

2025-2026

Dumbarton Burns Club – Schools Liaison Project

Anne Thorn, committee member responsible for school liaison contacted all primary schools in the Dumbarton/Cardross area to find out more about how primary children in the local schools celebrate Scottish culture and language. This year she was delighted she was able to liaise with 9 local schools (including 1 secondary school).

In November she attended a poetry slam in the Phoenix Community Centre where pupils from Dalreoch and St Michael's Primary Schools recited Scottish poems they had written on the theme of friendship.

At the beginning of January Anne visited Aitkenbar Primary and taught some ceilidh dances to all year groups. Later that week she was invited to the school's "Celebration of Scotland" assembly where pupils recited Scottish poetry, sang songs and performed highland dancing. Anne judged the poetry recitation competition with the school's janitor and the winners of the Scots poetry competition were presented with books and certificates donated by Dumbarton Burns Club. The overall winner of the competition was a P5 pupil who recited "Sam the Skull - The Glesga Cat" This was followed by three ceilidhs (P1-3, P4-5, P6-7) where the pupils danced the dances taught earlier in the week and had irn bru and shortbread at the end of their ceilidh session.



Anne was delighted to be invited back to Braehead Primary's Burns Supper which was organised by the P6 pupils for the P7 pupils. All of the pupils had the chance to sample some haggis, shortbread and irn bru after the haggis was piped in by an S1 pupil from Dumbarton Academy and "addressed." P6 pupils told the P7s about Robert Burns's life, his poetry and his songs then "the Bard" was interviewed in a rehearsed chat show performance. After the tables were cleared away, the children energetically danced a few ceilidh dances and the afternoon finished off with singing Auld Lang Syne. Earlier that week Anne was invited to their "Celebration of Scotland" Assembly where pupils performed Scots poems to their peers. Anne then presented books and certificates donated by Dumbarton Burns Club to the

pupils who won the Scots poetry competition. The highlight of this visit was a P4 pupils reciting “A Dug A Dug”.

Anne also visited Knoxland Primary to judge their Scots poetry recitation competition. Anne was particularly impressed by a number of poetry recitations including that of “A Red Red Rose”, an abridged version of “To a Mouse” and the P1s who recited “Wee Willie Winkie.” Books and certificates donated by Dumbarton Burns Club were presented to the winning pupils at their showcase of Scots culture event.

In January Anne, Sheena Nelson and Dr Patrick Trust (fellow members of Dumbarton Burns Club) were invited to Cardross Primary to judge the Scots poetry recitation competition. P1-P5 pupils recite Scots poems whilst in P6 pupils recite “To a Haggis” and P7 pupils recite an abridged version of “Tam O’Shanter”.

The P6 and P7 winners were invited to recite their poems again at the Cardross Community Council Burns Supper at the end of January.

Tam O’Shanter



Piping in the haggis before delivering The Adress to a Haggis



In February Anne and Dr Patrick Trust were invited to the Cardross Primary Scottish Week prize giving and the winners and runners up of the poetry recitations were presented with books and certificates donated by Dumbarton Burns Club.

From the Aitkenbar January newsletter:

On Thursday 22nd January 2026, children enjoyed a fun filled day, coming together to celebrate our National Bard, Robert Burns. We started with a whole school assembly where groups of children across P1-7 performed a range of Scots poems. The performances were judged by our VIP's, Anne Thorn, the first female member of the Dumbarton Burns Club, and our very own Janitor, Gary. All of our performers who recited a poem received a certificate. In addition to this, classes were also gifted a Scottish book on behalf of the Dumbarton Burns club.



Caitlin McBrearty (Principal Teacher at Dalreoch Primary) commented: "This year, our ongoing partnership with the Dumbarton Burns Club has continued to enrich literacy, cultural learning, and community engagement across the school. The Club's generous donation of high-quality Scot's literature provided prizes for our annual poetry competition, which focused on celebrating Scots language through the theme of *favourite animals with a Scottish twist*. Pupils from all stages engaged enthusiastically with the challenge, experimenting with Scots vocabulary and presenting their poems at our Scottish assembly. The book awards, alongside certificates recognising achievement and effort, helped to raise

the profile of Scots within the school and encouraged pupils to take pride in their linguistic heritage.

A key highlight of the partnership was the involvement of Anne Thorn from the Dumbarton Burns Club during Scottish Book Week. Anne joined us as a guest judge for our poetry slam competition, delivered in collaboration with a neighbouring school and our local community centre, The Phoenix. Her presence added authenticity and significance to the event. This joint celebration strengthened community links and showcased the positive impact of shared cultural experiences.

The support of the Dumbarton Burns Club continues to play an important role in promoting literacy, creativity, and cultural identity within our school. Their contribution has enhanced pupil engagement, supported the development of Scots language learning, and fostered meaningful connections with the wider community. We look forward to building on this successful partnership in the year ahead."

Hazel McQuade, Principal Teacher at St Patrick's Primary School stated "St Patrick's plans a range of activities around the theme of 'Scotland' in January- focusing on areas such as language, covering poetry like Robert Burns, Scots poems like 'Emb'dy lost a jaike' and also introducing pupils to Scots language.

Moreover, we have introduced different Scottish country dances such as The Gay Gordons, or Canadian Barn Dance and we have also looked at Scottish mythical creatures across the stages such as selkies, kelpies and more!

All of these activities help to enrich the pupils' appreciation of Scottish language and culture with depth and breadth allowed for in focusing on this for the whole month of January as well as marking Burns Night. Pupils demonstrated increased engagement and enjoyment in this focus month, and a celebration of Scots language was shared with parents in our 'sharing the learning' as part of Languages Week, which P1-3 used to focus on Scots."

The Club looks forward to consolidating links with the 4 new schools Anne has engaged with this year (St Patricks PS, St Michaels PS, St Peter's PS and Our Lady and St Patricks High School) and continuing to support the 5 schools we have engaged with since the Schools Liaison project began.

Dumbarton Burns Club is delighted that children in the local area are being encouraged at school to learn more about Scottish culture, poetry and song and in particular the life and work of Robert Burns. The Club is grateful to the Jean Armour Trust for the grant which has allowed age-appropriate books to be purchased to give to the children in all 9 local primary schools who have demonstrated their enthusiasm for Scottish poetry and literature.

Anne Thorn

Committee Member responsible for Schools Liaison
Dumbarton Burns Club