

INDIVIDUAL MARKER PLAQUES

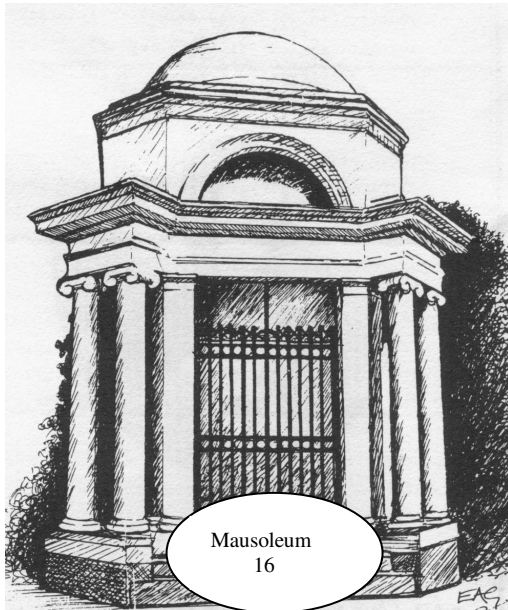
Showing positions of the graves of the Contemporaries of

Robert Burns

installed in

St Michael's Church Yard

By the Dumfries Burns Howff Club in 1996



The numbering of the plaques are as shown on the information Marker Plaque which Mr M.H.McKerrow had erected in the 1930's and this marker plaque is situated up on the right hand side of the Church

Past President W.A. Sutherland compiled the first edition of this booklet in 1996 in preparation for the Bi-Centenary of the Death of Robert Burns.

The Committee of the Burns Howff Club thought it would be a fitting tribute to him and Matthew McKerrow to update the publication for this the 250th Anniversary of the Poet's birth.

It was both Bill's and Matthew's intention that by examining the names on the marker Plaque and further installing numbered plates, the individual graves can be quickly located while ambling through the Church Yard.

The reasons for Mr McKerrow's choice of characters can be seen by following the brief resume on each of the contemporaries named on the marker plaque, while attempting to give some detail of the place each held in the life of the Poet.

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Compiled by Bill Sutherland
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1. REV. Wm. BURNSIDE

The minister of St Michael's when Robert Burns and Jean Armour were members. Burns wrote of Mr Burnside:- "Mr Burnside is a man whom I shall ever gratefully remember, and his wife – Gude forgie me! ... simplicity, elegance, good sense, sweetness of disposition : in short - but if I say one more word about her, I shall be directly in love with her. "Dr Burnside wrote an excellent history of Dumfries , a resume' of which appeared in Sinclair's " Statistical Account of Scotland ". The manuscript copy of his work is in the possession of the Dumfries and Galloway Natural History and Antiquarian Society.

2. THOMAS GOLDIE

Goldie was President of the Loyal Natives Club, a club which had a short existence, Burns snuffing it out by his audacious impromptu :-

" Ye true Loyal Natives, attend to my song,
In uproar and riot rejoice the night long:
From envy and hatred your corps is exempt,
But where is your shield from the darts of contempt?"

The Goldies lived in Irish Street - a street parallel to the High Street in Dumfries.

3. ROBERT CUTLAR AND WAUCHOPE RIDDELL

Buried in the ancestral grave of the Fergussons and Riddells. Alexander Fergusson and Robert Riddell were, of course, contenders for the Whistle - an award for drinking one's companions under the table. Burns himself was an observer, though not a contestant, while staying at Ellisland. The contest was held at Friars' Carse, a large house near the Hermitage and the home of Robert Riddell.

4. WM. HYSLOP AND JEAN MAXWELL

In Robert Burns' day joint owners of what is now the Globe Inn. When this was the Globe Hotel, Burns described it as his "favourite howff "

6. JOHN BUSHBY

This obelisk built by John Bushby in memory of his father, peculiar only bearing his father's name and that of another son, Thomas. For some years John Bushby, jnr. was an intimate friend of Robert Burns and then they became estranged. John Bushby's, jun's. tomb is unknown. Burns, in an ill-tempered mood, wrote the well known epitaph :-

"Here lies John Bushby - honest man
Cheat him, Devil - if you can !"

