

Honorary members of 2017 – 2019

2017 Prof. Gerard Carruthers, Dr Ian Green

2018 Rab Affleck, Margaret Cook, Annie Lennox,

Prof. Liam McIlvanney, Prof. Sir Geoff Palmer

2019 Prof. Ian Campbell, Prof. Kirsteen McCue, William A Nolan

2017 Prof. Gerard Carruthers (...)

Prof. Gerry Carruthers FRSE occupies the Francis Hutcheson Chair of Scottish Literature at the University of Glasgow and is best known in Burns circles as Co-Director of the Centre for Burns Studies at that institution. His academic work includes his roles as General Editor of the Oxford University Press edition of the Works of Robert Burns and as Principal Investigator in the ARHC (Arts and Humanities Research Council) project "Editing Robert Burns for the 21st Century, a project in which Irvine Burns Club is increasingly involved. Gerry is also Editor of the 'Scottish Literary Review'.

Gerry's interests in Scottish literature encompass much more than Robert Burns; they include the works and life of John Galt, born in Irvine and buried in Greenock, and Thomas Muir of Huntershill - Prof. Carruthers, with Don Martin, co-edited a book (publ. 2016), on this eminent political reformer (1765-1799; transported to Australia in 1794, escaped to America in 1796, and died in France).

Letter of acceptance, written from the University of Glasgow, on 3rd January, 2017 to Hon Secy Bill Nolan

Dear Mr Nolan,

I was delighted to receive your letter of 14th December 2016, inviting me to Honorary membership of Irvine Burns Club..

I regard your invitation as a signal honour, as Irvine Burns Club is known world-wide as repository of some of the best Robert Burns manuscripts & artefacts; as well as having a contemporary & historic membership that has done so much to advance the understanding of our national writer.

It gives me great pleasure to accept!

Yours sincerely,

Gerry Carruthers

2017 Dr Ian Green (1934-)

Ian Green is the son of a head gardener who played the Highland bagpipe, so musical evenings were common in the Green house, and Ian was introduced to traditional music at an early age. After serving his apprenticeship as a gardener in Edinburgh, he served in the army in Korea, then joined Edinburgh City Police, subsequently spending 30 years in the force, retiring as a Police Inspector late in 1985.

He had become an avid collector of folk recordings, was a founding member of the Edinburgh Police Folk Club and the Edinburgh Folk Club, and was a co-editor of Sandy Bell's Broadsheet magazine, one of the earliest traditional music publications. He also produced concerts. In the late 1970s, he set up Discount Folk Records, but held a burning ambition to be involved in the actual recording of Scotland's many talented musicians and singers. His dream was realized in 1986. Greentrax Recordings was launched, funded solely by Ian's police pension.

Since 1986, Greentrax Recordings Ltd has established itself as Scotland's leading traditional music recording company, with a well-earned worldwide reputation and has released some 500 albums. The Scottish Tradition Series from the archives of the School Of Scottish Studies are amongst the finest of their kind, and the range continues to expand annually.

Ian has won the Hamish Henderson Award for services to Scottish traditional music at the Scots Trad Music Awards and in 2006 was awarded an Honorary Doctorate by the Royal Scottish Academy of Music and Drama as a tribute to his work in Scottish traditional music over the past forty years.

Letter of acceptance, written from Greentrax Recordings Limited, Cockenzie Business Centre, Cockenzie, East Lothian, EH32 0XL, on 16th January 2017, to Hon Secy Bill Nolan

Dear Bill,

I am greatly honoured to be invited to become an Honorary Member of the Irvine Burns Club and I am delighted to accept.

I am very proud of the achievements of Greentrax Recordings and in particular the albums of the late, great Jean Redpath, MBE, and Rod Paterson, one of Scotland's finest interpreters of Burns' songs, plus others.

I have received a number of awards but Honorary Membership of the Irvine Burns Club ranks high on the list.

My best wishes and thanks to the Directors.

Yours sincerely,

Ian D Green

Notes:

Jean Redpath (1937-2014) was the Scottish folk singer.

Rod Paterson has been described as "one of Scotland's finest singers, with limitless depth and versatility".

