

# The Tattler



Spring 2025 Edition

## President's Message

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Junior Vice President	Mike Duffy
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Hon. Presidents:	May Crawley Jim Cunningham Ron Ballantyne Chrys Ballantyne

Contacts:  
**RBANA**  
 610-54th Avenue SW  
 Calgary AB  
 T2V 0C8

Editor  
 Colin Harris  
[amansaman@hotmail.ca](mailto:amansaman@hotmail.ca)

Webmaster  
 Henry Cairney  
[contact@rbana.com](mailto:contact@rbana.com)



The Robert Burns Association  
 of North America

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

Dear Members and Friends,

As summer weather begins to unfold across our RBANA family, I write to share my gratitude and reflections on what was a truly memorable 2025 RBANA AGM and Conference, held May 8–10 in Atlanta, Georgia.



Thanks to the outstanding efforts of the Burns Club of Atlanta, our delegates and guests were treated to a weekend that celebrated the very best of Burnsian fellowship. From Thursday's warm welcome reception at the Hilton Garden Inn Buckhead through the Friday night gathering at the historic Atlanta Burns Cottage to Saturday night's elegant Burns Dinner back at the hotel, every moment was infused with hospitality, thoughtfulness, and that unmistakable Burnsian spirit. We enjoyed historical tours, scholarly presentations, and plenty of music and laughter. The Friday evening Ceilidh and Saturday's dinner were both wonderfully atmospheric, featuring stirring performances, fine food, and spirited conversation. Special thanks go to all who helped behind the scenes—your efforts ensured everything ran smoothly and left lasting memories for all in attendance. At our AGM on Saturday morning, the Association moved forward

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## President's Message (continued)

with renewed momentum. We ratified the appointment of Mike Duffy as Junior Vice President, confirmed upcoming conference locations through 2028, and expressed our gratitude to Colin Harris, who is stepping down after 15 years as Editor of *The Tattler*. We were also proud to recognize Henry Cairney's winning poem in the Jack Hume Poetry Competition, and to crown Les Strachan the 2025 Jim Connor Memorial Quiz Champion. Above all, the weekend reaffirmed the strength of the RBANA community—its dedication, warmth, and shared love for the Bard. Please enjoy reading the full Conference report that is included in this edition of the

*Tattler*. As we look ahead to Edmonton in June 2026, I encourage you all to stay engaged with your local Burns Clubs, enjoy the company of fellow members, and continue to share the life and legacy of Robert Burns. Until then, my very best wishes to you and yours for a glorious summer!

Yours in Burns,

Mark Ferguson  
President, Robert Burns Association  
of North America



## Robert Burns in the Great American West Part 2



In the last issue of the Tattler, I reported on Robert Burns influence in the great American West focusing on one of many statues of the Bard, worldwide, located in Cheyenne, Wyoming. In my yearly travels throughout the vast

Plaines, Prairie, deserts and mountain ranges of mid-America, one may, just by accident and paying attention, discover more evidence of the Scottish diaspora who came here and brought their love of Robert Burns with them. Miles City, Montana is one.

Miles City sits on the southern side of the Yellowstone River, Americas only river never to be damned up for commercial purposes. The Yellowstone is mainly fed from the south by the Big Horn, Tongue, Powder and Little Missouri rivers. Custer's and the Red Bud battlefields are not far away nor the graffiti left by William Clark of the Lewis and Clark expedition. The Yellowstone turns north here to its confluence with the Missouri Rivers

near Williston, No. Dakota. This entire area is also a great fossils hunting area for creatures from the Jurassic area such as T-Rex and Triceratops and thousands of other reptilians that once inhabited the great inland sea that covered this area.

But, back to Burns in Miles City. For the auto traveler, I definitely recommend a stop over in Miles City, Montana to spend a few hours in the Range Riders Museum there where a veritable treasure of cowboy era and ranching history, filled with the discarded detritus of a fast growing America, is on display. The collection is extensive and includes items from the Native American cultures that originally

inhabited this area known as Absaroka (home of the Crows), where the cattle and later horse breeding area, the influence of the railroads that brought development into an area suited for agriculture, quickly developed. That development included the social life of its European/American inhabitant's. Women were here almost from the beginning and brought with them their demands for law and order, religion and domestic tranquility where families could be raised without the violence that preceded their arrival. This is

where one exhibit in the Range Riders museum immediately caught my attention, a set of bagpipes hanging in a display case. (right) Next case was the ephemera of the Caledonia Society, the Overseas Club and Burns night Dinner menus. (below)



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## Robert Burns in the Great American West Part 2

(continued)

Inquiries of the elderly docent and once cowboy, attending to visitors to the museum, asking if there were a Burns Club or a Caledonian Club still active in Miles City, he didn't know about it.

Travelers on vacations into middle America and Canada even, should always be alert to displays and information proving the Scottish diaspora came into and settled the area, such as I discovered in Miles City, Montana, is always a rewarding experience. Finding history

and collecting it, even in the dark back corners of old museums is always a thrill. We should enjoy it, photograph it and write about it.

