



28 June 2023

PLANS TO UPDATE BURNS MONUMENT GARDEN AS 200TH ANNIVERSARY APPROACHES

- **New garden developments planned by National Trust for Scotland as it celebrates milestone anniversary of Burns Monument**
- **Historic etchings and photos of Monument and its garden used as reference to re-establish and enhance traditional features**
- **Burns Monument anniversary celebrations taking place on Saturday and Sunday 1 & 2 July at the Robert Burns Birthplace Museum, Alloway, Ayr**

Poetry by the national bard and historic etchings from Scottish artists are being used as inspiration by the National Trust for Scotland to inform future plans for the Burns Monument garden to capture 'the spirit of Ayrshire' as it celebrates the memorial's 200th anniversary.

Traditional ink etchings by Scottish artists David Octavius Hill and James Mitchell in the early 1800s, alongside photography and postcards of the Monument and its garden from the 20th century, are being used by Scotland's largest conservation charity to develop future improvements to the visitor attraction, which opened on 4 July 1823.

New planting is gradually being introduced into the garden to complement its existing varieties of flowers and foliage to create a more cohesive look that will form a closer link to its historic design. This will help to tell the story of the property and evoke a sense of place within the community, supporting the Trust's mission to care for, protect and tell the story of Scotland's natural and cultural heritage.

To celebrate the 200 year milestone, the National Trust for Scotland is hosting celebration events on Saturday and Sunday 1 & 2 July at the Robert Burns Birthplace Museum in Alloway, Ayr, where visitors can join its Head Gardener Luke Sargent, to plant their own mini wildflower garden, enjoy garden tours from knowledgeable volunteers, children's trail and history trails around the garden, birds of prey as well as performances of Burns' poetry and music alongside talks on the proposed garden development and monument's restoration. Visitors to the museum will also be able to enjoy Burns' Homecoming exhibition, which has been extended until September, and features 12 original manuscripts by the poet alongside his First Commonplace Book, on public display for the first time since 1986.

The etching of the Burns Monument and Statue House by D.O. Hill, dating back to 1836, features the word 'Coila', a reference to Robert Burns poem 'The Vision' in which he is

visited by Coila, the spirit of Ayrshire. The spirit Coila, derived from the pagan name for Kyle, a district in Ayrshire, who visited the poet during a period of self-reflection on the lack of success of his work at that time, helped act as a muse and a source of inspiration for him, by highlighting the beauty of the countryside and the virtues of Scotland that have featured heavily throughout Burns poetry during his career.

Aiming to capture the same 'spirit of Ayrshire' in the new garden developments being planned for the Burns Monument, Luke will be talking about his work to mark the anniversary on Sunday, 2 July. Luke said: "We're really excited about the upcoming anniversary of the Burns Monument as it gives us the opportunity to share our ideas on how we can update the traditional design of the surrounding garden while being sympathetic to its past, shown in the historic etchings, photographs and postcards we've uncovered during our research. While some artistic licence has been taken in the artist's impressions, they demonstrate the significance of the memorial to the local community by depicting Burns Cottage and Auld Kirk in the distance.

"The Burns Monument garden was renowned for its roses and the space grew in popularity following the introduction of passenger railway services to Ayrshire in 1856. Following a traditional Victorian style formal garden style mixed with a more naturalistic design, the garden included a mix of Mediterranean plants alongside evergreens including a variety of different species of fir trees and grasses.

"Taking inspiration from Burn's poem, 'To a Mountain Daisy', an ode to the landscape and wildlife in the area, we are planning to plant native species of roses, grasses and evergreens into the garden to reflect the flora already in place, and intend to reduce the height of some of the trees to re-establish sight lines to Burns Cottage and the Auld Kirk to reflect the prominence of the monument within Alloway and the pride of the community in its local hero, Robert Burns. It is thanks to our members and donors that we're able to continue our work that supports our vision to provide access to nature, beauty and heritage for everyone by offering inspiring visitor experiences to the places in our care, to protect them for future generations to enjoy."

The monument was cared for by the Burns Monument Trust before it came into the ownership of the National Trust for Scotland in 2008. During the initial surveys, significant water ingress was identified that was causing damage to the fabric of the building and the intricately carved stone adorning its façade and its fine interior. In response, the conservation charity started a programme of restoration work to replace the lime mortar between the stonework that was completed in May 2019 and formally reopened in July of the same year.

Conservation chartered building surveyor and heritage consultant Kinlay Laidlaw who led the restoration project will be delivering a talk to visitors on the history of the Burns Monument and challenges involved in its restoration at the Robert Burns Birthplace Museum on Sunday 2 July.

Kinlay said: "The talk will be a celebration of the many involved in the creation of the monument and the custodians involved in its care in the intervening years until today.

We will be delving into the archives to shine a light on some of the interesting stories, people and events that led to the creation of the monument and those who have looked after it over many generations to ensure it has survived in good health.”

Further information about the Burns Monument anniversary celebration events and Trust Talks by Luke Sargent and Kinlay Laidlaw is available on the National Trust for Scotland website - <https://www.nts.org.uk/visit/places/robert-burns-birthplace-museum>.

The properties in the Trust’s care, and activities such as the Burns Monument anniversary celebrations, contribute to its strategy to deliver Nature, Beauty & Heritage for Everyone. The 10-year strategy, unveiled in 2022, refocuses its vision of caring for, sharing, and conserving Scotland’s heritage. Read more about the strategy at: <https://www.nts.org.uk/our-work/our-strategy>

ENDS

Editor’s Notes:

About the Blavatnik Honresfield Collection

The collection, originally named the Honresfield library collection, which takes its name from Honresfield House in Greater Manchester, the home of the original owners, was one of the most historically important private literary collections accumulated during the late 19th and early 20th century. It was brought together by two brothers, Alfred and William Law, who were hugely successful, self-made Victorian industrialists with a passion for literary history and book collecting. After their deaths in the early 20th century, the library was inherited by their nephew, Sir Alfred Law who died in 1939. The collection includes manuscripts by the Brontës, Jane Austen, Robert Burns and Sir Walter Scott.

The campaign to save the Honresfield Collection from being sold privately by auction house Sotheby’s in London ran in 2021. Led by the Friends of the National Libraries, £15 million was raised to acquire the Honresfield Library for the nation. Alongside other consortium partners, the National Trust for Scotland contributed towards the appeal thanks to support received from the charity’s members and donors. Every manuscript and printed book acquired has been donated to nearly 70 libraries and writers’ houses across the UK so that they are accessible to everyone. The 12 manuscripts are now wholly owned by the National Trust for Scotland. The Commonplace Book is jointly owned by the Trust and the National Library of Scotland.

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.

Scotland's largest membership organisation, the National Trust for Scotland relies on the support of its members and donors to carry out its important work.

For more information on the National Trust for Scotland visit www.nts.org.uk.

The National Trust for Scotland is a charity registered in Scotland, Charity Number SC 007410.