

Honorary members of 2010 – 2012

2010 Tim Smit, Sir Christopher Hoy, Carol Ann Duffy

2011 John McCormick, Jimmie McGregor, Jim Butler

2012 Rt Hon David Cameron, Prof. Tom Devine,

Bobby Lennox MBE, Cardinal Keith O'Brien

2010 Tim Smit (1954-)

After ten years working as a composer/producer in the music industry, Tim Smit moved to Cornwall where he met John Nelson and John Willis and together discovered and restored the Lost Gardens of Heligan, a "Sleeping Beauty" lost for many years under mountains of bramble, ivy, rampant laurel and fallen timber. His book on the Gardens won the Illustrated Book of the Year Award in 1997, and a TV documentary on the Gardens won an award in 1998.

Born in the Netherlands, he was educated in Britain and studied archaeology and anthropology at Durham University. He was awarded an Honorary CBE in 2002, and holds several Honorary Doctorates.

He is co-founder and chief executive of The Eden Project near St Austell in Cornwall. When it opened its doors in March 2001 it was hailed as "The Eighth Wonder of the World". More than 12 million people have now visited what was once a sterile pit turned into a cradle of life containing world class horticulture and startling architecture symbolic of human endeavour.

He is a regular inspirational speaker at conferences and dinners and is involved with a number of statutory and voluntary bodies both locally and nationally. As a highly innovative and successful businessperson, Smit has criticised a risk-averse tendency in British enterprise.

Tim Smit was awarded an honorary knighthood in January 2011 in recognition of services to public engagement with science. In raising funds for the Lost Gardens and the Eden Project, he "ignored the hundreds of people who told him it couldn't or shouldn't be done". When the Millennium Commission placed his dream project in Category 'C' for those unlikely to go further, Tim Smit held an extremely brief press conference thanking them for their decision, which was then reported in the press as success, and which led to a 'Times' leader saying what insightful thinking the Millennium Commission had shown by supporting such a tremendously exciting project. In the end the Eden project won more than £56 million of lottery funding.

Letter of acceptance, written from his home in Fowey, Cornwall, on January 18th, 2010, to President Billy Dickson

Dear Mr Dickson,

Thank you for your letter and kind invitation to join the Irvine Burns Club. I feel privileged and flattered to fall into such good company and moreover, a club with such stellar previous recipients of the honour. So, it is with much pleasure that I accept the

invitation and at the same time regret that I cannot attend the festivities on the 184th annual celebration on January 22nd. It is my mother's birthday.

Thank you for so honouring me and may I wish you an evening of great conviviality and distinction.

Yours sincerely

Tim Smit

2010 Sir Christopher Hoy (1976-)

Chris Hoy is a multiple world champion and Scotland's most successful Olympian. Inspired to cycle at age six by the 1982 film 'E.T. the Extra-Terrestrial', he raced BMX between the ages of 7 and 14 and was ranked second in Britain, fifth in Europe and ninth in the world. He also rowed in the Scottish junior team, and played rugby for his school, George Watson's College in Edinburgh. Starting track cycling in 1994, Hoy won his first Gold at the 1km Time Trial (no longer an Olympic event) at the 2004 Athens Olympics.

Chris Hoy was the first Briton to win three gold medals in a single Olympic games since 1908 and is the most successful Olympic male cyclist of all time. His three Golds are for the men's team sprint, the keirin and the men's individual sprint. Awarded an MBE in 2005, he was knighted in 2009. He holds three Honorary Doctorates of Science, from Edinburgh, Heriot-Watt and St Andrews Universities. In 2008, he was voted BBC Sports Personality of the Year. Hoy is ten times a world champion.

Chris Hoy is a very committed sportsman, a great ambassador for Scotland and a genuinely nice person. He is also a columnist for 'The Daily Telegraph', his first column appearing in January 2011. In the 2012 Olympics in London, he led out Team GB, won gold in the team sprint, setting a new world record in the velodrome, and became the most successful British Olympian ever, winning a total of six gold medals. He retired from competitive cycling in 2013, saying he was very proud to have taken part in the transformation of the sport.

Letter of acceptance, written from his home in Mere, Cheshire, on 4th August, 2010, to President Billy Dickson.

Dear Billy

Many thanks you for your very kind letter inviting me to join the Irvine Burns Club as an Honorary Member.

I would be delighted to accept and feel very privileged to become part of such a historic club. To be nominated alongside so many inspirational and legendary people is a huge honour.

