

Norman Nicholson Collections in the John Rylands Library

Norman Nicholson Archive

Date range: 1914–87.

Norman Nicholson (1914–87) was a writer in the widest sense: he wrote novels, plays, short stories, topographies, criticism, essays, reviews and biographies, but he was first and foremost a poet. A strong sense of place permeated his writing which was largely inspired by the landscape and industry of his native Millom, a small mining town in south-west Cumbria.

The archive contains a vast range of material generated by Nicholson throughout the course of his life, which reflects every aspect of his work as well as containing important biographical information. The archive includes: literary manuscripts, among them drafts of some of his best-known poems, typescripts and proofs and files relating to particular literary projects; agreements with publishers. There is a large quantity of correspondence with fellow writers, publishers, academics, critics and readers. Also included is a collection of over 130 personal letters between Nicholson and his cousin, Doreen Cornthwaite, charting their long friendship. There are photographs; news cuttings containing reviews and interviews, and diaries and personal documents. The archive also reflects Cornthwaite's ongoing concern with Nicholson's literary legacy and reputation.

Catalogue available [online](#)

Hard copy catalogue available in reading room.

Norman Nicholson Book Collection

The Library also holds approximately 700 books from Nicholson's personal library, mainly first editions, signed and containing enclosures from the authors, and annotated by Nicholson.

The collection contains an almost complete set of 20th-century poets, and a collection of some 35 first and early editions of Nicholson's own writings includes five volumes signed by the author.

Catalogue available online via University of Manchester [Library Search](#)

A collated list is also available via staff at the John Rylands Library and can be viewed on the Norman Nicholson Society [website](#).

Papers from the Norman Nicholson Book Collection

Archival material which was originally inserted in the books making up Norman Nicholson's personal book collection.

Catalogue available [online](#)

Hard copy catalogue available in reading room.

Bronze bust of the poet Norman Nicholson made by the sculptor Joan D. Palmer

Papers of Doreen Cornthwaite relating to Norman Nicholson

Catalogue available [online](#)

Hard copy catalogue available in reading room.

David Wright Collection of Norman Nicholson Papers

Catalogue available [online](#)

Hard copy catalogue available in reading room.

Tom Kelly Collection of Norman Nicholson Letters.

Catalogue available [online](#)

Hard copy catalogue available in reading room.

Matt Simpson Collection of Norman Nicholson Papers

Catalogue available [online](#)

Hard copy catalogue available in reading room.

Papers of Sylvia Lubelsky relating to Norman Nicholson

164 letters/cards from Norman Nicholson to Sylvia Lubelsky (later Elvey), dating from 1932-1980s.

Accession No. 2010/027; collection reference SNN. Basic box list available.

Papers of Jonni Stratton-Brook relating to Norman Nicholson

Collection reference JSB (Accession Nos 2011/031 and 2011/037). Comprises: a letter from Nicholson to Jonni Stratton-Brook (4 February 1985) with unpublished typescript article by Nicholson entitled 'Competitors Only' (dating from 1952/3); four further letters from Nicholson to Stratton-Brook (two dating from 1952, one from 1982 and one from 1985); and photocopy TS poem 'Ravenglass Railway Station'.

Papers of Janet Martin relating to Norman Nicholson

Collection reference JMN (Accession No. 2011/044). Comprises: two letters to Enid Hamer from Norman Nicholson (1937-8); two letters to Enid Hamer from Enrica Garnier (1938 and undated); letter from Norman Nicholson to Janet Martin (1986); and 14 carbon TS poems by Nicholson.

Papers of Ian Brodie relating to Norman Nicholson

Collection reference IBN (Accession No. 2015/9). Comprises: 7 letters and 3 postcards from Nicholson; card and copy letter from Ian Brodie to Nicholson; letter from Brodie to Faber; copy TS poem by Nicholson, 'The Bloody Cranesbill'; bundle of news cuttings relating to Nicholson; and publication - *Walks around Furness and the Duddon* by Ian Brodie, foreword by Norman Nicholson (Dalesman Books, 1985). Bulk dates from 1980-85; 1 item from 1957.

Letters from Percy Kelly to Norman Nicholson

Collection reference PKL. Comprises 17 illustrated letters from the artist Percy Kelly - 16 to Norman Nicholson and one to Rosemary Joyce (1971-[c.1987]); also includes a number of decorated envelopes.

Norman Nicholson Manuscripts (collection ref. NNM)

A box of material relating to Norman Nicholson, which was acquired by the Library over a long period from different sources. Includes: 5 compact cassettes of readings and other events associated with NN; letter from NN to a Mr Whitton (1965); a copy of *The Listener*, containing NN's article 'Millom Delivered'; TS poem 'From Walney Island'; letter from NN to a Rev. Eckersley (1953); bound typescript of *The Old Man of the Mountains*; 7 letters from NN to David and Pippa Wright (1977-1985); folder of material relating to NN's *No Star on the Way Back*, broadcast by Border TV in 1963.

