

U DP214 Letters from Philip Larkin and Stevie Smith 1955-1983
to Anthony and Ann Thwaite,
with related material

Biographical Background:

Anthony Simon Thwaite was born in Chester in 1930 and spent the years of the Second World War with an aunt in Washington DC where he went to school. On his return he was boarded at Kingswood School, Bath, before studying at Christ Church Oxford. While there he edited *Isis* and co-edited *Trio* and *Oxford Poetry* 1954. From 1955 to 1957 he was Visiting Lecturer in English Literature at Tokyo University. On his return to England he became a producer of features for the BBC Third Programme and then from 1962 to 1965 was literary editor of the *Listener*. From 1965 to 1967 he was Assistant Professor of English at the University of Libya, Benghazi. Later he became editor of *The New Statesman*, co-editor of *Encounter* and Director of Andre Deutsch Ltd. He had a sabbatical year as writer in residence at the University of East Anglia in 1972.

Thwaite published his first book of poems with the Fantasy Press in 1953 and his second 'Home Truths' with the Marvell Press two years after Philip Larkin's 'The Less Deceived' in 1957. A collected edition of his poetry was published in 2007 and 'Late Poems' in 2010. He is literary executor of the estate of Philip Larkin, for whom he produced 'Larkin at Sixty' (1982), later editing 'The Collected Poems' (1988) 'Selected Letters' (1992), 'Further Requirements' (2002) and 'Letters to Monica' (2011).

Ann Thwaite was born on 4 October 1932 In London. She spent the Second World War in New Zealand and returned to England to study first at Queen Elizabeth's, Barnet and later at St Hilda's College, Oxford. Having travelled and lived all over the world, she now lives in Norfolk with her husband, poet Anthony Thwaite. She has published several books, with a focus on children's stories and biographies. Her well-known children's books include *The Camelthorn Papers* (1969), *Tracks* (1978) and *Gilbert and the Birthday Cake* (1987) and for a long time, she ran a library for the local children from her own home. Her biographical works include *AA Milne: His Life* (1990), *Edmund Gosse: A Literary Landscape* (1985), *Emily Tennyson, The Poet's Wife* (1996) and *Waiting for the Party* (1974) about Frances Hodgson Burnett. Her most recent work is a history of her own family entitled *Passageways: the story of a New Zealand family* (2009).

Philip Arthur Larkin was born in the Coventry suburb of Radford on 9 August 1922. Larkin began writing while still at school and became joint editor of his school magazine. He went on to study at St John's College Oxford, gaining a First Class Degree in English Literature. After university he took the job of librarian at the public library in Wellington, Shropshire, before moving to the library at University College, Leicester in 1946. Also in 1946, his novel *Jill* was published by the Fortune Press and his second novel *A Girl in Winter* appeared on the Faber list to good reviews.

In 1950 he was offered the job of sub-librarian at Queen's University, Belfast. It was whilst he was in Ireland that he had one of his most productive periods as a writer starting two unfinished novels and many of the poems which were to be included in *The Less Deceived*, such as 'Church Going'. He had a small collection, *XX Poems*, privately produced by a Belfast printer in an edition of 100 copies in 1951. Larkin's return to England in 1955 to his new appointment as librarian of Hull University coincided with the publication of his first

Hull History Centre: Letters from Philip Larkin and Stevie Smith to Anthony and Ann Thwaite collection of poems *The Less Deceived*, issued by the Marvell Press, of Hessle, near Hull, owned by George Hartley.

Throughout the 1950s and 1960s Larkin kept writing poetry. He constantly received requests for poems from editors of magazines and newspapers. Although he refused most of these requests, filing the letters away in refusal files, many of these people become good friends. The most intriguing aspect to emerge from the collection of magazines and journals which published poems by Larkin is their wide political spectrum. Larkin had no problem allowing poems to appear in the right wing *Spectator*, the left wing *New Statesman* or less mainstream journals such as the *New Humanist*. What is clear is that he liked to cultivate the 'poet of the people' impression which continued to grow with his increasing fame. Thus, he gave interviews, judged local poetry competitions as well as national ones, and answered most of the many fan letters he received.

