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"Forget not your past, for in the future it may help you grow"

James M Barrie

Dear Fellow Members,

The above quote by Scots author James Barrie reminds me of a history teacher I had at school who always started the class by telling us, "Those who cannot remember the past are condemned to repeat it!" And he said this so often that I was convinced he must be originator of this particular pearl of wisdom. If truth be known, he said it so often I'm sure he was convinced that he actually originated the phrase. It was only much later that I learned the quote was attributed to Spanish philosopher, essayist, poet and novelist George Santayana (1863 – 1952).

Anyway, I remember when I first visited the Scottish Studies Department at the University of Guelph back in the early 1990s, I brought along a video camera and interviewed some of the graduate students while I was there. If I were to summarize the

single most important factor that seemed to have motivated these students to take up history, it was their hope that in some way it might just be possible for us to be able to figure out how our collective past mistakes might be avoided by future generations.

And so I think my old history teacher got it right. Not only can we learn from history – we must learn from history! And that is why we at the Foundation support the program at the University of Guelph.

At the Fall Colloquium last September, which celebrated the Foundation's 30th anniversary, the Foundation received much praise from everyone, and as the president, I was very honoured and grateful for that. But just exactly what is this Foundation or just as valid, where is it?

Well there are a couple of simple definitions we can look at:

First: A foundation is a stone or concrete structure that supports a building from underneath. Well, we don't have a building so that's not quite it. But the idea of it is still valid. You see, for a foundation to be effective – to do its job properly – it has to be strong and must be able to withstand the challenges that will inevitably occur over time.

The second definition is: An organization that is created and supported with money that people give in order to do something that helps society. OK ... that one fits much better. And indeed, it is through the generosity of all our members and supporters who have donated and continue to donate with contributions large and small to ensure that our Foundation has the strength to keep the Scottish tradition alive at the academic level here in Canada.



Scottish Diaspora Tapestry World Tour guide Jenny Bruce (left) in Toronto with Patricia Liddell Russell in front of the tapestry panel depicting her father Eric Liddell, the 1924 Paris Olympics gold medal winner of "Chariots of Fire" fame. Patricia lives in Oakville, Ontario. Following exhibitions in Victoria, Winnipeg, Wisconsin and Toronto, the tapestry continues on its North American journey and between now and December will be on display in Charlottetown, New Glasgow NS, Montreal and Ottawa.

But there's also a third definition and it's a more of a personal one for me. If you were to ask me to define what our Foundation is and where it is, my answer would be: "Look around!"

Our Foundation is people like you. People like you all across this country. People like you in the UK. People like you in the USA. People like you in Australia.

People like you who have a passion for history. People like you who are proud of the contributions that our Scots forebears made to this great country. People like you who are proud of the role that Scots played in the enlightenment. People like you who wonder how such a small nation could have played such a large role in the industrial revolution and in the global move to modernity. People like you who treasure the culture and traditions of our glorious Scots heritage and desire to see it passed on to future generations.

So in thanking the Foundation it is you, and indeed all our members, who are being thanked. You are the strength of our foundation – the very rock upon which we totally rely.

So to each and every one of you, thanks again for all your support and encouragement and best wishes to you and your family.

Sincerely,
David Hunter



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Scottish Diaspora Tapestry arrives in Canada

*From the lone shieling
of the misty island
Mountains divide us,
and the waste of seas.
Yet still the blood is strong,
the heart is Highland,
And we in dreams
behold the Hebrides.*

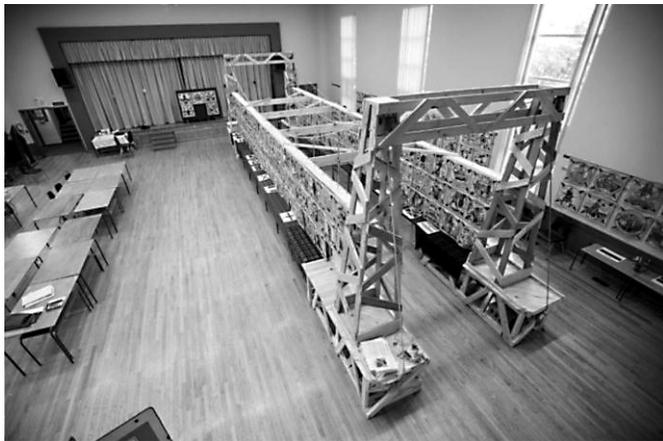
These emotive lines, written almost 200 years ago in tribute to our early pioneers, are from the *Canadian Boat Song* and encapsulate the strong connection that the people of the Scots diaspora throughout all parts of the world have with their homeland.

It is a connection that I was fortunate to see when the Scottish Diaspora Tapestry exhibit came to the St. Andrew's Presbyterian Church in Scarborough, Ontario last September. A tapestry created and brought to us as a result of a multiplicity of dedicated skill, effort, creativity and patience by people all over the world for people from all over the world living here in Canada to see and learn about the global legacy of Scots and their culture.

