

# Towards a History of Australian Diary Keeping<sup>\*</sup>

MICHAEL PIGGOTT

**RÉSUMÉ** Cet article présente un exposé en deux parties : que faudrait-il pour rédiger une histoire archivistique des journaux personnels en Australie et que pourrait couvrir cette histoire. Dans la première partie, l'auteur examine l'état des études en Australie sur le sujet ainsi que les infrastructures nécessaires pour supporter la constitution d'une telle histoire. Il note aussi les problèmes reliés à la particularité des journaux personnels australiens et au concept même de journal comme un document d'archives. Dans la seconde partie, il suggère quelques thèmes historiques découlant des facteurs variés qui ont amené l'émergence de la tenue de journaux personnels. Le genre, les antécédents scolaires et sociaux ainsi que les mentalités professionnelles peuvent prédisposer les personnes à produire et à conserver des journaux personnels. Des facteurs événementiels comme la participation à la guerre ou l'immigration vers l'Australie sont aussi commentés et développés historiquement, alors que la découverte européenne et la colonisation de l'Australie (plus particulièrement l'expérience des prisonniers de guerre) sont présentés comme deux thèmes à développer dans le futur.

**ABSTRACT** The paper is a two-part discussion of what is needed for an archival history to be written of diary keeping in Australia, and what it might cover. The first begins by looking at the state of archival history and diary studies in Australia, and the research infrastructure needed to support such a history. It also points to problems with the notion of a distinctive Australian diary, and with the concept of "diary" as a record type. The second part suggests some possible themes for the history arising from various factors which give rise to the keeping of diaries. Gender, educational and social background, and professional mindset can predispose people to produce and keep diaries and journals. Event-based factors such as participation in war or traveling to Australia as an immigrant are also discussed. These are developed historically, with the European discovery and settlement of Australia and its involvement in war especially as prisoners of war highlighted as two themes for further development.

## Introduction

The Australian diary, and inevitably the need to know its history, has been under notice for some time now. By almost any measure, in the past couple of

<sup>\*</sup> This paper develops ideas presented at the I-CHORA 1 conference and in the author's review article published in the May 2003 issue of *Archives and Manuscripts* (see note 6).

years especially, diaries have demanded our attention. To take that most orthodox of indicators, commercial publishers' judgments, currently we see a very strong market for diaries, particularly covering sport, war, politics, and the arts. We might also point to *The Australian* newspaper's year-long reproduction throughout 2002 of extracts from war-related 1942 diaries; the highly publicized on-line diary of the terminally ill euthanasia advocate Mrs. Nancy Crick; the decision of children's publisher Scholastic to begin a new "My Story" series of fictional historical diaries; Paul Cox's latest film "The Diaries of Vaslav Nijinski"; and the presence in Australia recently of a BBC production team to film "The Diary of a Welsh Swagman."

While this paper will be confined to local reflections, it is worth noting that the diary phenomenon finds many overseas parallels. In Europe and North America, it has linked diaries and film (Bridget Jones), fiction (Sue Townsend, Alice Hoffman), anthologies (by editors Blythe, Brett, and the Taylors), numerous published editions (Kurt Cobain, Edwina Currie, Jeffrey Archer, Alan Clark), and Web sites (Anne Frank, Bridget Jones). From the UK recently came news of a new journal, *The British Diarist*, and of course the Pepys industry continued to flourish with books and Web sites proliferating. This reached a fever pitch with exhibitions, events, and publications to mark the tercentenary of his death. The Samuel Pepys Club, for example, inaugurated an award and a medal for a book which "makes the greatest contribution to the understanding of Samuel Pepys, his times or his contemporaries."

The diary ranks with family photographs, birth certificates, tax returns, and perhaps census records as among the top half-dozen record types widely known within Australian society. For many children and teenagers, it is the very first kind of record created and kept. Diaries are truly a contemporary social and cultural phenomenon now, with Weblogs a key feature of virtual communities. And at the "log book" end of the scale, they are absolutely essential to the functioning of the global society: just think of the modern aviation industry without black box flight recorders.

At the centre of all this is the private diary, *the* premier personal record: Baiba Berzins called the diary "one of the most individual and intriguing forms of personal recordkeeping," and one which challenges generalization because each one is "so personal and so multifunctional."<sup>1</sup> Diaries take us directly to one of the central mysteries of our discipline: "why do people make and keep records?" That is a vast subject, linked as it is to explaining human motivation and behaviour, and not yet adequately addressed in our literature

1 Baiba Berzins (review of Katie Holmes) "Spaces in her Day: Australian Women's Diaries of the 1920s and 1930s," *Archives and Manuscripts* 26, no. 1 (May 1998), pp. 132-34. For an excellent overseas example of the case for studying diaries/journals, see Richard Cox's review of Adam Sisman's "Boswell's Presumptuous Task: The Making of the Life of Dr Johnson," *American Archivist* 65, no. 1 (Spring/Summer) 2002, pp. 138-42.

and research findings. If we re-word the question, broadening it historically and narrowing it by record type to ask “Why have people made and kept diaries?,” we have a seriously interesting challenge. Sharpen it further to ask “Why have certain kinds of people made and kept diaries, and in what circumstances?,” and we have the makings of a research agenda. Those questions, applied to Australia, plus a number of other related issues, are before us now.

