

# The Tattler



## Winter 2025 Edition

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The Robert Burns Association  
 of North America

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

## President's Message

**G**reetings fellow Burnsians,

I trust you have all had an excellent Burns Season celebrating the life and works of our beloved Bard! I was delighted to give the “Address” and the Immortal Memory toast at the Metro Atlanta Scotch Society on January 18, introducing a number of new folks into the world of Robert Burns. I had an equally great time at the St Andrew’s Society of Atlanta Burns Night dinner where I gave the Immortal Memory toast in the Atlanta Burns Cottage on February 1. It is always particularly special to attend events at the Burns Cottage as it is a magical place and a very fitting location to celebrate his genius. I feel very blessed to have enjoyed two Burns Suppers at the Cottage in 2025 having attended the Burns Club of Atlanta event the previous Saturday, January 25, where RBANA USA Director for the Northeast, Steve Newman gave a fantastic Immortal Memory toast! And Burns season continues for me with my Masonic Lodge Burns Supper coming up on February 25 – the correct day just one month out! I have been spreading the word following the wonderful news from Scotland, that Macsween of Edinburgh have created a recipe that meets FDA regulations thus clearing the way for the importation of Haggis to the US for the 2026 Burns Season! Talking about cele-



In This Issue:	
President’s Message .....	1
Robert Burns in the Great American West ...	3
Jack Hume 2025 .....	5
Calgary’s Burns Night .....	6
Medicine Hat’s Burns Night.....	8
SJCS at Rosenbach Burns Night .....	9
The Cameron Report .....	11

Continued pg. 2

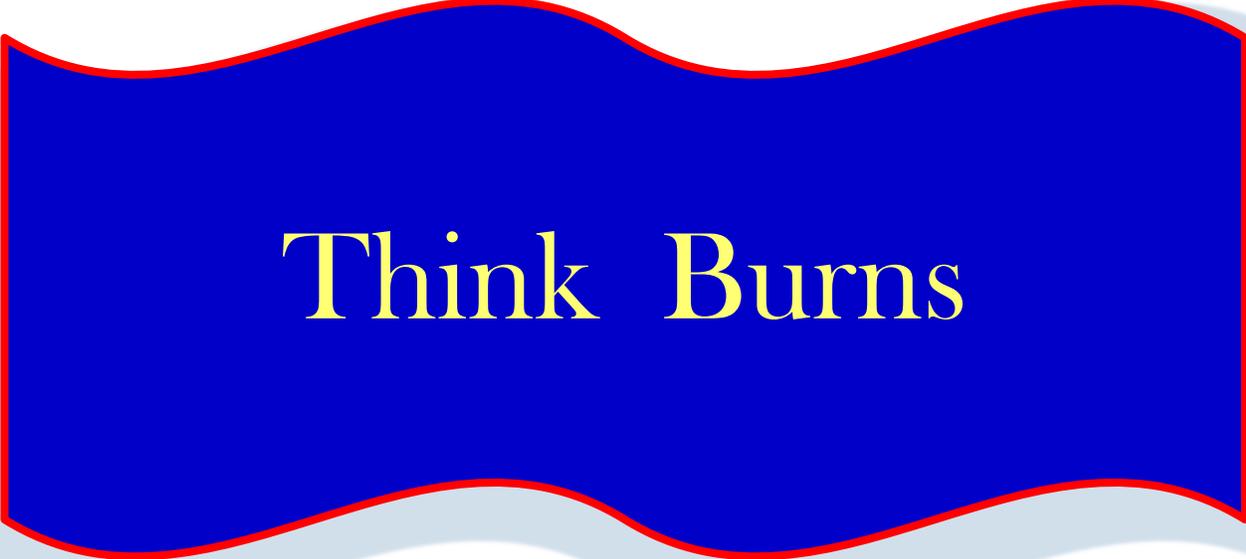
## President's Message (continued)

brating I am keen to remind you all about the 2025 RBANA AGMC, hosted by the Burns Club of Atlanta on May 8 -11. We are working hard to put on a great program and encourage you to get your registrations completed and hotel rooms booked. At the time of writing the number of confirmed reservations is around 20 folks which I am told is not unusual at 3 months out. I sincerely hope that this number at least triples and am counting on your support. The registration form with details for the host hotel has been sent out by email to each of you, several times and of course can also be accessed on the RBANA website. It is with mixed emotions that I finish this message with the news that our Junior Vice President, Phyl Smith has had to step down from her position due to family commitments. I know that her decision was not taken lightly, and she is to be applauded for making this difficult choice to focus on her loved ones. Please join me in thanking Phyl for all her tremendous contributions to RBANA and sending her every

good wish for the next step in her life. It will not be the last we hear from her as she will remain an Individual Member of RBANA. Looking forward, we are hopeful for some warm and pleasant weather in May for the AGMC and can't wait to enjoy your company.

