

**Honorary members of 1863 –
The 14th Earl of Eglinton & Winton, Henry Glassford Bell, Thomas Carlyle,
Alfred Tennyson, Samuel Lover**

The 14th Earl of Eglinton & Winton (1841-1892)

The 14th Earl was young, only 21, and just married (December 1862), when Irvine Burns Club invited him to become an Honorary Member (an honour awarded to his father in 1837). Just over a year later, in 1864, he was awarded the freedom of the Royal Burgh of Irvine.

Archibald William Montgomerie succeeded to the Earldom at the age of 20, in 1861, becoming the 14th Earl of Eglinton, and 2nd Earl of Winton, as well as 3rd Baron Ardrossan and 15th Lord Montgomerie. His new wife was Lady Sophia Adelaide Theodosia Pelham, daughter of the 2nd Earl of Yarborough.

The young Earl revived social life at Eglinton following his father's absences as Lord Lieutenant of Ireland, and had a keen interest in the turf and in hunting. The Bogside races were revived in 1867 and the Scottish Grand National steeplechase was instituted. By the time of his death there were four annual meetings at Bogside. As a fox hunter, he rode at the head of the Eglinton Hunt for many years. In public life, the Earl served as a Deputy Lieutenant of Lanarkshire and also of Ayrshire.

His estates comprised nearly 24,000 acres around Eglinton, bringing in (in 1873) over £32,000 in rents and over £9,000 in mineral royalties. Losses in the Glasgow Bank crash of 1878 prompted him to sell Coilsfield and the original family property at Eaglesham. It was the era of coal mining in the area – he sank the Lady Sophia, Eglinton No. 1 pit, in 1883. Also in 1883, he authorised the removal of the rubble and rubbish which had accumulated in the ruins of Seagate Castle and had it trenched into the Low Green.

The Earl latterly had poor health and was due to spend the winter of 1892-93 on his yacht in the Mediterranean, but died in the late summer. He was survived by his four daughters. The Countess had died in 1886. The Earldom passed to his brother, George Arnulph Montgomerie (1848-1919).

Letter of acceptance, written from Eglinton Castle in January 1863

Sir

I beg to acknowledge the receipt of your letter of the 28th intimating to me the honour the members of the Irvine Burns Club have done me in electing me an honorary member & I beg you will convey to them my thanks for the Lithograph.

I am Sir

yours faithfully

Eglinton & Winton

Henry Glassford Bell (1803-1874)

Sheriff-substitute of Lanarkshire from 1839, Henry Glassford Bell had earlier made his name as a poet and writer. The author of several volumes of poetry, he had also produced a 'Life of Mary Queen of Scots' in 1830. From 1828 to 1831 he was editor of the 'Edinburgh Literary Journal', which enjoyed a brief but brilliant career. His many literary friends included others of our honorary members.

By the time of his nomination as an honorary member in 1863, Bell had become one of the most prominent citizens of Glasgow. As Dean of Faculties in 1865-68, he helped to raise funds for the relocation of the University of Glasgow to its new site on Gilmorehill in 1870. He was one of the originators of the Royal Scottish Academy. In 1867, he was appointed Sheriff-principal of Lanarkshire.

He is interred in the nave of Glasgow Cathedral, the first person in the 19th century to be buried there.

Letter of acceptance, written from the Sheriff Chambers, Glasgow on Jan. 30th, 1863

Sir,

I beg to return my best acknowledgements to the members of the Irvine Burns Club for the honour they have conferred on me in electing me an Honorary Member, & for the interesting lithographic facsimile of the "Cottar's Saturday Night" they have been so kind to send me.

I have always been aware that the Irvine Burns' Club holds a high place among the numerous patriotic Societies who delight in commemorating the genius of our great poet, the lustre of whose reputation no time will ever dim.

I am

Sir

Your very obed. Svt

Henry Glassford Bell

Thomas Carlyle (1795-1881)

By 1863, aged 67, Thomas Carlyle, the son of an Ecclefechan stonemason, had for three decades been a prominent member of a brilliant London literary circle including such as John Stuart Mill and Leigh Hunt. He knew German well, and corresponded with Goethe. Thackeray described his famous (or infamous) writing style as 'prose run mad'.

