

A 'gift to the nation': the diaries and notebooks of CEW Bean

Anne-Marie Condé

Anne-Marie Condé is a curator at the National Museum of Australia. She also worked for many years as a historian at the Australian War Memorial. Her published work mainly concerns the history of archives, recordkeeping and museums in Australia, and she has an interest in recordkeeping in art and literature.

How can we know what we think we know? Postmodernism insists that we can't. Seekers of historical knowledge have long looked in archives to understand the past but, as has often been discussed in archival literature, even archives are not the still points in a turning world we might have hoped for. It is not just that some records are privileged because they are selected for long-term preservation as archives while others are not. Even the records that do make it into the archives often have multifarious histories, both before and after they cross the threshold. Canadian archivist Tom Nesmith has noted that the processes by which a record is created are complex, and that a record rarely comes to us unchanged from its initial inscription. These processes expand the evidence a record can carry, and he encourages us to understand 'the record we now have'. This article takes up that challenge by examining the diaries and notebooks of Charles Bean, official war correspondent and historian of Australia's part in World War I. Bean's diaries and notebooks offer a particularly rich example of how knowledge of the history of a record expands the evidence it can carry.

Introduction

In May 1942, Charles Bean wrote to the Australian War Memorial offering to donate some of the records he had created and used during his years firstly as official correspondent, and later official historian of Australia's part in World War I. The records comprised 286 volumes of diaries and notebooks, including the notes and other records made when Bean and his staff revisited Gallipoli in 1919. There were three copies of the records and the offer included all copies, including one (incomplete) set then stored in England. Also offered were correspondence files, the manuscripts of the six volumes of the official history that Bean wrote, and books of notes made in compiling the histories.¹

Bean had discussed his intentions before, so the War Memorial knew the records were coming, but still it was delighted, for this was the single most important private transfer of records it had then received (and has perhaps ever received). The free gift to an Australian library of such a large manuscript collection by a living person was rare, and the War Memorial was quick off the mark with a press release announcing this 'gift to the nation'. The Chairman of the War Memorial's Board, Senator JS Collins, said that the records' value could not be less than several thousand pounds, and that it was 'probably the most important body of private war records then in existence'.²

Bean used the records extensively in writing his six volumes of the Australian official history, and in 1938 had remarked that for him they could be said, 'roughly, to weigh in historical value about as much as the whole official record of the Australian infantry, each being complementary to each other'.³ He drew on them also in his late books *Anzac to Amiens*, *Gallipoli mission* and *Two men I knew*.⁴ The records were opened for public access in 1979 and since then many historians have used them, sometimes in passing, often extensively. In 2009 the records were digitised and placed on the Australian War Memorial's website where they can be read by researchers around the world. Since 1979 they have been the bedrock of Australian World War I scholarship.

I use the term 'bedrock' but, actually, to regard these records as fixed and immutable, unchanged and unchangeable, is quite wrong. As the

foregoing outline already suggests, these records, which document history so extensively, have a history of their own. The 'bedrock' actually has a history. We know a great deal about how Bean created, used and felt about his diaries and notebooks over a long period. We can untangle the crucial differences between the diaries and notebooks. A bit of detective work reveals the significance of the copies. To the question why, if placed in public hands in 1942, could the records not be used until 1979, there is an answer. Perhaps the fundamental question is: what were the processes by which a set of personal records became 'national' records - 'a gift to the nation'?

These processes are the subject of this article. Researchers usually read archives for their content, and analyse them for how that content might constitute evidence of the past. Archives are seen as an 'unquestioned and transparent conduit' through which to approach or receive the past, as two Canadian archivists have put it.⁵ But as those and other writers have suggested, archives are much more than this. What is recorded is never simply 'what happened', one theorist has noted: records are 'socially constructed and maintained entities'.⁶ They participate in processes which *also* constitute evidence that needs to be considered. It is a circular, perhaps rather vertiginous concept. Canadian archivist Tom Nesmith tries to tease it out by suggesting that because a record rarely, if ever, comes to us unchanged from its initial 'inscription', this varied creation process changes the record and expands the evidence it bears. He encourages his fellow archivists to try to understand 'the record we *now* have'.⁷ From a different perspective, oral historian Alistair Thomson finds that novice researchers sometimes use personal testimony with 'naïve enthusiasm', extracting small sections with little regard to how the provenance might be relevant to its interpretation and use. But there is, he says, a great deal of scholarship that shows that a life story is never a 'perfect replay of experience', but 'is received through language and is partial, selective and purposeful'. Moreover, every time we 're-remember' an event we make sense of it in new ways and potentially create a new version of it. Thomson quotes his colleague Alessandro Portelli, that 'memory is not a passive depository of facts, but an active process of creating meanings'.⁸ And thus it is for archives.

Creating the records

Bean began keeping the diary on the evening of 21 October 1914. That afternoon he had waved goodbye to his parents as his ship, *HMAS Orvieto*, pulled away from the pier at Port Melbourne. He kept the diary perfunctorily at first, because for the history of the war that the Australian Defence Minister, George Pearce, had suggested he write, he planned to make a series of separate notes. Life aboard ship was so uneventful at first that in his spare time Bean sat in his cabin dictating a historical novel to his batman and clerk, Arthur Bazley. But in early November, after the sudden and exciting encounter between the German ship *SMS Emden* and *HMAS Sydney*, which was Australia's first naval battle, the novel was abandoned and the diary became his 'chief personal record of the war'. Just before the landing at Gallipoli in April 1915 Bean told General William Birdwood, commander of the Australian and New Zealand forces in Europe, about the proposed history. Birdwood promised him every assistance and added, 'You can't begin writing too early. Do it now - write everything in your diary'. Bean already was; but Birdwood encouraged him now to miss nothing of character or atmosphere that might prove useful later on. A talented journalist, Bean did not especially need this advice, but he remembered Birdwood's comment all his life.⁹

