

1859: BELFAST BURNS CENTENARY

1859 was the centenary of the birth of Robert Burns, and commemorative events were held all over the world. The *Northern Whig* newspaper ran a competition for poems to celebrate the centenary of Robert Burns. Centenary events were held at Belfast Music Hall and the Corn Exchange.

BELFAST MUSIC HALL GRAND BANQUET

With guests of honour **Eliza Everitt** and **Martha Burns Everitt**, 250 gentlemen and 80 ladies packed the Music Hall (it stood on the corner of May Street and Upper Arthur Street) to commemorate Burns in style and grandeur. From 6pm until well after midnight dignitaries, clergymen, politicians and civic leaders gathered to toast and pay homage to the Bard. A portrait of Burns painted by William Dobie was unveiled during the evening.

During his speech at the Music Hall, **Professor Craik** of Queen's College, Belfast, said '... it might also be a matter of question whether this Ulster of ours be not really more a part of Scotland than a part of Ireland... we have come over and set up another Scotland here – an Irish or Little Scotland it may be called. We have made this Province of Ulster – this Black North – half Scotch, or more than half Scotch, in almost everything, in blood, in language... '.

The portrait was later given to Eliza Everitt; around 1901 her daughter Martha donated it to Queen's College.

CORN EXCHANGE 'WORKING CLASSES' EVENT

A different style of event was held at the Corn Exchange where 400 people 'from the working classes' attended a soirée which was felt by some at the time to be more in keeping with Burns' own ethos. Ayrshire-born **Dr James McCosh** of Queen's College was the key speaker. He made references to the Covenanters and said that, although he had been invited to the Music Hall event, he preferred 'mingling with the common people'. **Oldpark Band** played a selection of Burns' airs, and Burns songs were performed by a variety of solo singers.

