



'The Vision'

The Robert Burns World Federation Newsletter



Issue 49 March 2021

Despite the restrictions of lockdown, many Burns Suppers have taken place and the virtual capabilities of Zoom have revolutionised attendance at those suppers. The Federation's supper, for example, was chaired by Senior Vice President Henry Cairney from Calgary and the haggis piped in by the Pacific Rim Convenor, John Menzies, in Camperdown, Australia. We were honoured to have HRH The Prince Charles, Duke of Rothesay deliver a heart-felt tribute to Burns and offer a very welcome message of support for the work of the Federation. My particular highlight was the Burns supper from the Bakehouse (page 7) featuring a superb performance by Gerda Stevenson, award-winning writer, actor, theatre director, singer-songwriter, who has worked in theatre, TV, radio, film, and opera. It shows. [Ed]

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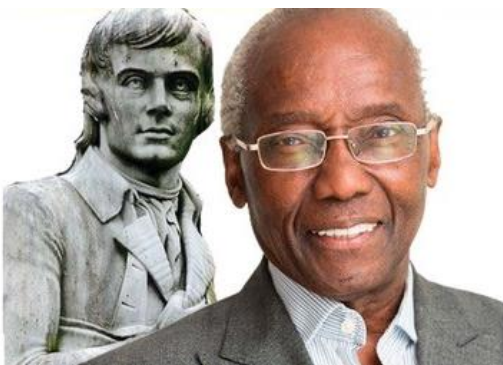
Winter

The wintry west extends his blast,
 And hail and rain does blow;
 Or the stormy north scuds driving forth
 The blinding sleet and snow:
 Wild-tumbling brown, the burn comes down,
 And roars frae bank to brae:
 While bird and beast in covert rest,
 And pass the heartless day.

'The sweeping blast, the sky o'ercast,'
 The joyless winter day
 Let others fear, to me more dear
 Than all the pride of May:
 The tempest's howl, it soothes my soul,
 My griefs it seems to join;
 The leafless trees my fancy please,
 Their fate resembles mine!

Robert Burns 1784

Sir Geoff Palmer Talks on Burns



On 18th March at 7.30 pm (UK time) the Federation's new Ambassador, Sir Geoffrey Palmer, will deliver a talk expressing his views on Burns the poet, the man and his relevance today. To register, for what promises to be a fascinating talk, email: admin@rbwf.org.uk

As well as his academic work specialising in the subject of brewing, Sir Geoff has been a prominent Human Rights activist and charity worker since the 1960's. Like Burns, he considered education to be very important and wrote a series of articles on ways to improve education and outcomes for children from ethnic minorities.

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The Working Birds

We watched as blue tits built their nest
this spring within our garden, blessed
to sit as architecture's guest
from dawn to gloam,
as day to day they strived and stressed
to build a home.

They worked with unrelenting zest
to find and fetch and craft their best,
till king and queen puffed-up a chest:
Now we belong.
They paid to be our garden's guest
with nowt but song.

With that, we thought the tits would rest,
but one kept zipping on a quest:
a feathered streak, a bird possessed.
We knew the score:
what once had been a two-bird nest
would soon be more.

And sure enough, as we had guessed,
the space within the box compressed,
when sharp and shrill and unrepressed
new songs were sung
that split the sky, the silence wrest:
the cry of young.

Such to-and fro-ing from the nest
left us breathless and impressed
to watch the parents' greatest test:
to raise their own.
Another morsel to digest
atop our throne.

The weeks slid by and we addressed
a sadness we could both attest
that soon we'd host an empty nest,
sans song, sans birds.
The parting of the ways was pressed
in air, in words.

On the day they flew the nest,
we felt a tugging in our chest,
as bird by bird, they bravely blessed
our patch of blue:
first frenzied flight with helmet crest,
then gone. Like you.

This autumn, now, we sit and rest
In silence in an empty nest.
Not sad, just hoping for the best
for you, our world.
Go fly like blue tits, proudly dressed
With wings unfurled.

This was the winning entry in the poetry competition for poems written in 'Standard Habbie,' the favourite stanza format of Burns. There were 22 entries, with poet Simon Lamb taking first prize. The adjudicator Sheila Templeton described it as, 'A beautiful poem, elegant and moving.'



Sheila writes in Scots and English. She grew up in Aberdeenshire, so her Scots expression is N-east or Doric. She's won several poetry prizes...the McCash Scots Language Poetry Competition, the Robert McLellan poetry competition, the Neil Gunn Writing Competition and been Makar for the Federation of Writers, Scotland. She was Poet in Residence at the Harbour Arts Centre, Irvine, for 3 years, involved in several projects with children and adults; and also worked in the Living Voices project for the Scottish Poetry Library, bringing poetry to groups of residents in care homes. She has two collections of poetry and four pamphlets published, as well as many poems in anthologies and magazines. Her latest collection *Clyack*, from Red Squirrel Press is due out in Feb 2021.