The diary was his daily record of what he 'saw, heard and felt', and what he could see personally of the fighting by positioning himself with his telescope about 1,200 yards from (or, on Gallipoli, almost right in) the frontline. Especially on Gallipoli, Bean worked on his diary at night after his press work was finished. Exhausted, he sometimes fell asleep in between sentences. 'Full daylight often came with the work still unfinished', he later remembered.¹⁰ But he wanted also to interrogate as many people as possible who planned, controlled and physically fought a battle and this could often happen only later, sometimes much later, than the event. To avoid confusing his own daily narrative, Bean kept a separate set of notebooks in which he recorded these interviews. These notebooks were the ones he was so often seen carrying with him, and when they were full they were kept and filed by Arthur Bazley, who called them 'our regimental records'. Bean had a system for taking notes at interviews. He knew that the

sight of a notebook might 'dry up' any infantry officer, so in these cases he would begin a discussion by sketching a map of the relevant ground. Sometimes an officer would take up the pencil himself in order to correct Bean when he went wrong, and from that point 'the ice was broken'. Bean could ask the officer to mark the salient points on the map while Bean himself sat opposite, scribbling as hard as he liked. It was a technique he learned as a journalist in Sydney and it always succeeded. Bean was proud of the fact that, especially in relation to his interviews with high-ranking officers and politicians, the notes of interviews constituted a record of events and decision-making that could be found nowhere else.¹¹

Added to the diaries and notebooks was a third category. These were letters and 'other single papers and notes' added later, after the war, during the writing of the official history. Significant though they are, they are not part of Bean's day-to-day wartime records and they are not discussed any further in this article.¹²

Copying and keeping

During the war Bean sent his completed diaries and notebooks to London for safekeeping, first to the Australian High Commission under Captain HC Smart, and later to the Australian War Records Section (AWRS) under Lieutenant John Treloar. The AWRS was established in May 1917 largely at Bean's instigation, initially to collect and monitor the standard of official records created by the AIF. Although Bean's records were not official AIF records, Treloar accepted them into his temporary care. Smart had arranged for the 37 Gallipoli volumes to be copied by his typist, Miss Mitchell (her first name is unknown).¹³ Precisely why copies were made can only be inferred, but some volumes are so messy and hard to read that even Bean might have had trouble making sense of them later, and it was also sensible to have a spare set to keep in a separate location. Later, in Australia, it meant that there could be a working copy for Bean's staff to use. Probably because Treloar did not have the staff to carry on the copying task by having them typed, he arranged for the rest to be photostatted.¹⁴

Photostatting was new technology at this time and it was typical of Treloar to have fastened upon it at once. Photostat machines were an

American invention and had been introduced into American offices in 1911. In mid 1917 the AWRS under Treloar hired a photostat machine for its own work, and its many uses were obvious to Treloar. In January 1918, during a spell in London, Bean noted in his diary, 'Treloar settled my greatest difficulty in one flash by suggesting a scheme by which my materials could be classified by use of the photostat. It will save months, possibly 6 months of labour'.¹⁵ The apparatus consisted of a camera that could make a copy directly onto sensitised paper without an intervening negative. A roll of paper was fed into the machine and all the chemical processes were done inside the machine.¹⁶ The first print would be a white-on-black image and so in order to produce a positive, the first print was recopied.

The idea for a *third* copy of Bean's diaries and notebooks probably came from Treloar. Miss Mitchell seems to have made carbon copies of her Gallipoli volumes, and the photostat process produced two copies of each of the rest. Thus a third set could be assembled from the typed carbons and the negative photostats. Bean could have the original and a copy in Australia and a third could be left in England for safekeeping. Bean asked his friend James Fisher Hough, Headmaster of Brentwood School in Essex which Bean had attended as a boy, to take charge of the third set. Hough agreed, and took delivery of the four boxes of records in March 1919. No-one could gain access to them without official authorisation and Hough affirmed to Bean that 'the diary and records are your private property and no man can come down to say that they belong to any Government'.¹⁷ The third set stayed with the faithful Hough until after World War II, when at Bean's request it was retrieved and presented to the Mitchell Library in Sydney. It stopped at first at the Australian War Memorial in Canberra, where Vera Blackburn, one of the War Memorials' librarians, checked and listed all the items. They were received by the Mitchell Library in March 1948. Exactly why Bean suggested the Mitchell Library as the home for this set is unknown.¹⁸

This, in essence, is the story of the assembly of the three sets of Bean's diaries, notebooks and folders. It's not an easy story to piece together because no proper record of it was ever made. Archivists and researchers alike do not necessarily give special consideration to the material or

artefactual aspects of records, and copies are usually assumed to be less valuable than originals.¹⁹ Indeed, for the sake of preserving the first set, for many years the second set of Bean's records was the one that was issued to researchers in the Australian War Memorial's reading room. So although researchers have been handling paper objects ('our fetish', as three Australian scholars called them recently), they have been at a remove from the intimate connection to their subject they could get from the original.²⁰ But there were benefits, too. Researchers reading the Gallipoli volumes could enjoy Miss Mitchell's superbly typed copies, which include copies of Bean's many sketch-maps and diagrams which she (or someone) drew by hand onto the typed copies. In contrast, Western Front researchers have had to contend with the photostats, which consist of photographic paper pages bound into stiff cardboard covers. The covers don't stay open and Bean's handwriting is often blurry, so reading these volumes is a physical struggle. Many a researcher has surely been puzzled and frustrated by all these processes. Someone who has written about the significance of the physical nature of archives is Canadian archives conservator Ala Rekrut. Records once created, she writes, start to change – through use, and by deliberate alterations made by creators, custodians and users. 'Evidence of creation and change are part of the history of a record, and the past and present choices of creators and custodians may have a significant impact on the future interpretation of the record.'²¹ We shall see later that this was certainly the case with Bean's records.

