# Larkin: New Eyes Each Year

# Exhibition Plan – DRAFT AF 4nd June 2017

**Overall theme** – a winding path down a small suburban town garden where the fences, hedges and shrubberies are made from library materials that are assembled and parted to reveal the unexpected in peeps and bursts.

We use shelves, trollies and file drawers wherever possible. Some interior fittings of shelves will have to be adapted to hand textiles etc.

The aesthetics of labelling and display echo library systems but is clearly disrupted and distorted, as if the messy truth cannot be contained by categorization.

Experience: Immersive and contradictory. Visitors are guided from the known to the unknown, from public to private, from light to dark. Just as Larkin sought fascination in the mundane, so should we. Texts as far as possible will be original found texts on objects and quotes.

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## Entrance:

Public entry under Librarian’s Office rather than from quad – something to indicate look up at Librarian’s Office

Waymarker vinyls on pillars in foyer indicating to turn left to the exhibition.

Welcome desk. Bookshop. Evaluation station. Entrance ticket is library card and date stamp.

Vinyls above welcome desk on rear wall- Welcome quote from Michelle about libraries being places of academic, intellectual and creative freedom

*Action: confirm book purchase and selection with BJL*

*Other PLS merchandise? Confirm quote from Michelle*

## Mask panel/bookcase

New Eyes Each Year in full.

New eyes each year

Find old books here,

And new books,too,

Old eyes renew;

So youth and age

Like ink and page

In this house join,

Minting new coin.

## Acknowledgements Panel:

Introductory Contextual statement TO WRITE LAST along the lines of…The objects in this exhibition, that now belong to the PLS and the HHC (is this true?), were once owned by Philip Larkin or his long term partner Monica Jones…..The process of curating an exhibition, rather like that of writing poetry, is one of elision. Philip Larkin said that poetry was (find quote about eliciting emotion rather than being literal). In 1947 Larkin wrote to his friend, the artist Jim Sutton, that he was working on a novel about an artist and wanted to create an effect on ‘no words…only the pure vision’ (Ref Bradford p75) There have been many words written about Philip Larkin, and we have included many of them in this exhibition. However, we hope that the juxtaposition of objects and books as objects in this exhibition will prompt each visitor to consider Philip Larkin with New Eyes according to their ow thoughts, feelings and memories…. our intention is not to judge but to encourage people to make up their own minds about this contradictory character.

Short statement about each of the partners

The Philip Larkin Society is a charity dedicated to ???? founded in????. For further information see ?????

The University of Hull ?????

Hull History Centre and University Archives????? (free to access etc)

Hull 2017 ?????

Team

Curator: Anna Farthing

Designer: Craig (preferred title?)

Thanks to James, John, Jim etc Caroline Duckworth, Andrew Motion, Icon Films,

## Section 1: Timeline – “Where can we live but days?”

Panel with images. Timeline of Larkin the man (plus relationships) the publications and the librarian

To emphasise – dates of house moves, death of father aged 63 when PAL was 24 and death of mother and moving in/out of her house , mother in care home, and last publication

I haven’t given poetry up, rather it has given me up. (R4)

Death same age as father - Final poem – Letter to my mind (PLS Journal 34 Oct 2012)

Dying words – I am going to the inevitable….

*Action: AF to revise content with PLS expertise (due Monday 5th June)*

*Graphic design and manufacture*

## Section 2: Philip Larkin: Librarian and Poet

Copy/Quote from 1959 Who’s Who listing his profession as a librarian (on the basis that a man is what he is paid to do) find and reproduce if possible. CHECK who has the original copy of 1959 edition.

Quote from poem Toads and Toads Revisited

Large scale reproduction of the b&w cartoon of the Librarian Laureate Telegraph 1988 (from John Bernosconi)

Richard Cole (b.1942), Larkin, signed and dated 1988, pen and ink, and monochrome watercolour, 12 x 9 ins.. Reproduced in Book Pages of the Daily Telegraph, 15 October, 1988.

Library Staff photo – must include Betty and Maeve – to be found.

Objects and images related to the development of his career as a librarian in Wellington, Belfast, Leicester and Hull.

Also National Poetry Library and SCONUL (Expanding on references from the timeline)

Text about library: Good summary of history of library here <http://catalogue.hullhistorycentre.org.uk/catalogue/U-LIB?tab=description> and in library tour notes (see email from Ali)

Images and plans relating to the development of this Hull University building - The Brynmore Jones Library (from BJL basement and HHC).

AV Media: Slide show of Larkin’s own photos of the building development that he took every Saturday.

