



DON ROBERTO

THE NEWSLETTER OF THE CUNNINGHAME GRAHAM SOCIETY

No.01 WINTER 2013

UPCOMING EVENTS

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| Monday 11th November | COMMITTEE MEETING
At 6.30 in The Hidden Gallery, 1081 Argyle Street, Glasgow G3 8LZ |
| January 2014 | NEW YEAR DINNER
Date and venue to be announced soon. |
| Spring 2014 | CUNNINGHAME GRAHAM SOCIETY NATIONAL LAUNCH
At The Smith Museum & Art Gallery, Dumbarton Road, Stirling.
Date to be announced soon. |

WELCOME

Friday 11th October saw the long overdue birth of the very first Society dedicated to celebrating and promoting the life and times of Robert Bontine Cunninghame Graham - The Cunninghame Graham Society.

Much preparatory work had gone into setting the scene for Friday's inaugural meeting of the Society at The Hidden Lane Gallery in Argyle Street in Glasgow, culminating in bringing together the many diverse interested parties from the art world, literary world, as well as political world bringing together and consolidating these individuals' interest to work together towards making his name better known.

It was a very positive gathering, and an exciting time for all concerned - harnessing enthusiasm to promote "Don Roberto" at home and abroad.

The theme running through the evening was that of how those who are already aware of Cunninghame Graham are often coming to him at different angles and speeds and often unaware of the various other dimensions to his story and his legacy and that he is nor cannot be the sole property of any one of these interest groups – that he just cannot be contained or owned solely by any one interested party.

In an evening of friendship, camaraderie and common purpose it proved a real celebration as people displayed their willingness to use their skills and talents and areas of expertise to promote the multi-faceted dynamism of this most remarkable man through a resource that will feed everyone's knowledge and understanding of the man fondly known as "Don Roberto". - *Gerry McGarvey*



There was an excellent turn-out for our first meeting at 'The Hidden Gallery' chaired by Alan MacGillivray, and there was a real buzz of excitement about what we have begun, and many new friendships were made. The formation of the Society was agreed by all present, and the Aims discussed and accepted. The following Committee members were elected:

Convenor:	Joe Farrell
Vice Convenor:	Gerry McGarvey
Secretary/Membership:	Lachie Munro
Treasurer:	Alan MacGillivray
Committee:	Ian Black
	Chris Dixon
	Alasdair Fisher

Special thanks were proposed to Joe Mullholland for the use of his amazing 'The Hidden Gallery' at 1081 Argyle Street, and to Chris Dixon of Tennent's for providing the 'refreshments'.

A busy programme of meetings and events is planned for the coming year, including a dinner in Glasgow, a major meeting in Stirling in the Spring of 2014, and a Book Club with special guests and speakers - WATCH THIS SPACE!!!

EDUCATION

Congratulations to Lachie Munro in London for his award of this year's Tannahill Fund for The Furtherance of Scottish Literature for work on his PhD - 'The Scottish Heritage of Robert Bontine Cunninghame Graham' at Glasgow University.

FELICITACIONES de ESPAÑA



Buenos Aires

A MESSAGE FROM W. R. B. (ROBIN) CUNNINGHAME GRAHAM IN SEGOVIA:

Estoy encantado de ver, al fin, la formación de una Sociedad de Cunninghame Graham y la apoyo totalmente.

Parece que, a pesar del fracaso de un evento para conmemorar Don Roberto en 2012, su estrella se ha ido en aumento desde que tenía, aunque sea brevemente, levantado de la oscuridad, quitado el polvo y sacado a relucir en el momento de la apertura del Parlamento de Escocia.

Primero, fue sólo el artículo de vez en cuando; luego la reedición de sus libros por Kessinger y Long Riders' Guild en los EE.UU.; siguiente llegó dos nuevas biografías, uno académico y otro, más ligero, basado en sus propias cartas; un programa de TV para BBC Scotland; una excelente 5 volumen conjunto de sus breves ensayos por Kennedy y Boyd (Reino Unido) y otras reimpresiones de Ulan Press en los EE.UU.; y para colmo, una moción, con el apoyo de todos los partidos, en el Parlamento de Escocia a reconocerlo mediante la colocación de una cita de sus escritos sobre el edificio del Parlamento.

El interés por el hombre como autor y aventurero ya estaba en marcha, pero con el debate de la Independencia en pleno desarrollo, el tiempo también estaba maduro para un renacimiento del interés por el político, que fue elegido como liberal, pero fue el primero abiertamente socialista miembro de la Cámara de los Comunes; pasó a fundar el Partido Laborista escocés con Keir Hardie y fue su primer presidente; fue co-fundador del Partido Nacional de Escocia y el primer presidente de la SNP: un verdadero hombre de muchas partes, quien tuvo la virtud de permanecer tanto un radical y fiel a sí mismo.