At the Foundation, through our contacts in Scotland, we had been following the evolution of the tapestry since its inception and it was gratifying to finally have it here in Canada.

At the exhibit in Scarborough I was also delighted to see the tapestry panels displayed by means of a unique and ingenious method designed by professional engineer Bruce McCowan who came up with the idea of building a wooden model of Thomas Telford's Menai Bridge, arguably the world's first modern suspension bridge spanning the Severn River between Wales and England.

It was so appropriate to see an engineering



At the Scarborough exhibit, three hundred and five panels of the Scottish Diaspora Tapestry cover Bruce McCowan's 36-foot model of the Menai Suspension Bridge which was designed and built by Scottish civil engineer Thomas Telford

solution to this – all too often the image of Scotland is portrayed only in terms of bagpipes and tartan and while that has a place, we should never forget that Scots engineering was at the epicenter of the industrial revolution and the global move to modernity. And I was so glad to see Bruce McCowan carrying on this tradition – using his engineering expertise to come up with this ingenious solution – not only was it totally practical but I couldn't help thinking that it was a metaphor for the major issues facing our world today. Just think about it – whereas others would have built a wall – St. Andrew's built a bridge. Now just how quintessentially Canadian is that?

David Hunter

Familiar Faces at Fall Colloquium

Thanks to the efforts of Scottish Studies Chair Dr. James Fraser and his team, this year's Fall Colloquium commemorated the 30th anniversary of the Scottish Studies Foundation and its relationship with the Guelph Centre for Scottish Studies. We were delighted that Ted Cowan and Graeme Morton travelled over three thousand miles from Scotland to be there; Katie McCullough came more than two thousand miles from Vancouver. Together with James Fraser and Elizabeth Ewan from the University of Guelph they formed an impressive lineup of speakers.

Ted Cowan was the former Director of the University of Glasgow's Dumfries Campus and Professor of Scottish History and Literature. From 1979 to 1983, Ted was Professor of history and chair of Scottish Studies at the University of Guelph. Ted delivered this year's Jill McKenzie Memorial Lecture which he titled *Caledonian Canada: Building the Foundations*.

Elizabeth Ewan is University Research Chair and Professor of Medieval and Early Modern Scottish History at the University of Guelph and gave a presentation on *The Scottish Collection in the Library of the University of Guelph*. With a PhD in History from the University of Edinburgh (1985), Ewan is an expert in medieval and early modern Scotland,



Scottish Diaspora Tapestry World Tour guide Jenny Bruce with engineer Bruce McCowan

focusing especially on urban history, women's history, and the history of crime.

Graeme Morton joined the University of Dundee in August 2013. In 2004 Professor Morton was appointed to the inaugural Scottish Studies Foundation Chair at the University of Guelph in Canada. As Director of the Centre for Scottish Studies, he promoted graduate research and writing and attended the odd Burns Supper or two. Coinciding with his appointment as Chair of Modern History at the University of Dundee in August 2013 he was appointed Adjunct Professor of History at the University of Guelph. Graeme presented a paper entitled *A Million Times Better: The Scottish Studies Foundation and the Spirit of Enlightenment*.

Katie McCullough is Director of the Centre for Scottish Studies at Simon Fraser University. Born and raised in Victoria, B.C., she completed her undergraduate degree in history at the University of Victoria and then pursued an MA in history and a PhD in modern Scottish history at the University of Guelph where she was very active with the Centre for Scottish Studies and in the local Scottish community. Katie's paper was entitled *Scottish Studies in Canada: Notes from the Pacific Northwest*.

James Fraser holds the position of Scottish Studies Foundation Chair at the University of Guelph. Prior to that, James was a Senior Lecturer in Early Scottish History at the University of Edinburgh. He is the author of *From Caledonia to Pictland: Scotland to 795* (Edinburgh University Press, 2009); *The Roman Conquest of Scotland: the Battle of Mons Graupius AD 84* (Tempus Publishing, 2005); and *The Battle of Dunnichen 685* (Tempus Publishing, 2002). James presented a paper explaining how the Scottish Studies Program evolved and its relationship with the Foundation.

The Picnic

Manitoba 1882

By Nellie McClung (1873-1951)

Frank Burnett, who was a natural leader, began to talk of a picnic early in the summer of '82, and he thought we should hold it at Millford beside the river. There could be tables set in the shade of the poplar trees, seats constructed, and a clearing made, which would make a permanent picnic ground.

A committee was formed and a program of sports arranged. There was to be a baseball game, married men versus single men; a pony race, an ox race, a slow ox race, and foot races. I was hoping there would be a race for girls under ten or that girls might enter with the boys. But the whole question of girls competing in races was frowned on. Skirts would fly upward and legs would show and it was not nice for little girls, or big ones either, to show their legs. I wanted to know why but I was hushed up. Still, I kept on practicing and tried hard to keep my skirts down as I ran. I could see it was a hard thing to do. In fact I could see my dress, which was well below my knees, was an impediment, and when I took it off I could run more easily. I suggested that I would wear only my drawers (we did not know the word bloomers). I had two new pairs, held firmly on my "waist" with four reliable buttons. My suggestion was not well received. Then I wanted a pair of drawers made like my dress, for that would look better than white ones with lace. Lizzie thought this a good idea, but Mother could not be moved. There was a stone wall here that baffled me. Why shouldn't I run with the boys? Why was it wrong for girls' legs to be seen? I was given to understand that this was a subject which must not be spoken of.

