

Honorary member of 1840 – James Glencairn Burns

James Glencairn Burns (1794-1865)

This third surviving son of the poet (the first being Robert, and the second being the William Nicol Burns mentioned in James' letter), like his two brothers, was educated at Dumfries Grammar School and went into the East India Company's Service.

(He was named in honour of James Cunningham, 14th Earl of Glencairn, who received the poet warmly on his arrival in Edinburgh in 1786. Glencairn's friends included the Duchess of Gordon and the publisher William Creech. Through the Earl's influence, within ten days of the poet's arrival, the Caledonian Hunt subscribed 'universally, one and all' for the 1787 edition, accounting for one hundred copies.)

James married Sarah Robinson in 1818, but she died in 1821, just after the birth of their daughter, Sarah; he married Mary Becket in 1828 and had another daughter, Ann. James had risen from cadet to the rank of Major. In 1833, he was appointed Judge and Collector at Cahar. At the time of this letter, James had recently retired and was living in London. After his wife's death in 1844, he stayed with his brother William, also a widower, in Cheltenham. He was made a Lieut.-Colonel in 1855. He is buried in the Mausoleum. He and his brother William were honoured by Irvine in 1844 - the Town Council created them honorary burgesses and bestowed on them the Freedom of the Burgh.

Letter of acceptance, written from London on 3rd March, 1840

Sir

I have been favoured with your letter of the 27th Feby announcing to me that I have been elected an Honorary Member of the Irvine Burns Club.

I beg you will return my warmest acknowledgements to the Members of the Club for the honour they have done me and in particular to Mr Dick for his kindness in proposing me as also to yourself for the terms in which you have conveyed it to me.

The letter for my brother William shall be duly forwarded to him.

I have the honour to be,

Sir,

Your ob. Servt,

J G Burns

Major E. I. C. S.

Notes:

The minutes record that "the three sons of the Bard" were proposed as Honorary Members. This letter indicates that James passed a letter from the Club to his brother William, but we do not know how, or whether, a letter was passed to the third son, Robert, who was by then retired and living in Dumfries.

EICS: East India Company Service