

Honorary members of 1918-1921

1918 Field Marshal Sir Douglas Haig
1919 Admiral Sir David Beatty, David Lloyd George,
Woodrow Wilson, Marshal Foch
1920 Andrew Fisher, Prof. Robert S Rait
1921 Andrew Bonar Law, Sir Andrew Duncan

1918: Field Marshal Douglas Haig (1861-1928)

Field Marshal Douglas Haig, 1st Earl Haig of Bemersyde, KT, GCB, OM, GCVO, KCIE, ADC, was a British senior officer during World War I. He had been knighted, for his work in the War Office as Director of Military Training on the General Staff, in 1909. He commanded the British Expeditionary Force (BEF) from 1915 to the end of the War. He was commander during the Battle of the Somme, the battle with one of the highest casualties in British military history, the Third Battle of Ypres, and the Hundred Days Offensive, which led, after the time of this nomination by Irvine Burns Club, to the armistice in 1918.

In November 1918 Haig refused Lloyd George's offer of a viscountcy, partly as he felt it was another snub as his predecessor Sir John French had been awarded the same rank on being sacked, and partly to use his refusal to bargain for better state financial aid for demobilised soldiers, whom Henry Wilson told him were amply provided for by charity. He held out despite being lobbied by the King, until Lloyd George backed down in March 1919, blaming a recently sacked pensions minister. Haig was created The 1st Earl Haig (with a subsidiary viscountcy and a subsidiary barony) and received the thanks of both Houses of Parliament and a grant of £100,000 to enable him to live in the style appropriate to a senior peer (he had asked for £250,000).

Letter of acceptance, written from General Headquarters, British Armies in France, on 22nd Jan 1918

Dear Sir,

Many thanks for your letter of 14th inst. in which you tell me that I have been admitted an Honorary Member of the Irvine Burns Club.

Will you please express to the Members of the Club my hearty thanks for the great honour which they have done me. I am very proud to belong to the Club both because of its historical associations as well as on account of the fine patriotic spirit which evidently exists in the Club, and which has led to so many of its members joining the Army and serving abroad at this time of crisis in our country's history. I note with great satisfaction that the Chairman & Vice-chairman are now serving with the Forces in France. I heartily congratulate them on the fine example which they have set us all.

& Believe me

Yours Very truly

Douglas Haig, F.M

Notes:

The paper is embossed with a crest.

The letter is addressed to The Hon. Sec., Irvine Burns Club.

He refers to the President Rev. John Paterson and the Vice-President solicitor J Irving Moffat serving in France.

1919: Admiral Sir David Beatty (1871-1936)

Admiral of the Fleet David Richard Beatty, 1st Earl Beatty PC, GCB, OM, GCVO, DSO, PC was a Royal Navy officer. After serving in the Mahdist War and then the response to the Boxer Rebellion, he commanded the 1st Battlecruiser Squadron at the Battle of Jutland in 1916, a tactically indecisive engagement after which his aggressive approach was contrasted with the caution of his commander Admiral Sir John Jellicoe. He is remembered for his comment at Jutland that "There seems to be something wrong with our bloody ships today", after two of his ships exploded. Later in the war he succeeded Jellicoe as Commander in Chief of the Grand Fleet, in which capacity he received the surrender of the German High Seas Fleet at the end of the War. He then served a lengthy term as First Sea Lord.

Letter of acceptance, written from H.M.S. Queen Elizabeth on 13 January, 1919

Sir,

Will you please express to the members of the Irvine Burns Club my warm appreciation of the honour they have done me in electing me an Honorary Member of their Club.

I am, Sir,

Yours faithfully

David Beatty

ADMIRAL

Notes:

The letter is, with the exception of the signature, typed.

It is addressed to R M Hogg, Esq., Irvine Burns Club, the Hon. Secy.

1919: David Lloyd George (1863-1945)

When Asquith resigned as Prime Minister halfway through the First World War in December 1916, and Bonar Law refused to form a government, Lloyd George consented to the king's request and became, for three years, to quote a contemporary encyclopaedia, "almost the dictator of the country". Never losing heart, he led the country to victory.

His earlier career, after becoming an MP in 1890, by 19 votes, aged 27, was marked by his spirit of independence, caustic wit and pungent utterances. When the Liberals came to power in 1905 under Campbell-Bannerman, he was appointed President of the Board of

Trade, passing the Patents and Designs Act. In 1908, he served Asquith as Chancellor of the Exchequer, being responsible for the Old Age Pension Bill and presenting the famous 1909 Budget (passed only after a new election) featuring drastic reforms, increased taxes, and new taxes (such as the new tax on petrol for motor-cars). In 1911 he presented another great reform, the national Health Insurance Act. In 1914, he arranged for huge war loans, unprecedented in the history of the country. Appointed Minister for Munitions in 1915, and putting through the Conscription Act of 1916, he succeeded Lord Kitchener at the War Office in 1916. An impressive legacy even before his Premiership.

