



# The Tattler



## Words from the President

Summer 2019 Edition

### Officers & Directors

- President: Ken Montgomery
- Vice President: Henry Cairney
- Secretary/Treasurer: Matthew Hill
- Past President: Colin Harris
- Canadian Directors: Tony Grace, Andy Harrower, Jim Steel
- U S Directors: George McClellan, Bill Fulton, Mark Ferguson
- Hon Presidents: May Crawley, Jack Mann, Jim Cunningham, Jean Cunningham, Ron Ballantyne, Chrys Ballantyne

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The Robert Burns Association  
 of North America

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

**G**reetings to all! I trust you are enjoying the summer.

First, congratulations to Ron Ballantyne, Ronnie O’Byrne and all those involved with organizing and hosting this years AGM held at Niagara Falls. I am especially thankful for the efforts made to have myself placed in the special suite attached to the hospitality room located on the 30<sup>th</sup> floor of our hotel which had spectacular high window views of the Falls. Well done and appreciated!

At this years Board meeting I intentionally involved Bill Nolan, current RBWF president and the other RBWF representatives present, as well as Ronnie O’Byrne, RBWF Rep, Canada and Les Strachan, RBWF Rep, USA. It was a very productive meeting where it was agreed that the RBANA Executive had to be more involved so RBANA could better represent its members and grow and prosper, and to better assist RBWF interests.

To that end it was agreed that where we have three Canadian Directors and three US Directors we had to have each more involved. A basic way to do this would be to divide each country into three areas with each director assigned to represent an area. The President and VP would then be responsible for monitoring, supervising and advising the directors in each country. This means that each director would know which members were in his area and would not only maintain communications to know what area Clubs and members were doing, but also would report back to the President or VP. Each Director would also be responsible for recruiting new members in their areas, ensuring events in their area were reported to the Club Webmaster and editor of the Tattler so proper articles would be available, and finally, the RBWF rep for Canada and the US would also be able to directly liaise with individual RBANA directors in order to better know what was going on in North America and be better able to report information of relevance back to the RBWF.

As the USA has a larger population and many logistical differences com-



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## Montgomery's Musings Continued

pared to Canada, this makes it more difficult to divide that country into three distinct areas. So where Canada is now ready to go our US RBANA directors are still working out the bugs so we may have three US areas soon identified. So, for now, Canadian Director Tony Grace ([tonyg.sheilaw@shaw.ca](mailto:tonyg.sheilaw@shaw.ca)) will take on Canada West that includes British Columbia, Yukon, North West Territories, Alberta and Saskatchewan. Jimmy Steel ([james.steel@rogers.com](mailto:james.steel@rogers.com)) will take on Canada Central, which is Manitoba, Ontario and Nunavut, and Andy Harrower ([ganush@me.com](mailto:ganush@me.com)) will take on Canada East which is Quebec and Canada's Maritime provinces that include Newfoundland and Labrador, Prince Edward Island, New Brunswick and Nova Scotia. VP Henry Cairney will supervise and monitor to ensure efficiency.

In order for this new strategy to work I am asking that Clubs or members in each designated area contact their area Director and provide that director with Club updates, information of interest and the names and contact information of any prospective new members. These directors are also there to let you know what RBANA and its many resources can do for you.

I also note that Canadian Director Andy Harrower has now relocated from Yellowknife, NWT to London, Ontario, so no doubt will be better able to additionally assist with our Eastern Canadian and US interests.

That's it for now, and it's not too early to start planning to attend next year's AGM in Atlanta.

All the best and yours in Burns,  
Ken Montgomery, President

## Winnipeg Honours The Bard

As has been its custom for longer than anyone can remember, likely the 1930s, the Winnipeg Robert Burns club gathered on the grounds of the provincial legislature to honour Robert Burns.

There were some clouds, which helped to cool the day down, but largely, the sun shone (unlike last year, when for the first time in the memory of long time members, rain shortened proceedings).

The occasion was the 223rd anniversary of the death of Robert Burns, the precise venue, the legislative grounds in front of the Burns Statue, which was gifted to the province by the club, in 1936.

We even attracted the attendance of two pass-



ing cyclists, who had been drawn by the pipes. Following an introductory piping by club piper Kirby McRae, and words of welcome by

Chaplain Joyce Allen, a moment of silence for Absent Friends, two wreaths were laid at the base of the statue, one on behalf of the club, by President Chris Halliday, the other on behalf of RBANA by Past President Colin Harris.