In 1964 *The Whitsun Weddings* was published by Faber and Faber to excellent reviews. *High Windows* was published in 1975 and received universally favourable reviews and for the first time Larkin achieved success in the American market. 'Aubade', Larkin's last great poem, was published in the *Times Literary Supplement* in 1977.

Larkin received numerous awards, including the Queen's Gold Medal for Poetry (1965), seven honorary doctorates, a CBE (1975), the Companion of Literature (1978) and, most significantly, the Companion of Honour (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.

Stevie (Florence Margaret) Smith was born in Hull on 20 September 1902. She was the daughter of Charles Ward Smith and Ethel Rachel Spear. When Stevie Smith was three years old her father joined the Merchant Navy as a ship's purser and left home for a life at sea. Following her father's departure Stevie moved with her mother and sisters to Palmers Green in North London, to a house in Avondale Road, which was to be Stevie's home for most of her life. Later when her mother became ill her Aunt, Madge Spear, came to live with them. Aunt Maggie played an important role in raising Stevie and her older sister Molly following the death of their mother in 1918, and was called the 'darling Lion of Hull' by Stevie. She acquired her nickname as a young woman at the age of 19 or 20, whilst riding on one of the London commons with a companion who compared her to Steve Donoghue, a popular jockey of the time. 'Steve' became 'Stevie' and the name caught on among her friends.

Stevie was educated at Palmers Green High School, North London Collegiate for Girls and Mrs Hoster's Secretarial Training College. From 1923 to 1953 she worked as private secretary to Sir Neville Pearson, chairman of Newnes Publishing Company, and later Sir Frank Newnes. She retired from Newnes Publishing Company in 1953 following an attempted suicide.

The first work by Stevie Smith to be published was a collection of six poems, which appeared in the *New Statesman* in 1935. Later that year, she submitted further poems to the publisher Chatto and Windus but was advised to 'go away and write a novel'. This she did, writing at home and in her office, using the yellow paper used at Newnes Publishing Company for carbon copies. 'Novel on Yellow Paper or Work It Out For Yourself' was published in 1936

Hull History Centre: Letters from Philip Larkin and Stevie Smith to Anthony and Ann Thwaite (by Jonathan Cape rather than Chatto and Windus) and was an instant success. Her first volume of poetry, 'A Good Time Was Had By All', was published in 1937.

Stevie's poetry was at first less successful than her novels had been and during the late 1940s and early 1950s she was comparatively neglected as a poet. However, following the publication of her best known collection 'Not Waving But Drowning' in 1957 she became more widely known and throughout the 1960s was increasingly popular in Britain and America, as she gave poetry readings and broadcasts that gained her new friends and readers among a younger generation.

Stevie Smith was awarded the Cholmondeley Award for Poets in 1966 and the Queen's Gold Medal for poetry in 1969. Her work was often tinged with sadness and accompanied by whimsical line drawings. Her 'Selected Poems' came out in 1962 and won considerable attention from Philip Larkin who was responsible for assembling the archive at the Brynmor Jones Library. She went on living with her aunt, who died at the age of ninety six in 1968. She herself died in 1971 from a brain tumour.

