conjecture, if not of fantasy, when she asserted that Mary died
in labour while bearing Burns’ child. There is evidence to support the traditional view that she died
of a “malignant fever”; we know that there was a typhoid epidemic in Greenock in 1786. There is
also evidence that the wood from the infant’s coffin which was discovered in the grave was from
the nineteenth, not the eighteenth, century.

Whether Carswell’s conjecture was true or not, it may have been responsible for the torrent of
abuse which greeted her book; she had traduced the reputation of “Highland Mary”, and the many
Mariolaters in Burns’ circles were determined that she should be punished for doing so.

On the 28th of November, 1786 Burns arrived on a borrowed pony in Edinburgh, where his
father had arrived forty years before him. But where William Burnes arrived in obscurity and
departed again unknown, Robert arrived as the Ayrshire bard and departed acclaimed as the poet of
Scotland. Carswell is scrupulous in recounting Burns’ Edinburgh period, and she avoids the common
but false assertion about Burns being inducted as poet laureate of Scotland by the Canongate
Kilwinning Lodge (No. 2) on February 1, 1787.

No other biography that I am aware of so poignantly recounts the last years of Burns’ life, lived
in Dumfries (1788-1796) away from his native Ayrshire. Carswell celebrates the few high points
(such as Burns apparently composing the 224 lines of Tam O’Shanter in a single day), and she
draws the reader into the almost unbearable sadness of the poet’s final decline, comforted by Anna
Park, then by the always-faithful Jean, and finally by the young servant girl, Jessie Lewars, who
came to help Jean through her last confinement. Carswell writes: “Burns’ mortification and his
anxiety between them was stretching him once more upon the plain man’s rood, and he lacked the
plain man’s crassness of endurance”.

Of the very last year of Burns’ life, Carswell writes:

“His heart was overrun by the daily demands, often in arrears through indisposition, and the
plans of stimulated hours drifted into the limbo of fatigue. Under exertion his voice faltered and
his hands shook. Sometimes he needed help in rising from his chair. Pain in his joints, particularly
in his hands and feet, made him sleepless. But his will held, and he kept up work and - less equally
appearances.”

As the news got about in Dumfries that Burns was dying, the idle and the morbid and the
curious began to assemble. Carswell again:

“Men and women quite suddenly realized that here lay one who was the Poet of his Country -
perhaps of mankind - as none had been before, because none before had combined so many human
weaknesses with so great an ardour of living and so generous a warmth of admission. Certainly none had ever possessed a racier gift of expression for his own people. The more for having sinned on all points wherein the common man is tempted to sin, both to glory and repentance; the more for having walked the valley of the shadow of compromise while yet retaining in his breast the proud, soft, defiant heart of a man."

Carswell's portrait of Burns is subtle, and deep and finely-tuned. Because she did not avert her gaze from Burns' dark side (which for a century and a half had been ignored) Carswell was pilloried and her work was scorned. Yet there is not a chapter, not a page, scarcely a line in which her love and respect for the poet is not manifest.

What sort of woman wrote this remarkable biography?

(2) Catherine Carswell:

Catherine Roxborough Macfarlane was born in March, 1879 one of four children of George and Mary Macfarlane. Her grandfathers, on both her mother's and father's side, had been ministers in the Free Church of Scotland, and her parents remained "Wee Frees". In her teenage years Catherine became a free thinker and (after reading the writings of Robert Blatchford) a socialist; subsequently she became involved with all manner of left wing movements and causes. Yet, according to her son John, she never quite abandoned the conviction, or at any rate the hope, that "underneath were the everlasting arms".

Catherine read English at Glasgow University but University Regulations did not then allow women to sit for the degree. So she went off to Frankfurt where for two years she studied music at the Schumann Conservatory. When she returned to Scotland she landed a job as the weekly fiction reviewer for the Glasgow Herald.

In 1904 at the age of 25 she met and married a man, Herbert Jackson, whom she had known for less than a month. Jackson was an artist, ten years older than Catherine, and unknown to her he was mentally unstable, perhaps a consequence of his experience fighting in the Boer War. Together they set off to Italy on their honeymoon. The first signs of Herbert's paranoia appeared when he insisted that they were being watched and spied upon; then he began to accuse Catherine of sexual intimacies with passing strangers. When Catherine conceived, Herbert insisted that the child was not his. To emphasize the point he once threatened her with a pistol, which she seized from him and threw out of the window. Eventually the authorities were brought in and Herbert was committed to an asylum from which he never emerged. He never saw Catherine again; nor his daughter Diana - who was born in 1905 and died tragically and quite mysteriously seven years later.

In 1906 Catherine, now a single mother, met two of the three important men who were to enter her life: the first was Maurice Greiggenhagen, a professor in the Glasgow School of Fine Art, seventeen years her senior, married, and with a family. Catherine fell in love with him, a long and hopeless and frustrating passion. The other man she met in 1906 was Donald Carswell, a sub­editor at the Glasgow Herald, whom she would marry in 1915.

The third important man in Catherine Carswell's life was D. H. Lawrence, whom she met after praising his first novel The White Peacock in a Herald review in 1911. Over the remaining years of Lawrence's life, they met occasionally and corresponded frequently. Her son, John, has described his mother's feelings for Lawrence as "a deep and lasting affection". For his part, Lawrence seems to have been attracted to Catherine's mind, her flinty honesty, and her critical judgement. It seems unlikely, although possible, that they were ever physical lovers. Catherine dedicated her Life of Burns thus: "Without D. H. Lawrence, my friend, and Donald Carswell, my husband, this book could not have been. I therefore inscribe it to them both."

But in 1906 Catherine was still legally wed to Herbert Jackson. The law did not allow for divorce because of insanity, only adultery. Against all professional advice, and with no money, Catherine resolved to challenge this. Jackson v Jackson came to trial in 1908. The trial lasted six days. Catherine had to testify, and be cross-examined, upon every detail of their whirlwind courtship
and brief marriage. Herbert Jackson was too ill to appear in court but his lawyer argued against the
granting of a divorce because it would render the child, Diana, a bastard. But Catherine prevailed.
Mr. Justice Deane held that, because Herbert was too mentally disturbed to understand the
implications of marriage, it was a nullity. With her marriage annulled, Catherine was unshackled.

In 1915 she married Donald Carswell. For a time they worked together on the Herald. The
same year as her marriage D. H. Lawrence published The Rainbow which was seized by the
authorities and prosecuted for obscenity. Catherine considered it a brilliant novel, and the action of
the authorities a travesty; she was determined that the Herald should review it favourably. To
avoid the editor spiking her review, she carried it directly to the printer. The review appeared (on 4
November, 1915) but Catherine was fired. Shortly after, she and Donald moved to London where
he became a sub-editor on The Times, and she a freelancer.

Her first novel, a repudiation of the dour Calvinism of her childhood entitled Open The Door!
was published in 1920, and won the Melrose Literary Prize, the first work of fiction to be awarded
this prize. She followed up with a lighter, warmer novel, The Camomile, published in 1922. Two
more novels were in the planning stage when Robert Burns intervened.

Catherine had long felt attracted by Burns’ iconoclasm, his rebellious, unfettered spirit, his
preoccupation with the welfare of the common man, and his ungovernable passions. When Donald
was commissioned to write a life of Walter Scott, Catherine resolved to tackle Scotland’s poet.

Catherine’s son, John, had written: “No serious life of Burns had been attempted for many
years and his life and work were alike blurred in a deposit of institutionalized sentiment presided
over by those who controlled the Burns Federation.” Carswell devoted five years of intensive
study to her book, including visits to all the sites associated with Burns, and firsthand scrutiny of
whatever original manuscript material was available. With her book pretty much completed, she
wrote to a friend [Marion McNeill] on July 19, 1929: “I don’t say my book is well-written and I
know it is full of faults, but if ever I get it done I shall have contributed an honourable and honest
piece of research to my country, and how furious they will be to have R.B. brought out of the mist
they had loved to keep about him! Well, well.”

Today, seventy years after its publication, Carswell’s Burns remains fresh, insightful and
sympathetic, justifying what John Buchan wrote to the author when the book first appeared: “A
really great book, which will be a classic long after the common Burnsite has ceased to exist.”

The same year that Carswell’s Burns appeared (1930), D. H. Lawrence died in Southern France
where he had gone in search of a cure for tuberculosis. Carswell’s next book, a biography of
Lawrence entitled The Savage Pilgrimage, also proved highly controversial. Under threat of a
libel action from J. Middleton Murray, who had arrogated to himself the position of authoritative
interpreter of Lawrence, the original publisher withdrew Carswell’s book from circulation. A revised
version was brought out by another publisher two years later. The Savage Pilgrimage has stood up
well to the passing years, and is today considred a definitive portrait of D. H. Lawrence.

With the outbreak of war in 1939, Donald Carswell took a Home Office job. During the blackout
occasioned by the blitz, he was struck by a car and killed while walking home from work. Catherine
Carswell lived on alone until her death in March, 1946 at the age of 67. Among her papers were
found unfinished fragments of an intended autobiography; in 1950 her son, John, edited and
published these episodic reflections under the title Lying Awake.

I conclude this paper with these words which Carswell wrote in her diary not long before her
death:

“I no longer need what I have always lacked, faith in myself. I have mostly lost what I once
had, faith in other people. I have found and I possess faith in life to sustain and vindicate me and in
death, into which before long I shall most surely sink. I believe that there is behind and ordering
both life and death a beneficent purpose beyond my comprehension.”

Ian Hunter
June, 1999
The question is often asked: Why would a twentieth-century American composer become so involved with the songs of Robert Burns?

Serge Hovey (b. 1920, New York; d. 1989, Los Angeles) was an accomplished composer who studied under Arnold Schoenberg and Hanns Eisler. He was the musical director for the American premier of Bertolt Brecht’s *Galileo* in Hollywood in 1948. His ballet music *Fable* was performed by The Philadelphia Orchestra in 1949 and Hovey was well on his way to being accepted into the “serious” musical establishment of that time. But then he became interested in what he called “the cultural roots of American music.” He became imbued with the notion that American music is comprised of the sounds and rhythms of the people who came to this land.

It is possible that his quest for these roots reflected his personal desire to establish his own cultural identity. His family traces back to Colonial days in Massachusetts and his father, Carl, was the editor of an early twentieth-century progressive magazine, *The Metropolitan*, which served as a spring-board for writers such as John Reed, Walter Lippman and Sinclair Lewis. His mother, Sonya Levien, was a Russian-Jewish immigrant who became a lawyer and a suffragist and then a successful screenwriter, working with George Gershwin and Will Rogers.

Hovey’s first works in a classical-ethnic style grew out of his own cultural heritage: the music for the plays *The World of Sholem Aleichem* and *Tevya and His Daughters*, both based on Jewish folk tales. He continued to compose original orchestral works such as *African Ballet Suite*, *Weekend USA*, *A Little New York Music*, *Symphony No. 1*, and also worked on scores for documentary films.

When Serge Hovey became interested in ethnic music, that meant total immersion. His insightful theories on music history and ethnomusicology were developing constantly as he spent many hours in the communities of people whose music he was trying to interpret as an American composer. In a letter to Hamish Henderson (September 14, 1972), Hovey described his early involvement with the songs of Robert Burns:

My interest in Burns’s songs, from the musical angle, started about twenty years ago. At the time I was living in New York, very much involved with Jewish music and off-Broadway theatre. I knew next to nothing about Scots songs. Then a friend, a Burns enthusiast, kept after me on a point of curiosity, i.e., what in the world were all these little tune indications under the titles of Burns’s songs? He showed me, opening up the Barke edition to page 584: *THE TAILOR* and asked, what did that mean: “Tune: *The Drummer*?” Or page 600: O, THAT I HAD NE’ER BEEN MARRIED, “Tune: *Crowdie*?”: Did these notations refer to tunes that still existed? Or tunes that had disappeared? Were they folk tunes? Or what? It’s hard to recapture the state of total innocence and naivete with regard to the music for Burns’s songs that I had then or, for that matter, most people in the United States (I won’t speak for Scotland!) still possess. Most people? Most U.S. scholars as well, even in “English” departments of great universities! Sheer curiosity led me to *The Scots Musical Museum* and Thomson’s *Scottish Airs* but once I realised that the tunes were still extant, that they were mostly Scots folk songs and, above all, that they sounded marvellous in conjunctions with Burns’s lyrics, then I was hooked.
From that point on, Burns songs became my hobby; I spent every spare minute arranging the songs. This was the magnetic attraction and still is: what could be done harmonically with these challenging, entrancing melodies?

In an autobiographical letter (August 11, 1982), Hovey wrote:

By 1973, I had completed the manuscript of The Robert Burns Song Book. The project is concerned with the re-creation and contemporary American interpretation of over 300 songs created or remodelled by the Scottish poet. The traditional tunes to which Burns either wrote lyrics or revised folk verses were largely lost, forgotten or scrambled in the years that followed his death. Many of these songs were brought to the New World by the early Scottish immigrants. The Burns and Scottish tunes worked their way into the bloodstream of American music. The aspirations of early Americans found many forms of cultural expression and, together with the writings of Paine and the spirit of the Enlightenment, we also find the songs of Burns.

Jean Redpath was introduced to Serge by Hamish Henderson in 1972. Between the years 1976 and 1989 they recorded eighty-eight Burns songs as arranged for small instrumental ensembles. These seven albums have recently been re-released on four CDs by Rounder Records in the USA and by Greentrax Recordings in Scotland.

The Robert Burns Song Book contains 324 voice/piano arrangements presented with background notes and illustrations. The notes are summaries of the extensive research conducted by the composer/author on Burns's own sources and the extent to which traditional materials were retained or changed by the poet. There is now an agreement with Mel Bay Publications of St. Louis, Missouri, that will finally bring this work to fruition in a four-volume edition. The first volume, “Country Life,” was released in 1998 and the second, titled “The Lasses,” will welcome the year 2000 in a happy fashion.

The manuscript is being edited by Dr. Esther Hovey in collaboration with her son Daniel. Continuing a relationship which began in 1968, Professor Robert D. Thornton is working with the Hoveys by proofreading and double-checking all the music, text and research data for each song. As Serge Hovey stated in his letter to Henderson:

Thornton contributed to my book in a major way, not only with that intangible but vital factor, encouragement, but with numerous concrete actions. He has examined every page with minute attention, making immensely helpful comments and criticisms. Recently, he contributed an excellent introduction.

Upon completion The Robert Burns Song Book will stand with Johnson's Scots Musical Museum and Thomson's Select Collection of Original Scottish Airs as a major source for Robert Burns and his songs, making them available to twenty-first century singers, musicians, and scholars as the earlier did for enthusiasts in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.

Reprinted from Studies in Scottish Literature, Volume XXX (1998), by kind permission of the editor G. Ross Roy; who added the following note to article:

I am delighted to be able to announce that arrangements have been made for the Hovey archive to be transferred to the G. Ross Roy Collection upon completion of the research for the publication of The Robert Burns Song Book. This collection at the University of South Carolina contains one of the world's greatest assemblages of works by and about Burns, and the Hovey archive will materially enrich its research potential. I am most grateful to Dr. Esther Hovey for this splendid gift.

GRR
PUBLISH AND BE DAMNED

(A personal view on Robert Burns and 18th century oppression)

They banished him beyond the sea,
But ere the bud was on the tree,
Adown my cheeks the pearls ran,
Embracing my John Highlandman.

(From Love and Liberty - written c. 1784, first published 1799)

That Robert Burns, one of Scotland's greatest sons, achieved fame from a volume of poems, the Kilmarnock edition, is something of an enigma. That he consolidated his fame with a larger second edition, the Edinburgh edition, makes it even more enigmatic. Though both editions contained captivating poetry, the enigma is that nowhere between the covers are to be found poems with the type of biting condemnation of the oppression of the people by church and state that abounds in those published after his death. Yet, by that time he had written several such poems: poems that were to endear him to the people of Scotland who could identify with the sentiment they contained. As indeed, later, would people the world over. No one reading through the Kilmarnock or Edinburgh editions could have realised that there were forces driving Burns to attempt to improve the lot of his fellow men and women.

The enigma of his fame is further compounded by the circumstances of his funeral. When the people of Scotland laid him to rest in Dumfries, as estimated ten thousand attended the funeral. He was buried with full military honours, attended by two regiments of the British Army and a Militia. His body lay in state for a few days as thousands filed past to pay their last respects: then the coffin was taken through the streets in the Grand Procession to St. Michael's churchyard...for burial in an unmarked grave! If I might be forgiven for saying so, there are occasions when we Scots do things in odd ways.

Poems touching on oppression were omitted from the Kilmarnock and Edinburgh editions, also from the subsequent London and later Edinburgh editions. We learn the "reasons" for this in the more complete works published after his death: reasons, which have been repeated through the years. They contain the assertion that he was advised against the publication of certain poems, as they might give offence to influential people or might not be acceptable to genteel society. On some occasions it appears that a friend or acquaintance gave the advice. Burns admits in a letter to a friend, on 22nd March 1787, that the noble Earl of Glencairn gave him hints on impropriety and indelicacy. Custom and practice have accepted these reasons as definitive reasons. They have become stock quotes for authors and editors, but how much truth do they contain? Though I don't doubt that they contain a modicum of truth, I am satisfied that it is far from being the whole truth. The broader 18th century picture of harsh authoritarian government in Scotland suggests another reason.

Twenty-first century Scots tend to take for granted the freedoms they enjoy and might find it difficult to appreciate how oppressed eighteenth century Scots were. Though it was then technically possible to express a political opinion in print, it could result in a heavy penalty. Robert Burns was well aware of this when around 1784 he wrote the stanza that introduces this article. The opening line refers to a penal colony, and it was to such a place that they sent John Highlandman. Penal colonies were for convicted criminals, the gravity of whose crimes varied as night from day. Insofar as political crimes were concerned, the gravity depended on how they were perceived. For Burns, John Highlandman's crime was to wear highland dress and be loyal to his clan. For the establishment, it was to wear an illegal uniform signifying membership of a proscribed clan, carry a weapon and be disloyal to the crown.
Crushed into the hold of any sailing ship taking convicts beyond the sea could be found a mix of men and women comprising: forgers, thieves, housebreakers, other undesirables and a few people who had dared to suggest that the government should give greater rights to men and women. For instance, the right to vote. When Burns visited Edinburgh he visited a city were only 33 people had the right to vote for a Member of Parliament. The man they had elected was Henry Dundas who was known to them all as a friend or colleague. When some years later three respectable Edinburgh citizens published recommendations from The Third National Convention for Parliamentary Reform they were damned. Maurice Margarot, Joseph Gerrald and William Skirving were found guilty of sedition and sentenced to fourteen years in a penal colony.

It was against this backdrop that Burns had to consider the wisdom of publishing poems that touched on human rights. When we brush aside the malicious myths generated by his critics we can see an astute individual who in today’s terminology would be described as a highwire act. He was communicating his humanitarian views by word of mouth and the private circulation of poems. He was taking on the establishment and knew the dangers of this, but had no control over the forces that were driving him. His mission in life was to prepare the ground on which the rights of ordinary men and women would be built, and he was well aware that it would not be accomplished in his lifetime. I think we have misinterpreted his dying words when he said to his wife, “I shall be more respected one hundred years from now than I am today”. Clearly, he could not have thought that such respect would come from his published poetry, he had already gained all the respect that that could produce. It therefore had to come from the humanitarian content of his then unpublished poetry and songs; some of which have fired the enthusiasm of human rights activists the world over. In those works, in my view, we see the true genius of Robert Burns, and it is gratifying to know that during their lifetime his wife and children were to see his prophecy come to pass.

For all his genius Burns was a realist. He wanted his unpublished poems to be known to people that he could trust, to ensure that after he had gone they could vouch for the poems being authentic-Burns. He did this because instinctively he knew that one day they would be published. One of those people was Mrs. Dunlop of Dunlop. In a letter to her on 15th January 1787, ostensibly to comment on a word to which she had objected when he had used it to describe Wallace, he told her gently but authoritatively that he was not about to change the word. He went on to quote when proud fortune’s ebbing tide recedes and used the expression you will bear me witness... He used a different ploy with Dr. Moore when on 17th January 1787 he wrote after criticisms, a peccant passage or two that I would certainly have altered, were gone to the press. Mrs. Dunlop, who was privy to some of his unpublished poems, was one of several notable people who would later bear witness to what they had been shown or given. After all, in theory, what better way was there to safeguard important papers against possible seizure by the authorities than to spread them around trusted friends. The vast majority of those fortunate people became notable because Burns entered their lives. Without wishing to be ungracious, I have to say here that were it not for Burns; to write the lifetime achievements of kindly Mrs. Dunlop and most of the others would not require as much ink as is needed to make a dot on the pages of history.

It is my belief that Burns used his trustees: he lined them up, to bear witness in the years following his death. In the letter replying to Mrs. Dunlop’s complaint, he also told her, “I have the advice of some very judicious friends among the literati here [Edinburgh], but with them I sometimes find it necessary to claim the privilege of thinking for myself”. It is not difficult to see the reason behind the motive for Burns showing or giving copies of his poems to friends and acquaintances. Apart from clearly stamping his identity on his work, there was the security aspect. Even today, more than 200 years after his death, poems from his time are still being found and attempts made to attribute these poems to him: he was encountering similar attempts during his last few years in Dumfries. Sadly, in the nineteenth century one man wilfully destroyed a quantity of Burns papers in a bonfire, an act of extreme vandalism. We have no record of what those papers contained.

