MARKETING SOCIETY STAR AWARDS 2013

CATEGORY NUMBER: 1.6
CATEGORY NAME: Integrated Communications
NAME OF ENTRANT: Matthews Marketing
CAMPAIGN: Robert Burns Birthplace Museum

It is relatively easy…
to create public and media interest in Scotland's national bard.

It is more challenging…
to direct that interest onto the Robert Burns Birthplace Museum in Ayrshire.

And considerably more challenging…
to attract young adult and culture visitors to the Museum from Scotland's central belt.

Robert Burns was a typical young Scottish man.
He loved women, music, a drink, and wasn't afraid to be controversial.
The truth about his past is revealed at the RBBM which presents the world's largest Burns collection.

Did you know that Burns was only 37 and a half when he died?
He was a romantic, and his love for the ladies saw him father a total of twelve children to four different women?
His internationally famous song "Auld Lang Syne" has been covered by likes of Jimi Hendrix, Elvis Presley and Rod Stewart?
Our campaign set out to teach young adults about the iconic Scottish figure, who used his voice to become an inspiration the world over...

ROBERT BURNS BIRTHPLACE MUSEUM: The Campaign Brief

The £21m Robert Burns Birthplace Museum [RBBM] opened in January 2011 and visitor numbers in its first year were approaching half a million. However, the National Trust for Scotland [NTS] was keen to attract new, younger audiences to the Ayrshire site which is home to the world's most significant Burns collection.

Matthews Marketing [MM] was appointed in September 2011 to develop and deliver an integrated marketing strategy for 2012.

Objectives

The purpose of the marketing campaign was three-fold:

1 To encourage visits to the RBBM.
2 To generate media interest in the RBBM.
3 To raise the profile of Burns specifically reaching new target audiences: young adult and culture visitors.

Strategy & Tactics

To target the 'harder-to-reach' young adult audience and generate media interest, it was essential to develop an integrated campaign for Burns that represented a move away from the expected, traditional style of celebrations.

From researching this target market, also known as the 'first digital generation': the use of social media and mobile applications is second nature, and viral marketing and other techniques to generate word-of-mouth, can be particularly successful.

The key, underlying strategy was to educate audiences through the portrayal of Burns as he really was - a young man who wasn't afraid to express views well ahead of his time. The RBBM 2012 campaign featured: an outdoor advertising campaign, new literature, onsite and online promotions and an events-led PR and social media programme. The events-led PR programme also included an outdoor event or 'stunt' set up to provoke a viral marketing campaign.

matthews marketing

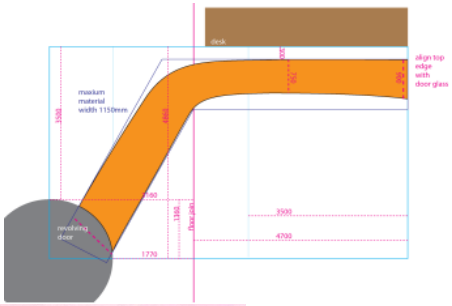
OUTPUTS- on-site marketing enhancements

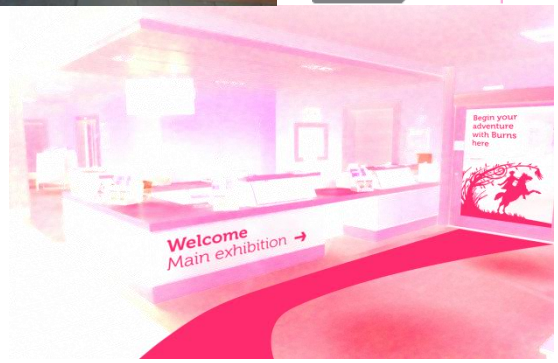
Research from the first phase of the project confirmed an immediate marketing requirement. The site itself was performing above the projected level to attract over 350,000 visitors per annum but the target of 75,000 for paying visitors was not on track.

Several on site visual enhancements were made to signage and promotions, carrying key messages:

The Main Exhibition is a 'must-see'
All-in-one-ticket
NTS world-class exhibit
Value for money

The new 'influencers' included pop-up stands; table-talkers; changes to the reception desk and entranceway plus new signs at the Burns Cottage encouraging visitors to make more of their ticket and to visit the Main Exhibition.





OUTPUTS - outdoor advertising

The imagery of the campaign was young and fresh. Up and coming Scottish model Rachel Hood, 16, featured in the key image used for the "Begin your Adventure with Burns" outdoor advertising campaign - a young girl with a rose in her mouth representing the romance and red rose often associated with Burns.

Over 125,000 journeys begin at Ayr Station each month. We mounted three banners along station platforms to reach the local market. The average dwell time on the station is seven minutes and the brand recall is approximately six times higher than low dwell time environments. The banners promoted the museum, the website and featured a QR code for mobile users.

The Burns campaign was the first-ever to use the ticket office windows at Glasgow Queen Street (image - below left) to display large format vinyl advertisements. We wanted to capitalise on the high footfall (1.25million journeys begin at Glasgow Queen St every month) and this was a new, negotiable space.

More than 20 outdoor poster sites were identified within high footfall city centre areas of Glasgow in locations of interest to cultural and youth audiences, including those positioned outside the NTS property Hutcheson's Hall (image - below right). This has been unused for some time but situated in the midst of the bustling Merchant City area.