Simon is an accomplished Ayrshire poet and performer. As mentioned in the November newsletter, he created a poem "On Poet's Path" which addresses the path which leads from the Birthplace Museum to Burns Cottage. The poem can be found at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=aqYAZPrglGI>

Another, more recent, poem on a Burns theme is his Mat o' Shanter which puts a beautifully crafted modern spin on the tale of Tam o' Shanter and can be seen at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Svj5KxEiwxI> .

For information on Simon see his website: simonlambcreative.co.uk



Chris Waddell Interview

One of the most interesting and informative Burns events in January features an interview by Scottish broadcaster Jackie Bird with Chris Waddell, the Learning Manager at the Robert Burns Birthplace Museum. This event was part of the National Trust for Scotland's 'For the love of Scotland' podcasts designed to highlight the attractions of particular properties.

Chris has held the post since February 2013. Prior to this, between 2007 and 2013, he worked for National Museums Scotland at the National Museum of Rural Life – Wester Kitchside near his home town of East Kilbride. He gained his Honours Degree in Countryside Management in Ayrshire at the Scottish Agricultural College's Auchincruive campus. He has a strong interest in Scottish and rural history, Scots language and literature and the wonderful landscapes and wildlife of his native land. Chris sits on the Scots Language Centre Council. The interview can be found at:



<https://audioboom.com/posts/7778374-is-robert-burns-and-his-poetry-more-popular-now-than-ever>

The photograph shows Chris holding the Gregg Violin which came to the NTS in 1995 following its discovery atop a wardrobe. It was conserved as a playable object in 2015 and is usually on display at the Robert Burns Birthplace Museum and played at a small number of events during the year – which, ironically, is essential to maintaining its condition.

The story behind it is that at the age of 19, Robert Burns came to the building now known as the Bachelors' Club in Tarbolton to take dance lessons from a man called William Gregg. Gregg moved Burns with the sound of his fiddle and there's every chance the poet also played this instrument, given his growing interest in Scots music and his sister's testimony that he owned a fiddle at this time.

Ellisland Farm Fund Raiser



[Photo Source Wikimedia]

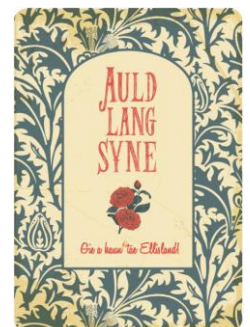
The Ellisland Trust held a fund-raising 'Evening of Burns at Ellisland' event on 22nd January chaired by Professor Gerard Carruthers, one of the trustees. The event also featured trustees Joan McAlpine MSP and David Hopes from the National Trust for Scotland. Musical entertainment was provided by Ellisland youth ambassador Rose Byers, renowned singing duo Emily Smith and Jamie McLennan and Alan Beck, with recitations from Margaret Greenlees, Gordon Johnston and Lesley McDonald. A recording of the event can be found at: https://youtu.be/ltQNbF2_El0

Robert Burns wrote Auld Lang Syne, the international anthem to love and friendship, right here at Ellisland. Millions around the world sing it at New Year and family gatherings, celebrating loved ones near and far.

The romantic rural farm steading was designed by the bard himself as his first marital home with Jean Armour. It is still surrounded by the woodland and river walks that inspired him. Ellisland feels like stepping back in time. It has changed little since Burns planted his first crop of apples in the orchard which still overlooks the river Nith. This is the best place to see nature through the poet's eyes.

But the birthplace of Auld Lang Syne needs your support. Help us by becoming a member of the charity that runs Ellisland, the Robert Burns Ellisland Trust.

Find out more about our new membership circles [here](#).



Gie a haun' tae Ellisland – for Auld Lang Syne!

Interactive Map of Burns Suppers

The [interactive Burns Supper map](#) resource is the broadest and most detailed record of Burns Night activities ever made. It was created in 2020 at the University of Glasgow, by Dr Paul Malgrati, research assistant in the Centre for Robert Burns Studies, and Mr Brian Aitken, research officer in the School of Critical Studies.

The present map inventories more than 2,500 contemporary Burns Suppers and Burns Night events, spreading across the 6 continents and nearly 150 countries. Most of these events took place in either 2020 or 2019, although earlier occurrences (as early as 2009) have also been recorded for areas with sparser Burns activities. If an event you hosted or attended in recent years does not feature on the map, please contact us at arts-burnssupper@glasgow.ac.uk

To make your browsing experience easier, feel free to open the map's search filters (below) by clicking on "Show Filters". The map features 17 filters, sorting data by date, attendance, as well as by types of host, toast, menu, drink, dress code, and entertainment.