2018 Rab Affleck (1953-)

Rab Affleck began his film career in a rather unusual way. In his younger days, he earned his living as a tradesman (time-served), but also fought as a semi-professional boxer. So good was he, he even fought for the British Heavyweight title. However, it was his experience of bare knuckle fighting that brought him to the attention of the producers of The Big Man - Crossing the Line (1990) starring Liam Neeson. He was initially asked to advise on the 'sport' but after several meetings it was decided to cast him in a prominent role, as Cutty Dawson. This film was based on 'The Big Man', by Willie McIlvanney [honorary member, 1990].

At Irvine Royal Academy Rab had been taught English by McIlvanney, who became his friend and inspiration, and who drew on Rab's stories of his father, a boxer, bare-knuckle fighter, and unlicensed boxer, in his portrayal of Danny Scoular in the book. Rab has said: "I'm so pleased he used that character because my dad was a miner and my grandfather was a miner. There were great stories to be told and there was nobody better than Willie to tell them."

Since then, he has generally typecast as the archetypal Scottish hard man, but has also done comedy in BBC's Screen One production, Screen One: Down Among the Big Boys (1993), where he played a character with the name of Bungalow!

Letter of acceptance, written from his home in Irvine on 12 November 2017, to President Allen Paterson

Dear Allen,

I refer to your letter dated 19th Oct. 2017 and invitation to become an Honorary Member of Irvine Burns Club.

I am overwhelmed and proud to accept your invitation to become an honorary member of such an established Club, known the world over.

Born and living in Irvine with a special connection to the Bard is truly an exceptional experience. Thank you once again.

Rab Affleck

Notes:

The 'special connection' refers to the Bard's thoughts of publishing his work being first encouraged in Irvine.

2018 Margaret Cook (....)

Margaret Cook has given, and continues to give, years of dedicated service in promoting the works of Robert Burns, as a teacher, reader, tutor and performer and as an active member of both Irvine Lasses Burns Club and the Irvine Burns Club, including regular service as a judge in the annual Verse Speaking Competition.

Letter of acceptance, written from her home in Irvine on 1 October 2017 to President Allen Paterson

Dear Allen,

I am deeply moved and greatly honoured by your offer of Honorary Membership of Irvine Burns Club, but in awe of the fact that I should be included in such a prestigious company of existing Honorary Members.

All of my life, I have been aware of our Poet Burns and am told I could recite some of his verses before starting school. I did my first Immortal Memory at the Irvine Royal Academy Literary and Debating Society in 1955 and just over twenty years later, needed no persuasion to join the newly formed Irvine Lasses Burns Club. Two years ago I was delighted to be able to join Irvine Burns Club.

In my career in Primary Education, I promoted the life and works of Burns whenever possible and still go into schools to teach the recitation of Burns poetry.

Involvement in the Burns Fraternity has open many doors to me, introduced me to friends from all over the globe and given me countless pleasurable and memorable experiences.

This honour you are giving to me tops the list and so "Wi gratefu' heart, I thank you brawlie" and accept.

Yours sincerely
Margaret S Cook

2018 Annie Lennox (1954-)

Annie Lennox was offered honorary membership for two reasons - her contributions to music and to global philanthropy.

Annie and fellow musician David A Stewart achieved major international success in the 1980s as the Eurythmics. With a total of eight Brit Awards, which includes being named Best British Female Artist a record six times, Lennox has been named the "Brits Champion of Champions". She embarked in a solo career in 1992, and other awards include four Grammys and, in 2004, both the Golden Globe and the Academy Award for Best Original Song for "Into the West", written for the soundtrack to the feature film 'The Lord of the Rings: The Return of the King'.

Annie Lennox is also a political and social activist, notable for raising money and awareness for HIV/ AIDS as it affects women and children in Africa. In 2011, she was appointed an Officer of the Order of the British Empire by the Queen for her "tireless charity campaigns and championing of humanitarian causes".

At the 2015 Ivor Novello Awards, Lennox was made a fellow of the British Academy of Songwriters, Composers and Authors, the first female to receive the honour. In 2017, Lennox was appointed Glasgow Caledonian University's first female Chancellor, taking over the role from Nobel Peace Prize laureate Muhammad Yunus.

Letter of acceptance, a typescript basis for a promised written letter

To all the members of Irvine Burns Club,

I am absolutely delighted, honoured and proud to become an Honorary Member of your distinguished Historical Society.