Readings followed, the Lament by members, including Colin, and former RBANA Secretary Treasurer Janet Thompson.

The afternoon ended with the singing of Star of Robbie Burns and Auld Lang Syne. Attending club members decamped to a local restaurant for a fish & chip dinner.

## RBANA Welcomes New USA Director

**R**BANA was very privileged to have had the service and dedication provided by US Director Ted Hirtz, however Ted has acknowledged that with all his other interests it's time for a new US Director to take on the challenge of furthering RBANA's interests and objectives. A special thank you to Ted for all his efforts!

President Ken Montgomery is now pleased to announce that Mark Ferguson of Atlanta, Georgia has agreed to step in and act as an interim US Director to see us through until the formal elections are held at the 2020 RBANA AGM.

Mark was born in Helensburgh, a provincial Scottish town situated on the River Clyde. In 1983 he graduated from Strathclyde University in Glasgow with a BEng in Production Engineering & Management. He joined Cadbury Schweppes Plc and moved to St Albans, in England where he first met his wife Elaine two weeks after his arrival. They were married in 1987.

In 1991, Mark transferred to work for The Coca-Cola Company and moved to Brussels, Belgium

where his son Alexander was born in 1996. That same year Mark and his family moved to Vienna, Austria where his daughter Melanie was born in 1998. The next move was made in 2001 when the Ferguson's moved to Dublin, Ireland where Mark and his family enjoyed 8 happy years before making their final move to Atlanta, Georgia in 2009.

Mark recently took early retirement from The Coca-Cola Company in Atlanta after a 32 year career and



is now President of PAALM Coaching an executive business coaching concern. He is an accomplished amateur singer and speaker with a particular love of Robert Burns. Mark has been a member of the Burns Club of Atlanta since 2015 and joined the Board as a director in 2018. He is also a member of the Clan Ferguson Society of North America, which he joined in 2016 as Region 4 Convener. In 2017 he was appointed to the role of Membership Chairman and took on the additional

responsibility of Region 4 Vice President when he was elected to this position in January 2019.

**As Always,  
Think Burns**

## The Falls Welcomes RBANA

The RBANA Conference for 2019, was held at Niagara Falls, Ontario at the beginning of May. Under the current leadership, the growth of the RBANA, as an active contributing organization to the furtherance of the Robert Burns literary legacy to clubs and organizations everywhere, is contemplated.

This year's venue was the Hilton Niagara Falls Fallsview Hotel, a multi-towered building with direct views of the famous American and Horseshoe Falls, from the Canadian side, from the right room.

The historic Niagara River, that drains Lake Erie into Lake Ontario, marks the divide between Canada and America and was, therefore a most appropriate location for the conference.

Most people arrived on the Thursday to be able to rise and shine early Friday morning. As is customary, Friday morning saw the annual a golf outing for those so inclined. This year the event was won by frequent champion, Ronnie O'Byrne. Friday afternoon was given over to the RBANA executive board meeting, which was attended, as well, by several of our overseas guests, including Federation President Bill Nolan. It was here that Board members learned of the resignation of Ted Hirtz, noted elsewhere.

Friday evening a pre-dinner reception was hosted by Ken Montgomery in his suite, with stunning views of the Falls, (below) from which attendees retired to the Erie &

Michigan room for the dinner and Ceilidh. The, as usual, excellent ceilidh was compered by Ron-



nie O'Byrne and anchored by Nils Brown, and included the usual music, singing, poetry recitations, jokes from those brave

enough to put themselves forward.

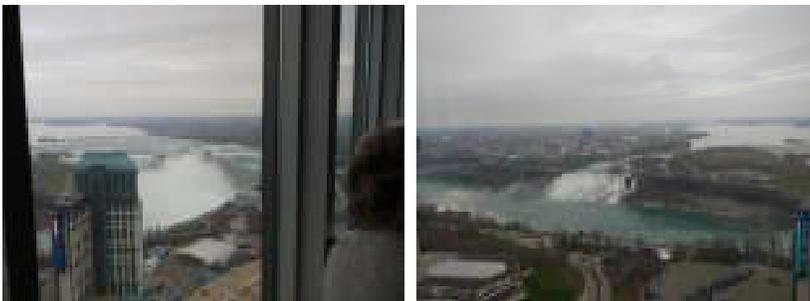
Saturday's events included the AGM, a scheduled three-hour event followed by lunch. When attendees reconvened, a seminar on a subject pertinent to Robert Burns was presented. The first presentation was "Burns and a World Catastrophe" explaining that Iceland's Laki volcano eruption of 1783-84, one of the most devastating in history, the poisonous sulphuric fog devastated all of Europe yet Burns failed to note it. Why? It appears due to a divided jet stream southwest Scotland missed the fog, but he did note the two years of bitter snowy winters that resulted. Former RBANA Secretary-Treasurer Ron Ballantyne was the presenter.

