

THE SCOTS CANADIAN

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Summer 2004

Dr. Graeme Morton appointed Chair of Scottish Studies

After almost 19 years of dedicated effort by the Foundation, North America's first Chair in Scottish Studies has been appointed at the University of Guelph, home to Canada's oldest established Scottish studies program and largest library collection of Scottish materials outside of Scotland. Graeme Morton, formerly a senior lecturer in economic and social history at the University of Edinburgh, has joined U of G in August as the Chair in Scottish Studies and a professor of history. Already, the enthusiasm over his appointment can be felt at Guelph.

"This is great news for the university," said Jacqueline Murray, dean of the College of Arts. "Not only are we gaining one of the world's top Scottish scholars, but the creation of the chair is another indication of our position as one of the world's foremost

centres of Scottish studies."

The permanently endowed chair was made possible entirely through \$2.1 million in private donations, including a \$1 million gift from the Scottish Studies Foundation.

As Chair in Scottish Studies, Morton will be mainly responsible for conducting research and guiding students. He will expand outreach activities to promote undergraduate and graduate education in Scottish studies and will enhance international connections, particularly with Scotland. A popular media commentator on Scottish events, he will work closely with the Scottish Studies Foundation to promote the study of Scotland and Scots in Canada.

Morton is one of the most exciting new Scottish historians of his generation. His work on *Scottish National Identity and Nationalism in the Nineteenth Century*, (1999) has become the standard work in the field, while his work on *William Wallace: Man and Myth* (2001), which has sold over 5,500 copies and is about to be issued in paperback, has brought his scholarship to a whole new audience outside the academic world and has made him a sought-after commentator by media and public groups.

Foundation members may remember his entertaining talk at the Scottish Studies Colloquium in Fall 2002. His commitment to teaching has been demonstrated in his co-authoring of a Sociology textbook and his co-editing of three new books which will be widely used in the teaching of Scottish History. Of especial interest to Foundation members is his new research project which compares federalism and devolution in Canada and Scotland.

Faculty at Guelph look forward to his appointment which will increase the range of Scottish-Canadian research and teaching in the program there. His editorial experience with the journal *Scottish Economic and Social History* will be a welcome addition to the editorial team involved in the re-launch of *Scottish Tradition* as the *International Review of Scottish Studies*.

As well as an excellent publishing record, Dr. Morton has demonstrated a dedicated commitment to teaching, engagement with



Dr. Graeme Morton

the community beyond the university, and involvement with academic work on an international stage.

At Edinburgh, he has been involved in various projects aimed at widening university access to students from under-privileged groups, and encouraging those who might never have thought of attending university to give it serious consideration. He has many innovative ideas on ways in which to involve Guelph students with Scotland, including the possibility of internships in the Scottish Parliament.

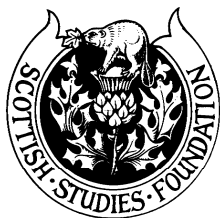
He was also funded by the Canadian High Commission to study nationalism in Canada and Scotland. Morton is part of an international team of scholars supported by the European Science Foundation studying "Writing National Histories in Europe." He currently serves on the council of both the Scottish History Society and the Scottish Economic and Social History Society.

In addition to teaching post-graduate and honours courses at the University of Edinburgh, Morton supervises master's and doctoral students. Indeed, one of his former PhD students is Kevin James who has served as convener of Scottish Studies at Guelph for the past two years.

Morton has firmly established his reputation as a generous and collaborative scholar, one who will be able to work closely and well with other members of the Scottish Studies program at Guelph. Indeed, the universal reaction from Scottish academics to the news of his appointment is that Scottish Studies could not hope for a more helpful and dedicated new colleague.

Scots Wha Hae

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their heritage in Canada
are invited to join*



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From the Chair

Dear Fellow Members,

As you can see from the front page, our key objective of establishing a Chair of Scottish Studies at the University of Guelph has at last been achieved. Therefore, on behalf of our Board of Directors, I would like to thank each and every one of you for your generous support and encouragement in making sure that Canada is in the forefront of Scottish Studies in North America. And, of course, I know I can count on you to give Dr. Morton a very special Canadian welcome to our country and I do hope you will be able to meet him in person soon.

