

The Tattler



Autumn 2025 Edition
St Andrew's Day

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,

It does not seem possible that another 3 months has passed since I was sitting down to pen a message to you all. The summer seems to have passed in a flash and now Fall is definitely well and truly here. I hadn't taken the time in the past to note exactly when Fall begins and a search on the electronic super information highway confirmed this as September 22, 2025. It coincides with the autumnal equinox in the Northern Hemisphere and varies only slightly each year, falling (pardon the pun) on September 22 or 23 depending upon the Earth's orbit and the exact moment the sun crosses the celestial equator heading south. Fall ends at the winter solstice when the sun reached its southernmost point in the sky. On 2025 this occurs on December 21 and marks the shortest day and the longest night of the year. So apart from this being the 2025 Fall edition of the Tattler, why am I focusing on these dates? I wanted to explore some of the more well-known poems that Burns composed about this season. "The Brigs of Ayr" is the first that comes to mind written in



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President's Message (continued)

autumn 1786 in which he provides a perfect description of the end of harvest time in rural Ayrshire. One of my favorite Burns compositions, "Ca' The Yowes To The Knowes" was first written in September 1794 and was subsequently revised by Burns who wasn't happy with the first version. Next of course is "Tam O'Shanter" of which nothing I could say would enhance it's exceptional form. The final poem I will mention in this short account is "Halloween" which is of course no horror story but instead an account of superstitions and eighteenth-century rural Scottish Halloween rituals. All of these works are perfect company as the days grow shorter and winter approaches. Looking ahead our

next edition of the Tattler will be showcasing all the activities that will take place for the Bards 267th Birthday celebrations. That edition will be edited by Ronnie O'Byrne who has generously agreed to take over the position from our current editor, Colin Harris. I'd like to take this opportunity to once again thank Colin for his 15 years of dedicated service and unfailing support in this role. Finally, I want to remind you all to sign up for the 2026 Annual General Meeting and Conference being hosted by the Edmonton Burns Club on June 26 and 27 in Edmonton, Alberta. In the meantime, I wish you all the best wishes of the Season.

Yours in Burns,

Mark Ferguson

Robert

Burns

Wordsearch

Robert Burns

I	T	D	P	O	O	F	A	R	M	E	R	A	N
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SUPPER
POEMS
COTTAGE
DUMFRIES
NEEPS
TRIFLE
ALLOWAY
DANCING
FAMOUS
FARMER
HAGGIS
POET
TATTIES
SONGS
CELEBRATE

RBANA Conference: June 26 to June 27, 2026

The Edmonton Burns Club is pleased to serve as the host the upcoming Robert Burns Association of North America Conference, taking place from June 26 to June 27, 2026, in Edmonton, Alberta. Hosted by the Edmonton Burns Club, this event will celebrate the life and legacy of Robert Burns through a series of engaging events, competitions, and entertainment.

Registration information has been provided to members, outlining options for either full conference participation or attendance at specific events. The conference will take place at the Westin Hotel, located at 10135 – 100 Street in downtown Edmonton, offering convenient access to various cultural attractions and the light rail system, all within easy walking distance.

RBANA Members can book rooms at a special rate of \$174 per night (plus GST and destination fees) by calling (780) 426-3636. Use “RBANA 2026” and “Edmonton Burns Club Rates” when reserving.

Rates are valid until May 22, 2026; availability is limited, so early booking is recommended.

Whether you are a seasoned Burns enthusiast or new to his works, this conference promises meaningful opportunities for learning, connection, and cultural discovery. Edmonton’s renowned hospitality and vibrant Scottish community will ensure an unforgettable experience for all participants. Don’t miss the chance to engage with fellow members, share stories, and deepen your appreciation for Robert Burns in the heart of Alberta. Highlights include a welcome reception, tours, a traditional Ceilidh, and the annual

Burns Dinner. The conference will also feature discussions on themes such as equity and social justice, linking Burns' wisdom to modern challenges.

Many Canadian and American cities offer direct flights to Edmonton International Airport, while major highways make driving yourself convenient. Once in Edmonton, public transit and ride-sharing options make getting around simple. If you decide to stay longer, you can enjoy the city's lively arts community, famous restaurants and natural sites like the River Valley and Elk Island National Park, even the mountains are a half-day drive away. The Edmonton Burns Club is also planning tours to unique locations, with prices to be shared as the conference approaches.



We welcome your organization to become a sponsor and assist with covering some of the expenses involved in hosting this event. Sponsorship packages can be customised to suit your organisation's objectives. For further information or any questions,

please feel free to reach out to us.

Keep up with our latest news by following us on Facebook or subscribing to the RBANA newsletter. If you have questions, email edmontonburnsclub@gmail.com or call Keith Robinson at (780) 885-7931, and please allow 24 hours for a response.

We look forward to celebrating Burns' legacy with you!

Submitted by
Keith Robinson

The Cameron Report



Both of Winnipeg's RBANA member groups, (and the two oldest Scottish groups extant in the city) began the autumn with their Annual General Meetings.

