

The Robert Burns Association of North America Annual AGM and Conference 2016

The Heather & Thistle Society of Houston, with local assistance from member and Dallas-area resident Charles McKay, put on a most successful and enjoyable event at the Marriott Airport North, adjacent to Dallas-Fort Worth Airport. About thirty members and guests attended the meeting, somewhat fewer than normal, the numbers from north of the border having been impacted by the weakness of the C\$ against the US currency. We did have a strong representation from Scotland, led by RBWF President Peter Hughes. Past President Jane Brown and RBWF member Willie Gibson also attended.



The weekend started early with an informal dinner gathering of about 12, followed by President Robert Boyd and his wife Irene hosting the company in the Presidential Suite in the hotel which provided more than ample accommodation.

On Friday morning the golfers headed out as usual, but this year the result was not the expected one, when Les Strachan edged out Ronnie O'Byrne.





About a dozen of the other delegates went on a bus tour of Dallas-Fort Worth which was voted extremely interesting and enjoyable.

A wine reception was hosted by President Boyd, followed by an informal dinner and Ceilidh. The highlight of the latter for many was Jane Brown's hilarious rendition of a health and safety seminar in the guise of an imaginary dialogue between Lord Nelson and Captain Hardy. After the ceilidh the company repaired to the Presidential Suite for a convivial end to the evening.



The 2016 RBANA AGM was held on Saturday morning. With few controversial issues this year, the business was dispatched in short order, and the election of the new Executive for 2016-2018 was held. A pleasant note was struck when Jim and Jean Cunningham and Ron and Chrys Ballantyne were elected Honorary Presidents in recognition of their extraordinary dedication and hard work for RBANA,

particularly in the last few years in running Conferences.



On Saturday afternoon we heard two most interesting presentations, one by Mac Irvine from Atlanta on *Burns and Whisky – Do They Gang Thegither?* And the other by RBWF President Peter Hughes on *Burns – So Much More than Burns Clubs and the World Federation*. The annual Dr Jim Connor Quiz had a new presenter this year, Jim Cunningham having stepped down after ten years. RBANA US Director George McClellan compiled an interesting set of questions, and the winner was Ronnie O’Byrne.



On Saturday evening a formal Burns Dinner was held. The haggis was piped in by Rafe Alderink and addressed by Andy Harrower.



The Presidential regalia was handed over to incoming President Colin Harris by Robert Boyd.

The awards ceremony this year included the inaugural Jack Hume Award for original poetry written in the style of Burns. There were twelve entries of excellent quality, and the winner was Ronnie O'Byrne with Jim McLaughlin of Calgary second and third, with Irene and Robert Boyd of the host club fourth. Ronnie O'Byrne gave the Immortal Memory, which included his award-winning poem.



Willie Gibson toasted The Lassies and Jane Brown responded, and RBANA was toasted by Peter Hughes with Robert Boyd responding. The evening ended with a Texas-style set by local singer Michael Cote.



The delegates departed after a most enjoyable event, and looking forward to the 2017 Conference in Medicine Hat, Alberta April 26-28.