OUTPUTS-events

Promoting two key marketing messages: that Robert Burns was just a young man of 37 and a half when he died and that he was born in 1759, the **"Braw Burns Birthday 2012"** events programme included precisely 37½ events. It kicked off at 17.59hrs on Tuesday 24 January and ran for 24 hours in the build-up to the poet's birthday. The activities finished at 25 January 17.59hrs, signifying the full date of his birth and culminating in the commencement of Burns Suppers across the nation and the globe.

The 37½ events included comedy, music, poetry, theatre, debate, suppers, whisky tastings, etc and also featured some world-firsts:
The World's First Robert Burns-themed Speed Dating Night and
The World's First Ceilidh Flash Mob.
The diverse nature and appeal of events reflected the
completely fresh approach to marketing Burns.
Each event was related in some way to the history of Burns so that people were being educated as well as entertained.

To remain cost-effective, MM created the full activity programme of 37½ events from three production strands:

Appropriate Burns events already organised, which could be 'packaged' and marketed more effectively;
Events already organised which could be re-shaped by MM to adopt a strong Burns theme; and
Totally new events initiated by MM, created specifically for January 2012.

MM came up with the concept of, and arranged all of the logistics for **twelve events** in total:

1. The "**Braw Burns Birthday Kick-off with Little Fire and Rose Parade**" at the RBBM;
2. The "**World's First Robert Burns Speed Dating Night**" at All Bar One hosted by Speed Dater;
3. The "**Ode to Scotland Today**" at Glasgow University which MM hosted with the aid of MacSween Haggis;
4. "**The World's First Ceilidh Flash Mob**" in Edinburgh hosted by Mark Neal from Edinburgh Ceilidhs and featuring a live ceilidh band;
5-8. The four "**Rabbie's Roses**" events which took place in the most prominent locations in Burns's life – Ayr, Kilmarnock, Dumfries and Edinburgh featuring representatives from MM handing out roses with a poem dedicated to the area to the public;
9. The "**Robert Burns Buskers**" performing some of Burns's tracks and handing out flyers in Glasgow's City Centre; and
10-12. The three "**Rabbie Burns Superstar**" events which included the final event ("**Half an Event for Half an Hour with Rabbie Burns Superstar**") which took place at the RBBM.

WELCOME to A Braw Burns Birthday Party

Robert Burns was just 37½ when he died. Our packed programme of 37½ events kicks off at 17.59 hrs on Tuesday 24th January and runs for 24 hours in the build up to the bard's birthday. The activities finish at 25 January 17.59 hrs, signifying the full date of his birth and culminating in the commencement of Burns Suppers across the nation and the globe. January is Burns Month.

Enjoy at least one of these fun events and begin your own adventure with Burns at the Robert Burns Birthplace Museum in Alloway, Ayr, where you can discover more about the man, his work and his life.

SPECIAL EVENT PRICE
Brig O'Doon House Hotel, Ayrshire
£80 Bed and Full Scottish Breakfast on 24 & 25 January for 2 people sharing.
See back page for details.