In October the Winnipeg Robert Burns

Club, began the second year of the current Board's term by managing to fill one important vacancy as Dr Jim Skinner stepped up to join the Board as Vice President.

A few weeks later, at the St Andrew's Society of Winnipeg AGM the same Dr Jim Skinner was elected to the same position with SASOW.

After a difficult year which saw a couple of resignations due to time commitments, Dwight MacCaulay was elected to his second term. Just days later the Society hosted its 154th Celebration of St Andrew's Day with a full Gala Weekend (the report of which follows elsewhere within the Tattler.



As for the Burns Club, final preparations are underway for the 119th Annual Burns Supper. It has been a long standing tradition to hold the event on the actual day, and for the 4th time this millennium it falls on Sunday.

We are pleased, this year, to welcome as our guest, to propose the Immortal Memory, past RBWF President, Alan Beck, (pictured below) joining other past RBWF Presidents, Jim Connor, John Paterson, Bobby Kane, and Henry Cairney, who have all done so.

Our thanks to Alan for agreeing to fit us into his hectic Burns Season schedule.

As always, everyone is welcome to join us, so if a Sunday evening in Winnipeg appeals, don't hesitate to get in touch.



Winnipeg Celebrates St Andrew's Weekend

The St. Andrew's Society of Winnipeg gathered in style to celebrate its 154th St. Andrew's Day last weekend! From the Friday flag-raising at City Hall, (below) with Mayor Scott Gillingham,



City Councilors, honorary guests, and John Devine, Scotland's Representative to Can-

ada, to a lively Board of Managers photo op, the spirit of tradition was palpable at every turn.

The festivities continued with a hearty Haggis Tasting (shoutout to Miller's Meats for a delicious classic!) and the much-anticipated Address to the Haggis, brilliantly performed by Rev. Dr. James Christie and accompanied by honorary piper Alex Peden from the St.

Andrew's Winnipeg Pipe Band and Peter Heavysege, past president. Evelyn Mitchell (right) had the crowd laughing with her memorable, lighthearted take on the legendary Athol Brose, a beloved Scottish blend of cream, oats, milk, and whisky. Special guests at the reception include John Devine, Scotland's representative to Canada and Japan's Consul-General Takehiko Wajima.



The next morning, members of the dinner

committee, and a team of volunteers from RBC assembled back at the Caboto Centre to set up for that night's Gala. (That involved draping the chairs, putting out the programs, setting up the media wall and displaying the clan shields) Many hands made short work, and an ex-

perienced Dinner Chair made certain that everything was organized.

The evening began with a Reception as the Society and guests gathered, before the Head Tables, and others were piped in with a Grand March before proceeding to their tables.

Following of our National Anthem, and words of welcome from Society President Dwight MacCaulay, and a Representative from the Provincial Gov-



ernment, and Greetings from Sister Societies by new Bard Charles Cameron (above) who also delivered his own poetic salute to SASOW – printed elsewhere in this issue, Honorary Patron Bill Shead invoked Grace. Local Broadcasting legend Garry Moir (Co-host with Dwight MacAulay on CJNU's Sounds of Scotland radio show Thursday nights) emceed the night and guided us through a series of Toasts: To the King, by SASOW Patron the Earl of Orkney; To the Society, by Dr Paul Galbraith, and To Canada, by Marj Lowther.

Winnipeg's Mayor Scott Gillingham, who presided over the Friday flag raising, re-

Winnipeg Celebrates St Andrew's Weekend

congregation for a service of worship, a long standing traditional end to a Gala week.

sponded to the Toast to Canada. The final toast of the night, and the main feature of the event, was The Toast to the Day, responded to by special Guest John Devine. (top right)



The entertainment was well spaced through the night, with dancers from the Manitoba Highland Dancers' Association, (right) the St Andrew's Pipe Band of Winnipeg, (far right) and representatives of the Royal Scottish Country Dance Society, Winnipeg Branch, (right) who also led those who stayed after the Anthems in some ceilidh dancing.



Sunday morning, a dedicated number of Society members, mostly still sporting their tartan, gathered at First Presbyterian Church, piped in by Alex Peden, to join the



Darlene and Charles Cameron before dinner



Left: SASOW President Dwight MacCaulay, Mayor Scott Gillingham, John Devine, Head of the Scottish Government in Canada, Dinner Chair Pam Simmons

Above: The Burns Club Table with Guest Don Ross. Front L to R Don Ross Ed Bethune, WRBC Director, Colin Harris; Rear L to R: Darlene Cameron WRBC Treasurer, Charles Cameron WRBC PP Dr James Sutherland, Mae Kong Sutherland, Janet Thompson WRBC President.

All dinner photos © Ian McCausland Photography

A TOAST TO THE ST ANDREWS SOCIETY

22 NOVEMBER 2025

A Toast in Verse to the St. Andrew's Society

In Winnipeg's young winter light,
A band of Scots did proudly stand,
And raised their thistle banner bright
To greet a wide and waiting land.

