

Robert Burns Poetry Competition 2012

Un-published Poets

TO A TRAVELLING LOVE

I sought for thee frae green to green;
I wander'd islands far.
Searching thus made my meek heart fain.
These pursuits I ponder'd, were meagre par?

O, I fear thee hae become obsess'd,
Considering our love much into the future.
My heart mere lust possess'd;
Alas I won't be taking our love any further.

When I shar'd my trouble wi' thee;
Your tears left no stain on my emotion.
I will continue on the road o' free;
A lone, unburden'd person!

Emer Lyons

A Burning Love

When the mist rolls in from the ocean,
And blankets the Dunedin hills.
It's just like being in Scotland,
Can ye hear the bagpipes trills?

In the misty twi-light a Scotsman sits,
He's looking to his faraway land,
He's going to write to his lassie,
Can ye see the quill in his hand?

He looks lonely and unhappy,
He and his love are so far apart,
For Dunedin isn't Edinburgh,
Can ye feel the ache in his heart?

He wants to return to the purple heather,
He's tired of waving green ferns.
But if ye go away to Scotland,
Can ye no come back, Robbie Burns?

Sylvia Lobb

The Heaven-born Ploughman

Remembered in life for his gallavanting,
his getting-with- child of too many women,
he's remembered in death as a saint of the
people, this impoverished farmer of land
and wealthy farmer of words.

Dubbed the "people's poet" in Russia:
his Scottish face reproduced on a
Russian postage stamp ten years
before the production of two commemorative
British ones: fourpence & one and threepence.

Further portraiture fame came from the
Clydesdale Bank, on a five-pound note
(the reverse a field mouse and a rose):
the once impoverished poet
more profitable in death than life.

Remembered in places far-flung,
his antipodean statue - seagulls seated on his
head - commands by place its status as
centrepiece to the Writers' Walk
circumferencing Dunedin's Octagon.

Like Mozart, like Schubert, like Chopin -
short-lived Masters of musical sound,
Burns was short-lived Master of the verbal:
rhythmic and wry, rustic, sincere, and
spontaneous heaven-born ploughman.

Mike Crowl

Of Society

languishing almost woman
sanguine and delighted
guile
how could they understand

know only her
nefarious man
miscreants
with platitudes and cunning

a paragon of society
obtuse and vapid
she
expunged his banal beauty

they will never understand

Kirsty Lewis-Bleakley

The Dunedin-Edinburgh Stone

Ye mae nae ken that stanes can talk
Ben prose and verse. We canna walk
Or swim or fish or catch a hawk,
 Ye braw guid lad.
So come and stand and have a gawk
 It's nae too bad.

I've come but lately to your toun
With braes so bonnie cauld and broon
An' dancing burns that sing and croon.
 It feels like hame.
I see at night the siller moon.
 It's still the same.

But the pole starn I canna see.
The sword's a pot—a mystery.
It's all southern tapsalteerie,
 A puzzling sight.
The gowden sun is warm for me
 With welcome light.

Auld Edinburgh is far away,
Twelve thousand miles, it's nae child's play.
By aeroplane it's just one day
 'Cross oceans blue.
An' now I'm here, I'm here to stay.
 To stay with you.

I've come to the end of the earth,
A phrase that gives me tottie mirth.
Although our globe has muckle girth
 No end you'll find.
But by the Leith I'll have my berth,
 Your welcome's kind.

I've let you see beneath my skin
Beneath the outer layer thin.
You feel, it's smooth, smooth as a pin.
 It's my warm heart.
I'm pleased to be in Dunedin.
 We'll never part.

Bruce Spittle

To a Humble Bus Driver

Written for my father Ian Rutherford, the bus driver and Robert Burns devotee who introduced me to poetry and nurtured my love of Burns.

Winter rain drives mighty force against the bus's drookit course.
Water spills in dreary rivers through banks and braes once pink wi' heather.
Spring will bloom again of course when time's fair turn calls back its source.
Of new born beauty, blossom sweet, birth and life as lovers meet.

