

Honorary members of 2003 – 2006

2003 Rhona Martin & Olympic Curling Team, Adam McNaughtan, David Steel

2004 Willie Young, Jack McConnell

2005 Robert Fisk

2006 Ian Rankin

2003 Rhona Martin & Olympic Curling Team

The Olympic Curling Team - Rhona Martin, Debbie Knox, Janice Rankin, Fiona McDonald and Margaret Morton - in February 2002, at the Winter Olympics in Salt Lake City, were the first British team to win in that competition for 18 years. On the road to their victory, the team had lost to Germany, then defeated Sweden and Canada, the final proving a hard-won match which lasted three hours - all the five team members were Scottish.

Rhona Martin was skip of the Scotland team that won a silver medal at the European Curling Championships in 1998. Following 2002, she has also been active in coaching and commentary. In 2012, she was inducted into the Scottish Sports Hall of Fame.

Letter of acceptance from Rhona Martin, written from her home in Ayrshire, to Eric Park, the Past President who had made the personal approach to Rhona and her team

Dear Mr Park,

On behalf of my Team, Debbie Knox, Janice Rankin, Fiona McDonald, Margaret Morton and I would like to thank the Directors of Irvine Burns Club for inviting us to have Honorary Membership of the Club.

It would be a great honour for us to accept this invitation and thank you for considering my Curling Team.

Yours sincerely

Rhona Martin

(GB Olympic Team Skip)

2003 Adam McNaughtan (....-)

Adam McNaughtan is a Scottish folk_singer, noted for his songs on post-war Glasgow. Amongst his works are "The Jeely Piece Song", a humorous song about tower blocks and "Where Is The Glasgow That I Used To Know?", which was quoted by Prince Charles at the opening of the 1988 Glasgow Garden Festival.

He taught English at the now-defunct Rutherglen Academy and later at Cathkin High School. He was also Head of English at John Street Secondary, Bridgeton, in the 1970s. He later owned a second-hand bookshop in Glasgow.

Adam attended many functions at Irvine Burns Club, enjoying the company of friends as much as his unaccompanied and witty renditions, such as "Hamlet, Hamlet", were enjoyed by other attenders.

Letter of acceptance, written from his home in Glasgow on 12 October 2002

President Willie McPike,
Irvine Burns Club

I gat your letter, winsome Willie;
I thank ye cautiously, no brawly.
Afore I'd trust an Irvine billie
 Wha gently speaks,
I'd trust a widden horse that's full ae
 Gift-bearin' Greeks.

I've wan advantage ower a'
Thae chiels like Browning, Foch an' Shaw;
They must hae thocht a comp'ny braw
 They wad enrol in,
But I've met Cowan, Lovie, Gaw,
 Caldwell an' Nolan.

An' yet, afore I'd learnt to write,
My mither taught me to recite
An' in his verse to tak delight
 Wha ploo'd Lochlie;
So I'm aware your kind invite
 Does honour me.

An' so, forsaking AOL,
I've just unearthed my long-lost quill
An' scribe my thanks, dear Pres'dent Will
 In awkward scrip',
The only duty to fulfil
 O' membership.

An' though Burns Suppers don't please me –
I don't like neeps, nor barley-bree –
In Januar', Twa Thoosan an' Three,
 The Twinty-Third,
I'll guest the Irvine Burns Club's spree.
 You hae my word.

Adam J. McNaughtan

Notes:

The individuals named in the 2nd stanza are Directors of Irvine Burns Club, Bill Cowan, Jack Lovie, Sam Gaw, Joe Caldwell and Bill Nolan, a motley crew indeed.

The reference in the 4th stanza is to our encouragement of honorary members to accept in handwriting. AOL was an email provider of the time.

2003 David Steel (1938-)

Elected as Member of Parliament for Roxburgh, Selkirk, and Peebles, followed by Tweeddale, Ettrick, and Lauderdale, David Steel served as the final leader of the Liberal Party (which, after his time, became the Social and Liberal Democrats), from 1976 to 1988. In 1976, at only 38 years old, he was one of the youngest party leaders in British history.

He retired from the House of Commons at the 1997 general election and was made a life peer as Baron Steel of Aikwood. He became the first Presiding Officer (speaker) of the Scottish Parliament in 1999, using the style "Sir David Steel", despite his peerage, and stepped down as an MSP when the parliament was dissolved for the 2003 election, though remaining as Presiding Officer until he had supervised the election of his successor.