Mother was very concerned about food for the day. "Don't I wish I could make half a dozen good juicy pies!" she said. "There's nothing a man likes as well as a pie, but with no fruit, no eggs, no pumpkins, it's hard. Still, I am going to think out something. . . ."

Little did nine-year-old Nellie McClung realize that an idyllic riverside community picnic would trigger a sense that things were just not right with the conventions of the day and that running in races was not the only thing that girls were not allowed to do. It set her on a path to become one of Canada's most famous champions of womens' rights.

Well, one good thing anyway is, there will be no whisky drinking to spoil everyone's fun. We won't have that trouble for a while for there's no whisky in the country and if everyone felt as I do, there never would be any. I've seen too many nice times spoiled with it. Drunken men fighting and swearing in the street, and their women crying and trying to separate them. It was awful sometimes in Chatsworth – no fun for anyone, just bad times."

The picnic day was the loveliest sort of a day – bright and warm, yet cooled by a gentle wind, and the prairie on July the first with its sweet brier roses in massed bloom was a sight to remember. The buds were deep crimson and the blossoms graded in colour from that to pure white, according to their age. Orange lilies were just beginning their season, and being scarce were much prized by the young hunters. The strawberries had been killed with the frost in June, and having no fruit had sent forth a great crop of leaves. Saskatoon berries were reddening on their branches but would not be ready for a couple of weeks yet, though their unripe state did not keep us from trying to eat them; but their tastelessness dulled our enthusiasm.

Down by the river the tables were set, and benches from the boarding-house brought down for seats. There were raisin-buns and cinnamon rolls curled like snail shells, doughnuts, and cookies (ginger and molasses), railroad cake; lettuce cut up in sour cream, mustard, and sugar; cold sliced ham, home cured; and Mother had made half a dozen vinegar pies, using her own recipe. The filling of a pie is rather a delicate matter when you have no fresh fruit or eggs, but she made her filling of molasses and butter thickened with breadcrumbs and sharpened and flavoured with vinegar and cinnamon. Her one regret was that she had not the white of an egg to make a frosting, but we had no hens that year.

The great surprise of the day was the box of oranges that came from Rapid City, and a great bunch of bananas just as it came off the tree, held up before us by John Brown, the storekeeper. There were not enough to give one to each person, but we all had a piece, and what a disappointment that first taste of a banana was. It tasted like white flannel to



Nellie McClung

me. But there were people there who enjoyed them and that made me wonder. Bob Naismith did not like his bit either, but Mr. Burnett told us bananas were an acquired taste, and explained what that was. "One grew to like them," he said, whereupon Bob and I with this encouragement made another assault on the Saskatoon berries.

But in the barrel of supplies from Brandon was a wooden pail of chocolates, bell-shaped, black grocery chocolates, thinly coated with this new delicious substance, and filled with white cream candy which was soft, but not sticky. Two of these were our portion, and having eaten one, and found it to be like something one would dream of, but never taste, I tried to keep my second one to help me to meet some of life's vicissitudes. I might be crossed in love as the years rolled on, or lose my character or my money, and I knew this piece of magic held tightly in my hand would comfort me for one moment at least though all the world went wrong. But looking at my treasure I discovered it was melting and spreading and oozing out between my fingers. So, to save it I had to eat it. But made it last as long as I could, and licked my fingers so hard I almost took the skin off them in pursuit of the last drop of this unbelievable sweetness.

The seats from off the wagons were set around the place where the baseball game was played. The ball was a home made yarn ball, and the bat a barrel stave sharpened at one end, but it was a lovely game, and every one got runs.

There were enough provisions for supper, so we stayed on and ate again, and were sorry to see the sun going down in the west. There would be chores to do, cows to milk,

and pigs to feed when we got home, but no one cared. It was so good to get together. I believe my special joy in the day was to see my mother so happy. She had on her brown poplin dress, and because of the bright sun, wore a wide straw hat instead of her bonnet. Under the trees, at the table, she took off her hat, and her pretty brown hair curling over her ears made her look as young as any of the women. It was so good to see her talking and laughing, and making light of the hardships of the long winter. I suppose she was the oldest woman at the picnic, though she was not yet fifty, but a new country belongs not to age but to youth, and Mother seemed to advise all the younger women, and become a mother to all of them in their family cares.

At the supper the men began to tell why they came to the North-West (Easterners still called it that), and in almost every case it was to get land for their boys. One woman spoke up and said she wanted to come because she and her husband had too many relatives in Paisley, and they couldn't buy a fanning mill or a neck-yoke or a blackpot without the relatives knowing, and they would be sure to get a "dig" about it from some of them, and she dare not buy herself a hat even though it was with the butter and egg money, for some of Jimmy's relatives would say that Jimmy would die in the poorhouse because of her extravagance.

