



ALLANTON JOLLY BEGGARS BURNS CLUB

"I am afraid I cannot at this moment
accede to your request, as I am much harassed
with the care and anxiety of farming business,
which at present is not propitious to poetry..."

letter to Alexander Blair (April 1788)

AJBBC Bulletin

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A WORD FROM OUR PRESIDENT...

Quotes from Robert Burns seem to be appropriate for any occasion and on a visit to Stirling he deplored the state of Stirling Castle at that time as a reflection of lack of care for this historical iconic building. Shrouded in the History of Scotland and allowed to decay. Robert Burns quoting deterioration and apportioning blame...

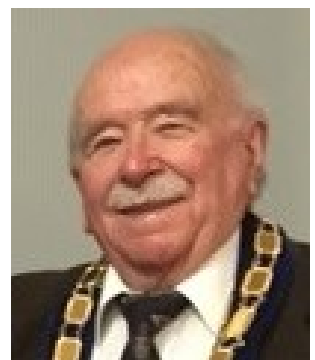
"Who knows them best despise them most".

These words have a bearing on many situations and as we hopefully ease out of lockdown everyone is expected to observe practices that will diminish and eventually get the upperhand on the pandemic. Unfortunately there are those who choose to ignore advice and leave the rest of us with the apprehension that another wave of that killer virus is coming.

Also "Forward though I canna see - I guess and fear", from the famous poem about the field mouse. We all have a need to look out for each other and reduce the guessing element and the fear.

Our Burns Club depends on the support of members and our hopes for the future are many but it needs continuing enthusiasm to convert these hopes in to reality.

Murdo Morrison
President



FROM THE EDITOR

The AJB Bulletin has come a long way since its inception just over a year ago with the initial sole intention of providing a simple club service of connecting the membership during the COVID lockdown. The main objective was to ensure that members who had little connect with the internet and email could be kept abreast of Club news and Club developments. Many of the issues were delivered by the Royal Mail or by hand through the good services of Martin Ryan and Helen Morrison.

Twelve months later: nobody would have envisaged or believed that the current recipients and contributors span the 5 continents of the globe. Many of the readers have good storytelling skills and have contributed well crafted and interesting yarns to the Bulletin, that have educated, informed and entertained.

Such is the interest among the Burns community for tales and snippets of unusual facts, figures and general stories related and linked to the Bard, that many readers and well known guests have dared to volunteer some very interesting personal details on how the works of Robert Burns has contributed or helped inspire various episodes in their lives.

This simple act of sharing some short or small, even personal, pieces of information demonstrates the need to remain connected and be able to share the significant and momentous moments in our lives or even just the most simplistic pleasures of friendship, fellowship and signal that fraternity is still alive, and thriving.

Through zoom and the internet we are enlarging and engaging with faraway places as we come together to celebrate our heritage and others things relating to Robert Burns

Let us embrace this development and accept new friends and readers to this ever flourishing adventure.

So keep the articles, ideas and innovations coming and don't be afraid to speak up and contribute.

Your thoughts and suggestions are most welcome.

thanks

Peter



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REV HAMILTON PAUL

There are many individuals and groups who can be credited with the perpetuation of the memory of Scotland's national poet amid the promotion of the works of Robert Burns but few can actually be lauded for their participation in the foundation of what we recognise today, that is the Burns' movement.

In the words of the writer Clark McGinn, while he was not exactly a * forgotten hero * the Reverend Hamilton Paul was the man who filled in the missing pieces and who, by ticking the boxes and speaking to the right people was the instrument by which the name of Robert Burns became a global icon especially in the area of Scottish cultural heritage, literature and entertainment by introducing us all to the phenomenon that is the global Burns' supper, the first of its kind being held in the * auld clay biggin * in January 1801.

Using the organisational skills and practices he gained, courtesy of his involvement within the Masonic community he is credited for * inventing * the Burns' supper not only in Alloway and the west of Scotland, where he also arranged the first Burns' supper in conviviality and camaraderie for the Glasgow/Ayrshire society in 1812 but internationally where today approximately nine million people take part in annual Burns' dinners.

Born in Ayrshire in the village of Bargany near Cumnock in 1773 and named after his father's employer, the Duke of Hamilton, he was lucky to have a loving childhood during which he became a bright scholar excelling in all matters education. This eventually led to a place at Glasgow University, where as a poet in his own right he earned a gold medal for his efforts.

After this formative period, during which he paid his way by tutoring he returned to Glasgow where he graduated in Divinity, finally returning to Ayrshire in 1800 where he was engaged as depute minister in Coylton, still finding time to engage in tutoring duties to a number of families.

He was a willing participant in the social circles of the area where his knowledge, convivial nature and eloquence ensured his invitation to the many evening events during which he regaled the assembled companies with selections of poems and talks on various subjects relative to the location, his station in the church and the glory of friendships.

He became the editor of the Ayrshire advertiser, which during his tenure benefited from the addition of his articles and subscriptions in relation to Ayrshire, poetry and the psalms.

An avid reader of Burns he was known not only for his support for the poet when he was in the right, but also for his unequivocal stance of protectionism whether the bard was in the right or in the wrong, a stance which could easily have resulted in him falling foul of the church authorities of the day.

His love of the Ayrshire bard's poems and songs, led to his involvement in the campaign to erect a suitable monument to Burns' memory and in consequence he, in concert with Alexander Boswell, the son of a local landowner embarked on a mission to fund what is now the Burns' monument in Alloway.