Following a break, the annual Jim Connor Memorial quiz was administered, by George McLellan, USA Director and RBANA quiz master. As noted elsewhere the winner was Les Strachan, of Virginia.

Following the quiz, the second presentation concerned the bawdy verses found in the Merry Mus-es, the history, story and rumors surrounding who contributed to the collection and why. Well, "Boys will be Boy's." It was presented by Bill Dawson, a past President of the Burns World Federation and Editor of the Burns Chronicle.

The day ended with another pre-dinner reception in the Presidential suite followed by a gala dinner with Highland Dress and all its refinements. Naturally music followed and the fun lasted well into night.

The conference committee chaired by Ronnie O'Byrne, assisted ably by Ron and Chrys Ballantyne are to be congratulated for the success of the weekend. Next year's conference will be held in Atlanta in late April.



## O'Byrne Wins Hume Award For Second Time

The fourth annual Jack Hume Heather & Thistle Trophy was awarded to RBWF Canadian Director Ronnie O'Byrne during the Saturday evening gala dinner at the Niagara Falls RBANA Conference.

The trophy, awarded for poetry writing in the style of Robert Burns, was donated by the now late Jack Hume of Houston. The entries were judged blindly by a three-member panel comprising Guida Hume, Jack's widow, author and



Past President Chrys Ballantyne presenting Ronnie O'Byrne with Hume Trophy

a professor of English; RBWF representative Willie Gibson; and 2018 Hume Trophy winner Jim Hutchens of the Calgary Burns Club, and coordinated by Past President Robert Boyd.

O'Byrne was also the trophy's initial winner.

His winning entry is published on the next page.

## Leslie Strachan Wins Connor Quiz

Once again, one of the highlights of Saturday afternoon at the Niagara Falls Conference was the Dr Jim Connor Memorial Quiz.

Administered by RBANA Quiz Master George McClellan the winner, as is quite the case was RBWF US Director Leslie Strachan.

The trophy, was presented during the Saturday evening dinner by Elma Connor, Past President of RBANA and widow of Past Federation President D Jim Connor, in whose memory the crystal bowl was donated.



## 2019 Hume Winning Entry

### Oor Twa Lands

Ma mither tongue o' guid broad Scots  
Was born an' bred on porridge oats  
Was learned amang the miner's rows  
Near bridges ower the River Forth  
Auld Reekie was oor favourite haunt  
When'er tae shop or jig or jaunt  
So ower the years an accent grew  
That's still a portion o' me noo

But chance an' fortune gie ye' guide  
I must fir wife an' weans provide  
So noo a live amid great lakes  
Whare NAFTA rules the border gates  
This northern land o' geese an' ice  
Has so became oor hame an' life  
But let me gie yir coat a tug  
An' whisper somethin' in yir lug  
That may assist some ither hands  
Explain connections 'tween oor lands

Since colonies were ance devised  
We Scots hae forged this nation's drive  
By river bends an' mountain range  
The ice packed north was tracked an' named

Sir William Alex asked King James  
Permission tae expand his reign  
The plan wis tae establish toons  
Frae Halifax tae Saskatoon

As high tides blew in Hector's boats  
An' Highland clans were cleansed by force  
In Pictou they first set afoot  
An' built New Scotland's Gallic roots

Lord Selkirk ventured further west  
Red River an' by Winnipeg  
While in the East McDonald's Clan  
Striped oot trees an' cleared the land

An' on they came an' on they spread  
Alang St Lawrence tae Quebec  
Then doon the lakes they built Glengarry  
Guelph an' places they called 'Barry'

Frae coast tae coast the Scots enhanced  
The towns an' structure o' the land  
The Dick McBride's an' James McGill's  
Built railroads, tunnels, bridges, schools

James Douglas factored out BC  
McKenzie searched the Northwest seas  
In Halifax Keith brewed some ale  
As Brantford phoned up Graham Bell

Provincial steps helped build a nation  
By politics o' federation  
Sir John McDonald swore an oath  
An' so the Nation's seal was forged

An' while these names are famed afar  
This land was built through toil an' graft  
The landed Scot wha ventured forth  
Tae self-improve his sense an' worth

Frae Gander Bay tae Barkley Sound  
Ancestral steps are traced an' found  
So lift yir glass an' raise your han'  
The toast this night ... is oor twa lands!

