



Source: Yorkshire Post {Main}
Edition:
Country: UK
Date: Wednesday 5, July 2017
Page: 3
Area: 1090 sq. cm
Circulation: ABC 29298 Daily
Ad data: page rate £11,476.08, scc rate £18.63
Phone: 0113 243 2701
Keyword: Hull City of Culture

Larkin about: Personal collection of books, clothes and even bedlinen reveals a contradictory character

Life of a poet, chapter and verse

DAVID BEHRENS

COUNTY CORRESPONDENT

■ Email: david.behrens@ypn.co.uk

■ Twitter: @yorkshirepost

HE REMAINS one of Britain's best-read poets – yet the more that is disclosed of the contradictory, private life of Philip Larkin, the less understood he becomes.

Yesterday, they stripped back his shocking pink bed linen to reveal a layer of intimate detail only a few had seen.

At Hull University's Brynmor Jones Library, where Larkin worked for 30 years, the evidence began to stack up – bookcases full of pulp fiction, rude drawings and a top shelf full of pornography.

"I think he would laugh," said Anna Farthing, who has curated the exhibition of his artefacts as part of Hull's tenure as the UK's City of Culture.

"All the same," she added, "I don't think he would have got on with me."

Larkin: New Eyes Each Year, named after a poem of his that explores a library and its visitors, includes clothes, letters and

three Super 8 films that capture life at the library.

It was, said his friend and biographer, the poet Andrew Motion, as close to Larkin as it was possible to get.

It was Motion who had helped to expose the poet's obsession with pornography, his casual racism and his shift to the political right wing.

Yesterday, he noted that elements of his "personality and genius" were bound to remain mysterious.

"This clever balancing is a great achievement, and provides

a rare pleasure," Mr Motion said.

It was a life that had been glimpsed mostly in black and white, yet the exhibition, culled from Larkin's archive of 11,000 letters, 4,000 books and 600

personal items, reveals that he lived it in the most garish colour.

"His letters were in pink, blue and yellow envelopes, his ties were those swirly ones from the 1970s and his bed linen was only ever pink," said Ms Farthing.

"Anyone who considered him erudite would have been surprised by the Agatha Christies and Billy Bunters among his reading material."

Many volumes concealed pressed flowers, rude drawings and other notations, she added.

"It is well documented that he had a stash of pornography but most of that was destroyed. However, we found a certain amount on a top shelf."

Larkin's extraordinary surroundings reveal him to be a prisoner of his own body, Ms Farthing said.

"He was hard of hearing, partially sighted, bald and he had a stutter. He had three women on the go but I don't know if he could fulfil his own desires."

Martin Green, the 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. We hope it will stimulate even more interest, whether you have read him or not."

Asked if Larkin would have been embarrassed at seeing his belongings on public show, Ms Farthing said: "I don't think he would have been horrified. I

think he would like the design.

"But I don't think he would have had time for me. He didn't like people very much, and I do."

What Larkin would have made of Hull's year as City of Culture must remain the subject of conjecture.

"He was dismissive of Arts Council funding," said Ms Farthing. "One of the reasons he was in Hull was that it was the sort of place that could hide him. So in this City of Culture year, he might just have moved somewhere else."

A new life for reading room

THE BRITISH Museum has unveiled plans to bring its world-famous reading room "to life again".

The arena, where Karl Marx wrote *Das Kapital*, has been closed in recent years.

Standing in the centre of the Museum's Great Court, it was hailed as one of the great sights of London and became a world-famous centre of learning when it was completed in 1857.

British Museum director Hartwig Fischer said he wanted the space to become an "intimate part" of visitors' experience and a "Reading Room of objects".

"It is a challenge," he said.

"We are a listed building so whatever we do requires ample discussion about every move we make."

But he added: "It will be absolutely stunning."



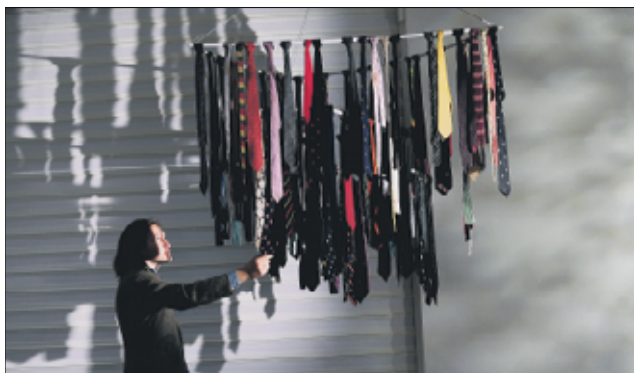
Source: Yorkshire Post {Main}
Edition:
Country: UK
Date: Wednesday 5, July 2017
Page: 3
Area: 1090 sq. cm
Circulation: ABC 29298 Daily
Ad data: page rate £11,476.08, scc rate £18.63
Phone: 0113 243 2701
Keyword: Hull City of Culture

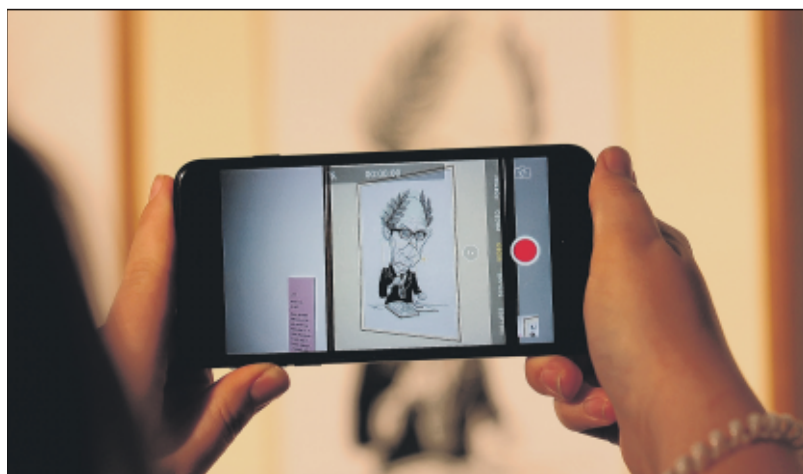
“ **He was hard
of hearing,
partially sighted, bald
and he had a stutter.** ”

Anna Farthing, who has curated the exhibition on Philip Larkin.



READING MATERIAL: Curator Anna Farthing looks at a first edition of *Lady Chatterleys Lover* owned by Philip Larkin, inset. PICTURES: SIMON HULME.





PIECES OF A LIFE: Top, ornaments, a lawn mower and shelves full of books are among the exhibits at Hull University's Brynmor Jones Library, where Larkin worked for 30 years; middle, a pressed flower found in one of his books, Ethan Harding looks into Larkin's glasses and a figure of Adolf Hitler that belonged to his father Sydney Larkin; bottom, a selection of the poet's colourful ties, tags show where books were found in his house and a caricature portrait of Larkin, one of many diverse items featured in the exhibition.