



The Tattler

Summer 2016 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

*Whatever mitigates the woes
or increases the happiness of others -
this is my criterion of goodness
And whatever injures society at large,
or any individual in it -
this is my measure of iniquity*



These words, taken from Burns' letter to Mrs. Dunlop have been associated with the Winnipeg Robert Burns Club, my home club, for much longer than my own involvement, as much a part of the image as the logo it flanks.

These words show the part of Robert Burns not widely known to the general public. No matter how unfairly, many of those who have only heard of Burns, and may know a line or two, have an image of him as a womaniser and a drunk. They know nothing of his humanitarian nature.

As I begin my term as President, I wonder how we, in RBANA, and in the greater global Burns community can take these words as inspiration? How can we, as Burnsians, mitigate the woes of others? Is there a humanitarian role for Burns clubs, indeed RBANA as a whole, to play in our communities?

Many would argue that our focus should be expanding our membership, broadening our base, to secure our future as an organization, but why can we not do both? In fact, would it not be somewhat easier to broaden our base and bring in new people to the cause of Burns, if we became known for taking on humanitarian causes?

Can we not change that unfair image I mentioned above, to portray a fairer image, broaden his appeal, and therefore our own?

That is our challenge.

Yours Aye
Colin Harris
President

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RBANA Meets in Texas

The 36th Annual RBANA AGM & Conference was held deep in the Heart of Texas during the last week of April.

As usual, it began with the early rising golfers playing a round at the Stewart Peninsula Golf Course. This year's winner was RBANA and Federation US Director Leslie Strachan.

The Board of Directors met in the afternoon, prior to a wine reception, hosted by Robert Boyd, in his Presidential Suite.

The wine reception was followed by a Cash Bar reception prior to Friday night's swiftly served Dinner, and Ceilidh. Following dinner many returned to the Presidential Suite, and then to a second, for more camaraderie into the small hours.

Saturday morning began with a buffet breakfast, followed by the Annual General Meeting, efficiently chaired by Robert Boyd. During the meeting Ron Ballantyne delivered his final report as Webmaster. He is being succeeded in the role by Robert Boyd. It was also confirmed that



US Director George McLellan has succeeded Jim Cunningham as Quizmaster, for the Jim Connor Memorial Quiz. Following an update on plans for the 2017 Conference in Medi-

cine Hat Alberta, it was suggested that Philadelphia may play host to the conference in 2018.

The meeting also confirmed a resolution from the Board to confer the title of Honorary President on Jim and Jean Cunningham, and Ron and Chrys Ballantyne.

A new board was elected, as detailed in the last edition of the Tattler. The three Canadian Directors elected were Tony Grace of Calgary, Andy Harrower of the Medicine Hat club, and Janet Thompson of Winnipeg. They join US Directors, elected by



acclamation, Leslie Strachan, George McLellan and Ted Hirtz; Past President Robert Boyd, Vice President Ken Montgomery of Medicine Hat, and President Colin Harris of Winnipeg.

After a break for lunch, the weekend resumed with the Jim Connor Quiz, which was generally considered tougher than past years. Once again Ronnie O'Byrne took the bowl home.

During the seminar which followed Mac Irvin of Atlanta presented on "Burns and Whiskey – Do They Gang Thegither?" Federation President Dr. Peter Hughes followed with "Robert Burns – Much More Than Burns Clubs" and "The World Federation"

The day, and conference ended with a Reception, followed by the

formal Burns Supper, which included the inauguration of the new President, and the awarding of the trophies,

for the new Jack Hume Poetry Writing completion, the Jim Connor Memorial Quiz, both won by Ronnie O'Byrne, and the golf tournament, to Leslie Strachan. Following Ronnie O'Byrne's Immortal Memory, which concluded with his recitation of his winning entry in the Hume competition, Ted Hirtz led the company in the singing of the Star of Robbie Burns.

The inimitable Willie Gibson, from Prestwick, toasted the Lassies, and was matched, of course, by Jane Brown, of the Globe Inn, in her reply.

The third guest from overseas, Federation President Peter Hughes, proved he wasn't going to be overshadowed by his compatriots, as he proposed the Toast to RBANA, which was responded to by Robert Boyd.

Fort Worth cowboy singer Michael Cote provided some musical numbers to end the night.

Most of those attending spent Sunday travelling to their homes, with a few remaining to tour the area.