Burns had to be constantly on guard against the threat to his liberty from the authorities.
Consequently, his references to the oppressors mentioned in his poems are sometimes very, effectively veiled. In the satirical poem *A Dream* (c. 1786), he dropped his guard when he criticised the crown and the political establishment. He did so on the following mistaken assumption:

*Thoughts, words and deeds, the statute blames with reason;  
But surely Dreams were ne'er indicted Treason!*

There is no shortage of people without creative ability who nevertheless feel qualified to advise those with it on how to dot the i and cross the t. Burns obviously believed that he could trust those to whom he had given copies of his poems, but with some his trust was misplaced. Some of his trustees either tampered with his work or allowed others to do so. For instance, Mr. Tytler of Woodhouselee was responsible for four lines being removed from *Tam O' Shanter*, because they criticised the church and the legal profession. The MS of *Love and Liberty* in Burns handwriting in Edinburgh University Library is substantially different from the renamed version, *The Jolly Beggars*, renamed and published in 1802. I don’t doubt that prime research into original documents would reveal that more of this actually took place.

So, at first it might seem that because Burns didn’t publish and wasn’t damned the establishment won the day. I don’t think that this was the case. In fact, I think that Burns outwitted the establishment and helped to move the hitherto deeply embedded wheels of democracy into an, albeit sluggish, but unstoppable motion. It’s true that he never became a martyr and suffered the hell of a penal colony. Though, the blunt truth on this point is that we have lost sight of the names of most of the martyrs. If ever we knew, we have forgotten them. However, we have not lost sight of Burns. His views were known in Scotland during his lifetime, and after his death the world began to learn how deeply he had been committed to human rights. The people of the world have honoured his memory with statues and plaques: they have read his poetry and demanded the rights that he advocated: they have sung his songs and kept his humanitarian values alive. Indeed, of all the exponents of world peace who down through the centuries have walked the face of this earth, there is not one whose name has had a more enduring international presence than Robert Burns.

Along with the great mass of humankind that pass into the halls of fame, his memory is revered and preserved in the highest echelons of those who loved their fellow beings. For what more could he have asked?

*John L. Clark  
Scottish Burns Club, Edinburgh.*
JEAN AND ISABELLA BROWN
Great Granddaughters of Robert Burns
by Peter J. Westwood

Aspects of the life of the Poet’s great granddaughter, Jean Armour Burns Brown (1864-1937) are well-known, however that is not the case with her elder sister, Isabella Ferguson Brown (1859-1870).

While Jean was to live for seventy three years, much of that time in Dumfries where she died and is buried, Isabella sadly lived for only eleven years.

Both girls were born at 12 English Street, Dumfries, their father Thomas Brown (1821-1906) a foreman carder in the Dumfries Tweed Mills, married Jane Emma Burns (1831-1911) daughter of the Poet’s eldest son, Robert and his common-law wife Emma Bland, in 1857.

In 1869 the Brown family left Dumfries for Canada and settled in the City of Guelph, Ontario, and it was here the following year on 8th May, 1870 that young Isabella died. She was buried in a family plot belonging to an Alexander Mackenzie in the Union (now Woodland) Cemetery. Her burial place was unmarked until 1958 when an inscription was added to the tombstone of Alexander Mackenzie: “Isabella F. Brown Great Granddaughter Robert Burns - Poet”.

The Brown family returned to Dumfries in 1880 where they resided for the rest of their lives.

A letter written by Isabella to her father, dated May, 1869 has survived, the contents are reproduced below (by courtesy of Dumfries Museum):

“Dear Father with great pleasure I write you a few lines Dear Father I am sorry to tell you that dear little Jeanie has had a bad cold but is getting better again hoping we shall all be together soon and be very happy we are all wearying very much to see you. Dear Father I am glad to tell you that I am getting very well on with my counting I am now in compound long division. My Aunt helps me sometimes and is very anxious for me to get on Dear Father I am going into the highest reading class on Monday. I am getting on first rate dont you think so father Uncle & Aunt kind love to you and to Mr. and Mrs. Armstrong. Grandma sends her kind love to you all accept the same from your loving Daughter Isa Brown.”

On the subject of the Browns going to Canada the Poet’s son, Colonel William Nicol Burns wrote to Jane Emma from Cheltenham on 4th June, 1869:
"Dear Jane, I have this morning received your letter of the 3rd instant informing us that you propose leaving Dumfries for Canada. We wish you every success and shall be glad to hear from you now and then how you are getting on. I enclose us a little parting present a Post Office Order for a Pound. Yours ever truly, W.N. Burns."

Both girls were given christian names of their illustrious ancestors, Jean (after the poet’s wife) and Isabella (after the poet’s youngest sister).

Between July 11 and 18, 1999, The London (Ontario) Burns Club No. 561, celebrated the 60th Anniversary of its formation and the 60th Anniversary of its admission to the Burns Federation with a week of events. On Sunday the 11th, club members travelled to Woodlawn Cemetery in Guelph, Ontario to attend the dedication of a plaque marking the gravesite of Isabella Ferguson Brown, the Great Granddaughter of the Poet, who died in Guelph on May 8, 1870, aged 10 years and 6 months. Isabella’s mother was Jane Emma Burns, the Daughter of Robert Burns Jnr. This plaque is the first in a series entitled “A Page From History”, which will mark the graves of notable people buried at Woodlawn. The club members were proud participants in the ceremony, as the sponsors of Isabella’s plaque. Mr. Paul Taylor, Cemetery Manager, expressed the Cemetery Management Board’s delight at the club’s commitment to the project. Joining the members on the trip was the Rev. Fred Neill, of Illderton, Ontario, who dedicated the plaque.
WILLIAM SIMPSON
“THE PRINCE OF PICTORIAL CORRESPONDENTS”

William Simpson is best known today as the War Artist whose first-hand depiction of the Crimean War helped bring home the reality of that ill-managed campaign to the British public. His were the surrogate eyes of Empire in many Victorian military adventures, and he reported faithfully, and indeed, sometimes disapprovingly, on what he saw: “wherever shot and shell and ugly sword-blades are about, there he is sure to be”, wrote the Glasgow Baillie of him in 1878. But his interests went far beyond the battlefield, for he also visited and sketched some of the most exotic and remote places in the world. In the process, he acquired a knowledge of religion, history, ethnography, archaeology, architecture and linguistics which marked him as a true polymath. On the centenary of his death, Simpson’s Great Grandson, Adrian Lipscomb*, has drawn upon his diaries, sketchbooks and letters for this biographical sketch.

In a career spanning over five decades, there is a certain irony in the fact that William Simpson’s best known artwork achieved its notoriety not because of any intrinsic artistic merit, but because its subject has come down in history as one of Britain’s great military fiascos. Indeed, it is far from Simpson’s best watercolour - and the most familiar representation of it is, in fact, not his original watercolour but a lithograph worked up from it in the offices of the publisher of his Crimean portfolio, The Seat of the War in the East. The work is entitled The Charge of the Light Brigade, and it represents an incident in British military history that has now reached mythic proportions, made all the more famous by Lord Tennyson’s poem for the same name:

“Their’s not to make reply,
Their’s not to reason why,
Their’s but to do and die;
Into the valley of Death
Rode the six hundred.”

The significance of Simpson’s painting of The Charge of the Light Brigade lies largely in the fact that its gestation typified his novel approach to his art - he preferred accuracy to drama, spirit to extravagance - and equally, it reflected both his ability to charm influential people and his pragmatism in the face of obduracy. The story goes that, having arrived in the Crimea some weeks after the charge, he assiduously studied the valley where the charge occurred and questioned the main participants to produce a picture. He also visited the Earl of Cardigan several times on his yacht in Balaklava Harbour with sketches to check on details, and each time Cardigan peremptorily dismissed them as inaccurate. “I felt rather nettled at the cold, haughty style of his lordship, but I was

* Adrian Lipscomb, like his Great Grandfather, is a keen traveller and travel writer, and recently wrote the Lonely Planet Guide to Papua New Guinea. He has also worked as an Analyst with the Australian Department of Defence in Canberra, has written extensively on Melanesia, and lectured in international tourism management. He is presently based in Bellingen, on the east coast of Australia.
anxious to send home the sketch bearing with it the approval of the principal hero”, Simpson later noted. Eventually, after three attempts, “I was rewarded with the warmest praise... The truth was that in the last sketch I had taken greater care than in the first two to make his lordship conspicuous in the front of the brigade.”

Simpson was the first of the Victorian “Special Artists” whose primary focus was war, a clique which has now yielded place to cameramen. But he was more than just a War Artist - his artistic stock in trade encompassed both the military and the civic achievements of a world in which the British Empire was at its peak. Simpson was a Scot and proudly independent, and although attendant upon a culture in which jingoism was the dominant paradigm, he had a rare understanding of, and empathy with, cultures other than his own. As such, he became one of that curious breed of peripatetic Britons who thrived on desolate places and exotic peoples - a breed which included the likes of Sir Richard Burton, Mary Kingsley, David Roberts and David Livingstone.

William Simpson was born on 28 October, 1823, the son of James Simpson, a dissolute labourer who worked in the Glasgow shipyards, and Ann (née Johnstone), a gentle woman for whom he always retained great affection. Simpson recalled his father as being “not naturally a drunkard... If there was no-one there to tempt him he never went to drink himself, but unfortunately there were always one or two in every workshop who were given to visiting the public houses, and these men always became my father’s friends and companions... When drunk, he would be uproarious and quarrellsome, and he would strike my mother or myself, or throw things about and break articles in the house. From the small amount of money my father brought in we were always in the most abject poverty - ill-fed and poorly clad - anything of value in the house was always at the pawnbroker. I regret to say that my father seemed to have not the slightest sense of duty of or responsibility.” Nevertheless, young William did inherit an innate intelligence from his father, whom he described as “a man of considerable ability” with an adept and agile mind, despite his fondness for liquor. James had, in his time, been one of Robert Owen’s idealistic followers in his Utopian experimental society at Orbiston Estate near Bothwell.

Because of their chronic poverty, Simpson’s mother also went out to work, washing and cleaning and doing anything to add to their means. As an only child, Simpson was very close to her and regarded her as “one of the best mothers”. “I owe everything to her,” he later wrote, “and it was a great satisfaction to me that I was able to make the last few years of her life comfortable and happy. My success was, of course, a source of happiness to her also, and I always felt a deep regret that she did not live a few years longer to have had the further pleasure of enjoying the still greater success which fell to my lot from the work I produced in the Crimean War.”

Although his formal education was scant, by the age of fourteen Simpson had earned himself an apprenticeship in lithography, initially with David MacFarlane and later with the firm of Allan & Ferguson in Glasgow. He had also acquired a wide interest in the arts and sciences and frequently attended free lectures at the Andersonian University and the Mechanics Institute, finding Chemistry and Natural Philosophy most to his liking. But art was his main interest. On certain days when no dinner was being made at home, a penny was given to him for food - by forgoing the meal, he could afford to buy colours in the art supply shop to enable him to sketch the people and street scenes of Glasgow.

So developed a talent for observation and analysis that served Simpson well in his later career. In 1851, at the age of 27, he moved with his mother to London and took up employment with Day & Son, lithographers. Lithography was then becoming an important technology, and illustrated newspapers were about to revolutionise the profession of journalism. The Crimean War broke out in 1854 and Simpson was commissioned to prepare a drawing (contrived, as was usually the case in those days) of the fall of Sebastopol in expectation of that happy event. This was a task he found difficult because he wanted to make it as accurate as possible but there was a dearth of pictorial scenes of Sebastopol available in London for research.
With news that an extended siege was imminent, it was decided to take the radical step of sending Simpson to the seat of the war to sketch on the spot - and hence Simpson became the first War Artist, eventually acquiring the sobriquet “Crimea” Simpson.

As a “camp follower” (for such was strictly, what War Artists were) Simpson followed the British Army to the Crimea in 1854; to Abyssinia with Napier in 1868 to free the hostages being held by Emperor Theodorus; he covered the Franco-German war in 1870, and entered Strasbourg and Metz with the German troops (in the process being arrested as a spy); he covered the Paris Commune in the following year; and he accompanied the Afghan Expedition in 1878 and was present at the taking of Ali Musjid, and the advance of Sir Samuel Browne’s column through the Khyber Pass to Jellalabad and Gundamuck, and remained until the signing of the Treaty of Gundamuck by Yakoob Khan and Cavagnari.

In all this he remained aloof from the naive and chauvinistic enthusiasm that tended to accompany military life; he maintained an affinity with the common soldier, but specifically refrained from taking any part in hostilities. He wrote of a visit to the British batteries at Balaklava: “One of the men offered me his rifle to have ‘a shot at the Rooshians.’ I took the rifle and fired it, but took care not to run the chance of touching any of the ‘Rooshians’... I saw the dust knocked up from the ground where it struck.”

He also took the opportunity whenever possible to pursue his own personal interests. In Abyssinia with Sir Robert Napier’s Army, Simpson found time to make copious notes and sketches on everything that passed before him, including a detailed study of the Amharic language, the boiling point of water at Senafe (198°F), an account of the traditional architecture of the area (including House of Refuge and Defence in Tigre Province and early Christian churches), and the customs and histories of the people. Whilst covering the Afghan War he made sometimes dangerous excursions to explore topes (Buddhist stupas) in the Jellalabad Valley and to study in detail the intricate ancient architecture. General Sir Sam Browne (whose main claim to fame was his eponymous military belt - its design helped his one arm better negotiate sword and holster) gave him some soldiers to excavate one tope, and Simpson uncovered a gold relic holder and some ancient gold coins, thereby causing something akin to “treasure fever” to spread among the local people. Seventeen of the coins were later identified as being of the Indo-Scythian period and three were Roman of the reigns of Trajan, Domitian and Hadrian.

Simpson’s main concern as a “Special” was, understandably, his art, and he did not shrink from danger in order to get a better perspective. He came under fire several times in the Crimea and Afghanistan, and in 1873, while visiting a US cavalry detachment near the Lake Tule lava beds of northern California, he left the camp on the same morning as a scouting expedition led by a Major Thomas, but in a different direction. Thomas’ party was massacred by the Modoc Indians that same day. Simpson later noted: “had I not been leaving, I should most certainly have gone out with the scouting party... with the same sad fate that befell them. I look upon this as one of the narrowest escapes in my life - and I have had more than one of those in my time.” Despite such close shaves and occasional misunderstandings, Simpson was always gracious in his descriptions of other cultures - the Modoc Indians were universally being condemned at the time in the press for their “savagery”, but he was undeterred in writing of them in sympathetic terms. He was particularly proud of a testimonial letter he received from the Society of Friends (the Quakers) a few years later, which stated succinctly: “(To) William Simpson Esq., in appreciation of the considerate and humane tone in which he has referred to the War with the Modoc Indians in his volume, Meeting the Sun”.

But Simpson’s achievements away from the world’s battlefields were equally, if not more, memorable. He went to India several times, and, as so often happens with that deceptive subcontinent, he became enamoured of its cultures and its contrasts. The Great Mutiny of 1857 had brought India considerable attention in Britain, and Day & Sons concluded that the production of a large format book of tinted
lithographs by Simpson of Indian scenes would be a profitable undertaking. A sign of the esteem in which Queen Victoria held Simpson as a result of his Crimean sketches was her permission to dedicate the forthcoming book to her, sight unseen. This, Simpson’s first visit to India, lasted almost three years, from 1859 to 1862, and he sketched prolifically the architecture, archaeology, and daily life of the people, from the southern plains to Nepal and Tibet. Unfortunately, during his absence from Britain Day & Sons failed, and Simpson’s watercolours of India eventually became part of their liquidated stock. A small book, *India Ancient and Modern*, was later produced, but was of poor quality. Worse, Simpson had funded his own travels in the expectation of a successful book, and he was left almost destitute on his return to London.

Nevertheless, Simpson’s writings on a range of learned topics about the subcontinent earned him a reputation as an expert on Indian exotica. He wrote a paper entitle *Architecture in the Himalayas* for the Royal Institute of British Architects; a trip to the holy source of the Ganges, the “Cows Mouth”, was described in a paper presented to the Alpine Club; a piece entitled *Pujahs in the Sutlej Valley, Himalayas* appeared in the Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society; and a treatise on Indian jewellery appeared in *The Watchmaker, Jeweller and Silversmith*. His interest in Eastern philosophy was also thoroughly nurtured, resulting years later in a book, *The Buddhist Praying Wheel*.

Simpson’s interest in exotic philosophies and mystical teachings was to develop and endure for the rest of his life, but it was not always appreciated by the hidebound Victorian elite. In that peculiar way common to Victorian eccentrics, he courted notoriety and even posed for a photograph later in life with a wig of long hair and the skimpy dhoti of an Indian ascetic. The *Illustrated London News*, a journal to which he was a frequent contributor, noted patronisingly on 21 February, 1874, “Mr. Simpson… is an enthusiastic connoisseur of all the Oriental religions - Judaism, Monhammedanism, and the Coptic, Abyssinian, Armenian, and Russian modifications of the Greek Church; the Parsee faith, and other most ancient beliefs of Iran; the Brahminism of India, the Buddhism of Thibet, the creeds of Tau and of Kong-Fu-Tze in China, and that of Shin-Too in Japan - his eclectic philosophy has a share of consideration for each and all. The extant forms of human credulity are not enough for his eager study. We can even detect… a hankering desire for a few more strange religions, which may have abused the minds of dim barbarous nations long since become extinct. Indeed, this intelligent and ardent curiosity, with regard to such old-world and other-world concerns, has always seemed to us remarkable in a man so keen and so alert to pursue the most practical objects of interest which beset us at the present day.” Simpson was clearly a man ahead of his time.

In 1869, with the impending completion of the Suez Canal, Simpson was sent by the *Illustrated London News* to sketch the opening ceremony and scenes on this “new route to India”. On the way, he took the opportunity to visit Jerusalem on behalf of the Palestine Exploration Fund in order to make detailed pictures of some of the excavations which Captain (later Major General Sir) Charles Warren had undertaken, particularly of the tunnels and caverns under that city. These tunnels were originally used as ancient water supplies, and were mentioned by the Roman historian Josephus.

In surveying the area, Warren had found sewage flowing in some tunnels, and was forced to use rafts made of old doors to traverse them. Simpson had it a little easier. He and Warren scrambled through “all sorts of queer holes” in the ground, and magnesium wire was burned to provide sufficient light for him to sketch. Simpson’s drawings became a unique record of these important archaeological places because Warren filled up the shafts and galleries after him, and it is only in more recent years that excavations have again uncovered some of them.*

* The ancient Hasmonean Water Tunnel which goes under the Temple Mount Area was reopened under controversial circumstances in 1997 by Israeli archaeologists and the East Jerusalem Development Corporation.
In an interesting historical footnote relevant to international tourism, Simpson returned to Jaffa (near present-day Tel Aviv) on completion of his task in Jerusalem, and encountered a curious procession on horseback passing in the opposite direction. “There were some forty or fifty persons,” he noted with his usual irrepressibly twinkling humour, “and I mentally ejaculated ‘Cook’s Circus!’ I was nearer the truth than I supposed. It turned out to be not Cook’s Circus, but the Cook’s tourists, the first party that enterprising provider had sent, ‘personally conducted,’ to Jerusalem.”

Simpson was commissioned in 1872 by the Illustrated London News to travel to China to sketch the marriage of the Emperor. He took the opportunity to extend the trip to a round-the-world journey resulting in a popular book, Meeting the Sun: A Journey All Round the World, and numerous paintings which were exhibited and sold in succeeding months. It was on this trip that he visited California and had his close shave with the Modoc Indians. He travelled part of the way in California by stagecoach, not a mode of transport he relished - “by imagining yourself rolled down a hill inside a barrel you may form some idea of the amount of comfort to be enjoyed.”

Simpson’s reputation had grown by this stage, one journal describing him as the “Prince of pictorial correspondents”. In keeping with this title, he also seemed to have developed an affinity for royalty, visiting the Queen occasionally, and becoming friends with the Prince of Wales, through various visits to sketch the royal households. This led to his revisiting India in 1875-6, with the Prince of Wales, and to trips to Berlin for the Silver Wedding of the Crown Prince and Princess of Germany and to Moscow for the coronation of the Czar.

In 1877 Simpson visited the eastern Mediterranean to sketch Schliemann’s excavations at Mycenae, Troy and Ephesus, a trip he particularly enjoyed for it allowed him to pursue his interest in archaeology, a science which was then in its infancy, and which Schliemann was giving a new popularity. A degree of professional enmity had arisen between the two men - “I became a sort of ‘Head-Centre’ of Schliemann’s enemies, and he had many”, Simpson wrote privately. “Letters came to me from all parts about him... Schliemann was a very able man in many ways, but no dependence can be placed on what he has written”. The disagreement between the two men approached a feud, and centred on whether Schliemann’s identification of the Homeric cities was accurate - a doubt which lingers to this day. The Illustrated London News of 5 January 1878, recorded one of the points of contention, “we do not wish here to revive the controversy that went on, last July and August, in Fraser’s Magazine and The Times; but as Dr. Schliemann’s case rests partly upon his collection of portable relics from the Troad, now on view at the South Kensington Museum, our readers must be warned of the conflicting arguments for and against the Hissarlik site of Troy. That this site is to be preferred to Gergis or Bournabashi, is admitted by Mr. Simpson; but he disbelieves the Scaean Gate and Priam’s Palace, and the Keep or Great Tower of Ilium, mainly because he thinks it impossible that the structures to which Dr. Schliemann gives those names can have existed together at one time, and because the style and materials of their building, compared with those of Tiryns and Mycenae, contemporary Greek cities, do not support that identification. There ensued a battle between the two men in the pages of The Times, and Simpson’s feelings obviously ran high for he wrote in his memoirs (and he was rarely publicly critical of people), “later on (Schliemann) invited me to dinner; I had another engagement. Then he sent me the later editions of his Troy books, and he even wrote saying there was no difference of opinion between us. But - as soon as he returned to Hissarlik he removed the ‘palace’ (from his descriptions).”

