

Chester Caledonian Association



Regalia & Artefacts

The President's Jewel



It is not known when the President's jewel was first acquired, but it may have been in the early days of the Association.

It originally bore the Arms, which the Association used for many years. These Arms consisted of the shield of the City of Chester with the Royal Supporters and the Scots Royal Motto "*Nemo me impune lacessit*". Around 1957, Mr. Allan Keith-Hill, a heraldic expert known to the Lyon Court, pointed out the impropriety of using Arms without authorisation.

The President's Wife's Cairngorm Brooch



The Cairngorm Brooch was purchased by the Association in the late 1950's. The purchase was delegated to the then Secretary, Mr Tom Lea. It was purchased from Hamilton and Inches in George Street, Edinburgh. The original intention was that this very handsome Cairngorm would be worn with a tartan sash as many Presidents' wives have found it rather heavy to attach to delicate fabrics of evening gowns.

The Ram's Heid Snuff Box



The Ram's Heid was presented to the Association by Mr. Yerburch, the Member of Parliament for Chester in the late 1800's. Mr. Tom Lea used to know an elderly solicitor who had acted as the MP's secretary before the First Great War and from him gathered that the MP had an estate in Galloway. After over a hundred years, the Ram's Heid was showing its age but in 1997, Professor Anderson (President 1996/97) organised a programme of rehabilitation including the provision of new ears.

Statuette of Robert Burns with Oak Plinth



The Burns' statuette was presented to the Association by Mr. Thomas Keith-Hill ("Sandy") and President 1926-27 and a prominent member of the Association for many years. His younger son Allan, the heraldic expert referred to earlier was President in 1959-60.

Statuette of William Wallace



This 50 cm high statue of William Wallace was offered to the Association in 2014 by a Mr Ted Goddard from Frankby, having been in his family for many years. Mr David Murdoch (President 2014-15) purchased the statuette for the Association. Mr Goddard donated the money to an Autism Charity.

The Quaich



The Quaich (or Cuach) was presented to the Association by Mr Ian Scott (President 1995-1996), shortly before he left Chester to return to his native Aberdeenshire.

Large Badge of the Association



The large badge of the Association, which is exhibited at major functions was produced by Allan Keith-Hill shortly after he designed the Association's badge. The vivid colours and the sharp delineation of the heraldic elements in the badge are typical of Mr Keith-Hill's work. It is understood that he has provided illustrations for one or more learned books upon heraldry and has himself designed and published heraldic maps of the City of Chester, of the Lothians and of Caernarfonshire. The last mentioned item was published to mark the Investiture of the Prince of Wales at Caernarfon Castle.

Mr. Keith-Hill also drew the Arms of Robert Burns shown on the current Burns' Dinner menus. No grant of Arms was made to the Poet in his lifetime but, in one of his letters, he described the Arms he would like to have. His description suggests that he had some knowledge of heraldry. A version of these Arms is used by the Burns' Federation but it is suggested that Mr. Keith-Hill's drawing is markedly superior. The initials "T.A. K-H" may be discerned in the motto "Better a wee bush than nae bield".

Like the Ram's Heid, it had become a little dilapidated over the years and Mr Ian Macdonald (President 1994-95) arranged for it to be repaired and renovated. The retired schoolmaster who undertook this task knew Mr Keith-Hill and was sympathetic to his work.

Facsimile of the Kilmarnock Edition

This facsimile of the Kilmarnock Edition was presented to the Association by Mr. Patrick Donald who proposed the principal toast at the 1984 Burns Dinner. Mr. Donald, a land agent in Ayrshire, was the cousin of Robert Brown, one of our members, now deceased. He has since proved helpful in finding other good speakers for the Association. The President at the time was Mr Donald Cromar who had the facsimile handsomely bound.

Music

Tom Lea's Rant:

Tom Lea was a past President of the Association on two occasions, Secretary for many years and attended the Burns' Dinner every year – unbroken – for over 50 years!

Following Tom's death in 2004, Mr. Paul Anderson, who plays fiddle music for us at the Burns' Dinner, was commissioned to write a Scottish tune in his memory. Tom Lea's Rant is now played at the St Andrew's Ball and the Burns' Dinner as the Presi-

Chester Caledonian Association Reel:

In 2009, Niall Rowantree, a gifted piper and frequent guest at our Burns' Dinners, wrote a superb pipe tune especially for the Chester Caledonian Association. Niall attended the Burns' Dinner that year and played in the year of our 125th Anniversary. By coincidence, this also marked Burns' 250th Anniversary, and the occasion was marked by a magnificent turn out of members and guests almost 250 strong.

Historical records

The following items provide a fascinating insight into the Association's history although the earliest minute books are missing and the detail of the minutes is variable. The menus from the 19th Century show a greater number of courses at the meal than modern man could cope with and the number and variety of the toasts is also somewhat daunting. Within the minute book commencing in 1921, there are menus stipulating the service of "a Caulker o' Glenlivet" with the Haggis at Burns' Dinners.

Menu Cards from St Andrew's Day Caledonian Balls: almost a complete collection 1936-present.

A Collection of Menu Cards from Burns' Dinner: a few of these date back to the 19th Century, there is then a gap to 1935 and thereafter, the collection is almost complete.

Minute Books (1921-1948, 1948-1967 and 1967 to date): the earliest retained Minute Book contains St. Andrew's Day and Burns' Dinner menus which are additional to the collections noted above.