If conceptualized in a certain way, the diary is one of the earliest types, if not *the* earliest type of record. Jenkinson’s lovely little representation of archival evolution has an Administrator at the dawn of ancient bureaucracy preserving three groups of writing – his “convenient form of artificial memory”: originals of documents received, copies of documents issued, and memoranda of proceedings. This last category is internally circulating documents that he also calls a sort of diary,<sup>2</sup> placing the diary-like record at the very beginning. In fact, if the diary is thought of as data set down or captured in chronological sequence for future reference (the “diary-ness” or sequence itself being integral to the reason for the recording), then we are back to the emergence of writing and the development of primitive calendars. We are there with Ice Age man tracking phases of the moon by making notches on bones.

### The Nature of the Challenge

The “Towards” of our title suggests that a great deal more work has to be done before that history is attempted. This is partly due to the state of Australian archival history, and partly because of the state of Australian diary studies.

As to the former, our interest and achievements in archival history are mediocre. In a survey undertaken in the mid 1990s, the author concluded that to the extent that it consciously happens at all, the writing of archival history in Australia follows predictably traditional lines.<sup>3</sup> I argued that point at a 1996 library history conference: library history conferences often included archives on their programs, but there have been no such conferences since 1996. There was also a brief flowering of interest at Australian Society of Archivists’ conferences in the late 1990s, and a trickle of research theses and published historical writing, with anniversary accounts of archival institutions continuing to be popular.<sup>4</sup>

Similarly, there have been very few historical studies on record types. We have no equivalent of *Archivaria*’s series of “studies in documents.” And there

2 Hilary Jenkinson, *A Manual of Archive Administration* (London, 1966), p. 23.

3 Michael Piggott, “The History of Australian Recordkeeping: A Framework for Research,” in B.J. McMullin, ed., *Coming Together: Papers from the Seventh Australian Library History Forum, Royal Melbourne Institute of Technology, 12 October 1996* (Melbourne, 1997), pp. 33–45.

4 Most recently, E.W. Russell, *A Matter of Record. A History of Public Record Office Victoria* (Melbourne, 2003).

is nothing to match such richly revealing works of historical sociology as those by John Torpey on passports and John Tagg on photographs.<sup>5</sup>

As for diaries specifically, Australian archivists have given little more than passing acknowledgment of their existence and importance. Examine the span of our literature, the conference proceedings, listserv debates, the Australian textbooks, and fifty years' worth of *Archives and Manuscripts*, and we find very little direct consideration of diaries. There have been one or two reviews<sup>6</sup> and a few indirect if tantalizing asides by Adrian Cunningham, Verne Harris, and Sue McKemmish while debating weightier issues.<sup>7</sup> Elsewhere, our manuscript librarians have studied and published selections from specific diaries in their care, but one has been left wishing they had addressed more centrally the diary's function as a record in addition to their value as research resources.<sup>8</sup> It is as if we have taken to heart Luciana Duranti's view that "documents expressing feelings and thoughts and created by individuals in their most private capacity," such as love letters and diaries, would probably reveal little through the diplomatic study of their documentary form.<sup>9</sup> Should we conclude then, when trying to detect forgery in cases similar to those involving Adolph Hitler or Roger Casement, or locally Susan Kemp<sup>10</sup> that it all turned on prove-

5 See John Torpey, *The Invention of the Passport. Surveillance, Citizenship and the State* (Cambridge, 2000); and John Tagg, *The Burden of Representation. Essays on Photographies and Histories* (Basingstoke, 1988). The closest Australians have come to such studies is the story of a national identity card which was never adopted! See Ewart Smith, *The Australia Card: The Story of its Defeat* (Melbourne, 1989).

6 In addition to the Berzins review, see also George Nichols' assessment of Robert Warner's *Diary of a Dream: a History of the National Archives Independence Movement, 1980–1985* in *Archives and Manuscripts* 23, no. 2 (November 1995), pp. 354–56. The author has also attempted to highlight the diary's significance in a review article. See Michael Piggott, "The Diary: Social Phenomenon, Professional Challenge," *Archives and Manuscripts* 31, no. 1 (May 2003), pp. 83–90.

7 See Sue McKemmish, "Evidence of me...", pp. 28–45 and Adrian Cunningham, "The Mysterious Outside Reader," pp. 130–44 in the Personal Record-keeping theme issue of *Archives and Manuscripts*, 23, no. 1 (May 1996); and Verne Harris, "On the Back of a Tiger: Deconstructive Possibilities in 'Evidence of Me'," pp. 8–21 and Sue McKemmish and Frank Upward's response, "In Search of the Lost Tiger, by Way of Sainte-Beuve: Re-constructing the Possibilities in 'Evidence of Me'," pp. 22–42, both appearing in *Archives and Manuscripts* 29, no. 1 (May 2001).

8 A recent instance is by the doyen of Australian manuscript librarians. See Paul Brunton, "A Comet of Wonder Fallen to Earth: The Diaries of Miles Franklin," *Australian Book Review* (October 2003), pp. 35–40.

9 See Luciana Duranti, "Diplomatics: New Uses for an Old Science (Part I)," *Archivaria* 28 (Summer 1989), p. 15.

10 Susan Kemp was a student at the centre of a sexual misconduct case involving Professor Sydney Orr at the University of Tasmania in the 1950s. Her diary featured strongly in the controversy, and doubts about it have never been fully settled. See W.H.C. Eddy, *Orr* (Brisbane, 1961), chapter 24; A.K. Stout, "The Orr Trials and Miss Kemp's Diary," *The Observer* (14 June 1958), pp. 259–61; and Cassandra Pybus, *Gross Moral Turpitude. The Orr Case Reconsidered* (Pt Melbourne, 1993), especially pp. 118–20.

