

Helen Blackshaw and Bert Corrin papers

Accession number 2789

Date 1927-1985

Author / Creator

Blackshaw, Helen, 1893-1991

Corrin, Bert, 1902-1985.

Abstract Papers of Helen Blackshaw and Bert Corrin, including letters, newspaper clippings, photographs and manuscripts.

Scope and content The collection consists primarily of letters written to Helen Blackshaw (nee Rigby) by Bert Corrin between 1927 and 1985. In 1927 Helen Rigby sailed to Auckland, New Zealand to be married to Arthur 'Lloyd' Blackshaw. On the same boat was Herbert 'Bert' Corrin, both were from Yorkshire and they became lifelong friends. Bert disembarked in Adelaide and began a correspondence which lasted for 58 years, always ending his letters 'As always, Bert'. The letters chronicle Bert's life as an itinerant worker in various parts of Australia including north and western Queensland and New Zealand.

Description 300+ letters, 2 manuscripts, 7 poems, photographs, postcards.

Access restrictions Unrestricted access.

Copyright status In copyright.

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Preferred citation

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Series 1: Correspondence (1927)

Series number 1

Series title Correspondence

Date 1927

Scope and content

In 1927 Bert Corrin wrote to his friend Helen Blackshaw from Brisbane. Having left the SS 'Naldera' at Adelaide, a town he disliked, he travelled by train to Brisbane. Without finding work, he then sailed to Auckland where he reported the wages were poor, and intended to return to Sydney. Although Bert had hoped to visit Helen, it did not eventuate.

Author / Creator

Corrin, Herbert, 1902-1985

Description

Description 7 letters

Locate OMOSBOX Box 24260 O/S grey album

Access

Access restrictions Unrestricted access

Copyright status In copyright

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Series 2: Correspondence (1928)

Series number 2

Series title Correspondence

Date 1928

Scope and content

In 1928 Bert Corrin wrote to Helen from Brisbane where he was working on a dairy farm for low wages. He applied unsuccessfully for work in New Guinea and travelled by train to north Queensland - to Cairns, Camooweal, and Mt Isa and found work at Rocklands Station, 160 miles north of Mt Isa, located on the banks of the Georgina River. Here he was employed as a 'pumper' maintaining the artesian bore and windmills during the drought.

Author / Creator

Corrin, Herbert, 1902-1985

Description

Description 11 letters

Locate OMOSBOX Box 24260 O/S grey album

Access

Access restrictions Unrestricted access

Copyright status In copyright

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Series 3: Correspondence (1929)

Series number 3

Series title Correspondence

Date 1929

Scope and content

In 1929 Bert Corrin wrote to Helen from Cloncurry, he had been given his notice from Rocklands Station - the breaking of the drought meant his services as a 'pumper' were no longer required. His search for work took him from Cloncurry, to the Gulf of Carpentaria, Richmond, Mitchell, Goondiwindi and Warwick, from where he planned to return to New Zealand. Bert sailed on the SS 'Maheno' in October and with help from Lloyd Blackshaw, found work on W.R. Birch's dairy farm, Hapua, Masterton.

Author / Creator

Corrin, Herbert, 1902-1985

Description

Description 14 letters

Locate OMOSBOX Box 24260 O/S grey album

Access

Access restrictions Unrestricted access

Copyright status In copyright

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Series 4: Correspondence (1930)

Series number 4

Series title Correspondence

Date 1930

Scope and content

In 1930 Bert Corrin wrote to Helen from Hapua, Masterton where he continued to work for W.R. Birch, but was unhappy and left the farm, visiting Helen briefly before going back on the road with his swag. Bert had tired of 'associating with cows' and was thinking of returning to Australia.

Author / Creator

Corrin, Herbert, 1902-1985

Description

Description 14 letters

Locate OMOSBOX Box 24260 O/S grey album

Access

Access restrictions Unrestricted access

Copyright status In copyright

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Series 5: Correspondence (1931)

Series number 5

Series title Correspondence

Date 1931

Scope and content

In 1931 Bert Corrin found work on various farms - Carterton, Masterton, Hamilton, and New Plymouth, sleeping out, and made plans to return to Australia. Although his plans were delayed after having money stolen from his belongings, he arrived in Sydney in December.

