



The Tattler



Words from the President

Summer 2020 Edition

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- Secretary/Treasurer: Mathew Hill
- Past President: Ken Montgomery
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 of North America

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Hi everyone,

I hope this finds you all safe and well under the trying and stressful times we all now find ourselves living in. As the first message to you after taking over the Presidency from Ken Montgomery, I have a few thoughts I would like to share.

First, I would like to congratulate Ken on the success and achievements of his presidency over the past two years (back when we all lived in better times) and I personally want to thank him for his friendship over these past four years that I have come to know him. Enjoy your term as Past President, Ken, and I look forward to working with you in that capacity over the next two years.

Second, I was bitterly disappointed that the Atlanta Conference and AGM had to be cancelled, though, like all of us, I am sure, I also recognize that RBANA had no choice, due to the threat of the COVID-19 Pandemic and resulting travel restrictions. In spite of the cancellation, I would like to personally thank the Atlanta Burns Club for all the effort and hard work they put into preparing for and setting up the Conference and AGM, as well as the necessary difficult and regretful work at completing the post-cancellation negotiations with the venue and other engaged parties. The Board will look to the next Conference and AGM to review possible timing, as well as to confirm whether or not it will be allowed to proceed. In this task, I will keep the membership current and informed on that progress.

Third, I would like to welcome our new Board Members: Regional Directors Mark Ferguson, Paul Kennedy and Brian Cumming, Immediate Past-President, Ken Montgomery, as well as former President Colin Harris. I would like to also say a word of thanks and gratitude to the other Board Members Andy Harrower, Bill Fulton, Mathew Hill and George McClellan for choosing to remain in their roles and continue working for the benefit of RBANA and its membership.

Additionally, I would also like to offer special thanks to outgoing Board Members Tony Grace and Jim Steel for their services to RBANA over the past years. Gentlemen, your time, effort and devotion are much appreciated. Finally, I would like to thank you, the members, for being a part of RBANA and for staying on as we work to negotiate the future of this organization, as it will be only with your continued participation and support that we will succeed in facing the many challenges that other organizations the world o'er are facing in these unprecedented times.



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Words from the President continued

In the near future, I will look to set up Zoom Meetings on a semi-regular basis to stay in contact with those of you who

can access the technology and, for those of you who do not currently have access to the Zoom Meetings technology, you can find information on it at the following sites:

- <https://zoom.us/>
- https://sitelicense.ucr.edu/files/zoom_for_instructors.pdf

The Board held its first meeting using Zoom on Friday, 15th May, and the minutes of that meeting will be shared with you as soon as they are prepared. A few weeks after this meeting, I intend to hold an all-members Zoom meet-

ing. Further details will be sent to you prior to that date and we hope as many of you can make the meeting as possible.

On closing, I hope that you all to keep safe and well with your families. I would like to quote a Robert Burns line that seems intended for Covid-19: "Wee sleekit, cow'rin tim'rous beastie", and I would add: "Don't come near my throat or breastie!"

Best Regards and yours in Burns,
Henry Cairney
RBANA President

Editors note:

Prior to taking his leave, Ken Montgomery penned a few final thoughts as well. We include them here.

Words from the Past President

This is my final message to you as president. The business my wife Brenda and I own is now pretty well closed due to the pandemic, but we expect to properly resume operations in due course.

We are still in quarantine and practicing social distancing, and we just finished watching another news update on the horrible and senseless tragedy that recently occurred in Nova Scotia where 22 innocent souls were murdered, including one RCMP officer, noting my oldest boy is a Mountie.

I am also using this quarantine time to grow a beard (first time ever). I think it looks pretty good (so far), but it is a work in progress, and regardless, my wife says shave it off!

To most of us in these very tough times, we have to remain hopeful and optimistic for better times ahead, and I must say that one of the nice things about getting older (like I am) is to truly believe we will weather the storm, and survive.

On Saturday, 25 April, the day our 2020 AGM was supposed to be held in Atlanta your Executive held a meeting by way of virtual via Zoom Communications, a first for RBANA.

At this point I must again thank the Atlanta gang for making the effort they did to host our 2020 AGM that was supposed to be in that wonderful city. Circumstances were out of our control, and that of course didn't happen. It is what it is, but sincerely, I thank all of you in Atlanta for all your efforts.

