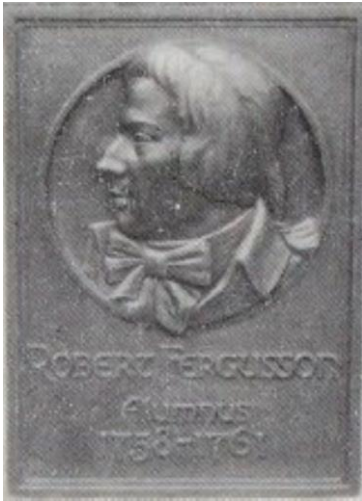


Remembering Robert Fergusson

A celebration of the 250th anniversary of the Poet's death on 17th October 1774

**Wednesday 9th October 2024, 3.45pm in the Assembly Hall, Royal High School, East
Barnton Avenue EH4 6JP**



Robert Fergusson was born in Edinburgh's Cap and Feather Close on September 5, 1750, and attended the High School of Edinburgh (now the Royal High School) from 1758 to 1761. After studying at St Andrews University, he returned to Edinburgh, writing many famous poems in a short career. He died at the age of just twenty-four in penury and isolation at Bedlam, the Edinburgh Poorhouse hospital, on 17th October 1774. He was buried in an unmarked grave in the Canongate Kirk churchyard, and ten years later Robert Burns paid for his headstone, signifying his high regard for the man he described as 'My elder Brother in the Muse'. The plaque shown above was first unveiled at the Regent Road campus on 24 June 1958, the 200th anniversary of his enrolment at the School. The sculpture of Fergusson by David Annand shown above was unveiled outside Canongate Kirk in 2004. The painting of Fergusson in 1772 is by Robert Runciman.

The Royal High School fiddle group, conducted by June Nelson, will play a selection of Scots music as guests arrive. Guest appearance by Graham Holton.

royalhigh.co.uk/robert-fergusson/



List of events

Introduction and Chair

Helen Mclean

Head of English, Royal High School

A TRIBUTE TO ROBERT FERGUSON

Professor Rhona Brown

Glasgow University

Principal Investigator of the project 'The Collected Works of Robert Fergusson: Reconstructing Textual and Cultural Legacies' - a two-year research project, funded by the Leverhulme Trust, running from October 2023.

The Works of Robert Fergusson will transform academic and popular perception of this influential and often misrepresented Scottish poet of the mid-eighteenth century. It offers the first full, consistent and transparently edited textual edition of Fergusson's works alongside extensive annotations, collation of textual variants, explanatory notes and an expanded Scots glossary. The collected works are contracted by Edinburgh University Press, to be published in 2026. Rhona will give a brief life of Fergusson and talk about the main themes of his work, and will also talk about the circumstances of his death and the way in which his situation influenced Dr Andrew Duncan to develop the Morningside Asylum, leading to the Royal Edinburgh Hospital and the Robert Fergusson Unit for brain injuries.

A SENSE OF AUDIENCE – SOME BRIEF THOUGHTS ON FERGUSON AND HIS AUDIENCE

Tom Pow

Poet and former Pupil

Tom Pow was born in Edinburgh in 1950. He attended the Royal High for thirteen years, followed by University at St Andrews. He began writing poetry in his fifth year at school, winning the London Club Prize for an English poem and in the Scotsman Schools Magazine Competition, one of whose judges was Norman MacCaig, the poetry prize was awarded to any of his five poems published in Schola Regia that year. He has published many collections, including *In The Becoming*, *New and Selected Poems* (Polygon, 2009). *Dear Alice – Narratives of Madness* (Salt) won the 2009 SMIT Poetry Book of the Year. He has also written two travel books and several books for children. *The Village and The Road* (Tom Pow and The Galloway Agreement), based on his book, *In Another World – Among Europe's Dying Villages* (Polygon, 2012), was part of the Made in Scotland programme at the Fringe in 2022 and the group was invited to perform in Japan in September 2023. In September 2024 the show returned to Japan and an accompanying book of poems – *Ghosts at Play*, Poems from Rural Japan was published.

Fergusson Poetry presentations by Royal High School pupils

Introduced by Kate Hendry, Teacher of English

Auld Reikie

A lively Scots poem, celebrating the charms and quirks of Edinburgh (Auld Reikie). Through vivid imagery and dialect, Fergusson paints a vibrant portrait of the city's streets, characters, and customs, capturing its essence with humour and affection in his poetic tribute.

Extracts from the poem, read in the original Lallans, and in English and Gaelic.

School Captain Hannah McLaughlin

2G2 Pupil

A Representative from James Gillespie's High School for a Gaelic translation

Braid Claith

The poem is a satire on the tendency of 18th century city dwellers to place importance on superficial appearance (by wearing Braid Claith'- Broad Cloth), as a symbol of wealth or success. He pokes fun at the pretentiousness he witnesses, but there is also a sense that he sympathises with the aspirations of the people his poem depicts. Pupils present the poem's nine stanzas in eight different languages, representing the School's broad ethnicity, starting and finishing with Fergusson's original Scots - the English translation of each verse will be shown overhead.

