Ruth Bowman[[edit](https://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Relationships_that_influenced_Philip_Larkin&action=edit&section=2)]

Ruth Bowman was a schoolgirl living in Wellington when Larkin moved there in 1943 to become librarian at the public library. They met the following year when she came into the library. She was 16, an academically minded schoolgirl, and the person with whom Larkin had his first sexual encounter – a year later – when he visited her at [King's College London](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/King%27s_College_London).[5] Their relationship continued and in 1948 they became engaged. The engagement was broken in 1950, shortly before Larkin moved to Northern Ireland. These events are referred to sardonically in the poem "Wild Oats", written in the early 1960s.[1]

Monica Jones[[edit](https://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Relationships_that_influenced_Philip_Larkin&action=edit&section=3)]

Larkin's long and extremely close relationship with Monica Jones dated from the autumn of 1946, when they met at [Leicester University College](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Leicester_University). Jones had been appointed as an assistant lecturer in English in January 1946 and Larkin arrived in September, as an assistant librarian. "Both had been at Oxford (he at [St John's](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/St_John%27s_College,_Oxford), she at [St Hugh's](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/St_Hugh%27s_College,_Oxford)), between 1940 and 1943, but had not met. Both had first class degrees in English. They had been born in the same year, 1922, and came from rather similar provincial middle-class backgrounds."[[*citation needed*](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wikipedia:Citation_needed)] For the first few years of the relationship, Larkin was involved with Ruth Bowman, but when Bowman broke off the engagement, "Monica quickly became central to Larkin's attention."[[*citation needed*](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wikipedia:Citation_needed)] Jones and Larkin had a holiday cottage at [Haydon Bridge](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Haydon_Bridge) where they spent many summers together. He left the bulk of his estate to her when he died in 1985.[6] She died on 15 February 2001.

Monica Jones was born Margaret Monica Beale Jones on 7 May 1922 in [Llanelli](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Llanelli), [South Wales](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/South_Wales).[7] She moved with her family to [Stourport-on-Severn](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Stourport-on-Severn), Worcestershire when aged seven. Educated at Kidderminster High School for Girls, she won a scholarship to study English at [Oxford University](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Oxford_University), a period of her life which was immensely influential to her; she acquired her distinctive accent and flamboyant dress sense whilst studying there.[6]

Jones taught at Leicester University from 1946 until 1981 when she retired. She never published anything during her academic career, she "regarded publishing as a bit showy", though she was noted for "the panache of her lecturing, in which, for example, she would wear a Scottish tartan when talking about [*Macbeth*](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Macbeth_(play))*.* "[8] Her literary enthusiasms, (not entirely shared by Larkin), included [Walter Scott](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Walter_Scott), [Jane Austen](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Jane_Austen) and [George Crabbe](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/George_Crabbe). They shared enthusiasm for [Thomas Hardy](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Thomas_Hardy) and [Barbara Pym](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Barbara_Pym), and swapped scornful opinions of [C. P. Snow](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/C._P._Snow), [Pamela Hansford Johnson](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pamela_Hansford_Johnson), [William Cooper](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/William_Cooper_(novelist)), and others.[9] They shared a sympathy with animals, both of them deplored vivisection and [myxomatosis](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Myxomatosis), were fond of [Beatrix Potter](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Beatrix_Potter)'s creations, and of real creatures, in particular cats and rabbits, though Monica Jones had a fear of hens, and of some other birds. Larkin's letters to Jones were sometimes "embellished with [his] skilful sketches", Jones as a rabbit ("Dearest bun"), himself as a seal.

