

Honorary members of 2020 – 2024

2020 Provost Ian Clarkson, Dr Joseph J Morrow, Sir Boyd Tunnock

2023: Prof. Murray Pittock, Rose Reilly, Kirsty Wark, Ian J Dickson

2024: Douglas Gibson, Dr Katherine Campbell

2020 Provost Ian Clarkson (1947-2023)

Provost Ian Clarkson has given long service and commitment to the community of Irvine via his years as a councillor, the Irvine Carters Society, the Marymass Festival Committee, and more recently as Provost of North Ayrshire Council, and including a warm relationship with Irvine Burns Club.

With many years of service as a councillor (elected to North Ayrshire Council in April 1995), his appeal transcends party lines, and he was elected Provost in May 2017.

One of Ian's earliest connections with Irvine Burns Club was his promotion, in the 1990s, of an Irvine Town Trail leaving from 'Wellwood' - an initiative which led to the Town Trail information hosted on our website (at Irvine Walking Tour). Over the years since then, he has encouraged the close cooperation between the Irvine Burns Museum and North Ayrshire Council, in the interests of the cultural life of Irvine and the legacy of the Bard's short but significant stay in the Burgh.

Provost Ian was the first local Provost to have been appointed an Honorary Member since Provost Robert M Hogg in 1926.

Letter of acceptance, written on 19 December 2019, on paper headed: 'From The Provost of North Ayrshire Council'.

Dear Mr Chalmers (Archie),

I am overjoyed to receive the Invitation to become an Honorary Member of Irvine Burns Club.

While being completely unexpected, it is an honour, especially from an organisation in my "ain toon" which I have so great a regard for, and which is so close and special to my heart.

My regard for Irvine Burns Club, and its members, is well known, and I have always looked on the Club as working at the highest level possible, not only as a local historic treasure, but one which is renowned world wide.

There is no doubt Irvine Burns Club is so special, and I am particularly pleased in the way you work with the young people in our schools, to promote and reach the works of our National Bard.

For all these reasons, and more, I am humbled by your generous offer, which I am most certainly delighted to accept.

With greatest regards,

Ian

2020 Dr Joseph J Morrow (1930-)

Dr Joseph ('Joe') J Morrow, Lord Lyon King of Arms, is known for being a principal speaker at Burns events over many years. When invited to speak at the 2019 Directors Dinner of Irvine Burns Club, he took the opportunity to task his staff with researching and creating the Coat of Arms which Robert Burns would have liked, though which would not have gained official approval; the result, created by Mark Dennis, is displayed at 'Wellwood'.

Dr Morrow has for many years been actively involved in the community and civic life in Scotland, involved with numerous charities, community activities and civic duties, and as a member of the Faculty of Advocates, previous to which he was a solicitor both in private practice and in the voluntary sector. His many positions include, or have included, President of the Additional Support Needs Tribunals for Scotland, President of the Mental Health Tribunal for Scotland, a member of the Visiting Committees of Her Majesty's Prison Perth and Her Majesty's Prison Friarton, a member of the Licensing Committee and Licensing Board of Dundee City Council, Chancellor of the Diocese of Moray, Ross and Caithness and former Legal Assessor to the General Synod of the Scottish Episcopal Church, Vice Lord Lieutenant of the City of Dundee

Dr Morrow was appointed Lord Lyon King of Arms in 2014, Queen's Counsel in 2015 and given an honorary Doctor of Laws by Edinburgh Napier University in 2016. He is a Knight of the Order of St John of Jerusalem, becoming the Scottish Priory's Chancellor in 2018, and he was made Commander of the British Empire in the same year. He is also an active Scottish Freemason and is at present First Grand Principal of the Supreme Grand Royal Arch Chapter of Scotland. Finally, Dr Morrow is also a Trustee of a number of charitable Trusts in Dundee, which distribute considerable sums of money to the good causes within the City.

Letter of acceptance, written on 10 November 2019 at his home in Tealing, Angus

Dear Archie,

I hope that my letter finds you well. Thank you for your kind letter containing an invitation to become an honorary member of Irvine Burns Club.

I feel deeply honoured by the invitation and undeserving. I am however as you imagine delighted.

I wholeheartedly accept the invitation and look forward to being with you on the 24th January 2020.