His prodigious output began with short biographies and articles in 1818 and went on to include the 'Life of Schiller' (1823), a translation of Legendre's 'Geometry' (1824), the novel 'Sartor Resartus' (1833), 'The French Revolution' (1837), 'Oliver Cromwell's Letters and Speeches' (1845, which made him famous) and, at the time of his Irvine nomination, 'The History of Frederick the Great' (1858-65). His marriage to Jane Welsh (a descendant of John Knox) in 1826 created a partnership of intellect and affection.

The years after 1863 saw fewer great works. His wife's death in 1866, while he was up in Scotland to take up the Lord Rectorship of the University of Edinburgh where he had studied, was a severe blow. Much was published after his death by his literary executor J A Froude, the eminent historian, whom Irvine Burns Club elected an honorary member in 1890 – his 'Life of Carlyle', 'Carlyle's Reminiscences' and 'Letters and Memorials of Jane Welsh Carlyle' provoked an extraordinary amount both of interest and of controversy. A statue of Carlyle was set up on the Chelsea embankment in 1882, and his house in Cheyne Row was opened to the public in 1895.

Carlyle is most remembered in Burns circles for his 'Life of Burns' published in 1828 (prompted by that of J G Lockhart). Reflecting the Bard's own comments on the importance of the Irvine stage in his career, Carlyle recognised this in his 'Life'. (He probably also thought back to his own 23rd year, when, mirroring Burns' 'hypochondriac complaint' of that period, he had himself suffered digestive disorders and a near mental breakdown and religious crisis.) On Robert Burns in Irvine, he wrote:

"By much the most striking incident in Burns' life is his journey to Edinburgh; but perhaps a still more important one is his residence in Irvine, so early as his twenty-third year. Hitherto his life had been poor and toilworn; but otherwise not ungenial, and, with all its distresses, by no means unhappy . . . But now, at this early stage, he quits the paternal roof; goes forth into looser, louder, more exciting society; and becomes initiated in those dissipations, those vices, which a certain class of philosophers have asserted to be a natural preparative for entering on active life."

Letter of acceptance, written from Chelsea on 1 Feby, 1863

Sir,

Will you be so good as to convey my thanks to the Gentlemen of the Irvine Burns Club for the interesting facsimile which I have just recd, and for the honour they have done me by Election to their Brotherhood. I beg to remain

Yours sincerely

T Carlyle

Notes:

The letter is addressed to Jas. Dickie, the Club's Hon. Secy.

Alfred Tennyson (1809-1892)

The pre-eminent poet of the Victorian age, Alfred Tennyson was appointed Poet Laureate (succeeding Wordsworth) in 1850 and became a great favourite of Queen Victoria. One commentator (Rachel Cooke, 2012) has written: It is sometimes difficult to believe how famous Tennyson once was . . the extravagantly bearded creature who succeeded Wordsworth as Poet Laureate was as well known as [a glamour model and media personality today] . . there were audiences with Queen Victoria (his neighbour in the Isle of Wight) who

found solace in the poet's verses 'In Memoriam' (1849) after the death of Prince Albert (in 1861) . . there was a visit from the great Italian liberator, Garibaldi, who (1864) planted a wellingtonia at the Tennyson home on the Isle of Wight . . and there was the funeral of Charles Dickens (1870) during which men lifted their children to catch a glimpse of the great poet over the heads of the congregation.

As a student at Cambridge, he won the chancellor's prize for poetry in 1829. Several volumes appeared in the 1830s, but his 1842 two-volume edition of his work contained some of his finest work and made his reputation. He was appointed Poet Laureate in 1850. In 1859, his 'Idylls of the King' finally established his fame and popularity; this volume contained a cycle of twelve narrative poems relating to King Arthur.

Although offered a baronetcy in 1865 and again in 1868, he declined on those occasions, but was persuaded by Gladstone to accept in 1883, and was created first Baron Tennyson in 1884.