Everyone laughed and there was more fun about relatives and their inquisitiveness. And I remember one man said he hoped coppers would never come into use in Manitoba, for they had been a curse in Ontario. Mr. Hall, the minister, then spoke up and he hoped they wouldn't either; they were hard on the churches, but they served one good purpose: they made it possible for Scottish people to be generous. I knew my mother wouldn't like that, but she laughed with the others.

Coming home as we did at last, in the purple prairie twilight, we were very tired and happy, with the pleasant evening sounds around us, drowsy birds softly twittering, the distant rumble of wagons, dogs barking, cattle lowing, the western sky still barred with crimson, and bright edged clouds above us; we were sure that no neighbourhood had ever had a happier picnic.

"We have good neighbours, John," Mother said. "Friendly, jolly people. What a blessing! I thought I'd never find neighbours like the Lowerys, the Congers, the Charltons, and the Littles and the Blacks and Carsons, and Kingsburys, and Hemstocks; but these will be just as good to live with – and it's just as Mr. Hall said, picnics give us a chance to get acquainted. . . . It did my heart good to see Frank Burnett and George Motherwell bite into the vinegar pie. In another year we'll have hens and I'll make some lemon

pies that will melt in their mouths. Step up the oxen, George, the sun is down, and 'twill be nearly dark before we are home, and the cows will be at the bars, wondering where everyone is."

Then the conversation turned to Mrs. Dack, the woman who came west because of her numerous relatives. Mother thought it was a queer way for her to talk of her relatives, and maybe she was extravagant too – certainly her hat with its plumes looked very dressy. . . . Anyway it would have been better for her to let Mr. Dack do the talking when there were so many strange men present.

I couldn't see why, but I knew enough not to say so. ■

Nellie McClung

Canadian feminist, politician, author, and social activist

Nellie McClung took on numerous roles throughout her lifetime. Known as a teacher, temperance leader, suffragist, lecturer, politician, historian, wife, mother, and activist, McClung was also a famous writer, authoring numerous essays, articles and fifteen books. An active journalist and founder of several clubs, she was the Liberal member of the Alberta Legislature for Edmonton from 1921 to 1926.

The daughter of a Scottish Presbyterian mother, characterized by her stern seriousness, and a good-natured Irish Methodist father, Nellie Letitia Mooney was born in Chatsworth, Ontario, on October 20, 1873. Even at a young age, her independent spirit set her apart, and her gift for dramatic impersonation was getting her into trouble. One of the earliest uses to which she put this talent, was impersonating her mother's two aunts – much to her mother's displeasure.

Her mother-in-law introduced McClung to the Woman's Christian Temperance Union (WCTU) and stimulated her interest in women's rights when she canvassed unsuccessfully in the 1890s for suffrage petition signatures. Mrs. McClung also encouraged Nellie to write a short story for a magazine contest. The story became the basis for McClung's first novel, *Sowing Seeds in Danny*, which in turn became a national bestseller. Mrs. McClung also pushed Nellie into her lecture career, by helping to organize her first speaking engagement at a Winnipeg church. It was at the WCTU that Nellie first learned the art of public speaking: "I saw faces brighten, glisten, and felt the atmosphere crackle with a new power."

McClung's understanding of human nature affected her views on temperance issues and

feminism. Thus, when the First World War ended and the Great Depression deepened, McClung's concern for people and her inability to keep quiet propelled her into political activism. As she watched the Depression deepen with its "destruction of youth....sadder than the war," she publicly criticized the government for not rushing in with employment relief projects like home- and road-building and water conservation.

In 1921, when the United Farmers of Alberta (UFA) comprised the majority government, McClung was elected as a Liberal. She served five years and joined hands with United Farmers' cabinet minister Irene Parby on many pieces of social legislation. However, she was profoundly disappointed when her pleas for temperance legislation were ignored. "We believed we could shape the world nearer to our heart's desire if we had a dry Canada," she wrote later.

McClung was defeated when she sought re-election in Calgary in 1926. She never returned to politics, but devoted the next years to her family, community service, writing, and travelling. In 1939, she was appointed to the Canadian delegation of the League of Nations.

By then, she was involved in another first – making "persons" out of women. When Emily Murphy was appointed the first female judge in Edmonton in 1916, she was told on her first day in court that she had no right to be on the Bench – because women were not "persons" under the British North America Act of 1867. As the law stood, women could vote and run for office, but they were ineligible for the Senate because the word "persons" in the British North America Act was interpreted to refer only to men. During the following decade, Judge Emily Murphy, with McClung and three other prominent prairie women, fought battles through the Canadian Supreme Court right up to the Judicial Committee of the Privy Council in Britain. On October 18, 1929, they won their battle and women received the right to sit in the Senate.

