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**NATIONAL  
COUNCIL ON  
ARCHIVES**



The National Archives



archive  
awareness  
campaign

**For Immediate Release**

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## **EXETER UNEARTH'S CORNISH POET'S LOVE LETTERS**

Touching Valentine cards by the famous Cornish poet Reginald John 'Jack' Clemo have been given a new lease of life thanks to the University of Exeter. A cataloguing project by the Special Collections department has brought Clemo's declarations of love out of obscurity, and made them available to the public for the first time.

As part of the [Archive Awareness Campaign](#), an ongoing celebration of archives and their treasures, the university is marking 'lover's day' by showcasing these wonderful Valentine cards. Throughout the year, local and national archives open their doors to help the public discover a piece of their own history.

Jack Clemo's personal papers are being catalogued alongside those of seven other authors as part of a [National Cataloguing Grants Scheme](#) funded project. The project, 'Writing Lives: Archives of Literary Craft and Kinship', is under way at the University, cataloguing collections of papers belonging to Jack Clemo, Agatha Christie, Ted Hughes, Charles Causley, Patricia Beer, Frances Bellerby, Margaret Forster and John Betjeman. It will be completed at the end of Spring.

The catalogues will be searchable online and can be accessed via the Special Collections website at <http://library.exeter.ac.uk/special/>.

**Helen Jones, Project Archivist, University of Exeter** said:

"I hope that these sweet, very personal, little cards will serve as a reminder of what can be expressed with just a small sheet of paper, a little imagination and a lot of love".

**Angela Owusu, Archive Awareness Campaign Officer** said:

“This project shows how important cataloguing is, because it will make available material relating to famous literary figures which it would otherwise be very difficult to access. In cataloguing these separate collections, the Special Collections department will be able to reveal details of the writers’ creative processes, highlight the many personal and professional relationships, and establish firm connections to other collections they hold and the wider modern literary scene”.

For further details, spokespeople or images on Archive Awareness Campaign, please contact **Angela Owusu** on **0208 392 5237** or email

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#### **Notes to Editor**

- Reginald John ‘Jack’ Clemo (1917-1994) was the Cornish writer of poetry, theology, and autobiography. A passionate man, he was deaf and blind for much of his adult life. He became somewhat intense and introspective, and this is reflected in his early work. However, his Christian faith was strong, if unorthodox at times, and supported always by a devoted mother, he fervently believed it was God’s will for him to marry.
- In 1968, at the age of 52, Jack Clemo married Ruth Peaty, a laundry worker from Weymouth. Jack and Ruth shared a deep love and respect for one another. In finding love, Jack was also able to rediscover a lighter side to life and his poetry. Jack’s love for Ruth, his self-expression through his poetry, and his mischievous wit are encapsulated in the little Valentine’s cards he composed each year for his ‘sweet little Pixie’ using two fingers on his well-used typewriter.
- Amongst Jack Clemo’s personal papers which have recently been catalogued, are the diaries in which he documented the many hardships in his life. His correspondence especially the Valentine’s cards provide a welcome contrast showing the joy he experienced and could express in his written word, but has been so often lacking in critiques of his work.
- Visitors interested in the card should contact the archive curator at Special Collections, [libspc@exeter.ac.uk](mailto:libspc@exeter.ac.uk) or on **01392 263 879**
- There will be an event with a small temporary exhibition in May to mark the close of the project.
- Archive Awareness Campaign was originally designed to address the issues of under representation of UK archives, especially in comparison with the museum, gallery and library sectors. The campaign began with ‘Archive Awareness Month’

in September 2003 and since then has taken place over a longer period in the autumn. Visit [www.archiveawareness.com](http://www.archiveawareness.com) for more details.

- To find an Archive Awareness Campaign event near you or to discover more about the UK's archives visit [www.archiveawareness.com](http://www.archiveawareness.com)

Here's a bit of colour  
To show our sky is blue  
Except when the weather's  
And then I turn to you <sup>duller,</sup>  
And we cling tight together  
Until the sun peeps through.  
For two decades we've done it  
Because our love is true.

To my darling

Ruth

After 22 years of

great love

From your devoted

Alan xxxxxx

to buy something



