

## **U DDD Papers of Douglas Eaglesham Dunn 1967-1996**

### **Biographical background:**

Douglas Eaglesham Dunn was born in Inchinnan, Renfrewshire on 23 October 1942. After qualifying as a librarian at the Scottish School of Librarianship, Douglas Dunn worked in a number of libraries in Britain and America before becoming a student at the University of Hull, where he graduated in English in 1969. His first collection of poetry, *Terry Street*, based on his observations while living in this now redeveloped street in central Hull, was published in 1969. Dunn then worked as an assistant librarian in the Brynmor Jones Library for two years, working with and becoming friendly with Philip Larkin, before leaving to work full-time as a writer. He was Fellow in Creative Writing at the University in 1974-75 and continued to live in Hull until the death of his wife Lesley in 1981.

Dunn then returned to his native Scotland, where he now lives near Dundee with his second wife, also Lesley, and family. In 1991 he was appointed a Professor of English at the University of St. Andrews and later became Director of the University's Scottish Studies Centre in 1993, a position he held until his retirement in 2008. Since his retirement Dunn has continued to supervise postgraduates at St Andrews as an Honorary Professor.

He has published several collections of poetry and works of literary criticism. Among the many awards he has received are the Whitbread Poetry prize in 1985 and Whitbread Book of the Year 1986 for *Elegies* (1985), a moving commemoration of the death of his first wife. He became a Fellow of the Royal Society of Literature in 1981 and was a member of the Scottish Arts Council from 1992 to 1994. In 2003 he was awarded an OBE and in 2013 he received the Queen's Gold Medal for Poetry.

### **Custodial History:**

Donated by Douglas Dunn, September 1969, April 1982 and December 1987.

### **Description:**

This small collection includes poetry notebooks and drafts of poems, the typescript of the Terry Street collection, letters from Philip Larkin, and the annotated typescript of the speech made by Dunn at the opening of the Philip Larkin Suite in the Brynmor Jones Library in December 1987.

### **Arrangement:**

U DDD/1-7 Miscellaneous notebooks and other papers

U DDD/8-9 Material relating to Philip Larkin

U DDD/10 Terry Street exhibition guide

**Extent:** 1 box

### **Related Material:**

Letters from Dunn to Ted Tarling, publisher of the poetry magazine *Wave* [U DP/177/2], and to Harry Chambers, editor of *Phoenix* [U DP/162/21], along with typescripts of poems published in these magazines

Letters from Dunn to the poets Tony Griffin, Peter Didsbury and Tony Flynn [U DP/183, 184 & 189]

**Access Conditions:**

Access will be given to any accredited reader

**Copyright:** Douglas Dunn

U DDD/1	'Seventh notebook' 1 volume	Jul 1967- May 1968
U DDD/2	'Eighth notebook' Begins May 1968 1 volume	1968
U DDD/3	Typescript drafts of poems, with holograph additions and alterations. Poems listed at U DDD/4 1 bundle (83pp.)	c.1968
U DDD/4	Manuscript list of poems at U DDD/3 1 item	c.1968
U DDD/5	Letter from Douglas Dunn to Philip Larkin Setting out the conditions for the use of his papers, with Dunn stipulating that these should not be located in a part of the Library open to the public (preferably in Larkin's room) and that 'cataloguing should be done as discreetly as possible.' He notes that 'They will always be my notebooks in a different way from how Terry Street will always be my book'.  Larkin's acceptance of these conditions is contained in U DDD/8. 1 item	1 Sep 1969
U DDD/6	Typescript of poems included in 'Terry Street' 1 bundle (60pp.)	1969
U DDD/7	Typescript of interview with Douglas Dunn by John Haffenden. Published in 'Viewpoints' by Haffenden (Faber, 1981) 1 item	23 May 1979
U DDD/8	Letters and postcards from Philip Larkin to Douglas Dunn and Lesley Dunn, written from Hull, Oxford, Galashiels and Dumfries.  9 May 1967 Letter from Larkin confirming Dunn's starting date in the University Library.	May 1967- Aug 1985

U DDD/8  
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12 May 1969 Letter confirming Larkin's suggestion that Dunn might consider letting the Library have some of his work sheets. 'I am afraid that this Library has never gone into this kind of collecting conscientiously, but I certainly think it would be appropriate if we were to have the sheets relating to the Terry Street poems, for instance.' Larkin also suggests that Dunn might 'record a tape for us before you leave the neighbourhood.'

4 June 1969 Letter from Larkin relating to a forthcoming reading by Dunn and an invitation to dinner 'I take a long time to accustom myself to the idea of even the nicest occasions'.

8 July 1969 Letter from Larkin suggesting a price of £100 for the two manuscript notebooks and assorted typescripts Dunn has supplied [U DDD/1-6].

17 Sept 1969 Letter from Larkin acknowledging Dunn's conditions for accessing his papers and accepts them as 'quite reasonable'.

