

John Pudney:

An Inventory of His Papers at the Harry Ransom Humanities Research Center

Descriptive Summary

Creator:	Pudney, John, 1909-1977
Title:	John Pudney Papers
Dates:	1850-1977 (bulk 1926-1976)
Extent:	3 boxes (1 linear foot), 1 galley folder
Abstract:	The papers of British writer John Pudney include drafts, notes, printer's copies, galleys, research material, notebooks, diaries, and correspondence.
Call Number:	Manuscript Collection MS-03348
Language:	English.
Access	Open for research

Administrative Information

Acquisition	Purchases 1963-977
Processed by	David Sparks, 1994 (Revision)
Repository:	Harry Ransom Center, The University of Texas at Austin

Biographical Sketch

John Sleigh Pudney, British poet, novelist, editor, and journalist was born on January 19, 1909, in Langley, Buckinghamshire, England. The only son of Henry William Pudney and Mabel Sleigh Pudney, he was reared in the country, but was sent away for his education to Gresham's Hall, Holt. At Gresham's Hall Pudney became friends with W. H. Auden and Benjamin Britten. Pudney left school at sixteen, however, to work for an estate agency and to pursue his interest in writing. His first volume of poetry, *Spring Encounter* (1933), ushered Pudney into the literary circle of Lady Ottoline Morrell. In 1934 he married Crystal Herbert, with whom he had two daughters and a son. At this time Pudney also began his professional writing career in earnest as writer-producer for the BBC (1934-1937), and as a journalist for the *News Chronicle*. In 1938 Pudney published the first of many novels, *Jacobson's Ladder*.

In 1940 Pudney was commissioned into the Royal Air Force as an intelligence officer and as a member of the Air Ministry's Creative Writer's Unit. During World War II Pudney published articles for this organization and wrote considerable poetry, including his famous ode to British airmen, "For Johnny." This poem achieved national significance and was broadcast and performed by several famous actors including Sir Laurence Olivier. After the war Pudney continued to write in various media and genres as well as work as literary advisor, editor, and director for several magazines, agencies, and publishing companies, including the *News Review* (1948-1950), Evans Brothers, Ltd. (1950-1953), and Putnam & Co., Ltd. (1953-1963). In 1949 he began editing an annual anthology entitled *Pick of Today's Short Stories* (1949-1963). In 1952 Pudney published *The Net*, his most successful novel.

After 1965 Pudney focused on the subject of recovery (from divorce and alcoholism), producing several articles and the autobiographical *Thank Goodness for Cake* (1978). In 1967 he married his second wife, Monica Forbes Curtis, and renewed his career with poetry readings accompanied by jazz musicians. During 1966-1967 he continued to write poems, two of which appeared in the *Times Literary Supplement* after his death on November 10, 1977.

Scope and Contents

The John Pudney Papers, 1850-1977 (bulk 1926-1976), include drafts, notes, printer's copies, galleys, research material, notebooks, diaries, and correspondence. The collection is arranged in two series: Works, 1850-1977 (2.75 boxes) and Correspondence, 1937-1962 (.25 box).

The Works series reflects the diverse genres (novels, poems, plays, diaries, literary criticism, humorous non-fiction, short stories) in which Pudney wrote. The manuscripts found here, both holograph and typescript, most often represent drafts, modified with corrections, annotations, and inserts. This series is alphabetically arranged by published titles or Pudney's folder headings, which are designated in the folder list by single

quotation marks. The folders often contain numerous manuscripts and/or related notes, proposals, and correspondence. Many of the drafts of poems are written on the verso of other incomplete manuscripts by Pudney. This series contains both published and unpublished material, which are identified as such whenever possible.

Manuscripts for Pudney's poetry collections and chapbooks in this series include *Collected Poems, 1957* (here entitled "The Green Verges: Collected Poems") and *Selected Poems, 1967-1973*. The folder for the collected poems entitled *Ten Summers: Poems, 1933-1943* includes only notes and correspondence. Manuscripts for early and/or unpublished later ("post-Spandrels") poems, 1926-1968, as well as later individual poems (1960-1961) are also found here. Proofs for war and post-war chapbooks, such as *Beyond this Disregard* (1943) and *South of Forty* (1943), as well as the more recent *Spandrels: Poems and Ballads* (1969) and *Living in a One-Sided House* (1976), are present in this collection.

Several manuscripts of Pudney's fiction, often found here in bound notebooks, include *The Accomplice* (1950), *Shuffley Wanderers: An Entertainment* (1948), and *Sleadley* (nd). Materials for *The Net* (1952), one of Pudney's most successful novels and *Trespass in the Sun* (1957), include only critical notes and correspondence. Among the unpublished works is the holograph manuscript of a play entitled *The Break Through* (1974-75).

