

Honorary members of 1922-1924

1922 Duncan McNaught, Robert Bruce Mantell, Sir David Paulin

1923 Viscount Younger, Dr W A Craigie, Col. John Buchan

1924 Sir Frederick Macmillan, Dr J Pittendrigh Macgillivray

1922 Duncan McNaught (1844-1925)

Three members of Kilmaronock Burns Club founded the Federation of Burns Clubs in 1885 - Provost David Mackay, Captain David Sneddon, and Duncan McNaught, who was parochial schoolmaster at Kilmaurs from 1867 (after two years as assistant there) for over fifty years.

He took over editorship of the Federation's annual 'Burns Chronicle' from its second volume in 1893 and continued in this work for 33 years until his death in 1925. He was himself one of the largest contributors, his articles invariably being well informed.

McNaught was appointed President of the Federation in 1910, resigning it in 1923 when nearing the age of 80. His Presidency saw the foundation of the Chair of Scottish History and Literature at the University of Glasgow, the preservation of the Auld Brig of Ayr, and the promotion of verse and song competitions for school pupils.

He took an active part in public life, being a founder of Kilmaronock Conservative Association, and editor of the 'Kilmaronock Herald' in its first year of existence. He produced a volume on 'The Charters of Kilmaurs' (1874) and 'Kilmaurs Parish and Burgh' (1912).

At least two events of 1921 would prompt the offer of Honorary Membership from Irvine Burns Club. One is his publication of a volume collecting material he had prepared for the Chronicle - "The Truth About Burns" published in September 1921. A contemporary wrote in the 1926 edition of the 'Chronicle': "As free from cant as from pernicious eulogy, he sought in his 'Truth About Burns' to give to the world the real Burns, the human man".

In that same year he was honoured by the University of Glasgow, which conferred upon him the honorary doctorate of laws, in recognition of his distinguished services as teacher, editor and parish historian.

Letter of acceptance, written from the Annual Burns Chronicle and Club Directory, Benrig, Kilmaurs, 15th Jan'y 1922, to R M Hogg, the Hon. Secy

Dear Mr Hogg,

I have to acknowledge with much pride, the high honour which the Irvine Burns Club has conferred on me, and hope to live up to the high literary standard of the honorary membership revealed by the brief list you have sent me.

With sincere wishes for the continued eminence of the Club in Burns circles.

I am

Yours truly

D McNaught

1922: Robert Bruce Mantell (1854-1928)

The showman P T Barnum, the patriot Robert the Bruce, Irvine and America all come together in the story of Robert Bruce Mantell, a heralded Shakespearean stage actor who made several silent films.

His father James was baker to Lord Eglinton, then his private secretary. He married Elizabeth Bruce, who could trace her lineage to Robert the Bruce, and together they leased the Wheatsheaf Inn on Irvine's High Street. The Wheatsheaf Inn was one of the inns frequented by Robert Burns and Richard Brown in 1781/82 (recalled in 'Memorables of Robin Cummell').

P T Barnum stayed in their inn, on the showman's second UK tour in 1858. Barnum's biographer (Joel Benton, 1998) records that Barnum brought with him Tom Thumb (Charles Stratton), exhibiting him in all the principal towns of Britain. Mantell's 1918 biographer (Clarence J Bulliet, 'Robert Mantell's Romance') records: "Barnum, once upon a visit to Irvine with a collection of his freaks, stopped over night at the Wheatsheaf Inn. Just after supper, the great showman saw a curly-headed boy of three or four standing in a corner of the dining room with great round eyes regarding in awed silence 'General' Thumb. The wonderful seriousness of the child made Barnum laugh. He walked over to the corner of the room, sat down in a huge chair, took Bobbie Mantell on his knee, stroked his head, and remarked, impressively: 'Some day, my lad, you will be a great showman, too.' The boy never forgot Barnum's words."

When he was 5, Mantell's family moved to Dublin, to a large public house, renamed the Eglinton-Winton in honour of their past patron. There the youngsters performed amateur theatricals during the Christmas season when guests were few. Robert attended five schools - dismissed from each for indiscipline - before settling at a seminary.

Using the name Robert Hudson (so as not to embarrass his mother, who did not regard acting as a career), he went to Boston, America, in 1874, found no work, and returned after ten days. He then made his stage debut in Lancashire. In 1878, now using his real name, he toured America for a few months. In England, he picked up roles in Shakespearean tragedies and in 1883 again headed to America, work coming easily in the 1890s. His earlier roles tended to be romantic leads, and many of his later ones were as a classic tragedian. His most renowned role was as King Lear, which he played and perfected from the 1910s almost until his death. His film career began in 1915 at age 61, all but the last, in 1923, being with Fox Studios - all are now lost.