nance, content, paper, and ink? Australian archivists *as archivists* seem to have ignored the diary, though today few would accept the stronger older doubt embodied in Jenkinson's dismissal of diaries written with an eye to future readers lacking the quality of an impartial record.<sup>11</sup>

Turning to diary studies, Australian scholarship has been solid, but limited to the reflections of editors introducing published selections of diaries on the one hand, and academics writing on themes concentrating mainly on women diarists and immigrants' shipboard diaries on the other. Academics such as Katie Holmes, Joy Hooton, Andrew Hassam, Dale Spender, and Sasha Grishin, and independent scholars such as Patricia Clarke have found them worthy of study in their own right, although their interest has been in the meaning of the experience expressed through diaries rather than in the diary's function as a personal *record*. Explorers' and pioneer settlers' journals in particular have also attracted the notice of cultural theorists such as Simon Ryan and Paul Carter, who have produced from sophisticated readings of them spatial interpretations of Australian colonialism.<sup>12</sup> Editors of diaries, usually also academic scholars, have occasionally taken us close to the functions of the diary as a record, only to leave the territory unexplored. Even diarists themselves have made quite insightful comments on the diary process. And occasionally libraries and archives publish them (print or on-line)<sup>13</sup> to showcase and share collection treasures, but rarely have publishing houses and journal and newspaper editors looked to us as possessing the relevant discipline expertise to review them or edit and write scholarly introductions to them.

Australian diary studies have their challenges, the most basic being the research infrastructure: we lack even simple listings of extant diaries in private hands and institutional collections. We also need bibliographies of published diaries, though there is partial coverage for certain periods and themes.<sup>14</sup> One little explored area dependent on specialist bibliographies would fall, strictly speaking, within the territory of the "history of the book."

11 Jenkinson, *A Manual of Archive Administration*, p. 150.

12 See Paul Carter, *The Road to Botany Bay. An Essay in Spatial History* (London, 1987) and Simon Ryan, *The Cartographic Eye. How Explorers Saw Australia* (Cambridge, 1996).

13 Publishers of diaries and diary studies aside, the National Library stands almost alone in trying to stimulate interest in diaries and letters. In 1996 it hosted a generally focused seminar, in 2001 another on Donald Friend and his diaries, and it has published diaries from its collections edited and introduced by appropriate scholars. For libraries' on-line publication efforts, see for example <<http://www.nla.gov.au/epubs/wills/>>; <<http://www.slnsw.gov.au/flinders/manuscripts>>, both accessed 8 March 2003.

14 On specific themes, see Ian Nicholson, *Log of Logs. A Catalogue of Logs, Journals, Shipboard Diaries, Letters, and All Forms of Voyage Narratives, 1788 to 1988, for Australia and New Zealand, and Surrounding Oceans* (Yaroomba, 1990); and M.K. Beddie, *Bibliography of Captain James Cook* (Sydney, 1970). The closest we have to a general diary listing is Kay Walsh and Joy Hooton, *Australian Autobiographical Narratives: An Annotated Bibliography* 2 vols. (Canberra, 1993–1997).

The rise of the diary as an item of stationery in the late 18<sup>th</sup> century, and soon after, of the Commercial Diary,<sup>15</sup> is a relevant line of inquiry, including the changing content of almanac-type information and the way printed blank diary stationery popularized its use and steered its content.

Existing diary studies provide many important reference points for archivists. But additional to this agenda, our research questions need to be heard. Our interest, at its broadest, is not in diary writing, but in diary keeping: the diary as record. Our analytical framework covers the record-keeping functions and concepts, applied historically. For example, diaries are often described by book reviewers, historians, and even collection managers as intrinsically “authentic.” On this presumption, of course, the forger relies. But one might then ask whether society operates with notion of “authentic” as strong and clear as that articulated in the famous Pittsburgh functional requirements for record-keeping, or rather do we need to offer a set of special diary functional requirements of our own? We should be especially interested in multiple social and personal contexts of diaries; with an exploration of their “recordness” and with the activities and relationships they perform and document, including their multiple uses and users long after the ink has faded – in other words, the issues which Sue McKemmish identified in “Evidence of me....” A study of the personal diary, she wrote, could be very revealing.

It represents both a documentary form and a type of record-keeping system, a system that is so institutionalised in our society that individuals can readily follow its “rules” and “protocols,” implementing the record-keeping processes associated with keeping a diary in ways which support its transactionality, evidentiality and quality as memory.<sup>16</sup>

An archival history of the diary in Australia would explain and show how that institutionalization process evolved.

### **An Australian Diary?**

Following the best practice for project management, our history would need to determine what is “in scope” and “out of scope.” Should our history, for example, cover diaries written by immigrants traveling to Australia, and others such as explorers and scientists (e.g., Charles Darwin on *HMS Beagle*) once active in Australian waters? And what of expatriates, who in our case have included notable writers? More pedestrian and immediate, there are diary accounts of young Australian visitors to the UK at a Web site called “aussiein-

15 Use of diary stationery could also be an indicator of social status. A commercial diary in 19<sup>th</sup>-century Australia, for example, being typically middle class. See Lucy Frost, *No Place for a Nervous Lady. Voices from the Australian Bush* (St. Lucia, 1995), p. 7.

16 Sue McKemmish, “Evidence of me....,” p. 38.

london,”<sup>17</sup> Are they to be included? What of visitor diarists such as Sidney and Beatrice Webb; or of the British geologist and Antarctic explorer Raymond Priestley, who in the 1930s was the University of Melbourne’s first salaried and Australia’s leading vice chancellor: during his four years here he produced a detailed diary, its significance and value thus being very Australian.<sup>18</sup> My university is also the home of the Grainger Museum, which includes the personal archives, including diaries (and much more), of Percy Grainger, the concert performer and composer who was born here but spent two-thirds of his long life in Europe and the USA.

