

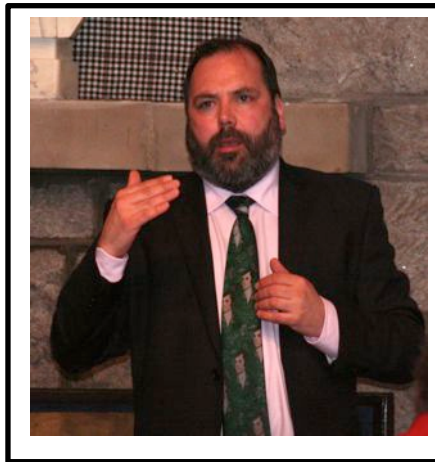


the Newsletter of the Burns Club of Atlanta

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April Program: Dr. Gerard Carruthers, PhD, An Update on the Latest Burns Research



Dr. Gerard Carruthers, PhD of the University of Glasgow, Scotland will return to the Cottage on Wednesday evening to deliver an update

Dr. Carruthers, his life and works. Dr. Carruthers is one of this generation's preeminent Burns scholars and a true scholarly research Club of Atlanta. Gerry last visited the Cottage in November 2011 with a talk on "New Threads in the Highland Mary Legend".

Dr. Carruthers' visit to the Cottage is part of a larger trip to the US with a series of presentation planned across the nation. Please join in extending our sincere thanks to Frank & Susan Shaw for coordinating Gerry's travels to Atlanta and for hosting him during our portion of his trip.

March Program: *Burns and his Brew*, by Jason Graham, Walt Hubert, PhD and Thomas Bard



A trio of Members, Walt Hubert, PhD, Thomas Bard and Jason Graham, JD, delivered a thoroughly entertaining and highly informative program during the March meeting. The subject

of the presentation was an in-depth exploration of brewing and the consumption of fermented drink during the age of the Bard.

Messrs. Hubert, Bard and Graham delivered balanced and well researched information complete with bibliography and modern day examples. Walt Hubert has quickly established himself as a master brewer within the ranks of the BCOA. His works have met with enthusiastic overtures at the Stone Mountain Highland Games and prior Club Ceilidhs.

(Photos on Page 2)



Founded January 23,
1896
Poet's birthday in the centenary of his death
Robert Burns Cottage built
1910
National Register of Historic Places
Re-founded
Member Number 208
Robert Burns
World Federation
1913

The Poet and the President

By Jim Davidson of the Mauchline Burns Club

Kindly submitted by Henry Frantz

During the homecoming year 2009 Mauchline Burns Club was involved in organising a special event to prepare and cook the World's largest Haggis. Robert Burns had written part of his famous poem 'The Address to the Haggis' in his friend's house in "The Cowgate", Mauchline. In order to achieve maximum publicity for the event the club contacted a number of specialist locations worldwide that had connections with Robert Burns and his work, with a view to gaining letters of support.

A letter and related correspondence was received from Doctor James Murray Cornelious, PhD, Curator of The Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library and Museum in Springfield, Illinois. The Burns Club were aware that Abraham Lincoln was a great lover of Burns, but we were greatly surprised when Dr. Cornelious explained the depth to which the works of Robert Burns had influenced President Lincoln.

Robert Burns was one of Lincoln's favourite authors and his knowledge of the subject was so complete that Lincoln would often give lectures on the works of Burns. The belief is that Lincoln first encountered Burns by hearing poems recited by Jack Kelso, when Lincoln would be in his early 20's and living in New Salem, Illinois. Kelso was not a native born Scot, and soon drifted from Lincoln's life.

Lincoln's first chance to study Burns comes through reading a book of Burns poetry owned by lawyer John A. Brackenridge of Booneville, Indiana. Although Brackenridge owned the book, he was several generations removed from his Scots ancestors and could hardly have given Lincoln much help in mastering the 'Scots' words and Ayrshire dialect.

At this time the works of Robert Burns were regarded as a closed book by most Americans because he used so many Scots dialect words. While practising law and during his election to congress a book of Burns was an inseparable companion to Lincoln, and to which he referred constantly.

Quoting Milton Hay, a law student in Lincoln's law office from 1839 to 1840, "*He could very*

nearly quote every Burns poem from memory. I have frequently heard him quote the whole of 'Tam o' Shanter', Holy Willie's Prayer, Epistle to a young friend and The Cottars Saturday Night all from memory".

He had acquired the Scottish Accent, and could render Burns perfectly. Lincoln's favourite Burns poem was Tam o' Shanter. Dr Cornelious felt certain there was much about the influence of Burns on Lincoln of which we are still ignorant. When a man raised in Kentucky, Indiana, Illinois and without the advantage of a literary education could become such a master of the Scottish dialect, that he could recite with proper Scottish accent such poems as 'Holy Willies Prayer' it suggests that Lincoln must have had associates who themselves were masters of the dialect, and that Lincoln had far more than a casual interest in the works of Burns. We ourselves would like to know who taught Lincoln the Scots dialect.

The question put by Burns is the cry of the down trodden and oppressed of humanity from the dawn of history.

*If I am designed yon lordings slave
By nations law designed
Why was an independent wish
E'er planted in my mind
If not, why am i subject to
His cruelty and scorn
And why has man the will and power
To make his brother mourn*

The man who hated slavery and sympathised with the oppressed and weary laden everywhere would feel in his heart every verse of the poem 'Man was made to Mourn'. No public figure better answered Burns' question than Lincoln himself by signing the Thirteenth Amendment of the United States Constitution, which freed 4,000,000 slaves in December 1865.

Burns and Lincoln were alike in many ways, one born in a clay biggin and one in a wooden shack; one schooled in the farmland of Ayrshire, the other in the forests and the prairies.

(Continued on Next Page)

The Poet and the President (cont.)

These schools of outdoor life and wide open spaces, taught the simple lesson that all men are brothers in the eyes of nature.

There is the story of Burns out riding with some young landed gentry near Edinburgh, when Burns stopped to speak to an elderly farmer. On returning to the party Burns was rebuked for wasting time by his young hosts.

Burns replied, “I was not speaking to the suit of hodden grey, sponce bunnet and wooden shoes but to the man sir. The man that stood in them, who for true manly worth and character would weigh down you, me and a dozen more such any day”.

This was a principle that Lincoln could relate to. Burns and Lincoln were truly kindred spirits in their belief of common humanity and equal rights. I leave the closing words to Abraham Lincoln who commented;

“Burns never touched a sentiment without carrying it to its ultimate expression and leaving nothing further to be said”

When asked to propose a toast to Robert Burns he replied;

“I cannot frame a toast to Burns. I can say nothing worthy of his generous heart transcending genius. Thinking of what he has said, I cannot say anything which seems worth saying”.

Abraham Lincoln,
President of the United States of America.

Photo to the Right: Henry Frantz in the former stables attached to the Globe Pub in Dumfries, Scotland.



The author, Jim Davidson of the Mauchline Burns Club (left), with Henry Frantz in Poosie Nancie's, from January of this year.



Henry Frantz (above Right) with Bert Hastings, past president of the Dumfries Burns Club. Photo taken upstairs at the Globe Pub in Dumfries where the Dumfries Burns Club meets (Notice the names of past presidents on the wall behind the two men).