One-hundred-fifty-four long years
They kept traditions strong and true—
With pipes that pierced the prairie air,
With song and story, old and new.

And then, a decade past from now,
A welcomed change came to their side:
The doors were opened wide at last,
And women joined the honored stride.

Their voices lifted with the men,
Their wisdom wove through every hall;
For heritage grows richer yet
When shared in strength by one and all.

So here's to those who built the way,
And those who walk it proudly still—
A Scottish heart in prairie soil,
A steadfast flame that time can't chill.

Lift high yer dram wi' pride sae bright,
For Scotland's flame burns warm the night;
Guid company, honour, joy, and light—
Slàinte! a' thegither!

Charles Cameron

St Andrew's Society of Winnipeg Honours Those Who Died So We Could Live



THE ST. ANDREW'S SOCIETY OF WINNIPEG

In a long standing tradition, the St Andrew's Society of Winnipeg honoured those who rendered the ultimate sacrifice at the city's Brookside Cemetery on November 11.

This year's salute at the Stone of Remembrance felt especially meaningful in the Field of Honour. One of my favourite traditions with The St. Andrew's Society of Winnipeg is always sharing this space with others. This year, we were joined by St. Andrew's Society Honorary Piper Alex Peden, pipe major of the St. Andrew's Pipe Band of Winnipeg. Alex's stirring tribute included two tunes followed by a solemn minute of silence and a lament. The Society placed a wreath on the Stone of Remembrance.

As the haunting notes drifted across the rows of resting heroes, families gathered to pay respects to their loved ones, some watching quietly, others in tears. Several visitors approached to express their gratitude for the tradition, many sharing that they return every year to honour and remember. It's truly moving to see how much these small acts of remembrance mean to people.

I was grateful for my own moment to place a poppy on my great-uncle John Sin-

clair's grave, reflecting on his sacrifice and those of all the Canadians who gave their lives so we might know freedom and peace. The day reminds us of how deeply our lives are shaped by their courage.

Lest we forget.

Submitted by Pamela Simmons
Past President and
Communications Co-Chair
SASOW



Pam Simmons with
Society Piper Alex
Peden

Characters Out of Robert Burns: Arent Schuyler de Peyster

How many have ever heard of Arent de Peyster?

Some Burns researchers and club scholars acquainted with the works of John Malcolm Bulloch may have read Bulloch's history of the de Peyster family. It was first published in the Burns Chronicle of 1930.

For those who may have forgotten a detail or two here or there, a quick refresher. The family de Peyster were Huguenots (French protestants) who fled to Holland after the massacre by Catholics, of St. Bartholomew, circa 1572. Thereafter, followed a long history of family military involvement with service to Holland, then Great Britain, then moving to Colonial America, where our young Arent was born.



He was born in NYC on 27 June 1736. His American roots extended as far back as 1657 to his paternal grandparents, Abraham and Catharina de Peyster. Abraham became the 20th Mayor of New York City. Arent had a lot of aunts, uncles and cousins living there as well. Later, his nephew's son, Frederic de Peyster (1796- 1882), was a noted New York City lawyer.

As a youth, Arent Schuyler de Peyster was sent to London to be educated. He spent part of his youth between Holland and Britain, ultimately identifying himself as British.

Like others in his family following military careers he purchased a British officer's commission as ensign, in time to participate in the Seven Years War. In 1755, and back in America, he joined the 50th Regiment of Foot, a Colonial American unit raised in Massachusetts by that state's governor in 1748 for the British Army, basically to fight the French.

The history of the 50th Regiment and de Peyster's role in it, is extensive. William Shirley, the Massachusetts governor who raised it, directed the assault on the great French fortress of Louisbourg, Nova Scotia (1745), with De Peyster's uncle, Col. Peter De Peyster, at his side.

Next he held a commission in the 51st Regiment of Foot, another regiment formed in colonial America by Lt. Gen. Robert Napier. At one point, the British colonial forces had three de Peyster Schuylers in it.

During the Seven Years War, he served under his uncle in campaigns in upstate New York, gaining experience in frontier Indian warfare. He was captured, taken to France as a prisoner, and subsequently exchanged serving out the war with the 8th Regiment of Foot in Germany.



The path getting from America to Dumfries is long and arduous. But, like preparing any story, we must start at the beginning.

In Holland, in 1684, Arent's grandfather, Abraham de Peyster, an officer in the Dutch Army, married a Dutch kinswoman,

Catherine de Peyster, who was probably a cousin. They produced a passel of children. She must have been a very fetching wench indeed.

Pierre de Peyster, the seventh son of that union, married another Catherine de Peyster, daughter of Arent Schuyler de Peyster, a son of Phillip Guillaume Schuyler (are we confused yet?).

The de Peyster family is not unknown in Colonial America as military supporters of the crown in the Revolutionary War becoming great Americans after. How did he get there?

Arent Schuyler de Peyster

(continued)

The 8th Regiment was returned to Canada, where de Peyster enjoyed a series of promotions up to and including Commandant of Fort Michilimackinac in 1774.