Correspondence between Norman Nicholson and Neil Hanson

Collection reference NNN (Accession No. 2016/1). Consists of: 6 letters from Norman Nicholson to Neil Hanson, Art and Exhibitions Officer at Carlisle Museum, with one copy letter from Hanson, and a typed, signed contract. 8 July 1981-16 June 1982. Relates to an exhibition on Cumbrian landscape called *Presences of Nature*. Nicholson suggests some of his own work which might be included, and suggests some artists to approach. Subsequent correspondence relates to the accidental omission of Nicholson's name from the list of contributors to the exhibition as listed in *Stand* magazine.

Letters from Norman Nicholson to John Edward Fisher

Collection reference NEF (Accession No. 2016/20). A collection of 20 letters from Nicholson to John Edward Fisher (known as 'Ted'), with one letter to Fisher from Nicholson's wife Yvonne. Fisher was a friend of Nicholson's from his school days, and went on to teach Ted Hughes at Mexborough Grammar School. These letters date from 1974-1983, and include details of Nicholson's life and work during this later part of his life.

Nicholson-related material forming part of the Modern Literary Manuscripts Collection

- **MLA/1** (Accession No. 2002/001): Small album containing satirical verses on Millom residents and public figures, authored by Norman Nicholson and J.E. Fisher, with illustrations by Fisher [1930s].
- **MLA/8** (Accession Nos 2012/036 and 2013/011): Three letters from Norman Nicholson to Peter Lewis (1966-1968). Peter Lewis was a lecturer at the University of Durham, and heavily involved with *Stand* magazine (through which he made contact with Nicholson, whom he visited on a number of occasions).
- **MLA/10** (Accession No. 2013/005): small booklet containing MS poem by Nicholson called 'Market Square: A Partita', dedicated to J. Edward Fisher; with a single MS poem on a loose sheet, 'Cellist', inscribed 'for Jeanne' [c. 1930s]. NB: Jeanne is Jeanne Milligan; this MS comes from the same donor as 2002/001.
- **MLA/12** (Accession No. 2015/14): two letters from Norman Nicholson to a Mr Pellow (13 Apr and 28 Dec 1944); with a cutting of Nicholson's poem 'The Affirming Blasphemy' [from the *Times Literary Supplement*, 10 Dec 1954]; and a cutting from a magazine of the sculpture of Nicholson by Josephina De Vasconcellos.
- **MLA/13** (Accession No. 2017/40): file of material relating to Norman Nicholson donated by Irvine Hunt, writer and Nicholson's literary executor. Comprises: modern copy of a photograph of Norman Nicholson and his wife Yvonne on their wedding day; photograph of a bust of Norman Nicholson [by Josephina de Vasconcellos], with news cutting on the reverse dating from 6 December 1963, reporting that the bust was presented to Carlisle Public Library by admirers of Nicholson's work; publication - *Cumbria, Lakeland and the Borders* magazine dating from April 1967 which includes an article called 'Some Lakeland Poets' containing a section on Nicholson; photograph of Norman Nicholson at home, taken by Frank Carruthers (a journalist and Workington historian, who supplied it to illustrate an article in the *Cumberland News*) in October 1975; photograph of Norman Nicholson, his wife Yvonne, and Irvine Hunt – taken at a joint reading which took place at Washington Co. Durham library, where Nicholson read Wordsworth and some of his own poetry, and Hunt read Coleridge and some of his own work; leaflet advertising the Norman Nicholson

Memorial Fund established by Millom Town Council; photocopy of a panel of artwork by schoolchildren which was due to be displayed at Millom station which includes a drawing of Norman Nicholson; photocopy of a flyer for a performance of Nicholson's *Prophecy to the Wind*, June 1996; photocopy of a flyer for 'Poets in Contrast', an event featuring Irvine Hunt and Norman Nicholson (undated).

- **MLA/15** (Accession No. 2017/52): Letter to Norman Nicholson from T.S. Eliot dated 24 March 1949.

Other related collections

- **Papers of Neil Curry:** include material relating to Nicholson, in particular to the Faber edition of Nicholson's Complete Poems, which Curry edited. Uncatalogued.
- **Kathleen Raine Manuscripts.** Accession No. 2002/002: 20 letters and cards from Kathleen Raine to Neil Curry, 1983-1992; these include references to Norman Nicholson.

*List compiled by Fran Baker
Amended by Jessica Smith
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