

Honorary members of 1906-1909

1906 Henry Campbell-Bannerman

1907 Lord Young, James Bryce, Lord Loreburn

1908 Theodore Roosevelt, Earl of Cromer, George Bernard Shaw

1909 Sir Donald McAlister

1906: Henry Campbell-Bannerman (1836-1908)

Sir Henry Campbell-Bannerman, Leader of the Liberal Party from 1899 to 1908, was Prime Minister from 1905-1908, at the time of the approach from Irvine Burns Club. His reply, unlike that of later PMs, was from his home. He was the first Lord of the Treasury to be officially titled Prime Minister. His 1906 election victory was the last occasion on which the Liberals gained an overall majority in the House of Commons.

Born and educated in Glasgow, after a second degree at Cambridge, he returned to Glasgow to work in the family drapery business. In 1868, he was elected as MP for Stirling Burghs, which he represented for almost forty years. Resigning as PM in 1908 due to ill health, he died nineteen days later.

Letter of acceptance, written from Belmont Castle, Meigle, Scotland, on 19 Jan 07

Dear Sir,

I am much obliged to the Irvine Burns Club for the compliment they have paid me in electing me an Hony Member. Such Clubs do much to keep alive Scottish national spirit, and I am pleased to have this honour from a town so identified with the life & memory of our great poet.

Yours very truly

H. Campbell-Bannerman

Notes:

Belmont Castle, once the home of Campbell-Bannerman, then of Sir James Caird, the jute baron, has been a Church of Scotland residential and care home since 1931.

Although nominated in 1906, his letter is of 1907.

1907: James Bryce (1838-1922)

A British academic, jurist, historian and Liberal politician, he served under Sir Henry Campbell-Bannerman as Chief Secretary for Ireland, from where his acceptance letter was written. Part of his education was in Glasgow (High School and University). After a term as MP for Tower Hamlets, he served as the MP for South Aberdeen from 1885 to 1907.

At the time of the Boer War, he had been one of the harshest critics of British repressive policy against Boer civilians in the South African partisan War. Taking the risk of being very unpopular for a certain moment, he condemned the systematic burning of farms and the imprisonment of old people, women and children in British concentration camps.

After serving as Ambassador to the United States of America from 1907 to 1913, he was ennobled in 1914 as Viscount Bryce.

Letter of acceptance, written from the Chief Secretary's Office, Dublin Castle, on Jan 25th 1907

My dear Sir,

I am deeply sensible of the honour which the Irvine Burns Club do me by electing me to be one of their Honorary Members, and I thank them sincerely for their kindness in doing so. I am, like all lovers of poetry, and as every West of Scotland man in particular ought to be, an ardent admirer of our national poet, a poet who is in a degree perhaps without any parallel, not only the national but the popular poet of his country. It is by him and by Walter Scott, more than by any other achievements Scotland can boast, that one finds Scotland known, and the name of Scotland famous, all over the world. Believe me, with renewed thanks,

Very faithfully yours,

James Bryce

Notes:

The address, being embossed, does not appear on photocopies.

1907: Lord George Young (1819-1907)

George Young was a Scottish Liberal MP in the British Parliament and a Judge, with the judicial title of Lord Young.

He was born at Dumfries and educated at the University of Edinburgh. He became a member of the Faculty of Advocates in 1840 and was also called to the English bar. He held the judicial offices of Sheriff of Inverness-shire 1853-1860 and of Haddington and Berwick 1860-1862.

He was appointed Solicitor General for Scotland 1862-1866 and 1868-1869. He then became Lord Advocate. He represented Wigtown Burghs 1865-1874, until he lost an election. After an election petition, that election was declared void and the seat awarded to Young on 28 May 1874. However, in June 1874, he was appointed a Judge of the Court of Session and left Parliament.

He died four months after accepting Honorary Membership.

Letter of acceptance, written from 28 Moray Place, Edinburgh, on Jan 28th 1907

Dear Mr Norval Murray

Your very kind letter reached me on Saturday, but I will not weary you by mentioning & explaining what delayed the acknowledgement till today.

I feel greatly honoured by the resolution of the Members of the Irvine Burns' Club to admit me a Member of the Club & accept the position with gratitude & sincere appreciation of the honour.

Believe me to be

Your faithful humble servant

G Young

Notes:

Mr Norval Murray was Hon. Secy of the Club at the time.

1907: Lord Loreburn (1846-1923)

Robert Threshie Reid, 1st Earl Loreburn GCMG, PC, QC was a British lawyer, judge and Liberal politician. He became MP for Dumfries Burghs in 1886, representing the seat till 1905. In 1905, he was appointed as Lord Chancellor, under Prime Minister Sir Henry Campbell-Bannerman, and ennobled as Baron Loreburn, serving as Lord Chancellor until 1912.

He was created an Earl in 1911.

Letter of acceptance, written from House of Lords, S.W., on 17 December 1907

Dear Sir

I regret very much that Mr Murray's letter of 25 January 1907 should have remained unanswered. I was ill at that time which may be the cause.

In any case I am much obliged by my admission as an honorary member of Irvine Burns Club & beg to thank the Club for the compliment.

Yours faithfully

Loreburn

Notes:

The headed paper is embossed with the crest of the Lord Chancellor.

