



Happy Birthday Robert Burns!

By Irené Waldman Costello, 2nd VP

January 25th marks the birthday of Robert Burns, and “Burns Suppers” as they are called in Scotland, will be happening all over the world around this time. The traditional festivities of Burns Night (Burns Nicht) focus on the celebration of his life and the poetry that has traveled all over the world. Your probably know Auld Lang’s Sign that is usually sung on Hogmanay as one of his most worldly known songs!

The first Burns supper was held in memoriam at his home by Burns’s friends, on 21 July 1801, the fifth anniversary of his death and it has been a regular occurrence ever since. The first still extant **Burns Club was founded in Greenock in 1801** by Ayreshire merchants, some of whom had known Burns. They held the first Burns supper on what they thought was his birthday, 29 January 1802, but in 1803, they discovered that his parish records recorded his date of birth as 25 January 1759. Since then, suppers have been held on or about 25 January. The Saint Andrew’s Society of San Francisco will be holding ours on February 1st at the Marines Memorial Hotel.



Greenock Burns Club Menu 1894

Burns suppers may be formal or informal. Both typically include haggis (a traditional Scottish dish celebrated by Burns in Address to a Haggis), Scottish whisky and the recitation of Burns’s poetry. We shall be including all three in our Burns Supper!

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Scotland in Music

By Edward Scott Pearlman

If you walk through the old market cross of Dunkeld toward the cathedral, you might notice a round blue plaque on the last house on the right, which says: “The Old Rectory...Dunkeld’s oldest surviving house. Fiddler Niel Gow and poet Robbie Burns entertained here 1787.”



Last year, in January, some 232 years after Burns and Gow met in Dunkeld, their violins met and made music together at the **Gaiety Theatre in Ayr**.

Ayrshire fiddler **Alistair McCulloch**, dressed as Robert Burns, greeted Perthshire fiddler **Pete Clark**, who personified Niel Gow, in a concert called The Twa Fiddles. They went on to perform again in September at the Scottish Parliament building, sponsored by Deputy First Minister John Swinney, whose district includes the homes of Niel Gow and Pete Clark. The concert was attended by several members of Parliament and about 60 invited academics, musicians, members of the National Trust for Scotland and friends.

The pairing of these historic violins was the brainchild of retired schoolteacher Paul Creighton of Ayr. “I knew Pete was one of the few fiddlers allowed to play Niel Gow’s fiddle,” said Paul, “and Alistair was one of the few to play Burns’s fiddle. It occurred to me that we might have an opportunity to do something quite special.” Bringing together the two historic violins is certainly something special, and Alistair, Pete and Paul are

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Hogmanay 2019 Celebration hosted at the Firehouse.



David Campbell, Kristian Mullins, Laurien Fiddes.

From The Bard — Jek Cunningham



The Desecration of Scotland's National Dish

Imagine, if you can, at a Burns Night the toastmaster rises to intone "Ladies and gentlemen I can assure you no animals were harmed in the making of this dish."

I must look wi scornful view on sic a dinner, because they've finally done it; taken a hearty meal and turned it into a ghastly concoction of nuts, beans and oatmeal rolled in cabbage leaves and baked. Burns commented on "Fricassé wad mak her spew", but I doubt he could have imagined this thing they call the vegetarian haggis. He said "Auld Scotland wants nae stinking ware that jaups in lug-gies." Apparently the newer Scotland has come to that "Poor devil see him ower his trash, as feckless as a withered rash. His spindle shanks a guid whiplash. His nieve a nit; thro bloody flood or field to dash, O how unfit!"

Call it what you like, you cannot call it Haggis.



Robert Burns

Holy Willies Prayer is one of my favorite Burns poems and was written in 1785. It was first printed anonymously in an eight-page pamphlet in 1789 and is considered the greatest of all Burns' satirical poems and a mocking attack on religious hypocrisy.

*O Thou that in the Heavens does dwell!
Wha, as it pleases best thyself,
Sends ane to Heaven and ten to Hell,
A' for Thy glory!
And no for ony gude or ill
They've done before Thee.—*

*I bless and praise Thy matchless might,
When thousands Thou has left in night,
That I here before Thy sight,
For gifts and grace,
A burning and a shining light
To a' this place.—*

*What was I, or my generation,
That I should get such exaltation?
I, wha deserv'd most just damnation,
For broken laws
Sax thousand years ere my creation,
Thro' Adam's cause!*

*When from my mother's womb I fell,
Thou might hae plunged me deep in hell,
To gnash my gooms, and weep, and wail,
In burning lakes,
Where damned devils roar and yell
Chain'd to their stakes.—*

*Yet I am here, a chosen sample,
To shew Thy grace is great and ample:
I'm here, a pillar o' Thy temple
Strong as a rock,
A guide, a ruler and example
To a' Thy flock.—*