He is also credited as the saviour of the Brig O' Doon, the integral and most important landmark in the Tam O' Shanter poem which had been earmarked by local traffic commissioners for demolition in order that the stonework could be use for essential road repairs. The result as we are well aware of today is that the bridge was saved and Tam's legacy preserved.

His ministering duties however were of prime importance and eventually he was offered the minister's post which covered the parishes of Glenholme, Broughton and Kilbucho.

He continued hosting dinner parties and his clerical duties until his death in 1854, and I am proud to say that in concert with Walter Watson we managed to raise the funding for the restoration of the gravestone in Broughton cemetery which at the time was in danger of toppling over as a result of the expansive encroachment of tree roots.

I would urge all of our friends and cohorts to raise a glass to the Reverend Hamilton Paul during the course of future Burns' suppers and events.

I have attached a poem written by Paul in which his admiration for the poet Burns is front, centre and patently obvious.

*Nor with more joy the cottage fair, whose bosom love refines
The flow'ry garland for her hair, with rosy finger twines,
Than I this hawthorn shade beneath, where blossoms bend the bough, while fragrant zephyrs
round me breathe,
In weave the panegyric wreath, to deck the poet's brow.*

*Not with more joy the faithful youth, folds in his bridal arms,
The fair, who, to his plighted truth, resigns her blooming charms,
That I, at rise or fall of day, clasp to my breast by turns,
The volumes which embrace the lay of lorn love, or effusion gay
Breath'd from the soul of Burns.*

*Then come, ye lovely virgin throng, that grace the banks of Ayr,
Or roam Doon's bonnie braes among, while nature's face is fair,
Come, and I'll lead you to the vale where flowers perennial spring, And perfumes sweeter far
exhale, than those which the Sabeen gale,
Bears on his balmy wing.*

*Nor you with many a furrow'd line, whose cheeks are wrinkled o'er,
Forget how once a beauty's shrine, ye gloried to adore,
But oft revolve the moral page which eild and poortith mourns,
Or listen to the counsel's sage or tales to soothe the woes of age,
Penn'd by the hand of Burns.*

*Your sense and lair I envy not, whose upcast jaundiced eye
Perceives an universal blot in our poetic sky;
Your blood is cold, your pulse is still, your stream of life scarce flows,
But stagnates like a frozen rill, of love the pure, the tender thrill,
Your bosom never knows.*

*You seem to think a lengthened face, whence every smile is driven,
Will rank you on the lists of grace, as denizens of Heaven;
Can peace within this bosom dwell who taste and feeling spurns?
No-'tis the residence of hell whose gloom defies th' united spell,
Of music, song, and Burns.*

*Illustrious shades, if from the skies you still can bend an ear,
Your friends, regrets, their tears and sighs, you will delighted hear;
Oft! When you linger'd here below we spent the social hour,
And while we felt the genial glow, bade for his fate our sorrows flow,
Within his native bower.*

*And you, who in the vale of years are to our wishes left,
Of you-say our foreboding fears we soon will be bereft;
I've poured the melancholy strain O'er many timeless urns,
But oh, comparisons are vain, for all the pleasure and the pain,
Are swallow'd up in Burns.*

Brian Goldie



WHAT IS A CLARSACH?

An innocent question; a minefield of controversy and confusion in the answer!

First, a wee quiz: A clarsach is...

1. A multiple-pronged aluminium farming device for picking up hay
2. An effervescent pink-hued gargle to relieve sore throats
3. A small harp

Answer: none of them. Okay, that was not really fair, since there is a glimmer of truth in definition 3. I enjoyed making up definitions 1 and 2.

Clàrsach is Scottish Gaelic for harp but a harp is not a clarsach – unless in a Gaelic-speaking environment or community, at the Royal National Mòd, for example. The word clarsach is generic rather than specific.

Other instruments regularly feature in Gaelic ceilidhs and mòds – the violin, the accordion, the bagpipes. But we do not (as a rule) refer to them in everyday chat as *fidheall*, *bogsa-ciuil* or *a' pìob mhòr*.

As emblematic of Scotland as the bagpipes (but even older), the harp in its basic form – a row of graduated strings contained within a wooden frame – fell into obscurity for various historic reasons, including the demise of the clan system where every Clan Chief once had his personal harper.

In 1891 An Comunn Gàidhealach (The Gaelic Association) was formed to promote Gaelic culture and history by way of the Royal National Mòd, its annual Gaelic-based festival. In the early to mid 20th century a stalwart group of members from An Comunn Gàidhealach decided to revive the old Gaelic harp, as it was called then. The instrument evolved gradually during the second half of the 20th century thanks to innovative and highly skilled harp makers, mainly based in England.



Marjory Kennedy-Fraser and her daughter Patuffa playing her Celtic harp, Songs from the Hebrides, c. 1922

These harp makers maintained the aesthetically-pleasing look and framework of the old Gaelic harps as well as creating a far more sophisticated instrument capable of greater musical possibilities.

Harps galore

A harp today comes in a diversity of different shapes, styles and sizes – probably greater than any other musical instrument – each with individual characteristics and playing techniques. The majestic concert harp has its own classical tradition and history far removed from the early harps of Scotland. In the early 19th century a complex mechanised system was devised to achieve chromatic notes (think black notes on the piano). The system was operated by foot pedals leaving the hands free to produce beautiful music on the strings; hence this harp became the **pedal harp**.

