

Honorary members of 1970 – 1973

1970 Lord Reith of Stonehaven

1971 Lord Macleod of Fuinary, James MacPhail, Rt Hon William Ross

1972 Rev. Alex Macara, Edward Heath, Lord Dalkeith, Herr Willy Brandt

(1973 no nominations)

1970 Lord Reith of Stonehaven (1889-1971)

John Charles Walsham Reith was a Scottish broadcasting executive who established the tradition of independent public service broadcasting in the United Kingdom. In 1922 he was employed by the BBC as its general manager; in 1923 he became its managing director and in 1927 he was employed as the Director-General of the British Broadcasting Corporation created under a Royal Charter. His concept of broadcasting as a way of educating the masses marked for a long time the BBC and similar organisations around the world.

Reith, commented journalist Charlotte Higgins ('The Guardian', 20/8/2014), and his early colleagues "were out to invent the future", and she describes him as "that monstrous, tyrannical, tortured man, [who] set his gaze at the new technological world of wireless telegraphy and saw that it could be, should be, placed in the service of society as a whole. . . What Reith saw was that he had in his hands an instrument that could inform, educate and entertain - not just the privileged but everyone. . . [He] saw that broadcasting could one day have a number of extraordinary qualities. First, that the licence fee . . was .. a passport to equality . . there would be no first, second or third class. .. Second, everyone would be able to access the BBC in private. Your tastes, your culture, your enthusiasms, your politics - all of these could be developed without the eye of anyone upon you. . . Third, Reith was convinced that broadcasting, with this peculiar capability of reaching everyone, should also provide for everyone."

Reith had no broadcasting experience when he applied for the yet-unformed BBC in 1922. In 1936, he directly oversaw the abdication broadcast of Edward VIII. He left the BBC in 1938. Though, as the founder of the BBC, he still stands for integrity and rectitude, as a parent, Lord Reith was a tyrant, and in 2006 his daughter Marista Leishman revealed the family secrets - including his utter disdain for TV - in a book about her remote, unappeasable, and philandering father.

While one might think Reith would have been offered honorary membership in 1938, or at some time soon after WWII, in fact it was 32 years later, a point noted, in his usual style, in his reply.

Letter of acceptance, written from Lollards Tower, London SE1, on January 12, 1970:

Dear Sir,

In reply to your letter of January 6, I am not 'Lord John Reith', but the Rt Hon Lord Reith of Stonehaven KT, PC, and some other things which Who's Who lists.

Moreover I left the BBC over 30 years ago.

Please note KT is not kt. It means Knight of the Thistle, next to the Garter in seniority.

It seems a little odd that this courtesy should have been withheld until very nearly I wasn't here to acknowledge it.

But of course I appreciate your gift and gladly accept it.

Yours truly

Reith of Stonehaven.

1971 Lord Macleod of Fuinary (1895-1991)

George Fielden MacLeod, Baron MacLeod of Fuinary, Bt, MC, a Scottish soldier and clergyman, was one of the best known, most influential and unconventional Church of Scotland ministers of the 20th century. He founded the Iona Community in 1938. In 1957 he served as Moderator of the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland.

In the early 1930s he bought Fingletton Mill as a refuge for Glasgow's poor, using ministers, students and unemployed labourers working together; the Iona Community then developed as an international ecumenical community. In 1967, he was awarded a peerage, the only Church of Scotland minister to have been thus honoured. From 1968 to 1971, he was Rector of the University of Glasgow. Through the creation of the Iona Community, he was a pioneer of new forms of ministry (outside more conventional parish or chaplaincy structures).

Letter of acceptance, written from 23 Learmonth Terrace, Edinburgh EH4 1PG, on 31.12.70, to Andrew Hood, the Hon. Secy

FROM VERY REV. THE LORD MACLEOD OF FUINARY

Dear Mr Hood,

I have today your communication of 30 December.

It was a real surprise to read it and I count it a considerable honour to accept my place among so many illustrious names in your Roll of Honorary Members.

I have read with great interest the excellent Brochure with its splendid illustrations. I shall certainly not visit Irvine without calling in on the Burns Club & Museum.

Were it not that I am off in ten days for a ten week visit, as the Guest of the Church in New Zealand, I would have made a Special Visit this month.

Speaking of industrial conditions, in the late 18th & early 19th centuries, you may be interested in the enclosed authentic "Notice" found in the back of an office cupboard in a Lancashire Factory!

Things do get better after all!

Thank you all again,

Sincerely

MacLeod of Fuinary

Notes:

His headed paper bears the heading opposite, his address, and phone number.

The 'Notice' enclosed with his reply is no longer with the reply.