In short, all projects need to define their terms. In doing so, one of our most difficult challenges arises from the fact that Australian history divides between 20,000 plus years of indigenous presence, and a few centuries of European occupation and of preceding exploration. Great care needs to be exercised here, for the ability to write is so often seen as a sign of a superior civilization and an instrument of colonization. Time, events, and individual and even collective consciousness can be “recorded” in many ways, via rites, ceremonies, oral traditions, songs, rock art, initiation acts, and sacred and other objects. How this happened in pre-contact Australia varied, but did happen.<sup>19</sup>

More elusive a question still is whether we can speak of an *Australian* record at all, be it a diary or anything else; in other words, can the universal characteristics of records and record-keeping practices take on distinctive national features of the local culture or society? Indeed, *are* there any particular kinds of record-keeping behaviours that are distinctively Australian? Was diary writing especially popular in Australia, and was it/is it anything approaching the levels reported in a survey published in the mid 1990s in the magazine *LIRE* which claimed 68% of French people wrote a diary regularly?<sup>20</sup> Currently the Weblog phenomenon suggests that Australian on-line diarists are disproportionately well represented. One answer argues the author and diary content inevitably give them their national character. The famous *favela* diary of Carolina Maria de Jesus would have Sao Paulo in every fibre of its paper; the quintessentially Jewish and Dresden diary of Victor Klemperer was described by a reviewer as “quite simply, the German of record.” But the issue remains. To take a final example, the Canadian literary scholar

17 Now located at <<http://www.inlondon.com/>>, accessed 4 March 2005. We should not conclude that the “overseas trip” diary is a recent phenomenon. See for a nineteenth-century example, Daisy White, *Daisy in Exile: The Diary of an Australian Schoolgirl in France 1887–1889* (Canberra, 2003).

18 Both have had parts of their diaries published. See Ronald Ridley, ed., *The Diary of a Vice-Chancellor: University of Melbourne 1935–1938, Raymond Priestley* (Carlton, 2002); and A.G. Austin, ed., *The Webbs’ Australian Diary 1898* (Melbourne, 1965.)

19 For an overview of pre-contact Australia, see D.J. Mulvaney and J. Peter White, eds., *Australians: A Historical Library. Australians to 1788* (Sydney, 1987).

20 As cited in “At Death’s Door in Literary France,” *Sydney Morning Herald* (13 July 1996).

Robert Fothergill's 1974 work, *Private Chronicles*, subtitled "A study of English diaries," raised but did not satisfactorily answer the question of the nature of their Englishness.

However, in addition to the inevitable influence of Australian history on the vernacular diary, there are clues to indicate areas where we may indeed be special and different. Two examples will suffice. The first is the so-called "dole diary," that recipients of unemployment benefits have been required to keep by the Australian federal government agency, Centrelink, that operates under the auspices of the Department of Family and Community Services. Introduced in 1996 as an anti-welfare fraud measure, the diary is issued to job seekers to record their attempts to find work each fortnight. It has been said that the "dole diary" is a requirement largely unknown beyond Australia. There is much which could be fruitfully developed here, especially if we set it against the contradictory observations that Australians have a talent for bureaucracy and deep seated antipathy for "red tape."

A second illustration comes from UNESCO's Memory of the World register. Its first iteration recorded the sixty-eight nominations from thirty-three countries accepted as being of world significance. Only two are diaries: the Republic of Korea's "Diaries of the Royal Secretariat," and, from Australia, the National Library's "MS 1," the personal journal of a British naval captain, James Cook, kept on HM Bark *Endeavour* during 1768–1771. The journal includes the first European discovery of the east coast of Australia. Cook's voyages are cemented into the Australian national consciousness for the significance of his discoveries. Significant for European Australians at least, meaning his naming of place and the events that led from the discoveries. For indigenous Australians, his arrival is anything but celebrated. Culturally, Cook's journal easily outranks the "Birth Certificates of the Nation" on display in the National Archives as the number one national documentary treasure. Cook and his journal continue to fascinate and challenge cultural historians: its acquisition in 1923 has also spurred those interested in archival history.<sup>21</sup>

21 Internationally, the literature on Cook and his three world voyages is substantially added to each year, but the bedrock authority is still J.C. Beaglehole, *The Voyage of the Endeavour, 1768–1771* (Cambridge, 1955). For a recent Australian reflection on the journal itself, see Greg Denning, "MS 1. Cook, J. Holograph Journal," in Peter Cochrane, ed., *Remarkable Occurrences: The National Library of Australia's First 100 Years 1901–2001* (Canberra, 2001), pp. 1–19. An exhaustive focus on all the journals produced during the first voyage has also recently appeared. See Ray Parkin, ed., *H.M. Bark Endeavour: Her Place in Australian History: With an Account of her Construction, Crew and Equipment and a Narrative of her Voyage on the East Coast of New Holland in the Year 1770: With Plans, Charts and Illustrations by the Author* (Carlton, 1997). As for its archival history, see Peter Biskup, "Cook's *Endeavour* Journal and Australian Libraries: A Study in Institutional One-upmanship," *Australian Academic & Research Libraries* 18, no. 3 (September 1987), pp. 137–49.

### Defining and Categorizing the “Diary”

An archival history would have to resolve some definitional problems of course. Diary. Journal. Log. Log book. Day book. Even Commonplace Book. And now, with the computer and the Internet: Web logs, networked and hand-held electronic diaries, black box flight recorders, and automobile electronic/event data recorders. And the reality television phenomenon: in Australian as elsewhere there are series such as *Big Brother* and its related Web site, which some have regarded as a continuous “diary.”

