

The Tattler



Winter 2021 Edition

Words from the President

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Contacts:

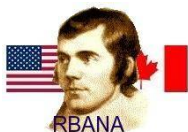
RBANA
10 Goldenrod Court SE
Medicine Hat AB
T1B 2S4

Editor:

Colin Harris
92 Avalon Rd
Winnipeg MB
R2M 2L5
amansaman@hotmail.ca

Webmaster

Mathew Hill
contact@rbana.com



The Robert Burns Association
of North America

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

Hi Everyone,

I hope you all had a pleasant Christmas and New Year in whatever way possible under all the restrictions we found ourselves in. Then along came January and all our physical Burns Suppers or celebration cancelled and reverting to 'Virtual Events', which is a first I am sure for most, if not all, of us. As I type this, restrictions and Vaccine news is still high in the daily news and I observe most of Canada caught in an Arctic Vortex.

As Robert Burns penned in Rantin' Rovin Robin:

*"Our monarch's hindmost year but ane
Was five-and-twenty days begun,
'Twas then a blast o' Janwar' win'
Blew hanel in on Robin."*

So I hope there is not too much '*Hansel*' blawin' in on you!

We held a RBANA Virtual Members get together in November which was a great way to keep us connected and we have another one planned for March 20th which we will communicate through Mathew our Treasurer/Secretary soon, and as such I would ask for as many members and clubs to take the opportunity to attend.

Since my last message, we unfortunately received news from Ron Ballantyne that Jean Cunningham had passed on December 31st 2020 as featured elsewhere in this newsletter.

We send deepest regrets and condolences to Jim, his family and all their friends.

I also pass on the following sad news from Robert Boyd who is retiring from active Burns involvement with his message:

Dear Henry

I have decided to retire from active Burns activities. I have been a Burns enthusiast all my life. For over thirty years I have been an office bearer of the Heather & Thistle Society of Houston and its Burns Club, and that has been a source of tremendous pleasure for me. I have been active in RBANA since 2007 when a group of us from Houston travelled to Winnipeg to promote the idea of holding the RBANA Annual Conference on a cruise ship out of Galveston in 2008. My satisfaction in running that event successfully is second only to my pride in becoming President of RBANA



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Jean Allison Cunningham (nee Young)

2/27/1939 - 12/30/2020

It is with sincere regrets that we report the death of our beloved member, Jean Cunningham

She passed away on 31 Dec. 2020, following a long and courageous battle with Cancer.

Jean was a native of Falkirk Scotland and qualified as a nurse and midwife.

She and her husband Jim, himself a Past President and driving force behind RBANA, came to Canada in 1966. She nursed in Kitchener and Milton Ontario until she retired in 1975.

Jean was a lifelong lover of singing, and often led the singing of the National Anthems at RBANA Conferences; and of Robert Burns.



She was a founder member of what is now the Robert Burns Association of North America (RBANA).

Jean served on two occasions as Secretary Treasurer of RBANA and helped organize multiple RBANA annual conferences, over the years.

Jean was an active member of the Halton Peel Burns Club and will be dearly missed.

We send our condolences to Jim, and to daughters Marion (Tilford) and Susan and to grandchildren Duncan and Nyssa Tilford

If there is another world, (S)he lives in bliss. If there is none, (S)he made the best of this." - Robert Burns

Cairney's Corner continued

in 2014.

Jack Hume was my mentor and friend throughout my time in Houston. I was delighted to assist him in developing the concept of the Jack Hume RBANA Poetry Writing Competition and to have run it since its inception in 2016. I am very keen that the Hume Award should continue, to honor Jack's memory. I will be pleased to help in any way I can with that.

My wife has been in poor health in recent years, and we moved to a retirement community almost three years ago.

My priority now is to remain close to home and devote what time and energy I have to that. Our travel days are over. Therefore I cannot put in the required effort to sustain the Heather & Thistle Society Burns Club. Ted Hirtz has agreed to assume that role and he should be the contact man for H&T from now on.

I wish RBANA every success in the future.

Sincerely

Robert Boyd

Past President RBANA

Myself, the board and members are sad to hear the news and can only wish Robert and Irene the very best for the future and hope they can keep in touch and assist if able. Another piece of sad news is the farewell to Major Andy Harrower who has retired from the Canadian Armed Forces and made the difficult decision to return permanently to his birthplace Scotland. Andy was a founding member of the Medicine Hat Burns Club, and fervent member of RBANA along with serving on the board for many years. Andy will be sorely missed in North Ameri-

ca but has assured us he will remain in RBANA as an individual member and promote our association although no longer amongst us. We thank him for his years of service to Canada, Medicine Hat BC and RBANA. Bon Voyage Andy and all the very best in your new chapter of life.

Once more I dwell on the year ahead and at this time see no light at the end of the Covid-19 tunnel for 2021 and in particular travel and social events. My message this time is clear, unless we can keep together and build RBANA stronger than it presently is, it has the danger of falling into the same trap as many other organizations and clubs of disbandment in the future.