1971 James MacPhail (c.1895-1973)

James Wyllie MacPhail was a retired banker, a native of Irvine, who retired from the Far East to live in Irvine. His nomination as an Honorary Member recognised his gift of £750 to enable Irvine Burns Club to purchase the Naismith drawing of Burns. The case in which it is kept is inscribed:

This original full-length pencil drawing of ROBERT BURNS is by
ALEXANDER NAYSMITH, R.S.A..

It was drawn in 1837 for Lockhart's "Life of Burns".

The Artist's pencilled advice is that the head by BEUGO should be
used in the engraving.

-oOo-

The engraving is on the left panel. The head on the right panel. The
centre-piece is one of the only two known full-length Portraits of
BURNS by the Artist, who was a friend of the Poet.

In the Club minutes, the President [Clement Wilson, 1970-71] "thanked Mr McPhail not only for his generosity to Irvine Burns Club but for the numerous gifts he had bestowed on his native town. Mr Wilson went on to describe Mr McPhail as a man born in Irvine who had spent a great part of his life in the far east, some of it in internment in enemy hands during the war, and who had returned to prove himself a true and loyal son of the Royal and Ancient Burgh. It was, said Mr Wilson, under the terms of the constitution "a special benefactor of the Club" and with very great pleasure he proposed Mr McPhail as an honorary member of the Club."

Letter of acceptance, written from 'Casita', 118 Bank Street, Irvine, on 28th April, 1971, to Hon. Secy Andrew Hood:

Dear Andrew

I have very much pleasure in replying to your letter of the 14th Feby., and would ask you to convey to your President, Mr Clement Wilson, my warmest thanks for the honour he bestowed on me, and my appreciation of the delightful evening spent in his company, and that of his fellow Directors, at Wellwood in the charming ceremony to mark my Honorary Membership.

I need not tell you that this was for me a cherished privilege and I would also thank you for your good wishes and for courteous and kindly assistance both in correspondence and in person.

Yours sincerely
James MacPhail

1971 Rt Hon William Ross (1911-1988)

Baron Ross of Marnock (as he became in 1979) was the longest-serving Secretary of State for Scotland, holding that office from 1964 to 1979 and again from 1974 to 1976. He served as Member of Parliament for Kilmarnock for over 32 years, from 1946 to 1979.

His Wikipedia entry reflects the public life of 'Willie Ross': "During his tenure, he was responsible for the creation of the Highlands and Islands Development Board and the Scottish Development Agency, the forerunners of Highlands and Islands Enterprise and Scottish Enterprise respectively. Ross campaigned for a "No" vote in the 1975 referendum on British membership of the EEC. He was also a firm unionist, in favour of Scotland and Northern Ireland remaining in the United Kingdom, and opposed devolution. Journalist Andrew Marr has called him "a stern-faced and authoritarian Presbyterian conservative who ran the country like a personal fiefdom for Harold Wilson". Ross coined the term "Tartan Tories" to describe the members of the Scottish National Party, whom he very much disliked. The nickname "Tartan Tories" is still used in the present day by some left-leaning critics of the SNP."

He supported the restoration of the town's historic Glasgow Vennel, which had looked likely to be demolished, chairing the 1980 committee which included representatives of Irvine Development Corporation, Cunninghame District Council, the National Trust for Scotland, Scottish Tourist Board, Irvine Burns Club and the Clement Wilson Foundation. The restoration was officially opened in January 1983 and won a Europa 1984 Award for conservation.

Letter of acceptance, written from the House of Commons, London, W1, on 7th Jan 1971, to Hon. Secy Andrew Hood

Dear Mr Hood,

Thank you for your letter of 29th and the offer therein of Honorary Membership of Irvine's historic Burns Club.

I have long known and admired the activities of Irvine Burns Club. As an Ayrshireman it gives me great pleasure to accept your generous offer.

With best wishes for the continued flourishing of a historic Burns Club.

Sincerely,

William Ross

1972 Rev. Alec Macara (1900-1992)

The Rev. Alec. Macara, inducted to Irvine Parish Church in September, 1928, served Irvine as a well-respected minister for 50 years, from 1929 to 1979. The son of the manse, he came to serve as probationer to the Rev Harry Ranken and took over the pulpit when his mentor retired. A native of Denny, Stirlingshire, he had studied at the University of Glasgow. An outspoken preacher, he caused a stir in 1965 at the Kirkin of the Town Council by calling for an end to party politics in local government. He was made a freeman of Irvine in 1967 in recognition of his services to his congregation and the town. He served as President of Irvine Burns Club in 1938-39. He was a keen gardener.

His successor, Rev. James Greig, recalled that Rev. Macara had headed up a Committee of the General Assembly tasked to bring about improvement in the accommodation provided for ministers. He returned to the Assembly to report that he had seen some terrible buildings in his travels, but none worse than his own. His Kirk Session took the hint, and a new manse was built in 1962!

His son, Sandy Macara, accepted Honorary Membership in 1996, being Chairman of the Council of the British Medical Association in 1993.