Those of you able to attend the Fall Colloquium on October 2nd will be able to hear Dr. Morton's inaugural talk entitled *Reading History in a Nation's Eyes: Past and Future Visions of Scotland*. Framed by his own research priorities, Professor Morton will outline his vision for the future of the Scottish Studies Programme at the University of Guelph.

I would also like to thank all the people at the University who worked very hard behind the scenes to get our message across. Their faith in our ongoing ability to continue to raise funds to honour our pledge and continue to support the program was instrumental in their decision to have the position in place now.

On the topic of fundraising, our 12th Annual Tartan Day Dinner was a great success. Bill Somerville and his team did a magnificent job of organizing the event and the Casa Loma venue made for a wonderful sense of occasion. What with the splendour of the tartan, the stirring sounds of the pipes, and the traditional music of Scotland, it was the next best thing to being in a Scottish Highland castle.

In the true Scottish tradition of not taking anything too seriously, the Rev. Malcolm Sinclair (our Master of Ceremonies for the evening) surprised everyone by bursting spontaneously into song every now and then and had the audience in stitches at his numerous jokes and funny anecdotes.

We were delighted to have John McDermott receive our annual Scot of the Year Award. The award is designed to honour Canadians of Scottish heritage who have achieved distinction through their contribution to Canadian society and/or the international community at large. John, of course, is an internationally famous vocalist whose music in the Scottish tradition has delighted young and old all over the world,

but his work with the underprivileged, in particular with disadvantaged war veterans, is probably not as well known.

In the USA, John established the McDermott House exclusively through his fan club. The McDermott House is an innovative new housing cooperative in Washington, DC which houses as many as 27 formerly homeless veterans making the transition to self-sufficiency -- from homelessness to independent living. John views the naming of McDermott House, in tribute to his tireless work on behalf of veterans, as one of the greatest honours of his career.

He also established the Hope McDermott Fund in memory of his mother (whose name was Hope). John would like this to become the catalyst through which projects like the McDermott House could be initiated in other cities throughout the U.S. and Canada. "Mothers teach you courage and compassion, dignity and humility in equal measure," says John. "I can think of no better way to honor my own mother than to remember her through building awareness and compassion for people who have served, and in many cases, shown great courage, and now find themselves against odds greater than any wartime enemy."

By the way, we shall shortly be commencing our quest for the Scot of the Year 2005 and would be delighted to learn of anyone you believe to be a suitable candidate. Just drop us a line or send an e-mail along with a brief biography of the person you have in mind and we shall make sure the nominating committee takes your recommendations into account.

In June of this year we were pleased to have a visit from Alistair McIntyre, the designer of the Electric Scotland website. At the Foundation's "Hour Club" at the Bow and Arrow Pub in Toronto Alistair gave an interesting talk explaining the challenges of getting such a large website up and running as well as the activity needed to handle new material as it continually becomes available.

Alistair was also a guest on Denis Snowdon's radio show *A Little Breath of Scotland* on AM740 during which he described the wealth of Scots historical information at the University of Guelph library.

Alistair has successfully combined his love of all things Scottish with his knowledge of computer software to produce a website which gets over 15,000 daily visits from people all over the world. His website now holds around 10,000 web pages on historical matters pertaining to Scotland, Scots and people of Scots descent and is the largest Scottish history site on the web.

Although Alistair was born in Glasgow

and was educated at Dollar Academy, he spent much of his childhood in the Middle East where his father worked as an accountant for a multinational oil company. His early years abroad emphasized the importance that expatriates attach to their homeland and gave him a unique understanding of the international aspect of the Scottish tradition.

When the popularity of the Internet soared in the 1990s, Alistair jumped at the opportunity to turn his love of Scotland from a hobby into a full-time occupation.

Finally, I do hope to meet as many of you as possible on Sunday, September 5 during our upcoming Tall Ship Cruise which commemorates the arrival of the pioneer ship Hector back in 1773.

In the meantime, take care and thanks again for your support.

