

Larkin 25 Hits Statue Target after Auction Dinner with Maureen Lipman

World-renowned sculptor Martin Jennings' Philip Larkin Statue to be unveiled in Hull's Paragon Station on 2nd December 2010

LONDON, MONDAY 6th SEPTEMBER, 2010—The Philip Larkin Society is pleased to announce, thanks to a Charity Auction Dinner last night, starring Maureen Lipman, that it has now raised sufficient money to pay for the Larkin Statue on Hull Paragon Interchange. The unveiling by the Lord Mayor of Hull will take place on 2nd December 2010, the exact 25th anniversary of the poet's death. Until last night's fund-raising event, there was still a shortfall of £7,000 to cover the costs. The auction dinner raised over £9,000.

Carole Collinson, chair of the Statue Commissioning Group, said: "We are absolutely delighted to have reached our target for the erection of the statue and are deeply grateful to all the individuals, businesses, organisations and trusts that have been so generous with their time and money. To have hugely talented Hull celebrities such as Sir Tom Courtenay and Maureen Lipman give their services free to help us raise funds has been a great privilege and shows how important the connection is between Larkin and their city."

Martin Jennings is the sculptor responsible for producing the statue; as a guest of honour at the dinner he said: "It has been a pleasure working with colleagues in Hull and I'm of course very pleased that the target has been reached so far in advance of the unveiling. It says a great deal about Larkin's appeal and the generosity of people in this part of the world."

The sculpture itself is now at the foundry being cast and is well on track to be installed on the station concourse in time for the unveiling. A 15-inch bronze maquette was on display at the dinner, one of a limited edition of 20 which are now on general sale at a cost of £3,000 (plus VAT). Please see http://www.philiplarkin.com/statue_updates.htm for more details. In her after-dinner speech, Maureen Lipman described the design of the statue as 'lovely, so characterful'.

The auction included lots donated by Ceruttis, the Portland Hotel, the Deep, the Humberside Fire and Rescue Service, the University of Hull, Hull Trains and First Transpennine. The most unusual item was a trio of Philip Larkin's own ties, framed with accompanying autographs by Maureen Lipman, Sir Tom Courtenay and Sir Andrew Motion. Eddie Dawes, chair of the Larkin Society, said: 'The society acquired over 150 of Larkin's ties when his effects were cleared from his Newland Park home. Offering just three of them for auction seemed to us a unique way of further supporting the statue appeal'.

Graham Chesters, Chair of the Larkin25 commemorations, said: "This is great news. The unveiling will be a fitting ceremonial climax to the six-month Larkin25 programme. The Larkin Society has done a brilliant job in fund-raising."

NOTES TO EDITORS

MARTIN JENNINGS

Martin Jennings set up his sculpture studio in Oxford UK in 1984. Working in stone, slate, marble and bronze, he has fulfilled numerous commissions for bronze portraits, figure and abstract sculptures, lettering inscriptions and monuments. His work is to be found in collections in the USA, in Europe and the Far East, as well as many prominent British locations, both public and private. Jennings' bronze statue of John Betjeman was unveiled by Betjeman's daughter on 12 November 2007. For more information, please go here: www.martinjennings.com

PHILIP LARKIN STATUE

Three sculptors were initially short-listed for the brief – Graham Ibbeson, Martin Jennings and Jemma Pearson – with each asked to present their ideas and maquette to an invited audience in Hull's Royal Hotel.

All of the submitted sculptures were marked in four key criteria: artistic quality, likeness to Larkin (including capturing of spirit), uniqueness and the fit with the location. Each sculptor was also interviewed. The Commissioning Group reassembled in late February to consider all the evidence and along with the Philip Larkin Society's Chairman Professor Eddie Dawes, decided to award the commission to Martin Jennings, who has already created the much-loved statue of Sir John Betjeman which is situated in St Pancras Station, London.

Details of the Philip Larkin Statue Appeal Fund can be found at www.justgiving.com/philiplarkinstatue

HULL

The 10th largest city in England, Hull has long had a dramatic influence on artists, writers and poets in addition to Philip Larkin. The former Poet Laureate Andrew Motion was a lecturer at the University of Hull, and other poets with strong connections with the city include Stevie Smith, Roger McGough, Douglas Dunn and Sean O'Brien. John Godber's plays are regularly performed at the Hull Truck Theatre, and Alan Ayckbourn centres his activities at the Stephen Joseph Theatre in Scarborough, where the University has its second campus. Further back in history, the political satirist and most polished of seventeenth-century poets, Andrew Marvell, was MP for Hull, while the novelist Winifred Holtby based the bustling, corrupt city of 'Kingsport' in her novel *South Riding* (1936) on the Hull of her day. Hull was also home to William Wilberforce, the British politician and philanthropist who led the movement to abolish the slave trade.