But winter's here with icy blasts nae wonder one mourns spring lang past.
Wind whips rain hard on bus and brae yon mountains stand not in its way.
A clear gaze cuts through sheets of rain, a solemn face through window pane.
Another day is gone before; this journey through the winter's roar.
Water spills in dreary rivers, incessant batter ceasing never.

He drives on through mists and gales into winter's angry hail.
Wheels turn, thoughts burn, his heid a churn come night he lies awake.
With wife and children to support there is so much at stake.
If money's tight and tight it is what then's a poor man left to give.
A sma' request, a silent prayer; gie me less Lord and gie them mair.
Take from me and gie to them, all that I have and all I ken.

A hundred years or more before across the water on yonder shore
A man like this lived a life, working and toiling for weans and wife.
His mind worked a different task; beauty in words from all he passed.
He wrote the verses we hold dear; life in passing, words so clear.
Of the same ilk tho' different day each living the life that passed his way.
Both thoughtful by nature, calm and clever,
Of kindness and courage in equal measure.

But it's through these hills he drives his bus lang aft days light, for drive he must.
Tae pay the bills and feed the weans, tae keep the hoose that they ca' hame.
Tae pay the tarry that schools the bairns, hold his heid high nae trace of shame.
Another man of simple pleasures nae airs nor graces has he.
He's gie ye his last and wave as he passed tae folks like you and me.

I saw him once on yonder bus stopped for a moments rest.
He reached inside his driver's jacket a book close to his chest.
Its tartan cover was battered and worn, its pages yellowed and cornered
Aged notes in the margin, words underlined, a book that was surely treasured.
I wondered and watched that bus driver as he savoured each page in turn.
Faded gold lettering on royal blue tartan; 'The works of Roberts Burns'.

Perhaps Rabbie sits beside him on those long and dreary days
I think he'd console and guide him, a brother in many ways.
Perspective may be a rich man's luxury the poor man wants to say,
But Rabbie nudges his self pity saying "Marvel natures play!"
And so he sees not a birdie waiting for a scrap
but instead a wondrous display of natures perfect map.
The birdie noose and irksome louse side by side in nature's house.
All poor earth born companions and fellow mortals.

So who's to say that his hard toil is more or less than theirs.
What man can claim to know his place in the life o' weighty cares.
Tae scorn the man that drives the bus is shameful and unfair
You might do well wi' Rab's advice and find that less is mair.
Mark the beauty of the trees, the sea and changing sky
Know those creatures that you pass, hear the call of natures cry.

Listen now! Put down yer phone and cease the constant running.
Listen now and mark the still for morrow's always coming.
Rest your head and mind the breeze that blows oe'r hills and glen.
Yer yesterdays can't be undone this day's the day ye ken.

These thoughts and others like them occupy their hearts and minds.
One ploughing fields wi' horse and cart, the ither the bus shift grind.
Humble kind and thoughtful good and gracious to the core
Two men alike tho' centuries apart may be closer than they know.

They say that spirit lives and breathes and moves between us all.
I'd like tae think that this is true then distances be small.
That he's in him and you're in me and each stays wi' the other.
Rabbie's book a just reminder that words etch hearts forever.

Donna Young

We're Still Praying

Are we closer do you think, are we standing on the brink?
Of the time the Bard foretold
Is essential man more valued now than heretofore?

In the last few hundred years, has humanity achieved,
an insight to the true value of Man?

Do we recognise the manners, of those who mind their grammar,
for the surface sheen that in an instant fades, if such as those
are challenged to share the bounty garnered,
from the sweat of those who bear no outer glaze.

With world wide uprisings, of the poor, is it surprising,
we may believe more equal times in store.
But the clout of wealth and power, the whole world o'er,
cling like to like to keep the poor below.

So Rab we are still trying and with the rich still vying,
to prove the worth of the intrinsic Man,
but we could do with help, to give them all a skelp,

Please Rabbie do your best with Him on high.

