

January 20, 2021



The Thistle

UPDATE

CELEBRATING BURNS.



Stay Safe. Stay Connected. Stay Scottish.

Who Was Robert Burns?

The eldest of seven children and the son of poor tenant farmers, Robert Burns was born in 1759 on a dark, windy January night in the village of Alloway in Ayrshire.

His father recognised the importance of education and so Robert, along with his brother Gilbert, was locally schooled as well as working on the family farm. There were signs of his greatness from an early age; as a boy he became an avid reader and developed a flair for writing.

By the age of 15 he'd penned his first love poems, written to the daughter of a neighbouring farmer. Throughout his life, women were one of his greatest passions and inspirations, with hundreds of lines of verse dedicated to the fairer sex. Burns went on to father 12 children, nine with his wife Jean Armour.

For Burns, it was with the publication of his first printed collection *Poems, Chiefly in the Scottish Dialect* that he rose to fame. Later known as the *Kilmarnock Edition*, this work was published in 1786. It made a considerable impression on Edinburgh's literary elite, and from then on his writing career flourished.

A Brief History Of Burns Night

Nine of the poet's friends decided to gather in the cottage where he was born in Alloway on the 21 July, the date of his death. The party's intention was to 'offer tribute to the memory of departed genius'.

The first Burns club was founded in Greenock in 1801 by a group of Ayrshire-born merchants, some of whom had personally known Burns. The group made the decision to honour the Bard on what they thought was the anniversary of his birthday on January 29, 1802. However, the following year they discovered in Ayr Parish Records that the true date was in fact January 25. Since then, celebrations have taken place on, or around, the historic day of Robert Burns' birth.

Across the pond, Burns Suppers became not only

a celebration of Scotland's National Bard, but of other aspects of Scottish culture. Scottish societies had already been established in many towns and cities and they would often run social events, but other cultural flourishes began to be incorporated into Burns Nights. Scottish music, especially bagpipe music, whisky, and the presence and wearing of tartan all quickly became synonymous with the makings of a great Burns Supper.

Today, countless Burns clubs and societies exist, some of which can trace their origins back to the 19th century. These groups of enthusiasts continue the great annual tradition of Burns Suppers, keeping the memory of Scotland's Bard and his works alive.

Robert Burns lived, and died, during the golden era of the British Empire. Through emigration and trade, Scots were making their presence felt in all corners of the globe. As they travelled, so did their customs.

The first Burns Supper held outside of Scotland was thought to have taken place in Oxford in 1806, and it was not long before Burns Nights were being exported overseas. Records show that in 1812, officers in the Royal Scots in India threw an event, and in the US and Canada, it is thought that suppers have been held since 1820.

Each Burns Supper Is Individual, But The Running Order Goes Roughly Like This (the short version):

