

Honorary members of 1977 – 1979

1977 Sir John Betjeman, James Callaghan
1978 Jane Burgoyne, Maurice Roeves, Professor Toshio Namba,
Sheikh Ahmed Zaki Yamani, Henry A Kissinger
1979 Prof. Christiaan N Barnard, Ian Douglas Smith,
Don Whyte, Andrew Hood

1977 Sir John Betjeman (1906-1984)

An English poet traditional in form, accessible in sentiment and often apparently parochial in his concern with English social and domestic life. The seriousness and accomplishment of Betjeman's poetry has often been obscured by its popularity. His "Collected Poems" (1958, rev. 1962) was a best-seller.

Poet Laureate (the reason for his nomination as an honorary member) from 1972, Betjeman was also a broadcaster and an idiosyncratic architectural critic.

(contributed by W Cowan)

Letter of acceptance, sent from 29 Radnor Walk, London on 26th January, 1977 to Hon. Secretary Andrew Hood

Dear Mr Hood,

Honoured to accept your kind invitation. I am at present in hospital but I hope I will soon be released and mobile enough to visit Irvine but cannot promise anything.

Yours sincerely
John Betjeman

Notes: Only the signature is handwritten.

1977 James Callaghan (1912-2005)

James Leonard Callaghan, Baron, a British statesman, was Prime Minister from 1976 to 1979 (the reason for his nomination as an honorary member). He entered Parliament in 1945 and succeeded Harold Wilson as Labour Party leader in 1976.

He is the only Prime Minister to have held all three major offices of state - Chancellor of the Exchequer (1964-67), Home Secretary (1967-70) and Foreign Secretary (1974-76). He is also the second post-war Prime Minister never to have won a General Election.

Callaghan's tenure was marked by negotiations with David Steel in the Lib-Lab pact, and strife with the trade unions culminating in the 'Winter of Discontent'. He was defeated by Margaret Thatcher in 1979 and became a life peer in 1987.

(contributed by W Cowan)

Letter of acceptance, sent from 10 Downing Street on 7th February 1977 to Hon. Secretary Andrew Hood

Dear Mr Hood

Thank you for your letter of 19 January inviting me to accept Honorary Membership of Irvine Burns Club.

I was very interested to learn of the rich tradition and activities of the Club and am honoured to have been invited to join a club of which so many distinguished people have been members. It gives me great pleasure to accept Honorary Membership.

Thank you also for your kind invitation to visit the Club. As you will appreciate, my Parliamentary and other commitments prevent me from visiting Ayrshire as often as I would like, but I will certainly bear your invitation in mind.

Yours sincerely
James Callaghan

Notes:

The "Dear Mr Hood" and the "Yours sincerely, James Callaghan" are handwritten onto the typed letter.

1978 Jane Burgoyne (1898-1989)

Born Jane Lymburn at Coylton, Ayrshire, she was dux medallist both at Coylton Primary School and at Ayr Academy, proceeding to graduate from Edinburgh University with First Class Honours in French and German. Teaching at Speirs School, Beith, she met her husband, married in 1925 and had one daughter.

She had a lifelong interest in Burns, using her linguistic talents to produce a sensitive translation of the biography of Burns by Hans Hecht (in 1936) and of an 1893 French biography by Auguste Angellier.

Jane Burgoyne played a leading part in Burns activities in Ayrshire and was honorary president of several clubs, including Ayr and Alloway. In 1959, Jane was elected an honorary vice-president of the Burns Federation. In 1970, she became the first lady President of the Federation. It was through Jane Burgoyne that the wider Burns movement came to know Professor Toshio Namba, who also accepted honorary membership of the Irvine Burns Club in the year 1977.

Although unable, for health reasons, to attend meetings in her later years, she continued a prolific and world-wide correspondence until her passing at the age of 90.

Letter of acceptance, sent from Cairnston Farm, By Ayr, 24th January, 1977 to Hon. Secretary Andrew Hood

Dear Mr Hood,

Thank you for your letter of 19th January, informing me that I have been nominated as an Honorary Member of Irvine Burns Club, an honour which I have the greatest pleasure

in accepting. I have long been impressed by your Club's unique list of honorary members, but never dreaming that I might one day be invited to figure in it.

Please convey my appreciation to the members of the Club and assure them of my deep consciousness of the distinction they have bestowed upon me.

May I add that the letter of invitation is a work of art in itself! The Guide too is very attractive.

