



# The Tattler



Winter 2023 Edition

## President's Message

### Officers & Directors:

President	Paul Kennedy
Vice President	Mark Ferguson
Secretary/Treasurer	Jamie Osborne
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Canadian Directors:	Ken Montgomery Brian Cumming Charles H Cameron
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The Robert Burns Association  
of North America

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

Greetings once again fellow members and guests,  
I am happy to report on several events attended by myself and other members of both RBANA and the South Jersey Celtic Society (SJCS) over the last few weeks.

To kick off the season, I was honored to present the Immortal Memory to the Burns Club of Atlanta (BCA) on January 21st although; due to a failing voice, I reluctantly turned my IM over to my colleague, John Adams (President, SJCS) to read for me. As I mentioned in my IM, if I had a bucket list; then addressing the men of the Burns Club of Atlanta, in their beautiful and authentic reproduction of the Burns Cottage, would certainly have been on it. About sixty-eight members of the BCA were in attendance and we were treated to an evening of southern hospitality and Burns style conviviality. The Haggis was then piped in to the applause by the members by Piper, Michael Scott, and expertly addressed by past president (BCA) Richard Green. Next came Introductions all around with several members introducing their guests and potential new members. Following dinner, introductions, a round of toasts, and the IM, several members read poetry of the Bard including a beautiful rendition of Tam O'Shanter, by Eddie Morgan; blue bonnet and all. The entire



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## President's Message (continued)

evening was truly a delight.

I was also honored to attend The Rosenbach Museum in Philadelphia, which boasts the largest collection of original Burns manuscripts outside of Scotland. Their annual Burns Night (January 25th) was a small gathering of guests who were treated to an evening of Poetry, Music, Haggis, and a blind whisky tasting.

(Pictures to right) The SJCS provided the music as well as the Haggis, while other members read from the works of Burns. One museum director read a letter from Thomas Moore to the Bard responding to Burns' request for advice; essentially suggesting that Burns not write so much in the vernacular... advice thankfully ignored by Burns. Many of the original manuscripts including a volume of the Kilmarnock Edition was on display for the guests

Finally, to round out the week, the 28th of January marked the 18th Annual SJCS Burns Supper. The IM was delivered by David Adams, a retired US Naval Officer, who drew a number of connections from John Paul Jones to Robert Burns. We also were treated to several songs from the "Merry Muses of Caledonia" including "Nine Inches..." which were artfully sung by "Chaste Treasure", a lovely trio of ladies known for their somewhat risqué approach to Renaissance music, but made an exception singing the bawdy songs of the Bard. Several members of the US Marines were in attendance as special guests of one of our long time members, Michael Coccozza, Colonel, USA (Retired).

With most of our Burns Suppers behind us, I am now looking forward to seeing as many of you as possible at the AGM in Calgary in May. Be sure to register early for what promises to be a great event!

Thank you,

Paul Kennedy

President,  
Robert Burns  
Association  
of North  
America



## From the Atlanta Burn's Club



## From the South Jersey Celtic Society







# The Robert Burns Association of North America



## RBANA 8<sup>th</sup> Annual Poetry Competition 2023

The **Jack Hume Heather & Thistle Trophy** is awarded annually for writing poetry in the style of Robert Burns. Jack Hume, who passed away a few years ago, was the founder of the Heather & Thistle Burns Club and a staunch supporter of RBANA. This is the eighth year that the trophy will be presented for the competition and entries are invited under the following rules and conditions:

- Entries should be submitted by email to [secretary@rbana.com](mailto:secretary@rbana.com)
- The deadline for entries is **Friday 21st April 2023**
- Poems submitted must be original, and not previously published.
- Only RBANA members in good standing are eligible to win the trophy.
- Entries from non-RBANA members will be judged by the panel but are not eligible to win the trophy.
- The winner will be chosen by a three-member panel comprising of **Marc Sherland**, President of the Lanarkshire Association of Burns Clubs, President of the Glasgow Haggis Club, SVP of Glasgow & District Burns Association and Past President of the RBWF; long standing judge and member of RBWF Ltd **Willie Gibson**; and 2022 Jack Hume Trophy winner **Jim McLaughlin** from Calgary, AB. Entries will be submitted to the panel anonymously, and the panel's decision will be final.
- The winner will be announced at the 2023 AGM and Conference in Calgary AB in May.
- This trophy is awarded annually, and the winner is responsible for returning the trophy to the RBANA Secretary or President prior to the following year AGM & Conference.



