



The Robert Burns World Federation Newsletter



Issue 1 January 2013

Message from the President, Bob Stewart.

Welcome to the first bi-monthly newsletter to keep members informed more directly about the work of the Federation and more generally about items of interest relating to Burns and his works.

Secretaries of Burns clubs and other organizations within the Federation are strongly encouraged to forward the newsletter on to club members. This will ensure the widest possible distribution and allow more direct communication to members.

The newsletter should allow us to reduce the cost associated with producing and posting three Chronicles per year but also enable us to move to a more substantial annual Chronicle as existed in the earlier years of the Federation. The annual format is still held in great esteem by Burns' scholars not only because of its scope for weightier articles, but also because it provided a more complete historical record of the Federation. We realise, however, that members had become used to more regular communication by having three Chronicles through the year. Hopefully a newsletter will help make up for the lack of the other two Chronicles and act as a useful supplement to the annual Chronicle.

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A Seasonal Song

The wintry west extends his blast,
And hail and rain does blow;
Or the stormy north sends 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.

Winter by Robert Burns

Tune: Macpherson's Rant

Chief Executive Confirmed



Until recently Alison Tait was employed in the post of Chief Executive on a temporary basis. However, based on her outstanding efforts in promoting the Federation and incredibly efficient running of the HQ

office over the past year, the Board was delighted to offer Alison the post on a permanent basis. Alison brings a wealth of experience and business acumen to the post. She holds a BA degree in Business Admin / Finance and runs her own business development company. She also mentors local young enterprise candidates and is actively involved in the Ayrshire Association of Business Women and the Federation of Small businesses.

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New Office Assistant - Corinne Buivenga

In order to allow Alison time to concentrate on building up the profile of the Federation and to generate a network of contacts the Board has appointed an administrative assistant to help run the office. Corinne Buivenga (pronounced bouffin hah) from Craigie, Ayrshire, has stepped seamlessly into the role and provided great support to Alison.

Anyone who has spent a day in the RBWF office in Kilmarnock will realize just what a busy little place it is. As Corinne says, "The day in The Dower House is never dull. We can have calls from anywhere in the world. For example, we have recently had a call from one of the Burns family in Maastricht in The Netherlands. Marcel Herpers was buying material for his Burns Supper and wanted to discuss this. This morning we had a call from Detroit from someone enquiring about a Burns Supper. Of course there are often calls from members who are looking for help as well as schools with enquiries regarding the Schools Competition. As well as dealing with items for the Chronicle, we also have enquiries for articles for other magazines, such as an article for their Easy Jet January Magazine.

There is always a heavy postbag of letters delivered from Royal Mail. These will be split into members paying fees, schools ordering certificates, bills and payment of invoices etc. Logging membership details is an ongoing activity as is dealing with sales which involves updating stock lists, creating invoices and shipping items. I go to the bank once per week and to the post office most days. For schools certificates we need to log the details required for the school, log the cheque for the bank, and post the certificates. Almost 15,000 certificates are sent out annually catering for around 100, 000 pupils in the schools' competition's categories of writing, recitation, singing, instrumental, project, and art.

Visitors to the Dower House are always welcome and we often get people popping in.

All in all it is a busy wee office with a very wide variety of work on a day to day basis."

Record Your Burns Supper

In Lanarkshire Allanton Jolly Beggars Club held their 55th Burns Supper but one with a certain difference: the evening was recorded. Of course this is not claimed as a "first ever" time a recording has been made of a Burns Supper but the background was probably different for two reasons. The first was to ensure that all the recipients of the local Wishaw and District Talking Newspapers weekly Disc would get a copy. A master disk is assembled in their production studio and then fast copying machines go into action and multi copy the required one hundred and seventy in a short space of time. These disposable disks are placed in re-usable padded envelopes and distributed free of charge by the Post Office. The disk is kept and the envelope returned for the next issue. This service is a lifeline to visually impaired people and helps keep them up to date with local happenings. Great appreciations was expressed by those getting the disks as they did feel being part of a real local Burns Supper.



The second reason for the recording was for the Club Members and others to get a permanent record of the evening. There was also a spin off use for Club fund-raising purposes and so far sale of the disks has generated a

very valuable contribution towards meeting the costs associated with the schools competitions.

However noble the concept might be it is advisable to plan ahead of the event to ensure that any future problems are not inadvertently caused. Once the Speakers, Singers and Reciters have been identified it is good practice to firstly advise them of the recording intention and also ask them for their written assent to their being recorded. It is unlikely that you will get a refusal but if people sign and give their permission there should be no comeback whatsoever on your Club. A local Hospital Radio Station or a Talking Newspaper are perfectly competent to make a good quality recording suitable for being copied and may even help with production of copies. Further details on recording your Burns Supper can be obtained from Murdo Morrison by emailing murdomorrison13@blueyonder.co.uk

Frank Shaw

One of the speakers at the Glasgow University Annual Conference entitled *Robert Burns: At Home and Abroad* was Frank Shaw who delivered a fascinating talk on the history of the Burns Club of Atlanta.

