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# Donors to Conservation & Restoration of the statue, Robert Burns & Highland Mary

Sculpted by Hamilton Patrick McCarthy

Restoration by Graciela Ainsworth

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Main Contributors

**Maple Oak Plc (developers of Menzies site)  
and West Lothian Council Public Art Fund.**

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Support and encouragement from past Chief Executive WLC  
Alex Linkston; present Chief Executive Graham Hope;  
Alistair Shaw, with great indebtedness to the sterling work of  
Stuart Eydmann and assisted in many ways by Camille Archer  
and Marjory Mackie. Support and assistance provided by local  
MSP Mary Mulligan.

## **Councillors:**

Ellen Blaney Glass; Gordon Beurskens; Alex Davidson;  
Bruce Ferrie; Jim Swan; John McGinty; Lawrence Fitzpatrick;  
William Boyle

**MP** - Michael Connarty MP

## **Societies Etc:**

Caledonian Society of France; The Scots' Society of St. Andrew  
Bedford; St. Andrews Scottish Society of New Mexico;  
Lodge St. Andrew Livingston Station No. 1587; Lodge St. John  
Midcalder No 272; Provincial Grand Lodge of Linlithgowshire;  
Clan MacQuarrie; Lodge Almondale No 1658; Balerno Burns  
Club (via Councillor Carl John); Balbardie Primary School;  
Bathgate District Provus Club; Bathgate Community Council;  
Bathgate History Group.

## **Individuals (and Shopkeepers):**

Mr. J. Kennedy; Col John M Loundes; Mr & Mrs J Kerr;  
C & D Donald; Mr. & Mrs. George Smith; Mrs. Margaret Connell;  
Mr. Neil Anderson (Bathgate Picture Craft); Kilt Studio;  
David Stein (Butcher); Anne & Bobby's Designer Dresses .

Supported by:



West Lothian  
Council

# Robert Burns & Highland Mary

## THE STORY OF THE STATUE



Bathgate Historic  
Conservation Society

# HISTORY OF A STATUE

## Robert Burns & Highland Mary

by Bathgate Historic Conservation Society

### The Pedigree

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**H**amilton Patrick McCarthy was the second generation of three generations of sculptors. In the 1870's he produced a 7 foot high 3 ton marble statue of Robert Burns and Highland Mary. It was exhibited in the Royal Academy, London in 1880.

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It is fair to say that McCarthy does not rank among the highest echelons of British Sculptors in the Victorian era.

Gordon Ashley, an Australian, visited Bathgate in September of 2010. He was making an appeal presently for another Burns' statue, that of Robert Burns and his dog Luath and he alleges, "The Bathgate statue deserves to be regarded as a national treasure. It is the only marble statue of Burns/Mary Campbell in the world. If Patrick McCarthy carved it before 1879 – as well he might have – it would also emerge as the oldest marble statue of Burns to have been sculpted by a Scot, as it would predate William Grant Stevenson's marble statue of Burns in Kilmarnock."

A response from Historic Scotland through the office of Nicola Sturgeon MSP informs us that, "as the statue is not on the Scottish Ministers Statutory List, and has been in a

warehouse for some decades, we had been to date unaware of its existence. However, we have now had the opportunity to look into the matter and in so doing have been in touch with West Lothian Council's Senior Conservation Officer, Stuart Eydmann. Whilst the statue is in a very poor condition now, due to vandalism, in its restored state and relocated to a suitable venue, its historical and architectural quality make it an item which could be assessed for inclusion on the Scottish Ministers List in the future."

It is clear from this introductory information that the five members of the BHCS did not tackle this project in a light hearted, or cavalier fashion and were not motivated by parochial sentimentality. It was something they felt strongly about in the specific as well as the general.

# Offer of Statue to the Greenock Burns Club

In 1943 the statue was offered by a James Anderson, a contractor of Steps to the Greenock Burns Club for display in a suitable site in Greenock. It is understood there may well have been a connection between Mary and the town. No appropriate (outside) site

was found prior to James' death in 1947. His brother Robert of Armadale inherited the statue. He died in 1951 leaving the statue to his son who gifted it to the Town of Bathgate in 1952.