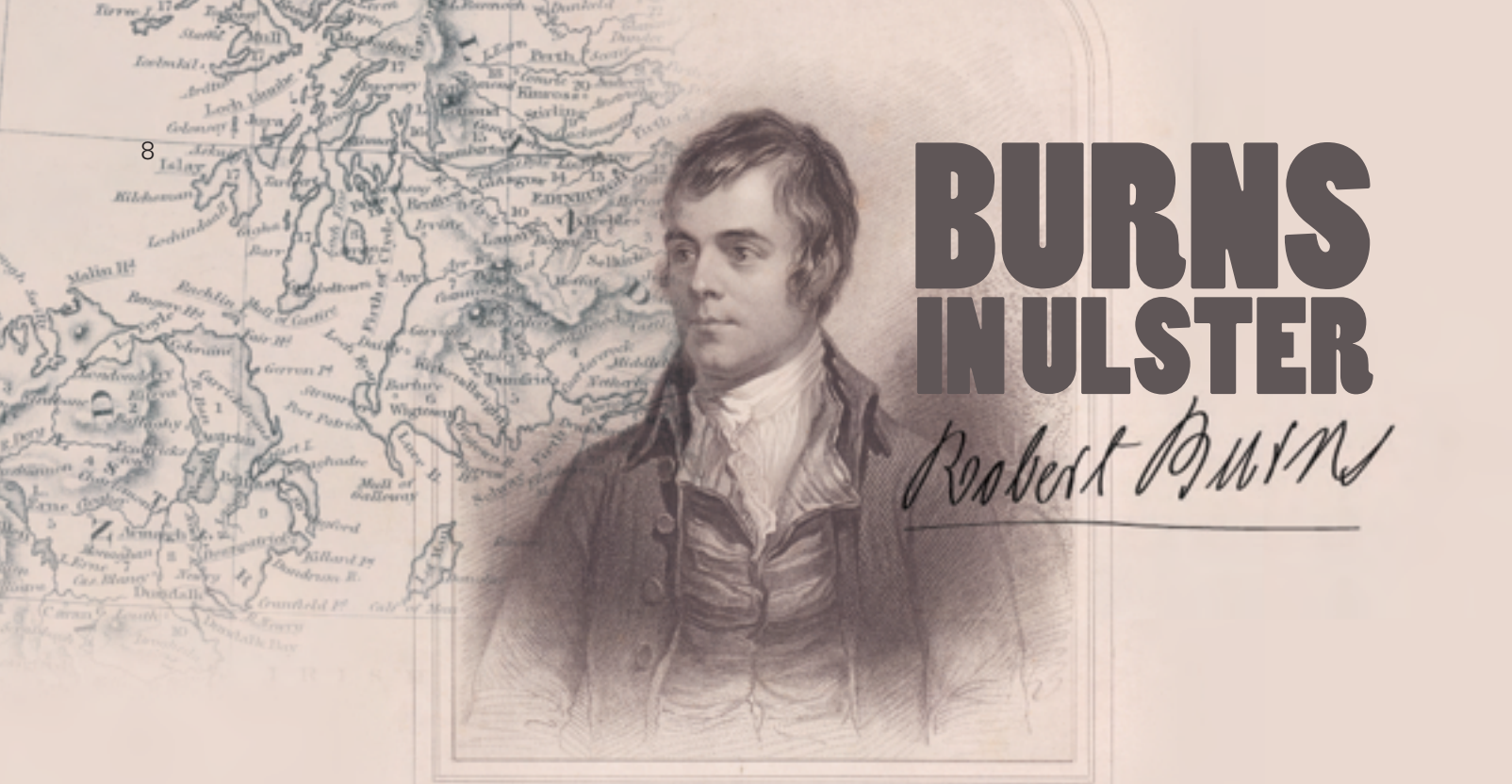
OTHER EVENTS IN ULSTER & IRELAND

Commemorations were also held in Newry and Armagh, and also in Dublin, Dundalk, Gort, Limerick and Tralee.

The Corn Exchange, Victoria Street, Belfast

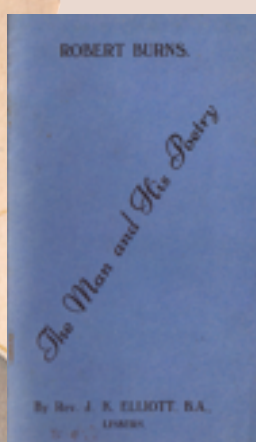


Martha Burns Thomas (née Everitt, right), at the Burns Cottage in Alloway in 1896. (courtesy of the Robert Burns Birthplace Museum)



