

21 January 2025



Dear Burns Clubs and Burns Enthusiasts,

At the time of writing, celebrations for Burns Night 2025 are well underway the world over, and I would like to bring to your attention a new publication coming this autumn that may interest and inspire you for next year's festivities and educational projects surrounding Scotland's great Bard.

My name is Sarah Pakenham and I am the founder and Publisher of Scallywag Press, a small independent publishing house based in London that delights in producing unique and compelling titles.

One such is our second book with Scottish writer Simon Lamb, being *Mat o' Shanter: A Cautionary Tale*.

As its name would suggest, this is a narrative poem inspired by 'Tam o' Shanter' by Robert Burns, and while it displays total respect for the ethos, meter, line count and narrative beats of the original classic, it adapts the story for a contemporary audience – for the ears and eyes and hearts of today – with remarkable skill and integrity. This is not a parody or a "version". It is a piece in its own right, thoroughly rooted in Burns's revered epic.

An introduction by the author is perfect for readers new to the work – or for those requiring a reminder – and an entertaining, surprising and emotional autobiographical essay complete what looks set to be an unmissable release for readers of all ages. In homes. In schools. In Burns Clubs. And beyond. Burns ignited anew.

Simon Lamb is the Carnegie-nominated author of *A Passing On of Shells* (Scallywag Press, 2023) and the current writer-in-residence at the Robert Burns Birthplace Museum in Alloway, Ayrshire. A former teacher, engaging performer and Burns speaker, he works tirelessly in schools and other venues across the country, bringing the excitement and joy of poetry to countless children and adults alike. He tours with his popular one-man show The Lamb o' Shanter Experience, the content of which has informed the author's note at the end of *Mat o' Shanter*. If you are looking for someone to flame-up your Burns community, we propose Simon Lamb.

We at Scallywag Press are proud that Simon's second book is a truly Scottish project, illustrated with breathtaking power and energy by Edinburgh-based muralist and first-time book illustrator Ross MacRae. This gorgeous hardback book is certainly going to be one to treasure. We would love for Burns Clubs and Burns enthusiasts to throw their support behind its release.

It is my hope that this letter will have sparked your interest in our project. If that be the case, please do follow the book on its journey to publication via the following channels:

- Scallywag Press | www.scallywagpress.com | @ScallywagPress
- Simon Lamb | www.simonlambcreative.co.uk | @SimonLambCreative
- Ross MacRae | www.rossmacraeart.com | @Ross.MacRae.Art

And please do think about including Simon and the book in your future events. You are welcome to get in touch whenever.

In the meantime, I wish you all a rousing Burns Night for 2025 and here's to many and successful ongoing activities throughout the year ahead. We look forward to Burns Night 2026 with great excitement.

25th September 2025: *Mat maun ride!*

Yours faithfully,

Sarah Pakenham

Publisher