The fort site located in what is now present day Mackinaw, MI. de Peyster spent five years there and a total of 47 years with the 8th Regiment. When war broke out with the United States in 1775, de Peyster's job was to recruit Indians from the Great Lakes region to serve the Crown. In 1779, he was promoted to major and assumed control of Detroit, where the Northwest Territory Indian tribes were hostile to the British.

De Peyster skillfully weaned them away from the colonists, made them British allies and quite effectively use them against American militia units from Pennsylvania and Kentucky. Even though Great Britain ceded control of Detroit to the United States at the end of the war, nevertheless, Detroit remained in British hands until 1796.

In November 1783, de Peyster was promoted to Lieutenant Colonel and transferred to Fort Niagara, where he assumed command on 05 June 1784. in the summer of 1785, after the war's completion, he returned to England with his regiment and continued to serve, eventually receiving a commission as Colonel on 12 October 1793.

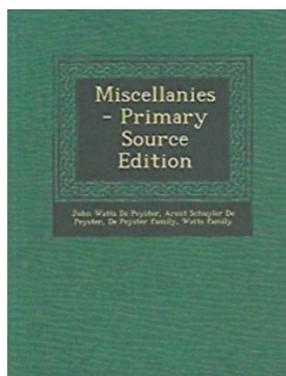
Illness forced his retirement in 1794 and he sold his Lieutenant Colonelcy to an associate of the 10th Earl of Westmorland, John Lorn, the then Lord Lieutenant of Ireland. After his retirement, De Peyster and his wife moved to Dumfries, where they settled down at a country estate named Mavis Grove, three miles north of town on the riv-



er Nith. Ellisland, Burns's farm, was another three miles further upriver. One might believe that an American, British, Dutchman, moving to the lowlands of Scotland would be sort of like a New Yorker moving to Brazil, except there was another connection. After

the Seven Years War Arent was posted to Scotland, where he married Rebecca Blair, daughter of Robert Blair, Provost of Dumfries. They married in 1757 and purportedly had a happy but childless marriage.

The year following his retirement, 1795, when Napoleon was threatening England, he became actively involved with organizing a militia called the 1st Regiment of Dumfries Volunteers as its commander. Robert Burns, already famous as a poet and excise man, but chaffing for his suspected anti-crown sentiments, as an effort to cast off the derision building against him, enlisted in the regiment, bought his uniform, attended drills. And assuaged his critics. Col. de Peyster, elderly and ill, was still a professional soldier, a stern commander who expected only the best effort from his troops. Tough on the outside, de Peyster, if the record is correct, developed a soft spot for the plight of Robert Burns, especially as Burns was nearing his death. When lying ill in his bed, Burns responded to an inquiry by the Colonel seeking after his health writing this epistle to his Colonel:



Arent Schuyler de Peyster

(continued)

Epistle to Colonel De Peyster

*My honor'd Colonel, deep I feel,
Your interest in the poet's weal;
Ah! Now sma' heart hae I to speel
The steep Parnassus,
Surrounded thus by bolus pill
And potion glasses.'*

*O what a canty warld were it,
Would pain, and care, and sickness spare it;
And fortune favour worth and merit,
As they deserve:
And aye a rowth, roast beef and claret:
Syne wha wad starve?*

This was the time when Burns also wrote his song of British patriotism.

The Dumfries Volunteers

*Does haughty Gaul invasion threat?
Then let then Loons beware, Sir,
There's wooden wall upon our seas,
And volunteers on shore, Sir. The Nith
shall run to Corsincon,
And Criffel sink in Solway,
Ere we permit a foreign foe
On British ground to rally! ...and etc.*

One suspects they may have had a favorable relationship beyond the parade ground. They were near neighbors. Col. de Peyster was very intelligent and Burns, as well highly respected were both far too knowledgeable about Colonial American affairs, the French condition and the goals of freemen, as to deny their had to have existed

some level of mutual admiration and communication and respect.

Col. Arent de Peyster led his Volunteer Regiment at Burns's funeral. In 1813, long after Burns's passing, de Peyster published his own book of verse, *Miscellanies by an Officer*. Only three copies of this book, all in America, are known to be in existence.

De Peyster died in Dumfries as the result of an accident on 26 November 1822. A large funeral was arranged in his honor and he was buried in St Michael's Churchyard. His wife, Rebecca, died five years later, on 20 February 1827.

An 1830 essay of the time published by John McDiarmid, titled *Sketches from Nature*, who knew de Peyster, wrote: "No man ever possessed more of the principle of vitality. Old age, which had silvered his hair, furrowed his cheeks, made so little impression on his inner man that...up to his last illness his mind appeared as active and his intellect as vigorous as they had ever been. When the weather

permitted, he still took his accustomed exercise, and walked round the billiard table or bestrode his gigantic charger, apparently with as little difficulty as a man of middle age."



So, now you know the rest of the story. Keep reading your Burns. ya never know what you

might find there.

