

Honorary members of 1980 – 1983

1980 Yvonne Helen Stevenson, Mohamed Anwar El Sadat, Margaret Thatcher

1981 Harald R Leslie (Lord Birsay), Jack Nicklaus, J C Stormonth Darling

1982 William Lockhart

1983 Johnny Beattie

1980 Yvonne Helen Stevenson (1897-1988)

Miss Y H Stevenson died in Victoria, BC, Canada at 91 years of age. Born in Middlesex, she had attended Edinburgh University, started out on her literary career, and was elected National Vice-President of the Canadian Authors' Association in 1943, the following year becoming President of the Vancouver and Mainland branch of the Association. She also served as President of the Victoria branch.

She was directly descended (through the Brown family) from Helen Armour, a sister of Jean, and was thus well suited to be the authoress of a book on 'Bonnie Jean'. The first of what became a trilogy of books, "Burns and His Bonnie Jean" appeared in 1967. The second book, in 1979, "Burns and Highland Mary", possibly prompted her nomination as an Honorary Member of the Irvine Club. After the third, "Burns and Clarinda", in 1985, she was made an Honorary President of the Burns Federation. She also published "The Songs of Robert Burns" in 1979.

Always very correct in etiquette and protocol, she was much in demand as a speaker on literary topics, and was one of the main speakers at the Burns Federation Conference in London, Ontario, in 1979. The rest of her family, a sister and nieces, all lived in British Columbia.

Letter of acceptance, written from Apt. 1401, Regent Towers, 415 Michigan Street, Victoria, B.C., Canada, on October 10, 1979, addressed to Jim Foulds, President 1979-1980

Dear Mr Foulds,

Many thanks for your kind letter of September 21st and I would ask you to convey to your Directors my very great pleasure in accepting the esteemed honour of Honorary Membership in the Irvine Burns Club.

It has always seemed to me that your distinguished Club has been foremost in Federation annals in its dedication to the life and works of Burns.

And, reading often your fine publication "Irvine and Its Burns Club" (kindly presented to me recently by Mr John Inglis), that Burns's pulse must have beat high when - at the apex of young manhood, with aims and objectives of personal independence in view - he trod the streets and environs of old-time Irvine. Alas! that those rosy dreams went, virtually, up in smoke!

Again, my warm thanks for the honour and privilege the Directors of the Irvine Burns Club have so kindly conferred.

With all Good Wishes

and fraternal Greetings

Yours sincerely,

Yvonne Helen Stevenson

1980 Mohamed Anwar El Sadat (1918-1981)

Anwar El Sadat was the third President of Egypt, serving from 15 October 1970 until his assassination by fundamentalist army officers in 1981. In his eleven years as president, he changed Egypt's direction, departing from some of the economic and political principles of Nasserism by re-instituting the multi-party system and launching the Infitah economic policy.

He succeeded President Nasser in 1970. He led Egypt in the October War of 1973 to re-acquire Egyptian territory lost to Israel in the 1967 Six-Day War, making him a hero in Egypt and, for a time, the wider Arab World. Afterwards, he engaged in negotiations with Israel, culminating in the Egypt–Israel Peace Treaty.

The Egyptian–Israeli Peace Treaty was signed by Anwar Sadat and Israeli Prime Minister Menachem Begin in Washington, D.C., United States, on 26 March 1979, following the Camp David Accords (1978), a series of meetings between Egypt and Israel facilitated by US President Jimmy Carter. Both Sadat and Begin were awarded the 1978 Nobel Peace Prize for creating the treaty. In his acceptance speech, Sadat referred to the long awaited peace desired by both Arabs and Israelis: "Let us put an end to wars, let us reshape life on the solid basis of equity and truth."

The Irvine Burns Club nomination followed both the award of the Nobel Peace Prize and the successful signing of the subsequent treaty. The treaty also made him unpopular among some Arabs, resulting in a temporary suspension of Egypt's membership in the Arab League and eventually his assassination.