TUESDAY 24TH JANUARY 2012

Time	Event Title	Description	Venue	Price
17.59 – 20.00	Little Fire and Rose Parade	This gig by two Ayrshire bands includes covers of some of Burns's most famous work in this intimate setting. http://littlefiremusic.com/; http://rose-parade.co.uk/	Café @ The Robert Burns Birthplace Museum, Alloway, Ayr, KA7 4PQ	Free
18.00 – late	⅓ Price Whisky at Poet's Bar	In 1787, the great man ate, drank and wrote a poem here on the chimney breast where you can still see it today, protected behind glass. All whisky brands are half price tonight to toast the bard.	The Kenmore Hotel, The Square, Kenmore, Perthshire, PH15 2HS	Free
18.00 – late	Say it aint Sew – with a Burns Twist	Designer and seamstress, Iona, will have you in stitches at this Robert Burns sewing and craft class in the West End's funky venue where cider, ping-pong, strawberry mojitos and retro computer games are also part of the Club culture.	The Hillhead Bookclub, 17 Vinicombe Street, Glasgow, G12 8BE	Free
19.00 – 21.00	An Ode to Scotland Today	A showcase night of talent where students present their views of Scotland Today just as Burns did in the 1700s. Young artists, writers, poets, musicians and other interpreters are invited to create an evening of entertainment. More info: Heather at Matthews Marketing: 0141 419 9000	Jim's Bar @ Queen Margaret Union, Glasgow University, 22 University Gardens, G12 8QN	Free
19.00 – 21.00	An Alternative Supper with Burns	The Old Town's famous Burns pub, The Tass, has storytellers David Campbell and Linda Bandelier on hand to provide a generous helping of stories, songs and lore served with the traditional haggis, neeps and tatties. Book early to avoid disappointment! More info: Scottish Storytelling Centre: 0131 556 9579	The Tass, 1 High Street, Edinburgh, EH1 1SR	Tickets £17.50 (includes dinner & entertainment)
19.00 – 21.00	Rogue Writers Burns Debate	An informal meet-up and sharing of work for writers, followed by a pint or two. Tonight is a Burns debate theme – "Is Robert Burns worthy of the title of Scotland's greatest poet?" www.pulp-books.com; 0131 229 4444	The Pulp Fiction Bookshop, 43 Bread Street, Edinburgh, EH3 9AH	Free
19.00 – 21.30	The World's First Robert Burns Speed Dating Night	Presented by Speed Dater, the UK leader in events for single professionals. Gents will take after the famous ladies' man Rabbie Burns and will be on their best and most flirtatious behaviour to charm the girls. Each lady will present her favourite gentleman with a rose. www.speeddater.co.uk/spd_events_details.php?EventID=13192	All Bar One, 56-72 St Vincent Street, Glasgow, G2 5TS	Tickets £9.95
19.30	Sherlock Holmes 2	A showing of Sherlock Holmes 2 as part of the "Burns Supper Film Festival" at Scotland's smallest cinema. www.rbcft.co.uk; 01387 264 808	Robert Burns Centre Film Theatre, Mill Rd, Dumfries, DG2 7BE	Tickets £6.10
19.30	Elena Piras in concert	Award-winning singer/songwriter from Sardinia focuses on Scottish folk music, although she is also known for her opera and jazz influences. Elena will perform Scottish folk songs including *Ae Fond Kiss* and *Thee Lee-Rig*, by Robert Burns. www.leithfolkclub.com; www.elenapiras.com	Leith Folk Club @ The Victoria Park House Hotel, 221 Ferry Road, Edinburgh, EH6 4NN	Tickets £6
19.30 – late	Burns Night with Linda Ormiston and James & Andrew Nicol	Live music, addresses to the laddies and lassies, and plenty haggis and whisky. www.pitlochryfestivaltheatre.com; 01796484626	Port Na Craig, Pitlochry, Perthshire, PH16 5DR	£30 pp
19.30 – 21.00	An Introduction to Scottish Country Dancing	A traditional class hosted by the Royal Scottish Country Dancing Society. www.aberdeenrscds.co.uk	Garthdee Church Hall, 27 Ramsay Gardens, Aberdeen, AB10 7AE	Free
19.30 – 22.00	The Stirling Writers Group – Textual Healing is Our Speciality	Advice, encouragement and constructive criticism to writers of all types and abilities by an outstanding group of tutors, including the acclaimed novelist, dramatist and performer, Allan Bissett, who wrote his modern Scottish classic Boy Racers while an SWG member. Members regularly have work published. More info from Robert: rj_ritchie@hotmail.com	Tolbooth Arts Centre, Jail Wynd, Stirling, FK8 1DE	Free
20.30 – 22.00	The Ceilidh Club	Ceilidh dancing, furious fiddlers and callers to lead you through the steps. www.edinburghceilidhs.co.uk	The Bongo Club, 37 Holyrood Road, Edinburgh, EH8 8BA	Free
20.30 – late	Red Raw Presents... Scotland Today	New acts and a rammed room full of optimism and people who don't like paying more than £2 for a cracking night of controversial Scottish comedy. Red Raw is dedicated to Burns, who famously gave his anti-establishment views on the Scotland of his day. Let's see if the new acts can rise to the Burns challenge! www.thestand.co.uk/glasgow.aspx	The Stand Comedy Club, Woodlands Road, Glasgow, G3 6NG	£2
20.30 – late	Wylie McCulloch presents Tales, Banter and Craic with Burns	The main event of Burns Week at the Selkirk Arms features a traditional Burns Supper in the very place where the poet wrote his world-famous Selkirk Grace in 1794.	The Selkirk Arms Hotel	£12 pp (includes dinner)
21.00 – late	Burns Karaoke: Sing for your Supper	Glee meets a Broons family Burns night in this Robert Burns karaoke, West Port Book Festival style. Belt out a tune with the support of Captain's fantastic regular musicians or simply lend us your ears. Come for the banter and stay to raise a dram. Over 18s. www.westportbookfestival.org	Captain's Bar, 4 South College Street, Edinburgh, EH8 9AA	Free
23.00 – 03.00am	Poison Club Night: £1 Whisky and a Rose Tattoo	Edinburgh's alternative club/bar will encourage you to get a rose tattoo as you celebrate the bard's birthday with a dram.	Opium, 71 Cowgate, Edinburgh, EH1 1JW	Free entry

