

Honorary members of 1897-1899

1897 Lord Kelvin

1898 Hall Caine, Lord Wolseley

**1899 Sir Alexander C Mackenzie, Sir Archibald Hunter,
Rev. Alfred Ainger, Lord Balfour of Burleigh**

1897: Lord Kelvin (1824-1907)

Described on St Andrew's Day 2010 as a "colossus of world science", William Thomson was born in Belfast, but the family moved to Glasgow when his father was appointed Professor of Mathematics there in 1833. William began study at Glasgow University at the age of 10 - it provided many of the facilities of an elementary school for able pupils, and this was a typical starting age. Thomson showed a keen interest in the classics along with his natural interest in the sciences. At the age of 12 he won a prize for translating Lucian of Samosata's Dialogues of the Gods from Latin into English. He went on to excel at Cambridge, where he was also active in sports, athletics and sculling. In 1846, he was appointed by the University of Glasgow to the chair of Natural Philosophy, becoming, at age 22, a learned professor in one of the oldest Universities in the country. Despite later offers of elevated posts from several world-renowned universities, he remained in this post for over 50 years, and became Chancellor of the University in 1904.

A mathematical physicist and engineer, he developed the basis of absolute zero, resulting in the Kelvin unit of temperature being named after him. He collaborated with Joule on kinetic theory in the mid-1850s. Elected to the Board of the Atlantic Telegraph Company, he was scientific adviser to a team laying transatlantic cable; completed in 1858, it proved unsuccessful through no fault of his, and a new one was laid in 1866. This success led to a knighthood from Queen Victoria in that same year. In 1867 he published his 'Treatise on Natural Philosophy', which did much to define the modern discipline of physics. Being an enthusiastic yachtsman, he improved the adjustable compass.

In 1892 Thomson became the first UK scientist to be elevated to the House of Lords. He took the title Kelvin of Largs, from the River Kelvin which flows close by his laboratory at the University and from the town of Largs where he lived in an imposing red sandstone mansion, Netherhall. In 1893, he headed an international committee to decide on the design of the Niagara Falls power station. In 1897, he estimated the age of the Earth as between 20 and 40 million years (well short of the 4.6 b. years now calculated, but provoking intense debate in his day). One of his few wrong predictions regarded aviation - he said in 1902 that "No balloon or aeroplane will ever be practically successful".

Kelvin is buried in Westminster Abbey, next to Isaac Newton. A devout Christian, he was for many years an elder in St Columba's Parish Church in Largs. Many of his original papers, instruments and artifacts are on permanent display in the Hunterian Museum at the University.

Letter of acceptance, written from The University, Glasgow, on January 27, 1897

Dear Sir,

I thank you for your kind letter of the 19th in which you inform me that I have been elected a member of the Irvine Burns' Club and I beg that you will express my thanks to the members of the club for their kindness in electing me.

Yours truly,

Kelvin

1898: Hall Caine (1853-1931)

Hall Caine (Sir Thomas Henry Hall Caine CH, KBE) was an enormously popular and best-selling author in his time, and was at about mid-career at the time of the Irvine Burns Club nomination as an Honorary Member. During the previous year, in 1897, his 14th novel, 'The Christian', had proved his most successful yet - it was the first novel in Britain to sell over a million copies. Later, he declined a baronetcy but accepted a knighthood (1918).

Caine is today virtually unknown and unremembered. His novels, though primarily romances, also addressed political and social issues - 'The Christian' handled the problems encountered by a young woman trying to live an independent life. Queen Alexandra enjoyed his Manx novels, so when she and King Edward VII visited the Isle of Man in 1902, Caine was invited to join them on the royal yacht and on their tour of the island the following day; in that year, all Caine's novels were still in print and the following year six companies were performing the theatre version of 'The Eternal City' in four continents. Caine edited books for the Queen's charities in 1905 and 1908, and one in 1914 in support of the exiled King Albert of Belgium, leading to his appointment as an Officer of the Order of Leopold of Belgium. During WWI, he devoted himself almost exclusively to British propaganda in the United States. By the 1920s, he was referred to as a "Victorian author". A 1920s encyclopedia comments that his novels were "all popular, though meeting with severe criticism at the hands of critics".