Yours sincerely,
Joe Morrow
Lyon

Notes:

His acceptance letter is on headed paper bearing his crest, name and titles 'Dr Joseph J Morrow, CBE, QC, LLD, The Rt Hon Lord Lyon'.

Dr Morrow was the special guest of the Club directors in March 2019.

Dr Morrow refers to attending the 2020 Annual Celebration.

2020 Sir Boyd Tunnock (1933-)

Sir Boyd Tunnock has, for many years, promoted Burns' works, and Tunnock's have encouraged young (primary age) budding poets to submit a rhyme on the back of a Caramel Wafer wrapper, the winner getting the ultimate golden ticket - a VIP tour of the Tunnock's factory. (Poet Laureate Ted Hughes had penned three such in 1987!) Sir Boyd is also known for many acts of charitable generosity within local communities, the Salvation Army, the National Lifeboats, and Scotland in general.

Boyd Tunnock joined the family bakers business in 1949 and worked with his father and brother Tom developing both the shop and catering side. The early 50's saw the introduction of Caramel Wafers, Caramel Logs, Teacakes and Snowballs. During National Service (1954-56), he served in the army catering corps and managed to become Cooks Sergeant after his two years - quote "finished cooking for 600 soldiers". Back in the business Boyd became very interested in the technical and engineering side of things and has done all jobs within the factory from mixing raw materials, repairing machines and packing biscuits where necessary. The business has gone from strength to strength and now has an international reputation for quality and value for money.

Boyd has been an elder of the church for over 50 years and gives much of his time and resource to charitable work. As a keen sailor one of his favourite charities is the RNLI and he was a key member of the fundraising committee that raised money for a new lifeboat at Troon. His current yacht is called LEMERAC - Caramel backwards.

In June 2019 Boyd received his biggest accolade when he was awarded a knighthood in the Queen's Birthday Honours for services to business and charity.

Letter of acceptance, written on 16 December 2019, from his home in Glasgow, to President Archie Chalmers

Dear Archie,

Thank the members of Irvine Burns Club for inviting me [to] be an Honorary Member of the Club.

My birthday is 25th January 1933 so I share the bard's special day.

It is a great honour to be given this accolade.

Kindest regards,

Sir Boyd Tunnock

2023 Prof. Murray Pittock (1962-)

Murray G. H. Pittock MAE FRSE is a Scottish historian, the Bradley Professor of Literature at the University of Glasgow and Pro Vice Principal (Special Projects) at the University, where he has served in senior roles including Dean and Vice Principal since 2008. In 2020, he produced a major report on the impact of Robert Burns on the Scottish Economy for the Scottish Government; a Parliamentary debate was held at Holyrood on the recommendations, which have been cited in policy debate many times since.

Previously he was Professor of Scottish and Romantic Literature and Deputy Head of Arts at the University of Manchester, becoming the first ever professor of Scottish Literature at an English university. He has also held visiting appointments at universities worldwide.

Murray Pittock is a well-known figure in Burns circles generally and, more locally, in Irvine Burns Club. He is regularly quoted in the media, both in Scotland and around the world, and has been described as “probably Scotland's leading cultural commentator”.

Letter of acceptance, written from his home in Stirling on 8 September 2022 to Club President Margaret Greenlees:

Dear Miss Greenlees,

Thank you very much for your letter of 2 September inviting me to take up Honorary Membership of the Irvine Burns Club. I should be delighted to accept your kind invitation, and would be happy to join the Club for any presentation associated with that at the Annual Celebration of the poet's memory on 28 January 2023.

Kind regards,
Murray Pittock

2023 Rose Reilly (1955-)

Rose Reilly represented both Scotland and Italy in the field of women's football and paved the way for women's football to be accepted by society at large.

Rose was part of the Stewarton side which lifted the inaugural Scottish Cup in 1971 and reached the first WFA Cup Final that year. To play football professionally, she moved to French club Reims in 1974. Six months later, she was bought by ACF Milan, twice winning the Serie A Golden Boot. Her opinions had led to being banned *sine die* by the Scottish Women's FA. In 1984, she was voted best player in the Italian team which won the Mundialito, an unofficial precursor to the Women's World Cup.