Author / Creator

Corrin, Herbert, 1902-1985

Description

Description 13 letters

Locate OMOSBOX Box 24260 O/S grey album

Access

Access restrictions Unrestricted access

Copyright status In copyright

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Series 6: Correspondence (1932-1933)

Series number 6

Series title Correspondence

Date 1932-1933

Scope and content

In 1932 Bert Corrin left Sydney for Victoria to search for gold and wrote from Yackandandah, where he dined on fruit from deserted orchards. He made his way by train to Cardwell, on the east coast of northern Queensland, where he tried his hand at fishing, but after his mother sent him the money for passage home to York, he left Australia in December. Bert stayed 6 months in York, but still had no luck in finding employment. In August he booked passage on the 'Iconic' to return to Australia.

Author / Creator

Corrin, Herbert, 1902-1985

Description

Description 9 letters

Locate OMOSBOX Box 24261 O/S grey album

Access

Access restrictions Unrestricted access

Copyright status In copyright

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Series 7: Correspondence (1934-1936)

Series number 7

Series title Correspondence

Date 1934-1936

Scope and content

In 1934 Bert Corrin wrote to Helen from Gunnedah, NSW where he was waiting for the weather to clear before departing on his bicycle. He had unsuccessfully tried to launch a device for topping sugar cane, and worked for several weeks on a sheep station. On his way north he picked up work timber cutting, peanut farming, cotton picking, and on a dairy farm in Cairns. In 1935 Bert Corrin wrote to Helen from Derby, north Western Australia where he had travelled with his bicycle. He was able to obtain a little work, including as a musterer's cook. In 1936 Bert wrote from Canarvon, Western Australia, Mount Magnet, and Broome, where he had work as a wharf 'lumper'. He intended to work his way south camping out, with his bicycle. In December he wrote from Kalgoorlie desperate to leave W.A. hopping freight trains across the desert to Port Augusta, South Australia.

Author / Creator

Corrin, Herbert, 1902-1985

Description

Description 4 letters

Locate OMOSBOX Box 24261 O/S grey album

Access

Access restrictions Unrestricted access

Copyright status In copyright

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Series 8: Correspondence (1937)

Series number 8

Series title Correspondence

Date 1937

Scope and content

In 1937 Bert Corrin wrote to Helen from Dareton, NSW describing the work he found on his way from South Australia which included stoning apricots and nectarines, haymaking, and grape picking, across the river from Mildura. Bert then made his way through Grafton, New England on his way to Gordonvale and Townsville, where he found work on a sugar plantation.

Author / Creator

Corrin, Herbert, 1902-1985

Description

Description 4 letters

Locate OMOSBOX Box 24261 O/S grey album

Access

Access restrictions Unrestricted access

Copyright status In copyright

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Series 9: Correspondence (1938-1941)

Series number 9

Series title Correspondence

Date 1938-1941

Scope and content

In 1938 Bert Corrin wrote to Helen from north Queensland where he was trying his hand at fishing, and thinking of joining the army the next year. In 1939 Bert wrote from Mareeba, north Queensland, where he had work on a tobacco farm and was living on mangoes. In August he wrote of his concern for his elderly widowed mother and his intent to sign on as crew for passage on a sugar boat bound for Montreal. In 1940 Bert Corrin wrote to Helen from York, England, where he was staying with his widowed mother. He had obtained some work - with the railway signal stores, shovelling snow and relief caretaking at the library.

Author / Creator

Corrin, Herbert, 1902-1985

Description

Description 9 letters

Locate OMOSBOX Box 24261 O/S grey album

Access

Access restrictions Unrestricted access

Copyright status In copyright

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Series 10: Correspondence (1943-1945)

Series number 10

Series title Correspondence

Date 1943-1945

Scope and content

In 1943 Bert Corrin wrote to Helen from RAF Station, Bathurst (Gambia), attached to the West African Forces as a Leading Aircraftman (LAC). Here he was working with the flying boats who

were tasked for anti-submarine and air-sea rescue missions. Bert was stationed there until July 1944 until he was posted an RAF Station in York. In 1945 Bert Corrin wrote to Helen from RAF Station, Red Hills Lake, near Madras, India, hoping to be discharged early the next year. In November 1945 he was discharged from the Air Force and returned to York. He then applied for repatriation to Australia in which he was successful.

Author / Creator

Corrin, Herbert, 1902-1985

Description

Description 14 letters

Locate OMOSBOX Box 24261 O/S grey album

Access

Access restrictions Unrestricted access

Copyright status In copyright

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Series 11: Correspondence (1946)

Series number 11

Series title Correspondence

Date 1946

Scope and content

In April 1946 Bert Corrin wrote to Helen from Townsville, having obtained a passage on an aircraft carrier to Sydney. With the intention of buying land, Bert first found work at Cardwell at the sawmill, then at Kuranda on the railway but did not find what he was looking for. He did however find 5 acres in Cooktown where he hoped to grow fruit. Bert set up home with two 'one-man army huts' side by side, and dug a well for water. His property was 9 or 10 hours by boat to Cairns and lit was by kerosene lamp. In November he sent Helen and Lloyd the manuscript of his novel that he had laboured over for several years.