7. JAMES GRACIE

Gracie was well-known banker and a Captain in the Royal Dumfries Volunteers. For upwards of twenty years he occupied the magisterial bench in Dumfries. He was an intimate friend of the Poet, and while the latter was attempting to find a remedy for his illness at the Brow Well, a few miles outside Dumfries, Gracie wrote enquiring after his health, offering the use of his carriage to bring him home. It is also believed that he tendered some pecuniary aid as well. Burns's reply to the letter is dated from the "Brow, Wednesday morn, July 13th," "only eight days before his death. In McDowall's "Burns in Dumfriesshire," there appears the following epigram :-

"Gracie, thou art a man of worth,
O be thou Dean for ever !
May he be damn'd to Hell henceforth
Who faults thy weight or measure."

8. MRS AGNES PEROCHON

Right in the corner of the North and East walls is the grave where Robert Burns was originally buried in 1796, prior to his removal of his body, in 1815, to the Mausoleum. Mrs Perochon had shown great kindness to Jean Armour and, out of gratitude, Jean gave her the spot where Robert was first buried. Mrs Perochon was the wife of one Joseph Perochon, a Fench Royalist, who fled his country during the Revolution.

As this is the original resting place perhaps we can take a brief moment to look back in time to the Poets earlier years. Robert Burns was born on 25th January, 1759, in a clay cottage (biggin) which his father had built in Alloway, Ayrshire. Robert, at six, attended the local school at Alloway Mill and his father engaged a private tutor, 18 year old John Murdoch. At seven, however, the Burns family moved to a farm at Mount Oliphant and at nine years of age, Robert was working alongside his father.

Robert during his earlier years read widely and tried to master French and Latin. At fifteen he had his first love affair with Nelly Kilpatrick, who was helping at the harvest.

Two years later, in 1777, the family moved to another farm at Lochlie. Tarbolton was near at hand and there Burns started his famous Batchelors' Club. In 1784, however, after the death of his father, Robert and family moved to Mossgiel, an Ayrshire farm near Mauchline.

Although he had short love affairs with many girls, it was Jean Armour, a girl from Mauchline, who captured his heart. Jean's father, for some reason or other, did not realise Burns' worth and did not approve of any intended marriage, eventually sending Jean off to Paisley.

All this time Robert Burns had been writing poetry, and in 1786 had the Kilmarnock edition of his works published. Later in the same year he was treated as a celebrity by Edinburgh's society, which resulted in the Edinburgh edition of his works being published the following year.

In 1788, Robert Burns moved to Ellisland, a farm on the outskirts of Dumfries, and Jean Armour joined him there. He had taken a six-week course in gauging under an Excise Officer

at Torbolton, and successfully applied, while in Dumfriesshire, for a job with the Customs and Excise, Dumfries division.

He was still writing poetry profusely, and while at Ellisland, wrote his famous 'Tam o' Shanter' in, as it is said, one day. After three years at Ellisland, Burns moved to Dumfries to another Excise post, that in the port division. Initially he settled in Bank Street, 'the Stinkin Vennel', in a house which is now named 'the Songhouse of Scotland', as, while there, he wrote many of his most famous songs. Not long afterwards he moved to a house in the Mill Vennel, barely 100 yards from St Michael's Church. This street has now been re-named Burns Street. There, in 1796, Robert Burns died, and after his funeral, which was attended by many thousands, he was interred in the grave now occupied by Mrs Perochon, who had just been mentioned.

9. ROBERT JACKSON

Jackson was a publisher of the second broadsheet newspaper in 1777. He did not have a great contact with Robert Burns whose fame at the time was only budding, not having reached its full flower. Jackson also published a weekly serial prior to 1777.,

10 JOHN LEWARS

Lewars was a Supervisor of Excise, and along with his son John, was a colleague and friend of Robert Burns in the Excise. Robert Burns received much useful information regarding his Excise duties from the son and maintained a friendship with him until his death. John Lewars jun., lived in Ryedale Cottage, which was latterly the site of a knitting factory. He died in 1826. John jun., was the brother of Jessie, who tended Burns on his deathbed.

