



The Guildry Gazette

The Newsletter of The Guildry of Dundee - *An Ancient and Honorable Incorporation*

AUTUMN 2026

Building for the Future

Dear All,

I hope that you have experienced a brilliant summer and thoroughly enjoyed your holidays, relaxing with family and friends, wherever and whenever opportunities have arisen.

Our latest Annual Dinner was a wonderful reminder of the many benefits we enjoy through fellowship and active engagement. The warmth of the welcome, the pleasure of good conversation and the sense of common purpose all demonstrated what makes our Guildry so special. Events such as this strengthen friendships, deepen our connection with the organisation and give us fresh energy for the work ahead. I hope that many more members will join us at future gatherings and experience for themselves the enjoyment and fulfilment that come from taking part.

A strong and thriving membership is essential if the Guildry is to continue its proud contribution to Dundee. Our future depends not only on retaining and engaging the members we are fortunate to have, but also on welcoming new people who share our values, civic pride and desire to make a positive difference. Each of us can help. I would encourage each one of us to reach out to friends, relatives and colleagues who may be interested in joining us.



A personal invitation is always the most powerful way to introduce someone to the friendship, heritage and purpose of the Guildry.

New members will always be guaranteed of a warm welcome when they join our great organisation. Membership application forms can be obtained from Clerk, Stuart King, email: Stuart.King@blackadders.co.uk

We are now shaping an engaging programme for the remainder of this year and for our landmark 700th Anniversary Year in 2027. This is a remarkable opportunity to celebrate our heritage while also looking confidently outwards: strengthening fellowship, increasing participation and ensuring that the Guildry remains visible, relevant and valued in the life of our city.

As part of that work, a group of members and Assessors, under the leadership of Assessor Robert Dunn, are considering a suitable charitable initiative for 2027. Our ambition is to identify an initiative that will deliver the greatest possible benefit to the community, raise the profile of the Guildry across Dundee and create meaningful opportunities for as many members as possible to become involved. By bringing our ideas, experience and enthusiasm together, we can create an

anniversary legacy of which we can all be proud. Please contact Clerk, Stuart King, with any suggestions you may have to input into the working group.

There is every reason to look to the future with confidence. Within our membership, we have the quality, talent and commitment needed to build something truly exciting. If we continue to support one another, invite others to join us and take an active part in the life of the Guildry, we will honour the generations who came before us while laying strong foundations for those who will follow.

Together, we can build a future worthy of our remarkable past.

With warmest wishes,

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading 'Ivor Morton', with a long, sweeping underline.

Ivor Morton,
Lord Dean of Guild

Guildry of Dundee enjoys memorable Annual Dinner with Michael Marra

by Ivor Morton



Sixty-four members, partners and friends of the Guildry of Dundee gathered at the Apex Hotel for a memorable Annual Dinner, celebrating fellowship, local talent and another successful year in the life of the organisation.

The evening began with a convivial drinks reception, where guests were warmly welcomed by the Lord Dean. This set a relaxed and cheerful tone before three talented members of Dundee Young Singers, Gracie, Archie and Madi, who delighted the gathering with a superbly delivered medley of songs. Their confident performances brought energy and warmth to the occasion and were enthusiastically received.

The Right Reverend Andrew Swift, Bishop of Brechin, then offered an uplifting grace, leading guests into a sumptuous three-course dinner. The meal was professionally and caringly served by the Apex Hotel team, whose attentive hospitality contributed greatly to the enjoyment of the evening.

Following dinner, the Lord Dean introduced the guest speaker, Michael Marra MSP. Despite a hectic electioneering schedule in his campaign for the leadership of the Scottish Labour Party, Mr Marra had made time to join the Guildry and was given a warm welcome.

His talk, entitled “*The Politics of Economic Change*”, engaged the audience with a clear, factual and non-partisan explanation of some of the most important issues facing society today. Thought-provoking yet accessible, the address provided valuable context on the forces shaping economic and social change, while encouraging reflection and discussion among those present.

Past Lord Dean Joe Morrow offered a gracious vote of thanks, expressing the appreciation of everyone in attendance to the guest speaker and all who had helped to make the evening such a success, particularly Assessors Jim Pickett and Malcolm Horner. The Lord Dean then brought proceedings to a close with warm concluding remarks.

With excellent entertainment, fine food, stimulating conversation and good company, the 2026 Annual Dinner was a thoroughly enjoyable occasion. It reflected the Guildry’s enduring spirit of friendship, civic engagement and pride in Dundee, leaving guests with many happy memories of a splendid evening.





