

**U DX353**

**Papers of Brenda Little  
relating to Philip Larkin**

**1957-1994**

**Biographical Background:**

**Brenda Little** was born on 11 October 1944 in Battersea. She became a librarian at Ryde Library on the Isle of Wight and died in Ryde in July 2002. It is unclear how she came to know Philip Larkin.

**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 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.

**Custodial history:**

Donated by John Richardson, University of Edinburgh in 2005

**Description:**

This small collection contains various types of documents relating to Philip Larkin. It includes several photographs of Larkin, as well as copies of letters sent between Brenda Little and Larkin. Other items include letters between Brenda and notable literary figures such as Andrew Motion, newspaper obituaries on Larkin and other newspaper articles about Larkin.

**Arrangement:**

U DX353/1	Letter and other papers
U DX353/2	Photographs
U DX353/3	Obituaries and Newspaper Clippings

**Extent:** 30 items & 2 files

**Related material:**

Correspondence with numerous friends, fellow poets, colleagues etc. is at  
Papers of Philip Larkin [U DPL]  
Photographs of Philip Larkin [U DLV]  
Literary Manuscripts donated by Philip Larkin [U DX73]  
Papers of Andrew Motion [U DP165]  
Papers of Anthony Simon Thwaite [U DP155]  
Archives of the University of Hull Brynmor Jones Library [U LIB]  
Papers of the Larkin Family [U DLN]  
Papers of Jean Hartley [U DJE]  
Philip Larkin book collection [P/L]  
Letters from Philip Larkin to James Sutton [U DP174]  
Letters from James Sutton to Philip Larkin [U DP182]

Other repositories:

Letters from Monica Jones to Philip Larkin, Bodleian Library: Department of Western Manuscripts

**Access conditions:** Access will be granted to any accredited reader

**Copyright:** All photographs taken by University of Hull Photographic and Copy Service

<b>U DX353/1</b>	<b>Letters and other papers</b> <b>This series includes various letters from and about Philip Larkin. There are two letters written from Philip Larkin to Brenda Little as well as letters from Larkin's associates, after his death, to Brenda. Correspondents include Charles Monteith, Andrew Motion, Peter Levi, Rev. Francis Brown, Nigel Rees and Harry Chambers.</b> <b>15 items</b>	<b>1985-1994</b>
U DX353/1/1	Letter Typed letter to Brenda Little from Philip Larkin. Thanks Brenda for her comments on his poetry and the Faber cassette, comments that he did not want the Laureateship and includes a section about the fear of death. 4 items	16 Jan 1985
U DX353/1/2	Poem Handwritten poem by Brenda Little entitled 'One Man's Meat' 1 item	Mar 1985
U DX353/1/3	Letter Typed letter to Brenda Little from Philip Larkin. Praises her poem 'One Man's Meat' and says he will not be writing a thirtieth anniversary poem about taking the office of Librarian. 4 items	21 Mar 1985
U DX353/1/4	Letter Typed letter to Brenda Little from Charles Monteith (Faber and Faber publishers). Thanks her for her letter about Philip Larkin's death and mentions a Memorial Service is to happen in early February. 1 item	17 Dec 1985
U DX353/1/6	Copy of Order of Service Typed letter to Brenda Little from the RSPCA, thanking her for her donation of £25.00 in Philip Larkin's memory. 1 item	30 Dec 1985
U DX353/1/7	Letter Copy of the Order of Service in Memory of Philip Arthur Larkin held at Westminster Abbey on 14th Feb 1986. Includes a ticket and a letter guaranteeing her a ticket from Matthew Arnold on behalf of the Chapter Clerk of Westminster Abbey. 1 item	14 Feb 1986