There are any number of semantic games to tempt us here. They fall into two clear categories. The first relates to the lack of any agreed upon archival definition of “diary.” In *Archivaria* twenty-six years ago John Batts commented that in Canada, the definition of what constitutes a diary was “persistently problematical,”<sup>22</sup> and the advent of the on-line diary has resulted in even looser use. Diaries might well be widely known, but there is little agreement as to what they are. In preparing an exhibition on diaries in 2002, I was struck by the certainty with which professional colleagues asserted that diaries and journals were, or were not, different.<sup>23</sup> The author of a classic study of diaries, Thomas Mallon, thought opinion was so “hopelessly muddled” that he effectively gave up trying to distinguish the differences.<sup>24</sup> Many of our glossaries avoid the challenge, and international descriptive standards leave it to local practice to guide what goes into standardized elements such as “form” and series and file level “title.” Interestingly, ISBD (G) lists diaries *and* journals as examples of form distinguished by common intellectual characteristics. Over thirty years ago Kevin Green quixotically compiled an Australian list of record types, but there has since been little enthusiasm here for definitions at this level.<sup>25</sup>

A further set of definitional issues arises from the fact that there are so many different kinds of diaries, and accordingly, an historical account should specify which it will be considering. Acknowledging this diversity can be more revealing than one might expect. There is a bias in popular, publishing, and scholarly consciousness towards the personal diary or journal, usually expected to contain intimate reflections and revelations. Such records are rare.

22 John Batts, “Seeking the Canadian Pepys: The Canadian Manuscript Diaries Project,” *Archivaria* 9 (Winter 1979–80), p. 130.

23 See <<http://www.lib.unimelb.edu.au/collections/archives/publications/diaries.pdf>>. The Bellardos were equally certain: diaries are personal accounts, journals impersonal. See Lewis Bellardo and Lynn Bellardo, eds., *A Glossary for Archivists, Manuscript Curators and Records Managers* (Chicago, 1992).

24 Thomas Mallon, *A Book of One's Own: People and their Diaries* (New York, 1984), p. 1.

25 Kevin Green, “Some Comments on ‘Record Types’,” *Archives and Manuscripts* 5, no. 5 (November 1973), pp. 115–23. For *Diaries* he wrote “Daily record of events = journal, n.b. an account written in the form of a diary not contemporaneously is **not** a diary.” For *Journal*, he noted “= diary” and added the standard range of financial meanings.

There are dozens of diary types, and even straightforward categories such as official and personal break down in practice. Also it is not unknown for individuals to keep multiple diaries – for instance, I have kept a *paper* work diary for decades and continue to do so, although for three years I was directed by management to keep a networked diary that apparently makes it easier to schedule meetings. Then there are recorded rather than written diaries that may or may not be transcribed. The famous British political diarist Tony Benn kept five different kinds running concurrently.<sup>26</sup> Finally, we should at least consider sequences of photographs forming a visual diary as part of the proposed Australian history. When images are deliberately created and kept as a record of events over time, and contextualized by captions and other detail, they are undoubtedly records and arguable diaries.

So what is a diary? A sample of published diaries reviewed recently in *Archives and Manuscripts* showed each was a daily, or more or less periodic, account; but added into some were such items as photos, illustrations, notes, lists, correspondence, newspaper cuttings, and so on.<sup>27</sup> Concerning the diaries of one of the four reviewed, which was compiled by the Australian painter and writer Donald Friend, his editor Anne Gray wrote that they were: “a patchwork, containing fictional, biographical and historical elements, as well as aspects of scrapbooks and artists’ journals.”<sup>28</sup>

All of the samples were in fact mini filing systems in their own right. These were in part narrative given the way photos and letters were interwoven with text; however, they were part memoir too, for another of the sampled diarists, Raymond Priestley, could not resist – any more than could the Australian World War One war correspondent and historian C.E.W. Bean – adding corrections and additions decades later.<sup>29</sup> Donald Friend did the same, in effect choosing what would appear in the selection of his wartime diaries published as *Gunner’s Diary* (Ure Smith, 1943). A further sampled diarist, the sportsman Steve Waugh, worked with his editor and marketing people to select the right extracts. Such overwritten and packaged “diaries” would fail the Kevin Green test, but raise a Sue McKemmish question: Are diaries ever actual?

Each diary, in the history of diaries, has a past – and a future. Perhaps the most obvious illustration is when diaries take a new lease on life through publication. Publication itself also hastens a pluralizing process which sees the

26 Peter Howson, a minister in various Australian governments of the 1960s and early 1970s, both wrote up his diary from notes, then later began keeping a recorded/transcribed diary. See Don Aitkin, ed., *The Howson Diaries: The Life of Politics* (Ringwood, 1984). As for Benn, see his “The Diary as Historical Source,” *Archives* 89 (April 1993), pp. 4–17.

27 Michael Piggott, “The Diary: Social Phenomenon, Professional Challenge.”

28 Anne Gray, ed., *The Diaries of Donald Friend* vol. 1 (Canberra, 2001), xxxii.

29 Of the hundreds Bean compiled, only those from the Gallipoli campaign have been published. See Kevin Fewster, ed., *Gallipoli Correspondent: The Frontline Diary of C.E.W. Bean* (Sydney, 1983).

diary as “evidence of me” becoming “evidence of us.” This occurs on one level through the aggregation of collected archives and on another level as the consequences of good record-keeping regimes. Sometimes, as in the case of diaries, their publication accounts for a much stronger reinforcement of collective, historical, and cultural memory than their meager “use” in reading rooms, as footnotes, and in exhibitions. In Australia particularly, we would emphasize the “never ending [published] story” of wartime diaries (think of “Weary” Dunlop, see note 52) and diary extracts (think of the many editions of and spin-offs from Bill Gammage’s *The Broken Years*, see note 48). The combined weight of cricketer Steve Waugh’s nine published diaries has also had its accumulative impact on our constructed memory of him and what he represents.