George McClellan,  
USA Western Director, RBANA

### HALTON PEEL INTERNATIONAL BURNS CLUB

"for love of the Bard"

Member of RBANA & #2008 World Federation of Burns Clubs



In January 2000, Jack Jackson, who was an individual member of the Robert Burns World Federation, sought to join or set up a local Burns Club. The Federation advised that there was a club in Niagara Falls some 100km (62 mi) away, but none in the Greater Toronto Area where Jack lived. However, the Niagara Club at that time had RBWF Director, May Crawley, as a member, and through May's assistance, a couple of Jack's friends came along with him to a meet up with the Niagara Club to discuss options and get some advice. Around the same time, Chrys Ballantyne, another Scot living in the Greater Toronto Area, met Bill Molloy, who was also a member of the Niagara Falls Club, at a Strathclyde University Alumni gathering. She mentioned to Bill that she would love to join a Burns Club but there was none in her area. Bill was of course aware of the contact from Jack

Jackson, and from there things started to get organised.

An inaugural meeting of this new Halton/Peel Club was held on 17th March 2000, at the home of Jack & May Jackson, with Jim & Janet Orwin and Chrys & Ron Ballantyne in attendance. These six constituted the founding members. It was decided that the Club should meet monthly and that a fundamental of the club's ethos should be the study and appreciation of the works of Burns, his life, and associates. It was also agreed that running a major Burns Supper was not to be part of the club activities and that their Burns Suppers should be confined to members and close friends or spouses only. There were a couple of major fundraising activities on behalf of RBANA that saw a departure from that rule in subsequent years, but those efforts never detracted from the main club activities.

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## Halton/Peel International Burns Club (continued)

Over the next decade the club grew and flourished, and many members took on executive roles within RBANA and were regular attendees at RBANA and RBWF Conferences. The club became an active and stimulating fellowship of Burnsians with a membership of cultural backgrounds: Scots obviously, but also members with English, Irish, Indian and Canadian history too.

Then covid came along and the club meetings, like many, sought to use the Zoom platform. However, through a mixture of events and circumstances the club continues to use Zoom to conduct their meetings to this day. This has given the club several advantages. It means that those members who find it difficult to travel in the Canadian winters can still participate, those with some periodic medical conditions don't miss out, other members who move home or relocate to a different time zone can continue to connect, and most importantly, the club opened its doors to cronies and friends from around the world, and we now have members in different parts of Scotland, Yorkshire, Texas, Virginia, Nevada, California and other airts joining us every month – to such an extent that the members added 'international' to the club name and are now known as **Halton/Peel International Burns Club**.

Over the 25 years of club activities, they have built an impressive catalogue of multimedia presentations (right) and members continue to present papers at club meetings on a wide range of topics related to Robert Burns

and things Scottish. This has grown into quite a significant body of work and one that the executive committee and members would like to offer and share with other Burns Clubs and interested Burnsians around the world.

The presentations are in PowerPoint format, and many have a script to accompany each presentation. However, for those unaccustomed to PowerPoint, the presentations can also be saved and changed to PDF format. The only disadvantage of PDF is that the presentation slides lose their animation features, but other than that the content is the same. These presentations have involved hundreds of research hours to compile the stories and information related to each topic. Some of this work is of course a process of compiling information that is already in the public domain, but other information has been put together by the members through their years of study, personal research and interest in different aspects of Burns life and works. We have presentations related to Burns and the Medical profession, Burns and Germany, Burns and Mrs. Dunlop, Burns Tours, Burns Monuments, Burns and the French Revolution, and Burns' connections with Edinburgh, The Scots Musical Museum, Abraham Lincoln, John Galt, Ireland and many more.