Custodial history:

Purchased through Bertram Rota Ltd, June 2012, total price £8,420 including VAT where applicable. Purchased with the aid of grants of £3000 from the V&A Purchase Fund and £3000 from the Friends of the National Libraries

Description:

This small collection contains twelve letters and cards from Philip Larkin to Anthony Thwaite, fifteen letters and cards from Philip Larkin to Ann Thwaite and thirteen letters and cards from Stevie Smith to Ann and Anthony Thwaite, as well as other related materials including newspaper cuttings and a copy of Departure magazine (1955) containing poetry by Larkin and Anthony Thwaite. Larkin's letters to Anthony Thwaite mainly relate to Larkin's poetry as well as publications and programmes featuring his work, but also include Larkin's thoughts on his contemporary poets and his life in Hull. Larkin's letters to Ann Thwaite mainly relate to his visits to the Thwaites' and also include comments on his own work as well as Ann's and that of other poets. Stevie Smith's letters to Anthony and Ann predominantly relate to her own work and whether the Thwaites could use them in various publications, but also cover other topics such as Stevie's health and her holidays in Devon with her sister. There are also newspaper cuttings including an obituary for Stevie Smith, an extract from the Spectator of Larkin's poem 'Church Going' and a review of the book Stevie Smith: A Selection. Other items include a first edition copy of Selected Poems by Stevie Smith and three letters from Frances [Spalding], Stevie's biographer, to Anthony Thwaite.

Arrangement:

- U DP214/1 Letters from Philip Larkin to Anthony Thwaite, with related items
- U DP214/2 Letters from Philip Larkin to Ann Thwaite, with related items
- U DP214/3 Letters from Stevie Smith to Ann and Anthony Thwaite, with related items

Extent: 57 items

Hull History Centre: Letters from Philip Larkin and Stevie Smith to Anthony and Ann Thwaite

Related material:

Papers of Anthony Thwaite [U DP155]

Correspondence between Philip Larkin and Anthony Thwaite [U DP181]

Papers of Anthony Thwaite relating to his editorship of Larkin at Sixty [U DP188]

Papers of Anthony Thwaite as literary executor of Philip Larkin [U DAT]

Papers of Philip Larkin [U DPL]

Photographs of Philip Larkin [U DLV]

Papers of Florence Margaret Smith (Stevie Smith) [U DP156]

Stevie Smith Papers [U DP209]

Letters from Stevie Smith to Ladislav Horvat [U DP197]

Stevie Smith Collection, printed material [U SSC]

Access conditions: Access will be granted to any accredited reader

U DP214/1	Letters from Philip Larkin to Anthony Thwaite, with related items Includes twelve letters and cards from Philip Larkin to Anthony Thwaite which mainly relate to Larkin's poetry as well as publications and programmes featuring his work, but also include Larkin's thoughts on his contemporary poets and his life in Hull. Other items include a copy of Departure magazine (1955) and an extract from Spectator featuring poems by Larkin and Thwaite, as well as two postcards of Larkin portraits held at the National Portrait Gallery. 17 items	1955-1993
U DP214/1/1	Typed airmail letter from Philip Larkin to Anthony Thwaite Thanking Thwaite for his comments on Larkin's recent book of poems and his thoughts on living in Hull 1 item	21 Apr 1956
U DP214/1/2	Handwritten postcard from Philip Larkin to Anthony Thwaite Christmas Greetings 1 item	Dec 1958

