

The Remarkable Story of Camperdown's Robert Burns Statue

ROBERT BURNS

THE MAN
THE STATUE
THE STORY





But to see her was to love her,
 Love but her, and love for ever.
 Had we never loved sae kindly,
 Had we never loved sae blindly,
 Never met—or never parted,
 We had ne'er been broken-hearted.

from: Ae Fond Kiss

*Should auld acquaintance be forgot
 and never brought to mind
 seas A' between us, O my Luve's
 for auld lang syne. While the sands
 O my Luve's like a red, red rose,
 that's newly sprung in June,
 O my Luve's like a bottle and an honest friend
 that's truly for auld lang syne.
 As they fly woe, what peace
 is there the milder sun
 Had I a cave on some distant shore
 'twas all cold duty now allows
 Friendship, her blush
 Who, distant, burns in flaming torrid climes*

the
balmy
gales
the
flowers
O
wake
then
Believe
is
happiness
Sweet
early object
youthful vows
Once fondly

me
catch
the
weep
moment
as they fly
woes
what
peace
is there
the milder
sun
Had I a cave
on some distant shore
'twas all cold duty now allows
Friendship, her blush
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Robert Burns – Scotland's National Bard

Born at Alloway in Ayrshire in 1759, Robert Burns died in Dumfries at the early age of 37, yet in that short time, he had taken the Scottish literary world by storm and had secured himself a place in history and in legend.



The eldest of seven children, Burns spent much of his early years working on his father's farm and most of his education came from his father. From the age of fifteen, he was writing love poetry to whoever was the current love of his life, and by the age of eighteen, was proposing marriage – only to be rejected.

When his father died in 1784, Robert and his brother, Gilbert, struggled to keep the farm going but with little success and, two years later, Robert accepted an offer of employment as a bookkeeper on a slave plantation in Jamaica.

In order to pay for his passage to the West Indies, Burns published the first volume of his poetry, **Poems, Chiefly in the Scottish dialect** “by subscription”. It sold for 3 shillings and contained many of his best poems including “The Twa Dogs”; “Halloween”; and “The Cotter's Saturday Night”. The book, known as The **Kilmarnock Volume**, was an instant success and soon Burns' name was known all over Scotland.

He postponed his planned emigration to Jamaica and a year later, an enlarged second edition was published bringing him the amount of £400. He was feted by the Edinburgh literary elite and publicly recognised as a poet of great talent.

A prolific poet, he wrote in a Scottish dialect and in 'Educated English' and his poems were read by all – from farmer to aristocrat. He wrote about the countryside and its beauty, love and loss, friendship and parties, politics, philosophy, life and death.

The themes of his poems reflect his many passions such as Scottish patriotism, anticlericalism, republicanism and the curse of poverty as well as his delight in socialising with friends, singing, dancing and drinking. He was a strong supporter of equality between all people and became a determined opponent of the slave trade.



It was in sweet Senegal that my
foes did me enthral,
For the lands of Virginia, -ginia, O:
Torn from that lovely shore,
and must never see it more;
And alas! I am weary, weary O:
Torn from that lovely shore,
and must never see it more;
And alas! I am weary, weary O.

from: The Slave's Lament

Burns' style is marked by spontaneity, directness and sincerity, and ranges from tender love songs through rollicking humour and blazing wit as well as blistering satire.

Burns also wrote lyrics to more than a hundred songs, many of them adaptations of Scottish folk songs. His most famous is the well-known "Auld Lang Syne" which is still sung to welcome in the New Year and on many festive occasions.



In his personal life, Burns was a high-ranking member of the Freemasons and was received as an equal by Scotland's aristocrats and men of letters.

He was married to Jean Armour who bore him nine children, only three of whom survived infancy. However, his love of women led to various affairs and a number of children born out of wedlock.

In 1796, Burns died from complications after a dental extraction.

Known variously as "The Ploughman Poet", "The Bard of Ayrshire" or just "The Bard", Robert Burns is remembered through many Robert Burns Societies all over the world. Every year on his birthday, January 25th, somewhere in the world "Burns Night" is held with traditional feasting, poetry and songs.