The Guildry and the High School of Dundee - A Continuing Partnership

Two years ago, as the Guildry representative, I took up the position as a Director of The High School of Dundee (HSD). In recent years the governance of The HSD Board of Directors has been brought up to date. Directors serve for a period of 3 years. Conveners can serve for a second period, giving a maximum of 6 years. Directors are assigned to different sub-committees (e.g. Education, Safeguarding, Governance, Marketing, Finance etc.) based on their skill set. If a particular skill set is missing, then The Board will advertise externally to find a suitable candidate.

When I was appointed, I joined the Finance committee and the Awards committee. The Finance committee sets the budget and monitors spend v the budget. It also sets the school fees, pay rises and approves major spend items. The last 2 years have seen a particular

challenge, for all independent schools, following the introduction of VAT on school fees. The Awards committee grants a number of bursaries varying from 10% to 100% of the school fees. These are awarded based on academic ability and are means tested.

In my second year the Estates, IT and Health & Safety committee was re-established as a stand-alone committee and I became the Convener. The work of this committee is wide ranging. The school Estate covers various city centre buildings and the sports facilities at Mayfield and Dalnacraig. This committee reviews and prioritises capital

spend and repairs and maintenance spend. It also reviews and prioritises capital spend on IT infrastructure and equipment and it maintains an oversight of Health & Safety across the school.

Directors are encouraged to get involved in the life of the school and 45 years after leaving the school I have enjoyed attending various events such as prize giving, musical concerts, school shows etc.



Graeme Reid



An introduction the Guildry's newest members

Gavin Strachan and David Young are two of our newest members in the Dundee Guildry and bring with them a wealth of experience, knowledge and vitality. They have penned a few personal details about themselves so that we get to know them better.



Gavin L Strachan

Born after the second world war to Lewis Strachan OBE and Margaret Strachan and educated at Downfield Primary and Eastern Primary before attending Dundee High School in the senior school.

Completed my education at Dundee College before joining an insurance Company and moving to Glasgow. Returned to Dundee to join McTavish Ramsay Ltd in 1971 where over the years I became Chairman and MD.

In 2000 I became Chairman and MD of Dovetail Enterprises after serving as a director with Lord Roberts Workshops since 1983. I was on the steering committee of Dovetail during the amalgamation of Lord Roberts and Blindcraft. I retired from Dovetail in 2013 but rejoined for a short period in 2020.

My interests and sports over the years have been rugby, squash, and golf having started at the age of eight at the behest of my parents, both of whom were keen and good golfers. Through these years I have experienced the highs (a few) and the lows (a few more) with my handicap changing in accordance with my ability.

I have been a Rotarian on two occasions, firstly from 1982 until 1986 when business commitments prevented me from continuing as a member but rejoining in 2005. I served as Treasurer and President (2018 - 2019) to The Rotary Club of Dundee. My involvement with Rotary has led to volunteering for different charities which include Brae Riding for the disabled, Fareshare and St John with whom I was presented with the ten year service medal this year. I was a member of the trustees at Carolina House from 2005 until I retired from the organisation in 2019.

I am married to Monica and our family, my step family, consists of two daughters and a son who amongst them have six grandchildren keeping us busy and involved with younger generations. They, in turn, keep us abreast of the complexity and workings of the computer age.



David Young

I am David Young, the Council Officer for the City Chambers in Dundee.

I came to this role in December 2024 having been Assistant Council Officer previously.

I began working in 1990 as an Apprentice Mechanical Engineer with Yorkshire Imperial and served my time accordingly. During this period, I was a Special Constable with Tayside Police, a voluntary role in which I was deployed regularly. This led to a full-time position, and I was sworn in as a Police Constable with Tayside Police (latterly Police Service of Scotland) on 16th May 1994. I enjoyed a 28-year career, working various roles, including beat duties, road traffic and firearms, retiring in 2022.

This role seemed a natural progression, I am passionate about preserving and maintaining the high standards of this office. One of my roles, which I am extremely proud to hold, is Keeper of the Gavel for the Guildry of Dundee.

1199 and all that...

As we prepare to celebrate the septencentenary next year of the confirmation charter of King Robert I to the Burgh of Dundee, which included moulding Dundee's Guildry on that of Berwick, it's time to think again about the two early surviving records of 1199 and 1327. With a documentary void of 128 years caused by Proud Edward and the War of Independence they are important both to the Guildry and the City in understanding the early history of Dundee and its mercantile activity.

King David I between 1124 and 1153 followed the established Anglo-Norman pattern and transformed Scotland's economy by establishing a network of burghs to foster local and international trade and, most importantly, generate cash revenue for the crown. So burghs and their merchant bodies were linked at the hip until guild monopolies were ended in the 19th century.