Meanwhile, the intrepid harp makers of the 20th century endeavoured to introduce a chromatic system to the old Gaelic harp. Metal blades were fitted at the top of the strings, a separate blade for each string; these could be used to raise the pitch of the string by a semitone. Thus a string tuned to C could be raised to C sharp. Soon the clumsy metal blades were replaced with levers – which could go up or down, sideways or even twisted like a hook to achieve the coveted chromatic semitone notes. It was a one-way system; the strings could only be raised by a semitone, never lowered.

By means of setting the levers appropriately at the beginning of a piece of music, this ‘new’ form of harp was able to play tunes in different keys. If a lever change was required mid-tune then the left hand was used, thus leaving the right hand to maintain the melody.

The Welsh harp is different again: it has sets of three parallel strings, no pedals, no levers, and the chromatic notes are achieved by playing the middle strings.

Renaissance

The old Gaelic harp now had its renaissance. A number of expert harp makers were established throughout the UK, mainly in England and Wales, with a few in Scotland. The name given to the resurrected harp of Scotland was **lever harp**; a logical choice to differentiate it from the pedal harp.

Today, barring the diminutive lap harp which can be played troubadour style, most other harps fall into one of these three distinct categories: pedal, lever or Welsh.

The pedal harp is glorious to behold, usually with rich ornamentation, but to afford to buy one, a second mortgage is needed, a larger car and a fleet of agile young men to help transport the instrument.

The lever harp has become the harp of choice for many of us today (including me): it is accessible for all ages and abilities of players, at an achievable price (though still expensive) and relatively transportable (shame about losing the agile young men though).

Since the ladies (mainly) who instigated the revival of the lever harp were members of An Comunn Gàidhealach, at the end of the Mòd held at Dingwall in 1931 they formed an offshoot group: An Comunn Clarsaich, to promote the ancient harp of Scotland in its renaissance.

This in time became The Clarsach Society: strictly speaking the anglicised version should be The Harp Society, but the original hybrid name endures. The Clarsach Society rapidly grew and flourishes today, with branches throughout the UK; the Society organises and runs the highly successful annual Edinburgh International Harp Festival. This year the Society celebrates its 90th anniversary, and the Harp Festival its 40th.

What's in a name?

Meanwhile, the lever harp – for all its popularity – continues to suffer from an identity crisis; it has acquired a bombardment of alternative names, mostly misconceptions. The instrument is played and enjoyed throughout the world, especially in America, but hardly anyone ever uses its correct name.

Celtic harp, Scottish harp, folk harp, small harp – and (mainly in Scotland) clarsach... not a single one is an accurate moniker. The harp is no longer confined to Scotland and Celtic countries, and although we play folk music (sometimes) our repertoire of music is wide-ranging across most musical genres including classical and jazz. Nor is the lever harp particularly small any more. In its standard form the lever harp has 34 strings (can be more or fewer); the pedal harp in its standard form has 41 strings. It is hard to tell the difference in tonal and musical quality between a pedal and lever harp just by listening.

In America there is an abundance of harp groups, societies and festivals; these are usually described as events for Celtic or folk harps. The word clarsach is probably unknown to transatlantic harpists. Magazines exist: the Harp Column and the Folk Harp Journal.

A few years ago I was fortunate enough to be ship's harper on a Saga cruise (an exciting adventure): friendly passengers came to talk to me, and I was quizzed about my harp.

"Is it a Welsh harp?" was the most frequent question. Or sometimes "Is it an Irish harp?"

No one mentioned the word 'clarsach'.

It is unlikely Robert Burns ever knew the word either but he would have been familiar with harps. Primitive forms of the pedal harp languished in corners of elegant Edinburgh drawing rooms mainly used to accompany singing, not as today capable of playing independent fully harmonised and chorded solo melodies.

Burns was not a Gaelic speaker but he admired the Gaelic culture; he set a multitude of his poems to beautiful old Gaelic tunes. Many of these songs are today loved and performed throughout the world, and are especially poignant played on the lever harp.

In the cause of research, I have checked out a few of the current online definitions of 'clarsach'. There are almost as many as there are styles, shapes and sizes of harps.

One of the most amusing is: *A clarsach is a small practice harp invented by Derek Bell of the Chieftains for children to use before progressing to the big harp.*

To sum up

What, indeed, is a clarsach? This rambled account has probably only further confused you. The subject continues to be a hot-bed of controversy. The opinions given here are strictly mine; there are those who might disagree with them.

What do I call this glorious instrument, which in the right hands can produce sublime music? I call it a harp; easy to pronounce, easy to spell and – mostly – folk know what it is.

As the Bard himself might have declared:

A harp's a harp for a' that!

Joan Matthewson

INSPIRATIONAL STANZAS

This section invites Bulletin readers to share a favourite verse or stanza from a Burns poem that was especially poignant or inspirational or even summed up a sentiment that chimed or resonated with a personal belief. A selection of those verses submitted are shared here:

*Ye banks and braes o' bonnie doon
How can ye bloom sae fresh and fair?
How can ye chant ye little birds
And I sae weary full o' care?
Ye'll break my heart ye warbling birds
That wanton through the flowery thorn
Ye 'mind me o' departed joys
Departed never to return*

As a song I always thought these two verses were but one verse in this beautiful Burns Poem-Song.

