

Honorary members of 1870-74

1870 David Dunbar, Karl Blind, Robert Browning

1871 William Jack

1872 Edward Jenkins

1874 Sir Bartle Frere

The **1871** minutes also record the nomination for Honorary Membership of **Robert Buchanan**, the Scottish author and poet, though no acceptance letter is known. Robert Williams Buchanan (1841-1901) was only 29 at the time. His father was a native of Ayr, Robert was educated in Glasgow, and by the end of 1870 he had published five volumes.

The **1872** minutes also record the nomination for Honorary Membership of A C Swinburne, the poet, though presumably no acceptance letter was received. Unusually, our files contain the Secretary's draft of his letter, with its alterations. It is a typical invitation of the time: **Written to Algernon Charles Swinburne Esq.**, Care of Messrs E Moxon & Co., Publishers, London, on 26th Jany, 1872:

Sir,

I am to intimate that the Members of the Irvine Burns Club at their Annual Meeting held yesterday unanimously elected you as an Honorary Member of the Club, and I am at the same time to beg your acceptance of a lithographic fac-simile sent herewith of the Poet's original manuscript of "The Cottar's Saturday Night".

I may be permitted to mention that this Club which was instituted in 1826 possesses a very valuable collection of the original manuscripts of the Poet's principal Works from which the first edition of his poems was printed.

I have the honour to be,

Sir,

Your most obed, Servt.

<being a draft, unsigned>

1870: David Dunbar (1828-1873)

David Dunbar was a local Dumfries poet and politician, best known for giving his home town its nickname. When he stood as a candidate for Parliament in the General Election of 1857, he lauded the town, in one of his addresses, as "Queen of the South", from the Old Testament tale of the Queen of Sheba, described in the New Testament Gospels of Matthew (12.42) and Luke (11.31) as the Queen of the South (where Jesus indicates that she and the Ninevites will judge the generation of Jesus' contemporaries who rejected him). The moniker thereafter became synonymous with the town.

When several local football sides merged to form one Dumfries team in 1919, various names were suggested, the name Queen of the South was adopted, and the team's first game took place on 16th August 1919, being a 2-all draw with Nithsdale Wanderers.

In 1859, he published his "Poems and Songs - Respectfully dedicated to the Inhabitants of Dumfries by their obliged and grateful townsman" (of which a University of California copy

has been digitised by Google*). The first poem in the collection is "Robert Burns: A Centenary Poem - An Invocation to Scotland to Arise and Celebrate the Centenary".

* web link: <https://archive.org/details/poemssongs00dunbrich/page/n5/mode/2up>

We do not at present have other biographical information, except that the 1871 census records him as a Teacher of Writing, living at 9 Langlands, aged 42. An "In Memoriam" book was published, containing a tribute, newspaper notices, and other items, but we have not yet been able to see its contents.

Letter of acceptance, written from Langlands, Dumfries on 2nd Feb. 1870

Sir,

It was with lively satisfaction I got your kind intimation of 31st Jany that I had been chosen an Honorary Member of the Irvine Burns Club. I feel myself highly honoured by my admission into so distinguished a body whose efforts in extending the fame and defending the name of Burns have been so extensive and effectual.

For many years past I have read with great interest the reports of the annual meetings of your Club, from all of which I gather that it possesses many members of high literary attainments who have done good service in strengthening the love and admiration all true Scotsmen feel for the Bard of Coila. These Meetings are productive of much good for they draw us out to the contemplation of what is elevating & ennobling.

When we meet in honour of Burns, we simply meet to honour what is best and noblest in our country's history!

I have to thank you for the excellent fac simile of the "Cottar's Saturday Night" - a document which I value exceedingly.

Thanking you again for the courtesy of the Club,

I am, Dear Sir,

Yours most truly,

D Dunbar

1870: Karl Blind (1826-1907)

Karl Blind was one of the four major nationalist leaders in Europe of his day, the others being Garibaldi (1807-82), Mazzini (1805-72) [note 1] and Kossuth (1802-94) [note 2]. Blind was continually engaged in agitating or in heading risings in the cause of German freedom and union, being tried and condemned on several occasions, and was imprisoned for his part in the Baden Insurrection of 1848.