1872: BELFAST BURNS CLUB FOUNDED

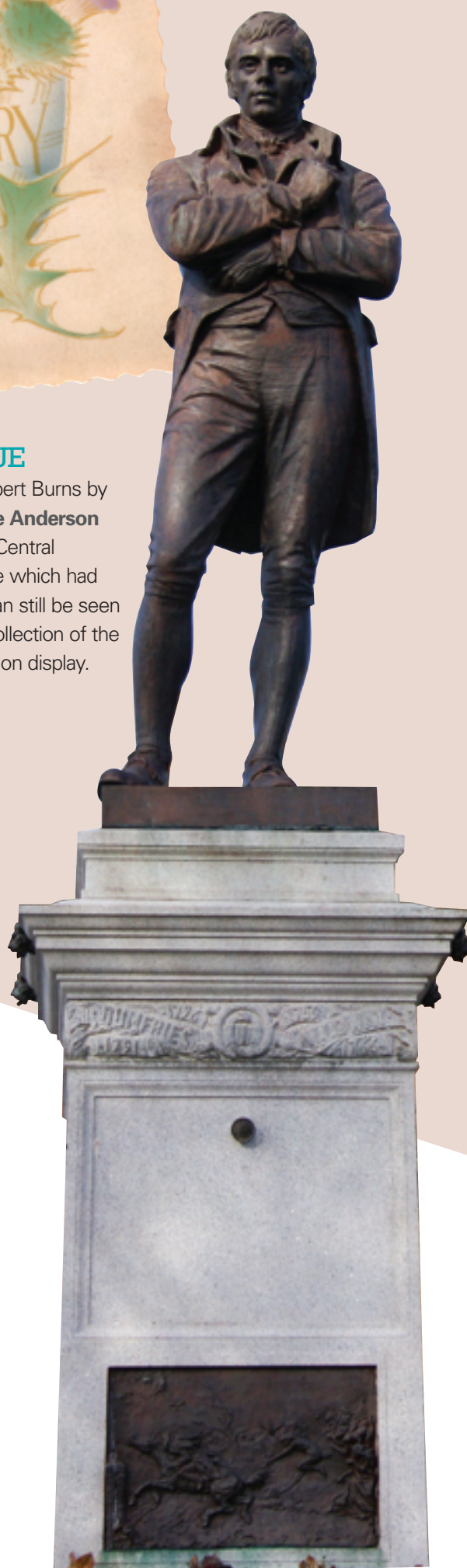
When he was in Belfast in 1844, Robert Burns Jr asked to be made an Honorary Member of Belfast Burns Club. In 1872 a Burns Club was formally instituted in the city and in 1886 was accepted into membership of the newly established Burns World Federation, becoming Burns Club No 15 in the world. Today there are over 250 member clubs worldwide.



Above: Belfast Burns Association publications from the 1930s and 1940s

BELFAST'S BURNS STATUE

In September 1893, a statue of Robert Burns by renowned Scottish sculptor **George Anderson Lawson** was presented to Belfast Central Library. It was a replica of the statue which had been installed in Ayr in 1891, and can still be seen there. The Belfast statue is in the collection of the Ulster Museum but is not currently on display.



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VISIT BELFAST: GIBSON COLLECTION, LINEN HALL LIBRARY

Andrew Gibson (1841-1931) was born in New Cumnock in Ayrshire and came to Belfast with his family in the 1880s. He lived on Cliftonville Avenue and was an agent for the G & J Burns and Cunard steamship lines. He was a man of wide interests – he was Governor of the Linen Hall Library, became President of Cliftonville Football Club and his son played international football for Ireland.

THE GIBSON COLLECTION

Gibson was the only person outwith Scotland on the Executive Committee of the **Burns Centenary Exhibition** in Glasgow in 1896, an event to which he loaned hundreds of items from his own vast Burnsiana collection. In 1901, the 2,000 volume collection was acquired by the **Linen Hall Library** – one of the largest Burns collections anywhere in the world. Some of the Gibson collection is held at **Queen's University**, Belfast.

THE 1896 ROBERT BURNS SEAL CARDS

Gibson was one of the recipients of a centenary card from Burns' great-granddaughter **Martha Burns Thomas**, featuring Robert Burns' wax seal. Martha was now living in County Wexford and she issued these to close family and friends. Gibson's personal card – signed 'Andrew Gibson Esqre. with Mrs Burns Thomas' compliments, 11th Sept. 1896' – is thought to be with other Gibson items which are held in the Manuscripts, Archives & Rare Book Library of **Emory University**, Georgia, USA.