The four items previously put to the membership for decision were all approved. I was very pleased to see that

done and to acclaim Henry Cairney as our new president, Bill Fulton as VP, Mathew Hill as the Secretary/Treasurer and myself as Past President.

Further, I was pleased to see my old buddy George McClellan and Burn's keeners Mark Ferguson (Atlanta) and Paul Kennedy (South Jersey) come on board as our US directors, and in Canada having Medicine Hat's own, Andy Harrower (now in London, Ontario), and RBANA long time member, past president and Tattler editor Colin Harris (Winnipeg), and the energetic Brian Cumming from Calgary also coming on board to complete the RBANA team.

'Oh Henry' what a gang of Cronies you have!

One thing I would very much suggest one does with all this down time, other than clean the house and yard, or sort through old papers and photographs, is to relax and seriously take the time to read or re-read some Burns.

I did this and found I am getting a better appreciation than I had previous of the Bard and his works, and especially certain poems like, 'Man Was Made to Mourn' that I now feel is more relevant today than ever before.

As a result of my involvement with RBANA I have been very fortunate to have met so many wonderful people, and I am especially grateful for the support I have received from my many friends within



President Ken presiding over the first RBANA virtual meeting

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the RBANA family, including those with the RBWF. It is also my intention to remain involved with RBANA and assist the cause wherever I can.

I am especially pleased to pass the torch to my good friend Henry Cairney, and to see the new Board in place.

My last official comments relate to the future of all Burns related organizations. Times are changing, regardless of the COVID 19 challenges we now face, and that which many organizations have and will continue to struggle with, including that of obtaining new members, and, more especially, future leaders.

We all have to stay interested and go that extra mile to be involved, and to get others involved. Our secretary recently advised me our membership ranks has increased and to me, that is encouraging. .

With changing times there must be changing attitudes, about how we operate and do business, and what we must do to properly survive, and properly move ahead to exist in the future. The Zoom Communications initiative (inspired by Henry) that was used for our recent meeting is one clear sign to support this is the way we have to go.

To me, failure to appreciate and accept what must be done to survive is inexcusable and would be a total disservice to Burns and his legacy. Another reality is that being involved with a Burns club or related interest is something that should not only involve a sincere desire to preserve and promote the works and memory of the Immortal Bard, but something that should always be fun and enjoyable, just like drinking a real good Scotch (which I know many of us like to do).

Never forget that or why we are here!

That's it for me. Best regards, stay safe and I remain, yours in Burns.

Ken Montgomery

President (2018-2020)

Think Burns

Think Burns

Tributes Flow in for Former RBANA President Dr Tony Grogan

DR. J. A. (TONY) GROGAN: Nov 24, 1935 - Jun 05, 2020



In a peaceful and serene moment, while holding wife Renate's hand, former RBANA President Dr Tony Grogan smiled at a joke only he could hear, and took a last calming breath.

Tony was born in 1935 in Milngavie. He went to school at St. Aloysius College in Glasgow, before attending Medical School at

Glasgow University.

While working at Glasgow Infirmary, a young nurse caught his eye, and he was on a mission! He finally wore her down, and Tony and Renate were married in 1962.

Over the next five years they had three children, Alastair, Peter and Marion.

In 1969, the family moved to Bothwell, Scotland, where they lived until immigrating to Teulon, MB, Canada in 1980.

Tony's deep love of sailing, flying and of all things Scotland, never left him.

He was an active and proud, and Honorary member of the Winnipeg Robert Burns Club; as well as being Past President of RBANA and was especially proud when, in 2018, was honoured as a Life Member in the St. Andrew's Society of Winnipeg.

Tony's achievements were many, but he was probably best known for his sense of humour and practical jokes - to which NO ONE was immune. He felt it was especially important to make his patients feel comfortable and took immense enjoyment from finding new and creative ways to put them at ease.

Tony and Renate made many good friends after moving to Canada. He held you all in the highest regard. And although thousands of miles apart, Tony and Renate maintained a close relationship with their lifelong best friends, Vincent and Margaret Madill, and visited and travelled with them at every opportunity.

Tony was fiercely proud of his kids, Alastair, Peter and Marion; grandkids, Morgan, Adrian, Kate, Alexander, Tessa and Colin; and great-grandson Théo. He took great pleasure

in their every achievement and was most happy and content when surrounded by his family

Many tributes were received by the Winnipeg club, and forwarded to Renate.

