

Mass recital celebrates daffodils (BBC NEWS)

A quarter of a million children started the day on Friday with the famous line "I wandered lonely as a cloud..."

Those words of William Wordsworth rang out across the UK in a mass recital to celebrate the bicentenary of his daffodil-inspired poem.

The Words Worth Reading event was set up by the Wordsworth Trust and Marie Curie Cancer Care to help raise funds to pay for specialist cancer nurses.

It is hoped a world record will be set for the largest mass poetry reading.

The idea is also aimed at generating more enthusiasm for poetry among children.

Marie Curie, which has the daffodil as its emblem, had originally planned to attract 150,000 schoolchildren - to represent the number of people who die of cancer in the UK each year.

Wordsworth wrote the poem at Dove Cottage, Grasmere, which is preserved as a memorial to his work by the Wordsworth Trust.

The poem was rewritten in 1815, adding a new stanza and replacing the words "dancing daffodils" with "golden daffodils".

Wordsworth Trust director Dr Robert Woof said the work's enduring popularity was down to its strong rhythm and the way it turned the commonplace daffodil into something magical.

Poet Laureate Andrew Motion said: "It's not a great poem but it is a poem of real charm."

He said the poem's "strong and simple language" carried it straight into people's hearts, particularly as daffodils were a flower which could be seen in towns and the country.

But the event prompted English professor John Sutherland to say he hoped children would be taught public reading in schools.

He said: "These lovely children - they read very badly. This is something that has declined awfully in our education over the last few years.

"If one good thing comes out of a quarter of a million children chanting out this poem, I hope it's a new emphasis on how to read poetry aloud."