Yours in Burns,

Mark Ferguson  
President, Robert Burns Association of North America



Think Burns

## Robert Burns in the Great American West

One can find statues of Robert Burns all over the world, including in such out of the way places as Cheyenne Wyoming. This photo is of the author in front of the Burns statue in a small rectangular park at 26th and Randall in the city of Cheyenne, Wyoming. By no means is it out of the way because it's within sight of the State capitol building.



How came such a monument to a Scottish poet to be found here in cowboy country where the legends of the "Old West" passed through or made their names?

The bronze Burns statue is truly magnificent. It was a gift to the city of Cheyenne by a woman named Mary Gilchrist, an early Cheyenne resident who was born in Edinburgh, Scotland and as a wee lass, learned and sang Burns songs. She loved Burns and it was a dream of hers to raise a statue of him in his honor. That opportunity came in 1928 when she ceremoniously unveiled the statue in front of a group of State and city dignitaries. Apparently there were a lot of Scots who grew up in the Western frontier. The Wyoming Governor, Frank C. Emerson accepted the gift for the people of Wyoming stating in his remarks, that it was a fitting tribute to the poet and to the Scottish immigrant who had contributed so much to the state of Wyoming. Apparently, this Burns memorial in America had international as well as US significance because the well publicized event was accompanied by floral tributes and greetings from Scots both in America and abroad. The news does get out.

Mary Gilchrist, apparently a woman of means, had commissioned one J.S. Gormley, the most prominent Scottish sculptor of the time, to create the statue. It cost her \$20,000.

US dollars. Gormley, who lived and worked in Paris, France put his Scottish soul into the project to create Burns as *"having the face of a ploughman and the look of a gentlemen."* Upon completion, Gormley told his wife *"I have completed my task, my highest honor, the zenith of my career. Now I shall rest."* Nature, maybe God's will, works in the strangest ways. Gormley lay down on the couch in his studio, fell asleep and never got up.

His passing was shocking news to the expats living in France and the word of his death spread to Scotland and around the world. There sat the statue, in a studio in Paris. The question was what to do with it now that its creator was dead. This particular statue was judged to be the finest likeness of Burns in the world. Scotland wanted it for their own but, Mary Gilchrist would have none of it. She paid for it and wanted it in Cheyenne. She believed in Burns' philosophy *"that rank is but a guinea's stamp, and a man is a man for a' that"* could best be honored in Wyoming where the rights of the common man would be respected.

Mary bought the parcel, hired a landscape artist from Denver, Colorado who set about designing the small park where the Statue can still be seen. The landscaping included planting trees and shrubs native to Scotland, installing a couple concrete benches where passers-by *"could pause and rest as they contemplated the statue and harken back in memory to the poems and songs of Burns."*

These many years later in the 21st Century, Cheyenne is no longer just a cow town but a sophisticated town through which Interstate highways and rail roads pass. During WWII the military found the area fit for the needs for air combat and heavy bombing. Time have changed and the once ubiquitous Scottish identity has melted away, not gone but

## Robert Burns in the Great American West (continued)

not there either. Not everyone who pauses by the little triangular park is conscious that it was once a shrine to a genius. But still can enjoy the patina of old world charm over which the statue of Burns presides.

Like many shrines around the world, this little park in the Wyoming city was, for several years, neglected until the introduction of the Cheyenne Parks and Recreation Waterbug Project. Volunteers stepped up and created a

spot of flowered beauty, trimmed lawns and cleaned edged sidewalks. There is a reawakening of the Scottish Diaspora around the world including Cheyenne, Wyoming. I have visited this park several times in my travels out west collecting the stories



of the explorers, pioneers, fur traders and Indians that lived here.

Little information has been found about Mary Gilchrist, how or why she ended up in Cheyenne, what was the source of her wealth, was she a rancher's wife, or a businesswoman? I continue the search.

