

Burns poetry returns from a Space Odyssey

In February 2010 a miniature book of Burns' poetry, which is less than one-inch high, was taken on onboard the space shuttle Endeavour on a two-week mission to the International Space Station, by British astronaut Nick Patrick.

During the visit it completed a 5.7 million-mile trip and 217 Earth orbits.

The book was originally provided to the Space School by Alan Archibald of the Department of Electronic & Electrical Engineering, who is a distant relative of Burns' wife Jean Armour.

The tiny book was taken to the NASA Johnson Space Center in Texas by 10 Scottish high school students taking part in the Scottish Space School, operated by Strathclyde University, to encourage school pupils to pursue careers in science and engineering.

The pupils handed the book to Nick Patrick in November 2009 during their visit.

On 16th June 2010 the tiny book was returned to Scotland and was presented to First Minister Alex Salmond by astronaut Nick Patrick at Holyrood.

Nick said: "It was a real honour to have met such an enthusiastic group of young people, not only to continue the inspirational work undertaken by the Scottish Space School, but to also help spread the timeless poetry of Robert Burns."

In response Alex Salmond said "I am delighted that the ten Scottish Space School pupils had such a successful visit to NASA, where they also helped make a little history. Robert Burns' works have a truly global reach so it is entirely fitting that following the successful Year of Homecoming his poetry has literally travelled around the world on the mission to the International Space Station."

The book contains a small fragment of Jean Armour's wedding dress and is now displayed in the Burns Museum in Alloway which had an official opening on December 1st and will open it's doors to the public sometime in January. {See the article in the December Tattler}