VERSE 1	VERSE 2	VERSE 3
Scots - S2 Pupil	Spanish - S5 Pupil	Polish - S3 Pupil
Ye wha are fain to hae your name Wrote in the bonny book of fame, Let merit nae pretension claim To laurel'd wreath, But hap ye weel, baith back and wame, In gude Braid Claith.	Cualquiera que pueda permitirse estos bienes, Un sombrero negro azabache en cabellos de nieve, Puede presumir de ser el mejor, Con todo este ropaje, Envuelto en un caparazón brillante de finas ropas.	Współczuje temu, kto tego nie ma! Bo jest głupcem, na pewno go wyśmieją, Facet, który nigdy zazna szacunku Kiedy bierze oddech, Dopóki nie będzie całkowicie ubrany W dobre, eleganckie ubrania.
VERSE 4	VERSE 5	VERSE 6
Tamil - S5 Pupil	Cantonese - S5 Pupil	Persian - S5 Pupil
Nayitrukizhamaigalil, mudithiruthum nabar, kurmaiyagavum, nerthiyagavum, thanadhu savarum velayai mudithavudan, thanadhu sattaiyil oru velli brochutan, nalla udayil puthisalithanamaga, pulveligaliku allathu poongavirku selgirar.	你會以為，看到他們時， 他們會不願再去剃你頭髮， 或整理一些頭髮， 他們會討厭這份工作， 帶著自豪的心情漫步， 身穿好衣裳。	اگر هر مرد جوان مشتاقی بخواهد نظر یک خانم را جلب کند نباید جرات دیده شدن را داشته باشد تا زمانی که لباسی تمیز و خوب به تن کند با لباس های مرتب
Verse 7	Verse 8	Verse 9
Mandarin - S6 Pupil	Bengali - S2 Pupil	Scots - S2 Pupil
若他 身着 衣衫褴褛， 那她 绝不会 再看他一眼。 不单 会 紧闭双唇， 而且 还会 对他 不屑一顾。 追求者啊！请收起你们的付出吧！ 若是没有 华丽的衣裳！	সুন্দর কাপড় মানুষকে দেয় বড় উৎসাহ, শত, শত শুঁয়ো পোকাকে প্রজাপতি বানায়, শত, শত ডাক্তারকে ডিগ্রী দিয়া দেয় অল্প দক্ষতায়, সংক্ষেপে, তুই সবই হতে পারিস, সুন্দর কাপড় পরে	For thof ye had as wise a snout on As Shakespeare or Sir Isaac Newton, Your judgment fouk would hae a doubt on, I'll tak my aith, Till they could see ye wi a suit on O' gude Braid Claith.

'New Reikie'

Pupils present their own experiences of today's Edinburgh, in their own words in English with a nod to the Fergusson style of Auld Reikie.

1A2 Pupil

1A2 Pupil

1A2 Pupil

The Unveiling

The Plaque will be re-unveiled, with three short tributes.

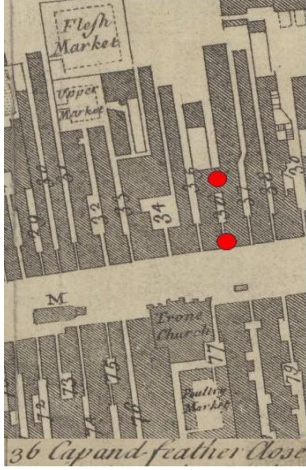
Alastair Allanach will read Robert Garioch's 1962 poem 'At Robert Fergusson's Grave'

Tom Pow will read his own short original composition 'Butterfly'

School Captain Hannah McLaughlin will read her own poetic tribute

The Plaque will be unveiled by Alastair Allanach, who was present the first-time round in 1958

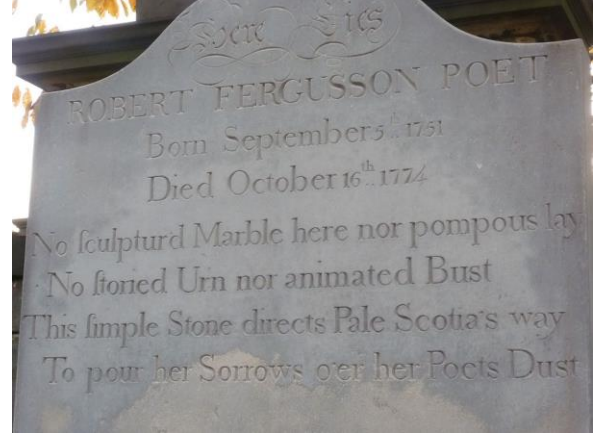
From our collection of Fergusson related photographs



Fergusson's birthplace in Cap and Feather Close as shown on the 1742 Edgar map, but was swept away by the building of the North Bridge in 1765.



Portrait by Alexander Runciman, 1772



Robert Burns' epitaph on Robert Fergusson's grave, Canongate Kirkyard



Blackfriars Monastery – the likely location of the High School Fergusson attended



Norman MacCaig – addressed the 1958 unveiling ceremony



Scottish poets in Milnes Bar-Abbottsford Bar-Cafe Royal by Alexander Moffat 1980 – led by Hugh MacDiarmid, all influenced by Fergusson

Acknowledgements

The Royal High School for hosting this event

Donna McIver (Gillespie's) via former Rector Matt MacIver for the Gaelic entry
Peter Bourhill, Edinburgh Life (a report will appear in the 2024 Christmas edition)

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Anyone else we have unintentionally omitted