11 REV. WILLIAM INGLIS

Mr Inglis was a minister of Loreburn Church. When asked why he, on occasions, attended the 'Meeting House' Burns replied, "I go to hear Mr Inglis because he preaches what he believes, and practices what he preaches." Mr Inglis, who attended Burns on his last illness, died in 1826, in the 62nd year of his ministry. Greatly loved by his congregation, this stone was erected by them as a testimony of the esteem in which he was held. Mr Inglis' eldest son became a chemist in Dumfries, and, when a lad took medicine to the dying poet, which had been prescribed by Burns' good friend and physician, Dr Maxwell.

12 FRANCIS SHORTT

Francis Shortt was Town Clerk during the time Burns was in Dumfries. During that period there were many changes both nationally and provincially. In his latter days, it is recorded, Shortt was a 'walking encyclopedia' of local events. He lived in Castle Street, Dumfries, and was Secretary of the Loyal Natives Club.

13 DAVID AND JESSIE STAIG

David Staig was a banker and Collector of Customs in addition to being Provost of Dumfries. First chosen as Provost in 1783, he was re-elected seven times. A man of great influence in the Town he was instrumental in organising the building of Dumfries Academy and establishing a Mail Coach

communication between Edinburgh, Dumfries and Portpatrick in 1808. He promoted the building of the New Quay and Buccleuch Street Bridge, as well as many other significant improvements. His daughter, Jessie, whose beauty, virtue and accomplishments are placed in permanent record in poetry of Burns, became the wife of Major William Miller of Dalswinton, but she unfortunately died at the early age of 26. Robert Burns said of her :-

“Fresh is the rose in the gay, dewy morning,
And sweet is the lily at evening close;
But in the presence of lovely young Jessie,
Unseen is the lily, unheeded the rose.

14 GEORGE GRAY

Gray was a colleague of Burns in the Excise. ‘The whole tenor of his life was unblemished, his conduct discreet, sincere and manly; his heart grateful and affectionate; a sincere Christian and an excellent husband, an anxious father and faithful friend’

15 JOHN MITCHELL

John Mitchell was Burns’ superior officer in the Excise, both while at Ellisland and in Dumfries. He was an ancestor of James Weir Mitchell, the American novelist. Burns often consulted Mitchell about his poems, and after Mitchell’s death a collection of poems in Robert Burns’ handwriting was found among his possessions. Unfortunately Mitchell’s family lost the manuscripts. Robert Chambers, a Burns’ biographer, says that “it may be added that Burns had a critical friend in Collector Mitchell, who, having been well educated with a design to the Church, possessed a mind not ill-qualified to judge of literary compositions.” Burns himself wrote to Mitchell :-

“Friend of the Poet, tried and leal,
Wha wanting thee might beg or steal;
Alake, alake, the meikle Deil
Wi’ a’ his witches
Are at it, skelpin jig and reel
In my poor pouches ! “

16 MAUSOLEUM

Around midnight on 19th September, 1815, the mortal remains of Robert Burns were transferred from there original resting-place to the Mausoleum by James Grierson, John Milligan and James Thomson, together with James Bogle, the Maxwell’s gardener, assisted by some of his cronies. Burns coffin was in an advanced state of decay compared with the coffins of his children. The macabre scene is described by William McDowall in his “History of Dumfries” as follows :- ‘at first glance, Burns’ dead body appeared to be very well preserved, suggesting one who had just sunk into the slumber of death, the lordly forehead of the dreamless sleeper still rising arched and high, the dome of thought covered with hair still dark as a raven’s wing, and the teeth still retaining their original whiteness and regularity. The scene was so imposing that most workmen stood bare and uncovered, and at the same time felt their frames thrilling with some indefinable emotion as they gazed on the ashes of him whose fame is as wide as the world itself. But the effect was momentary; for when they proceeded to insert a shell or case below the coffin, the head separated from the trunk, and the whole body,

with the exception of the bones, crumbled into dust.’

