

The Tattler



Autumn 2024 Edition

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,

With Fall in its twilight and Winter fast approaching I'm sure your thoughts are turning to the Holidays and colder temperatures. As you do, I'd like to share a couple of pieces of heart-warming news. I am delighted to confirm that as of September 4th we have had a full complement for your Board of Directors with the appointment of Alan Yorker as the US Region Director for the Southeast. Alan is a member of the Burns Club of Atlanta and brings with him a great deal of enthusiasm for the Bard and Scotland. He and his wife Janie attended the 2023 AGMC in Calgary and those of you who have not had the opportunity will get to meet him at the 2025 AGMC in Atlanta. I am also delighted to confirm that the Burns Club of Atlanta have selected the Hilton Garden Inn in the Buckhead area of Atlanta as the partner hotel for the meeting in May next year and we look forward to seeing as many of you as possible at the event. We are particularly excited that the Friday night Ceilidh will be held at the replica Burns Cottage as it should be a very special occasion. If you haven't already seen it, a copy of the full program and a link to the registration form is included in this edition of the Tattler. I am also pleased to share that I attended the Medicine Hat Burns Club



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President's Message (continued)

15th Annual Jolly Beggars Banquet in Medicine Hat, Alberta, Canada on October 5th. Peter Pringle, RBWF President was also present as “Chieftain O’ The Nicht” and we both had an incredible time. The venue for the event was spectacular with several very unique performances of Burns’ work conducted throughout the program. There is no doubt in my mind of the enthusiasm for Robert Burns in Medicine Hat! It’s also time to get your entries ready for the 2025 Jack Hume Poetry Competition. SVP Brian Cumming is the coordinator of this the 10th Annual tournament and he and the panel of three judges look forward to getting your submissions. Finally, I wanted to wish you all the very best for a happy holiday season, a good New Year when it comes and lots of enjoyment celebrating on January 25th, 2025!

Yours in Burns,
Mark Ferguson

Think
Burns

IMPORTANT NOTICE:

The RBANA website had been hacked a few months ago which has caused a lot of issues with logging into the site. The web host has cleaned and added further protection to hopefully prevent further hacking or phishing taking place.

A problem with this is that the site through most browsers may show the site still as “Unsafe”, but I have been assured by the host it is clean and will eventually settle down. I suggest you remove any history of visits or cookies to the site in your browser. I will be following up with the host in the coming weeks if issues continue.

Regards,
Henry Cairney
RBANA Secretary

SJCS Celebrates Samhain with Celtic Lore and a Spirited Reading of *Tam O'Shanter*



On October 25, the South Jersey Celtic Society (SJCS) invited the public to the Burlington County Lyceum in Mount Holly, NJ, to experience *Robert Burns and a Celtic Halloween*, a celebration of Samhain, the ancient Celtic holiday marking the end of the harvest season and the onset of winter. Samhain,

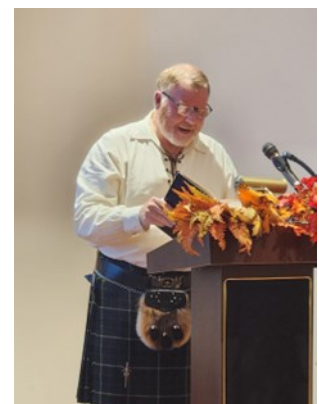
often called Celtic Halloween, is steeped in rich traditions and is a time to honor the dead. According to ancient lore, the veil between the living and the spirit world is at its thinnest during Samhain, allowing spirits to visit our world—a belief that inspired many Halloween customs still practiced today, such as wearing costumes to ward off evil spirits and carving Jack-o'-lanterns, traditionally made from turnips. As bagpipe music by Doug Conner (bottom, left) filled the air, guests arrived in festive costumes, eagerly awaiting an evening of history, folklore, and music. SJCS member Paul Kennedy, Jr., captivated the audience with a reading of Robert Burns' famous poem *Tam O'Shanter*, immersing listeners in a world of ghostly gatherings and supernatural adventure. On the heels of this eerie tale, SJCS founding member Paul Kennedy, Sr. joined his son in the spotlight to sing haunting renditions of traditional Celtic folk songs. With Sr. on the acoustic guitar and Jr. on the violin, the pair performed *Molly Malone*, the sad story of a young fishmonger whose spirit haunts the streets of Dublin and *The Ghosts of Molly McGuire*, (right) a song about Irish immigrant minors who lost their lives in the coal mines of Pennsylvania.