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# Medicine Hat Continues To Think Outside The Box

A few years back the Medicine Hat Burns Club wanted to be involved with a summer event that would help promote the Club. As a result they established a Haggis on a Bap (bun) booth at the local Canada Day celebration held every 1<sup>st</sup> of July in a huge local public park. Where this went well, with the price of haggis going up, it was eventually felt that to break even prices would have to increase, and when that price point was established it was suspected that most would not pay more for a Haggis on a bap than they would for a cheeseburger. It was therefore decided it was time for a change, and for the Club to again think outside the box.

Another annual event in Medicine Hat was the annual Downtown Chili Cook Off. This year would be the 30<sup>th</sup> annual event. This involved having downtown streets blocked off and various businesses and organizations each setting up a chili stand outside of a business where the public, after purchasing a chili bowl and spoon then visited each entry to sample their chili. Club Chef Ian Baird spent considerable time selecting a primo recipe. Club members then met at Ian's home two days before the event to pick up their ground pork, cubed beef, spices, canned tomatoes and other ingredients so multiple batches of this special chili could be made. The Club needed a name to draw in the crowd.



It was decided that the Club's entry would be called 'Clan MacChilli's Traditional Highland Coo Chili'. A banner was made and custom t-shirts ordered.

The Club was also privileged when members of the South Alberta Pipes & Drums offered to volunteer their time and pipe at the Club's booth. On Saturday, 20 July it was show time. What a blast! The Club served over 400 bowls of chili before running out and the public reaction was fantastic. Where the Club definitely generated interest in Burns, Scottish Culture, traditions and Club membership, they

also promoted the World Federation by putting out the RBWF display banner.

The Club also used this opportunity to have Club Piper Malcolm Sissons (right) unveil its new piper's pennon which features the Club's formal crest as well the badges and insignia of the RBWF, RBANA, the British Army Training Unit Suffield (BATUS) and Canadian Forces Base Suffield which the Club is also affiliated to.



Medicine Hat also hosts an annual stampede that following the Calgary Stampede is the second largest rodeo event in the world. Pictured below are this year's Medicine Hat Stampede's Queen and Princess,



each enjoying a bowl of chili at the Club booth.

It just goes to show that a Burns club can have fun and promote the cause other than

being involved with traditional events. So, don't be afraid to think outside the box!

It should be noted that, the Medicine Hat club's efforts proved worthy when they made front page in the Monday, 22 July 2019 edition of the Medicine Hat News. The caption reads "Robbie Burns member Sean Wentzel hands out a scoop of chili Saturday afternoon during the downtown Chili Cookoff."



## Burns at the Fringe

*A Man's a Man*, a play written by two teachers at Edinburgh's Clifton Hall School, returns to the 2019 Edinburgh Fringe for its first professional production.

Colleagues Martin Franssen and Headmaster Rod Grant (below r & l) accidentally discovered a shared love of Robert Burns, and in 2015 set about writing a new musical play with an original score.



Grant explains: "Burns is often portrayed in a comedic way or with a focus on his poetry. *A Man's a*

*Man* shows his failings as a man as well as the genius of his words.

"It was written to entertain Burns aficionados, but also constructed to educate people who know very little about the man himself."

Franssen adds: "We have created a musical which takes a fresh look at the life of Robert Burns, relating his whole story using autobiographical works put to new, present-day music.

"It charts the poet's life from humble beginnings in Ayrshire to his tragic early death in Dumfries, via the stardom, adulation and bright lights of Edinburgh.

"*A Man's a Man* presents Burns in a refreshingly honest and accessible way, including poetry such as Address to A Haggis, Auld Lang Syne, Ae Fond Kiss and Tam O' Shanter among many others, all put to an original score and woven into Burns' life story."

