

Alan Benson:

A Preliminary Inventory of His Collection of Vernon Scannell at the Harry Ransom Center -->

Descriptive Summary

Creator:	Benson, Alan
Title:	Collection of Vernon Scannell
Dates:	1948-2007
Extent:	7 document boxes (2.94 linear feet)
Abstract:	The Alan Benson collection of Vernon Scannell includes correspondence, notebooks, drafts of poems, review typescripts, novel typescripts, radio scripts and audio tapes of talks and poetry readings sent to Benson by British writer and poet Vernon Scannell. The pair corresponded for more than twenty years.
Call Number:	Manuscript Collection MS-05132
Language:	English
Access:	Open for research. Researchers must create an online Research Account and agree to the Materials Use Policy before using archival materials.
Use Policies:	Ransom Center collections may contain material with sensitive or confidential information that is protected under federal or state right to privacy laws and regulations. Researchers are advised that the disclosure of certain information pertaining to identifiable living individuals represented in the collections without the consent of those individuals may have legal ramifications (e.g., a cause of action under common law for invasion of privacy may arise if facts concerning an individual's private life are published that would be deemed highly offensive to a reasonable person) for which the Ransom Center and The University of Texas at Austin assume no responsibility.
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Administrative Information

Preferred Citation: Alan Benson Collection of Vernon Scannell (Manuscript Collection MS-05132). Harry Ransom Center, The University of Texas at Austin.

Acquisition: Purchase, 2008 (08-10-007-P)

Processed by: Liz Murray, 2008

Repository: [Harry Ransom Center, The University of Texas at Austin](#)

Scope and Contents

This collection of papers of the British poet and writer Vernon Scannell (1922-2007) was purchased at auction in October 2008. The papers were formerly held by longtime admirer and friend Alan Benson who corresponded with Scannell for more than twenty years. Although Benson is a portrait photographer and painter in Knutsford, Cheshire, he shared a passion for literature with Scannell, who resided in the West Yorkshire town of Otley. In the course of their exchanges, Scannell expressed frustration with preparing typescripts of his poems. Benson, who was proficient with his word processor, offered to type Scannell's drafts and return finished copies to him. Scannell also sent Benson copies of his handwritten and typescript drafts of numerous book reviews, articles, and his novel *Feminine Endings*, as well as photocopies of the published writings in newspapers and magazines. Several short stories are also included in the correspondence. Over time, Benson served as "the keeper of the Scannell archives" as Scannell described him, retaining all the drafts and published material Scannell sent to him. Both octogenarians suffered physical maladies in their later years, Scannell battling throat cancer, while Benson struggled with macular degeneration from 1990 onward. Despite his failing eyesight, Benson continued painting from memory and managed to produce finished typescripts for Scannell.

Benson's collection of Scannell material contains correspondence, primarily from Scannell to Benson, with a smaller number of letters from Benson to Scannell; works by Scannell; and miscellaneous personal and career-related material. The papers are arranged in three series: I. Correspondence, 1995-2007; II. Works, 1948-2000; and III. Career-Related and Personal, 1978-2007, undated.

The correspondence series is divided into Subseries A. Vernon Scannell to Alan Benson, 1995-2007, and Subseries B. Alan Benson to Vernon Scannell, 1996-2001. The bulk of the papers are found in this series. Benson retained the material Scannell sent to him in the original mailing envelopes. He carefully noted the contents on the outside of the mailer along with the date the material was received. The correspondence is most prolific for the years 1996-2000 and begins to diminish in 2001 as Scannell's health deteriorated. All poetry included in this correspondence is indexed at the end of this inventory. Benson retained copies of some of his correspondence to Scannell. These letters are found in Subseries B. Series II. Works contains three subseries: A. Novel and Poetry Collections; B. Poems; and C. BBC Radio 3, "A Closer Look" transcripts. Subseries A. includes handwritten notes, drafts, and an uncorrected typescript of Scannell's novel *Feminine Endings* published in 2000. Scannell sent draft sections to Benson over a period of time so that Benson could prepare word-processed typescripts for Scannell. Benson removed Scannell's drafts from the correspondence and retained the drafts as a unit. Also found in this series are several published volumes of collected poems, some with Scannell's handwritten notations. Included are *Graves and Resurrections* (1948), *An Ilkley Quintet* (undated), *Mastering the Craft* (1970), *A Mortal Pitch* (1957), and a bound typescript of poems collected in 1997. Nearly all of Scannell's published works including novels, his autobiographies, and children's books were received with these papers and are held in the Ransom Center's book collection. Many of

these books are inscribed to Benson, or are signed by Scannell.

Subseries B. Poems includes poetry published in three literary periodicals and signed presentation copies of individual poems Benson typed for Scannell. These poems, like those in the correspondence series, are index at the end of the finding aid.

For several years in the 1980s, Scannell wrote and presented the radio program "A Closer Look" for BBC Radio 3. Typed transcripts of those programs are found in Subseries C, arranged alphabetically by the subject of the program, primarily literary figures such as W. H. Auden, Emily Dickinson, John Keats, Dylan Thomas, William Wordsworth, and others.

The Career-Related and Personal series includes a newspaper article about Scannell from 1983 and review of *Ring of Truth*; Benson's list of Scannell's published works from 1953-2001; notes withdrawn from books sent with this collection for the HRC Library; obituaries and funeral service program; Benson's photographs of Scannell taken in May 1998 for publicity purposes; and the first issue of *Screever* (Summer 1978).