Canadian Director Brian Cumming  
presenting the Hume Trophy to 2022  
winner Jim McLaughlin



## Custom Art Work to Be Auctioned at Conference

In order to support the upcoming 2023 RBANA AGM, Stew Kennedy, a proud member of Clan Kennedy and the Medicine Hat Burns Club, who is a local lawyer who on the side loves to produce traditional and accurate reproductions of medieval armour, has been recruited to produce a custom, and authentic replica helmet as worn by Robert the Bruce for the upcoming RBANA AGM.



ing RBANA AGM.

This custom piece of art will be raffled or auctioned off to support this RBANA event and more info on this later.

The 2023 RBANA AGM Committee also guarantee that for whoever ends up with this custom piece, it will definitely be a keeper and special treasured acquisition.



## Conference Registration Deadline Nears

Fellow RBANA members, and guests  
The Calgary Burns Club is hosting the 2023 RBANA AGM and Conference from May 5-7/2023 at the Delta Hotel Calgary South. It is a mixed event. We will have events starting May 4/23 for those attending early, with the Conference commencing on Friday May 5/23 with a ceilidh highlighting the talents of RBANA members. The AGM and formal dinner will be May 6/23 with an Immortal Memory from Phyl Smith, RBANA director and member of the RBANA Academy of Speakers. There will be a Burns themed program on the Saturday afternoon as well. If you are not interested in attending the AGM, you can just register for the Friday night dinner and ceilidh, and Saturday night formal dinner. Note: Only RBANA members, or members of Clubs which have RBANA membership, can attend the AGM itself. Attached is a fillable registration form for you, and

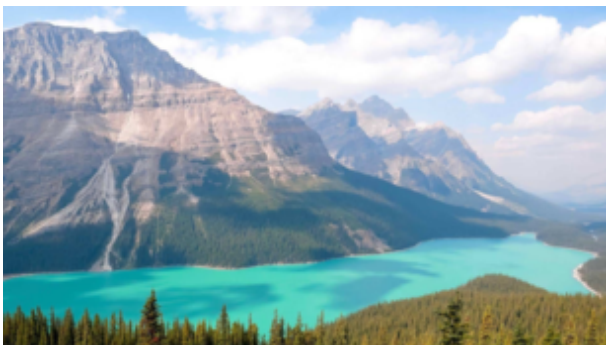


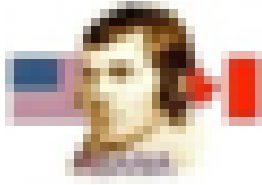
any guests you wish to bring with you. Space is limited to 150 persons. Page two and three are your details. We would like the names of all of the persons in your group, and if you are taking a table, the RBANA member who will be table host. Tables seat eight. Any dietary needs can be included on a separate page if required. There are two choices of entrée on Friday night and Saturday night. Please indicate the numbers of each entrée choice for your attendees for each night. Hotel rooms at the special room rate of \$139.00 Cdn plus tax applicable for the days you have chosen over the period May 4-8, 2023. Room rates includes breakfast. Please register soon. Payment must accompany your form. See you May 5-7/23. If you have any questions, please contact your RBANA regional director.



## **2023 RBANA AGM – CALGARY**

**WE NEED YOU  
TO  
REGISTER  
TODAY!**





## THE ROBERT BURNS ASSOCIATION OF NORTH AMERICA THE 43rd AGM and CONFERENCE

May 5th to 7th, 2023 Calgary, Alberta, Canada

AGM/Conference at the Delta South Hotel  
135 Southland Dr SE, Calgary, Alberta

**\*\*CONFERENCE REGISTRATION FEE PER PERSON\*\***  
**(Rooms Are Not Included)**

**\$175.00(US)**

**\$235.00(CAD)**

ROOM RATE Starts at: **\$139.00(CAD )**  
Single/Double OCCUPANCY **Standard Room.**

If you wish to extend your stay  
The room rate for Thursday 4th May and Sunday 7th May  
starts at \$139 .00(CAD)

**Note: Breakfast is not included**  
**ROOMS MUST BE BOOKED DIRECTLY WITH THE HOTEL**

To reserve rooms **on-line** for this conference, click the link below:

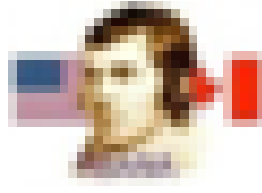
[Book your group rate for RBANA AGM & Conference 2023](#)

or, call the hotel directly at (403)-278-5050 and make sure to mention  
**RBANA 2023** when booking. Room rates will last until May 8th, 2023.