That would be a sad outcome for a prestigious organization and we all need to collectively change that course. In the words of Robert Burns poem from 1788, I quote:

*Your friendship much can make me blest,
O why that bliss destroy!
Why urge the only, one request
You know I will deny!*

*Your thought, if Love must harbour there,
Conceal it in that thought;
Nor cause me from my bosom tear
The very friend I sought.*

I wish all of you and your family and friends to be safe and well and look forward to seeing you online in March.

Best Regards and yours in Burns,

Henry Cairney
RBANA President

Endeavours at Ellisland

Ellisland Farm was Robert Burns' home from 1788-91, and during a period of sparkling creativity in his life. Here was his first home as a married man with Jean Armour, the point at which too his career hopes were at their zenith. Already a successful and celebrated poet, he anticipated soon a career as an Excise Officer and hoped his lease of the Dumfriesshire farm would supplement a good income as he set about seriously attending to his growing family. For various reasons the farm was not a great success in itself, but its stunning location amid the most glorious countryside and on the banks of the River Nith was an almost daily inspiration to Burns and it is perhaps not coincidental that the writer produced more than a fifth of his entire output of poems, songs and letters while living there. At Ellisland, some of the greatest hits were penned including 'Tam o Shanter', 'Auld Lang Syne', many Jacobite songs, love songs and texts that paint the beauties of nature.

In the spring of 2020, a new Board of Trustees took over at Ellisland, the site having been gifted to the Scottish nation in 1921 and held in trust since that decade. The new board including Chair, Joan McAlpine a Member of the Scottish Parliament for the South of Scotland, and Deputy-Chair, Dr David Hopes Head of Collections and Interiors at the National Trust for Scotland, were immediately faced with a more parlous financial situation than they had anticipated. A worldwide pandemic notwithstanding the new board worked hard on putting in place a series of new initiatives to begin making this important Burns heritage site sustainable.

A new Project Officer and Volunteer Coordinator was appointed, and funds were obtained for a range of purposes including improving maintenance, site

ceived from Dumfries and Galloway Council, whose Museum Services are currently safe-housing the most precious Ellisland manuscripts, from Dumfries Rotary Club, with many others waiting in the wings. Our young volunteer and ambassador



Rose Byers, an accomplished singer of Burns, was recently announced as winner for Scotland at the British Museum & Marsh Trust awards, a national scheme which recognises the work of museum volunteers. The board now has a complement of eight people, all with distinct skills set and including the internationally renowned singer, Emily Smith.

Ellisland is a site of rare environmental beauty, and as well as the museum this theme will be developed in future by the Board. So too with Burns' songs written here, which include many which have been set over two years by the crème de la crème of European composers. In other words, we ought to see Ellisland as an important site of Worldwide Romanticism with the potential, the Board is currently considering, to be a Centre for Song.

Watch this space!

Ellisland also now has several tiers of membership:

Individual for adults, £15 annually

The 1788 Circle open to all federated Burns Clubs (annual contribution £200)

The Glencairn Circle open to individuals and organisations (annual contribution £500)

For further information, please contact: coordinator@ellislandfarm.co.uk



Ellisland

MUSEUM & FARM

The Rural Home of Robert Burns

security and also the visitor experience. Much has been accomplished already, but these things are all works in progress. Excellent support has been re-

*Submitted by Prof. Gerard Carruthers,
Board Secretary, Ellisland Farm and Museum*

Calling All Poets:

Jack Hume Heather & Thistle Trophy

2021 Competition Looms

The Jack Hume Heather & Thistle Trophy returns for its sixth year.

The trophy is awarded annually for writing poetry in the style of Rob-



ert Burns. Jack Hume, who passed away three years ago, was the founder of the H&T Burns Club and a staunch supporter of RBANA. Entries are invited under the following rules and conditions:

- 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 Guida Hume, Jack's widow, author and a professor of English; RBWF representative Willie Gibson; and 2020 Hume Trophy winner Jim McLaughlin of the Calgary Burns Club. Entries will be submitted to the panel anonymously, and the panel's decision will be final.
- The winner will be announced and published in the Summer Edition of the Tattler.
- This trophy will be awarded annually. The winner is responsible for returning the trophy to the RBANA Secretary or President prior to the following year's conference.
- Entries should be submitted by email to henrycairney7@gmail.com
- The deadline for entries is April 30, 2020.



James Montgomery, Poet & "Robert Burns"

W e spend considerable time studying, learning, interpreting, and appreciating what Burns wrote, and it occurred to me we should take a little time to see what others thought of him.

While researching my family history I learned of another Scottish poet, James Montgomery, and although we are not related (that I can determine at this time), he is an interesting fellow.

As a matter of interest I acquired a copy of his book 'Montgomery's Poetical Works', published in 1860, and being housebound during Christmas had a chance to start reading some of his works. It was on page 316 that I came across one poem I thought I should share. So for your edification and enlightenment I would like to introduce you to James Montgomery and his poem, Robert Burns.