Non-fiction materials include the proposal and correspondence for *Home and Away: An Autobiographical Gambit* (1960) and the manuscript of Pudney's critical study, *Lewis Carroll and His World* (1976). The material for *The Thomas Cook Story* (1953) consists of the mid-19th century correspondence and ephemera of Thomas Cook, George Cruikshank, and Emily Ellis. These letters, collected by Pudney, include a few signed sketches by George Cruikshank and concern the British temperance movement. The materials for his humorous non-fiction, *The Smallest Room* (1954), a history of sanitation and water closets, includes working files, research material, correspondence, and an annotated bound copy with printer's marks used for a 1959 revised edition.

Several diaries and notebooks created by Pudney are present in this series including a World War II diary entitled "Duty Run" that details his daily military routine during 1942-1943. This diary also includes numerous poems copied at the end. Also included here is a commonplace book, "Working notebook used on travel, 1947" which Pudney used during his research on the history of the British Royal Air Force. In the folder entitled "Juvenile Pieces" are also found three untitled notebooks (1968, nd) that contain drafts of poems, general notes, and addresses.

The bulk of the Correspondence series, divided into incoming and outgoing and chronologically arranged, concerns the publication and revision of *The Smallest Room*. Other correspondence helps to describe the nature of his literary endeavors and editorial duties. Letters from George Barker and H. E. Bates are, however, of a more personal nature. Another series of letters from Jules Roy concerns the translation of his poetry into French. Letters from representatives of Queen Elizabeth and of Queen Mary acknowledge receipt of Pudney's book, *His Majesty, King George VI: A Study* (1952), as well as to offer several suggestions and criticism.

Other significant correspondents include Kingsley Amis, Malcolm Arnold, John Betjeman, Benjamin Britten, Jocelyn Brooke, Sir Winston Churchill, Cynthia Coville (Secretary to Queen Mary), Oliver Dawney (Secretary to H. M. Queen Elizabeth, the Queen Mother), C. Day Lewis, T. S. Eliot, John Lehmann, Compton Mackenzie, Wolf Mankowitz, Lady Ottoline Morrell, Laurence Olivier, J. B. Priestley, Frederic Prokosch, Herbert Edward Read, Michael Redgrave, Vita Sackville-West, Edith Sitwell, Stephen Spender, Henry Treece, and Evelyn Waugh.

Index Terms

Correspondents

Amis, Kingsley
Arnold, Malcolm
Barker, George, 1913-
Bates, H.E. (Herbert Ernest), 1905-1974
Betjeman, John, Sir, 1906-
Blackburn, Thomas, 1916-
Blakiston, Noel
Brickhill, Paul
Britten, Benjamin, 1913-1978
Brooke, Jocelyn
Church, Richard, 1893-
Churchill, Winston, Sir, 1874-1965
Cook, Thomas, 1808-1892
Crease, David
Cruikshank, George, 1792-1879
Dalton, Hugh, Baron, 1887-1962
Day, Lewis, C. (Cecil), 1904-1972
Eliot, T.S. (Thomas Sterns), 1888-1965
Fonteyn, Margot, Dame, 1919-
Fry, Christopher
Gwynn, Stephen Lucius, 1864-1950
John, Augustus, 1878-1961
Lehman, John, 1907-

Lewis, D.B. Wyndham (Dominic Bevan Wyndham), 1894-1969
 Logue, Christopher, 1926-
 Mackenzie, Compton, Sir, 1883-1972
 Mankowitz, Wolf
 Menzies, Robert Gordon, Sir, 1894-1978
 Meynell, Francis, Sir, 1891-
 Morrell, Ottoline Violet Anne Cavendish-Bentinck, Lady, 1873-1938
 Olivier, Laurence, 1907-
 Priestley, J.B. (John Boynton), 1894-
 Prokosch, Frederic, 1908-
 Read, Herbert Edward, Sir, 1893-1968
 Redgrave, Michael, Sir
 Roy, Jules, 1907-
 Sackville-West, V. (Victoria), 1892-1962
 Shute, Nevil, 1899-1960
 Sillitoe, Alan
 Sitwell, Edith, Dame, 1887-1964
 Spender, Stephen, 1909-
 Treece, Henry, 1911-1966
 Van der Post, Laurens
 Waugh, Evelyn, 1903-1966

Subjects

Great Britain--Royal Air Force--History--World War, 1939-1945
 Carroll, Lewis--1832-1898--Criticism and interpretation
 English literature--History and criticism
 Poets, English
 Sanitation, Household
 Toilets

