



Secretary: Bruce Spittle, 727 Brighton Road, Ocean View, Dunedin 9035;  
E-mail: [spittle@es.co.nz](mailto:spittle@es.co.nz); Phone/Fax: 03 4811418



## Annual Report of the Dunedin Burns Club 15 April 2015

Since the last AGM on 23 April 2014, the Club has continued with its aims of fostering interest in the literature and songs of Robert Burns. The concert immediately before the 2014 AGM with Scottish songs, including some by Burns, sung by Peter Chin and Arnold Bachop with the accompaniment of Heather Clough, some piano accordion solos by Heather, and a sing-a-long was greatly enjoyed by a small but appreciative audience. Arnold noted that he once sang to a smaller audience of one and thanked the person for staying to the end only to be told he was the caretaker and was waiting to lock up the hall.

The Club members gave excellent support to the Dunedin Scottish Festival: celebrating Dunedin's links with Scotland and Robert Burns, Sunday 31 August to Wednesday 3 September and the Club was ably represented on the Festival organizing committee by Ann Barsby. The Club hosted the AGM of the Robert Burns Association of the Pacific Rim on 3 September 2015. Royden Somerville was elected Junior Vice-President of the Association and Ann and Bruce as Directors (committee members).

The Robert Burns song section in the Otago Performing Arts Competitions Society Senior Vocal Competition, held on 24 September 2013, was won by Julia Moss-Pearson singing *My love is like a red, red rose*. Anna Thompson was second singing *Ca' the yowers to the knowes* and Samuel Butler third singing *Ae fond kiss*. The Club sponsored the prizes to the value of \$250.

The Club again supported the Dunedin Robbie Rocks competition by sponsoring the People's Choice prize of \$250. The competition entrants performed in the afternoon of Scottish activities in the Octagon on 25 November 2013, and the section winners performing at the Burns Supper that evening. The Schools Section was won by Line Drawing and Robbie Burns singing "My love is like a Red Red Rose." The Open Section was won by The Ward Family and Robbie Burns singing "A parcel of Rogues in a nation." The Dunedin Burns Club Peoples Choice Award was won by Rosa, Rachel & Chelsea singing "My Love is Like a Red Red Rose." U-tube videos of the winners can be found by putting Dunedin Robbie Rocks 2015 into the Google search engine. They are available at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rWaCJa70dBY>, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=AN46xXKVYQU>, and [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vCT5eC1v\\_A8](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vCT5eC1v_A8), respectively.

The Robert Burns Poetry competition attracted entries of high quality and the support of the Dunedin Public Libraries, The Dunedin City Council, The University of Otago, and The Otago Daily Times in organizing this event was much appreciated. Dunedin poet and writer Kay McKenzie-Cooke, judged the competition along with 2014 University of Otago Burns Fellow Majella Cullinane. The winning poems were published in the *Otago Daily Times* on 22 January 2015 and are available at on the Dunedin Public Libraries website by putting Robert Burns Poetry 2015 in the search engine for the website and selecting "What happens if I win." The website

address for the winning poems is: <http://www.dunedinlibraries.govt.nz/events/our-competitions/robert-burns-poetry-competition/2015-winners>. The winners were:

*Published poets:* First Place: H. Williford-Lower (Waikouaiti), *To Wee Russet Tuft*. Second Place: Peter Matheson (Waitati), *Rabbie's Ode to Dunedin*. Third Place: Stephanie Mayne (Parnell, Auckland), *Wha daurs meddle wi me: the Song of the Scottish Thistle*.

*Unpublished poets:* First Place: Stewart Webster (Dalmore, Dunedin), *Address tae the Dunedin Stadium*. Second Place: Christina Hulbe (Opoho, Dunedin), *Ye Men of Fire and Steel (Haast Eagle Coronach)* Third Place: Louisa Baillie (Fernhill, Dunedin), *To Donald, on your wife's passing 27th May 1869*.

Youth Section: Joe Corbett, Waikouaiti, Age 17, *Thank Ye, Rabbie Burns: a serenade to the Scottish bard, whose egalitarian ideas were the basis for the freedom we have today, such as the education system and our right to hunt game*.