He returned once again to the Indian subcontinent in 1878-9 for the Afghan War, and again indulged his love for the scenery and people of that region. His activities were, however, circumscribed by his obligations to sketch the activities of the military expedition, and so his cultural and historical explorations had to be “fitted in”.

Simpson was getting well into his fifties by this state - “few men have passed through as many years (as I had) without finding someone
to attract them,” he later wrote. “One reason, and the principal one, why I never ventured on the cares of a married life was on account of my Father. Although he ignored me - he never communicated with me or sent a message of congratulation about anything I ever did, or inquired after my health when I was ill - still I could not conscientiously throw him aside, and not provide for him. The cost was not a great deal, and I may have been able to sustain that as well as a wife, ... (but) the horrors of my early days with the struggle we all had for existence was a thing I feared again to encounter. At that time I was not responsible for the poverty, but should I undertake new ties, and could not support my duties, the responsibility would be mine. That to me would have been dreadful. Duty and responsibility have always been to me the most serious things. To fail in my duty has a terror for me that few people are liable to.

So wrote the famous War Artist who was renowned for taking risks on the battlefield to capture a mere sketch. Simpson was now a successful and prolific artist and had gained a degree of financial independence. Probably more significantly, the main incubus in his life had disappeared with his father’s death in Glasgow in 1879. On his first visit to India Simpson had met and made friends with a Dr. Anthony Beale at the court of the Governor General, Lord Canning. Beale introduced him to his sister, Kate, who, in turn and on his return to England, introduced him to her niece. Her name was Maria Eliza Burt, and she was an accomplished painter of miniatures whose small, finely-detailed portraits had been exhibited at the Royal Academy. She was the daughter of a moderately successful railway engineer, and came from a middle-class family which claimed Huguenot descent and Henri IV of France as a long-distant ancestor, albeit via an illegitimate birth. William had probably known Maria for at least 15 years when he married her in a private ceremony in Willesden in 1881, and the 18 year difference in their ages seemed to bother them not a whit. Maria was, by this stage, a pretty, petite and prematurely-grey woman of 39, William was 57.

They honeymooned in Brighton and the Isle of Wight, returning to London via the Salisbury Plains and Stonehenge.

To suit his new married status, Simpson acquired a large house in Willesden, on the outskirts of London, a spacious place with a well-tended garden bordered by big elm trees that stretched down to meadows becoming, a few miles out, the real country. Dog violets grew in the hedge and laburnum and lilac flowered. A year after their marriage Maria was pregnant, but, to their sorrow, a daughter was still-born on June 4, 1882.

On 28 January, 1884, a second pregnancy was successfully concluded, and a healthy daughter named Ann Penelope entered the household. Simpson was 60 and Maria was 42.

Simpson’s was still working, despite occasional bouts of ill-health, and in 1885 he undertook one last major expedition – accompanying the Afghan Boundary Commission through Persia and Afghanistan. The commission’s role was to define more precisely the border between Russia and Afghanistan, and the task became a thousand mile trek on horseback from Tehran to Mashad, no mean feat for a 61 year old whose body by this stage was occasionally assailed by recurring fevers, probably malaria, acquired at some stage in his previous travels. Nevertheless, he revelled in the opportunities the journey presented to sketch the desolate locations and the cultural and historical sights. He even visited Nishapur in Persia, the burial-place of Omar Khayyam. Despite the remoteness of the places he visited, however, his thoughts clearly rarely strayed from his wife and young daughter. Maria wrote to him, and somehow, a letter reached him in far-off Persia bearing a lock of hair of his newly-born daughter. This moved him greatly and he carried it with him thereafter (it is now in the possession of the writer of this monograph).

On his return to England, he relished the long-sought-after opportunity to enjoy home life. Now a loving family man with a small daughter, he was getting well into his sixties, and his health remained uncertain. His travels were consequently limited to shorter excursions from Willesden, and he took Maria and Ann on picnics.
and outings to the sea. Ann, later wrote: “Nearly all our holidays were spent at Rottingdean in Sussex, a few miles to the east of Brighton. We loved this tiny fishing village and used to go for long walks over the downs. I remember seeing the sheep herded in by the shepherd at night.”

In 1888 Simpson visited Berlin to sketch the funeral of Kaiser Wilhelm I, and (in a busy year) also took Maria and Anne with him to see the International Exhibition at Glasgow and he attended and sketched (on his own) the funeral of Frederick II in Potsdam.

A trip back to Scotland in 1890 to sketch the opening of the Forth Bridge by the Prince of Wales heralded a major decline in his health – the weather was sleety and foul, and he acquired what seemed to be a chronic case of bronchitis which persisted off and on for years thereafter.

In 1892, he was asked by the Prince of Wales to sketch the remains of his son, the Duke of Clarence, at Sandringham prior to the funeral service, a touching and poignant task for he was quite friendly with the Prince by this stage.

But it was his family life that he savoured most. Every Friday evening Simpson and his wife gave dinner parties for his old friends. Visitors included Robert Carrick, the distinguished artist, and Walter Besant, brother of Annie Besant. He continued painting, and worked up larger watercolour paintings from sketches he undertook during his heyda, and he also completed two books which had long been on his mind: *The Buddhist Praying-Wheel*, a comprehensive study of Tibetan Buddhism and its role in the culture of Tibet, and *The Jonah Legend*, a comparative study of various world cultures which incorporate mythology involving a man being swalled by a fish.

The *Illustrated London News* asked him to visit Chicago in 1893 to sketch the Great Exhibition, but his health was not up to it, and on doctor’s advice, he declined.

Simpson died on August 17, 1899, aged 75, at his home in Willesden, his wife and daughter at his side. He had never fully recovered from the attack of bronchities which he had caught nine years earlier while sketching the opening of the Forth Bridge. He was buried beside his mother in the dissenters section of Highgate Cemetery, quite close to the grave of a controversial social theorist who had died some years earlier – his name was Karl Marx.

In more recent years a reverential Soviet government has placed a monolithic headstone on Marx’s grave which tends to dominate the cemetery. It bears the inscription “Philosophers have only interpreted the world in various ways; the point is to change it” – but in 1899 Marx had been dead only sixteen years, and his grave bore a simpler headstone and would have been little known and unremarkable.

Simpson’s trademark – his eye for detail – never faltered during his life, and his work was notably free of the cultural arrogance that was adopted by many of his contemporaries. Consequently, he was regarded by some as an eccentric and by others as a cultural fifth columnist. Nevertheless, he managed a rare feat in that Kiplingesque age – that of walking with Kings without ever losing the common touch. So there is a certain aptness in the fact that Simpson now lies peacefully in Highgate Cemetery slightly to the left of that other great Victorian social commentator, Karl Marx. Simpson may not have entirely agreed with the essence of the more-recent inscription on Marx’s headstone, but nevertheless the juxtaposition of the graves would have made him smile – and it does make for both a fine metaphor and a suitable memorial.

**CHRONOLOGY OF WILLIAM SIMPSON’S LIFE**

1823  William Simpson born, 28 October, in Carrick Street, Glasgow.

1837  Apprenticed to David MacFarlane, lithographer.

1839  Apprenticed to Allan & Ferguson, lithographers, Glasgow.

1851  Employed by Day & Son, and takes up lodgings at 1 Orchard Street, Kentishtown, bringing his parents to live with him (his father soon returns to Glasgow).

1854  Simpson’s mother dies, 24 August, and is buried in Highgate Cemetery – Simpson departs, 26 October, for the Crimea, to provide drawings for Colnaghi.

1855  Attached to the Duke of Newcastle’s expedition to Circassia – *The Seat of the War in the East* and Brackenbury’s *Campaign in the Crimea* published (with lithographs based on
Simpson’s sketches) by Colnaghi – his first audience with Queen Victoria.

1859 Travels in India, Kashmir & Tibet, making sketches of the architecture, archaeology, and daily life – returns to England & takes up residence at 64 Lincoln’s Inn Fields, London.

1862 Is employed by the Illustrated London News and accompanies the Prince and Princess of Wales to the Marriage of the Czarevitch (Alexander III) at St. Petersburg.

1866 Day & Son goes into liquidation – *India Ancient and Modern* published.

1867 Travels to Abyssinia to sketch Napier’s campaign against Emperor Theodorus.

1869 Travels new route to India via Mont Cenis Tunnel, Brindisi and Suez Canal – visits Jerusalem and illustrates Warren’s excavations – revisits the Crimea – attends and sketches opening of Suez Canal – attends opening of Vatican Council in Rome.

1870 Covers the Franco-German war, enters Strasbourg and Metz with the German troops.

1871 Covers the Paris Commune.

1872 Undertakes a world tour resulting in *Meeting the Sun: A Journey All Round the World*.

1874 Simpson’s father dies in Glasgow, 31 May.

1875 Accompanies Prince of Wales’ tour of India – *Picturesque Photographs from Drawings of the Prince of Wales’ Visit to India* published.

1876 Visits Mycenae, Troy and Ephesus in connection with the excavations of Schliemann and Wood.

1878/9 Accompanies the Afghan Expedition.

1881 Marries Maria Eliza Burt, 5 January, and takes up residence at 19 Church Road, Willesden.

1882 A still-born daughter is delivered to Maria Eliza.

1883 Visits Berlin (for the Silver Wedding Anniversary of the German Crown Prince & Princess) – visits St. Petersburg and Moscow (for the coronation of the Czar) – and Finland and Sweden.

1884/5 A daughter, Ann Penelope Simpson, is born in London 28 January, 1884 – Simpson accompanies the Afghan Boundary Commission and visits the tomb of Omar Khayyám at Nishapur.

1888 Visits Berlin (for the funeral of Kaiser Wilhelm I) – Glasgow (with wife and daughter, for the International Exhibition – Potsdam (for the funeral of Frederick III).

1890 Sketches the opening of the Forth Bridge – visits Berlin.

1892 Sketches the remains of the Duke of Clarence at Sandringham prior to the funeral service.

1893 Declines, on doctor’s advice, a request from the Illustrated London News to visit Chicago to sketch the Great Exhibition.

1896 *The Buddhist Praying-Wheel* published.

1899 Simpson dies about 3.00 a.m. on 17 August at Willesden – *Glasgow in the “Forties”* published – *The Jonah Legend* published.

1903 *The Autobiography of William Simpson RI* published by T. Fisher Unwin, based on his Notes and Recollections as edited by his wife and daughter.

**NOTE:**

ROBERT BURNS and GEORGE THOMSON
their association with COMPOSERS PLEYEL, KOZELUCH and HAYDN
By Rainer W. Lenk

INTRODUCTION

The author of this article, Rainer Lenk, has lived in Wales since 1939, but spent his formative years in Vienna between the two World Wars. Notwithstanding its hidden, dark corners, this city has left an indelible impression on him, so much so, that much of his spare time over the last 60 years has been spent on further research of its history, but - above else - its glorious musical heritage. An impressive collection of Viennese documents has been built up - including many original music publications and autograph letters etc. Nearly all the material has a direct, or indirect connection with the city or its composers. The indirect group includes a four-volume octavo set of a “Select Collection of Original Scottish Airs for the Voice”, with Introductory and Concluding Symphonies for the Piano Forte, Violin & Violincello by Pleyel, Kozeluch and Haydn. The set dates from 1803, each volume being personally signed by the publisher George Thomson of Edinburgh. The title page has a beautiful portrait of Robert Burns, who contributed the texts for over 100 songs. The connection with Vienna is, that all three composers were - at one time or another - active, as was Beethoven, who contributed to later volumes.

George THOMSON (1757-1851)

Scottish amateur folksong editor and publisher. He spent his childhood in northern Scotland. At the age of 17 he settled in Edinburgh; in 1780 he took up a clerical post with the Board of Trustees for the Encouragement of Art and Manufactures in Scotland, for whom he worked for the next 59 years. Financially secure, he devoted his spare time to music. He joined the influential Edinburgh Musical Society, playing the violin in the orchestra and singing in the choir. He also developed a taste for Scots folksongs in ‘classical’ arrangements by hearing foreign singers perform them at the Society’s weekly concerts. Folksongs in their unadorned state, such as he must have heard in his childhood, do not seem to have appealed to him.

Thomson’s place in musical history is that of a most enthusiastic, persevering and successful collector of the melodies of Scotland, Wales and Ireland, a work begun in his youth and continued for more than forty years. Honourable as it was, the basic idea of his collection was even in his own time criticised for its lack of national spirit. It was not an artistic success, nor the standard classic that Thomson intended, but nothing more than an historical curiosity.

Early in the 18th century there had been a movement in Scotland to collect folksongs - an idea which was to spread to the rest of Europe. By the second half of the century collections of Scottish songs were numerous. George Thomson came on the scene relatively late, in the 1790’s, but he aimed to make his collection surpass all previous ones in scope and quality.
Thomson’s Collection of Scottish Airs

The collection of melodies consisted of (a.) without words; (b) with none in English; (c.) with English texts - indecent, if not to say obscene and (d.) with a few decent words - in which case he thought it well to add a new song. A large number of eminent authors - including Robert Burns - were employed by Thomson for this purpose. When the melody was known to the poet, there was little difficulty in writing an appropriate song; when not, Thomson sent a copy of it with its character indicated by the common Italian terms, “Allegro” etc., which were a sufficient guide.

Thomson and Robert Burns

Burns was the principal writer of the poetry; but Scott, James Hogg and Joanna Baillie also worked for Thomson. At his insistence they were rewriting the words of the songs to remove their bawdiness and to substitute a pathetic sensibility. The “Select Collection of Original Scottish Airs for the Voice” consisted of 6 volumes (folio size), published between 1793 and 1841.

In the Advertisement, included in each volume of 50 songs, Thomson includes the following statement by Robert Burns: “I do hereby certify, that all the Songs of my writing, published, and to be published, by Mr. George Thomson of Edinburgh, are so published by my authority. And moreover, that I never empowered any other person to publish any of the Songs written by me for his Work. And I authorise him to prosecute any person or persons who shall publish or vend ANY of those Songs without his consent. In testimony whereof, &c. “ROBERT BURNS”.

Mention should be made of the fact, that in Thomson’s published Collection of Scottish folk songs, many of the melodies have two poems (not necessarily by Burns) set against them; thus the numerical number of songs and poetry do not coincide.

Instrumental Accompaniments

Thomson’s plan was as new and original as it was bold. Besides the pianoforte accompaniment each song was to have a prelude and coda, and parts ‘ad libitum’ throughout for violin, or flute and violincello - the compositions to be entrusted to none but first composers.

In the years 1791-93 Pleyel stood next to Haydn and Mozart - they in Vienna, he in London at that time. Thomson engaged Pleyel for the work: he soon ceased to write, so Thomson had to seek another composer. Mozart was dead; Haydn seemed to occupy too lofty a position. Thus Kozeluch of Vienna was engaged. But William Napier’s collection of Scottish Songs with pianoforte accompaniments written by Haydn during his first London visit, showed that the greatest living composer did not disdain this kind of work. Thomson applied to him, and Haydn worked for his Collection until about 1806. The new star Beethoven was persuaded to continue the work. He, too, died before Thomson’s work was completed, Henry Bishop and George Hogarth making up the 6th and final volume of Scotch songs in 1841. Weber (briefly in 1825) and Hummel (from 1826-c.
1835) also made contributions.

Thomson's collection contained 300 songs in six folio volumes (1793-1841). Vol I was originally all by Pleyel, and Vol. II all by Kozeluch. In the second Edition of these (1803) Thomson substituted arrangements by Haydn for several which were 'less happily executed than the rest'. Vols III and IV were all by Haydn.

Of the 200 Original Scottish Airs in Vols. I-IV, Robert Burns supplied texts for 112 (of which 53 were specially written for this Collection) * See specially compiled Index.

Most of Thomson's arrangers had never heard genuine Scottish folksongs and tried to accommodate the melodies of Viennese harmony. In the case of Beethoven, Thomson infuriated him by simplifying his piano parts for the drawing-room market. The folk tunes were largely culled from earlier printed collections, only a few being personally collected by Thomson and his correspondents.

Robert BURNS (1759-1796) and Scottish Airs

He had little formal education, first at a local school, then from his father. But his appetite for wide reading and his intense interest in and love for the Scottish countryside and the oral literature and music of its people gave him an enviable command over two languages - English and Scots, and a deep appreciation of the wide range of sentiment expressed in Scots traditional melody.

In 1786 he began supplying material to James Johnson for publication in "The Scots Musical Museum" (six volumes, 1787-1803) and later to George Thomson, editor of the "Select Collection of Original Scottish Airs" (five volumes, 1793-1818). His work entailed drawing on the vast store of Scots songs he already knew and collecting others, using fragments of existing lyrics as a basis for his own poems, and selecting suitable airs on which to compose new lyrics. He produced over 350 songs, including more than one-third of those published in the "Musical Museum and some 112 of those printed in the "Select Collection"; this represents the major part of the published repertory of Scottish national song. Those tunes printed in the "Musical Museum were given basses by Stephen Clarke, Johnson's musical editor. Both Airs and lyrics in the "Select Collection" had considerable tinkering, and were given Symphonies and Accompaniments for the pianoforte and violin by continental composers - out of character with the simple nature of the songs. Though few of his songs were published before his early death, they soon became immensely popular and have since appeared in innumerable arrangements and editions.

ROBERT BURNS and George THOMSON'S Select COLLECTION of ORIGINAL SCOTTISH AIRS for the Voice With Introductory and Concluding Symphonies and Accompaniments for the Piano Forte, Violin and Violoncello by PLEYEL, KOZELUCH and HAYDN with Select and Characteristic Verses both Scottish and English adapted to the Airs, including upwards of One Hundred New Songs by BURNS (200 songs in 4 Volumes).

Key: * = Burns poetry specially written for this work.
Airs: & = known to have been popular before 1724. @ = said to be Irish.

Index to BURNS Poetry

Alphabetically arranged by the first line of each song; the corresponding Air is given underneath each first poetry line, followed by the composer/arranger. Volume and Page refers to Thomsons Collection.
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<td>Air: Farewel to Ayr</td>
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<td><em>The small birds rejoice on the green leaves returning</em></td>
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<td>Air: Irish Air - Captain O'Kain @</td>
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<td><em>Their groves o' sweet myrtle let foreign lands reckon</em></td>
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<td>Air: The Humours of Glen</td>
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<td><em>There was a lass, and she was fair</em></td>
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<td>Air: Willie was a wanton wag</td>
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<td><em>There's nought but care on ev'ry hand</em></td>
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<td>Air: <em>Green grow the rashes</em></td>
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<td>Air: <em>The Lammy</em></td>
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<td><em>Thou hast left me ever, Jamie</em></td>
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<td><em>Thou ling'ring star, with less'ning ray</em></td>
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<td>Air: <em>Thou ling'ring star</em></td>
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<td><em>True hearted was the sad swain</em></td>
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<td>Air: <em>Bonny Dundee</em></td>
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<td>Air: <em>Johnny's grey breeks</em></td>
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<td><em>What can a young lassie do wi' an auld man?</em></td>
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<td><em>When Guildford good our pilot stood</em></td>
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<td>Air: <em>Killicrankie</em></td>
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<td><em>When o'er the hill the eastern star</em></td>
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<td>Air: <em>The lea-rig</em></td>
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<td><em>When wild war's deadly blast was blawn</em></td>
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<td>Air: <em>The mill mill o</em></td>
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<td><em>Where are the joys I have met</em></td>
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<td>Air: <em>Saw ye my father</em></td>
<td>Haydn</td>
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<td><em>Where cart rins rowing to the sea</em></td>
<td>Haydn</td>
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<td>Air: <em>The auld wife ayont the fire</em></td>
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<td><em>Where's he, for honest poverty:</em></td>
<td>Haydn</td>
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<td>(The honest man the best of men)*</td>
<td>Haydn</td>
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<td>Air: <em>Up and war them a' Willy</em></td>
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<td><em>Willy Wastle's Wife</em></td>
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<td>Air: <em>Tibble Fowler</em></td>
<td>Haydn</td>
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<td><em>Wilt thou be my dearie?</em></td>
<td>Haydn</td>
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<td>Air: <em>The sutor's daughter</em></td>
<td>Haydn</td>
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<tr>
<td><em>Ye banks, and braes, and streams around</em></td>
<td>Kozeluch</td>
<td>Y/43</td>
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<tr>
<td>Air: <em>Katharine Ogie</em></td>
<td>Kozeluch</td>
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<td><em>Ye banks and braes of bonny Doon</em></td>
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<tr>
<td>Air: <em>The Caledonian hunt's delight</em></td>
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Details of Negotiations by
GEORGE THOMSON with the
Composers PLEYEL,
KOZELUCH and HAYDN

By Rainer W. Lenk

Ignace Joseph PLEYEL (1757-1831)
Engraving by Biosse, after Guerin
Austrian composer, music publisher and piano maker, active
in France. His music was enormously popular in his lifetime.

Ignace PLEYEL

Shortly after PLEYEL left London in 1792, Thomson approached him for some 'symphonies and accompaniments' to 32 songs. In the course of the year 1793, Thomson’s books show that he paid Pleyel £131.5s for these songs and for six sonatas. But he had some kind of financial trouble with Pleyel, for when he came to negotiate with Kozeluch, he was insistent about having a stamped agreement.