Frank is the mastermind behind a column **Robert Burns Lives** on the ElectricScotland website which can be found at: www.electricscotland.com/familytree/frank/burns.htm

There are now over 160 chapters on the website each one featuring an article covering a diverse range of topics related to Burns. They are well worth a read. Frank is a keen supporter of the Federation and acknowledges his debt to the Burns Chronicle as an invaluable source of research material. His introductory remarks to the site are instructive as to his motivation for creating such a resource and reflect great credit on his dedicated scholarship over many years:



“The column will attempt to bring insights into Burns for those who may not be as familiar with Burns as they would like. On more than one occasion I have heard people say they would like to know more about the writings of Burn but they try to understand the Scots dialect and eventually give up – sooner rather than later. I know. I have been there. Done that!

Well, nearly two years ago I took the bull by the horns and joined the Burns Club of Atlanta. I felt that the only way to get past this "bump in the road", aka understanding the Scots dialect, was to expose myself to those who know more than me on the subject and buy books on Burns to study. Not everyone is fortunate enough to have a local Burns Club to fall back on for information about Scotland's National Bard, his life and his work. So, I discussed with Beth Gay, our Editor, about the possibility of having a regular column on Burns. Why wait for Burns Night one time a year to honor Burns? Maybe the haggis but not Burns! This will be like a mini correspondence course without the exams. It will be an *Introduction to Robert Burns 101*, if you please. Guest authors, and laymen like myself, will write this column and from time to time, I'll stick my two cents worth in with an article or two.”

We, as a Burns community can only say that those two cents have been a magnificent investment.

The Burns Armorial Bearings



Many members will have seen the Burns family crest, which the Poet designed himself, but may not be familiar with the elements that make it up. They are described in detail by Burns in a letter to his friend Alexander Cunningham on 3rd March 1794. It suggests Burns was well versed in matters of heraldry. He describes the shield as follows:

“On a field, azure, a holly-bush, seeded, proper, in base; a Shepherd’s pipe & crook, Saltier-wise, also proper, in chief. --On a wreath of the colors(sic) a woodlark perching on a sprig of bay-tree, proper, for Crest. Two mottoes:

Round the top of the Crest ‘Wood-notes wild.’ At the bottom of the shield, in the usual place. ‘Better a wee bush than nae bield’ (a small bush is better than no shelter).

By virtue of generous funding from the Burns Howff Club in Dumfries, the Coat of Arms of the Poet was matriculated by the Burns Federation with permission being granted by the Lord Lyon, King of Arms of Scotland. An illuminated parchment, narrating the pedigree as proved, is held by the Federation and a duplicate recorded in the Public Register of All Arms and Bearings in Scotland. Most importantly, this means the Coat of Arms cannot be reproduced without the explicit permission of the Federation.

Stay in touch



Changed your e-mail? Let us know so we can keep you updated on the latest news and information. E-mail the office admin@rbwf.org.uk This is especially relevant for secretaries of clubs because we are relying on you to distribute the newsletter to club members.

Federation Appeal



President Bob Stewart sent out a letter recently which explained the financial challenges facing the Federation following the withdrawal of core funding by the Scottish Government. This funding had been vital to enable the Federation to satisfy its aims and objectives and also to enhance its profile to a wider audience. We need to make up this shortfall.

So far several clubs and individuals have responded positively to the appeal which is very encouraging. The Board is very keen to avoid raising subscription fees. All avenues to generate new income streams are being explored. This will take patient effort and the donations will buy some time to allow this to happen. Please consider making a donation (ideally with Gift Aid) which you feel would be appropriate and, affordable.

Share your events



Have you attended or staged a Burns event recently which you think others would enjoy? Then send a few lines about it and let the newsletter publicise it. For example, a review posted by Thornhill Burns Club of the production *Love and Memories* by students from Reid Kerr College prompted a further booking for

this talented group in *An Evening with Burns* at the National Trust for Scotland's property Broughton House in Kirkcudbright.

The Big Burns Supper – Dumfries 25-27 Jan

After a highly successful inaugural event in 2012, Dumfries is all set for a bumper repeat of the Big Burns Supper. The two days are crammed with an eclectic mix of events for the whole family. The 80-page brochure detailing all the events can be found on the website: www.bigburnssupper.com



For the busy festival-goer, ten-minute Burns Suppers will be served and performed throughout the weekend at the Globe Inn taking participants through the experience from the Selkirk Grace right through to Auld Lang Syne. School classes will have the opportunity to take part in music and Scots language sessions delivered by Dr Fred Freeman. Schools will also take part in the Opening Show and will be given 3 full days training in theatre, dance, music and performance.

Centre for Robert Burns Studies – University of Glasgow



The photo of the replica Burns cottage in Atlanta graced the flyer for the annual conference organized by the Centre for Robert Burns Studies which was held on 12 January this year. Hopefully some conference items will appear in the Chronicle in due course. Many will also appear progressively on the Centre's website www.gla.ac.uk/robertburnsstudies. This will include the songs sung at the conference by renowned singer/songwriter Bill Adair. Other songs are already available on the site by clicking [Burns C21 Blog](#) on the *Editing Burns for 21st Century* page: <http://burnsc21.glasgow.ac.uk> The site also provides details of the AHRC research grant awarded to the Centre to produce a multi-volume edition of Burns's work, to be published by Oxford University Press over 15 years. The first vol,

Burns's *Prose* is due out by the end of 2013 with Burns's *Songs for George Thomson* and Burns's *Songs for James Johnson* to follow.