

Acc.13344  
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## **Inventory**

**Acc.13344**

**George Mackay Brown**

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Letters, 1986-1994, of George Mackay Brown (1921-1996) to Kenna Crawford (b.1959), with related literary papers.

George Mackay Brown first met artist Kenna Crawford when she travelled to Orkney in 1986 at the invitation of Nora Kennedy, a close friend of the poet. Brown seems to have been instantly captivated by Crawford, some 40 years his junior, and one of his early acts of friendship was to write a poem, 'Kenna's Return to Orkney', in her sketchbook (Acc.13344/11). Crawford never had been to Orkney before, but she did have some Orcadian ancestry and this was enough to establish the all-important Orkney connection in Brown's eyes.

The friendship lasted for the best part of ten years, though the correspondence was at its height during 1986-1988, most notably when Crawford spent a year travelling and working in New Zealand. At this time, Brown's letters to her were close to being journals, often containing several days' worth of writing. He also made her gifts of manuscript poems, some because she was the inspiration behind them, and others - mainly acrostics - written for birthdays and Christmasses, and one for Crawford's wedding. The collection includes the uncorrected typescript of 'The Ballad of the Golden Bird', which Brown dedicated to Kenna Crawford.

*Bought, 2012, with the assistance of the Friends of the National Libraries.*

<b>1-9.</b>	<b>Letters.</b>
<b>10-11.</b>	<b>Poetry.</b>
<b>12.</b>	<b>Prose.</b>
<b>13.</b>	<b>Photographs.</b>
<b>14.</b>	<b>Miscellaneous.</b>

#### **1-9. Letters.**

George Mackay Brown occasionally added enclosures to his letters. These include a few papers relating to his life as a public figure in Orkney, and press-cuttings mainly of his own weekly column, 'Under Brinkie's Brae', from *The Orcadian*. Where a poem was included in or with a letter, it is detailed in the list below. Some poems and acrostics either arrived singly or were separated from their associated letters and these constitute Acc.13344/10.

1. 1986.  
Letters, some with enclosures.  
Poems: 'Seal (night-song)', typescript, f. 45; 'A Writer's Day', manuscript, f.54r-v; 'Sailing to Papay', manuscript, ff. 65-66; 'A Christmas present of shells', manuscript, ff. 73-74; 'Song of the Hogmanay drams', manuscript, f. 74.  
75 ff.
2. 1987.  
Letters, some with enclosures.

Poems: 'Betty Corrigan (the grave in the Peat Moss)' manuscript, f. 29; untitled poem, manuscript, f. 50; 'Wanderer', manuscript, f. 72; 'The Rackwick Dove', manuscript, f.91; 'Old Woman', manuscript, f. 125.  
166 ff.

3. 1988.  
Letters, some with enclosures.  
129 ff.
4. 1989.  
Letters, some with enclosures.  
30 ff.
5. 1990.  
Letters.  
14 ff.
6. 1991.  
Letters.  
9 ff.
7. 1992.  
Letters.  
10 ff.
8. 1993.  
Letters.  
4 ff.
9. 1994.  
Letter.  
3 ff.

### **10-11. Poetry.**

10. Manuscript and typescript poems and acrostics, mainly fair copies.

'Whale'. Typescript 'working copy', 1986. (f. 1).

'Kenna's Birthday, 3 October 1986. Acrostic, manuscript. (f. 3).

'Gossip in Hamnavoe: about a girl'. Manuscript, 1987. (f. 4).

'The Prince in the Heather (to Kenna: a valentine)'. Manuscript, typescript, 1987. (ff.5-9).

'A Dream of Fair Women'. Manuscript, 1987. (f. 10).

'Kenna's Birthday: 3 October 1987'. Acrostic, manuscript. (f.11).

'A Carol for Kenna'. Manuscript, 1987. (f. 12).

'Third of October 1988'. Acrostic, manuscript. (f.13).

'Christmas Verse for Kenna: 1988'. Manuscript. (f. 14).

'Kenna's Birthday, 3 October 1989. Acrostic, manuscript. (f. 15).

'A Christmas Poem for Kenna'. Acrostic, manuscript, 1989. (f. 15).

'Kenna's Birthday, 3 October 1990. Acrostic, manuscript. (f. 17).

'Poem in October, K. C. 3/10/91'. Acrostic, manuscript. (f. 18).  
'A Golden Day: 3 October 1992'. Acrostic, manuscript. (f. 19).  
'A Happy Birthday, Kenna 3 October 1993'. Acrostic, manuscript. (f. 20).  
'Kenna's Birthday: 3 October 1994. Acrostic, manuscript. (f.21).  
'Kenna: 3 October 1995'. Acrostic, manuscript. (f.22).  
'May Wedding: Kenna and Graham'. Acrostic, manuscript. ?1991. (f.23).  
23 ff.

11. Sketchbook, dated 1985, of Kenna Crawford. Many blank folios.  
Towards the end of the volume, inverted, manuscript poem of George Mackay Brown: 'Kenna's Return to Orkney', dated 6 May 1986.

## 12. Prose.

12. Uncorrected typescript, 1986, of 'The Ballad of the Golden Bird', with additional manuscript title page, dedicated to Kenna Crawford and dated 'Rackwick 1984 – Stromness 1986'.  
Published as 'The Golden Bird' in *The Golden Bird; two Orkney stories* (London: Murray, 1987).  
iii + 239 ff.

## 13. Photographs.

13. Five photographs and copies of photographs of George Mackay Brown; in two of them Kenna Crawford also appears.

## 14. Miscellaneous.

14. Miscellaneous.  
Copy of *The Tablet*, 20/27 December 1986, containing two poems by George Mackay Brown: 'The Silent Girl from Shetland (to Kenna)' (p. 1361) and 'They Came to an Inn: a ballad' (p. 1388).  
Proof of book jacket for *The Golden Bird*.