

## **Honorary members of 1984 – 1986**

**1984 William Golding, R L C Lorimer**  
**1985 John Prebble, 'Manny' Shinwell**  
**1986 George Mackay Brown**

### **1984 William Golding (1911-1993)**

William Golding (born in Cornwall), the prominent English novelist, is best remembered as the author of "Lord of the Flies", his first novel, which introduced one of the recurrent themes of his fiction, the conflict between humanity's innate barbarism and the civilising influence of reason. The novel became a successful film in 1963. Golding's work is often allegorical, full of allusions to classical literature, mythology and Christian symbolism.

Of his later work, "The Spire" is perhaps the best recognised, an allegory concerning the hero's obsessive determination to build a great cathedral spire, regardless of the consequences.

Golding studied English Literature and Philosophy at Oxford, and after serving in the Royal Navy became a schoolmaster. As a prolific writer of novels, poetry, essays and verse he was awarded the Nobel Prize for Literature in 1983, one of the triggers for his choice as an Honorary Member by the then President. The author's letter of acceptance perhaps suggests an academic who did not strive for public recognition of his much valued work.

*(contributed by G W Watson, President 1983-84)*

Postscript: Golding had much failure with 'Lord of the Flies' before it was accepted by Faber - after rejections from five other publishers, Faber and Faber offered him, to his delight, an advance of £60. The book has sold 20 million copies in the UK, and has been translated into 30 languages. A second film adaptation was produced in 1990. Golding's daughter Judy, in an affectionate memoir published in 2011, portrays her father as a complex, difficult man, one with a 'painfully sharp sensibility about children', yet less sensitive where his own were concerned.

#### Letter of acceptance, written from Salisbury, Wiltshire, on 13th January 1984:

Dear Sir,

So long as I have nothing to do but write this letter I am happy to be an honorary member of the Irvine Burns Club.

Yours,

William Golding

#### Notes:

Some in the Burns Club in 1984 saw the brevity of the reply as an insult, but fortunately this was a minority view and the Secretary duly recorded and filed this acceptance.

**1984 R L C Lorimer (1918-1996)**

"Our faither in heiven, / hallowt be thy name; / Thy Kingdom come; /  
thy will be dune / on the yird, as in heiven"

1983 was the first translation of the New Testament into the Scots tongue. Robin Lorimer's father, Professor W L Lorimer (1885-1967), had spent many years labouring on the translation, but it was the work of his son that was recognised as editor of the substantial work. It is ironic that four hundred and twenty three years had passed since the Reformation prior to the publication of the scholarly translation. The first edition ran to 2500 copies at £17.50 each, by Southside Publishers of Edinburgh. The Four Gospels are now available in an audio version, read by Tom Fleming.

The Annual Celebration in 1983 offered an ideal opportunity for readings from the New Testament, including the parable of the Prodigal Son [Luke 15: 11-32], by Mr Frank Bryson, a weel kent local reader of Scots verse, contributing appropriately to 'a richt guid nicht'.

*(contributed by G W Watson, President 1983-84)*

There had been two earlier Scots versions of the New Testament, though both were worked from the English. One was published in 1520 by Murdoch Nisbet (and reprinted in 1903). In 1901, "The New Testament in Braid Scots", rendered by Rev. William Wye Smith (of St Catharine's, Ontario, Canada), with a glossary of Scottish Terms, was published at Paisley by Alexander Gardner. For comparison's sake, here is its equivalent of the above: "Faither o' us a', biding Aboon! Thy name be holie! Lat thy reign begin, baith in Yirth and Heeven!" (Matthew VI, 9-10)

Wikipedia comments: "The maist kenspeckle translate o The New Testament wis bi William Laughton Lorimer. His wark wis pitten ower straucht frae the Greek an is for ordinar hailed as ane o the maist important warks o Scots prose in mony centuries."

Letter of acceptance, written from 6 Sciennes Gardens, Edinburgh, EH9 1NR, on 11 January 1984, to George Watson, President 1983-1984

Dear Mr Watson,

Thank you very much for your letter dated 31 December last year, which Southside (Publishers) Ltd have forwarded to me. Although I am well aware that my father deserves far more credit for having made his Scots translation of the New Testament than I can possibly have earned by editing it, I am, therefore, all the more grateful to you for having presidentially nominated me for Honorary Membership of the Irvine Burns Club, and have great pleasure in accepting it.

I shall unfortunately not be able to attend this year's Annual Celebration, but thank you very much indeed for having so kindly invited me to attend it.

With all best wishes to you, and all other Members, for a richt guid New Year,

Yours sincerely, R L C Lorimer

Notes:

His address is embossed, so does not appear on the photocopy.