With best wishes to you and the Club,

I am,

Yours sincerely,

Jane Burgoyne

1978 Maurice Roëves (1937-2020)

Born in Sunderland, Maurice Roëves grew up in Scotland from the age of five or six, having to "learn Glaswegian fast because I was fed up having seven bells knocked out of me every day for being a wee Sassenach". The mental-survival training he received during national service, when attached to the SAS help him "survive the ups and downs of an actor". After studying at RSAMD in Glasgow (and winning a gold medal there), he went to work as an assistant stage manager at the Citizens Theatre, where his first acting role, as Lorenzo in 'The Merchant of Venice', found himself getting what he called 'the Beatles treatment' - girls screaming for him when he came on stage.

Roëves' many roles, on stage and film and TV, included the character Vince Diver in 'Tutti Frutti', and star roles in 'Doctor Who' and 'Star Trek'.

The Burns connection is his warm representation of the Bard in the one-man show 'There Was A Man', though this gains no mention in the main obituaries. This one-man play, written by Tom Wright, was performed in the Demarco Gallery at the Edinburgh Festival Fringe in 1977. Maurice Roëves was also at one time with Borderline Theatre in Irvine, and performed the show while with Borderline.

Throughout his long career, which continued right up to the part of Lenny in episode 1 of the BBC Scotland drama 'The Nest' in 2020, Roëves moved with ease between stage, TV and movies, notching up credits in a wide variety of titles while never quite becoming an A-list star.

(Some of the above details are from 'The Times' obituary of 17/7/20.)

Letter of acceptance, sent from The Richard Demarco Gallery Ltd, Monteith House, 61 High St., Edinburgh, on 2nd September 1977

Dear Brothers in Burns,

It is with great respect and happiness that I accept your offer of a Honorary Life membership in the Irvine Burns Club.

The play "There Was a Man" has been received very well, through here at the Edinburgh Festival and more & more people keep telling me that they are going back to re-study their Burns - this can only be a benefit to them and the rest of humanity.

I'll never forget your kind hospitality and help with my study of the role - Thank you.
Yours fae taken a whim tae when God will forgive us all -
Aye yours,
Maurice Roèves

1978 Professor Toshio Namba (1910-1989)

Born in Osaka, of parents from Yokohama, Toshio Namba graduated from Osaka Music University, with interests in Scottish song, then graduated in English Literature at Nihon University, Tokyo (the largest university in Japan), then gained a Masters degree in the same subject at the same university. He was appointed a Professor at Nihon University in Tokyo, and was also a Lecturer at Aoyama Gakwin University in Shibuya, Tokyo.

In 1936, he studied at the University of Edinburgh. During the war years, as a young school teacher, he was never in the Japanese Army. He lived near a prison camp and as Allied prisoners returned to their camp at night after forced labour all day, their hearts were gladdened by seeing a photograph of Robert Burns at the end of his garden.

In 1965, he did research in Scottish Literature, as a British Council scholar, at the University of Edinburgh, and during his time in Scotland immersed himself in the works of Robert Burns and the places Burns had visited; he also made many friends in Scotland. He wrote: "Scottish language is the most characteristic and beautiful one, far beyond our imagination. . . Burns himself courageously adopted his mother tongue in 'Poems, chiefly in the Scottish dialect', as its title tells us. The pronunciation is the soul and life of Scottish dialect, in other words, Scottish poems are dialectically inspired. . . . Scottish is not a language barrier; on the contrary, it has much attraction for us Japanese" (A Study of Robert Burns' Poetry, 1975, p.231). Toshio Namba celebrated the songs and poems and life of Burns in several books in the 1970s, published in Japan.

Toshio Namba visited Irvine in 1981. John Inglis escorted him around all the places he wanted to see. He was delighted to walk the same streets which his hero Robert Burns had walked - he regarded Burns as "a true poet of the people".

The Emeritus Professor of English Literature at Sophia University, Tokyo, Peter Milward, wrote: "Here in Japan the name of Robert Burns is inseparably associated with that of Professor Toshio Namba. What he doesn't know about Burns is hardly worth knowing. The lifelong devotion of this Japanese scholar to the Scottish poet is moving and impressive."

Letter of acceptance, of 19th November, 1977

Dear Sir,

It was the proudest, happiest minute of my life when I received the epistle of appointment for Honorary Member of Irvine Burns Club.

Your Burns Club shines brilliantly for tradition and history and the present achievements. I feel it a great honour to join the illustrious company of Charles Dickens, Alfred Lord Tennyson, Robert Brown, Sir Alexander Fleming, Albert Schweitzer, George Bernard Shaw, and the like, whom I respect and reverence from the very bottom of my heart. "Struggling student as I am, I will not quit the pen on Burns as long as I breathe" (as Mrs Jane Burgoyne kindly cited my words in Burns Chronicle 1972).