Offer of Statue to the Town of Bathgate. Courier Extract : 18th July 1952.  
(Report on meeting of 21st April 1952)

## Gift of Statue

The following paragraph appeared in the Finance Committee minute : "The Provost (Councillor P Glen) informed the committee that Mr Robert Anderson, Contractor, Steps, had offered, through him, a gift to the town of a pleasing marble statue of Robert Burns and Highland Mary which he had inherited. The Provost stated that he had taken upon himself to accept this gift and delivery had been made, although a site has still to be selected. The Chairman (Treasurer Dent) expressed appreciation of Mr. Anderson's generosity and of the Provost's action."

"The Provost explained that Mr. Anderson had informed him that he had been left a small estate in Greenock and that he was demolishing certain buildings for the purpose of building villas on the site. On the site there existed a monument of Burns and Highland Mary. He (the Provost) took the opportunity, along with Mr. Anderson of having a look at it, and he was convinced it was a most acceptable gift which was offered free of charge. He knew full well that he would require the authority of the

Council. He secured the services of Mr. Roberts (local monumental sculptor), who went to Greenock. It was a beautiful statue of monumental marble, and Mr Roberts estimated that its cost would be around £1000. He (the Provost) asked Mr. Roberts to make the necessary arrangements for the transfer of the statue to Bathgate, and it was now lying in Mr. Roberts' yard. The Provost moved that the Council accept the gift and that they find a suitable site for its erection in the Public Park and also that a letter of thanks and appreciation be sent to Mr. Anderson."

"Baillie Hunter said he was not an expert on marble statues but he went down to Mr. Roberts' yard and saw it and he was agreeably surprised. It was not a large statue, about seven feet in height. It was a beautiful piece of marble, and Mr. Roberts who knew a great deal about that class of work, told him it was fine marble and had evidently been done by a gifted sculptor. He (Baillie Hunter) thought it would be an acquisition to the burgh."

“The Council agreed to the Provost’s motion to accept the gift and that a letter of thanks should be sent to Mr. Anderson. It was suggested that the Estates and Parks committee might consider the question of a suitable site in Kirkton Park for the statue.”

From the minutes of Bathgate Town Council of 9th June 1952 we find the following abstract mentioned in the minutes of the Robert Burns and Highland Mary statue –

“The Committee selected a site in the border

on the west side of the main pathway leading from the entrance gate to the Bandstand almost opposite the rear of the Bandstand for the erection of the statue of Robert Burns and Highland Mary, present by Mr. Robert Anderson of Steps. The Committee instructed Mr. Roberts to have the statue cleaned and an inscription carved in one inch letters giving the name of the donor. They instructed the Burgh surveyor and Mr. Roberts then to have the statue erected in the selected place.”

## Beauty Beheld

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From 1952 until the mid seventies the statue of Robert Burns and Highland Mary was admired by the townsfolk of Bathgate. It gave a great deal of pleasure and indeed Bathgate folk were proud of their particular Burns statue.

## Beauty Denied

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Sadly after twenty plus years the vandals moved in wrecking what once was appreciated by the majority of the townsfolk of Bathgate. Both heads were broken off as well as an arm and a leg, leaving the only option to the Parks Department of removing it from public view and condemning it to storage for the next 35 years. There are many reasons why it took so long before restoration was considered, not least the continual flux of local government organisation which left the statue in limbo and through the passage of time, forgotten about.

It is also worth noting that the aforementioned Bandstand was also a magnet for the vandals and it has long since disappeared.

A Courier report of 17th February 1975 described the damage done to the statue in the following extract. A photograph similar to the one on the following page showed the extent of the damage with the heading “RABBIE LOSES HIS HEAD”



The present state of the statue Robert Burns & Highland Mary as stored at Kirkton Public Park Bathgate

The report continued “It is well known that Robbie Burns in his youth was a lad for merriment and jest, but even he would have taken a dim view of the vandals’ work last week on the statue in Kirkton Park.. For he lost his head – and in the company of a lady, his companion Highland Mary.

“Both Robbie and Mary have had their heads knocked off, along with their arms, leaving the statue in an almost irreparable condition.