13 Nov 1969 Letter from Larkin at 33 Pearson Park Comments on a Guardian review Dunn has sent him (on 'Terry Street'). Commiserates that the reviewer didn't like the book better - 'he must have had an off day.' Notes 'A. Cronin was v. sharp about me back in '56.' Suggests that the only answer 'is to write some more good poems - next time he'll have changed his tune.' Complains of feeling ill - 'the doc has given me orange & lemon pills, & a rather fine tonic that tastes as vintage port ought to taste.'

1 Oct 1970 Letter from Larkin confirming Dunn's resignation from the Library 'I shall follow your career with great interest'.

5 Dec 1970 Letter from Larkin at All Souls College with news of his work on the Oxford anthology and expresses his depression as to how it is going. Congratulates Dunn on his appointment to *Encounter*.

16 January 1971 Letter from PAL at All Souls College to Douglas Dunn, 134 Marlborough Avenue, Hull [Dunn now back working in the Library]. Again laments his progress on the anthology. 'I am so unappreciative of 75% of our own published bards that it'll be totally unrepresentative.' Comments on Oxford contemporaries. 'AL Rowse is rather over-friendly to a brother bard, but better than under-friendly I suppose.' Included in Selected Letters.

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17 May 1971 Larkin acknowledges and thanks Dunn for supplying a printing copy of 'Terry Street'. 'This makes an admirable addition to the books of manuscripts you were kind enough to let us have some time ago, and to one who admires your work as much as I do the gift is especially gratifying. 'It's interesting to see the kind of marks printers make on one's work'.

10 November 1971 Typewritten letter from Larkin at 32 Pearson Park commenting on 'the desirability of subsidised authorship.' [Dunn applying for Arts Council funding] He doubts its value but is willing to sponsor ('with a sponsor like this, who needs a kick in the goolies'). Makes an oblique reference to his urging 'the work of a (in my opinion) excellent novelist [i.e. Barbara Pym] with six novels to her credit) who has been rendered redundant just because novels don't pay.' 'To the Library tonight, to hear Michie on Scott. Och aye.' Signed 'Yours truly Melville Dewey.' Included in Selected Letters

2 July 1972 Airmail letter from Larkin addressed at 32 Pearson Park but written in Loughborough to Douglas Dunn in Tursac, Dordogne. Apologises for being a bad correspondent - 'my weekends in Loughborough take up most of my non toad time'. Bemoans his anthology now the proofs have been returned. 'it's terribly unfair that one never gets any better at writing: never has any idea of how the thing is done, not like making a window frame or seducing women.' 'Really I'd like to start it all over again: it'll bring me no credit.' 'At present I feel I shall never write anything again.' Expects him to 'look like some Marcel Pagnol character when he returns, 'lounging on the seafront in a beret & chewing the heads off prawns.'

15 September 1972 Letter from Larkin from 32 Pearson Park enclosing a proof copy of 'This Be The Verse' . Included in Selected Letters.

26 November 1972 An amusing typewritten letter from Larkin from 32 Pearson Park regarding the anthology publication date 27th March, 'No doubt Princess Anne will announce her engagement simultaneously, or Wilson throttle Heath, or Mrs Whitehouse and a Barbary ape be caught in flagrante delicto. I aim to be travelling, unreachable, by Fleet Street telephones. But perhaps I flatter myself.' Signed 'Roger McGregor Hardie.'

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25 November 1973 Letter from Larkin from 32 Pearson Park. Comments on Dunn's 'New Poems' which he likes very much.

31 August 1973 Postcard from Larkin in Galasheils 'it's rather a change to be holidaying in the Lowlands'

21 August 1974 Brief postcard from Larkin relating to 'the Ellington book'

8 September 1974 Postcard from Larkin from Dumfries. 'on wettest holiday ever had'

18 December 1974 Letter from Larkin addressed to Dunn as an Arts Council Fellow in Creative Writing regarding his proposal for a miscellany to mark the 300th anniversary of Andrew Marvell's death.

23 June 1975 Letter from Larkin relating to Dunn's application to the Ferens Fine art Committee for financial support in his capacity as Fellow in Creative Writing and the production of 'Experience Hotel'

1 July 1975 Further short letter relating to 'Experience Hotel' and congratulating Dunn on it breaking even and not requiring further financial support from the University. 'I do hope you can find a copy of the script. It is like all the copies of Hamlet being swept up after the first night at The Globe - if that is where it was produced'

7 November 1975 Letter from Larkin relating to a meeting between the University and City [Council] 'to discuss this blasted Marvell idea, which I can see will be a sorrow to us all and that I devoutly wish you had kept under your hat.' Reference to being glad that 'the Palace is over.' 'I found it rather an ordeal, not being one of nature's courtiers. It was terribly tedious, too - lots of standing and sitting about. However, it was all extremely well meant, and I got through it without being taken to the Tower.'

