

Keyword: Hull City of Culture

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By Dave Higgens, Press Association

A new exhibition featuring personal items from the life of Philip Larkin promises to throw new light on the life of the complex and contradictory life of one of Britain's best-loved poets.

The collection is opening at Hull's Brynmor Jones Library, where Larkin worked for 30 years, and features many of his possessions never before seen in public, including clothing, letters, photographs, drawings, music and film.

Among the items are three Super 8 films showing life at the library and a rare recording of a conversation with his mother, along with some of the letters he wrote to her every day.

Larkin: New Eyes Each Year is named after one of Larkin's poems which explores books, a library and its visitors. It is the latest highlight of [Hull's tenure as UK City of Culture 2017](#).

Curator Anna Farthing said: "Our commission was to surprise and our response has been to focus on Larkin's personal possessions, rather than his poetry or writing about him by others.

"We know that ordinary things were meaningful for him and he was a great collector of souvenirs and thoughtful about their placement. Therefore we invite visitors to investigate for themselves, to peek between the layers of our display, to recognise and question and to use their own imaginations.

"We hope that this experience will stimulate new responses to his much-contested character, as well as draw people to his legacy of poetic works."

The exhibition has been designed by Craig Oldham and presented by Hull 2017, the Philip Larkin Society and the University of Hull Archives.

Most of the objects in the exhibition have never before been shown. They focus on his domestic and personal interests and include ties, souvenirs, previously unseen photographs and his private book collection, which ranges from crime fiction to Beatrix Potter and is arranged in the order that they were found at his home.

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Larkin was librarian at the University of Hull for 30 years, from 1955 to his death in 1985. He oversaw the design and construction of the university's Brynmor Jones Library.

When his house was cleared, it was found to contain thousands of books. More than 3,700 of these, along with 11,000 letters and 1,500 LPs, are now conserved together with the university's archives in Hull History Centre.

Former Poet Laureate, friend and biographer of Larkin Andrew Motion said: "This original and subtle exhibition takes us almost unnervingly close to Larkin.

"As it generates a meaning for all manner of objects associated with him, it gives substance to the man himself; but at the same time, it reinforces our sense that elements of his personality and genius are bound to remain mysterious. This clever balancing is a great achievement, and provides a rare pleasure."

Martin Green, director of Hull 2017, said: "Philip Larkin is one of the most renowned artists to have lived in Hull and we are delighted that this new exhibition is opening as a centrepiece of our Freedom season. With Anna Farthing's very unique take on how to present from the thousands of objects that belonged to him, we hope that it will stimulate even more interest in the poet, whether you have read him or not."

:: Larkin: New Eyes New Year open to the public from Wednesday and runs until October 1. It is free to visit.

ends

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