Letter of acceptance, written from Cairo on Sept. 11th, 1979, to Jim Foulds, President 1979-1980

Dear Mr Foulds,

I received, with a deep sense of recognition, your kind message through which you expressed to me your desire to respond to you and accept the Honorary Membership of Irvine Burns Club in Scotland.

I wish to thank you for your noble sentiments and for that very kind gesture of you and to get you informed "I gladly accept the Honorary Membership you were kind enough to offer me".

I avail myself of this opportunity to hail the great works and production of Robert Burns, the National Poet of Scotland who, undoubtedly deserves the best appreciation and honour.

Thanking you once again, I wish you and the Club members the best of health and happiness.

Mohamed Anwar El Sadat

Notes:

His letter is on his official notepaper, as The President of the Arab Republic of Egypt. The letter is, apart from the signature, typed.

1980 Margaret Thatcher (1925-2013)

Margaret Hilda Thatcher, Baroness Thatcher, LG, OM, PC, FRS, née Roberts was the longest-serving (1979–1990) Prime Minister of the United Kingdom of the 20th century, and the only woman ever to have held the post. A Soviet journalist nicknamed her the "Iron Lady", which became associated with her uncompromising politics and leadership style. She served as MP for Finchley from 1959 to 1992.

One of her most famous comments is sometimes misunderstood. When, in 1987, she commented "There is no such thing as society", a following sentence was "It is our duty to look after ourselves and then also to look after our neighbour". Community was a crucial part of her vision - an antidote to those who assumed that something nebulous and impersonal called 'society' would take care of them.

As it was by now customary for Irvine Burns Club to nominate the incumbent Prime Minister for honorary membership, the approach and her acceptance are within seven months of her achieving that position. That her reply is entirely in her own hand is typical - she preferred the personal touch to the impersonal acknowledgement.

Letter of acceptance, written from 10 Downing Street on 21st October 197, to Jim Foulds, President 1979-80:

Dear Mr Foulds,

When he received an invitation, Robert Burns replied

"The King's most humble servant, I
Can scarcely spare a minute,
But I'll be wi' you by an' bye
Or else the deil's be in it."

I can only reply to your kind invitation in very much more prosaic language - as an admirer of Burns poetry I am very happy to become an honorary member of the Irvine Burns Club.

Yours sincerely
Margaret Thatcher

Notes:

Mrs Thatcher's letter is on paper headed with the crest, the address and the words "The Prime Minister".

The poem quoted is Burns' "Address to an Invitation". Mrs Thatcher was known to occasionally use a suitable quote from the Bard.

1981 Harald R Leslie (Lord Birsay) (1905-1982)

Following was service during the Second World War in the Royal Scots (and awarded a military MBE), Harald Leslie was appointed Standing Counsel to the Department of Agriculture, becoming an Advocate Depute in 1947. He was appointed Queen's Counsel in 1949, and in 1951 returned to private practice. In 1956, he was appointed Sheriff of Roxburgh, Berwick and Selkirk, and in 1961 as Sheriff of Caithness, Sutherland, Orkney and Zetland. In 1965, he was appointed Chairman of the Scottish Land Court, taking the judicial title, Lord Birsay. He was appointed a Knight of the Thistle, Scotland's highest order of chivalry, in 1973. He retired in 1978.

In 1958, there was courtroom drama when Peter Manuel, accused of eight murders, decided to dismiss his counsel, Harald Leslie, QC. Sixteen days later, it took the jury just two-and-a-half hours to find Manuel guilty of seven of the murders.

The original link between Irvine and Lord Birsay was through Don Whyte, the journalist and Honorary Member (1979), who had introduced Lord Birsay to Joe Caldwell, founder (in 1960) of the Eglinton Burns Club. Lord Birsay proposed the Toast to the Lassies at that Club in 1979, and the Toast to the Immortal Memory of Robert Burns in 1981 (when Joe Caldwell was the Dinner Chairman), being nominated as an Honorary Member of Irvine Burns Club in the same January. Being driven back thereafter, with an Immortal Memory to deliver elsewhere, he was asked about his forthcoming speech, and replied that he was thinking it out as they travelled. Joe Caldwell enjoyed a good friendship with Harald and his wife.