Include photo with Queen Mother and quote – Our Poet Librarian – What a wonderful thing to be.

S8” Cine Film of library staff messing about (via HHC either on screen on shelf or projected or in library foyer on large monitor with slides from BJL development?)

## Section 3: Larkin’s Library:

We turn the corner and expect to see erudite academic books but what we see is…

Books belonging to Larkin – Densely shelved approx. 83 linear metres of personal library in approximately same order as found in house. Create peep holes for small domestic objects using book ends. Portents of things that will crop up later in the exhibition.

Items to include: DH Lawrence T Shirt, Beatrix Potter figures, Cricket china plate, cricket card game, Horse/Animal art, Photo with Bruce Montgomery/Crime writer, items relating to self analysis, images of Larkin as a child with the bike from Philip Pullen (with the Billy Bunters) bike puncture repair kit, trinket box related to Brunette Colman girls school stories.

DOODLE 2 - 11 - 69 sea lion in coat by bookcases

Lines from poem A Study of Reading Habits quoted on panels and backings for these sections (his library, books by him, books about him)

[**A Study Of Reading Habits**](https://allpoetry.com/A-Study-Of-Reading-Habits)

When getting my nose in a book

Cured most things short of school,

**It was worth ruining my eyes**

**To know I could still keep cool,**

And deal out the old right hook

To dirty dogs twice my size.

Later, with inch-thick specs,

Evil was just my lark:

**Me and my cloak and fangs**

**Had ripping times in the dark.**

**The women I clubbed with sex!**

**I broke them up like meringues.**

Don't read much now: the dude

Who lets the girl down before

The hero arrives, the chap

Who's yellow and keeps the store

Seem far too familiar. **Get stewed:**

**Books are a load of crap.**

*Action: AF to annotate book list for object links.*

*Get map/list of where books were located in the house and how it is cross referenced with the red tags from HHE to add to Vols info pack*

## Section 4: Books by Larkin

Sparsely arranged on separate shelves – a) published poetry x 4, b) novels x 2, c) university library minutes x 7 d) bottom shelf a few essential compendia (Larkin’s Jazz, Required Writings, Further Requirements, Willow Gable ed Booth))

Quote about his output including the University minutes from Monitor doco ‘when I bind up the library minutes…..” Find and Check quote.

## Section 5: Books about Larkin “I was meant to be studied, not to study”

Densely shelved. Demonstrate quantity. Reference books, academic books, PLS journals, newspaper articles and other. A level essays and revision guides and literature blogs from online searches (Self’s the Man and Mr Bleany etc) Possibly also scrapbook of cuttings

*Action: gather books from HHC, BJL reference section, PLS and second hand.*

## Section 6: Letters and Diaries

Display of quantity of letters bound in files (Perspex tables) with a few single examples open for reading. Display letters catalogue to show quantity (HHC) or total number of letters. Is it 9000? A copy of Thwaites Selected Letters and Letters to Monica. Flyers for forthcoming books on his letters by Booth and Pullen

Display Diary covers to show contents missing – quote from Betty about destroying them.

DOODLE Letter 21 April 1963 image I envisage myself surrounded by boxes of letters

## Section 7: Music

? x linear meters of LP records in boxes and a catalogue of them displayed to read

Facing out – Recent CD compilation Larkin’s Jazz (can be played as tracks are out of copyright)

Book Larkin’s Jazz

Quote about going a week without poetry but not a day without jazz OR few things in life bring more pleasure than jazz CHECK

Quote about moving – foot stomping – jumping about (from CD booklet??)

List and Quote from Desert Island Discs

Poems – Reference Back, For Sidney Bechet

The relevant LP covers facing outward - Desert Island Discs (1st one was Dallas Blues 1929) – Louis Armstrong Aint Misbehavin 1928 (3rd record he bought)

AV: player and headphones for listening

List of Desert Island Discs

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/p009n0l9/segments>

Download of Desert Island Discs (recording)

https://www.jstor.org/stable/1343890?seq=1#page\_scan\_tab\_contents

*Action: Find/Check the LP list from HHC*

## Section 8: The Body

Vast caged figure made from exploded display of objects on fishing wire etc.

To include hat, glasses, hearing aid, shirt/vest layered, tie, jacket, trousers/long johns layered, belt, braces, socks, academic gown, walking stick, dancing shoes with PAL bags, weighing scales, brain X Ray, evidence of the stammer….

Shirts in packets stacked to show the label Garstangs – (add note about Garstangs of Blackburn making shirts for Two Ronnies, Roald Dahl and Kenneth Williams and advertising mail order in Sunday Times & Telegraph)

Quote/letter/doodle about weight/body consciousness

Notes about two sets of weighing scales (Booth?)