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U DX353/1/8	Letter Typed letter to Brenda Little from Andrew Motion. Thanks her for her praise of his poem about Larkin and they're feelings about his death. Contains a copy of his poem in Memoriam to Philip Larkin 'This is Your Subject Speaking' as produced in the [Times Literary Supplement] on 7 Feb 1986. 1 item	20 Feb 1986
U DX353/1/9	Letter Handwritten letter to Brenda Little from Charles Monteith. Says that there are arrangements to erect a gravestone on Larkin's grave. 1 item	19 Jul 1986
U DX353/1/10	Card Handwritten letter to Brenda Little from Rev. Francis Bown. Thanks her for her letter about Philip Larkin and asks whether she read the obituary in the Spectator. Includes the Bulletin from the Parish Church of St Stephen the Martyr, Spring Bank, Hull (Jan 1986) with a section about Philip Larkin's death, as well as a small newspaper snippet from the Sunday Telegraph about the awarding of the commission to write the authorised biography of Philip Larkin to Andrew Motion. 1 item	19 Jul 1986
U DX353/1/11	Letter Card thanking Brenda for her donation to the Philip Larkin Memorial Appeal Fund 1 item	27 Nov 1986
U DX353/1/12	Letter Typed letter to Brenda Little from Harry Chambers (Peterloo Poets), about her order of 'An Enormous Yes' 1 item	5 Feb 1988
U DX353/1/13	Circular Typed circular from Maeve Brennan (Friends of the Bynmor Jones Library), asking for help to purchase the collection of letters from Philip Larkin to James B. Sutton to whom the novel Jill was dedicated. 1 item	31 May 1988
U DX353/1/14	Card Thank you card to Brenda Little for giving a talk for Yr 12s and 13s, in Ryde on the Isle of Wight, about Philip Larkin and his work. Includes a snippet about her talk from the school magazine. 1 item	3 Apr 1992

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U DX353/1/15	Letter Handwritten letter to Brenda Little from Nigel Rees. Thanks her for her praise of his book 'Epitaphs', mentions that Chichester Cathedral now 'make rather a thing of the Arundel tomb because of his poem' and comments that he has not heard of a lobby to get Larkin into Poets' Corner. 1 item	22 Jun 1994
U DX353/2	<b>Photographs</b> <b>This series includes both black and white and colour photographs of Philip Larkin and others. It includes a library staff photograph from 1957 and photographs of Larkin inspecting the building work for the new extension of the Brynmor Jones Library in 1958.</b> <b>9 items</b>	<b>1957-[1980s]</b>
U DX353/2/1	Photograph Black and white photograph of Philip Larkin and his colleagues. The first Library staff photograph, taken by Larkin with a delayed action camera. 1 item	1957
U DX353/2/2	Photograph Black and white photograph of Philip Larkin inspecting the building works for the new extension to the Brynmor Jones Library. 1 item	Aug 1958
U DX353/2/3	Photograph Black and white photograph of Philip Larkin inspecting the building works for the new extension to the Brynmor Jones Library. 1 item	Jun 1958
U DX353/2/4	Photograph Black and white photograph of Philip Larkin 'mopping' his brow and holding a copy of 'Sweating System Part 1' ordered by the House of Commons to be printed 17 Aug 1889, during the move into the new library. 1 item	c. Sep 1959
U DX353/2/5	Photograph Colour photograph of Philip Larkin in front of a bookcase 2 items	c. 1980s

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U DX353/2/6	<p>Photograph</p> <p>Colour photograph of Philip Larkin and a woman [Brenda Moon] with an early model computer.</p> <p>1 item</p>	c. 1980s
U DX353/2/7	<p>Photograph</p> <p>Colour photograph of Philip Larkin giving a speech/reading.</p> <p>1 item</p>	c. 1980s
U DX353/2/8	<p>Photograph</p> <p>Colour photograph portrait of Philip Larkin at a desk.</p> <p>1 item</p>	c. 1980s
<b>U DX353/3</b>	<p><b>Obituaries and Newspaper clippings</b></p> <p><b>Includes obituaries and other newspaper clippings relating to Philip Larkin from various newspapers including The Times Literary Supplement, The Daily Telegraph, The Guardian, The Times and The Spectator.</b></p> <p><b>2 files</b></p>	<b>1985-c.1993</b>
U DX353/3/1	<p>Obituaries</p> <p>The obituaries include snippets from the Times Literary Supplement, The Daily Telegraph, The Guardian, The Times and The Spectator. Some of the obituaries are stuck onto pages with other newspaper clippings relating to Philip Larkin.</p> <p>1 file</p>	3 - 7 Dec 1985
U DX353/3/2	<p>Newspaper clippings</p> <p>Includes various newspaper clippings relating to Philip Larkin from newspapers and magazines such as The Times Literary Supplement, The Daily Telegraph, The Guardian, The Times, The Spectator, The Listener, The Observer and The Independent. Includes articles written by people who knew Larkin, such as Kinglsey Amis and Jean Hartley; articles and reviews relating to the publishing of Philip Larkin's 'Collected Poems' edited by Anthony Thwaite; clippings relating to his Will and the possible destruction of his MSS, as well as articles relating to Larkin's reputation and Andrew Motion's biography of Larkin.</p> <p>1 file</p>	1986-c.1993