Leopold KOZELUCH

In a letter to an intermediary in Vienna about the subject of drawing up a stamped agreement with Kozeluch, Thomson writes on 6 February 1797: ‘I have been disappointed and deceived by a musical composer some years ago, which he has only fulfilled in part, after putting me to a world of trouble and expense. As he is resident in France, I have no means of procuring any redress from him. Musicians are generally incorrect in business and eccentric in their conduct, so that it is necessary to be on one’s guard in transactions of this kind.’

Thomson found Kozeluch’s terms rather high: 12 sonatas for piano, with accompaniment of a violin and cello = 400 ducats; and 70 Scottish songs = 100 ducats. After pointing out the high expense, the publisher accepted. In fact Thomson purchased only 6 sonatas from Kozeluch, writing to him in 1801, to say, that ‘the six already published have had a very limited circulation’.

But in 1797 Kozeluch was still a desirable object to the Scottish publisher. But the wily Kozeluch would have nothing to do with any formal agreement. On 1 June 1797, Mr. Stratton of the British Embassy in Vienna wrote to Thomson, that ‘I have had several conversations with Kozeluch, in the course of which I am sorry to say that I perceived extreme reluctance on his part to enter into any legal agreement… To bring the matter to an issue, I sent a sketch of an agreement to him, with the request that he would have it copied and properly executed. But he
sent me back the paper - unsigned - with a verbal message, that he had nothing more to add.' On 29 July 1797, Straton wrote that Kozeluch had still not signed the agreement, in spite of repeated promises. On 16 August 1797, the Viennese Embassy official reported that Kozeluch had said he could not carry on 'owing to the very faulty manner in which the music of the Scottish Airs had been copied 'Thomson informed Straton on 18 September that he had spent a fortnight making new copies of the 64 songs... 'If Mr. Kozeluch should still find little defects in some of the modulations, he must impute such to the peculiar nature of the compositions, and make of them as he can'.

On 28 October 1797 the now desperate Straton wrote to Thomson, that 'Kozeluch called on yesterday, saying that he had found most of the melodies “une musique barbare”, and that therefore he did not think it worthwhile to add symphonies &c. to them. Kozeluch did, however, write for Thomson, though the arguments went on, for Thomson wrote to Vienna on 21 February 1801, that he was 'never more surprised nor more hurt... that people in this country will not look at any other but a simple and easy accompaniment to their national songs'. The stubborn Kozeluch maintained that his arrangements were perfect, and that he (Thomson) was ill advised, asking him to simply melodies, which would detract from his reputation'. In short, he refused to alter anything. (In due course, Thomson ran into the same problem with Beethoven). Such, then, was some of the background to Thomson’s attempt, in October 1799, to open negotiations with Haydn.

Joseph HAYDN

Sympathies must go out to Alexander Straton, an official at The British Embassy in Vienna. First he was the go-between for Thomson in his futile negotiations with Leopold Kozeluch. Now, it seems, he was entrusted with a similar task in conjunction with Joseph HAYDN.

The publisher himself has set down a short history of his relationship with the famous composer: 'My first application to Haydn was upon the 30th October 1799, when I sent him part of the Scottish melodies, which in the following summer he returned united to his admirable symphonies and accompaniments. And from that time we continued in correspondence till the year 1804, when I received the last of his many precious compositions. I wrote him in 1805 with more national airs. My letter, perhaps, was miscarried, for I received no answer, and therefore in June 1806 I despatched a duplicate of it which was returned to me by my banker in London in consequence of information from his correspondent at Vienna that Haydn could not compose any more owing to illness. In 1808, having heard that he was restored to health, I wrote him one more with part of my Irish melodies, in the hope of his composing ritornelles and accompaniments to them, but I received no answer; and therefore sometime after I sent those melodies to Beethoven, worthy in all respects to be the successor of Haydn.'
Franz Joseph HAYDN (1732-1809)  
Pencil portrait by George Dance, dated ‘March 20th 1794’; which is in the collection of the Royal College of Music, London, the likeness which Haydn considered the best.

Thomson wrote a letter to Straton as well, who was to deliver the letter personally to Haydn and ‘say whatever you conceive is likely to produce compliance’ and if necessary to offer a few more ducats for each air. But Haydn ‘must not speak of what he gets’. Thomson does not expect that Haydn will do the accompaniments better than Kozeluch: ‘That is scarcely possible’ (!); but in the symphonies (ritornellos) he will be ‘great and original’. Thomson had offered two ducats for each air; Mr. Straton wrote to say that Haydn ‘seemed desirous of having rather more than two ducats, but did not precisely insist upon this point’. Straton, as a result of the interview, adds that ‘Upon the whole he appears to be a rational animal, whereas all that can be said of the other, I mean Kozeluch is, that he is a Biped without feathers’ The idea obviously occurred at once to Haydn that he could give some of this work to his pupils and then ‘look over’ the result; indeed some - if not a great deal - of the arrangements for Thomson were done by Haydn’s pupil Sigismund Neukomm. But the old composer clearly sensed that this would be an easy way to collect a substantial amount of pounds, as indeed Beethoven did afterwards. Haydn and Kozeluch were not on intimate terms, the latter being jealous of Haydn’s success of ‘The Creation’.

On 16 February 1800, Alexander Straton wrote to Thomson, that ‘Haydn called at the British Embassy yesterday and mentioned that he had already written to you and also begun the composition of the accompaniments of 15 Scotch airs, that you had sent him through me.’ About the middle of June, Haydn delivered 32 Scottish airs, harmonized, and with introductory and closing ‘symphonies’ (ritornelli), to Straton for shipment to Thomson. Straton sent them on 19 June and adds that they would have been done sooner but ‘poor Haydn laboured under so severe an illness during the course of this spring that we were not altogether devoid of alarm in regard to his recovery.’

Extraordinarily, Thomson delivered to the composer only the melody of the songs, never (apparently) the words or even a précis, much less a translation. Early in 1801 Thomson sent 16 more airs for Haydn to arrange, and on 30 April Straton of the British Embassy in Vienna wrote to Thomson that Haydn at first refused to touch them because the price was too low. But in the course of conversation Haydn told him he was writing to Thomson, asking him to procure a dozen India handkerchiefs, and it struck him that ‘your making him a present of them might mollify the veteran into compliance respecting the 16 airs’. Straton took it upon himself to promise in Thomson’s name that the handkerchiefs would be sent as a gift, and ‘this had the desired effect to such a degree that Haydn immediately put the 16 airs in his pocket, and is to compose the accompaniments as soon as possible on the same terms as the former’.

It would be inappropriate to refer to the entire correspondence, not merely between Straton and Thomson, concerning Haydn, but indeed Haydn’s own correspondence with Thomson. In any event it would appear that Haydn’s pupils wrote many of the actual songs, but very probable, that the changes that Thomson was occasionally requiring were made by Haydn himself: it was quicker to do these at once, rather
than send for a pupil and then to have to correct his work. Haydn wrote a certain amount of the songs himself, if only to show his pupils how the works should be done.

On 5th December 1801 Haydn wrote to Thomson: 'Most esteemed Friend (written in Italian) I now send you the rest of the songs, and I am convinced that they could not be better done: for I have taken great pains to satisfy you, and to show the world how far a man can progress in his art, if he is willing to exert himself: and I wish that every student of composition would try his hand at this type of music. In time, the fruits of their efforts would surely be well rewarded. I flatter myself that with this work I shall go on living in Scotland many years after my death. I would only ask you to send me a copy, when it is printed. In the hope of receiving your kind favour very soon, I am, Dearest Friend, Your sincere and most humble servant, Giuseppe Haydn.

Another Haydn letter to Thomson should be mentioned, (this time in French) ‘Vienna, 1st July 1803... I have received the money you sent me; don’t be angry at me for having to wait for so long for the 25 songs, but they have been ready to be sent to you for 5 months. The Secretary of the Embassy hasn’t told me, when he was to leave; till now I have not found an opportunity to send these and 14 more songs to you. I shall choose a safe way by which to send you the other 11 which I have yet to compose. The copy (of the Third Volume of “Select Collection of Original Scottish Airs for the Voice”, 1803) is unparalleled, not only for its engraving but also for the beauty of the paper. (*this, and Vol. IV had 50 Airs each - all arranged by Haydn) I beg you to send me the 1st and 2nd volumes, together with the 4th, for I admire this distinguished collection and the musicians who have worked on it. I shall be glad to pay for all of them, and am, with profound esteem, your most devoted servant, Joseph Haydn.

By 1805 Haydn had neither the students nor his own strength to continue the lucrative assignments for George Thomson and in 1806 he asked Fries & Co. to inform the publisher in Edinburgh, that the work must stop. Thomson then got Haydn to sign a formal cession of rights for all the arrangements which comprised some 170 Scottish and Irish and 62 Welsh songs, for which Haydn received £291,18s, 1d- a very substantial sum in those days.

*The majority of the material, concerning Thomson’s negotiations with Pleyel, Kozeluch and Haydn, has been excerpted from “HAYDN; Chronicle and Works”, by H. C. Robbins Landon; Thames and Hudson, London, 1977.

An article on Burns, Thomson and Beethoven (1770-1827) will appear in the next issue of The Burns Chronicle.

Robert had, in modern parlance, become ‘engaged’ to Jean in the spring of 1786. But when James Armour heard his daughter was pregnant, he ordered (according to the Poet’s brother Gilbert Burns) that “the written papers which respected the marriage should be cancelled”. The Mauchline Kirk Session “being informed that Jean Armour, an unmarried woman, is with child” required the couple to do public penance. Robert appeared in church for rebuke on 25 June, on 30 July (the eve of his Poems being published in Kilmarnock), and was absolved on 6 August. He wrote (to John Richmond, 9 July): “I am indulged so far as to appear in my own seat”; and he obtained “a Certificate as a single man, if I comply with the rules of the Church, which for that very reason I intend to do”.

When twins were born on 3 September, “sweet, little Bobbie” was taken up to Mossgiel, while little Jean was kept in the Armour household. The unmarried mother, as Burns wrote (in another letter to Richmond, 1 September) “would gladly now embrace that offer she once rejected, but”, he insisted, “it shall never more be in her power”.

After a spell in Edinburgh arranging a second edition of his Poems, Burns returned on a brief visit to Mauchline in June 1787. Now a local hero, he was put out by “the servility of my plebeian brethren, who perhaps formerly eyed me askance” and in particular by the “mean, servile compliance” of the Armours. This he found when he called in at the Cowgate to see his ailing infant daughter, who had in fact less than six months to live. According to the Grierson Papers “Jean’s parents made him welcome and locked the two in a room”. Even though this is unsubstantiated gossip, Robert later admitted not only that he “was made very welcome” but that in due course “the usual consequences began to betray her”.

Back in Edinburgh, he wrote on 25 October 1787 to John Richmond (who had returned to Mauchline) asking “news of Armour’s family, if the world begin to talk of Jean’s appearance any way”. On 2 December Jean Armour was summoned before the Kirk Session along with two others alleged to be with child. On 9 December she sent an excuse declaring she could not attend till the following sabbath. On 13 March the Session Officer was ordered to summon Jean Armour on the 23rd; but there is no indication that she complied.

Sometime that winter, possibly in December 1787, Jean went to stay with the Muirs in Tarbolton Mill. She was much later quoted (by Hately Waddell) denying that she had been put out by her parents. She said that when visiting the Muirs she had word from her mother advising her to stay there as her father was very angry, no doubt at being told of this second pregnancy. Burns favoured a more dramatic version of Jean being “literally and truly cast out to the mercy of the naked elements”, repeating that “she was turned, literally turned out of doors, and I wrote to a friend to shelter her till my return”. Meantime in Edinburgh on 4 December he met Mrs. Agnes McLehose, who became his Clarinda.

He returned to Mauchline in February 1788. His principal purpose was to go down to Dumfriesshire with John Tennant of Glenconner for an inspection of Ellisland farm, which Patrick Miller had offered to rent him. Then he planned to return to Edinburgh in connection with his proposed entry into the Excise. Before he left Edinburgh on Monday 18 February he vowed that “I am yours, Clarinda, for life”. He made his way via Glasgow, Paisley, Dunlop and Kilmarnock, whence he made a brief visit to Willie’s Mill Tarbolton on the morning of Saturday 23 February. He then hurried on to Mossgiel, where he wrote to Clarinda. “I, this morning as I came home,
called for a certain woman. I am disgusted with her; I cannot endure her... I have done with her and she with me”.

He compared Jean’s “tasteless insipidity, vulgarity of soul, and mercenary fawning” with Clarinda’s “polished good sense, heaven-born genius, and the most generous, the most delicate, the most tender Passion”. He told Clarinda he was setting out for Dumfriesshire the next day. In fact he spent the week in Mauchline before going down the following weekend. He spent another week at Mauchline before leaving for Edinburgh on Monday 10 March. Three letters to Clarinda (2, 6 and 7 March) seem apologetic in tone, though do not even hint at what was really taking up his time and attention.

He had brought Jean from Tarbolton to Mauchline and installed her in a single-end in the Back Causeway rented from Archibald Muckle, the tailor, next door to the house Dr. John Mackenzie purchased that year. So he told his Edinburgh crony Robert Ainslie in a letter dated 3 March, the day he returned to Mauchline from Ellisland. “Jean I found banished like a martyr - forlorn, destitute, and friendless; all for the good old cause: I have reconciled her to her mother: I have taken her a room: I have taken her to my arms: I have given her a mahogany bed: I have given her a guinea”. Then what is hardly credible, for she was eight months pregnant with twins, he asserted he had sex with her “till she rejoiced with joy unspeakable”. He made her solemnly swear “never to attempt any claim on me as a husband”. He boasted that he “took the opportunity of some dry horselitter” and again “electrified the very marrow of her bones”. Jean, he mentioned casually, “did all this like a good girl”.

Twins were born and buried before the end of March. Their date of birth, according to the Family Bible, was 3 March 1788. That was written down three years later and seems wrong: 3 March was the date of the letter to Ainslie; on 4 March he “dined at a friend’s at some distance”; on 7 March he told Captain Richard Brown that he had “towed her into convenient harbour where she may lie snug till she unload”. 8 or 9 March seems a more likely date, as Duncan McNaught suggested in the 1918 *Burns Chronicle*. The Family Bible notes that the daughters “died within a few days of their birth”. Mauchline Parish register has two brief entries listing “Jean Armour’s child unbaptized”, their burials on 10 and 22 March. The first was dead and buried on Monday 10th, possibly just before Burns set off for Edinburgh. After just a week there he left hurriedly the following Thursday and arrived back on Saturday 22nd, possibly in time for the burial of the second twin that day.

He made a brief trip to Ellisland, whose lease he had signed when in Edinburgh. He was back in Mauchline by 29 March, when he signed the minutes of Lodge St. James. On 31 March James Findlay, Excise Officer, Tarbolton, was instructed by the Commissioners to provide Mr. Robert Burns with the necessary six weeks’ instructions, a full-time occupation which apparently left Burns no time to write a single letter in the three weeks 7 - 28 April or the second three weeks 4 - 25 May.

After 3 March most of Burns’s letters are addressed, not from Mossgiel as previously was his custom, but from Mauchline. This implies the possibility that he had moved in to join Jean at the Back Causeway before the twins were born. There followed ten days in Edinburgh, a trip to Ellisland, and six weeks Excise instruction when he possibly lodged in Tarbolton - these excursions possibly delayed the commencement of a regular cohabitation, such as would legally constitute an irregular marriage.

There seems to have been some sort of ceremony. John G. Lockhart wrote (in 1828) that Burns rode back to Mauchline on 18 February 1788 and went through a Justice of the Peace marriage in the writing chambers of Gavin Hamilton. That date is simply when Burns is supposed to have left Edinburgh; and though Lockhart as a biographer is sometimes suspect, his information is here derived from a known source. The antiquarian Joseph Train grew up in Sorn parish, Ayrshire where his father was land steward at Gilmilnscroft. Train’s surviving manuscript notes (published by Robert Fitzhugh, 1943) refer to Jean Armour and Robert Burns being “privately married in the writing office of Gavin Hamilton by John Farquhar of Gilmilnscroft, Justice of the Peace”. Robert
Chambers (in the Land of Burns, 1840) refers to Hamilton's writing room, with back door leading into the churchyard, as "the one in which the poet was married, the ceremony being rather of a legal than a religious complexion". Local tradition (as collected by John Taylor Gibb for the 1896 Burns Chronicle and repeated by William Wallace) confirmed this, though referring to two alternatives. One has the ceremony taking place in a house in Loudoun Street, occupied by John Ronald the carrier, later Learmont's baker's shop - but there may have been some confusion here because of Gavin Hamilton's public office being there or thereabouts in Loudoun Street. A third location suggested was Hugh Morton's Black Horse Inn: this was behind the churchyard, adjacent to Gavin Hamilton's house, and opposite Ronald's ball-room - perhaps suggesting some kind of a celebration with friends after the legal ceremony.

Letters written in March and April have been searched for hints of the marriage. To Captain Brown, 7 March, with appropriate sea-faring metaphors: "I have found Jean - with her cargo very well laid in; but unfortunately moor'd; almost at the mercy of wind and tide: I have towed her into convenient harbour where she may lie snug till she unload; and have taken command myself - not ostensibly, but for a time in secret." That might suggest a promise to Jean made before the twins were born. There are possible clues in a letter to Mrs. Dunlop on 31 March: "Till Whitsunday I shall be immersed in business, partly my own, and partly on behalf of some near and dear friends, that I will not have a spare moment"; and to Margaret Chalmers on 7 April: "I have lately made some sacrifices for which... you would applaud me".

The earliest definite proof of marriage is the letter of 18 April to James Smith in Linlithgow referring to "a certain clean-limbed, handsome, bewitching young hussy of your acquaintance, to whom I have lately and privately given a matrimonial title"; he ordered a printed shawl as his "first present to her"; and concluded the letter with a reference to "Mrs Burns ('tis only her private designation)".

William Jolly, the schools inspector who collected local material for his Robert Burns at Mossgiel (1881) gives a date for the marriage as 3 August: "In Mr. Hamilton's business room... he was formally married to his Jean, on the 3rd August, 1788, after his return from Edinburgh; going that evening, Patrick said, to the small house in the Back Causeway, which was their home till their removal in December". The informant was Willie Patrick, who had been the Mossgiel herd-boy, and helped with the flitting (which took place long before August). Patrick earlier supplied details to the anonymous writer in the Airdrossan and Saltcoats Herald (1858 articles reprinted as Mauchline Memories, 1985) that "Jean Armour was finally united to the poet, on the 3rd August, by what is called a justice-of-peace-marriage, in the writing chambers of Burns' friend and patron, Gavin Hamilton". But William Patrick (1776-1864) was only twelve years old in 1788, and it was more than sixty years later when he gave the date as 3rd August. He is proved wrong by Burns in the letters: 28 April to James Smith already quoted; 25 May to James Johnston: "I have given her a legal title"; 26 May to Robert Ainslie; "Mrs. Burns... which title I now avow to the world"; 13 June to Mrs. Dunlop: "I am indeed a Husband".

Robert Burns formally acknowledged Jean Armour as his wife sometime after 7 April when he wrote to William Dunbar: "I am earnestly busy to bring about a revolution in my own mind"; before 28 April when he told James Smith of "Mrs Burns... to whom I have lately and privately given a matrimonial title"; and probably just a day or so before that same letter of 28 April when he ordered the printed shawl as his "first present to her".

There is no evidence of how or when Clarinda heard of Burns's marriage, but the correspondence ceased. To Margaret Chalmers Burns wrote on 16 September explaining his decision to marry Jean: "This was not in consequence of the attachment of romance perhaps; but I had a long and much-loved fellow creature's happiness in my determination". "My Jean," wrote Burns, had "the handsomest figure, the sweetest temper, the soundest constitution, and the kindest heart in the county". Her only reading was the Bible, but she was a fine singer of ballads and an admirer of her husband and his poetry. Similar justification was offered to Mrs. Dunlop, who was also informed
(June 13) that he had married Jean for "there is no sporting with a fellow-creature’s happiness or misery"; she had "the most placid good-nature and sweetness of disposition"; and "may make a tolerably good wife".

Compassion was probably not the only reason for marrying Jean. He would be better fitted as a married man for his future career. Clarinda has been deemed by writers as an unlikely wife for a farmer or exciseman, even had she been free to marry Burns. It is overlooked that Jean was only a little more suitable. As the daughter of a fairly well-off builder she had no experience of farm work, and had had little training even in ordinary housework from her mother who (according to Mauchline Memories) was "a woman of a light-hearted, almost thoughtless disposition". So Jean had to be sent up to Mossgiel to learn. Burns told Mrs. Dunlop (in the letter dated 10 August) that "she is regularly and constantly apprentice to my Mother and sisters in their dairy and other rural business"; and "in housewifely matters" he was proud of her "aptness to learn and activity to execute". At Mossgiel she would also learn something about child-rearing, for there under old Mrs. Burns’s care was Jean’s only surviving child, "sweet, little Bobbie" was "a very fine fellow", now over a year old and recently (6 March) inoculated against smallpox.

One further preparation was required before Robert and Jean’s removal from Mauchline to Ellisland. For those flitting from one parish to another the Church of Scotland still expects lines to be lifted. This process was in the 18th century more than a formal certificate of transfer of membership. The Church then required a testimonial of good character before admitting anyone to the Sacrament; and also a guarantee that the incomer would not prove a burden on the parish poor’s fund. In this instance the Mauchline Kirk Session had some difficulty in defining Burns’s marital status.

Since 2 December 1787 the Session had been concerned with Jean’s condition, and on 30 July 1788 a List of Persons under Scandal since the previous Sacrament included Jean Armour and Robert Burns with the comment “their affair not settled”. Such details come from the Brulie Minutes, being draft notes kept by Andrew Noble, the session clerk. They do not appear in the book of Session Records, for before he wrote that authorised account the business had been settled, sometime between 30 July and 5 August.