Letter of acceptance, written from The Manse, The Old Parish Church of Irvine, on Monday, January the third, 1972, to Hon. Secy Andrew Hood:

Dear Mr Hood,

It is difficult for me to express in writing the pleasure I feel in receiving your letter of the 31st ulto., informing me of the great honour the Burns Club of Irvine, through its President, has conferred upon me.

As a Past President and ex-Director, I fully realize how jealously guarded this privilege has been through many generations; and in all humility I feel proud to give the consent you wish, that my name be added to your illustrious list of honorary members.

It is a joy to know of the ever-increasing enthusiasm for our national Bard, and to realize that the Burns Club of Irvine is so successfully stimulating that interest, and promoting serious study of his works.

Yours Sincerely
Alec Macara.
Minister of Irvine

Notes: The letter is on the notepaper of The Old Parish Church of Irvine, The Manse.

1972 Edward Heath (1916-2005)

Edward ('Ted') Heath served as Prime Minister from 1970 to 1974, resigning after the 1974 General Election when the Labour Party won four more seats and his talks with the Liberal Party failed to result in a coalition. He then resigned as leader of the Conservative Party when Mrs Thatcher narrowly outpolled him in her 1975 challenge. His years as an MP numbered 51, from 1950 to 2001.

His achievements include overseeing the decimalisation of British coinage in 1971, the reformation of British local government in 1972 and leading Britain into membership of what was termed the Common Market in 1973. Much else information is of course available in online sources.

Letter of acceptance, written from 10 Downing Street, Whitehall, on 15 January, '72:

Dear Mr Hood,

I would be glad if you would express to the Irvine Burns Club my appreciation of its kind offer of Honorary Membership. I am glad to accept its invitation to become an Honorary

Member and I feel proud to join the ranks of a Club with such a long history and so many distinguished members. With best wishes.

Yours sincerely
Edward Heath

Notes: On headed notepaper, the letter is wholly in his own hand.

1972 Lord Dalkeith (1923-2007)

Walter Francis John Montagu Douglas Scott, Lord Dalkeith, was to become, in the following year after the death of his father in 1973, the 9th Duke of Buccleuch and 11th Duke of Queensberry. After a hunting accident in 1971, he became a notable spokesman for disability organisations. He was the first MP after the Second World War to enter the House of Commons chamber in a wheelchair, where he was greeted by Harold Wilson, who crossed the floor of the chamber to shake his hand, in October 1971.

Lord Dalkeith came to own the largest private landed estate in the United Kingdom, covering some 280,000 acres (1,100 km²). The estate includes Drumlanrig Castle in Dumfries and Galloway, Bowhill House in Selkirkshire, and Boughton House in Northamptonshire.

His acceptance letter comes from Eildon Hall, the principal residence of whoever happens to be the Earl of Dalkeith, heir to the Dukedom of Buccleuch.

Letter of acceptance, written from Eildon Hall, Melrose, Scotland, on 4th January 1972, to Hon. Secy. Andrew Hood

Dear Mr Hood,

One hopes that Burns would not be as shocked by your choice of Honorary Members as I am delighted. He was always broadminded and I hope he would smile on my pleasurable acceptance of so kind an invitation.

Yours sincerely
Dalkeith

1972 Herr Willy Brandt (1913-1992)

Willy Brandt was Chancellor of West Germany from 1969 to 1974. In 1971, he was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize in recognition of his efforts to strengthen cooperation in western Europe through the EEC and to achieve reconciliation between West Germany and the countries of Eastern Europe.

Born as Herbert Ernst Karl Frahm, he had adopted the pseudonym Willy Brandt to avoid detection by Nazi agents in 1933, when fleeing to Norway, then to Sweden, and formally adopted the name in 1948. His political roles included a period as Mayor of West Berlin (1957-66), when he accomplished much in urban development, and Leader of the Social Democrat Party from 1964 to 1987.

Letter of acceptance, written from the office of Der Bundeskanzler (the Federal Chancellor), Bundesrepublik Deutschland, Bonn, on den 14 März 1972, to Andrew Hood, Hon. Secretary of Irvine Burns Club:

Sehr geehrter Herr Hood,
Ihr liebenswürdiges Angebot der Ehrenmitgliedschaft in Irvine Burns Club empfinde ich eine besondere Ehre. Ich nehme es dankend und mit Freude an.

Mit freundlichen Grüßen

Ihr Willy Brandt

Translation:

Dear Mr Hood,

I am greatly honoured by the kind invitation of the honourable members of the Irvine Burns Club. I thank you for it and am delighted to accept.

Yours sincerely

Willy Brandt

Notes:

On the photo enclosed with his acceptance is the salutation, "Dem Irvine Burns Club mit freundlichen Grüssen" ("With friendly greetings to the Irvine Burns Club").