WEDNESDAY 25TH JANUARY 2012

Time	Event Title	Description	Venue address	Price
09:00 – 09:30	Rabbie's Roses in Ayr	Join us and receive a rose with a verse, which Burns wrote and dedicated to the area.	Burns Statue Square, Ayr	Free
10:00 – 10:30	Rabbie's Roses in Kilmarnock	Join us in Kilmarnock, where Burns's first book of poetry was published, as we hand out roses with a verse that he wrote dedicated to the area.	Burns Statue at Kilmarnock Cross, Kilmarnock	Free
10.00 – 17.00	The Nine Lives of Robert Burns	Catch the last day of this exhibition by John Cairney, an artist and actor whose own life has been intertwined with that of Robert Burns. www.burnsmuseum.org.uk	Robert Burns Birthplace Museum, Murdoch's Lone, Alloway, Ayr, KA7 4PQ	Adult £8, Concession £6 Free to NTS members
10.00 – 16.30	Burns Supper Exhibition	A show honouring Burns, focusing on the plants and vegetables mentioned in his work. www.rbge.org.uk	Royal Botanic Garden, Library Foyer, 20A Inverleith Row, Edinburgh, EH3 5LR	Free
10.00 – 17.30	Cupcake Tribute to Burns	Indulge in a vanilla sponge cupcake filled with whisky custard, topped with whisky buttercream icing and featuring an edible scroll with Burns's poetry. www.cuckoosbakery.co.uk	Cuckoo's Bakery, 150 Dundas St, Edinburgh, EH3 5DQ	£2.75 per cupcake
10:30 – 12:30	Rabbie Burns Superstar Promenades	Our world-famous celebrity goes walkabout in Glasgow City Centre to meet, greet, recite and give autographs, pose for photographs and any other requests (within reason!).	Various locations and Burns landmarks in Glasgow City Centre	Free
11:00 – 11:30	Rabbie's Roses in Edinburgh	Join us in Edinburgh, where Burns became famous, as we hand out roses with a poem that he wrote dedicated to the capital.	Inscription in Makars' Court, outside The Writers' Museum in Edinburgh's Old Town	Free
11.30 – 12.15	An Immortal Memory – the Life of Robert Burns in his Own Words	Performed by Hugh Farrell, performances last 45 minutes. www.burnsmuseum.org.uk	Burns Cottage, Robert Burns Birthplace Museum, Alloway Street, Alloway, Ayr, KA7 4PY	Adult £8, Concession £6 Free to NTS members
12.00 – 19.00	Scottish Film Day	Come and watch some of your favourite historic Scottish films and an amusing 1930's Robert Burns musical, at Su Casa's home cinema (a massive projector screen!) with some excellent coffee. www.sucasaayr.com	Upstairs @ Su Casa Coffee Shop, 115 High St, Ayr, KA7 1QL	Free
12.00 – 13.00	The World's First Ceilidh Flash Mob!	Join us for a world's first as a live ceilidh band (weather permitting) will play and call you through the steps of a dance programme featuring the Gay Gordons, Dashing White Seargent, Canadian Barn Dance, St Bernard's Waltz and Strip the Willow. www.edinburghceilidhs.com	Parliament Square, Edinburgh, EH1	Free
12.00	Radio Supper	A non-traditional Burns supper including live music, readings of the bard's work, thoughts and views, from young local talent, politicians and local people. To tune in, if in Dumfries on 107.3 FM and no matter where you are in the world you can listen live online.	Alive Radio (107.3 FM) or online at www.aliveradio.net	Free
12:00 – 12:30	Rabbie's Roses at the Burns Statue, Dumfries	Join us in Dumfries, where Burns lived, worked and died, where we will be handing out roses with a poem that he wrote dedicated to the area.	The Dumfries Town Centre Statue outside Greyfriars Church	Free
12.30 – 13.15	An Immortal Memory – the Life of Robert Burns in his Own Words	Performed by Hugh Farrell, performances last 45 minutes. www.burnsmuseum.org.uk	Burns Cottage, Robert Burns Birthplace Museum, Alloway Street, Alloway, Ayr, KA7 4PY	Adult £8, Concession £6 Free to NTS members
14.00 – 15.00	The Robert Burns Buskers	Also known as musicians Fraser Macpherson and Dorian Cloudsley of the Glasgow-based rock band Rainbow Dissolve who will perform some of Burns's most famous songs. www.myspace.com/rainbowdissolve	Buchanan Street, Glasgow City Centre	Free
14.00 – 16.00	Burns Memorial Window	To commemorate the birthday, the doors of the Alloway Parish Church will be open for visitors to see the Burns Memorial Window and make their own tribute to Burns. www.allowaychurch.org	The Alloway Parish Church, Alloway, Ayr, KA7 4PQ	Free
15.00	The Robert Burns Birthplace Museum – Behind the Scenes	A behind-the-scenes look at Robert Burns Birthplace Museum's hidden treasures hosted by Curator Amy Miller. www.burnsmuseum.org.uk	The Robertson Room, Robert Burns Birthplace Museum, Murdoch's Lone, Alloway, Ayr, KA7 4PQ	Free with admission
15.00 – 18.00	Argyll Fantasies	Edinburgh's newest fantasy and sci-fi bookshop celebrates Burns Night with an invitation to "Argyll Fantasies" featuring traditional Scottish storytelling of wonder, fantasy and horror, all taking place in Robert Burns's romantic escape, Argyll. www.pulp-books.com	The Pulp Fiction Bookshop, 41-43 Bread Street, Edinburgh, EH3 9AH	Free
15.30 – 16.15	An Immortal Memory – the Life of Robert Burns in his Own Words	Performed by Hugh Farrell, performances last 45 minutes. www.burnsmuseum.org.uk	Burns Cottage, Robert Burns Birthplace Museum, Alloway Street, Alloway, Ayr, KA7 4PY	Adult £8, Concession £6 Free to NTS members
16.00 – 16.30	Rabbie Burns Superstar goes shopping	Ayrshire's local celebrity makes an appearance at Ayr Shopping Centre, delivering personal poetry signings.	Outside Ayr Shopping Centre, at the Burns Statue	Free
17.00 – late	Burns Dinner and Rocking Ceilidh	Experience Burns with a modern twist at live music venue and indie/rock nightclub Maggie May's. Featuring a three course traditional Scottish dinner followed by the rocking ceilidh band "Sporran to be Wild." www.maggiemays.co.uk	The Basement @ Maggie May's, 60 The Trongate, Glasgow, G1 5EP	£15 per person (full dinner/ceilidh package)
17:15 – 19:15	Rabbie Burns Taste of Scotland	Tour of the world's largest collection of Scotch whisky (including several named after the man himself) and tasting session, followed by a Scottish food tasting experience in the Amber Restaurant. www.scotchwhiskyexperience.co.uk	The Scotch Whisky Experience, Castle Hill, Edinburgh, EH1 2NE	£50.00 per person
17.29 – 17.59	Half an Event for Half an Hour with Rabbie Burns Superstar	The final act in the 2012 Braw Birthday programme features "Rabbie Burns Superstar" by Mischief La Bas. Find out everything you've ever wanted to know about Burns from "the man himself" (well, sort of) in this fun half hour with Rabbie and his fans and have a favourite poem signed.	Robert Burns Birthplace Museum, Murdoch's Lone, Alloway, Ayr, KA7 4PQ	Free