Any questions contact the RBANA Secretary at  
[secretary@rbana.com](mailto:secretary@rbana.com) **Further details on the weekend program will follow**

**RBANA Registration open until March 31st, 2023**  
**ROBERT BURNS ASSOCIATION OF NORTH**  
**AMERICA 43rd ANNUAL CONFERENCE**





Delta South Hotel  
135 Southland Dr SE, Calgary, AB T2J 5X5

## REGISTRATION FORM

Attendees:

Names of participants attending the **Full Conference**:

Names of participants attending **Friday** dinner only:

3. Names of participants attending **Saturday** dinner only:

Address:

Club:

Tel:

Email:

Any special needs?

Friday Golf Course and Cost T.B.A. - How Many?

Saturday Banff Trip Cost T.B.A. -How Many?

### REGISTRATION FEE:

Full Conference: **\$235.00 (CAD)** per person or **\$175.00 (US)** Dinners only:

Friday: **\$55.00(CAD)(\$40 US) Per Person.**

Saturday: **\$80 (CAD) (\$60 US) Per Person.**

Sponsorship/Donation Enclosed: \$

Total enclosed: \$

Send all registration forms to Jamie Osborne Secretary/Treasurer at the address below:

### Payment Methods

**By Cheque:** Make cheques payable to “**Robert Burns Association of North America**”

mail to:**c/o Jamie Osborne**

610 54th Avenue SW Calgary, Alberta T2V 0C8

Canada

**By Etransfer (CAD or US):** secretary@rbana.com,

Reference: RBANA2023

**THE ROBERT BURNS ASSOCIATION OF NORTH AMERICA**  
**THE 43rd AGM and CONFERENCE**  
**May 5th to 7th, 2023 Calgary, Alberta, Canada**



**MENU CHOICES**

**Friday Set Menu (Appetizers and Dessert)**

**Artisan Greens:** Pickled apples, crumbled goat feta, toasted pumpkin seeds, white balsamic vinaigrette

**Main Dish (See Choices Below)**

**House-Made Sweet Selection**

Hazelnut + Milk Chocolate Bon Bon; Chewy Single Malt Whisky Caramel with Sea Salt;

Black Tea + Orange Shortbread; Raspberry Pates de Fruits

**Friday Main Dish Choices (Select choice/number of meals) Number of Meals**

Prairie Ranchers Braised Alberta Shortrib: Caramelized shallot jus, chefs vegetables, smoked cheddar potato gratin

Stuffed Chicken Supreme: Truffle mushroom and boursin cheese filling, natural jus, chef's vegetables, smoked cheddar potato gratin

Dietary Request (e.g. Vegan) **Food Type requested/number:**

**Saturday Set Menu (Appetizers and Dessert)**

**Cold Smoked Salmon:** Salmon caviar, fresh dill, horseradish crème fraiche, pickled shallots, rye crumbs

**Cock-a-Leekie Soup:** Alberta leeks, roasted chicken, pearl barley, prunes

**Haggis, Neeps & Tatties:** Local haggis, mashed turnip + apple, buttermilk whipped potatoes, Drambuie cream

**Main Dish (See Choices Below)**

**“Cranachan”:** Scottish breakfast tea infused cream, raspberries, blackberry whipped cream, oat brittle

**Saturday Main Dish Choices (Select choice/number of meals)**

6oz Pacific Salmon:

Local asparagus, roasted pepper + tomato emulsion, béarnaise

Roasted Alberta Striploin:

Local asparagus, roasted pepper + tomato emulsion, single malt peppercorn sauce

Dietary Request (e.g. Vegan) **Food Type requested/number**

## Montgomery and Cumming Do Edmonton

Brian Cumming and Ken Montgomery, RBANA Canada directors, and Medicine Hat Burns Club member Chris Lunney were privileged to attend the 101st Edmonton Burns Club dinner and sit at EBC president Keith Robinson's front row table. Also attending were MHBC members Scott

Mathieson and Scott (Monty) Montgomery, who are also past EBC presidents. Though a Calgarian, Brian Cumming is also a MHBC club member.

It was another great Burns dinner.

I note Chris recently retired from the Canadian military, serving with the Princess Patricia's Canadian Light Infantry (PPCLI), and



Ken and Brian chat with Edmonton Mayor Amerjeet Sohi and his wife.

where this event was his first appearance at what I would call a Big Boy Burns dinner. Chris loved it, especially as he also got to meet many old army acquaintances including retired Lieutenant General Paul Wynnyk CMM, MSM, CD, former commander of the Canadian Army and Vice Chair of the Defence Staff

As a former Edmontonian and long time EBC annual dinner attendee, I also got to run into many old friends, and Brian and I made some new ones including EBC special guest Edmonton mayor Amerjeet Sohi.

