

The Robert Burns World Federation Ltd
Quarterly Meeting
Venue: Virtual
Date: 20th February 2021
MINUTES

No.	Content	Action
1.	Sederunt: Jean Abdulrahim, Enez Anderson , Helena Anderson Wright, Trekker Armstrong, Alan Beck, Kay Blair, Jane Brown, Eric Budgell, Henry Cairney, Ray Connal, Ken Dalgleish, Bill Dawson, Margaretann Dougall (minutes), Mike Duguid, Fiona Evans, John Hannah, Beth Kerr, Melvyn McCrostie, Lesley McDonald, Tom McDonald, Neil McNair, David Miller, Murdo Morrison, Ronnie O'Byrne, Marc Sherland (Chair), Annie Small, David Smith, Margaret Stokes, Les Strachan, Jim Thomson, James Waite, Walter Watson	
2.	Apologies: Iain Gordon, Bill Nolan, Frances Marshall	

Item

3. **Chairman's Remarks**

Marc R Sherland - We now start every Board meeting with a few words of Burns, so before the formal welcome, this principle will be extended to all meetings and I should like to read the following:

Winter: A Dirge by Robert Burns

This poem was copied into Burns's Commonplace Book, with remarks : "As I am what the men of the world, if they knew such a man, would call a whimsical mortal, I have various forms of pleasure and enjoyment which are in a manner peculiar to myself, or some here and there such out-of-the-way person. Such is the peculiar pleasure I take in the season of Winter more than the rest of the year. This, I believe, may be partly owing to my misfortunes giving my mind a melancholy cast; but there is something even in the

Mighty tempest, and the heavy waste,
Abrupt, and deep, stretched o'er the buried earth.

which raises the mind to a serious sublimity favourable to everything great and noble. There is scarcely any object gives me more -- I do not know if I should call it pleasure -- but something which exalts me -- something which enraptures me -- to walk in the sheltered side of a wood, or high plantation, in a cloudy winter day, and hear the stormy wind howling among the trees and raving over the plain. It is my best season for devotion; my mind is rapt up in a kind of enthusiasm to Him, who, in the pompous language of the Hebrew bard, 'Walks on the wings of the wind.' In one of these seasons, just after a train of misfortunes, I composed these lines."

A list of obituaries as follows was read out and a minute's silence was duly observed.

- ❖ Elizabeth Clark – Founder member of St Petersburg Forum and member of several Burns Clubs
- ❖ Jean Cunningham – Halton Peel Burns Club
- ❖ Allister Anderson – Greenock Burns Club and Alloway Burns Club
- ❖ Walter Robertson – Whiteadder Burns Club
- ❖ Raymond J S Grant – Edmonton
- ❖ Avril Dodds – Dumfries Ladies Burns Club
- ❖ Anne Melrose – Dumfries Ladies Burns Club

4. **Minutes of Previous Meeting – 21st November 2020**

Proposed – Henry Cairney **Seconded** – Lesley McDonald

5. **Matters Arising**
None

6. **Finance Update – Ken Dagleish**

Collection of annual subscriptions successful so far, which is our main income raising activity. We have not been able to raise income from events this year. Zoom events have been very successful. However, these do not bring in any funds.

We are at a standstill situation at the moment but the cash balances are good.

It is our intention to broaden our bases to raise funds through corporate areas. If any members know of any organisations who would be interested in supporting us, please let Ken know.

Sale of goods has been ongoing and some increase in sales were noted with the new tartan merchandise. The website is being updated to make the sale of goods easier.

No questions were asked of Ken.

7. Reports

7.1 **President – Marc Sherland**

Much has been achieved in a fairly short period, but there is still much to do. I am sure it came as a tremendous surprise when the 180 people who tuned into the RBWF Burns Supper had the pleasure of hearing a message recorded especially for the Federation from HRH Charles, Duke of Rothesay, praising the work that we do. That positive and rallying message has since been used in a number of Burns settings including the Glasgow Cathedral, Greenock Burns Club, the Glasgow & District Burns Association and it is an ongoing gift to the Federation from the Duke.

I was particularly proud of my fellow Directors who stepped up to deliver the speeches and toasts during the Burns Supper and did it so well and my thanks go to Jean Abdulrahim and Jane Brown of the Events Team who organised it and Henry Cairney who hosted it.

Since we last met we have also held a lecture with Prof Patrick Scott and the Yule Concert of talented young people.