Pero hay mucho más por hacer - mucho más - para promover la memoria de este escocés único y esa es la tarea a la que se dedica esta nueva sociedad. Espero poder verlo crecer y prosperar que Don Roberto por fin reciben el reconocimiento que disfrutó durante sus últimos años.

(I'm delighted to see the formation of a Cunninghame Graham Society at long last and wholly support it.

It seems, that despite the failure of an event to commemorate Don Roberto in 2012, his star has been rising since he was, albeit briefly, lifted from obscurity, dusted down and trotted out at the time of the opening of the Scottish Parliament.

First there was just the occasional article; then the reprinting of his books by Kessinger and the Long Riders' Guild in the USA; next came two new biographies, one scholarly and the other, lighter, based on his own letters; a TV programme for BBC Scotland; an excellent 5 Volume set of his sketches by Kennedy and Boyd (UK) and further reprints by Ulan Press in the US; and to crown it all, a motion, with cross-party support, in the Scottish Parliament to recognise him by placing a quote from his writings on the Parliament building.

Interest in the man as author and adventurer was well under way, but with the Independence debate fully under way, the time was also ripe for a revival of interest in for the politician, who was elected as a Liberal, but was the first openly socialist member of the House of Commons; went on to found the Scottish Labour Party with Keir Hardie and served as its first president; was a co-founder of the National Party for Scotland and First president of the SNP: truly a man of many parts, who had the virtue of remaining both a radical and true to himself.

But there is more to be done – much more – to promote the memory of this unique Scot and that is the task to which this new Society is dedicated. I look forward to seeing it grow and prosper and Don Roberto finally receive the recognition he enjoyed during his latter years.)

NEWS FROM THE DIASPORA



A homage to the memory of Robert Cunninghame Graham (the Scottish Gaucho) was paid on May 5, 2013 at the William Henry Hudson Museum, in Florencio Varela, near Buenos Aires. The Buenos Aires Scottish Guard led by Douglas Moffatt (in the photo) was in charge of the ceremonies, and Eddie Macrae, President of the Scottish Argentine Society exhibited the bust of the great writer that is kept in the museum. This ceremony honouring the birth of "Don Roberto" has been taking place for many years - *Eduardo Macrae Moir*

NEWS FROM HOME

The formation of The Cunninghame Graham Society has generated much national and international interest, and we look forward to a special event to be held in Stirling in the Spring which will bring together enthusiasts from all over Scotland.

The committee's efforts to spread the word were certainly helped by this amusing piece by Tom Shields in 'The Herald' a week before the event, and we were delighted to welcome Tom as a founding member.

Hail an internationalist nationalist



TOM SHIELDS ON ... Vote for Don Roberto

SHOULD Scotland get round, hopefully sooner than later, to choosing a president I nominate Robert Bontine Cunninghame Graham, pictured. There is a slight problem since RBCG (as we call him for short) died in 1938.

RBCG is immortal and it's a shame he's dead. We could do with his contribution to the current debate on Scotland's future. As the nation examines what it means to be Scottish, the good news is that a Cunninghame Graham Society is being set up to cherish the life and

work of one of Scotland's most interesting sons.

Born into a land-owning family, RBCG became the first socialist MP in the British parliament, winning the North West Lanarkshire seat in 1886. He was co-founder with Keir Hardie of the Labour Party. His manifesto included an eight-hour working day, votes for all, and free school meals. A troublesome cone in the Commons, RBCG was suspended for being rude about the House of Lords which he believed should be abolished. The offending word was "damn". He was excluded again from Parliament after a rammy with police at a civil liberties demo in which he was severely beaten up and then jailed for six weeks.

RBCG was an advocate of what was known as Scottish home rule. He said that if taxes were to be wasted this could equally well be done by an Edinburgh parliament and not in London. He was active in the Scottish nationalist movement and was elected the first president of the Scottish National Party in 1934.



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Perhaps his most telling quote is: "The enemies of Scottish nationalism are not the English, for they were over a great and generous folk, quick to respond when justice calls. Our real enemies are among us, born without imagination."

His politics is only part of the story. RBCG was also a writer, promoter of the arts, and most famously an adventurer. He was a gaucha in Argentina, probably inspired to be so by his maternal grandmother, a Spanish noblewoman by the name of Doña Catalina Paulina Alessandro de Jimenez. He is revered in Argentina as Don Roberto. He was a classic internationalist nationalist.