The fact that Robert and Jean were living together in a single room off Mauchline’s main street was sufficient public evidence of an irregular marriage, with or without any formal declaration before witnesses, such as apparently took place in Gavin Hamilton’s sometime within the month of April. No recent marriage could however eliminate the charge of ante-nuptial fornication, for the twins born in March had apparently been conceived in sin; and that would necessarily require public rebuke as previously in 1786, with possibly more severe penalties for a repetition of the scandal.

Burns wrote to James Smith on 26 June: “I have waited on Mr. Auld about my Marriage affair, and stated that I was legally fined for an irregular marriage by a Justice of the Peace”. Burns is here using the word ‘fine’ not in its modern sense of a monetary penalty but as in ‘burgess fine’ where it implies a registration fee. But notification before a justice of the peace of an irregular marriage would require (to satisfy the session) a date before the twins were conceived. Burns told Smith that the minister “says if I bring an attestation of this by the two witnesses there shall be no more litigation about it”. The letter is not (as Snyder mistakenly suggests) asking Smith to perjure himself by attesting that he was at a ceremony he had only been informed about in a recent letter (28 April) and for which local witnesses must have been available. What was sought was Smith’s attestation that Burns had really been married to Jean from an earlier date, and because Smith had left Mauchline two years before, the reference must be to the original marriage contract which Jean’s father had torn up. This was argued by Duncan McNaught in the 1918 Burns Chronicle, and squares with the opinion of Rev. Andrew Edgar, later minister of Mauchline, in the second volume of his Old Church Life, 1886. The second witness required would be that other crony, John Richmond, now back in Mauchline.
Gilbert Burns, who must have known the whole story, was quite reticent. All he would say (in his biographical letter to Mrs. Dunlop) was that his brother “was advised to go to Edinburgh to publish a second edition. On his return, in happier circumstances, he renewed his connexion with Mrs. Burns, and rendered it permanent by a union for life”.

At any rate, the Kirk Session had evidence sufficient to recognise the irregular marriage and to drop any charge of ante-nuptial fornication. The minutes of 5 August are worth quoting in full:

“Compeared Robert Burns with Jean Armour his Alledged Spouse. They both acknowledge their irregular marriage and their Sorrow for that irregularity and desiring that the Session will take such steps as may seem to them proper in order to the solemn confirmation of the said marriage.

“The Session taking this affair under their Consideration agree that they both be rebuked for their acknowledged Irregularity and that they be taken solemnly engaged to adhere faithfully to one another as husband and wife all the days of their Life.

“In regard the Session have a title in Law to some fine for behoof of the poor. They agree to refer to Mr. Burns his own generosity.

“The above sentence was accordingly executed and the Session absolved the said parties from any Scandal on this account.

“Signed William Auld, Moderator, Robert Burns, Jean Armour. (Extract below).

Mr. Burns gave a Guinea note for behoof of the poor.

9 Aug. Information was made from the turn that the said in the time of the Church is left upon Monday forenoon for behoof of the poor.”
Several comments on this seem necessary. It is noteworthy that on this occasion no rebuke before the congregation was required. The session meeting in private absolved the couple from scandal. Because Robert Burns was now a person of consequence in the eyes of the elders, he was entitled as “Mr. Burns”. and not just “Robert Burns in Mossgiel” as two years before. Not only was he excused public embarrassment, but the amount of his fine was left to his own generosity.

He could easily afford the guinea he donated; to his wife he made presents of a printed shawl (28 April), fifteen yards of black silk (5 August), and new gowns (12 September); for the house he ordered feathers for pillows (4 May), table linen (12 September), furniture to be made by Matthew Morison of Mauchline (paid 19 March 1789); for himself books from Peter Hill (18 July); and there was a cask of whisky (22 December), possibly as a present from John Tennant. With the fine of one guinea Burns obtained (very cheaply) absolution from scandal, legitimisation of his marriage, a token for him and Jean to attend the Sacrament at the Holy Fair on 10 August, and the certificate for their acceptance within the congregation of Dunscore parish following the flitting in December 1788.

**THE BURNS HEADSTONES IN ERSKINE CHURCHYARD**

Within three or four yards of Compaq’s Erskine property, in the Bishopton Erskine Churchyard are the graves of two of Robert Burns’s relations, his Sister in law and his nephew.

The attached photograph shows the headstones, which were restored and cleaned by The Burns Federation.

The headstone nearer to the wall of the Churchyard is that of Jean Burns nee Breckenridge, wife of Gilbert Burns, younger brother of the poet, Robert Burns.

A native of Kilmarnock, she married Gilbert Burns on 21st June 1784 in a first floor flat of a house at the corner of Waterloo Street and Green Street. The site is now under the town centre bus terminus. It is thought that she was a woman of property, albeit not a large one. The Ayrshire register of Sasines records that in April 1781, Jean Breckenridge daughter of James Breckenridge, merchant Kilmarnock inherited a property in the town. She borne Gilbert, eleven children, many of whom would die in childbirth or early years.

Gilbert was Robert’s partner at Mossgeil Farm, near Mauchline from 1783 until Robert left in 1788, so Jean would have lived at the farm with The Poet for the first four years of her married life.

In 1798 Gilbert left Mossgeil and farmed in various places until 1804, when he became The Factor to the East Lothian Estate of Lady Katherine Blantyre with whom he worked until he died in 1827. At that time Erskine House belonged to the Lord Blantyre and it is assumed that Gilbert’s widow, Jean and her unmarried son, James came to work at Erskine Estate.

Jean died in 1841, aged 77 and her son died six years later, he was buried next to his Mother in the churchyard.

Another son Thomas, who wanted to be a farmer like his Father and Uncle, but at the request of his Father became a minister of the Church of Scotland. He was the Minister at Prestwick in the red sandstone church near the Airport, but at The Disruption in 1843, walked out of his church with The Dissenters. Four years later he was leading two shiploads of Free Kirk emigrants to found the Free Church in New Zealand.

William McCallum

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The view that Robert Burns in his later years was nothing other than a drunken sot, having only "browster wives an' whisky-stills" as his Muses and eventually dying of incurable alcoholism, is commonly thought to have three sources: George Thomson's unsigned obituary notice in *The London Chronicle* (July, 1796, 28-30), Robert Heron's "A Memoir of the Life of the Late Robert Burns" in *The Monthly Magazine* (no. iii, June, 1797, 213-16, 552-62), and James Currie's four-volume edition of *The Works of Robert Burns, with an Account of his Life* (4 vols., Liverpool, 1800).

The most influential of these sources was undoubtedly Currie's edition, for his work had a major influence on the critical assessment of Burns and his writing for over 120 years. Currie's view of the Bard held sway until 1926, when Sir James Crichton-Browne in his *Burns From a New Point of View* (London, 1926, p. 85) demonstrated that the poet died of sub-acute bacterial endocarditis "with the origin of which alcohol had nothing to do." What remains unclear is whether or not Thomson, Heron and Currie had an earlier authority for their strictures. Were their pejorative remarks born simply of envy and malice, or did there already exist a popular tradition about Burns and what he himself called "the wicked soup o' drink" (*To William Stewart*)?

*Satan, I fear thy sooty claws,  
I hate thy brunstane stink,  
And ay I curse the luckless cause,  
The wicked soup o' drink.*


Among "various lucubrations by biographers and critics" Peterkin includes remarks of James Currie, David Irvine (*The Lives of the Scottish Poets*, 2 vols., Edinburgh, 1810), Josiah Walker (*Account of the Life and Character of Robert Burns*, Edinburgh, 1881), and *The Edinburgh Review* (an unsigned review by Jeffrey in no. xiii, January, 1809, 249-72), together with "a most memorable instance of brotherly kindness and charity in and English review" (an unsigned review by Scott in *The Quarterly Review*, no. I, February, 1809, 19-36). Peterkin notes that not all the unfavourable published opinions about Robert Burns were signed:

Some of the strictures on Burns's life and writings, to which we shall advert, have been ascribed to gentlemen of high note among the periodical authors of the day. This matters little. It, indeed, only serves to rouse a keener purpose of correcting their errors, for which we have not the slightest degree of veneration. We know not even by whom they were written, except in the instances where the names of the authors are given.

To Peterkin's list and to those of Ross and Low may be added a further periodical review which is signed only with initials and which, while very favourable to Burns, includes at an early date remarks about the Bard's alleged tendency to be "whyles daez't wi' drink" (*Second Epistle to Davie*).

The article, "On the Tardiness of Literary Patronage," is signed simply "C. G." and appeared
in *The Britannic Magazine* (vol. 5, no. 67, 1798, 331-334). By internal evidence no. 67 must be dated January, 1798, but to have appeared in print the essay must have been penned in 1797; *The Britannic Magazine* appeared every three weeks, but we cannot know what length of lead time was required for the appearance of a particular article. While the possibility remains that the essay is reprinted from an earlier source, there is no such indication given.

No identification is offered of “C.G.”, but in his opening paragraph he informs us that he has mingled in the world of experience for forty years. Dating experience slightly later than birth, and assuming the author has no reason to lie to us, we are dealing with a man 40-60 years of age. A likely candidate is one Charles Graham, of Penrith, who contributed a variety of articles to magazines from 1770 onwards. He wrote, for example, “Critical Remarks on the poems of Leonidas” for *The Sentimental Magazine* (no. III, May, 1775, 221-223). He was a “writing-master” and literary hack but wrote lucidly on many subjects including, it would appear, the tardiness of literary patronage.

Arguing that patronage would afford poets a vagabond wage on which to live while writing, “C.G.” laments the lack of worldly advancement of Gay, Chatterton and, especially, Burns. The climax of his generous treatment of the Bard is of interest:

> He remained without a patron, though locally situated within a few miles of the metropolis of his native kingdom. Having a wife and five small children to provide for, he was necessitated to solicit for a place in the excise; and, after much solicitation and importunity, at length procured an appointment to one of the most subordinate. However, our poet did not perceive his condition much improved in consequence of this promotion, is so it may be called: and, decimal numbers not proving so congenial to his taste, as those inspired by the muse; he conceived a disgust to his new appointment, which probably was the cause of his falling into vulgar company and low tippling: which, doubtless, hastened his dissolution.

“C.G.” could well be a liar about Burns’s alleged “tippling,” but his possible motive for lying is obscure, especially since he otherwise writes with great sympathy for the Bard. What is most interesting about the rather damning concluding remark is that it antedates the work of Currie.

While “C.G.” could conceivably have got his “information” from Thomson’s obituary or from Heron’s *Memoir*, it could, on the other hand, reflect a popular tradition about Burns which was more widespread in the years immediately following the Bard’s demise than is commonly supposed, and to counter which Jean Armour and Gilbert Burns said what they did on the vexed topic of Burns’s “tippling.”

Let us retain a suitably balanced view. Burns was neither an alcoholic in our modern, clinical sense nor a teetotaller. He was a man of the 18th-century, a period whose values and behaviour were not our own, a period of what we would today count rather heavy drinking. So let us accept the evidence of the poems Burns has left behind, and take his own, balanced view as told to David Sillar:

*For me, I’m on Parnassus’ brink,*
*Rivin the words to gar them clink;*
*Whyles daez’t wi love, whyles daez’t wi drink,*
*Wi jads or Masons;*
*An whyles, but ay owre late, I think*
*Braw sober lessons.*

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During my summer sojourn in Scotland, I found Robert Burns very much in the news. On July 14, for instance, the television news broadcast carried an item about Lord Singh and the new Singh tartan (a rather nice blue one), and reported that Lord Singh’s next project is to have Prestwick Airport renamed Robert Burns Airport!

Burns would have a field day with news that Menzies Cottage at Fortingall, the house in which supposedly Pontius Pilate was born, is on the market for offers of more than £85,000. Pilate’s father was reputedly a Roman soldier stationed at Fortingall who married a local woman, a Menzies, and the future governor of Palestine was born there before they returned to Rome.

Burns would surely smile to read that the lure of Viagra is causing a slump in the stag trade. Gamekeepers and stalkers throughout Scotland report losing the lucrative trade with the Orient in certain deer parts which were supposed by the Chinese to have aphrodisiac qualities. The slump has hit Harrod’s owner Mohammed Al Fayed’s Balnagown Estate in Easter Ross, among many others.

Burns would enjoy the on-going controversy about the Stone of Destiny. The Knights Templar are convinced that the real Perthshire-quarried rock from 1296 was hidden in Dundee and later in Perthshire while a dummy was placed in Westminster. Jean Nimmo, widow of the Dundee minister John Nimmo who guarded the stone for decades in one of the city’s churches, wants to give it to the devolved assembly to be placed under the chair of the presiding officer, David Steel, in accord with Rev. Nimmo’s wish that the real stone be given back when the Scots regained control of their own affairs.

A 15th-century Scots poet was in the news with the launch of a new collection of his works in Stirling, a town he once dubbed a “hideous hell.” William Dunbar (1460-1520) described Stirling in Dirge to the King as a town “inhabited only by hermits, where there is no fine wine and the beer is thin and weak.” The poet laureate to the court of James IV refers to Stirling as being like a purgatory on Earth whose courts are full of criminals and whose “pain and woe” contrast with Edinburgh’s “worship, wealth and welfare.” Paraphrasing the Lord’s Prayer, he wrote, “Lead us not into the temptation of Stirling, but deliver us from its evil.” One commentator observed, “Obviously, he wrote that before he visited Kirkaldy.”

Burns’s twa dugs came to mind with accounts of the proposed new Scottish Parliament building to house our 129 MSPs. The successful tender for the building has been won by Catalan architects Enric Miralles and Benedetta Tagliabue, not by a Scot. Then there came the report in the Aberdeen press (promptly denied by Andrew Slorance, media relations officer for the Scottish Parliament) that Scottish granite would not be good enough for the building, and Chinese granite would have to be imported. NSP MSP Alasdair Morgan said claims that Scottish quarrying methods caused stress fractures in the stone were wrong, as our quarries reserved special workings for stone to be used for such purposes. At any rate, Burns would certainly have been amused by the posturing of prominent Scots as they decided whether or not to attend the formal opening of the new Parliament itself on July 1st, when Scotland reconvened her first national Parliament since 1707.

Burns would have been most gratified as he took his place at the opening of Scotland’s Parliament in the form of the song, “A Man’s a Man for a’ That,” which Burns sent to Thomson in January, 1795 and which puts down the mighty from their seats and exalts them of low degree. The song was movingly sung by folk singer Sheena Wellington, who said the words were “what we want the Scottish Parliament to be all about.”

Robert Brown, Scottish Liberal Democrat MSP, was so moved that he wants “A Man’s a Man for a’ That” as Scotland’s new national anthem. Brown (who represents Glasgow Region) has written to Sir David Steel, presiding officer of the Scottish Parliament, and the leaders of the four
main parties to seek support for his proposal. *The Aberdeen Press & Journal* of July 16 quoted him verbatim:

I have been overwhelmed by the positive response to the suggestion I made that, following the success of the Scottish Parliament’s opening ceremony, Rabbie Burns’s anthem should be adopted as the anthem for Scotland. Many people support my assertion that an anthem which is forward-looking and concentrates on the themes of fraternity and equality is much more suitable at the dawn of the 21st century than one which harks back to centuries-old battles and enmities which are long since past. “God Save The Queen” would still be the British national anthem but the Burns song could be used on specifically Scottish occasions such as sporting competitions and events involving the Scottish Parliament. The proposal has so far received a great deal of encouragement.

“God Save the Queen” is English, and verse 3 talks of a Scotland kept subservient to English rule: “And like a torrent rush/Rebellious Scots to crush.” “Scots Wha Hae” is certainly nationalistic, but recalls ancient warfare and reeks of old battles and past victories and losses. The same can be said of “Flowers of Scotland” (the Corries, Ronnie Brown); yet it is uplifting in nature, and has been taken all over the world by Scottish international teams in rugby, football, ice hockey, etc. “A Man’s a Man for a’ That” has the great advantage of being both national and *international* at the same time, and projects the very image of which Scotland could be proud. The decision is keenly awaited.

It has been my pleasant task to make the acquaintance of the Rev. Fraser Aitken of St. Columba’s, Ayr, who will address the Edmonton Burns Club on January 25th, 2000. His visit is warmly anticipated. Our excellent speaker in 1999 was the Very Rev.Dr. James Simpson. Dr. Simpson’s granddaughter unfortunately has cystic fibrosis; he sold copies of his books of humour to raise funds in aid of cystic fibrosis research, and told an interesting story. It is suspected that both Burns and Jean Armour were carriers of the disease. This would explain why several of their children died very early (supposedly of pneumonia) while children Burns had by other women were healthy. Both parents have to be carriers, and then a child has a one in four chance of having the disease. Cystic fibrosis is genetic. Thick mucus builds up in the lungs, a breeding ground for bacteria and infections. Nowadays patients can take CPX, a new drug which gives promise of longer life as it attacks the defective enzyme causing the problem. A carrier has a 50%-50% chance of passing on cystic fibrosis. Perhaps someone with medical expertise can tell readers of *The Chronicle* more about this.

Statues of the Bard can be found throughout Scotland, in England (including London), Ireland, the USA, Canada, Australia and New Zealand. The Edmonton Club continues its efforts to erect a statue of Burns in Edmonton. The site has been granted, and the artist John Weaver of Hope, British Columbia, has cast the statue. Money is, of course, the problem; a total of $60,000.00 is needed for statue, base and plinth, and about half the necessary sum has been raised so far. Contributions would be warmly welcomed by Gordon Heron, 4108 - 106B Avenue, Edmonton, Alberta T6A 1K8. About half a dozen authentic Burns portraits exist, the most famous being the Alexander Nasymth bust portrait, but Weaver has not taken the Nasmyth as the basis for the Edmonton statue, preferring to research the matter thoroughly for himself. See photograph on page 50.

Raymond J. S. Grant
BURNS’S DEESIDE SONG

A Note on “Theniel Menzies’ Bonie Mary.”

By Alexander Keith, M.A.

(from “The Deeside Field” No. 5, 1931)

On September 9, 1787, Burns was in Aberdeen and called upon James Chalmers, the printer, with whom he met (besides “Tullochgorum’s” son, afterwards the Bishop) a “Mr. Marshall, one of the poete minores.” On September 10 he was at Stonehaven, having gone round by the Brig o’ Dye.

In the second volume of the Scots Musical Museum, the preface to which is dated March 1, 1788, song No. 156 is entitled “Theniel Menzies’ bonie Mary,” directed to be sung to the tune of Ruffians Rant. It is signed “Z,” which denotes “old verses, with corrections or additions” by Burns. The song runs thus:-

In coming by the brig o’ Dye,
At Darlet we a blink did tarry;
As day was dawin in the sky,
We drank a health to bonie Mary.

Theniel Menzies’ bonie Mary,
Theniel Menzies’ bonie Mary,
Charlie Grigor tint his plaidy,
Kissin’ Theniel’s bonie Mary.

Her een sae bright, her brow sae white,
Her haffet locks as brown’s a berry;
And ay they dimp’l wi’ a smile,
The rosy cheeks o’ bonie Mary.

Theniel’s Menzies’, etc.

We lap and danc’d the lee-lang day,
Till Piper lads were wae and weary;
But Charlie gat the spring to pay,
For kissin’ Theniel’s bonie Mary.

Theniel Menzies’, etc.

The song has to be sung “lively but not too fast” to its tune, Ruffian’s Rant, which is also the air to Mrs. Grant’s lively lyric, “Roys Wife of Aldivalloch.” To a slower movement, it is also the tune to “Though thou leave me now in sorrow” - a song well known as a duet in the dramatized version of Rob Roy. Ruffian’s Rant appears in several early song or air collections. It is in McFarlane’s MS., circa 1740; it is No. 43 in Bremner’s Reels, 1759; in Cumming’s Strathspeys, 1780, and No. 114 in Vol. II of Aird’s Airs, 1782. In the McFarlane MS, it is entitled Cog na scalan. John Glen found it, under the name of “Lady Frances Weemys’ Reel,” in a London collection, Walsh’s 24 Country Dances for the Year 1742. It was a favourite tune in the eighteenth century. At George Thomson’s request, Burns wrote the song “Is this the plighted, fond regard?” (No. 70 in Scottish Airs, 1799) to Ruffian’s Rant, and there are three songs to the air in The Merry Muses.

Who were Theniel Menzies and his bonny Mary and (for one day at least) the no less important Charlie Grigor? The question has been asked often enough, but never answered. It would be useful to know, because the Theniel Menzies song has a rather curious history, which the editors of the Centenary Burns either ignored or refused to investigate. Here is the song’s history, so far as I have been able to ascertain it.

James Chalmers, besides editing the Aberdeen Journal, ran (in spasms) the Aberdeen Magazine. One of the series of the magazine is from 1788 to 1791. Burns’s “Lament of Mary Queen of Scots” originally appeared in the magazine in the number dated October 21, 1790. In several previous numbers we find poems by Burns, either lifted from or printed simultaneously in other periodicals. But in the issue for November 20, 1788, there is a song, “Thainy Menzies’ Bonny Mary,” described as, “The words by a Gentleman of Aberdeen. Adapted to music by Mrs. Wilson.” In the British Museum volume of the Aberdeen Magazine for
The mixer's joys an' gowden bliss, I nei-ther ken nor seek to guess, I'm rich when I can

gain a kiss. Frae Thainy Menzies' bonny Mary. Thain-ny Men-zies' Bon-ny Ma-ry,

Thainy Men-zies' Bon-ny Mary. A' the world woud I gi'e For a kiss o' Thainy's Mary.