McClung's life of achievement was impressive: first female member of the CBC Board of Governors (1936), Canadian delegate to the League of Nations (1938), public lecturer, and proponent of the Canadian Authors' Association. At the close of her eventful life she wrote: "In Canada we are developing a pattern of life and I know something about one block of that pattern....I helped make it...."

Nellie McClung died, at 78, in Victoria, British Columbia on September 1, 1951. Her gravestone reads simply: "Loved & Remembered" and is shared with her husband. On the 100th anniversary of her birth, an eight-cent stamp was issued in a belated tribute. ■

James Barke — a very individual man

By Ian Hunter

James Barke (1905-1958) was born at Torwoodlee, near Galashiels, in Scottish Border country, the fourth child of James Bark (1862-1937), dairyman, and his wife, Jane (b. 1866), a dairymaid, daughter of Thomas Gibb, ploughman. The family moved in 1907 to Tulliallan, Fife, which Barke, remembering his happy rural childhood, considered to be in effect “the land of my birth.” In 1918 they moved again, to Glasgow. Barke was educated at Tulliallan parish school and Hamilton Crescent public school, Glasgow. He trained as an engineer and worked for a Glasgow shipbuilding and engineering firm, becoming manager of its brickworks, while beginning his writing career. The recurrent theme of his early fiction is the sadness and bitterness of the empty valleys and glens, and of the men and women who had left, some moving to cities, some emigrating.

His first novel, *The World his Pillow*, was published in 1933, the same year he married Agnes (Nan) Coats; they had two sons.

Over his lifetime, he wrote about a dozen novels, including a five-volume cycle of novels on the life of Robert Burns, a giant enterprise which balanced his talent as a novelist with his own research into Burns's life and times.

Barke's most successful novel was *The Land O' the Leal*. Published in 1939, this ambitious book tells the story of Scotland over three generations of one family, spanning 1840 to 1940. The reviews were generous: one reviewer compared Barke to Sir Walter Scott; the *Times Literary Supplement* called *The Land O' the Leal*: “A memorable piece of work – from first to last it deals with the living stuff of experience.” The book had several re-printings and emboldened by this success, Barke set out on what he considered his life's work: a cycle of historically accurate novels that would tell the story of Robert Burns.

Volume 1: *The Wind that Shakes the Barley*, appeared in 1946. A note to readers states: “This is a novel; and since a novel is devised for entertainment it should be read for pleasure, or not at all.” Fiction, Barke explained, allowed him “a profounder spiritual and artistic truth” in portraying Burns than would either history or biography. Nevertheless he insisted upon the accuracy of his work: “The reader may care to know how far this fictional life of Burns adheres to historical fact. It does so much more firmly than biographies. This adherence to truth has cost me many pains

and confronted me with many difficulties. It would have been simple to have invented pleasing fictions. But facts are chieftains that winna ding [facts are fellows who will not be shaken]. The historical novelist must be historically accurate. The creative artist who cannot thus discipline himself rules himself out of court.”

The Wind that Shakes the Barley opens when William Burnes, late of Clochnahill, first met Agnes Broun of Maybole, and they planned a new life together in the “auld clay biggin” that William had fashioned by his own hand on the road leading south from the town of Ayr. This is now, of course, the famous “Burns' Cottage” maintained by the National Trust, which annually attracts visitors from all over the world.

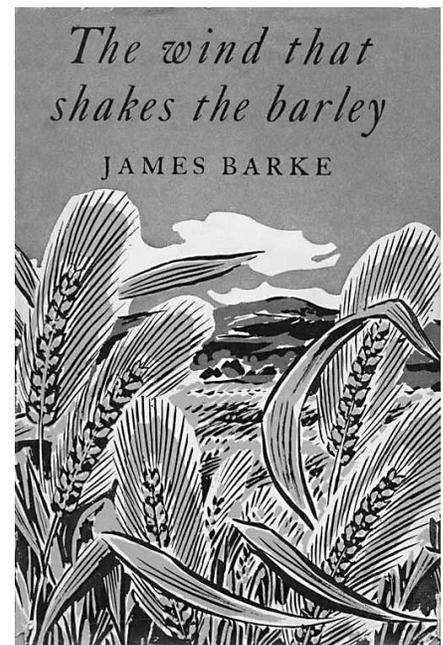
One of James Barke's gifts is portraiture; has any biographer better captured the core of William Burnes? “There was no meanness or hypocrisy about him and nothing of the canting moral humbugger of the Presbyterian bigots. Yet he was essentially and fundamentally Protestant. He stood alone before his God, inexorable and unbending even as his God was. Justice measured all his actions as he hoped for mercy. But laughter never broke the line of his purposeful lips. He had never – and with some reason – known anything in life to arouse laughter. And having no sense of humour saved him many a subtle heartache.”

Barke spends considerable time on the relationship between father and son; William, so anxious to provide a proper education for his sons, Robert and Gilbert; Robert, aware of his father's unimpeachable integrity and rectitude, yet chafing under the restrictions thereby imposed.