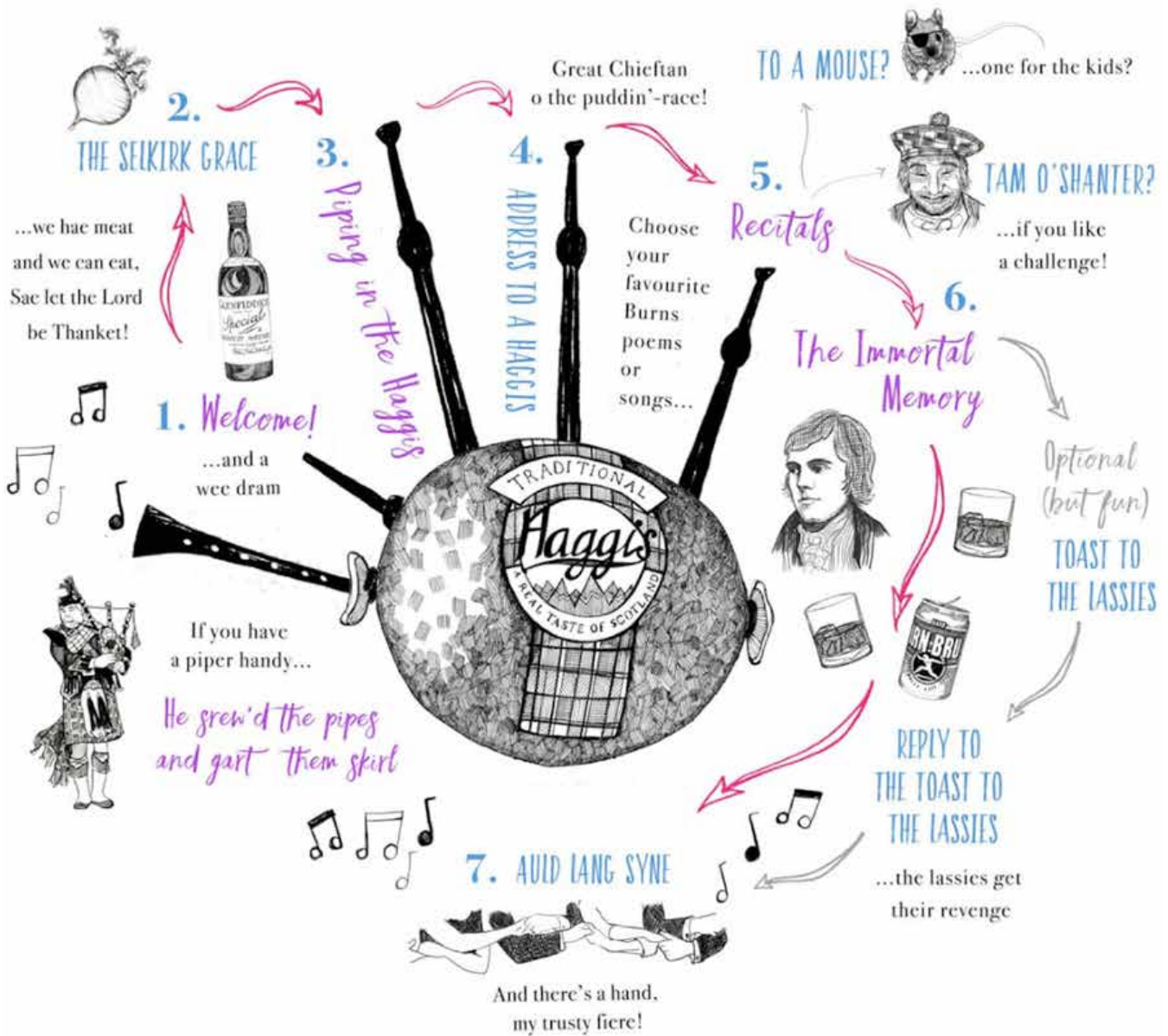
To start – everyone gathers, the host says a few words, everyone sits and the Selkirk Grace is said.

*Some hae meat and canna eat,
And some wad eat that want it,
But we hae meat and we can eat,
Sae let the Lord be Thankit!*

The meal – the starter is served, the haggis is piped in, the host performs Address to a Haggis, everyone toasts the haggis and the main meal is served, followed by dessert.

After the meal – the first Burns recital is performed, the Immortal Memory (the main tribute

How to throw a BURNS SUPPER at home...



speech to Burns) is given, the second Burns recital is performed, then there's a Toast to the Lassies, followed by a Reply to the Toast to the Lassies, before the final Burns recital is performed.

To end the night – the host gives a vote of thanks, everyone stands and sings Auld Lang Syne, crossing their arms and joining hands at the line 'And there's a hand, my trusty fere!'.

But remember – if you hold your own, you can follow as much or as little of this running order as you like. You could even make your own additions – hold a quiz, play an epic Scottish Spotify playlist, add a ceilidh, include a treasure hunt – we don't think Robert Burns would mind at all, as long as you're having fun!

Traditional Burns Night Order (the long version):

1. PIPING IN THE TABLE

For formal gatherings, start the evening with a blast of the bagpipes and have your top table guests piped in. If hosting a more casual supper, play some Scottish music, traditional bagpipe music or your favourite contemporary Scottish band as your guests arrive. If you're feeling particularly enthusiastic, clap along to the tune as your guests take their places.

2. WELCOME

With the guests all present, the selected chairman or speaker takes the role of Master of Ceremonies for the evening – if it's a formal occasion, a chairman may be specially appointed, while the host usually carries out this job at informal gatherings. Firstly, everyone is welcomed to the Burns Supper. Then the chairman introduces the top table and any other speakers and entertainers before reciting *The Selkirk Grace*.

3. PIPING IN THE HAGGIS

The audience should rise to their feet to greet the 'great chieftain o' the puddin' race' as it is ceremoniously piped in. At traditional Burns Suppers, the chef follows the piper into the room, carrying the haggis in on a silver platter. The speaker who will address the haggis follows at the tail of the procession.

4. ADDRESSING THE HAGGIS

The appointed speaker now delivers a rousing rendition of Burns' Address to a Haggis. After apologizing for 'killing' the haggis, he, or she, will then dramatically plunge the knife into the haggis. The meaty pudding is sliced open during the line 'An' cut you up wi' ready slight' which translates as 'and cut you up with skill'.

