

U DX270**Medical Case File of Philip Larkin****1985****Biographical Background:** For a detailed biographical entry see U DPL

Born in Coventry in 1922 and educated at King Henry VIII School there, Philip Larkin first showed his literary talent in regular contributions to the school magazine, *The Coventrian*. He gained a first class honours degree in English at St John's College, Oxford, in 1943. He then became a librarian, working successively in the public library at Wellington, and the libraries of Leicester University College and, from 1950, Queen's University, Belfast. In 1955 he was appointed Librarian of the University of Hull, where he remained until his death at the age of 63 in 1985. His first poem to achieve a national circulation was 'Ultimatum' in *The Listener* in 1940. Other poems were published in anthologies of Oxford poetry before his first personal collection, *The north ship*, appeared in 1945. This was followed by two novels, *Jill* (1946) and *A girl in winter* (1947). A lean period followed after the rejection by publishers of *In the Grip of Light* (1948), but he continued to write, and his next collection, *The less deceived* (1955) established him as a major poet. *The Whitsun weddings* (1964) won him the Queen's Gold Medal for Poetry. He edited *The Oxford book of twentieth-century English verse* (1973), and the last collection of his poems, *High windows*, appeared in 1974. The posthumous publication of his *Collected poems* (1988) and *Selected letters* (1989) revealed a much more prolific writer than had previously been imagined. He received many honours, including the CBE in 1975 and the Order of the Companion of Honour just before his death in 1985.

Despite serious illness, Larkin's labours continued practically to the end of his life, with his former library secretary employed to do the typing. His death from cancer on 2 December 1985 produced an enormous outpouring of grief from friends, colleagues, and lovers of his poetry. He remains widely recognised as one of the most significant writers of modern poetry in English, and as an extremely successful university librarian.

Custodial history: Donated by Professor John R. Bennett, West Ella, Hull, February 1995**Description:** Medical case file containing medical and surgical notes relating to the illness and condition of Philip Larkin prior to his death in December 1985**Extent:** 1 file**Related material:**

Papers of Philip Arthur Larkin [Ref U DPL]

Photographs of Philip Arthur Larkin [Ref U DLV]

Access conditions:

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U DX270/1	File. 'Philip Larkin' Contains medical and surgical notes and photographs relating to the illness and condition of Philip Larkin prior to his death in December 1985 1 file	Apr-Nov 1985
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This item contains personal sensitive information and is not available for public inspection for 50 years until 1 January 2036