Growing up in Aberdeen in the 1950s and 60's, I was very aware that Robert Burns held a special place in the consciousness of the local community and the Scots nation as a whole - not only at home, but across all four corners of the globe.

For Aberdonians, Robert Burns has been a constant presence, especially since the inauguration in 1892 of a dark bronze statue cast in his likeness, which still stands enigmatically upon a tall granite pedestal in the city centre above Union Terrace Gardens. I used to pass this historic landmark every day on my journey to school, and habitually checked to see whether the daisy held in Burns's left hand had been dislodged by some inebriated youths during the previous night. Despite the fact that the statue was cast in bronze, the poor daisy was still a fragile thing.

Over the years it became a regular target for delinquent night revellers, which always tended to offend me, as it felt disrespectful towards such a legendary figure as the noble Bard.

Looking back now, I suspect Burns might have found it somewhat hilarious that the local town council has had to keep replacing the wee, modest, crimson tipped flow'r, its slender stem crushed among the stoure . . not by the plow, but by glaikit foo loons.

Thank you so much for such a special recognition. I'm deeply touched to receive it.

Yours truly

Annie Lennox

2018 Prof. Liam McIlvanney (c.1969-)

Liam McIlvanney, at the time of this nomination, holds the Stuart Chair of Scottish Studies at the University of Otago in Dunedin, NZ. His expertise is in "Scottish literature and culture since 1707, including Robert Burns, Scottish vernacular poetry, the Glasgow Novel, Ulster-Scots poetry, contemporary Scottish writing, Irish-Scottish literary connections, literature of the Scottish Diaspora, and Scottish crime fiction". Born in Kilmarnock, he is the son of novelist William McIlvanney [honorary member, 1990].

In 2002, Liam McIlvanney published 'Burns the Radical: Poetry and Politics in Late Eighteenth-century Scotland', a "major reinterpretation of the man who is coming to be recognized as the poet laureate of the radical Enlightenment", winning a Saltire Award. He co-edited (with Gerard Carruthers) 'The Cambridge Companion to Scottish Literature' (CUP, 2012).

Prof. McIlvanney's nomination as an Honorary Member recognises both his furthering of the knowledge of the works of Robert Burns and his work in the wider field of Scottish literature. He was presented with his Honorary Membership certificate at Irvine Burns Club in August 2018. The following month, we were delighted to hear that with his novel 'The Quaker' he won the 2018 McIlvanney Prize for Scottish crime book of the year, an award renamed in 2016 in memory of his father.

Letter of acceptance, written from the Department of English, Centre for Irish and Scottish Studies, University of Otago, NZ, on St Andrew's Day 2017, to President Allen Paterson:

Dear President Paterson,

Thank you for your letter. I am honoured and delighted to accept your kind invitation to become an Honorary Member of Irvine Burns Club. As an Ayrshireman and a lover of Burns, I am sensible of the great honour and privilege represented by this invitation, and I am deeply grateful to the Club. With fraternal greetings from the Dunedin Burns Club (founded 1861).

Yours aye,

Liam McIlvanney

2018 Prof. Sir Geoff Palmer (1940-)

Sir Godfrey Henry Oliver Palmer is a Professor Emeritus in the School of Life Sciences at Heriot-Watt University in Edinburgh, Scotland, and a human rights activist. He discovered the barley abrasion process while a researcher at the Brewing Research Foundation from 1968 to 1977. In 1998, he became the fourth person, and the first European, to be honoured with the American Society of Brewing Chemists Award of Distinction, considered the "Nobel prize of brewing". In 1989, he became the first black professor in Scotland. He retired in 2005. He was knighted in the 2014 New Year Honours for his services to human rights.

His nomination recognises three strands in his life and work - his contribution to Food and Beverage Science, his contribution to Robert Burns studies, and his work in fostering awareness of Scotland's role in the 17th/18th century slave trade.

Born in Jamaica, and brought up by aunts, he joined his mother in London in 1955 shortly before his 15th birthday. He graduated in botany and gained a PhD in grain science and technology. In 2018 Sir Geoff was appointed Jamaica's first Honorary Consul to Scotland. In 2020, he was appointed the Robert Burns World Federation's first Ambassador.