An aspiring man of letters, he was in contact with many of the leading personalities of the day, particularly those of a socialist leaning, and was largely self-taught. Following a well-received review of 'Macbeth', he and Henry Irving became good friends. His friends also included Bram Stoker and Rossetti (in whose last two years, 1880-82, he acted as "secretary, companion, housekeeper and eventually nurse").

Many of his novels were made into films (black and white silent films), such as 'The Christian' in 1915 and again in 1923. 'The Manxman' (1917) drew huge crowds. Alfred Hitchcock's later (1929) version of 'The Manxman' was Hitchcock's last silent film. The two men did not get on well with each other, and shooting, though begun on the Isle of Man, was completed in Cornwall.

He married his devoted wife Mary in Edinburgh, under Scottish law, by declaration before witnesses, in 1886. They had lived together from 1883 (he was 29 and she 13, then the age of consent) and had a son in 1884.

Hall Caine travelled widely, including in Iceland, Morocco, Russia and North America, so it is no surprise that the acceptance is from a member of his staff and that there was apparently no subsequent personal letter. One important legacy of a visit in 1895 to North America for the Society of Authors was his successful negotiation for the introduction of copyright protection there.

Hall Caine Airport was an airfield on the Isle of Man (located near Ramsey), named after the author by his sons Gordon Hall Caine and Derwent Hall Caine, who were the project initiators. Hall Caine Airport flourished for a short period prior to the outbreak of the Second World War. From 1935 to 1937 it handled domestic scheduled passenger flights to English, Scottish and Irish airports. By 1937 it had fallen into disuse, primarily due to its location.

For more on this one-off character, see
<http://www.isle-of-man.com/manxnotebook/people/writers/thc.htm>

The letter in our files, from Greeba Castle, Isle of Man, on Feb. 9th 1898

Dear Sir,
Mr Hall Caine is spending the winter on the Continent, and will not be back for a month at least, but he will have your letter immediately on his return.
I need hardly add that Mr Caine will be very sensible of the honour your Club has done him.
Yours faithfully
A. J. Phillips

Notes:

The letter, being just a note, is typed.
Greeba Castle is an 1849 castellated house, originally rented by the Caine family, then bought by them in 1896, and his home until his death.
We presume that A J Phillips is one of Hall Caine's staff.

1898: Lord Wolseley (1833-1913)

At the time of his Irvine nomination, Lord Wolseley was Commander-in-Chief of the Forces, a position he held from 1895 to 1901. He had served in Burma, the Crimean War, the Indian Mutiny, China, Canada, and widely throughout Africa - including his brilliantly executed Ashanti campaign (1873–1874) and the Nile Expedition against Mahdist Sudan in 1884-85. His reputation for efficiency led to the late 19th-century English phrase "everything's all Sir Garnet", meaning "all is in order". From 1890-95 he served as Commander-in-Chief, Ireland.

Garnet Joseph Wolseley was knighted at the end of the Ashanti campaign in 1874. After a short and brilliant campaign in Egypt in 1882, he was raised to the peerage as Baron Wolseley of Cairo and of Wolseley in the County of Stafford. After the Nile Expedition of 1884, he was created Viscount Wolseley.

Lord Wolseley was an outstanding soldier in the field and an excellent administrator, with an eye for efficiency, in the War Office. He was succeeded, as Commander-in-Chief of the Forces, by Lord Roberts of Kandahar, whom the Irvine Burns Club Directors had already recognised with Honorary Membership in 1894.

Letter of acceptance, written on his behalf by George H Gough, Col., from the War Office, London, S.W., on 27.1.98

Dear Sir,

I am desired by Lord Wolseley to thank you very much for the honor you have done him in making him an Honorary Member of the 'Irvine Burns' Club.

ffy yours,

George H Gough, Col.

P.S.

Notes:

The War Office address is embossed, so does not appear on photocopies. The paper also bears the seal of Commander-in-Chief.

ffy = faithfully

P.S. = Private Secretary

1899: Sir Alexander C Mackenzie (1847-1935)

Edinburgh-born Sir Alexander was a Scottish composer, conductor and teacher best known for his oratorios, violin and piano pieces, Scottish folk music and works for the stage.