*[O Lord thou kens what zeal I bear,
When drinkers drink, and swearers
swear,
And singin' there, and dancin' here,
Wi' great an' sma';
For I am keepet by the fear,
Free frae them a'.—]*

*But yet—O Lord—confess I must—
At times I'm fash'd wi' fleshly lust;
And sometimes too, in wardly trust
Vile Self gets in;
But Thou remembers we are dust,
Defil'd wi' sin.—*

*O Lord—yestreen—thou kens—wi'
Meg—
Thy pardon I sincerely beg!
O may 't ne'er be a living plague,
To my dishonor!
And I'll ne'er lift a lawless leg
Again upon her.—*

*Besides, I farther maun avow,
Wi' Leezie's lass, three times—I trow—
But L—d, that friday I was fou
When I cam near her;
Or else, Thou kens, thy servant true
Wad never steer her.—*

*Maybe Thou lets this fleshy thorn
Buffet Thy servant e'en and morn,
Lest he o'er proud and high should turn,
That he's sae gifted;
If sae, thy hand maun e'en be borne
Untill Thou lift it.—*

*Lord bless Thy Chosen in this place,
For here Thou has a chosen race:
But God, confound their stubborn face,
And blast their name,
Wha bring thy rulers to disgrace
And open shame.—*

*Lord mind Gaun Hamilton's deserts!
He drinks, and swears, and plays at
cartes,
Yet has sae mony taking arts
Wi' Great and Sma',
Frae God's ain priest the people's hearts
He steals awa.—*

*And when we chasten'd him therefore,
Thou kens how he bred sic a splore,
And set the warld in a roar
O' laughin at us:
Curse Thou his basket and his store,
Kail and potatoes.—*

*Lord hear my earnest cry and prayer
Against that Presbytry of Ayr!
Thy strong right hand, Lord, mak it bare
Upon their heads!
Lord visit them, and dinna spare,
For their misdeeds!*

*O Lord my God, that glib-tongu'd Aiken!
My very heart and flesh are quaking
To think how I sat, sweating and shaking,
An' pish'd wi' dread,
While Auld wi' hingin lip gaed sneaking
And hid his head!*

*Lord, in thy day o' vengeance try him!
Lord visit him that did employ him!
And pass not in thy mercy by them,
Nor hear their prayer;
But for thy people's sake destroy them,
An' dinna spare!*

*But Lord, remember me and mine
Wi' mercies temporal and divine!
That I for grace and gear may shine,
Excell'd by nane!
And a' the glory shall be thine!
Amen! Amen!*

Scotland in Music

hoping to raise funds to present more Twa Fiddles concerts, as well as produce a video and an educational package for schools, so that the unique connection of Niel Gow and Robert Burns can be more widely appreciated.

The original meeting between Burns and Gow took place in late summer, 1787. Perhaps Burns was seeking more melodies for his project, the Scots Musical Museum. The first volume of this six-volume series had just been published by James Johnson and would ultimately total 600 traditional and contemporary Scottish songs, all collected by Robert Burns, many with lyrics written by Burns himself. To our knowledge, Burns did not write any of the melodies, but he had an impeccable ear and a passion for preserving good melodies and lyrics representative of the Scottish tradition. Though known as a great poet, he was perhaps greatest as a songwriter. He wrote more than 320 songs, nearly two-thirds of his artistic output.

Robert Burns was moved by Niel Gow's fiddling and his compositions, using several for songs such as "My Love's Like a Red, Red Rose" and "Braving Angry Winter's Storms."

Gow was well known in his day for his powerful fiddling, and his son Nathaniel published an influential series of tune books that are central to the repertoire of Scottish musicians even today. The Duke of Atholl, who owned land from Blair Castle through Dunkeld and beyond, paid Niel Gow an annual retainer of £5 for his musical services—more than he paid his head gardener!

At a time when classical composers like Mozart were patronized by aristocracy in mainland Europe, Gow and other Scottish fiddlers were patronized by Scottish aristocrats who cared deeply about their national music. A statue paying tribute to Niel Gow will be unveiled in Dunkeld in March as part of Pete Clark's annual Niel Gow Festival.

Burns's violin was not, strictly speaking, owned by Robert Burns, but appears to have been handed down in his family and might actually have been played by the poet himself. There is speculation that Burns learned a bit of fiddling, but no clear proof. He was very musical, as is amply demonstrated by his

ability to collect and preserve so many great melodies of Scotland. He could read and write music, and he said himself that when he wrote a song, he first selected the melody and sang it as he wrote the words. His songs are certainly a masterful blend of music and lyrics.