Eleanor MacGregor

Burns' Pathway of Life

Robert Burns of Alloway

Born in a small clay cottage

His normal speech was Ayrshire Scots

'Til John Murdoch taught him English

At 16 "The Two Dogs" he wrote

Country dancing he tried too

But Nellie Kirkpatrick was the one

Who inspired his first love poem new

The family moved to Lochlie Farm

Where brothers Robert and Gilbert improved conditions

Robbie later met sailor Richard Brown

Who encouraged his serious poetic ambitions

Burns tried flax-dressing but things got worse

The venture was a total failure

His father William died after a legal dispute

The sons then found another tenure

They rented the farm of Mossgiel

But success was not forthcoming

Farm servant bore Burns a child

Though unmarried, not becoming

Later confirmed still a bachelor

Burns became married to Jean Armour

As family man 'wi means' and a wife

He could happily not ask for more

Graham Radue

Ayr Apparent.....Life of Robert Burns

Och maun, 'tis true, the life ye led
there's nane sae bauld, frae wha' I've read,
to kilted Scot each lassie fled
into thine arms,
fu' lo'ed by thee to woo, and bed.
held by thy charms.

Wha' makes a maun, a maun, we ask
is it his looks or manly tasks?
How mony deeds, to boast, to bask
to conquer a',
or hide aneath a thousand masks,
thy past recall.

Tho' times were hard, ye dinna care
fu' blooded Scot, saft heart, laid bare,
wi' quill 'n ream and Lo'land flair
sae bauld indeed,
for a' the world, ye're life to share
as scattered seed.

Sae mony bairns he sired in a'
frae pedistal our Rabbies fall,
frae Parents grace and Calvin call,
predestined fate.
Thru' song and rhyme, o'ercame it a'
his mark to make.

He spake o'lue, and spake o'loss
a' frae the heart in rhythmic gloss
sae mony gone to earthy moss,
and live na' more.
But Rabbie lo'ed, and lo'ed b'cause
he's maun, for sure.

Wha' makes a maun w'lue possessed
to lay his souls poetic fest'
a' Whisky laced, bared Rabbie's best,
we read in awe,
the words between each line a test
as ne'er before.

'Twas helped nae doubt by suppin' wine
a dram or twa, o'Whisky fine,
sae wad ye sing to "Auld Lang Syne"
and merry be,
let Rabbies words fore'er enshrine
his artistry.

This Scotian say wha hae wha hae,
yon Ploughman Poet, on his way,
frae soil and sweat his labours pay
a pittance sore.
Uplift our Bard frae toil and clay,
he's worthy more.

Ye dinna quat ye callin' Bard
tho' life were cruel and health were bad
each word ye wrote, emotion scarred
wrenched frae inside,
now resting, aye, in high regard,
in peace and pride.

Wi' luve thee penned sweet words in tune
now Rabbie's gone, and gone too soon.
May saft winds blaw, bricht glow the moon
on Rabbie's soul.
His spirit lives in Dune-Doon,
we heed thy call.

Robbie Williams

Robert Burns

Robert burns competition I saw,
As I was in Dunedin library today,
His work has influenced poets galore
To follow their dreams in a pensive way.

He inspired me with focusing on this.

I have no rhyme or reason,
For this funniest summer season,
So do with this what you will.
It may be awhile for others to see,
We all have gifts to follow through,
To write, to love and to be free.

Jess Palmer

Burns in our Southern Eden

Forever in a day,
The devil came my way,
With not a thought to say
Just a few words to splay.

The devil was my leader:
My one and only breeder
You should see, dear reader
The devil, the real bleeder!

The black raven cawed
The bad devil soared
Oh you should see dear lord!
How the demon roared!!

Keri Teavae

Robbie Burns

Many celebrate thy birth,
Many more now praise thy death,
Especially they who dinna ken
What thou saith to God or men.

Thee that sitteth on thy throne,
Expressionless and made of stone;
Thou does't not e'en hold a pen,
And what thou saith we dinna ken.