Charles Bean as diarist

Now to the diary. Bean did capture 'character and atmosphere' in his diary, as Birdwood had suggested, but how personal is the diary? It is true that Bean often recorded his own reflections, and reactions of fear, revulsion and grief at the events around him, but on the whole he documents his outward observations rather than inner reflections. Bill Gammage suggests that it is 'central to understanding Bean to realise that his skills always remained those of a first class observer and reporter', and later, as Bean wrote the official history, his personal experience of the war 'fires his narrative'. The records he made of that

experience 'threaded his account together'.²² How the diary functioned as an inner companion to Bean as a person is not something that has received much attention from historians, and the Australian scholarly work on diary-keeping tends, with some exceptions, to focus on women's diaries, not men's. A diary, argues Katie Holmes, might be the only space available to women in which to define their own lives and shape their identities, and the traditional masculine concept of 'great events' of history is inverted or subverted in a woman's diary: 'great events' for her might be events of domestic or family import, but no less great for her. Charles Bean did write about 'great events' of history in his diary, as he witnessed plenty of them, but he also shared some of the motivations and diary-keeping habits of women. In a fine study of the theoretical literature on women and diary-keeping, Janet Butler finds that 'scholars agree on a basic premise: that diaries reveal a woman struggling to negotiate the gap between public perceptions for her life and work, and the reality of her lived experience'. She notes that the 'self' reflected in a diary is likely to be a shifting and multidimensional being which will change over time. She mentions examples in the literature of women who re-read and revise their diaries, an activity that adds complexity to the question of the construction and reconstruction of the self.²⁴ All of this was true for Charles Bean as well. Diaries can provide a place for anyone, man or woman, to be alone.

What distinguishes Bean's diary from most others is that almost from the beginning it was going to be source material for a national history, and from 1919 (perhaps earlier), he planned to hand it eventually to the Australian Government for public use. He read and amended it over many years, even after the sets were presented to the Australian War Memorial and the Mitchell Library. All three sets show evidence of this, even until the late 1950s. So the diary was never really private, but nevertheless, like other diarists, he still used it to explore his various intermingling roles and identities, in his case as private citizen, soldier, war correspondent and war historian. Most importantly, he knew that his mistakes and expressions of anger and prejudice, made in haste and under conditions of stress that few of us could imagine, would one day be on show for any stranger to see.

Bean often imagined that moment, with much anxiety. He could not, like Pontius Pilate, say, 'What I have written, I have written'. It was as if he knew, long before the postmodernists came along, that the meaning of what is written in an archived document is not a fixed and stable thing. He sought to keep control of that meaning, all the while knowing that it could slip away from him like jelly. Firstly, he imposed conditions on his deposit of the records with the Australian War Memorial that specified that during his lifetime no-one could look at them without his approval. After his death, access had to be approved by the Director of the Australian War Memorial and the research had to be, in the Director's judgement, towards a historical work 'worthy of AIF', and not the publication of 'scandalous matter'. Secondly, he stipulated that a label was to be attached to the outside cover of each volume of all three sets of the diaries, notebooks and folders, 'so that the attention of the reader cannot fail to be drawn to it'.²⁵ The text for the label was re-drafted a few times but the final version, dated 16 September 1946, reads in part:

These writings represent only what at the moment of making them I believed to be true. The diaries were jotted down almost daily with the object of recording what was then in the writer's mind. Often he wrote when very tired and half asleep; also, not infrequently, what he believed to be facts were not so – but it does not follow that he always discovered this, or remembered to correct the mistakes when discovered. Indeed, he could not always remember that he had written them.²⁶

In earlier drafts Bean had been franker: the diaries 'contain many errors and exhibitions of prejudice', and '[t]he criticisms were sometimes hasty and partial'.²⁷ Even as early as 1918 Bean had been anxious about how the records would look to unknown readers. In March that year, at about the time that the AWRS took charge of the diaries and notebooks Bean had made thus far, Bean asked Treloar to have a notice attached to each volume, including all duplicates, wherever they were kept. It was effectively an earlier version of the label quoted above, and it stated that the records were Bean's 'personal property', and were being stored with Australian government records 'only for convenience and safety'. They were not to be used for the compilation

of any history except with Bean's permission. A set of labels was sent to James Hough at Brentwood School with a request that he attach them to the third set in his care. The 1918 and 1946 labels were part of Bean's long-standing concern for how his records would be interpreted. Although any private diary contains 'errors' and 'exhibition of prejudice', Bean was uneasy that what was 'true' to him in a fleeting moment might be taken by uninformed readers as the ultimate 'truth' of a situation.