Author / Creator

Corrin, Herbert, 1902-1985

Description

Description 9 letters

Locate OMOSBOX Box 24261 O/S grey album

Access

Access restrictions Unrestricted access

Copyright status In copyright

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Series 12: Correspondence (1947-1948)

Series number 12

Series title Correspondence

Date 1947-1948

Scope and content

In 1947 Bert Corrin wrote to Helen from his property in Cooktown, where his garden was progressing. To supplement his income he had temporary work at the aerodrome and sent Helen a story of the settlement of Cooktown. His letters are full of local anecdotes - *Mrs Romeo wife of a local trochus shell fisherman, who regularly sports a black eye; Darky Addison who has the instincts of a flying fox - he knows where all the ripening fruit trees are in Cooktown, and how a snake ate his cat.*

Author / Creator

Corrin, Herbert, 1902-1985

Description

Description 11 letters

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Access

Access restrictions Unrestricted access

Copyright status In copyright

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Series 13: Correspondence (1949-1950)

Series number 13

Series title Correspondence

Date 1949-1950

Scope and content

Early in 1949 Bert's property in Cooktown is affected by the cyclone in February which flattened many buildings in the town. One side of his house was blown away and some of his fruit trees bent to the ground. He later obtained work on the flooded aerodrome and by August the region was in drought without their regular winter rains. He wrote that life was looking up as he has obtained a wireless radio and cycles into town for supplies.

Author / Creator

Corrin, Herbert, 1902-1985

Description

Description 10 letters

Locate OMOSBOX Box 24262 O/S grey album

Access

Access restrictions Unrestricted access

Copyright status In copyright

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Series 14: Correspondence (1951-1953)

Series number 14

Series title Correspondence

Date 1951-1953

Scope and content

In 1951 Bert wrote of progress in Cooktown, although a doctor only visits once a week for consultations. Drought followed by storms feature; he has planted pineapples to help pay his rates and in 1952 obtained temporary work at the airstrip. In 1953 there was much local news: the sawmill has closed down and the local roadworks have stopped due to a lack of funding. He described it as a season for boils, ringworm and ulcers and the air ambulance had been busy seeing to: broken arms, ribs, illnesses, 3 deaths, smash ups, goring by bull, and stings by sea wasps.

Author / Creator

Corrin, Herbert, 1902-1985

Description

Description 11 letters

Locate OMOSBOX Box 24262 O/S grey album

Access

Access restrictions Unrestricted access

Copyright status In copyright

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Series 15: Correspondence (1954-1957)

Series number 15

Series title Correspondence

Date 1954-1957

Scope and content

During this time Bert described himself as an onlooker of Cooktown life and wrote stories of the local people. 1957 was a time of economic depression for the town, the sawmill closed and many homes were put up for sale. Bert received Helen's book of poems, which he described as the story of her life in NZ.

Author / Creator

Corrin, Herbert, 1902-1985

Description

Description 10 letters

Locate OMOSBOX Box 24262 O/S grey album

Access

Access restrictions Unrestricted access

Copyright status In copyright

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Series 16: Correspondence (1958-1960)

Series number 16

Series title Correspondence

Date 1958-1960

Scope and content

Bert has become friends with his neighbours - the Fletchers - and takes regular meals with them, he writes of the happenings in the town - reports of miners blowing themselves up on gold claims, robberies and the lack of a resident doctor. Bert received a copy of Helen's book and latest poems, and the town has a re-enactment of Captain Cook's landing.

Author / Creator

Corrin, Herbert, 1902-1985

Description

Description 10 letters

Locate OMOSBOX Box 24262 O/S grey album

Access

Access restrictions Unrestricted access

Copyright status In copyright

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Series 17: Correspondence (1961-1963)

Series number 17

Series title Correspondence

Date 1961-1963

Scope and content

While Bert has been unsuccessful in getting his book published in 1961 he wrote of many events in Cooktown: the doctor has left, they celebrated 'Back to Cooktown week' with a pig-hunt, tin-sluing, and damper competitions; the railway line is being removed. In 1963 the new doctor's husband and author John Naish, died of a drug overdose, and his neighbour Fletcher sold his property to the former Deputy Prime Minister, Morris.