Dunedin is of thee greatly proud,
Thy statue draws a gaping crowd;
But puzzled looks come on faces when
Thy words are spoke – they dinna ken.

Perhaps the seagull on thy head
Makes meaning of the words thee said,
But as for us, we dinna ken!

So-

Get over all this Scottish bard rubbish and give us some good Kiwi poetry
That we can understand!

Roslyn King

Reflection on Robert Burns in the Octagon

"Did yae expect a' o'er life
Would bring in death, domestic bliss?
Nae more the tairge, nae Fashous fa',
Nae dry doos needing drouk wi' wit?"

Instead envisaged, trapped halfway;
Scottish hills in fair South Seas.
There's worse be seen when one's to die
Than a city's patron, one would think.

But
This grassy hillock hides no rest,
For quarrelers occupy it.
Changed indeed into a "fashous fa"
And the "doos" will never quit!

Giles Graham

The Beastie in the Loch

'Drive on, drive on,' she shrill'd so clear
'Ne'er tarry when you ride wi' me
The beastie lurks e'er more deeply
In the peat blue loch a'feard by thee'

The mistress, she did crave the loch
Its heather, purple hued tho' wanton wild
Eerily lit by the moon's pale glimmer
Slittered upon pinewood sentinels, darkly sloping banks and braes

The wakes and waves, they offer succour
Salmon, lamprey, stickleback for company
Weaving thru' the Great Glen Fault
Water, fresh and caul for those who face their fears

Therein dwells a massive monster
Niseag by name, maybe cryptid by nature
Strang and smee this ancient plesiosaur
Surges swiftly, peeks out quickly

The squire, he slow'd to gi'e the eye
Of the great beastie e'er so sly
Upon the shore where ne'er do wells and
Moochers, linger, e'er hopeful in the glen

And so the tale persists
The mistress, she concedes defeat
No magic moment this time round
For now 'Nessie', must remain, anonymous again

Linda Jane

Yesterday, Tomorrow and Today

The city centre, nothing less
Was chosen as his home to be
He sits in stone-faced solitude
And watches you and me

Two fifty years, or near enough
It took for him to get to that
And ever since he's quaintly had
A seagull stand-in for a hat

Cast in bronze in '86 *
For all eternity he'll sit
A man of words the world still loves
He's guarded by his god above

A Presbyterian was he
And so it seems unseem (i) ly
That he should in the shadow be
Of a splendid stone cathedral ** there

He sits above a changing scene
A crowd that comes and goes
Two sixteen years *** from death to now
Still; 'twas a ways you know

A biker sits his horse astride
At least 650 plus
And Robbie watches, gaze unchanged
And hears the throbbing buzz

With throaty roar he kicks it off
From Princes through to George
And just like horsemen long ago
He leaves without a word

A city old and new he sees
A phone box [red] below
And further down a station clock
Chimes time from long ago

When you and we are well-long gone
He'll still be there you know
His back to the hill, his gaze still fixed
On Olympians crowned below

THE END

J Benjamin, 9/1/12

* 1886

** Anglican ☺

*** 216

John Olssen

THE SILVER SALMON

I watched a Gillie by the water
Giving instructions for the glide

"Cast that Mrs Simpson,
Upstream and to the side"

The deference in his tone
Told me much about the pair

"Just bow your head and tell me!"
(You'll never get your share)

A Nobleman he's guiding, exclusive Tweed and Greenheart gear,
River beats reserved, no need for any care
A careless play, the fish away, the Gillie I'll take the blame

Unless you've got the silver, and perhaps a title to your name
A commoner like my friend Hogg and I, can only watch the game

Sea-run Silver Salmon and the red speckled Brown Trout
Will not be on our table, and with that there is no doubt

I received a note from Tait, a weaver from Selkirk,
Who sailed to Dunedin, in New Zealand, with a ship load of English Louts

And he has described to me. The Town, the Harbour, and the Hinterland,
The people of the place, equality for more Scotsmen that might want to flee