I'm glad to hear the inaugural exhibition went well and I look forward to meeting you one day.

All the best,

Chris Hoy

Notes:

The exhibition mentioned is the 2009-2010 "Dear Mister Burns" exhibition featuring our Honorary Members.

2010 Carol Ann Duffy (1955-)

2010 President Billy Dickson was delighted to have the opportunity to invite Carol Ann Duffy and to add her name to our honorary member list of seven of the last eight Poets Laureate.

Born in the Gorbals in Glasgow, daughter of an electrical fitter, her family moved to Stafford when she was six, thereby causing her to lose "a river, culture, speech, and sense of first space". A passionate reader from an early age, her literary talent was encouraged by two Stafford English teachers. Her first poems were published when she was 15, and from 16 she dated and lived with the poet Adrian Henri for over ten years. She was poetry critic of 'The Guardian' from 1988-89, and a poetry magazine editor, and was appointed a lecturer in poetry at Manchester Metropolitan University in 1996.

Carol Ann Duffy was appointed Poet Laureate in May 2009 for ten years, to 2019. She had almost been appointed in 1999, but would not have accepted at that time. She is the first woman and the first Scot to hold the position in its 341-year history.

Her poetry addresses current issues and experiences. Her first two poems as Poet Laureate won immediate popular attention - the first tackling the scandal over British MPs expenses in a 14 line sonnet, and her second marking the deaths of Henry Allingham and Harry Patch, the last two British soldiers to fight in World War I. She is also a playwright and several of her plays have appeared on the London stage.

Carol Ann Duffy holds four Honorary Doctorates and is Creative Director of the Writing School at Manchester Metropolitan University.

Her acceptance by email on 26 January 2010:

Hi Billy,
your letter just reached me - I'll be delighted to accept. I'm on a big poetry tour at the moment so will handwrite my acceptance asap.
warm wishes
Carol Ann

Notes:

The Club did not receive a handwritten acceptance.

2011 John McCormick (c.1945-)

John McCormick attended school in Irvine. He taught history in a Glasgow comprehensive for a couple of years while also doing a Master of Education degree at Glasgow University. His broadcasting interest began as he wrote scripts and presented programmes for a close circuit television service in Glasgow for Glasgow schools. After educational broadcasting for 12 years and senior posts thereafter, he was appointed Controller, BBC Scotland, in 1992 and served till 2004.

Letter of acceptance, written from his home in Glasgow on 13th January 2011, to Bill McGregor, President 2011:

Dear Bill,

I was delighted to receive your letter of 17th November inviting me to become an Honorary Member of Irvine Burns Club. As an Ayrshire man who attended school in Irvine I know something of the history of the Club and know, too, that it is a great honour to receive such an invitation. I am, of course, very pleased to accept.

I am so sorry that work commitments in London on 22nd January mean that I am unable to accept your invitation to the Burns Supper that evening. I know that it will be a very special occasion. It would have been a particular pleasure to have been introduced to the Club in the company of Jimmie Macgregor, for whom I have the greatest admiration.

You can be sure that at some point that evening I will raise a glass to Rabbie and to Irvine Burns Club, and I look forward to being part of the company next year.

Thanks again for honouring me with the invitation.

With all best wishes

Yours,

John

2011 Jimmie McGregor (1930-)

In 1960 Jimmie McGregor formed a musical partnership with Robin Hall that would last 20 years. They appeared extensively on BBC Television – both on the *Tonight* programme and on the *White Heather Club*. Their anthem "Football Crazy" was released in 1960 on Decca Records.

He went on to make television programmes for BBC Scotland, many on long-distance walking, and has been involved in various conservation organisations. He was awarded the MBE in 1994 for his services to Scottish heritage and culture.

Letter of acceptance, written from his home in Glasgow on 17th December 2010, to Bill McGregor, President 2011

Bill,

Thank you for your very kind and flattering invitation from the world's oldest Burns club, and from a place with such intimate associations with the man himself. With all humility, I am delighted to accept.

I have an immortal memory at Oran Mor in Glasgow on 22nd, and the Liverpool Philharmonic Hall on 23rd, but I hope to attend your event on 21st. I shall keep in touch, and thank you and your colleagues most sincerely once again.