In old age Bean acknowledged that sometimes he either veiled or omitted information from his diaries and notebooks because he feared prying eyes, or the records falling into the wrong hands. 'But normally', he says, 'the narrative was completely frank and, being meant for my own reading, it was often I fear intemperately (and sometimes ignorantly) critical'.²⁹ How much of Bean's inner self is ever really on show in his diary? Perhaps not much. Archives scholar Michael Piggott has remarked, 'Knowing one's diary is being read, shared, stolen or soon to be published, shapes the recording. And shapes the silences too ...'.³⁰

'What ... I believe to be true'

Bean's lifelong fidelity to the 'truth' is well known. Denis Winter concludes that for Bean there was only one religion: the search for the truth. Winter quotes Bean: 'It seems to me that providing men have the truth as a basis of their judgments, they cannot go far wrong'.³¹ Bean adhered to that eighteenth-century philosophical ideal of the nature of truth, that is, that there is truth – a pre-existing reality that can be captured in language kept in documentary form as evidence. Archivist Heather MacNeil has written about this in depth and notes that the Latin word for evidence means 'that which is manifest or in plain sight'.³² Clearly, what was in plain sight for Charles Bean was what he was going to believe in. His red-lettered warning on each volume of his records continues thus:

[The author] cannot of course, vouch for the statements made to him by others and here recorded. But he did try to ensure such accuracy by consulting, as far as possible, those who had seen or otherwise taken part in

the events. The constant falsity of second-hand evidence (on which a large proportion of war stories are founded) was impressed upon him by the second or third day of the Gallipoli campaign, notwithstanding that those who passed on such stories usually themselves believed them to be true. All second-hand evidence herein should be read with this in mind.

MacNeil goes on to say, 'Because a record was assumed to reflect an event, its reliability depended on the claim of the record-maker to have been present at that event'. A trustworthy record that accurately reflected the event had to be uncontaminated by 'time, bias, interpretation, or unwarranted opinion on the part of the record-maker'.³³ By the end of the nineteenth century, these standards for judging the reliability and authenticity of records as evidence were well established in law and in historical criticism, and Charles Bean, trained in both those fields, inherited a century's worth of that philosophical thinking.

We know he attached enormous importance to evidence having been gained either by himself as eye-witness or from speaking as soon as possible with those 'actually engaged in the fighting'. He did read the soldiers' letters and diaries which, from the mid-1920s onwards, the Australian War Memorial was collecting, but he drew on them only in a partial way in his own work. Indeed, he asked the War Memorial to attach to the earliest accessions a red-lettered label similar to the one attached to his own records, warning readers that soldiers' letters and diaries did not necessarily constitute first-hand evidence.³⁴ The incidents described in them were, Bean believed, 'largely hearsay', and were therefore 'dangerous as a source of history'.³⁵

He rejected war histories that were based on sources such as generals' despatches, second-hand reports composed long after events, and 'stories already half-crystallised as legend'.³⁶ Physical and temporal proximity were vital to him. He revelled in the chance he had as official correspondent to 'see and know' the events that he would write about,³⁷ and he was proud of the access he had to commanders and politicians at the highest level. 'Always I tried to visit the front line either during a battle or a few days after', he later wrote. As war

correspondent, 'I felt that my special responsibility to the Australian people required me to give them, if possible, news confirmed by my own eyes. I made this also a requirement for the official history'.³⁸ Small wonder, then, that time after time Bean stressed the significance of eye-witness records, and admitted that his own ignorance, prejudice and just plain exhaustion had to be taken into account by anyone using his records. Working on his own history he could make those allowances by drawing on his own memory, which was vivid. How could he expect a third party to do that? Hence the need for the red-lettered label, quoted above.

Historian Peter Edwards has observed that Bean and other Australian official historians wrote with a commemorative purpose in mind and for a readership interested in the role of individuals in war. Most official histories of our age have been written primarily for the general populace.³⁹ So Bean's history had to draw upon people who were there. Readers who were veterans would be hoping to locate their own experience within Bean's narrative, metaphorically if not literally. By means of his diaries, notebooks and correspondence he could reach out to his readers and convince them that his history was authentic and trustworthy. Trustworthy records would hopefully produce a trustworthy history. Michael Piggott has wondered whether records and recordkeeping behaviours can take on the distinctive national features of the local culture or society. Can there be such a thing as an *Australian diary*, he wonders?⁴⁰ Evading this question, I would say that in the case of Charles Bean what we see is a set of personal records out of which a distinctively Australian *official history* emerged. Probably no other World War I official historian – of any nation – wrote his history from eye-witness records to the extent that Bean did.

Access to the records

Going over his diaries again in the 1950s, Bean was reminded about how frank he had been, all those years ago. He was planning a series of books about some 'men he knew' in the AIF, although ultimately the only book to be published was *Two men I knew*, in 1957, dealing with WT Bridges and CBB White.⁴¹ Bean was a great admirer of White and, as is well known, in mid 1918 he and some others had attempted

to have White made Commander of the Australian Corps in place of John Monash who, at that time, Bean did not admire. Bean came to regret his part in the affair but, as Geoffrey Serle has noted, Bean's diaries are 'thickly sprinkled' with prejudiced impressions and harsh judgements of Monash, and Serle believed this was the reason that, in 1952, Bean placed a further 30-year embargo on access to them, to come into force after his death.⁴² In 1956 Bean began work on a book of extracts from his diaries, tentatively titled 'Unofficial history: from the diaries of an official historian'. He only got as far as early August 1915 but he was working on it right up to about mid 1960.⁴³ In order to undertake these projects Bean continued to borrow back from the Memorial items from the second set of his diaries, as he had already done for *Anzac to Amiens* and *Gallipoli mission*. Some handwritten additions in his diary may date from this very late period.

After a long illness, Bean died on 30 August 1968. For the next 30 years, just three of his closest friends could use and grant access to the records. They were Gavin Long (official historian of World War II), Arthur Bazley (Bean's former assistant and one-time acting Director of the War Memorial) and Angus McLachlan, a journalist and newspaper executive with Fairfax newspapers. Long also died in 1968, and Bazley in 1972. Angus McLachlan was the last one left and he was ageing. This is how things stood in the mid-1970s when a new generation of historians, then emerging from the universities, began to nibble for access to Bean's records.