You can also find further information about a particular Burns Supper by clicking on its red and white icon. The listed details are as precise and complete as possible, based on information made available online by the event's organisers. However, whilst providing a faithful description of most events, details are not always exhaustive and occasionally rely on estimates (especially for attendance figures). If you notice any mistake or missing information, please let us know.

Finally, the map also features more than 900 pictures and 281 embedded videos (you can access these by clicking on 'Watch Video' below the event's description). These are used with a strictly informative and educational purpose. Nonetheless, do notify us should you wish to see any picture or video removed.

This map is a testament and a tribute to the global, creative, and diverse Burns movement of the twenty-first century. Its mission is to serve future research on Robert Burns, Burns Suppers, and Scottish culture, whilst also promoting Burns's legacy and connecting Burnsians and Scotophiles across the world. Happy browsing!

Colin Rae Brown – Part 2

2021 sees the 200th Anniversary of the birth of one of the greatest-ever Burnsians; Colin Rae Brown. In this, the second part of his biographical sketch of the great man, RBWF Junior Vice-President, Alan D Beck tells us of Brown's life in London and his many Burns achievements during this final part of his life.

The friends Colin Rae Brown had made amongst the platform guests of the Centenary Celebrations included a number of London-based writers who introduced Brown to a series of symposiums, designed for gentlemen from the fields of Literature or the Arts. On Hallowe'en 1868, together with these gentlemen, Brown formed the London Burns Club and from the following January, the club held an annual celebration in Brown's Kensington townhouse. By 1880 these celebrations had become too popular for even Brown's home and so the decision was taken to find a larger venue for the following year and to open-up the membership to ladies.



For those first twelve years Brown was President, and delivered the Immortal Memory at each Annual Celebration. This position brought Brown into contact with the many wealthy and important ex-patriot Scots who had significant London interests. As 'a man of wide culture and refinement, and a brilliant conversationalist', Brown was quickly able to establish himself in the circles of these new contacts, and the Burns Movement in London benefitted from this: never more so than when John Gordon Crawford, a wealthy Glaswegian merchant based in London, was persuaded by Brown to fund the erection of a London part-copy of John Steell's (sic) New York Burns bronze. On the 24th of July 1884 at Victoria Embankment, the statue was unveiled to much applause.

Colin Rae Brown – Part 2 (Cont'd)

Apart from his publishing career, Brown had a successful share portfolio, with interests in many companies throughout the Empire. He was a shareholder and Chairman of the Great Western Farm Dairy Company; he had a Frame Manufacturing company based off Leicester Square and he still maintained his share of the Fine Art Business in Glasgow. In fact, Brown's career was going so well that he maintained not only the Kensington home, but two other residences in Tighnabruich and Whetstone. His Death Certificate describes him, under 'Profession', as 'of independent means'.

Brown was instrumental in having John Steell's bust of Burns placed in Poets' Corner, Westminster Abbey, and seeing Burns in the place of honour next to Shakespeare was symbolic to him of correcting the 'stigma attached' to the perceived neglect of the memory of Scottish heroes.

It was immediately following the bust's unveiling in March, 1885, whilst walking with a deputation of Kilmarnock Burnsians, that the idea of the Burns Federation was formed. Brown began to discuss with David Sneddon and David Mackay, (both members of the Kilmarnock club), the forthcoming Centenary Celebrations of the Kilmarnock Edition. The conversation soon turned to a world-wide federation of Burns clubs. All three were enthused and it was agreed that if a Burns Federation were to be set up, then the time was right.



The first minute of the Burns Federation was taken in Kilmarnock on July, 17th, 1886. Brown occupied the Chair and the first signature of the seventeen members in this minute, was his. Soon he had negotiated that London Burns Club would be recognised as No. 1., since the idea of the Federation had been formulated there. However, at the next meeting when Sneddon read the roll, it began with 'Kilmarnock Burns Club, No. 0.'. There is no record of any challenge to this and it has remained thus ever since.

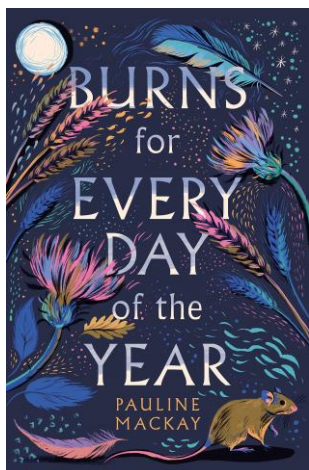
NB – Correction - Shortly after the publication of the previous part of this biographical sketch in the January newsletter, the author discovered two more children of Colin Rae Brown, viz., Alexander (born 1854) and Marie (born 1858).