I have lived in America well over 25 years, but hale from The Durham Dales, in England, near the River Tees. If I am homesick, to remind me of home I listen or I sing the old folk songs. This poem of Burns gets me every time: "*and I sae weary full O'Care*". Does it make me sad? No, it does not. It helps me visualize the River Tees meandering along on a sunny afternoon and the speed of life slow and measured. Sitting in the garden enjoying a cup of tea and chatting to friends and family. Even though I know that the Doon River is up in Ayr.

"Ye warbling birds that wanton through the flowery thorn"

The flowers and hedges that grow everywhere at home and the birds chirping in the background, always spring to my mind. I love my current home, but this poem-song transports me to the land of my birth, to the beautiful Dales where my roots are so deep with my ancestors, without ever having to leave my current home. When introduced to this song in what seems like a thousand years ago, I had no idea it was Burns. Perhaps it is an advantage, not knowing much about who wrote a poem or song as then we truly create a connection more personal to ourselves. Because when you read the rest of the poem-song it becomes obvious that this is all about lost love. But there are so many types of love. But for me this one poem-song will always conjure up my love of my homeland.

Karen Roberton

President

St Andrew's Society of Mid-Maryland USA

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My great granny Mary Howat was born on Mount Oliphant farm on 22nd February 1858. The Burns song for me is "Handsome Nell" which was written by Burns at Mount Oliphant about his first love Nellie Kilpatrick. The verse I would pick is the first one:

*Once I lov'd a bonie lass,  
Ay, and I love her still;  
And whilst that virtue warms my breast,  
I'll love my handsome Nell.*

I picked this song because it was written about his first love when he was at Mount Oliphant and my family farmed the same farm as his. I picked this verse in particular as it mentions Nell's name and that makes me think about my family and his and how hard it must have been to farm at Mount Oliphant as it was not a prosperous farm.

### **Kathryn Darling**

Member St Andrew's Society

Vice Chair Garret County Celtic festival

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*For a' that, and a' that,
It's comin' yet for a' that,
That man to man, the world o'er,
Shall brothers be for a' that!*

So appropriate - after all these years - the way of the world today - and now zooming us together in the most unexpected way.

Dorothy Penders

Founding Member Ambassador

Saint Andrew's Society of Mid-Maryland USA

Dorothy is affectionately known as our own "Dundee Dorothy", with her beautiful lilt. She was born on a farm in Montrose, Scotland. In 1961 Dorothy emigrated to Washington DC, where she later married David Penders, they established themselves in the Metropolitan area. Dorothy is a Founding Member (1999) of the Saint Andrew's Society of Mid-Maryland (SASMM). She has been a driving force helping to organize our Burns Suppers since 2001. Dorothy pointed out to us that without the Pandemic and the use of Zoom we would not have made the connection with the Allanton Jolly Beggars Society - she is so right.



ST ANDREW'S SOCIETY INAUGURAL TARTAN DAY

Two years ago our Club's Honorary Piper attended a Tartan Day Parade in New York as a member of the Lanarkshire Schools Pipe Band. We were all very proud to see Amy McIntyre in that procession and, as always, they got a great welcome.

Recently on Saturday the 10th of April our Club linked up via a Zoom facility with members and friends of the St Andrew's Society of Mid Maryland in USA.



Saint Andrew's Society of Mid-Maryland
Celebrating Scottish Life and Culture

This was to participate via our computers with an Inaugural Event commemorating the famous Tartan Day celebrations. With the difference in time the Jolly Beggars and friends had to join at 10pm and there was a warm welcome awaiting us. Beauty sleep if required was ignored and all too soon the bell tolled for 2 a.m.

Crossing the Atlantic and doing so sitting by our own firesides was a pleasurable experience and a well prepared programme of interest and entertainment followed.

Planning had been ongoing for some weeks and the contributions from our Club came from a couple of hundred emails crossing and re-crossing the vast distances in between.

There were three main "themes" including Cullodden, the Declaration of Arbroath and Sir Walter Scott. Each of these subjects came alive with appropriate music and songs and video sound and pictures in appropriate places.

Karen Robertson the President of the Society was on duty together with her Vice President Marianne Elliott to welcome everyone on both sides of the Atlantic and to set the mood for the evening. For the "Official Opening" Marianne read out their mission statement and then came a video of the Black Watch Pipes and Drums.

Music of supreme quality flowed through the evening and the scene for that was set by violinists Ava & Amy Beth Horman playing Bartok's Bagpipe Dance.

Kathryn Darling, Society Member introduced the Honoured Guest from Scotland and Phyl Smith for the Sarasota St Andrew's Society. Elliott Clan President Bill Elliott and Wardlaw Clan President - Mark Wardlaw also attended.

A toast to the Honoured Guests was made by Pastor Andrew Hart a member of the Society.

A group with the title of Clanadonia complete with kilts and sporrans from another age performed with drums.

Sir Walter Scott's "Rob Roy" was quoted by Debbie Abramson and, with the next speaker in mind, a short piece followed of the Parachute Regiment's quick March. An appropriate introduction for Alasdair Hutton a good friend of Allanton Jolly Beggars and a person of great experience in speaking. Alasdair who is known in many circles as the announcer for the Edinburgh Military Tattoo lives in Kelso and is very well versed in the writings and the life of Sir Walter Scott.

AJB Vice President Peter Pringle with his son James sang a stirring duet with "Hey Johnny Cope". The background to that composition was given in style.