In Scotland braid or far awa',
Where maidens paint and busk them bra',
Sae sweet a lass I never saw,
As Thainy Menzies' bonny Mary.

Thainy Menzies', etc.

Some dozen'd loons, sae dowff and aul',
Had liv'd till they were growin' caul',
An' scarcely bent they had a saul,
Till they saw Thainy's bonny Mary.

Thainy Menzies', etc

Her milk-white hand, sae saft an' sleek.
Her lovely lips and rosy cheek.
Her twa bright een that seem to speak
Have ty'd my heart to Thainy's Mary.

Thainy Menzies', etc.

Thenie Menzie's bonny Mary;
A' the warld would I gie,
For a kiss o' Thenie's bonny Mary.

Thenie Menzie's bonny Mary;
A' the warld would I gie,
For a kiss o' Thenie's bonny Mary.

Thenie Menzie's, etc.

Some dozen'd loons sit douf and cauld,
And they hae liv'd till they've grown auld,
Scarce even kent they had a saul,
Til they saw Thenie's bonny Mary.

Thenie Menzie's, etc.

Her dimply chin and rosy cheeks,
Her milk-white hands saw saft and sleek,
And twa bricht een that seem to speak,
Hae tied my heart to Thenie's Mary.

Thenie Menzie's, etc.

This set from Peter Buchan may have been some old Aberdeenshire stroud, or it may have been a variant of Marshall's lines in the Aberdeen Magazine; or - and I think this the most probable solution - there was a "Thainy Menzies" chorus, from an older forgotten song, floating about the
The differences between the *Aberdeen Magazine* song and the Buchan set are not important; in fact, the two songs are so nearly the same that no “gentleman of Aberdeen” would have sent Chalmers the former as his own work if he had known of the latter. While quite a number of explanations of the whole story suggests themselves, one at least seems quite natural and watertight so far as our knowledge goes. Burns met Marshall in Chalmers’s company. The two speedily discovered a common interest - old songs. Marshall would mention to Burns the “Thenie Menzies” refrain which he had come across somewhere, and would add that he had tried to build a song round it. On such a topic Burns would instantly be all enthusiasm, and, one may guess, would vow to cap Marshall’s version with one of his own. On the way to Stonehaven he would be milling over a song in his mind, the Brig o’ Dye would supply the local colour of a pretty name, and the resultant “Theniel Menzies’ bonie Mary” was published at the first opportunity - in the second volume of the *Scots Musical Museum*, of which Burns was co-editor.

This, as I have said, is surmise, but we might be on surer ground if we could fix the identity of Theniel, Thenie, or Thainy Menzies.

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**FOUR FIFESHIRE FRIENDS OF ROBERT BURNS**

By Helen Cook

Robert Burns never visited St. Andrews or Cupar in Fife, but we can be sure that the poet was spoken of, his poetry read, and his songs sung, in and around the St. Andrews and Cupar of his day.

Cupar in Fife would perhaps not be the first place to come to mind if one were asked to name a town in Scotland where a friend and correspondent of Robert Burns lived and worked. And yet, that would be the correct answer for James Clarke, friend and correspondent of Burns, schoolmaster of Forfar and formerly schoolmaster of Moffat. On September 24th, 1802, Clarke was appointed “schoolmaster of the Latin school” in Cupar - that is, Cupar’s Grammer School. Clarke’s salary was fixed at £40 sterling per annum, which the Town Council of Cupar paid quarterly, “Mr. Clarke being bound to teach in the said school every branch of education he is capable of teaching...” so that the post was no sinecure.1

As all Burnsians know, professionally Clarke’s Moffat years were stormy, and he fell into a bitter dispute with his employers, the Patrons of Moffat Grammer School, described by Burns as “the Ministers, Magistrates, and Town Council of Edinburgh.” This acrimonious dispute came to a head in 1791, and Burns flew to the support and defence of “my friend Clarke,” “a man whom I particularly respect and esteem.” Burns wrote to influential friends and patrons of his own requesting their support for Clarke, and also lent Clarke considerable sums of money during his Moffat troubles. Eventually the dispute was resolved in Clarke’s favour: a victory which was in no small measure due to the poet’s moral support and practical help.

Possibly Clarke’s dispute with the patrons of Moffat School was not particularly unusual, for Clarke’s immediate predecessor in Cupar was sacked by the Town Council. And between the period 1778-88 the Rector of Cupar Grammer School had been locked in a bitter dispute with his employers, Cupar Town Council. Finally, the former agreed to resign “his Rectorship of the School of Cupar” on the condition the Town Council paid him £20 sterling annually. The Rector’s resignation
was accepted without a dissenting voice. Without commenting on the rights and wrongs of the Rector’s case, it is interesting that one of the sins of which he was accused was severe treatment of pupils, as indeed Clarke was similarly accused in the Moffat School dispute.

James Clarke taught in Cupar Grammer School, where he was latterly Rector, until he retired around 1820. He was well known among the ‘literati’ of the area, and after his retiral he moved to the university town of St. Andrews, where he stayed for about two years. Later he moved to Dollar, where he kept a boarding house and had as a friend and neighbour William Tennant*, the author of Anster Fair. Tennant was later Professor of Oriental Languages in St. Andrews University. James Clarke died on September 6th, 1825, and is buried at Dollar.

An excellent raconteur, Clarke was a good violinist, loved the songs of Burns, and shared to a degree, certainly in his younger days, the radical sympathies of the poet. Clarke spoke frequently of Burns, and celebrated the poet’s birth every year by holding an entertainment in his home. I suggest the following gentlemen, all with local connections, would have been welcome, honoured, and congenial guests of Clarke at such a celebration of Burns: Dr. Adam Ferguson, the Rev. Dr. Thomas Gillespie, and the Rev. James Macdonald from North Uist. All had some personal contact with Burns, and would have had reminiscences of the poet to contribute to the evening’s entertainment and celebration. All, too, were at ease in society.

Dr. Thomas Gillespie (1777-1844) was born in Closeburn, Dumfriesshire, as was James Clarke, and it is certain that the two men would have known each other, for from 1813 Gillespie was the minister of Cults parish in the Presbytery of Cupar. Liberal in his outlook, and keenly interested in education, Gillespie was also a talented writer in prose and verse. He was also a humorous man with a great zest for life, an eloquent speaker who loved to recall his boyhood in Dumfriesshire. There as a boy of twelve he had seen and overheard Burns going about his Excise business on a fair day in Thornhill, in August, 1790: an occasion when Burns admonished the widow Kate Watson, who brewed for sale only on fair days, before she could commit a fair day Excise offence. In 1824 Gillespie left Cults to take up a St. Andrews University appointment as assistant to his father-in-law Professor John Hunter, whom Gillespie succeeded in the Chair of Humanity in 1835. Thomas Gillespie died at Dunino near St. Andrews in 1844.

It was in Sciennes Hill House, the Edinburgh home of Professor Adam Ferguson (1723-1816), at a conversazione of the Edinburgh literati, that a teenage Walter Scott observed, and was acknowledged by, Burns. Ferguson, Professor of Natural Philosophy, and later professor of Moral Philosophy in Edinburgh University, and one time Keeper of the Advocates Library, chose to spend his retirement in St. Andrews, from whose university he had graduated in 1742. In St. Andrews he bought a sunny house at the east end of South Street, only a short distance from the ruins of St. Andrews Cathedral and a few steps from the old Black Bull Inn - a house which, because of its position in the heart of St. Andrews, was the very antithesis of Sciennes Hill House, and was in Ferguson’s day given the sobriquet ‘Kamchatka’, because of its isolation.

Ferguson, one of the most distinguished men of the Scottish Enlightenment, and a sophisticated, well travelled man, became a familiar figure in St. Andrews, well wrapped up against the vagaries of the weather. He enjoyed the society of the St. Andrews academics and that of his old friend George Dempster of Dunnichen. Dempster, described by Burns as a “true blue Scot”, after his retiral from Parliament spent his winters in St. Andrews, where like Ferguson he bought a house. A son of Logierait manse in Perthshire, Adam Ferguson spoke fluent Gaelic, as did the Reverend James Macdonald, who on the evening of the 1st of June, 1796, dined with and spent an evening in the company of Robert Burns in a Dumfries Inn.

Macdonald, from North Uist, was Minister of Anstruther Wester in the East Neuk of Fife (1799-1804). A native Gaelic speaker with strong clan ties, Macdonald’s family was through marriage and friendship connected with both Flora Macdonald and John of Moidart, Chief of Clan

* In 1822 the Professor was appointed an Honorary Member of Dumfries Burns Club. - Editor.
Ranald. In 1808 Macdonald, who was an ardent admirer of Burns, his poetry, and his politics, married Janet Playfair, the second daughter of Dr. James Playfair, the then Principal of United College, St. Andrews University. Janet shared with her husband a love of travel and journal keeping.

James Macdonald was about twenty-five years old when he dined with Burns. A graduate of Aberdeen University who had studied divinity at Edinburgh University, he was much thought of in the circles of the Edinburgh 'literati'. In the summer of 1796 Macdonald was about to leave for Europe as the tutor/companion to the son of William Macdonald W.S., of St. Martins in Perthshire, a former guardian of John of Moidart. But before leaving Scotland for the Continent with his charge, James Macdonald "resolved to visit several districts of my own country before I proceeded to the Continent."

The young minister kept a journal of his Scottish journeyings between 24th of May and 25th July, 1796, a journal which contains an account of his meeting with Burns, only seven weeks and two days before the poet's death on the 21st July, 1796. Two hundred years later James Macdonald’s writing is faded, but his account of his meeting with Burns has lost none of its clarity, fascination, and poignancy. It was written on the 2nd June, 1796, at Sanquhar, when all the details of the meeting were fresh and clear in the young minister’s mind. It reads as follows:

Yesterday, Burns the Ayrshire poet dined with me, and a few evenings of my life passed away more to my satisfaction. He looks consumptive, but was in excellent spirits, and displayed as much wit and humour in three hours time as any man I ever knew. He told me that being once in Stirling when he was a young lad, and heated with drink, he had nigh got himself into a dreadful scrape by writing the following lines on the pane of a glass window in an Inn.

> Here Stewarts once in triumph reign’d,
> And laws for Scotland’s weal ordain’d;
> But now unroof’d their Palace stands,
> Their Sceptre’s fall’n to other hands;
> Fall’n indeed unto the earth
> Whence grovelling reptiles take their birth;
> And since great Stewart’s line is gone,
> A race outlandish fills their throne,
> An idiot race to honour lost,
> Who know them best despise them most.

Those lines are a proof of Burns's rashness and folly. He promised to send me an ode he composed when chosen poet Laureat (sic) to the meeting of Jacobite gentlemen once in Edinr. When old Farquharson of Monalterie happened to meet with a poor man who had fought by his side at the Battle of Culloden, which circumstances when he mentioned it brought the tears into the poet’s eyes.4

He told me many anecdotes of himself and others in the very best and most genuine spirit of pleasantry. The landlord of our Inn commonly known by the name of the Marquis (s) Johnstone is also a good-humoured fellow and served as a whetstone for Burns’ wit. They are both staunch Republicans. Burns repeated an ode he composed on the Pretender’s birthday replete with grand imagery and brilliant expression. I am sorry I do not remember the words of the ode. One simile which referred to the Swiss avalanche was sublime. He promised to send me a copy of it.

At parting the poor poet with tears in his eyes took an affectionate leave of me. He has vast pathos in his voice, and as he himself says in his Vision, 'His eye e’en turn’d on empty space beams keen wi’ honour.' I am happy to have seen and enjoyed the company of this true heaven-born Genius, whose conversation is at least correspondent to his published thoughts, and whose
personal appearance and address, partake more than is generally allowed of those of the gentleman and of the scholar.

The ode which Burns recited to Macdonald was his “Birthday Ode for 31st December 1787”, and the sublime simile was:

\[ \text{As from the cliff, with thundering course,} \\
\text{The snowy ruin smokes along.} \]

Macdonald’s meeting with Burns was a brief encounter, but an interesting one on several accounts. He does not say how he came to meet Burns, or whether he went to Dumfries with this in mind. Possibly it was through the mysterious Mr. W— of whom he wrote: “Immediately on my arrival here (Dumfries) I sent for my old friend and acquaintance Mr. W—, writer, who soon made his appearance and has hardly left me for a minute ever since I came.” It is tantalising not to be told who Mr. W— was. Could he have been William Wallace, the young Dumfries lawyer, who knew and admired Burns and who, after the poet’s death, did much for the deceased’s family? In 1796 Wallace would have been about the same age of James Macdonald.

The Burns the young minister describes is a sentimental and easily moved man, a witty man whose conversation sparkled and entertained and who was excellent company, a man whose face was marked seemingly by ill-health rather than dissipation; and indeed circa 1st of June, 1796, Burns was writing to Maria Riddell: “I am in such miserable health…” But Macdonald’s descriptions of Burns does not portray the sick man who wrote on the 26th of June to James Clarke: “…were you to see the emaciated figure who now holds the pen to you, you would not know your old friend…” Nor does it portray the dying man who described himself in a letter of the 7th July to Andrew Cunningham as “pale, emaciated, and so feeble as occasionally to need help from my chair - my spirits fled! fled!” which suggests that the deterioration of the poet’s health was rapid, probably quickened by incorrect medical treatment.

Touching things political, the young minister also portrays Burns wearing his Radical and Jacobite hats. Did Burns know that although Macdonald moved in politically conservative circles in Scotland the young minister at this time described himself as a “democrat” and “for the French”, although he did not openly express his views? In 1793 Macdonald had been rash enough to visit Thomas Muir, Thomas Palmer, and William Skirving of ‘The Friends of People’ when they were awaiting trial in Edinburgh on charges of sedition.

After he left Dumfries, partly by accident and partly by design James Macdonald made what must have been one of the earliest tours of the Burns country, visiting people and places associated in some way with the poet and/or celebrated by him in song and verse. Macdonald wrote the last pages of his travel journal in Highland “silence and solitude” at Braemar. The pages were dated 25th July, 1796. He seemed unaware of the death of Burns on the 21st of July. Soon after, Macdonald and his pupil left for Weimar. The young minister found life there most congenial, and while abroad moved in educational and literary circles. He made numbers of friends, among whom were Goethe, Herder, and Wieland.

Macdonald also discovered that in certain German circles there was a great deal of interest in Scotland and things Scottish, and as a patriotic Scot he was more than pleased to supply such information. He contributed “Edinburgh Letters” to the Neuer Deutscher Merkur of the day, and also drew attention to “Mr. Burns” and his poetry. On his return to Scotland, Macdonald sent books and other printed matter to his German friends, including Currie’s The Works of Robert Burns with an Account of his Life (1800). This last apparently got lost in transit.

The life of James Macdonald, clansman, Minister of the Church of Scotland, tutor, and writer, proved to be as short as that of Robert Burns, the poet and man he so much admired. Macdonald died in Edinburgh on the 18th of April, 1810, aged thirty-eight, having just finished writing his General View of the Agriculture of the Hebrides. He was buried in St. Cuthbert’s Churchyard,
Edinburgh, in the tomb of his former teacher James Robertson, Professor of Oriental Languages in Edinburgh University. His wife Janet returned to stay in St. Andrews.

Works Consulted

Cupar Town Council Minutes.
Diary of the Rev. James Macdonald, the. The author wishes to express her thanks to St. Andrews University Library for permission to quote from the manuscript of Rev. Macdonald’s diary.

Notes

1. It is probable that one extra subject Clarke would teach in Cupar, for which he received fees over and above his salary, would be music. He did so in Forfar, where he was also choirmaster. According to the Minutes of Cupar Town Council Clarke was also fully qualified to teach French as well as Latin.

2. Adam Ferguson is buried in the grounds of St. Andrews Cathedral.

3. Burns was hardly “a young lad” when he scratched those lines with a diamond pen on a pane of his bedroom window in a Stirling Inn. It was during his 1787 Highland Tour with William Nicol, and Burns later obliterated the lines by breaking the pane in October, 1787. It is interesting to compare Macdonald’s version of “Lines on seeing the Royal Palace at Stirling in ruins” with the published version. Did Macdonald take down the lines when they were declaimed by Burns, or did he write them down from memory?

4. Scott also remarked that on the occasion of Adam Ferguson’s conversazione “Burns seemed much affected” by a print accompanied by a verse,…”or rather the ideas which it suggested to his mind. He actually shed tears.” The print depicted a soldier lying dead in the snow, and beside him his widow, child, and dog mourning him.

5. Johnstone was obviously the subject of the following epitaph composed by Burns.
On an Innkeeper nicknamed “The Marquis”.
Here lies a mock Marquis whose titles were shamm’d,
If ever he rise, it will be to be damn’d.
This inn was apparently sited in what was called “The Marquis’s Close” in Dumfries.

6. Macdonald knew Lord Braxfield. The latter was father of John of Moidart’s first wife. Macdonald’s political views gradually moderated and became more conservative.


8. Most of Macdonald’s life was spent as a tutor/travelling companion, and writer. He accompanied young Clanranald abroad, and later helped to extricate the young man from an entanglement with a married woman in Sweden.
CHILD’S COFFIN FOUND IN “HIGHLAND MARY’S” GRAVE

During the past 200 years one of the most important and equally controversial subjects related to the life of Robert Burns was the suggestions that “Highland Mary” Campbell died in childbirth and that Robert Burns was the father.

In the 1920’s the subject received much publicity when during the removal of the remains of Mary Campbell to her new resting place in Greenock Cemetery portions of a child’s coffin were found in the grave.

Some 10 years later the subject was again raised and on this occasion on a national basis, when the Daily Record serialised extracts from Catherine Carswell’s book* the Life of Robert Burns in which she stated:-

“...She was no Ayrshire girl, but was from the Cowal coast of the Firth of Clyde, where they spoke the Gaelic. With pleasure he had heard her soft, singing, delicately broken speech, with delight he had looked into her shy, sincere and amiable eyes. He had learned her name - Mary Campbell - that her father, once a preventive man, owned a small coaling vessel, and that she was a dairymaid at Stairaird. It may have been on his recommendation that in November she left her Tarbolton place and became nurse-maid at the Castle to Gavin Hamilton’s new baby - his second boy, born that summer. But all through the winter and early spring Jean had been in sturdy possession, and April brought the fama clamosa. Even if Mary did not know before, she knew then all that was said of Robert.

She was the retiring sort. When he asked her one day in April to meet him that evening in the ruined tower of the Abbey she refused. But on hearing from his own lips that he was deserted, that he was free, that he was crazy with a young man’s longing and that he wanted a wife, she was not able to go on refusing. For she was in love. Very soon Robert and Mary were meeting as often as meetings were possible - that is to say, every Sunday in daylight and every weekday that could be managed after dark. And because of her outlandishness and his desperation these meeting brimmed with a peculiar sweetness. Jean had been willing with the homely and hearty willingness of a young heifer. But Mary was wilder, gentler in her yielding. She was quiet, superstitious, with a delicacy of spirit and a capacity for sacrifice to which Jean would always be a stranger. She fulfilled his boyish dreams. And he had sought her out and won her, not she him. Would she marry him he asked? Seeing him tender and sincere, she said she would. Would she also trust him? For good reasons they could not immediately celebrate their marriage. Though morally free, Robert has still to receive ecclesiastical discharge from his promise to Jean, to discharge Dr. Auld would give him, he was assured, when he had stood in church for his three rebukes. Would Mary trust him? Mary would and did. During the last fortnight of April and the first fortnight of May they loved without reserve. Not even Smith shared their secret. Before May was well advanced Mary knew that in due time she would bear Robert a child.

Meeting at night beneath the still tightly closed buds of the hawthorns the lovers measured themselves against fate. They kissed and made their difficult arrangements. Mary must still trust Robert and do as he said. She could not remain in Mauchline - not till the faintest suspicion might be aroused. Term day - May the fifteenth - was near. She must give the Hamiltons immediate notice on the usual plea.

that her mother needed her at home to help with
the younger children. She would tell her parents
that she was tokened and had come home to
prepare for her speedy marriage. Robert would
send them a letter setting forth his honourable
intentions. As soon as things were cleared for
him he would come for her; or if this was
prevented, she would meet him at Greenock,
where she had an uncle in the carpentry line,
or at Glasgow - if it was from Glasgow port he
would sail. At either place they would be
publicly married. They cherished the idea that
they might then even sail to the Indies together.
In the interval she would not be able to write to
him, but he would write to her and send her the
songs that welled from this heart at every thought
of her.

So they made their plans, as daring and well-
meaning a pair of lovers as ever kissed. But Mary
was Highland. Before she went she would have
Robert swear on the Holy Book itself and would
herself so swear. And she would have their vows
repeated across running water, so to placate the
grudging powers of nature.

Only

thus could she
travel away alone and face her parents.

Robert was the last man to deny these
requests. So the jeering prophecy of Mrs.
Armour was fulfilled. He purported to contract
another irregular union. This time he would put
such awe upon the women that she would dread
faithlessness as a danger to her very soul. For
himself, the more firmly he was committed the
better he was pleased. Therefore on Sunday
evening, the fourteenth, when Mary's little box
was corded in her attic, they met under Stairaird
crag at that quiet ferny place where Mauchline
burn runs over a shelf of rock into Ayr river.
Leaping across the narrower water Robert knelt
by Mary's direction (he being less knowing than
she in such procedures); and he on the further
bank, she on the nearer, they joined hands under
the current, thus solemnly to pledge their troth.
Then they exchanged the Bibles each had
brought. Robert's was a smart, two-volume one,
gilt-edged, and with his name, his Mason mark
and the Mossgiel address on its fly-leaves.
Producing his ink-horn and 'old stumpie', his
quill - which he was used to carry with him for
the taking down of stray song-music - he first
added Mary's name to his own in each volume,
and then he wrote on the blank pages opposite
these awful words:

On vol. I - 'And ye shall not swear by My
Name falsely - I am the Lord.- Levit. 19th chap.:
12th verse.'