The first formal approaches came to McLachlan in 1976 and 1977 from Ken Inglis, Geoffrey Serle, Guy Verney and Kevin Fewster. Under Bean's conditions of access, these historians would have to be turned away. Verney apparently did not pursue his request for access. Fewster's (which related to his PhD thesis on military censorship) was initially declined, later accepted. Inglis was granted access just to Bean's diary entry of 11 November 1918. Geoffrey Serle was working on a biography of John Monash and perhaps because of his personal repute and the complexity and significance of his project, it was Serle's approach that really forced the issue of access. The War Memorial's Assistant Director at the time, AJ (Bill) Sweeting, believed the embargo could be lifted and he found McLachlan receptive to the idea that Australia's federal archives authority, Australian Archives,

be asked to examine the records with a view to clearing for access all the 1942 deposit of diaries, notebooks and folders except those that threatened the reputation of people still living. That had been Bean's concern when he imposed the 30-year embargo in 1952. Clearance by Australian Archives, as McLachlan realised, would absolve him of having to make access decisions time after time. Events were proving that there would many more requests.

Sweeting believed that the question of access hinged on whether the records could be regarded as 'official records'. He thought that they were: that Bean's privileged position as official correspondent gained him the confidence of the AIF's high command. Without that confidence, Sweeting argued, Bean would not have been so placed to create the diaries and notebooks that he did, full as they were of the 'frankness of the people whose conversations [Bean] was recording'. Sweeting apparently believed that if the records were 'official', Bean's embargo could be set aside. He implies, but was probably too respectful of Bean to state, that Bean did not have the authority to impose an embargo on official records, even if he created them himself. He notes that all of Gavin Long's records as official correspondent, including diaries, were the property of the Commonwealth absolutely, and that if Long had known about Bean's 1952 embargo he might have tried to talk Bean out of it. Sweeting and McLachlan agreed that it was Bean's re-reading of the diaries for *Two men I knew* that prompted Bean to clamp down on access. Setting this out in a letter to McLachlan in November 1976, Sweeting concluded that if the records could not be used for 'honest historical research' until 1998, they would by then be regarded as 'antiquities'.⁴⁵

The 'official records' argument was contrary to Bean's own beliefs about the records, and technically Bean was always a civilian, never an enlisted soldier, but by 1976 there were few people to argue Bean's case except for Angus McLachlan and he, although a thoughtful and conscientious man, anxious to do his duty, regarded his authority to grant access as 'a heavy responsibility'.⁴⁶ So he agreed to Sweeting's plan to invite Australian Archives to examine the records. This work was done between February and July 1978 and the vast majority was cleared for public access, 20 years earlier than the conditions imposed by Bean.

A new era of scholarship

A new era of Australian World War I scholarship then began. In 1979 the Australian War Memorial celebrated the 100th anniversary of Bean's birth with a centenary exhibition held temporarily in the Western Front Gallery. The exhibition was much more modest than some members of staff had hoped – there were proposals for a bronze statue and even a diorama depicting Bean!⁴⁷ – but it did include three of Bean's notebooks used in Gallipoli and in France, and one he used on his 1919 return to Gallipoli. Given the fact that a mere two years before there had still been 20 years of a 30-year embargo still to run, and only one man alive had had the authority to grant exceptions, the display of these records was remarkable.

Historians of stature were now attracted to the War Memorial, and many books have been written based on readings of Bean's diaries and notebooks. Their work was greatly assisted by a guide to Bean's papers, compiled by Michael Piggott and published by the War Memorial in 1983.⁴⁸ The diaries and notebooks were individually described, and they could at last be seen in the context of the many other accessions of official and private records created by Bean and deposited over many years by him and, after his death, by his widow, Effie. Indeed, 1983 was a big year in Bean scholarship, for also published were Kevin Fewster's edited selection from Bean's Gallipoli diaries, *Gallipoli correspondent, the frontline diary of CEW Bean*, and Dudley McCarthy's partial biography of Bean, *Gallipoli to the Somme: the story of CEW Bean*.⁴⁹ McCarthy's work was partial in the sense that it ends in 1919. It is based on a close reading of Bean's diaries (and it was a very close reading because McCarthy obtained permission to take items from the second set home), and so when the diaries end, so does the biography. Bean did not keep a diary after 1919 and a scholarly biographical treatment of those many years until his death would be an exceedingly complex task without the backbone of a diary. No-one has yet succeeded at it. Similarly, Kevin Fewster never attempted a selection of the post-Gallipoli years of Bean's diary, perhaps in part because there were no typed transcripts of them. In these ways the materiality of records may affect their scholarly use and interpretation.

Developments in archival practice have both enhanced and detracted from access to Bean's records. In 1990 the various deposits of the Bean

papers were incorporated into the Australian War Memorial's official records as Official Records Series AWM38. Item descriptions were added to RecordSearch, the database run by the National Archives of Australia (formerly Australian Archives).⁵⁰ This means that all item descriptions can be searched by keyword – an extremely powerful mode of access. But RecordSearch was not designed for collections of personal records. The intellectual arrangement of the Bean papers into 'series' (loosely defined), achieved by Michael Piggott for the 1983 guide, is entirely lost on RecordSearch, leaving the researcher alone in a sea of apparently unrelated item descriptions, like a ship without a compass. Only by luck might a researcher encounter a copy of the long out-of-print Piggott guide. Moreover, also in the 1990s, faith in the magic of databases led to the withdrawal from the War Memorial's reading room of all of the many card indexes that represented the old way of gaining information about records. This included a card index to many (but not all) of Bean's diaries which had been painstakingly prepared many years before by Arthur Bazley.⁵¹ It can be requested from the stacks, but in reality even experienced Bean researchers are hardly aware that it exists. They miss the deep access it offers to the diary, constructed by someone who knew Bean and his records better than most.