A video about the Declaration of Arbroath was shown. There was an introduction by James C Robertson. He stimulated interest as he quoted the importance of that Declaration to Americans.

The Society's tribute to the 275th Anniversary of Culloden with Lyn Mulling and Jon Alexander was emotive and James Shields maintained that feeling with his singing of "Will ye no come back again".

Lynn and Jon recited the Robert Burns "Lament for Culloden", and with style and enthusiasm Brian Goldie sang "Ye Jacobites by name".

In fine fettle Stewart Houston was present to give an expert background introduction and to recite "Such a parcel of rogues in a Nation".

Back to Tam O' Shanter the night went on "wi sangs and clatter" and amongst the singers Morven Pringle sang the beautiful Highland Lullaby. Peter Pringle gave an informative description of "Tartan" and the origins and possibilities for planning a new Tartan. With some of his contacts more information could be supplied if the St Andrews Society might be interested in developing this and involving schools in such a project.



Rounding off the evening was a hilarious video of two men in a lift that was voice operated. The automatic device could not understand the Scottish accent....! Threaded through the evening were a number of toasts and the final one was to the Scots and Clans around the world.

A Bridge over the Atlantic is possible after all!

VIEWS FROM NEAR AND FAR

THOSE WERE THE DAYS!

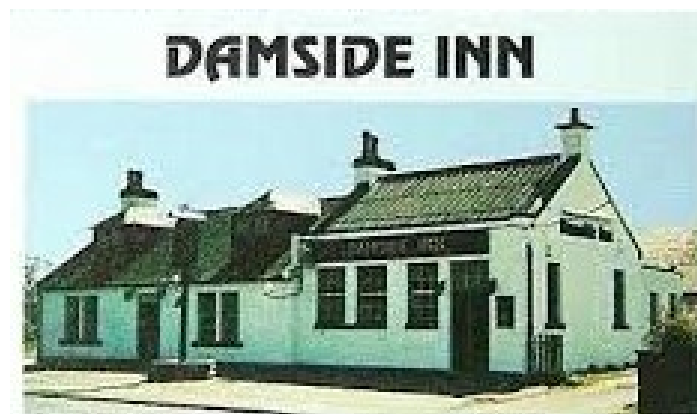
*Those were the days my friend
We thought they'd never end
We'd sing and dance forever and a day
We'd live the life we choose
We'd fight and never lose
For we were young and sure to have our way
(Mary Hopkin 1968)*



A look over our shoulder at years gone by can often generate a comment about prices which appear so cheap in comparison to our world today.

In the 1950's a gallon of petrol cost four shillings and sixpence which in today's terms was all of twenty two pence. A pound of butter was 18 pence and a loaf of bread about 4 pence. The eventual introduction of decimal currency and litres replacing gallon caused more than a little confusion as to what the costs were in what was called "real money" by an older generation.

The original name for Allanton Jolly Beggars was based on the pub where the Club was formed. The Inn belonged to a Brewer and in the discussion for a Club name a letter was written asking for permission about the name. It would be the Damside Jolly Beggars Burns Club. This was agreed by those attending the meeting and also the attendance fee for every meeting of seven and a half pence - two shillings and six pence in old money. A member present said that he would donate a half bottle of whisky for raffling and a Mr Joe Holby (presumably the landlord of the Damside Inn) would be asked for another half bottle. That was on the 30th March 1957.



The following month - on April 27th - a letter was read out from the Brewer who was pleased to give permission for the Club title to include Damside Inn. Adding to their written thanks was a complimentary bottle of whisky.

The Damside Inn Jolly Beggars Burns Club was launched and got early involvement with the other Lanarkshire Clubs and the Burns Federation. Details of suggested "rules" and being formed in to a Constitution were then adopted. Burns Suppers and Bus runs began to appear on the agenda for discussion and a Burns supper could be held in the adjacent Damside Barn (long demolished).

By September 1957 there was advanced planning for a possible Burns supper in the following year. Proposed participants for the speakers were Messrs Farquhar, Pender, Smith, McDougall and "A Minister" (not named for some reason). Another sentence in the minutes would create a riot nowadays: "..it was agreed unanimously that it would be men only in attendance". Before the meeting closed it was decided that an effort would be made to see if reduced prices for Spirits might be available. The Burns Supper cost - twenty seven and a half pence (today!).

For bus outings paid up members of the Club would travel free but any guests would have to pay an appropriate amount. There was genuine feeling for members who had fallen in to hard times and became unemployed and an agreed £3 would be sent to them.

There was a room described as a Club room within the Inn and it was in constant use by the Club until some dispute with the Landlord was reputed to withdraw that facility because the Club were not making much use of the refreshment facilities available. The Damside name went away and on the 30th March 1963 the description was "The Jolly Beggars Burns Club Number 809" - no mention of where they were now gathering. By the time of April 1963 the new name "Allanton Jolly Beggars" appeared and also noted that the "Picture and Diploma" would be retrieved from the Damside Inn.

The exclusion of ladies gradually faded and a previous statement about not having ladies present was modified to: "allowing one lady in (at the Burns supper) to wash the dishes"! That was a major step towards full inclusion. Since those long gone days the ladies have taken a major part in running our Club.

An Old Timer



VIEWS FROM NEAR AND FAR (continued)

A WEST AFRICAN BURNS SUPPER...