His later successes included his contribution to the 1919 Peace Conference and his 1921 negotiation of the Irish settlement. He served as Prime Minister until October 1922. In his final months as PM, he published his memoirs, there was an outcry that a PM who had led his country during a bloody war should profit from his book, and he announced that the profits would be “devoted to charities connected with the relief of suffering caused by the war” – an interesting parallel with another war leader’s similar decision in 2010.

A recent biography of Lloyd George is that of Roy Hattersley – an account, according a reviewer, “of underhand political manoeuvres, of misrepresentation to the point of mendacity, of cash for peerages, [and] of personal enrichment”. Lloyd George knew, as did Disraeli, that a political career could not be forged by modesty and restraint, and “his lack of scruples, his use of any available ends to achieve his means, and his ceaseless philandering” are not faults unique to this politician.

Lloyd George was the only PM to speak English as his second language (Welsh being the first), a Chancellor who laid the foundations of the modern welfare state, and the last Liberal PM (though of a predominantly Conservative coalition). He served Caernarvon Boroughs for 55 years, until raised to the peerage in the New Year Honours of 1945, less than three months before he succumbed to cancer.

Letter of acceptance, written from 10 Downing Street, Whitehall, S.W.1, on January 18th, 1919

Dear Sir,

I thank you for your letter of the 10th January, informing me that I have been admitted an Honorary Member of the Irvine Burns Club. I very much appreciate the honour accorded me, and have pleasure in accepting the kind invitation of your members.

Yours faithfully,
D Lloyd George

Notes:

The letter is, with the exception of the signature, typed.
The address is embossed, so does not appear on photocopies.
It is addressed to R M Hogg, Esq., the Hon. Secy at the time.

1919: President Woodrow Wilson (1856-1924)

The 28th President of the USA, from 1913 to 1921. His acceptance letter was written just over a week after, on January 8, 1918, Wilson made his famous Fourteen Points address, introducing the idea of a League of Nations, an organization with a stated goal of helping to preserve territorial integrity and political independence among large and small nations alike.

He intended the Fourteen Points as a means towards ending the war and achieving an equitable peace for all the nations. He spent six months in Paris for the Peace Conference (making him the first U.S. president to travel to Europe while in office) and worked tirelessly to promote his plan. The charter of the proposed League of Nations was incorporated into the conference's Treaty of Versailles.

For his peace-making efforts, Wilson was awarded the 1919 Nobel Peace Prize.

Letter of acceptance, written from the American Commission to Negotiate Peace, Paris, on 16 January, 1919

My dear Sir:

May I not acknowledge with appreciation your letter of the 10th of January and say how much I am gratified and honored to accept the honorary membership so graciously offered me by the Burns Club of Irvine? Pray express to the members of the club my sincere gratification that they should so evidence their kind friendship.

Cordially and sincerely yours,
Woodrow Wilson

Notes:

The letter is, with the exception of the signature, typed.

It is addressed to Mr R M Hogg, Hon. Secy, Irvine Burns Club - note the US "Mr" rather than the UK "Esq." of the time!

1919: Marshal Foch (1851-1929)

Ferdinand Foch, after earlier promotion and recall, was ultimately appointed "Generalissimo of the Allied Armies" in the spring of 1918. He played a decisive role in halting a renewed German advance on Paris in the Second Battle of the Marne, after which he was promoted Marshal of France.

On 11 November 1918, Foch accepted the German request for an armistice. Foch advocated peace terms that would make Germany unable to pose a threat to France ever again. His words after the Treaty of Versailles, "This is not a peace. It is an armistice for twenty years" would prove prophetic; the Second World War started twenty years and sixty-five days later. In 1919 he was made a Field Marshal in the British Empire, and in 1923 a Marshal of Poland, adding to a long list of military decorations.

Letter of acceptance, written by the Chef de Cabinet du Maréchal FOCH, le 25 Janvier 1919

Monsieur le Secrétaire,
Le Maréchal FOCH a été très touché de la décision prise par le "Irvine Burns Club", et m'a mandé de vous faire tenir, ici, la sincère expression de ses vifs remerciements.
Veuillez agréer, Monsieur le Secrétaire, l'assurance de mes distingués sentiments
Chef de Cabinet du Maréchal FOCH
J Bardoux

An attached carte de visite bears two printed lines and two hand-written lines:

Le Maréchal Foch
Commandant en Chef les Armées Alliées
Avec ses remerciements
F Foch

Notes:

Translation: Dear Secretary, Marshal Foch has been very touched by the decision taken by Irvine Burns Club, and has instructed me to pass to you, by this note, the sincere acknowledgement of his warm thanks. Yours faithfully, dear Sir, J Bardoux

The letter is, with the exception of the signature of the Chef de Cabinet, typed. Foch's signature is on the carte de visite. Whether Marshal Foch saw the nomination (or the acceptance) is not known.

On his cartes de visite, Foch seems to have generally written the third person possessive adjective 'ses'.