**While there is still a Scot living in the world,
Robert Burns will not be forgotten**

My heart's in the Highlands,
my heart is not here,
My heart's in the Highlands,
a-chasing the deer;
Chasing the wild-deer,
and following the roe,
My heart's in the Highlands,
wherever I go.

from: My Heart's in the Highlands

Our Scottish Heritage

Scottish immigrants played a major role in the settlement and progress of Camperdown and district. They probably influenced the cultural heritage of the area more than any other ethnic group.

Scots began to settle in the district in 1839 and were amongst the first Europeans to arrive. Most Scots emigrated to escape the then harsh economic conditions in Scotland. Many paid their own way over. Others came as assisted immigrants, bonded to work for a while for the sponsoring farmer or business. In the 1850s and 1860s, another wave of Scots came in pursuit of gold. After trying their luck, many settled in Camperdown and district and resumed their usual occupations.

The Scots were better educated than most immigrants and included in their number highly skilled and experienced farmers, artisans and businessmen. They brought with them their traditions of art, music, dance and literature. Importantly, many of these Scots had a strong commitment to community service. Some became prominent and influential Shire Councillors. Others assumed leadership roles with the Presbyterian Church, the Freemasons, and on various other boards and committees.

Some of our notable Scots



Dr. Daniel Curdie

pioneer landholder,
Medical Practitioner,
naturalist, Shire Councillor



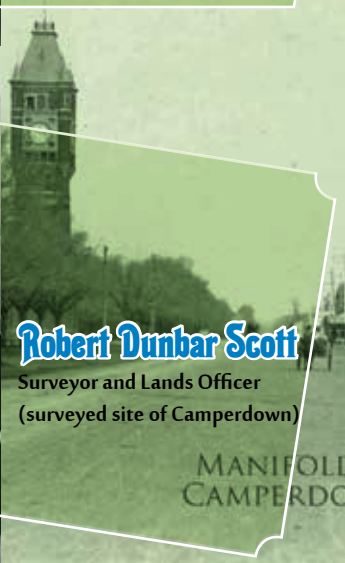
James Dawson

Guardian of Aborigines,
champion of Aboriginal
interests



Robert Dunbar Scott

Surveyor and Lands Officer
(surveyed site of Camperdown)



Camperdown – Named in honour of a Scot

Camperdown was named in honour of Scottish naval hero; Admiral Adam Duncan, Earl of Camperdown (1731–1804). The naming apparently came about this way:

In 1854, Governor Charles Latrobe was out kangaroo shooting with prominent Scottish settlers Niel Black of “Glenormiston” and Duncan McNicol. As they rode through the country occupied by the fledgling town, Black asked the Governor to suggest a name for it. The Governor replied; “I keep hearing you saying ‘Duncan this and Duncan the other’ (referring to McNicol), so you had better name it after him.” Black objected that Duncan was hardly a suitable name for a town. “Well” replied the Governor, “there was an Admiral Duncan, Earl of Camperdown – why not call it Camperdown?”



Flow gently, sweet Afton,
amang thy green braes,
Flow gently, I'll sing thee
a song in thy praise;
My Mary's asleep by thy
murmuring stream,
Flow gently, sweet Afton,
disturb not her dream.

from: Afton Waters

Camperdown's Robert Burns Statue

Camperdown's Robert Burns statue is believed to be the oldest surviving statue of Burns in the world.

So how did this wonderful old statue, crafted in Scotland, end up in Camperdown, Australia?

In 1786, the earliest known portrait of Robert Burns was painted from life by his good friend Peter Taylor. In 1829 the portrait was willed to William Taylor of Queensferry, a distant relative of the artist.

In 1830, William Taylor commissioned the eminent Scottish sculptor, John Greenshields, to carve a statue of Burns based on the painting. When William Taylor died in 1866, he left the statue to his son, William Andrew Taylor.

William Andrew Taylor immigrated to Victoria in 1876 and settled in Camperdown. He married a local girl named Isabella Dawson and they farmed a property overlooking Lake Bullen Merri, which they named "Renny Hill".