The performance was followed by an enlightening presentation by SJCS President John Adams, who shared the Celtic roots behind Halloween's most enduring legends. Attendees learned that the headless horseman figure, often recognized in the United States through *The Legend of Sleepy Hollow*, originates from the Irish and Scottish

tale of the "Dullahan," a headless rider symbolizing death. They were also intrigued to discover that the practice of carving Jack-o'-lanterns comes from the tale of "Stingy Jack," who, after tricking the Devil, was condemned to roam the earth with only a hollowed-out turnip lantern for light.

Samhain, traditionally celebrated on October 31st through November 1st, is marked by customs like lighting bonfires to keep away evil spirits and setting out candles to guide ancestral souls. Mantles are often adorned with harvest items, such as apples, gourds, and autumn leaves to symbolize the season, while friends gather to share spooky stories. According to John Adams, *Robert Burns and a Celtic Halloween* is a perfect annual event to showcase these traditions and advance the mission of the South Jersey Celtic Society.

"Our Samhain celebration offers a festive occasion where members of the community can learn about the heritage, traditions, language, art, music, and culture of the Celtic people," Adams said. "We look forward to sharing this event with our local community for years to come."



Medicine Hat Burns Club Holds 15th Annual Jolly Beggars Banquet



The Medicine Hat Burns Club's 2024 Jolly Beggars Banquet was held 5 October 2024 at the Medicine Hat Golf & Country Club was another success.

For those unfamiliar with this now internationally recognized black tie event, here the Club seats thirty-seven (37) gentlemen (Cronies) for a special night of fellowship (as Burns was 37 when he passed). The Club always has a Chieftain o' the Nicht as a headliner and special guest speaker, and since 2013, this has been the first official event attended by the newly installed or elected RBWF president. This year we had two Chieftains o' the Nicht, Peter Pringle from Edinburgh, the new President of the Robert Burns World Federation (RBWF), (below left with his ADC, and addressing the assembled, below right) and Mark Ferguson of Atlanta, Georgia, the new president of the Robert Burns Association of North America (RBANA), joined by special



guests, Doug Matheson and Jamie Osborne, the presidents of the Edmonton and Calgary Burns Clubs.

The entertainment, as usual was exceptional and special thanks to Club member Henry Cairney, a wee contingent of the Calgary Burns Club Singers, and others who helped the Club pull that part of the program off.

The Club was also again fortunate to make this a special Canadian event by having Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP) Staff Sergeant Mike Courty, return from last year to attend as the Chieftain's Aide de Camp. The Aide de Camp is the only guest allowed to wear a uniform or non-Burns awards/medals.

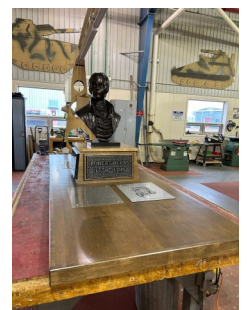
The night also featured three special additions to this special event.

One, the Club added a 30" wide extension piece to its banquet table that featured a plinth to display the Club's bronze Burns bust we acquired as part of the Club's Robert Burns 250th Anniversary in 2009, and original sponsor ap-



preciation plaques, which had been in the lobby of the Medicine Hat College but for a variety of reasons was relocated to

the Club's whisky tasting room a few years back. This was made for the Club by the craftsmen at the British Army Training Unit Suffield (BATUS) workshop, located at nearby Canadian Forces Base (CFB) Suffield, who I note made our original 8' X 32' custom Burns sectional banquet table. Where the Club will continue to haul out the bust for future JB dinners, the Club also hopes to also show off our Burns bust at future events.



Second, the Club added a sixth course to its special menu, that being ostrich. This came from the Prairie Ostrich Ranch located at

nearby Bow Island, and the Club gave special thanks to Club Vice President John Cameron for helping to pull this off. The Chefs at the venue also gave extra effort to ensure this course was as fantastic as it was. The reviews are in, it was a hit, and ostrich will be back next year to go along with our Salmon and Caviar appie, Cock o' Leekie soup, Stacked Haggis, Rack o' Lamb, Cranachan, Athol Brose. etc.

Third, another new treat for the Club was the addition of a new 8" X 10' full standing backdrop that depicts a famous scene from Tam o' Shanter, the dancing witches in the abandoned Kirk at Alloway with Tam peeking in a window. This scene depicts that part of Tam o' Shanter just prior to Tam being discovered, then chased by the witches over the Brig o'



Doon. A great backdrop for the Address to the Haggis and other presentations. With proper room lighting it also worked well to make guests actually feel they are actually sitting at the Auld Kirk at Alloway, and for guest photos/selfies.