The inscription on the stone inside the Mausoleum is badly prosaic, yet eloquently simple :-

In memory of
Robert Burns
who died the 21st July, 1796
in the 37th year of his age.

Prominent among those thinking along the lines of a monument were John Syme and William Grierson. (John Syme - Stamp Shop Johnnie – is buried in Troqueer Cemetry across the River Nith.). Sir Henry Duncan, minister of Ruthwell Church and founder of the Savings Bank, and Grierson were, in fact, joint secretaries of the Mausoleum Committee, with Sir Walter Scott assisting in the fund-raising for the memorial. About fifty designs were submitted and the plans of Thomas Hunt of London eventually approved. The foundation stone was laid, with full Masonic honours on June 5th, 1815. The mural sculpture of an Italian, Peter Turnerelli was chosen for the interior -- this gentleman not long after receiving the freedom of Dumfries.

In 1834 the vault of the Mausoleum was again opened to receive the mortal remains of Jean Armour. Mrs Burns was buried on the 1st April of that year and her coffin was carried shoulder-high from the Midsteeple in the centre of Dumfries, with the great crowds striving to touch the coffin, which was a mark of respect in those days. While the vault was open, a number of gentlemen, who had received prior authority, descended into the vault and obtained a cast of the Poet’s skull with a view to examining it and attempting to deduce the power of the brain. Now with his wife and family, the Poet sleeps peacefully

‘For him no more the blazing hearth shall burn,
Or busy housewife ply her evening care:
No children run to lisp their sire’s return
Or climb his knee the envied kiss to share.’

(Gray)

17. JAMES McLURE

Buried within the precincts of the Mausoleum because he was a very good friend of the Poet’s, and, after Burn’s death, James McClure was active and successful in his own endeavours to promote the interests of the family. Robert Burns said of him, ‘he is a man who, by his punctuality, his integrity, his benevolence and the uniform uprightness of his character, conferred respectability on the humble situation of a letter carrier.’

After quitting the precincts of the Poet’s Tomb, we may say with Campbell :-

“Farewell, high chief of Scottish song!
That could’st alternately impart
Wisdom and rapture in the page,
And brand each vice with satire strong;
Whose lines are mottos of the heart,
Whose truths electrify the sage.

Farewell, and ne'er may envy dare
To wring one baleful poison drop
From the crush'd laurels of thy bust;
But while the lark sings sweet in air,
Still may the grateful pilgrim stop
To bless the spot that holds thy dust"

18 JESSIE LEWARS

Jessie was the daughter of the Supervisor of Excise and sister of John Lewars , a colleague of Robert Burns in the Excise Service. As is well known, Burns was rarely able to leave his room from April, 1796, until his death in July of that year, and during that period Jessie rendered invaluable assistance to Jean Armour. She is remembered through two lyrics from Buens' pen, ' Here's Health to Ane I lo'e dear' and 'O wert thou in the Cauld Blast.' Jessie, who married James Thomson, a well-known write in Dumfries, died on the 26th of May, 1855.

19 ADAM RANKINE

Rankine was described as an active, bustling, enterprising and warm-hearted gentleman who was Governor of the local Savings Bank. He also formed a Volunteer Artillery Corps, of which he was made chief officer.

20 JAMES CRICHTON

Elizabeth Crichton was the eldest daughter of Sir Robert Grierson of Lag. In life, she was the antithesis of her infamous ancestor -- Grierson of Lag, persecutor of the Covenanters. As trustee and executor of her husbands estate, she gave to Dumfries the Crichton Royal Institution or Crichton Royal Hospital as it is today. Known worldwide for the treatment and care of the mentally ill, the Crichton, with its magnificent buildings and tranquil grounds, is situated within the Southern environs of the Burgh.

21 ROBERT MUNDELL

Robert Mundell, a tobacconist, was well-known for his friendship with Burns, as was his sister's husband, Gabriel Richaedson, who was abrewer in the Town. Mundell also had a brother who was a doctor.