James Montgomery (4 November 1771 – 30 April 1854) was a Scottish-born hymn writer, poet and editor, who eventually settled in Sheffield. He was raised in the Moravian Church and theologically trained there, so that his writings often reflect concern for humanitarian causes, such as the abolition of slavery and the exploitation of child chimney sweeps.

Montgomery was born at Irvine, in south-west Scotland, the son of a pastor and missionary of the Moravian Brethren. He was sent to be trained for the ministry at the Moravian School at Fulneck, near Leeds, while his parents left for the West Indies, where both

field General Cemetery. He had remained unmarried. One poem he wrote was a tribute to Robert Burns and was written on the occasion of the anniversary of his birthday being celebrated in Sheffield and first published in *The Star*, 22 May 1820. This poem is also called, Robert Burns.

What bird, in beauty, flight, or song,
Can with the Bard compare,
Who sang as sweet, and soar'd as strong,
As ever child of air?

His plume, his note, his form, could Burns
For whim or pleasure change;
He was not one, but all by turns,
With transmigration strange:

The Blackbird, oracle of spring,
When flow'd his moral lay;
The Swallow, wheeling on the wing,
Capriciously at play:

The Humming-bird, from bloom to bloom,
Inhaling heavenly balm;
The Raven, in the tempest gloom;
The Halcyon in the calm;

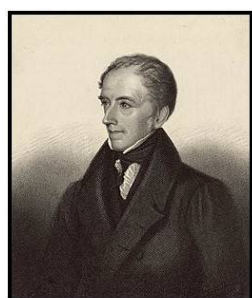
In "Auld Kirk Alloway" the Owl
At 'witching time of night:
By "bonny Doon" the earliest fowl
That carol'd to the light.

He was the Wren amidst the grove,
When is his homely vein;
At Bannockburn the Bird of Jove,
With thunder in his train!

The Woodlark in his mournful hours;
The Goldfinch in his mirth;
The Thrush, a spendthrift of his pow'rs,
Enrapturing Heaven and Earth!

The Swan, in majesty and grace,
Contemplative and still;
But rous'd, — no Falcon in the chace
Could like his satire kill!

The Linnet, in simplicity;
In tenderness the Dove;—
But, more than all beside, was He
The Nightingale, in love!



L: James Montgomery 1855

R: Statue of James Montgomery on the Sheffield Cathedral forecourt.



died within a year of each other.

In 1822 Montgomery published his own *Songs of Zion: Being Imitations of Psalms*, the first of several more collections of hymns. During his life he composed some 400 hymns, although less than a hundred of them are commonly sung today.

From 1835 until his death, Montgomery lived at The Mount in Glossop Road, Sheffield. He was well regarded in the city and played an active part in its philanthropy and religious life. He died on 30 April 1854, was honoured by a public funeral, and buried in Shef-

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Donnelly - Hill November 28, 2020

Mhairi Clare Donnelly and Mathew Paul Hill, RBANA Secretary/Treasurer, were married on November 28, 2020, in a small, 10-person (total) ceremony in Medicine Hat. What follows is Mathew's account:

I met Mhairi at the Irvine Town House Dinner Gala thrown for the RBWF AGM/Annual Conference in September 2018. At the time, Mhairi worked for the North Ayrshire Council. She was standing at the entrance of the gala/dinner



room, checking attendees off a list she had on a clipboard. I got to the top of the stairs, took one look at her, and felt my heart almost leap out of my chest. Despite initial hesitation on my part for beginning a long-distance relationship, Mhairi persisted, which gave me the courage and certainty that the relationship we were beginning was genuine and likely for the long-term. So, I visited her during the next RBWF AGM/Annual Conference and she visited me and my family down in Scottsdale, Arizona. In December 2019, I asked her to marry me. To my joy, she said "Yes". We had planned to get married in May of 2020 down in Scottsdale, Arizona, with a mixture of her family and mine. COVID-19 put an end to those plans. Braving the uncertainties and risks of international travel, Mhairi flew out to Medicine Hat, Alberta, early November of 2020. We did our 2-week quarantine, got all our ducks in a row, and had a brief but very heartfelt wedding. Malcolm Sissons, the Medicine Hat Burns Club Piper, made a CD of music for us, so Mhairi and I were able to "walk-the-aisle" with one another to the



from the bottom of my heart, I thank Robert Burns for helping to bring Mhairi and me together. Tapadh leibh!!!!

"Robert Burns" continued

Oh, had he never stoop'd to shame,
Nor lent a charm to Vice,
How had Devotion lov'd to name
That Bird of Paradise!

Peace to the dead! — in Scotia's choir
Of Minstrels, great and small,
He sprang from his spontaneous fire,
The Phoenix of them all!

Submitted by Ken Montgomery

sounds of Scottish bagpipes.