In Britain, Rose Reilly was inducted into the Scottish Sports Hall of Fame in 2007 and honoured in 2020 with an MBE for services to women's football. She has seen her life story made into a stage play.

In 2023, President Margaret Greenlees proposed her as an Honorary Member, saying: “Rose Reilly is an inspiration to girls who want to get into football and encourages them to do so.”

Letter of acceptance:

Dear Irvine Burns Club,

It's an honour for me to accept the Honorary Membership, I'm grateful to have been chosen and would make myself available for events.

Yours sincerely,
Rose Reilly

2023 Kirsty Wark (1955-)

Kirsty Wark, born in Dumfries, was educated in Ayrshire, and has said “Acting was my dream”. Indeed, at age 16, in 1971, she appeared on stage in Irvine at the Harbour Arts Centre in Harbour Theatre’s production of ‘The Crucible’, playing the part of Abigail Williams.

After studying History, specifically Scottish Studies, at the University of Edinburgh, she joined the BBC in 1976. A journalist, a presenter and a producer with the BBC both on radio and television, she has also written two novels.

Her career includes being a reporter on the Lockerbie Disaster, a finalist in Celebrity Masterchef, and a regular presenter on Newsnight, and being one of the main presenters of the BBC's election results coverage in 2021.

Kirsty regards her children, a daughter and son, as her greatest achievement and says: “I have been known to be an interrupter. There’s a time constraint during interviews; you’re trying to get a conversation somewhere against the clock. After being on air, it can take some time to adjust. When needed, my kids just tell me to shut up.”

Letter of acceptance, written from her home in Glasgow on 4.10.22 to Club President Margaret Greenlees:

Dear Margaret,

Thank you so much for your most unexpected invitation and I can only apologise for the delay in my reply. My only excuse is that it has been an exceptionally busy time both professionally and personally.

I would be honoured to accept Honorary Membership of Irvine Burns Club. Dad talked very fondly of being invited, and I, like dad, love Burns’ work,

With best wishes,

Kirsty

2023 Ian J Dickson (1947-)

Ian Dickson arrived in Ayrshire, from East Lothian, for his first teaching post in 1969, finding a wife, Louise, a promoted post in St Michael’s Academy, and the pleasure of involvement in Irvine’s organisations, namely the Harbour Arts Centre (Chairman twice), the Speakers’ Club (President once), Irvine Burns Club (President 1996), Irvine Seagate Rotary Club (President twice), North Ayrshire C.A.B. (Treasurer) and the Incorporated Trades (a foot-soldier). His formal teaching roles in Classics and Computing were accompanied by extra-curricular pleasures of taking many school trips to places of Roman interest round Britain and by many years of leading and directing the school Drama Club. In 2022 he moved back to his family home in Dunbar, yet continues to contribute to Irvine Burns Club activities.

He mentions his activities in support of Irvine Burns Club in his letter of acceptance, the most recent and most important probably being bringing the 1999 website up to modern standards, gaining the Club significant extra kudos.

Letter of acceptance, written from his home in Dunbar on 10 February, 2023

Dear Margaret,

I am humbled and honoured by your offer of Honorary Membership of Irvine Burns Club, a highly respected body celebrating the poet and particularly his time in Irvine, where, for almost 50 years, I lived within a short walk of places he frequented in 1781.

The humbling arises from being associated with those Honorary Members celebrated for outstanding service to the Club – in my case, including the audio-visual refurbishment, the masterclasses, contributions to Dear Mister Burns and Harbour Heritage projects, research into Club history and the recent website overhaul. I have enjoyed working with the dedicated team of directors who, with a common aim, use their skills to maintain and develop the Club.

The honour arises both from your recognition of my service and from my name now rubbing shoulders with eminent Honorary Members, whom I continue to research and document. I am no Garibaldi or Dickens, but the association is pleasing!

I thank you and my fellow-directors for nominating me, and I accept with humble sincerity the honour which causes me to look back over 27 years with the satisfaction that tasks I undertook with no thought of reward are appreciated as contributing to the health and long life of Irvine Burns Club.

Yours sincerely,
Ian J Dickson

Notes:

The reason for the later than usual date of the letter is that his nomination was kept secret by fellow-directors until the gathering at 'Wellwood' on Burns weekend Sunday.