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2024-2025 HPIBC Programme		
<p style="text-align: center;"><b>September 27</b></p> <p><i>Opening Dedication:</i> David Murray <i>Calendar:</i> Maggie McEwan <i>Major Presentation:</i> Eileen McKay: Anecdotes of Burns <i>AGM Report:</i> Jane Brown <i>Finance Report:</i> Jim Steel <i>Membership Report:</i> Maggie McEwan &amp; Lindsey Steel <i>Programming Report:</i> Lindsay Steel</p>	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>October 25 - Hallowe'en</b></p> <p><i>Opening Dedication:</i> Jim Cunningham <i>Calendar:</i> Bill Dawson <i>Membership Update:</i> Maggie McEwan <i>Minor Presentation:</i> Phyl Smith - Personal article re. Alloway's said haunted Kirk <i>Major Presentation/Poem:</i> Hallowe'en - David Murray and Les Strachan</p>	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>November 22 - St. Andrew's Day Ceilidh</b></p> <p><i>Opening Dedication:</i> Jim Steel <i>Calendar:</i> Jane Brown <i>All members - bring a party piece</i></p>
<p style="text-align: center;"><b>January 19 - Burns Supper</b></p> <p><i>Setkirk Grace:</i> Maggie McEwan <i>Address to a Haggie:</i> Les Strachan <i>The Immortal Memory:</i> Phyl Smith <i>Toast to the Lassies:</i> Ronnie O'Byrne <i>Reply to the Toast to the Lassies:</i> Jane Brown</p>	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>February 28 - Love</b></p> <p><i>Opening Dedication:</i> Bill Dawson <i>Calendar:</i> Maggie McEwan <i>Poems:</i> Phyl Smith (One of the following - TBD): Mary Morrison, Ae Fond Kiss, Greenock Grown the Rashes O' or My Luv is like a Red Red Rose <i>Minor Presentation:</i> Eileen McKay: Correspondence with poet Shona MacCallum (no connection to Love theme) <i>Major Presentation:</i> Les Strachan <i>Music:</i> David Murray: Gabertunzie version titled MacPherson's Rant</p>	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>March 28 - Irish Connections</b></p> <p><i>Opening Dedication:</i> Chrys Ballantyne <i>Calendar:</i> Ron Ballantyne <i>Minor Presentation:</i> Phyl Smith: Personal experiences with "International interest in Robert Burns" <i>Major Presentation:</i> Ronnie O'Byrne: Gilbert Burns II and his MANY connections to Irish brands &amp; retail stores that we still know today <i>Music:</i> Ronnie will provide, closer to the time</p>
<p style="text-align: center;"><b>April 25 - No Theme</b></p> <p><i>Opening Dedication:</i> David Murray <i>Calendar:</i> Jane Brown <i>Poem/Analysis:</i> Les Strachan - TBD <i>Major Presentation:</i> Ron Ballantyne - Geddes Burns <i>Minor Presentation:</i> Eileen McKay: Geddes Burns Viewing at Huntington Library.</p>	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>May 30 - No Theme</b></p> <p><i>Opening Dedication:</i> Jim Robertson <i>Calendar:</i> Maggie McEwan <i>Presentation:</i> Phyl Smith, Part 1: Burns in Stirling, Part 2: Personal story written about Bannockburn and Burns entitled: The King, The Post, and The Raven. <i>Presentation:</i> Ronnie O'Byrne, Canadian Fathers of Confederation &amp; Burns Centenary Celebrations in 1859</p>	

## Halton/Peel International Burns Club (continued)

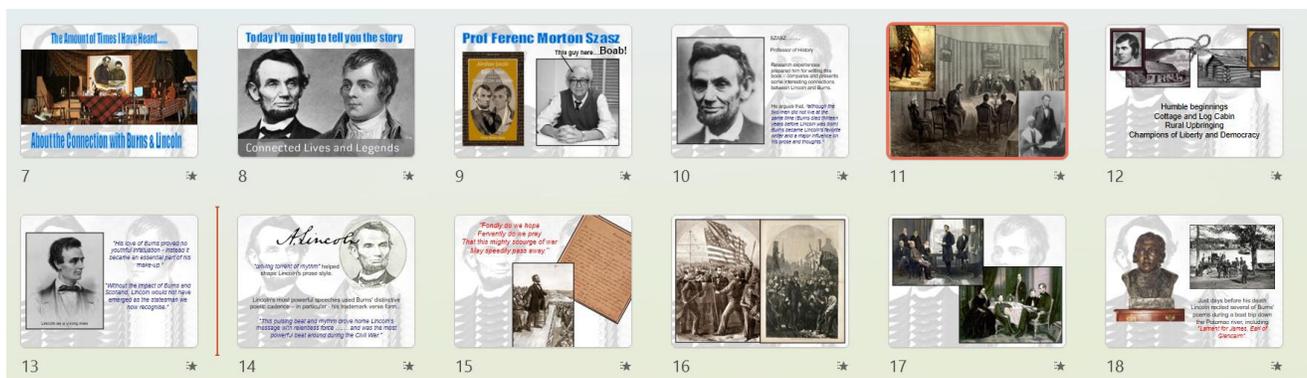
Several have been presented at RBANA Conferences including Ron Ballantynes presentation on the Laki Volcano that impacted Scotland in 1783 and Dr. David Murry's paper on Burns death – both of which were published in the Burns Chronicle.

As well as putting together these topic presentations the members of Halton/Peel have produced short background presentations and analysis of Burns poetry and musical pieces. **The Halton Peel Burns Club would be delighted to share these presentations with any Burns Clubs and interested Burnsians around the world.**

**Additionally, if you have an interest in JOINING the Halton/Peel International Burns Club - or to explore what our ZOOM meetings are all about - please contact.**

Lindsey Steel (Club Administrator) - [lindsey.steel@rogers.com](mailto:lindsey.steel@rogers.com)

Jim Steel (Club President) – [james.steel@rogers.com](mailto:james.steel@rogers.com)



Sample Slides from Burns & Lincoln Presentation

**T**he 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 Friday, August 15, 2025.

The edition will be published and distributed August 31, 2025.

## RBANA Returns to Atlanta

The Robert Burns Association of North America (RBANA) held its Annual General Meeting and Conference from May 8 to May 10, 2025, in Atlanta, Georgia, hosted by the Burns Club of Atlanta (BCOA). The gathering brought together delegates and guests from across the United States and Canada for three days of fellowship, cultural celebration, and appreciation of Scotland's national bard, Robert Burns.

### Thursday, May 8 – Welcome Reception

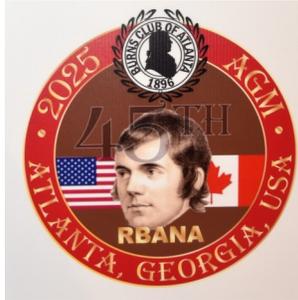
The Conference officially began with a Welcome Reception from 6:30 to 8:30 p.m. at the host hotel, the Hilton Garden Inn Buckhead, Atlanta. The evening provided a warm and informal opportunity for 12 out-of-town delegates to meet with members of the host club, led by Mac Irvin, Past President of RBANA.