The Internet, by offering the means of instant publication, further stretches the boundaries of definition and the scope of our history. There are now millions of “bloggers” including politicians, activists, journalists, and ordinary people posting thoughts and reports to personal spaces on host Web sites. Increasingly, using digital cameras and webcams, these are also illustrated, a trend to please scopophiliacs popularized in the mid 1990s by global 24/7 Pepysians such as Jennifer Ringlet (of “Jennicam” fame) and now by many others such as the evidently unselfconscious Natacha Merritt.<sup>30</sup> In Australia, geographical patterns and communities (“webrings”) of on-line diarists are already discernable, recalling those of early modern England<sup>31</sup> as well as of Raymond Priestley’s early 20<sup>th</sup> century Antarctica. Christopher Isherwood’s 1930s explanation in *Goodbye to Berlin* of his fictional/actual role as a diarist, “I am a camera with its shutter open, quite passive, recording, not thinking” was remarkably prescient. His extensive diaries, of course, are preserved and published. The challenge of new kinds of diaries requires new answers, but one hopes there will be a wider historical context to set them against.

30 For Natacha Merritt’s photo journal entitled *Digital Diaries*, see <<http://www.digital-diaries.com/intro.html>> accessed 4 March 2004. See also John Mangan, “California’s Controversial Digital Diarist Does Melbourne,” *The Melbourne Age* (27 April 2002), p. 16; for Ringlet’s site, see <<http://www.jennicam.org/>>, accessed 8 March 2003, and Libby Copeland, “O What a Tangled Web she Weaves,” reproduced from *The Washington Post* in the “Today” section of the *Melbourne Age* (31 August 2000), p. 3. There is already a considerable literature on blogging and the continuous on-line public diary. For recent summaries in the popular press, see Julie Szego, “Camgirls,” *The Melbourne Age* (1 February 2003), pp. 1, 4; Bernard Lane, “Exposed: My Life as a Blog,” *The Australian* (17 September 2002), p. 9; and Joanna Mareth, “The Humble Blog Brings Freedom to the Internet,” *The Melbourne Age* (17 June 2002), p. 9. Academic interest is already evident too, particularly from RMIT University scholars Kerry Hempenstall and Meredith Badger.

31 On the distinctiveness of Melbourne Web rings, see Jenny Sinclair, “Blogging On,” *The Melbourne Age*, “The Culture” section, pp. 1, 3; see also Elaine McKay, “The Diary Network in Sixteenth and Seventeenth Century England,” *Erasmus: School of Historical Studies On-line Journal* 2, (November 2001), at <[http://www.arts.monash.edu.au/eras/edition\\_2/mckay.htm](http://www.arts.monash.edu.au/eras/edition_2/mckay.htm)>, accessed 4 March 2004.

One final challenge comes with the technology, specifically what might be termed mechanical diaries or automatic log book writers. In other words, things such as the black box flight recorder and its many variants including electronic data recorders (“EDRs”). Data recording in machinery is not new (the Wright Brothers pioneered the use of a device to record propeller rotations), though industrial and manufacturing instrumentation is increasingly electronic. Automatic event recording is now also having a direct impact on mainstream society, with devices included in automobiles already 1) featuring in successful prosecutions for manslaughter, and 2) coming under notice of privacy groups because awareness of the recorder’s existence among owners is limited at best.

Traditionally conceived diaries and log books are *compiled* in more or less regular chronological sequence (hence the popular phrase “inscribing the daily”) and *kept*, by direct human intervention; and occasionally they record standardized technical data; navigational data in a ship’s log for instance. By comparison, flight recorders and the like are *designed* by direct human intervention to compile and keep/erase data in a real time chronological sequence, and the data is more often standardized technical data. In both types of cases, for example the pilot’s log book and the airplane’s flight recorders, the resultant records have to be authentic and reliable. In between are variations of grey, such as the diarist who dictates end-of-the-day reflections with a tape recorder which may or may not then be transcribed and edited, and the bloggers who add automatically date stamped photos to their on line musings.

The question can also be looked at as one of record-keeping technology. A century ago, there was pen, ink, paper, or possibly pre-prepared diary stationery with built in guidelines about what to record, and all these helped shape the record. For some POWs, just securing paper was part of the contextual metadata of creation, and the “pen” was a pencil stub hidden under one’s tongue! Today, pen ink and paper have become hardware and software. An archival history of the Australian diary will need to be clear where and how the technological context of creation fits.