Mhairi is back in Scotland and we plan to have her move here to Medicine Hat and then we will see how the world shakes out these next few years.

At the end of the day, I am happy and proud to be Mhairi's husband, and I consider myself to be the luckiest man in the world to be able to call Mhairi

Clare Donnelly (my Bonnie Lady Clare) my wife.

And, our meeting would not have been but for my affinity for Scotland, its history and culture, which brought me to know Ken Montgomery, who asked me to join RBANA as its Secretary/Treasurer.

And, most of all, thanks to The Bard, Robert Burns, who's works bring people together from the world o'er to celebrate his songs and prose. The spirit of Burns created the chance for Mhairi and me to meet.

So,



THE MEDICINE HAT BURNS CLUB (MHBC) 2021 VIRTUAL BURNS DINNER

To many, any January without a Burns dinner would be tragic. As a result of COVID, 2021 is possibly the year that since the first ever Burns dinner was held in 1802 that many dinners would have to be cancelled. Some however, decided to use new technology and carry on. This would be the year of Zoom.

The MHBC decided to go virtual. It had worked for executive meetings and was also seen to work well in communicating with RBANA.

After some discussion, it was agreed that most presentations would be pre-recorded and thus allow us to be a little creative and maintain order. We also agreed that greetings and final remarks from Club President Andy Harrower CD would be live.

We were also privileged to have our valued and most talented club member and RBANA president, RBWF First Vice President and Calgary Burns Club President Henry Cairney act as our Zoom coordinator and MC for the event. For our program, we decided this was also a great opportunity to utilize the talents of some of our Burnsian friends who were not members of our Club and who were located much further afield.



Our first performance was an introduction and a cappella version of O' Canada by Jennifer Brown (left). Jennifer had been our Club vocalist and was also an Honorary Club Member, who, with her family, relocated to Midland, Texas, her husband being in the oil

business. We note Jennifer was wearing her Canada tartan club sash.

This was followed by the skirl o' the pipes by Club Piper Malcolm Sissons AOE and the Selkirk Grace delivered by Club Member Dr. Jan Joubert (right), an ER physician at our local hospital. Jan did his piece in scrubs right from an ER room, this being a COVID



tribute to our front line health care workers. It appears his patient may have eaten too much haggis.

President Andy gave the Address to the Haggis and this was followed by Dr. Peter Hughes OBE, RBWF Past President and MHBC Jolly Beggar. Peter played guitar and sang his own tribute to the MHBC Jolly Beggars.

Next up was MHBC friend Les Strachan, RBWF USA Director from the Blue Ridge

Mountains of Virginia. In costume and with original lighting, Les presented Holy Willie's Prayer (right). It was quite eerie, as it should be, and was over the top, brilliant. Les was followed with guitar tunes from Scotland by Ian McIntyre,



RBWF Past President and another fellow MHBC Jolly Beggar. Yours truly then did the Toast to the Queen.

Another highlight of the night was the Immortal Memory delivered by Marc Sherland, the current RBWF presi-



dent (left). This was special as we have had the honour of having every RBWF president since Jane

Brown (our Club patron), presented an annual Immortal Memory for us in 2013. So, even with COVID, we would not be denied the current President's involvement, thus our tradition of RBWF presidential involvement continues. Marc's efforts were very much appreciated.



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MHBC continued

Just when we thought how we could ever beat that, we then had Henry Cairney on accordion playing Sweet Afton, Willie Gibson from Troon presenting the Toast to the Lassies, with our own Jane Brown from Dumfries giving the response.

Jennifer Brown returned to sing Red Red Rose, after which, our good friend Ron Pratt from the Calgary Burns Club (CBC), delivered his original 'Cure for Piles'. These were followed by A Toast to Absent Friends from Mathew Hill, Club member and RBANA Secretary Treasurer and the Lament by Malcolm.. After final remarks by Andy H, the event closed with a brilliant rendition of Auld Lang Syne, sung by renowned CBC singer Trevor Ramage (deceased).

It was a great evening. We had people attending from more than one place in Ontario and Scotland. We had attendees from Winnipeg, Manitoba, Fort McMurray, Calgary, Sherwood Park, Edmonton, Airdrie and Bow Island, Alberta, and even Palm Desert, California.

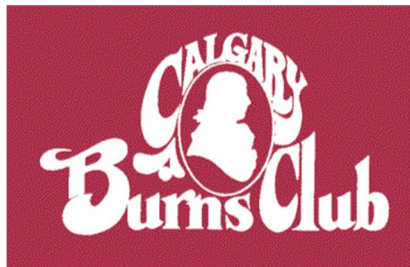
To close I believe we clearly proved that COVID would not get us down, nor should it get any other club down. Also, we are producing a custom DVD of our very special and unique COVID Virtual Burns dinner event. If anyone is interested in obtaining a copy please let me know/.