Held in the Lennox Room, the reception featured a buffet-style meal that included BBQ meatballs, buffalo chicken wings, vegetable spring rolls, a vegetable crudité platter, and a fruit and cheese board.

A cash bar was available throughout the evening.

The camaraderie continued as several attendees retired

to the Parlor on the sixth floor, where an impromptu musical session took place. Guests sang Burns songs, accompanied by the skillful fiddle playing of Paul Kennedy Jr., and enjoyed a selection of fine single malt Scotch whiskies, wine, and beer in true Burnsian fellowship.



### Friday, May 9 – Tours and Ceilidh

While the RBANA Annual Golf Competition, organized by Jim Stark and originally planned for the Bobby Jones Golf Course, was unfortunately canceled due to insufficient sign-ups, the rest of the day's

program was both rich and engaging.

That morning, 26 conference delegates visited the Atlanta History Center for a curated tour. Jackson McQuigg led an insightful exploration of the Cyclorama and the Texas Locomotive, followed by a tour of the Tully House gardens with Rodney Cook. Delegates were treated to live Scottish piping, and RBANA's Official Piper, Michael Scott, led the procession from the main building to the Tully House, adding a ceremonial flourish to the occasion.

After the tours, the group dined at Souper Jenny's, the History Center's on-site restaurant, before returning to the hotel to prepare for the evening's Ceilidh at the Burns Cottage.

### Friday Evening – Ceilidh at the Burns Cottage

Delegates made their way to the historic Burns Cottage (left) between 5 and 6 p.m. for an evening of rich culture and conviviality.

On arrival, all 64 guests were invited to closely examine a special display

of original Burns books and manuscripts from the private collection of

David Llewellyn, augmented by BCOA's



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## RBANA Returns to Atlanta

own Edinburgh edition.

The Silent Auction, orchestrated by Eric Lucas and Morgan Robertson, opened at 6 p.m., while guests enjoyed hors d'oeuvres including hummus, char siu (tangy Asian Meatballs), olives and mozzarella balls, and pita bread.



A pre-assigned seating plan was coordinated by Dave McDaniel, and the evening's proceedings were ably emceed by BCOA Vice President, Bob Pierson. (left) He welcomed guests from across North America, including representatives from the Cal-

gary Burns Club, Winnipeg Burns Club, South Jersey Celtic Society, Halton Peel Burns Club, and the Medicine Hat Burns Club.



Grace was delivered by RBANA Senior Vice President Brian Cumming, followed by a buffet dinner (left) supplied by Baskat Catering

featuring seasoned rice, BBQ chicken, vegan moussaka, garlic mashed potatoes, and desserts of banana pudding and triple chocolate brownies.

Guests then took part in the Burns Club of Atlanta tradition of introducing themselves around the room before a short break allowed further browsing of the book display and silent auction.

Patrick Scott read Burns' letter of September 11, 1790 to John Wilson the Tarbolton schoolmaster who had asked for a reference, setting the tone for an evening of literary and

musical celebration. Entertainment included musical performances from Ben Bell, Paul Kennedy, Paul Kennedy Jr. (right), and Michelle Bard, wife of BCOA member Tom Bard.

Highlights included:

- Les Strachan's engaging recital of *An Epistle to a Young Friend*
- Jim Flannery's moving background and rendition of *A Red, Red Rose*

A rousing rendition of *A Man's A Man for A' That* by RBANA President Mark Ferguson, accompanied by Ben Bell (guitar), Paul Kennedy Jr. (fiddle), and Paul Kennedy (guitar)

The evening concluded with the singing of Auld Lang Syne, the closing of the silent auction, and the collection of unsold lots for display at the Burns Dinner on Saturday.



### **Saturday, May 10 – AGM, Presentations, Quiz & Burns Dinner**

The RBANA 2025 Annual General Meeting was called to order at 9:31 a.m. by President Mark Ferguson with 23 delegates in attendance. Following approval of the meeting agenda, a moment of silence was observed in remembrance of members who are no longer with us.

Delegates then stood as the national anthems of Canada, the United States, and the United Kingdom were sung. This was followed by a reading of Burns' poem *Here's A Bottle*, delivered by Immediate Past President Paul Kennedy.

President Ferguson extended a warm welcome to all in attendance and called for the recording of proxies, after which the meeting proceeded with the published agenda. Key items of business included:

- Confirmation of Henry Cairney of the Calgary Burns Club as the winner of the

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## RBANA Returns to Atlanta

2025 Jack Hume Poetry Competition.

- Ratification by membership vote of the Board's nomination of Mike Duffy as Junior Vice President.
- Approval of the Edmonton Burns Club's offer to host the 2026 AGM and Conference.
- Agreement in principle to meet in Philadelphia in 2027, contingent on the World Scottish Literary Congress proceeding as planned.

A motion passed to hold the 2028 AGM in Canada, with the exact location to be determined at a later date.