Barke opened my eyes to the influence of two individuals whom most biographers scant. First, Annie Rankine, daughter of Burns' Lochlie friend, John Rankine of Adamhill; it was this Annie who, “wi' sma' persuasion ... agreed to see me through the barley, O.” Of their subsequent *amours* Burns wrote:

*“I hae been blithe wi' Comrades dear;
I hae been merry drinking, O;
I hae been joyfu' gath'rin' gear;
I hae been happy thinking, O:
But a' the pleasures e'er I saw,
Tho' three times doubl'd fairly, O,
That happy night was worth them a',
Amang the rigs wi' Annie, O.”*

Another individual whom Barke brings to life is the sailor, Richard Brown, whom Burns first met in 1781 during his brief sojourn in Irvine where he had gone to learn the flax-dressing trade. Brown was six years older than Burns, and considerably more experienced in the ways of women. Brown encouraged Burns to consider himself a poet,



The first of James Barke's five-volume cycle of novels on the life of Robert Burns

firing the insecure young man's self-confidence. It was Brown who encouraged Burns to send his verses to a publisher.

Barke's second volume, *The Song in the Green Thorn Tree*, covers a critically important but comparatively brief period of the poet's life: from the death of his father in February 1784 until that memorable November day in 1786, when mounted on a borrowed pony and clutching his Kilmarnock edition, Burns made his way from the comparative obscurity of Ayrshire to the bright lights and literary salons of Edinburgh. This is the period of the poet's volcanic eruption into verse and song; a period of lusty expense of spirit in a waste of shame; the time of his wooing of the Mauchline belles; that brief romantic interlude with Highland Mary Campbell; and, of course, the beginning of the long courtship of the mason's daughter, Jean Armour.

Barke's *Preface to Volume 2* shows that he was worried about the Mariolaters of the Burns Federation who, a few years earlier, had practically crucified Catherine Carswell for daring to portray Mary Campbell as a flesh and blood woman rather than an ersatz saint. In a prefatory note Barke wrote: “I would like to assure the worshippers of Highland Mary (those peculiars of Burns hagiology) that my treatment of her has been determined by years of sifting through and mulling over all available internal and external evidence. I am far from claiming infallibility; but I unhesitatingly claim to respect her memory, both for herself and for her association with Burns, as deeply as anyone.”

What intrigued me most in Volume 2 was Barke's portrayal of the Mauchline "Holy Fair," the subject of one of Burn's early and justly famous satires. I had not previously realized that a "holy fair" was an annual preaching carnival, complete with midway, in which visiting divines displayed their wares by extempore preaching marathons. Rural folk flocked into the town for these diverting spectacles, a boon to pickpockets and young boys seeking adventure, a boon particularly to licensed houses, like *Poosie Nancie's* and to local whores seeking ready cash.

Barke writes: "At the main entrance to the kirkyard a preaching-tent was erected. The tent was a simple structure of wood and canvas and merely gave the preacher protection from the elements and served as a rostrum. ...the douce who liked their theology strongly laced with the astringency of Auld Licht doctrine were well served ...[The preacher] had a rare edge to his tongue and he used it to slashing effect. He lingered long and luridly on the terrible damnation that awaited the sinners and backsliders; and he painted the burning lake and the boiling brimstone in singeing simile and malodorous metaphor: tidings, indeed, of salvation. ...His tidings were of thundering and universal damnation for all but the elect – and even they were brushed aside with scant courtesy."

Barke imagines Burns being more interested in the wooing than in the preaching, saying to a friend: "It's a wonderful business; the sublime and the ridiculous hand in hand." Later Burns would immortalize this "bellyfu' o' brimstone" in *The Holy Fair*, concluding the poem:

*How many hearts this day converts
O' sinners and o' lasses!
Their hearts o' stane, gin night are gane,
As soft as ony flesh is.
There's some are fu' o' love divine;
There's some are fu' o' brandy;
And mony jobs that day begun
May end in houghmagandie!*

The third volume of the quintet, *The Wonder of All the Gay World*, published in 1949, is the longest, most prolix volume – at nearly 700 pages, or double the length of the others – yet it covers that comparatively brief span (November 1786 to March 1788) when the poet's star blazed above the Edinburgh literary firmament, illuminating all who came within its orbit. This volume displays both the strengths and limitations of James Barke's methodology; the author fills in, at considerable length, detailed conversations that the reader knows might well have happened, but the content of which, he knows equally, is forever lost. Even so, the wealth of detail is informative, and Barke

demonstrates a keen understanding of the Edinburgh *literati* who made such a fuss and fawned assiduously over the ploughman poet from Ayrshire, so that the reader learns much. Also, Barke devotes about a third of this volume to two periods generally ignored in the standard biographies: namely the poet's two tours of country, first to the Lowlands with his lawyer-friend, Robert Ainslie, the second to the rugged Highlands in company with the Latin-master and school teacher, William Nichol. Because these formative excursions tend to be overlooked or minimized in conventional biographies, Barke is able to say much here that is original and revealing about the poet's impetuous and generous nature. Awed by the rugged, desolate beauty of the Highlands, Burns wrote a poem that concludes:

*Here, to the wrongs of Fate half
reconciled
Misfortune's lightened steps might
wander wild;
And Disappointment in these lonely
bounds,
Find balm to soothe her bitter rankling
wounds;
Here heart-struck Grief might
heavenward stretch her scan,
And injured Worth forget and pardon
Man.*

Back in Edinburgh, Burns met James Johnson whose glorious idea it was to collect and publish the ancient Scots songs, songs of the common folk of centuries past – and who now had found, in Burns, a lyricist capable of supplying words equal to the music! Thus began their collaboration on what would eventually become six volumes of the *Scots Musical Museum*, a project that occupied, along with much else, the remaining years of the poet's life. This was also the time of Burns' first meeting with the Edinburgh grass widow, Agnes Maclehose, whom Burns called Clarinda, and whose abusive husband was far away in Jamaica; this was one of the most intense love affairs of Burns' tempestuous life, culminating in that unmatched song of parting *Ae Fond Kiss*.

When, after months of frustration, Burns finally prised his money for the sale (and copyright) of his Edinburgh edition of the Kilmarnock poems from the skinflint printer, William Creech, he returned to Ayrshire, to his family, and to Jean who had now borne him four children and three had died.

Burns next acquired the lease of a farm at Ellisland, situated on the Nith River near Dumfries, and there he duly went to build a house, a hovel really, in order to provide a roof over the heads of Jean and the one surviving bairn, his son Robert. It was while he was living alone at Ellisland and thinking

of Jean that Burns wrote lyrics to an old Highland tune: *Of A' the Airs The Wind Can Blow*; it was Jean whom Burns liked best to hear sing it:

*Of a' the airs the wind can blow
I dearly like the West,
For there the bonnie lassie lives,
The lassie I lo'e best,
There wild woods grow, and rivers row,
And monie a hill between,
But day and night my fancy's flight
Is ever wi' my Jean.*

The fourth novel, *The Crest of the Broken Wave*, opens in the year 1788, when Burns was 28; it deals with the three years (until 1791) when Burns lived and tried to farm at Ellisland, another period often scanted in biographies. These are the years when Burns settled in with his now wife, Jean Armour; when he wrote his longest poem, *Tam O' Shanter*, all 225 lines of which are said to have been composed in a single day as the bard strolled along the Nith River. *Tam o' Shanter* is a comic masterpiece of storytelling, but it also is tinged with melancholy:

*But pleasures are like poppies spread:
You seize the flower, its bloom is shed;
Or like the snow falls in the river,
A moment white – then melts for ever.*

The momentous year 1789 was when Burns finally obtained an excise commission – "Common gouger, searcher of auld wives clarty ale-barrels," as he put it; and the year of the French Revolution, the event that really opens the modern era and one that Burns loudly but anonymously encouraged from afar; it was also the year when he fathered his last bastard child, with Anna Parks, she of the golden locks at the Globe Hotel in Dumfries – a child that Jean graciously accepted into her home and raised as her own:

*Yestreen I had a pint o' wine,
A place where body saw na';
Yestreen lay on this breast of mine
The gowden locks of Anna.*

In this volume Barke writes of three years of struggle, of the poet's frequent and debilitating illnesses, and times of poetic genius. Burns is here displayed, as his friend Alexander Cunningham described him: "Not one man but a dozen men – and all of them remarkable."

The Well of the Silent Harp, published in 1954, completed the quintet. This book covers the last five years (1791-1796) of the poet's life, with Jean and now four bairns huddled together in two small and crowded rooms in Dumfries, on a street insalubriously but accurately called by locals "the stinking

vennel” because of a nasty open sewer that ran down the middle of the street and emptied into the Nith River as rainfall and drainage permitted. Why, oh why, one asks, did the gentry of Scotland allow their national poet to live in such squalor? That is a question to which no one has provided a convincing answer.

By January 1796 the poet was frail and ailing; rheumatism, aches and pains, debilitating fevers; as Burns wrote to a friend, “I have drunk deep of the cup of affliction.” At his doctor’s suggestion he tried sea bathing in the ice cold waters of the Solway Firth and that prescription almost certainly hastened his death. A seventeen-year-old serving girl, Jenny Lewars, came to nurse him in his final days; to her he wrote his last song:

*O wert thou in the cauld blast
On yonder lea, on yonder lea;
My plaidie to the angry airt –
I’d shelter thee, I’d shelter thee.
Or did Misfortune’s bitter storms
Around thee blaw, around thee blaw,
Thy bield should be my bosom,
To share it a’, to share it a’.*

Burns died on July 21, 1796. He was only 37 years old. Barke writes: “And the news reached Mossgiel; and the news spread out in a more widening circle from Dumfries. It reached Edinburgh; it reached down into England; it reached the north of Scotland; it reached Ireland. And wherever it reached, men stood still and wondered at the suddenness with which the immortal singer had been silenced...”