Submitted by Ken Montgomery

Calgary Burns Club Goes Virtual

The Calgary Burns Club held its 45th Burns Supper as a Virtual Burns Celebration on January 22, 2021 due to Covid 19 restrictions. In attendance by Zoom were 52 registrants and many spouses/partners as well. Calgary Burns Club members from Halifax, Vancouver and Mexico also joined us on the call.

In addition to Club members and spouse/partners, several special guests joined us. Ronnie O'Byrne, a RWBF director, and our scheduled 2021 speaker and Jane Brown our 2018 speaker and former RBWF president, joined from Scotland. Major Andy Harrower, our 2020 speaker, president of the Medicine Hat Burns club, and a RBANA director joined from London Ontario. Ken Montgomery, past president of RBANA and the Medicine Hat Burns Club joined us from Medicine Hat. From Calgary participants included Stephanie West past pipe major, and Jason Bosworth, present pipe major of the Calgary Police Service Pipe Band, Jason Wright, who has run the A/V for many of our dinners, and has recorded most the Calgary Burns Club



Singer's CD's and finally Thomas Farquharson of the 78th Fraser Highlanders who virtually piped us in. All performances we pre-recorded.

The night was programmed to be intimate night for members and spouses/partners and special friends of the Calgary Burns Club,

along the lines of the second half of our normal Burns Supper.

The evening commenced with the singing of the Canadian and Scottish national anthems, followed by the Loyal Toast by David Currie.

First VP Brian Cumming (right) made introductory remarks, followed by a reading of Whigham' Inn Sanquhar, emphasising the importance of fellowship and keeping in touch during these times.



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Calgary continued

The rest of the evening was emceed by Club President Henry Cairney. (right)

Founding member, Jack Whyte, gave us a recitation of his poem "A Toast to Canada", followed by Maurice McAtamney (below) playing his guitar while singing "Ca' the Yowes".

Ronnie O'Byrne (below right) delivered an eloquent



Immortal Memory on the theme of optimism. George Muir performed the "Toast to the Lassies" followed by Jane Brown's "Reply from the

Lassies"

The Toast to Absent Friends was proposed by Rob



George Muir (r) and Jane Brown (l)

Pinkerton, followed by a Piping set from Kyle Scott (right).

The formal program was

completed with the singing of Auld Lang Syne sung by the late Trevor Ramage.

Because we were not able to be together physically this year, each Club member received a Glencairn

whisky glass inscribed with the Calgary Burns Club



logo and the words "2021 Special Edition". The glasses were sponsored by Life member Gerry Wood.

In keeping with the theme of the night, of fellowship, community, and connection,

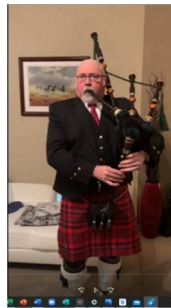
after the formal program was completed, microphones were unmuted for about 30 minutes so that



all participants could mingle and chat and catch-up with old friends. There was a lot of good-natured ban-

ter.

The performances were heartfelt and very well done, and other than a few minor issues with sound quality due to a few of the participant's internet quality, ran quite smoothly and seemed to be enjoyed by all.



The Calgary Burns Club also intends to issue a recorded version of the program on YouTube using the original videos.

Submitted by Brian Cumming
First Vice President
Calgary Burns Club

Burns Lives, Covid-19 or Not!

There is an excellent pub and restaurant in Milton, Georgia, north of Atlanta, called the Olde Blind Dog Pub that has, at least since 2012, held a Burns Nicht Dinner. It has been my pleasure every year but one, to perform the Address to the Haggis at that dinner and our friend and my Burns Club and RBANA colleague, Mr. Mark Ferguson, for every year but one, to present the Toast to the Immortal Memory.

As the Olde Blind Dog has grown in popularity, so has its amenities. The interior is appointed with imported Rosewood bar furniture and separate dining booths, brass rails, and Victorian style drapery. It's lovely! At the beginning, they had a roofed outdoor plaza which can seat nearly sixty people. When it rained, plastic curtains were dropped down the sides to protect diners inside but, when the January temperatures dropped to the 20s and 30s, the ceiling mounted gas burners struggled vainly to warm the air for the sufferers below, usually Burns dinner attendees.

I remember vividly, every year, trembling from approaching hypothermia as the drop cloths kept out the rain but never the cold. Later, the plastic drop cloths were replaced, and the once outdoor plaza was soon enclosed in the enveloping warmth by a solid wall. It was wonderful!

The Covid-19 virus didn't come to Georgia until after the January 2020 Burns dinner and it is the only Burns event I missed, not because of illness but because of a broken ankle incurred fighting a fast-moving ground fire threatening my home in the deep layers of autumn leaves that surrounded our home in the woods. It was saved!