During a family visit to Scotland in 1882, William Andrew Taylor arranged for the statue to be shipped to Camperdown. Soon after it arrived in March 1883, Taylor gifted the statue to the people of Camperdown and it was erected in the Camperdown Botanic Gardens later that year.

The statue was mounted on a plinth designed by Scottish born architect, Alexander Hamilton. It stood there, facing east, for over 125 years.

Vandalism & Restoration

The statue was already in need of restoration when one night in mid 2009, it was badly damaged by vandals. Staff from the Corangamite Shire Council immediately removed the statue from the plinth and moved it to a secure location.

In the ensuing months, Corangamite Shire Council worked closely with the National Trust of Australia to determine how best to restore the statue, and to raise the necessary funds. In the meantime, publicity about the significance of the statue and its plight attracted national and international attention. It was suggested by one commentator, that the statue should be returned to Scotland. This idea was swiftly rejected by the Council.

After extensive research, stone that closely matched the original was sourced from the Drumhead Quarry nearby Denny, Scotland. The owners of the Drumhead Quarry were so enthusiastic about the restoration that they generously donated the stone. The large block of stone arrived on the docks at Port Melbourne with a tartan ribbon tied around it in honour of its intended use.





Local businessman, Trevor Lee, made space available at his Manifold Street premises for restoration work on the statue. Through the shop front window, passers-by were able to watch the work slowly progress. Sculptor, Smiley Williams, and skilled stonemasons from Cathedral Stone in Melbourne, worked throughout 2011 to meticulously restore the statue to its original appearance.

Local residents and Burns lovers the world over, urged Corangamite Shire Council to display the statue at a safe, indoor location. On the 27th January 2012, the restored statue of Robert Burns was unveiled at its new home in the foyer of the Corangamite Shire Civic Centre, Camperdown, by the Premier of Victoria, the Hon. Ted Baillieu MP.

The ceremony was attended by Burns admirers from all over Australia as well as from overseas. Special guests included Belinda Treseeder, an eighth generation direct descendant of Robert Burns; a family member of the owners of the Drumhead Quarry, and descendants of the sculptor, John Greenshields.

Also present were a number of local descendants of William Andrew Taylor.



Some hae meat and canna eat,
And some wad eat that want it,
But we hae meat and we can eat,
And sae the Lord be thankit.

The Selkirk Grace

Awakening & Celebration

Ironically, the vandalism of the Robert Burns statue in 2009 has had some very positive outcomes.

The extensive publicity about the statue has drawn international attention to this treasure that has quietly resided at Camperdown for over 125 years. Importantly, the publicity has awakened local community interest in the life and works of Robert Burns, and awareness of the immense contribution of Scots to the settlement and progress of Camperdown and district.





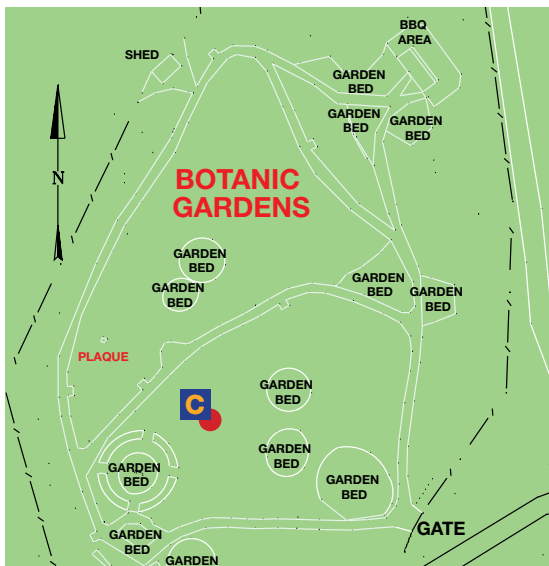
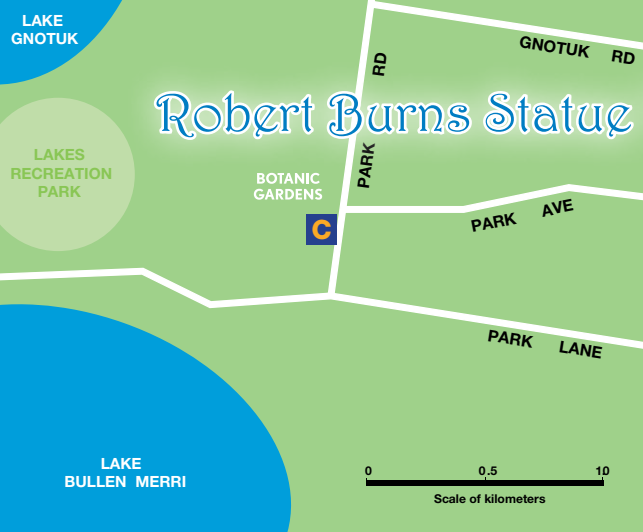
The Robert Burns statue has become a rallying point for the celebration of our Scottish heritage. In August 2012, the inaugural Robert Burns Scottish Festival was held in Camperdown. The festival is a celebration of Scottish music, dance and traditions, the lives of our many notable Scots, and of course, Robert Burns.