Submitted by
George McClellan

SJCS Members Gather for a Celebratory Picnic and Day of Giving

This past August, South Jersey Celtic Society members gathered at Liberty Lake in Bordentown, NJ for the annual SJCS picnic. Before the festivities began, club president John Adams led a brief meeting to elect new officers and reaffirm the society's direction for the year ahead. One of the most gratifying moments of the picnic was seeing how generously members donated to the 50-50 raffle and the food drive, which together provided significant support to a local food pantry. It's always been part of the SJCS mission to not only celebrate Celtic culture, but also to give back to the community.

SJCS Delegates Journey to Kilmarnock to Attend the RBWF Annual Meeting

In early September, four board members from the SJCS made the pilgrimage to Kilmarnock, Scotland, to attend the 2025 Annual Conference of the Robert Burns World Federation (RBWF). The gathering was especially significant this year, marking the conference's return to Kilmarnock after more than three decades. Over the three-day program, delegates were immersed in Burns culture, Scottish heritage, and the fellowship of Burns Clubs from around the world. Highlights included guided visits to the Dick Institute and a tour of Mauchline, where delegates explored the Burns House Museum,



Poosie Nancie's Hoose, and Nanse Tinnock's Hoose. In the evenings, attendees enjoyed dinner, entertainment, and heartfelt toasts to the Bard. The federation meeting took place at the Dick Institute, where participants were treated to a moving video highlighting the RBWF's Box O'

Burns project, an initiative that uses the poetry and songs of Robert Burns to evoke memories and encourage conversation among older adults with memory challenges. The visit concluded with a formal dinner and gala celebrating the organization and its members.



Pictured: SJCS board members Christopher Collom, Angela Collom, Paul Kennedy, and Leo Dungan

Celtic Festival 2025 Showcases Highland Games, Pipers, Celtic Culture, and More

On October 11, the South Jersey Celtic Society hosted its fourth annual Celtic Festival and Highland Games at the Burlington County Fairgrounds in Columbus, NJ, where nearly 1,000 attendees came together to celebrate Celtic culture and community. Although festivities were shortened by an unexpected tropical storm, the day was packed with energy and entertainment. Festivalgoers enjoyed live performances from Celtic favorites The Rowdy Bardlings, Charlie Zahm, Chaste

Treasure, and The Birmingham Six, along with appearances by talented pipers, Irish and Scottish dancers, and other local musicians. The Highland Games drew an enthusiastic crowd for time-honored feats of strength such as the caber toss, hammer throw, and stone put. Food trucks, craft brewers, and vendors offered a true taste of Celtic hospitality, while a whiskey with cheese pairing hosted by SJCS President John Adams and Vice President Paul Kennedy provided guests a refined way to toast the day. Cheers to all who attended and we can't wait to see you next year!

SJCS Celebrates Samhain, a Celtic Halloween

On October 24, the SJCS embraced the turning of seasons with A Celtic Halloween (Samhain), held at the Burlington Lyceum in Mount Holly, NJ. Far from your typical costume party, the event combined the ancient Celtic festival of Samhain (the time when the veil between realms is believed thinnest) with the warmth of Burns-themed toasts, storytell-

ing, and music. Guests mingled in the dim lights glowing from carved turnips (a Celtic tradition!) while listening to an animated live reading of Burns' Tam O'Shanter by SJCS member Paul Kennedy, Jr. (below) SJCS president John Adams shared the history of traditional Halloween



stories including The Headless Horseman and Dracula, as well as a local ghost story that gave attendees goose bumps. Happy Halloween to all who attended!

Submitted by Angla Collom
SJCS

To the Immortal Memory of Bill Fulton

The South Jersey Celtic Society (SJCS) is saddened to report on the passing of our good friend, William (Bill) Fulton. Bill joined the SJCS during the 2018 RBANA AGM in Philadelphia, PA. Since then, he has proposed both the Immortal Memory and the Toast to the Lasses at two of SJCS's Burns Suppers and has been a life-long member ever since.

Bill's Funeral service and reception was on held on October 22nd, and was attended by friends and family from all over the US as well as representatives from SJCS, the Robert Burns Association of North America (RBANA), and the Robert Burns World Federation (RBWF).

The entire SJCS family join his wife Mary Jim in mourning Bill's passing as he will be sadly missed but will remain in our hearts for many years to come.



Photo - Bill is recognized for his years of service to RBANA as both Past Vice President, and US Regional Director at the 2024 AGM in Mount Holly, NJ.

Submitted by Paul Kennedy



South Jersey Hosts Alzheimer's Fundraiser

The South Jersey Celtic Society hosted its annual Tom MacIver Memorial Alzheimer's Fundraiser on November 22nd at the Burlington Country Club, Burlington NJ. Tom MacIver was a co-founder and life-time member of SJCS and passed away two years ago from Alzheimer's. SJCS has instituted an Annual Fundraiser in his memory.