THE PHILIP LARKIN SOCIETY

The Philip Larkin Society was founded in 1995 on the 10th anniversary of the poet's death. It has charitable status and aims to promote public knowledge and appreciation of the works of Larkin and his contemporaries. Its President is Anthony Thwaite, and its Vice-Presidents include Melvyn Bragg, Douglas Dunn, Seamus Heaney, Andrew Motion, Alan Plater and Tom Stoppard. Its Committee which is chaired by Professor Eddie Dawes includes Jean Hartley (co-publisher of *The Less Deceived* in 1955) and Professor James Booth (author of several seminal works on Larkin's poetry).

The Philip Larkin Society took the initiative in launching the idea of commemorating the 25th anniversary of Larkin's death. It entered into a partnership with the University of Hull, Hull City Council, East Riding of Yorkshire County Council and Visit Hull and East Yorkshire to mark this significant anniversary in a way that celebrates the artistic and professional achievements of Larkin and makes a national and international impact.

The Philip Larkin Society has led on the erection of a Larkin statue on Hull Paragon Station. It was also instrumental in securing the production of a boxed CD set of Larkin's Jazz, released by Proper Records in July 2010, and has supported the publication of a new anthology of Hull-connected poets, *Old City, New Rumours*. The expertise of its members has informed many of the other events in the Larkin25 programme, particularly the exhibitions and the Larkin Trail. Learn more about the Philip Larkin Society on its website: www.philiplarkin.com.

PHILIP LARKIN

Philip Arthur Larkin, CH, CBE, FRSL 1922 – 1985 was a poet, novelist and jazz critic first coming to prominence in 1955 with the publication of his second volume of poems, *The Less Deceived*, which was followed by *The Whitsun Weddings* in 1964 and *High Windows* in 1974. He was offered but declined the Poet Laureateship following the death of John Betjeman in 1984.

Larkin was born in the city of Coventry. From 1930 to 1940 he was educated at the King Henry VIII School in Coventry from which he went up to St John's College, Oxford to read English Language and Literature. While at Oxford he met Kingsley Amis, who became a lifelong friend and frequent correspondent. Shortly after graduating from Oxford, Larkin was appointed municipal librarian at Wellington, Shropshire. In 1946 he became assistant librarian at University College, Leicester and, in 1950, sub-librarian at Queen's University, Belfast. By this time he had published two novels and his first collection of poetry. In March 1955, Larkin was appointed librarian at the University of Hull, a position he retained until his death.

During the thirty years he spent in Hull, Larkin produced a significant body of poetry. He never married; his companion and confidante of over thirty years was Monica Jones whose letters from Larkin are to be published in 2010 in a volume edited by Anthony Thwaite. A significant collection of papers and other archive material relating to Philip Larkin is now held by the £10.3m Hull History Centre - the new home for Hull City Archives, Hull Local Studies Library and Hull University Archives. The centre is working with other Larkin25 partners to curate a major exhibition based on the archives. For a select bibliography of Larkin's work please visit:

www.larkin25.co.uk/philiplarkin.htm

LARKIN 25

Larkin25 is a celebration of the life and work of the poet, novelist, librarian and jazz critic Philip Larkin, marking the 25th anniversary of his death. Using Larkin's artistic achievements as a catalyst, Larkin25 is seeking to engage and involve visitors to Hull and local residents through participatory creative events, spectacular city centre celebrations (including the hugely successful Larkin with Toads animal sculpture trail) and a high quality programme of performances, publications and exhibitions. The official programme of events began on 12 June 2010 and culminates on 2 December, the 25th anniversary of Larkin's death in 1985. For complete details, please go to:

www.larkin25.co.uk.

MEDIA ENQUIRIES

For national media enquiries, please contact Tracey Jennings or Alex Martin at Midas Public Relations on 020 7361 7860 or tracey.jennings@midaspr.co.uk / alexander.martin@midaspr.co.uk.