

Address to a Haggis

To a Haggis is one of Burns's most famous and regularly performed poems. Written in 1786 not long after Burns arrived in Edinburgh, this poem has become the centrepiece of Burns' Suppers and it can be argued that it has been as influential as any of Burns' poems in presenting the popular image of the poet that most people are familiar with today.

There are two stories that are linked to the writing of this poem. The first, more romantic version, is that Burns came up with poem on the hoof during a dinner at Mauchline cabinet-maker John Morrison's house. More likely is the story that the poem had been written by Burns for a dinner at the house of his merchant friend Andrew Bruce.

No matter what the origin of the poem it is notable for being the first of his poems to be published in an Edinburgh periodical, the Caledonian Mercury, on the 20th December 1786.

In Burns day haggis was not an every day meal, and it could be described as a luxury item. As this was the case it is not beyond possibility that Burns' 'Address' was ironic in its praise for the dish, and was pointing the finger at those who would revere it.