If anybody has answers to these questions, contact me at [gemcclellan@ellijay.com](mailto:gemcclellan@ellijay.com)

George G. McClellan SA Director, RBANA  
13Feb25



**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 Spring Edition is Saturday, May 31, 2025.





# The Robert Burns Association of North America



## RBANA 10th Annual Poetry Competition 2025

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

- Entries should be submitted by email to [secretary@rbana.com](mailto:secretary@rbana.com)
- The deadline for entries is Monday 31st March 2025
- Poems submitted must be original, and not previously published.
- Only RBANA members in good standing are eligible to win the trophy.
- Entries from non-RBANA members will be judged by the panel but are not eligible to win the trophy.
- The winner will be chosen by a three-member panel, consisting of Steve Newman, Associate Professor in the English Department at Temple University, Jim McLaughlin, a frequent winner of the competition and life member of Calgary Burns Club, and the 2024 Jack Hume Trophy winner Ronnie O'Byrne of St. Catherines, Ontario. Entries will be submitted to the panel anonymously, and the panel's decision will be final.
- The winner will be announced at the 2025 AGM and Conference in Atlanta, GA in May 2025.
- This trophy is awarded annually, and the winner is responsible for returning the trophy to the RBANA Secretary or President prior to the following year AGM & Conference.



Brian Cumming, RBANA Senior Vice President

## The Calgary Burns Club Burns Supper

The Calgary Burns Club held their Annual Burns Supper at the Hotel Arts on Friday 24<sup>th</sup> January.

There were 370 guests there including over 50 ladies in attendance for the second year. During the cocktail hour prior to the dinner, guests were treated to music from 2 of The Calgary Police Service Pipe Band pipers, Stephanie West and Emma Macpherson. The sound throughout the evening was excellently handled as usual by Jason Wright (Dark Matter Production) who has been handling our sound at the supper for over 20 years.

The Emcee for the first half was Steven Cambell 1<sup>st</sup> Vice-President and event Manager was John Easton 2<sup>nd</sup> Vice-President.



The club photograph was taken of all members and speaker Ronnie O'Byrne. (left)

The CBC singers then opened the event with the National Anthems of Canada and Scotland, 'O Canada' and 'Scots Wha Hae' Grace was said by James Dahl, (below, left, with Steven Campbell), following which the guests were treated to a hearty "Bill O' Fare"



consisting of; Smoked Salmon, "Cock-a-leekie" soup, Prime Rib of Alberta Beef accompanied by Haggis, neeps and Tatties, then finished with Scotch Trifle which had a good

lick of Drambuie to finish it off.

The entertainment through the night consisted of: The Calgary Burns Club Singers (r) who performed apart from the anthems; Hey Johnnie Cope, Killiecrankie, Bring On The Whisky And The Haggis, Ye Jacobite's, The Star O' Rabbie Burns and a smaller group performed The Midges.



The haggis party (right) consisted of Pipers Stephanie West and Emma Macpherson, 1st Sword Rob Pinkerton, 2nd Sword Colin Pinkerton, Haggis Bearer James Dahl, Club Steward David Currie and Henry Cairney then addressed the Haggis with vigour!

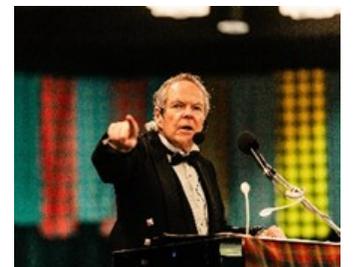


The Calgary Police Pipe Band (right) gave rousing performances of a number of sets with their pipes, drums and dancers.



Past President Dr. Sandy Paterson (below) performed Robert Burns poem, 'To a Louse', followed by Thomas Farquharson delivering the 'Loyal Toast.

After the intermission the top table was piped in by Thomas Farquharson, and Steven Campbell handed over the



# The Calgary Burns Club Burns Supper

emcee duties to Past President Henry Cairney who stood in for President Jamie Osborne Club President who was present but unable to perform on the evening.

The Immortal Memory was delivered by Ronnie O'Byrne (right) who gave a stellar speech which was greatly appreciated by all in attendance.