The greatest recent gain has been the digitisation of the diaries, notebooks and folders, accomplished in 2009.⁵² Essentially, a 'fourth set' has now been created. Researchers anywhere in the world can now view and print the records from their own computers. The records are arranged into three separate lists: diaries, notebooks and folders. Where the 1983 Piggott guide ran them on in a single list – for that was how Bean (or his staff) had numbered them – the presentation of the digitised records preserves the numbering but rearranges the items 'onscreen' to bring out the differences between the three types of records, thus ending several decades of puzzlement on the part of researchers. But the digitised versions are not linked to or from the item descriptions on RecordSearch, meaning that readers who discover the records through RecordSearch are left unaware that they can see digitised versions of them. Users of the third set in the Mitchell Library may be unaware of either, and indeed, at the time of writing, the Mitchell Library still maintains restricted access to its copies of the records. And finally, the first – the original – set of records was chosen

by the Australian War Memorial for digitisation, so that researchers are at last able to see it. But Miss Mitchell's easy-to-read typescripts of the Gallipoli volumes in the second set are now effectively lost to researchers unless they know to ask for them in the reading room.

It might seem now that the digitised version removes readers' access to that 'personal and direct sensory engagement with the past' that Ala Rekrut wrote about.⁵³ But, really, what has happened is that the paper surrogate that researchers have used for years – the second set – is now removed from access, and replaced with a digital surrogate of the original.⁵⁴ The digitised versions are likely to be a wonderful stimulus to World War I scholarship in Australia and overseas, but it remains to be seen what emerges when researchers can only see digital surrogates, not physical objects. In terms of archival scholarship, Bean's records do provide an admirable example of how the 'records continuum' model can allow us to conceptualise and describe not just the 'afterlife' of records, but the many dimensions they can have: public *and* personal, originals *and* copies, physical *and* electronic formats. Bean's records show us that none of these dimensions is any more important than another.⁵⁵ And finally, the red-lettered label that Bean had attached to all copies of his diaries and notebooks is immensely significant. It demonstrates Bean's realisation that there is more than a one-to-one relationship between the event, the record, the recorder and the reader. There are *multiple* relationships, and *multiple* influences on the record and its use. What is an 'event'? What is a 'record'? In recent decades archives theorists have been exploring these questions, but long before that Bean knew them as a personal dilemma. No wonder he was so uneasy.⁵⁶

Conclusion: 'mediating acts'

I have covered much territory, and drawn together many threads, in order to show how the process of creation and archiving of records affect their continuing use. 'Mediating acts' is how literary scholars Maryanne Dever, Sally Newman and Ann Vickery describe them. These acts 'shape the archive as we find it' and transform its possible meanings. In this article we have followed the various 'mediating acts' that have affected and continue to affect Charles Bean's personal

records. His records are a particularly rich example to examine, especially given the peculiar 'private/public' nature of his records, and indeed of his own role. We have seen how words that he made on paper in a matter of seconds spin off into lives of their own: copied twice, numbered, indexed, transported, used, transferred, embargoed, borrowed, returned, released, arranged, listed, exhibited, used again, copied again ... and so on. Archivists do not necessarily explain to researchers adequately the history of a record, especially as it concerns the reception and treatment of the record within the archive. Indeed, sometimes in the busy rush of day-to-day work, they can barely perceive it themselves. And researchers rarely ask questions, although that may start to change under the influence of scholars like those just mentioned. Crucially, researchers are rarely aware that they themselves participate in the history of the record, and that the shifting of its meanings never ends.

Endnotes

¹ Letter, Charles Bean to Arthur Bazley, 30 May 1942, AWM315, 419/008/001 01, ff. 22-4.

² Press statement, undated [probably June 1942], AWM315, 419/008/001 01, f. 28.

³ Letter, Bean to Bazley, 30 May 1942, AWM315, 419/008/001 01, f. 23.

⁴ CEW Bean, *Anzac to Amiens: a shorter history of the Australian fighting services in the First World War*, Australian War Memorial, Canberra, 1946; *Gallipoli mission*, Australian War Memorial, Canberra, 1948; *Two men I knew: William Bridges and Brudenell White, founders of the AIF*, Angus & Robertson, Sydney, 1957.

⁵ Terry Cook and Joan M Schwartz, 'Archives, records, and power: from (postmodern) theory to (archival) performance', *Archival science*, vol. 2, nos 1-2, 2002, p. 174.

⁶ Ciaran B Trace, 'What is recorded is never simply "what happened": record keeping in modern organisational culture', *Archival science*, vol. 2, 2002, pp. 137-59.

⁷ Tom Nesmith, 'Reopening archives: bringing new contextualities into archival theory and practice', *Archivaria*, no. 60, Fall 2005, p. 263.

⁸ Alistair Thomson, 'Anzac stories: using personal testimony in war history', *War and society*, vol. 25, no. 2, October 2006, pp. 2, 4.

⁹ Charles Bean, 'Unofficial history from the diaries of the official historian: introduction', typescript, no date [mid- to late-1950s], AWM38, 3DRL 6673/891 part 1, p. 4. The manuscript of the unfinished novel is at AWM38, 3DRL 6673/869.

¹⁰ *ibid.*, p. 5; Bean, *Gallipoli mission*, p. 25.