The report in the *Otago Daily Times* on 22 January 2015 by Shane Gilchrist and available from: <http://www.odt.co.nz/entertainment/arts/330704/poems-fit-bard> noted: "Dunedin poet and writer Kay McKenzie-Cooke, who judged the competition along with 2014 University of Otago Burns Fellow Majella Cullinane, was impressed by the level of accomplishment. "Some poems were either written in, or made reference to, the Scots language. Some referred specifically to their admiration of Robbie Burns. Some were specific to Dunedin. Some described nature. Some described people, present or past. Some were political. Some used pathos, others veered into bathos. Mostly, the poetry showed how deeply the city of Dunedin still connects with Burns, its Scottish bard." The winning poem of the published section, *To Wee Russet Tuft*, by Helen Williford-Lower, of Waikouaiti, offers a consistent and compact beauty, McKenzie-Cooke notes. "It makes excellent use of the Scots language to describe the dilemma humans face when nature shows its more brutal side." And the winning poem in the unpublished section, *Address tae the Dunedin Stadium*, by Stewart Webster, of Dalmore, is one that "would be dear to Burns' own heart." McKenzie-Cooke says, "It is a lively and humorous poem that makes fun of what the poet considers to be a local political faux pas." Joe Corbett (17), of Waikouaiti, won the youth section for the third successive year. His work, *Thank Ye, Rabbie Burns*, "stood out for its confident use of Scots and for its surprisingly mature and proficient poetic style," McKenzie-Cooke notes. Corbett has been invited to recite his poem to help welcome the Scottish cricket team on its arrival to Dunedin on February 15 for the ICC Cricket World Cup. McKenzie-Cooke's comments were supported by Kay Mercer, events co-ordinator, Dunedin Public Libraries: "The high standard of the 32 entries is clear evidence that our city is deserving of being named a Unesco City of Literature."

The Burns Night Dinner was hosted jointly with Toitu Otago Settlers Museum, at Toitu OSM with approximately 105 persons attending. Ray Goodfellow, Official Piper, piped in the official party and, at the end of the evening played a pipe medley before all joined for *Auld Lang Syne*. Frances Brodie, accompanied singer Beth Colston. The winners of the Published and Unpublished sections of the Robert Burns Poetry Competition, Helen Williford-Lower and Stewart Webster, read their poems. The winners of the Schools and Open sections of the Dunedin Robbie Rocks competition, Line Drawing and The Ward Family, performed their songs. Lieutenant Darryl Tong gave the Immortal Memory Address and considered whether Burns terminal illness was due to a dental infection. NZ crime fiction writer Vanda Symon also spoke. Harry Morton, Scotland, addressed the haggis and recited Holy Willies Prayer. Members of the Otago Polish community again attended. The evening was seen to have been most successful.

The inaugural public Robert Burns Lecture, *Poetry, Politics and Patronage: Editing Robert Burns's Scottish Tour for the new Oxford Edition*, was supported by the Club, with a \$300 donation, and was given by Professor Nigel Leask, University of Glasgow on 6 May 2014.

Julie Marshall kindly donated some items to the Club including photographs of the ceremony in Dunedin's Northern Cemetery on 27 April 1995 when a headstone was unveiled for John Hamilton, born Paisley, Scotland, 7 May 1827, died Dunedin, 26 April 1983. John Hamilton was a poet writing a book *Lay of the Bogle Stone* and was a founding member of the Committee of the Dunedin Burns Club when it was reconstituted on 18 March 1891. The Club was first constituted, according the Kilmarnock Roll of Burns Clubs, in 1861. John Barr, author of *Poems and songs: descriptive and satirical*. Old Physic Gardens, Edinburgh: John Greig & Son; 1861, was the original founder. His grave is also in the Northern Cemetery (by a cabbage tree at the end of the curved road on the right about 300 m from the entrance).

Barbara Newton kindly donated to the Club 37 books and booklets related to Robert Burns and Scotland that had belonged her late grandfather who was the Club president in 1956–1959. The books included: (i) Currie J. *The entire works of Robert Burns with an account of his life, and a criticism on his writings to which are prefixed some observations on the character and condition of the Scottish peasantry*. 6th Diamond ed. embellished with fourteen illustrations from original design by Mr Stewart. Warwick Square, London: Allan Bell & Co.; 1836; (ii) Henley WE. *Burns: life, genius, achievement*. Reprinted from "The Centenary Burns." Edinburgh: TC and EC Jack; 1898; and (iii) Lord Rosebery. *Burns: appreciation*. Stirling: Eneas Mackay; 1912. Charles S Turner, president, is situated in the 1959 photo below of the Dunedin Burns Club Committee for the Burns Bi-Centenary 1759–1959, in front of the middle of the statue plinth (Beneath the letter T in Robert) with Alex McMillan, Life member and Patron, on his right (to the left in the photo) and William Brown, Past President, on his left.



Bruce Spittle,  
Secretary, Dunedin Burns Club.