Doodle image of seal looking in the mirror

## Section 9: Family, childhood and adolescence (poss combine with Section 10 Home is so sad?)

Quote They fuck you up your mum and dad – obscure ‘fuck’ with objects

Make a photo album montage

Image of family all together?

Mother and Father together

Letters between Mother and Son showing frequency/regularity

Image of Father & Son together in Germany

Peep - little Hitler figure reflected/magnified by shaving mirror

Sister Kitty ten years older than Philip – father treated her as an idiot (poss dyslexic/aspergic) partially obscured – always in the background or masked

School report aged 9 – (as seen in AN Wilson doco)

‘I was meant to be studied, not to study’

## Section 10: Home is so sad (poss combine with section 9 family, childhood, adolescence)

Trunk with labels

Tea Towels as a main feature

Net curtains from Larkin’s office (ask John Bernosconi if they are still kept in rare books)

Envelopes or headed paper with all addresses

Always living with High Windows

Lofty Lodgings at St Johns (photo and shield)

Wellington digs

Belfast digs (map and broken jug and letter describing it)

32 Pearson Park (photos of top floor of Pearson Park details – contact via Henri)

For the last 16 years I’ve lived in the same small flat, washing in the sink and not having central heating or double glazing or fitted carpets or the other things everyone has. And of course I haven’t any biblical things such as wife, children, house, land, cattle, sheep etc.

Mother’s house in Leicester

Newlands Park

Ashtray souvenirs and other smoking materials

Evidence of heavy drinking

High Windows – views from above at home and office

Sense that indoors is stifling – get outside

Gardens and gardening

Lawns and mowers –

The MOWER rigged on the wall, cutting through words – an image from a notebook with workings on relevant poem

Poetry as mowing – elision.

## Section 12: Affiliations, Friends and Colleagues

Display of ties (up to 130 ties) as a social map of affiliations

Photo of Oxford University Chums

Objects - Plaques of colleges etc

Poets Map of Hull (Ref: book from John Osborne) The wider poetry scene – Bette Noir etc

Andrew Motion in Hull 78 – 84 Father Son Mentoring Friendship.

Supporters and mentors (Jean Hartley book facing outward & see Jim’s notes on Jean and George Hartley and Marvell Press)

Photo of Larkin with Kingsley and Hilly Amis (broken off) plus copies of Lucky Jim and The Odd Couple – letter about not putting Monica in the book. Rubber stamp type graphic of ‘What does this mean?” and “Why do you think I care?” (Bradford p45) and Bum

Jim Sutton (broken off)

Bruce Montgomery (broken off)

## Section 13: Self’s the Man (combined with affiliations above – separate faces for separate relationships)

Selfishness, independence, control of image,

Camera’s and photographic equipment

Contact sheets amended

Selfies

Doodles (use Chicago piece by Jim and Jean)

DOODLE letter 18 Sept 1973

DOODLE Letter 19 April 1964 ref 'Monitor' and image of tv camera

## Section 14: Sex among the stacks….

Quote…."It seems to me that *bending someone else to your will* is the very stuff of sex, by force or neglect if you are male, by spitefulness or nagging or scenes if you are female. And what's more, both sides *would sooner have it that way than not at all*. I wouldn't. And I suspect that means not that I can enjoy sex in my own quiet way but that I can't enjoy it at all."

Letters in filing draws – optional to viewer

Letter: 1958, “I’m sorry too that our encounter had such unhappy results for you! I really didn’t expect such a thing, though I suppose it might have been predicted. I am sorry. It does rather spoil the incident, even at best, which was very exciting for me anyway. Let’s hope all rights itself soon….You sound as if you want comforting Fat rabbit lovely pretty rabbit,”

Letter after holiday in 1958 “I’m sorry our lovemaking fizzled out,” “I am *not* a highly-sexed person.” This comes after a letter in which he invites her to consider their affair in the light of “a kind of homosexual relation, disguised: it wdn’t surprise me at all if someone else said so.” He writes, in December 1954, “If it were announced that all sex wd cease as from midnight on 31 December, my way of life wouldn’t change at all.”

Material featuring schoolgirls, flagellation, and sodomy. (In 1958 to Conquest: “I agree *Bamboo* & *Frolic* are the tops, or rather bottoms: do pass on any that have ceased to stimulate.”) At his death, along with many other private papers, the vast library of pornography was destroyed.