This year, to my surprise, the OBD Pub held its annual Burns dinner uninterrupted again and I was once again invited to participate. Nearly fifty people paid up to attend, and a successful dinner was enjoyed by all. We had two pipers and a local popular Celtic music group, the Border Collies, as well as a British purchased Haggis pudding that it was my pleasure *to cut it up wit ready slight, trenching its gushing entrails bright, warm, reeking, rich*, to the applause of all assembled. I use a cool and colorful looking knife for the performance. (left) The Dinner's organizer, Mr. Mike Stewart, is a local police officer with a kilt. With his wife and two grown sons, all the hard work gets done finding people willing to give the toasts to the laddies and Ladies, the Armed Forces, the Queen, and the President and, they are usually successful in finding new folks willing to participate.



The Toast to the Immortal Memory this year was presented by the organizer, Mr. Michael Stewart himself, and he offered an outstanding presentation. In contrast to previous Januarys, this year was rainless and only moderately chilly. The Dinner offered entree choices that included salmon or roast lamb and a veggie choice of course along with tatties, neeps, and the usual Scottish dinner embellishments.

*Submitted by George McClellan
Director, RBANA
Director, Burns Club of Atlanta*

Burns Club of Atlanta Virtual Dinner

The Burns Club of Atlanta has met monthly on the first Wednesday since 1896. We have not assembled at the world-famous replica of the Burns Cottage (1910) (below) since Covid-19 made its scary appearance a year ago. The club, under the leadership of Mr. Lee Landenberger, has successfully conducted its business and membership meetings by use of the new Zoom electronic capabilities that are amazing everybody.

The Club's Annual Burns Night Dinner fete was abandoned this year but an observance, of sorts, was held by Zoom on 03 Feb 21 that included the appropriate toasts. Of special interest was our Canadian guest speaker, Major Andy Harrower, serving officer, Canadian Army, and currently president of the Medicine Hat Burns Club, and a

member of RBANA who, resplendent in his "Red Coat" Mess dress, (Americans love British Red Coat Mess Kit) by invitation presented the Toast to the Immortal Memory.

The BCoA had a good turnout, nearly forty plus members in attendance for its first Virtual Burns Dinner ever, each member with charged glasses in hand, to toast the appropriate designee. Alas, our celebrations were bereft of a piper but, we did call upon our famous Celtic fiddler, Mr. Keith Dunn to perform Auld Lang Syne at program's end.

*Submitted by George McClellan
Director, RBANA
Director, Burns Club of Atlanta*



Federation Holds International Virtual Burns Supper

The Robert Burns World Federation had its first 'Virtual Burns Supper' on Friday 22nd January via a Zoom conference call and had more than 130 attendees. The program hosting was shared by Henry Cairney Senior vice President and Marc Sherland President (below) and administered by



Margaretann Dougal, Administration Manager. Dr John Menzies, (right) International Director from Australia, piped in the guests and the haggis which was addressed by Bill Dawson, Archivist. (below left)



Ken Dalglish Finance Director



(below right) delivered the grace for the evening.

The gathering was then surprised by a wonderful message from HRH Prince Charles (right) who delivered greetings to the RBWF which was widely appreciated and enthralled the audience. Henry Cairney then gave the Loyal Toast to Her Majesty The Queen, which was toasted in the tradition Royal Navy style whilst seated.



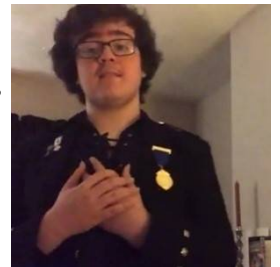
Alan Beck, Junior Vice President, (left) performed his first song "O Lay Thy Loof In Mine Lass" accompanied by his wife Polly on the Piano. Marc Sherland then presented an excellent Immortal Memory of Robert Burns

and Henry Cairney then gave a Toast To The RBWF President.

Les Strachan, (right) American International Director, then delivered a wonderful recitation "*The Auld Farmer's New Years Morning Salutation Tae His Auld Mare Maggie.....*" which was very warmly received by all.



Henry Cairney then played 'Sweet Afton' on his accordion, followed by young Burnsian Liam Kearney (right, upper)



who recited "Epistle To A Young Friend",



which was followed by John Hannah, Heritage Convenor, (right, lower) deliver-



ing his first ever public appearance of an entertaining "Toast To The Lassies".

Alan and Polly Beck then performed the song "Duncan Gray" which was followed with a 'Guid Response' from Lesley McDonald, Education



Convenor, in her "Reply From The Lassies".

Neil McNair, Marketing Convenor, gave a toast to International Guests, followed by the reply from Trekker

Armstrong, Communications Officer.

Mike Duguid, Literature Convenor, then gave a vote of thanks to the federation and all performers and guests, followed by the last remarks from our

Federation continued

President Marc Sherland. The Scottish singer Evelyn Laurie then sang “Auld Lang Syne” to conclude the formal part of the evening, followed by an open floor session for guests to catch up.



