

## Impact case study (REF3)

<b>Institution:</b> University of Glasgow (UofG)		
<b>Unit of Assessment:</b> 27 English Language and Linguistics		
<b>Title of case study:</b> Maximising the economic and cultural value of Robert Burns for Scotland through government consultancy, public engagement and authentication/provenance work		
<b>Period when the underpinning research was undertaken:</b> 2007–present		
<b>Details of staff conducting the underpinning research from the submitting unit:</b>		
<b>Name(s):</b>	<b>Role(s) (e.g. job title):</b>	<b>Period(s) employed by submitting HEI:</b>
Gerard Carruthers	Francis Hutcheson Chair of Scottish Literature	2000–present
Pauline Mackay	Lecturer in Robert Burns Studies	2011–present
Murray Pittock	Bradley Chair of English Literature	2007–present
Nigel Leask	Regius Chair of English Language and Literature	2004–present
<b>Period when the claimed impact occurred:</b> 1 <sup>st</sup> Aug 2013–31 <sup>st</sup> Dec 2020		
<b>Is this case study continued from a case study submitted in 2014?</b> N		
<b>1. Summary of the impact</b>		
<p>Research at the Centre for Robert Burns Studies (CRBS) has informed major policy and societal developments at both (1) governmental and (2) third-sector levels during the period 2014–2020. (1) CRBS produced a major report for the Scottish Government addressing the economic impact of Burns in the tourism, festivals, food and drink sectors, housing and other areas, which triggered a Scottish Parliamentary debate. The Report's recommendations are now being implemented. (2) CRBS research, drawing on highly innovative technical methodologies, has underpinned expert advice to organisations with Burns holdings, e.g. National Records of Scotland, informing decisions on authenticity, provenance, acquisitions and exhibitions.</p>		
<b>2. Underpinning research</b>		
<b>2.1 Centre for Robert Burns Studies: expertise based on cutting-edge Burns research</b>		
<p>CRBS's body of work includes several major projects, including <i>Editing Robert Burns for the 21<sup>st</sup>-Century</i> (PI Carruthers, 2011–2022), <i>Robert Burns in Global Culture</i> (PI Pittock, 2007–2009) and <i>Robert Burns Beyond Text</i> (PI Pittock, 2010–2011). Key outputs exemplifying UofG's authoritative status on Burns include a new multi-volume edition of the <i>Complete Works</i> (OUP). Through examining all surviving manuscript and early-print witnesses, the research is revolutionising our understanding of the creative processes underpinning Robert Burns's poetry, including his treatment of sources. CRBS is also substantially revising the Burnsian canon and its interpretation [e.g. 3.1], for example by excluding 50 songs formerly attributed to Burns, by demonstrating Burns's knowledge of Greek, and by offering major new insights into his contemporary reception and the society in which he lived.</p>		
<p>This research is producing important new insights into, for example, historic inks in Burns and other 18<sup>th</sup>-century manuscripts through a highly innovative interdisciplinary project involving mass spectrometry [e.g. 3.2]. Important manuscripts, such as the 'Highland Lassie' note, have been identified, and the team has mapped the field of Burns's prose for the first time. This research identified not only Burns's most-used ink, but also that of the late 19<sup>th</sup>-century forger, A.H. 'Antique' Smith. The researchers have greatly improved scholarly understanding of forgery, watermarks and papertypes, providing a fuller-than-ever picture of the materiality of Burns's production, with implications for all organisations curating Burnsiana.</p>		

## 2.2 Use of Burns expertise to understand his contribution to Scotland's economy

In 2019 a team led by Pittock produced a Report on *Robert Burns and the Scottish Economy* [3.3], commissioned by the Scottish Government's Department of Economic Development. This research deployed an innovative model for measuring economic impact, identifying, *inter alia*, the value of tourism and festivals, produce, retail, and cultural capital, and the role of overseas visitors. The resulting Report quantified the value of Burns to the Scottish economy at GBP203 million, with an additional GBP138.5 million of embedded brand-value. Concentrations of economic impact were identified not only in Ayrshire, Arran, and Dumfries and Galloway (especially Dumfriesshire) but also in Scotland as a whole. The Report also identified under-exploited economic potential, particularly in Dumfries and Galloway.

