



The Tattler



Spring 2024 Edition

President's Message

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The Robert Burns Association
 of North America

Affiliated with the
 Robert Burns World Federation Ltd
 Kilmarnock Scotland

Club #1024

Greetings fellow Burnsians,
 I am honoured and humbled to be composing my first message to you all as the 21st President of the Robert Burns Association of North America. Our 2024 AGM & Conference in Mt Holly, NJ was the 44th occasion that the organization has convened, and it was tremendous to witness the continued excitement created as friends old and new gathered to celebrate the ethos of such a brilliant man. I would like to thank all of you who attended the meeting and especially those who travelled from Scotland and Canada to participate. Our hosts, led by John Adams, President of the South Jersey Celtic Society, put on a magnificent program and I would like to particularly thank outgoing RBANA President, Paul Kennedy for his role in the success of the event. I will let you read about all the activities we enjoyed in the Conference report which is included in this publication. I am delighted to have the able-bodied support of the newly elected members of the Executive Committee and congratulate, Brian Cumming, 1st Vice-President, Phyl Smith, 2nd Vice-President, Henry Cairney, Secretary and Jamie Osborne, Treasurer to their roles. I also want to call out two of our Region Directors who have decided to step down this year. Ken Montgomery, Past President and Canadian Director, East



In This Issue:	
President's Message	1
RBWF Conference	3
Paul Kennedy Honored	7
Retiring Board Members Honored	8
Heather & Thistle Lose 2 Stalwarts	8
Bill Fulton Reflects	9
The Cameron Report	10
SASOW has an Active Spring	11
Medicine Hat Burns Night	12

Continued pg. 2

President's Message (continued)

and Bill Fulton, Past Vice-President and US Director, North were recognized at the Conference for all of their substantial contributions to the organization over the years. With these departures from the Board along with the creation of the new positions of 1st and 2nd Vice president, we had four Region Director roles to fill. I am delighted to share that Rob Pinkerton, now Past President of the Calgary Burns Club and Ronnie O'Byrne of the Halton Peel and Niagara Falls Burns Clubs have been appointed as Canadian Region Directors, West and East respectively. In the US, Steve Newman of the South Jersey Celtic Society has been appointed as US Region Director, Northeast and we are actively sourcing an individual for the last remaining vacancy for US Region Director, West. Please join me in welcoming these new faces to the Board and thanking those who have supported us with their time and talent in the past. Another activity that I had the pleasure of coordinating for 2024 was the 9th Annual Jack Hume Poetry Competition. This year our panel of judges, Steve Newman, SJCS, Jim McLaughlin, Calgary Burns Club and Jim Alexander, Burns Club of Atlanta had ten extremely well written entries to consider. They were unanimous in their decision to select "The Classics and Us" composed by Ronnie O'Byrne of Halton Peel Burns Club as the winner. You



can read this excellent work, as well as the second and third placed entries in the Hume Poetry Supplement. In addition to presenting the Jack Hume Trophy to Ronnie at the Burns Dinner on May 4th, I was also delighted to present Darlene Cameron with the RBANA Golf Trophy. Darlene has the distinct achievement of beating Ronnie O'Byrne by having the "Best Back Nine" on the day! I am also pleased to announce that the winner of the 2024 Dr Jim Connor Memorial Burns Quiz was once again Les Strachan from Bedford, Virginia, (left being presented the Connor trophy by Paul Kennedy) whose knowledge of the Bard is legendary! Finally, I want to take this opportunity to call your attention to the RBANA website which has been substantially updated

thanks to the efforts of the website committee expertly guided by Henry Cairney. Check it out at www.rbana.org where you will find a wealth of information organized in a way that is much easier to access. Please mark your calendars for the 45th RBANA AGM & Conference which will be hosted in 2025 by the Burns Club of Atlanta on May 9th & 10th in Atlanta, GA. In finishing, all that remains for me to do is to wish you all a wonderful summer.