He was a member of a musical family and was sent for his musical education to Germany. From 1865, for about ten years, he was back in Edinburgh, with a heavy workload, teaching music, both privately and in colleges, and playing the violin in orchestral concerts.

Mackenzie had many successes as a composer, producing over 90 compositions. He first achieved national fame as a composer of vocal music during the 1880s. Following other successful pieces in 1881 and 1882, 'The 'Rose of Sharon', written for the Norwich Festival of 1884, became his most famous choral work. See our note below for the dates of his three 'Scottish Rhapsodies'.

From 1888 to 1924, he devoted a great part of his energies to running the Royal Academy of Music. Together with Hubert Parry and Charles Villiers Stanford, he is regarded as one of the fathers of the British musical renaissance in the late nineteenth century.

Between 1892 and 1899, Mackenzie was conductor of the Royal Choral Society and the Philharmonic Society Orchestra, giving the British premieres of many works, including symphonies by Tchaikovsky and Borodin. From the 1890s, his professional prominence brought him many honours from universities and learned societies in Britain and abroad. He was knighted in 1895.

Letter of acceptance, written from the Royal Academy of Music, Tenterden Street, Hanover Square, W., London on Jan. 28th 1899

Dear Sir,

I shall be very much favoured if you will kindly convey my warm thanks to the members of the Irvine Burns Club for the honour they have conferred upon me, in electing me an honorary member of their well-known Club. It is a distinction which is highly valued and appreciated by me. I only regret that distance, and much occupation, prevents me from making the personal acquaintance of the members of the Club and from sharing their enjoyment of the national treasures you mention in your letter.

It may interest them to know that I have myself contributed to Burns (musical) literature by writing two orchestral Scottish Rhapsodies, the second and larger of which (entitled "Burns") has been played a good deal in other countries than our own.

With repeated thanks for your welcome communication and sincere wishes for the welfare of the Club.

Believe me

Dear Sir

Very faithfully yours

A. C. Mackenzie

Notes:

His Scottish Rhapsodies were premiered in 1880 and 1881.

Much later, in 1911, he produced Scottish Rhapsody No.3, titled 'Tam O' Shanter'.

1899: Sir Archibald Hunter (1856-1936)

Archie Hunter, the website of the Melik Society tells us, was one of the most effective front-line commanders of the late Victorian era. Through long and rugged service in the Egyptian Army he distinguished himself in many a "frontier" skirmish rising to become Kitchener's commander of the Egyptian infantry division in the campaign to reconquer the Sudan 1896-8. A tough Scot, he had the humour and personal magnetism which his superior lacked and was described by Churchill as the "darling of the Egyptian Army".

Later, he was one of the few senior officers to emerge from the Boer War with an enhanced reputation. However, although on retirement he was the senior General of the British Army, he was denied the ultimate military prize of the Field Marshal's baton. In 1909, he was General Officer commanding in Scotland. His Governorship of Gibraltar (1910-3) exposed a certain inability to cope with politicians and prominent civilians. Described by the Prime Minister, Asquith, as the best general in the army but "subject to fits of madness", he was denied active command in World War 1 and remained in a training role at Aldershot.

After the war, perhaps surprisingly given his opinion of politicians, he became an MP 1918-22 but made little impact. For many years he was ignored by historians but two recent books, "A Soldier's Hero" by Duncan Doolittle and "Kitchener's Sword-Arm" by his namesake Archie Hunter have preserved his reputation for posterity.

Letter of acceptance, written from the Naval and Military Club, 94, Piccadilly, W., on 29th Jan 1899

Sir,

I highly appreciate the honour of being elected an Honorary Member of the Irvine Burns Club, and offer my best thanks to the Members & to your Secy for your kindness in so electing me.

Yours faithfully
Archibald Hunter

Notes:

The headed paper bears the crest of the Naval and Military Club.