Mantell married four times. One divorce led to alimony demands and arrest warrants for non-support that kept him out of New York for years. He was twice widowed, each time from wives who had been his leading ladies. His fourth wife was 35 years younger than him.

Letter of acceptance, written from Chateau Laurier (one of the three Grand Trunk Pacific Hotels), Ottawa, Canada, on 1st March 1922, to R M Hogg, the Hon. Secy

My Dear Mr Hogg,

I received your good letter. Please say to the Irvine Burns Club that I feel highly honoured, and I don't know when in all my life more delighted.

If all goes well will be in Irvine about the 5th of June. Kind good wishes to all,

Yours Sincerely

R. B. Mantell

1922 Sir David Paulin (1847-1930)

Sir David's father, George Paulin, was Rector (headmaster) of Irvine (Royal) Academy for over thirty years, from 1844 to 1877 - he was known as "a pious and painstaking rector and a minor poet" (Strawhorn, 'History of Irvine'). In 1922, Sir David presented a bust of his father to the school; having graced Irvine Royal Academy (now Sovereign House), it now sits in the Head Teacher's office at the current Irvine Royal Academy on Kilwinning Road.

Sir David himself, Irvine-born, was an actuary by profession, and was joint founder and manager of the Scottish Life Assurance Company from 1881 to 1918, then a Director. Knighted in 1909, he was a prominent member of the Edinburgh financial scene.

His many positions show his high standing in the financial community. They included President of the Scottish Society of Economists, President of the Actuarial Society, President of the Life Insurance Society of Edinburgh 1904-06, Chairman of Associated Scottish Life from 1892, and one of the eight trustees of the Widows' Fund of the Merchant Company, his address being recorded as 19 St Andrew Square, in 1896. In about 1918, he was also a Director of the Arizona Copper Co. Ltd., Vice-President of the Edinburgh Chamber of Commerce, and Chairman of the Edinburgh Canadian Mortgage Co. Ltd., of Fleming Reid & Co. Ltd. and of the Scottish Advisory Committee for the Welfare of the Blind.

Letter of acceptance, written from 6 Forres Street, Edinburgh, on 16th Jan. 1922, to R M Hogg, the Hon. Secy:

Dear Mr Hogg

I have received your letter intimating that the Irvine Burns Club has done me the honour to elect me an Hon Member of the Club.

I return my most grateful thanks to the Club & have pleasure in accepting membership.

Yours very truly

David Paulin

1923 Viscount Younger (1851-1929)

Sir George Younger, 1st Viscount Younger of Leckie, was born in Alloa. He left college at 17, on his father's death, to run the family brewery. He was MP for Ayr Burghs 1906-22, and Chairman of the Conservative Party 1916-23. In 1922 he was central in breaking up the Lloyd George coalition government and replacing it with the Conservative governments of Bonar Law and Baldwin. He was created a peer in 1923. He held the position of Treasurer of the Conservative Party from then until his death. In the tradition of his uncle, William McEwan, Viscount Younger combined a career as a politician with that of a successful brewer.

Letter of acceptance, written from 36 Eaton Square, London S.W. on 19th January 1923, to R M Hogg, the Hon. Secy

Dear Mr Hogg

Will you very kindly thank the members of the Irvine Burns Club for their kindness in electing me as an Honorary Member of the Club.

I appreciate the compliment very highly, & I hope I may have the privilege of meeting you all in the not too distant future.

I have no intention of cutting myself adrift from so many friends in Ayr & Irvine who have been so consistently kind to me for so many years & I am only too proud that you think me worthy of enrolment amongst you.

Yours very sincerely

Geo Younger

1923 Dr W A Craigie (1867-1957)

The 1926 'Burns Chronicle' records: "Professor Craigie, lately of Oxford and now of Chicago, is engaged on a Middle Scots Lexicon covering the period down to the 17th century. When this is published the way will be open for the preparation of a new and up-to-date Modern Scots Dictionary, containing vernacular words in literary and popular use since 1700".