Sincerely,

David Hunter

Fall Colloquium scheduled for Saturday October 2nd

This year's Fall Colloquium, *Scottish Studies @ Guelph: Retrospect and Prospect* will be a very special occasion indeed, as it marks the inaugural address by our new Scottish Studies Foundation Chair, Professor Graeme Morton.

In celebration of his appointment, and in recognition of years of support from the Scottish Studies Foundation, its members and the wider Scottish-Canadian community, we are delighted to welcome you to campus for a day marking the achievements, and charting the future direction, of the programme.

The event will bring together graduates of the Scottish Studies Programme, current students and faculty, all highlighting research which was developed in the context of the Programme at Guelph.

We are delighted to offer complimentary registration and lunch this year to all Foundation members, in recognition of the tremendous support which our colloquia and programme have received from so many members of the academic and wider communities.

If you are able to attend this special occasion on Saturday 2 October, please advise the Scottish Studies Office by September 15, by email (scottish@uoguelph.ca), phone (519.824.4120, ext 53209), or by post:

Scottish Studies Fall Colloquium Registration
MacKinnon Building, Room 253
University of Guelph
Guelph, ON
N1G 2W1



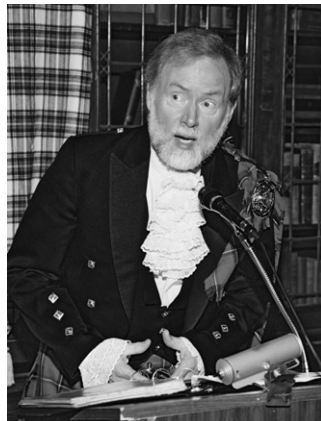
John McDermott receiving the Scot of the Year award from last year's recipients Ian Ronald and Alistair Gillespie



The St. Andrews College pipe band



John sings "Bonnie Mary o' Argyle"



Master of Cermemonies the Rev. Malcolm Sinclair



The Campbell Brothers

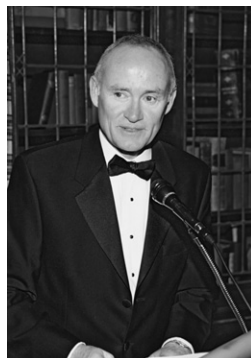


Michael MacMillan with the MacMillan family and Iain and Cristina Ronald

Hugh Heron with Mr. and Mrs. McDermott



David Hunter (SSF President), Jeanne Isley and John McDermott



Paul Kenny, John's friend since schooldays



Robin Lee Norris (University of Guelph)

Tartan Day 2004

The Scottish origin of the Canadian Boat Song

By Hubert G. Mayes

*From the lone shieling of the misty island
Mountains divide us, and the waste of seas
Yet still the blood is strong,
the heart is Highland,
And we in dreams behold the Hebrides.*

These lines, familiar to many Canadians, linger in the memory because of their imagery, their pleasing sounds and rhythms, and their mood of poignant nostalgia mingled with national pride. However, most people who know the quotation including Canadians of Scots descent - are unable to name the poem from which it is taken. Until recently I belonged to

Canadian Boat Song

Fair these broad meads -
these hoary woods are grand;
But we are exiles from our fathers' land.

Listen to me, as when ye heard our father
Sing long ago the song of other shores -
Listen to me, and then in chorus gather
All your deep voices, as ye pull your oars.

From the lone shieling of the misty island
Mountains divide us, and the waste of seas -
Yet still the blood is strong, the heart is
Highland,
And we in dreams behold the Hebrides.

We ne'er shall tread the fancy-haunted
valley,
Where 'tween the dark hills creeps the
small clear stream,
In arms around the patriarch banner rally,
Nor see the moon on royal tombstones
gleam.

When the bold kindred, in the time long
vanish'd,
Conquer'd the soil and fortified the keep -
No seer foretold the children would be
banish'd,
That a degenerate lord might boast his
sheep.

Come foreign rage -
let Discord burst in slaughter!
O then for clansmen true, and stern
claymore
The hearts that would have given their
blood like water,
Beat heavily beyond the Atlantic roar.

this category myself. My search for the source of the poem led me back to its origin in the literary world of nineteenth-century Scotland, but it also convinced me that Canadians should consider the well-known lines to be part of their own historical and cultural heritage.

