Bannockburn

Robert ‘Rabbie’ Burns, known as ‘Scotland’s favorite son’ or ‘The Bard’ is held as the national poet of Scotland. Though a chiefly Scottish poet, he is loved by others as well for his poems that, while Scottish, are easily accessible to the English language. He was born in Alloway, Scotland in 1759. His childhood was rough; his schooling coming mmostly from his father. It was in 1774 that the 15 year old Scottish boy was influenced by Nelly Kirkpatrick during the harvest time. Because of this influence he began his first poem *O, Once I Lov’d a Bonnie Lass.* Burns became a freemason in the fall of Obctober 1781, and his duties at the “St. David Tarbolton Kilwinning numer 135” lodge gained him great reputation as a freemason poet and a poet in general. In 1786, John Wilson published Burn’s poems in a volume called the *Kilmarnock*, and containing many of his best poems. Later that year he was accepted in Edinburg as a great, and where he met and influenced Walter Scott. He later moved to Dumfries, where he wrote the remainder of his poems. Because of heart conditions, Burns died at the young age of 37 in Dumfries. After his death he was given the ‘freedom of the town’ in honor of his wisdom as a poet.

‘Bannockburn’ or ‘Scots Wha Hae,’ as it is more commonly called, was written by Burns in 1793, only a few years before his death. It was the National Anthem of Scotland for a long time, but has recently been replaced. It is said dthat the tune ‘Hey Tuttie Tatie,’ which Burns used for his lyrics, was sung by Bruce at the battle of Bannockburn.

It is this battle of Bannockburn that Burn’s poem writes of. The poem begins by laying out the situation: the English are camped at near the village of Bannockburn, and the Scottish were nearby, awaiting dawn. As dawn breaks, Bruce addresses his soldiers Scottish soldiers. Fueling them by an appeal to their royal ancestry, and pleading that they fight for salvation from the current English King, King Edward, Bruce speaks to his soldiers one last time before the battle. Burns was motivated to write this because of, as he noted to his publisher, Bruce’s “glorious struggle for Freedom, associated with the glowing ideas of some other struggles of the same nature, not quite so ancient.” Burns hoped to show the danger of the ‘Radical Movement’ of the time by firing up fellow Scots with Bruce’s memorable speech.