Letter of acceptance, written from 27 Queensferry Road, Edinburgh, and from Queensfield, Birsay, Orkney, on 8th December, 1980, to James Wilson, President in 1981

Dear Mr Wilson,

To have a line of mine placed among Rabbie's treasures is high privilege indeed. I humbly but gladly accept your invitation to be an Honorary Member of the Irvine Burns Club.

Today there is a tendency to obliterate history, denigrate our Scottish symbols, deracinate our folk and culture, and what do we achieve? - the wrecking whirlwind of lost identity and individuality.

Shades of Rabbie, nurtured on the Makars and Ferguson.

"A!" (wrote Barbour) "fredome is a noble thing!

Fredome mayss man to haiff liking;

. A noble hart may haiff nane ess,

Na ellys nocht that may him pless,

Gif fredome fail yhe".

Rabbie, founded deep in Scottish patriotism, strove to make brotherhood universal, - "to share it aa".

I join you with gratitude.

Yours aye,

Harald R Leslie

Notes:

The usual spelling is: A! Fredome is a noble thing! / Fredome mayss man to haiff liking; /

..... A noble hart may haiff nane ese, / Na ellys nocht that may him plesse, /

Gyff fredome fail;

1981 Jack Nicklaus (1940-)

Jack Nicklaus thrice won the Open - at Muirfield (1966) and at St Andrews (1970 and 1978). Although he never won The Open in Ayrshire, one of the legendary games of golf is his 'Duel in the Sun' with Tom Watson in the 1977 Open at Turnberry. At its end, Nicklaus, in a memorable act of sportsmanship, threw his arm around the champion's shoulder and walked him toward the scorer's tent. The contest created headlines around the world. In the one-on-one battle, Nicklaus shot 65-66 in the final two rounds, only to be beaten by Watson, who scored 65-65. This event marked the first time 270 was broken in a major championship, and the third-place finisher Hubert Green scored 279. Nicklaus would later say: "There are those in golf who would argue into next month that the final two rounds of the 1977 British Open were the greatest head-to-head golf match ever played. Not having been around for the first five hundred or so years of the game, I'm not qualified to speak on such matters. What's for sure, however, is that it was the most thrilling one-on-one battle of my career."

After winning two U.S. Amateurs in 1959 and 1961, and challenging for the 1960 U.S. Open, Nicklaus turned professional toward the end of 1961. He is widely regarded as the most accomplished professional golfer of all time, winning a total of 18 career major championships while producing 19 second place and 9 third place finishes in major events on the PGA Tour over a span of 25 years. He bowed out in 2000 on the Old Course at St Andrews.

Letter of acceptance, written from North Palm Beach, Florida, on Nov 18, 1980, to James Wilson, President in 1981:

Dear Mr Wilson,

Please excuse my delay in answering your kind invitation to become an honorary member to the Irvine Burns Club. As you may know, I have been travelling a great deal and it sometimes takes a while to catch up on my correspondence.

I am truly honored to be selected for membership in your fine club and to be part of such a distinguished membership. Obviously, I accept your kind offer and hope that I have the opportunity to visit you on one of my trips to Scotland.

As I have said in the past, the British Open is my favorite tournament in golf. I always look forward to it, and particularly at one of the Scottish venues. Again my thanks to your membership and all my good wishes from this side of the Atlantic.

Sincerely

Jack Nicklaus

Notes:

James Wilson, President in 1981, was a keen golfer and an ex-Captain of Prestwick Golf Club.

1981 J C Stormonth Darling (1918-2000)

Sir James Carlisle ('Sir Jamie') Stormonth Darling, CBE, MC, TD, WS, lived at The Harestones, Longniddry, East Lothian. He was appointed as secretary of the National Trust for Scotland in 1949, when the organisation was relatively small, and later Director of the Trust for many years, retiring in 1983. By then, the Trust managed about 100 properties and had a membership of about 120,000.