Jack Hume Award 1st Place Winner

The Burns Supper Ronnie O'Byrne

When chilled winds blaw ower frosted snaw
An' gloaming nichts fair early draw
As winter clouds hang dreich an' dark
An' silver birks stand strained an' stark
In the midst o' Janwar's strains
To ease us o' our gripes an' grains
A nichts arrived you canna dang
Immortal tales an' auld Scot's sang
Fu' kindness cup we toast the Bard
Wae tippeneny an' usquabae

Wae joy unfeign'd the nicht begins
Wae wines an' malts an' hefty gins
Chattered voices strained an' jarred
Raise their glass to "slangevar"
Then at the hour, appointed time,
They mak' their way tae sit an' dine
For in the distance pipes are skirl'd
An' paired tae march high heid yins birl
A' roond the tables up the isles
They swing their kilts an' tartan styles

Wae order called the chairman stands
An' welcomes guests wae great command
But just as quick he sits his arse
He's up again near just as fast
For ance time mair the pipes are skirled
As on a hod the chieftan's hurled
Guarded by three single malts
He fills the trencher's groaning vaults

Fair fa' your honest, sonsie face
Is followed by the Selkirk Grace
The soup, a broth made by a queen,
Haggis by the man MacSween
Neeps an' tatties mashed and fine
By such hamely fare we dine
Ye pow'rs, wha mak mankind your care
Fair dished us up fine bill o' fare

The tables cleared, the glasses filled,
Awe snuggle back an' keepit still
The first artiste has ta'en the flair
A sang o' love consumes the air
"Ae fond kiss" wae soften tones
Touches hearts wae warring groans
It brings us ilka joy and treasure
Peace, enjoyment, love and pleasure

A lad stands up, a weel kent name,
A politician of some fame
Wae skillfu' talk an' clever turns
He gie's an insight into Burns
He speaks of man the world o'er
Of life an' love an' wondrous poems
Of contributions great an' bold
That so provides our nation's soul
Of Cotters Nights an' ghostly tales
Of Kirks an' dugs an' drunken males
Then, to a close, wae solemn phrase,
"Immortal Burns", the toast is raised



The Lassies toast this night is keen
Among the best there's ever been
A loon who seldom gets the chance
Tae gie the lassies some romance
He taunts the jads an' pu's their hair,
The lauchtin' makes our sides a' sair
He patronises, condescends,
But with his close he makes amends
He tak's us through their contribution
Of life and love and admiration
Clarinda, Jean and highland lassies
Fondly kissed among the rashes

This night we have a chosen race
For only men frequent the place
An ancient rule lent by Tarboulton
That we have kept a sturdy hold on
So to "reply" we have a cronie,
An' just like Tam's pal Souter Johnnie
He's now weel fu' an' unco glorious
Ower a' the ills of life victorious
A second break, a little longer,
As whisky, gill an' beer get stronger
The swinging door is even paced

As ten goes oot ane gets replaced
Wae time the bodies re-assemble
Anticipation soothes the rabble
A treats in store for all whose there
Remember Tam o' Shanter's Mare
The finest tale in our Scot's tongue
Revered by baith the auld and young
Poetic gem o' storms and mirk
Of ghaists an' dancin' in the Kirk

Some artist's croon, some fiddles play,
Killicrankie, Duncan Grey,
Gentle voice in perfect tone
Sings John Anderson my Jo
Recitals, complex, hit yer lugs
Hornbook, Mouse, an' Twa braw Dugs
Satires darts, The Holy Fair
Epistles to his friends an' mair,
In his goon see Holy Willie
High pitched voiced hypocrisy
Poems filled wae love's tight knot
Humanity an' anguished thought

To an end the nicht has come
With claps an' cheers for every name
Artist, guests, committee team
Distillers, brewers, the kitchen queen
The piper's skirls, the bar staff too
Ten other names are on his queue
But then his breeks are gi'en a tug
A message whispered in his lug,
Just say goodnight an' wish them fine,
Let's sing the sang ... it's "Auld Lang Syne".

© Ronnie O'Byrne 2016

'Mindless' pranksters deface mural of Robert Burns with a Hitler moustache

A Robert Burns portrait has been ruined by pranksters. The portrait of the bard, in Ayrshire, Scotland, was smeared by "mindless" hooligans just after it had been restored by celebrated graffiti artist Bobby McNamara.

Murdo Morrison, Past President, and Marketing Convenor for the Robert Burns World Federation, said: "We deeply deplore acts of vandalism of this nature which are so pointless and counterproductive. "Why anyone would like to attack a mural or any other icon such as Robert Burns is beyond our understanding

"We do know and recognise that there is a problem from time to time with attacks on statues, grave stones and other artefacts depicting the bard and other icons.