In the name of St Andrews, I needs must perform my own duty as Burns scholar from now on.

I pray tae Scotia that my humble writings may exert an influence upon [the] younger generation in Japan even after my death mysterious and untraceable.

May Irvine Burns Club prosper forevermore!

Let me be reiterating my hearty thanks!

Yours very faithfully,

Toshio Namba

Newly appointed Honorary Member of Irvine Burns Club

19th Nov., 1977

Notes:

Prof. Namba sent both an acceptance in beautiful Japanese calligraphy and the translation, written with the same pen.

The reference to Brown refers to Browning.

1978 Sheikh Ahmed Zaki Yamani (1930-2021)

Sheikh Yamani was the public face of Saudi oil policy for 24 years, from his appointment as Saudi oil minister in 1962 to his dismissal by King Fahd in 1986. The most media savvy of Arab politicians, he was urbane and articulate, could speak English and French, and was a formidable negotiator. As the leading strategist within Opec (the Organisation of Petroleum Exporting Countries), he was considered responsible for the near-quadrupling of international oil prices during the 1973 Arab boycott of oil exports to countries deemed too favourable to Israel during the Arab-Israeli war.

He travelled the globe as Saudi Arabia emerged as an oil-market superpower, and owned homes in London, Surrey and Geneva. Danger was never far away. In 1975, King Faisal, shot by his nephew, died in his arms. Within a year, gunmen led by Carlos the Jackal gave him 30 minutes to write a will. From then on, he kept a retinue of former-SAS bodyguards. After his dismissal (learned of from television) in 1986, he was placed under virtual house arrest, but later founded the Centre for Global Energy Studies, collected Islamic manuscripts, and perfected the Arabic skill of making perfume.

In the years after the embargo, Sheikh Yamani, believing that it was in Saudi Arabia's long-term interest to prolong global dependence on affordable oil, resisted demands from Iran and Iraq for big price increases, fuelling their allegations that he was pro-American. It was probably at this point that he was nominated for Honorary Membership of Irvine Burns Club.

Letter of acceptance, sent from the Ministry of Petroleum & Mineral Resources, Saudi Arabia, on February 12, 1977 to Hon. Secretary Andrew Hood:

Dear Mr Hood:

I wish to thank you for your kind letter of January 19, 1977, nominating me to an honorary membership of the Irvine Burns Club.

I am pleased to inform you of my acceptance, however, I am not sure when I will be able to visit the Club physically due to my very busy schedule ahead.

Kind regards,

Sincerely,

Ahmed Zaki Yamani

Minister of Petroleum and Mineral Resources

Notes:

The letter is, excepting the signature, typed.

1978 Henry A Kissinger (1923-2023)

At the time of the Irvine Burns Club approach, Heinz Alfred ('Henry') Kissinger had demitted office as U.S. Secretary of State, having played a major role in U.S. foreign policy from 1969 to 1977. He has since been condemned as an alleged war criminal by many journalists, political activists, and human rights lawyers, as well as venerated as a highly effective U.S. Secretary of State by many prominent international relations scholars. He pioneered the policy of détente with the Soviet Union, orchestrated the opening of relations with the People's Republic of China, engaged in shuttle diplomacy in the Middle East to end the Yom Kippur War, and negotiated the Paris Peace Accords, ending American involvement in the Vietnam War. After leaving government, he formed Kissinger Associates, an international geopolitical consulting firm. Kissinger has written over a dozen books on diplomatic history and international relations. The Presidents he served were Richard Nixon and Gerald Ford.

Kissinger launched so many initiatives that he became the go-to person in the White House, and his schedule was full not just with very public mediation in foreign crises, but with the unseen grind of back-channels negotiation and networking, diplomatic talents of which he was a master.

A double-brained, owlsh professor, he was voted by 'Playboy' bunnies in 1972 as the man they would most like to date. On foreign policy, he converted his theoretical works on the national interest into a reality. He challenged the fossilised wisdom of the State Department with gusto. The power-hungry diplomat captivated Playboy bunnies and world leaders alike.

In 2019, aged 96, Kissinger wrote about the implications of artificial intelligence algorithms destabilising the decision-making processes of humans. In 2020, aged 97, he analysed the Covid-19 pandemic and called for greater international cooperation. His contributions on world matters continued to merit consideration by governments.

