

# Arran History

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Since 2000 The Isle of Arran Distillers have been granted life membership of the World Burns Federation - an organisation based in Kilmarnock, Ayrshire which is dedicated to the life and works of our national poet Robert Burns.

Robert Burns was born in Alloway, Ayrshire in 1759 and his links with Ayrshire and Arran are well known. In fact, although the bard never actually visited the Isle of Arran, he is certain to have been able to see it on clear days as he laboured in the fields of Ayrshire on his father's farm. At that time there were several illicit stills on Arran which produced whisky that was claimed by many to be "among the finest whiskies available".

Robert was the eldest of seven children and worked alongside his brothers on his father's farm. Despite being from a poor family, he and his brother were lucky enough to have a tutor who introduced them to the joys of literature. Aged 15 Robert began to start writing in order to find some sort of release from the daily grind of farm life. At this early age he produced his first poetry which was dedicated to the main subjects which dominated his life - scotch whisky and women!

After the death of his father in 1784, Robert and his brother took over the farm although by this time the romantic nature of poetry led him to seek the sunnier skies of the West Indies. He was on the point of abandoning farm life in Scotland when his first collection of poetry "Poems Chiefly in the Scottish Dialect - Kilmarnock Edition" was published and was extremely well received. He therefore decided to stay in Scotland, parenthood also a contributing factor in this decision, and he began to mix with the literary and artistic circles in Edinburgh. This change of fortune in his social life was not necessarily backed up by financial fortune so he supplemented his low income as a poet by working as an exciseman - yet another link to Arran and its illicit stills of days gone by. All the while, he continued to write poetry and songs.

In the latter part of his life he produced such masterpieces as Tam O'Shanter and Red Red Rose and he eventually passed away of heart disease aged 37. He died on the day that his wife Jean Armour gave birth to his last son Maxwell. Over 10 000 people came to his funeral although, as is the case with many artists, his popularity has reached even more impressive heights since he died. Although he was not a legend in his own time, Robert Burns left a legacy which has touched Scotland and indeed people in countries all over the world. On his birthday, 25th January, Scots all over the world celebrate with a Burns Supper where they address the haggis, the ladies and, of course, whisky. Such a celebration of his life, work and all of the things he loved in life would surely make Robert Burns proud today.

We are proud to count the Burns Malt, the Burns Blend and a collection of three Robert Burns Deluxe Blended whiskies as part of our product range. All of these products are officially endorsed by the World Burns Federation and are our most fitting tribute to Scotland's National Poet, given that whisky was one of the things in life he enjoyed the most. We are proud to be able to honour him in this way and would invite you to click on the link below in order to find out more about the man himself or on the link to the Robert Burns Collection available from Isle of Arran Distillers Ltd!



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