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U DP214/1/3	<p>Typed letter from Philip Larkin to Anthony Thwaite Asking for advice to give to a student called Galloway who is being interviewed for a trainee studio manager post at the BBC, where Anthony works, and if Anthony is writing any poetry 1 item</p>	28 Feb 1959
U DP214/1/4	<p>Typed letter from Philip Larkin to Anthony Thwaite Regarding enquiry relating to a student called Galloway (see U DP214/3); congratulations on their new baby; enquiry about the publication of Thwaite's modern poetry book; thoughts on the poetry of Elizabeth Jennings and mention of a new work by Larkin being published by George Hartley 1 item</p>	3 Mar 1959
U DP214/1/5	<p>Typed letter from Philip Larkin to Anthony Thwaite Relates to the use of The Whitsun Weddings in a [program] by the BBC and how Larkin would like it to be read 1 item</p>	17 Mar 1959
U DP214/1/6	<p>Handwritten postcard from Philip Larkin to Anthony Thwaite Relates to a deadline for contributions to a [BBC] programme and Larkin's hopes that a new poem of his will be ready in time. 1 item</p>	8 May 1960
U DP214/1/7	<p>Typed letter from Philip Larkin to Anthony Thwaite Relates to his review of the 'Owen proofs' and Thwaite's comments on Larkin's most recent work 1 item</p>	5 Oct 1963
U DP214/1/8	<p>Typed letter from Philip Larkin to Anthony Thwaite Relates to Thwaite's comments on 'To The Sea', Larkin's thoughts on his book All That Jazz to be published shortly, Larkin's work on the 'Oxford Book' and comments on Douglas Dunn 1 item</p>	13 Jan 1970
U DP214/1/9	<p>Handwritten letter from Philip Larkin to Anthony Thwaite Relates to Thwaite's comments on poetry recently sent to him by Larkin, congratulations on Selected Thwaite and suggestions to include work from 'New Confessions', brief comments about Larkin's recent holidays and Larkin's thoughts on 'ABC of English Verse'. 1 item</p>	23 Aug 1975
U DP214/1/10	<p>Signed Christmas Card from Philip Larkin 1 item</p>	c. 1977

U DP214/1/11	<p>Typed letter from Philip Larkin to Anthony Thwaite Relates to the death of Lesley Dunn, comments on other writers including Martin, Levin and Leavis, arrangements to look at photographs for a [publication of Thwaite's] and Larkin's thoughts on the government's plans for universities. 1 item</p>	13 Mar 1981
U DP214/1/12	<p>Typed letter from Philip Larkin to Anthony Thwaite Relates to arrangements regarding Larkin's Will and his choice of executors; comments on the work of Jonathan [?] and his [death]; comments about his and Monica's health; a possible recording of his poetry and comments on his fan letters. 1 item</p>	6 Feb 1985
U DP214/1/13	<p>Postcards and newspaper cutting relating to Philip Larkin Includes two postcards of Larkin portraits held at the National Portrait Gallery and a cutting, with photocopy, from the Spectator (18 Nov 1955) of 'Church Going' by Philip Larkin and 'A Book of Heroes' by Anthony Thwaite with other poems. 4 items</p>	1955- c.1993
U DP214/1/14	<p>Departure: A Magazine of Literature and the Arts, Vol. 3 No. 7 Includes 'Always Too Eager...' by Philip Larkin and 'The Dream' by Anthony Thwaite 1 item</p>	1955
U DP214/2	<p>Letters from Philip Larkin to Ann Thwaite, with related items Includes fifteen letters from Philip Larkin to Ann Thwaite which mainly relate to his visits to the Thwaites' and also include comments on his own work as well as Ann's and that of other poets. U DP214/2/16 contains copies of two photographs originally enclosed in Larkin's letter found at U DP214/2/9. 20 items</p>	1972-2012
U DP214/2/1	<p>Signed Christmas Card from Philip Larkin to Ann Thwaite Congratulations on 'Encounter' 1 item</p>	1972