With a great interest in human rights, Sir Geoff Palmer has also authored a book on the history of slavery, 'The Enlightenment Abolished: Citizens of Britishness' (2007), and has spoken out extensively against the slave trade. He visited Irvine in 2016 as a guest of Irvine Burns Club, speaking on the topic of the Scottish influences in Jamaica.

The following quote from Prof. Palmer's writings will resonate with the content of his acceptance letter:

"What people need is a cup of kindness. Burns was speaking metaphorically in Auld Lang Syne. Whisky in Scottish culture is just like Russian vodka, or American bourbon, or French wine. When somebody asks you to take a drink with them that is an act of kindness... this drink of kindness does not have to be alcoholic. But how many migrants have been asked to join in such a drink? If somebody is not prepared to eat or drink with you, then you're not part of the system. I think you get that relationship of kindness in a society if somebody sees you as equal."

Letter of acceptance, written from his home at Penicuik on 28 September 2017, to President Allen Paterson:

Dear Mr Paterson,

I thank you for your letter of the 12th September 2017. My life and work have benefited from two words, made even greater, by the Bard. They are "Goodness" and "Kindness". Therefore, it is an unbelievable honour to be told in your letter that the Irvine Burns Club, with "Goodness" and "Kindness", has decided to invite me to become an Honorary Member. I accept this honour with humility and I am proud to stand at the end of the long line of years and special people who have served as Honorary Members of the Irvine Burns Club.

Yours sincerely,

Geoff Palmer

Professor Sir Geoff Palmer

2019 Prof. Ian Campbell (....)

The research interests of Ian Campbell, Professor Emeritus of Scottish and Victorian Literature at the University of Edinburgh (he retired in 2009), are mainly in the field of Scottish literature since the time of Robert Burns and include the life and works of John Galt and Thomas Carlyle. In 2015, Prof Campbell published an omnibus edition: "Four Galt Novels: Annals of the Parish, The Ayrshire Legatees, The Provost, The Entail" (Zeticula Ltd, Edinburgh). He is a senior editor of the Duke-Edinburgh edition of the Collected Letters of Thomas and Jane Welsh Carlyle (Duke UP, N. Carolina).

His interests also include the life and works of Allan Ramsay, Robert Fergusson and Robert Burns.

Letters of acceptance, written from the Department of English Literature, School of Literatures, Languages and Cultures, 50 George Square, University of Edinburgh, on 19/09/2018, to President Annie Small:

(handwritten:)

To the President and Members,
Irvine Burns Club,

It is with great pleasure that I accept the Honorary Membership you have offered.
I wish the Club every success.
Ian Campbell

(a typed supplementary:)

Dear Annie Small,

Allow me to thank you rather more fully for the great pleasure and honour of your letter. As you know it was my first visit to Irvine, and I learned a lot as well as appreciated the dedication and open friendship I met there. I hope to keep up my links with the Club, and I will gladly do anything I can to help further its interests.

With every good wish,
Ian Campbell

Notes:

The visit to Irvine mentioned here was that of 23 March 2018 when Prof. Campbell was guest speaker at the Directors' Dinner, addressing the company on the subject of John Galt, one of the first two Honorary Members, in 1828, of Irvine Burns Club.

2019 Prof. Kirsteen McCue (...)

Professor of Scottish Literature & Song Culture at the University of Glasgow, and Co-Director of the Centre for Robert Burns Studies, Kirsteen McCue is a co-editor of The Oxford Edition of the Works of Robert Burns, part of the "Editing Burns in the 21st Century" project - her "Volume IV: Songs for George Thomson" (involving reviewing and revising George Thomson's 'Scottish Musical Museum') is due to be published in late 2019).

One of the fruits of Kirsteen's research was the performance, in October 2016 in Glasgow University Chapel, and in November 2018 in London, of the first edition of 'The Jolly Beggars', to the music by Sir Henry Bishop (1818), by soloists supported by the Glasgow University Chapel Choir (enjoy it at https://youtu.be/uxW9x_K-uJM).

Prof. McCue has also co-edited "Women's Travel Writings in Scotland" (2017; travelogues of the early 19th c.; one writer, Anne Grant, was a friend of George Thomson).

Kirsteen is well-known to Burns enthusiasts in Irvine, most notably having delivered a riveting Immortal Memory at the Eglinton Burns Club's annual Supper.