When he settled in exile in London in 1852, the Blind family home became a regular meeting place for many European revolutionaries and champions of liberty, including Karl Marx (who had settled in London after the 1848 revolutions), Garibaldi and Mazzini. Blind interested himself in democratic movements, and cultivated his literary as well as his political interests, including contributing to magazines. The anti-establishment atmosphere influenced his children. Expelled from school for atheism, his step-daughter, Mathilde Cohen (1841-96) later took her stepfather's surname, and became a noted Anglo-German poet and biographer; her first book of poems was dedicated to Mazzini. In 1866 Blind's son Ferdinand attempted to assassinate Bismarck (who easily disarmed him).

Karl Blind was brought to the notice of Irvine Burns Club by Robert McTear, auctioneer & valuator on Renfield St., Glasgow. In a 1869 letter (regarding Garibaldi), he wrote: "It was he who recommended Freiligrath [3] the great German poet to translate Burns' works into German, since which several translations have appeared in Germany. Mr & Mrs Blind are intimate friends of mine and both of them have an extraordinary knowledge of Burns' works and admire them accordingly. Karl Blind is in the best sense a great man and I know he would appreciate the attention, which should be accompanied by a copy of the fac-simile".

Notes:

- [1] Giuseppe ('Joseph') **Mazzini** founded the 'Young Italy' movement which aimed to unite Italy as a republic, liberating Rome in 1848 with Garibaldi as his military commander, but disapproving of the Kingdom later created by Garibaldi & Cavour.
- [2] Lajos ('Louis') **Kossuth** led the 1848 independence revolution in Hungary, becoming President briefly until Russian troops helped Austria to crush the rebellion.
- [3] The republican Ferdinand **Freiligrath** (1810-76) took part in the revolutionary movements in Germany in 1848. His writings led to a charge of treason - he was acquitted, in the first jury trial ever held in Prussia. He produced a version of "Is There For Honest Poverty" in 1843 and many other admirable translations of works by several poets, including Burns, Tannahill, Longfellow, Shakespeare, and Victor Hugo.

Letter of acceptance, written from 2 Winchester Road, South Hampstead, London, N.W. on Feb. 12th, 1870

Dear Sir,

Had it not been for a relapse of illness, I would have acknowledged, ere this, your kind letter which contains so gratifying a communication. I feel and prize it as a great distinction to have been elected an honorary member of your old-established Club, which so nobly cultivates the memory of the great Scottish bard.

Around the town of Irvine, such remembrances of the poet's early life are gathered that I was deeply moved when a fac-simile of his own handwriting, printed there, first met my eye. For years, I, and those around me, have turned with ever-renewed joy to the poems of Burns, whose very language stands even closer to our own than the English tongue, and whose sentiments always touch deep, whether they reflect the feelings of a loving heart, or are the utterance of a patriotic longing for freedom.

Be kind enough, dear Sir, to convey to all the members of the Club my sincere and respectful thanks for the honour conferred upon me,

and believe me

Yours faithfully

Karl Blind

1870: Robert Browning (1812-1889)

A foremost Victorian poet and playwright, Browning had finally, in completing and publishing his long blank-verse poem 'The Ring and the Book' over the previous eighteen months, achieved the significant recognition which he had sought for forty years, though we have no way of knowing whether this was the prompt for his Irvine nomination.

Browning's father was a well-paid clerk for the Bank of England and had amassed a library of about 6,000 books, many of them rare, so Robert was raised in a household of significant literary resources. His father encouraged his interest in literature and the arts, and his mother was a talented musician. By the age of fourteen, Robert was fluent in French, Greek, Italian and Latin.

In 1846, he married, initially in secret, Elizabeth Barrett. Their only child, Robert, was born in 1849. He remained relatively obscure as a poet till his middle age, and it was only after his wife's death in 1861 that his reputation started to take off, particularly on the publication in 1868 of 'The Ring and the Book'.

Buried in Poets' Corner in Westminster Abbey, his grave now lies immediately adjacent to that of Alfred Tennyson (an honorary member of 1863), who died three years later.

