

The Tattler



December 2015 Edition

Words from the President

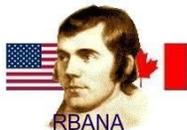
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The Robert Burns Association of North America

Affiliated with the Robert Burns World Federation Ltd
Kilmarnock, Scotland
Club #1024

I was shocked to realise that the holidays and Burns Season are just around the corner, so I guess it is time to get preparations under way! I've been motivated by several nice happenings in recent weeks.



I had the honour to be a guest at the Medicine Hat Club's Jolly Beggars Banquet in September. Newly-minted RBWF President Peter Hughes was there too, as were guests from the Calgary Club, Paul Armstrong and Trekker Armstrong, and from the Halton Peel Club, Ronnie O'Byrne. A great time was had by all. Thanks so much to Ken and Brenda Montgomery, Bill Cocks and the Hatters for a memorable event. These guys do it right.

I attended a Glasgow University alumni event here in Houston also in September, and the development officer from Glasgow who attended the event was telling me that the Austin alumni group was trying to start a Burns Supper. I offered to help them of course, and it also got me thinking that this might be a way to grow RBANA. If anyone going to a college, school or similar alumni event would suggest the idea of a Burns Supper or better yet a Burns Club, who knows we could gain a few new members. One of my daughters is active in a curling club in Ohio, and they are piped onto the ice at every bonspiel. This seems an ideal fit to start a Burns Supper too and we are working on that.

I had a pleasant surprise yesterday when I received an email from immediate past Federation President Jim Thomson. He is visiting family in the Houston area this month, and much to my delight he is able to attend our regular Heather & Thistle club meeting next Saturday. Jim is bringing with him copies of a book he has written, I believe on Burns's Mauchline works, and led by Jim we are going to study Holy Willie's Prayer. Since this is stalwart member Jack Hume's regular party piece we should be in for an interesting meeting.

On a less happy note, Immediate Past President of RBANA Tony Grogan has been hospitalized for the last few days with heart trouble. His wife Renate tells me that Tony is now feeling better having had a couple of stents inserted. He hopes to be home soon, and I sent best wishes to him from all of us at RBANA.

Charles McKay and I are under way with planning the Dallas Conference set for April next year, and intend to send out the registration package along with the RBANA dues notice as usual early next month.

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Words from the President

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I would like to wish you and your success and enjoyment with everything you are planning for the coming season. Keep promoting Burns!

Yours Aye

Robert Boyd
President

(Editor's Note) We can report that Tony Grogan is back on his feet and will be Toasting the Immortal Memory in Winnipeg on Burns' Night

Americans fund Alloway Burns monument project

The National Trust for Scotland (NTS) has said it was "delighted" to receive a donation of about £100,000 pounds towards the cost of restoring the Robert Burns Monument.

The donation is from its American foundation. NTS needs to raise £175,000 for the project.

The monument in Burns' birthplace of Alloway was designed by the architect Thomas



Hamilton and was built in 1823.

It was the world's first memorial dedicated to the poet.

Nat Edwards from NTS said he was "very grateful for this outstanding generosity from across the Atlantic Ocean" and said it demonstrated "Burns' continuing appeal after more than 250 years and continues a legacy of philanthropy in preserving his legacy".

Lochlea Farm to become Distillery

An Ayrshire farm that was once home to Robert Burns is to become the site of a new distillery and visitors' centre in homage to the Scottish poet.

Ayrshire Council has granted planning permission for Lochlea Farm to be transformed into a Scotch whisky distillery, complete with maturation warehousing and 'visitor interpretation centre'.

Farm owner Neil McGeoch intends to build a whisky distillery within a small courtyard of out buildings on the site. The whisky itself will be a Lowland single malt produced



from barley grown locally at Lochlea, and eventually given a Burns-related name. By-products from the production process will be recycled as cattle feed.

Robert Burns' family moved to Lochlea Farm in 1777 from the smaller Mount Oliphant farm near Ayr.

Aged 18, Burns and his brother Gilbert worked the farm along with their father, William.

The family remained at Lochlea until 1784, when William passed away and Robert and Gilbert subsequently moved on to rent nearby Mossgiel Farm at a rate of £90 per annum.

Federation Meets in Peebles

RBANA was again represented at the Robert Burns World Federation Conference held once more in the Peebles Hydro Hotel in Scotland from September 4 – 6th. RBANA Vice President Colin Harris,



and several members of the Calgary Burns Club, including RBANA Director Tony Grace attended.

The Registration was on the Friday afternoon at the same time as the Federation Shop opening with a selection of items for sale. This year these included a number of donated items that were available through a silent auction, which concluded on the Saturday. Burnsians from abroad travelled from Australia and Canada.