Hats off to the Edmonton Burns Club for another great dinner. (About which, more on next page)

The Tattler encourages all clubs to submit news of club events or activities.

As well, all members are reminded they are welcome to submit articles or essays on Burns or Burns related topics for publication.

Thanks to all those who submitted articles for this issue, including Paul Kennedy, Ken Montgomery, George McLellan, Brian Cumming and Charles Cameron

The deadline for submissions for the Spring Edition is Monday May 15.

The edition will be published and distributed May 31.



## Edmonton Burns Club's Big Night

On Friday, 27 January 2023 the Edmonton Burns Club hosted a successful tribute banquet to the Bard, its 101<sup>st</sup> such event. We had an attendance of just over 350 people, including head table guests that included club members, the mayor of Edmonton and his wife, a representative from the Loyal Edmonton Regiment, and our guest speaker Alistair Jessamine.

Entertainment was provided throughout the evening by musical guests and our members. Terry McDade provided a series of Scottish themed tunes on his harp during supper, which include the traditional neeps and haggis. The Address to the Haggis was expertly delivered by member Bill Gibson after being delivered by members Jim Cuthbert, Brian Hodgson and Keith Day.

Member Alex Thomson gave a poetic reading that started off the program, which was followed by Dawn Bailey delivering the Reply to the Lassies after an excellent Toast rendered by member Scott Watson. Gerald Robertson stepped up to presenting the Twa Lands followed by several songs performed by the Juno Award winning folk ensemble The McDades.

Club piper David Trew played the restored Waterloo Pipes and included a lament for absent members and the Club's composition *100 Years Strong*. The Greenwood Singers preceded the Immortal Memory, delivered by Alistair Jessamine. We closed the evening with a performance by the Edmonton and District Pipe Band, when members and invited guests retired to the Crown Suite.



A view of the room. Although we were not as packed as previous years, attendance was comfortably full and members and guests enjoyed themselves.



President, Keith Robinson hosted the podium, and performed the role of Toastmaster for the evening.



Mayor Amarjeet Sohi, his wife Sarbjeet Sohi, Bill Gibson and Keith Robinson enjoying memories of previous Edmonton Burns Banquets.



The Head Table from left to right Bill Gibson, Sarbjeet Sohi, Amarjeet Sohi, Keith Robinson, Alistair Jessamine, Cam Macdonell, Sgt. Major Mark Denney and Brian Hodgson

# MEDICINE HAT BURNS CLUB

## 2023 16<sup>th</sup> ANNUAL BURNS CELEBRATION

11 February 2023, Medicine Hat, Alberta Canada

Well, another year, and another successful event. This year the Medicine Hat Burns Club (MHBC) changed venues and re-located to the Medicine Hat Golf & Country Club, that venue which also hosts the Club's annual Jolly Beggars Banquet.



The attendees admire and watch as the South Alberta Pipes & Drums do their thing

This location is also recognized for having our cities best view of the down town and river valley from its special banquet room windows. We had about 120 attend and it was a very special and fun time. We also had to adjust our date into February as this venue (a golf course) is closed each year for all of January. As Valentine's Day was so close this allowed us a great excuse to also provide all the attending Lassies with fresh red roses. And of course Burn's song, A Red Red Rose was also sung to make that proper. With increasing costs the Club was very dependent on sponsors and our Whisky Bar and raffle to subsidize this event. To also reduce costs we went to a partial buffet dinner. Here the soup (Cock o' Leekie of course) was served to the table, the main dinner was buffet and included haggis (as much as you could eat), AAA Alberta roast beef, roasted potatoes, beets, various salads, and for the first time, mini-Yorkshire puddings. This was a hit and very well received. The desert, Sticky Toffee pudding was then also served to the tables.

I note that by going buffet the haggis was especially better utilized with considerably less discarded at the end of the night, and it was nice to see that those who wanted to eat a lot could, and those that wanted

a taste or none could also be satisfied.