Finally we should note that diaries, if difficult to define, are difficult to categorize too. “Personal” diaries are hardly just instances of personal record-keeping, as McKemmish and Upward tried once again to show four years ago in their debate with Verne Harris (see note 7 above). Raymond Priestley’s diary in particular demonstrates how artificial the dichotomy is between personal and corporate record-keeping. As the University of Melbourne’s first salaried Vice-Chancellor between 1935 and 1938 during a critical (and controversial stage) in its development, his diary’s content and function were inevitably a blend of personal and official, reinforced by the incorporation of work notes and official correspondence. Boundaries blur with the famous Austra-

lian cricketer Steve Waugh too: his personal diaries quickly became a composite account and a corporate product.<sup>32</sup>

### Structure and Themes

How might the history be structured? What themes, periods, and common circumstances might give the history its shape? Regardless of the final answer, *our* special perspectives, as has already been argued, and in contrast to those of cultural, literary and other historians, should start with diary keeping, not diary writing: the diary as record. In metaphorical dialogue with our subjects, we might take our cue from Darian Leader who famously asked *Why do Women Write More Letters than they Post?* (London, 1996). Of the frontier settler's wife, of the Cabinet minister insider, of William Bligh just evicted from the *HMS Bounty*, we should not only ask what compelled you to daily toil, but also: "For what purpose did you keep, or hide, or share, or publish, or restrict the writing?" Additionally, we may also need to ask beyond the author's grave, such questions as why was it destroyed, neglected, offered to a collector or an archives, or so lovingly memorialized through selective transcription.

So our analytical framework must cover the record-keeping functions, applied historically and sociologically. We should be especially interested in multiple social and personal contexts, and how these differed with the circumstances. Circumstances for instance set by the expectations of travel, the documentary components of exploration and discovery, the duties of a midshipman or nurse, the warrants of a profession, the deep human urge to witness, the anticipated needs of accident investigators, and the evolving protocols and technical boundaries of blogging. Within that analytical framework, however, what themes would prove useful for an historical treatment of Australian diary keeping? Are there alternatives to the predictable focus on the most common categories of diary keeper found in Australia (such as the tiresome debate about diarists' motives regarding intended audiences). The possibilities are endless, and could include the so-called life-writing practices of "journaling" and "scrapbooking," not otherwise dealt with here. My suggestions are offered in the hope that others will take up the challenge of full historical treatments.

### Jailers, Immigrants, Explorers, Women, and Politicians

European Australia begins with the establishment of penal settlements in Sydney, New South Wales by the British Governor Arthur Phillip in 1788 and in

<sup>32</sup> The most recent of his nine published diaries is Steve Waugh, *Captain's Diary 2002* (Sydney, 2002).

Hobart, Tasmania in 1803. The former especially was remarkable for the extent of diary and journal keeping, prompted by a military, administrative, scientific, and medical predisposition to record, by the prospect of publication, and by a strong awareness of history making. The first years and especially the first months, are richly documented in this way, and much of this so-called First Fleet “incunabula” was also published contemporaneously and/or subsequently as selections.<sup>33</sup>

The colonizers’ charges, the convicts, may have helped make up a distinctive Australian culture and psyche which continued to evolve well after transportation practically ceased in 1850s, but one looks in vain for detailed records of them rather than about them. Very few are known to have kept diaries. Nevertheless they are by no means un-knowable, as recent scholarship on convict narratives has shown.<sup>34</sup> The primary immigrant group which gradually replaced them – more than a million assisted and free immigrants from the British Isles – did slightly better at writing themselves into history. A few were reasonable correspondents, but many more produced shipboard diaries, and preserved them through sharing copies with family members and with them and us through publishing.<sup>35</sup>

If we now add to jailers and immigrants a third group our school history textbooks called simply “the explorers,” we can see two patterns of diary record-keeping emerging. The first arises from the mindset of the diarist. People like the Spanish, Portuguese, Dutch, French, and British maritime explorers who mapped and described parts of, and the waters near, the Australian coast in the 16<sup>th</sup>–18<sup>th</sup> centuries, the tragic-hero Victorian figures who opened up the interior of the continent in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Explorers produced journals (and of course maps) because they were culturally and professionally predisposed to daily accounting; they anticipated that history was being made; and they sought to establish, enhance, or defend their reputations through journal

33 See John Cobley’s three volumes of extracts of the various early settlement journals, *Sydney Cove, 1788* (London, 1962); *Sydney Cove, 1789–1790* (Sydney, 1963); and *Sydney Cove, 1791–1792* (Sydney, 1965). For those unfamiliar with the history of the European occupation of Australia, we should note that not all development began as penal settlements, Adelaide the capital of what became the State of South Australia being the best known exception. However, the “convict stain” on the form of development and cultural psyche of Australia was strong and enduring. The most recent journal anthology is by Jack Egan, ed., *Buried Alive, Sydney 1788–9. Eyewitness Accounts of the Making of a Nation* (St. Leonards, 1999).

34 See Lucy Frost and Hamish Maxwell-Stewart, eds., *Chain Letters: Narrating Convict Lives* (Carlton, 2001).

35 The key authority on immigrant diaries is Andrew Hassam. See his *No Privacy for Writing: Shipboard Diaries 1852–1879* (Carlton, 1995); and *Sailing to Australia: Shipboard Diaries by Nineteenth-century British Emigrants* (Carlton, 1995). Documentation arising from Irish migration to Australia was primarily the letter (where it was produced and retained at all), and very occasionally, the diary. See David Fitzpatrick, *Oceans of Consolation: Personal Accounts of Irish Migration to Australia* (Ithaca, 1994).

publication.<sup>36</sup> These circumstances and the diary mindset were to be repeated many times, a case in point being Australia's long standing involvement with Antarctic exploration giving prominence to such explorer-diarists as Edgeworth David, and Douglas Mawson, and such diarist/photographer-explorers as Frank Hurley.

The second pattern of diary keeping arises from anticipation and experience of a personal and/or collective "sea change" event. The immigrants were not nearly as intellectually or professionally conditioned to make and keep records – of any kind in fact, but they *did* have the occasion: the potentially life-changing voyage, coupled with a cultural expectation they would prepare some kind of account to share around.