¹¹ On the origins of the notes of interviews, see Bean's 'Unofficial history ...', pp. 5-6. On notetaking technique, see Denis Winter, *Making the legend: the war writings of CEW Bean*, University of Queensland Press, St Lucia, 1992, pp. 9-10. For Bean's categorisation of the records, see letter, Bean to Director of the Australian War Memorial, 21 December 1939,

AWM315, 419/008/001 01, f. 20; and Bean, 'The writing of the Australian Official History of the Great War – sources, methods and some conclusions', *Journal and proceedings of the Royal Australian Historical Society*, vol. XXIV, part 2, 1938, pp. 85–112, especially p. 95 and p. 100.

¹² These folders include correspondence with veterans and veterans' families after the war. However, separate runs of records of that nature were kept by Bean and his staff. See AWM38, 3DRL 7953; and AWM43.

¹³ Although some already have been done on Gallipoli, perhaps by Arthur Bazley. For example, a handwritten note by Bean near the end of his diary 6 (the original) says that a month after that diary was finished, a transcript of it was made 'at ANZAC'. See AWM38, 3DRL 606/6/1, April–May 1915, available at <http://www.awm.gov.au/collection/war_diaries/cew_bean/folders.asp?type=Diary>, accessed 14 March 2011, see last handwritten page.

¹⁴ Bean, 'Unofficial history ...', pp. 6–7.

¹⁵ Bean, diary entry 7 January 1918, AWM38, 3DRL 606/95/1, December 1917–January 1918, pp. 79–80, available at <http://www.awm.gov.au/collection/war_diaries/cew_bean/folders.asp?type=Diary>, accessed 14 March 2011.

¹⁶ Ian Batterham, *Office copying revolution*, National Archives of Australia, Canberra, 2008, pp. 83–6; JoAnne Yates, *Control through communication: the rise of system in American management*, Johns Hopkins University Press, Baltimore and London, 1989, pp. 54–6; Barbara Rhodes and William Wells Streeter, *Before photocopying: the art and history of mechanical copying 1780–1938*, Oak Knoll Press & Heraldry Bindery, Delaware, 1999, pp. 159–60.

¹⁷ Bean said the third set also safeguarded against the possibility that censorship might be imposed upon him in Australia. See Bean, 'Unofficial history ...', p. 7. On the transfer of the records to Hough, see letter, Hough to Bean, 15 January 1919, AWM16, 4379/20/7.

¹⁸ Letter, HF Ward (Australian War Memorial) to O Pentelow (Public Library of New South Wales), 18 March 1948, AWM315, 419/008/001 01, f. 120. Blackburn's listing is at AWM38, B56/4. It shows that the third set consisted of copies, either typed or photostatted, of items 1–259, and so it is not a complete set of the records (in the first set there were 286 items). Items 237–259 of the Mitchell set consisted of typed copies of Bean's 'folders' of notes and correspondence. Many of these were marked by Blackburn as incomplete, probably because Bean kept adding to the originals of these folders after the war. This set, the set that had been left with Hough, could not be added to after late 1918.

¹⁹ Ala Rekrut, 'Material literacy: reading records as material culture', *Archivaria*, no. 60, Fall 2005, pp. 11–37.

²⁰ Maryanne Dever, Sally Newman and Ann Vickery, *The intimate archive: journeys through private papers*, National Library of Australia, Canberra, 2009, p. 29.

²¹ Rekrut, p. 12. See also Dever et al., pp. 28–32.

²² See Bill Gammage's Introduction to the 1982 reprint of volume four of Bean's official history, *The Australian Imperial Force in France, 1917*, Queensland University Press, St Lucia, 1982, p. xxiv. There is still much more work that could be done to compare Bean's diaries and notes with what he writes in the official history, although a start has been made. See John Barrett, 'No straw man: CEW Bean and some critics', *Australian historical studies*, vol. 23, no. 89, April 1988, pp. 102–14; Denis Winter's anthology of

Bean's war writings does to an extent weave diary entries in with selections from the official history. See his *Making the legend*.

²³ Katie Holmes, *Spaces in her day: Australian women's diaries 1920s-1930s*, Allen & Unwin, St Leonards, NSW, 1995, p. xviii.

²⁴ Janet Butler, 'Journey through war: the Great War diaries of an Australian Army nurse', a thesis submitted in total fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy, School of Historical and European Studies, La Trobe University, 2007, pp. 11-14.

²⁵ Letter, Bean to Bazley, 30 May 1942, AWM315, 419/008/001 01, ff. 22-4.

²⁶ One thousand labels using this text were printed in March 1947, enough to attach to the cover of every volume in all three sets, including the Mitchell Library set. See AWM315, 419/008/001 01, f. 60 and f. 84.

²⁷ These drafts, dated 30 May 1942 and 23 June 1946, are on AWM315, 419/008/001 01, f. 22 and f. 37.

²⁸ Letter, Bean to JL Treloar, 6 March 1918; and letter, Treloar to JF Hough, 2 April 1919, both on AWM16, 4369/20/7.

²⁹ Bean, 'Unofficial history ...', p. 5.

³⁰ Michael Piggott, 'The diary: social phenomenon, professional challenge', *Archives and Manuscripts*, vol. 31, no 1, May 2003, p. 87.

³¹ Winter, p. 6.

³² Heather MacNeil, 'Trusting records in a postmodern world', *Archivaria*, no. 51, Spring 2001, p. 40.

³³ *ibid.*, p. 40.

³⁴ For instance, see any record held in the Memorial's Private Records collection with the prefix '1DRL' in its accession number. My thanks to Sue Jamieson of the Australian War Memorial for assistance with this point. On the collecting of soldiers' records in general, see Anne-Marie Condé, 'Capturing the records of war: collecting at the Mitchell Library and the Australian War Memorial', *Australian historical studies*, vol. 36, no. 125, 2005, pp. 134-52.