### **1985 John Prebble (1915-2001)**

Born in Middlesex, and brought up in the predominantly Scottish township of Sutherland in rural Saskatchewan, this English/Canadian journalist, novelist, documentarian and historian is best known for his studies of Scottish history. One of his first big successes was 'The High Girders' (1956), a description of the Tay Bridge Disaster. The books for which he is best known include 'Culloden (1962), 'The Highland Clearances' (1963), 'Glencoe' (1966) and 'The Lion in the North' (1973).

His later publications include 'The King's Jaunt: George IV in Scotland, August, 1822' (1973).

Letter of acceptance, written from Hill View, The Glade, Kingswood, Surrey on 3rd December 1984:

Dear Mr Campbell,

I thank you for your wish to make me an honorary member of your ancient and distinguished club. I accept this honour with great pleasure and in admiration of the noble man whose memory you maintain.

"The heart aye's the part aye  
That makes us right or wrang."

Yours sincerely  
John Prebble

#### Notes:

The quotation comes from the "Epistle to Davie, a Brother Poet". David Sillar (1760-1830, one year younger than Burns) was from Spittalside near Lochlie. A close friend of the Robert Burns, he was a member of the Tarbolton Bachelors' Club, his own book of poetry was published at Kilmarnock in 1789, three years after Burns' Kilmarnock Edition, and he was a founder member of Irvine Burns Club, in 1826.

### **1985 'Manny' Shinwell (1884-1986)**

Manny Shinwell was a British trade union official, Labour politician and one of the leading figures of Red Clydeside. In 1919, he gained national notoriety through his involvement in the Glasgow 40 Hours' Movement. This movement culminated in clashes between police and protesters in Glasgow's George Square. He was afterwards tried for incitement to riot and was sentenced to five months' imprisonment.

As an MP, he represented Linlithgowshire from 1922 to 1924 and from 1928 to 1931, thereafter Seaham from 1935-1950 and its successor constituency of Easingham till 1970. His political offices culminated in the Ministry of Defence 1950-51.

He was made a life peer in 1970 and continued to be active in the House of Lords until shortly before his death.

Letter of acceptance, written from the House of Lords, on 7th December, 1984, to Club President Robin Campbell

Dear Mr Campbell,

Many thanks for your letter of November 30th. It will be a pleasure to become a member of your Burns Club.

Yours sincerely,

Manny Shinwell

Notes: The letter is on House of Lords notepaper and is, apart from the signature, typed.

### **1986 George Mackay Brown (1921-1996)**

George Mackay Brown was born in Stromness in 1921 and apart from his education at Edinburgh University and a short spell at Newbattle Abbey College in Edinburgh, he spent his whole working life in Orkney, writing the most beautiful poetry and prose at the kitchen table of his council flat.

Talking of himself, he said, "I was never bright but I could always tell stories" and the telling of stories about his beloved Islands in a prodigious body of poetry, novels and newspaper columns brought him a Booker nomination, an OBE, an Honorary Doctorate from Glasgow University and the respect of people of literature world-wide. The Nobel Laureate, Seamus Heaney, is one of his most ardent admirers. His canon of work described every aspect of the ordinary lives of the crofter, fisherman and tinker and also painted a vivid picture of the history of the ancient past of St Magnus and the Norsemen.

George Mackay Brown was chosen as an Honorary Member of Irvine Burns' Club because, not only was he one of the greatest of Scotland's modern wordsmiths, but also because he shared with Burns a love of the glories of nature and a faith in the goodness of humankind and brought an appreciation of these things to the page with a spare and brilliant pen. Not least, he was chosen because he was recognised and loved by his people as the most gentle, self-effacing and least pretentious of famous men.

He died in Kirkwall in April 1996, in the season of the year when, "The daffodils are standing in long lines with their green visors still up".

*(contributed by Jack Lovie, President 1985-86)*

Letter of acceptance, from 3 Mayburn Court, Stromness, Orkney on 27 November 1985:

Dear Dr Lovie

Thank you for doing me the honour, as President of Irvine Burns Club, of proposing me for honorary membership.

I accept with much pleasure. The great Ayrshire bard's work has meant a great deal to me for most of my life, and brought much delight, laughter, and solace.

Thank you also for the enclosed booklet 'Robert Burns in Irvine', which I'll be glad to have on my bookshelf.

There is a faint possibility that I may be in Ayr visiting friends in January: in which case it would be a great pleasure to attend the Annual Celebration on 24 January.

Thank you for associating me in this delightful way with the great poet.

Yours sincerely

George Mackay Brown