Since the day that Robert Burns set out on a borrowed nag from Mossgiel to Edinburgh, methods of locomotion have been somewhat revolutionized, and today cars and airplanes have made it possible for the tourist to cover great distances in a much shorter period of time. Burns spent 22 days traversing the highways enclosed in the square... Stirling, Inverness, Aberdeen, and Edinburgh. However, nowadays, the same area can be covered in just a few days.

So, imagine, if you will, what Rabbie would have thought knowing that his poetry was recited in such far-flung places like a remote village in Liberia, West Africa! Complete with Haggis and Bagpipes. Well, sorta...

...WHEN I THINK BACK ON MY LIFE AND MY LOVE AND ADMIRATION FOR OUR BARD'S WORK
I AM OFTEN REMINDED OF MY VERY FIRST BURNS SUPPER.

I WAS PRETTY YOUNG THEN, MID 20s OR SO, AND I LIVED IN LIBERIA, NORTH WEST AFRICA AT THE TIME. I HAD AN IDEA ABOUT HOLDING A BURNS SUPPER AND CONTACTED THE BRITISH EMBASSY IN MONROVIA AND ASKED IF THEY WOULD SPONSOR IT, AND, AFTER SOME LENGTHY DISCUSSION AND PERSUASION, THEY EVENTUALLY AGREED TO FLY A BAGPIPER IN FROM SIERRA LEONE AND, ALSO PROVIDE THE HAGGIS. HOW THEY WERE GOING TO GET A HAGGIS, I'D NO IDEA, BUT I WAS NEVER ONE TO LOOK A GIFT HORSE IN THE MOUTH. WHAT I DIDN'T ANTICIPATE, HOWEVER, WAS THAT THE BAGPIPER WOULD ARRIVE THAT DAY AT THE AIRPORT IN FULL HIGHLAND ATTIRE, PERSPIRING PROFUSELY, BE PROMPTLY ARRESTED AND DIVESTED OF HIS DIRK AND BAGPIPES (THEY OBVIOUSLY WEREN'T TAKING ANY CHANCES). THE PIPER WAS ABLE TO PERSUADE THOSE 'EARLY TSA' GUYS TO LET HIM KEEP THE CHANTER, THANK GOODNESS. AND THAT HAGGIS? THAT WAS IN A TIN, SIX TINS OF IT TO BE EXACT, AND, ALTHOUGH WE WERE PERMITTED TO KEEP THOSE, IT WAS A MYSTERY AS TO WHERE THEY CAME FROM, A CLOSELY GUARDED SECRET, NO DOUBT.

IT WAS STANDING ROOM ONLY AT THAT FIRST BURNS SUPPER, MOSTLY BECAUSE THE ATTENDEES OUTNUMBERED THE CHAIRS! SEVERAL PEOPLE ATTENDED FROM THE BRITISH EMBASSY, FELLOW EXPATS FROM BRITAIN, GERMANY, FRANCE, CANADA, AMERICA, ALL OF WHOM HAD GATHERED EXPECTING TO EXPERIENCE A TRADITIONAL BURNS SUPPER. IMAGINE THE SCENE IF YOU WILL: THE PIPER, CLUTCHING HIS CHANTER TIGHTLY, PIPED IN A TIN OF HAGGIS ON A TRAY, I STOOD OVER THE TIN AND PROCEEDED TO RECITE THE ADDRESS TO A HAGGIS WITH A TIN OPENER IN MY HAND, TURNING THE WEE HANDLE TO OPEN THE TIN OF HAGGIS AND AT THE SAME TIME STRUGGLING TO KEEP A SOLEMN, STRAIGHT FACE WHILE RECITING THE TRADITIONAL BURNS POEM.

I ALWAYS THINK, WHEN I ATTEND OTHER BEAUTIFULLY ORGANISED BURNS SUPPERS, WHAT A LONG WAY I'VE COME SINCE THOSE DAYS. BUT UNFORTUNATELY, TO MY CHAGRIN, AND EVERLASTING EMBARRASSMENT, THERE ARE PEOPLE ALL OVER THE WORLD THAT ACTUALLY BELIEVE YOU HAVE TO USE A TIN OPENER WHEN YOU ADDRESS THE HAGGIS AT A BURNS SUPPER, AND PIPE IN THE HAGGIS WITH THE CHANTER!!

Phyl Smith

A PERSONAL PERSPECTIVE

EPISTLE TO A YOUNG FRIEND

This is an engaging poem highlighting Burns' genuine view of humanity written in 1786 for the benefit of Andrew Aiken, son of Robert Aiken of Ayr, a good friend of Burns. It was written only weeks before the pregnant Jean Armour had been spirited off to her relatives in Paisley and Burns was exchanging marriage vows with Mary Campbell with whom he was planning to emigrate to Jamaica. I should mention at this stage that it is ironic, to say the least, that in verse six of the poem he advises his young friend, Andrew, of the debasing effect of illicit love:

***"The sacred lowe o' weel plac'd love,
Luxuriantly indulge it,
But never tempt the illicit rove,
Tho' naething should divulge it".***

In the poem Burns proceeds to moralize about man and his propensities for good and evil and is a simple and eloquent testament of moral belief. It is one of the clearest statements of his own simple creed that he ever penned.

James Hogg, the Ettrick shepherd, and one of Burns' contemporaries, with whom Burns shared the same birthday, said: "This is a beautiful and masterly poem".

