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New Zealand | Celebrating the Robert Burns Fellowship exhibition



The University of Otago in Dunedin, New Zealand presents an exhibition *Auld Acquaintances: Celebrating the Robert Burns Fellowship*, marking 60 years of the oldest and most prestigious literary art award in New Zealand. The Fellowship commemorates the Scottish poet Robert Burns and his family's involvement in the early settlement of the region.

The Robert Burns Fellowship was established as a way to foster nascent or already established New Zealand writing talent. Poets, novelists, short story writers, historians, scriptwriters, playwrights, essayists – no genre is excluded. Many of New Zealand's most well-known writers have been Robert Burns Fellows – Maurice Gee, Janet Frame, James K. Baxter, Hone Tuwhare, Witi Ihimaera, Roger Hall, Cilla McQueen, Michael King, Laurence Fearnley...

All of the Robert Burns Fellows will feature in the exhibition. Many of them have written their own paragraphs on how the Fellowship has impacted their lives, making the exhibition a very personal one. In addition and where possible, the publication that resulted from the Fellow's tenure is on display. From the novelist Ian Cross – first ever Fellow in 1959 – to the Robert Burns Fellow in 2018, poet Rhian Gallagher, this exhibition is a piece of New Zealand's literary history that everyone needs to see.

Exhibition dates: 7 September - 7 December 2018

Venue: De Beer Gallery, 1st Floor, University of Otago Central Library

There has always been some mystery surrounding the people who helped set up the Robert Burns Fellowship, but Dunedin's own Charles Brasch certainly had a hand in it. The purpose of the Fellowship was to commemorate the anniversary of the birth of the Scottish poet, Robert Burns (1759), and to acknowledge the Burns family's involvement in the early settlement of Otago by the Scottish diaspora.

The Fellowship is hosted by the University of Otago's Department of English and Linguistics, where an office is provided and a stipend is paid. There is no expectation of output.

The city of Dunedin, with its statue of Robert Burns in the Octagon, is part of the personality of the Fellowship. The University, Dunedin's tradition of education and literature, the 'smallness' of the city, the 'Scottishness', the weather, landscape, and people have all uniquely contributed to the experience of each Fellow. For some, Dunedin has become their turangawaewae.

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