1908: Earl of Cromer (1841-1917)

A British statesman, diplomat and colonial administrator, Evelyn Baring had been ennobled, as Viscount Errington and the first Earl of Cromer, in 1901. He was British controller-general in Egypt during 1879, part of the international Control which oversaw Egyptian finances after the khedives' mismanagement, and during the British occupation prompted by the Urabi revolt, agent and consul-general in Egypt from 1883 to 1907, retiring when the new Liberal government under Prime Minister Sir Henry Campbell-Bannerman decided to adopt a more lenient policy towards Egypt.

Letter of acceptance, written from Newlands Corner, Merrow Downs, Guildford, on February 1st 1908

Dear Sir,

I beg that you will convey to the Irvine Burns Club my high appreciation of the honour which they have conferred on me in making me an Honorary Member.

I remain, Dear Sir,
very faithfully yours
Cromer

Notes:

His headed writing paper includes, as often in those days, the name of the nearest railway station - "Station, Clandon L & S W R." (London & South Western Railway)
The letter is addressed to R Boyd, Esq., the Hon. Secy

1908: Theodore Roosevelt (1858-1919)

Roosevelt greatly admired the works of Burns. Apart from his comments in the letter below, he wrote, in a 1903 letter regarding a Burns celebration in Nashville, Tennessee: "The poetry of Burns, though I suppose we must admit it is preeminently for Scotland, is for all the world."

The 26th President, from 1901 to 1909, a Republican, he was noted for his exuberant personality, range of interests and achievements, and his leadership of the Progressive Movement, as well as his "cowboy" persona and robust masculinity. He followed the assassinated President McKinley, and remains, at 42 when sworn in, the youngest President ever. Roosevelt was also the first of only three sitting presidents to have won the Nobel Peace Prize (the others being Wilson and Obama).

The "Scotch blood" mention is interesting, and puzzling. In a speech in 1898, he said: "I'm half Irish myself as well as half Dutch." His father's ancestors were Dutch - the Roosevelts were Dutch colonists who had been in New York since the mid 17th century. His mother Martha was a Southern belle from a slave-owning family in Georgia, surnamed Bulloch. Roosevelt's great-great-grand-father was Archibald Bulloch, the third Governor of Georgia - Archibald was the son of James Bulloch and Jean Stobo (the daughter of a Puritan minister, the Reverend Archibald Stobo), immigrants from Scotland to South Carolina in the 1720s. Thus his Scottish connection was from five generations earlier, yet conflicts with his own statements!

Letter of acceptance, written from the White House, Washington, on Feb 11th, 1908

Sir

I much appreciate the honor of being made an Honorary Member of the Irvine Burns Club; I wish it were my good fortune to see your Burns Manuscripts.

Of course I am a great admirer of Burns - I suppose everybody is - and my Scotch blood gives me a certain proprietary interest in him.
I accept the membership with pleasure.
With thanks I am
sincerely yours
Theodore Roosevelt

Notes:

On headed paper, the letter is otherwise in his own hand.
The letter is addressed to Rob. Boyd, Esq., Hon. Sec., Irvine Burns Club.

1908: George Bernard Shaw (1856-1950)

Shaw's plays were first performed in the 1890s. By the end of the decade he was an established playwright. He wrote sixty-three plays and his output as novelist, critic, pamphleteer, essayist and private correspondent was prodigious. He is known to have written more than 250,000 letters.

Adelphi Terrace, from where his letter comes, was built c.1770 and demolished in 1936, and number 10 has a place in the history of the LSE. During the second half of the nineteenth century, number 10 accommodated various clubs, the best known being perhaps the Crichton Club which was there in 1891–6, but in 1897 a lease of it was taken by Charlotte Payne-Townshend, a fellow Fabian, whom GBS married; afterwards they lived there until 1927. The London School of Economics and Political Science, founded by GBS and three other Fabians in John Street in 1895, was moved here in 1897 and remained until 1900, when, admitted as a school of London University, it removed to a new and more adequate building at its present location in Clare Market.

Letter of acceptance, written from 10 Adelphi Terrace, W.C., on 1st June 1908

Dear Sir,
I am much obliged to the Irvine Burns Club for the honor it has done me in admitting me as an honorary member. I do not know how it divined that I am a bit of a Burns site; for I have never, as far as I can recollect, made any public allusion to Burns; but it is a fact that I read a good deal of Burns in my youth, and found that the taste for him was born in me.
yours faithfully
G. Bernard Shaw

Notes:

The letter is addressed to Robert Boyd, Esq., Honorary Secretary, The Irvine Burns Club.

1909: Sir Donald MacAlister (1854-1934)

A physician, following appointments at Cambridge University, he served as Principal of the University of Glasgow from 1907 till 1929, and, on retirement, appointed Chancellor, holding this position till his death in 1934.

Born in Perth, a native speaker of Gaelic, he is said to have spoken well in 17 other languages, apart from English. From 1904, for an unbroken period of 27 years till 1931, he was President of the General Medical Council. He was knighted in 1908 and created 1st Baronet of Tarbert in 1924.

He presided over a period of spectacular growth in academic departments and the University Chapel was one of several important new buildings completed during his time in office. The approach from Irvine Burns Club, we may guess, would have reflected his appointment as Principal.

Letter of acceptance, written from University of Glasgow on 27 January 1909

Dear Sir

I am grateful to the Irvine Burns Club for conferring on me the privilege of its Honorary Membership, and I ask you to convey to the Club my appreciation of its courtesy. The honour is not less pleasing for being unmerited on my part.

I am

Yours very truly
Donald McAlister