Alfred, Lord Tennyson was the first Poet Laureate to be invited to accept honorary membership of the Club. When he died, the post was left open for a few years as no living poet was considered suitable (Rossetti was female; Swinburne was in poor health). All subsequent ones except Day-Lewis, whose tenure was short, have been invited.

It is possible that the contact for Tennyson may have been his friend Alexander Macmillan (1818-1896), who had been brought up in Irvine - Macmillans certainly published his 1849 volume of poems and probably published many others. The last years of Macmillan's life were spent in a house once owned by Tennyson. Macmillan's friendship with other authors, such as Kingsley, may have forged other links.

Letter of acceptance, written from Farringford (Isle of Wight) on Feby 9th 1863

Sir,

The fac-simile which you have been so kind as to send and the accompanying intimation of my election as an Honorary Member of the Irvine Burns Club have only just reached me. I beg to thank you for your kind gift and for the honour done me by the members of the Irvine Club.

I have the honour to be

Sir

Your very obedient servant

A. Tennyson

Notes:

The Tennysons had rented Farringford from 1853, and bought it in 1856, from the proceeds of publishing "Maud".

As noted above, he was at this date still plain A. Tennyson.

Samuel Lover (1797-1868)

There is no single obvious reason for the Club's nomination of Samuel Lover as an honorary member. We would have to guess at the publication of his collection of songs, 'The Lyrics of Ireland', in 1858.

Yet this would reflect only one of Lover's many gifts, shared between two islands - born in Dublin, he moved to London in 1835. He was a novelist - his best-known titles being 'Handy Andy, an Irish tale', 1842, and 'Rory O'More: A National Romance' (1836) . He was an artist (particularly of miniature portraits) - in 1832 Paganini, at the height of his popularity, was visiting Dublin and agreed to sit for Lover - Lover had already painted the Duke of Wellington and various of the Dublin nobility, but it was the marked success of the Paganini portrait which led to its display at the Royal Academy and Lover's permanent removal to London. He was a song-writer - his song 'Rory O'More' was the hit tune of 1837 - the New York Times (1880) records that "it immediately flew over the Kingdom, crossed the ocean, and made a circuit of the world, becoming a favourite in every city and village of Britain, America and the colonies". He was a musician and entertainer, appearing often at Lady Blessington's evening receptions, and his 'Irish Evenings' of sketches and songs were popular both in Britain and America. Here is a verse from Rory O'More:

Then Rory, the rogue, stole his arm round her neck,
So soft and so white, without freckle or speck,
And he look'd in her eyes that were beaming with light,
And he kiss'd her sweet lips; - don't you think he was right?
"Now Rory, leave off, sir; you'll hug me no more,
That's eight times to-day you have kiss'd me before."
"Then here goes another," says he, "to make sure,
For there's luck in odd numbers," says Rory O'More.

Letter of acceptance, written from The Vine, Sevenoaks, on February 19th 1863

Dear Sir

I have to request you to convey to the members of the Irvine Burns' Club my lively sense of the honor they have done me in electing me an honorary member of their fraternity. In a club constituted for the very purpose of honouring the memory of the great National Bard of whom Scotland is so justly proud, such a mark of recognition is a most gracious and very touching compliment, a compliment I feel deeply, & for which I return sincere thanks. Beyond the borders of his native land few, if any, more admire & more highly appreciate the genius of Burns than myself, therefore the present of the facsimile of "The Cottar's Saturday Night" which accompanies the announcement of my honorary membership is most welcome, for its intrinsic value, but is rendered more valuable as a memento of the circumstance it commemorates, and, as such, shall always be looked upon by me with pleasure & with pride. Perhaps some day I may have the opportunity of seeing those most interesting MSS which the Club possesses, and pledge my brother members in "a cup o' kindness", though I cannot promise to be quite up to a "pint stoup" or "a right good willie waught".

Believe me, Dear Sir,

Yours Very truly,

Samuel Lover

P.S. Your letter bearing date January 29 - I did not receive till last night.