Glasgow and the West of Scotland display the benefits of Jamie's foresight and the contrasts in the range of the trust's conservation interests, a feature which has attracted international attention. When the opportunity was given to the trust to acquire The Tenement House in Buccleuch Street, Jamie appreciated the cultural significance of the property and supported the case for acquisition against argument that such a modest house was not of sufficient importance. Other West of Scotland properties which came into the trust's care during his directorship include Brodick Castle and Gardens, Iona and Greenbank House and Gardens, at Clarkston, where the trust's West of Scotland office is located. Culzean also became Scotland's first country park, and a model for others that followed elsewhere in the country. Its management, involving local authorities, and its ranger-naturalist service's interpretative and educational programmes, are reflections of Jamie's philosophy. He believed that public enjoyment of the trust's properties would win hearts and minds and arouse a demand for protection of the wider environment. He justified this view by pointing to the trust's title and saying with emphasis: "It's the National Trust for Scotland."

He encouraged the formation of Members' Centres, and highlighted opportunities for conservation volunteers, and the adventure of staying on the remote island of St Kilda, 110 miles west of the mainland. Jamie saw the Trust as a catalyst, exerting influence through its properties, and also by the involvement of its council members, notably its president, the Earl of Wemyss and March, and chairman, the Marquess of Bute.

He advised the benefits of partnerships with other bodies long before such arrangements had their present-day popularity. This policy brought the trust into working relationships with the Nature Conservancy Council for Scotland, the Countryside Commission for Scotland, the Scottish Wildlife Trust, and the Forestry Commission, as well as central and local government.

An association with Scottish Heritage USA inspired Jamie to organise the first international conference of national trusts. It brought together in Scotland representatives of voluntary organisations from England, the US, Canada, and Australia in intensive studies of practical conservation techniques "on the ground".

Although committed to partnership and co-operation with others, Jamie upheld the strength of the trust's independence as a voluntary organisation. He had a genuine interest in all who lived and worked on trust properties and those employed on its staff. He would talk about the trust as a family. Its achievements were always attributed to "the team". He knew all the staff personally and, in many cases, their families, too. When help was needed it was quietly given. His approachability to all was symbolised by his ever-open office door. Jamie's vision of the trust was born of a knowledge and love of Scotland, its people, the fascination of its environment, and the interest of its history. He made them relevant for all, and fun.

Jamie was knighted for his work and, when he retired, made a vice-president emeritus of the trust, a unique distinction for a former member of staff. With characteristic generosity, in his

retirement he gave his support to many organisations, Scotland's Gardens Scheme, the Ancient Monuments board, and Scotland's Churches Scheme among them.

(for more information, see: "The Herald" 22.4.2000)

[His son-in-law Capt Luke Borwick (b. 1947) lived at the Blair Estate, Dalry, Ayrshire.]

Letter of acceptance, written from The National Trust for Scotland, 5 Charlotte Square, Edinburgh, on 14 January 1981, to James Wilson, President in 1981

Dear President,

I have been overwhelmed at the significance of your letter of invitation to become a Honorary Member of the Irvine Burns Club. I accept with a deep sense of humility as I feel that personally I do not deserve such a great honour.

But: The National Trust for Scotland which I have had the great honour to serve as its Chief Executive for nearly 32 years does perhaps merit recognition of your most distinguished Burns Club. The Trust has <fought?> for the Bachelors Club at Tarbolton and Souter Johnnie's Cottage at Kirkoswald since before the World War of 1939-45. Those that made it possible for these two precious buildings to come into the care of the National Trust for Scotland are, in the first place, to be honoured and remembered, but I feel, above all that, it is those who have represented the Trust at these two important Properties - so closely associated with our National Poet - who deserve our deepest thanks. I think particularly of Mr Sam Hoy [check name] who devotes his life to the Bachelors Club and to be with him for an hour or more is to feel that one is reliving the life and times of 2 centuries ago.

If in honouring me in this way, it can truly be translated to all who have dedicated their lives to those two properties, then this most valued invitation does serve its real purpose. Furthermore, I dearly hope that the Trust can play its full part in the present discussions concerning the Glasgow Vennel in Irvine.

With most grateful thanks

Yours most respectfully

Jamie Stormonth Darling

Notes:

The acceptance is on NTS official notepaper.