In 1987, I happened to meet a film crew from Grampian Television of Scotland. They had come to Winnipeg to film segments of *The Blood is Strong*, a documentary on the Gaelic Scots at home and abroad. At the beginning of their prospectus for the program I read the lines quoted above, and underneath them the following indication of the source: "Song of the Canadian Fishermen". A faint echo of a different title sounded in my memory: somewhere I had read that the lines came from a poem called "Canadian Boat Song". I decided to confirm this recollection, because it seemed to me that if the other stanzas were equal in quality to the one I knew, the effort required to find the poem would be well rewarded.

Another part of my impression was that the "Canadian Boat Song" was by an anonymous author. I mistakenly assumed that this anonymous poet was a Canadian, and as a result spent several fruitless hours searching in the nineteenth-century sections of anthologies of Canadian poetry.

As it happens, there is another poem entitled "A Canadian Boat Song" in the anthologies. It was published in 1806 by the Irish poet Thomas Moore, and used to appear in Canadian school readers. I reflected that the almost identical titles of the two poems have probably added to the confusion surrounding the song of the Scottish exiles.

At this point in my search a Scot who was visiting Canada tactfully informed me that the "Canadian Boat Song" had been written by a Scot and that it had first appeared in Blackwood's Magazine (Edinburgh) in 1829. He also intimated that it was part of the literary heritage of every well-educated Scot. Though I was privately skeptical about every literate Scot's familiarity with the whole poem, I realized that I was on the track, not of a Canadian, but a Scottish "classic".



The "Lone Shieling"

Located near the Cabot Trail in Cape Breton, this shieling was erected in accordance with the terms of the will of Professor Donald S. MacIntosh, a native of Pleasant Bay, Inverness County. The will devised to the Province of Nova Scotia, one hundred acres of land, expressing the wish that the Government of the Province maintain a small park and build a small cabin to be constructed in the same design or plan as the lone shieling on the Island of Skye, Scotland. Photo: Alistair McIntyre

A quick glance at the table of contents of the Oxford Book of Scottish Verse brought me to the end of my quest. There it was: entitled simply "Canadian Boat Song," it appears under the heading "Anonymous (18th Century)". Classifying the poem as an eighteenth-century work may have been simply a careless mistake. On the other hand, the editors may have believed that the song was actually composed long before it appeared in Blackwood's. The poem consists of five four-line stanzas preceded in this version by an introductory couplet. I was to learn later that this couplet was originally intended as a refrain.

The poem presents few linguistic difficulties~ but two words may be unfamiliar to non-Scots: a "shieling" is a hut or cottage on summer pasturage and a "claymore" is a large two-edged sword formerly used by the Scottish Highlanders. The "royal tombstones" are perhaps a reference to the graves of the Scottish kings on Iona and on Inch Kenneth off the coast of Mull.

Though the second stanza has poetic qualities that make it stand out above the others, the rest of the poem deserves more attention than it has received. The images recalling the beloved Hebrides powerfully express the longing of the exile for a landscape he will never see again, and the last two verses cry out strongly, first against the cruelty and injustice of the Highland Clearances, which uprooted defenceless crofters to make room for sheep pastures, and second against the weakening of the Scottish



Pioneer ship Hector on its way from Ullapool in Scotland to Pictou, Nova Scotia in 1773. The Foundation's Tall Ship Cruise on September 5 will commemorate the voyage.

nation by the forced emigration of the very people who would have been its staunchest defenders.

Because certain aspects of the final stanza raised questions in my mind, and also because the Scottish visitor already mentioned told me that much had been written about the poem (especially the question of authorship), I decided to try to uncover more information about the "Boat Song" during a trip to Scotland in June 1990. I hoped that in some of the great libraries of Edinburgh or Glasgow someone would help me locate books and periodicals in which the poem and the problem of authorship had been examined.

But it was in a second-hand bookshop in St. Andrews that a remarkable stroke of luck provided the documentation I was looking for. I was about to leave the store after discussing some other subjects of research when the proprietor reached down to a shelf and produced a book which she said she usually showed to Canadians who came into the shop, and which might possibly interest me. It was entitled *A Literary Enigma - The Canadian Boat Song: its authorship and associations* by Edward MacCurdy, published by Eneas Mackay in Stirling in 1935.