The Board of Directors has been meeting on a monthly basis and has furthered the work of the Federation by diligent effort, so that I am confident that their reports will surprise and enthral you, but in summary I can tell you that the Robert Burns World Federation tartan has now been woven and six Directors have paid for kilts to be made from the first batch along with ties and scarves which will be on sale from the revamped shop.

The Website, long a thorn in the flesh, has been modernised and although not perfect is now a far more presentable face to the world. Further changes to the site can be expected in the near future as we take full charge of all aspects of it.

Neil McNair our Marketing Director will be telling you shortly of his work to secure £20,000 of investment for an intended Lifelong Learning Centre in the headquarters building which will include an updated library, a digital audio visual recording suite and educational resources. At the moment the donor wishes to remain anonymous.

I know many of you were concerned at reports over the condition of the headquarters building and I am very pleased to state that EAC has fixed the roof and intend to renovate the damaged interior at no cost to the Federation.

The Federation Annual Campaign 2021

After this meeting the Robert Burns World Federation are launching a Federation Annual Campaign which will feature a particular project chosen to further the work of the Federation. The first project is a matter of honour and will be to raise funds to enable Arms to be awarded posthumously to Robert Burns.

Many of you will know that Robert Burns designed a 'coat of Arms' which he hoped to have matriculated for himself, but due to his untimely death and perhaps his finances, this was never achieved, though a silver seal bearing the Arms was made.

In conversation with the Lord Lyon, King at Arms, Joe Morrow, he expressed an opinion that it was perfectly possible to award Arms should a petition be made on behalf of Robert Burns, by the Federation. As many of you will know the Lord Lyon is very interested in Burns and Burns was very interested in Heraldry, so the Lord Lyon feels that this is no less than Burns deserved. It is often the tradition in Scots Heraldry that the greatest of Scotland's people have traditionally been granted Arms and even Supporters such as Sir Sean Connery. However there is a cost to this process around £2,000 - £3,000, and we would like to ask Members, Clubs and Associations whether they would like to contribute to this worthy cause?

7.2 Events – Marc Sherland

It was an observation made recently that the refreshed Events Committee now has more past presidents serving on it than any other committee, which is a curious fact.

Diary

February 26th - Love event - Zoom Lecture Raymond Connal to coordinate. The Loves of Robert Burns - Angus Middleton & Jimmy Law.

March Thurs 18th - 7:30 - Lecture Sir Geoff Palmer - 'Burns and Me' - Marc to coordinate.

April Thurs 15th - Jean Armour - Action - Jean Abdulrahim and Jane Brown to coordinate.

May - Quiz Night - Jimmy Gibson/Jim Thomson - Quizmaster. Angus Middleton -

July 2nd Tamfest - Storytelling Robin & Wren - Marc Sherland

July 9th Tamfest - 'N' aw' That' - Children's Concert - Jane and Jean to Coordinate

July 23rd - 31st July - Killie Burns Summer –

At our next meeting we will begin to plan the day to day events.

Simon Lamb, Bachelor Club, Kilmarnock Friday - Jane & Jim

Using headquarters or internet and local venues, events to include poetry speak easy, coffee afternoons etc.

August 6th Tamfest -

August 13th Tamfest -

September - Conference - Glynhill Hotel - Decision to go ahead or postpone will be taken at March meeting

7.3 Literature – Mike Duguid

The Literature Committee had a very fruitful meeting yesterday. We discussed an exciting project involving six, final year, Honours degree students from the West College Scotland who have to complete a theatre piece on the subject of Influential Women in the Life of Robert Burns. Under the guidance of Federation Junior Vice President Alan Beck and Federation member and ex-Principal of the College, Peter Pringle, the students have to devise the script, film and edit it, dub suitable music and perform it as an ensemble. They have to complete the project by 10th April when it will be assessed by their tutors. Hopefully the end product will be showcased to a wider audience including the Federation.

This form of 'visual literature' is highly likely to become increasingly popular as technology offers a format to which the younger generation can relate. It may also be something which could be offered to schools as a means of teaching children different aspects of Burns which could fire their imagination and link into the poems and songs they would normally be learning.

There may be an important role for Federation members here in helping children get a better understanding of Burns where the Education Packs are brought to life through performance.

