

**U DP222 Letters from Philip Larkin to Professor Raymond (Ray) Brett,
with Larkin's application for the post of University Librarian at the
University of Hull, 1954-1984**

Accession number: 2024/06

Biographical Background: Raymond Laurence Brett was born in Bristol on 10 January 1917. Following wartime service at the Admiralty he spent several years as a lecturer at the University of Bristol, before being appointed to the G F Grant Chair of English at the University of Hull in 1952. He remained at Hull until his retirement in 1982.

Brett and Larkin were initially colleagues and soon friends. Brett supported Larkin through the internal politics of university committees, as well as through the building of the new Brynmor Jones Library building (obituary by Alun R. Jones in About Larkin, the newsletter of the Philip Larkin Society, no. 3. (1997), pp.26-27 <https://philiplarkin.com/wp-content/uploads/2022/08/About-Larkin-03.pdf>). The letters in this collection, although few in number and mainly short, show the ease and friendship between the two men, as well as Larkin's sense of humour.

Ray Brett died on 6 December 1996.

For a full biography of Philip Larkin please see U DPL.

Custodial history: The letters were in the possession of Professor Raymond Brett until his death, when they passed into the ownership of his family. They were purchased in 2024 from Second Story Books, Washington DC, USA, with support from the Friends of the National Libraries and the Arts Council England/V&A Purchase Grant Fund (www.vam.ac.uk/purchasegrantfund).

Description: This small collection comprises letters written by Philip Larkin to Professor Raymond Brett, alongside Larkin's original application for the post of University Librarian at the University of Hull. Professor Brett was chair of the Library Committee at the time.

Extent: 1 file

Related material: U DPL Papers of Philip Arthur Larkin

Access conditions: Access will be granted to any accredited reader

Copyright: Copyright is held by the Larkin Estate

Language: English

U DP222/1	Application letter from Philip Larkin for the post of University Librarian at the University of Hull Professor Brett was the Chair of the Library Committee at the time of Larkin's application. 1 item	19 Oct 1954
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Hull History Centre: U DP222 Letters from Philip Larkin to Professor Raymond Brett

U DP222/2	Handwritten letter from Philip Larkin to Ray Brett Thanking him for his congratulations on "this medal business" [the award of the Queen's Gold Medal for Poetry]. 1 item	8 May 1965
U DP222/3	Typescript letter from Philip Larkin to Ray Brett Written on University of Hull stationery. Thanking him for sending a copy of "Poems of Faith and Doubt" and inviting him to sign the staff collection copy. 1 item	31 May 1965
U DP222/4	Typescript letter from Philip Larkin to Ray Brett Thanking him for sending a copy of "Theology", and for the "kind words" about himself. 1 item	2 Feb 1966
U DP222/5	Handwritten postcard from Philip Larkin to Ray Brett Date as postmark. Postcard sent from the Isle of Jura - "It's certainly the loneliest spot I've struck... The gulls sometimes recall a meeting of Senate, though." 1 item	[2 Sep 1971]
U DP222/6	Handwritten letter from Philip Larkin to Ray and Kitty Brett Thanks for the card; university news; saw [Cecil] Day Lewis in London. 1 item	22 Nov 1971
U DP222/7	Typescript letter from Philip Larkin to Ray Brett End of "'the Golden Age of Brynmor Jones'" and Jones's impact on the University Library. 1 item	5 Apr 1972
U DP222/8	Handwritten letter from Philip Larkin to Ray Brett Thanks for letter which "did much to mitigate the horrors of my 50th birthday"; how long he has lived in Hull; Brett's "cheerful friendship". 1 item	9 Aug 1972
U DP222/9	Typescript memo from Philip Larkin to Ray Brett, headed "University Film" University film; the poem "Here". 1 item	30 Jan 1975
U DP222/10	Handwritten letter from Philip Larkin to Ray Brett Thanks for his letter about "this unexpected compliment" [Larkin's award of the CBE]. 1 item	16 Jun 1975

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U DP222/11	Typescript letter from Philip Larkin to Ray Brett Thanks for the second edition of "Introduction to English Studies". 1 item	18 May 1976
U DP222/12	Typescript letter from Philip Larkin to Ray Brett Thanks for sending a copy of "William Hazlitt". 1 item	15 Nov 1977
U DP222/13	Handwritten letter from Philip Larkin to Ray Brett Thanks for his sympathy [following the death of Larkin's mother] - "it's just the thought of someone's being wiped out of existence for ever that is so hard to comprehend". 1 item	25 Nov 1977
U DP222/14	Typescript memo from Philip Larkin to Ray Brett Thanks for sending a copy of his [Andrew] Marvell article. 1 item	24 Jan 1979
U DP222/15	Handwritten letter from Philip Larkin to Ray Brett With envelope. Monica's vision no longer impaired; visit to the Tennyson; University very quiet. 2 items	13 Aug 1983
U DP222/16	Handwritten letter from Philip Larkin to Ray and Kitty Brett Thanks for lunch; has enclosed a gift; Oxford Book of 20th Century English Verse sold 3671 copies last year. 1 item	30 Aug 1983
U DP222/17	Handwritten letter from Philip Larkin to Ray Brett With envelope. Thanks for letter about the Oxford D.Litt; the Vice Chancellor's visit to the University Library; Monica is "stable but not fit". 2 items	5 Jan 1984
U DP222/18	Handwritten letter from Philip Larkin to Ray Brett With envelope. Thanks for "writing so kindly" [following the publication of Larkin's "Required Writing: Miscellaneous Pieces 1955-1982"]- "It is really quite absurd that a ragbag of fugitive scribblings should get all this attention"; just had three weeks off work with a "superficial thrombosis"; local shopping. 2 items	21 Feb 1984

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U DP222/19	Handwritten letter from Philip Larkin to Ray Brett With envelope. Hospitals; health; reading Coleridge; death of John Betjeman - "I really think we have lost a remarkable person". 2 items	26 May 1984
U DP222/20	Two envelopes Both labelled "Professor R L Brett, Dept. of English". It has not been possible to match the envelopes to their former contents. 2 items	[1970s-1980s]