Outgoing president Callum Watson has taken the Howff Club to new territory

I say goodbye . . .

It has been said many times that the presidency of the Howff Club flies past once the chain is in place and I will be saying exactly that to William Johnston in a few weeks. My year has flown past and I have thoroughly enjoyed my time as President of the club.

I have had the tremendous support of Honorary Secretary David Smith, who has made each of the functions effortless through his meticulous planning. Our executive committee has also worked tirelessly to ensure the smooth running of the club. My year has seen me visiting some of the areas that Burns did during his lifetime. The warm welcomes have been appreciated and my travels have taken me from Coldstream to Dumfries, Hawick to the Brow Well, Dumbarton to Sanquhar, Moffat to Terregles, Peebles to Friars Carse and Ellisland to Tarbolton. It never ceases to amaze me how passionate people get when they speak of our Bard. A personal highlight was when I had the pleasure of presenting Past President Les Byers with Honorary Life Membership of the Howff. Well deserved, not only for his Immortal Memory but his years of service. I have attended schools’ competitions and Burns Suppers where youngsters have performed and I’m convinced that with the assistance of tutors and our club’s support, the Burns movement is in good hands and has an encouraging future.

This year also had its moments of sadness. The passing of our Honorary Treasurer, Frank Manson and the recent death of Duncan Baird at such a young age shows how fragile life can be. I speak for all members of the club when I say our thoughts remain with their families.

I would like to thank everyone in the Dumfries Burns Howff for making my year as President so memorable and also give thanks to my wife Lisa for her tremendous support throughout the year. Burns sums up my thoughts in these lines from “Here’s a Bottle”:

Then catch the moments as they fly,
And use them as ye ought, man:
Believe me, happiness is shy,
And comes not aye when sought, man.

I wish our incoming President William Johnston the very best for the coming year and look forward to supporting him whenever required.

William Johnston looks forward to his year, carrying on a family tradition

. . . and I say hello

It seems like only yesterday that I was honoured with being elected Junior Vice President of the club but at the time being President was a long way off. But, as in the line from “Tam o’ Shanter” Nae man can tether time or tide the passage of time is swift and imminently I am to assume the role of President.

Since I became a member of the Dumfries Burns Howff club 15 years ago, I have been proud to be part of such a well-known and prestigious club and I look forward to following in the footsteps of the many distinguished presidents. Indeed, it is becoming something of a family tradition since my father and brother are Past Presidents.

I’m sure we will all agree that President Callum has been an exceptional president and ambassador for the club and I think the past year has seen some of the best speeches and performances I can remember. He will be a hard act to follow but I can assure you that our redoubtable Honorary Secretary has been working hard in the background with his little blue book of extensive contacts to ensure a strong programme for the coming year and I can promise there are some delights in store.

I hope to use my year to promote the involvement of members in the activities of the club as well as the main functions. I am thinking of the wider use of the club library and promoting the support for our winter lectures and other events such as the Treasure Hunt, which it is hoped to resurrect this year in a slightly different format.

I look forward to my year as club President and to representing the club on your behalf and hope that you all have an enjoyable year. I suspect, as former presidents have commented that it will be over all too quickly.

But pleasures are like poppies spread;
You seize the flow’r, its bloom is shed;
Or like the snow falls in the river,
A moment white - then melts forever.

ROBERT BURNS IN MY LIFE - Howffer John Lauder

At the time of joining the Howff club, John Lauder was employed by the Regional Council in the Department of Administration and Law.

When were you first aware of Burns?
I cannot recall a time when I was not aware of Burns. My dad had a copy of the Poetical Works of Robert Burns. It is my bedside Burns.

Did Burns play any role in your life?
No part before club membership.

What do you like about the Howff?
The general air of friendliness.

Has it changed much in your time?
Apart from changes in personnel and the odd tweak in the administration, not really.

Favourite Immortal Memory?
Ronnie Crichton, Lord George Roberson and Brian Taylor stand out.

Which Burns poem remains fresh?
Tam o’ Shanter

And what about a song?
Ae fond kiss.
Frank Manson - an appreciation

Frank Manson was a Yorkshireman. Not many know that, but he was born in Leeds and moved to Bonar Bridge in Sutherland with his parents at the age of 18 months.

Frank applied himself at Dornoch Academy where he took his Highers and went on to study accountancy at Glasgow University. It was there that he met June and they married in 1970, moving to Dumfries after he qualified as a Chartered Accountant.

