

Honorary members of 1930-1935

1930 Sir Oliver Lodge, Jan Smuts

1931 John Masefield, James Brown

1932 Rev. Henry Ranken, Harry Lumsden

(1932 the Rt Hon Ramsay MacDonald was also nominated as an Honorary Member)

1935 Lord Macmillan

1930 Sir Oliver Lodge (1851-1940)

Sir Oliver Joseph Lodge was a physicist and writer involved in the development of key patents in wireless telegraphy.

His many books included "Why I believe in Personal Immortality" (1928) in which he wrote: "All the evidence achieved refers to the survival of the individual after his separation from the material body: it would be a vain presumption to pretend to know what is hidden in the remote and dark future. Truth be told, this is a tomorrow in which it is not necessary to think for now. Enough for the moment to know that our present life is not the end of our existence as individuals, and on the other hand, that if we use it properly it will be the first phase of a long series of opportunities offered to us to render continuous service, the only service in harmony with our true nature and that it is equivalent, therefore, to perfect freedom." We wonder whether his 1928 book prompted the Irvine Burns Club nomination.

Letter of acceptance, typed, from Normanton House, Lake, Salisbury, on 21st January 1930, to James Hogg - when James' brother Robert died in 1930, James had succeeded him as Hon Secy. (to 1935)

My dear Sir,

I am honoured by the nomination of the Irvine Burns Club as an Honorary Member, and provided it entails no responsibility (which I assume is the case,) I can have no hesitation in accepting the nomination, and expressing gratitude for the friendly feeling which has initiated the idea.

Yours sincerely,

Oliver Lodge

1930 Jan Smuts (1870-1950)

Field Marshal Jan Christian Smuts, OM, CH, DTD, ED, PC, KC, FRS was a South African statesman, military leader and philosopher. In addition to holding various military and cabinet posts, he served as prime minister of the Union of South Africa from 1919 to 1924 and 1939 to 1948.

In 1905/06 Smuts, an Afrikaner, negotiated full self-government for the Transvaal within British South Africa. In 1908/09 he negotiated a South African constitution which was passed by Parliament and given Royal Assent in 1909. The Union of South Africa was born, Louis

Botha was Prime Minister, and Smuts was the second most powerful man in South Africa. In a 1925 article, he was described as 'the greatest protagonist of the white race'.

His career was complex, playing major roles in both South African and European politics. In 1945, as South Africa's representative at the drafting of the United Nations charter, he is said to have done 'more than anyone to argue for, and help draft, the UN's stirring preamble'. In 1948, he was the first person from outside the UK to be elected Chancellor of the University of Cambridge.

Letter of acceptance, written from 102, Banbury Road, Oxford, on 28 Jan 1930

Dear Mr Hogg

I am deeply honoured by the resolution of the Irvine Burns Club, and wish you to convey to the Directors my sincere appreciation of the distinction conferred on me.

Yours faithfully

J. C. Smuts

1931 John Masefield (1878-1967)

John Edward Masefield had recently been appointed as Poet Laureate (in 1930), a position he held until his death in 1967. He succeeded Robert Bridges, who had accepted Honorary Membership of Irvine Burns Club in 1914. His first edition of his *Collected Poems* (1923) sold about 80,000 copies. On his appointment *The Times* wrote of him: "his poetry could touch to beauty the plain speech of everyday life". He produced significant amounts of work in a wide variety of genres. As a sailor, he was awed by the beauty of nature, but eventually developed an interest in poetry. While employed at the huge Alexander Smith carpet factory in Yonkers, New York, he purchased up to 20 books a week, and devoured both modern and classical literature.

Possibly his best-known poem is 'Sea-Fever' which includes these lines:

I must go down to the seas again, to the lonely sea and the sky,
And all I ask is a tall ship and a star to steer her by;
And the wheel's kick and the wind's song and the white sail's shaking,
And a grey mist on the sea's face, and a grey dawn breaking.

I must go down to the seas again, for the call of the running tide
Is a wild call and a clear call that may not be denied;
And all I ask is a windy day with the white clouds flying,
And the flung spray and the blown spume, and the sea-gulls crying.