Letter of acceptance, written from 19 Warwick Crescent, Upper Westbourne Terrace, London W., on March 14, '70, the letter bearing a crest with the motto 'Virtute':

Dear Sir,

Allow me to apologise both to you and to the Members of the Irvine Burns Club for some delay in acknowledging the flattering intimation that I have received the signal honor of being constituted one of the Body, - an honor indeed should be counted any association with those who thus interest themselves in the transcendent genius of the Poet. My delay in saying thus much, - or rather thus little, was caused by unforeseen circumstances: pray offer my excuses for these, together with all thanks to the Club for what - I repeat is a signal honor conferred, however unworthily, upon,

My dear Sir,

Yours very obediently & faithfully

Robert Browning

Notes:

We do not know what the 'unforeseen [*sic*] circumstances' of the delay were, but we can suggest a possibility. The admission of his only child, Robert, nicknamed 'Penini' or 'Pen', to Oxford University in 1869 had not ended his father's worry about him.

Browning was happier by 24th Feb. 1870, writing in a letter: "Pen is at last round the corner of his career and fairly with his head in the right way - I do trust." Yet he was later to be disappointed, as his son did not succeed and left Oxford in June that year. Perhaps concern for his son had delayed Browning's answer to our invitation.

We also possess a copy of the letter of Election of Robert Browning to Honorary Membership of Irvine Burns Club, dated 8 February 1870. This was sent to us in August 2000 by the Wedgestone Press, Kansas, during their preparation of a book on the Robert Browning correspondence.

1871: William Jack (1834-1924)

This honorary member is one of the younger nominees, being only 36 (or 37) at the time of his nomination. He would have been nominated by his former teacher Dr John White (hon. member 1881, see notes there), the Club President in 1871.

Born in Ayrshire, at Stewarton, and brought up in Irvine, William Jack studied at Glasgow and Cambridge. He was appointed HM Inspector of Schools in the South West of Scotland District in 1860, then Professor of Natural History at Owen's College, Manchester 1866-70, before moving to the editorship of the 'Glasgow Herald' in 1870. His Ayrshire birth and the newspaper editorship may have been the prompts for his nomination by Irvine Burns Club in 1871. (Some years later, he sent the Club copies of the two editions of MacMillan's Magazine containing his articles on Burns' Common Place Book.) He was editor until 1875.

In 1876, he joined the publishing firm Macmillan & Co., thereby creating another link between Irvine Burns Club and that Irvine-born publisher. Finally, in 1879, he was appointed Professor of Mathematics at Glasgow, a chair he held for 30 years up to the age of 65.

Letter of acceptance, from 7 Janefield Terrace, Hillhead, Glasgow, on Feb. 1st, 1871, addressed to James Dickie, Esq., Secretary, Irvine Burns Club

My dear Sir,

I have to ask you to express to the members of the Irvine Burns Club, my sense of the high honour they have done me, in electing me an honorary member. You are perfectly right in saying that I am not disposed to ungenerous reserves in my estimate of the most gifted Scotchman whom we have known for perhaps a couple of centuries.

Very truly yours,
William Jack

Notes: His address is embossed on the writing paper, so does not show up in photocopies.

1872: Edward Jenkins (1838-1910)

John Edward Jenkins was nominated following the success of his 1870 novel 'Ginx's Baby: his birth and other misfortunes; a satire' (reprinted in 1872 and/or 1876). [The Club minutes erroneously record "Edwin Jenkins, author of 'Jink's Baby'"; Project Gutenberg and newspapers digitised by the National Library of Australia proved valuable sources for this summary.] In 'Ginx's Baby', a baby, born in a London slum and abandoned by its parents, is "tossed about and quarrelled over by various officials and charitable associations of London - a healthful warning against red-tape methods of exercising charity". [A 1917 silent film with a similar-sounding title is not connected.] Jenkins later wrote many more novels. He also forsook his legal career for a political one.

Jenkins' visit to Australia in 1889 was well reported. His imminent lecture tour followed that of David Christie Murray (an honorary member in 1888). In the Hobart 'Mercury', he is "Edward Jenkins, author of 'Ginx's Baby', 'The Devil's Chain' and other popular works of fiction". The Adelaide 'Advertiser' carried a fuller biography.

