

The Robert Burns Association of North America 2012 AGM & Annual Conference.

In 2011 the RBANA Executive requested the President, Chrys, to convene a committee which would organize the 2012 Conference in the USA. She approached the Committee who ran the 2009 & 2010 Conferences, to take on the job. The recommendation was to “make the venue an “attractive destination itself, readily accessible by all transport modes and at an appropriate time of year.”

The committee was chaired by Jim Cunningham, with Jean Cunningham {Secretary}, Ron Ballantyne {Treasurer}, Ronnie O’Byrne, who provided Printing & Technical support and the RBANA President Chrys. Following the recommendation, the committee decided on Williamsburg Virginia as a suitable venue. They visited the area and the ideally located Williamsburg Hospitality House was selected. The combination proved to be a great success and attendance was the largest for several years. The choice of venue also encouraged the Williamsburg St Andrews Society to join RBANA



The conference rate was negotiated for 2 days prior and 2 days following the conference. Well over half the delegates took advantage of that, to explore the historic area. The supervisor of the local tourist board came to the hotel on the Thursday to prime the delegates on what to see & do in the area. The weekend teed off on Friday morning with the usual round of golf

for the “keener types” and the winner of the day was Ronnie O’Byrne of the Halton Peel Club.

This year we were honoured by the presence of the Robert Burns World Federation President, Jim Shields and 3 Past Presidents; Jim Robertson {with Eileen}, Mike Duguid {with Pat} & Bill Dawson.

The Friday evening dinner took the form of a traditional “Colonial Dinner, which followed the usual reception in the hospitality suite.

During the meal we were entertained by two Balladeers in period costume



Hope Dillard and John Turner (an expat Scot) singing and playing in early colonial style. They were joined by Jim Shields for a couple of songs. Jim had met them in the Shields Tavern in the old town on Thursday evening.

The entertainment continued after the meal, Ceilidh style. Three of the ‘golfers’ teamed up to sing a hilarious “Willie Brew’d a peck o Maut” The evening went so well that we even had Bill Dawson up on the dance floor.



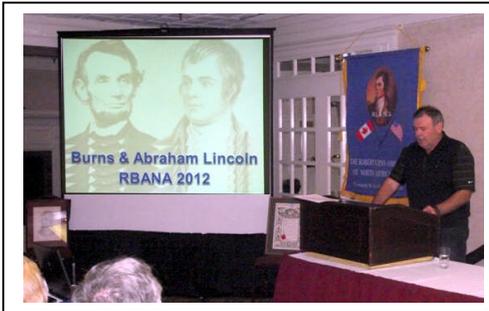
On Saturday morning the AGM was held in the hotel. The new executive were elected, appointing

Tony Grogan of the Winnipeg Club as President, Robert Boyd from the Heather & Thistle Club of Houston as Vice President, Don Rennicks of the Winnipeg Club as Secretary/Treasurer with Leslie Strachan and Independent member, & Kathleen McGlew of Annapolis as US Directors, Ron Ballantyne and Alan McKenzie of the Halton Peel club, & Jean Cunningham from the Robert Burns Society of Doon as Canadian Directors, and Chrys Ballantyne as Past President A short director’s meeting was held following the close of the AGM. Ted Hirst from the Houston Club was appointed as the third US director. Priority assignments were determined and plans initiated for the next two conferences.



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In the afternoon, two well attended study seminars were presented, one by Ronnie O'Byrne of the



Halton Peel Club on the subject "Burns & Lincoln", which created a lot of interest. RBWF President Jim Shields gave his presentation on "Burns the Songsmith", in both word & song, which was particularly appreciated. There was a lively discussion after both sessions



The Jim Connor memorial Burns Quiz was held between the two presentations and the winner was Bill Molloy from the Niagara Falls Club.

The formal dinner on the Saturday Evening took the form of a Burns Supper.

The Hotel had sourced the haggis from a Richmond Virginia sausage maker, who followed a recipe provided by Jean Cunningham. It passed muster but the recipe will need a bit of "tweaking" to bring it up to expectations.



Mike Duguid addressed the haggis in grand style but had to use his Sgian Dubh to perform the ceremony as the chef had omitted to provide the requisite knife. However the meal provided by the hotel was an outstanding success, and the individual steak pies and dessert trifle took everyone by surprise.

Vince Leahy, an Irishman, from the Halton Peel Club

gave the "Toast to the Lassies", and was ably replied to by Jean Cunningham.

The Immortal Memory was delivered by a guest speaker Duncan Beatty, who is a former member of the Canadian Parliament and for many years was the principle speaker at the Parliamentary Burns Supper. He also was involved in bringing the 1988 Federation Conference to Hamilton Ontario.

Duncan without notes wandered amongst the guest tables delivering his spellbinding address. Quite a "tour de force".



Chrys Ballantyne then formally handed over the President's Chain of Office to Tony Grogan.

The trophies for the golf event and Jim Connor Memorial Quiz were presented. Bill Molloy was obviously deeply moved when he received the quiz trophy, he was a great admirer and friend of Dr Connor.

Bill Dawson received a special prize for his highest score by a guest in the quiz.

The primary entertainment following the dinner was a concert style presentation of Burns' Jolly Beggars Cantata, sung a cappella by 10 members of the Halton Peel Club, with musical introductions to the songs by Pierre Arnold on harmonica & fiddle, Bob Richie on the small pipes and Ronnie O'Byrne on bodhrán.

Leslie Strachan from Bedford Virginia delivered the recitative.

The performance was given a standing ovation by the audience.



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The exceptional raffle items generated a generous response from the attendees on both evenings. On Sunday Morning most of the company attended the early service at the nearby Presbyterian Church. They were greatly impressed by the service, particularly by the bell choir, which provided outstanding renditions of classic pieces. The performers were primarily music students at the neighbouring College of William & Mary.

On Sunday afternoon following a light lunch in the hospitality suite, 37 of the delegates drove to nearby Norfolk Virginia, to attend the Virginia International Tattoo, which closely followed the style of the Edinburgh Festival Tattoo.



Cammy Goodall, the new RBWF webmaster, was performing at the Tattoo as the Pipe Major of the Pipes & Drums of the Royal Regiment of Scotland, 7th Battalion (51 Highland).

Several delegates met with Cammy on the Plaza after the show.

A grand wind-up to the conference.



The committee is happy to report that the conference finished in the 'black', despite some last minute cancellations for health emergencies.

Credit and thanks are due for the organization and efforts by the Conference committee.

The clubs participating this year were as follows:-.

- The Halton Peel Burns Club
- The Robert Burns Society of Doon
- The Robert Burns Society of Kilmarnock Ontario
- The Winnipeg Robert Burns Club
- The Heather & Thistle Society of Houston
- The Niagara Falls Burns Club
- The Robert Burns Society of Annapolis
- Scheihallion Scottish Heritage Society
- Calgary Burns Club
- Burns Club of Atlanta
- St Andrews Society of Williamsburg VA
- Four Independent members

Plus our 6 visitors from the UK