Kissinger had gone to the USA in 1938, fleeing the Nazi persecution of Jews and was naturalised as an American citizen in 1943. He received a BA summa cum laude at Harvard College in 1950 and MA and PhD at Harvard University in 1952 and 1954.

Letter of acceptance, sent on 3/9/77 to Hon. Secretary Andrew Hood:

Dear Mr Hood

I would be honoured to accept the invitation of the Irvine Burns Club for honorary membership and to join the illustrious company who thus pay tribute to the immortal Robert Burns.

I hope that I shall soon have the opportunity to visit the Club and I look forward with keen interest to spending some time in the Library and Museum when I am in Scotland.

With good wishes

Henry A. Kissinger

1979 Prof. Christiaan N Barnard (1922-2001)

Professor C N Barnard, M.D. M. MED., Ph.D., F.A.C.S, F.A.C.C., D.Sc. (Hon. Causa) was the first surgeon to carry out a heart transplant - on Sat 2nd / Sun 3rd Dec., 1967. When interviewed soon after the operation, he said "The actual transplant was not really a problem; the question of tissue rejection is the important one". His work has saved innumerable lives since.

Letter of acceptance, written from the University of Cape Town, Dept. of Cardiac Surgery, on 13th December 1978 to J J Caldwell, President 1978-79

Dear Mr Caldwell,

People usually consider the 13th as an unlucky day but the 13th of December 1978 is my lucky day in that I have the pleasure today to accept your very kind offer to become an Honorary Member of the Irvine Burns Club.

I write to thank you very much for the honour and to wish you a Happy Xmas and health for 1979.

My very best wishes

Yours faithfully

Chris Barnard

1979 Ian Douglas Smith (1919-2007)

Ian Douglas Smith was Prime Minister of Rhodesia 1964-1979. The President who nominated him as an Honorary Member writes: "he did a marvellous job of keeping the peace between rival factions and preserving 'The Empire' ". His various top level meetings with Prime Minister Harold Wilson on board ship are well-known. Born and educated in Rhodesia, he went to Rhodes University in South Africa to study commerce, but put them aside to volunteer for service in 1939, joining the British RAF, and being badly injured in a Hurricane crash in 1943, though continuing active service to the close of the war.

In 1962 he formed the Rhodesian Front party with Winston Field to thwart the plans of the British government for Rhodesia, and became Prime Minister in 1964; he imprisoned Robert Mugabe for 10 years as a "terrorist" aiming at a one-party dictatorship. In 1965 his government made a Unilateral Declaration of Independence. Rhodesia, now Zimbabwe, then slipped into isolation, then civil war. After an internal agreement was reached with the

moderate black nationalist leaders, the election of 1979 brought a Government of National Unity (under the leadership of Bishop Abel Muzorewa), in which Ian Douglas Smith served as a Minister without portfolio until expelled by Robert Mugabe in 1986. Despite their bitter differences, both Smith and Mugabe regarded Britain as a meddling colonial power. He spent his final years in Cape Town. If agreement had been reached sooner, Ian Smith might have handed over to the more moderate Nkomo rather than Mugabe.

In 1999, he published his bitter memoir, 'The Great Betrayal'. At a launch interview, he said: "Rhodesians stopped the communists from painting the map of southern Africa Kremlin red. The West should be grateful but, of course, it's not. And on my 80th birthday I'll raise my glass and toast the downfall of my old enemy Robert Mugabe who has managed to destroy this wonderful country in such record time."

Letter of acceptance, written on his Prime Minister's headed paper from Salisbury, Rhodesia, on 11th December 1978 to J J Caldwell, President 1978-79

Dear Mr Caldwell,

I have received your letter inviting me to join the roll of Honorary Members of the Irvine Burns Club. When I consider the names of those distinguished gentlemen associated with the Club, this is indeed a great honour.

I thank you for your kind attention to me, & regard it as a privilege to accept your invitation.

My kind regards,

Yours sincerely

I Douglas Smith

1979 Don Whyte (1926-1996)

John Donaldson Whyte, ex-brother-in-law of that year's President, was a distinguished writer and reporter with the Daily Express, Glasgow Herald, etc., and wrote a memorable autobiography 'On The Lonely Shore'. He arranged that Irvine Burns Club should have his father's Bechstein Grand piano - his father Ian, founder and conductor of the BBC Scottish Orchestra, accepted Honorary Membership of the Club in 1949.