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FIDDLE ORCHESTRA

GAIETY THEATRE, AYR
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TICKETS: BOX OFFICE 01292 288235

The violin associated with Burns was used by his dancing teacher, William Gregg. At age 17, Burns defied his father and went off to learn country dancing at the Bachelor's Club at Tarbolton Lodge, a small building that can still be seen not far from Ayr. He claimed he wanted to "give his manners a brush," despite (and probably in open rebellion against) his father's view that dancing was sinful. Like many dancing masters, William Gregg taught while playing the fiddle.

Made around 1750, the Gregg violin is beautifully and elaborately decorated on all sides. The violin fell into disrepair until 1995, when Wallace Galbraith, Alistair McCulloch's violin teacher and founder of the Ayrshire Fiddle Orchestra, learned that it was still in existence at a farm near Mauchline. The violin is now proudly on display in the Burns Birthplace Museum in Ayr. These days it is Alistair McCulloch who looks after the violin and keeps it in use

several times a year, including Burns Night celebrations at the cottage where Burns was born.

Alistair learned classical violin formally, but his father played fiddle and pipes and introduced him to the local strathspey and reel society. For many years, Alistair played with the Scottish Fiddle Orchestra, led the Ayrshire Fiddle Orchestra for nine years and now teaches violin and Scottish fiddle both privately and as a faculty member of the Royal Conservatoire in Glasgow. His trio has toured and recorded, featuring whistle player Marc Duff, formerly of Capercaillie, and Aaron Jones of Old Blind Dogs on bouzouki, guitar and vocals. McCulloch's latest project is the annual Land O' Burns Fiddle Weekend, which was launched this past fall. Four great Scottish fiddlers—Gordon Gunn, Kevin Henderson, Rua Macmillan and Alistair himself—provided instruction and performances at the inaugural event.

The Burns Museum entrusts Alistair McCulloch with the care

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Scotland in Music

of the Gregg violin and allows him to take it out of the museum for performances such as The Twa Fiddles concerts. In fact, in January 2020, McCulloch will be taking the violin over to the United States for a Robert Burns tour sponsored by the National Trust for Scotland in Los Angeles, Chicago, Boston and Washington, DC.

Blair Castle displays Niel Gow's violin in the ballroom. Glued inside is a slip of paper inscribed "Niel Gow, 1787." Curiously, that is not only the year that Burns and Gow met, but also the year Henry Raeburn painted the famous portrait



Niel Gow's Portrait, Fiddle and Chair in the Ballroom at Blair Castle

of Gow now hanging above the violin's display case. The only problem for The Twa Fiddles project is that Blair Castle will not permit the Gow violin to leave the premises.

Fortunately, Pete Clark found a way around this problem—by finding another violin belonging to Gow! One day, after discussing Niel Gow enthusiastically on television, Clark received a call from a retired clergyman in the Borders who asked Pete to come see an interesting violin. Accompanying the instrument was handwritten paperwork tracing it to a Peter Murray of Perthshire, who is known to have received directly from Niel Gow two violins and a cello. The label inside the violin is marked "Caspar de Salo" and links this violin with stories that Niel Gow played a violin made by the eminent 16th-century Italian violin-maker Gasparo Da Salo. The misspelling of the name inside the violin, however, has led experts to believe it was probably a German copy of a da Salo violin. And being a violin owned by Niel Gow, it allows Alistair McCulloch and Pete Clark to continue bringing together the music and the fiddles of Burns and Gow.

Soon, before you pass through the Dunkeld market cross and take note of the Old Rectory where Robert Burns and Niel Gow met in 1787, you might notice someone watching you - the new lifesize statue of Niel Gow standing by the road, holding his fiddle and wondering which tune you'd like him to play.

To learn more, visit the Web sites of [Alistair McCulloch \(www.alistairmcculloch.com\)](http://www.alistairmcculloch.com) and [Pete Clark \(www.pete-clark.com\)](http://www.pete-clark.com).

About the writer of this article: **Fiddler Edward Scott Pearlman** has performed, taught and written about Scottish music since 1980. He directed the Boston Scottish Fiddle Club for 18 years, organized and performed in many Scottish and Cape Breton events, and served as a distributor of Celtic recordings. He tours with his family, particularly his son, pianist **Neil Pearlman**, and his wife, **Highland dancer Laura Scott**.

This article was first published in the Winter 2019 edition of Scottish Life Magazine.

THE ST. ANDREW'S SOCIETY OF SAN FRANCISCO
BURNS SUPPER
SATURDAY, FEBRUARY 1, 2020



Join the Saint Andrew's Society of San Francisco for an incredible night, to rejoice and celebrate the life and works of Scotland's national Bard – Robert Burns!