William Alexander Craigie studied at St Andrews University and at Oxford, where he read for degrees in Classics and Philosophy and spent much time independently learning German, French, Danish and Icelandic. In 1894, he took up an appointment at St Andrews University. Three years later, in 1897, he joined the editorial staff of the Oxford English Dictionary (known then as the N.E.D.). In 1901 he was made co-editor of the Dictionary, becoming senior editor in 1925, and moving to Chicago in the same year, while continuing to work on the Dictionary. In 1928, work on the first edition was completed and Craigie received a knighthood. His industry and achievement were rewarded with wide recognition and a variety of academic honours from different countries.

As is clear from his reply to Irvine Burns Club, it was his interest in the Scots tongue that prompted his nomination. In 1901, for example, he had published his edition of Bellenden's 1533 translation of Livy's 'History of Rome'. In the 'Scottish Historical Review' of April 1921, he had published an article on "Scottish Biblical Inscriptions in France". In the same journal in Oct. 1924, he published "The Earliest Records of the Scottish Tongue". He edited the first two volumes of "A Dictionary of the Older Scottish Tongue", of which the first fascicle appeared in 1931 (and the last in 2002).

Craigie was a skilled and a highly energetic lexicographer, once described as a "tiny Scotsman", who was "quietly dignified, rather reserved, yet unfailingly kindly and companionable . . . with modest tastes and tidy habits". He would work methodically for most of the day and evening throughout his long life.

Letter of acceptance, written from Oriel College, Oxford, on 20 Jan. 1923

Dear Sir,

It was a very great pleasure to me to receive your letter the other day, intimating my election as an Honorary Member of the Irvine Burns Club. I greatly appreciate the honour, thus done to me, and trust to merit it by further work in the interests of our native tongue. I shall be glad if you will convey my thanks and good wishes to the Club at the first convenient opportunity; no doubt you will have the usual gathering in honour of the 25th.

I shall assuredly endeavour to pay a visit to Irvine when I am next in the North.

Yours sincerely

W. A. Craigie

1923 John Buchan (1875-1940)

"The Thirty-Nine Steps", serialised in 'Blackwood's Magazine' in 1914, was published in 1915. 'Greenmantle' followed in 1916. Working for Thomas Nelson and Sons, the Edinburgh publishers, he had broken into the popular market with the novel 'Prester John' in 1910. Over 44 years from 1896, he wrote over 30 works of fiction and over 50 of non-fiction (including many biographies, from Sir Walter Raleigh to Julius Caesar). He had an entry in "Who's Who" from the age of 24. Although the author Erskine Childers produced the first novel of suspense ('The Riddle of the Sands') in 1903, it was Buchan's works that inspired a century of spy fiction.

Buchan studied Classics at Glasgow and Oxford, where he was elected President of the Oxford Union. He served as private secretary to Alfred Milner, High Commissioner to South Africa (Hon. Member 1902), before joining Nelson and becoming editor of 'The Spectator'.

Pronounced medically unfit for combat service in World War I, Buchan's contribution was nevertheless significant. As a war correspondent, aware of the importance of propaganda, he sent back optimistic reports from the Front. Working for Haig at General HQ, he drafted government communiqués. He published the 'History of the War' in serial form as the war progressed, this perhaps encouraging the Irvine nomination. These years, as for so many others, incurred personal sadness - his brother Alastair killed in his first action on the Western Front in 1917, a close friend the same day in the same battle, and other friends too. He was Director of Information in 1917-18 and for a brief time Director of Intelligence. Promoted to temporary Lieutenant-Colonel, he is recorded in our minutes with his honorific title as Col. John Buchan.

His career pulled in two directions, the literary and the political. In literature, his attention turned to historical subjects, and Buchan was President of the Scottish Historical Society in 1929-33. In politics, failing to win a parliamentary seat as a Unionist in his beloved Borders, with its happy memories of childhood holidays, he was elected MP for the Scottish Universities in 1927. He served as Lord High Commissioner to the Church of Scotland in 1933-34. In 1935, created the first Baron Tweedsmuir of Elsfield, he became Governor of Canada, holding that position until his death. Also in 1935, Hitchcock invited him to the opening of the film 'The 39 Steps' - probably accepting the need to change story details for the different medium – Buchan said that the Hitchcock film was better than his book! His last novel, 'Sick Heart River' in 1939, is very introspective, and as powerful as the earlier thrillers. His death in 1940 was front page news around the world.

On meeting John Buchan in 1924, Canadian Prime Minister Mackenzie King stated: "I know no man I would rather have as a friend, a beautiful, noble soul, kindly & generous in thought & word & act, informed as few men in this world have ever been, modest, humble, true, [a] man after God's own heart." Of his literary talents, Anne Widdicombe (TV, 2008) reflected that "a century after its writing, his work still has application to the mainstream of life - that is the ultimate tribute".