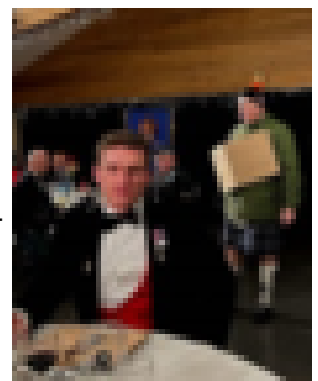
As usual the entertainment was first class as planned. We involved Highland dancers from the Diamond V Highland Dance Academy, (left) and it was nice to see a male perform as part of their team (for here, that's rare). For our feature performance, the South Alberta Pipes & Drums did their thing, and were as now expected, brilliant. This year's Chieftain o' the Nicht was Brian Cumming, one of our three RBANA Canadian directors, who is also a past president of the Calgary Burns Club and a MHBC member, as now is his lovely wife Jan. Brian presented the Immortal Memory and did a great job. (right)



Of special note was Mathew Hill, former RBANA secretary and MHBC member who did a fantastic job on addressing the haggis, (below) and Andy



Cowan, Club President who did A Man's a Man while portraying a drab street person brandishing a cardboard sign around his neck that read, 'Hungry and Homeless'. (right) Considering the situation that



exists in Canada and other places today, to many this version of A Man's a Man had a new significance, hit home, was very touching and truly emphasized the brilliance of Burns and his poetry. As is now tradition here, we also had many members of the Canadian and British military stationed at CFB Suffield and the British Army Training Unit



# MEDICINE HAT BURNS CLUB

## 2023 16<sup>th</sup> ANNUAL BURNS CELEBRATION

(continued)

Suffield (BATUS) also posted there, attend. We also had our local Member of Parliament and area RCMP Commander as guests.

All in all we had a grand time, and other than a kilt malfunction I had, as I forgot my kilt suspenders (additional entertainment I suppose), I suggest the MHBC did another superb job, and we are looking forward for a debrief so we can evaluate how we did, and then plan to do better next year. I must say a review or debrief after such a big event is very important for any club to conduct..

Submitted by,

**Ken Montgomery**  
 Past President, RBANA  
 Club Secretary  
 Medicine Hat Burns Club



**OFFICIAL PHOTO OF THIS YEARS CLUB EXECUTIVE & SPECIAL GUESTS**

**Back Row:** Rob Cowan, Club VP, Lt. Colonel Mike Onieu CD, Commander, South Alberta Light Horse, Lt. Colonel Steve Burke CD, Commander, CFB Suffield, Base RSM Garnert Carvery CD, Mathew Hill, Event Co-Chair, Glen Motz MP, BATUS RSM Mark Riley QDG,

Lt. Colonel Mark Jenkins RA, Commander British army Defence Infrastructure Organization, Canada & Belize, and Malcolm Sissons AOE, Club Piper.

**Front row:** Ken Montgomery, Club Secretary, Brian Cumming, Chieftain o' the Nicht, Andy Cowan, Club President, Charlie Malone, President, Calgary Burns Club and John Cameron, MC, Club Gaird & Chaplain & President, Clan Cameron, Canada.



Some military & police who attended...



And dueling drums, WOW!!!



## The Cameron Report



Well, another year has gone by. 2022 was the year that my Burns Club in Winnipeg made History.

At our October Annual General Meeting, the Club elected myself, Charles Cameron to be their next President for two years.

Dorothy Doran, a staunch Scottish Lady of 99 years, agreed to a Director, and Jean Lindsay, 91 years young, and our longest term member, also agreed to accept the duties of Director. Ashoka Dasgupta, a Gentleman from India also accepted duties of Director. Linda Kane accepted duties of Membership Secretary. Colin Harris agreed to stay on as Secretary and Janet Thompson as Vice President. We are set to take on another year. I was accepted as Canadian Director for Central Canada for RBANA. I am still the Entertainment Secretary.

At our November 2022 Luncheon, we had the Irish Cowboy entertain for us after our lunch and meeting. Some of our Members have had this Chap at their Residences over the years, and all thoroughly enjoyed his performance. He had his audience hopping.

December was a very cold Month, very quiet luncheon, and meeting we had fun singing Christmas Carols.

The Burns Supper on 25 January 2023, was a hit. As detailed elsewhere in this effort we had nearly 70 people join us for Scottish fare and good times. The food, prepared by a brand new Chef at the Holliday Inn South, was exemplary. February 18 2023 saw nearly 30 members for lunch and meeting. Burns Poems will be read along with the Celtic Trio as entertainment, afterwards.

Submitted respectfully,

Charles Cameron  
Canadian Director



Think Burns

## Winnipeg Revives Burns Supper After 3 Year Hiatus

A cool January 25 saw the return, after a pandemic enforced hiatus, of Winnipeg's longest running Burns Supper, which dates back to 1907.