Letter of acceptance, written from The Scottish Parliament, [the office of] The Rt Hon Sir David Steel KBE MSP, The Presiding Officer, on 22 October 2002:

Dear Mr McPike,

Thank you for your letter of 2 October.

I would be delighted to accept your kind invitation to be an Honorary Member of the Irvine Burns Club.

I am also happy to accept your invitation to attend the Club's annual celebration of the Poet's birthday on 23 January 2003. Perhaps you would let me have further details nearer the time.

Yours sincerely
David Steel

Notes:

The three paragraphs are typed.

2004 Willie Young (...-)

Willie Young, flautist par excellence, delighted audiences for a good number of years - in particular those who attended Irvine Burns Club Annual Celebrations.

Willie's father, an amateur player, was his first teacher. Willie, then eight years old, showed such promise that he was assigned to the foremost teacher in Ayrshire at that time - one Adam Bennett. He subsequently entered the RSAMD and studied under David Nicholson and has since attended Masterclasses under such eminent flautists as James Galway, Jean-Pierre Rampal, William Bennett and Richard Chester. His record in the contests run by the British Flute Society is impressive and is unlikely to be matched - seven times Scottish Open Junior Champion and eight times Senior Champion. Willie plays an 8-carat rose gold Muramatsu flute - surely the Rolls Royce of flutes.

Willie is married to Elaine, has two boys, and is a Music Instructor for North Ayrshire Council.

(contributed by Jim Butler, President 1992-93, and piper)

Letter of acceptance, written from his home in Kilwinning in late January 2004, to Andy Howat, President 2003-04

Andy,

It is with pride I would like to officially accept Honorary Membership of Irvine Burns Club.

Over the years it has been a great pleasure to perform to such an appreciative audience.

My recital nights in Wellwood were also memorable, and I look back at them as a highlight of my playing career.

With these few words may I reiterate my somewhat perforated acceptance speech at the Annual Celebration and wish you and the club well,

Yours with grateful honour,

William J M Young

ARCM Kilwinning

Notes:

'Wellwood' is the name of the Irvine Burns Club premises.

ARCM is the acronym for Associate of the Royal College of Music.

2004 Jack McConnell (1960-)

Jack McConnell, now Lord McConnell, was born in Irvine, was brought up on Arran and went into teaching mathematics (at Lornhill Academy, Alloa). His major breakthrough was in his handling of the 1997 General Election success, where Labour attained a large overall majority victory.

He served as First Minister of Scotland and Leader of the Labour Party in Scotland from 2001 to 2007. As first minister, he implemented a ban on smoking in public places, signed a Co-operation Agreement with Malawi, and successfully bid for the 2014 Commonwealth Games to be hosted in Glasgow. In the 2007 Scottish Parliament election, the Labour Party in Scotland became the second largest party, with the SNP having one seat more.

He made a commitment to continuing his work to tackle poverty in Africa and to develop the relationship between Scotland and Malawi.

Letter of acceptance, from the office of the First Minister, Scottish Executive, St Andrew's House, Edinburgh on 12 July 2003, to Willie McPike, President in the previous year, 2002-03:

Dear Willie,

Thank you very much for the invitation to join Irvine Burns Club as an Honorary Member. I am delighted to accept.

Please pass on my best wishes to the committee.

Yours sincerely

Jack McConnell

Notes: The acceptance is in his own hand.

2005 Robert Fisk (1946-2020)

Robert Fisk is Britain's most highly decorated foreign correspondent and the world-renowned Middle East correspondent for 'The Independent' newspaper in London. Mr Fisk received a Ph.D. in Political Science from Trinity College, Dublin in 1985 and an Honorary Doctorate of Literature and Journalism from the University of Lancaster. He was 'The Times' Belfast correspondent from 1971 to 1975, and the Middle East correspondent for the same newspaper from 1976 to 1987.

Fisk has covered the conflict in Northern Ireland, Israeli invasions of Lebanon, the Iranian Revolution, the Iran-Iraq War, the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan, the Gulf War, wars in Bosnia and Algeria, and the Palestinian uprisings. He was the winner of 'The Amnesty International UK Press Awards' in 1998.

His books include 'The Point of No Return: The Strike which Broke the British War in Ulster', 'In Time of War: Ireland, Ulster and the Price of Neutrality' and 'The Great War for Civilisation, The Conquest of the Middle East'.