The next AGM was officially confirmed for Saturday, June 13, 2026, in Edmonton, Canada.

A notable moment came with the announcement that Colin Harris would be stepping down as Editor of *The Tattler* after 15 years of dedicated service. A hearty vote of thanks was offered in recognition of his exceptional contribution to RBANA's communications and community.

The meeting concluded with closing remarks from the President, followed by a reading of Burns' poem *Lines Written On Windows Of The Globe Tavern, Dunfries*, by Senior Vice President Brian Cumming, before formally adjourning at 10:30 a.m.

### Morning Presentations

After a brief break, delegates enjoyed two engaging presentations:

- Patrick Scott delivered a fascinating talk on the portraits of Robert Burns, (right) offering insight into their origins, authenticity, and artistic interpretation.
- Terry Morris of the Burns Club of Atlanta followed with a well-researched presentation on the history of the Club, tracing its roots



from its founding in 1896 to the construction of the Burns Cottage in 1910 and the first Burns Supper held on January 25, 1911.

### The 2025 Jim Connor Memorial Burns Quiz

After a short intermission, the 2025 Jim Connor Memorial Burns Quiz was held. The quiz was set by Henry Cairney and conducted by Quiz Master Mark Ferguson. It provided both a challenge and a great deal of fun for participants.

- Les Strachan emerged as the winner, scoring 22 out of a possible 32 points. David Llewellyn took second place with 19 points.

Delegates then broke for lunch and personal time in preparation for the evening's formal Burns Dinner, which began at 6:30 p.m.

### Saturday Evening, May 10 – The RBANA 2025 Burns Dinner

The 2025 RBANA Conference culminated with a formal Burns Dinner on the evening of Saturday, May 10, held at the Hilton Garden Inn Buckhead. The evening began at 6:30 p.m. with a cash bar cocktail reception where the 56 guests mingled and revisited the Silent Auction, which featured marked-down lots remaining from Friday's event to encourage final bids. Musical entertainment



during the reception was provided by The Border Collies (above), who performed a delightful selection of Burns songs and Celtic tunes, setting a spirited and festive tone for the evening.

At 7:15 p.m., Master of Ceremonies Bob Hughes, President of the Burns Club of Atlanta, called guests to their seats and introduced RBANA President Mark Fer-

## RBANA Returns to Atlanta

guson, who officially welcomed all in attendance. Paul Kennedy then delivered the Selkirk Grace.

The ceremonial Haggis Parade followed, led by RBANA Official Piper Michael Scott, with William Todd carrying the haggis, Greg Slaton (Club Secretary), Jamie Osborne (RBANA Treasurer and whisky carrier), and Les Strachan, who delivered a rousing performance of the Address to the Haggis. In a lighthearted moment, Les was surprised



when his initial dram turned out to be a cleverly disguised spoof drink

made of soft beverages. After a hearty laugh from all, he was promptly handed a proper dram, much to his amusement and the delight of the crowd.

Dinner began with a salad course, followed by pre-selected entrees served to guests, with options including Filet Mignon, Chicken Marsala, or Wild Mushroom Risotto. The Border Collies provided musical interludes as the meal was enjoyed.

At 8:15 p.m., MC Bob Hughes introduced a series of toasts and replies:

- Mac Irvin delivered the Toast to the RBWF, with the Reply by Paul Kennedy, current JVP of the Robert Burns World Federation.

William Todd gave the Toast to RBANA, with the Reply from Jamie Osborne.

Dessert followed, with guests choosing between cheesecake, berry parfait, or vegan chocolate cake.

President Mark Ferguson then presented sev-

eral awards and recognitions:

- The Jack Hume Poetry Trophy was presented to Henry Cairney (accepted on his behalf by Jamie Osborne), following a reading of the winning poem by SVP Brian Cumming.

- The Jim Connor Memorial Quiz Trophy was awarded to Les Strachan.

- In a surprise tribute, President Ferguson presented Past President Medals to three former RBANA Presidents in attendance. (See companion article Page 11)

After a short intermission, the evening continued with:

The Toast to the Lassies by Brian Cumming, delivered with warmth and humor.

The Reply by Jan Boydol, Brian's wife of 37 years, who responded with poise and wit.

The Immortal Memory of Robert Burns, the evening's keynote address, delivered by Eddie

Morgan. His thoughtful and eloquent tribute was warmly received and deeply appreciated.

A Toast to Absent Friends was given by David Llewellyn, followed by a moment of reflection as Michael Scott

played "The Flower of the Forest" on the bagpipes.

To close the evening, the Border Collies delivered a final lively set, prompting some attendees to get up and dance, bringing the formal program to a joyful end. MC Bob

Hughes thanked the musicians for their contributions, then invited President Mark Ferguson to offer final closing remarks. President Ferguson expressed his deep thanks to all who contributed to the success of the 2025 AGM and Conference.

In traditional fashion, MC Hughes then asked all to "circle up", and the company joined voices to sing "Auld Lang Syne", closing the Conference on a high and heartfelt note.



## “A Man’s a Man for A’ That” – Honouring Our Past Presidents at the 2025 Burns Gala Dinner

In a night already rich with the music, memory, and mirth of Robert Burns, a moment of quiet dignity stole the spotlight during the 2025 RBANA AGM & Conference’s Gala Dinner in the Piedmont Ballroom on Saturday, May 10.