The Cunninghame Graham Society, which has its first meeting on Friday in Glasgow, is a non-partisan organisation dedicated to the man and his large legacy of written work. They also plan a memorial in a central Scottish location. (Equestrian statue in George Square would be good.)

Check out cunninghamegraham.com for more information.

'The Herald' 5th October 2013

Our Vice-Convenor, and Gartmore resident Gerry McGarvey has raised interest in Cunninghame Graham's home patch by this well-placed article in 'The Stirling Observer' last week which promotes the memory of Don Roberto, and the proposed meeting in The Smith Museum & Art Gallery in Spring 2014.

(Your Editor thinks that the gentleman seated with his arms folded in the centre-left of the photograph is Compton MacKenzie, and that the location is probably an early Bannockburn Rally.)

Stirling Observer

GARTMORE SON

Fans keep name of adventurer alive

Gregor White

Fans of arguably Gartmore's most famous son are hoping to spread the word about him even further after establishing a new society in his name.

Robert Bontine (RB) Cunninghame Graham was a Scottish politician, writer, journalist and adventurer who started his political life as a Liberal MP before going on to become a founder and first president of the Scottish Labour Party then founder of the National Party of Scotland, the forerunner of the Scottish National Party.

He also lived in Argentina as a cattle rancher, travelled to Morocco disguised as a Turkish sheikh, prospected for gold in Spain, befriended Buffalo Bill in Texas and taught fencing in Mexico City.

The Cunninghame Graham Society was officially launched in Glasgow last Friday with organisers hoping it can become a focal point for those interested in the man and his work.

Promoting both through events, lectures and articles the society wants to look at ways of making his work more widely known, and to establish an archive of his own work



Inspirational Robert Bontine Cunninghame Graham

as well as work about him.

Gartmore resident and the society's vice convenor Gerry McGarvey, said: "Cunninghame

Graham is such an amazing character. In his day he was such a dynamic figure in so many ways; as a politician, a political writer, a fiction writer, a travel writer and

indeed a leading cultural figure of his time, yet so few know just how much he has influenced and shaped Scotland's political and cultural landscape.

"At this time when Yes and No Campaigns for the Referendum are in full flight, people are rediscovering his works and want to find out more about this man who straddles the perceived political gulf between supporters of the Labour Party and the SNP.

"It is bizarre that there has not been any resource where people can find out more about the man who, although from a titled family, lived the life of a gaucha in Argentina, became the very first man to declare himself a Socialist as a Member of Parliament in Westminster and cofounded the Labour Party with Keir Hardie, wrote prolifically on almost every subject under the sun and in his later years helped form the National Party of Scotland.

"In fact, the more you discover about him, the more you want to know."

The society hope to host a series of Graham-themed events at both the Stirling Smith and Gartmore House next year. In the meantime to find out more go to www.cunninghamegraham.com.

MEMBERSHIP

Society membership is £10 per annum, and enquiries should be addressed to lachiemunro25@gmail.com as should any written contributions to, or comments on the Newsletter.

QUOTATION

"He was the natural pride of a fine race, superb manhood, and mental independence. Those who imagined he had the less pleasant kind of pride should have seen him, at a private literary function in his honour, going round the room talking delightfully with every one he thought was in the slightest danger of being overlooked. It was all the finer since he had, in mixed company, the shyness of the man of action who is also something of a literary recluse. He was too big a man to be afraid of appearing "faintly absurd" in the eyes of conventional snobs; he espoused struggling causes that appealed to his chivalrous and patriotic instincts, and lent them the ægis of his own prestige."

'Should Auld Acquaintance' by William Powers (1937)

IMAGES

Thank you to Robin Cunninghame Graham for these images of his great-uncle, which your Editor hadn't seen before. (From where did the artist get his inspiration I wonder?)



'Don Roberto' by Simpson

USEFUL WEBSITES

THE CUNNINGHAME GRAHAM SOCIETY:

cunninghamegraham.com

FULL BIOGRAPHY:

gerrymcgarvey.wix.com/don-roberto

CUNNINGHAME GRAHAM'S FUNERAL:

ssa.nls.uk/film/5936

HOMENAJE A DON ROBERTO CUNNINGHAME GRAHAM

www.youtube.com/watch?v=F-LivgMroHA

PUBLICATIONS

Members might like to be reminded that many of Cunninghamham Graham's sketches and short stories are available in these excellent anthologies edited by our own Alan MacGillivray, John C. McIntyre, and James Alison, and published by Kennedy & Boyd. They are all available from Amazon.