Over 60 members and friends, and a visitor from Banff-

shire, gathered in the ball-room of the Holiday Inn Winnipeg South, heeding the call of longtime club piper Kirby McRae (right) to take their seats to welcome the entry of Club President Charles Cameron and his table. Among those gathered were 5 Past Presidents, the largest such gathering in recent memory.

Following the National Anthem and Grace, and a Toast to Absent Friends, the company enjoyed the

Scotch Broth course.

An animated rendition of the Address o Haggis (bottom) followed, by Don Munroe, a friend of President Cameron and member of Winnipeg's Scottish Gentlemen's Club.

Following the service of the haggis course, and the service of the main, Club Recording Secretary Colin Harris brought Greetings Frae Ither Clubs. President Cameron, Canadian Director of RBANA conveyed greetings from RBANA President Paul Kennedy. Following the Grace after Dinner, club member Linda Hiebert proposed the Toast to the King, followed by Colin Harris proposing the Toast to Canada. Local ensemble Matchstalk Men entertained on either side of the Interval.

St Andrew's Society of Winnipeg 2<sup>nd</sup> Vice President Dwight MacAulay CVO, Honorary Consul for the United Kingdom, proposed the Immortal Memory. The Toast to the Lassies was then proposed by Gordon Cameron, President of the Lord Selkirk Association of Rupertsland, descendants of the original Red River settlers, and a member of the St Andrew's Society. The reply came from his partner, former St



Piper Kirby McRae led in the Haggis, born, in Winnipeg style, atop the Cormack Hod, by long time members John and Colleen Allan



Don Munroe, with President Cameron bearing the sword Addressed the Haggis in a suitably animated fashion

## Winnipeg Revives Burns Supper (continued)

Andrew's Society board member and well known former journalist Alexandra Paul. (below, left) Following closing remarks by President Cameron and the door and draw prizes, the evening ended in the traditional manner, with the singing of Auld Lang Syne and The King.



Dwight MacAulay CVO



Matchstalk Men

## Winnipeg's St Andrew's Society Host Kilt Skate Event

On the warmest day of the week, Sunday, February 26, 2023, (the -8 degree temperature was a great improvement over the frigid cold just days earlier) the Saint Andrew's Society of Winnipeg hosted the latest edition of the Great Canadian Kilt Skate, a national phenomenon that began in 2015, the bicentenary of the birth of Canada's first Prime Minister, and native Glaswegian, Sir John A. MacDonald, under the organization of the Scottish Society of Ottawa. It has since spread, reportedly to the U.S., Scotland, Ireland, and even Australia. In 2021 Winnipeg was declared the Kilt Skate Capital of Canada.

Among the 75 or so participants at Assiniboine Park's Duck Pond, were members, including a piper, from the Queen's Own Cameron Highlanders of Canada, a local regiment with historic ties to the



Society.

Thanks to Canada's best known purveyor of donuts, for a supply of Hot Chocolate, and Tim Bits, Event chair, Evelyn Mitchell, and her team for a successful event..







Canadian Director Charles Cameron with wife Darlene and a member of the Cameron Highlanders



SASOW Vice Presidents Dwight MacAulay and Peter Heavysege



Not everyone came to skate. Past President Jae Eadie and wife Rhoda on snowshoes.



Event Organizer Evelyn Mitchell with her family



Members of the Queen's Own Cameron Highlanders of Canada







We have received not our usual one, but two submissions from RBANA USA Director George McClellan., one historic, one thought provoking. They follow below.

## Robert Burns and The Black Bull Inn, Moffatt

The Black Bull Inn dates as far back as 1568 and apart from its associations with Robert Burns it served as the headquarters of Graham of Claverhouse, 1st Viscount Dundee, aka: 'Bloody Clavers' or 'Bonnie Dundee' during the Covenanter 'Killing Times.' His reputation vied with Sir Robert Grierson of Ayrshire for his extreme acts of cruelty against supporters of the Covenant. Jumping ahead two hundred years we learn that Burns, as an excise officer, frequently visited Moffat where friends such as James Clarke, the parish schoolmaster, lived. His choice of accommodation was invariably the Black Bull Inn. It is here where Burns wrote the epigram to Miss Davie on an inn window that is commemorated by the plaque on the exterior wall. The story goes that a friend asked the poet why God made Miss Davies so little, and a lady who accompanied her so large as the ladies, who had just passed the window, were out of sight, Burns etched the following words on a pane of glass:

*Ask why God made the gem so small?  
And why so huge the granite?  
Because God meant mankind should set  
That higher value on it.*

The pane of glass bearing the verse is said to have been given to the Grand Duke Nicholas of Russia as he passed through Moffat in 1817 on a triumphal tour of Britain as one of the victorious allies who had helped defeat Napoleon at the Battle of Waterloo. A gifted replica of the windowpane was placed in the 'Robert Burns Room' within the hostelry in 1996, by the Robert Burns World Federation.