After exclaiming at the coincidence that had brought this rare book and an equally rare buyer together, the bookseller and I concluded our transaction and I walked out with my valuable find. It contained a bonus - a musical setting of the poem by Calum MacPharlain and Andrew J. Orr. The latter had written on it "With A. J. Orr's compliments," and the previous owner had taped it to the title page.

MacCurdy's work discusses the first appearance of the poem, the manner in which it gradually acquired its reputation, and the

evidence for and against the possible authorship by eight poets. These are: the Earl of Eglinton, Sir Walter Scott, John Galt, William Dunlop, James Hogg, John Wilson, David MacBeth Moir and John Gibson Lockhart. In the course of his analysis of the claim for authorship (none of them made by the authors themselves), MacCurdy makes reference to all the books on the subject which preceded his, as well as to letters and articles which had appeared in newspapers and magazines.

The frontispiece of MacCurdy's book is a reproduction of a photocopy of the page in *Blackwood's Magazine* on which the "Boat Song" is printed. The poem appeared in Number 46 of a series of conversations published under the title *Noctes Ambrosianae*.

The participants in the discussions were regular contributors to *Blackwood's* who met in the evening at Ambrose's Tavern. On the evening in question several of these writers, including Christopher North (the pseudonym of Professor John Wilson) and the "Shepherd" (a rustic figure usually linked with the poet James Hogg), are engaged in an imaginary conversation about Scottish nationalism. One member of the group complains that because of changes in the entail law English capitalists are gaining control of land which belonged to the Scottish gentry. The discussion leading up to the poem unfolds as follows:

SHEPHERD:

Weel, if the gentry lose the land, the Highland anes at ony rate, it will only be the Lord's righteous judgment on them for having dispossessed the people before them. Ah! wae's me - I hear the Duke of Hamilton's cottars are a' gaun away, man and mither's son, frae the Isle o' Arran. Pity on us! was there a bonnier sight in the world, than to sail by yon green shores on a brow summer's evening, and see the smoke risin' frae the puir bodies' bit shielings, ilk ane wi' its peatstack and its twa three auld donnered pines, or saughs, or elms, sugh-sughin' owre the thack in the gloamin' breeze?

MR. NORTH:

Bye the bye, I have a letter this morning from a friend of mine now in Upper Canada. He

was rowed down the St. Lawrence lately, for several days on end, by a set of strapping fellows, all born in that country, and yet hardly one of whom could speak a word of any tongue but the Gaelic. They sung heaps of our old Highland oar-songs, he says, and capitally well, in the true Hebridean fashion; and they had others of their own, Gaelic too, some of which my friend noted down, both words and music. He has sent me a translation of one of their ditties - shall I try how it will croon?

MR. OMNES:

O, by all means - by all means.

MR. NORTH:

Very well, ye'll easily catch the air, and be sure you tip me vigour at the chorus. (The "Boat Song" appears here with the two-line chorus [Fair these broad meads, etc.] after each verse.)

SHEPHERD:

Hech me! that's really a very affectin' thing, now. - Weel, Doctor, what say you? Another bowl?

Apart from the inclusion of the chorus after each verse, the original *Blackwood's* version differs only slightly from the Oxford version already seen. In the original, the words "boat" and "song" in the title are connected with a hyphen, the words "from the Gaelic" follow the title, the word "lord" in verse four is written with a capital letter, and a colon is placed at the end of each stanza.

Because Professor Wilson (North) generally assumed responsibility for the *Noctes*, it was long believed that he had written the "Boat Song" as well as the dialogue. However, in 1855 when his collected works were published, it was revealed that the forty-sixth *Noctes* was not one that he had composed. Since Wilson was not in Edinburgh in the fall of 1829, the task of writing the *Noctes* fell upon his associate, John Gibson Lockhart, the son-in-law of Sir Walter Scott.

