

Rabbie's Return tae Dumbarton

This poem was written to commemorate the 200 anniversary of Burns visit to Dumbarton on 29th June 1787. The first half is written as if he returned there and relived his West Highland Tour that took him there. The second part is a fantasy of his 'visit' the annual Burns Supper of Dumbarton Burns Club,

It's oer twa hunner years since frae life ah slipped
Sae Ah thocht Ah'd come back a' tak a trip
Tae a' the places whaur Ah hud been
An see if folk were still as keen
On the thochts Ah'd pit oan paper.
Or are they up tae ither capers?
Are they jist as douce as me
An' aye tak in aw that they see?

Aye Ah thocht Ah'd come an' hae a look
For a' the folk who? bought ma book.
Ah goat as far as Inverary
But the Duke wus holdin' a fishin' pairty
Aye, the toon wus fu' Highland Pride
An' there wus nae whaur there for us tae bide.
So Ah wrote doon the thochts that made me bile
When Ah couldna' meet wi' His Grace, Argyll

Ah went back doon oer the Aray Bridge
Trying tae get awa frae that Highland midge.
Ah made guid time on Jenny Geddes
Roon Fyne, thro' Kinglas tae Croe she led us.
At Crocharibas we stopped for the night
At a place noo ca'd the Highland Man's Height.
But the following day we? be faced wi' ruin
If we didnae reach the mooth othe Fruin.

We were at Bannachra for the next twa days
Takin' some time tae sail and play.

We pushed the bottle wi' Airchie MacLachlan
Jist like the guid times Ah hud in Mauchline
The lassies left aboot hauf past three
They'd hud enough oor company.
But the rest o' us moved doon tae the bay
Tae wait an' toast the Lamp o' Day.

Well, Ah wandered on doon the Banks o' Lomond
That wus whaur Ah met withe Highlan' Donald.
His horse and he had done me doon
When Ah fell an' landed on ma croon!
Bit the place was still as Ah remember
Faur better than that Auld Reekie, Embra.
The peace, the quiet, was still quite glorious
As it had been athose years before us.

Ah wiz pleased tae see that a' the folk,
Didnae think Ah wiz a kind o' joke.
Some o' them still sang ma sangs
Even though Ah'd been deid ower lang.
Ma Auld Lang Syne is so well known
Ah wish the future Ah'd been shown ---
when Ah wrote these words, that still sound bright.
---- Ah'd a takin oot the copyright!

Ah trotted on down through Renton
Whaur Ah hud the guid intention
Tae see the place where the writer Smollet
Hud lived, an' touched, this simple poet.
Some fellow Masons, with decorum
Showed me his great memorial column
We drank a toast tae that great thinker
Who gave the world his Humphrey Clinker

On Ah went oer the River Leven,
Tae the toon that's surely made in heeven!
Dumbarton; tho' known in ancient times
Wus still tae come intae it's prime.
Sae history steeped, Ah hud little dou't
The guid folk there would a' turn oot ---
--- tae greet this puir wee lad frae Ayr
Wha's poems he gied the warld tae share.

Ah met a lawyer cheil ca'd Lindsay
As Masonic Maister, he'd cam tae greet me,
His Dumbarton Lodge, Ah still remember,
Hud done me prood : an Honorary Member
Rab Lindsay hud, alang wi' many,
Read ma poems and spent the penny.
Like a' the folk who'd taen a subscription
He helped me sell ma Embra Edition

But it's really sad that ye couldnae keep
The house where Ah had hud a sleep
MacAulay's mansion fair an' bricht
Wus where Ah hud spent the nicht
Aye, where once lived the wee Toon Clerk
Is noo a peacefu quiet park,
Whaur a' the toon-folk walk an' play,
An' admire the floe'rs on a simmers day.

They said that Glencairn House wus still there
Though Ah couldnae really see quite where -
--Until Ah spotted the wee bit plaque ---
---- they've hud stuck up, an' painted black.
The Great and Good all came tae see
And gaitered there tae remember me
Their guest of honour wis ma relation,
She spoke quite well oma reputation.

And along the street stauns a brand new kirk
Jist where that Auld Licht Oliphant used tae smirk
Oh, the building? No' the same of course
An' against that man ah've nae remorse ----
--- Ah spoke o' him in "The Ordination"
But tae staun at his grave is a strange sensation.
Ye know, Ah aften thought he was quite wicked
To mak them hide ma Burgess Ticket.

