



£100,000 boost for Burns as fans celebrate

by **Angela Taylor**

IT IS more than two centuries since the demise of Scotland's bard, but Robert Burns's works remain as collectable as ever.

With Scots around the globe celebrating the anniversary of his birth tomorrow, booksellers from New York to New South Wales are offering examples of Burns's literature through the Abebooks website – but at a price.

A copy of *Poems, Chiefly in the Scottish Dialect*, published in 1787 when Burns was 28, is being offered for sale for £12,500 by a Chelsea-based antiquarian bookseller.

Printed for Burns himself, the book is bound in purple with the initials R.B. in the centre of the front cover and the back features a cluster of thistles inlaid in green and mauve leather.

Also on offer is his publisher William Patterson's copy of *The*

Works of Robert Burns, printed in 1867.

The book, which has more than 400 inserted engravings, is on offer for £10,687.

Abebooks.co.uk – which specialises in new, used, rare and out-of-print books – lists 24

items of the bard's writings priced at more than £1,000.

Most are being offered by US booksellers, though rare books of this nature are also found in London and Oxford.

Cooper Hay, owner of Cooper Hay Rare Books in Glasgow's Bath Street, said collectors looked for editions published during Burns's lifetime, and particularly the Kilmarnock edition, which was the first appearance of his poetry in 1786.

Sue Connors of Abebooks said the interest in the bard did not fade.

There was demand for his work from all corners of the globe and collectors were prepared to pay high prices for the right book.

Meanwhile, a nationwide search for songs celebrating Robert Burns, backed by £100,000 funding, was announced yesterday.

Culture Minister Patricia Ferguson said it was crucial to preserve the bard's legacy as she launched Burnsong, a national project to encourage contemporary songwriting in Scotland.

The initiative, created by Dumfries and Galloway Arts Association, has been awarded

£80,000 from the Scottish Arts Council and £20,000 from EventScotland.

Ms Ferguson said: "This week thousands of people throughout the world will celebrate the life and work of Robert Burns.

"His songs and poems, rich in their heartfelt humanity, strike a

chord with us all. I'm delighted the Scottish Arts Council and EventScotland are funding Burnsong, created to celebrate Burns and to honour every kind of song.

"Children and adults will be invited to write songs in every conceivable style and, as with the songs of Burns, those that reflect people's lives, their relationships with others, surroundings and environment."

She added: "Protecting Burns's legacy is crucial."

Last week, the minister met the National Trust for Scotland to discuss reviving the crisis-hit Burns National Heritage Park at Alloway, Ayrshire, and today she will be meeting leaders of South Ayrshire Council.

● Burnsong invites songs in any style or language. They can be new, or use new music composed for existing words or old tunes found for new texts.