

# STONEHAVEN (FATHERLAND) BURNS CLUB

## ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

### 11<sup>TH</sup> MAY 2023

## PRESIDENT'S REPORT

The President began by saying how delighted he was to report on the success of this year's Supper. As it had been three years since the last one the impact the lack of continuity might have caused was unclear. He thanked those members and friends who attended for their continued support. He went on to say it was a very enjoyable evening with an interesting and thoughtful Immortal Memory presented by weel kent local loon Andy Hall. This year the Toast to the Lassies and the Reply were delivered by local couple Ken and Susan Henderson. Both speeches were cleverly crafted and well received. The Cub is also grateful to Ken who doubled as the piper and led in the haggis party. Our hauder was 11 year old Harris Cameron who did an excellent job and, given his age, may well in future challenge the late Jim McAllan's 40+ year record as hauder. Club stalwart David MacDonald did an excellent job of addressing the haggis before everyone tucked into an superb meal efficiently served by the staff of the Station Hotel. Thanks must also go to Frank Smith for the Selkirk Grace and Alex Ewen for the Loyal Toast. Once again Peter and Jean Webster led the company in singing "A Man's a Man", "Star O' Rabbie Burns" and "Auld Lang Syne". They also gave an excellent rendition of "Sweet Afton". The President made clear that the Club is very grateful to Peter and Jean for their input to this and many previous suppers. "Scotland Yet" was delivered by the President and David MacDonald thanked the guests. Perhaps the surprise event of the evening though was the recitation – the whole poem and without notes - of "Tam O' Shanter" by 11 year old Elise Walker, a P7 pupil at Glenbervie Primary school. She really was excellent. Elise demonstrated she is a credit to her family, her school and herself.

At this point the President said he wished it recorded that this year's Supper would not have taken place had it not been for the dedication and unstinting effort of David MacDonald.

One of the consequences of the sad and untimely death of long time committee member and club treasurer Russell Adams was an inability to access the computerised club records and documents he kept. For example, we did not have an up-to-date membership list, nor did we have copies of such things as the membership/Supper application form, tickets, etc. David used his computer skills to produce most of these essential documents from scratch and issued them in good time. Thanks to David these documents are now in electronic and hard copy, and readily accessible by more than one committee member. To promote the Club and advertise the Supper the Club had a display in one of the library windows in January. The President thanked the members of the Committee and others who helped with this.

Other matters dealt with by the Committee between the last AGM and the present day are as follows.

- The plaque commemorating the many years of service dedicated to the Club by Jimmy and Rosie McAllan and situated at the Burns Garden, was officially unveiled. The ceremony was attended by members of the McAllan family.
- Russell Adams's service to the Club as member, committee member and notably treasurer for a number of years was similarly commemorated by the planting of his favourite flowers, bluebells, at the Burns Garden. The possibility of providing a commemorative plaque is still

under consideration. The Club is grateful to the Horizon Group for their help in sourcing and planting the bluebells.

- Thanks also go to Jane Sanders for her successful application on behalf of the Club to the Community Council's community fund to recoup some of the money spent by the Club on providing the QR code plaques at the Burns Garden. An unfortunate outcome of the death of our treasurer was that the Club's website had ceased to exist and resurrecting it had proved very difficult. Thanks to the very welcome intervention of Club supporters Donald Clarke and Paul Bentley, the website should soon be up and running. However, despite their best efforts, Donald and Paul could not reinstate the Burns Garden QR codes and those volunteers who produced the original recitations have been approached to see if they will be good enough to provide another.
- Last June, the Club took a stall at the town's annual Feein Market in order to promote the Club and raise funds. We were successful on both counts. Thanks go to committee members and volunteers for their work in preparing and manning the stall on the day.
- Also in relation to the Burns Garden, the Club was involved with other volunteer organisations led by Horizon in gaining the Gold award in the 2022 coastal towns category.
- Despite our best efforts we were unable to organise Mini Burns Suppers again this year. The schools are still striving to recover from the difficulties occasioned by the Covid pandemic and were reluctant to devote the time to participate this year. However, a number of schools did respond favourably to the President's offer of support with preparing pupils for their annual Burns/Scots poetry recitation competition as well as assisting with judging performances. He visited Arduthie, Dunnottar, Glenbervie, Gourdon and Portlethen primaries sometimes on more than one occasion and worked with pupils and staff.
- The Committee had a meeting with representatives of the Aberdeen Burns Club with a view to both clubs working more closely together. It was agreed that, if possible, a tour of the key sites associated with Burns' forebears in the Mearns be arranged at some point in the future.
- Also in relation to Burns memorials, the Glenbervie Burns Memorials sub committee of the SFBC did not meet this year. The dedicated fund available to this sub group remains at £3354.53. The decision was taken to use some of this fund to provide informative QR codes at the mausoleum at Glenbervie and the monument on the A90 although this has yet to happen.

Reflecting on his report so far, the President commented on the considerable amount achieved in the past year by the Club. This was especially significant given the size of the Committee - just six members – although volunteers had assisted at key events such as the Feein Market and Supper. He thanked the members and the volunteers for their hard work and dedication in supporting the Club over the past year.

The President concluded his report by noting that four members of the Committee, Cathie Dawson, Gwynne Stewart, Frank Smith and Marka Rifat had intimated their intention not to stand again. This leaves just two of the 2022/23 committee members, the President and Jane Sanders, willing to continue. The President said that he unfortunately had to intimate to the Club's members in the run up to the AGM that, unless more people came forward, the Club would likely have to fold. He sincerely hoped that this could be avoided.

Douglas Samways  
President, Stonehaven (Fatherland) Burns Club  
May 2023