“Police are investigating the attack and Bathgate Town Council have condemned this blatant act of mindless vandalism.

“As Robbie himself once wrote in “The Brigs of Ayr”, ‘Auld vandal, ye but show your little mense (respect)’.”

## The Formation of the Society

The driving force behind the setting up of a Trust Fund for the restoration of the statue of Robert Burns and Highland Mary was Clainie Welsh.

She sent invitations to several likely supporters on 10th October, 2007 and arranged an initial meeting to be held in Balbairdie Hotel, Bathgate on Wednesday 24th October, 2007. Those present were Sharon Houston, Senior Policy Officer of West Lothian Council, who chaired the meeting, Councillor John McGinty, Clainie Welsh, Dorothy Slater, Allister Mackie, Joseph Welsh, William Millan and Robert Harkness.

Apologies were received from Stuart Eydmann, Sybil Cavanagh and Councillor Jim Walker.

Prior to this initial meeting a costing exercise had been carried out as to the viability of conservation and restoration of the statue and costs involved. This work was carried out by Graciela Ainsworth Sculpture Conservation, Edinburgh.

Although the support was small in number it was considered that the project was viable, and that a suitable site for the restored statue might be, with West Lothian Council approval, the foyer of the proposed new library. It was agreed that Sharon Houston should go ahead with the necessary arrangements to prepare a constitution for an Unincorporated Organisation in the form of a Civic Trust (heritage) with a Charity number with the aims of restoring the statue and encouraging the children of Bathgate to develop an interest in their heritage. At this meeting Clainie Welsh was voted Chair Person, and Robert Harkness and Dorothy Slater took on the offices of Secretary and Treasurer respectively.

By 16th January, 2008 final adjustments were made to the constitution which had been discussed previously, and application for Charitable Status was made. The Constitution was accepted on 13th February, 2008, and Charitable Status was granted by 3rd June, 2008.

On 16th April, 2008, Bill Millan suggested he could produce a pencil drawing to give an indication of how the statue should look when complete. Instead, by 20th August, 2008 he had painted a beautiful picture in oils of Robert Burns and Highland Mary as they would appear after restoration. Subsequently a photograph of this painting was turned into post cards for promotional purposes.

## The Challenge of Funding

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Like eager beavers the committee set about the task of finding sources for funds. The Society felt it had two good events which would work to its advantage, these being the much advertised "Homecoming" and the 250th anniversary of the Poet's birth. It was expected that eyes would be focused on Scotland and on Burns and this would give the needed boost to our fund raising challenge of £50,000.

There were two main routes for raising funds. One was by way of the world-wide-web and the other was by post. Joe Welsh used the web to contact literally hundreds of Burns, Celtic, Caledonian Societies, Masonic Lodges and all

Scottish groupings abroad. Another 75 companies were targeted with a mail shot. Meanwhile the secretary was sending applications to over 16 major trusts and foundations, contacting Local Government and National Government Agencies, involving local councillors (who were very supportive), our local MP Michael Connarty, MSP Mary Mulligan and MEP David Martin (European Funding), along with well known personalities, individual donors and the Society's own efforts of fundraising through Burns Suppers, sale of post cards and taking a stall for promotional activities at the local Highland Games in Bathgate.

# Media

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Joe Welsh approached all avenues of the media. This resulted in a half-page story in the Herald and Post on Thursday, 15th January 2009, and also a half-page article by Laura Cummings in the Edinburgh Evening News on 21st February, 2009.

In 2010, our Australian friend Gordon Ashley, already mentioned, who was visiting Scotland, was staggered at the lack of Government and cultural interest in the statue, and this inflamed him to write to at least four newspapers and Government, with the Scotsman publishing an article on the 9th September, 2010, outlining the plight of the statue. Joe Welsh was also in contact with local radio and TV stations and gave interviews on the Society's behalf. The follow-up articles when the funding was in place was put into print by the Herald and Post on Thursday 27th January, 2011; and by Laura Cummings in the Edinburgh Evening News on 31st January, 2011.