The Report made 10 key recommendations, including stronger regional connectivity, locally-provenanced supply-chains, greater alignment of economic activities (e.g. food, tourism) and between local authorities, and other measures. All are designed to lift Burns-related economic impact towards the level of Mozart (currently worth GBP3.5 billion for the Austrian economy).

The report highlighted the need for further investigation of higher cultural tourism spend, for example based on effective development of the Mozart brand in Austria, and the promotion of Burns Suppers on Scotland's Winter Festivals website. Commitment to profile the core appeal of Burns to visitors to Dumfries and Galloway was also recommended as part of a stronger evidence base for why people visit Dumfries and Galloway. The Report also called for the Scottish Government and its agencies to continue to develop plans for the promotion of Burns at home and abroad.

## 3. References to the research

- 3.1 Carruthers, G. and Mackay, P. (2013) The missing manuscript of [Robert Burns's 'Patriarch' letter](#). *Studies in Scottish Literature*, 39(1), pp. 227–232 [available on request from HEI]
- 3.2 Newton, J., Ramage, G., Gadegaard, N., Zachs, W., Rogers, S., Barrett, M. P., Carruthers, G. and Burgess, K. (2018) [Minimally-destructive atmospheric ionisation mass spectrometry authenticates authorship of historical manuscripts](#). *Scientific Reports*, 8, 10944. (doi:[10.1038/s41598-018-28810-2](#)) (PMID:30050048) (PMCID:PMC6062563)
- 3.3 Pittock, M. and Ambroisine, J. (2019) *Robert Burns and the Scottish Economy*. Glasgow. 143pp. Available at: [https://www.gla.ac.uk/media/Media\\_705140\\_smxx.pdf](https://www.gla.ac.uk/media/Media_705140_smxx.pdf).
- 3.4 Leask, N. (Ed.) (2014) [The Oxford Edition of the Works of Robert Burns: Volume I: Commonplace Books, Tour Journals, and Miscellaneous Prose](#). Oxford University Press. ISBN 9780199603176 [available on request from HEI]
- 3.5 Pittock, M. ed. (2018) [The Oxford Edition of the Works of Robert Burns: Volume II and III: The Scots Musical Museum](#). Oxford University Press. ISBN 9780199683895. 1067pp. [available on request from HEI]
- 3.6 Pittock, M. (2018). [Enlightenment in a Smart City: Edinburgh's Civic Development, 1660–1750](#). Edinburgh University Press. ISBN 978 1 4744 1660 3 (paperback). 298pp. [available on request from HEI]

**Quality:** The body of work has been funded by several successive AHRC-funded projects from 2007 (AH/I003738/1 and AH/P004946/1), including the GBP2 million two-phase *Editing Robert Burns for the 21<sup>st</sup>-Century*; publications are in peer-reviewed journals and books. *Burns and the Economy* offers a broadly applicable model for cultural figures' impacts on the economy.

#### 4. Details of the impact

##### 4.1 Implementation of recommendations from *Robert Burns and the Scottish Economy*

On the strength of a 2018 Scottish Parliament [debate](#) on *The Economic Potential of Robert Burns*, and a 2018 briefing by Pittock to the Scottish Government on the enduring importance of Burns, the Scottish Government commissioned a report on *Robert Burns and the Scottish Economy*, with a particular focus on Regional Inclusive Growth (RIG). This study, led by Pittock, demonstrated both the current value of Burns to the Scottish economy and how this can be maximised: for example, highlighting effective regional practice in linking food, drink and retail to Burns's brand.