Letter of acceptance, written from the Centre for Robert Burns Studies, University of Glasgow, on 1 October 2018, to President Annie Small.

Dear Annie (if I may),

Firstly, sincere apologies for the delay in responding to your letter of 14 September. It caught us just as term started here and it's all been a bit hectic.

I am honoured to be proposed for an Honorary Membership of Irvine Burns Club. I have many friends there and the Club is so important to our ongoing work here at CRBS in addition to being its own important national collection. Without you, our job here at the Centre working on Burns's life and works and producing a new 21st century edition would be much more difficult.

I send warm thanks to you as President and to your Club for thinking of me in this regard and I look forward to speaking to you further about it, and to visiting Irvine Burns Club many more times.

With kind regards,
Kirsteen

Notes:

The letter was typed and a handwritten letter followed.

2019 William A Nolan (....)

W A Nolan, 'Bill' to all, has served Irvine Burns Club as President (1989), Director, and more recently as Honorary Secretary. Throughout, he has given unstintingly of his time and talents, especially in his efforts to raise the profile of the Club.

Of the many projects under Bill's leadership, a few examples must suffice. He devised and led the "Dear Mister Burns" exhibition launched at the Homecoming Finale celebrations in 2009, an exhibition comprising a set of 24 display panels to celebrate our tradition, since 1828, of offering Honorary Membership. Bill led the application and implementation of the Irvine Harbourside Project, working with the local authority and other community groups, in 2013-17. He has also led the Club's support of other projects undertaken by North Ayrshire Council, such as "Forever 19" marking the anniversary of the Great War, the hosting of The Great Tapestry of Scotland display in the refurbished Townhouse, and lectures by Sir Tom Devine and Sir Geoff Palmer in that building. This community co-operation was a major

factor leading to the presentation of the Provost's Award jointly to Irvine Burns Club and Irvine Lasses Burns Club, in 2015.

Bill's efforts have also led to major improvements and repair to the exterior fabric of 'Wellwood', and to the successful return of the Templeton chair, a seat enjoyed by Burns, from Australia, going on display in January 2016. He has also been an active member of the team of Directors in charge of the programme of school visits. In the wider Burns world, Bill's efforts have resulted in meaningful links, involving several other Directors, with the Glasgow University Centre for Burns Studies, the Royal Conservatoire of Scotland, and the Royal Society of Edinburgh.

Bill Nolan's nomination for Honorary Membership also marks his Presidency (2018-19) of the Robert Burns World Federation - he is the third Past President of Irvine Burns Club to progress to that distinction. He is well respected as a speaker, particularly as a proposer of the Toast to the Immortal Memory of Robert Burns.

Bill's career was primarily in public relations, most notably with Tennant's Lager during the time of the Lager Lovelies, and latterly with Irvine Development Corporation. His many other interests include rugby - in which he served on the Executive Committee of the International Rugby Board.

Letter of acceptance, written from his home in Irvine on 7 September 2018, to President Annie Small:

Dear President Annie,

Despite having been educated in Irvine, I knew little when leaving school of Robert Burns and his links with the town and was only vaguely aware of Irvine Burns Club or of Wellwood, both of which have played major roles in my later life. Like others, I knew a few Burns' poems and songs but little of the man who had either written or collected them.

That changed when I went to Edinburgh University and was introduced to Scotland's rich store of Literature and Music. It was like scales falling from my eyes when I bought a book of Burns' poems for the princely sum of 7/6 - and that, now battered and well-used, has travelled the world with me as a guide, prompter and often as a saviour.

On returning to Irvine in the late 60s, I joined Irvine Burns Club where I learned from men like Sam Gaw, John Inglis and Alex Macmillan. With Burns, you are always learning, and I still am, about someone whose works and philosophy are as valid today as they were 230 years ago when he wrote:

"Gie me ae Spark o' Nature's fire,
That's a' the learning I desire."

Robert Burns has given me that spark and that learning for which I will be eternally grateful to him. I will always be grateful too to you for inviting me to become an Honorary Member of Irvine Burns Club which I happily accept.

Thank you for listing me in that Pantheon of "Gods, Giants and Heroes" and hope not to be much out of place among them.

Yours sincerely,
Bill Nolan