



Robert Burns



**Maybole
where it began**



Robert Burns - Where it began

If William Burnes had not attended a fair held in Maybole High Street in 1756, it is very possible that Robert Burns, our National Poet, may never have existed.

Agnes Broun was living in Maybole, Carrick's Capital, and they met, courted and were married in a church at the foot of the Kirkwynd on 15th December 1757. Just over a year later, on 25th January 1759, Robert was born in nearby Alloway.

It is the Maybole and Carrick connections that we would like to celebrate this year which marks the 250th anniversary of the marriage of William and Agnes.



Bible containing Burnes family names

Agnes Broun was born a few miles from Maybole in 1732. She was the eldest of her family, and only 10 years old when her mother died. Two years later, when her father remarried, she was sent to live in Maybole with her grandmother.

Agnes is widely known to have entertained Robert, her eldest son, with legends from local oral traditions, and folk songs.

According to one of her daughters, Agnes “was naturally cheerful; her manner, easy and collected; her address simple and unpretentious; and her judgement uncommonly sound and good. She possessed a fine musical ear, and sang well.”

Mark Twain wrote of her in *Innocents Abroad*, “It reminds me of what Robert Burns’ mother said when they erected a stately monument to his memory: ‘Ah, Robbie, ye asked them for bread and they hae gi’en ye a stane.’”

There is a monument to her, called Burns' Mother's Well, near Bolton on the roadside from Haddington, East Lothian.

William Burnes (1721-84) was born in the north east of Scotland in Kincardineshire and trained as a gardener. He moved south obtaining work as he travelled.

In many ways, the couple appeared to be exact opposites. He was tall, dour, serious and shy, she was lively, fun loving and gregarious. He had a sharp intelligence, she was all but illiterate. He was the thinker, she had the songs.

Anniversary Celebrations

Maybole and Carrick have many other connections with Burns in his later life including a few friends and acquaintances close to his heart as depicted in his poems. It is felt that the Burns' trail rightfully begins in Maybole.

Heritage Lottery Fund has awarded £46,800 to May-Tag Ltd in partnership with Maybole Community Council, Maybole Community Association and Maybole Historical Society. The project will to replicate the original Maybole Fair where William and Agnes met, with stalls, a farmers' market, dance displays and other activities of the period.

Concurrently there will be displays of Burns-related exhibits and archives in Maybole Castle and Town Hall. Local schools will be involved in the re-enactment of both Burns' parents' life and his relevant poems. Activities will continue throughout the year, culminating in December.

Throughout a large part of the year Maybole Historical Society, in conjunction with other historical and heritage groups, the local archives and museums services, Culzean & Cassillis Estates and the National Trust for Scotland will have a large variety of displays of the life and works of Burns, and the life and times in Maybole in the 1750s.

Many local groups will be involved in events over the course of the year.

All events during the year will be professionally recorded and made available to everyone involved, future visitors and future generations.

This celebration of the 250th anniversary of the marriage of William and Agnes will be the focal point of events which will promote and preserve the local connections and history associated with Robert Burns and Carrick.

It will educate young and old, as well as encourage them to learn more about our National Bard. It will also provide a lasting memorial to Burns' parents and the Bard.

This project is planned two years before the *National Homecoming* event to mark the 250th anniversary of Burns' birth. It will give a big boost to Maybole and also provide a major amount of pre-publicity to all events in 2009.

In a separate project, Maybole Historical Society is endeavouring to relocate, at Maybole Castle, the bust of Burns, originally sited on the top of a nearby building to mark the spot of the meeting of his parents at the Fair.

2007 Events

- May** Ongoing education of local school pupils culminating in entries for the Jean Falconer Literary Competition. This is an annual award by Maybole Community Council but on this occasion will be specifically themed on Burns' life.
- Jun 9** Market and Fair featuring the meeting of William Burnes and Agnes Broun. Local businesses encouraged to adopt an 18th century theme.
- Jun 11** Quiz with a specific Burns and Scottish theme.
- Jun 14** Pet Show with special prizes for the pets from Burns' poems (what an exceptional opportunity for the mice in Maybole!!!)
- Jun 16** Town Parade. The parade will feature no motorised transport but horses and other period transport will be encouraged and supported.
- Jun 9-16** Throughout this week there will be a "Best Dressed Shop/Window" competition with a specific theme of the 18th century, and staff dressed in period costumes.
- Sep** Garden competition featuring best vegetables to reflect William Burnes' trade.
- Dec 14/15** Concerts featuring our wealth of local talent involving local schools, Maybole Pipe Band, SCDS, Maybole Concert Party and Ayrshire Fiddle Orchestra.
- Dec 15** Re-enactment of the wedding of William and Agnes.
- Dec 16** Final ecumenical service celebrating Burns' life.