22 COLONEL ARCHIBALD McMURDO

Mr McMurdo was a son of John McMurdo, Chamberlain to the Duke of Queensberry at Drumlanrig Castle. Robert Burns, while at Ellisland, became friendly with Mr McMurdo, sen., and wrote at least three songs about his daughter, Miss Philadelphia McMurdo. The best known, possibly, being one beginning :-

“ Adown winding Nith I did wander,
To mark the sweet flowers of the Spring;
Adown winding Nith I did wander
Of Phillis to muse and sing.”

23 GABRIEL RICHARDSON

Gabriel Richardson was a brewer in Dumfries and also a leading Councillor, who, at a later date, became Provost. Richardson had a house in Nith Place, which is quite near Burns Street, and the Poet was a welcome and familiar guest at Gabriel's house at any time.

24 JOHN McDIARMID

Editor of the 'Dumfries and Galloway Courier' and recording the daily ongoings of the community, both social and political., McDiarmid was regarded as a 'guide, philosopher and friend, to a complete generation of citizens'. He left a mark upon the minds of the population which was not effaced when his pen of power fell from his fingers which had used it for so long as a sceptre.

25. COL. de PEYSTER

Col. Arent de Peyster trained the Dumfries Volunteers, of which, of course, Robert Burns was a member. He survived Burns by some twenty-six years, dying at the ripe old age of 96. A verse of his own is inscribed on his tombstone:-

"Raise no vain structure o'er my grave-
One simple stone is all I crave;
To say below a sinner lies,
Who died in hopes again to rise,
Through Christ alone, to be forgiven,
And fitted for the joys of heaven."

26. GEORGE HAUGH

Haugh was a 'douce, honest, blacksmith' who was treated by Burns on a 'familiar footing as a neighbour'. He lived above Burns in Bank Street.

27. MRS EVERY MILLER (FRANCES EVERY)

Frances Every was the second wife of Major William Miller, whose father was the celebrated Patrick Miller of Dalswinton -- who set Robert Burns up at Ellisland. Major Miller's first wife was the lovely Jessie Staig forementioned.

28. WILLIAM SMITH

A prosperous trade in Robert Burns' day was that of a barbour and such was William Smith. He dealt in hair-powders, pigtails, wigs and perfumery. As a youth he frequently saw Burns and gave his recollection of the Poet, describing his eyes as "piercing, lustrous, like orbs of fire".

29. WILLIAM WALLACE

A devoted friend and admirer of Burns, he was a writer in Dumfries. After the Poet's death he was zealous in his efforts for the welfare of the family.

30. DAVID WILLIAMSON

A draper in the Town, David Williamson supplied the Bard with his uniform as a Volunteer . His wife was a niece of the celebrated John Paul Jones, who is credited with founding the American Navy.

31. CAPTAIN JOHN HAMILTON

Capt. Hamilton was Robert's landlord while he lived in his first house in Dumfries, in the Wee or Stinkin' Vennel (Bank Street). As a friend and admirer of the Poet, He occasionally invited Burns to dinner.

32. DR ARCHIBALD BLACKLOCK

Dr Blacklock played a leading part in obtaining the cast of Robert Burns' cranium for phrenological purposes. One of the few casts now in existence may be seen at the Robert Burns Centre.

31. JOHN BLACKLOCK - on gravestone

THOMAS BLACKLOCK - contemporary

Though from a poor background. Thomas Blacklock was well-educated and was eventually ordained as Parish Minister at Kirkcudbright. He was blinded at the age of three, being a smallpox victim, and before the age of nineteen lost both his parents through a tragic accident. He was a good friend and great admirer of Robert Burns as well as being an excellent poet in his own right, publishing a small volume of Miscellaneous Pieces, which was highly acclaimed.