[Note: Part 3 to appear in the May Newsletter. Ed]

Burns for Every Day of the Year – Book Review

Once upon a time, in pre-Covid days, the world of Burns, and Burns in the world, turned January and the Janwar winds to be a time for celebrating and commemorating Burns.

The scale of involvement in this particular month grew to large proportions on a national and international basis. A best guess puts the number of Burns Suppers well over ten thousand a year.



A well-researched book is appearing this year with great appeal to the many Speakers who satisfy the demand for proposing toasts to the Immortal Memory or to the Lasses or any part of a Burns supper.

The book "Burns for Every Day of the Year" fills a gap that is refreshingly different and, as the title implies, really does create well-researched quotes identified with 366 days. The daily dose moves the words of Burns from being an occasional use to a daily one. A treasure chest of information which reflects the many dedicated hours that author Pauline Mackay spent in compiling the facts – all being 'Chiels that winna ding!'

All proof, if needed, that Burns is for all reasons a Poet for all seasons. Published by Black and White Publishing Company Retail Price £20. ISBN 978 1 78530 298 5.

[Review by Murdo Morrison. Past President. Member of Literature Committee]

Raymond J. S. Grant - Obituary



It is with profound sadness that we announce the passing of Dr. Raymond J. S. Grant from Edmonton, Canada. He will be sadly missed by his countless friends and colleagues from around the world in Scotland, England, the Netherlands, the Czech Republic, the U.S., and Canada. Raymond leaves behind to honour his memory his beloved wife Pauline, daughter Mareika Purdon (Jaymes), son Andrew (Lindsay), grandchildren Aidan, Brooklyn, Megan, Cameron, and Lillian.

For a number of years Raymond contributed numerous articles to the Burns Chronicle in his role as Literary Editor. He was a close associate of Editor Peter Westwood and wrote on a variety of topics on Burns, Scots interests and related arts. Burns associations with Canada was a favourite and he returned to that theme for several papers.

As well as Burns, Raymond had many other passions to which he dedicated his life, work and expertise, such as Anglo-Saxon English, King Ludwig II of Bavaria, St. Michael, classical music/opera and photography to name a few. Raymond is a graduate of Aberdeen and Cambridge Universities, ordained to the Word by the Church of Scotland, a respected professor, much-published author, preacher, and public speaker. He was a long-term member of the Edmonton Burns Club and is fondly remembered for his kindness, sharp wit, strength of character, smooth Scottish burr, tremendous sense of humour, impeccable grammar and willingness to give time to others.

[During my visit to Edmonton to deliver the Immortal Memory at the Burns Club's Supper in 2015, I had the pleasure of being hosted by Raymond who could not have been more helpful in making it most memorable. Ed]



Auld Lang Syne Put to Good Use



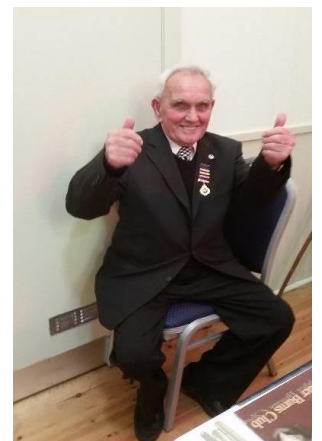
One of the most enjoyable versions of Auld Lang Syne appeared in a file sent to me by my ex-boss when I served as an RAF exchange officer serving with the USAF in Omaha, Nebraska. He wondered what the marks would have been had John been a true Scotsman.

The brother and sister ice-skating duo Sinead and John Kerr grew up in Dundee and teamed up as skating partners in 2003. Their most successful campaign was in 2009–10, qualifying for their first Grand Prix Final where they finished 4th. They were fifth at the European Championships, 8th at the 2010 Winter Olympics and a career-best 5th at World Championships. They were the first British ice dancers to make the top ten at the European Championships since Jayne Torvill and Christopher Dean. They officially

announced their retirement from competitive skating on April 6, 2011. See their adaption of Auld Lang Syne at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=on3F4e7B5eo> [Ed]

Obituary - Walter Robertson Whiteadder Burns Club

It was with great sadness that we have to record the death of our Honorary President Walter (Wattie) Robertson at the grand old age of 95. Wattie fulfilled his position as Honorary President of The Whiteadder Burns Club with charm, wit, and enduring enthusiasm. His contribution to the "Club" was legendary. He was a founder member from its foundation in 1952, the inaugural Burns Supper being held in the Red Lion, Allanton, Berwickshire. John Gardiner, Secretary Whiteadder Burns Club, intimated his death at the club's virtual Burns Supper on 1st February.