He opened the Dumfries office for accountancy firm JW Jarvie and Co, but after a few years he set up in his own practice, latterly as FM Associates in Newall Terrace.

Frank Manson became one of the most respected professional men in Dumfries gaining a reputation for probity and for offering shrewd advice to his clients.

Outside the office, Frank was known as a man of many parts, a keen curler, squash and tennis player but one of his great interests was in motor racing and he was often seen at Silverstone and Donnington Park cheering on the F1 drivers.

He was a member of the Porsche Owners Club and his high performance cars were a familiar sight in town.

Frank Manson’s contribution to the life of Dumfries was legend. He was a member of the Board of Management at Dumfries & Galloway College, a trustee until recently at the Loch Arthur Community at Beeswing and an active committee member at the Cumberland Street Day Centre for the elderly. But it is at the Dumfries Howff Club where he will be missed the most. Frank joined the club in the eighties and served for a spell on committee but stood down due to pressure of his other commitments.

He rejoined the committee in 1997, later serving with distinction as president in 2011-2012 and then as Honorary Treasurer, a post he held at the time of his death.

Frank Manson was not only one of nature’s gentlemen, but a kind and considerate human being and whose wit, good humour and sound advice will be sadly missed. He was a family man, committed to June, his daughter Jane and son Graham and his grandchildren; latterly were a source of great joy. His passing will be felt by a very wide circle of friends.

Frank Manson’s contribution to our Honourable Secretary, David Smith

Our retiring president has been one of the most charismatic holders of the office in recent years and his term will be remembered for many reasons.

The year was overshadowed by the sudden and tragic death of Honorary Treasurer Frank Manson whose passing shocked us all and leaves an irrereplaceable gap in the ranks.

Our winter club nights were interesting with speakers on a variety of topics with the final in the season’s programme being an evening visit to the Observatory.

Forthcoming events include:

- **Tuesday, May 24** - Club bowling night at Newall Terrace for the coveted Draffan Cup. Supper at the Globe Inn to follow.
- **Monday, July 4** - Jean Armour Dinner, 7pm at the Globe after the wreath-laying at the statue.
- **Wednesday, July 20** - Brow Well Service, Ruthwell at 7.30pm followed by a social gathering at the Cairndale Hotel.
- **Sunday, August 7** - Annual outing to Dumfries House, Cumnock. Please book early.

The Annual General Meeting will be held on Thursday, May 19 at 7.30pm, please note that this is a change of date from that printed in the syllabus. Reports on the year’s activities will be presented and office bearers and the executive committee elected. Please try and come along and contribute to the management of the club.

Past President Jim McCambley has set up a Facebook facility for the immediate posting of photos and reports. This can be accessed from the club Website homepage by clicking on the “F” symbol.

**STOP PRESS**

The Interim Treasurer is not seeking an increase in the amount of the annual subscription and it is expected to remain at £22 full, or £17 for state retirement pensioners.

It would be much appreciated if you could remit your subscription as soon as possible but by no later than May 31.

Subs should be sent with the payment slip to The Treasurer, Burns Howff Club, Globe Inn, 56 High Street, Dumfries DG1 2JA.

**Burns’ Factoids**

Some little known facts about Robert Burns and Ellisland from Les Byers.

1. The famous poem “Tam o’ Shanter” was written at Ellisland, some say in an afternoon but probably it took longer.

2. The great anthem “Auld Lang Syne” sung world-wide at times of parting was also written at Ellisland.

3. Robert Burns was the first to bring Ayrshire cattle to Dumfriesshire and start a dairy herd.

4. The poet was one of the first farmers in Scotland to grow and eat a swede, resembling a turnip.

5. Burns and Robert Riddell of Friars Carse with others, founded a public lending library at Dunscore, one of the first in Scotland in April, 1789.

6. Seventy per cent of all the letters by Robert Burns were written during his Ellisland years and one quarter of all his literary output.

**IT WAS A NIGHT:** Les Byers receives honorary membership from the president while David Miller sparkles as Holy Willie.

**AT WORK AND PLAY:** Frank served the Howff Club with distinction as its president and he was also a keen supporter of club social occasions.

**DIARY UPDATE from our Honourable Secretary, David Smith**

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Changed your e-mail address? Please send updates to david.smith72@btinternet.com for the occasional Howff Club E-Mail Express.

**www.burnshowffclub.org**