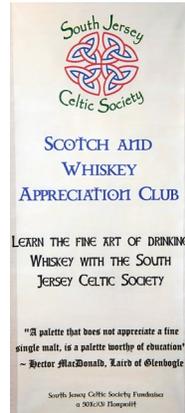
This very special tasting and consisted of Lochlea's limited (and final) edition of their Seasonal Series; *Sowing, Harvest, Fallow, and Ploughing, Third Crop*. A very special thanks to all the folks at Lochlea who made the tasting possible through their generous donation of their Seasonal Series Third Crop as well as a fifth offering, their Flagship single malt, "Our Barley".

For those who may not be familiar with Lochlea Distillery, this was the home of Robert Burns from 1777 until his father's death in 1784.

After brief introductions by SJCS President John Adams, Paul Kennedy and son Paul Jr. presented the growing seasons using the words of Robert Burns (and music of Steve Winwood) by singing "John Barleycorn Must Die".

Paul used the song as an explanation of the actual four agricultural seasons depicted by each of the whiskies in the seasonal series the whisky of Spring (a time for sowing); late Summer (Harvest time); Fallow (the time of resting the fields); and finally back to Late Winter, Spring (Ploughing) by weaving stanzas from the Ballad throughout the tasting.

Matt Collins, the Lochlea distributor for the



US East Coast was on hand to answer more specific questions on the Distillery itself. Paul asked, after each sample how it fared against the previous examples, and while all the guests were very impressed with all of the offerings of the day, it seemed "Fallow" was the favorite.

A final sixth offering was also provide as a gift of SJCS: Lochlea's Cask Strength, Batch 3

All in all, the day was a great success and allowed SJCS to donate £2500 to Box O' Burns, RBWF's program headed up by Grace McKelvie to help Alzheimer's sufferers to reconnect with old memories using Robert Burns poems, songs and other related activities. The Burlington Country Club was a wonderful host provided Barbecue Pork

sliders and Egg rolls to accompany the tasting.

Following the tasting, SJCS offered a bonus dram of each guests favorite to accompany a cigar on the patio.

This was a wonderful afternoon for a very worthy cause.

Submitted by Paul Kennedy



FALL REPORT - MEDICINE HAT BURNS CLUB

2025 16th ANNUAL JOLLY BEGGARS BANQUET

The MHBC hosted its 16th annual Jolly Beggars Banquet, Saturday, 4 October 2025 at its official venue, the Medicine Hat Golf & Country Club. And this function, as usual, was preceded the night before by a private Ceilidh for certain special guests attending.

This years function was also going to be unique, as not only was the MHBC going to only have its second female RBWF president attend (Jean Abdulrahim) as our Chief-tain o' the Nicht, this club event being men only, but another lassie, former RBWF president and Club Patron Jane Brown, was also coming, this being Jane's first official visit as Club Patron, and her first visit back to our Jolly Beggars Banquet since 2013.

This years guests would also include the current presidents of the Edmonton and Calgary Burns Clubs (Tam Connelly and Steve Campbell respectively), representatives from RBANA (including Brian Cumming, 1st VP, Henry Cairney, Secretary, Ronnie O'Byrne, Director, Canada East and Rob Pinkerton, Director, Canada West), but other special Club friends including Lt. Colonel Paul Eaton, Commander BATUS (British Army Training Unit Suffield) and Lieutenant Colonel Turmel Chiasson CD, the newly appointed Base Commander for CFB (Canadian Forces Base) Suffield.

For this special year we also decided to offer a more enhanced program than normally presented, and to offer what we considered to be the best Burns, and related talent we could acquire.

The Club's World-Famous Whisky Bar also



stepped outside the box as this year it featured Annandale Distillery's 'Man o' Words' as its feature whisky, special thanks to Annandale Distillery Group owners Professor David Thomson and Theresa Church, as well as a selection of Canada's award winning Macaloney Island Distillery whiskies,

special thanks to Macaloney Island Distillery owner and Chief Whisky Maker, Dr. Graeme Macaloiny, who also acted as the Club's Honorary Whisky Steward o' the Nicht.



The Friday night Ceilidh was held at the Montgomery Pub and started with the installation

of the Club's new Club Executive (for 2025-2027), John Cameron President, Kenny McMillan MBE, Vice President, Kevin Conrad, Gaird & Chaplain, and yours truly, back again as Secretary/Treasurer. After an official welcome by the Club President and Jean Abdulrahim, entertainment began and included Jane Brown performing her brilliant

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FALL REPORT – MEDICINE HAT BURNS CLUB continued

dition of 'Jean Armour's reflection of Robert Burns', 'Tam o' Shanter' by Andy Harrower, Robert Service's 'Cremation of Sam McGee' by Club Bard Bill Cocks, singing by Henry Cairney, Ron Pratt, Scott Montgomery and Kenny McMillan, other poems by various attendees and a few tunes on the small pipes by Club Piper Malcolm Sissons. And all this was done while the attendees were treated to a fully stocked bar, managed by the Club's Poosie Nansie (Mel Hullah), and copious quantities of the Club's custom-made haggis pizza.