Yours in Burns,

Mark Ferguson
President, Robert Burns Association of North America

Think Burns

RBANA 2024 Held in New Jersey

The South Jersey Celtic Society (SJCS) hosted the 44th RBANA AGM and Conference in Mount Holly NJ from May 2 to May 5. The SJCS planned activities, for each day of the conference highlighting the town of Mount Holly and its History. Mount Holly is a town of approximately 10000 people which is located 30 minutes from Philadelphia PA. Historically, Mount Holly was the site of The Battle at Iron Works Hill; a small but significant skirmish leading up to the Battle of Trenton which allowed General Washington to defeat the Hessians (British mercenaries) at Trenton and Princeton in the weeks following the action in Mount Holly. The conference kicked off Thursday night with cigars and whisky at the Smoking Dog Cigar Lounge followed by dinner the Local Bar & Grill. An informal Ceilidh followed in the restaurant's lounge and whisky bar. Entertainment was provided by the Kennedy's (Paul on guitar and Junior on fiddle.) Friday began with a golf tournament where to everyone's surprise Darlene Cameron, the wife of Canadian Director Charles, won. This is the first time in many years that Ronnie O'Byrne or Les Strachan's name is not to the trophy.

Friday afternoon treated guests to a walking tour of Historical Mount Holly, (below and right) while others participated in a whisky tasting at the Train Wreck Distillery featuring a selection of whiskies created especially to hon-



or Robert Burns. Friday night was a ceilidh held at the Deerfield Country Club with an excellent buffet dinner and entertainment. (below) Guests were treated to music from RBANA and SJCS members as well as a local group.



The AGM itself was held at the **Lyceum and Museum of Natural History** in Mount Holly; the land and

building being given by King George III in a grant. Congratulations to Mark Ferguson on his election on installment as president of RBANA; Brian Cumming as Senior Vice President and to Phyl Smyth of Sarasota as Junior Vice President. Henry Cairney was



confirmed as Secretary, and Jamie Osborne as Treasurer with the position now being split. Following the AGM a lecture on Burns and Adam Smith, by Dr. Steven Newman

of Temple University and by a joint lecture by Ronnie O'Byrne and Les Strachan on Burns and Ireland providing an educational

RBANA 2024 Held in New Jersey

experience for all in attendance. Post AGM Saturday attendees returned to the hotel where the Jim Connor Memorial Quiz was convened.

Saturday afternoon activities included either a brewery tour of three local breweries or an afternoon tea (right) hosted by the Colonial Dames and held at the Peachfield Plantation, the Historic Home of the first freemason in North America, John Skene.

The RBANA Burns Supper was held later that evening at O'Connor's American Grill. The event was presided over by Charlie Zahm, a well known folk singer and fellow Burnsian. Jamie Osborne performed a rousing rendition of the *Address to A Haggis*. Additional entertainment was provided by Charlie Zahm, the Kennedys, and Don Simon, a new member. Great food was had again, including a special flight of whiskies available, paired to the courses. Les Strachan did the Immortal Memory, Ronnie O'Byrne the Toast to the Lassies and Jane Brown the Reply.



On Sunday eight members piled into a bus and were treated to a private tour of the Rosenbach Museum, in Philadelphia where they were able to see and touch a number of Burn's handwritten manuscripts as well as a copy of the Johnson's Scot's Musical Museum.

Finally, many thanks to Paul Kennedy and his volunteer drivers who not only picked us up and dropped us off at Philadelphia International but also drove us to and from events.

In addition to members from the US (SJCS and the Burns Club of Atlanta) and Canada (Calgary Burns Club, Edmonton Burns Club, Halton Peel Burns Club, the Winnipeg Robert Burns Club and the St Andrew's Society of Winnipeg) several distinguished guests braved the trip; notably Jasne Brown, Jean Abdulrahim, Margaretann Dougal and Bill Dawson for which we were truly grateful to have them in attendance.

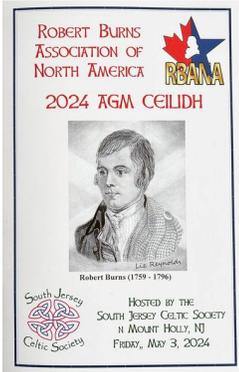
Submitted by Paul Kennedy, with filings from Brian Cumming and Jamie Osborne

Pictures from a Weekend in New Jersey

Seen on the walk through Historic Mount Holly



Pictures from a Weekend in New Jersey



Saturday morning AGM and Lectures



Pictures from a Weekend in New Jersey



Saturday Tea at Peachfield Plantation (above)



Burns Supper at O'Connors (below)



The Outgoing Board in attendance (right)

L to R Charles Cameron, Les Strachan, Bill Fulton, Mark Ferguson, Colin Harris, Paul Kennedy, Ronnie O'Byrne, Jaimie Osborne, Brian Cumming, George McClellan.