As the speaker recites the final lines of the poem, the platter is raised above their head whilst saying the exultant words 'Gie her a Haggis!' to rapturous applause.

ADDRESS TO A HAGGIS

*Fair fa' your honest, sonsie face,
Great chieftain o' the pudding-race!
Aboon them a' yet tak your place,
Painch, tripe, or thairm:
Weel are ye worthy o'a grace
As lang's my arm.*

*The groaning trencher there ye fill,
Your hurdies like a distant hill,
Your pin was help to mend a mill
In time o'need,
While thro' your pores the dews distil
Like amber bead.*

*His knife see rustic Labour dight,
An' cut you up wi' ready sleight,
Trenching your gushing entrails bright,
Like ony ditch;
And then, O what a glorious sight,
Warm-reekin', rich!*

*Then, horn for horn, they stretch an' strive:
Deil tak the hindmost! on they drive,
Till a' their weel-swail'd kytes belyve
Are bent like drums;
Then auld Guidman, maist like to rive,
Bethankit! hums.*

*Poor devil! see him owre his trash,
As feckles as wither'd rash,
His spindle shank, a guid whip-lash;
His nieve a nit,
Thro' bloody flood or field to dash,
O how unfit!
But mark the Rustic, haggis-fed,
The trembling earth resounds his tread.
Clap in his walie nieve a blade,
He'll mak it whissle;
An' legs an' arms, an' hands will sned,
Like taps o' trissle.*

*Ye Pow'rs, wha mak mankind your care,
And dish them out their bill o' fare,
Auld Scotland wants nae skinking ware
That jaups in luggies;
But, if ye wish her gratefu' prayer
Gie her a haggis!*

5. TOAST TO THE HAGGIS

The speaker then calls for the guests to toast the haggis and everyone, including the chef, raises their glasses and shouts 'The Haggis' before enjoying a dram.

The haggis is then piped back out to be prepared for dinner.

6. THE MEAL

Haggis, neeps, tatties and beef, chicken or pasta (for our vegetarians plus other wonderful Scottish dishes and desserts to serve to your guests.

Traditionally, the speeches and other performances of poems and songs take place after the meal has been served and cleared. If holding an informal supper, you might want to plan some poetry readings or songs to take place in between courses.

7. FIRST ENTERTAINER

The Chairman introduces the first entertainer who then recites one of Burns' songs or poems. Popular choices include *A Red, Red Rose* or *Tam O' Shanter*.

8. THE IMMORTAL MEMORY

The main speaker is introduced and gives an insightful speech on the life and legacy of Robert Burns. The speech should be witty in style, but also inspiring, and include topics like Burns' literary prowess, politics, nationalistic pride in Scotland, character flaws and humour. The speaker concludes with an invitation to join in a heart-felt toast: 'To the Immortal Memory of Robert Burns'.

9. SECOND ENTERTAINER

At this point, another of Burns' works may be recited. If you're lucky enough to know some musicians, one of his songs could be performed with musical accompaniment, or even sung a capella.

10. TOAST TO THE LASSIES

This jokey speech should be written especially for the evening in advance. The discourse should gently ridicule the (few) shortcomings of women, with the aim to amuse both sides of the audience – 'observations' therefore should not be too cutting! Despite the light air of mockery, the speech ends on a positive note with the speaker asking the men to raise their glasses in a toast 'to the Lassies'. Here are a few quotes from Rabbie himself to

inspire your Toast to the Lassies, but remember – for impact, mention the ladies present in the room at your Burns Supper, to make for a more meaningful toast.

THE GOWDEN LOCKS OF ANNA, 1791

*She is the sunshine o my e'e
To live but her I canna
Had I on earth but wishes three,
The first should be my Anna.*

THE RIGHTS OF WOMAN, 1792

*But truce with kings, and truce with constitutions,
With bloody armaments and revolutions;
Let Majesty your first attention summon, Ab! ca ira!
The Majesty of Woman!*

A RED, RED ROSE, 1794

*My love is like a red, red rose
That's newly sprung in June:
My love is like the melody
That's sweetly played in tune.*

AE FOND KISS, 1791

*Ae fond kiss, and then we sever,
Ae fareweel, alas, for ever!
Deep in heart-wrung tears I'll pledge thee,
Who shal say that Fortune grieves him,
While the star of hope she leaves him?
Me, nae cheerful twinkle lights me,
Dark despair around benights me.*

*But to see her was to love her,
Love but her, and love forever.
Had we never lou'd sae kindly,
Had we never lou'd sae blindly,
Never met - or never parted -
We had ne'er been broken hearted.*

11. REPLY TO THE TOAST TO THE LASSIES

Now a female speaker can retort with some good-natured jokes of her own about the male species. The speech usually begins with a sarcastic note of thanks on behalf of the women present for the previous speaker's 'kind' words, before giving a spirited response highlighting the foibles of man. Often, references to Burns and the women in his life are included in this speech. Like the previous toast, the speech finishes on an upbeat note. After the toast, the opportunity for the ladies to

have their say presents itself and a female speaker will retort with a few good natured jokes of her own.