The next evening starting with a limo bus picking up our dignitaries at our venue hotel, complete with the Chieftain's Aide de Camp, RCMP Staff Sergeant Mike Courty, greeting the RBWF President with a crisp and proper Canadian salute. From here it was off to our venue, the Medicine Hat Golf & Country Club.

After the guests mingled, did a wee bit of chin wagging and bellied up to the Club's whisky bar, the Canadian flag was piped in to the tune of 'The Maple Leaf Forever', and the festivities formally began after the traditional roll call was done and all attending were then given a numbered, limited edition presentation coin made to commemorate the event.

After the Address to the Haggis, (right) done by Jane Brown, using the Club's kukri as traditionally used by the Club to slaughter



the wee beastie, it being noted this was the first time a lassie has ever addressed the haggis at a MHBC event, the guests were then treated to a special five course meal that included, a salmon, caper and caviar starter, Cock o' Leekie soup, stacked haggis, rack o' lamb, and for dessert, Cranachan cheesecake with hand made Athol Brose.

And like Friday night, the entertainment was outstanding. Featuring Ronnie O'Byrne, our Honorary Club Bard o' the Nicht, Ronnie not only did a proper introduction to the Jolly Beggars Cantata, including 'The Son of Mars' (inspiring the Cronies to sing) and 'See the Smoking Bowl before Us', but his feature presentation of 'Holy Willie's Prayer' was spectacular.

Other entertainment included Henry Cairney's 'A Mans a Man', Jane Brown and Andy Harrower doing a more physical rendition of 'Red, Red Rose' (Andy's cheek is still smarting),

Andy Cowan's 'To a Mouse', Bill Cocks 'The Soldiers Return', Joe Marshall's 'Sic a Wife as Willie Had' and Tam Connelly's 'Johnnie Scott'.

The highlight of the night was the official remarks given by the Chieftain o' the Nicht, Jean Abdulrahaim. (left) Her words were motivational, inspiring, very well received, and she left no doubt that the World Federation was in good hands.



The night ended with the Club passing its large quai

FALL REPORT – MEDICINE HAT BURNS CLUB continued

around for the Cronies toast, the first time done since COVID, and the evening concluded with its traditional raffle and silent auction, then the evening ended with Auld Lang Syne and mair sangs and clatter.

Another successful Jolly Beggar Banquet, our only concern now is how the hell do we outdo this event next year.



2025 JOLLY BEGGARS COMMEMORATIVE COIN

As many know, Jane Brown is our Club Patron. As Jane was attending this years Jolly Beggars Banquet

the Club decided to produce 100 special commemorative coins, a limited edition numbered coin to mark that event.

The Club does have a few of these coins left. If interested, they are \$20.00 Canadian each, which includes postage and handling, and If anyone wants one, contact Club Secretary Ken Montgomery with mailing address and send funds by way of Etransfer to mhburnsclub@shaw.ca.

2025 PRESIDENT'S ST. ANDREW'S DAY DINNER

We are now planning for our annual President's St Andrew's Day Dinner. This event will be held Saturday, 29 November 2025 and instead of roast beef, reserved for our annual dinner, or rack of lamb, reserved for the Jolly Beggars Banquet, for this function we go with Chicken Balmoral.

2026 19th ANNUAL ROBERT BURNS CELEBRATION

For this event the Club now holds it on the first Saturday in February each year. The reason is to allow those Club members who wish to attend the Calgary or Edmonton Burns Club dinners to do so. For our 2026 event, please see the attached poster.

Submitted by Ken Montgomery

~ 19th ANNUAL ~
ROBERT BURNS CELEBRATION
267th Anniversary
Saturday, 7 February 2026

MEDICINE HAT GOLF & COUNTRY CLUB
COCKTAILS ENTERTAINMENT & CHIN WAGGING
START AT 6:00 PM, DINNER AT 7:00 PM

COME ENJOY A SCOTTISH NIGHT OUT, INCLUDING THE CLUB'S WORLD-FAMOUS WHISKY BAR, & TRADITIONAL SCOTTISH CUISINE & ENTERTAINMENT

TICKETS REMAIN \$640.00 FOR A TABLE OF EIGHT (\$80.00 EACH)
OR \$85.00 EACH FOR INDIVIDUAL TICKETS
SEATING IS LIMITED & DRESS IS HIGHLAND KILT, TREWS & BUSINESS DRESS/SEMI FORMAL

FOR INFORMATION OR TICKETS CONTACT
mhburnsclub@shaw.ca

PROUD SUPPORTERS OF THE CANADIAN & BRITISH MILITARY

What happens when Robert Burns meets AI? The answer is a poem that bridges centuries. At a time when artificial intelligence is reshaping the creative arts, Toronto's Lindsey Steel, President of the Halton Peel International Burns Club; a virtual gathering of Burns enthusiasts; explores what happens when technology meets tradition. Through an imaginative collaboration with ChatGPT, an AI chatbot, a new Scots poem, *Echoes o' Hallowe'en*, came to life. In keeping with the spirit of collaboration, ChatGPT also helped in shaping parts of this article, which reflects on that experiment and what AI might mean for the next generation of Burnsians.