He was born at Bangalore, India. His father was minister of St. Paul's Presbyterian Church, Montreal, Canada. Educated at Montreal and the University of Pennsylvania, Jenkins was called to the bar at Lincoln's Inn in 1864, and practised with success up to 1872-3. In 1874, he was appointed Agent-General for Canada, resigning in January, 1876, when the Canadian Government decided to reduce the office to an emigration agency. While absent in Canada, he was elected a member of the House of Commons for Dundee, and continued to represent

Dundee till April, 1880. In January, 1881, he unsuccessfully contested the City of Edinburgh against Mr. McLaren, the Lord Advocate. Mr. Jenkins was "an advanced Liberal, chiefly on social questions, and an anti-Republican, and is in favor of Imperial unity as against the anti colonial party". Best known as the author of "Ginx's Baby", his other works included "Lord Bantam", "The Coolie", "Little Hodge", "The Devil's Chain", "Lutchmee and Dilloo", "The Captain's Cabin", "Fatal Days", "A Paladin of Romance", "Contemporary Manners", and "Jobson's Enemies", besides several political essays. He was also occasional contributor to 'Fraser', 'The Contemporary', and other reviews. In 1870, Jenkins visited British Guiana on the part of the Aborigines' Protection Society to watch the proceedings of the Royal Commission appointed to investigate and report on the condition of the coolies. He was associated with Sir George Grey, Mr. Torrens, and others in the emigration and colonial movement. He was also a member of the Royal Commission on copyrights.

An article in "The West Australian" in 1888, printed below this on our website, lambasted his opposition to the creation of a Responsible Government for Western Australia, and ended: "Mr. Jenkins evidently thinks that West Australians are a set of fools, easily victimised by unscrupulous swindlers. . . . We are certainly no more than a handful of people, but a people who know fairly well how to hold their own, and how to promote the best interests of their adopted country. And if Mr. Jenkins could be made aware of what, with our small resources, we have already done in this direction, he would doubtless confess that we may be safely trusted to walk alone."

Letter of acceptance, written from 5 Paper Buildings, Temple, London, on January 30, 1872, to Jas. Dickie, Esq., Honorary Secy.

Sir,

I have to acknowledge with great satisfaction and many thanks the honour done to me by the Irvine Burns Club in electing me an honorary member. I have also to express my gratitude for the interesting memorial of Burns which you have sent me.

I well remember, as who could ever forget, the profound and pleasurable emotions awakened in me by the reading of the Cotters Saturday Night when a boy, in I think Chambers' Miscellany and the renewed pleasure its reading always affords me. This copy of it will always have a special value to me.

I may also give expression to the gratification afforded me by the fact that this compliment implies on the part of those who confer it an acquaintance with and approval of some things I have written. I value it much as an evidence of your goodwill that you associate me with yourselves in the duty of doing honour to your matchless poet.

I am Sir

Yours truly

Edward Jenkins

Notes:

The 'Paper Buildings', part of the Inner Temple, were so called from the 1610 timber and plaster 'paper work' construction of the first building, destroyed by fire in 1838. No. 5 was rebuilt in 1847-49.

See the end of this document for an **extra Edward Jenkins item, on the future of Western Australia, from the 'Western Mail' (of Perth, West Australia) on 7 Jan., 1888**

1874: Sir Bartle Frere (1815-1884)

At age 19, Henry Bartle Edwards Frere graduated from the East India Company's college and began a long career in the Indian Civil Service. Rising to Commissioner in Sind (1850-59), he suppressed the Indian Mutiny (War of Indian Independence) and was knighted. As Governor of Bombay (Mumbai) (1862-67), he restructured the town along modern lines. The prompt for his Honorary Membership is most interesting

In 1865-66, Livingstone had stayed with Sir Bartle in Bombay - both were determined opponents of the east African slave-trade, Livingstone from his knowledge of the African interior around Lake Nyasa, and Frere from the Anglo-Indians of Bombay who traded with the Zanzibar Arabs. Frere arranged for Livingstone to take some freed slaves from a Bombay government school, and a dozen sepoys from the Bombay Marine Battalion, for his next expedition, and in 1870 Livingstone named a river after Bartle Frere. In 1872 Gladstone's government decided to abolish the sale of all slaves, and Sir Bartle was appointed to sign a treaty with the Sultan of Zanzibar to that effect. After Sir Bartle threatened a British naval blockade, the Sultan signed on 5 June 1873, from which day the slave market in Zanzibar was closed for ever.