³⁵ CEW Bean, 'A war historian's experiences with eyewitnesses', in *The life and letters of Sir Jadunath Sarkar: essays presented to Jadunath Sarkar*, Punjab University, 1957-8, p. 4. An offprint of this article is in the Bean papers, AWM 38, 3DRL 6673/925.

³⁶ CEW Bean, *The Australian Imperial Force in France*, 1916, Angus & Robertson, Sydney, 12th edn, 1941, p. v.

³⁷ Quoted by Winter, *Making the legend*, p. 7.

³⁸ Bean, 'Unofficial history ...', p. 5.

³⁹ Peter Edwards, 'Continuity and change in the Australian official history tradition', in Jeffrey Grey (ed.), *The last word? Essays on official history in the United States and the British Commonwealth*, Praeger, Westport CT, 2003, pp. 75, 71.

⁴⁰ Michael Piggott, 'Towards a history of Australian diary keeping', *Archivaria*, vol. 60, Fall 2005, pp. 145-66.

⁴¹ Draft titles were 'These men I knew' and 'More men I knew' and the possible subjects were WT Bridges, Brudenell White, Graham Butler (the medical historian), John Monash, John Gellibrand and several other senior commanders of the first AIF. See

AWM38, 3DRL 6673/82, /83, /84, /85, /85A, /85B, and /85C.

⁴² See Geoffrey Serle's Introduction to the 1983 reprint of volume six of Bean's official history *The Australian Imperial Force in France during the Allied offensive, 1918*, University of Queensland Press, St Lucia, 1983, p. xx. Bean's friend Angus McLachlan also believed in retrospect, after Bean had died, that it was the work on the 'Men' books that had reminded Bean of the harshness of his attitude to Monash, and which led to the imposition of the 30-year embargo. See McLachlan's letter to AJ Sweeting, Acting Director of the Australian War Memorial, 15 October 1976, AWM315, 419/008/001 03, f. 10.

⁴³ Charles Bean, 'Unofficial history ...', and letters to the AWM, 14 July 1956 and 31 July 1960, AWM315, 419/008/001 part 2, f. 25 and f. 90.

⁴⁴ For instance, in 1952 Bean typed an additional set of notes based on his 'vivid recollection' of the night of 30 April 1915 at Gallipoli, and had them appended to all three copies of the diary (two at the Australian War Memorial and the third (by then) at the Mitchell Library). For the copies at the War Memorial, see AWM38, 3DRL 606/6/1 and /2, and at the Mitchell Library, see ML MSS 159/3. Another example of late intervention is that diary 7a, recording a few days in May 1915, seems to have been found as an stray and inserted into the sequence much later. Much of it is in shorthand, so in mid 1958 Bean asked Vera Blackburn to have a go at transcribing a section of it which he needed. The typed transcript was added to both the Australian War Memorial sets and the Mitchell Library set, and includes handwritten corrections by both Bean and Blackburn. See the exchange of letters between Bean and Blackburn on 28 and 30 July 1958, AWM315, 419/008/001 02. See Blackburn's transcript at AWM38, 3DRL 606/7A/1 and /2, and at the Mitchell Library, ML MSS 159/3.

⁴⁵ Letter, AJ Sweeting to AH McLachlan, 9 November 1976, AWM315, 419/008/001 03, f. 12.

⁴⁶ Letter, McLachlan to Sweeting, 15 October 1976, AWM315, 419/008/001 03, f. 10.

⁴⁷ 'Dr Bean exhibition', diorama sketch made by Don Evans, 13 August 1979; memorandum, Peter Holmes to Director, 29 August 1979, and memorandum, Anne Lu to Director, 24 August 1979, all on AWM315, 693/011/001.

⁴⁸ Michael Piggott, *A guide to the personal, family and official papers of CEW Bean*, Canberra, Australian War Memorial, 1983. The set at the Mitchell Library has only ever had a collection-level description.

⁴⁹ Dudley McCarthy, *Gallipoli to the Somme: the story of CEW Bean*, John Ferguson, Sydney, 1983; Kevin Fewster, *Gallipoli correspondent, the frontline diary of CEW Bean*, George Allen & Unwin, Sydney, 1983. A reworked edition of Fewster's book was published in 2007 as *Bean's Gallipoli: the diaries of Australia's official war correspondent*, Allen & Unwin, Crow's Nest, NSW, 2007.

⁵⁰ Series notes for series AWM38, available at <<http://naa12.naa.gov.au/scripts/SeriesDetail.asp?M=3&B=AWM38>>, accessed 14 March 2010. Drafts of Bean's official history volumes were consolidated into another series, AWM44.

⁵¹ The card index is at AWM38, items A1 to A7. A list of the diaries that Bazley indexed is at AWM38, B56/7/1.

⁵² See <http://www.awm.gov.au/collection/war_diaries/cew_bean/>, accessed 14 March 2010.

⁵³ Rekrut, p. 12.

⁵⁴ Researchers who can establish a particular need can still request the issue of items

from either set in the Australian War Memorial's reading room.

⁵⁵ See Sue McKemmish and Michael Piggott (eds), *The records continuum: Ian Maclean and Australian Archives first fifty years*, Ancora Press and Monash University, Clayton, Vic., 1994.

⁵⁶ For many interesting discussions about the accessibility of Bear's diaries and notebooks, I thank Michael Piggott, and former colleagues at the Australian War Memorial: Joyce Bradley, Janette Condon, Wendy Gadd, Craig Tibbitts and Robyn van Dyk. Opinions expressed are mine.

⁵⁷ Dever et al., p. 10.