



Adult Learning Within Reach

Member Lecture – 21 January 2021

Burns for the 21st century
Marc Sherland

Questions not taken during lecture and answered post-lecture.

Q1 Are you a poet Marc? Did Burns or someone else inspire you?

I am a poet, Burns is certainly an inspiration, though not the only one. I am however fascinated by the verse form he often used which is a uniquely Scottish form 'the Habbie'.

Q2 What is haggis made of?

Essentially a haggis can be either meat or vegetarian these days but is usually a mix of offal, grains, spices and meat mixed and stuffed into a sheep's intestine, though these days more often other substitutes are used. Also in truth, the haggis started out as a Northumbrian peasant's dish.

Q3 Does the Robert Burns World Federation consider any of Burns' contemporaries?

It is our Mission to consider all Scots Leid writers using the language and heritage of Scotland to construct their poetry. Burns was interested in and promoted contemporary poets and so do we.

Q4 In terms of accent, I have noticed a move towards rhotic or retroflex 'R' in Scottish pronunciation with the final 'r' in minister is heavily pronounced like an American accent and unlike an English accent with no 'r' sound. Traditionally, the Scottish accent would also have no 'r' sound or would actually roll the final 'r'. Any thoughts?

Whilst I am by no means a phonetic expert, I think there is a general drift to losing the distinctive rolling 'r' in Scots, which has long been a distinctive sound, but the drift is slow. The rhotic 'r' is probably a cultural appropriation from American English which has come over through the growing dominance of TV and film. It's rare to hear my godsons play in any other accent except assumed American drawl. The Edinburgh vs Glasgow sound where the Edinburghers sound less Scots and more Anglified was mostly caused in the 18th Century where there was a definite move to lose the Scots sound with those who could afford it taking lessons to 'improve' their speech. This did not occur on the West Coast.

Useful links and further reading

Robert Burns World Federation – <http://www.rbwf.org.uk>