event marketing

Our venue-partner hosts had promotions in place and it was a win-win of joint marketing where partner events benefited from the Burns event umbrella PR and the core Burns programme gained from the partners' marketing. Our partners were predominantly private sector arts venues, hotels and cafes.

Event programmes were created and distributed to all participating venues for customer pick-up; plus bars, cafes and other places of interest to the target audiences, including student unions. Over 5,000 generic leaflets were distributed to the venue audiences to begin their "Adventure with Burns".

event delivery – effectively marketing the RBBM

Representatives from MM attended/hosted a number of events to: measure direct results i.e. number of attendees, feedback from attendees, etc; communicate relevant messages regarding the RBBM, including the distribution of at least 100 general leaflets per event (image –right, above); conduct market research. All other event organisers were provided generic leaflets to hand out at the events and instructed of any other messages e.g. introducing a gig.

The "Rabbie's Roses" events (image –right, below) were also created simply to promote the RBBM – representatives handed out roses with a Burns poem and information on the Museum attached at events in Ayr, Edinburgh, Kilmarnock and Dumfries, at Burns-related locations.

Marketing Society Star Awards 2013 – Integrated Marketing Communications

OUTPUTS - PR

MM worked in partnership with the NTS on a press call to launch the events programme and adjoining outdoor advertising campaign (images – right, above). Model Rachel Hood was present for a photo call at St Enoch's Subway Station where she handed out roses to male commuters. This was a massive success securing national media coverage.

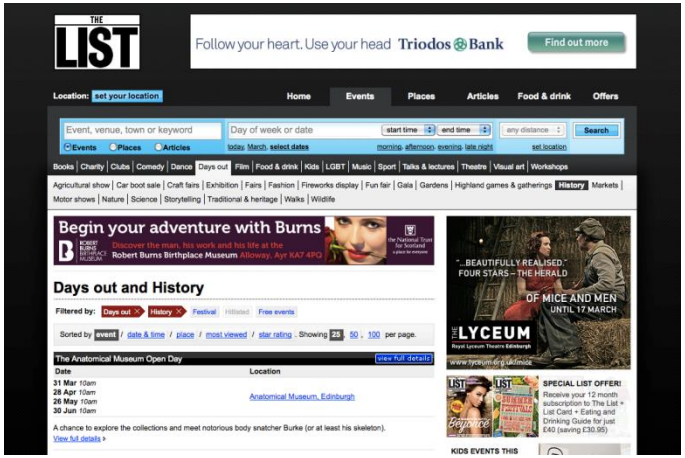
The press were called to attend the 'world's first' events within "A Braw Burns Birthday 2012" including the "World's First Ceilidh Flash Mob" and the "World's First Robert Burns Speed Dating Night" which were set up as 'stunt' events to garner publicity with viral marketing potential. The "World's First Ceilidh Flash Mob" in particular was a massive PR success (image – right, below). The event cost only £350 to set up factoring in resource costs, a live ceilidh band and securing a group of 20 ceilidh dancers. It attracted over 300 people on the day, dancing or spectating and secured mass press coverage. Broadcasters including BBC and STV covered the event as did press including the Scotsman.