2024 Douglas Maitland Gibson (1943-)

Born in Kilmarnock, Douglas Maitland Gibson moved to Canada in 1967, becoming editorial director of Macmillan of Canada in 1974 and publisher of the company in 1979. In 1986, he moved to McClelland and Stewart and managed his own imprint Douglas Gibson Books. Many authors followed him to these publishers.

In 2022, he wrote 'Great Scots: Celebrating Canadian Writers with Links to Scotland' and donated the rights and royalties of his new book to the Scottish Studies Foundation to be used as a fund-raiser for the Scottish Studies program at the University of Guelph. John Galt, born in Irvine, and Robert Service, born in Kilwinning, are naturally two of his 35 Great Scots.

Douglas Gibson has been described as 'the legendary ex-publisher who put together this celebration of Scottish Canadian writers'.

Letter of acceptance, written from McClelland & Stewart Ltd, 'The Canadian Publishers', on December 6, 2023, to President Angus Middleton:

Dear Angus,

I am thrilled to accept the invitation to become an Honorary Member of the Irvine Burns Club.

As a boy who grew up in Dunlop – where “the road to Irvine” was treated with great respect, I know how important your town and its historic club is to the world of literary scholarship.

I am deeply sorry that health challenges and trans-Atlantic distances prevent me from being present to accept this hugely important award in person.

I trust, however, that my deep appreciation of this award came through every word of this letter of acceptance.

Yours sincerely,

Douglas Maitland Gibson

P.S. I am pleased to enclose a copy of my most recent book: *Great Scots: Celebrating Canadian writers with Links to Scotland*.

2024 Dr Katherine Campbell (....)

Katherine Campbell is an Honorary Research Fellow at the Elphinstone Institute, University of Aberdeen. A former Senior Lecturer at Celtic and Scottish Studies, University of Edinburgh, she now works freelance, and has focussed on the songs of Robert Burns for the past few years, culminating in the book, co-authored with Dr Emily Lyle, *Robert Burns and the Discovery and Re-Creation of Scottish Song* (Glasgow: Musica Scotica, 2020) and the solo CD, *Robert Burns: Tune Unknown* (2019). For the CD, Katherine took ten Burns poems which have been identified as being originally written as songs, but for which the melody has been lost, and composed new melodies with a piano accompaniment – the reversal of Burns’ usual; practice of writing words to extant melodies!

Katherine studied cello and piano at the RSAMD Glasgow, graduating BA Hons (Musical Studies), before undertaking a PhD in Ethnomusicology at the School of Scottish Studies, University of Edinburgh (awarded 1999). She also holds a PGCE in Music from the University of Edinburgh and an MSc in Organic Farming from the Scottish Agricultural College.

Originally from Fochabers in Morayshire, Katherine is a keen traditional singer. She worked with Dr Emily Lyle at the University of Edinburgh as a joint editor on volume 8 of *The Greig-Duncan Folk Song Collection*, and continued her research on a one-volume edition, *Songs from North-East Scotland: A Selection for Performers from “The Greig-Duncan Folk Song Collection”* (Edinburgh: John Donald, 2009). She then moved on to work on the life and songs of Alexander Robb (1863-1940).

Letter of acceptance, written from Elphinstone Institute, MacRobert Building, 581 King Street, University of Aberdeen, on 23 January 2024, to President Angus Middleton:

Dear Mr Middleton,

Thank you very much for your kind letter, inviting me to become an Honorary Member of the Irvine Burns Club.

This is a marvellous honour to receive, and I feel truly blessed to have been chosen.

I am delighted to accept this wonderful accolade, and I know that this honour will inspire me to continue with my work on Robert Burns, explaining his songs through my own writing, singing and creative practice.

The poem that originally inspired me to begin work on the project “Robert Burns: Tune Unknown” was “The Night was Still”, which ends with a most memorable compliment to the people of Irvine: “And aye the owreword o’ the spring / was Irvine’s bairns are bonnie a’.”

I send good wishes to all at the Irvine Burns Club for 2024, and pass on my warmest appreciation to its members for this kind honour.

I look forward to seeing you all in person in the near future.

Yours sincerely,

Katherine Campbell