"But this is, in fact, approaching desecration with that mindless activity."

Mr Morrison added that the organisation would investigate what happened in further detail to try and "rectify" the situation.

He said: "The Robert Burns World Federation works closely with local councils and their cooperation is greatly appreciated."

The mural, approximately 25 feet high and 16 feet wide, and which has been a source of pride for locals and literature fans ever since its creation two decades ago, is painted on a concrete sea wall.

Glasgow-based artist McNamara, who is also known as Rogue-One, oversaw the makeover of the portrait a few months ago, adding some colour to the black and white masterpiece.

North Ayrshire council chiefs are now considering restoration options while appealing to the public for information on the vandalism.

A spokesman for North Ayrshire Council added: "Clearly this is extremely disappointing and frustrating and we'd urge anyone with information to contact local police.

"We will need to assess the vandalism and look at the best options for restoring the mural for the public."



The Editor requests that all submissions for consideration for publication in The Tattler be made as an attachment to email in either .pdf or Word format. Thank you.

RBANA Vice President Addresses Rotary

Submitted By Ken Montgomery

On 24 May 2016 I was invited to a breakfast meeting of Medicine Hat's Sunrise Rotary Club to give a talk on Rotary founder Paul Harris 1868-1947 and his relationship to Robert Burns. Below is an excerpt from my presentation.

Thank you for having me here. First thing is I don't normally get up this early. Second, it is a normal Scottish tradition that when you do a presentation on Burns you normally finish off with a toast with good Scotch whisky. I don't think that would work at a breakfast meeting. On or about January 25th many Rotary Clubs around the world will hold a Burns Supper and enjoy eating the traditional Scottish meal of haggis, neeps and tatties, the drinking of whisky, and the recitation of works by, about, and in the spirit of Scotland's National Bard – Robert Burns.

There is a Burns connection to Rotary and it is more than simply the traditional singing of the Burns song 'Auld Lang Syne' at the end of Conferences and Conventions which I understand occurs; it is more profound. Robert Burns was Rotary founder, Paul Harris' favourite poet.

Forget for a moment the annual Rotary International presidential themes, Harris believed that Burns' work – 'A Man's a Man For A' That' -gave to us all a simple yet definitive Rotary philosophy based around our common humanity.

*Then let us pray that come it may
(As come it will for a' that)
That sense and worth o'er a' the earth
Shall bear the gree for a' that;
For a' that and a' that
It's comin' yet for a' that,
That man to man the world
o'er shall brithers be for a' that.*

In his 1935 book 'This Rotarian Age', Harris once said (in his unmistakable prose style) of Burns' poem,

In the compass of these words have been found all the philosophy, all the hope, the substance of every prayer of the first seer, but how vain were

the aspirations and hopes of this widely separated twain. Primordial forces were to be reckoned with, as is also the case even now though generations have lived and died since the lips of the sage of Ayr were sealed in death.

Harris would also go on to say, "When I think of Burns I see the thing we are striving for in Rotary - The Brotherhood of Man".

He further explained Burns' part in the genesis of Rotary. "Centuries later was born in Scotland another who lived in advance of his time, one who stoutly refused to do obeisance to unreasoning precedent; one whose soul overflowed with the poetry of life. Of all the words of the Scottish bard, none will be more highly appraised nor longer remembered than he, and Harris then referred to that quote from a man's man.

In his 1935 book, Harris also used a verse of Burns 'Address to the Unco Guild' as an introduction to his third chapter entitled 'The Cradle of Religious Liberty'. In another reference to the National Bard, Harris wrote "It should all do us good once in a while to see ourselves as others see us...", another reference from Burns, and his poem 'To a louse'.

One co-incidence between both men was that their respective wives were both called Jean. Robert Burns married Jean Armour in 1788, and like Jean Harris, Burns' father came from Kincardineshire. The following Burns poem to his wife was one of Paul Harris' favourites.

*Of a' the airts the wind can blow
I dearly like the west
For there the bonnie lassie lives
The lassie I lo'e best;
There wild woods grow and rivers row
And monie a hill between;
By day and night my fancy's flight
Is ever wi' my Jean*

Harris visited Ayr in Scotland, Burns' birthplace in 1928 and returned a few years later to see the newly formed Rotary Club of Ayr and often hypothesised over what a wonderful Rotarian Burns would have made.