Burns Night at the Bakehouse



The Bakehouse is a small, intimate venue for poetry and spoken word performance in Gatehouse of Fleet, in the beautiful Galloway hill country of south west Scotland. It's a place where the spirit of Burns is always close. Burns is reputed to have written the song 'Scots Wha Hae' at the Murray Arms, a local hostelry. The Bakehouse provides a platform for contemporary Scottish poets and writers, in particular, staging a regular programme of events throughout the year as well as the annual BIG LIT: The Stewartry Book Festival.

Our 2021 Burns Night celebration was held online, with a big audience joining us from near and far via Zoom. The event featured the peerless Gerda Stevenson. You can watch her performance by [clicking the link here](#)

What a delight to hear Gerda kick the evening off with extracts from a lesser-known poem by the bard, *The Vision*. Gerda's stunning and insightful performance includes her commentary on the poem's resonance for contemporary Scotland.

A beautiful singer, Gerda's rendition of two Burns' songs is very moving. A poet writing in Scots and English, she reads from her books, including her most recent, *Quines*, which tells the stories of 80 Scottish women through time. Her poem in the voice of Mary Queen of Scots' voice is particularly fascinating, giving us a little-known insight into events prior to Mary's abdication. See: <https://www.luath.co.uk/product/quines-ljmn9> for book details.



Gerda is a bard for our times, reflecting Burns' love of poetry, politics and song in this informative and highly entertaining set.

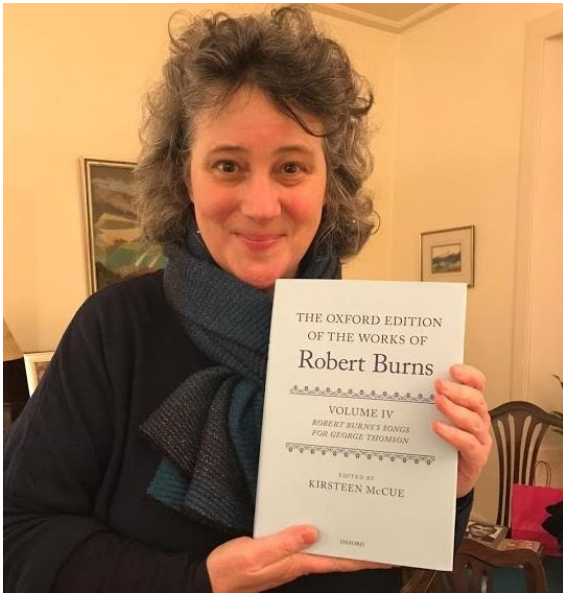
With live events on hold due to Covid, The Bakehouse is keeping the words flowing with a wide array of poetry and spoken word films, in English, Scots and Gaelic, on The Bakehouse website, www.thebakehouse.info. Check them out by going to the 'Bakings' page and following your nose through its treasure trove of Scottish and Scotland-based voices. Or use the search facility to find particular writers; if poetry in Scots is your thing, you could start with Rab Wilson, Hugh McMillan, Sheila Templeton, Stuart Paterson and more of the glorious Gerda Stevenson.

We'll be adding more films over the coming year so do keep an eye on the website as it grows. If you would like to know more about Bakehouse events or receive occasional mailings of links to film poems specially selected for you, do sign-up to our mailing list via the facility on the website home page. It's all free... though if you like what you see and hear, and want to support us, there is a Donations button on our website. Just saying...
[Chrys Salt, MBE, Artistic Director, The Bakehouse Community Arts]

[Another treasure trove of poetry in Scots, English and Gaelic can be found on the Scottish Poetry Library (SPL) website. During lockdown, the SPL chose to expand its reach digitally, by asking four guest curators to select works by poets that they would like to share. The guest curators – Ceitidh Campbell, Hugh McMillan, Aoife Lyall and Thomas Clark – were tasked with commissioning five poets each to produce a collection of 20 new works in total. The overarching theme was 'vision' – the topic of National Poetry Day in October.

Crucially, the choices made by the curators were made entirely independently without a steer from the SPL. Each curator was made aware of our commitment to equalities and inclusion and we also encouraged them to commission work that included video or audio, as we seek to grow online resources that can be accessed at home, in the classroom or on the move. <https://www.scottishpoetrylibrary.org.uk/champions-2020/> Ed]

The Oxford Edition of the Works of Robert Burns -Volume IV



On 18th February 2021, following research over many years, Kirsteen McCue, Professor of Scottish Literature and Song Culture at the University of Glasgow saw the launch of her *Magnum Opus*: 'Robert Burns's Songs for George Thomson.'