The Report received wide publicity in the Scottish media [5.1] and led directly to a further [debate](#) being held in the Scottish Parliament in January 2020 [5.2]. At the debate, the report invoked favourable responses across parliamentary divides, including Willie Coffey MSP (SNP): *'it points us towards new opportunities for making Burns's legacy more relevant in today's modern economy'*. Oliver Mundell (Con) remarked *'it is good for us to have a substantive evidence base, so that we can go to the bodies that are involved in making decisions to passionately advocate for improvements...'* [5.2].

Joan McAlpine MSP [5.3] commented that: *'the report was extremely useful in shaping the thinking of both Government and Parliamentarians how best Burns can support the Scottish Economy as well as providing expert analysis on the value of cultural and literary tourism. The high value of the University of Glasgow scholarship in the report, in terms of both quantitative and qualitative analysis, has made policy makers at every level of government take note. In particular, the detailed international case studies featured in the report have been influential and aspirational – setting goals around regional, sustainable economic growth...'* The Head of the Clyde Mission in the Scottish Government Economic Development Directorate [5.4] additionally noted that the Report *'sparked interest in cross-government work about how culture can be used to leverage economic benefits: from historical figures such as Burns to contemporary opportunities such as successful TV and film productions'*.

The Report, and the Parliamentary debate, noted that Dumfries and Galloway accounted for GBP21 million of the total c.GBP138 million value of Burns' brand to Scotland's economy, and recommended that specific attention be given to this at the regional level, aligning with the Scottish Government's [Regional Inclusive Growth agenda](#). Dumfries and Galloway (D&G) Council subsequently commissioned a Tourism Study aimed at maximising the benefit of Burns to the area [5.4]. Joan McAlpine MSP nominated CRBS's Gerry Carruthers to the Study Management Group, and their findings were published in interim form in November 2020, citing the 2019 Report [3.3] and identifying multiple opportunities to grow Dumfries and Galloway's share of Burns' economic potential in line with its recommendations [5.5].

Recommendations on external promotion and trade-linkage are now being implemented by the Scottish Government's hubs in the UK and abroad: Pittock spoke at a European diplomatic event at the London hub, and continues to advise the Scottish Government and Scotland's Department of International Trade. The Head of [Scotland House](#), a joint Scottish Government, Scottish Enterprise and VisitScotland facility in London, commented that *'the report's publication in 2019 provided impetus to the further development of marketing, branding and other materials to support the promotion and delivery of Burns-focused events at home and*

abroad.... [i]ncluding diplomatic engagement, business networking events, engaging the Scottish diaspora overseas' [5.6].

#### 4.2 Promoting Burns-related cultural heritage

In addition to the Report, CRBS staff have supported national and international campaigns to promote Burns-related cultural activity, including the Scottish Government's [Scotland's Winter Festivals Burns Night](#) campaign and *Burns Night at the Museum*, hosted at Glasgow's Hunterian Museum since 2014. CRBS expertise was harnessed for the *Robert Burns: Poems, Songs and Legacy* online course, a freely-available [MOOC](#) run twice-yearly since 2015 and promoted by the *Burns Scotland Partnership*, the *Robert Burns Association of North America*, and the *Robert Burns World Federation*. Up to 31<sup>st</sup> December 2020, the online course had been taken by 25,962 learners from all over the world, with a cumulative quality review of 4.7/5 stars. Comments from learners typically describe the course as excellent and interesting and are typified by, for example: '*I learned so much about Robert Burns*'; '*I discovered lots of things I didn't know*'; and '*[I] expanded my knowledge*' [5.7].

Other examples include advising WeeBox, an SME exporting Scotland-themed high-value gift-boxes to over 20 countries, on Burns-related materials (led by Mackay since 2017). The WeeBox CEO [5.8] explained that CRBS's expertise '*was invaluable in making the January Burns WeeBoxes a credible product*.' She added that this expertise and the '*provision of materials from the "Editing Robert Burns for the 21st Century" Project*' led to a unique and innovative product that helped '*gain competitive advantage*', resulting '*in increase[d] sales and market share, evidenced by a spike in sales*', reaching 9,000 in 2020 [1,600 in 2019, 3.3: 48].

