

NATIONAL TRUST FOR SCOTLAND MEDIA RELEASE

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Violin's voice restored for Burns Night

A violin which Robert Burns is said to have danced to will sounds as it did in the 18th century, after the National Trust for Scotland had the piece restored to its original condition.

The instrument is thought to have belonged to Burns' tutor William Gregg and accompanied Robert Burns' dance lessons at the Bachelors' Club in Tarbolton.

Over the years, a series of repairs and modernisations, including the adding of a chin cup, had been made to the violin and it used modern style strings.

Last year, the National Trust for Scotland, the charity which conserves and promotes Scotland's heritage, arranged for David Rattray, the Kirkcaldy-based violin expert to restore the instrument to how it would have been in the 18th century, when Burns danced to it.

The instrument is a decorated baroque violin of provincial-type construction dating to the mid-18th century. It is made from pine, bird's-eye maple and plain cut sycamore. It has now been repaired and restored and has been restrung with gut strings as it would have originally.

According to experts at the museum, around 1779 the adolescent Robert Burns began attending dancing lessons in Tarbolton.

Curator Sean McGlashan said:

"Burns wrote that he hoped dancing would 'give my manners a brush.' More likely, he realised dancing lessons were an excellent form of rebellion, as his father frowned upon such sinful behaviour."

The violin is part of the National Trust for Scotland's collection at the Robert Burns Birthplace Museum in Alloway.

It is due to be played a number of times around Burns Night by acclaimed violinist Alistair McCulloch. This is the first time in many years that people will hear the violin as Burns did in 1779.

Alistair is looking forward to playing the fiddle. He said:

"I am very excited about playing the Gregg violin again and treat it as a real honour. I feel it is important to play music of the period, particularly the music of Niel Gow who Burns met in 1787. The tone of the instrument has a sweetness which enhances the character of these great old tunes."

The National Trust for Scotland's Alloway museum is hosting a series of events to mark the bard's birthday. The violin will be played at the Burns Big Birthday Bash at Burns Cottage on Sunday 29 January.

For more information about events visit www.burnsmuseum.org.uk.

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A selection of images are available for download at:
<https://www.flickr.com/gp/133918740@N04/37vi0g>