They include Federation President Brian Goldie who said, "Although I met him only briefly, I am happy to say that I recognised him for the person he was, a nice guy and a good Burnsian."

Former RBANA Canadian Director Scott Reid said "Tony was one of the few characters going around. A wonderful raconteur with a glass in his hand. Great stories and at the same time great professionalism. He was a good, happy Burnsian and I am sure he will be enjoying his Angels Share while we remember him with great fondness."

Ronnie O'Byrne called him "a good man with a big heart"

Robert Boyd, who succeeded Tony as RBANA President related "Tony honored us by giving the Immortal Memory at the Houston Heather & Thistle Society Burns Supper one year. Afterwards one of our members rushed up and said, "Dr Grogan I'd like to thank you first for a great speech, and secondly for fixing my sore back when you made a house call in Blantyre over fifty years ago"! RBANA stalwarts May & Alex Crawley added, "we have many fond memories of time spent with Tony and Renate over the years, and especially at the last RBANA Conference in Winnipeg. We enjoyed our time with them at their lovely home."

Ron & Chrys Ballantyne said "over the years we have enjoyed his friendship, his leadership, and support within RBANA. He had a smile that lit up the world, we will be the poorer with his passing."

Jim & Jean Cunningham and Les & Nancy Strachan also added their condolences..

A private funeral was held, due to Covid 19, but an outdoor gathering was held in Teulon. Past President Colin Harris, former RBANA Secretary-Treasurers Janet Thompson and Don Rennicks, along with his wife Diane and Past Club President Charles Cameron, and his wife Darlene were among those who attended.



At the MHBC Jolly Beggars Night, September, 2013: (l to r), Dr. Tony Grogan, President, RBANA. RCMP Cpl. Sean Chittenton, Aide de Campe to the RBWF President, Ms. Jane Brown, RBWF President and MHBC Club Patron, Medicine Hat Burns Club, Major Les McCulloch (AGC) SPS, Hon. Member, MHBC, Bill Cocks, Esq., President MHBC and Ken Montgomery, Secretary, MHBC

Alan Cumming to Bring Robert Burns Dance Show to 2021 Fringe

Hollywood and Broadway star Alan Cumming has revealed that a major new dance show he is creating inspired by the life of Robert Burns, Scotland's most celebrated romantic poet, will tackle his poor treatment of women and how his darker side has been "sanitised."

Perthshire-born Cumming, (right) who is bringing the new show to the Edinburgh Festival in 2021, says he was drawn to the 18th century Ayrshire writer's double life.

The dance production is expected to highlight how the reality of Burns' tangled personal life was a sharp contrast to the image of the revered wordsmith.

However he had fathered 12 offspring by four different women by the time he died at the age of 37.

Cumming who is currently based in the United States, where he is seen introducing Masterpiece Mystery on PBS as well as shows like The Good Wife, says the show will address what it is to "be Scottish, to be male and how you deal with desire."

The dance show is expected to be the latest new stage production to be launched by Cumming in Scotland following the success of his starring roles in The Bacchae and Macbeth in 2007 and 2012. Speaking on BBC Scotland's Shelf Isolation programme, Cumming said: "I'm going to be doing this project next year which is based on Robert Burns.



"It is a dance piece. I'm making my solo dance debut. It's trying to find out more about the real life of Burns and this idea of being a man, being Scottish and how you deal with desire. I'm horrified and terrified, but it's my own fault. I obviously agreed to do it. I find him utterly fascinating.

"One of the things that I'm really excited about and really drew me to it was the seeming dichotomy between him being this man who was very egalitarian and spoke about the need for women's rights in 1792, so he was well ahead of the game in that way.

"Yet in his own life, in his personal life, he did not treat women very well. It is fascinating how we have dealt with that, how in some ways we have maybe biscuit-tinned him and sanitised him, and roughed off the edges."

Cumming revealed that as part of his research for the project he had been reading a controversial biography, The Life of Robert Burns, by the Glaswegian writer Catherine Carswell, who upset traditionalists and received death threats for her depiction of the poet after it came out in 1930.

Cumming added: "In this biography, she is almost aware that she is going to get some grief if she takes too feminist a stance.