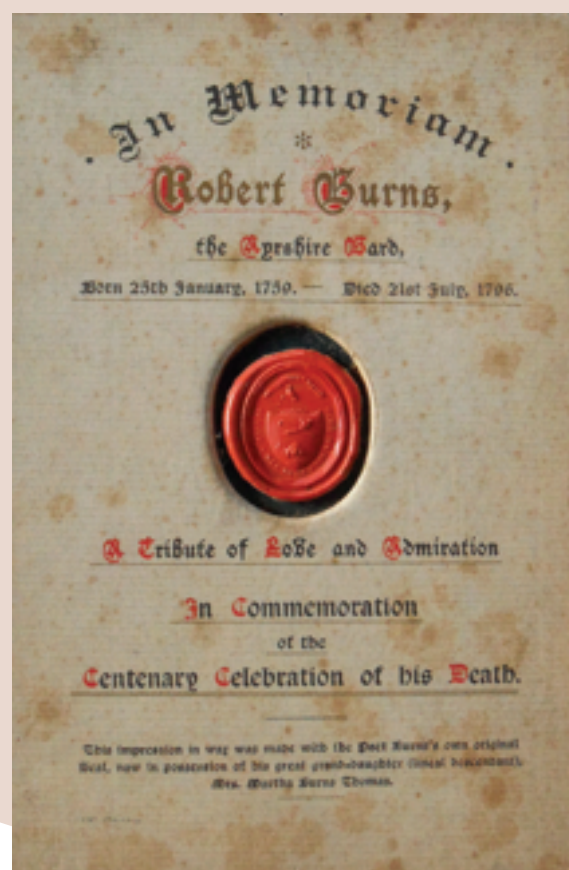
To find out more visit www.linenhall.com