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U DP214/2/2	Handwritten letter from Philip Larkin to Ann Thwaite Thanks for entertaining him during his recent visit and comments about his possible purchases for the [Brynmor Jones Library] 1 item	7 Dec 1972
U DP214/2/3	Typed postcard from Philip Larkin to Ann Thwaite Includes extract from 'Liaison' newsletter from the Library Association 'Record' about Ann Thwaite's opening of her personal library to be used by the local children 1 item	1974
U DP214/2/4	Handwritten card from Philip Larkin to Ann Thwaite Thanking her for her hospitality during a recent visit, mention of a new edition of High Windows and brief comments on M[artin] Amis' new work. 1 item	21 Sep 1974
U DP214/2/5	Handwritten letter from Philip Larkin to Ann Thwaite Comments on Anthony Thwaite's recent appearance on a programme with Kingsley [Amis] and others, mention of Larkin's new car and comments about [Gosse records] relating to Thomas Hardy and his work. 1 item	10 Feb 1978
U DP214/2/6	Handwritten letter from Philip Larkin to Ann Thwaite Relates to his enjoyment of a recent visit to the Thwaites' and comments about his car troubles. 1 item	6 Jun 1978
U DP214/2/7	Handwritten postcard from Philip Larkin to Ann Thwaite Thanks for a photograph of his last visit and hopes to visit again soon. 1 item	18 Sep 1978
U DP214/2/8	Handwritten letter from Philip Larkin to Ann Thwaite Relates to his opinions on Ann's recent book The Camelthorn Papers, thanks for his recent visit and mention of Andrew Motion making a visit to the Thwaites. 1 item	6 Oct 1979
U DP214/2/9	Handwritten letter from Philip Larkin to Ann Thwaite Comments on photos Larkin took whilst visiting the Thwaites (see U DP214/2/16), directions to his house on Newland Park with map and brief comments about an interview with M. Gross. 2 items	17 Nov 1979

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U DP214/2/10	Handwritten letter from Philip Larkin to Ann Thwaite Relates to a poem he enclosed (now missing) and some photos he has received from Ann. 1 item	9 Feb 1980
U DP214/2/11	Handwritten letter from Philip Larkin to Ann Thwaite Regrets that he will be unable to attend Anthony's birthday party and the reasons why. Access will be granted to any accredited reader 1 item	18 May 1980
U DP214/2/12	Typed letter from Philip Larkin to Ann Thwaite Relates to possibly sponsoring her for a grant provided by the [Arts Council] and brief mention of her biography of Gosse. 1 item	18 Jul 1980
U DP214/2/13	Handwritten letter from Philip Larkin to Ann Thwaite Relates to his opinions on a recent article on him in the Guardian as well as two TV programmes and a book, comments on letters offering him [honorary titles] and brief mention of work on his house. 1 item	10 Jun 1982
U DP214/2/14	Handwritten letter from Philip Larkin to Ann Thwaite Congratulations to Ann on finishing her biography of Gosse and his opinions on the start of the new term. 1 item	2 Oct 1982
U DP214/2/15	Handwritten letter from Philip Larkin to Ann Thwaite Relates to Monica's health, his fears for the future and comments on the recent Cambridge Guide to English Literature. 1 item	17 Apr 1983
U DP214/2/16	Handwritten card from Ann Thwaite to Judy Burg, Hull University Archivist Includes copies of two photographs originally enclosed in Larkin's letter at U DP214/2/9 and relates to the letters to be auctioned which now constitute this collection 3 items	18 Mar 2012
U DP214/2/17	Typed letter from Philip Larkin to Mrs H.M. Harrop Thanks for her donation to the Tennyson Appeal 1 item	17 Jul 1980

U DP214/3	<p>Letters from Stevie Smith to Ann and Anthony Thwaite, with related items Includes thirteen letters from Stevie Smith to Anthony and Ann Thwaite which predominantly relate to her own work and whether the Thwaites' could use them in various publications, but also cover other topics such as Stevie's health and her holidays in Devon with her sister. There are also newspaper cuttings including an obituary for Stevie Smith and a review of the book Stevie Smith: A Selection as well as a first edition copy of Selected Poems by Stevie Smith and three letters from Frances [Spalding], Stevie's biographer, to Anthony Thwaite. 20 items</p>	1962-1986
U DP214/3/1	<p>Handwritten postcard from Stevie Smith to Ann and Anthony Thwaite Christmas greetings, comments on her sister Molly's health and a recent accident involving [her] cat. 1 item</p>	n.d.
U DP214/3/2	<p>Handwritten letter from Stevie Smith to [Anthony] Thwaite Thanking him for his review of [The Frog Prince] and her opinions on being told that she is 'eccentric' 1 item</p>	28 Nov 1962
U DP214/3/3	<p>Typed letter, with annotations, from Stevie Smith to Ann Thwaite Relates to her opinions on cats and cat poems and suggests Ann looks through Selected Poems and 'The Frog Prince' for poems about children 1 item</p>	22 May 1968
U DP214/3/4	<p>Handwritten letter from Stevie Smith to Ann Thwaite Relates to a possible article she is to write for Ann about her childhood (see U DP214/3/5-6) and brief mention of her stay in hospital when she was eight 1 item</p>	2 Jun 1968
U DP214/3/5	<p>Handwritten letter from Stevie Smith to Ann Thwaite Originally enclosed (now missing) a copy of an article about her childhood (see U DP214/3/4, 6) and some poems for Anthony to consider for publication in the [New Statesman]. 1 item</p>	9 Jul 1968

