

Special Collections

THE ROBERT BURNS COLLECTION

Robert Burns was born on 25 January 1759 and died 37 years later. His life was hard and brief but eventful, and his fame rests on one single, rather slim book, **Poems, Chiefly in the Scottish Dialect** and on his songs. As a poet who expressed the essence of a nation and sang of common humanity, he has attained cult status not only in his native land, but all over the world.

When The Mitchell Library opened to the public in 1877, one of the earliest decisions made by the library committee was to form a **Burns Collection** as a memorial to Scotland's national poet. The aim was to collect all available works by Burns, about him or in any way relating to him.

Over the years the collection has grown to over 5,000 items and is believed to be the largest such collection in the world. It is housed in the magnificent setting of the Burns Room, alongside the **Scottish Poetry Collection**; this collection – which has its own separate catalogue –

contains more than 12,000 volumes and brings together all editions of the works of Scottish poets, as well as anthologies, biographies and critical and historical studies. Among the many interesting and valuable items in the Burns Collection are:

- over 900 editions of the works
- 2 copies of the 1786 Kilmarnock edition – estimated fewer than 30 copies still extant
- two printings of the 1787 Edinburgh and 1787 London editions
- 15 original manuscripts of letters and poems – including the only surviving letter written by Burns in Scots and one of 6 extant manuscripts copies of 'Auld Lang Syne'
- translations of the works into more than 30 languages
- extensive collection of ephemera and artefacts

- audio and visual material (index of illustrations available)
- scrapbooks of Burnsiana (indexed) complete set of the Burns Chronicle (indexed to 1975)

In 1996 The Mitchell produced a **printed catalogue** to the Collection, arranged in 4 sections: Editions, Life, Analysis and Memorabilia. There is a chronological index of editions, index of publishers and printers as well as an extensive general index. Material added to the Collection since 1996 can be found in the online catalogue for Glasgow Libraries.

The Burns Room is not open to the general public but material from the collection is available for reference during library opening hours. Staff will be happy to assist anyone access material via the catalogue and group visits may also arranged.

It is also possible to hire The Burns Room for talks and events.