Clan Kennedy Honors Outgoing RBANA President

During the Saturday evening Burns Supper at Conference 2024, President Mark Ferguson revealed that the Kennedy Society of North America had honored our outgoing President Paul Kennedy.

The letter from Society Chief Sean Carrick read as follows:

I want to congratulate you on completing your term as President of the Robert Burns Association of North America (RBANA) and your ongoing service as the U.S. Director for the Robert Burns World Federation (RBWF).

As Robert Burns was born in let's go back in Ayrshire/Carrick the KSNA has a strong connection to "Rabbie" as that area of Scotland is the hereditary seat of the Kennedy family specifically Culzean Castle. There are several KSNA service awards that can be bestowed to KSNA members. First, the Alisa Craig award. The Alisa Craig award was developed to honor those Kennedy members who have given exemplary service to the Society. Just like the Crai – they are the foundation, the "rock" upon which KSNA succeeds.

Second, the Order of the Dolphin is the next KSNA service award in succession. The Order of the Dolphin award is attached with a blue and yellow ribbon which are the KSNA colors. The Order of the Dolphin is a higher-level service awards given to members who have undertaken a significant role

in furthering our Scottish culture the KSNA board can think of no one else more deserving of these two service awards. Once again, I would like to congratulate you for all your service to both RBANA, RBWF and for being such a wonderful ambassador of the KSNA.

Mark Ferguson presented these two awards to Paul, on behalf of the KSNA. He also presented Paul, on behalf of RBANA, with a photostatic copy of the "Friendship Tile" which will be on display at RBWF headquarters in Kilmarnock. (below)



Credit for all photos from the Mount Holly weekend goes to Art Dobie (SJCS) and Jamie Osborne

Retiring Board Members Honored

As noted elsewhere, RBANA 2024 marked the end of direct service for a couple of long-term members of the RBANA Board.

While past President, and Canadian Director Ken Montgomery was unable to attend Mount Holly, he has left an indelible mark on the Association



and his service will be missed.

Bill Fulton, whose own memories of service are detailed elsewhere in these pages, was formally thanked and honored by new President Mark Ferguson, during the Saturday evening banquet.

Houston's Heather and Thistle Society Loses Two Stalwarts

We recently lost two grand dames of the Heather & Thistle Society of Houston who passed away within a day or two of each other. Both will be sorely missed.

Guida Hume, (left) a cherished member of our society, has left us at the age of 94. She was the widow of Jack Hume, a RBANA stalwart, and the generous donor of the trophy in his name for original poetry writing that RBANA still proudly runs. Guida was a distinguished English literature scholar and author of 26 books. After Jack passed away in 2018, she served for several years on the judging panel for the Hume Trophy and was an ever-present at H&T Burns meetings until the group folded three years ago.



Joan Down, another long-standing member of H&T, also passed away recently, aged 93. She was the widow of Dr Arthur Down, another Houston figure well-known in RBANA circles. Arthur, Jack Hume, and Ted Hirtz co-founded the Burns study group within H&T over forty years ago. The Downs rarely missed an RBWF Annual Conference in the UK and particularly enjoyed the opportunity to visit the Braemar Games when the two could conveniently be combined. Joan moved to Southern California a few years ago to be nearer her family.

Submitted by
Robert Boyd RBANA President 2014-16

A RBANA Board Member's Reflection

I was elected to the Robert Burns Association of North America (RBANA) Board in 2018. With Les Strachan, we produced the 2018 RBANA Conference in (my beloved) Philadelphia. Not bad for a two-man team!

In that process we discovered the South Jersey Celtic Society (SJCS) with Paul Kennedy, John Adams, Leo Dungan and others.

I promoted The Rosenbach Museum and introduced SJCS.

This relationship has evolved into an annual Burns Night.

I maintain my contact with the U. of South Carolina library and staff. The Rob Roy Collection of Robert Burns work is the most comprehensive outside of the United Kingdom.

I attempted to encourage and foster membership in RBANA with the 26 US States I was assigned. My lament is the inability to discover new RBANA clubs/members.

I continue to maintain contacts with Scottish/Burns groups.

The Virginia Military Institute (VMI) pipes and drums, the local English-Speaking Society, Washington & Lee University and a newly forming group of a Shenandoah Valley Robert Burns Club will promote the legacy of



Robert Burns.