While Sir Bartle had indeed instigated the blockade, it was actually Dr John Kirk, the only companion of David Livingstone to emerge unscathed from the explorer's disastrous Zambezi expedition of 1859-63, and resident in Zanzibar from 1866, who persuaded Sultan Barghash to yield to British pressure. Hazell's book (v. infra) is a compelling account of how Dr Kirk's persistence and diplomacy won the day, even though the self-important Frere, who had failed to close the deal with the Sultan, had ensured through a barrage of press publicity that he received the credit. A mountain in N E Queensland was named in his honour by Scottish explorer George A F E Dalrymple.

It is likely that the Irvine Burns Club, approaching Frere six months after the treaty, was not so much honouring "the distinguished traveller" (the phrase in our minutes), as recognising an outstanding humanitarian achievement which Burns would have celebrated - the ending of the last outpost of the trade in human beings - the cumulative result of Livingstone's reports, Stanley's reports, a British Government decision, Sir Bartle's intervention, and the unsung work of John Kirk. Sadly, Livingstone, having died in April, did not see the closure of the slave market.

In 1875, Frere accompanied the Prince of Wales to Egypt and India, a trip so successful that he was created a baronet. In 1877, appointed Governor of Cape Province to implement the policy of confederation, he provoked a war with Zulu tribes, causing a disastrous British defeat in 1879, though eventually winning the trust of the Boers before recall to London in 1880. He died in 1884, while preparing to answer his critics with a vindication of his actions regarding Afghanistan as well as South Africa. In 1888, a statue of Frere, paid for by public subscription, was unveiled in the Victoria Embankment Gardens by the Prince of Wales.

(compiled by IJD, including information from Tim Jeal, 'Livingstone' (Yale, 1973), p.353 & passim, and Alastair Hazell, "The Last Slave Market" (Constable, 2011).)

Letter of acceptance, written from 22 Princes Gardens, South Kensington, London, on 2nd February 1874

Dear Sir

Will you return my warmest thanks to the members of the Irvine Burns Club for the honor they have done me in electing me an honorary member of their Club - Whenever I am in the neighbourhood of Irvine I shall hope to thank you and the other members of the Club in person - and to express to you how gratefully I appreciate the honor you have done me.

Believe me,

My dear Sir,

Very faithfully and sincerely yours

H B E Frere

-oOo-

Extra on Edward Jenkins: From the 'Western Mail' (Perth, West Australia) on 7 Jan., 1888

Mr. EDWARD JENKINS ON WESTERN AUSTRALIA. (FROM THE WEST AUSTRALIAN.)

ELSEWHERE to-day we re-publish a leading article which appeared in the Overland Mail of the 11th Nov., on the subject of "Western Australia and the Colonial Office." The writer, our London correspondent informs us, is Mr. EDWARD JENKINS, the well-known author of "Ginx's Baby," formerly a member of Parliament, and at one time also Agent-General for Canada, and supposed to possess a more than ordinarily large and accurate knowledge of colonial affairs. It will be seen that Mr. JENKINS considers Sir HENRY HOLLAND'S intimation of his willingness to grant Responsible Government to this colony, "one of the most scandalous decisions ever arrived at by a Secretary of State," which, he adds, "is saying a great deal." He regards the proposal to "throw away 750,000 square miles of territory now belonging to the Crown and people of Great Britain" as "an extraordinary thing". In reality, he declares, this "magnificent" province would not be handed over to the "35,000" men, women and children, its present inhabitants - "it would practically be placed at the disposal of a small clique of speculators who would soon get control of the Government of the colony and be free to carry out a gigantic scheme of land jobbery." Apparently Mr. JENKINS bases this assumption upon a passage in Sir FREDERICK BROOME's paper read at the Colonial Institute in which His EXCELLENCY remarked that men of business were turning their attention to our colony, and that capitalists were awakening to the fact that money was to be made on this side of the Australian continent. Already, Mr. JENKINS says, 2,700 square miles of Western Australian territory has been sold out right; already 250,000 square miles have been granted on lease for pasturage. About 747,00 [sic] square miles remain at the disposal of the Crown and this "glorious heritage" it is "on which Australian and English speculators have fixed greedy eyes and which Sir HENRY HOLLAND and his advisers at the Colonial Office are credited with the intention of handing over gratuitously to the entire management and disposal of a trumpery parochial ring to be called a Government, elected by the thirty-five thousand people scattered over Western Australia." The Imperial authorities might indeed retain power over these lands, but "it is perfectly certain", thinks Mr. JENKINS "that if that were made a condition of granting Responsible Government the whole scheme would be dropped like a hot-potato."

