



Family Burns Brunch, credit Allan Devlin

## CASE STUDY

# Family Burns Brunch

Robert Burns Ellisland



Connection Place

## Overview

The Family Burns Brunch was an event held at Robert Burns Ellisland with the aim to introduce a younger audience to the traditional Burns Supper. Caitlin MacLeod, Museum Development Officer, explains how the event helped make the tradition more accessible for families to engage with.



This project meets the aims set out in the [place](#) priority area of the strategy for Scotland's museums and galleries.

## The project

It's Scottish tradition to hold an event in January to celebrate the birthday of Robert Burns, known as a "Burns Supper", which has many recitals, toasts, and entertainment. At Ellisland we decided to do an abridged version of this tradition to make it more appealing to children and introduce Burns outside of a school or academic environment. It was held in the daytime so that all ages could participate, and it included a three-course meal and entertainment. We kept ticket costs as low as possible and had funding from Holyrood Trust, Museums Galleries Scotland, and Annandale Nithsdale Community Benefit Company to pay for staff time and some production costs. The event took place in a barn built by Burns and Ellisland was the place where a third of his work was produced, including Auld Lang Syne and Tam o Shanter.

The event was promoted through local schools, village noticeboards, as well as online. It sold out and our audience included lots of local families, grandparents keen to share traditions with their visiting grandchildren, and families visiting the area.

As the event was for young people it was important to have young traditional music and Burns performers. We worked with five young performers to co-produce the programme of entertainment. They were given lots of flexibility about what they'd like to perform, and we gave them the structure through event timings.



## Challenges and successes

- The event sold out!
- We had really positive feedback from attendees and families who enjoyed doing something together and share in an experience that wasn't all tech related.
- The logistics of the site were a challenge, especially keeping people warm without blowing the electrics! However, the event went smoothly and doing it helped us to work out the logistics for the site and team for future events.
- Accessible transport is a challenge for Ellisland as there is little public transport in our rural area. Having the event in the daytime meant there was an (infrequent) bus service available, but most attendees arrived by car or taxi.
- The performers were really well received, and the event was a successful and paid gig for them, which they've been able to use to help further their careers.

## Impact

- The event has raised the profile of Ellisland as somewhere that is accessible and interesting for children. People told us that before the event they didn't know about Ellisland or thought it wasn't for children. There's been a noticeable increase in local visitors since the event and we know that word of mouth from attendees has helped this.
- The children who attended mostly didn't know what a Burns Supper entailed, and their only experience of Burns was through school. Attending the event was a fun introduction to a tradition in their local area.
- We were able to show our funders that the event was well received, which has helped us secure further funding.
- Working with young performers also brought in a new audience through their friends and families and helped us build an ongoing relationship with creative young people in the area who are involved in Burns traditions.

## Guidance

- As the event was an introduction for young people to a Burns tradition, it was important that the whole event was focused on being relatable by working with young performers.
- The event was for all the family, in their different forms, so it was important that it was fun and accessible for all ages, and everyone felt they could participate.

- Amongst all the Burns and winter events it was important to stand out. We made sure we were in touch with our local press, schools, and created a winter events programme leaflet to distribute in the local area.
- Members got a small discount on the ticket, as they do with our other events, which helps maintain valued and engaged members.

## Additional information

For more information contact: Caitlin MacLeod, Museum Development Officer,  
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Read another case study about sharing traditions in communities: [Intangible Cultural Heritage at Gairloch Museum's Festival of Stories](#)

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