

Burns' country starts in Maybole

HOW can you have a story without a beginning? Until now the story of Robert Burns, our national bard, has been told with the opening of "born in Alloway on the 25th of January 1759."

All the Burns' trails promoted nationally ignore completely the life of Burns' parents prior to their move to Alloway shortly before he was born, although many do include their deaths by way of directions to their grave-stones!

Also omitted is the town of Maybole, possibly the most important place in the story because, if it were not for the market there, Burns' parents might never have met and there would have been no story at all!

Maybole Historical Society would like to see Maybole being given its proper prominence in the story alongside Alloway, Tarbolton, Irvine, Mauchline, Dumfries and other locations connected with the bard and will be working to correct all the omissions and promote Maybole as

"The start of Burns' Country in the very heart of it!"

It is fairly safe to say that, had it not been for Maybole and the Fair in the High Street where William Burnes met and fell for Agnes Brown, our national Bard might never have existed.

William and Agnes married in Maybole on 15th December 1757 and just over a year later, on 25th January 1759, Robert was born in nearby Alloway.

Maybole has many other connections with Burns in his later life and one of the subscribers to his Kilmarnock Edition of poems was Baillie Niven of Maybole. Returning to collect the money from his childhood friend, Robert Burns spent a convivial night in the Kings Arms, which sadly no longer exists except in old photos.

The Burns Trail rightfully begins in Maybole - at the cemetery gate where a church stood. The Bard's parents were wed there on December 15, 1757. Maybole singers Davie Anderson and Frances Dryburgh, who both featured in Burns an' a' That, are pictured at the scene.

To celebrate the 250th Anniversary of the marriage of William Burnes and Agnes Brown several local organisations are working together to put a bid to the Lottery Heritage Fund to allow the town to mark the occasion next year.

Proposals include:

- Siting of a perspex covered plinth in the small piece of garden in front of the Factor's Office at Maybole Castle containing the bust of Robert Burns originally situated on the top of the butcher's shop diagonally opposite.
- Special Day with extra events at the Greenside such as a market with local suppliers in period costume – market from 9.30am – 12.30pm.
- Special competition for shop windows in a 1757 theme with additional money sought for period costumes and decoration for each shop in the High Street.
- In addition to the normal Gala King and Queen etc



MAYBOLE singers Davie Anderson and Frances Dryburgh at the start of the Burns Trail in Maybole - at the cemetery gate where the church stood that the Bard's parents were wed in on December 15, 1757.

there would be a William Burnes and an Agnes Brown. Sponsorship of floats and walking groups which will all have a period theme. Parade to start normally at Carrick Academy but there would be a stop at the Castle while William Burnes meets Agnes Brown and escorts her to the Gala festivities

in the Glebe Park.

- Large Fair at the Glebe Park with special displays and stallholders in period costume.
- Addition of Maybole to the Burns trail and appropriate signage for the whole trail – starting in Maybole! (This will also have benefits in 2009)

- A series of events in the Castle and Town Hall around about December 15, 2007 themed on Burns' poetry and music to celebrate the anniversary of the wedding. A large depiction of the marriage could be projected on to the Castle.
- Possible production of DVD of all events.

May'bowl' brothers aim for the top

ONE half of Maybole's well-known Campbell bowling brothers delighted crowds at the Dewar's Centre in Perth recently, when he beat world number six Robert Weale on the opening day of action in the Scottish Masters.

Although 34-year-old Gavin was later knocked out of the competition by the eventual winner, he was absolutely delighted to get as far as he did, and is hoping to emulate that success in future tournaments.

Gavin and younger brother Graeme have become 'weel-kent' faces in the town for their achievements in the sport, but bowling started off as a pastime for Gavin, coming second to his love of football.

"I played football with Maybole Amateurs 'till I was about 21, then took up playing bowls," he said.

"My mum and dad were members of Maybole bowling club and Graeme started playing when he was about 11, so there was always a family connection with the sport."

A few short years down the line and both Gavin and Graeme had been capped at junior level for outdoor bowls, with Graeme also earning two full Scotland caps with the senior team later on.

The pair are members of the World Bowls Tour and Scottish Indoor Bowling Association, and normally go to Durham every year in an attempt to qualify for television tournaments such as the Scottish Masters, Welsh masters, World Singles and International Open.

Thanks to his success in qualifying over the last three years, Gavin gained a few extra ranking points and jumped to number 27 seed in the world after reaching the semi-finals of the BUPA Care Homes Open in Sheffield in 2003.

Over the years the lads have picked up the British Indoor Triples title in 1999, Two Bowl Pairs, Scottish Indoor Triples and the Scottish Fours to name but a few.

While Graeme is a member of Newton Park Outdoor bowling club in Ayr, Gavin

still plays for Maybole, and both brothers are members of Prestwick Indoor club.

Due to work commitments, bowling has taken a back seat in Graeme's life this year and he hasn't been able to get involved in the game as much as his older brother. Despite this, the 31-year-old still managed to win the Scottish Outdoor Pairs last summer and will be representing Scotland in the British Pairs later this year with Newton Park club member Gordon Nelson, a competition he secured victory at 12 years ago with Maybole Bowling club team-mate Malcolm Mitchell. The pair were later beaten in the British Final.

Mum Liz and dad Jim still play the odd game of bowls and are extremely proud of both their sons' sporting achievements.

"There is no rivalry between Graeme and I. We always support each other as much as possible when we are playing and so do our family," Gavin said.

Unlike many other sports, bowlers can continue to play 12 months a year, with the indoor season running from September to April, when the outdoor season kicks off.

Gavin laughs: "You just need to ask my wife Mandy if bowling takes up a lot of my time! She's really supportive of me, but she also hopes that our five-year-old daughter Kayleigh doesn't take up the sport!"

Gavin is now looking forward to the International Open in Wales in February, his 10th series with the Scotland team.

He is also hoping to have climbed a few places up the World Rankings List, which is also out next month.

"My main aim for the future is to make it into the top 16 players in the world as I wouldn't have to pre-qualify then," he said.

Gavin went on: "I'd definitely encourage youngsters to take up bowling. It has always been classed as an old man's sport for some reason, which makes it difficult to persuade young people to take an interest in it. Youngsters with family members



Maybole bowling brothers, Gavin and Graeme Campbell.

involved in the sport tend to take it up though, which is a good way to start.

"Maybole Bowling Club actually have a few young members which is great to see, and is what the sport needs."

Although Gavin remains an avid football fan, he has no regrets about taking up bowling, and is always grateful for the support he receives from locals. Gavin and Graeme also received 'Scrolls of Appreciation' from Maybole Community Council in 1999 for bringing recognition to the town through their achievements.

"Whenever you walk down Maybole High Street there's always somebody who'll stop me to say they saw me playing on TV or just to ask how I'm getting on, which is nice," he says.

"People in the town always take an interest, and like to see their sportsmen or women putting Maybole on the map.

"That's the type of place Maybole is - people encourage you and like to see you do well, and it's always great to receive recognition for your achievements from people in your community."