That Mr. JENKINS is, or was, a clever man "Ginx's Baby," remains as a standing proof, but, certainly, the article from which we quote displays a singular depth of ignorance of the very subjects stated to be within his special knowledge. No more virulent attack upon the resolve of this colony to accept the responsibility of full self-Government and upon the favourable attitude of the SECRETARY of STATE towards that decision has yet appeared and none showing a more complete misapprehension of the actual facts of the case reviewed. Inaccuracies in regard to figures may be passed over as of

minor consequence. The main and absurd blunder which Mr. JENKINS in common with other publicists has made in dealing with the present negotiations between Western Australia and the Colonial Office, is his assumption that this colony "belongs" to the Crown and to the people of Great Britain in a different sense from that in which other colonies of the Empire belong to them and that the granting of Responsible Government will involve abandonment of special privileges and rights. That a man who has made colonial subjects a special study of his life should be under such a strange hallucination tells ill either for the extent of his research or for the clearness of his understanding. It should surely be unnecessary to point out that Western Australia is no longer governed by Orders in Council and that "the Crown" and "the people of Great Britain" can no longer dispose of her lands and destinies at their own sweet will. There is now it is true a check upon the action of the colonists which under Responsible Government would be considerably relaxed. But, on the other hand, the counter check which the colonists possess upon any arbitrary action of the Crown is already almost as complete as it will be when the Executive is locally appointed. The colonists through a Legislature in which their strength is practically as twenty one to four have been endowed with full control of the public purse. Mr. JENKINS when he becomes acquainted with this fact may possibly consider it "a scandal" but we must assume his reading of constitutional lore sufficiently wide to enable him to realize the full extent of what it means and that the "Crown and people of Great Britain" can no more dictate in the present the uses to which our territory shall be put than they will be able to do when full blown Parliamentary Government shall have taken the place of the existing form.

What Mr. JENKINS and his like are apparently afraid of is that a future West Australian "parochial" Parliament will apportion the vast lands of the colony amongst its members and put a stop to immigration. Mr. JENKINS has not informed us how he conceives that jobbery of the kind might be rendered profitable and why he is of opinion that the conspiring ring which he has induced himself to believe is in league to acquire this colony should wish to keep it unproductive and unsettled. When 27,000 colonists undertook the Government of Queensland did they parcel the land amongst themselves? When any other British colony entered upon the sole management of its affairs were the evils Mr. JENKINS anticipates ever known? Are not the Crown lands in every self governing British colony open to the world, and on more liberal terms than when their control was vested in Downing Street officials? Why then should it absurdly be taken as a matter of course that Western Australia will prove the one exception and fall into the hands of a disreputable and unscrupulous jobbing gang? And what, we should like to know, are these Imperial emigration schemes of which we have heard so much of late? Instead of denouncing us anticipatorily for interfering with them, let them be stated. Mr. JENKINS does not know, of course, that only a little corner of the "glorious heritage" he writes of is fitted to support a population living by tillage of the soil. But to the extent of our resources there is nothing of which we stand so much in need as increased settlement, and the expenditure of capital in bringing labour and our lands together. And of this Mr JENKINS may rest assured, that we shall always warmly welcome any Imperial or other emigration scheme worked so as to contribute to our wealth and our production, Mr. JENKINS evidently thinks that West Australians are a set of fools, easily victimised by unscrupulous swindlers. He, perhaps, may be surprised to learn that hitherto there has been much gnashing of teeth amongst gentry of this description, because the suspiciousness of our colonists leaves less than ordinary room for the exercise of their evil craft. We are certainly no more than a handful of people, but a people who know fairly well how to hold their own, and how to promote the best interests of their adopted country. And if Mr. JENKINS could be made aware of what, with our small resources, we have already done in this direction, he would doubtless confess that we may be safely trusted to walk alone. Difficulties we know we shall encounter, but amongst them we need not reckon assaults from Mr JENKINS' imaginary land sharks.