#### 4.3 Verifying the authenticity of manuscripts, benefiting heritage organisations.

CRBS research, led by Carruthers and supported by technical staff at National Libraries of Scotland (NLS), has led to new authentications of Burnsiana, with important implications for heritage organisations. Identification of specific ink compositions has resulted in a diagnostic tool for testing the authenticity of newly-discovered and known historic manuscripts, enabling the detection of forgeries. This work has clear applications for NLS, the Burns Birthplace Museum and other heritage collections to establish the genuineness (or otherwise) of their holdings, and to assist in confidential police enquiries involving repatriating heritage materials. The team has advised National Records of Scotland, who commented [5.9]: '*the specialist knowledge of Prof. Carruthers and his team has been of vital importance to us in the delicate and confidential work of assigning dating, provenance, and consequently ownership, to several documents of considerable historical and financial value ... and there have undoubtedly been cost and time savings to us ... advice of this quality would be unobtainable elsewhere*.'

A further application of the work has been at Blackie House, a private Edinburgh-based library-museum, research centre and exhibition space which holds 20,000 Scottish-related historical items, including an important Burns collection [5.10]. William Zachs (a University of Edinburgh academic who runs Blackie House as a private collector) commented that '*certainty about the relational constituency of the ink to other indisputably authentic documents of a given writer is nothing less than a watershed*'. He explained that, for example, '*among the manuscripts at Blackie House, is a letter from 1753 of the writer Oliver Goldsmith (1728–1774) which I acquired as an acknowledged forgery ... analysis by the Glasgow team determined that the ink*

*profile was of the period in which Goldsmith was active ... suddenly, I possesses an authentic Goldsmith letter [of] now considerable monetary and historical value' [5.10].*

#### 5. Sources to corroborate the impact

- 5.1 Examples of media coverage of the research, sub-itemised here and collated into single PDF: a) <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-scotland-51061993>  
b) <https://www.express.co.uk/news/uk/1227032/scottish-economy-robert-burns>
- 5.2 Transcript of Parliamentary discussion on the importance of the research, also available at <https://www.scottishparliament.tv/meeting/members-business-robert-burns-in-the-scottish-economy-january-21-2020> [PDF]
- 5.3 Testimonial letter, Joan McAlpine MSP, corroborating the importance of the research, its cross-party support and in particular how its international case studies, qualitative and quantitative analysis and work on place-making have influenced Scottish Government thinking; also corroborating the Report's influence on Dumfries and Galloway local authority and on the newly-formed South of Scotland Enterprise Agency [PDF]
- 5.4 Testimonial letter, Head of Clyde Mission Team, Economic Development Directorate, Scottish Government, corroborating the importance for the Scottish Government by stimulating thinking in relation to economic development, and noting that Covid-19 since March 2020 had taken up some of the focus that would otherwise have been on taking more concrete actions [PDF]
- 5.5 Interim Report (November 2020), *Burns Tourism in Dumfries and Nithsdale*, by David Hicks Heritage Consultancy, showing the impact of the national Burns and the Economy Report on local authorities and their thinking around managing and maximising their Burns heritage related assets. [PDF]
- 5.6 Testimonial letter [via email], Head of Scotland House, London, corroborating and detailing the implementation of Recommendation 8, including the use of Burns suppers as a basis for international engagement, and the development of marketing and branding for Burns-focused events internationally, as well as for business networking more generally [PDF]
- 5.7 Data showing participation and feedback for the Burns MOOC, including learner figures and user feedback taken from online reviews [PDF]. Excel data showing geographical range is available on request.
- 5.8 Testimonial letter, CEO, WeeBox, detailing the impact of the research and expertise of researcher McKay on the business [PDF]
- 5.9 Testimonial letter, Head of Archival Innovation and Development, National Records of Scotland, corroborating the importance of the work on authenticity and how it has impacted on their work. [PDF]
- 5.10 Testimonial letter, Blackie House, corroborating the implications of the work on authenticity and exemplifying its impact on their own collections [PDF]