From Adam Tait's description,
I can see unto Otago where all the streams are free,
To liberate the trout, and silver salmon in the sea
For the common man to cast for, like Hogg, and You and Me

No longer need for Gillies,
From the mountains to the sea,

No so called superiors, spoiling for a fight
I can see the snow clad peaks a-gleaming
In pure, pale, spring light

The snow so gently melting, drip to drop to trickles
From moss and rock tussock shingle slides

Forming even larger rivulets,
Wriggling down the mountain sides

The clear pure water to be caught in the valley floor below
Meandering now more slowly through fern and peatish bog
Sufficient just to colour it, just add the malt and skill

No water to be added, a dram, or two to drink
To ease the mind and spirit and strengthen a Scotch man's goodwill

To lift the soul inside
A cottage with a fire,
A tavern with a bar

Ruddy cheeks and laughter,
Scotland not too far

The women with fair ankles,
And dresses that might lift

Drink up you sons of Scotland,
To Hell with all this thrift.

Dick Tait

Alba an Aigh – Scotland the Brave

Across the hills of fair Scotland,
Deep in the pitch of the night,
Comes the battle cry of the pipe band,
And the marching of feet out of sight.

For those that seem to always prevail,
Those who have not a care,
The melody follows up hill and down dale,
Those who are wild and fair.

Before long, the air is thick with tune,
With whisky fumes and wine,
Where under a whimsical baleful moon,
The wild and fair come to dine.

The pipes echo long o'er peat bog and moor,
While piobaireachd and reel intertwine,
The raucous applause and cries of 'Encore!'
Reality do undermine.

The pride of the Scots is alive here, boys,
The clans are fit and well,
Where gorse-twined heaths ring loud with noise,
And the voice of Burns will swell.

As daylight breaks the crowds diverge,
And go their separate ways,
Across pitch night the red hues surge,
And the wild and fair meet the day.

Zilla Steel

The Road to Portobello

Many a day has passed in life's
Dwelling, distant sunshine derives
The Road to Portobello
Glist'ning salt air
Exhilaration breath still thrives
Pulsating fair

Childhood ways at harbour sea's edge.
Of ditched vehicles on wet sedge
Drunken nights on the neeps. No pledge
Glist'ning salt air
Regardless of life's slender edge
Pulsating fair

Reaching far to climb crumbling cliffs
Above roadside where wallflowers
Cling abundant in heady scents
Glist'ning salt air
Fists full of darkened, marbled hues
Pulsating fair

Resting at Yellow Head thrust clear
Wee grandmother's graveside so drear
Sad remembrance of death draws near
Glist'ning salt air
While fresh brindled flowers sear
Pulsating fair

Rushing pell-mell down shingled beach
Below silent grave secrets teach
Gathering in myself lean niche
Glist'ning salt air
And stare out across Broad Bay reach

Pulsating fair

Visiting aged kin whose smokes clot

Endless cups of ripe tea. To hot

In old crackled porcelain pot

Glist'ning salt air

Butt'ry girdle scones on what not

Pulsating fair

Arrive at last – Portobello

Laying tartan rugs smooth. Just so

Cooled by watery sun aglow

Glist'ning salt air

Sharp winds snake past Harbour Heads flow

Pulsating fair

How I dream of those far off days

When life was in simple, sweet ways

Pure, untrammelled, joyful, fair stays

Glist'ning salt air

While the Road to Portobello's

Pulsating fair

Gary Richard Johnston

For Laura, in drink

My Laura was a bonnie lass
I waved her off across the sea
But she cam hame, my doghter dear
A poor damn'd drinker she.

And nae hae I but grief and pain for promised joy.

Now I've been blythe with friends so dear
And I've been cantie drinkin'
But stoppin' weel before the yill
Has made me doun fallin'.

But nae hae I but grief and pain for promised joy.

But Laura now loud grates your lug
And picks up douts frae off the streets
And lets ye fill her glass or jug
Tells yairns until she greets.

And nae hae I but grief and pain for promised joy.