1982 William Lockhart (c.1917-1990)

An adopted son of the Royal Burgh of Irvine, Willie Lockhart assiduously threw himself into every facet of town life. Kirk and Youth were to benefit from the generosity of his efforts, but it is the historical associations of Burgh life which he made his own. The Carters Society, the Incorporation of Trades and Irvine Burns Club all benefited from his unstinting efforts.

In the Trades, his worth was recognised by being appointed Deacon Convener in 1972-73. In the Burns Club, he served as President in 1955-56. A Chartered Accountant, he served the Trades for many years as Clerk, and the Burns Club as Treasurer.

The Council of the Royal Burgh also recognised Willie Lockhart's contribution to the life of the town, by making him an Honorary Burgess and Guild Brother in ancient form. On his

coming to the Burgh, the hand of friendship was extended freely and with obvious pleasure by this friendly man.

(contributed by Peter McGlone)

Letter of acceptance, written from 'Greystones', 32 Kilwinning Road, Irvine, on 21st January 1982, to President James Millar, Esq...:

Dear Jim,

I am greatly honoured to receive your letter of 13 January, 1982, inviting me to accept Honorary Membership of Irvine Burns Club.

I do, of course, accept this honour with pride & humility when I consider the famous names that have preceded me over the years.

I joined the Directors of the Club in 1953 on my appointment as Vice-President Elect. Over the intervening years as a Director & since 1968 as Honorary Treasurer, I have been privileged to serve a Club which has done much to foster the works and ideals of Robert Burns both at home and abroad.

It has also been my good fortune to make & enjoy valued friendships.

To have my modest contribution appreciated by my fellow-members is, in itself, reward enough. To be accepted as an Honorary Member is far beyond my wildest aspirations.

I fervently hope that I have yet some contributions to make to a Club which has become part of my life.

Thank you again, Jim, for the honour you have done me.

With every good wish for your future well-being & that of the Club which you now so ably lead.

Yours aye,

Wm Lockhart

1983 Johnny Beattie (1927-2020)

The career of Johnny Beattie, Scottish actor and comedian, has spanned well over five decades - one of Scotland's earliest comedy figures, others being the likes of Rikki Fulton, Jack Milroy and Stanley Baxter. He became known in the 1960s for Johnny Beattie's Saturday Night Show, which ran from 1964 all the way until 1970. He was also a well known stand-up comedian, who was popular during his routines for very often talking about his everyday life. He appeared on other shows including the sketch show Scotch & Wry and the sitcom Rab C. Nesbitt, and later moved into playing more dramatic roles, most notable that of Malcolm Hamilton in the soap opera River City. In 2007 he was appointed MBE in the Queen's birthday honours for his services to entertainment and charity.

Beattie enlisted in the army in 1944 at the age of 18, and was sent to Singapore to fight the invading Japanese forces and became his nit's "Del Boy" character, constantly with scams on the go. After winning his first two bouts as a boxer, he promised his mates he'd take a dive in his third fight so that they could place a bet on him losing and win some money. As it happened, he got knocked out anyway, and the guy who beat him got killed in the final round. Beattie recalled "That could have been me." Back in Greenock in 1947, he perfected

his skills as an entertainer while working at the Fairfield shipyard in Govan. He stayed until the 1950s, when he began touring with a theatre company. 60 years later, Beattie told BBC Scotland that comedy had provided relief from his day job: "They were tough places. None of the health and safety you'd get today. They were dangerous and that was an escape route." One of his children, Maureen, followed him into an acting career.

Letter of acceptance, written from his home in Glasgow, on 25/1/83, to 1983 Club President Robin Whyte:

Dear Robin,

Thank you for your kind invitation to become an honorary member of "Irvine Burns Club". Needless to say I am delighted and honoured to accept.

I look forward to meeting all the members in the "Heckling Shed" in the future: Let the Heckling commence!

Warmest Regards!

Johnny Beattie

Notes:

The letter refers to his being principal guest at the Directors' Dinner in the Heckling Shed in Feb., 2005 - though dated appropriately, his acceptance was a few years late in arriving!