Jimmie

2011 Jim Butler (1942-2022)

Art Teacher, artist, piper, Burnsian, and reader, Jim Butler was a much-respected member of The Irvine Burns Club where he had been President in 1993. In recognition of his services to the Club, particularly as its appointed Club Piper for many years, Jim was made an Honorary Member in 2011 by his life-long friend Bill McGregor during the latter's year as Club President. It was a well-merited honour that Jim treasured.

He was an inspiring art teacher for young people, first at St Peter's Secondary, then at St Andrew's Academy, returning after retirement to teach piping. Jim was a talented artist who exhibited his work in a wide range of galleries, including several popular exhibitions in the local Harbour Arts Centre in Irvine. He donated a painting of the exterior of Wellwood Burns Centre & Museum to The Irvine Burns Club and this hangs proudly in the entrance to The Music Room.

Letter of acceptance, written from his home in Kilwinning, Ayrshire, on 28.11.2010, to Bill McGregor, President 2011:

Dear Bill,

I was astonished, but deeply moved, to receive your letter inviting me to Honorary Membership of Irvine Burns Club.

To have such an honour conferred upon me for doing something which I enjoy simply compounds the pleasure which your letter gave me. Acceptance, however, was not without some reservations. I am mindful, and always shall be, of the fact that, gathered round the Directors' table are individuals whose contribution to the progress and well-being of this club far outweigh mine. It is often the case at Burns Suppers that the piper, once his duties are over, is relegated to a corner, given a dram, and generally ignored. From my earliest attendances at this Annual Celebration, long before I became President, I have always been treated with unfailing courtesy. So, on behalf of the Piping Fraternity I graciously accept your valued invitation and shall be honoured to join the company of distinguished men and women who are Honorary Members of this venerable Club. With profound thanks!

Yours fraternally,
Jim Butler, Piper

Notes:

The letter is in the fine calligraphy with which Jim Butler has inscribed many a membership certificate and other Club documents.

2012 Rt Hon David Cameron (1966-)

David Cameron served as Prime Minister from 2010 to 2016, resigning within weeks of losing the referendum on the UK's membership of the European Union. Details of his career are easily available elsewhere.

Letter of acceptance, written from 10 Downing Street, on 29 November 2011, to Michael Diamond, Club President 2011-12:

Dear Michael,

Thank you very much for your recent letter, kindly inviting me to become an Honorary Member of the Irvine Burns Club. I am very sorry for the delay in replying to you.

It would give me great pleasure to join the long and impressive list of former Prime Ministers who have been Honorary Members of the Irvine Burns Club, the oldest continuing Burns Club in the world. From Disraeli, through Churchill, Macmillan and Margaret Thatcher - it is the most distinguished of lists. I am joining some very great company indeed.

I am most grateful to you for extending this generous invitation to me, and delighted to accept your kind offer to become an Honorary Member. I look forward to you keeping me updated with news from the Club.

This comes with my very best wishes for your continuing work.

Yours

David

Notes:

The letter is on 'The Prime Minister' official notepaper, and is typed except for the opening greeting and the signing off.

2012 Prof. Sir Tom Devine (1945-)

Tom Devine, since knighted, is Professor Emeritus of the Sir William Fraser Chair of Scottish History and Palaeography at the University of Edinburgh. Appointed Professor of Scottish History at Strathclyde University in 1988, he held posts at Aberdeen University before joining Edinburgh University in 2006. His stature as the leading Scottish historian is clear from his own words: "I was presented by HM Queen Elizabeth II with the Royal Gold Medal, Scotland's supreme academic accolade, and appointed OBE in the New Year Honours List 2005 for services to Scottish history. I am the only UK historian elected to all three national academies within the British Isles; Birthday Honours Lists 2014, created Knight Bachelor for services to the study of Scottish history, first historian knighted with that citation."

His letter is on the notepaper of the Scottish Centre for Diaspora Studies at Edinburgh, established by an external endowment of £1 million pounds by a leading Scottish fund manager and his family. Prof. Devine was appointed its Director in 2008. The endowment is reckoned to be the single largest private donation ever made to a UK university for the development of historical studies.

His links with Irvine include giving a superb John Galt Memorial Lecture, without notes, in the upstairs hall of Irvine Town House, on May 6th, 2017. His book '*The Scottish Nation 1700-2000*' (published in 1999) has been described as "the most comprehensive account of modern Scottish history".