After an initial performance at the school, the two writers staged a production for a short run at Fringe 2018. They then sought a professional company to produce the piece for this year's festival.

Producer Stephen Wright has revealed comedian and playwright Rory Bremner helped get the play up and running.

Stephen said: "It's all Rory Bremner's fault. We did a show with Rory at the 2018 Fringe.

"At the same time, Rod and Martin, who teach at Rory's old school, Clifton Hall on the outskirts of Edinburgh, were staging a short Fringe run of an earlier version of the play and had contacted Rory to ask for some advice on how to take things on to the next level.

"Rory very kindly suggested that they speak to Fair Pley," a Glasgow based arts production company.

After a couple of meetings, Fair Pley began developing a professional production of *A Man's a Man* for a full 2019 Fringe run.



Director Liz Carruthers auditioned and cast five Scottish actors; reworked the script and set about marrying the drama of Burns' life story with the exquisite joy of his songs and poetry.

Stephen hopes the play will bring a new look to the story of Burns.

He said: "It is such a fresh approach to the life story of Burns – a dramatic play, featuring familiar and some less well-known works.

"We get sent a lot of scripts – and not all of them measure up, but when I first read this in September 2018 I thought: 'Oh, here's something different!'

"Then I listened to the score and I was hooked. It tells the dramatic story of Burns' life, but in a new, energising and radical way. Plus, of course, there is the beauty and grace of his poetry and songs, though on this occasion with a few twists and surprises!"

The show is scheduled for August 1-12 and 14-25 at the New Town Theatre.

## Burns Returns to Moffat

An iconic 16th century inn has unveiled a homage to Robert Burns this summer. Moffat's Black Bull Inn is well documented as a favourite haunt of famed Scots poet Robert Burns in the 18th century.

The poet was an admirer of a beautiful but petite local girl, Deborah Davies and one day, as legend goes, while he was drinking at the inn, he saw her ride past, accompanied by a tall and portly lady.

Someone asked him why God had made one lady so large and Miss Davies so small.

In reply, Burns etched his famous 'Epigram to a Scrimpit Nature' on to a nearby window: "Ask why God made the gem so small and why so huge the granite? Because God meant mankind to set the higher value on it."

The original window is now in St Petersburg, Russia after being gifted to Tsar Nicholas 1st who visited Moffat as a young man aged 20 in 1816 when he



was a Grand Duke.

But the inn's new owners, Mark and Janie Seaton, set about honouring the inn's link to Scotland's best-known poet.

Janie said: "When I took over the Black Bull Inn my customers told me they wanted to see the links between Robert Burns and the inn restored after being dormant for a very long time.

"I could see this was very important to the community who are proud of their Black Bull/Burns history and, with this in mind, I made it my mission to bring the Bard back to his natural home in Moffat."

She added: "I have been weaving him back into the essence of the hospitality in several ways, but my piece de resistance is this plaque on the wall bearing the precious verse from

a lost windowpane etching the Bard did during a drinking session here.

"With the verse back in The Black Bull, I have given the community the Black Bull they asked me for six months ago and I hope they will be as proud as I am . . . however, I'm not finished yet and there's lots more to come."

## Burns Farm Tops BBC Awards

An Ayrshire farm once worked by Robert Burns has won a top award at the BBC Food and Farming Awards.

Mossgiel Milk, a small dairy near Mauchline, won the "Future Food Award" for its innovative approach to farming.

Once losing £10,000 a month as a result of plummeting milk prices, farmer Bryce Cunningham transformed his traditional dairy business by making it fully organic and single-use plastic free.

Robert Burns was a tenant farmer at Mossgiel Farm in the late 18th century.

Mr. Cunningham, the third generation of his family to farm at Mossgiel, said he was delighted with the award.

He told BBC Radio 4 programme Farming Today:



"We lost so much money in my first year of farming after my father Robert's death that I felt we had to do something different to what we were doing.

"I started to think the consumer today has no connection to the farm or where the food comes from.

"Then I was thinking about single use plastics and how we had the solution 50 years ago with bottles, there is a drive behind this, and I thought there was an opportunity there."

He added: "It was a massive step but our local community was behind it and we launched two crowd funders which were really successful

and we are now in a position to support two other local organic farmers who were in the same position as us five years ago by simply being in the wrong milk contract."