As the clink of glasses softened and the assembled guests leaned in with curiosity, President Mark Ferguson rose with purpose. In the spirit of “gratitude even in silence,” he invited three esteemed Past Presidents forward—not with fanfare, but with heartfelt respect. Each was to receive a medallion, a newly minted symbol of service and stewardship, offered as a tribute to their lasting contributions to RBANA.

First came Mac Irvine of the Burns Club of Atlanta, who led the Association from 1996 to 1997. Then followed Colin Harris of the Winnipeg Burns Club, President from 2016 to 2018. And lastly, “last in time, but not in honour,” Paul Kennedy of the South Jersey Celtic Society, who most recently served from 2022 to 2024. As each man made his

way to the front, to have their medallion placed around their neck, there echoed in the air the sentiment Burns once penned: “The rank is but the guinea’s stamp, The man’s the gowd for a’ that.”

The gesture, unexpected and deeply meaningful, reminded all present that service to RBANA is not just administrative—it is a labour of love, a commitment to culture, and a bond of fellowship that transcends years and titles. Perhaps Burns himself said it best in “To a Louse”, when he urged us to see ourselves as others see us. That night, we saw these three not only as former leaders, but as lasting stewards of the Bard’s legacy.

The medallions now hang heavy with meaning—a symbol of service rendered with humility, good humour, and the enduring passion of those who cherish Robert Burns.

“Then let us pray that come it may, As come it will for a’ that, That Sense and Worth, o’er a’ the earth, Shall bear the gree, an’ a’ that!”



Robert watched the Friday night event from atop the mantle



Mark Ferguson, Bob Pierson & Bob Hughes, hosts for the weekend, at the cottage

## Friday Night @ Burns Cottage, Atlanta



The silent auction



The Canadians (l to r) Jan Boydol CBC, Brian Cumming RBANA VP CBC MHBC and Halton Peel Colin Harris, Winnipeg, Jamie Osborne, RBANA Treasurer and CBC, at the cottage

## Saturday Night



Jamie Osborne carried the whiskies (and a special surprise for Les)



## Presentations at RBANA



Vice President and Hume Convenor Brian Cumming presented the Hume Trophy to Jamie Osborne (representing winner Henry Cairney) (l)  
President Mark Ferguson presented the Jim Conner trophy to Quiz winner Leslie Strachan (r)



Paul Kennedy presented Mark Ferguson with a new President's Medal (r)



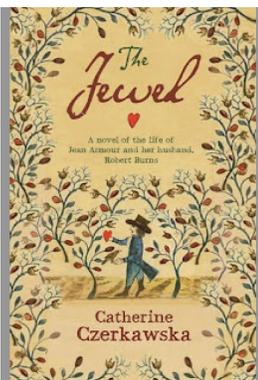
Burns Club of Atlanta

## The Jewel

The article below is from a presentation by Eileen McKoy of San Diego, CA to the Halton Peel International Robert Burns Club at their February 2024 meeting.

It occurs to me that RBANA members may not be familiar with the author, Catherine Czerkawska, steeped in Burns history. I would like to introduce you to her. Before I begin though, a word about my resources. Full disclosure - all my information comes from the book by Catherine, articles she has written, a review, and Wikipedia. Catherine lives in Kirkmichael, near Maybole, South Ayrshire with her husband Alan Lees, a well-known wood carver and painter. Catherine is both a novelist and playwright. She has published numerous novels and short stories. (both fact and fiction) and written many plays for the stage and for BBC Radio 4. She also teaches and gives lectures. I have many of her books and have corresponded with her for about ten years.

Our correspondence was initiated by me when I read in an RBWF Newsletter that Catherine was writing "The Jewel" - a novel of the life of Jean Armour. Catherine responded and our friendship grew over the years. Alas, I have not met her, but count her as a very dear correspondent, very generous of her time to an ardent fan. Her letters are always long and friendly. Catherine has added much to my life.



"The Jewel" historical novel, published in 2016, is an ode to Jean Armour and brings to glorious life the dramatic years of Jean Armour and Robert Burns's courtship, and their tempestuous, passionate married life.

The book's back cover de-

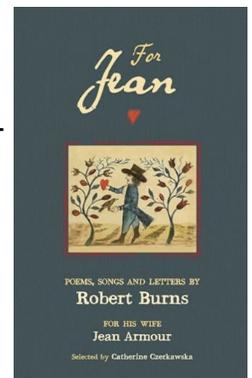
scribes Jean as a beautiful young woman with the voice of a nightingale, who set young Robert's heart aflame from the first. Their marriage endured against all odds, its rocky course revealing Jean's indomitable strength and character. How Jean lived with - and frequently without - her famous husband is surely Scotland's greatest love story. The book opens with Burns's poem "The Belles of Mauchline, from which, of course, comes the name of the book:

*In Mauchline there dwells six proper young belles,  
The pride of the place and its neighbourhood a';  
Their carriage and dress, a stranger would guess,  
In Lon'on or Paris, they'd gotten it a'.*

*Miss Miller is fine, Miss Markland's divine,  
Miss Smith she has wit, and Miss Betty is braw;  
There's beauty and fortune to get wi' Miss Morton,  
But Armour's the jewel for me o' them a'.*

As you know, Burns wrote many lines of verse for Jean. These have been collected and annotated by Catherine, together with a revealing selection of Burns's letters. This other gem of a book was published in 2017, entitled "For Jean" - poems, songs and letters by Robert Burns."