It was also said by another of Burns' contemporaries: "It displays much shrewdness, an intimate acquaintance with human nature and great kind-heartedness. When Burns employed his mind in giving rules for moral and prudential conduct, no man was a sounder philosopher".

The poem ends with a simple blessing and a final twist in the tail which completely removes any suggestion of pomposity from his moralizing:

***"In ploughman's phrase 'God send you speed',
Still daily to grow wiser,
And may ye better reckon the rede,
Than ever did th' adviser".***

Stewart Houston

Epistle to a Young Friend (1786)

***I lang hae thought, my youthfu' friend,
A something to have sent you,
Tho' it should serve nae ither end
Than just a kind memento:
But how the subject-theme may gang,
Let time and chance determine;
Perhaps it may turn out a sang:
Perhaps turn out a sermon.***

*Ye'll try the world soon, my lad;
And, Andrew dear, believe me,
Ye'll find mankind an unco squad,
And muckle they may grieve ye:
For care and trouble set your thought,
Ev'n when your end's attained;
And a' your views may come to nought,
Where ev'ry nerve is strained.*

*I'll no say, men are villains a';
The real, harden'd wicked,
Wha hae nae check but human law,
Are to a few restricked;
But, Och! mankind are unco weak,
An' little to be trusted;
If self the wavering balance shake,
It's rarely right adjusted!*

*Yet they wha fa' in fortune's strife,
Their fate we shouldna censure;
For still, th' important end of life
They equally may answer;
A man may hae an honest heart,
Tho' poortith hourly stare him;
A man may tak a neibor's part,
Yet hae nae cash to spare him.*

*Aye free, aff-han', your story tell,
When wi' a bosom crony;
But still keep something to yoursel',
Ye scarcely tell to ony:
Conceal yoursel' as weel's ye can
Frae critical dissection;
But keek thro' ev'ry other man,
Wi' sharpen'd, sly inspection.*

*The sacred lowe o' weel-plac'd love,
Luxuriantly indulge it;
But never tempt th' illicit rove,
Tho' naething should divulge it:
I waive the quantum o' the sin,
The hazard of concealing;
But, Och! it hardens a' within,
And petrifies the feeling!*

*To catch dame Fortune's golden smile,
Assiduous wait upon her;
And gather gear by ev'ry wile
That's justified by honour;
Not for to hide it in a hedge,
Nor for a train attendant;
But for the glorious privilege
Of being independent.*

*The fear o' hell's a hangman's whip,
To haud the wretch in order;
But where ye feel your honour grip,
Let that aye be your border;
Its slightest touches, instant pause-
Debar a' side-pretences;
And resolutely keep its laws,
Uncaring consequences.*

*The great Creator to revere,
Must sure become the creature;
But still the preaching cant forbear,
And ev'n the rigid feature:
Yet ne'er with wits profane to range,
Be complaisance extended;
An atheist-laugh's a poor exchange
For Deity offended!*

*When ranting round in pleasure's ring,
Religion may be blinded;
Or if she gie a random sting,
It may be little minded;
But when on life we're tempest driv'n-
A conscience but a canker-
A correspondence fix'd wi' Heav'n,
Is sure a noble anchor!*

*Adieu, dear, amiable youth!
Your heart can ne'er be wanting!
May prudence, fortitude, and truth,
Erect your brow undaunting!
In ploughman phrase, "God send you speed,"
Still daily to grow wiser;
And may ye better reck the rede,
Then ever did th' adviser!*

A PERSONAL PERSPECTIVE (continued)

ADDRESS TO THE TOOTHACHE

The "Address to the Haggis" (1786) brings back many memories, and of a different nature his "Address to the Toothache" (also 1786) is in another category.

Robert Burns experienced some pain and suffering all because of toothache. Our modern dental surgery is clinically clean and equipped with instruments. Far advanced from the time of Burns when dental treatment was totally different, to us primitive, but effective.



Although there may still be a dread about going to the dentist the words of Burns describing toothache still ring true:

*My curse upon your venom'd stang,
That shoots my tortur'd gums alang,
An' thro' my lug gies mony a twang,
Wi' gnawing vengeance,
Tearing my nerves wi' bitter pang,
Like racking engines!*

*When fevers burn, or argues freezes,
Rheumatics gnaw, or colics squeezes,
Our neibor's sympathy can ease us,
Wi' pitying moan;
But thee-thou hell o' a' diseases-
Aye mocks our groan.*

*Adown my beard the slavers trickle
I throw the wee stools o'er the mickle,
While round the fire the giglets keckle,
To see me loup,
While, raving mad, I wish a heckle
Were in their doup!*

*In a' the numerous human dools,
Ill hairsts, daft bargains, cutty stools,
Or worthy frien's rak'd i' the mools, -
Sad sight to see!
The tricks o' knaves, or fash o'fools,
Thou bear'st the gree!*

*Where'er that place be priests ca' hell,
Where a' the tones o' misery yell,
An' ranked plagues their numbers tell,
In dreadfu' raw,
Thou, Toothache, surely bear'st the bell,
Amang them a'!*

*O thou grim, mischief-making chiel,
That gars the notes o' discord squeel,
Till daft mankind aft dance a reel
In gore, a shoe-thick,
Gie a' the faes o' Scotland's weal
A townmond's toothache!*

A former Dental Patient



A PERSONAL PERSPECTIVE (continued)

THE SILVER HARVEST OF THE SEA

Proud Seine Netters. Drifters, Trawlers,
Ropes tight coiled with fishing pride.
Painted, caulked, with names bright gleaming,
Waiting for the turn of tide,
Breakwater in outline darkly,
Lifeboat swinging beneath the lee.
Guardian Angel for those who seek,
The Silver Harvest of the sea.
Fresh dawn breaking, halyards shaking,
Misty cold the morning light,
Seeking, searching, sweeping, stalling,
Straining senses ears and sight
Nets are splashing, dragging, trawling,
Standing proudly strong is he
Who respects the snarling stormy tempest
For the silver Harvest of the sea
Butting, cutting, parts the ocean
Man and the heavens eternal fight,
Heaving, rolling, engines throbbing,
To the distant harbour light,
Faces stubbled eyes half closing
Heading for the distant quay,
Bringing home the silver harvest
The silver harvest of the sea.