12 April 1976 Letter from Larkin from 105 Newland Park, congratulating Dunn on the Faber Prize.

17 June 1976 Letter from Larkin to Lesley Dunn, Ferens Art Gallery. Thanking her for 'the beautiful Grimshaw print'

U DDD/8  
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24 January 1977 Letter from Larkin to Douglas Dunn at 3, Muirfield Park, Hull, informing him, politely, that he had overdue library books. 'This puts me in a slightly embarrassing position, and as I always insist that they treat everyone the same I thought it best to ask you put it right whatever is wrong between us, and try to keep it that way'

5 October 1977 Typescript letter from Larkin giving permission for a Mr Sommer [colleague of Dunn's] to use the Library. Reference to Robert Lowell's death - "most unexpected and upsetting: I shall be thinking about him at 6 o'clock today'

7 December 1978 Letter from Larkin from 105 Newland Park to Lesley Dunn, Ward 100, Hull Royal Infirmary. Sends his regards to her following her operation. 'What an awful thing to have happened!' A good job the medics have got hold of it and knocked it on the head' In Selected Letters

22 April 1979 Letter from Larkin from 105 Newland Park quoting a poem by Charles Tennyson Turner. Reference to Kingsley Amis. In Selected Letters.

4 March 1981 Letter from Larkin from 105 Newland Park commiserating Dunn on the death of his wife, Lesley. In Selected Letters

12 October 1981 Letter from Larkin from 105 Newland Park to Douglas Dunn in Dundee, where he now has a post at the University. 'Glad that St Kilda's P is getting such a good press.'

3 December 1981 Letter accompanying an introduction Larkin had written [for Rumoured City?]

23 November 1982 Letter from Larkin from 105 Newland Park to Douglas and Lesley Dunn. Thanking them for their recent hospitality. Reference to having just read 'Europa's Lover' 'with just the mixture of pleasure and incomprehension you might predict'

U DDD/8  
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4 March 1984 Letter from Larkin from 105 Newland Park to Douglas Dunn in Tayforth, Fyfe commenting on the progress Dunn has made in finding a new home. 'The one next door here is on sale for £66,250. In a pig's arse, as the poet says.' Reference to a cassette recording they have made together. 'I have 'our' cassette now, and think it sounds more or less alright, bar Craig's KGB intros. Our styles of reading differ very much. You make me sound like Donald Wolfit!' 'The sales of RW continue to amaze. I go round chalking MIDDLEBROW LITERARY CHAT RULES OK on walls.'

30 April 1984 Letter from Larkin from 105 Newland Park accompanied part of a letter sent to Craig Raine concerning a publishing dispute. Reference to his deputy taking-up a post in York 'He's well worth it, but what becomes of me?' Also thanks Dunn for sending him 'Keats's Grave' 'I am reading Keats's letters at present - first time since the Forties'

21 May 1984 Typescript letter from Larkin regarding making a contribution to Betty Mackereth's retirement leaving present. 'You will not need reminding of Betty's constant cheerfulness, loyal dependability and intelligent understanding of all the Library's work that has made her such a source of strength over the years not only to me but to all her colleagues ...' With an annotation about John Betjeman's death.

6 June 1984 Typescript letter from Larkin thanking Dunn for his 'generous contribution to Miss Mackereth's retirement present' and inviting him to a sherry-and-refreshments party. Includes the annotation 'I'm glad you are settling into your house: you must feel like WB Yeast, as Private Eye calls him. Seamus has got an Hon Doc from the Open U - can't get much lower than that.'

29 August 1984 Typescript letter from Larkin written from 105 Newland Park asking if he has invented an electronic cat flap. Details Monica's illness and his drinking. Describes having had his portrait painted. In Selected Letters

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1 March 1985 Letter from Larkin from 105 Newland Park thanking Dunn for sending Elegies. 'It makes painful reading, of course, bringing back that awful time.' [i.e. death of Lesley]. In Selected Letters [but edited]. Very detailed, loving appraisal of the poems. Reference to Monica perhaps having Parkinsons]. Refers to his own illness and not being able to eat.

5 August 1985 A typescript dictated by Professor Larkin in his absence. Refers to having 'been rather in the wars lately.' Now back home convalescing 'I feel I shall never get better again.' 'My doctors assure me that I shall be a new man in a few month's time. Personally, I liked the old one, but he seems to have gone for ever.' 'Monica is looking after me valiantly'.

38 items

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| U DDD/9  | Typescript of speech made by Douglas Dunn at the opening of the Philip Larkin Suite in the Brynmor Jones Library, University of Hull<br>Includes the phrase 'Books can become permanent. Libraries protect them. Without libraries there would be no civilization.'<br>1 item                | 2 Dec 1987 |
| U DDD/10 | Terry Street exhibition<br>Printed guide to the Terry Street exhibition, held at the Ferens Art Gallery 16 Nov-21 Dec 1996. The exhibition featured photographs by Robert Whitaker and poems by Douglas Dunn. There is an annotated dedication to Janet Whitehead by Douglas Dunn.<br>1 item | 1996       |