

The Robert Burns Association of North America AGM & Annual Conference.

The Winnipeg Burns Club hosted the RBANA Annual Conference and AGM in the Marlborough Hotel in Downtown Winnipeg on the 13th, 14th & 15th May 2011. The attendance was lower than expected, with 30 registrations. 20 people sent apologies, with very valid reasons for not being able to come. We had an attendance of 40 at the Friday Evening Ceilidh and 50 at the Saturday formal Burns Supper.

We were honoured by the attendance of The Robert Burns World Federation President David Baird and his wife Ruth. The largest contingents registered were from the Winnipeg Club and the Halton Peel Club. On Thursday evening the early arrivals were taken to a Scottish concert in a city church, featuring visiting performers from Scotland. The usual round of Golf, for the enthusiasts, on Friday morning had to be cancelled this year as few attendees signed up for the game.



The floods in Manitoba had displaced a large rural population from around Winnipeg and they were being temporarily housed by the Government, in most of the city hotels.

This initially threatened to put a damper on the conference, as the lobby and approaches to the hotel were crowded with displaced residents and children, who had nowhere else to go.

The hotel rose to the occasion and opened the upper floor ballrooms to give the flood refugees an area to congregate, socialize and occupy the children, so things settled to near normality.



The Friday night dinner entertainment took the form of an impromptu Ceilidh. Many of our registrants performed their “party pieces”, with music provided by Winnipeg Club member Craig Oliphant (a Past President) who entertained us with vocals and guitar accompaniment. Raffle tickets had been sold early on by Don Rennicks with a “Rob Roy Tam and red hair”. Draws were made throughout the evening.

On Saturday morning the AGM was held in the hotel.

It was well attended and was completed in 1½ hours, thanks to President Chrys’ careful direction of the proceedings. Robert Boyd introduced the RBANA lapel badge, which was well received.

May Crawley provided a detailed report on some excellent promotional work being done in two schools in Mississauga Ontario, with the possibility of a third joining in.

In the afternoon, a study session “Robert Burns’ place in the World” by a former Vice President of the Winnipeg Club, Paddy McLellan, started us off. That was followed by the Jim Connor Memorial Burns Quiz, which this year was won by Alex Crawley from the Niagara Falls Club. Colin Harris then presented an outline history of the Burns Statue at the Manitoba Legislature, {see the Tattler for this}



David Baird outlined the importance of the World Federation and the advantages of membership. The Formal Burns Supper on Saturday evening was enjoyed by all. The Haggis was paraded in on a hod, military style, and was dramatically addressed by Dr. Tony Grogan.



A large Baked Alaska was then brought in with sparklers in place of candles which many in the company interpreted as a birthday cake to celebrate the 100 years the Club had been a member of the World Federation.

After the formal toasts we were regaled with an amusing "Toast to the Lassies" by Jim Cunningham and the equally humorous reply from Jean Cunningham.

Entertainment was provided by the Braemar Country Dancers, who also provided an excellent Burns musical interlude, a soprano, with flute and clàrsach accompaniment.

They then demonstrated some beautifully executed dances.



The Immortal Memory was delivered by Dr. Archie McNichol a young Doctor from Glasgow.

Raffle draws again punctuated the evening and a presentation was made to David Baird from the Winnipeg Club, who gave him a mounted model of a Red River wagon. These were used by the Scots immigrants who settled the territory.

David presented to RBANA President Chrys Ballantyne a Burns Crystal decanter set. Chrys followed with an award to David awarding of the book "A Night Out With Robert

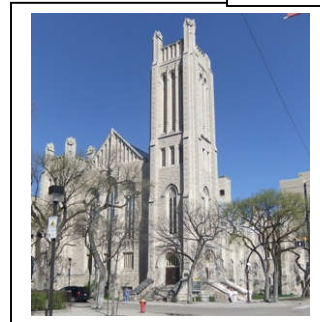
Burns" in recognition his high score in the Burns Quiz.

After some more demonstrations from the Balmoral dancers the evening closed with "Auld Lang Syne".

On Sunday morning a special service was held in Knox United Church.

The company was paraded to the Church, following the Pipes and Drums of Manitoba and ANAVERTS 283 Pipe Band. The service was led by Joyce Allen, a lay leader and member of the Winnipeg Club.

The pipe band assembled in the chancel area during the service and played a moving rendition of "Highland Cathedral", accompanied by the magnificent church organ.



There being no club offering or willing to host the 2012 conference in a US, the conference will be organized by a RBANA executive sub-committee, at a venue to be selected by the Fall.