The little lady was Miss Deborah Duff Davies. She was admired for her wit, charm and as Burns noted, her petite beauty. Related to the Riddell's of Friars' Carse, she was the daughter of Dr. Davies of Tenby in Pembrokeshire and she was betrothed to Captain Delaney who despite writing romantic verses to her using the poetic name 'Stella', chose his army career

over her, resulting in her 'going into decline'. She is thought to have gone to France because of poor health, but nonetheless she died young from consumption (TB).

Burns may have first met her when he was living at Ellisland, near to Drungan's Lodge where she was staying and he first wrote to her in October 1791. In June 1793 he wrote to Mrs

Frances Dunlop of Dunlop saying that Deborah was "*Possibly the least creature ever I saw, to be at the same time un-exceptional, and indeed uncommonly, handsome and beautiful; and besides this has the felicity to be a peculiar favorite toast of mine.*"

She had written a friendly letter to Burns from Fontainebleau in 1792 and he replied in his most ostentatious style but seems to have regarded her as unachievable due to her status in society. In April 1793 he composed a ballad for the lovely Miss Davies" in her honor:

*Bonie wee thing, cannie wee thing,  
Lovely wee thing, wert though mine,  
I wad wear thee in my bossom  
Lest my jewel it should tine.*

In a letter to her, dated 06 April 1793, Burns goes off on a radical rant about the inequalities which allow '*misbegotten chance to put foolish men in high places.*' One or two paragraphs later, in the same letter, Burns wrote:

*Still the inequalities of life are, among men, comparatively tolerable: but there is a delicacy, a tenderness, accompanying every view in which one can place a lovely woman, that are grated and shocked at the rude, capricious distinctions of fortune. Women is the blood-*



## Robert Burns and The Black Bull Inn, Moffatt

*royal of life; Let there be slight degrees  
of precedence among them, but let them  
all be sacred.*

Included with the note to her was a song Burns wrote considered tenderly passionate. It was titled 'Bonie Wee Thing.'

Another local tradition surrounding the Black Bull Inn and Robert Burns maintains that another local

Moffat beauty of note, Miss Helen Hyslop, was for a time the object of Robert Burns' admiration even to the point that she may have succumbed to his charms engaged in an affair with him that resulted in her conceiving another daughter for Burns' legacy. The child was also named Helen. How Helen Hyslop passed is not noted but she and her child are both buried in the Moffat cemetery close to the Black Bull Inn.

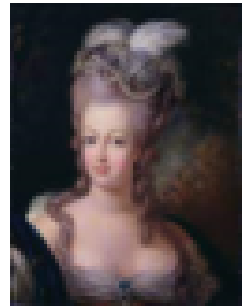
## How Do Burns' Politics and Today's Politics Compare?

Burns readers must wonder: how do today's politics compare with the politics of his time? Can comparisons be made? Well, yes, in many ways comparisons are there to be seen! Today, our Western philosophy of a republican form of government seems to be sinking into the dangerous waters of non-acceptance by accusations of treachery, stroking fear of what the other political party is doing and certainly trying to eliminate the commonality of citizens. It wasn't much different in Burns' day either. Communications were slower, mostly available to literate people who could understand and discuss the conspiracy theories that abounded then as they do here today. Then, literate people, like Burns, rabidly consumed newspapers, books, periodicals, flyers and tracts that discussed issues of the day. The big news everybody was wrapped up in was the French and American revolutions, world shaking events that saw common people challenging the hierarchy of leadership by birth and hereditary station. At the same time, Burns' writings influenced the Irish but that lot couldn't manage a revolution ending up instead forming a rebellion that the British crushed without pity.