1899: Rev. Alfred Ainger (1837-1904)

Alfred Ainger was educated at King's College, London, and at the University of Cambridge. After ordination, he became a reader at Temple Church in London in 1864, where he later became preacher. In 1887, he was appointed Canon of Bristol Cathedral, but kept up his connection with Temple Church, and was appointed Master of the Temple in 1894.

In 1895 he was appointed honorary chaplain to Queen Victoria, becoming her chaplain-in-ordinary a year later. He also became chaplain to King Edward VII.

Ainger was a popular lecturer and preacher, and his other main interest was literature. His major work was on the life and works of the essayist Charles Lamb (1775-1834). In 1882, he contributed the volume on Lamb to Macmillan's "English Men of Letters" series. Then, in 1883, he produced his major edition of Lamb's works, 'The Life and Works of Charles Lamb'; a copy of the de-luxe edition of 1899-1900 was recently (California, 1998) valued at \$10,000.

Ainger contributed to literary discussions of his day on other writers, including in the 'Spectator' (1884), in the Wordsworth Society's journal 'Wordsworthiana' (1889), and in the journal 'Athenaeum' on a Shakespearian topic (1899). From his letter to Irvine Burns Club, he had clearly also written or spoken on Burns. Macmillan's English Men of Letters series also included Ainger's booklet (1903) on narrative poet George Crabbe (1754-1832), and he wrote the preface for the volume of 'Humorous Poems' by Thomas Hood (1893).

Like Tennyson (hon. member 1863) and others of our honorary members, Ainger was a friend of Irvine-born publisher Macmillan. This connection may explain his nomination by the Club.

Letter of acceptance, written from the Master's House, Temple, London E.C., on 30th January 1899

My dear Sir

I have to acknowledge with sincere thanks, and true gratification, your letter telling me of the honour conferred upon me by the Irvine Burns Club. I am the more pleased I cannot fail to connect their kind action with some recent public utterances of mine upon the great Poet

from whom they take their name. It is a rare thing, I fancy, for an Englishman's estimate of Burns to be thought worthy of notice by a body of Scotsmen - Perhaps I may claim to be allowed to sympathise with the admirers of Burns in his own country, because I was taught from my early boyhood to love the beauty and the moral teaching of much of Burns' poetry, when he was in his wise and sound mind. I well remember my father telling me that the finest plea for Christian charity ever uttered was in the words

"What's done we partly may compute
But know not what's resisted."

Your town has been, in its name at least, a household word with me for many years. My old friend Alexander Macmillan, the publisher now gone to his rest, was (I think) a townsman of yours - & also my dear friend, still happily living, Professor Jack of Glasgow.

With renewed thanks, I remain, dear Sir,

Yours faithfully & obliged

Alfred Ainger

Notes:

The lines quoted are the last two lines of Burns' "Address to the Unco Guid".

The Alexander Macmillan was the London publisher of Ainger's work; being of an Irvine family, Macmillan was granted the freedom of the Burgh of Irvine in 1870.

1899: Lord Balfour of Burleigh (1849-1921)

Alexander Hugh Bruce was the 6th Lord Balfour of Burleigh, a title restored for him in 1869 after its forfeiture in 1715 due to the 5th Lord's role in the first Jacobite rebellion. The original family seat was Burleigh Castle, near Kinross, which is now in ruins.

A Conservative politician, he sat in the House of Lords from 1876 to 1921, serving as Secretary of State for Scotland from 1895 to 1903 (serving first under Lord Salisbury, then under A J Balfour), this position being the prompt for his nomination as an Honorary Member.

Letter of acceptance, written from the office of the Secretary for Scotland, Dover House, Whitehall, on 1st Feby, 1899

Sir,

I have to thank you for your letter of recent date, in which you intimate that the members of the Irvine Burns Club have been good enough to elect me as an Honorary Member of that Club, and I would ask you to convey to the Members my appreciation of the motives which have prompted their action.

I have read with much interest the list of the Poet's holograph manuscripts which the Club are so fortunate as to have in their possession.

I am, Sir,

Very faithfully Yours,

Balfour of Burleigh

Notes:

The letter is addressed to James Dickie, Esq., Hon. Secy., Irvine Burns Club.