Much later, when the churchman Norman MacLeod asked the two men to reveal what they knew about the authorship of the "Boat Song," Lockhart maintained complete silence and Wilson disclaimed any knowledge of the matter. "The secret was so well guarded in the lifetime of those who knew," says MacCurdy, "that - except in the hardly probable event of new relevant matter of primary importance coming to light - it is hardly likely that there will ever be complete agreement as to its solution." MacCurdy speculates that Lockhart kept silent because he may have made changes in the poem as it was originally sent to him - changes important enough to give the poem a dual authorship.

After examining all the evidence, MacCurdy concludes that the most probable author of the "Boat Song" was David MacBeth Moir, a doctor in regular practice in Musselburgh. Writing under the pseudonym "Delta," he was a prolific contributor to Blackwood's Magazine. Of all the possible authors of the "Canadian Boat Song" he is, in MacCurdy's opinion, the one whose name "raises fewest difficulties".

But there are also positive reasons for MacCurdy's conclusion: Moir was a gifted poet; he had received letters from his friend John Galt in Canada describing Canadian boatmen and their singing; he had already written some verse about the lot of the Highland exile; and in the few years preceding the "Boat Song" he had published poetry making use of the eleven-syllable line known as the "sapphic" - the metre employed in the first and third lines of each stanza of the "Canadian Boat Song".

An aspect of the poem which has some bearing on the question of authorship is the change of tone between the third and fourth stanzas - a change which strengthens the theory that more than one author may have been involved. In verse four, the muted nostalgia of the previous verses gives way to bitterness, and in verse five there is an outburst of anger and sorrow.

According to MacCurdy, the first line of the last verse should be taken to mean: If foreign rage should come (to Scotland), and if Discord should burst into slaughter ... MacCurdy also points out that the viewpoint of the writer of the last stanzas is clearly the Western Highlands, and quotes in support of his assertion the following letter from a Mr. Hoare to the Glasgow Herald in 1924: "The last two stanzas are clearly written by the home-dweller bewailing the absence of the stalwarts, and the retributive justice that awaits the land in consequence when wars arise. No Celt in exile would put himself in this posture."

If this is so, there is a serious flaw in the unity of the poem, as the speaker in the first three stanzas is a Scottish-Canadian boatman who is addressing his fellow rowers. One can simply accept this shift in point of view as an accident which occurred as the author let himself be carried away by his emotions. It seems to me, however, that the author(s) can be defended by reading the last verse as follows: If Scotland should find herself obliged to take up arms to repel an invasion, she would then long for the presence of loyal clansmen wielding the fearsome claymore, but the hearts (our own) that would have given their blood freely for the homeland now' beat (over here) beyond the Atlantic's roar.

Another area of controversy has been the words "from the Gaelic" which follow the title. If indeed the poem was written in

Scotland and subsequently inserted into the Noctes dialogue, North's claim that the song had come to him from a friend in Canada and was a translation from the Gaelic was nothing but a whimsical deception on the part of Lockhart. MacCurdy states that half a century of continuous research both in Canada and in Scotland has revealed no evidence of any Gaelic original. To underline his point he quotes a Dr. Donald Masson as follows: "I lived among Canadian Highlanders all the way from Georgian Bay to Cape Breton, but I never heard a snatch of anything that looked in the least like the Gaelic original of the Canadian Boat Song." And Neil Munro, quoted by George Fraser in his study *The Lone Shieling*, affirms: "The poem, though always said to be a translation of a Gaelic song by a Canadian exile, was never anything of the kind. It is beautiful, but it is, in its thought, in its fancy, utterly unlike any Gaelic poem I know, and the thought and language of it are so manifestly simultaneous in their inspiration that it is inconceivable that it can be a translation in the commonly accepted sense of the term." In the face of such authoritative statements, it is unlikely that anyone would still believe the poem to be a translation of a Gaelic song from Canada.

I have the impression, however, that the composers of the musical setting of the poem (which predates MacCurdy's book) took the alleged Gaelic origin of the song seriously. They used the refrain "Fair these broad meads" as an introduction and composed a new chorus in Gaelic. Another intriguing aspect of the musical setting is the authors' treatment of verse four. They have put brackets around the stanza and placed beside it the words "may be omitted". Even in 1931 when the music was composed there was apparently a danger that someone might be offended by the line about "a degenerate lord." As far as I have been able to determine, this setting has never enjoyed any popularity in Scotland or Canada. This is not surprising, since in my view the tune is not at all appropriate for the words.