For information about Camperdown's Robert Burns Scottish Festival, go to the festival website:

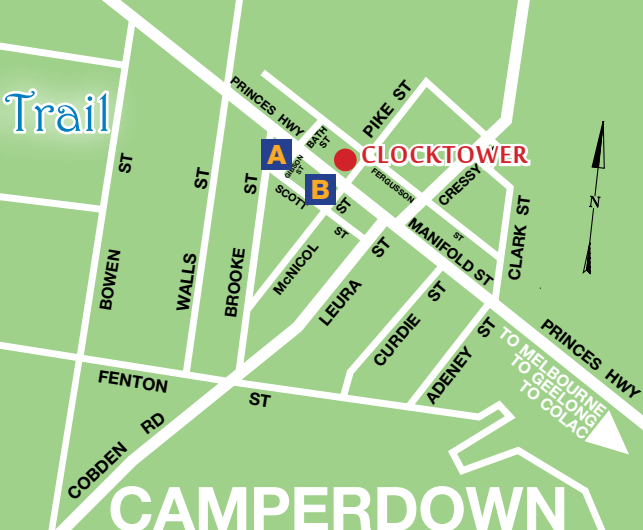
www.camperdownburnsfestival.com







Trail



A **Heritage Centre:** Records of Scottish settlers & the Robert Burns statue

B **Corangamite Shire Civic Centre:**
Home of the Robert Burns statue

C **Botanic Gardens:** Former home of the
Robert Burns statue, 1883-2009





Auld Lang Syne

Should old acquaintance be forgot,
and never brought to mind?

Should old acquaintance be forgot,
and old lang syne!

CHORUS:

For auld lang syne, my dear,
for auld lang syne,
we'll take a cup of kindness yet,
for auld lang syne.

And surely you'll buy your pint cup!
and surely I'll buy mine!

And we'll take a cup o' kindness yet,
for auld lang syne.

CHORUS

We two have run about the slopes,
and picked the daisies fine;

But we've wandered many a weary
foot, since auld lang syne

CHORUS

We two have paddled in the stream,
from morning sun till dine;

But seas between us broad have roared
since auld lang syne.

CHORUS

And there's a hand my trusty friend!
And give us a hand o' thine!

And we'll take a right good-will draught,
for auld lang syne.

CHORUS



CORANGAMITE
SHIRE

*Should auld
acquaintance be forgot
and never brought to mind
sear & between us
for auld lang syne*
O my Luve's like a red
red rose that's newly sprung in June
O my Luve's like a red
red rose that's newly sprung in June
is a bottle and an honest friend
then catch the weep
Believe me
happiness
Sweet early object of my youthful vows
Once fondly
O my Luve's like a red, red rose
Who, distant, burns in flaming torrid climes

*the
balmy
gales
the
flowers
O
awake
the
wings
as they fly
woes
what
peace
is there
the milder
sun
Had I a cave
on some distant shore
Friendship! her blush
'tis all cold duty now allows
Who, distant, burns in flaming torrid climes*

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www.camperdownhistory.org.au