Letter of acceptance, from Elsfield Manor, Oxford. on 24th January, 1923

Dear Mr Hogg,

I am greatly honoured by your letter of 15th January. I count it no small privilege to be counted elected [*manuscript alteration*] an honorary member of one of the oldest and

most famous of all Burns Clubs. If ever I am in Ayrshire you may be sure I will take advantage of your kind invitation and inspect your archives.

Will you offer to the members of the Club, on my behalf, my best thanks.

Yours sincerely,

John Buchan

Notes:

This letter was, apart from the alteration and the signature, typed.

Elsfield Manor gave Buchan the retreat he needed for his writing.

For more on John Buchan, read "Beyond the Thirty-Nine Steps – a Life of John Buchan" by Ursula Buchan, his grand-daughter (Bloomsbury, 2019)

1924 Sir Frederick Macmillan (1851-1936)

Sir Frederick Macmillan was Chairman of the International Publishing House Macmillan & Co.. He was the elder son of its 1843 founder Daniel Macmillan (1813-57), who had spent childhood years in Irvine. Daniel was the business brain, and his brother Alexander (1818-96), born in Irvine, laid the literary foundations, publishing such great authors as Charles Kingsley, Christina Rossetti, Matthew Arnold, Lewis Carroll, Alfred Tennyson, Thomas Hardy and Rudyard Kipling.

When Alexander retired in 1889, his nephew Frederick succeeded him as Chairman of the company. He was knighted in 1909. Frederick was probably the most respected and personally popular publisher of his day. He had been the inspiration behind the 1900 Net Book Agreement that brought about the system of fixed retail prices - in 1997 it was declared to be against the public interest and therefore illegal.

Sir Frederick was a founder of, and on two occasions President of, the Publishers Association of Great Britain. He also served as President of the National Hospital for the Paralyzed & Epileptic in Bloomsbury, London.

Letter of acceptance, written from 22, Devonshire Place, W., on Jan 20, 1924, addressed to Provost R M Hogg, Irvine

Dear Sir,

I am in receipt of your letter informing me that I have been elected an Hon. Member of the Irvine Burns Club, & I write to express my appreciation of the honour you have done me. In the event of my visiting your ancient Burgh I shall not fail to pay my respects to the Club

I am

Yours faithfully

Frederick Macmillan

1924 Pittendrigh Macgillivray (1856-1938)

Dr J Pittendrigh Macgillivray, R.S.A., LL.D., was apprentice to sculptor Wm Brodie, R.S.A., Edinburgh, and moved to Glasgow in 1875. He was the only sculptor among the talented young painters later known as the Glasgow School. He was a founder and editor of The Scottish Arts Review. In 1896 he returned to Edinburgh, designing his own house with a large studio. It is surprising that the sculptor was not nominated for honorary membership soon after the unveiling of the Irvine statue.

Macgillivray was described at the time as "the most virile and original exponent of the newer school of sculpture", as he sought to establish a more modern style. He was appointed Sculptor Royal for Scotland in 1921. His works include a statue of Byron for Aberdeen Grammar School, also, in Hornel's Broughton House in Kirkcudbright, fine busts of Thomas Carlyle and of E A Hornel, the latter being described by a Kirkcudbright resident who knew Hornel as being an excellent likeness. His 1891 bronze bust of Thomas Carlyle graces the Wallace Monument Hall of Heroes.

The Irvine statue led to a number of large public commissions, culminating in the grandiose National Monument to Gladstone in Edinburgh. Macgillivray, also known as a painter and a poet, was an ardent Nationalist, an authority on the Clans and their tartans, and an Honorary Member of the Scottish Pipers Society. He was a man of wide culture, varied interests, and vigorous ideas.

Letter of acceptance, written from Ravelston Elms, Murrayfield Road, Edinburgh, on 27th March, 1924, addressed to Mr Hogg, Secretary of Irvine Burns Club

Dear Sir,

I very much regret to discover that your letter of the 17th Jan. intimating that I had been elected an Hon. member of the above named club, has quite inadvertently got laid aside unacknowledged. I went from home at the time it arrived - and found much to do on my return.

Please convey my best thanks for the honour the members have done me. I appreciate highly the consideration they have shown me, and I hope I may be able to join them in the Immortal Memory one day.

Yours faithfully

Pittendrigh Macgillivray

Notes:

The address is embossed, so does not appear on photocopies.