

21 August 2025

## **DESCENDANT OF ROBERT BURNS GETS A CLOSE LOOK AT BOOK GIFTED TO HER 6X GREAT GRANDMOTHER**

A schoolgirl from Stirlingshire, and a 10th generation descendant of Robert Burns, paid a special visit to see the book the bard gifted to her six times great grandmother, Elizabeth Burns, removed from its case for the first time in a decade.

Luciana Docherty, age 13, along with her grandmother Irene, father Campbell, and younger sister Carolina, made the trip to the National Trust for Scotland's Robert Burns Birthplace Museum in Alloway to get a glimpse of a precious family artefact.

Elizabeth, or Bess, was Burns' first child, who was born to Elizabeth Paton in 1785, and she was raised by the poet's mother. Robert Burns gifted young Bess a 1793, second Edinburgh edition of 'Poems, Chiefly in the Scottish Dialect' for her eighth birthday. Part of the museum's collection of prized Burns items, the book was removed from its case for the first time in more than 10 years so that three generations of descendants could see the 230-year-old tome up close.

Irene didn't know that Robert Burns was one of her great grandfathers until her daughter-in-law Fiona traced the family tree several years ago. The family has now embraced their poetic roots and have become more involved in Burns celebrations, especially the annual Burns Supper held at the Burns Cottage each year.

The Supper is organised and hosted by Hugh Farrell, a longtime volunteer at the Museum, who guided a visit from Luciana's school a few years ago. When Luciana proudly presented her family tree, Hugh, who rarely encounters genuine Burns descendants, saw an opportunity to involve the family in his annual tradition.

In January 2023, both Luciana and Campbell attended the Burns Cottage Supper, with Luciana giving a reading of 'A Poet's Welcome to his Love Begotten Daughter,' written for her ancestor, Bess, and Campbell giving a speech in ode to Robert Burns. At the invitation of Hugh, they will be attending the Supper again in 2026.

Luciana Docherty said: "We recite Burns' poems at school and always have a competition, so I've done it in front of people before, but it was great to be at the Supper in the place where Robert Burns was born. I'm really proud to be a descendant of Burns and it was amazing to be up close to the book he gave to my great-grandmother over 200 years ago. My whole family is really thankful to Hugh for organising it."

Hugh Farrell, National Trust for Scotland Volunteer at the Robert Burns Birthplace

Museum, said: "I've been working at the Museum a long time and I've had many people say they are descendants of Burns, but it's very rarely the case. When Luciana visited with her school and showed me her family tree, I was very confident that this was genuine, and it was wonderful to be able to invite her and her father, ninth and tenth generation descendants, to participate in a Burns Supper in the very place their ancestor was born.

"Our Burns Suppers at Burns Cottage are very special occasions. The earliest known Supper was held in Burns Cottage in 1801, when nine men attended in remembrance of Robert Burns. They resolved to meet every year on his birthday and continued to do so before moving the event to the Kings Arms Hotel in Ayr in 1810 to accommodate more guests. After many decades without one, I began hosting a Supper in the Cottage in 2016 on behalf of the Friends of Robert Burns Birthplace Museum. Each year we are joined by people from all over the world, and funds are raised for the Museum and the conservation of the Burns Collection and Burns Cottage. We are looking forward to 2026, and to having Burns' descendants in attendance again for this wonderful celebration."

For more information about Robert Burns Birthplace Museum and Burns Cottage, visit [nts.org.uk/visit/places/robert-burns-birthplace-museum](https://nts.org.uk/visit/places/robert-burns-birthplace-museum).

The Burns Collection Online, including Poems, Chiefly in the Scottish Dialect, can be viewed at [nts.org.uk/collections/robert-burns-collection](https://nts.org.uk/collections/robert-burns-collection).

## **ENDS**

### **Notes to Editors:**

**Images:** <https://www.flickr.com/gp/133918740@N04/f42U23y411>

### **Robert Burns Family and Children**

Robert Burns was father to at least 12 children in his lifetime. He married Jean Armor in 1788 and together they had nine children, three of whom survived infancy.

Burns' first child was Bess, born outside of marriage to Elizabeth Paton in 1785. Another daughter named Betty Burns Park was born outside of marriage to Helen Anne 'Anna' Park in 1791.

Robert Burns had five surviving children at the time of his death.

### **About the National Trust for Scotland**

Established in 1931, the National Trust for Scotland is Scotland's largest conservation charity and cares for, shares and speaks up for Scotland's magnificent heritage.

Over the last 90 years the Trust has pioneered public access to and shared ownership of some of the most magnificent buildings, collections and landscapes in Scotland. It cares

for more than 100 sites, from ancient houses to battlefields, castles, mills, gardens, coastlines, islands, mountain ranges and the plants and animals which depend upon them.

In March 2022 the National Trust for Scotland launched *Nature, Beauty & Heritage for Everyone*, its ten-year strategy which sets out the ambitions of the charity over the coming decade. From speaking up for Scotland's heritage which doesn't have a voice, to improving the lives and wellbeing of people across the country, and responding to the climate and biodiversity crisis, the Trust will build on its work in recent years to grow its impact and conserve and restore more of Scotland's heritage, as it moves towards its centenary in 2031.

For more information on the National Trust for Scotland visit [www.nts.org.uk](http://www.nts.org.uk). The National Trust for Scotland is a charity registered in Scotland, Charity Number SC 007410.