Lesley McDonald, Education
Convenor, Reply from the
Lassies



Trekker Armstrong, Commu-
nications Officer, Reply from
the International Guests



Neil McNair, Marketing Con-
venor, Toast to International
Guests



Mike Duguid, Literature Con-
venor, Vote of Thanks

Submitted by: Henry Cairney
SVP RBWF



Evelyn Laurie, Auld Lang
Syne

Stay Safe
&
Think Burns

Book Review:

Novella of poet's life is superbly readable

The Riotous Passions of Robbie Burns
John Ivison
Ottawa Press and Publishing

One glory of John Ivison's new novella, **The Riotous Passions of Robbie Burns**, lies in its evocation of a great city, the cradle of the Scottish Enlightenment, as it neared the end of the 18th century.

Edinburgh becomes a character in its own right as Ivison leads us through its cobbled streets. This was a city whose temperament found room for the contrasting extremes of Royal Mile, Fleshmarket Close and the stewpots of Barefoot Park, for John's Coffee House and John Dowie's Tavern.

Thanks to Ivison, we feel we know the urgently alive world that greeted Scotland's rising ploughman poet, Robert Burns, when he blazed into Edinburgh in 1786. The freethinking Burns of this book, exerting a presence both irrepressible and irresistible, will also consider it natural that he live up to his image as a great love poet capable of reducing women to melting acquiescence. Ivison, a National Post columnist, must have been aware of a potential minefield here. A couple of years ago, poet Liz Lochhead scandalized Burns disciples by comparing the warm-hearted creator of Flow Gently

Sweet Afton with sexual predator Harvey Weinstein. As evidence, she cited a 1788 letter in which he boasts of his prowess in bedding his heavily pregnant girlfriend and electrifying "the very marrow of her bones."

This letter also makes an appearance in the present book. It is no less shocking, but here it adds a further element to the complicated psychology of the poetic genius.

Ivison employs a cunning narrative device in giving us a witty memory piece filtered through the affectionate but often dismayed prism of John Bruce, Robbie's young Edinburgh companion. Bruce's friendship is sometimes severely tested, yet his fondness for his maddening friend endured. "We were living in the age of enlightenment," he reflects near the end. "Natural philosophers had calculated the movement of the stars. But none could chart the madness of men afflicted by the exquisite bliss of love."

Ivison's tale is superbly readable but carries a tinge of ruefulness and lament.

Jamie Portman
Postmedia News

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Editor's note:

The Spring Edition of the Tattler is planned for mid-May.

Members are encouraged to make submissions for publication no later than May 9th.

News about your club or any Burns related articles are more than welcome

Book Excerpt: The Riotous Passions of Robert Burns

The following book excerpt was originally published in the Halifax (NS) Chronicle Herald. It is reprinted here with the kind permission of the author, John Ivison, and publisher Ron Corbett of Ottawa Press and Publishing

Robert Burns published his *Poems, Chiefly in the Scottish Dialect* in July, 1786, to universal acclaim. Later that year, he set out for Edinburgh to print a second edition. In this excerpt from the recently released historical novella, *The Riotous Passions of Robbie Burns*, the author sketches the welcome that awaited the poet in the seat of the Scottish Enlightenment.

From the distance of nearly three decades, I can reminisce about Burns with great fondness. He took me under his wing, taught me how to bend Cupid's bow and held me in the grip of his charming sorcery. He was a bewitching figure — someone once said of him that when you shook hands, it was as if he burnt you.

Yet there were occasions where he behaved damnably and persuaded me to be complicit in many of his deceptions. His belief that poets should be governed by different rules of conduct than everyone else inflicted scars that took many years to heal.

It was scarcely surprising that the man inspired mixed emotions — he was a mass of contradictions: capable of beauty and baseness, sensitive to the promise of life but also its many pitfalls, gifted with confidence and accomplishment while crippled with self-doubt. He possessed a rare kindness but cruelty, too. Being in his orbit was exhilarating and exhausting.

The night we met was a typical grey Edinburgh evening. I wandered into Johnnie Dowie's tavern and headed to the narrow little room at the back, ominously named "The Coffin." I looked in to see Richmond, Nicol and a third man — part peasant, part dandy — clad in a coat the russet brown colour of dead leaves, his brown hair tied back in a way that was not yet fashionable and with no trace of powder. He had eyes that were clear and strong and probing. The group sat eating oysters and drinking porter

while the stranger held court. My friends did not see me, so I let him continue with his story before entering.

"We ranged around a bowl until the good-fellow hour of six and then went out to pay our devotions to the glorious lamp of day," he said. "We saddled up and spent the day passing the bottle as we rode. But then a Highlandman came past us at a gallop on a tolerably good horse that had never known the ornament of iron or leather. We scorned to be out-galloped by a Highlandman, so off we started, whip and spur.



My companions fell astern, but my old mare was not called Rocinante for naught. She was as fleet as Don Quixote's horse and strained past the Highlandman in spite of all his efforts with the hair halter. Just as I was passing, Donald wheeled his horse, as if to cross before me to mar my progress. But ere he could, down came his horse and threw his rider's breechless arse into a hedge. Then down came Rocinante and my bardship between her and the Highlandman's horse. Neither horses nor riders came off as badly as might have been expected — just a few cuts and bruises and a thorough resolution to be the pattern of sobriety in the future." With that he raised his bumper and winked at me as the others howled in laughter.