James Barke’s five novels sold well in hardcover, in paperback, and occasionally in boxed sets. They were re-issued as late as 2009 in a boxed set from Black and White publishers in Edinburgh. The books remain readily available (some 700 copies were available on Abebooks when last I checked).

Writing about Barke, author Moira Burgess listed his interests as “Scotland, piobaireachd (bagpipe music) and anything controversial.”

A friend wrote: “He was a man full of humanity, a very individual man. His novels are like him.” He was a committed socialist and his fourth novel, *Major Operation* (1936), argued the case for socialism at some length, while providing a striking impressionistic description of Glasgow in the depression years.

After an unsuccessful hotel-keeping venture in Ayrshire, Barke returned to live in Glasgow in 1955. He had been in poor health for some years and died, following a heart attack, in Glasgow Royal Infirmary on March 20, 1958. A private cremation four days later was followed by committal at New Kilpatrick cemetery, Bearsden, where C. M.

Grieve (the poet Hugh MacDiarmid) gave the funeral oration. Barke was survived by his wife.

Of Barke’s assessment of his own achievement I quote from the preface to the final volume: “My portrait of Robert Burns is unashamedly romantic and idealistic; but it is more solidly related to historical fact than any other portrait. This is not to say that it is the best portrait. Time has settled the hash of innumerable portraitists of Robert Burns; and it would be foolish of me to look for partiality where none has ever been granted. All I claim is that I have done the best I can for my generation. ...The last word has not been written about Burns – nor will it ever be.”

Ian Hunter is Professor Emeritus in the Faculty of Law at Western University. He is the author of “Robert Burns: A Tribute” (Elmwood Press, 2003).

On 'Theory of the Earth'

By Gausje Groote

In his *Sonnets from Scotland*, poet Edwin Morgan began to envisage a series of alternative Scotlands, both past and future, that symbolized the persistence and vitality of the culture. One of them brings together Scotland’s greatest geologist, James Hutton, and greatest poet, Robert Burns, by way of Burns’ evocative folk lyric, *A Red, Red Rose*, with its strange temporal perspective: “Till a’ the seas gang dry, my Dear, And the rocks melt wi’ the sun.”

James Hutton that true son of fire who said to Burns:

Aye, man, the rocks melt wi’ the sun was sure the age of reason’s time was done.

What but imagination could have read granite boulders back to their molten roots?

And how far back was back, and how far on would basalt still be basalt, iron iron? Would second seas re-drown the fossil brutes?

"We find no vestige of a beginning, no prospect of an end."

The final lines quote Hutton’s conclusion to his account of the earth’s geological processes in *Theory of the Earth* (1785), but in the context of the political failures of the 1970s and 1980s, their assertion became a reaffirmation of the value of the nation’s history to which Burns continued to be central and that refused to acknowledge the “prospect of an end.”

James Hutton and Robert Burns both lived in the Age of Reason, the eighteenth century. This era saw many philosophical and

scientific developments. Although here is no historic data showing that Hutton and Burns ever met, both men were well-known figures in Edinburgh society towards the end of the century.

Hutton (1726-1797) was a Scottish chemist and geologist, often referred to as the founder of modern geology. He was fascinated by the earth’s history and determined that rocks and minerals derived from a series of volcanic action and floods.

Hutton’s controversial and innovative book *Theory of the Earth* (1785) was an attempt to retrace earth’s history and the quote “We find no vestige of a beginning, no prospect of an end” is taken from this book.

The first line of Morgan’s sonnet refers to Hutton as “that true son of fire,” – a term often given to the devil – fire being associated with destruction, but also creation – the beginning of everything. Also, in the enlightenment, when reason was seen as one of the most precious virtues, someone renowned for deductive reasoning was also called “a son of fire,” a term which also appears in the poem *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell* by William Blake (1757-1827) a contemporary of Hutton and Burns.

In Morgan’s sonnet, after the first few lines in which the reader is introduced to Hutton and the “age of reason,” Morgan turns to Burns and these lines from *A Red, Red Rose*:

*And I will luv thee still, my dear
Till a’ the seas gang dry.
Till a’ the seas gang dry, my dear,
And the rocks melt wi’ the sun!
And I will luv thee still, my dear,
While the sands o’ life shall run.*

Burns expresses his love by comparing it to the beauty of nature, but in Morgan’s sonnet, the lines lose their value of conveying eternal love. Morgan only used those lines that are connected with nature, and in the sonnet the lines come to carry a completely different meaning. Morgan changes Burns’ romantic lines into Hutton’s scientific thoughts: “Aye, man, the rocks melt wi’ the sun.”

Morgan presents Hutton and Burns as typical examples of the Age of Reason. He stresses their mutual interests and questions in man’s position and function in the universe.

Although Hutton represents the scientific part of society and Burns stands more for the literary innovations, they have a lot in common. Morgan shows how both, Hutton and Burns, set an example for the “age of reason,” as did Blake, who always saw unity in contrasts. ■

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