Between 1792 and his untimely death in 1796, Robert Burns engaged in a detailed correspondence with Edinburgh civil servant and song editor, George Thomson (1757-1851). Thomson had approached him with a commission to provide song texts initially for a large collection of Scottish National airs or tunes.

This fascinating and productive relationship has received little attention over the past two hundred years, with most editions of Burns's songs removing them from this original context. Thomson's role in editing Burns's texts, and in the 'branding' of Burns, in the early decades of the nineteenth century, has also received little detailed analysis. This new edition of Burns's songs for Thomson is the first to fully explore the nature of this

collaboration, explaining the context for Thomson's masterplan and articulating clearly how Burns engaged, at all levels, with this project. It presents over 170 of Burns's songs as they appeared across Thomson's collections of Scottish, Welsh, and Irish airs for the first time since their original publications. Presenting both texts and music, it is the only time Burns's songs for Thomson's *Select Collections* have been examined and presented as a body of work.

Thomson's project, aimed at the growing middle classes and at performance in the drawing room and on the concert platform, presented Burns's songs amongst those by other poets of the period, including Walter Scott, Joanna Baillie, and Lord Byron. Burns's songs were also set to national airs with musical arrangements by eminent contemporary European composers including Joseph Haydn and Ludwig van Beethoven.

Each song in this new edition appears with detailed explanatory notes on this creative context, tracking the poet's and editor's conversations about songs and tunes, the changes made by Thomson to Burns's songs, and giving essential information about both the airs and their musical settings. There is a detailed account of Thomson's complicated bibliography and his 1805 'Glossary of the Scottish words' is included as an appendix, alongside a list of songs recommended by Burns but never published by Thomson.

Hardback. ISBN 9780198797272. 800 pages. Price £145 Order online at: www.oup.com/academic

RBWF 200 Club Winners

Jan-21	1st prize	£ 42.90	56	Jim & Eileen Robertson
	2nd prize	£ 21.45	205	Kay Blair
Feb-21	1st prize	£ 42.90	147	Peter Stuart
	2nd prize	£ 21.45	126	James Murison
Mar-21	Quarterly Prize	£ 107.25	200	Jim Smith
	1st prize	£ 42.90	199	Alex & May Crawley
	2nd prize	£ 21.45	45	Ron Murray

St Petersburg Association Pays Tribute to Elizabeth Clark

Following on from the brief obituary for Elisabeth Clark in the last newsletter I thought it would appropriate to relay the tribute to her from Margarita Mudrak, Chairman of the Board of the St Petersburg Association for International Cooperation:

“We always admired her personality and charisma and were happy and proud that Elizabeth was our friend and colleague who promoted her country and Russian-Scottish friendship with such passion and dedication. She has done everything possible to strengthen cultural and people-to-people contacts between our two countries. She was a real diplomat and an exclusive example of a goodwill messenger. We shall always think of her and keep wonderful memories of our meetings, work, talks, discussions and exchange of ideas and experiences.

We shall try our best to continue the charity and international programmes that Elizabeth started and successfully developed. Your Petersburg friends, members of the St. Petersburg Association for International Cooperation, express our most sincere condolences to husband Tom and her sons.”



These sentiments from Russia were expressed at her funeral service during which her sons, David, Graham and Douglas, delivered wonderful eulogies which not only demonstrated their love for their mother but also highlighted the amazing range of interests Elizabeth enjoyed: sailing, sub-aqua, curling, skiing, mountaineering, horse riding to name but a few. Above all, however, she was superb cyclist winning at least 12 National Scottish Cycling titles over various distances and disciplines. [Ed]

Federation Annual Campaign

Starting in March 2021, the Federation is launching a "Federation Annual Campaign" which will feature a particular project the President has chosen to further the work of the Federation. The first project will be to raise funds to enable Arms to be awarded posthumously to Robert Burns. Many of you will know that Robert Burns designed a 'coat of Arms' (shown) which he hoped to have matriculated for himself, but due to his untimely death and perhaps his finances, this was never achieved, though a silver seal bearing the Arms was made.

The Lord Lyon, King at Arms, Joe Morrow, expressed an opinion that he felt it was perfectly possible to award Arms should a petition be made on behalf of Robert Burns, by the Federation.

As many of you will know, the Lord Lyon is very interested in Burns who, himself, was fully conversant with the principles of Heraldry, so the Lord Lyon feels that this is no less than Burns deserves. It is often the tradition in Scots Heraldry that the greatest of Scotland's people have traditionally been granted Arms. However, there is a cost to this process (between £2K to £4K depending on final design) and we would like to ask Members, Clubs and Associations whether they would like to contribute to this worthy cause?