On this Scottish leg of his tour Paul also visited the Rotary Club of Glasgow, where he was clearly moved by a rendition of 'Auld Lang

RBANA Vice President Addresses Rotary continued

Syne' and remarked to the Club President that it would be a lovely gesture for the Club to sing "Should Auld Acquaintance be forgot..." to all visiting Rotarians.

It is reported the President replied with a frosty disdain "We dinna sing songs like that for everyone"!

The Bard of Ayr's influence on the small town New England world of the young Paul Harris can also be illustrated by looking at the poem entitled 'Robert Burns' by Henry Wadsworth Longfellow. Here's a brief extract:

*But still the music of his song
Rises o'er all elate and strong;
It's master-chords
Are Manhood, Freedom, Brotherhood,
Its discords but an interlude
Between the words.*

Many Rotarians are also Burns enthusiasts and many have brought their Rotarian leadership skills to many Burns Clubs. Here, in Medicine Hat, for example our outgoing president Craig Elder is a proud Rotarian and past president of the club I addressed. Last year our inaugural Jean Armour Ladies Dinner was chaired by Mylvia Baumann, the current president of the Sunrise club, and in Edmonton, the newly elected president of the Edmonton Burns Club is Scott Montgomery (not a direct relative) but also a very active Rotarian and a past president of an Edmonton club.

So, there is a connection to Burns and the Rotary. So when looking for new members for any Burns club I submit it's a good idea is to make contact with your local Rotary clubs.

Scottish Diaspora Tapestry tours North America

The Scottish Heritage Council of Manitoba, of which the Winnipeg Robert Burns Club is a member, hosted an exhibition of the Scottish Diaspora Tapestry in Winnipeg during the month of June. The Tapestry was displayed around the Grand Staircase on the Main Floor of the Legislative Building, a neoclassical building full of masonic imagery. RBANA President Colin Harris, a Council Board Member, was present at the grand opening of the exhibition.

The Scottish Diaspora Tapestry consists of 305 hand-embroidered panels (each measuring 20 inches by 20 inches) that tell the story of the Scottish Diaspora from around the world. It is estimated that more than 30 million people across the world (six times the current population of Scotland) proudly claim and celebrate their Scottish descent, each with a tale to tell of how their families journeyed to the far corners of the earth and made



new lives.

The panels were submitted from 34 countries, including, of course, Canada and the United States. Each of the were hand-embroidered by local stitchers, in each community with each panel taking approximately 200 hours to complete.

The Tapestry was developed as a project for Scotland's 2014 Homecoming. After touring the United Kingdom in 2014, the Tapestry has been exhibited in Europe (Norway, Netherlands, Italy and France), Australia and New Zealand. The exhibition is currently in North America stopping in Victoria BC before going to Winnipeg. Following Winnipeg the exhibition will then proceed to Wisconsin, Toronto, Prince Edward Island, Nova Scotia and Montreal before returning to Scotland where it will eventually be on permanent display in Prestonpans.

Burns' former lodgings in Kirkcudbright for sale

A townhouse in Kirkcudbright where Robert Burns once stayed and even reputedly inscribed a poem on a wall, is up for sale.

The townhouse is steeped in history and was formerly 'The King's Arms Inn', which was frequented by the poet and includes an inscription on one of the walls believed to be from the poet himself.

52 High Street has now been launched to the Dumfries and Galloway market through property consultants CKD Galbraith and offers buyers the opportunity to own a piece of local history as well as a superb family house.

The inscription was discovered by William Robson, a noted artist, who acquired the property in 1920. When stripping wallpaper in one of the first floor bedrooms the following verse was revealed: ‘

*'When January winds were blawin' cauld (Kirkcudbright?)
I took my way,*

but mirksome night did me enfauld till earlyest day.'

R Burns

William Robson had the inscription preserved on the bedroom wall, where it remains today. Whether or not this is truly a Burns' inscription remains somewhat a mystery however the town has strong links to Burns. The town's peaceful atmosphere is believed to have inspired other famous verses from the poet such as the Selkirk Grace, thought to have been written whilst he stayed at the Selkirk Arms Hotel in Kirkcudbright.



David Corrie, of CKD Galbraith's Castle Douglas office, said: "This is an immaculately presented home of character and history, with the principal rooms being elegantly proportioned and offering different layout options as well as flexible accommodation for a large family. Included in the sale of 52 High Street is a substantial stone out-building which would make for an ideal artist's studio and an Edwardian rotating summer house."