The 'Toast to the Lassies' was given by Past President Jim Hutchens, (far right) and the reply was given by CPSPB Piper Emma McPherson. (below)



The last but not least toast was the Toast To Absent Friends was given by Past President Jim Osborne (right) reminding us who could not attend the venue as they had

passed, or due to other reasons.

The night ended with the company singing 'Auld Lang Syne'.



Prepared and Submitted by Henry Cairney



Henry Cairney (above) addresses the Haggis.

Thomas Farquhason delivers the Loyal Toast (with Steven Campbell right)



## Medicine Hat Burns Club 2025 Burns Supper Report



Above:

Enjoying the view of Medicine Hat's River valley and downtown at the Medicine Hat Golf & Country Club, guests enjoy a performance by Highland dancers.

Right:

MHBC Past President Andy Cowan, wearing his red-haired tam, addresses the haggis while adding a suggestion that Irn Bru could be the 'Amber Bead', and is accompanied by his haggis presentation team that includes John McIntyre, Piper, Ty Risk, Executive Chef, RCMP Staff Sgt. Mike Courty, Club Gaird, and the Club's Poesie Nancie (Mel Hullah)

touch, we decided to include Club member, Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP) Staff Sergeant Mike Courty, in full dress uniform, and armed with the Club claymore, to be the Club's Gaird (guard) and part of our 2025 Haggis Presentation Team. With our dinner we started with Cock o' Leakie soup served to the table. This was followed by a special buffet that included



On Saturday, 1 February 2025 the Medicine Hat Burns Club (MHBC) hosted its 18th Annual Burns Dinner. We had 120 attend, all dressed in their best finery, and our event was again held at the Medicine Hat Golf & Country Club that overlooks Medicine Hat's River valley and downtown.

It's noted we intentionally hold our dinner a week after the usual weekend closest to 25 January, as we don't want to conflict with the Edmonton and Calgary Burns Club dinners that occur that time, and so our members may attend these events, and their members may attend ours.

It was also a coincidence, and historically significant that this was the day US President Trump's tariffs were supposed to start at midnight, and this year, it was very noticeable when our national anthem O' Canada was sung, as this appeared to be the loudest rendition many regular attendees had ever heard before. Additionally, and as a Canadian

AAA carved roast sirloin au jus with mini-Yorkshire pudding, mashed tatties and neeps w' carrots, Ayrshire potato salad and copious quantities of haggis. For dessert we then had Scottish sticky toffee also served to the table along with coffee and/or tea.

Our Chieftain o' the Nicht who presented the Immortal Memory, was Edmonton Burns Club member Tam Connelly. Tam, now living outside Edmonton is originally from Glasgow and is a former British army para trained commando now working with the University of Alberta. His mother taught him Burns starting at a young age, and he says the toughest thing he has ever done, and remains, is him reciting Burns works in front of her. Tam's Burns resume is also extensive and includes him performing more than once for the Calgary Highlanders, and once at a Burns dinner at Edinburgh castle.

Entertainment included Highland dancers,

singing by our in-house singers Henry Cairney and Brian Cumming, Burn's poetry by Club Bard Bill Cocks, the traditional toasts, three performances by the South Alberta Pipes & Drums, and the biggest raffle draw we have held to date. We also again featured our World-Famous Whisky Bar, and the night concluded of course, with Auld Lang Syne, with all standing, hands entwined.

Our guests included folks from all walks of life, and as usual, we were pleased to have a uniformed contingent from the British and Canadian military, including the South Alberta Light Horse (SALH) and the South Alberta Horse Artillery (SAHA).

Another great success, we are now actively starting to plan the 2025 Jolly Beggars Banquet.

Submitted by Ken Montgomery,  
MHBC Secretary



## Burns Night Celebration at the Rosenbach Museum & Library Honors Scotland's Beloved Poet



On January 25, the Rosenbach Museum & Library on historical Delancey Street in Philadelphia hosted a Burns Night celebration to honor Robert Burn's birthday. Edward Pettit, Senior Manager of Public Programs at the

Rosenbach emceed the event, which included live music, poetry readings, whiskey tastings, traditional Scottish fare, and more.



The South Jersey Celtic Society's own SJCS Band, featuring Paul Kennedy Sr., Paul Kennedy Jr., Bob Hurst, and Joe Mullin, added authenticity to the festive atmosphere. The kilted quartet played a new song, "Now Westlin Winds," as guests arrived and pep-

pered the evening with a spirited playlist ranging from beautiful Scottish ballads to upbeat, crowd-pleasing sing-a-longs.

