

Honorary members of 1940–1941

1940 Edward Bernard Raczyński

1941 John N Hall

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Count Edward Bernard Raczyński, of the Austro-Hungarian house of Hapsburgs, was appointed, in 1934, the ambassador of the Republic of Poland to the United Kingdom. Following the September 1, 1939 German invasion of Poland, Raczyński remained in London where he continued to serve as the ambassador of the Polish Government in Exile and one of its prominent members. He was able to provide the Allies with one of the earliest and most accurate accounts of the ongoing Holocaust.

Irvine Burns Club clearly wished to honour the representative of the occupied country. After the war, Raczyński remained in London, being one of the most notable members of Polish diaspora there, actively supporting the democratic opposition in communist-controlled Poland. In 1979, he became President in Exile, holding that post until 1986. He was the longest living head of state in Poland's history and one of the very few centenarians among European politicians of the 20th century.

Letter of acceptance, written from the Polish Embassy, London, on Febr. 9th, 1940

Dear Sir,

I beg to acknowledge receipt of your letter dated Jan. 26th which however reached me only today. I should be very grateful to you for kindly conveying to the members of the Irvine Burns Club the expression of my profound gratification for the honour which they have deemed fit to extend to me by electing me Hon. Member of the Club - and which I am accepting with the greatest pleasure.

Yours faithfully

Edward Raczynski

(Polish Ambassador)

1941 John N Hall (1875-1944)

John Neill Hall succeeded Peter S Clark as Irvine Burns Club President in 1926 – both were involved in the resuscitation of the Incorporated Trades and other Irvine traditions. In 1926, on the occasion of the Centenary of Irvine Burns Club, he gifted a plaque to commemorate the location of the lodgings in Glasgow Vennel where Robert Burns stayed while in Irvine; his wife performed the unveiling ceremony. Three years later, in 1929, he wrote the lyrics for a new Burgh Anthem (“ . . then let the good cause triumph, For ever and for aye.”; music by ex-Deacon Convener Harry Lumsden).

His grandson, also John N Hall, donated, from Canada, his grandfather's copy of the 1926 Centenary programme to Irvine Burns Club.

He seems not to have been related to the father-son-grandson series of Halls who were Presidents in 1891, 1904 and 1932, perhaps not surprising considering the number of Hall families in Irvine at the time.

Letter of acceptance, written from Eastwood, Irvine, on 17 February 1941

Dear Sir,

I am favoured with your esteemed letter of 29th January.

I greatly appreciate the honour conferred upon me by the Directors of the Irvine Burns Club in enrolling my name amongst the distinguished Company of Honorary Members of the Club.

I would tender to them my thanks for the kindly manner in which they have given expression to any services I have rendered, whereby the name & fame of Burns have been enhanced, and the splendid traditions of the Club extended, in the Royal and Ancient Burgh of Irvine, where Poesy and Song found in Burns an ardent Lover and ennobling friend.

I remain,

Yours very sincerely,

John N Hall