The Club has and continues to offer its World-Famous Whisky Bar and have a proper Poosie Nansie present to ensure all attending, and especially the Club's secretary, stay in

line. Alas, however, this doesn't always work out but the Club will keep trying (LOL). Every year the Club tries to outdo itself and 2025 will be a challenge that the Club is ready to take on.

Respectfully submitted by the Medicine Hat Burns Club's most humble secretary

Ken Montgomery



Robert Burns and Taxes

Nothing is as certain as death and taxes. Once again, we are facing the annual coming of the income tax season, scurrying around seeking receipts, bills and invoices. How did Robert Burns face the similar situation in Ayrshire in his time? A lot happened with Robert Burns after moving to Mossgiel. Great Britain, then as now, was staggering under a staggering monstrous national debt and desperately needed funds. Soon after their arrival at the Gavin Hamilton farm he rented, Burns received a packet of tax forms from the government tax collector in Ayr, his old friend Aiken, that required him (Burns) to list all his assets. This was the period in Britain's history when William Pitt was Prime Minister and, history tells us, how he overspent the public's money on his failed overseas adventures. (Sound familiar?)

In any event Burns, always the cynic, and never afraid to sarcastically rain ridicule down upon the heads of anyone he thought deserved it. He seriously considered the documents that lay before him. Taxable assets then, included farm equipment, hired hands, beasts and wheeled conveyances. In true Burns fashion he composed his inventory in mocking prose, more as a measure to amuse Aiken than as a cynic. Burns wrote: "Heaven had sent him one more than he wanted, son-sie, smirking dear-bought Bess. (his daughter by Lizzie Paton). He "refused to pay a tax on either her or her mother". He had, he said, "paid enough for them already", but he promised to do good and be better:

"Frae this time forth, I do declare
I'll ne'er ride horse nor hussy more; (Lizzie)
Thro' dirt and dub for life I'll paddle
Ere I so dear pay for a saddle...



The Kirk an 'you can tak' you that!
It puts but little in your pat!"

Beasts included "carriage" horses. Burns claimed he had no carriage horses, but he did have: "four plough horses of gallant mettle" including one he called "a good old has-been that had been strong and willing in its day." Another was a "well-going filly that had often brought him safely home from Kilmarnock after a carousal at the Inn." Another one of his horses Burns described as "As worthy a beast that every rode hides or rope;" and his fourth horse, as Burns described, was "a stubborn, capricious, stark mad beast that had been named Highland Donald for its sins." Burns admitted to also owning a promising young colt, "the best that ever run before a tail" which could bring 15 pounds if it lived to maturity.

Burns owned no "carriage" but he admitted to owning three carts and two wheelbarrows one of which had a broken handle, and a spindle knocked out of the wheel rendering it more suitable for the firewood his mother made use of it for.

Farm hands were another challenge. Burns claimed he had three young, hired lads one of which walked before the plow removing larger rocks lest they damage the shears and another who assisted with the threshing. The third, he wrote, was a very wee lad who helped with the feeding of the beasts. The farm lads, according to Burns' description, were "notable for their noisy behavior and exceeding healthy appetites."

It is interesting to note also, that one of Burns' duties was to daily examine the three lads as to their proficiency in the Kirk's Catechism requirement. As much as he ridiculed

Robert Burns and Taxes (continued)

the Kirk and its formalities, he still complied with the requirements they levied upon everyone.

He had no female servants: "Lord keep me free o' a' temptation!" (a sly reference to his relationship with Lizzie, no doubt); neither did he have a wife... "an that my bliss is, an ye hae laid no tax on misses!" His inventory to the excise was dated February 22, 1784. By the next year, 1785, Burns' passion for Jean Armour had ignited his fertile brain and he produced such masterpieces as: Rantin, Rovin' Robin, The Jolly Beggars, The Cotter's Saturday Night, and The Twa Dogs, among others. He churned out numerous Epistles and Epigrams, all of them great hits

with the tavern crowd. One wonders if Burns ever bought a drink himself.

In contrast to his examining the farm lads on their Catechism, his epic poem The Holy Fair, quite the reverse, was derisive to the Kirks annual Communion services that gave Burns a lot of material by which he unleashed his contempt for the sacrosanct and holy observances of the faithful to the annoyance of the Kirk Elders's. Jean's parents, faithful pillars of the church, were likewise unamused.

Well, I've drifted away from Burns' tax problems, a phenomena we all experience in different degrees. I suppose the old axiom is probably still true: "The more things change, the more they stay the same."