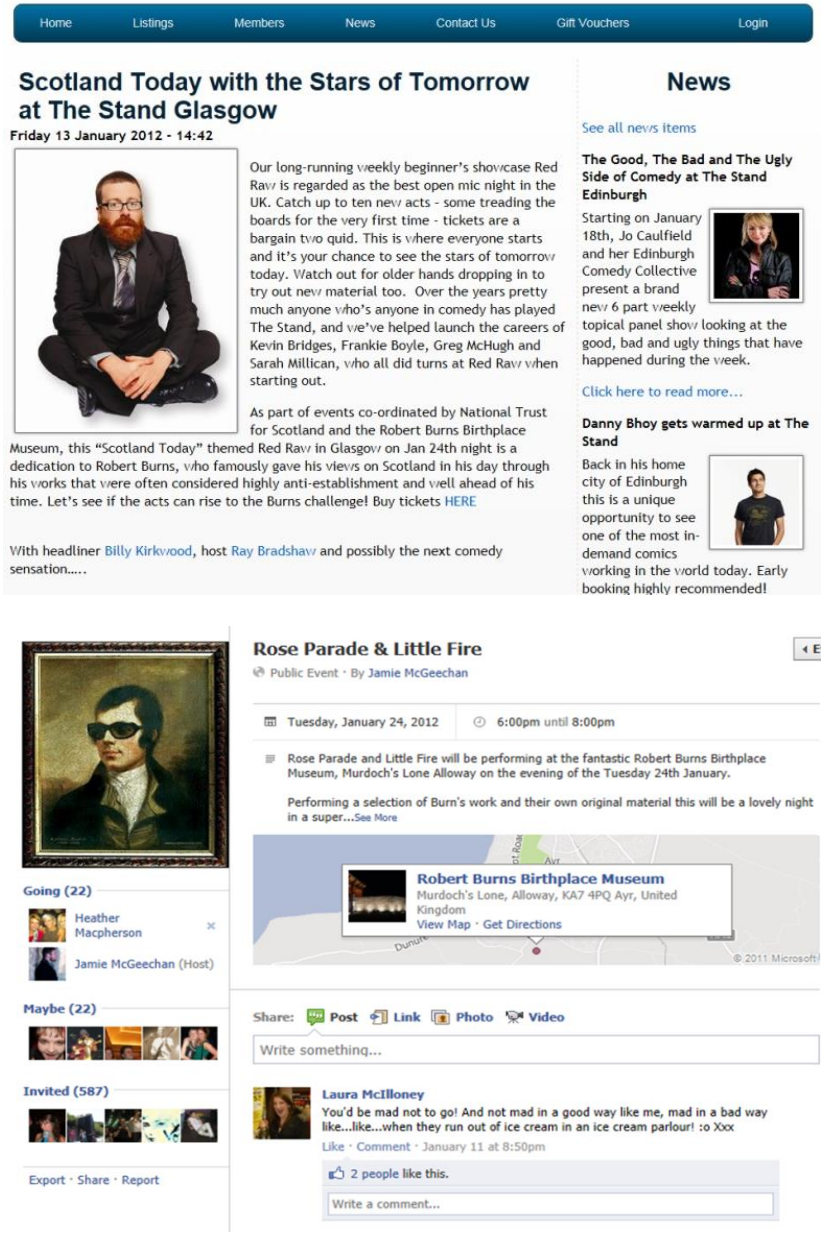
OUTPUTS - website & social media promotions

Robert Burns is on Twitter. He regularly tweets about how he is feeling on a particular day, normally through a song or poem. We complimented and enhanced the Burns twitter page and RBBM Facebook page with regular comments and insights into his colourful personality along with news and video clips of events etc.

The majority of event promotions took place online over venue websites and social media channels. For example, the “Ode to Scotland Today” event was promoted in conjunction with the University of Glasgow which posted regular updates to students on different pages such as the GU Literature Society, encouraging students to register as an act or attend.

Events info was posted on sites including the Skinny and the List, where banner ads were also placed directing audiences to the RBBM website.