On Ah went through Dumbarton Toon
Tae see how much they hud pult doon.
But when Ah goat tae the Hoose, Dumbuck
It wus there Ah felt ah'd cam' intae luck.
There wis meetin' there wi' lots ofolk
They're a' sat doon tae laugh an' joke.
Some wan recited Tam o' Shanter ----
----They're fillin' the room wi' lots o' banter

Aye, there's lots o' men sat doon tae dinner
Tae remember me ; a puir wee sinner.
They toast the haggis an' drink the whisky
Sae naethin' changed since ah wus frisky.
But they neednae dress wi' sic pretension
Tae gie ma works a bit attention.
Thae dicky bows an' starched white sarks
Are no required tae hear ma works.
Ah'd raither they were jist themselves
An no kid on they're someone else ----
Enjoy a wee bit fun an' rhyme
Jist like Ah did in ma time.

So; coost yer duddies tae the wark
An sit there drinkin in yer sark,
Listen tae ma songs and sonnets,
An raise a glass and tip your bonnets
Oh aye! an ye toast the lassies, but they're no there!
Is there no one here who disnae care--
----about the birdies in their life?
Noo , they might be someone else? wife,
But that? no reason tae ignore them;
They should be here tae mak up the quorum
A wee bit skirt in life's a treesure,
Too bad tae miss oot on a' that pleasure.

Oh! an' there's wan mair thing Ah must point out
There are folk in here wha sing an' spout.
But maist o' them are twice ma age
An' they staun up there upon the stage
An' gie us a' o' their very best, but what about a' the rest--
O' the young folk here, just sittin --- drinkin'
Is it no about time that they were thinkin'
O' gein us some turns;
Maybe a sang or a poem o' Rabbe Burns.

Ah'd like tae thank some o' yir members
Wha gied ye a' some nights tae remember
Aye, the folk wha always grab attention
Are surely worth a special mention
So tae Barlow, Taylor, Cairns, and Kean
An ither folk who can aye be seen
Wia song or a poem or maybe a speech
--- go on, try it yersel, it's no beyond reach!

Tae wee McLean wae a sang or a quip,
An' Stuart Cook who plays wi' nary a slip
An' Galt, an' Thomson, an' even John Sorbie,

An' yer ancient member, thon Rory Murphy.
An tae Nelson, ye now him best as Moir
He rules yer club like Conan the Destroyer.
Bob Callander's worth a second look,
He recites ma poems but he cooks your books!
John Young is is there in many guises,
Wi' John Dow an' a' Ronnie Armstrong's surprises

Goldie an' Hemphill, Jones an' Hendry were just fine
But Ah'll hae tae meet them some ither time

But Ah've left the best tae last, jist because Ah can
For that's Jimmy, o' the Hempstead clan
He writes an' writes tae entertain us
His Rhymes for Fun fair made him famous.
Yer ain club's history is his latest opus
That's made ye a' come into focus
For years an' years he's been in the "Chronicle"
He's faur better known than yon Topaz McGonagall
Aye, there's mony a story he can tell
For he knows mair aboot me than Ah dae ma sel'

Still, it wis nice tae hear ma wurk again
And know ma time's no spent in vain.
But Ah'd better get back tae ma ain wee pub,
-----Ah hear they use for a club
Aye the auld Globe Inn is still ma local
The guid folk there are still as vocal,
But times anon, away doon south
They've gone an' turned it intae the Howff!

So when ee'r ye sit doon an think o' me
And, maybe, drink tae ma memory.
Jist bear in mind that Ah wis here,
And joined ye in yer hour of cheer.
The praise ye geid fair made me happy
An' Ah drank wi you a pint o' nappy.
Fareweel tae all who mind ma rhyme
Ah'll visit ye here some ither time.

But jist wan last thing Ah want tae say
Then Ah really will be on ma way.

It's jist tae ensure Ah get a staunin' ovation

For ge'in ye this wee poetic oration.

Ah'll gie ye a toast, tae yersells an'
no tae the lassies.

So, gentlemen, fill yer glasses,
get up aff yer arses--

Aye that? the rub --- lets a' toast

DUMBARTON BURNS CLUB.