**MC, Bob Young, Burns Supper, Bowral Golf Club 25th January 2013**

What is a Burns’ Supper and why is it celebrated all over the world tonight in thousands of locations? The first was held in 1801 and there are no similar celebrations for any other poet or writer.

Robert Burns was born on 25/1/1759 and died in 1786 aged 37. On the way he had 12 children for 4 women.

As an indication of his regard in this country, there are 8 statues of him in Australia in almost every State. The one in Sydney is outside the Art Gallery of NSW, in Adelaide on North Terrace, In Brisbane at Century Place and 4 in various locations in Victoria. The grandest one was erected in Canberra in 1935, outside the Burns Centre in Forrest Circle. Behind the large statue there are 4 friezes, each bearing a likeness to one of his works with relevant quotes. One of them comes from of his most famous poems ***To a Mouse*** which was prompted by his turning her up in his nest with the plough. Click here to see a few verses.

Scots or descendants of Scots with poetry in their soul are indebted to Burns. Australia’s national song, ***Waltzing Matilda*** was written to the tune of thou Bonnie Wood of Craigielea by Banjo Patterson, a man of Scottish descent. Our national anthem, ***Advance Australia Fair*** was written by Scottish migrant, Peter Dodds McCormick and first performed in Sydney on St Andrew’s Day 1878.

It can safely be claimed that the poetical works of Robert Burns can be found in almost every settler home and his songs were spread through the activities of Burns Nights and St Andrew’s Day gatherings. There was something about Burns, the man, that also resonated in the hearts and minds of the growing Australian community. He was a man of the land, a man who knew hard times, but despite his difficulties he celebrated life. He enjoyed a drink, he was convivial but Burns had no time for cant and hypocrisy. Burns exalted the common people, he championed equality and independence. All of this resonated and made sense to the settlers of the young Australia.

And in toasting the **Immortal Memory of Robbie Burns** tonight, we pay tribute not only to the passions and power of his work and its enduring quality, we acknowledge that as Australians we owe him a debt of gratitude for all that he has been and continues to be in our community and the indefinable contribution his thought has made to the very being of the Australian experience and way of life.

**Robert Young 1/13**

To a Mouse excerpt, Robert Burns follows…

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