Poor lassie, my fair Laura kens
Her lot of care and sorrows
But wine's a deep and loving friend
Oh aye! Until the morrow.

And nae hae I but grief and pain for promised joy.

The bottle's bocht, she carefully hides,
She'll close the door and lovin'
The moment caught, cares cast aside
The glass full to brimmin'.

But nae hae I but grief and pain for promised joy.

That deil drink! Fair would I slay it!
My bonnie lass, how to save ye?
Fain would I hear from her lips dropt
"Na, nae mair drink for me".

But nae hae I but grief and pain for promised joy.

Sandra Jones

They Love You Still

Ah Rabbie man
They've done you proud.
Sitting gowned
a look of whimsy on your face
as you survey this town.

Your breeches tight,
gazing over lawns and buses
and the lovely bonnie lassies.
Fair Mary's word below your feet
And Baxter's plaque behind you.

You would have loved
James K, a man like you
in love with words and drink.
A Dunedin man
fit well to be your ilk

They could have placed a prelate here,
John Knox or such.
A braw and stern
reminder of their faith and plans
for their new town.

But no, these grave men of the Kirk.
They placed a poet here.
A man of roving eye
who loved the lassies
And drink for bye

They knew
long after buildings fall
and sermons pass away.
The words of poets ring
Through ages long.
Knew the words of Robbie Burns
will last past ould Lang syne

And so it is
on every 25th of January
they do remember you
with fondness in their hearts
and pride in this fine city

You and they, Dunedin
"Gave each their promise true.
Gave you their promise true.
Till all the seas gang dry"

Ah, Rabbie man
They love you still

Daniel McCaffrey

The Rainbow Room

When I think
On my bed

of you
Embroidered

In parched
and barren ways

The frustrations of desires
Is fair trade

Stars and space
The God of love

Installed there
the rainbow room

Georgia Todd

Tell Us Robbie

Tell us Robbie 'bout yer words
seems t'me y'ar confused
really, d'ya know it all
or are yer words a ruse?

Tell us 'bout this fondest kiss
ay, an' a' that, an' a' belong
did ye ken this fairground miss
who turned yer kiss to song?

Or p'haps yev heard of that book
we hold these days so high
Tell me did this corn rig annie look
a'ythin' like poor Jenny rye?

An' tell us did ae e'er reply
to the barb yer soot
I question how it were e'er wise
to rustle up ol' cloot!

Though wise a word yer can jus' say
I'll gav yer that
An' hold happy moments – I'll do it
For you, an' for a' that

'n fact 'tis truly you the bard
yer words are full of clues
an' if some folk'll find yer ramblin' twisted words so hard –
well its them that are confused!

Jesse Farry

He Sits On My Shelf With Sir Scott
Love Affairs

Robert Burns was a romantic,
An' likewise pedantic.
He used a light, wee Scottish tongue,
When his po-em was sung.
This charming an' lyrical bard,
Was clever, an' worked hard.
A national hero was he,
An' he wrote to be free.

The serving girl, sweet Miss Paton,
Was undone by the moon,
The bard of course had a fun,
Liz fell pregnant, when done.
Jean 'Cupid' Amour, love affair,
Had long beautiful hair,
An' in addition she spawned
Twins, O' the Robert Burns.

Slave aware Burns was in trouble,
He needed cash, double!
An' to Jamaica clan burns went,
A good friend had him sent,
Mail, proclaiming cash, thirty pound
In Jamaica he found,
As he worked, a slave plantation,
Inspire foundation!

Six years on produced; A Lament.
Slave's Lament, at present.
Burns fell to another arrow,
Love went to the marrow.
Mary Campbell, a bonnie lass,
A girl he saw at Mass.
But Highland Mary went to mom,
She left our Robert, Glum.

Although many children he had,
His poems make us glad.
His affairs were far and many,
Liz, Mary and Jenny.
This bard, Robert Burns, a poet,
Not to be below-it,
Married and paid, most of his wage,
To comfort his lovers.

Lana Burns