The speech will include a sarcastic thanks on behalf of the women present and it will thank the speaker for the 'kind' words, before giving a lively response highlighting the foibles of the male race, using references to Burns. Again, this speech finishes on a positive note.

Burns was not afraid to point out some of man's weaknesses, from drinking and debauchery to being frequently distracted by 'bonnie lassies'.

Ladies, get back with a little help from Rabbie.

MY BONY MARY, 1788
*Go fetch to me a pint o' wine,
And fill it in a silver tassie,
That I may drink, before I go,
A service to my bonie lassie.*

THE BELLES OF MAUCHLINE, 1974
*Miss Miller is fine,
Miss Markland's divine,
Miss Smith she has wit,
and Miss Betty is braw:
There's beauty and fortune
to get wi' Miss Morton,
But Armour's the jewel
for me o' them a'.*

O GUDE ALE COMES AND GUDE ALE GOES, 1795
*Gude ale gars me sell my hose,
Sell my hose, and pawn my shoon,
Gude ale keeps my heart aboon.*

TAM O' SHANTER, 1791
*O Tam! had'st thou but been sae wise,
As ta'en thy ain wife Kate's advice!
She tauld thee tweel thou
was a skellum,
A blettering, blustering,
drunken blellum,
That frae November till October,
Ae market-day thou was nae sober,*

12. FINAL ENTERTAINER/CEILIDH DANCE
The last entertainer pays homage to Burns with a final song or reading. Some formal Burns Suppers will also include a traditional ceilidh, a series of Scottish dances which usually include the Gay Gordons, Strip the Willow and The Dashing White Sergeant. The music is provided by a ceilidh band who perform upbeat, jaunty tunes using instruments such as the accordion, the fiddle and the drums.

13. VOTE OF THANKS
The chairman says a vote of thanks to everyone who has made the evening such a roaring success, from the chef and speakers to the guests.

14. AULD LANG SYNE
The Burns Supper is brought to a close with the tradition of singing Burns' most famous song, Auld Lang Syne. All the participants in the evening join hands in a large circle and sing the words in unison. At the line 'And here's a hand', you cross each of your hands over and clasp the hands of those standing on either side of you.

A few simple Scottish recipes to accompany your dinner

If you can't have haggis for Burns Night, a beef dish would be okay. To make the meal more Scottish, you can prepare a simple dish to go along with. These recipes are from Visit Scotland that has many traditional and modern Scottish dishes (including desserts) <http://ebooks.visitscotland.com/recipes/traditional-recipes>

Cock-a-leekie Soup

Tip: Make sure you simmer gently otherwise the chicken will become tough. For a richer taste, you can sauté the chicken in butter until golden first before boiling.

2½ pints of water
1 medium free-range chicken
12-15 stoned prunes (optional)
2 large leeks sliced and washed
Seasoning

1 Break the chicken into jointed pieces. Pop into a pan of water and bring to the boil. Skim off the white residue with a ladle and reduce heat to a gentle simmer. Cook for half an hour.

2 Add half the leeks and all the prunes. Season with salt and pepper. Simmer for another hour and half and then add the rest of the leeks. Now simmer for another half hour.

3 Carefully take out the chicken from the pan. Leave to cool before removing the skin. Take the meat from the chicken and shred into pieces.

4 Add the chicken to the pan and heat. Season to taste and serve.

Cullen Skink

1 tbsp olive or vegetable oil
1 leek, well-rinsed, chopped and cut into roughly 3/4" cubes
4 cups fish stock
7 oz waxy potatoes, peeled and cut into roughly 3/4" cubes
3/4 cup undyed smoked Scottish haddock fillet
1 bay leaf
Freshly ground pepper
2 tbsp whipping cream
Chives, roughly chopped

1 Warm the oil in a pan. Add the chopped leek, cover and gently cook for a few minutes until soft. Add the stock, bay leaf, potato and haddock. Season lightly with black pepper. Bring to the boil and simmer for 15 minutes.

2 Remove the haddock from the pan with a slotted spoon. When the fish is cool enough to handle, remove any skin and bones, then flake the haddock back into the pan.