After all this effort there was little to show in the funds. There were two likely explanations. Firstly, the world economic climate had taken a severe downturn, and secondly, the "Homecoming" did not appear to have any funding behind it.

The responses the Society received from the majority of applications showed the project fell between the cracks either in nature, or heritage terms. Most funding appeared to be targeted at live, artistic or heritage or humanity projects.. So, by the AGM of 2010, most of the committee members were at a low ebb and at a loss as to where to try next. However, they were encouraged by Councillor W Boyle to persevere

Money is sometimes closer to hand than you think! Stuart Eydmann was part of the team from an early stage and close ties were maintained through his office as Senior Planner – Conservation and Design at West Lothian Council. On 13th April, 2010, he called a meeting with the Society at which Camille Archer was present. Various aspects of lottery funding were discussed and it was stated that Chief Executive of West Lothian Council, Alex Linkston was keen that the project should succeed, suggesting money might be obtained from developers and Stuart Eydmann had been asked to pursue this line. In the meantime the search by the Society continued to find that elusive funding.



## Success at Last

News came to the Society that negotiations were in progress in the summer of 2010 and Stuart Eydman was hopeful of a positive outcome. The Society's minutes of the 16th February 2011 shows the elation felt by the committee, and it was with renewed enthusiasm that they could plan for the

next stage in the process which is now under the umbrella of West Lothian Council. The necessary contracts were drawn up with Graciela Ainsworth for the conservation and restoration work. A site was to be prepared at the New Lindsay House in South Bridge Street, Bathgate.

## The Journey Begins

On the morning of Tuesday 12th April 2011, a team headed by Graciela Ainsworth uplifted the statue from Kirkton Public Park, to her workshop in Edinburgh in specially constructed wooden crates with extra softening. Down the pathway, through the Stewart Gates, and carefully hoisted onto transporter thence to Edinburgh, the whole process was eagerly recorded by a group of the Society.



# The crating of the statue



The statue is all set for the first leg of the journey.  
A Visit to the Workshop of Graciela Ainsworth



Heading for the Stewart Gates



Modelling of the new head for Highland Mary



Detail of thistle can just be seen



## Sylvia, Clainie Welsh, Mary & Robert, Graciela

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**O**n the 15th June, 2011, 5 members of the Society paid a visit to the workshop of Graciela Ainsworth, who made us feel immediately at home.

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The workshop was spacious and airy and many of the pieces of ongoing work were to be seen in various stages of conservation and restoration.

Our own statue of Robert Burns and Highland Mary was “work in progress” and we were pleasantly surprised to see how much work had been done in such a short space of time. The difference in the quality of the surface of the marble since we last saw it in the storage area at Kirkton Park was remarkable, and we could visualise how wonderful it will look when complete conservation and restoration has been carried out. Graciela introduced the party to Sylvia, a Master Conservator, who is presently modelling the head of Mary in clay, and is painstakingly working through anatomical sketches to produce as satisfactory a likeness to the original head as possible. Graciela and Sylvia gave us a lot of very interesting information regarding

materials, cleaning methods, techniques in the art of sculpture and its restoration along with information relating to the human anatomy.

The most effective method of cleaning was the use of conservation grade steam machines. This revealed all the intricate details skilfully carved, notably a lovely little thistle, sculpted around the base of the statue which no one in the group had noticed before as they had been hidden from view by years of dirt and grime.

The gentlemen of the party accepted an opportunity to show their skills and ability when Graciela invited them to try their hand at sculpting a slab of marble – and surprisingly they all came up to the mark!!

We left the workshop in good spirits in the knowledge that Robert Burns and Highland Mary were in not only safe and expert hands but also loving ones.

On 28th July 2011 a second visit was paid to Graciela's Workshop. Things had moved on apace and although Graciela reported the marble was still not available. The original source was to be Italy but an increase in costs was proving horrendously expensive and the finest white marble, "Thassos" from Greece was selected. The statue looked impressive. The missing limbs and heads had been expertly reproduced, modelled in clay/resin, and were in place.



The Statue as viewed on 28th July 2011 on the second visit to Graciela's Workshop

The following graphics illustrates the progress made.