February 1st, 2020 - 6:00 PM to 11:00 PM
at the
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312 Maple Avenue
S. San Francisco, CA 94080
P: 415-885-6644

info@caledonian.org
caledonian.org



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americeltic@gmail.com
americeltic.net



The Erskine Home

Bishopton
Renfrewshire
PA7 5PU
Scotland
P: +44 (0)141 814 4569

www.erskine.org.uk



John Muir Association

P.O. Box 2433
Martinez, CA 94553
P: 925-229-3857

johnmuirassociation.org



The Peninsula Scottish Fiddlers

shauna0829@hotmail.com
thefiddlers.com



Grace Cathedral

1100 California St.
San Francisco, CA 94108
P: 415-749-6300

gracecathedral.org



British-American Business Council of Northern California

369 Pine Street, Suite 103
San Francisco, CA 94104

info@babcsf.org
babcsf.org



The University of Edinburgh

Old College
South Bridge
Edinburgh
EH8 9YL
Scotland
P: +44 (0)131 650 1000

www.ed.ac.uk



University of Glasgow

Glasgow
G12 8QQ
Scotland
P: +44 (0)141 330 2000

www.gla.ac.uk



Robert Louis Stevenson Museum

1490 Library Lane
P.O. Box 23
St. Helena, CA 94574
P: 707-963-3757

info@stevensonmuseum.org
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BURNS SUPPER



JANUARY 25, 2020

THE PBFSCO 26TH ANNUAL TRIBUTE TO ROBERT BURNS, THE BARD OF SCOTLAND

FEATURING MEN OF WORTH

5:30pm No Host Bar/Registration ❖ 7:00pm Dinner
Pleasanton Marriott ❖ 11950 Dublin Canyon Road

Dinner Ticket \$85

Advanced Reservations Required by January 18, 2020

Unfortunately, there are no refunds

Get your paid registration in by December 31, 2019 and be entered into a drawing to win a bottle of Single Malt Scotch

Please fill out the form on the next page including each attendee in your party and their meal choice

For your convenience, you can also register and pay through our website www.PBFSCO.org OR <http://burns2020.brownpapertickets.com>



For information please visit www.PBFSCO.org
Susan Spiegel 650.799.9001 or susan@celtic-lass.com

Please do not drink and drive
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Rate available until January 18, 2020
Click here to make your [hotel reservations](#) online OR
call 925.847.6000 and ask for the Burns Supper block

www.PBFSCO.ORG

Meeting & Events Schedule

Date	Event / Topic	Location / Notes
2020		
Sat. Feb. 1	Annual Robert Burns Supper	Marines Memorial Club, SF
Mon. Feb. 17	Member Meeting (speaker/topic TBD).....	1088 Green St., SF
Mon. Mar. 16	Member Meeting (speaker/topic TBD).....	1088 Green St., SF
Sat. April 4	Tartan Day Scottish Faire at Ardenwood	Fremont, CA
Mon. April 20	Member Meeting (speaker/topic TBD).....	1088 Green St., SF
Sat. April 25	John Muir Day / Earth Day celebration.....	NPS - Martinez, CA
Mon. May 18	Member Meeting (speaker/topic TBD).....	1088 Green St., SF
Mon. June 15	Member Meeting (speaker/topic TBD).....	1088 Green St., SF
Mon. July 20	No Meeting (Summer Recess)	
Sat. July 18	Summer Ceilidh at Encinal Yacht Club	Alameda, CA
Mon. Aug. 17	No Meeting (Summer Recess)	
Sept. 5-6	Caledonian Club's 155th Highland Games & Gathering	Pleasanton, CA
Mon. Sept. 19	Member Meeting (speaker/topic TBD).....	1088 Green St., SF
Mon. Oct. 19	Member Meeting (Candlelight Dinner).....	1088 Green St., SF
Sun. Nov. 8	Remembrance Day Service.....	Grace Cathedral, SF
Mon. Nov. 16	Member Meeting (speaker/topic TBD).....	1088 Green St., SF
Sat. Dec. 5	157th Annual St. Andrew's Banquet & Ball	Marines Memorial Club, SF
Mon. Dec. 21	No Meeting due to December 31st. Hogmanay Celebration	
Thur. Dec. 31	Hogmanay Celebration	1088 Green St., SF
2021		
Mon. Jan. 18	Member Meeting (speaker/topic TBD)	1088 Green St., SF

About Us

The Saint Andrew's Society of San Francisco

1088 Green Street
San Francisco, CA
94133-3604
415-885-6644

www.saintandrewsociety.org

Gary Ketchen,
Newsletter Editor

Membership Meetings

Meetings are held the 3rd Monday of the month, at 7:30 P.M. Light supper served before the meeting. (Free valet parking is provided for members' meetings. MUNI: one block east of Hyde St. cable car).

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1088 Green Street
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