

Winners of the 2015 Robert Burns Poetry Competition - unpublished poets

First Place:

Stewart Webster (Dalmore, Dunedin)

Address tae the Dunedin Stadium.

Whit's yon braw sicht that stauns afore me,
Doon bi' the waters o' the Leith,
Wi' stoot arches abin and wa's bricht siller,
Fair o'erwhelms the e'e !

An edifice sae lairge an' graund,
I sharely huvnae seen.
I wunner what its purpose nicht be,
Wi' a fiel amín , sae flat and green ?

It's a' in richt and guid proportion,
A' credit tae the makkers.
A barn for coos, or swine perhaps,
Wid be a fine apportion !!

Tae pleuch yon fiel for corn and aits,
Nicht also hae great valye.
I'm share the needy and their bairns
Wid genuinely thank ye !
Whit's that ye say, its nae fir farmin',
But fir playin wi' baws and ertertainin' !
Nae wunner folks are sare complainin',

Fir a' that fude that they're nae gainin !

Fair trammelt they micht a' well be,
In face o' such absurdity !!

What's that ye say, the Cooncil built it,
Wi heids on-high amín the clouds,
Slee feedin on the common riches,
Their thinking sharely skewed and stilltit !

Wi siller trinklin doon the pit,
Gaen fester than a neig can trot,
It's herd tae see the fu' sense o'it !
Ae'n herder still tae hud tae hope
That yin day sín' the drain wul stop !

Mony say it's o'er the tap,
And ithers say it's share tae flop,
But what is share , as share can be,
T'will tak mony a muckle tae mak that flee !!

Fowk's gírnin like a ghastie melts,
In the feem o' strang debate,
While Cooncil fecht amín themselves,
An' think it best tae wait !

They weel need their wee dowiepies skellpit,

Or, pit in jael if they canna fix it,
Or, some wîd hae them hung and drawn,
Or, tar'd n' fettered on the dawn !

The rancour graws fair snell and sleight,
But time will tell , as tell it must,
And a' the fowk mî fondly wish,
The dice, in time, will fa' richt.

A coo byre could weel be the fit
For a' the population.
A fit and proper yîs fir it,
Tae end a' the speculation !

Then a'could hae meat,
An' a could eat,
An' the Cooncîl be well thankît !

In years frae hence when "Auld Lang Syne"
Is sung a' roond the toon,
Will a' the fowk for succour pine,
An' reca' when they wîr able,
Tae tap their cup wî halesome wine,
An' pît meat upon thîr table !!

EN'

With apologies for the liberties taken with the misuse of old Scots vocabulary in places !

Second Place:

Christina Hulbe (Opoho, Dunedin)

Ye Men of Fire and Steel
(Haast Eagle Coronach)

Ye men of fire and steel
look around, look around!
Ye men of fire and steel,
your appetites reveal
deep wounds that will not heal
nor sorrow drown.

What shapes the hungry life
on the field, on the field?
What shapes the hungry life,
the talon and the knife,
the ploughman makes his slice
none can shield.

Who trades in land and air
tethered down, tethered down?
Who trades in land and air
harvest now your share
and trip the reaper's snare,
all are bound.

Gone silent on the wind
no practiced eye, no fledgling cry.
Gone silent on the wind,
our fates are needy twinned,
our feathers all are pinned
none to cry.

Ye men of fire and steel
look around, look around!
Ye men of fire and steel,
your appetites reveal
deep wounds that will not heal
nor sorrow drown.

Third Place:

Louisa Baillie (Fernhill, Dunedin)

To Donald, on your wife's passing 27th May 1869

Here resteth your belov'd wife
So young she passed at thirty-one.
She rests w' view across th' brine
To hills tha' glim in westerin' sun
Grant's Brae, Waverley, Highcliff, aye
Where South Sea albatross a' ride

Wind blows an' rustles cabbage trees
Grown tall and strong within th' plot
Tawny, brittle leaves a gi'
Dry clack clackin', whisperin rasps
Antipode's lament for Gaelic lass
Elizabeth, Elizabeth; young wife to rest

Bold n' plucky she must ha' been,
To farewell for e'er her haem, her kin.
Sail forth in ship that yawed and pitched
When wild and scatt' red wind blew harsh,
Reckless tossed as storm waves surged,
Three month a' jostle t' raw Dunedin

She were t' lass tha' you, Donald, trothed:
Frae moors o' heather and winding vales
A lovely bride, dear luve I'm sure
Fair bloom who brought sweet happy days
Teasin' laugh w' warm, dark eyes
A' poutin lips, a' playful hips

Fervent hearts had ye, fresh Scottish faith
Cosy crib built i' th' lee of a hill
Fantails did flit n' bellbirds ring
Tui chased, a scutter'd then cleared their throats
To sing o't 'mong shaded bush:
Verdant olive an' cinnabar green

Aye, toiled long each day ye surely did
Sae all t' more joy, Don, t' enter haem
To greet your wife a mammie now,
A sweet wee dochter sleepin' ginst
Ah, gently trace finger down Bess' cheek,
Then kiss and daut your dearies

Belov'd Elizabeth too worked hard
For on th' grave stone words are writ
That Wiliamina, two months new,
Beside her mama lies: four years afore

Her mam she passed; n' here's a weary sigh,
She seventh dochter, was.
Seven dochters; any more? Any lads as well?
Was there time to mind each bairn,
To croon an' cuckold, kiss th' toes
Dearie wee things, jewels o' luve
Mouths t' feed n' napkins t' wash
Was there e'er t' time t' write haem?

When Bess weaken'd, did ye yet hope
Then despair when look'd South that late May?
Where ink dark clouds piled high n' brooded
Sea a weighted, flattened pewter
Thin silve of light b'tween th' masses
Afore th' blast of bitin' wind

The nights were long, down drove the rain
As Elizabeth slowly sank
She sank t' sleep w' faithful grace
Your bonnie love, now chil, now stil
Gane, alas! O, rave the wind
And mingle grief and bursting tears

Did ev'ry waking hour hence forth
Recall you o' your Bess?
Did ye hear her in the Bellbird song
An' when hearing, stop t' catch your breath?
Did ye hold close tight remaining bairn
And ne'er mind their prattling chitter?

Fair Scottish lass, sleep well I trust
In that far country ye believed ye'd go
I hopeth too ye both met again
With welcoming arms she greeted thee
And calm at last your soul did ease a'
'Peace, perfect peace' as 'tis writ.