France, like England had a Royal family, a King and Queen and their progeny, surrounded by socially ranked Dukes, Earls and Baronets all eager to keep their wealth and position while the people had to do as well as they could. "Let them eat cake," famous-

ly ascribed to France's Queen Marie Antoinette, was the 'storm petrel' of their destruction. One had to be careful what one said or wrote lest it arrive in the public domain and worse, become the rallying cry to action. Either as a rumor or fact, retribution to comments that challenged the reigning interests of government could be swift coming for the writer. This was especially true for the British government of George III and would apply to want to be radicals like our Robert Burns, especially as he was a government tax agent who indulged his passion to make things equal for all people, but not as openly as he would have liked. He saw the dangers! Today, what the government doesn't like said is censored by media sources suborned to government intimidation but willingly operated by a generation of indoctrinated illiterates who know nothing yet set the example of modern journalism.

To study and understand Robert Burns and the characters who made him, it's necessary to look closely at the prevailing politics of his time to grasp the real depth of his supposed radicalism, what he learned from other supposed radicals and if he emulated them or they him, in shouting out the "rights of man" to the world. We are astounded that nowhere do we find that Robert Burns ever read, mentioned or communicated with the French philosopher Voltaire,



## How Do Burns' Politics and Today's Politics Compare? (continued)



aka: Francois-Marie Arouet, a writer of the enlightenment, historian, and philosopher as famous for his wit, his criticism of the Roman Catholic Church and black slavery, as well as his advocacy for freedom of speech, freedom of religion, and separation of church and state. Voltaire died in 1778 and would have been known to Robert

Burns yet no line of serendipitous communication can be found.

Burns' iconic poem, a song actually, A Man's a Man For A' That (1795), challenged aristocratic power and privilege: *"the rank is but the guinea's stamp,"* Championing the equality and the worth of the common man with: *"The honest man, tho' e'er sae poor, Is king o' men for a' that."* The song concludes with one of Burns' greatest lines, the fraternal: *"That Man to Man the world o'er, Shall brithers be for a' that."* Unlike our electronic media of today, in Burns' time the written lines he penned by quill and ink on parchment paper, took a long time to find wide expression in the world outside of Scotland. But, find outside expression it did.

In a sense, however, Burns' involvement in the wider issues of world politics, i.e.: the French and American revolutions, especially the moral values behind them like slavery, still centered on the fact that while Great Britain had a Monarch, (George III) its government changed from time to time as we see even today, with the resignation of Great Britain's Boris Johnson, and Britain's long lasting Monarch, Elizabeth II who only recently passed.

Burns' passionate nationalism was Scottish directed and his radicalism never wavered. He believed in 'the brotherhood of man' and in the rights of the ordinary man and his love for Scotland's fading glorious history, suborned by England, was reflected in his passionate recognition of the story of William Wallace, which *"poured a Scottish prejudice in my veins which will boil along there till the flood-gates of life shut in eternal rest."* Burns also examined the pages of Scotland's Jacobite influence which led him to write such songs as *'O Kenmure on and awa''* and *'Scots wha hae'*. In those days, politics and religion were closely aligned, a social trait that carried on to the British American colonies and buggers us still to this day.

In an interesting side note, Burns wrote an anonymous letter sent to the Editor of the Edinburgh Evening Courant. He protested a minister of religion (Presbyterian), celebrating the Revolution of 1688, who reviled the Stuarts:

*'Bred and educated in revolution principles, the principles of reason and common sense, it could not be any silly political prejudice that made my heart revolt at the harsh abusive manner in which the Reverend Gentleman mentioned the House of Stuart, and which, I am afraid, was too much the language of that day. We may rejoice sufficiently in our deliverance from past evils, without cruelly raking up the ashes of those whose misfortune it was, perhaps, as much as their crimes, to be the authors of these evils... The Stuarts have been condemned and laughed at for the folly and impracticability of their attempts, in 1715 and 1745. That they failed, I bless my God most fervently, but cannot join in the ridicule against them... Let every man, who has a tear for the many miseries incident to humanity, feel for a family, illustrious as any in Europe, and unfortunate beyond historic precedent; and let every Briton, and particularly every Scotsman, who ever looked with reverential pity on the dotage of a parent, cast a veil over the fatal mistakes of the Kings of his forefathers.'*

Burns readers are fairly well acquainted with Burns' religious opinions often expressing open hostility to organized salvation as practiced by the Kirk but, on the face of it, at the same, Burns was a crypto Jacobite and a Jacobin. But only 'on the face of it!'

One must wonder which political parties, Republican or Democrat in the US or Tory or Labour in the UK, are so necessarily partial to their own creed as to abandon the commonality of man that Burns championed? For the sensitive Scots of Burns' day, he had to balance what seemingly appeared to be irreconcilable opposites. He had to keep his government job, avoid being hanged or transported, and still express his latent feelings about equality. A clever balancing act for a poet, don't you think?