No Burns Night would be complete without the ceremonial addressing of the haggis, a tradition that was upheld with gusto. The

dish was ushered in and Kennedy Sr. took a moment away from performing with the band to recite by heart Burns' famous poem

"Address to a Haggis." After the poem, Kennedy along with members of the South Jersey Celtic Society, presented the Rosenbach with

a gift of \$1000 from the SJCS, and a framed Certificate of Membership to the Robert Burns Association of North America.

Guests had the opportunity to enjoy their haggis and assorted Scottish treats alongside a fine assortment of Scotches curated by father-daughter whiskey sommeliers Tony and Cat Meholic. A few lucky attendees were fortunate to take home one of the selections as a



# Burns Night Celebration at the Rosenbach Museum & Library Honors Scotland's Beloved Poet



door prize, including a Glenmorangie Cadboll Estates gift box.

Several scholars took the mic to recite some of Burns' most beloved works. Dr. Alexander L Ames, Rosenbach Director of Outreach and Engagement, compared and contrasted Burns' "Ode for General Washington's Birthday" and Phillis Wheatley's "To His Excellency, George Washington."



Sheila Sandapen, Director of English Programs and Teaching Professor in the Department of English and Philosophy at Drexel University, read "Ye Flowery Banks." Robert



Berry, comic book artist and Ulysses instructor for the Rosenbach, University of Pennsylvania, and Villanova University, recited "The Battle of Sherramuir," and Elizabeth E. Fuller, Rosenbach Librarian, read "A Man's a Man for A' That."



As the evening ended, guests sang "Auld Lang Syne," linking arms in a

timeless gesture of camaraderie and remembrance. The event concluded on a high note, leaving attendees with a deeper appreciation for Burns' enduring legacy and the traditions that keep his spirit alive.



Submitted by Angela Collom



## The Cameron Report



October 2024, the Winnipeg Robert Burns Club held their Annual General at our new hard sought venue and elected a new Administration.

Janet Thompson, a former RBANA Director and Secretary, was chosen as the new President. While the Vice President position remains vacant, Darlene Cameron continues as Treasurer, Colin Harris as Recording Secretary and Linda Kane as Membership Secretary. Your Humble correspondent returns as Immediate President and continues in the role as Entertainment Coordinator. For Directors we welcomed back Past President (of both the club and RBANA) Jim Carrigan and newcomers to the Board, Ed Bethune and recent new club member Ian Woods. Past President Joyce Allen continues as Club Chaplain and Burns Supper Chair.

At the November Luncheon, Charles Cameron entertained with his Blair Electronic Chanter several bag pipe tunes. A reading or two from the 365 Poems of Burns. Several of our Burns Members attend and enjoyed the St Andrew's Society St Andrew's Dinner on the 30th. (as detailed in the last edition) December saw the Irish Cowboy entertain with various songs from the Bard's various songs...very well received...even a few Christmas carols were sung by all.

January was eventful as Dwight MacAulay, President of the St Andrew's Society and Charles Cameron, Immediate Past President of the Burns Club of Winnipeg were interviewed on Community Radio Station CJNU 93.7 bringing forward information on the Annual 118th Robert Burns Dinner for the 25th of January 2025 which helped to bring the number of attendees up to 67 in all. (right)



266 years has passed since the Bard's Birthday.

February brought another luncheon on the Ides of Febru-



Presidents, Past and Current at the February Lunch: (l o r) Joyce Allen, Charles Cameron, Colin Harris, Janet Thompson, Craig Oliphant, Jim Carrigan

ary, featuring Craig Oliphant, Past President to entertain the Members who attended.

The 17th of February brought the Scottish Community together in a Canadian Kilt Skate at the Duck Pond at Assini-

boine Park hosted by the St Andrew's Society of Winnipeg. (below : photo credit; John Woods, Winnipeg Free Press)

Colin Harris, our Secretary and Editor of the Tattler for RBANA will be travelling to Atlanta, Georgia to attend the 2025 RBANA Con-



ference 8 to 11 May 2025. He will be returning the Golfing Plaque that Darlene Cameron won to RBANA in May 2024 at the New Jersey Conference

Charles presents Henry Cairney with his Certificate of Honorary Membership in the Winnipeg club

