

The Philip Larkin Society

Registered Charity No. 1085251

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SUBSCRIPTIONS (1 July – 30 June)

UK Institution £50

Full Member £25

Unwaged or senior citizen £18

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Overseas

Institution £60

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Editorial

The current issue of *About Larkin* features facsimiles of original letters by the poet. The reflections which Larkin sent to John Mole in 1971 in response to Mole's poems about jazz even include a hitherto unpublished doggerel couplet. Also Michael Shuff includes two letters from 1983 in a fascinating piece on the collection of Stevie Smith's work which Larkin brought together in the Hull library.

The appeal made in issue 47 for information about Larkin's Hull oil painting by Lilian Walton has led to an identification of the site, and Society member Mary Rose Barker offers first-hand recollections of 'Jenny's Café', recorded here in an article by Geoff Weston.

The first major Society event of the year was the AGM held at the Lawns Centre on 1 June at which Imtiaz Dharker read poems from her latest volume *Luck is the Hook*, including the evocative 'This Tide of Humber'. This was the first AGM not attended by our President Anthony Thwaite and his wife Ann, who were indisposed. We hope to see them again soon. The next major event was the joint Larkin/Hardy Society Weekend held at Kingston Maurward College, Dorchester from 9 to 11 August, organised by Carole Collinson and Tony Fincham. The speaker on Friday was Phil Pullen, whose talk, 'Philip Larkin in Hardy's Wessex', published here, includes some remarkable new photographs unearthed in the History Centre, Hull. Christopher Ricks spoke on Saturday, holding his audience spellbound with a subtle analysis of Hardy's 'System for Growing Rhyme'. And on Sunday James Booth suggested, in 'The Girlhood of Philip Larkin', that the Brunette Coleman poems show Larkin learning as much from Dorita Fairlie Bruce as from Yeats or Hardy. The weekend was marked by wind and rain. The Hardy birthplace at Bockhampton, the Visitors' Centre and Max Gate were closed for fear of falling branches. However, on Sunday the sun shone on our tour of Dorchester with the town crier Alastair Chisholm, followed by a charabanc drive to Weymouth in an historic 1979 vehicle, retracing Larkin and Ruth's 1948 journey on foot.

An important associated event was a two-day conference, 'Philip Larkin: Personality, Poetry, Prose' organised in the Hull History Centre on 13-14 June, by Kyra Piperides Jaques, Rebecca Devine and Felicity Powell with the help of University Archivist, Simon Wilson. The keynote lectures were by Phil Pullen and James Booth, and there were papers by Kyra and Rebecca, and also George Dixon, Nick Everett, Sam Perry, Alison Mace, James Underwood, Helen Cooper, Don Lee and Dámaso López García (by video). Wes Finch from the Mechanicals Band sang settings of Larkin's poems and Hull poet Vicky Foster gave a reading of her work.

Rachael Galletly records a memorable visit by Phil Pullen to her sixth-form class in King Edward VII School, Sheffield. And Kyra Piperides Jaques reviews J. Ryan Hibbett's book: *Philip Larkin, Popular Culture and the English Individual*. We include also poems by Kieron Winn, Tony Flynn, Layton Ring and Sally Hawkes.

Sadly, we bid farewell in this issue to Anthony Hedges, who set 'Bridge for the Living' to music, and to Layton Ring, born a week earlier than Larkin and a contributor of pithy poems to *About Larkin*.

The timetable for the new 'Philip Larkin Society Prize' of £500, announced in our last editorial, has been moved on and the prize will now be awarded in January 2020. The digitisation of the *About Larkin* archive approaches and we can no longer offer past issues for sale. David Brown of The Beverley Old Bookshop, however, has a number of past issues and members should refer to him: bevoldbooks@yahoo.com.

To celebrate the Society's 25th anniversary the fiftieth number of *About Larkin* will be a special commemorative volume, issued next summer, edited by James Booth and Kyra Piperides Jaques and featuring a selection of the best pieces from the journal's first quarter century.

James Booth