Seóras MacGillefhaolain. (George McClellan)
USA Director, RBANA

Ken Montgomery of Medicine Hat found this story, about Burns' former farm, and found it interesting, passing it along for our edification:

\$344 for a coffee? Scottish farm is selling UK's most expensive cup

The Associated Press

A Scottish dairy is making the audacious bid to sell what it's calling Britain's most expensive cup of coffee.

For the equivalent of \$344, an investor in the farm gets a flat white. That's a double shot of espresso topped with a layer of steamed milk and a fleeting work of foam art.

The buyer also gets 34 shares in Mossgiel Organic Dairy, a farm once worked by Scotland's national poet Robert Burns.

The dairy's owner Bryce Cunningham says the coffee costs about 80 times more than an average flat white but its helping to fund the growth of his sustainable operation.

Join Us in Atlanta for the 2025 RBANA AGM and Conference!

Dear RBANA Members,

We are delighted to extend an invitation to the 2025 RBANA Annual General Meeting and Conference, hosted by the Burns Club of Atlanta on May 9 and 10, 2025. The registration form is already in your hands (and included in this edition of *The Tattler*), so don't wait—secure your spot today for this extraordinary weekend of Burnsian fellowship and celebration!

Host Hotel: Hilton Garden Inn, Buckhead
Our home base for the weekend is the Hilton Garden Inn Hotel in Buckhead, a comfortable and convenient venue in one of Atlanta's most vibrant districts. Take advantage of the special RBANA rate, available from May 7 to May 11, by booking your room directly with the hotel. This extended rate offers the perfect opportunity to explore Atlanta before or after the main events. Full information on booking is included on the registration form.

Conference Highlights

The full conference fee includes a variety of events that showcase Atlanta's rich culture and history while celebrating the legacy of Robert Burns.

Early Arrivals - Thursday, May 8:

Informal Gathering: For those arriving early, we are introducing an optional informal gathering at the hotel. Join us for a relaxed evening to reconnect with friends and meet new members of the RBANA community. This event is a separate charge on the registration form.

Friday, May 9:

Golf Tournament: The annual RBANA golf tournament will take place early Friday



morning at the beautiful Bobby Jones Golf Course, offering a great start to the weekend for our golfing enthusiasts.

Morning Excursion: Attendees will enjoy coach transfer to the Atlanta History Center, a premier museum complex where you can

delve into captivating exhibits.

Evening Ceilidh: In the evening, the coach will transport everyone to the Burns Cottage, a stunning replica of Burns' birthplace, (below) for a lively Ceilidh filled with music, poetry, and camaraderie. The coach will return you to the hotel after this unforgettable evening.



Saturday, May 10:

AGM & Lecture: The AGM will be held at the Hilton Garden Inn, followed

by an insightful lecture from Professor Patrick Scott, a distinguished Burns scholar.

Jim Connor Quiz: Test your knowledge of the Bard in the ever-popular Jim Connor quiz.

Afternoon Free Time: Spend the afternoon exploring Atlanta's other attractions, such as the Georgia Aquarium, World of Coca-Cola, or Martin Luther King Jr. National Historical Park.

Formal Burns Dinner: The weekend culminates in the spectacular formal Burns Dinner in the hotel's grand ballroom. Expect all the traditional pomp and ceremony that makes this event so special.

Why Attend?

This conference is more than an AGM; it's a

celebration of Burnsian fellowship, culture, and history. From the charm of the Burns Cottage to the camaraderie of the Ceilidh and the grandeur of the formal dinner, every moment promises to be memorable.

It's exciting to know that this will be our 45th AGM and Conference so don't delay! Book your rooms directly with the hotel and submit your completed registration form today to secure your place at what promises to be one of our most exciting gatherings yet!

We can't wait to welcome you to Atlanta!

Yours in Burns

Robert Hughes
President
The Burns Club of Atlanta

CONFERENCE REGISTRATION FEE PER PERSON: \$200.00(US)
ROOM RATE: \$109.00(US) + TAXES. SINGLE or DOUBLE OCCUPANCY
BREAKFAST and WIFI INCLUDED
ROOMS MUST BE BOOKED DIRECTLY WITH THE HOTEL

To reserve rooms on-line for this conference, use this link:

<https://www.hilton.com/en/attend-my-event/atkhgi-bca-9ca17c07-12b2-4511-a068-c162ec8a6bb3/>

The booking link is set up for a 5-night stay from May 7 through May 12 at the special

room rate of \$109.00 (US). Once you have selected the room type you can then edit your stay and select the actual nights you wish to stay.