What happens when Scotland's most famous poet meets artificial intelligence? In a recent creative experiment, I asked ChatGPT to reimagine Robert Burns' epic poem *Hallowe'en*, resulting in a brand-new Scots poem that I named *Echoes o' Hallowe'en*, bridging centuries of storytelling. I shared this unique collaboration during a presentation to the Halton Peel International Burns Club — a poem not written by a human poet, but by ChatGPT, an advanced AI chatbot capable of generating human-like text from a wide range of prompts. The project began with a simple request: "Can you write a poem in Scots, summarizing Robert Burns' epic poem *Hallowe'en*?"

ChatGPT delivered, going so far as to suggest images to create a rich visual experience. What impressed me most, however, was what came next: the AI began prompting me, offering English translations, alternative poetic styles, and even an imagined interview with Burns himself.



To bring the experience to life, I asked my good friend Yvonne Waring, a primary school teacher with a love of amateur dramatics, to record the poem for our October meeting, which fittingly fell on Hallowe'en night. A notable figure in the Robert Burns community in Scotland, Yvonne's lively reading infused the words — and the ghosts, fairies, and laughter within them — with vivid energy, proving that while AI can spark creativity,

it is human performance and interpretation that give the verse its true heartbeat.

Echoes o' Hallowe'en

**Upon a nicht sae mirk an' cauld,
When ghaists an' fairies roam sae bauld,
The lassies, lads, baith young an' auld,
Gather'd wi' mirth an' glee;
Wi' nuts tae burn an' kail tae read,
They tried their fate, wha they nicht wed,
An' tales o' weird things aft were said,
About what nicht might be.
They dropp'd their names in burnin'
flame,
Or pu'd the stocks wi'oot a name,
An' ilka charm, aye much the same,
Wad tell them wha they'd court.
Some saw a shade ayont the glen,
Some heard a step, nae beast, nae men—
The world atween wis thinn'd just then,
For mortals tae consort.
The fairies danc'd on Cassilis Doon,
While witches socht the wanin' moon,
An' youthfu' hearts, tho' aft they swoon,
Wad laugh wi' mockit fear.
For Halloween's a time sae braw,
Wi' lore an' love, an unco law—
Where dreams may rise, an' doom may
fa',
On yon enchanted year.**

From Bard to Bot

This project shows AI's power as a creative collaborator, demonstrating how technology and imagination can celebrate language and culture. Like Burns' own muse whispering through the years, *Echoes o' Hallowe'en* reminds us that new tools may change how we write - but the heart of the story still beats the same.

As we look ahead, it's only natural to wonder what this new technology might mean for future Burnsians. AI can help us rediscover the Scots language, explore fresh interpretations of Burns, and inspire new generations to read, write, and perform in ways we could scarcely have imagined before. Students outside of Scotland might soon learn the rhythm of *Tam o' Shanter* through an interactive AI tutor; a scholar might uncover linguistic patterns in Burns' verse with the aid of digital tools. In many ways, AI could help keep the Bard's voice alive - not by replacing it, but by amplifying it. Yet this new world also



raises important questions. If AI can compose a poem in the style of Burns, who deserves the credit - the human guiding it, or the AI itself? What happens if someone submits a machine-generated poem to a writing contest, such as RBANA's Jack Hume Poetry Competition, claiming it as their own? Such acts mislead judges and rob both the human and the technology of rightful recognition.

Transparency matters. Just as Burns celebrated honesty and authenticity in his verse, we too must approach these tools with integrity and understanding.

AI is, at its heart, a mirror. It reflects our words, our values, and our imagination. Used wisely, it can be a creative partner — a modern quill for the digital age. Used carelessly, it can blur inspiration and imitation. Perhaps the truest Burnsian lesson we can take into this new era is this: technology may shape the verse, but it is still

the human heart that gives it meaning.

Submitted by
Lindsey Steel
President;
Halton-Peel International
Burns Club based on a
presentation to the club in
October

A Word from the Editor

When, at the Detroit conference in 2010 I was asked by newly elected President Chrys Ballantyne, and agreed, reluctantly, to “assist” the ailing Frank Campbell, I had no idea that it would be a commitment of 15 years, but there you are.

Unfortunately, Frank, Editor Emeritus, was unable to return to the newsletter he started, and named.

From the literal cut and paste newsletters which Frank worked so diligently on, the Tattler has grown slowly from a one man operation, with some RBANA news and odd Burns related news stories from around the globe, to a quarterly with regular, and occasional contributors, with news of club events, and a few more scholarly pieces, and I thank you all.

I thank you all for the encouragement and support from the board, and the membership as a whole.

The format may change under Ronnie’s regime, as it did under mine, but I hope that the support continues, in every way.

As I take my exit and walk the path into the future I encourage all to continue, as my late predecessor did in every issue he produced, to:

Think Burns