In 2016 in *Scottish Review*, Morelle Smith, a Scottish writer, wrote glowingly of "The Jewel". She points out that there are many biographies of Robert Burns but, where Jean Armour was concerned, there was little information beyond the facts, though they were startling enough in themselves. Jean was a young woman bearing



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## The Jewel (continued)

children outside of wedlock in a time and society which was so condemning of extra-marital sexual relationships, and particularly of women if they got pregnant. Smith goes on to say that in biographies Jean appears as a rather passive cypher, with only the sketchiest of character descriptions. What was it about her that kept Burns going back to her, and eventually marrying and spending the rest of his life with her? There had to be something special about the young woman and their relationship and this is what we discover in "The Jewel". As Catherine says "Everything either happened, or could have happened." In this book, Jean is the protagonist, not Robert. Again, quoting Smith - We come to know Jean, her successes in scaling obstacles, her tenacity and loyalty, her very human painful feeling of jealousy and anger, her spirit and outspokenness, the fact that she could not bear a grudge for more than five minutes.

Catherine's research for this book encompassed many hours of painstaking research. We not only are led into this greatest of love stories, we also learn many things about the times in which the



Catherine Czerkawska

characters lived. The historical facts are there and with the imagined dialogue added, it all feels so real.

The book ends with Jean in her widowhood and I quote: "*She still found herself dreaming of her husband from time to time, his blue coat, his plaid tied just so, not like the others, a fact which had so annoyed her poor father at first, his bonnie black hair curling down on his collar, his fine dark eyes, glowing with life and merriment, his smile, his way of making you laugh even when you thought you might be going to cry. His gentle hands that knew how to give you so much pleasure. His nose in a book. His poems. His songs. Especially his songs. 'Sing to me, Jeany,' he would say. That night, in her dream, she sang:*

*Tho' I were doom'd to wander on,  
Beyond the sea, beyond the sun,  
Till my last weary sand was run;  
Till then - and then I love thee!*

*And she woke, with his song on her lips"*

It is a lovely end to a lovely story so beautifully and imaginatively presented of "The Jewel" that was and is, in our thoughts, our Bonnie Jean.

## Lethbridge Jolly Beggars The 2025 Banquet - a Brief Review

The 2025 Lethbridge Jolly Beggars, held on April 26<sup>th</sup>, 2025, is complete. The bills have been paid, and the nuts and bolts that made it another successful banquet have been wound down.

Many thanks to all who attended, with special mention to Shelby Chadsey who took over the role of Poosie Nancie this year. 'Poosie' supervised the event, ensuring that proper decorum and attention to the occasion was maintained by the Cronies assembled. More notes of thanks to those who went above and beyond:

John Cameron of the Lethbridge Jolly Beggars and the Medicine Hat Burns Club for being the Emcee of the evening.

Bill Cocks of the Lethbridge Jolly Beggars and the Medicine Hat Burns Club for presenting a complete and thoroughly enjoyable Tam O'Shanter.

Stéphane Guevremont for a most enlightening, educational and entertaining presentation of Sir John A Macdonald & the Building of Canada - Stéphane ensured we kept to our goal of historical accuracy.

Mark Pearce, Master Blacksmith and alumnus of the Canadian Football League Calgary Stampeders for



taking the role of Honourary Chieftain O' The Nicht. A refreshing change to have a kinder, gentler Brit preside over a group of Scots, plus those who want to be Scottish.

Last but certainly not least, to Brian Cumming, Henry Cairney of the Calgary Burns Club (Calgary Burns Club Singers), along with John Cameron for leading us in song(s).

Outbreaks of measles, influenza plus other highly contagious and nasty bugs were, and still are, going around. This resulted in some expected Cronies having to cancel attending the Banquet. We have since learned that the infectious maladies also impacted some Cronies after the Banquet.

To all those impacted, our best wishes to you for a quick return to good health. Mark the Date - the next Jolly Beggars Banquet will be held on April 25<sup>th</sup>, 2026, at the Galt Museum & Archives in Lethbridge, Alberta, Canada.

At the risk of excessive repetition, once again, many thanks to all.

Submitted by Mike Duffy  
Junior Vice President

## Remembering Scotland's Bard: The Music, Myth, & Memory of Robert Burns Behind the Bookcase Tour

The Rosenbach Museum & Library in Philadelphia (<https://www.rosenbach.org/>) holds one of the world's great collections of Burns letters, literary manuscripts, rare books, and artifacts. In this special Behind the Bookcase tour, timed to coincide with the 229th anniversary of Burns's death on July 21, we will explore letters, literary manuscripts, early printed editions of Burns's writings, and evocative artworks to discuss the Scottish bard's literary and musical legacy, as well as how the poet emerged as a symbol of Scottish ethnicity and national identity. Burns is one of the most frequently memorialised figures in the world, with statues in his honor found from Central Park to Edinburgh to New Zealand, and innumerable poems, songs, and speeches to his "immortal memory." In this program, we'll consider enshrinements of Burns and in Burns. Even as he celebrates life, his work is shot through with meditations on death; the Rosenbach's world-class collection includes manuscripts of "Thou Lingering Star," to the oft-memorialized Highland Mary, and poems memorializing famous Scots events and figures, such as "Scots Wha Hae"/"Bruce to His Troops at Bannockburn" and "The Lament of Mary Queen



of Scots". Dying far too young, part of the myth surrounding him, this man who mixed "dirt and deity" in the words of Lord Byron, still commands our attention as we consider his work and his legacy. The program will close with a

toast to the legacy of Robert Burns!