Letter of acceptance, written from Boars Hill, Oxford, in 1931

Sir,

I thank you for your letter of the 17th of this month.

I thank the Officers & Members of the Irvine Burns Club for the honour they have done me, in admitting me as an Honorary Member of their Society.

Yours sincerely

J. Masefield

Notes: At Boar's Hill, Masefield took up beekeeping, goat-herding and poultry-keeping.

1931 Rt Hon James Brown (1862-1939)

James Brown, who lived most of his life in Annbank (where he would teach in the local Sunday School), was the first Labour MP for South Ayrshire – elected in 1918, holding the seat until 1931, regaining it in 1935, and MP until his death, though it may have been his appointment as Lord High Commissioner to the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland in 1924 and 1930 (and again in 1931) that prompted his nomination in early 1931.

He was granted the Freedom of the Royal Burgh of Ayr in 1930, and of Girvan in 1931 and was awarded an Honorary LLD by the University of Glasgow in 1931. He was a Deputy Lieutenant of Ayrshire.

He started working in the pits at the age of 12 and held posts in the Miners' Unions. His life story "From Pit to Palace" by Alexander Gammie was published in 1931. He was the great-uncle of the future first Presiding Officer of the Scottish Parliament David Steel.

Letter of acceptance, written from the House of Commons, on 21st January, 1931, addressed to James Hogg, Hon. Secy..

My Dear Mr Hogg,

I thank you most heartily for your letter, to me, of the 17th inst. in which you inform me, that Irvine Burns Club Members have elected me, unanimously, an Honorary Member of the Club.

Anything I can say is inadequate to express the pride and the pleasure the members of the Club have given me, in admitting me to Honorary Membership of such an old, and such a famous Club. Believe me, I appreciate the goodwill and friendship which prompted the Members to honour me, and I shall strive to be worthy of their confidence in me.

Kindly accept my warmest thanks, and convey my thanks and good wishes to the Members.

With every good wish,

I am,

Yours sincerely,

James Brown

Notes:

The handwritten letter is on House of Commons embossed notepaper.

1932 Rev. Henry Ranken (1852-1937)

The Rev. Henry Ranken was minister of Irvine Old Parish Church from 1893 to 1928 During his ministry the church roll increased from 820 to 1170 members. He had a great interest in improving the burgh and in respecting its history, and helped rescue the Powder House. He served as President of Irvine Burns Club in 1895.

His son , Captain Harry Sherwood Ranken, V.C., Chevalier of the Legion of Honour, M.B., Ch.B. (Glasgow), M.R.C.P. (London), Royal Medical Corps, and attached to the 1st Battalion King's Royal Rifle Corps (60th), died, aged 31, at Braisne, in France, of wounds received in action on 25th September 1914. He was awarded the Croix de Chevalier, for gallantry during the operations between August 21st and 30th, 1914. He was awarded the Victoria Cross for

tending the wounded in the trenches under rifle and shrapnel fire at Hautresnes on 19th-20th September 1914, continuing to attend the wounded after his thigh and leg had been shattered.

Letter of acceptance, written from 1 Sackville Avenue, Glasgow W.3, on 28th January, 1932

Dear Sir,

I realize, with much gladness that, in a way, it is not necessary for me to express my thanks for the great distinction of Honorary Membership, conferred on me by the Members of Irvine Burns Club. My fellow-members of the Club, sometime my parishioners, and fellow townsmen, of the Royal Burgh of Irvine, know well how keenly the honour affects me. Yet, in spite of their already knowledge, I declare, with all my heart, my deep sense of the very high Honour that has come to me through the exceeding kindness of our Club. The Club has a long list of Honorary Members, most highly distinguished in every city in the Realm of Fame - Literature, Art, Science, Military and Naval Service and Statesmanship. But to none of them does there come so inly a pleasure as comes to a few of us - the pleasure of receiving our Honour from Brother-Hands. It has been, and it is, the privilege of that few to look back on past Burns meetings - business meetings and Commemoration Dinners. And what a fine, jovial, hearty, brotherly back-look it is! I was Chairman on one of the coldest nights I ever remember, in the long-lasting snow of the early Nineties, when the Hall, now so comfortable, was then like an ice-house; but, though we were cold without, we were warm - glowing, if you like - within, physically, mentally, and morally. It is with pride I recall and here commemorate, the fact, that, though the Irvine Burns Club was not the first founded in Scotland, it is the Club that can show, in its Records, the longest unbroken life. And it is my earnest wish that, as the years go on, and as long as the world lasts, Burns, who has got to the hearts of all the world, with Ayrshire as his Cradle, will be remembered, as we remember him, by our children and our children's children, unto all generations.