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U DP214/3/6	<p>Typed letter, with annotations, from Stevie Smith to Ann Thwaite</p> <p>Thanks for publishing her work in Ann's 'Annual', including the poems 'Our Doggy' and 'My Tortoise' and comments on the article about her childhood (see U DP/214/4-5).</p> <p>1 item</p>	18 Jul 1968
U DP214/3/7	<p>Handwritten letter from Stevie Smith to Anthony Thwaite</p> <p>Includes a typed draft of her poem 'Grave by a Holm-oak' with annotations and questions regarding possible changes to the poem</p> <p>1 item</p>	c. 1969
U DP214/3/8	<p>Typed letter from Stevie Smith to Anthony Thwaite</p> <p>Relates to her receiving the Queen's Gold Medal for Poetry</p> <p>1 item</p>	1969
U DP214/3/9	<p>Typed letter from Stevie Smith to Anthony Thwaite</p> <p>Relates to a recent, unnamed poem</p> <p>1 item</p>	28 Apr 1969
U DP214/3/10	<p>Handwritten letter from Stevie Smith to Anthony Thwaite</p> <p>Relates to a 'story-poem' originally published in her novel The Holiday and whether Anthony would like to [publish] it</p> <p>1 item</p>	3 May 1969
U DP214/3/11	<p>Typed letter from Stevie Smith to Anthony Thwaite</p> <p>Includes the poem 'Soupir d'Angleterre' and her opinions on it, and brief comments on her holiday in Devon</p> <p>1 item</p>	25 Jul 1969
U DP214/3/12	<p>Handwritten letter from Stevie Smith to Anthony Thwaite</p> <p>Thanks for the cheque for use of her poems and details of her disagreement with [Batsford publishers] about her payment for a children's anthology she is producing for them</p> <p>1 item</p>	8 Aug 1969
U DP214/3/13	<p>Handwritten letter from Stevie Smith to Anthony Thwaite</p> <p>Relates to recent unnamed poems, comments on 'Scorpion' and the poem 'The Stroke'</p> <p>1 item</p>	17 Jan 1971
U DP214/3/14	<p>Handwritten letter, heavily annotated, from Stevie Smith to Anthony Thwaite</p> <p>Relates to her health, her stay in hospital and her poem 'Come, Death'</p> <p>1 item</p>	17 Jan 1971

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| U DP214/3/15 | Signed first edition of Selected Poems by Stevie Smith
Signed to Anthony and Ann Thwaite
1 item | 4 Jul 1970 |
| U DP214/3/16 | Newspaper cuttings relating to Stevie Smith
Includes an obituary (7 Mar 1971) and a review of Stevie Smith: A Selection
2 items | 1971 - [1983] |
| U DP214/3/17 | Handwritten letter and postcards from Frances [Spalding], biographer of Stevie Smith, to Anthony Thwaite
Thanks to Anthony for giving her copies of Stevie's letters (see U DP214/3), comments on poet Fiona Pitt-Kethley, mention of American universities selling their Stevie Smith collections and thanks for the material relating to Stevie's poems featured in 'The Listener'.
3 items | 9 Jun –
9 Oct 1986 |