Author / Creator

Corrin, Herbert, 1902-1985

Description

Description 12 letters

Locate OMOSBOX Box 24262 O/S grey album

Access

Access restrictions Unrestricted access

Copyright status In copyright

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Series 18: Correspondence (1964-1966)

Series number 18

Series title Correspondence

Date 1964-1966

Scope and content

Bert described the Cooktown open air picture theatre he sometimes attended, and that 'a rash of caravan parks has broken out'. He has written a story of Cooktown enterprises which he mailed to Helen and notes that "In Cooktown we are all busily minding our own & everybody elses business".

Author / Creator

Corrin, Herbert, 1902-1985

Description

Description 14 letters

Locate OMOSBOX Box 24263 O/S grey album

Access

Access restrictions Unrestricted access

Copyright status In copyright

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Series 19: Correspondence (1967-1969)

Series number 19

Series title Correspondence

Date 1967-1969

Scope and content

Bert is reminded that it is 40 years since Helen and he met and first started writing. He noted that Cooktown is the last place to come if you want to keep to yourself, the postmaster & staff know everying. Bert reminisced about his childhood in a small town called Hebden Bridge in the Calder Valley, and Helen's elder son Quenten emigrated to Melbourne.

Author / Creator

Corrin, Herbert, 1902-1985

Description

Description 13 letters

Locate OMOSBOX Box 24263 O/S grey album

Access

Access restrictions Unrestricted access

Copyright status In copyright

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Series 20: Correspondence (1970-1972)

Series number 20

Series title Correspondence

Date 1970-1972

Scope and content

In 1970 Cooktown prepared for the Queen's visit onboard the Britannia for the Captain Cook celebrations. Bert gave several reports on the event and other local news: the undertaker Patrina emptied a corpse out of a coffin at funeral because they wouldn't pay enough for the coffin; the museum closed and reopened several months later.

Author / Creator

Corrin, Herbert, 1902-1985

Description

Description 12 letters

Locate OMOSBOX Box 24263 O/S grey album

Access

Access restrictions Unrestricted access

Copyright status In copyright

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Series 21: Correspondence (1973-1975)

Series number 21

Series title Correspondence

Date 1973-1975

Scope and content

During these years Bert has a unexpected visit by Helen's son Quentin and his family, which was cut short by the threat of floods. There were many happenings in Cooktown: the butcher died, matron's son killed by car, new shop in main street, the hardware store burned down, local detectives investigating stock stealing. Bert sold his second property to a neighbour Mr Pratt.

Author / Creator

Corrin, Herbert, 1902-1985

Description

Description 13 letters

Locate OMOSBOX Box 24263 O/S grey album

Access

Access restrictions Unrestricted access

Copyright status In copyright

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Series 22: Correspondence (1976-1980)

Series number 22

Series title Correspondence

Date 1976-1980

Scope and content

As Helen Blackshaw's eyesight fails, her husband Lloyd takes over the letter writing, and Bert continues to tell them of the happenings in Cooktown - someone shot his very talkative pet cockatoo, the local cat lady has up to 35 felines, and he reminisces about the war years.

Author / Creator

Corrin, Herbert, 1902-1985

Description

Description 12 letters

Locate OMOSBOX Box 24263 O/S grey album

Access

Access restrictions Unrestricted access

Copyright status In copyright

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Series 23: Correspondence (1981-1983)

Series number 23

Series title Correspondence

Date 1981-1983

Scope and content

In April 1981 Bert is invited to visit Helen and Lloyd, he is met at the airport by their son Quentin and he stays for several weeks. It had been nearly 50 years since he last saw them both. In 1982 the council had plans to rezone Bert's property (he is almost 80 years old) and is no longer able to maintain his garden.

Author / Creator

Corrin, Herbert, 1902-1985

Description

Description 11 letters

Locate OMOSBOX Box 24263 O/S grey album

Access

Access restrictions Unrestricted access

Copyright status In copyright

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Series 24: Correspondence (1984-1985)

Series number 24

Series title Correspondence

Date 1984-1985

Scope and content

Bert wrote of the many accidents and events in Cooktown - fights, shootings, death by snakebite and a drowning. He ponders "Does Cooktown do this to us or do we come here because we are already like that?" Bert prepares to sell his property and move to a flat, he also writes of his nephew Phillip Corrin who lives with his growing family in Cairns. The last letter, from his nephew, advises Helen and Lloyd of Bert's passing in October 1985.