The stone appears to have been erected in memory of his father, John Blacklock, and the inscription reads :-

“Here drop, Benevolence, thy cordial tear!
A friend of human kind reposes here;
A mind content himself and God to know;
A heart with ev'ry virtue form'd to glow;
A soul superior to each mean disguise;
Truth's sacred voice and Pity's melting eyes.
Beneath each pressure uniformly great;
In life untainted, unsurprised by fate;
His God beheld his suffering worth sincere,
And bade it shine in Heaven, it's genuine sphere!”

34 THOMAS WHITE

This stone was erected by friends and pupils of Thomas White, who was a highly regarded mathematician and taught at Dumfries Academy for forty years. A man who was held in great esteem by all who knew him, he taught the sons of Robert Burns and also John Richardson, later Sir John Richardson the great explorer.

35. JAMES McNEIL

Although he was not a cronie of Robert Burns, Mr McNeil's sister, who acted as his housekeeper, used to remark that 'she aye kend ticht weel when her brother had been spending his nichts wi' the Poet.'

36. MARY McLAUHLAN

Mary, the wife of Andrew Nicholson, a shoemaker, when young, was in the service of James McClure, a letter carrier mentioned earlier. She was, in later years, the devoted attendant of Robert Burns on his death-bed, and also gave valuable assistance to Cromek when that indefatigable collector was preparing his 'Reliques of Burns.' In 1813, Jean Armour took Mary into her own household, and, finding her sensible and trustworthy, treated her more as a companion than as a dependant. On Mary's marriage to Andrew Nicholson, Jean gave them six chairs – one of which can be seen in Burns' House today.

37. SAMUEL CLARK(E) ???

Samuel Clark(e) was conjunct Commissary Clerk and Clerk of the Peace for the County of Dumfries. His remains lie behind the rear of the Church. He was a friend of Robert Burns to whom the Poet wrote on one occasion following the night when he, Burns, had expressed a political opinion to the annoyance of a certain Captain Dods.

38. MAXWELL'S VET'RAN CHIEF

Burn's famous lines to Maxwell were written on the latter's 71st birthday

"But for thy friends – and they are mony,
Baith honest men and lassies bonnie –
May couthie fortune kind and cannie,
In social glee,
Wi' mornings blythe and e'enings funny
Bless them and thee. "

39. MRS JOHN McMURDO (JANE BLAIR)

Jane was the wife of John McMurdo AND DAUGHTER OF Provost Blair. While at Ellisland, Robert Burns wrote to Jane in appreciation of kindness shown on a previous visit. To Jane's daughter, Jean, Burns wrote:-

"There was a lass and she was fair,
At Kirk and market to be seen;
When a' the fairest maids were there
The fairest maid was bonnie Jean"

40. DAVID NEWALL

David Newall was a friend of Robert Burns. There is not much on his headstone, unlike many other memorials in the Churchyard, in fact it is singularly unique in its simplicity.

41. WILLIAM CLARK

Very little is known about William Clark, but he was Provost of Dumfries from 1786 to 1788 -- the period just prior to Robert Burns' arrival in the area.

42. WILLIAM THOMSON

Thomson was a gentleman of high moral worth and culture, who became Provost of the Burgh in 1824. It was to Thomson that Burns consigned his present of "De Holme on the British Constitution." Again he was a friend of Robert Burns.

43. CROSBIE OF HOLM

The headstone commemorating the Crosbies of Holm, near the entrance gate, is, unfortunately now rather broken. Robert Burns often used to direct his course to their house when it was occupied by Robert Riddell and his accomplished wife, Maria Woodley. Burns was, for a long time, on intimate terms with Maria.

44. MRS DAVID McCULLOCH (JANET McCULLOCH)

Janet was the wife of David McCulloch, whom Burns trusted to accompany him when he made the tour of Galloway. The 'Laird of Ardwall,' as David was known, administered a practical rebuke to those who, in Robert Burns' darkest days, were for ignoring him in the High Street of Dumfries, he did this by greeting the Bard with the utmost cordiality and accompanying him to his house.

45. ALEXANDER DOUGLAS.

Alexander Douglas was a merchant and also a friend and contemporary of Robert Burns. His father was a wig maker in Dumfries.