I entered somewhat red of face for having eavesdropped, but I need not have worried. When Richmond and Nicol saw me, they rose and ushered me to take a seat.

"Rab, this is the newest recruit to our band of revelry, John Bruce. John, meet the poet laureate and bard-in-chief over the districts and counties of Kyle, Cunningham and Carrick, Robert Burns."

"Too kind, too kind, sir. Mr. Bruce come and join us for some homely fare," the man introduced as Robert Burns said to me.

"Mr. Burns, pleased to make your acquaintance," I said back. "I'd heard you were bound for Jamaica?"

"Well my chest of belongings was already on the road to a ship harboured in Greenock when I received word that Dr. Thomas

Continued on page 16

Book Excerpt: (continued)

Blacklock, the esteemed blind poet and scholar, held my Kilmarnock Edition in some regard, and that roused my poetic ambition. His idea that I would meet with every encouragement in the capital for a second edition fired me so much that I posted to Edinburgh without a single acquaintance, bar our mutual friend, John Richmond, and not a single letter of introduction in my pocket.”

“So what’s next for you?” I asked.

“What’s next, my boy, is a trip to Dawnie Douglas’ tavern to introduce Mr. Burns to the Crochallan Fencibles,” interrupted Nicol.

I’d heard about this club, ostensibly a band of citizens formed as ‘fencible men’ or volunteers against the dangers arising from invasion. But this was no ordinary fencible club. It was a social gathering, with mock military pretensions, of some of Edinburgh’s most eminent citizens, named after an old Gaelic song the proprietor was in the habit of singing to his guests — The Cattle of Colin or Chro challin.

When the happy triumvirate I had joined had finished eating and drinking, we made our way to a neighbouring close, where a sign read “Anchor Tavern Howff,” with a scale stair leading down.

We descended and found a group of men arranged around a long table with three older gentlemen at the head. Nicol was hailed on his entrance to the Crown Room at the back of the tavern by the foremost man, who seemed to be in charge. He returned the greeting. “Colonel Dunbar,” said Nicol, “I have brought you two new recruits, including the poet whose star is blazing across our skies, Mr. Robert Burns. Jock Richmond I think you have met, and may I present my kinsman from Annandale, John Bruce.”

“Gentlemen, come in and take a seat. Welcome to the Crochallan Fencibles, a body of men who can scarcely discern between right hand or left for drunkenness. I’m William Dunbar, WS. Our military rank is as ludicrous as the threat to our security from the Americas. But we like to add a degree of formality to our revels. To my left is Mr. Charles Hay, our muster-master general, who is charged with drilling the recruits. To my right is our esteemed founder and sergeant-at-arms, Mr. William Smellie,” he said, pointing to a man in mid-life who, having apparently grown careless of his costume and appearance, had a

shabby coat, grisly growth on his chin and un-combed locks.

“You will meet the other members in due course: Mr. Cleghorn, Mr. Cunningham, Mr. Johnson, Mr. Masterton, Mr. Hill and Mr. Gordon. But a question first, Mr. Burns — are you a lover of the ladies?”

Burns stepped forward into the light and thought for a minute. “Sir, I am the greatest fool when woman is the presiding star. So much so that I am honouring my king by begetting him loyal subjects,” he said to a murmur of general satisfaction from the membership.

“Well said, sir,” replied Dunbar. “Then you will join us in saving the ladies. The rules to the game are simple. Each man has to propose his own girl as the loveliest of her sex, drink to her glory and vow to die in her defence. The one who drinks most and falls prone last is the victor.”

At this point bumpers were raised, toasts made and Smellie rose unsteadily to his feet before launching into a chorus:

“Come rede me, dame, come tell me, dame, My
dame come tell me truly,
What length o’ graith, when weel ca’d hame, Will
sair a woman duly?

The carlin clew her wanton tail, Her wanton tail sae
ready,

I learn’d a sang in Annandale
Nine inch will please a lady.”

The Crochallan Fencibles had been called to arms.

John Ivison is a Scottish Canadian journalist and author. He is an Ottawa-based political columnist for the *National Post* and Ottawa Bureau Chief.

Raised in Dumfries, Scotland, he worked as a reporter for *The Scotsman* newspaper in Edinburgh and as deputy business editor of *Scotland on Sunday*. He was educated at the University of Glasgow, McMaster University and the University of Western Ontario, where he earned a Masters of Arts in Journalism.

He moved to Canada in 1998, as part of the team that launched the *National Post*. After five years at the Financial Post, Ivison moved to the news section of the National Post, where he has covered provincial politics in Ontario and federal politics in Ottawa since 2003.

Ivison is married to Canadian diplomat Dana Cryderman. He has three children, James, Fiona and William.