And on vol. II - 'Thou shalt not forswear
thyself, but shalt perform unto the Lord thine
Oath.- Matth. 5 Ch.: 33rd Verse.'

What he wrote in Mary's Bible for his own
reminder will never be known, but surely it was
every bit as solemn and binding. Mary was
satisfied that she was truly married according
to Scots Law and the Evangel, as well as by the
rites of jealous nature. And so indeed she was,
unless Robert should choose to perjure himself,
which was unthinkable. Next day, sad but
confident, she set off on her tedious journey by
cart and sail to Campbeltown in Kintyre, where
her parents were now living. And Robert, sitting
that night in the rat-haunted Mossgiel parlour,
his heart melting as the thought of her, his chair
balanced on its back legs, composed the
following lines - for a son of Mr. Aiken's who
was leaving home for the first time:

'The sacred love o' well-plac'd love,
Luxuriantly indulge it,
But never tempt th' illicit rove,
Tho' naething should divulge it.
I wave the quantum of the sin,
The hazard of concealing;
But och! it hardens a' within,
And perturbs the feeling!'

There was nothing of the 'illicit' in his
feeling for Mary. He was 'luxuriantly' possessive
and had bound himself 'by secret troth and
honour's band.' By his own code he was as truly
married to her as if all the powers of Church
and State had tied the knot. After swinging a
while loner on the back legs of his chair and
crunching 'old stumpie' he smiled and sat
foursquare and wrote further:

'If ye have made a step aside-
Some hap mistake o'erta'en you,'
Yet still keep up a decent pride,
And ne’er o’er far demean you.
Time comes wi’ kind oblivion’s shade,
And daily darker sets it;
And if nae mair mistakes are made,
The world soon forgets it.’

And what, all this while, of Mary? Ever
unassuming, she had retired into the background
of Robert’s life. But there she was established
in modest supremacy, blooming sweetly and
many-rooted as a daisy plant. He was faithful to
her in his, and in nature’s fashion; his tender
loyalty was not diminished but rather increased
by the turmoil of his life and by the unexpected
turn things had taken. But his life was in turmoil
and things had taken most unexpected turns, and
Mary’s was a waiting part.

Small comfort all this was to her as her body
grew heavier with the weight of Robert’s child,
and her heart with the secret she was trying to
keep from her parents. For she was their eldest
and their much loved and trusted daughter,
always frank and good, kind and trustworthy,
helpful with the four younger ones. The only
cause of uneasiness she had ever given them was
her tokening to an Ayrshire man she hardly knew
and of whom doubtful stories were told. As
summer passed and autumn drew on and still
Robert’s letters told of postponement, she saw
the race with nature grow every more desperate.
But she had still every reason to believe in
Robert, and his letters continued to come, and
his loving songs. He would be meeting her at
Greenock in August... in September... in
October...

For again her secret husband had put off his
coming. The Bell sailed without him on
September 20. The harvest was nearly got in.
And still Robert waited for word from Lawrie,
and Mary for a clear word from Robert. His
future, which had been dark but distinct, might
now be brighter to a casual eye, but it was
painfully vague and threatening to his own. To
stay on after one’s leavetaking is bad enough,
but here there was worse; and lingering among
the scenes to which he had bidden farewell,
Robert was tragically at a loss. Closing around
him he could feel the meshes of a net invisible
to others, which was the work of his own ‘folly-
devoted’ hands. His very success as tightening
the knots, for he had laid his plans for failure
and departure. Would he be able to avail himself
of the best-meant plans of his friends, based as
these were on his staying at home, when the truth
of his circumstances was discovered? His known
position with regard to Jean would make it hard
enough for those who tried to obtain an Excise
or other post for him. (And there was no getting
away from it that when he looked at Jean
suckling his twins he realised how deeply his
affections were engaged and how gladly he
would make provision for the three of them. But
what when they learned of his solemn pledge to
Mary? Yet with Mary he could never break faith,
and he must indeed act quickly if he was to avoid
what he would deeply have agreed with De
Quincey was ‘an abiding pang, such as time
could not abolish, of bitter self-reproach.’ For
the most part he still saw nothing for it but Mary
and Jamaica, and that as soon after harvest as
might be. But he had consented to wait until
Lawrie had heard from Blacklock, if only for
the chance of a speedy second edition, which
might help to solve the still pressing problem
of money. Armour had withdrawn his threat, so that
Mossigli farm was safe to live in, but the
situation of its tenants was not as yet materially
affected by the success of the poems, which
remained strictly local. Here was yet another
paralysing factor - the hope of fame. Robert
could not forgo the verdict of Edinburgh. Mary,
after all, might benefit and could not suffer by
that verdict. She was but five months gone. She
could still wait a week or two.

That same afternoon, while the poet was
taking wine with Lord Daer at Catrine, earth was
being shovelled over the body of Mary Campbell
in Greenock churchyard. The same grave
contained her dead baby. Round the grave the
men of the Campbells and the Macphersons
were cursing the name of Robert Burns as the
Armours had never cursed it.

It happened in this manner. When it had
begun to seem urgent to Mary that she should
get away from him if she was to keep her secret
longer, she arranged to take a situation in
Glasgow from the November term. Even if she
were to get as far as Glasgow her lover could
easily come for her there; but she prayed she
might not get beyond Greenock, where she could stay with a cousin of her mother's - a shipwright named Macpherson - till Martinmas and hope for the best. As her younger brother Robert was on the point of being apprenticed to Macpherson, their father took the family in his boat from Campbeltown to Greenock and went with them himself to stay in their cousins' tenement house so that he might see his son through the 'brothering-feast'. There would be a party to admit young Robert to the craft: Mary would help with everything: it would be a family occasion.

So it was; but next morning the new-made apprentice fell ill - too ill to go out to work. Everybody made a joke of it. Mary said he had drunk too much. Macpherson observed that it was a mercy he had lately bought a grave, as it was no easy matter getting one in Greenock just then, unless a man were a stranger or a pauper, when he went to the common corner of the churchyard. Still the boy Robert ached and drooped; and instead of throwing off what seemed like nothing more than an attack of low spirits he began to shiver and burn by turns, to breathe quickly and to vomit. His head pained him; there were noises in his ears and throbbings in his temples; his eyes lost their brightness and seemed sunk in their sockets; his skin darkened and his teeth and lips looked blackish. When he began to wander in his speech and purple spots appeared here and there on his body, all knew it was the 'putrid' or 'malignant' fever.

Mary, of course, minded him. Mary was always good. She was a devoted nurse, but Scottish methods - especially Highland methods - were the reverse of hygienic. With small, low-ceilinged, crowded bedrooms (and even beds), closed windows, absence of drainage, the presence of many bewailing friends, 'the fivver' had a way of spreading itself throughout whole households and parishes. As Robert grew better his sister began to hang her head. She developed the characteristics symptoms. But to the consternation of her cousins and her father she also displayed symptoms which were unusual in her disorder. The strange frenzy of her manner was not to be accounted for by common delirium. It must surely be that she was 'smit', bewitched, under the evil eye. So the one-eyed man, her father - he had lost an eye in the Revenue service - went to where two streams meet, and from the joining of the waters he chose out seven well-matched smooth pebbles. These were put to boil in new milk for the correct time and the milk given to Mary to drink. But Mary only grew worse, and soon the reason for her peculiar frenzy was revealed. She gave birth to a premature infant. Within a day or two both were dead. Before the burial her little sister went privily and cut off a lock of the corn-coloured hair.

A week or so later the Mossgiel household were all sitting in the kitchen. The harvest being now in, the men were idle - but one at least of them restless. The women were making ready for winter spinning, and young Bell was being shown how to use the 'big' wheel, which had just been got out, when the carrier arrived with a letter for Robert. Looking up from her thread, Bell marked how her brother scanned the direction on the cover, as people do when they see an unfamiliar hand, and how he went to the window for light and privacy. She watched him slyly with her black eyes, saw his face darken and convulse, and then hastily resumed her work as he turned, crushed the letter in his hand and left the house.

Robert wrote to the Campbells, but there was no reply. He wrote again pleading his honourable love, beseeching for some word of how Mary had come to die, begging for at least a handkerchief or ribbon that she had worn - with the same result. At Greenock and at Campbeltown Mary's father gave orders that neither her name nor Robert's should be mentioned in his hearing. All the letters and poems she had received were destroyed. Only the mutilated Bibles were kept as a shameful memorial; and the little sister, who had hair as yellow as that she had cut from Mary's head, knew some of Robert's verses by heart from having heard them often repeated in confidential hours.

Shock and grief apart, Mary Campbell's death affected Robert's life crucially. On her account he had freed himself from Jean; now he was freed from her. Before this freedom there is no sign that he had thought of going to Edinburgh; after it, almost at once, he decided
that he would go. No definite news has been received about a second edition, but the last few weeks had brought new influential admirers, and the old admirers like Aiken thought it might be well for the poet to visit the capital in person. Richmond was written to for a bed. If the visit were a failure Robert could still sail for Jamaica— from Leith instead of from Greenock. He had heard of a ship that was leaving Leith before Christmas."

The following appeared in the Daily Record proving the fact that the remains of the child’s coffin in the grave belonged to Agnes Hendry:

HIGHLAND MARY’S TOMB

MYSTERY OF INFANT’S REMAINS

REMARKABLE STATEMENT

The Daily Record is able to reveal important evidence which throws new light on the mystery surrounding the discovery of an infant’s body in “Highland Mary’s” grave in the old Greenock Cemetery. A Greenock resident Miss Hendry, states that her father often told her that his little sister has been buried beside “Highland Mary”. Miss Hendry has no doubt whatever that the child’s remains were those of her relative.

CUSTOM OF 100 YEARS AGO

WHEN GROUND WAS LENT

The following was addressed by Miss Hendry to the Editor of the Daily Record:

2 Margaret Street,
Greenock, October 9, 1930.

Sir, - At the time when the remains of “Highland Mary” were discovered in the Greenock Cemetery, reference was made to the little coffin in our local newspaper, the Greenock Telegraph, and a day or two later, in the same paper, Mr. James Hendry, jeweller, stated it contained the body of his infant aunt.

I can verify this statement, as many a time I have heard my father say that his wee sister, Agnes, was buried beside “Highland Mary”.

This child was born on January 4, 1827 and died February 27, 1827.

My grandfather’s burying ground was in Campbeltown, and a very usual custom in those days was to get the use of a friend’s ground.

(Miss) J. Hendry.

NO BURIAL GROUND

Interviewed last night by a Daily Record representative at her home, 2 Margaret Street, Greenock, Miss Hendry said she felt that she could no longer allow the slanderous statements in Mrs. Carswell’s book regarding “Highland Mary” to pass unchallenged.

“The suggestion”, she said, “that the baby found in “Highland Mary’s” grave was Mary Campbell’s child, is utter rubbish. The baby was Agnes Hendry, my father’s sister. Of that there is not the slightest doubt.

“The baby’s father, my grandfather, was Capt. Duncan Hendry, a Campbeltown man who came to reside in Greenock, where the child was born.

“My grandfather had no burial ground in Greenock. The family burial ground was in Campbeltown, and, being a friend and neighbour of the MacPhersons*, he was allowed to bury the child in the same grave as “Highland Mary”. That was the custom in those days.

“Had it been a grown-up person, of course, a new lair would have been taken, but not in the

* The Wife of Peter MacPherson, a Carpenter in Greenock was a relative of the Campbells, hence the fact that Mary Campbell was interred in the MacPherson Lair.
case of a baby. I have often heard my father talk about it.

**IN AMERICAN NEWSPAPER**

"Shortly after "Highland Mary's" remains were reinterred in Greenock Cemetery, ten years ago, it was recorded in the *Greenock Telegraph*, that the coffin found in "Highland Mary's" grave was that which had contained the baby Hendry. The first suggestion that the child was "Highland Mary's" was made in an American newspaper. I paid no attention to that at the time, but now that it has cropped up again in Mrs. Carswell's book I feel bound to state the true facts of the case.

Another point which proves that Mrs. Carswell is wrong is that if the child had been Mary Campbell's it would have been laid in the same coffin with her.

All our family have been keenly interested in the controversy, and only the other day I had a letter from my cousin in Tarbrax in which she said, 'I see that woman slandering our "Highland Mary". Oh! that mistake of burying our wee auntie in her grave.'

"Mrs. Carswell is also wrong when she speaks of "Highland Mary" having a little sister. She had only one sister, called Ann, who was a married woman when Mary Campbell died, and her son, who afterwards became a plater in Greenock attended "Highland Mary's" funeral."

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As recent as the 1990's it was suggested that forensic science would be one method of proving the case by way of a DNA profile. This could only be done by opening up the grave and examining the infant's remains.

The owners of the "Highland Mary" lair in Greenock Cemetery are Greenock Burns Club who would have to give permission for the grave to be opened and there is no possibility that would take place.

The following newspaper article (circa 1930's) was sent in following the publication in the 1998 *Burns Chronicle* of a paper given by Dr. Margery Palmer McCulloch to the delegates attending the annual conference of the Burns Federation held in the Peebles Hydro - "A Bad Sort But - Loveable".

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**"HIGHLAND MARY"**

In connection with the controversy raging over Burns and Highland Mary, as a result of the publication in the *Daily Record* of extracts from Mrs. Carswell's new "Life" of the poet, a Campbeltown correspondent recalls the investigations into the problem conducted by the late Colonel Charles Mactaggart.

Colonel Mactaggart, who was the recognised historian of Campbeltown, found that Mary's father Archibald Campbell, was a cuttersman, who eventually obtained a financial interest in and the command of a smack plying with cargoes of coal between Ardrossan, Troon and the Argyllshire ports especially Campbeltown.

For some years after his marriage Captain Campbell as he was styled, lived at Dunoon, and there Mary, his eldest child, and two of his other children were born.

In 1773, when Mary was nine years of age, he decided to settle in Campbeltown, as his work lay chiefly with this port. He and his wife and family made the journey from Dunoon to Campbeltown in his own smack, the voyage taking about ten days, and they all eventually landed safely at Dalintober Quay.

They took up their abode at Campbeltown in a house which stood where Gayfield Place now stands at the head of Broombrae, looking down Saddell Street.

**UNIDENTIFIED GRAVE**

There they lived for many years. From Campbeltown the Captain made his voyages. There he died, and he is buried in Kilkerran Cemetery, Campbeltown, although his grave cannot now be identified.

On the Broombrae Mary spent her girlhood, and she was educated at a school which was carried on in a little thatched house in the High Street of Dalintober, just opposite the site of the existing Scotia Distillery, and within 50 yards of her father's house.

An old Cambeltonian who remembered Mary as a girl told Colonel Mactaggart she was
well known in Dalintober for her nice manners, winning ways and readiness to help all requiring her assistance.

He described her as having a graceful figure, a delicate face, a fair complexion, fair hair, and very light blue winsome eyes.

When she was fourteen years of age Mary entered domestic service as nursery-maid in the family of the minister of Lochranza, and after spending two years there she went to the house of Montgomerie of Coilsfield in Ayrshire as dairymaid.

**GAELIC HER MOTHER TONGUE**

Montgomerie's wife, was a Miss Katherine Arbuckle, who was closely related to a well known Campbeltown family, and it was probably owing to that fact that Mary found her way to Coilsfield.

Mary's mother tongue was Gaelic. She spoke broken English, and so she became known at Coilsfield as "Highland Mary".

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"Burns was a fickle lover," Colonel Mactaggart once declared, "and his relations with the women he loved were not always honourable. He was anything but what Kipling would call a 'plaster saint.' In fact, he was a sore sinner.

"Had he been more of a saint his memory would be more respected and revered than it is now; but it would probably be less loved, for it is just his waywardness, his forwardness, his sinfulness - in short, his humanity - which has done so much to endear him and his poetry to his fellow countrymen the world over.

**INSPIRED BY PURITY**

But his love for his Highland Mary, declared the Colonel, was of a different type from that which he gave to the other women who came into his life. It was a higher, a purer, a nobler, a better love, and the explanation of that fact lies in the piety, the purity, the innocence of the girl who inspired it. Poor Mary's life was short, but it was probably, in Colonel Mactaggart's view, a happy one, and she did not live in vain, for she inspired the most beautiful love song in the English language "To Mary in Heaven".

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31 Upper Charles Street, Greenock where "Highland Mary" died during October, 1786. The houses were demolished and a plaque on the ground marks the site of the house.
TOAST TO THE TWA LANDS

It is impossible to propose the toast to the twa lands of Scotland and Canada without a lump coming to one's throat, for we emigre Scots of the Diaspora always have a soft spot in our hearts for both our almae matres. Last semester a colleague in the Theology Faculty of Charles University asked me a question I was unable to answer – “Where's home?” I have a house in Canada, and another in Scotland, commuting annually between the two and hoping that I never have to choose between them. My term of teaching in Prague should have lent the vexing question the gentle boons of distance and detachment, but such did not, alas, prove to be the case. I fell back upon the cliche that “home is where the heart is,” then upon the Buchan poet Charles Murray’s touching poetic gem, Hamewith:

Hot youth is ever a ranger,
New scenes ever its desire;
Could Eild, doubtful o’ the stranger,
Thinks but o’ hauin’ in the fire.

Midway, the wanderer is weary,
Fain he’d be turnin’ in his prime
Hamewith – the road that’s never dreary,
Back where his heart is a’ the time.

Many Scots who leave their native land take this attitude of sentimental Sehnsucht, as did Robert Burns when in 1786 he thought of leaving for a new life in Jamaica. Just think how different things would have been had Burns taken passage to Jamaica as he planned – he could have been the first Scottish reggae poet and rapper. Burns expressed his feelings in such poems as Stanzas on Naething, On a Scotch Bard gone to the West Indies, My Highland Lassie O, The Farewell to the Brethren of St. James’s Lodge, Tarbolton, The Farewell, Tho Cruel Fate, and the best of the valedictory poems written that autumn, Farewell to Eliza:

From thee, Eliza, I must go,
And from my native shore:
The cruel fates between us throw
A boundless ocean’s roar;
But boundless oceans, roaring wide
Between my love and me,
They never, never can divide
My heart and soul from thee.

Taken to an extreme, this train of thought can lead to the rhetorical patriotism of Scott’s Lay of the Last Minstrel:

Breathes there the man, with soul so dead,
Who never to himself hath said,
This is my own, my native land!
Whose heart hath ne’er within him burn’d,
As home his footsteps he hath turn’d,
From wandering on a foreign strand!

And it can lead to the stark realism of Maurice Lindsay’s, The Exiled Heart:

My restless thoughts migrate to a Northern city – fat pigeons stalking the dirty, cobbled quays, where a sluggish river carries the cold self-pity of those for whom life has never flowed with ease, from a granite bridge to the grey Atlantic seas.

The anonymous Canadian Boat Song takes a tack which combines sentiment and anger:

· From the lone shieling of the misty island
  Mountains divide us, and the waste of seas-
  Yet still the blood is strong, the heart is Highland,
  And we in dream behold the Hebrides.

When the bold kindred, in the time long
vanish’d,
Conquer’d the soil and fortified the keep –
No seer foretold the children would be banish’d,
That a degenerate lord might boast his sheep.

The other side of the coin, of course, is in the stories of those emigré Scots who have taken Canada as their own, expanding Auld Scotia to embrace Nova Scotia, seizing this new patria and moulding it anew on their own terms. In his history of the voyageurs of early Canada and the Hudson’s Bay Company entitled Caesars of the Wilderness, Peter Newman describes the striking behaviour of Governor Simpson:

“...when the Governor’s canoe... flashed out of the dark rock ‘at the point’ into our full view, and gracefully turned into the little ‘port’ at our feet, the heart seemed to swell with admiration and delight at the sight. Never; never, had anything so grand and splendid, and delightful withal, been seen in those primitive wilds!

Flags flying, cannon blasting, his piper leading the way, the Governor would step ashore in his theatrical Royal Stuart tartan cloak with collar of soft Genoa velvet. Simpson’s insistence on being convoyed by a piper was only partly vanity. What better, what more emotional way to reach the hearts and souls of his men in these lonely huts than with the mantra of the glens? The bagpipes may have wowed the Highlanders, but Simpson’s caravan left behind many puzzled Indians. According to one anonymous and quite possibly apocryphal story, a Cree who heard Colin Fraser play at Norway House reported to his chief: ‘One white man was dressed like a woman, in a skirt of funny color. He had whiskers growing from his belt and fancy leggings. He carried a black swan which had may legs with ribbons tied to them. The swan’s body he put under his arm upside down, then he put its head in his mouth and bit it. At the same time he pinched its neck with his fingers and squeezed the body under his arm until it made a terrible noise.”

Ged Martin and Jeffrey Simpson talk in their book, Canada's Heritage in Scotland, in similar tones:

“It is not quite true to suggest that the Scots made Canada - not quite. It is true to state that few groups, if any, did more. Scots ran the banking and finance system, hacked out pioneer farms, introduced both corruption and controversy into politics and led the way in education. The spark which ignited Confederation was the alliance in 1864 of two Scots politicians, George Brown and John A. Macdonald; they were, in fact, deadly enemies, as might be expected, since one was from Edinburgh and the other from Glasgow. Scots squabbled for the honour of building the Canadian Pacific Railway. Who can claim to have achieved more for Canada than its political and physical unity? Nor is the Scottish contribution confined to the obvious hordes of Macdonalds and Mackenzies who troop the pages of the textbooks. Joe Clark’s ancestors came from Tiree in the Hebrides. Pierre Elliott Trudeau had Scottish blood, as did Margaret. Scots moved into Québec, not just those who like James McGill or George Stephen dominated Montreal’s English-speaking business community, but many who switched direct from their native Gaelic into French, so that today you will encounter ‘Macs’ who speak not a word of English. They left their mark on maps and in history. There was the unknown settler who named his property after his two daughters, Miriam and Isabel; in the 1970s it became the site of Montreal’s international airport. Some have regarded Mirabel as the greatest disaster to hit Québec since the battle on the Heights of Abraham in 1759.”