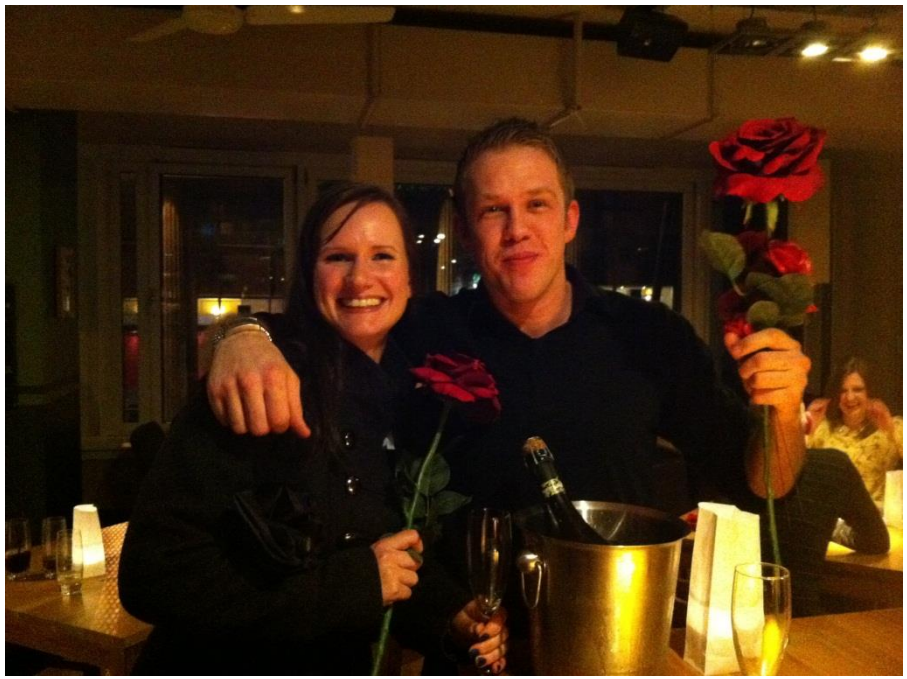


OUTCOMES

events

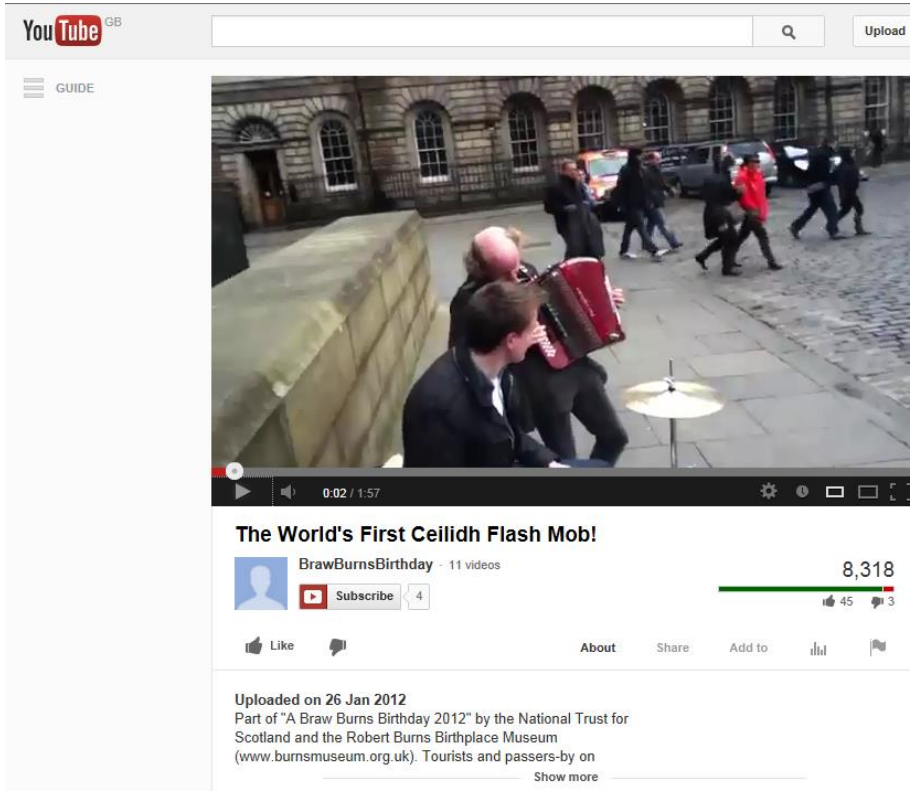
High attendance rates of the target audiences (over 5000 across all events); good use of pop up stands, leaflet print and distribution and plenty verbal promotion ensured the connection between events and the RBBM. MM's direct feedback from events and organisers from Speed Dater to the Scottish Storytelling Centre was very positive. Events were exceptionally well attended, and the majority of attendees were young adults.

Whether through event attendance, a rose (800 handed out across 4 locations), an events programme, generic leaflet, news bulletin, newspaper article or a social media comment, we can safely say that over 25,000 young adults from across Scotland will have received some form of direct communication regarding the RBBM through "A Braw Burns Birthday 2012".



social media - burns goes viral…

The YouTube videos alone: www.youtube.com/brawburnsbirthday, secured over 10,000 views. This featured the highlights of some of the key events including the ceilidh flash mob and individual students performing at the "Ode to Scotland Today". University students shared videos over their personal sites while views of the flash mob were boosted by STV Online, the Scottish Government website and other online channels.



PR

National and international media coverage print, online / offline, broadcast, radio. On a budget of less than £2000 for PR and events materials, we tripled this amount in terms of press coverage.

Braw birthday bash for The Bard

THE National Trust for Scotland this week launched a new promotional campaign to mark Burns' 252nd birthday.

And to celebrate the bard's birthday, the Trust will also launch 'A Braw Burns Birthday' with almost 24 hours of events across Scotland, beginning at 17.59 on Tuesday, January 24 in the new Robert Burns Birthplace Museum in Alloway.

The programme of 37 and a half events – one for each year of Burns' life – includes music, club, comedy and debating events taking place from Alloway to Aberdeen.

The £21 million museum officially opened in January 2011 and its visitor numbers are already approaching half a million. But the Trust is keen to attract even more people to the Ayrshire sites which tell the story of Robert Burns' life, loves and works and which is home to the world's foremost Burns' collection.

Museum Director Nat Edwards said: 'We've had an amazing first year, with hundreds of thousands of visitors, loads of awards and nominations, including a five star award from VisitScotland.

'Visitors absolutely love the museum and its unique and at times irreverent take on Burns. We want everyone to hear about the museum and come along to visit. We hope the new adverts will encourage a whole new audience to visit, start their adventure with Burns and celebrate 'A braw Burns birthday' on the 25th.'

Amongst the programme highlights being held in Ayrshire are:

Tuesday, January 24, 6pm to 8.30pm – Kick-Off Event at the Robert Burns Birthplace Museum Café, Alloway with a Gig featuring Ayrshire bands 'Little Fire' and 'Rose Parade that will include some covers of Burns' most famous work.

Wednesday, January 25 Rabbie's Roses in Burns Statue Square, Ayr and at Burns Statue, Kilmarnock Cross, Kilmarnock, from 9am to 9.30am.

People will be handing out red roses with a Burns poem attached.