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SCHOOLS SHOWCASE

We were delighted to receive essays from School 606 in St. Petersburg. There has been a long established link with School 606 started through the association with the St. Petersburg Forum. Many of our members have made the trip to St. Petersburg and the hospitality they were shown was second to none. I unfortunately have not been able to get there yet but I am still hopeful.

Two pupils Lidia Andronova and Olga Blokhina submitted excellent essays on the subject "On the late Captain Grose's Peregrination" and Murdo Morrison and Helen Morrison sent them Allanton Jolly Beggars Burns Club medals. I have included Lidia's essay for this months bulletin and will include Olga's in next months issue.

The girls were delighted with their medals and sent us this lovely picture. We thank their teacher Elena Miklyaeva for her continued support for Robert Burns projects.

Joyce Goldie
Schools Convener



Robert Burns is famous for his poetry all over the world. I got acquainted with his poems when I was at primary school. I truly loved his poetry. Thanks to Robert Burns I became interested in the history of Scotland and its culture. At first, I could not understand the reason of my feelings but getting older I noticed folk motives in his poems. The Burn's poetry is simple at the first sight because it is like folk songs. He was interested in human essence and the concept of morality. Going deeper there are lots of things to be analyzed.

Now I would like to share my impressions of the strophe in the poem called "On the Late Captain Grose's Peregrinations Thro' Scotland". To begin with, the vocabulary is old so it is hard to understand the meaning. Luckily, I have found a standard English translation of this poem. Here it is:

*"By some old, owl-haunted dwelling,
Or church deserted by its roof,
It is ten to one you will find him snug in
Some unearthly part,
With devils, they say, Lord save us! Colleaguin
At some black art."*

So, the main pathos tells us about magic which is beautiful (black art). There is an attribute "owl-haunted" which gives us the atmosphere of mystery. Houlet is an owl which is a symbol of ghosts. What is more, a reader can definitely spot that the author was a Scot because of using the word "eldritch" (mystery or spooky). Using such vocabulary can help me to deepen down to the Burns' time and imagine the atmosphere.

It is important to mention that the strophe is an appeal to a person whose name is unknown. His name appears only in the last quatrain. Due to this trick the atmosphere becomes more mystical and scaring. Additionally, in the fifth line there is an appealing to God ("Lord save us!"). It causes the feeling of despair.

Though the action takes place in a kirk (church) there are lots of devils there. This raises questions because a church is the place only for good creatures, not for the evil. However, in the second line the reader understands the reason of existing devils and owls in the kirk. It is deserted and ruined. There are no people there who can pray. A church is the symbol of people's faith so if people do not believe the Lord, churches are broken and filled with demons. People destroy sacred places by their actions helping demons.

There is a paradox in the fifth line. People start praying after refusing of faith. In difficult situations they appeal to God ("Lord") but they deny God in their common life. The problem of ungrateful behavior plays major role in this verse.

As for me, this strophe is very organic and moral. At the first sight, the poem is not obvious. I do not understand why the author shows us a destroyed church and devils, but after deeper reading a person thinks about his or her attitude to God and the expression of gratitude to others. It was written to make us remember things we forget. The reader feels pain of the kirk which is filled by demons due to ungrateful people.

Summing everything up, the third strophe in the poem called "On the Late Captain Grose's Peregrinations Thro' Scotland" represents the decline of morals. It makes us think about important questions.

**Commentary on the Essay by Lidia Andronova of School No.606 in St. Petersburg,
titled "On the late Captain Grose's Peregrination"**

This well composed essay begins with a quote from the poem which tells of some aspects of the life of Captain Grose in Scotland. Captain Grose was well known to the poet Robert Burns and was, for a time, living in the mansion house on the land beside Robert Burns' farm Ellisland.

Congratulations to Lidia Andronova in selecting the poem because it does have a number of words which are difficult to understand as they are in the Scots language which was in use at the time of Robert Burns.

This student asks questions and this is a good technique to encourage the reader. The explanations which follow are very good and begin to produce the reasons behind the poem.

It is important to know what Robert Burns wrote but it is also equally important to calculate **why** he wrote what he did.

Robert Burns in many poems praises the power of good but also mentions many evil matters. He is a firm believer in good overcoming evil whenever it arises.

An excellent example of the thought of Robert Burns is in this essay where people are using Faith as a shield but turning their backs on their Faith if it suits them to do so. A good essay and a result of research carried out in a splendid way.

Murdo Morrison

Former President – The Robert Burns World Federation

PS That is a lovely "houlet" (owl) on the School Crest. Not sure what it would "say" in Russian but here in Scotland it would be "Two witt – too woo"!