Over a dozen audio cassette tapes and CDs of Scannell reading his poetry, as well as radio programs that aired his works, were included with the papers. There are also taped conversations with Scannell from 1997 and 1998, and a 1987 Imperial War Museum recording of Scannell talking about his life and writings. These have been added to the HRC's Sound Recordings Collection.

The Ransom Center holds additional Scannell materials (Manuscript Collection MS-03717) described in a separate finding aid. Scannell correspondence is located in the HRC collections of Nimbus Magazine, Derek Parker, and Anvil Press Poetry.

Series I. Correspondence, 1995-2007

Subseries A. Vernon Scannell to Alan Benson, 1995-2007

1995	Container 1.1
1996:	
January-April	Container 1.2
May; includes 1966 handwritten notebook with notes for radio programs, book reviews, and poems	Container 1.3
June-December; includes typescript of short story Lady Lazarus and handwritten draft of Fitzrovia, an unproduced prose piece for radio broadcast	Container 1.4
1997:	
January-March	Container 1.5
April-May	Container 1.6
June-August	Container 1.7
September-December	Container 1.8
1998:	
January-March	Container 2.1
April-May	Container 2.2
June-July	Container 2.3
August-September	Container 2.4
October-November	Container 2.5
December	Container 2.6
1999:	
January-March	Container 2.7
April-May	Container 2.8
June-October	Container 3.1

November-December **Container 3.2**

2000:

January-March **Container 3.3**

April-May **Container 3.4**

June-August **Container 3.5**

September-October; includes typescript of short story Hurt **Container 3.6**

November-December **Container 3.7**

2001:

January-May **Container 4.1**

June-December **Container 4.2**

2002:

January-April **Container 4.3**

May-December **Container 4.4**

2003; includes a copy of VS's collected poems Extra Time (2003), inscribed to Benson (25 September) **Container 4.5**

2004 **Container 4.6**

2005 **Container 4.7**

2006 **Container 4.8**

2007:

January-March **Container 5.1**

April-July **Container 5.2**

Subseries B. Alan Benson to Vernon Scannell, 1996-2001

1996 **Container 5.3**

1997 **Container 5.4**

1998-2001 **Container 5.5**

Series II. Works, 1948-2000

Subseries A. Novel and Poetry Collections

- Extra Time (collected poems, 2003) in 25 September 2003 correspondence **Container**
4.5
- Feminine Endings (novel, 2000):
- Handwritten spiral notebook, with letter to Benson, 3 September 1998 **Container**
5.6
- Handwritten draft and notes in 1984 daybook **Container** 5.7
- Uncorrected typescript, undated **Container** 5.8-10
- Graves and Resurrections (collected poems, 1948), published volume with Scannell's handwritten notations on contents page **Container**
6.1
- An Ilkley Quintet (collected poems, published for the Ilkley Festival, Yorkshire; undated) **Container**
6.2
- Mastering the Craft (published collected poems, 1970), with handwritten changes **Container**
6.3
- A Mortal Pitch (published collected poems, 1957), with handwritten changes **Container**
6.4
- Poems, 1997 (collected poems, 1997), bound typescript **Container** 6.5

Subseries B. Poems

- Published poems in Contemporary Review (August 1962), English (Spring 1969), and South East Arts Review (Autumn 1979) **Container**
6.6
- Signed presentation copies of individual poems, arranged alphabetically by title:
- A - I **Container** 6.7
- K - O **Container** 6.8
- P - Y **Container** 6.9

Subseries C. BBC Radio 3, A Closer Look, typed transcripts, circa 1981-1983

A-D, arranged by literary figure/subject:

- Arnold, Matthew **Container** 6.10

Auden, W. H.

Blake, William

Browning, Robert

Death of the Poets

Dickinson, Emily

Donne, John

Douglas, Keith

Drayton, Michael

H-M:

Hardy, Thomas

Container 6.11

Herbert, George

Hopkins, Gerard Manley

Keats, John

Marvell, Andrew

T-W:

Tennyson, Lord Alfred

Container 7.1

Thomas, Dylan

Thomas, Edward

Wordsworth, William

Wyatt, Sir Thomas

Series III. Career-Related and Personal, 1978-2007, undated

- Article about Scannell, 11 November 1983; and review of Ring of Truth, undated **Container**
7.2
- Article by Scannell on the centenary of J. B. Priestley's birth, Yorkshire Post, 13 September 1994 **Container**
7.3
- List of Scannell's published works [1953-2001] compiled by Benson and 'index to Vernon's poems on third disc' **Container**
7.4
- Notes withdrawn from books added to HRC Library **Container** 7.5
- Obituaries and funeral service program, 27 November 2007 **Container** 7.6
- Photographs of Scannell by Benson, May 1998 **Container** 7.7-8
- Issue of Screever, no. 1, Summer 1978; first issue published at the University of Keele [contains no Scannell poems] **Container**
7.9

Index of Poems

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- At the Grave of Henry Hall--1.5
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- Baptism of Fire--4.1
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- Beauty of Boats--1.7
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- Les Belles Dames--2.7, 4.1, 6.7
- A Bereavement--1.7
- The Better Word--4.5
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- Celebration of a Birth--2.5
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- Child with Toy Sword--2.5
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- Code Poem--2.5
- Cold Spell--6.7
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- A Couple of Heavyweights--2.5
- A Criticism of Life--4.1
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- Dear You... --4.5
- The Death Beast--2.4
- Death of a Snowman--1.7, 4.5
- Desirable Residence--4.2, 4.5
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- Dick Weaver's Victory--3.4
- Dies Faustus--2.7
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- A Dream of Books--2.5
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- The Emporium--2.5-6
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- An Extempory Effusion on the Appointment of the New Poet Laureate--2.8
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- Knockout--4.1
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