

The Scottish poet, Robert Burns was born on January 25, 1759 in the “auld cley biggin” that is now known as Burns Cottage. The day of his birth is celebrated today throughout the world as Burns Night, with Burns Suppers, poems and songs, and remembrance of Scotland’s National Bard. The celebrations go further than a simple appreciation of Burns poems and songs – great as they may be. Burns has come to be a symbol for Scotland and a global brand for the Scots themselves.

Burns was voted the Greatest Ever Scot by television viewers in a 2009 poll and Burns’s song *Is there for Honest Poverty* was chosen as the anthem to open the new Scottish Parliament. Yet, behind the global brand, lies a complex and surprising man, who grew from the obscurity of a small, West of Scotland village, to become perhaps the first modern celebrity. Some Robert Burns facts can be found on this page

1759	Born in Alloway on 25 January
1765–8	Burnes family move to Mount Oliphant Farm, near Alloway
1766	Burnes family move to Mount Oliphant Farm, near Alloway
1774	Writes his first song, <i>O once I lov’d [a bonnie lass]</i>
1777	Burnes family move to Lochlea Farm, near Tarbolton
1781	Becomes a Freemason
1781	Moves to Irvine to learn flax-dressing (preparing flax so it can be made into linen)
1784	His father, William Burnes, dies. The family move to Mossgiel Farm, near Mauchline
1784	The family change their name to Burns
1785	Meets Jean Armour. Becomes a father for the first time, to Elizabeth, born to maidservant Elizabeth Paton
1785–6	Has an affair with Margaret Campbell (‘Highland Mary’)
1786	The first edition of Burns’s <i>Poems, Chiefly in the Scottish Dialect</i> is published in Kilmarnock
1786	Abandons plans to emigrate to Jamaica to work on a slave plantation. Instead, travels to Edinburgh to look into publishing a second edition of his poems
1786	Enters into ‘a form of wedlock’ with Jean Armour
1786	Becomes a father to twins Robert and Jean Burns, born to Jean Armour
1787	Second edition of poems is published in Edinburgh. Meets James Johnson and agrees to contribute to <i>The Scots Musical Museum</i>
1787	Tours the Highlands, Stirlingshire and the Borders, collecting local songs and airs
1787	Becomes a father to a child, born to Edinburgh servant girl May Cameron
1787	Meets Agnes McLehose (‘Clarinda’)
1788	Marriage to Jean Armour is officially recognised by the Kirk
1788	Becomes a father to twin daughters, born to Jean
1788	Moves to Ellisland Farm, near Dumfries
1788	Becomes a father to Robert, born to Edinburgh serving maid Jenny Clow
1789	Becomes a father to Francis Wallace Burns, born to Jean
1789	Begins work as an Excise officer
1790	Writes <i>Tam o’ Shanter</i>
1791	Becomes a father to Elizabeth (‘Betty’), born to barmaid Anna Park
1791	Moves to Dumfries
1791	Becomes a father to William Nicol Burns, born to Jean
1792	Becomes a father to Elizabeth Riddell Burns, born to Jean
1792	Begins work on <i>A Select Collection of Original Scottish Airs</i> with George Thomson
1794	Becomes a father to James Glencairn Burns, born to Jean
1796	Dies in Dumfries, at the age of 37
1796	Robert’s youngest son, Maxwell Burns, is born to Jean on the day of the poet’s funeral. Jean is unable to attend the funeral service