Letter of acceptance, handwritten and on official notepaper, written from the Scottish Centre for Diaspora Studies, The University of Edinburgh on 14 December, 2011, to Club President 2011-12 Michael Diamond:

Dear Mr Diamond,

Irvine Burns Club: Hon Member Invitation

I was delighted to receive your invitation to become an Honorary Member of this most illustrious and historic Burns Club.

I am very pleased to accept and wish the Club well in all its future endeavours.

Warm best wishes,

Tom Devine

T.M. Devine OBE DLitt FRHistS FRSE HonMRIA FBA

Senior Research Professor in History, University of Edinburgh

2012 Bobby Lennox MBE (1943-)

Bobby Lennox, Scottish footballer, born in Saltcoats, played for Celtic and was a member of their 1967 European Cup-winning team, known as the 'Lisbon Lions'. He earned ten international caps for Scotland.

Bobby Charlton said of him, "If I'd had Lennox in my team, I could have played forever. He was one of the best strikers I have ever seen."

Letter of acceptance, written from his Saltcoats home, on 10 January 2012, to Club President Michael Diamond, a Celtic supporter.

Dear Michael,

Irvine Burns Club: Honorary Membership Invitation

Thank you for your recent invitation to become an honorary member of Irvine Burns Club.

The list of those, noted in your letter, who are among those who have accepted honorary membership is extremely impressive and I am honoured to be invited to join with them.

As an Ayrshire man, I am very aware of the worldwide fame of Robert Burns, who spent the majority of his (tragically short) life in our country. I am also keenly aware of the important role played by Irvine Burns Club, over nearly 200 years, in the promotion of the life and works of the Bard. At St Mary's Primary School in Saltcoats, we learned many of Burns' songs. "Scots Wha Hae", "Ye Banks & Braes" and "My love is like a Red Red Rose" are among the many we learned and sang with great enthusiasm.

Therefore I have great pleasure in accepting your invitation and look forward to visiting Wellwood in the near future to learn more about Irvine Burns Club.

Yours Sincerely

Bobby Lennox

2012 Cardinal Keith O'Brien (1938-2018)

This fallible churchman was appointed a Cardinal in the Roman Catholic Church in 2003, though already having a reputation for indiscretion and outspokenness. His appointment to this high office prompted his nomination as an Honorary Member.

A graduate, in maths and chemistry, from Edinburgh University, he was ordained as a priest in 1965, and served in various parishes and two Roman Catholic colleges. In 1985, he was appointed Archbishop of St Andrews and Edinburgh. Revelations about his private life and associated manipulative character surfaced in 2012, were reported to the Vatican, and led to his resignation in February, 2013, after which he lived quietly in a Northumbrian village, finally forsaking the rights and duties of a cardinal in 2015, and retaining his rank only by name.

Letter of acceptance, written from the Archbishop's House, Edinburgh on Saint Andrew's Day, 30th November 2011, to Club President Michael Diamond:

Dear Michael,

I write to you as President of the Irvine Burns Club to thank you for your kind invitation to become an Honorary Member of the Club, founded in 1826. I am more than happy to accept your invitation and look on it as a great honour to have been proposed for membership.

I know something of the distinguished history of the Club and would assume that I am the first Cardinal of the Roman Catholic Church to be an Honorary Member. However, I am sure you are aware of a previous illustrious bishop of the Roman Catholic Church who was a close friend of Robert Burns. I refer to Bishop John Geddes who was Vicar Apostolic of the Lowland District of Scotland from 1780 until 1793. Geddes thought Burns was "a man of uncommon genius" and "an excellent poet started up in Ayrshire where he has been a ploughman"; while Burns wrote to Geddes "Venerable Father . . . you do me the honour to interest yourself much in my welfare". Burns actually wrote several extra poems at the front and the back of a book that Geddes had purchased - the "Geddes Burns" is now in a library in California!

Burns had a great respect for the individual person, whatever his beliefs, and could write: "A man's a man for a' that!" May that basic respect for one another inspire us all at this time - especially in this beloved land of Scotland.

With renewed and sincere thanks:

† Keith Patrick Cardinal O'Brien,

Archbishop of St Andrew & Edinburgh, Scotland

Notes:

The letter, addressed to Club President Michael Diamond, is on official notepaper, but written fully in the Cardinal's hand.

The Geddes copy of the Edinburgh edition passed to Geddes' niece Margaret Hyslop, then to her daughter, then to a Henry Goadby who emigrated to USA in 1938. Burns had written twelve extra works, over 27 pages, in its front and back blank pages.