Above: Linen Hall Library

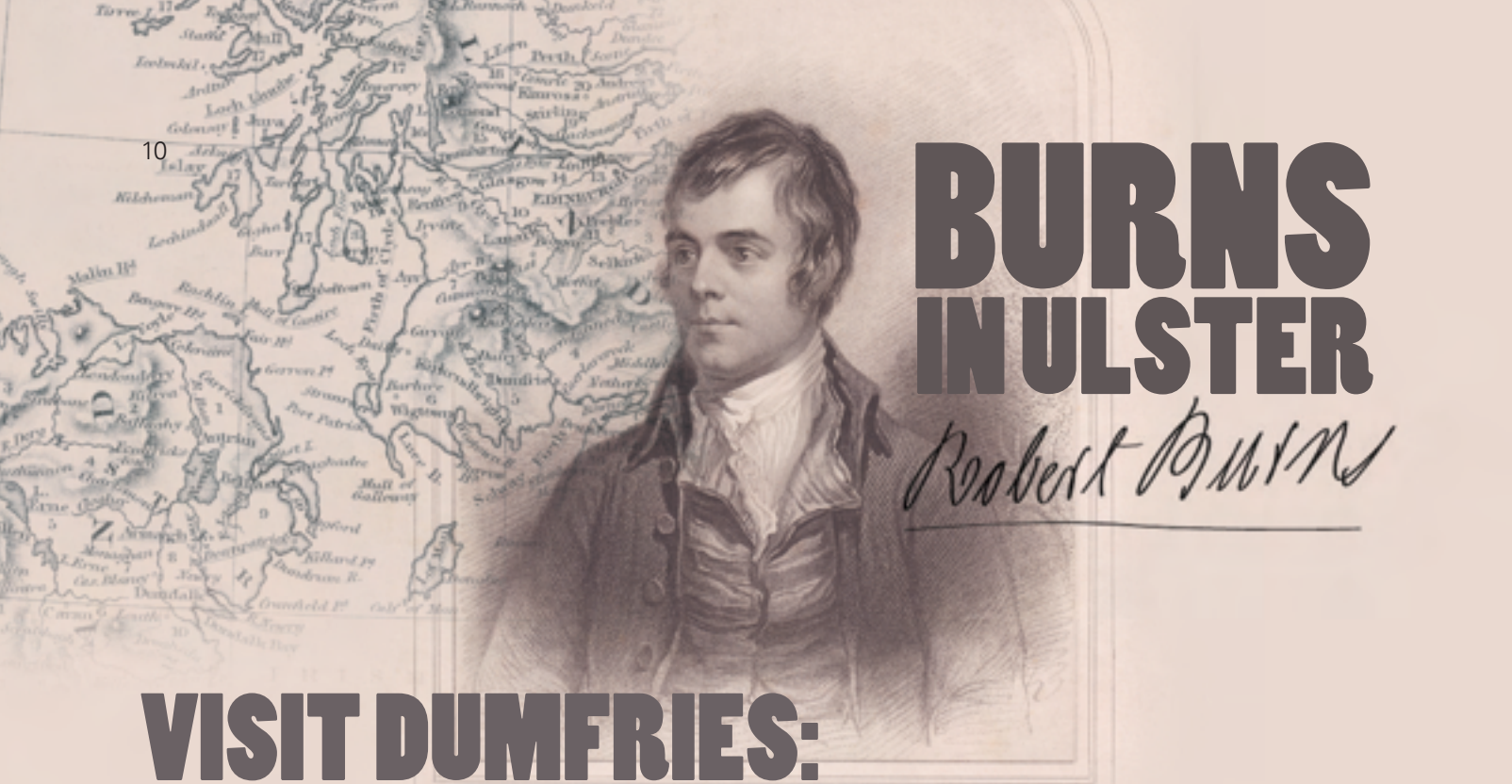
Right: Andrew Gibson

Below: A Centenary Wax Seal card issued by Martha Burns Thomas in 1896




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VISIT DUMFRIES: ROBERT BURNS HOUSE AND CENTRE

The next time you're in south-west Scotland, perhaps driving towards the Scottish Borders or the north of England, why not stop for a break at Dumfries and visit these two excellent Robert Burns visitor attractions? Samuel Thomson, the Ulster-Scots poet from Carngranny near Templepatrick, visited Burns at his house in Dumfries in 1794. You can visit the same building today.



ROBERT BURNS HOUSE

BURNS STREET, DUMFRIES DG1 2PS

It was in this simple sandstone house in a quiet Dumfries street that Robert Burns, Scotland's national poet, spent the last years of his brilliant life.



ROBERT BURNS CENTRE

MILL ROAD, DUMFRIES DG2 7BE

Located in the town's eighteenth century watermill on the west bank of the River Nith, the Robert Burns Centre tells the story of Robert Burns' last years spent in the bustling streets and lively atmosphere of Dumfries in the late eighteenth-century.