Document Types

Biographies
 Commonplace books
 Diaries

Poems

Postcards

Scripts

Series I. Works, 1850-1977

<i>The Accomplice</i> [novel, 1950]	box 1 folder 1
"The Ancient Ports of Blakeney and Wells" [essay, nd]	folder 2
<i>Almanack of Hope: Sonnets</i> [poems, 1944] -- removed to galley files	
<i>Beyond This Disregard</i> [poems, 1943] -- see folder 3.9	
<i>The Book of Leisure</i> [anthology, 1957]. Front matter and correspondence, 1956-1957	folder 3
"The Break Through" [play, 1974-1975]	folder 4
<i>Collected Poems</i> [1957]	
Front matter and correspondence, 1956, nd	folder 5
"The Green Verges: Collected Poems" [poems, 1957]. Printer's copy, nd	folder 6
"Duty Run" [diary, 1942-1943]	folder 7
Early poems, unpublished work, 1936-1939	folder 8
Five Short Stories [1968, nd]	folder 9
The November Silences, 1968; The October Roses, nd; The Clean Break, nd; Perfect Mother, nd; The Relic, nd	
<i>Home and Away: An Autobiographical Gambit</i> [1960]. Proposal, criticism, and correspondence, 1959	folder 10
Juvenile Pieces [poems, 1926-1967, nd]. Three untitled notebooks, 1967, nd; The Speed Boat, nd; miscellaneous poems, 1926-1928	folder 11
<i>Lewis Carroll and His World</i> [literary criticism, 1976]	box 2 folder 1

<i>Living in a One-Sided House</i> [poetry, 1976]	folder 2
"A London Summer: Reflections in Word and Picture of the Long Hot Summer of 75" [television scripts, 1975]	folder 3
"The Lunar Visitor," (song in three parts) [poem, nd]. Includes correspondence, 1958	folder 4
"A Man There Was..." [poem 1961]. Includes correspondence and note, nd	folder 5
<i>The Net</i> [novel, 1952]. Correspondence and note, 1951-1952, nd	folder 6
<i>Pick of To-Days's Short Stories</i> [annual anthology, 1949]. Front matter and correspondence, 1948-1949, nd	folder 7
"Post Spandrels poems" [nd]	folder 8
Recent Poems [1960, 1961, nd]. "The Bungalow," 1960; "Chillibillee," nd; "The Trampoline," nd; miscellaneous poetry, 1961, nd	folder 9
Save the Queen from this... [lyrics, nd]. Includes note, nd	folder 10
<i>Selected Poems, 1967-1973</i> [1973]	folder 11
<i>The Seven Skies: A Study of the B.O.A.C. and its Forerunners since 1919</i> [essay, 1959]. "Working notebook used on travels," 1947	folder 12
<i>Shuffley Wanderers: An Entertainment</i> [novel, 1948]	folder 13
"Sleadley," [novel, nd]	folder 14
<i>The Smallest Room</i> [non-fiction, 1954; revised 1959]	
Bound copy with author's revisions and printer's marks [for new edition]; "An Annexe," ca. 1959	folder 15

Notes and drafts, printed matter, newspaper clippings, 1947, 1954, nd; correspondence, 1953	folder 16
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<i>South of Forty</i> [poems, 1943] -- see folder 3.9	
<i>Spandrels: Poems and Ballads</i> [1969].	folder 2
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<i>Spill Out: Poems and Ballads</i> [1967]	folder 3
<i>Take This Orange: Poems and Ballads</i> [1971]	folder 4
<i>Ten Summers: Poems, 1933-1943</i> [1944]. Notes and correspondence, 1943, nd	folder 5
<i>The Thomas Cook Story</i> [biography, 1953].	folder 6
"Research material," 1850-1960, nd. Includes correspondence of Thomas Cook, George Cruikshank, and others, 1850-1960; admission to "Worship of Bacchus" exhibition, 1863	
<i>Trespass in the Sun</i> [novel, 1957]. Author's plot notes, nd, and readers report, 1957	folder 7
"The Twenty-fifth Anniversary of the Royal Air Force" [poem, ca. 1943]. Correspondence, 1943, nd	folder 8
"War Poems and Post War " [1942-1944, nd]	folder 9
<i>Beyond This Disregard</i> [1943], unbound copy; <i>South of Forty</i> [1943], bound copy with authors corrections; "The Traveler," [short story, nd]; miscellaneous poetry and correspondence, 1942, 1944, nd	
Untitled manuscript [fiction, nd]; miscellaneous newspaper articles, 1945, 1977; Pudney's obituary, <i>The Times</i> , 1977	folder 10

Series II. Correspondence, 1937-1962

Incoming, 1937-1961, nd; Outgoing, nd

**box 3 folder
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The Smallest Room

Outgoing, 1953-1954, 1961, nd

folder 12

Incoming, 1937-1961, nd

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Bertram Rota, Ltd., miscellaneous, ca.1961-1962

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Miscellaneous annotated folders

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