Author / Creator

Corrin, Herbert, 1902-1985

Description

Description 7 letters

Locate OMOSBOX Box 24263 O/S grey album

Access

Access restrictions Unrestricted access

Copyright status In copyright

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Series 25: Illustrations (1935-1950)

Series number 25

Series title Illustrations

Date 1935-1950

Scope and content

This series contains a number of illustrated items sent by Bert Corrin to Helen Blackshaw. They include:

- Pen and ink sketch of a coastal camp, presumably Bert's at Cardwell, north Queensland.
- One page of illustrations with a map, in pen and ink. The map shows the coastline south and east of Cardwell, north Queensland.
- Hand drawn map, in pen and ink, of northern and western Queensland.

Author / Creator

Corrin, Herbert, 1902-1985

Description

Description 3 illustrations

Locate OMOSBOX Box 24260 O/S grey album

Access

Access restrictions Unrestricted access

Copyright status In copyright

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Series 26: Manuscripts (1946-2004)

Series number 26

Series title Manuscripts

Date 1946-2004

Scope and content

This series contains several manuscripts by Bert Corrin. His main work titled 'The Ever Hopeful' was intended for publication, but was never accepted. The items include:

- Typed copy of Bert Corrin's unpublished manuscript titled 'The ever hopeful'. The fictional work was written while he travelled around Australia, while in York, England and in the RAF during the Second World War. The handwritten manuscript was posted to Helen Blackshaw in New Zealand in 1946 for her appraisal. It was typed by her lifelong friend Dorothea Mason, wife of NZ poet R.A.K. Mason. Original kept by Helen plus 2nd copies of typewritten edition. Bert's copy consumed by insects according to his letter of 1974.
- Typed copy of Bert Corrin's unpublished manuscript relating to his search for and establishment on land in Cooktown. The work is a reworked version of a journal of the time, kept by Bert. It includes a covering letter to Helen Blackshaw, dated 20 April 1948.
- Copy of handwritten notes made from Bert Corrin's letters. The notes, made for the benefit of the Blackshaw family history, by Helen's daughter-in-law Daphne Blackshaw, include dates of letters and brief summaries of their content.

Author / Creator

Corrin, Herbert, 1902-1985

Description

Description 3 manuscripts

Locate OMBOX Box 4857 [manuscript book] OMOSBOX Box 24260 O/S grey album

Series 27: Newspaper clippings (1930-1970)

Series number 27

Series title Newspaper clippings

Date 1930-1970

Scope and content

This series consists of newspaper articles sent by Bert Corrin to Helen Blackshaw for her interest. One is in relation to 'Nature' colonists to set up a haven in north Queensland; another on the

prospect of a new water supply to Cooktown in the 1960s.

Description

Description 1 folder

Locate OMOSBOX Box 24260 O/S grey album

Access

Access restrictions Unrestricted access

Copyright status In copyright

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Series 28: Photographs, postcards (1930-1981)

Series number 28

Series title Photographs, postcards

Date 1930-1981

Scope and content

This series contains colour photographic slides; black and white photographs, photographic and picture postcards relating to Bert Corrin, with Helen and Lloyd Blackshaw. They include:

- Three colour transparencies taken of Bert Corrin, Helen and Lloyd Blackshaw in Whangaparaoa, Auckland, New Zealand during his last visit to his lifelong friends.
- Black and white photographs taken of Bert, and Lloyd Blackshaw, taken at the Blackshaw farm at Cambridge, New Zealand, on his second visit. Several photocopies are also included.
- Photographic postcards of places of interest at Gordonvale, north Queensland.
- Picture postcards of Black Mountain, Cooktown, north Queensland

Description

Description 3 slides (with 6 photographs; 3 photographic postcards; 2 picture postcards)

Locate OMOSBOX Box 24260 O/S grey album

Access

Access restrictions Unrestricted access

Copyright status In copyright

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Series 29: Poetry (1930-1980)

Series number 29

Series title Poetry

Date 1930-1980

Scope and content

Pages of prose in Bert Corrin's hand, mostly untitled. They begin:

- 'Beyond earth's rim, through sullen hope, the storm cloud thrusts his glowing hulk' ...
- 'A cold night wind is blowing, across the bay black hills and orange sky' ...
- 'How can I live forever - here! hemmed in by countless rows of houses' ...
- 'The plains spread wide beneath a winter moon' ...
- 'Night behind me draws in closer, above still water gnarled thorn trees stand' ...
- 'From the dull despairing clouds a soft rain falls, and mist broods in the leafless forest aisles' ...
- 'In triumph the shouting wind appears, and groaning elms writhe at its might' ...
- 'I think just for today the world is an enchanted land of drowsy afternoons' ...

Author / Creator

Corrin, Herbert, 1902-1985

Description

Description 7 poems

Locate OMOSBOX Box 24260 O/S grey album

Access

Access restrictions Unrestricted access

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