Modelling of the legs



Modelling the heads and arms

## Graciela Workshop Visit 29th September 2011.



After further conservation, Mary's head is now cast for sculpting



Cast arm and legs ready for sculpting in marble. Strip of marble at right had corner of photograph being used as template for shading trials to blend new with old.

Below - cast head of Robert as model for sculpting.



Conrad sculpting the new right leg



Sylvia explaining the techniques involved

On our third visit, 29th September, we could see how further cleaning and conservation had taken place. Sylvia explained which areas would be replaced with marble and those areas where an alternative material would be used because it would be unsuitable to sculpt marble. She also explained how they proposed to overcome the difference in shading between the new and old marble. A pointing machine was being used in the carving of this delicate and accurate work, similar to that used in the original sculpture apparently.

On our final visit on 12th December, 2011, we were delighted to see Robert's head in its final stages of restoration, while Mary's was progressing well. John was working on Mary's arm and Robert's hand. New holes will be drilled and stainless steel dowels with polyester resin will be used to secure the newly carved parts to the main sculpture.

The thumb prints of the Society were added to the resin section of Burns' heel at the back of the sculpture. The delight about this is clearly seen in the photograph where we are posing like five "Little Jack Horners".



Mary's head being sculpted in marble



Robert's head being finely worked by Conrad



John works on Mary's arm and Robert's hand



The thumb printing session

# Reassembling the statue

On 23 January some of the Society members gathered at the New Partnership Building as the now restored statue arrived and, amid not a little trepidation, watched as Graciela's team worked tirelessly in the cold,

reassembling the plinth and then carefully placing each piece of marble in position with a layer of lime mortar. The morning winter sun gave that special luminosity to the white marble and we were much impressed.



The Base is measured and laid



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XXXXXXXX



XXXXXXXX

Everything is now in place for the Unveiling Ceremony to take place on Wednesday 25th January 2012



The Restoration Team



Wednesday 25th January 2012



A few appropriate words from Provost T Kerr



Miss D Slater presents a bouquet to Graciela Ainsworth



A few appropriate words from Provost T Kerr



Members of the Bathgate Historic Conservation Society  
From L-R: Drew Kerr, Joe Welsh, Jennifer Tod, Clainie Welsh,  
Dorothy Slater, William Millan, Robert Harkness and  
Camille Archer, Arts Development Officer

# The Statue in the Garden Orchard, New Partnership Building

The morning of the 25th of January, 2012 saw the culmination of all the hard work and perseverance by all parties involved in the project.

There was an air of excitement and anticipation as invited guests arrived to witness the unveiling ceremony of the statue which dominated the orchard garden of the New Partnership Building, South Bridge Street, in Bathgate.

MC Joe Welsh began with a resume of the statue's history, the toils and tribulations of fund raising activities, and concluded on an interesting up-beat note of discovery – a granddaughter of Hamilton P McCarthy, a Mrs Mary Croft from Canada had contacted the Society recently.

Joe went on to give fulsome praise to Graciela Ainsworth's restoration team for their dedicated hard work. A toast was raised to the Bard and a young piper, Murray Horn, played a lament for the occasion. Murray had previously provided suitable pipe tunes for the foregathering.

Provost Tom Kerr said a few appropriate words prior to Mrs Welsh performing the Unveiling after which she placed a Red Rose at the foot of the beautiful statue. After a photo shoot by press, TV and BHCS, photographer, Robert Harkness, a bouquet of flowers was presented to Graciela by Dorothy Slater on behalf of the Society. She thanked the Team not only for their professionalism but also for their friendship.



Thereafter everyone enjoyed a special Scottish buffet and the event was concluded by Councillor Jim Walker's vote of thanks.

The Society was gratified to see so many guests clearly appreciative of the event and thanks all donors and interested parties who gave us support and encouragement throughout the duration of the project.

The statue now being in the care of West Lothian Council, it is anticipated that more events relating to the arts and sciences will take place within the New Partnership Building, Bathgate, through the offices of Camille Archer, Arts Development Officer.

## Highland Mary and Robert Burns





Hamilton P McCarthy  
Circa 1889 – Ontario Canada