Jack Webster, also an Honorary Member (1987), wrote of "the sheer beauty of his prose" and the "music of his language". Don Whyte was most appreciated as a journalist, but also created Bran the Cat on BBC Children's Hour, and even managed to conduct his own orchestral work on radio. Polio, calling for an iron lung, had struck him at the age of 12 on the golf course at Duddingstone, and much was done from his wheelchair, but he sought no favours in his crippled condition. Jack Webster again: "He would climb mountains and sail in dangerous waters, savouring life as a balm to the regular pain of his condition." His main public role was as a brilliant feature writer on the Scottish Daily Express from 1950 onwards.

His first wife Nan (nee Caldwell) played violin in his father's orchestra, and their three children are Eileen, Iain and Stewart. His second wife was Anne, also a polio victim. Before polio struck him, while still a healthy little boy, he had, on Deeside, raised a threatening hatchet to a girl of his own age who came looking for worms to go fishing - luckily he did no harm to the future queen, then Princess Elizabeth!

Letter of acceptance, written from Glasgow, on 4th June 1978 to J J Caldwell, President 1978-79

Dear Joe,

In reply to your kind letter may I say how delighted I am to accept Honorary Membership of Irvine Burns Club.

The knowledge that so many illustrious names adorn your roll of honorary members makes me very conscious of my own shortcomings in the halls of fame.

I therefore count the honour you have bestowed on me as something of a challenge - to help in furthering the cause of 'sense and worth' in Scotland and the rest of this uneasy world.

I know how much work Irvine Burns Club has put in over the years to foster friendship and the real brotherhood of mankind, and I am proud to have been recruited to your corps.

During the years to come you may count on me for my support.

Yours sincerely,

Don Whyte.

1979 Andrew Hood (c.1933-1982)

Andrew Hood's untimely death at the age of 49 was a profound shock to the many friends he had in business, in the Royal Burgh of which he was a Burgess and Guild Brother, and the many from all over the world who met and respected him as a fellow Burnsian. It was only in the previous autumn that Andrew was appointed the Burns Federation's representative for Africa, a post in which ill health prevented his full participation. Ironically, "Afric's burning zone" figured memorably in Andrew's life.

His National Service was spent in Kenya's Mau-Mau campaign. He was guardian of the later President Jomo Kenyatta while he was being taken to his island exile and it was while returning from Lagos in 1978 where he had just proposed the Immortal Memory to Robert Burns that he was stricken by an illness that enforced his retirement from active participation in the Burns movement and Irvine Burns Club.

Director of a successful business engaged in building services, Andrew was better known for his promotion of Robert Burns. President of Irvine Burns Club in 1967-68, and stepping into the breach as Secretary of the Irvine club in 1968 on the death of Bill Phillips, Andrew assiduously devoted his energy to creating in the museum a suitable tribute to the poet. His expertise developed not only the bricks and mortar, but also the educational aspect. With his bonhomie and original wit, he reminded all with whom he came in contact that Burns was the poet who enjoyed and loved life to the full - the poet of people.

His pursuits were pleasurable but not always successful. The waters of the Tay and Girvan will hide their stately salmon; the racehorse he owned and stabled in his yard was missed only in a horticultural sense. His proudest possession was Gavin Hamilton's copy of the Kilmarnock Edition - a fitting memento.

The Burns movement mourned a worthy exponent.

(contributed by S K Gaw)

Letter of acceptance, written from Chamberhouses, Irvine, on 25th Jan. 1978 to Hon. Secretary Bill Cowan

Dear Bill,

There is no one more than I know, respect and appreciate the significance of Honorary Membership.

It is therefore, with great pride and humility I accept the honour of having my name added to that illustrious list of men and women.

It is my fervent hope that I shall give many more years service to Irvine - the greatest of Burns Clubs.

To President John Inglis, to you, to the Directors and Members my sincere thanks for the honour bestowed upon me.

Yours sincerely,

Andrew Hood

The following declined honorary membership in 1978/79

The Pope (John Paul II, Karol Wojtyla): The following letter was sent from the Secretariat of State at the Vatican, on 5 May 1979:

Dear Mr Caldwell,

The Holy Father was pleased to receive your letter and has asked me to send you this acknowledgement on his behalf.

Although His Holiness is very appreciative of the sentiments which prompted your invitation, it is not his practice to accept honorary membership of societies.

The Holy Father invokes God's blessings upon you and your colleagues.

With every good wish, I remain,

Yours sincerely,

Mgr G Coppa, Assessore

Mohammed Ali: The then President of the Club, Joe Caldwell, spoke to champion boxer Mohammed Ali, Cassius Clay, when he was in London for a fight. He verbally said that he would accept, but this did not materialise.