A further thought was the production of a catalogue of good filmed performances so that children could better understand the language and meaning of particular poems and songs. Many suppers this past have been conducted by Zoom and other platforms and recorded and some of them would make suitable candidates for a wider audience. In the March Newsletter I will be showing a link to an alternative Burns Supper from the Bakehouse arts centre in Gatehouse of Fleet. It includes an outstanding piece by poet, singer and actor Gerda Stevenson which I strongly recommend you should all take a look at.

The newsletter will also show the results of the competition for poems written in 'Standard Habbie' the favourite stanza form of Burns. The 23 entries would suggest there is still a strong interest in poetry.

Another topic that came up was the subject of archiving items produced by the Federation, such as the Newsletter, the Chronicle, Annual Reports, meeting minutes and so that in 50 years-time we have a record to which people could refer for information about the Federation. Senior Vice President Henry explained how all the records of the Calgary Burns club, going back forty-five years, are archived in three separate storage discs held in different locations. It was felt the Federation should be doing something similar.

Henry offered some information on how Calgary B C digitisation works. All important documents are backed up annually and stored. This is certainly something that should be taken forward.

7.4 Archivist/Editor – Bill Dawson **Archivist**

There has been no recent activity on the archive due to current restrictions on travel.

Website enquiries passed to me have been dealt with as they occur.

Editor

The Final proof of the Burns Chronicle has been sent to the publisher, Edinburgh University Press, and copies will be sent directly from them to our Members. Burns Chronicle 130:1 will contain five significant articles and five short papers and reports of interest to Burnsians.

Content for Chronicle 130:2, due to be published in October this year, is being assembled and edited. Further content is sought and I again encourage anyone who has interesting thoughts and researches to submit their paper for consideration.

Word reached me this morning, 15th February, of the passing of Raymond J S Grant of Edmonton who was a frequent contributor to the Chronicle over a number of years. A tribute to his support for the Chronicle will be forwarded to the Newsletter Editor for inclusion in his obituary

7.5 Marketing – Neil McNair

Merchandising – good progress has been made with the new products, which are selling well.

Sponsorship – The message from HRH was noticed by a member who wishes to support our work. They will support the establishment of a Lifelong Learning Centre by way of a substantial donation.

There will be a 16 week programme to set this up and it will have three aspects, a digital unit, an educational resource and a revamped library. We will purchase books from a list provided by our Archivist. These books cover various aspects of Burns life interests. Technical digital equipment will also be purchased.

We are hopeful that this will be live in time for the July Festival.

A press release will be sent out regarding this when we get the go ahead.

7.6 Education – Lesley McDonald

Started by saying what wonderful news this is regarding the Lifelong Learning Project.

As you know, there are no schools competitions this year. There has been little interest from schools.

We have received essays from St Petersburg which were wonderful. Winners will be published in the newsletter.

Bob Stewart has been successful in Cupar & District with 49 entries from schools. All children will receive a certificate of participation. Another positive to report is that Tradeshouse will run a virtual competition later in the year.

Finally, Burns Scotland, working with the team at the Centre for Robert Burns Studies, will be running a CPD day in April, which I will be attending.

DRAFT

7.7 Heritage – John Hannah

Encourage everyone to keep us up to date with sites and areas of interest.

Thankfully, I have not been advised of any damage to any monuments etc over the winter.

The plaques at St Michael's graveyard have been replaced by member of the Dumfries Burns Howff Club.

The statue at the Citizens Theatre has been restored and returned to it's original position.

Recording/Cataloguing – I have been in touch with Historic Scotland 'Scran Project'. They were very positive and I have been given access to the website where they hold this data.

David Miller advised the meeting that access to this was free during lockdown and it is a fantastic recourse – www.scran.ac.uk

Trekker referred to the interactive map produced for the Burns Suppers around the world this year. It would be wonderful to be able to do this with monuments. Would it be possible to collaborate with the University of Glasgow to set this up.

John advised that he has met with Gerry Carruthers to discuss this. The priority at the moment is to document all the monuments first. When this is complete, we will consider this as a longer term vision and potentially produce tours etc.

Ronnie O'Byrne advised that Ron Ballantyne has produced a number of Powerpoint presentations which may be useful. He will forward these to John on his return to Canada.

Henry Cairney also advised that Edmonton Burns Club are moving their statue from its current position to a new location.

7.8 Membership – Alan Beck

New members are listed as below.

We will also hopefully have a new club in Yorkshire to report at next meeting.