He comments slyly but learnedly on the buggery implications of the D. H. Lawrence novel that was then on trial in the courts. “*You and your bottom*,” he elsewhere writes fervently. “I lay in bed one morning last week remembering one after-breakfast time when you were looking out of my kitchen window … You were wearing the black nylon panties with the small hole in!” AND “ You must look a wonderful sight in fur hat & boots—nothing else? Holding a rawhide whip? (You see how naturally my imagination composes aesthetic *montages* for you.)”

“I’m getting more kinky”

Pornography – files of ‘staff handbook’

Typical lines from Trouble at Willow Gables run: 'Marie, her hair dishevelled over her pale little face, her underlip mutinously jutting out, her tunic off-shoulder and her sash also, fought like a wild thing as Ursula, out of all patience, gripped her by the neck and forced her backwards over the headmistress's desk, scattering ink and papers...

'As Pam finally pulled Marie's tunic down over her black stockinged legs, Miss Holden, pausing only to snatch a cane from the cupboard on the wall, gripped Marie by the hair and, with a strength lent by anger, forced her head down until she was bent nearly double. Then she began thrashing her unmercifully...'

Corporal punishment features extensively in the plot of Trouble at Willow Gables . One section reads: 'The younger girl twisted to escape but Philippa had learnt how to deal with Marie from experience. In a very short time she was lying face down on Philippa's silken knee, with her velvet skirt folded neatly round her waist. The belt had a curious metal buckle, which Philippa rightly adjudged would add an awful sting to the lashes. Oblivious to Marie's piteous tears, cries and struggles, she thrashed till her forearms ached. Towards the end she even started to enjoy it.'

FIND THE LETTERS MAKE CHOICES AND DISPLAY IN FILING DRAWERS

**Annus Mirabilis**

Sexual intercourse began

In nineteen sixty-three

(which was rather late for me) -

Between the end of the "Chatterley" ban

And the Beatles' first LP.

## Section 15: Relationships: All that will survive of us is Love (flow/combine with 12 and 13 – affiliations and self representation)

The Women – separate alcove compartments for each person

People represented through photograph AND as animals AND in doodles AND small momentos

Text about the women – quite formal Dictionary of National Biography style birth and death dates and short biographies giving full details of their lives other than as his muses – represent them as fully human with their own lives.

Doodles blown up – portrait heads of animals at life size overlaid with real photographs.

Scraps and fragments to represent Judy (pregnancy), Patsy (Belfast - was married) Oxford?

Ruth - (the cloth?)

Monica – pink dress, scallop coat, tiny gloves and shoes, kids sewing patterns, open out a dress pattern to show its fragility and transparency - Tory, loud, blowsy, pantomime. Cartoon bunnies.

Maeve – photos – her book The Philip Larkin I knew - cartoon

Betty – photo of library staff – loaf haired secretary - quote from when AM revealed their relationship - the crocodile STILL ALIVE

Edited Video clips or YouTube links showing Ruth, Monica, Maeve, and Betty in later life

Betty: <http://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/p00ckfhz>

Monica: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3KQt15r0tc4>

Ruth and Maeve: <http://www.bfi.org.uk/films-tv-people/4ce2b89bdde25>

Image of the three gravestones together in the cemetery – Philip Larkin, Monica Jones, Maeve Brennan and comment that Betty is still alive.

## Section 14: Legacy

What Larkin means to me – contributor wall.

Response board as leaves to be pinned on quote from The Trees.

Seed a few comments from other writers and public figures

Grayson Perry, Nick Cave, Douglas Dunn, AN Wilson, Karen Walton (Barrister married to Toby Jones - phone number is in notes), Mark Ravenhill, Kate Fox (Thirsk) Wendy Cope, Jackie Kay, Helen Dunmore. Frank Turner and Laura Marlin (via Sam at H2017)

Include quote from Terry Eagleton 1993 from J’accuse Philip Larkin *“..death obsessed and emotionally retarded misanthropist who had the impudence to generalize his own fears and failings to the way things are”*

Jim’s list of the poetry set to music. Artefact from All Night North Larkin Poetry set to Music

Dove House Hospice 01482 784 343 and Julie MacDonald (Hull medic dept)

Bill Nighy;s Whitsun Weddings on the Train…

## Section 15: Signposts

Pinboard of recent clippings and forthcoming media etc

Tours of the local area on foot and by bike

The Larkin Trail leaflet or download

Details of programmed events by Hull 2017, PLS and University Reflections Programme

Visits to his office during HODS and other times

Kingston Swing – swing music and dance opportunities

Ye Olde Black Boy music and events