(contributed by Fr Willie Boyd, President 2004-05)

Letter of acceptance (see notes), written from Beirut on March 28th, 2005, to Fr. Boyd, President in 2004-2005:

Dear Father Boyd

Thank you so much for your letter of January 2nd, which was forwarded to me in Lebanon. Unfortunately, a late return from Iraq, Mr Hariri's subsequent murder in Beirut and work on my forthcoming book has set my correspondence way behind.

So I must apologise sincerely that I did not respond to your kind letter before January 28th.

Obviously, it's too late for you to nominate me as an 'Honorary Member' of the Irvine Burns club this year.

However, if I'm not on your 'black list', I should add that I would be privileged if you wished to nominate me next year - although I appreciate you may by then have found a more worthy person to honour.

Yours sincerely,

Robert Fisk

Middle East Correspondent

The Independent

Notes:

This letter is technically not an acceptance, but indicates willingness to accept, so we include him in our acceptances.

The letter is typed, not in holograph.

2006 Ian Rankin (1960-)

Ian Rankin, the award-winning Scottish author, was born in Fife, graduated from the University of Edinburgh in 1982, and (he freely admits) spent the three years he was supposed to be working towards a Ph.D. (in Scottish Literature) in writing novels. He has since made famous throughout the world not only his main character, Detective Inspector John Rebus, but also the city where the novels are set, Edinburgh. The first Rebus novel, *Knots and Crosses*, appeared in 1987 and the 'final' one (the eighteenth), *Exit Music*, in 2007, with the 19th, *Saints of the Shadow Bible*, appearing in 2013. He lives in Edinburgh with his wife and two sons.

His success has come in worldwide popularity (the Rebus books are now bestsellers in twenty-two languages), in many awards (the Chandler-Fulbright Award, four Crime Writers' Association Dagger Awards including the prestigious Diamond Dagger in 2005, America's Edgar award in 2004, Denmark's Palle Rosenkrantz prize, the French Grand Prix du Roman Noir, and the Deutscher Krimipreis), in honorary degrees (from the universities of Abertay, St Andrews, Edinburgh, Hull and the Open University, the first two being honorary doctorates), and by the Crown (awarded the OBE for services to literature, he is also a Deputy Lieutenant of Edinburgh).

In 2022, Ian Rankin received a Knighthood from HM Queen Elizabeth II for services to literature and charity as part of her Birthday Honours List.

It is indicative of Ian Rankin's appreciation of his native country that in 2002 he opted to receive his OBE in his home city of Edinburgh. On his website, www.rankin.net, he mentions some of his enthusiasms; in late 2007, he wrote: "I also turned 'political hack' courtesy of The Times and covered May's Scottish elections, interviewing the likes of Tony Blair and Alex Salmond. Then there was the opera libretto, the two BBC TV documentaries (one celebrating 20 years of Rebus, the other the roots of Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde). And did you happen to catch 'Reichenbach Falls', a one-off BBC drama about a detective who starts to realise he's a character in a long-running series of novels? I co-wrote that with an old friend from university, James Mavor. We enjoyed it so much, we're trying out other ideas...".

Letter of acceptance, written from his home in Edinburgh on 23/1/06, to Jim Burns, President 2005-06

Dear Jim

Many thanks for your letter of 4 January, inviting me to become an Honorary Member of Irvine Burns Club - I am happy to accept!

Sorry I missed the annual celebration on 7 January, but your letter didn't reach me till after that time.

Right, I'd better get back to the next Rebus novel . . . All the best to you - and thanks again!

Cheers -

Ian Rankin

Notes:

The AGM had been on the 7th January - the Annual Celebration was on its usual Friday, 27th Jan. that year.

The following declined honorary membership in 2006

Sir David Attenborough CH, FRS: Replying to President Jim Burns, he wrote: "Thank you for your letter which has only reached me today. I am very flattered that you should invite me to become an honorary member of Irvine Burns Club. Nonetheless, since I am not a Scot and have no particular involvement with Burns I feel I should decline. Thank you nonetheless."

Sam Torrance, OBE, European Team Captain: Replying to President Jim Burns, he wrote: "I am writing to thank you for your kind invitation to be an Honorary Member of Irvine Burns Club. I feel very honoured to have been asked but reluctantly I will have to decline. My busy schedule means that sadly, I haven't enough time to dedicate to honorary memberships and as a result I endeavour to keep them to a minimum. I tend only to accept things, which I know I will be able to put adequate time towards."