Although there currently is no Emeritus Status within RBANA, I will continue to promote the vision and objectives of this organization.

Thank you for the opportunity to be a part of this wonderful experience. Thank you, Les Strachan for exposing me to RBANA.

I wish my successor as USA Director to be successful and contributing to the mission of RBANA.

I am thankful for the experience of meeting fellow Scots interested and dedicated to promoting the legacy of Robert Burns. I cherish my association with my Canadian friends.

A special affection for the sister I never had—Jane Brown.

I love you lass!

RBANA will continue to flourish, and I pledge my assistance wherever needed.

Finally, I thank my wonderful wife, Mary Jim, for her support, technical skills, and patience.

Again, thank you all for the opportunity to be a part of the ROBERT BURNS ASSOCIATION OF NORTH AMERICA.

Submitted by Bill Fulton

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.

The deadline for submissions for the Summer Edition is Thursday August 15.

The edition will be published and distributed August 31.

The Cameron Report



This year's trip to Conference was a memorable Road Trip to Mount Holly, New Jersey. Leaving Winnipeg on the 21st of April, Darlene and I arrived in Williamsburg, Virginia (the site of Conference 12 years ago).

We visited the 17th Century Town, enjoying the Museum like displays, witnessed a Court Room Session, in which I took part. (Presbyterian Faith finally allowed.)

We also visited a 17th Century Printing Press, was shown the workings of how to print a Newspaper, one sheet at a time; and the Tavern where George Washington, along with his Compatriots outlined the War of Independence from Britain.

Nearby was Jamestown, the first British Colony, the Birth of America, also where Pocahontas lived.

After leaving Williamsburg, we drove to Frederick, Maryland, less than an hour out of Washington, where we visited a Winery with friends, had a glass or two of fine wine and went out for Supper at a very swank Steak House. The AC was on high, and we just about froze to death...Steak was very good though.

The next day we visited Arlington National Cemetery, witnessed the changing of the Guard at the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier...very impressive and moving. While there we saw the graves of the Kennedy Family, Robert E. Lee's House and very many Crosses, row on row.

From Frederick, we made the trip to Mount Holly, delivering the RBANA banner, which we had possession of since last summer, and displayed at our Burns Supper in January, to Paul Kennedy.

I'd like to say that I was very impressed with the Burns Conference in Mount Holly. Congratulations to Paul, John Adams, Leo Dungan, and all the organizers.

Mount Holly is a beautiful historic town which I would have no hesitation on visiting again. It was an honour to be asked to propose the Toast to RBWF again this year.

As Director for Canada Central, I have made great contacts in Southern Ontario, May, Alex and Ronnie.

Golf was a blast, with Ronnie, Les, Myself and Darlene.

Darlene came home with the RBANA Golf Award. The first Lady to win in RBANA history.



Moving on after Conference, our outing to Valley Forge was an exciting one. I guess the good Lord was watching over us, Jan and Brian from Calgary, along with Darlene, giving me pointers along the way. Eight thousand kilometers later, we are back in Winnipeg.

Fred Morrison, World Famous Bag Piper Extraordinaire was in Winnipeg on 15 May, an event sponsored by RBANA member, the St. Andrew's Society of Winnipeg.

If ever you get a chance, go see him, you won't regret.

The Manitoba Highland Gathering will be held in East Selkirk, Manitoba on 22/23 June. Both the Burns Club and the St Andrew's Society will be present.

Our Robert Burns Memorial Service will be held on 21 July at 16:00 hours by his Statue on the Legislature grounds. 228 years since his passing.

Both the Winnipeg Robert Burns Club, and the St Andrew's Society will be manning tables at Winnipeg's annual Folklorama festival during the first two weeks of August this

Continued pg. 11

Cameron Report (continued)

Submitted by

Charles H. Cameron
President: Winnipeg Robert Burns Club
Director Central Canada for RBANA

Summer.

Our top priority in the coming weeks is securing a new venue for our Burns Club luncheons and our Burns Supper.

In closing, let me wish you all a good summer.