1759 – the year of the birth of Canada and of Robert Burns! The emigré Scots brought to this new land of promise their hard work, their faith, their language, their traditions, their humour, their poetry and their Bard. The great poet of the human heart has statues to his honour all over Canada; in the West, they grace Winnipeg, Vancouver, and Victoria. If the Edmonton Burns Clubs can muster sufficient funds, there will shortly be one in Edmonton, too.

Scottish humour has long since put down fresh roots in Canada, as the following examples will serve to attest:

Scots pioneers on a wagon train headed west became apprehensive when they saw a lot of fire and smoke in the distance. Then they noticed Indians wearing war paint observing them from
the hilltops. As night fell, the travellers drew the wagons into a circle. They built a bonfire, and everyone kept a gun handy. Two of the men were keeping guard through the night when suddenly they heard the loud beating of Indian drums – PUM-pum-pum-pum, PUM-pum-pum-pum. “Listen”, one of the watchmen said nervously, grabbing the other one by the arm, “I don’t like the sound of those drums.” From out of the darkness came an Indian voice: “Yeah, well, he’s not our regular drummer.”

There was a firm in Ontario which made compasses and belonged to a Mr. Tait. The compasses, alas, insisted on pointing to the south instead of to the north, thus giving rise to the saying, “He who has a Tait’s is Jost.”

Three men were condemned to be shot in Iran for alleged espionage. They were asked if they had any final wishes. The American asked for half an hour to tell how wonderful America was. The Canadian asked for long enough to explain the Canadian constitution. And the Scotsman asked to be shot before the Canadian.

Here’s one for our friends in Prague. An Aberdonian and a Czech were hiking in the Rockies when they were pursued by two grizzly bears. The Aberdonian swung himself into a tree to safety, but one of the bears caught and devoured the Czech. The Aberdonian later managed to get down from the tree and run to fetch the ranger. When the men caught up with the two bears, the ranger asked him, “Why are you drinking them so fast?” “You’d drink them fast if you had what I have,” replied the Scotsman, who then drank down the other four whiskies in double-quick time. The barman asked, “For goodness’ sake, tell me – what is it you’ve got?” And the Scotsman replied, “Fifty cents.”

To muddy the waters, some English folk have come to Canada, notably Charles Dickens’ grandson Frank, an inspector in the NW Mounted Police who rejoiced in the sobriquet “Chickenstalker.” Inspector Dickens and a friend were out hunting one day, and got themselves hopelessly lost. Dickens said, “All we have to do is shoot in the air three times, and we’ll be rescued.” So they shot in the air three times, but nothing happened. A couple of hours later, they tried again, shooting in the air three times, but again nothing happened. So Chickenstalker said, “We’ll have to be careful when we shoot again – we’re down to our last three arrows!”

Lest we ourselves miss the mark this evening, let us return to the serious task in hand. I hope I have adduced sufficient evidence to support my thesis that a fair answer to the question, “Where is home?” is “In both Scotland and Canada, for the two countries are in essence and in spirit ONE.”

Now we can afford to be sentimental, for our sentiment is ennobled by its having a new, and firmer emotional foundation. Now we can pine with Lord Byron for Dark Lochnagar without danger of lapsing into sentimentality, for his thoughts of Lang Syne can be placed in a new emotional context.

As Auld Lange Syne brings Scotland one and all, Scotch plaids, Scotch snoods, the blue hills and clear streams,

The Dee, the Don, Balgounie’s brig’s black wall,

All my boy feelings, all my gentler dreams
Of what I then dreamt, clothed in their own pall,
Like Banquo’s offspring; floating past me seems
My childhood in this childishness of mine;
I care not – ’tis a glimpse of “Auld Lang Syne.”

New poetry enjoys a similar inspiration. Ben
Kelly's *Follow Me* is dedicated to “the stream of Scots who return to Scotland each year on a visit from their new homes in foreign lands, and to their children visiting Scotland for the first time.”

Follow me, across the wide, wide ocean,
Follow me to where it meets the sand,
And I’ll show you a place that I’ve dreamt of all my days—
Follow me to bonnie Scotland.

Follow me to where the heather blossoms,
Come and see the beauty of the isles,
Where the eagle flies high and you’ll hear the seagull cry.
Follow me, come follow me.

There may be countries far across the sea,
Wealthy in silver and gold,
But, to my eye, there’s no money that could buy
This land on which my heart’s sold.
Tho’ the way may be long,

There’s a promise in the song.
Follow me to the land I love;
Follow me, follow me to the land I love.

Follow me, across the wide, wide ocean,
Follow me to where it meets the sand,
And I’ll show you a place that I’ve dreamt of all my days—
Follow me to bonnie Scotland.

Several years ago, my friend and colleague at the University of Alberta, the late Reynold Siemens, said, “Say, Grant, I heard one of your radio talks on CBC the other day.” “Was I talking about Burns?” I asked. “Well,” he replied, “You were talking about Burns, but you were saying, ‘I was born in Scotland, I’ll live and die a Scotsman, I’ll always be a Scotsman!’”

It is in the revealing light of that sub-text that I have the honour this Burns Night to propose the toast to THE TWA LANDS!

*Raymond J. S. Grant*  
*Edmonton, Alberta*

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**ALEXANDER ANDERSON**  
**“SURFACEMAN”**  
by Joe Kennedy (Kilmarnock Burns Club)

Alexander Anderson was born in a but-and-ben off the main street in Kirkconnel and moved to Crockford near Dumfries with his family three years later. He received all his former education at Crockford Village School. In later years he loved to recall.

*The old, dark, humble schoolhouse  
That stood by the little stream  
That babbled and splashed in the sunshine,  
Or slipped into pools to dream.*

The family returned to Kirkconnel in 1862. Alexander found work in the quarries close to the town until he obtained employment with the Glasgow and South Western Railway company two years later as a “Surfaceman” (Railway Navvy). The company had opened the Nith Valley main line in 1850. It was when still a quarryman that he commenced his self education. During the following several years he studied French, German and Latin to a standard that enabled him to read those languages with ease. When a schoolboy his ability in sketching and painting drew much favourable comment both from his elders and his classmates, but his interest in practicing this art form declined as he found increasing pleasure and satisfaction in writing poetry. So intense was
his study of languages, however, that this too took a back seat for a few years.

In time his muse could not be denied. He returned to her in about the year 1864 and gave her the close attention that characterised his other studies. The result was a succession of poems, some witty, some sentimental, some lyrical and all perceptive and vernacular. They circulated among his friends in the Kirkconnel district, to their great enjoyment. Soon they were being read much further afield.

The parallel with Burns will, up to this point, be obvious. Here their courses diverge, Burns was persuaded to publish his work in book form. Anderson chose to submit some of his poems to magazines. Notably the *The Peoples Friend* and *The Peoples Journal*. His first production to reach the printed page was a spirited defence of the character of Burns in reply to an attack on it by the Reverend Fergus Ferguson, and eminent Edinburgh minister.

At this time the *The Peoples' Journal* had an annual poetry competition; ‘Surfaceman’ won it in 1869, 1871 and 1872 and took second prize in 1870.

Much of his early work did not reach the hallowed realm of print and he destroyed all of it some years later. The spirit chills to think of what gems of poesy he thus denied posterity. Included in this sad loss is Holy Jamies’ Prayer, a lampoon on a self-righteous (is there any other kind?) railway ganger written we are told, in the style of Holy Willie’s Prayer. Let us hope that some of his lost works may be discovered and come out of hiding to enlighten and entertain this generation as it did a previous one.

When a public library was proposed for his native town he was a principal subscriber and trustee, in addition to books and money he also donated a portrait of himself and one of Robert Burns, both of which hang in the library reading room. Much space would be required for a comprehensive consideration of his poetry. Conversely the comment of a contemporary in Kirkconnel that “There’s naithin in them; they’re just wha a see in the hoose every day” is too dismissive. Yet it is a back-hand compliment, for some of his earliest and most endearing work was as a number of domestic poems that came to be known as the Cuddle Doon series.

Another vein that found appreciative ears was his championship of the working man and the nobility of his labour. It is significant that he gave his first book the title of “Song of Labour”.

In his nature and love poems the gentle, marvelling side of his temperment is in full bloom; and his humour sparkles in apt smile. His first book “Song of Labour” appeared in 1873 It was followed by three more in his lifetime and one posthumously in 1912.

Surfaceman had a mischievous sense of humour, on one occasion he challenged an old Kirkconnel worthy to a game of draughts, although he knew he had not the faintest chance of winning by fair play So he carried out his trick by securing a small piece of rosin from a shoemaker on his wrist, and when making a move he would press his wrist on another of his opponents men and illegally lift it off the board. He managed to do this twice and was declared the winner of the game, much to his opponents surprise. When the game was ended his opponent looked across at him and said “Weel you have beat me. But I’m no satisfied. There is something gie queer aboot it!” He was also a very compassionate man and one day along with some friends he was sitting outside on the library window sill smoking his pipe, when he was asked for a fill by a passing workman on tramp to Dumfries in search of employment. Anderson suggested that he was in greater need of new boots than of tobacco and advised him to go into the shop across the road and get a pair, and new socks.

The traveller did not know what to make of this, but on being told by Andersons friends to “take the man at his word” he went into the shop, and as instructed said that his purchases would be paid for by the man across the street. He received his boots without quibble and was nearly speechless with surprise and gratitude. When he returned to his benefactor, Surfaceman would not give his name. “It’s just your luck,” he told the man.

Whether by reading the magazines or by obtaining circulating manuscript copies of his poems, a Kilmarnock Laird, Thomas Corbett, became one of Andersons admirers, his son A. C. Corbett became the first Lord Rowallan.

A post of Assistant Librarian at Edinburgh
University had to be filled in 1880 and several of Surfaceman’s friends persuaded him to apply for it. He did; obtained the appointment and moved to Edinburgh before the end of the year. Except for a short period, 1883/86, when he moved to the Edinburgh.

Philosophical Institute as its Secretary, he remained at the University until he died, latterly as acting Chief Librarian. His poetry and his work at the University won him ready acceptance in the Capital.

During my research I was delighted to learn that he served on the Burns Centenary Committee and was a contributor to the very first Burns Chronicle. He also wrote a poem on Burns, which he recited at the inaugural meeting of the Dundee Burns Society.

He died in 1909, of cancer of the liver, still a most popular, much discussed poet. He is revered in his native Kirkconnel where he lies in the Kirkyard with other members of his family. Nearby, looking out to the main road, a handsome monument to his memory was erected in 1912. His best known poem is Bairnies Cuddle Doon.

I have heard this poem recited by 88 year old Bob Scott at many a Busbiehill Burns Club night. It never fails to bring a tear to my dear wifes eyes.

JAMES THOMSON 1827-1888
Author of “The Star of Robbie Burns”
by Archie McArthur, Honorary President, The Robert Burns World Federation Ltd. Honorary Member Hawick Burns Club

Over many years I have had the pleasure of taking visiting Burnsians to the graveside of James Thomson, in Well-o-gate Cemetery in Hawick, and told them the following story...

James Thomson was born in the little Roxburghshire village of Bowden in the year 1827. In these early 1800s it was common practice for young boys to attend the village school during the winter months, while the summer months were spent earning much needed money to keep body and soul together.

The way that the young James Thomson spent his summers was to herd the kye over the Eildon hills, and as he oftimes said, he carried a rather tattered copy of the Kilmarnock edition of Burns’s works, which gave a barren brain a slight touch of poetic fancy. At the age of sixteen James Thomson was apprenticed to a Selkirk cabinet-maker and wood-turner, and some years later he came to live in the town of Hawick.

That touch of poetic fancy spoken of by James Thomson would find some inspiration when Hawick celebrated the centenary of the Bard’s birth in 1859. On that day the town of Hawick closed its mills, shops, and every other place of work so that the townsfolk could take part in the joviality’s of the day. Bands of all kinds played throughout the day, marching through the streets where the populace had gathered. On the evening of the celebrations of the Bard’s birth many dinners were held in the various halls of the town. The largest of these was held in the Commercial Hotel, Buccleuch Street, where some 400 persons attended, and many more were disappointed by not gaining admission. Among the speakers at this dinner were a number of well known townsmen, including a young school teacher, James A. H. Murray, later to be knighted in recognition of his compilation of the New Oxford English Dictionary. At another dinner held in the Tower Hotel, the Rev. Henry Scott Riddell of Teviothead, the author of that stirring song, “Scotland Yet”, proposed the “Immortal Memory”.

The success of these local celebrations stimulated interest in the life and works of Robert Burns, coming at a time when throughout Scotland working men were seeking intellectual improvement by instituting Historical and Debating Societies. About 1860 a Hawick Literary Society was formed, and one of the speakers at one of its early meetings was James
Thomson, known locally for his poetical leanings.

On the 20th of February 1862 a special meeting was called, where a committee was set up to look into the feasibility of instituting a Burns Club, and among those on this committee was the local Historian, Robert Murray, and taking a leading part was James Thomson. Unfortunately this attempt to establish a Burns club in Hawick suffered the fate of several other attempts, but James Thomson and a few others of like mind never gave up their desire to honour the Bard in Hawick. In 1878 over thirty men gathered in Graham's public house to celebrate the poet's birthday, with Thomson taking the chair and also proposing the "Immortal Memory". From this gathering a new attempt was made to form the Hawick Burns Club, with James Thomson being elected President and Thomas Caldwell as Secretary.

The newly formed Hawick Burns club held their first meeting to celebrate the birth of Robert Burns in January 1879, and the dinner proved to be an occasion of more than passing interest, for during that evening a new song was sung by Thomas Strathearn, a song whose words were written by chairman James Thomson and set to the music of Mr. Booth, a song that has gained world-wide renown and is sung whenever Burnsians meet, that song, "The Star O' Robbie Burns", is a wonderful tribute to our Bard, and a credit to the man we have come to honour. James Thomson was a man who shunned the lime-light, and after four years as President he resigned that position, but he continued to serve the club as a member of the Executive Committee, and was a regular speaker at both his own club and many others to which he was invited. James Thomson lived to see the outcome of his early efforts to establish a Burns club in Hawick come to fruition, and the populace of his adopted town revere his name.

Every year during civic week many hundreds of spectators sing his Border songs, "The Auld Mid Raw", "The Border Queen" and "Up Wi' The Banner" with gusto, and all over the world wherever Burns lovers meet, James Thomson's "Star O' Robbie Burns" pays tribute to the man who inspired him "to give his barren brain a slight touch of poetic fancy."

James Thomson died a bachelor on the 21st of December 1888 in the Hawick Cottage Hospital, and his memorial stone was erected by the brethren of St. James Masonic Lodge Number 424, as a mark of respect to their much talented and honoured Bard.

"A hundred years are gane and mair, yet brighter grows its beams."

I have little doubt that when my listeners left James Thomson's grave side they would have gone home knowing that James Thomson had died a bachelor, and like me would have assumed that bachelorhood meant that he left no offspring, and like me they would have been wrong.

It is strange how I came to meet James Thompson, the great, great, grandson of the illustrious James Thomson of "The Star O' Robbie Burns" fame. My very good friend Jenny Rafferty of Kilbirnie in Ayrshire, (who shares my admiration of Robert Burns), wrote to me about July 1999, and informed me that she had met a gentleman whom she had known over a long number of years, and in conversation told him that I sometimes spoke of his namesake in Hawick, and to her surprise he informed her that he was the great, great grandson of that James Thomson from Hawick. I asked Jenny if it could be arranged for me to meet James Thompson and within a short period my wife and I spent a few days with Jenny and on the Saturday night James Thompson came to visit us. I was delighted to listen to James Thompson tell me his story, and from the paper work which James gave me on that night, and later from more paper work that he sent on to me, I now relate his story.

As a young boy James's mother had told him that there was a family connection between her father and the man who wrote the song "The Star O' Robbie Burns". Unfortunately there was no documentary evidence to support her story, and it was not until James decided to compile a family tree in 1963, that the story began to unfold. At this time James was employed in the Registrar's office in Kilbirnie, and was familiar with the procedure of extracting information from the appropriate registers. He had no idea at this time that a James Thomson had written the words of "The Star O' Robbie Burns", and it was only when he was reading an article in
the "Scots Magazine" of January 1983, which told of James Booth, who wrote the music for the "Star", that he discovered that James Thomson had been responsible for the words. Knowing that his maternal grand-father had resided in Hawick, James wrote to the Registrar in that town asking for details of the Thomson family, and the subsequent correspondence confirmed that his grand-father had been born at No. 12, Ladylaw Street, Wilton, Hawick, on the 11th of September 1881, and that his parents (James’s great grand parents), were John Thomson and Mary Turnbull, who were married in Hawick on the 10th of September 1880. In the marriage register John Thomson’s parentage is given as James Thomson, woodtrimmer, reputed father and Mary Scott or Riddell, widow.

Shortly after James received this information he changed jobs, and his researches were temporarily suspended. In 1996 he retired from work, and having more time on his hands he again went in search of his ancestors. In New Register House in Edinburgh, his researches found that his great, grand-father, John Thomson, had been born at No. 2 Silver Street, Hawick, on the 14th of December, 1856. He was registered as John Robert Thomson Scott or Riddell, parents shown as James Thomson, wood trimmer, reputed father and Mary Scott or Riddell, widow of William Riddell, and by the time he came to be married he was known as John Thomson. Although James now knew that the author of "The Star O’ Robbie Burns" was a James Thomson, he did not associate him with the James Thomson, reputed father of his great grand-father. The information that James had gathered on the Thomson family history was collated and he sent copies of the story to interested relatives. James thought, and I think he would not be long in assuming, that a bachelor death usually meant a dead end.

However a cousin, to whom James had sent the family history that he had compiled, sent him a copy of a letter he had received from the Selkirk library, regarding the poet James Thomson, Author of "The Star O’ Robbie Burns". This letter showed that this man had been a wood trimmer, the same occupation as James’s great, grand-father’s reputed father. Suddenly James’s mothers story began to make sense, and James returned to Edinburgh and traced James Thomson’s birth to Bowden, on the 4th of July 1827, his father being Robert Thomson, a sawyer to trade, and a native of St. Boswells, and his mother being Helen Wilkie, a native of Bowden. It is surely no co-incident that when he was born, James’s great grand-father was given the middle names Robert Thomson, the name of James Thomson’s father. When James Thomson died in 1888, the death register records him as single, but the death was registered by John Thomson, given as son of the deceased, and as James Thomson would have been well known in the town of Hawick, we can only assume that the registrar would have known that James Thomson was indeed the son of James Thomson, and the registrar would never have permitted any false information to appear in the death certificate.

James Thomson, whose story this is, now lives in Dalry, Ayrshire, and he owns a copy of his illustrious great, great grand-father’s book of poems, which contains a photograph, and this photograph bears a striking resemblance to James’s late mother’s brother, David. I now know that the story that I related at the grave side of James Thomson is true, but the evidence given by James Thompson of Dalry in Ayrshire, tells us never to assume that a bachelor, even one of the 1888s, does not leave offspring to carry on his line.

THE THOMPSON LINEAGE

Robert Thomson born 1798 or 1799 at St. Boswells great, great, great, grand-father to James Thompson of Dalry.

James Thomson born 4th July 1827 at Bowden author of "The Star O’ Robbie Burns" great, great, grand-father to James Thompson of Dalry.

John Robert Thomson Scott, or Riddell, later known as John Thomson born 1856 at Hawick great, grand-father to James Thompson of Dalry.

James Thosmon born 1881 at Hawick grand-father to James Thompson of Dalry.

Agnes Thompson born 1909 at Kilwinning mother of James Thompson of Dalry.
There is a star whose beaming ray
Is shed on ev’ry clime;
It shines by night, it shines by day
And ne’er grows dim wi’ time.
It rose up on the banks o’ Ayr,
It shone on Doon’s clear stream,
A hundred years are gane and mair,
Yet brighter grows its beam.

Chorus: Let kings and courtiers rise and fa’
This world has mony turns,
But brightely beams aboon them a’
The Star o’ Robbie Burns.

Though he was but a ploughman lad,
And wore the hodden grey,
Auld Scotland’s sweetest bards are bred
Aneath a roof o’ strae.
To sweep the strings o’ Scotia’s lyre,
It needs nae classic lore;
It’s mither wit an’ native fire
That warms the bosom’s core.

Chorus: Let kings, etc.

On fame’s emblazon’d page enshrin’d
His name is foremost now,
And mony a costly wreath’s been twin’d
To grace his honest brow.
And Scotland’s heart expands wi’ joy
Whene’er the day returns
That gave the world its peasant boy -
Immortal Robbie Burns.

Chorus: Let kings, etc.
TAM O' SHANTER & SOUTER JOHNNY.

Tam fed him like a very brother,
They had been fou for weeks theither.
The night draw on wi' songs & clatter,
And ope the ale was grown betther.

The landlady & Tam grew gracious,
W' evenings secret, sweet, A precious.
AULD LANG SYNE.

For auld lang syne we dra,
For auld lang syne
We'll tak a cup o kindness yet
For auld lang syne.

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