If you wish to extend your stay beyond the 5-night period, please book all 5 nights and then contact Mark Ferguson at rbana2025agmc@gmail.com with the additional dates you wish to stay, and we will manually adjust your booking accordingly. The \$109.00 (US) rate will be honoured for additional nights.

If you prefer you can call the hotel directly on +1-844-311-9158 to book your stay. Make sure to mention "RBANA 2025" and "Burns Club of Atlanta rates" when booking. Room rates will remain in effect until April 16, 2025.

Any questions or concerns contact Mark Ferguson at rbana2025agmc@gmail.com

RBANA Registration open until April 16, 2025

<https://www.rbana.org/events/conferences/>

Special note: As it's become customary for those arriving on Thursday to get together as a group to meet up in a restaurant near the venue hotel, we are including the possibility to pay in advance for this option. We will be serving a buffet-style meal in a private room with a cash bar at the hotel. We hope this added feature will be welcomed by those arriving early.



Winnipeg Celebrates St Andrew's Day

For members of the St Andrew's Society of Winnipeg, the St Andrew's weekend got off to a brisk (some might say cold, some may something harsher) start at Winnipeg City Hall on

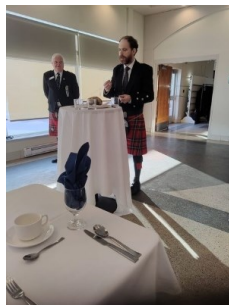


Friday morning, for the annual flag raising ceremony. Standing in for Mayor Scott Gillingham, Deputy Mayor Janice Lukes (l, with SASOW President Peter Heavysege) greeted members and delivered brief remarks before leading, behind piper Alex Peden, the assembled outside to raise the saltire. (below)



Following the flag raising the Society members travelled from City Hall to south Winnipeg, to the venue for the Sat-

urday night dinner, for another SASOW tradition, the Haggis tasting lunch, which included the traditional Address to a Haggis, (right) a soup course, the haggis with the usual accompaniments, and an offering of the Athol Brose.



Then came Saturday night. Members and guests, including RBANA Director Charles Cameron and his wife Darlene, (right) and several members of the



THE ST. ANDREW'S SOCIETY OF WINNIPEG

Burns Club gathered at the Caboto Centre for the big night, the 153rd celebration of St Andrew's Day by the oldest Scottish society in Western Canada.

Both Manitoba's Premier, Wab Kinew, and Winnipeg's Mayor Scott Gillingham, the main speaker for the night, graced the reception, Premier Kinew departing for

another engagement before the attendees moved into the main hall for dinner. (right)



Following the piping in of the official party, by MWO Dan Locke of the Queen's Own Cameron Highlanders of Canada, Dinner Chair, and incoming 1st Vice President Catherine Aastrom gave brief opening remarks before turning the evening over to morning radio host Brody Jackson.

Following the National Anthem, and a performance by the Royal Winnipeg Rifles Warrior Drums, (r) outgoing President Peter



Heavysege gave words of welcome, recognizing a number of distinguished attendees. Bard John Perrin conveyed Greetings from Sister Societies from Canada, the US and

St Andrews Night (continued)

beyond.

Following Grace, by Society Patron, Elder Jim Bear, (below) Scott Murray reprised his Friday luncheon Address to a Haggis. Following the Loyal Toast, by Lt Col Jon Baker, of QOCHOC, (below) The

Toast to the Society by Maj Andrew Flook, The Toast to Canada by Luke Settee, President of Clan Sinclair, Canada, replied to by Alexandra Paul, a relative descendant of the Society's founder, the assembled tucked into their dinner.

The Jazz Combo from HMCS Chippewa, a local navy reserve unit, interspersed their musical stylings between courses. The final toast of the evening to The Day An' A' Wha Honour It, by incoming President Dwight MacAulay, with Mayor Gillingham (r) responding with tales of his own Scottish



roots.

A performance by the QOCHOC Pipes and Drums (below) preceded the raffle draws, and the passing of the President's badge to Dwight MacAulay, (r) and the closing anthems (by Tradition, Flower of Scotland, Crimmond (Psalm 23), Auld Lang Syne, and of course, God Save the King).



There was an opportunity, for those, who wished, to remain with an open dance floor and recorded music, as many braved the brisk weather, and slippery parking lot, to their cars, and homes.

The weekend ended, as it usually does, with a Service of Worship, at Winnipeg's First Presbyterian Church which was attended by a hardy handful of Society members.



Credit for the photographs on this page, and some on the preceding goes to Ian McCausland Photography

The 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 Winter Edition is Saturday, February 15, 2025.

The edition will be published and distributed February 28, 2025.