With high respect and deep gratitude,

I remain, Sir,

Yours faithfully

Henry Ranken

Notes:

The word 'inly' is a poetic version of 'intimately'.

Rev Ranken refers to the Celebration Dinner which he chaired as President in 1895.

1932 Harry Lumsden (1866-1939)

Harry Lumsden, LL.D., was President of Irvine Burns Club in 1903, as his father Alexander had been in 1877. A partner in the legal firm of Biggar and Lumsden in Glasgow, he was appointed Clerk to the Trades House of Glasgow in 1896 and held the post until his death in 1939, 43 years later.

In Irvine, he joined the Hammermen Craft in 1897, became a member of their Master Court in 1906 and remained an office-bearer for the remaining 33 years of his life. He served as Deacon Convener of the Irvine Incorporated Trades from 1910 to 1920. Called on because of

his expertise in documents, he provided true translations of the 1646 Seal of Cause and the 1751 Charter of Confirmation and published them in 1909.

As an author, he wrote the "History of The Hammermen of Glasgow", the "History of the Skinners of Glasgow" and "The Bibliography of John Galt", the last mentioned in his acceptance letter.

In 1924 and again in 1932 he hosted Col. Walter Scott, the New York businessman and philanthropist, whom he nominated for Honorary Membership in 1928, and who, in 1933, donated \$100 to the funds of Irvine Burns Club to encourage proper storage of its manuscripts, letters and other possessions.

Letter of acceptance, written from the Trades House of Glasgow, on 8th Feb. 1932, to James Hogg, Hon. Secy

Dear Mr Hogg,

I feel much honored indeed by the receipt of your letter of 23rd ulto.

But conscientiously I do not feel that my name is worthy of being placed among such great names as already appear on your remarkable list of honorary members. Anything I have done of a literary nature and anything in particular in the way of Galt literature falls far short of earning me a place on your honor roll.

Still I am very happy to think that I have at least done something for Galt which has not been done before, and that all he wrote (so far as at present known) is enumerated in my Galt Bibliography.

What gives me the greatest pleasure of all is that I have thereby gained such a high expression of esteem from my fellow townsmen in Irvine.

Will you kindly convey my most cordial thanks to my fellow members of the Club for the special honor they have done me.

I am

Yours very sincerely

Harry Lumsden

Notes:

The acceptance is on the official notepaper of The Trades House of Glasgow and bears the text "Clerk: Harry Lumsden, M.A. LL.B., writer" (i.e. solicitor).

1935 Lord Macmillan (1873-1952)

This Scottish judge, Hugh Pattison Macmillan, became a King's Counsel in 1912. When the Labour government of Ramsay Macdonald was elected in 1924, and the Labour Party, not having been in power before, had no QCs in its Scottish Parliamentary representation, Macdonald appointed Lord Macmillan as Lord Advocate, even though he was a Conservative; he served from February to November 1924.

In 1930, he was created a life peer as Baron Macmillan of Aberfeldy and sat as a Law Lord until 1947, apart from a brief period at the outbreak of WWII when he was Minister of Information.

Letter of acceptance, written from 44, Millbank, Westminster, S.W.1., on 30th January, 1935,
to James Hogg, Hon. Secy

Dear Mr Hogg,

I have received with much gratification the intimation which you have conveyed to me of my admission as an Honorary Member of the Irvine Burns Club. I appreciate very highly the honour of having my name added to the illustrious roll of those who have enjoyed the distinction of Honorary Membership of so famous an institution.

I am,

Yours sincerely,

Macmillan