Of course, we will accept donations from other organisations for this project and if we meet the target all extra funds, will be allocated to the next project on the President's Appeal, shopping list of ideas, which would be for educational resources including restocking the RBWF Library and equipping the educational resource room.

To contribute a donation, please send a note of the amount and pay by BACs transfer to Robert Burns World Federation Ltd. Sort: 80-08-53 Account: 00856523. Ref: Appeal. Please [email admin@rbwf.org.uk](mailto:admin@rbwf.org.uk). Cheques can be posted to RBWF Headquarters 3a John Dickie Street, Kilmarnock, Ayrshire, Scotland KA1 1 HW.

A Message to the Federation from HRH The Prince Charles, Duke of Rothesay.

The highlight of the Federation's virtual Burns Supper on 23rd January 2021 was an address by HRH The Prince Charles, Duke of Rothesay, extolling the work of the Federation, especially the encouragement of schoolchildren through our Primary and Secondary Schools' Festivals. Members of the Federation Board were the speakers and performers for the evening but Zoom allowed us to have the haggis piped in by John Menzies in Australia and the meeting chaired by Senior Vice President Henry Cairney from Calgary. His Royal Highness's address can be found at:

<http://www.rbwf.org.uk/message-from-hrh-duke-of-rothesay-to-the-robert-burns-world-federation/>

His Royal Highness's wonderful message to all people who are interested in the life and work of Robert Burns was also played at the start of the Glasgow Cathedral memorial service the following day. Geoff Depledge, President of the Glasgow & District Burns Association and Marc Sherland, President of the Robert Burns World Federation both read the lessons. The Revd. Mark Johnstone, Chaplain of the G&DBA, presented an inspiring sermon comparing sections of Burns poetry with passages from the Bible to great effect and the illumination of all who attended. The service can be viewed at:

<https://www.glasgowcathedral.org/a-morning-service-for-the-24th-of-january/?fbclid=IwAR3PP5667QPI4MaiH-2bl-dRdvELVniLXU3O7ptYPUKB4NDXBem4LpCqRMk>

Corporate Fundraising Assistance

" Do you have experience of Corporate Fundraising? We are keen at RBWF to grow existing and develop new corporate relationships. This may include corporate donations, sponsorship opportunities and joint venture projects as well as income from products and services.

If you think you can help please contact our Finance Director, Ken Dalgleish on dalgleishkt@gmail.com"

I sing Burns Songs too.....

I knew Liam Bonthron was a young man to be watched, when the entire audience stood simultaneously to loudly applaud at the conclusion of his performance at the Caledonian Club.



Liam is a Bicentenary Scholar at Royal Academy Opera, under the mentorship of Nuccia Focile and Jonathan Papp. He recently completed Postgraduate studies at the Guildhall School of Music & Drama, where he studied with Robert Dean and Adrian Thompson. Liam won First Prize in the 2018 GSMD English Song Competition.

Liam also gained a First-Class Bachelor's degree from the Royal Conservatoire of Scotland, won the *Hugh S. Robertson Prize for Scottish Singing*, the *Leonie Kayser Prize*, and the *Elgar/Spedding Lieder Duo Prize*.

Where were you brought up? I was born and brought up in Perth, Scotland.

Did you sing Burns songs at school? I didn't sing much at school, but I learned many Scottish songs (including many Burns) as a member of the Jamboree Choir - a youth choir to which I owe my early musical upbringing and inspiration. The choir director Edna Auld was passionate in encouraging singing to young people in the Perth community, and every Thursday evening the choir rehearsed in Perth Grammar School. This was the highlight of my week, and as my voice and confidence grew, I was invited alongside a few of the senior members of the choir to give concerts almost every (Friday night!) throughout Perth and Kinross, at local Guildry events, SWRI evenings etc. The programme choices were always diverse, ranging from Opera, Gilbert and Sullivan, songs from the shows and folk music.

We used to end our concerts with a 'Scottish selection', and Burns songs were always a firm part of the repertoire, and it was here that I learned and fell in love with many of Burns' famous songs.

Liam Bonthron (Cont'd)

Can you remember the first Burns song that you sang professionally? I was approached by Perth Burns Club to be a guest soloist at their Annual Burns Supper, held in the Salutation Hotel. The Perth Club has a long and remarkable history as one of the oldest established Burns Clubs in Scotland, so it was at first quite daunting for me. However, it was a wonderful evening: witnessing and learning more about Burns and Scotland's culture and traditions, whilst receiving such a warm welcome from the club.

When and where was the first Burns supper you attended? The first Burns Supper I attended must have been around 2008 at the local Kinnoull Parish Church, as part of the 3rd Perth Boys Brigade, where I spent many years of my childhood.