3 Blend a ladle full of the soup in a liquidizer and return to the pan. Stir in the double cream and simmer for another 2-3 minutes. Add more black pepper if necessary, then sprinkle with the chopped chives and serve.

4 Serve with chunks of fresh wholemeal or granary bread.

Scotch Broth

Prep time: 30 mins | Cooking time: 2-3 hours

2¼ cups chicken stock
1 carrot, diced
1 onion, diced

1 stick of celery, diced
1 leek, diced
A sprig of thyme

1 In a thick-bottomed pan melt the butter and add all the vegetables.

2 Sweat all the veg and add the chicken stock.
3 Add the barley and place on a low simmer for 2-3 hours with a sprig of thyme.

4 Serve piping hot.

Scottish plans for a virtual celebration of Scotland's national bard in the new year have been unveiled.

The **Big Burns Supper** (usually held in Dumfries) will be staged online and hosted by comedian Janey Godley.

Organisers said the special broadcast on January 25 will also include KT Tunstall, Dougie MacLean and Donovan.

It will celebrate Robert Burns but also hopefully give everyone a "much-needed lift and a laugh".

Due to Covid restrictions, the **Big Burns Supper** will take place via the event's Facebook and YouTube channels in Scotland at 7pm (11am Minnesota on January 25).

Executive producer, Graham Main, said: "It doesn't matter where you are on Burns Night, tune in online and raise a glass to the world for Auld Lang Syne.

"We started the festival 10 years ago because we thought Burns Night had the potential to grow, and this free show is our thanks to the community, artists and audiences who have supported us to do just that over the last 10 years."

From a journal by Jim Parsons to his daughter Evva, in the entry for February 2, 2009:

Mom and I went to the Robert Burns Night dinner on Saturday at the old Thunderbird Motel in Bloomington, now the Ramada Inn-Mall of America.

Our minister David attended the dinner at my suggestion and he brought as his date, a woman who last year was a Shamrock Princess in the St. Patrick's Day parade. Her name is Erin and she must be into things Celtic, or very tolerant, because a Burns Night dinner features elements most young women are none too fond of: bagpipe music, recitations of semi-intelligible poetry in Scots... and haggis.

There were some real Scots imported to give the address to the lassies (a man from Glasgow) and the address to the ladies (a rather younger woman from Glasgow). They both had that British/Scottish wit, a bit dry, twinkle in the eye, and nice, Glaswegian accents, very pleasant to listen to.

The Macalester College pipe band was playing and I was getting a tingle on the back of my neck at the emotion expressed in their music, and I took a sip of my little dram of whisky, giving my tongue a burn, and between the tingle and the burn I was momentarily feeling about as Scottish as I am able to feel.

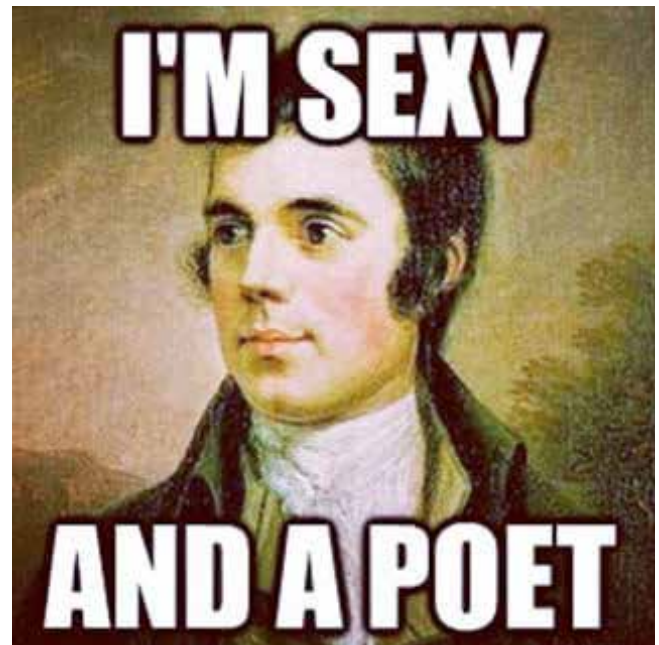
I just re-read Arthur Herman's *"How the Scots Invented the Modern World: The True Story of How Western Europe's Poorest Nation Created our Modern World and Everything in It"*. A modest little book that gives Scots their rightful place at the pinnacle of everything. It's written for a popular audience, but it's actually a 361 page, scholarly work.

Hogmanay Fun Read (if ye can)



A Wee Joke From Lewis (Chip) Combs

"She was but a Whisky-maker, but he loved her still."



Accept the Gift of Friendship - Sincere — Robert Burns