The search for the origin of the "Canadian Boat Song" led me, as we have seen, to the discovery that the stated source of the poem was almost certainly a hoax perpetrated in a Scottish periodical over 160 years ago, and that its author was probably a nearly forgotten writer named David MacBeth Moir.

Does this discovery have any significance for present-day Canadians? First, a comment on the hoax: it seems to me that no one should be troubled by Lockhart's deception concerning the origin of the poem. Since no author protested that he had not been given credit for his work, we can presume that Lockhart and the author had agreed on an anonymous presentation. What matters to us is the quality of the verse and the historical

and emotional associations that the poem has acquired with the passing of time. While some may have reservations about the praise that has been bestowed on the poem, few will dispute that it conveys in highly expressive language the attachment of Scottish expatriates to their homeland. To be precise, the singer and the other rowers are the sons of exiles. The first lines make this clear: "Listen to me as when ye heard our father/ Sing long ago the song of other shores -"; and Lockhart describes them as: "a set of strapping fellows all born in that country" (Upper Canada). The depth of emotion shown by these second-generation Canadians is all the more striking since they know about the land of their forebears only through the stories and songs of their parents.

Frequent references to the Boat Song on patriotic occasions and in writings about the preservation of Scottish traditions have gradually made the poem part of the cultural heritage of Scots in Canada. They will continue to hear it quoted at St. Andrew's Day banquets, Burns dinners, Highland Games and ceilidhs and so will other Canadians, for it is not just people of Scots descent who take pleasure from these events. When their emotions are stirred by the familiar lines, Canadian Scots should be aware that the poem is a legacy they share with Scots in the homeland. This common heritage extends of course to all parts of the world where descendants of Scottish emigrants remain conscious of their roots. In this regard the Scottish writer Neil Munro has said: "Today it [the poem] is one of those few lyrics which have become part of the common feeling of the British race throughout the world." Knowing the genesis of the poem should also make listeners and readers realize that at a time when there was widespread indifference to the plight of innocent people being driven off their crofts to make room for sheep, there was at least one non-Gaelic poet in Scotland who understood their suffering and had the courage to raise his voice in protest.

Finally, I do hope that the reprinting of the "Boat Song" may make it accessible to many who have been curious - as I was - to see the whole poem. Perhaps having a complete and authentic version readily at hand will stimulate speakers at Scottish gatherings to quote more than the second stanza. If "still the blood is strong, the heart is Highland," their listeners will respond with gratitude.

This article first appeared in the April/May 1991 issue of the Beaver. The author, the late Hubert G. Mayes, was a frequent contributor to "The Beaver." Mr. Mayes hailed from the fair City of Winnipeg and was involved in Scottish life there for many years. He was Professor of French at the University of Winnipeg until his retirement.

From the Mailbox

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Robert Service's Boss

I very much enjoyed your piece on Robert Service. It was a beautifully scripted short biography. It invited one's imagination to go to work just as his writings have done. He is a Canadian icon who has illuminated our history. It is not my purpose to deny his contribution - only to provide a little more detail on the context.

Mention is made of him as a bank employee Canadian Bank of Commerce in Victoria. My grandfather George Gillespie was his boss. His son, Kenneth Gillespie and Service shared junior clerk duties. This would have been about 1901. That's when the old Bank of B.C. was purchased by the Bank of Commerce. George Gillespie was the last manager of the old Bank of B.C. and the first manager of the Bank of Commerce, its new owner.

What about Robert Service as a banker? What were his duties? How did he perform them? Well, according to Kenneth Gillespie, Robert Service didn't like guns. Even more, he didn't like handling a pistol. But that was part of his duties.

One of the responsibilities of the junior clerks was the night-time security. The arrangements were a little rudimentary by modern standards; but practical nevertheless.

Each night one of the junior clerks was assigned to the bedroom immediately above the main vault. A hole had been cut in the floor. As a peephole it looked down over the entrance to the vault. And it was big enough to take the muzzle of a 45. Ken Gillespie is reported to have once said, "Robert Service wouldn't have known how to load the revolver, put the muzzle through the peep hole and pull the trigger".