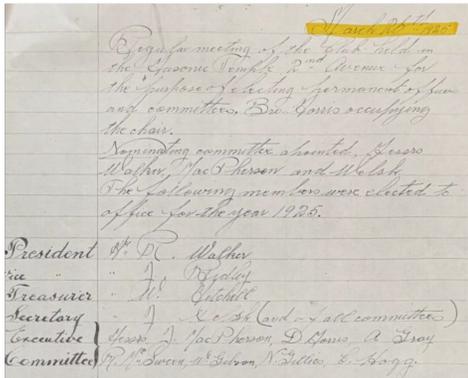
**This program is a collaborative partnership of the Rosenbach, the Robert Burns Association of North America (RBANA) and the South Jersey Celtic Society.**



## Niagara Falls Club Celebrates a Century

Members of the Niagara Falls (Canada) Burns Club gathered on Friday 21st March to mark and celebrate the club's centenary.

Club President, Bill Molloy, brought along original documents and minutes from the inaugural meeting of the club, (below) on 26th March 1925 and shared some of the club's history that was published in the 2011 Winter edition of the Burns Chronicle (Page 20/21)

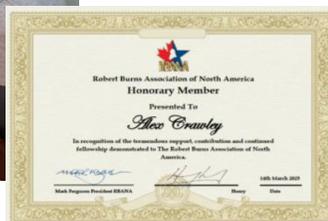


(right) As well as having a nostalgic look back at the minutes and records of the club, members also shared photographs and memories of

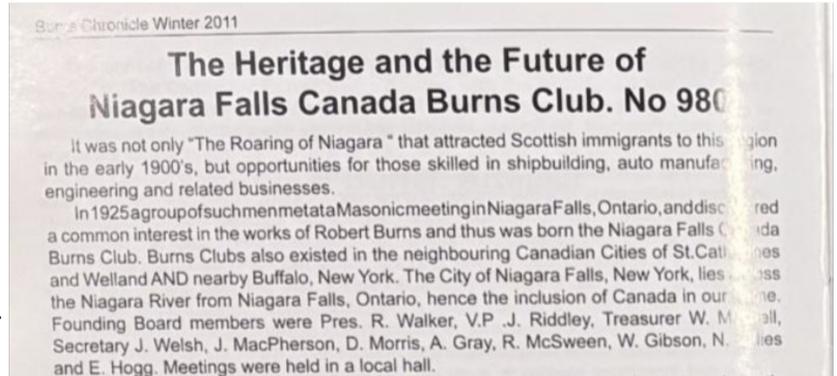
the many 'legends and stories' of club supporters and events.

The Niagara Burns Club has a long history in promoting Robert Burns and the Burns Federation in North America and as one of the six founding member clubs, that in 1981 helped established what is now RBANA.

The club has a proud tradition within the Burns Movement and at the meeting acknowledged Hugh & Lillian Hutton, Bill & Margaret Molloy, Alex & May Crawley and Elma Gardner for their long-standing member-



ship of Niagara Burns Club and their support of RBANA and RBWF over many



years.

As Mark's letter to Alex read "For over 40 years, both you and May have been steadfast supporters of NAAFB, RBANA, and the Robert Burns World Federation. Your shared commitment was further recognised when RBWF President Robert Stewart invested you both as Honorary Presidents of RBWF at the 2019 RBANA Conference in Niagara. Your assistance to May in her many roles with RBANA and RBWF, as well as your active participation in numerous RBANA and RBWF conferences has been truly commendable. It is only fitting that RBANA now acknowledges your extraordinary contributions with this honorary membership"

However, the surprise of the day came later, after the members had shared and performed their favourite Burns poem - and just before the cake was cut.

On behalf of the Executive Committee of RBANA, Alex Crawley was presented with an Honorary Membership of RBANA by the Niagara Club President, Bill Molloy, on behalf of RBANA President, Mark Ferguson. (left)

As Mark's letter to Alex

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## Niagara Falls Club Celebrates a Century

read:

*For over 40 years, both you and May have been steadfast supporters of NAAFB, RBANA, and the Robert Burns World Federation. Your shared commitment was further recognised when RBWF President Robert Stewart invested you both as Honorary Presidents of RBWF at the 2019 RBANA Conference in Niagara. Your assistance to May in her many roles with RBANA and RBWF, as well as your active participation in numerous RBANA and RBWF conferences has been truly commendable. It is only fitting that RBANA now acknowledges your extraordinary contributions with this honorary membership.*



Think Burns