"I guess so many biographies of great men are written by men. It is just so refreshing, especially in terms of the project I'm going to be doing."

Hume Trophy Awarded Despite Pandemic

Despite the cancellation of the Atlanta Conference, the fifth annual RBANA Poetry writing competition for the Jack Hume Heather & Thistle trophy went forward successfully ad a winner determined.

As always, the submitted poems were original, and not previously published.

Submitted anonymously to the three member jury of Guida Hume, Jack Hume's widow, and a professor of English; Willie Gibson, representative of the Federation; and last year's winner Ronnie O'Byrne, the entries were judged independently and the results tabulated by Past President Robert Boyd the only who knew the identities of the authors.

This year's winning entry was an epic poem written by Jim McLaughlin of the Calgary Burns Club. The top five entries are printed in their entirety in a special supplement to this edition of the Tattler.

President Henry Cairney presents Jim McLaughlin with Hume Trophy at social distancing compliant ceremony.



Ellisland Farm to Become Centre for Songwriting

A farm once run by Robert Burns will become a centre for songwriting under ambitious plans to bolster the Bard's legacy.

As detailed by Professor Gerard Carruthers, Francis Hutcheson Chair of Scottish literature at Glasgow University, during an online Zoom seminar attended by Burns enthusiasts around the world, the team behind the newly-founded Robert Burns Ellisland Trust have ambitions to draw 20,000 visitors a year to the farm they say was "creative crucible" of Burns.

As well as plans to create a songwriting haven, the trust is also calling for an integrated country-wide "Burns Trail" to promote literary tourism, in the wake of the success of other Scottish driving tours such as the NC500 and Heart 200.

The new trust - chaired by MSP Joan McAlpine - was formed after the former Ellisland Trust decided to wind itself up after almost a century.

"The new volunteer board took over at the worst possible time mid-pandemic and there is a lot of work to do," she said.

The new body hopes to promote the rich catalogue of work created by the Bard during his three years on the farm, which saw him write some of the most important pieces in Scottish literary history, including Tam O'Shanter, John Anderson My Jo and Auld Lang Syne.

Trustee professor Gerry Carruthers thinks establishing the site as a centre for songwriting development can help illuminate the farm's considerable impact on the literary world.

The Glasgow University Burns expert said: "We believe that one of the things which needs to be pointed out is how important Ellisland was in Burns' career, especially his songwriting career. Some of the greatest hits, both poems and songs, were written here. Ellisland was where he began to write songs which resounded through history and began to connect to a whole tradition of European romantic song. That legacy of Ellisland has never really been appreciated. It's a really important site."

Burns remained on Ellisland until 1791, five years

before his death. The site was purchased in 1922 by George Williamson, who bequeathed to promote the appreciation of Burns.

The Ellisland Trust hopes to draw 20,000 annual visitors represent a 10-fold increase in footfall to the museum, on the banks of the Nith near Dumfries, which includes a romantic cottage designed by Burns in 1788 after the success of his Kilmarnock edition. It was here that he finally set up marital home with the young Jean Armour, and parts of her stove remain in the cottage kitchen.

Professor Carruthers, also secretary of the Robert Burns Ellisland Trust, said: "We have plans to make it a better cultural heritage site and we're looking at establishing it as a centre for contemporary songwriting, possibly with a songwriter-in-residence programme.

"About a quarter of Burns' output comes from Ellisland which has never been properly grasped before. His energy at this time was off the scale."

Now members of the trust want the site to become part of a push for wider promotion of Burns heritage and legacy throughout Scotland, including Burns Cottage in Alloway, Ayrshire, which is second only

to Shakespeare's Stratford Upon Avon museum in popularity among UK literary museums.

A Scottish Government study led by Glasgow University's professor Murray Pittock earlier this year revealed that Burns' annual value to the Scottish economy as £203 million, with 75% coming from tourism.

It also identified "significant opportunities for improvement" with Ayrshire Regional Economic Partnership and in Dumfries and Galloway.

Professor Carruthers said: "We need to get our tourism act together and establish a proper Burns tour which would take in Ellisland and Alloway and other places

"If you look at the interest around the world, we're not doing enough to attract these people whose interest has peaked and to really milk Burns for touristic and cultural capital."