11.30am to 12.15pm; 12.30pm to 1.15pm, and 3.30pm to 4.15pm – At Burns Cottage, Hugh Farrell, past president Alloway Burns Club and Stonehouse Burns Club and past secretary Perth Burns Club performs ' An Immortal Memory - the life of Robert Burns in his Own Words, adult £8, concession £6, free to NTS members.

Noon to 7pm upstairs at Su Casa Coffee Shop, 115 High Street, Ayr, a Scottish Film Day where you can watch some of your favourite historic Scottish films and an amusing 1930s Robert Burns musical.

2pm to 4pm – View Burns Memorial Window in Alloway Parish Church.

All 3pm get a behind the scenes look at Robert Burns Birthplace Museum's hidden treasures hosted by curator Amy Miller in The Robertson Room, free with admission.

Half an Event for Half an Hour with Robbie Burns Superstar from 5.29pm to 5.59pm.

The final act in the programme of events will feature Robert Burns himself in the form of 'Rabbie Burns Superstar' by Mischief La Bas.

'Rabbie' will be taking questions and signing copies of his poems at the Robert Burns Birthplace Museum, Alloway.

Staying in the museum, also taking place is an exhibition of paintings by actor John Cairney - The Nine Lives of Robert Burns which runs until 9pm on January 25.

Then from 7pm John Cairney will host a special Burns Night at the museum.

Tickets cost £45 and can be booked by calling 0844 493 2601.

On Sunday, January 29, Alloway 1759 comes to life as Alloway's famous sites are transformed with costumed characters and fun activities for all the family.

To access the full nationwide programme of events log onto http://www.burnsmuseum.org.uk/index.php/whats-on-whats-going-on/117-braw-burns-birthday-

SUPERSTAR: Rabbie Burns.

PERFORMING: Rose Parade.

RABBIE'S ROSES: Will be handed out in Ayr and Kilmarnock.

AYRSHIRE'S OWN: Little Fire, will perform in opening event.

Love: Say it with flowers

My love is like a red, red, rose... next!

By **Graham Grant**
Home Affairs Editor

HE is Scotland's greatest poet who enjoyed a formidable reputation as a ladies' man.

But yesterday the National Trust for Scotland (NTS) was accused of besmirching the 'immortal memory' of Robert Burns – by organising a speed-dating event to commemorate his achievements.

Just a week before Burns Night, next Wednesday, the NTS, which also runs the Robert Burns Birthplace Museum at Alloway, Ayrshire, published a list of forthcoming events to honour the Bard.

They include 'the world's first Robert Burns-themed speed-dating night' in a Glasgow pub and a 'Burns karaoke' session in an Edinburgh bar. A nightclub in the capital is also offering whisky at £1 a dram and the chance of a red, red rose tattoo.

Last night there was concern the NTS was trivialising Burns' contribution to literature. Simon Coom, son of Burns' great-great-great granddaughter Janet Elsie-May Coom, who died recently, said: 'Burns was an enlightened and well-educated man who had many of the qualities that are missing in today's world.

'But I can't see for the life of me how a speed-dating event will educate people about that and there is a risk of trivialisation unless there's a balance – the light-hearted has to be tempered with a more serious approach.'

The speed-dating event will take place in All Bar One in Glasgow next Tuesday. According to the NTS, 'each lady will present her favourite gentleman with a rose' and the man with the most roses at the end of the night will be crowned as Robert Burns – 'the biggest ladies' man who will have his pick of the bunch'. The NTS, which has spent £2,300 on a programme of events dubbed A Braw Burns Birthday 2012, say they will show how his youthful, fun-loving approach to life affected his poetry.

There are 37.5 of them to reflect Burns' age when he died, some say as a result of excessive drinking.

The '0.5' event comprises a half-hour appearance by an Elvis-style Burns impersonator – pictured in sunglasses in the programme – who will chat to tourists at the Burns Museum.

Murdo Morrison, of the Robert Burns World Federation, said: 'Traditionalists will feel this is not protecting Burns' memory but I personally don't have a problem with the speed-dating event.'

An NTS spokesman added: 'It's a lively mix of events – some traditional, some modern and quirky. And it's vital to attract new audiences to discover the joys of Burns in many different contexts.'

Evening News

Flash-mob ceilidh reels in crowds

Published on **Thursday 26 January 2012 12:00**

TOP STORIES
9am Briefing: Mark

THE SCOTSMAN THURSDAY 26 JANUARY 2012

PICTURE OF THE WEEK

Tourists in Edinburgh's Parliament Square were encouraged to join a ceilidh flashmob yesterday, as part of nationwide Burns Night celebrations Picture: Phil Wilkinson

online promotions & website statistics

Online promotions via the NTS; RBBM; and all partner event organisers; listings websites plus social media activity, reached an estimated audience of over 100,000.

The image, message and website being repeated through outdoor media as well as via press and online channels clearly boosted visits to the web site. Web statistics show a 5.4% increase in traffic to the Burns Museum website (www.burnsmuseum.org.uk) in January 2012, the majority of referrals being from different websites and social media channels such as Facebook.

THE BIG RESULT - visitor numbers

The Museum officially opened in January 2011, therefore interest was at its peak at this time. One year on, visitor attendance figures for January 2012 were boosted by the campaign, the number of visitors from the first week to the last week in January 2012, saw a sharp increase of almost **75%.**