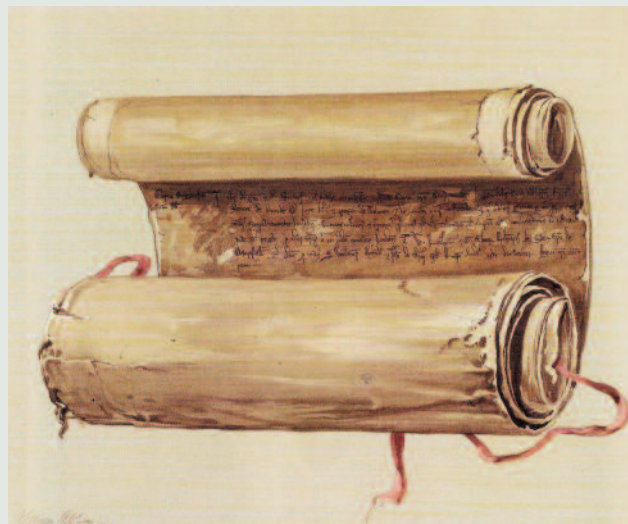
Dundee, under the flamboyant Henny King, orchestrated an action-packed 800th birthday in 1991, a date chosen from contemporary cross references to Dundee as a burgh. Alas, Dundee's

nicked or burnt burgh kist would have included both King William I's original grant to his brother David Earl of Huntingdon about 1191 and certainly the original of the trading grant from King John of England to "Earl David's burgh" of 1199. A copy of the missing original grant is written out in a roll in The National Archives, Kew.

This grant was highlighted by Dennis F. Collins, former Clerk and later Archivist to the Guildry, who promoted its octocentenary in 1999.

Rapacious King John, he of Magna Carta, newly on the throne, later not to be known later for his generosity of spirit, granted that "the Burgesses of Earl David... may be free and quit of toll and of all other dues which pertain to us throughout all our

lands (England)" except the City of London...". This was massive. One of the possible explanations was that King William's infant son Alexander (later II) was to be brought up under John at the English Court under the humiliating peace Treaty of Falaise and this perhaps was an opening sweetener of John's reign.



It also means that Earl David's burgh must already have had a fleet, merchant skippers, and established trade routes to take advantage of this highly lucrative arrangement, and that would have taken rather longer than eight years to develop.



Fast forward 128 years of the smell of burning, and the sounds of war cries and clash of steel on steel, and Robert the Bruce is in need of hard cash now that the war chest was dry. Dundee appears to have been a highly lucrative target. There would be the legal niceties of getting his chancellor Bernard Abbot of Arbroath (he of the famous Declaration) to carry out an enquiry of what rights Dundee had had so he could confirm them, but most importantly Dundee City Archives have the tiny charter from Robert to the burgesses of Dundee of a piece of ground on which to build a tolbooth, 20 Oct 1325. Two years before the formality of the Confirmation Charter, cash is already rolling into the royal (and burgh) coffers through tolbooth dues, confirmed by the *Rotuli scaccarii regum scotorum* (The Exchequer rolls of Scotland) in Edinburgh.

When Bernard had enquired of local worthies what sort of place Dundee had been, that provided a fascinating introduction which itself raises questions. He found that there were "... liberties and rights...in the time of William (1165 -1214)...

before...William had conferred the said burgh on his brother David (Earl of Huntingdon)". That means that Dundee had royal trading rights **before** 1191, the year picked for our lavish birthday party eight hundred years later. The confirmation also confirmed the rights enjoyed during Alexander III

(1249 - 86), being customs, free harbour, market and fairs.

Berwick-upon-Tweed, Scotland's oldest royal burgh before its English occupation in 1482, was founded by King David I before 1153. The principal grant by Robert was that the burgesses of Dundee "shall enjoy... their privileges... as our burgesses of Berwick have... and that they may be... exempt over our kingdom from tolls, pontages, ferries, pier dues... and petty customs on their goods...". Quite clearly was added "We grant also and confirm to the same their merchant's guild, (*Gildam suam mercatorum*)" as freely as ever our burgesses of Berwick have and enjoy theirs". Although there would have been a merchant body to organise trade before David of Huntingdon in 1191, and one to administer King John's grant of 1199, this can be taken as King Robert's royal foundation of a merchant Guildry in Dundee.

Celebrate!

Dates for the Diary

Friday, 2nd October. 11.00am for 11.30am

- Court of Deans of Guild of Scotland, Stirling Guildhall. A great event open to all members. Transport will be organised.

Wednesday, 14th October - AGM. Dundee City Chambers.

Speaker - Ashley Edwards KC, Leader of the Principal Crown Counsel Team. Refreshments provided. All welcome.