Which is your favourite Burns song? This is very difficult to choose - there are so many fantastic songs! I remember finding a strong emotional connection to 'My heart's in the Highlands'.

What is your favourite song other than Burns song? To perform - I love German lieder, especially the works of Schubert. To listen - anything acoustic, or Ray Charles, Queen, Ella Fitzgerald and Gershwin!

What are doing professionally now? Whilst COVID-19 has put a halt to live Classical Music in the UK, I'm lucky to be in music education, and am now approaching the end of my first term in the Opera School at the Royal Academy of Music. We are about to put on a socially-distanced production of Britten's *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, and next term I'll be singing my first Ferrando in Mozart's *Così fan tutte*, alongside some recitals and auditions...better get my head down! [Article by Neil McNair, Marketing Director]

See Liam and fellow singer Fiona Joice at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fh0Br7IKKrg&t=237s>
[Their Burns Songs appear between minute 4.45 and minute 12.45. Ed]

Greenock Burns Club - Burns Supper

Christine Currie, President of Greenock Burns Club (The Mother Club) chaired its celebration of the birthday of Robert Burns at its 219th Annual Celebration on Monday the 25th of January. On the evening the Immortal Memory was proposed by Prof. Gerard Carruthers, Francis Hutcheson Chair of Scottish Literature at Glasgow University and Co-Editor of the Burns Chronicle.

You can view the celebration by clicking on this link:

<https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCEIF7iptel9nN1v1AwkhGEw/videos>

**Spinning Joy at the Robert Burns Birthplace Museum**

The Friends of Robert Burns Birthplace Museum (RBBM) have been awarded the massive sum of £1,884.59 by the CO-OP Community Fund for a Spinning Wheel Project. The amount given has been generated from the 1% earned by members buying selected CO-OP branded goods and services locally in Doonfoot and Ayr. The Project was chosen as one of this year's causes and the Friends of RBBM gratefully appreciate this generous support.

With spinning wheels purchased by the scheme, volunteers will now be able to learn the skills of using them. Then they'll demonstrate the techniques to visitors to Burns Cottage and the museum nearby in Alloway. Imagine them sitting in Burns

Cottage showing what Robert Burns' mother Agnes used to do on a daily basis in that very house. After this, the group aim to roll out workshops with spinning and weaving activities to involve children and families and, later, local community and disability groups.

Alison Wilson

President's Address

The term 2020 used to be something about vision and having perfect sight, but last year it has come to mean something about a disastrous virus and the shutdown of normal systems of communication and gathering.

It would have been easy to allow the restrictions to stop the things the Robert Burns World Federation wished to see achieved, but I am proud to say that with the innovative and dedicated Board of Directors, we have not let it hold us back and indeed if anything it has prompted a fresh and exciting review of the mission of the Federation to educate, celebrate and promote the works of Robert Burns, Scottish culture and the unique Scots Language.

In the few months since I became President, the Board has held three Lectures as part of TamFest and offered a St Andrew's Lecture featuring Prof Patrick Scott on Burns manuscripts. It has also appointed its first ever Ambassador, Sir Geoff Palmer, who will offer a lecture this coming March. The Events Committee put on a Yule Concert featuring young Burnsians and organised by JVP Alan Beck and hosted by SVP Henry Cairney.

In the field of life-long learning we offered our first ever Habbie writing competition and we intend to put onto the newly revamped website some educational materials to help budding poets write in this uniquely Scottish poetry form.



As part of our educational offer, Education Convenor, Lesley McDonald is in contact with Clubs, schools and associations who usually offer Burns Competitions to see what is the best way to support them in the coming year and we have just recently redesigned the participation certificates.

To mark the birth of Robert Burns, we organised a virtual Burns Supper in January with most of the Directors taking key roles in the evening. The newly developed Robert Burns World Federation tartan has already featured on new merchandise in the online shop. February will see a 'LoveFest' event organised around the love poetry of Burns.

Probably biggest news of all is that we are looking forward to introducing new and stimulating events, at least one every month as well as refreshing the committee structure and the Quarterly Meeting of Members.

As the new year progresses, we hope, once it becomes practical, to offer a programme of events based at the headquarters building in Kilmarnock. Our excellent support for heritage and culture is exemplified by the work of John Hannah and Bill Dawson and the spring will see the first edition of the newly reformatted Burns Chronicle, whilst Mike Duguid ensures that the good news of Burns worldwide is captured in the bi-monthly Newsletter, The Vision.

So, looking back on what was a difficult year, we can reclaim 2020 as that original meaning of perfect vision and state that we will build on what has been achieved and will amplify our intention to be visionaries in education and celebration by promoting the RBWF mission worldwide.

Marc R Sherland, President