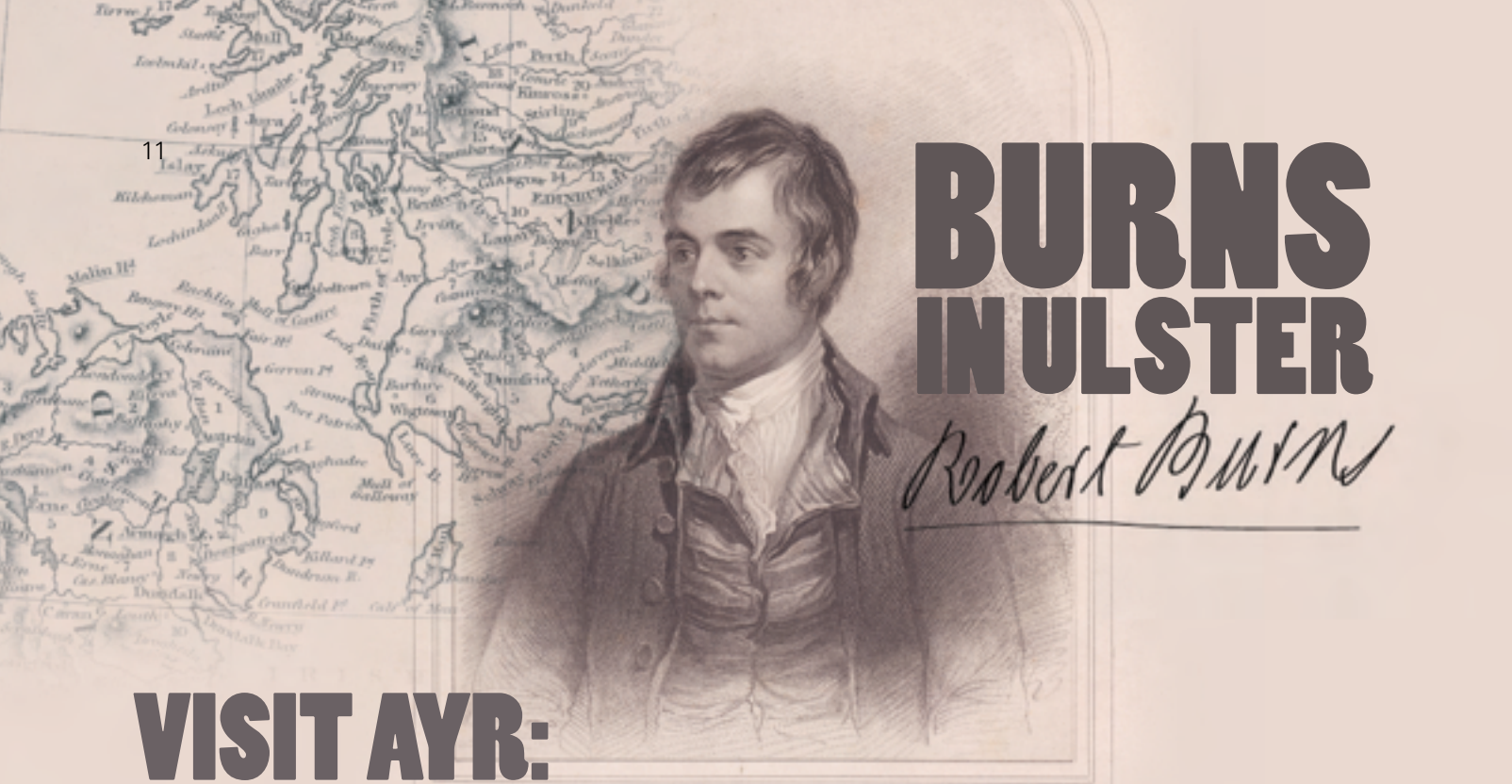
For more information about Robert Burns House and Robert Burns Centre visit www.dumgal.gov.uk/artsandmuseums



There are many other Burns connections in and around Dumfries, including his **mausoleum** at St Michael's Church, a white **marble statue** near Greyfriars Church, **Ellisland Farm** near Auldirth and the **Brow Well** on the B725 near Ruthwell.

To find out more about the collection of manuscripts, books, relics, art and memorabilia that illuminates Scotland's national bard visit www.burnsscotland.com





VISIT Ayr: ROBERT BURNS BIRTHPLACE MUSEUM

Robert Burns Birthplace Museum offers a truly unique encounter with Scotland's favourite son. Set among 10 acres of the poet's cherished Alloway countryside, the museum comprises the famous Burns Cottage where the poet was born, historic landmarks, the elegant monument and gardens created in his honour and a modern museum housing the world's most important Burns collection.



With fantastic interpretation and adventures to suit all the family, the museum offers a magical opportunity to see where Burns began – and to understand why his amazing legacy has touched the hearts of people throughout the world. Open seven days a week, year-round and supported by a busy programme of events, Burns' birthplace is truly a place of inspiration for everyone.

A 'MUST-SEE' DESTINATION FOR CENTURIES
Over the centuries many Ulster travellers have chosen Alloway as a 'must-see' destination. As just one example, in 1813 Robert Magill of Broughshane near Ballymena, who was a student at Glasgow University, walked from Portpatrick to Glasgow. He had learned many of Burns' poems by heart as a child – 'I called to see his portrait and to drink his memory – the landlady pointed out the place where his father slept and told me several particulars relative to his life'.



There are many other Burns connections in Alloway and Ayr, including **Alloway Auld Kirk** and G.A. Lawson's **bronze statue** at Burns Square, a replica of which is in Belfast.

See www.burnsmuseum.org.uk for more details.