The Friday evening provided a reception followed by a meal and then a ceilidh. The entertainment provided was most enjoyable and well received – particularly the singing provided by the



five members of the Calgary Burns Club Singers who were present and constituted the largest part of the Canadian (and North American) Contingent this year. The RBANA folks were honoured to have been hosted by incoming President Dr Peter Hughes at his table.

Joe McGinty acted as MC again and kept the evening moving along in his own inimitable style with performances from Angus Middleton (The Sodger's

Return), Martin Cassidy, Peter Hughes, Bobby Kane, Ian McIntyre (the new Junior Vice-President), Margaret Anderson and Jane Brown.

Saturday saw the AGM properly and efficiently conducted under President Jim Thomson. With the attention of the Directors firmly focused on the Financial Management Plan discussed at last year's AGM the operating loss has been reduced from £34,000 by over £30,000 with every likelihood that the Federation should break even in this coming financial year. All the other reports were well received and the new Office Bearers were announced along with the election of the new Junior Vice-President Ian McIntyre. Finally it was confirmed that the 2016 AGM and Conference would be held again at the Peebles Hydro Hotel from September 9th – 11th, 2016, for the second of a three year arrangement with the hotel

Saturday afternoon saw a presentation from Professor Gerard Carruthers discussing how Robert Burns' influence was used by both sides in the referendum in 2015. Literature Convenor Mike Duguid followed with a brief presentation spoke on the digitization of the Burns Chronicles, a project he has spearheaded.

The evening saw the Inaugural Dinner when the new



Federation Meets in Peebles concluded



Office Bearers were invested in front of all members and guests present; President Peter Hughes, Senior Vice-President Bobby Kane, Junior Vice-President Ian McIntyre and of course Past President Jim Thomson. After the speeches and toasts the formal evening concluded with Burns' own Auld Lang Syne.

Many of the assembled accepted an invitation to Dr. Hughes' suite for further conviviality.

The Conference concluded on Sunday with a non-denominational Church Service.

University of Glasgow Offers On-Line Course on Burns

In celebration of Burns Night 2016, the Centre for Robert Burns Studies at the University of Glasgow, in partnership with Futurelearn, will be launching the first Massively Open Online Course (MOOC) on Robert Burns. The course 'Robert Burns: Poems, Songs, and Legacy' is free and open to all.

The aim is to attract newcomers as well as long-time fans of the poet, including those with an interest in Scottish history and culture, or just poetry, literature and song in general.

The course, led by Prof Gerard Carruthers, Francis Hutcheson Chair of Scottish Literature at the University of Glasgow, will introduce learners to the

life, works, and posthumous reputation of Burns.

Over the course of three weeks, learners will explore three core questions:



Who was Robert Burns?
What made Robert Burns a poetic genius? What made Burns a worldwide icon?

In the process, learners engage with diverse materials including poems, songs, music and video,

as well as original publications and manuscripts by Burns and objects made to commemorate the poet.

Registration for the course is now open at

<https://www.futurelearn.com/courses/robert-burns/1>

Burns Manuscripts Among Online Offerings From National Library of Scotland

Millions of items, including manuscripts of Robert Burns and Walter Scott, are among items being digitized to be made available online by the National Library of Scotland.

It is aiming to make a third of its 24 million items available on the internet in the next 10 years including rare books, maps, sound archives and thousands of films on life in Scotland.

It said it was one of the biggest programmes of its kind anywhere in Europe.

The library has already put some iconic items online and has seen its website traffic double in the last five years.

The library said its long-term aim was to make as much material digitally available as possible, subject to restrictions around copyright or conditions set by publishers.

National Librarian Dr John Scally said: "The internet has created a revolution in how people expect to be able to access information.

"We want people to be able to connect to our collections from wherever they are, rather than having to consult material in the Library as has been the case for most of our existence. We are committed to removing as many barriers as possible that prevent people accessing our collections and services."



He added: "Our role is to be the guardian of the published and recorded memory of Scotland for current and future generations. Our aim is to make the knowledge held within our collections as widely available as possible."

The library already has a strong online presence and has digitized a number of its iconic items including the last letter of Mary Queen of Scots, the Order for the massacre of Glencoe, the first books printed in Scotland in the 16th century, the first atlas of Scotland and First World War official photographs.

It said its website now had more than three million visits annually.

Culture Secretary Fiona Hyslop said: "The National Library's new strategy 2015-20 highlights the key role that the Library plays in educating and supporting research and innovation, and enhancing Scotland's profile here at home and abroad.

"I am pleased to see that it is firmly committed to improving access to its impressive collection of 24 million items by developing further its online presence to make its collections more widely available and engage with new and more diverse audiences worldwide.