We have met as a committee to consider where we want to be in 5 years time, and various issues. We have drawn up a list of topics and a 5 year plan, considering such things as what are the benefits of membership. The benefits were listed by Alan.

I would like to express my thanks to Mark Ferguson, Neil McNair and Iain Gordon.

We have now emailed every MP and MSP regarding membership. The RBANA Board are also considering options for their members.

A suggestion was made that we should follow up potential membership with our local MSP's/MP's.

A question was asked from Murdo Morrison regarding his email on the benefits of membership. Alan agreed to send the list **out** to Murdo that he had read out for his information.

Murdo also asked about members who have not renewed.

It was explained that unless members specifically tell us that they are not renewing, we have to assume at this point that they are and we will chase these. However, Margaretann also stated that due to the increasing numbers of members paying by Paypal and setting up recurring payments, we are seeing membership renewals coming in throughout the year, so it is difficult to say that if a member does not renew in January, they will not renew later in the year.

8.0 Admin – to include 200 Club Draw

Working from home at the moment, due to lockdown restrictions.

Lorraine furloughed for 4 days – working on a Monday. Margaretann is in the office at the moment on a Friday. Once lockdown is over will be in two days per week and continue to work from home for 2 days and have her day off on a Wednesday.

Office repairs externally are complete. EAC will now move on to the interior repairs that are required after the walls have dried out.

200 CLUB WINNER DETAILS

Jan-21	1st prize	£	42.90	56	Jim & Eileen Robertson
	2nd prize	£	21.45	205	Kay Blair
Feb-21	1st prize	£	42.90	147	Peter Stuart
	2nd prize	£	21.45	126	James Murison
Mar-2	Quarterly Prize	£	107.25	200	Jim Smith
	1st prize	£	42.90	199	Alex & May Crawley
	2nd prize	£	21.45	45	Ron Murray

8.1 International Reports

Pacific Rim – John Menzies

An international group is being put together, who are hoping to offer something very interesting in the future.

Canada – Ronnie O’Byrne

The situation that we have found ourselves in, has been fantastic in many ways in terms of more member, including internationally, being able to meet together regularly via Zoom.

U.S.A. – Les Strachan

Nothing to report.

8.2 Association Representatives

Mike Duguid/Dumfries & Galloway Burns Association

We were very disappointed that the wreath laying could not go ahead. However a video has been made of the President laying a wreath, which is available to view.

James Waite/Ayrshire Association

I'd like to start by noting that so far, I have enjoyed my first meeting of the Robert Burns World Federation and I look forward to attending many more over my time as president of the Ayrshire Association and hopefully getting to meet most of you in person during that time. Indeed, I proposed an amendment to the AABC Constitution, so that the President is automatically one of the Associations representatives to the World Federation, as I see the need for a strong and positive relationship between the Association and the Federation

Ayrshire Association continues to meet as it would normally but via the virtual platform of Zoom. This has been well received by members and attendances are rather positive. While I am not suggesting that this is a long-term replacement for meetings there is certainly something to be said for the convenience of meeting from your comfort of your own home on a cold winter's night.

I would like to highlight the efforts that our member clubs have gone to in order to commemorate the birth of our National Bard during this global pandemic. From socially distanced wreath laying's to videos and of course the online Burns Supper the efforts clubs have went to is a credit to them all.

Enez Anderson /GDBA

Ken Dalgleish has now demitted office and our new President is Geoff Depledge. We were able to take part in the service at Glasgow Cathedral. Education is the principle theme and we continue to support the Aye Can Project. A seminar is being organised by Bridgeton B C. We have close links with the Jean Armour Burns Trust and a closer relationship is being established with the Centre for Robert Burns Studies and Trades House of Glasgow.

Lesley McDonald/Lanarkshire Association

We continue to meet by Zoom and most recently held a virtual Burns Supper. We are hopeful that the Covington Mains event will go ahead in July – will keep you posted.

8.4 New Members entered into the register.

Family

Mr & Mrs Peter Lund, Oregon, USA

Club

The Three Sisters Burns Club, Linlithgow

Individual

Mr Gordon Matthew, Paisley

Mr Denis Divers, Arbroath

Mr Matthew Cassidy, Belfast

Mr James Kinniburgh, Falkirk

Dr Philippa Whitford MP

Mr Steve Bailey, Irvine

9.

Open Forum

No questions were raised at the open forum.

Meeting closed

10. **Date of next meeting: to be advised.**