SASOW Have an Active Spring

The St Andrew's Society of Winnipeg (the other Winnipeg RBANA member) has had a busier Spring than it historically has had. Making the decision a few years ago to grow beyond just its annual dinner in November, it marked Tartan Day, April 6, with a Ceilidh at a local community centre, Victoria Day, Canada's May holiday, the 80th



Members of the SASOW Board with Fred Morrison

proved to be a popular, and profitable, addition to the events calendar. Hopefully a return visit is not too distant in the future. In the coming weeks SASOW will, like the Winnipeg Robert Burns Club, be out at the Manitoba Highland Gathering, north of the city, and at Winnipeg's Folklorama festival's Pavilion of Scotland, as well as having a few more Pop-Up Piper opportunities.



anniversary of D-Day, (left) with the appearance of a Pop-Up Piper. It then joined the Prairie Pipe Band Association of Manitoba (PPBAM) with a picnic and Summer Showcase pipe and drum competition



in south Winnipeg's St Vital Park. (right) It also hosted, as Charles mentioned in his report, the Winnipeg visit of Fred Morrison, which



SASOW Board Members Chris Lawson, Ian Aastrom and Dwight MacAulay

Medicine Hat Burns Supper



On Saturday, 3 February 2024 the MHBC hosted its 17th Annual Burns Celebration, again at the wonderful Medicine Hat Golf & Country Club that features a spectacular

view of the City of Medicine Hat and its South Saskatchewan River valley.

This year, our mixed event involved about 130 guests. We were aware that costs had risen and there was a limit to what folks would pay for a ticket. With that in mind it was still our intention to host a 'proper' Burns dinner with the expected fare and entertainment attendees normally expect at

this type of event. It was the position of our Club executive that it would be an insult to the Bard and his memory if we did anything less.

The guests were welcomed by Club President Rob Cowan (left) and the function was properly managed by

this years MC, Canadian Army Major Kevin Conrad CD (Rtd) (right) who with his military skills and training had the crowd surrender to his will. With respect to the food, where we had the traditional cock o' leekie soup served to the table with real baps, as we did with the desert (Scottish sticky toffee pudding w' whisky sauce), the main course was done buffet style. This included the haggis. We found this worked well as where many like haggis, unfortunately its a fact many don't, so why



waste a large serving of haggis to those who don't want it, especially considering the increasing cost that wild beastie is now realizing.

We also still include the Address to the Haggis, done again brilliantly by Past President Bill Cocks, (right) as well as the Immortal Memory done

wonderfully, and for the first time by Club VP John Cameron, who was also our 'Chieftain o' the Nicht'. Here, we note the Immortal Memory is a tricky piece of work to properly pull off. In short, its a real balancing act to educate, entertain and not bore the crowd. We feel you have to gauge the audience, and for sure, keep that presentation to no more that 15 minutes. There is a time and place for the full version and that's normally when you have true Burnsians as your audience or at a special club meeting. To us, another must have is proper entertainment that usually includes Highland dancers and pipes and drums.

In Medicine Hat we are very fortunate and privileged to work closely with the South Alberta Pipes & Drums, (below) and as usual they put on quite a show. We also feature dancers, and this year were from the



Continued pg. 13

MHBC Supper (continued)

Diamond V Highland Dance Academy. Another must is to highlight Burns with a little poetry and song interspersed throughout the program. This year we included Tae a Moose, My Heart is in the Highlands, Killiecrankie, and at the end of the night, of course, Auld Lang Syne with all involved. A post event review again confirmed that for the MHBC to properly pull off what we consider to be, a successful and proper Burns dinner, and to get people out, the event has to be subsidized. And in our case, this year we did so up to about \$15.00 per head. That means, and we know, we need fundraising activities and sponsors. With the MHBC, our Jolly Beggars Banquet is our primary fundraiser, and all our sponsors are recognized in our full written program that also is our Club's historical register. We feel the proper recognition of sponsors is very important.

We also believe it is crucial for the MHBC to not only closely monitor our own activities, but to watch and learn from other Clubs, so we may not only improve but learn from the successes and mistakes of others and ourselves. We also believe no Burns club is an island and we must com-

municate and work with other clubs, if for nothing else, for all of us to grow, flourish and survive.

If anyone wants to chat about hosting dinners or other Burns related initiatives, please contact me at monty855@shaw.ca.

Regards and yours in Burns,

Ken Montgomery
Secretary MHBC
Past President RBANA



Club VP John Cameron
Proposing the Immortal
Memory



The Evening Ends With
Hands Entwined and Auld
Lang Syne