1920: Andrew Fisher (1862-1928)

Andrew Fisher was born in Crosshouse, a mining village near Kilmaurs, East Ayrshire, Scotland, the second of eight children. His education consisted of some primary schooling, some night schooling, and the reading of books in the library of the cooperative his father had helped to establish. At the age of 10 he began work in a coal mine. He worked six days a week for 12 hours a day. He then had a 4 km trek to go to night school. At 17 he was elected secretary of the local branch of the Ayrshire Miners' Union, the first step on a road to politics. The union called a strike in 1881 to demand a 10 per cent increase to wages, but this was to prove ultimately unsuccessful and Fisher lost his job as a result. After finding employment at another mine, he once again led miners to strike for higher wages in 1885. This time, he was not only sacked but also blacklisted.

Unable to find work, Fisher and his brother migrated to Queensland in 1885. Despite leaving his homeland, Fisher is said to have retained a distinctive Scottish accent for the rest of his life.

In Australia, he was elected to the Queensland Assembly in 1893 and the first Federal Parliament in 1901. He became Australia's fifth Prime Minister in 1908 (a minority government), gaining that office again in 1910 (the world's first Labour Party majority government) and again in 1914. Fisher served as Australia's second High Commissioner to the United Kingdom from 1916 to 1921.

Letter of acceptance, written from the office of the High Commissioner, Australia House, Strand, London, W.C.2 on 10/1/20

My Dear Sir,

I have just received your letter of 9th instant advising me of the honour conferred by the Irvine Burns Club making me one of its Honorary Members.

I accept the position with pleasure and thank the members for thinking me worthy of being associated with them in doing honour to the immortal memory of Robert Burns.

If fortune favours I hope to pay the land of my birth another visit at no distant date and then will seek an opportunity to thank you in person for your great kindness.

With good wishes

Yours faithfully

Andrew Fisher

Notes:

The letter bears the crest of Australia.

Andrew Fisher had been born in Crosshouse.

1920: Prof. Robert S Rait (1874-1936)

Robert Sangster Rait, of Aberdeen upbringing and education, made his mark as a Scottish historian, holding the chair of Scottish History and Literature in the University of Glasgow, from 1913 to 1930. The Chair was newly-created, funded through the proceeds of the 1911 Scottish Exhibition held in Kelvingrove Park. Prof. Rait engaged more closely with students than was traditional for academics at the time, inviting students to tea at his home. He was also, from 1919, Historiographer Royal of Scotland. A prominent intellectual figure in Glasgow, he frequently contributed letters and articles to the 'Glasgow Herald', often anonymously.

In 1929, Rait was appointed Principal of the University, building on his already close relationship with students, and making time for both students and staff. When, in 1933, he was knighted and returned from London to Glasgow Central station, he was met by hundreds of students and escorted to the University in a carriage drawn by Blues and led by the band of the OTC. In 1933, he succeeded John Buchan as President of the Scottish Historical Society.

The effect of the Depression on the University finances in the 1930s took its toll on his health and a serious illness in 1935 led to his death the following year.

Letter of acceptance, written from 31 Lilybank Gardens, Glasgow, on Jany. 10. 1920

Dear Sir,

I am greatly obliged by receipt of your letter of the 9th inst., in which you inform me that the Irvine Burns Club have done me the honour to elect me as an Honorary Member. I beg that you will convey to the Club my sincere thanks for the distinction thus conferred upon me, which I have great pleasure in accepting. I am proud to be associated with a Burns Club of so old a date and possessed of interesting links with the Poet himself, and it gives me great pleasure to know that your too generous appreciation of my work has led you to add my name to your distinguished Roll.

I hope, some day, to have the honour of meeting my fellow members of the Irvine Burns Club.

I am

Yours faithfully,

Robert S Rait

1921: Andrew Bonar Law (1858-1923)

(accepted nomination, but letter no longer extant)

Andrew Bonar Law was leader of the Conservative Party 1911-1921 (at the time of his nomination) and later Prime Minister (1922-23). Born in New Brunswick, when his widowed father had remarried in 1870, his aunt, returning to Scotland, had brought Andrew with her. As an MP, he represented Glasgow Blackfriars and Hutchesontown 1900-1906, Dulwich 1906-1910, Bootle 1911-1918, and, at the time of the nomination, Glasgow Central 1918-1923.

1921: Sir Andrew Rae Duncan (1884-1952)

(accepted nomination, but letter no longer extant)

Sir Andrew Rae Duncan was a lawyer and industrialist, later President of the Board of Trade 1941-42. Born in Irvine (at 8 Waterside) to missionary George Duncan and wife Jessie Rae, he was President of the Club in 1927, and presented the plaque marking the Drukken Steps made famous by Robert Burns. At the Club's 1926 Centenary Dinner, President John Hall said: "We welcome him to our midst tonight fresh from his important mission to our brethren in that wonderful land of vast resources, and we trust that his efforts to bring together all parties concerned in one of the greatest industries of Canada, will have an abundant reward." This refers to his 1926 appointment by the Mackenzie King Canadian government to investigate Maritime discontent; his recommendations of freight-rate reductions and subsidy increases were implemented, but suggestions for subsidies based on fiscal need and transportation use to encourage regional development were ignored.