Following a fall downstairs in October 1982 in her Haydon Bridge cottage she went into Hexham Hospital, and then convalesced with Larkin in his house in Hull. She returned to Haydon Bridge when recovered, but at Easter 1983 she was stricken with [shingles](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Shingles) and on leaving hospital this time Larkin, "offered her shelter and care in his house in [Newland Park](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Newland_Park), Hull." Following his death, in December 1985, "Monica hardly left that house in Hull until her own death in February 2001."[10]

She is said to be the model for the character of Margaret Peel, Jim Dixon's [manipulative](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Psychological_manipulation) on-again-off-again girlfriend, in [Kingsley Amis](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Kingsley_Amis)'s novel [*Lucky Jim*](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Lucky_Jim) (1954).[7] Monica Jones may also be the inspiration for the character Elvira Jones in [Robert Conquest](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Robert_Conquest)'s 1955 novel *A World of Difference*.[[*citation needed*](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wikipedia:Citation_needed)] The book contains other "Larkinesque" references, including a spaceship named after the poet. She has also been suggested as the model for Viola Masefield in [Malcolm Bradbury](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Malcolm_Bradbury)'s first novel, *Eating People is Wrong*.[7]

As with Larkin and Maeve Brennan, Monica Jones was buried in Cottingham Cemetery near Hull. Her white headstone is of identical design to the one situated at Larkin's grave.

Winifred Arnott[[edit](https://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Relationships_that_influenced_Philip_Larkin&action=edit&section=4)]

Winifred Arnott was a young colleague of Larkin's at Queen's University, Belfast. They became close friends but she soon became engaged to her boyfriend, and withdrew from the friendship to a degree. Larkin wrote the poem "Lines on Young Lady's Photograph Album" about her, and also "Maiden Name". Both appeared in Larkin's 1955 collection [*The Less Deceived*](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Less_Deceived).[1]

Patsy Strang[[edit](https://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Relationships_that_influenced_Philip_Larkin&action=edit&section=5)]

Larkin knew Patricia Avis Strang Murphy (1928–1977) during the 1950s, and wrote her his first love letters.[11][12] At the time, she was married to Colin Strang, a friend of Larkin's and a lecturer in the Philosophy Department at [Queen's University, Belfast](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Queen%27s_University,_Belfast),[13] where Larkin was Under-Librarian.[14] She became pregnant by Larkin, but miscarried.[13] As Patricia Avis, she is the author of *Playing the Harlot* (1996, Virago), a *roman à clef*; the character of Rollo Jute is thought to have been inspired by Larkin.

Strang discovered and read some of Larkin's sexual diaries.[15] It is possible that Larkin's poem "[Reference Back](https://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Reference_Back&action=edit&redlink=1)", from the collection [*The Whitsun Weddings*](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Whitsun_Weddings), addresses Patsy Strang.[16] Strang would later marry the poet [Richard Murphy](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Richard_Murphy_(poet)).[17]

Maeve Brennan[[edit](https://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Relationships_that_influenced_Philip_Larkin&action=edit&section=6)]

Maeve Brennan (27 September 1929 – 11 June 2003)[18] was a colleague of Larkin's at Hull University. They first met in 1955 when he moved from Belfast to Hull, but it was in 1960, when Larkin coached her for a Library Association exam, that their relationship became meaningful and romantic. This happened despite Larkin's deep and by then long-standing relationship with Monica Jones. The emotional attachment between the two lasted for eighteen years.[19] Larkin's longest poem, the unfinished "The Dance" was about an evening spent with Brennan. The poem "Broadcast" was also written about her.[1] As with Larkin himself and Monica Jones, Maeve Brennan was also buried in Cottingham Cemetery. Her grave is situated approximately 20 metres from Monica Jones.

Betty Mackereth[[edit](https://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Relationships_that_influenced_Philip_Larkin&action=edit&section=7)]

Betty Mackereth was Larkin's secretary for most of his time at Hull University, joining the staff in that role in 1957.[20] After his death it was she who, on his wishes, destroyed his diaries, feeding them sheet by sheet into a university shredder. They began an affair in 1975, when they were both in their fifties.[21] She knew about both Monica Jones and Maeve Brennan, and also about his large collection of pornography. In 2002 a poem written to her, "We Met at the End of the Party", was publicised by her, prompted by the discovery of a notebook which contained its opening lines.[22] As depicted in Larkin's little drawings sometimes added to letters Mackereth appeared as a whale – Monica Jones was a rabbit and Maeve Brennan a mouse.