Ken Gillespie, a cheerful, fiercely independent man who loved the outdoors had nothing but disdain for his fellow clerk. He referred to Service as a "hopelessly impractical itinerant Englishman who couldn't cross a cattle pasture without stepping in every cow pad". Whether Ken's education at the famous boy's school in Scotland, Loretto, had anything to do with his attitude towards Englishmen we can only guess. More likely it was because he and his brothers had been brought up in a - pioneering - We on the West Coast of Canada. They grew up with guns and used them for shooting game.

One can only guess too at what influence Robert Service's Glasgow roots might have had to do with Ken's attitude towards him.

In any event the two were soon competing for a promotion "up country". Both sought the opportunity. Robert Service won. He headed for the North and found his fame and fortune but not as a banker. He captured the romance, the excitement, the character and challenge of the North as few have ever done. For that we must be eternally thankful.

Alastair W. Gillespie
Toronto, Ontario

Ed: Thanks Alastair. What a coincidence, talk about six degrees of separation!

Dr. James Connor

Dear Mr. Hunter,

Back in 2000, I was in contact with you with regard to nominating Dr. Connor for the honour of "Scot of the Year"

I am writing to inform you that Dr. Connor passed away on February 25, 2004.

Dr. Connor was a great benefactor to the Scottish Studies Foundation both financially and "in kind". In 2000 he donated a magnificent set of rare Scottish Books to the library at the University of Guelph.

It is unfortunate that Dr. Connor could not have been honoured as Scot of the Year as he will be greatly missed by the Scottish community in London, Ontario, Canada and other parts of the world.

I am enclosing an excerpt from the London (Ontario) Burns Club newsletter which perhaps could be printed in the next copy of the Scottish Studies Newsletter.

Joan Turner
London, Ontario

Ed: Thanks Joan. Dr. Connor was indeed a great man and was a wonderful support to the Foundation and the University of Guelph. We are delighted to reprint the following excerpt from your newsletter:

In February the Burns club lost a member. That's always a hard statement to make because the club feels a great attachment to all of its members, past and present, but in Jim Connor we lost not only a member, a Past President and an Honorary President but also the man who came to the club, when it was probably its lowest ebb, held it together

and presided over it in the strongest period in its history.

During his time with the club, Jim was a major force in its attaining a profile and a reputation that extended far beyond the borders of our city, our province and our country.

The profile and reputation of the club were things that Jim guarded jealously and he was justly proud of all that was achieved during the many years in which he was involved. The development of our organisation was brought about largely by Jim's ideas, his vision and his ability to organise the membership and galvanize them into action.

Large Burns Suppers were held with attendances in the hundreds. They featured speakers from the political worlds of Canada and the UK, from broadcasting, from academia and from the arts. Scottish entertainments were mounted, featuring top Scottish stars such as: Andy Stewart, Kenneth McKellar and the Alexander Brothers. Conferences were convened, which were visited by Burnsians from both the Northern and Southern Hemispheres. Jim

Connor and the London (Ontario) Burns Club became known around the world.

Jim was front and centre in the club's involvement in city events such as Kavalkade. He was also a prime mover in the establishment of London's first Scots Heritage Week celebration.

There are few of us who see our dreams realised during our lifetime. However Jim Connor was twice blessed in this way. The co-founding of the North American Association of Federated Burnsians (NAAFB), now

the Robert Burns Association of North America (RBANA), was an extremely important event for him and for the Burns movement. Later, his elevation to the presidency of the World Federation came as a reward for all his efforts.

When we consider Jim Connor's life, in relation to the Burns movement, London's Scottish community and the Burns Club, we must not forget that he was first and foremost a husband and a family man who, as a family doctor, had an extended family made up of several generations of the city's population. The members of that family depended on him for their physical well-being and he was still serving his patients until shortly before his death.

As a man of many talents Jim had much to give and what he gave, he gave willingly. It would seem appropriate that only a few short weeks before his death on February 25, that, here in London, he presided over what was to be his final Burns Supper. Dr. Jim Connor will be remembered and missed by many.



Dr. Connor