Where a fourth category of diarists, women, fits in this typology of motives and roles is not totally clear. But certainly nineteenth-century Australian diary keeping presents a gender issue. While the journal writers among the explorers and jailers were men, many of the colonists and emigrant diarists were women. As Hooton put it, "women were frequently accorded the familial role of recording the vicissitudes of emigrant life."<sup>37</sup> Other scholars have highlighted the convention of keeping diaries among middle-class women in both 19<sup>th</sup>- and early 20<sup>th</sup>-century Australian society, but also pointed to the use of inner literary "space" beyond the limited social roles available to women.<sup>38</sup>

36 Of all available, William Bligh comes closest to embodying all the explorer's motives. His connections to Australia are many, and his governorship of New South Wales aside, it is his voyage to Indonesia then England following eviction from the *Bounty* which has loomed large in Australia. Both his notebook and logbook from his remarkable longboat voyage are in Australian repositories and published. See for example John Bach, ed., *The Bligh Notebook: "Rough Account - Lieutenant Wm Bligh's Voyage in the Bounty's Launch from the Ship to Tofua & from Thence to Timor," 28 April to 14 June 1789, with a Draft List of the Bounty Mutineers* (Canberra, 1986). Aside from publication at the time, explorers' journals generally have attracted scholars' critical editions, and the anthologist. A recent instance of each is E. and M. Duyker, eds. and trans., *Bruny d'Entrecasteaux: Voyage to Australia & the Pacific, 1791–1793* (Carlton, 2001); and Tim Flannery, ed., *The Explorers* (Melbourne, 1998).

37 Joy Hooton, "Life-Lines in Stormy Seas: Some Recent Collections of Women's Diaries and Letters," *Australian Literary Studies* 16, no. 1 (May 1993), p. 6.

38 In addition to Hooton, *ibid.* and Frost, *op. cit.*, see Penny Russell, "On the Road...with an Iron Bedstead and Curried Swan," *National Library of Australia News* XIII, no. 1 (October 2002), p. 7–10; Patricia Clarke and Dale Spender, eds., *Life Lines: Australian Women's Letters and Diaries, 1788 to 1840* (St Leonards, N.S.W. 1992); Katie Holmes, "Making Time: Representations of Temporality in Australian Women's Diaries of the 1920s and 1930s," *Australian Historical Studies* 26, no. 102 (April 1994), p. 1–18 and Katie Holmes, *Spaces in Her Day: Australian Women's Diaries of the 1920s and 1930s* (St Leonards, N.S.W., 1995). Numerous women's diaries have been published, none more popular than that of Georgiana McCrae (1804–1890) and the only Australian diarist to have a society established in her name. See Brenda Niall, *Georgiana; A Biography of Georgiana McCrae; Painter, Diarist, Pioneer* (Carlton, Vic., 1994), especially the Epilogue, "Remember Me...", pp. 256–58.

Men seemed much less confined, especially – if we allow the literal and figurative exception of POWs<sup>39</sup> – in war.

Historically, much Australian diary keeping has been predictable and unsurprising. The “usual suspects” included the explorers who we somehow just knew would scribble away at the end of a hard day’s journeying, and women conforming to the expectation to tell the loved ones back home of the voyage to Australia. Are there others? In Australia, writers, artists, those of educational and intellectual predisposition (those with the literary skills, sensibility, and usually a mindset to document) are there in abundance. Our final category, diarist politicians, emerged in the past 50 years. Until the modern boom in family history, self publishing and now the Web, the majority of published diarists came from these groups.

Regarding Australian politicians as a whole, we must concede the absence of anyone, including prime ministers, as prolific and disciplined as Richard Crossman or W.E. Gladstone from the United Kingdom or Mackenzie King from Canada.<sup>40</sup> Nevertheless a small number from national rather than state politics and administration have revealed the diligence, sense of witnessing, and wish to prepare for one’s memoirs necessary to compile a political diary. Fewer still seem to have been completely ingenuous in their diary keeping. Many were happy to agree to publication which they seem to have anticipated. Fewer still returned after to find any self awareness or reflection.<sup>41</sup> The num-

39 The Australian POW diarist is discussed below. For the moment we want to stress that Holmes’ powerful “space” metaphor also perfectly covers one kind of (male) POW experience. Gavan Daws for example has highlighted the experience of the English medico Cyril Vardy, whose diary was the one (secret, mental) place where he could still be a person, where he could recall the simple and real things he missed such as the sound of a distant train. One of Vardy’s entries in particular struck Daws: “Did nothing all day except be a prisoner.” See Gavan Daws, *Prisoners of the Japanese: POWs of World War II in the Pacific* (New York, 1994), p. 134. A further parallel can be seen in the nineteen men “imprisoned” for a six week 6,000 kilometre voyage in a longboat led by William Bligh after eviction from HMS *Bounty* in April 1789. Here, Bligh meticulously compiled a notebook, continued the ship’s log, and banned everyone else from keeping a written record, in circumstances Denning called a “closed-down world.” See Greg Denning, *Mr Bligh’s Bad Language: Passion, Power and Theatre on the Bounty* (Cambridge: 1992, p. 97, and his reflections on Bligh’s longboat recordings, “Reading to Write,” in Marion Halligan, ed., *Storykeepers* (Sydney, 2001), pp. 31–45.

40 For a direct comparison, including coverage of diaries, see Graeme Powell, “Prime Ministers as Recordkeepers: British Models and Australian Practice,” in Sue McKemmish and Michael Piggott, eds., *The Records Continuum; Ian Maclean and Australian Archives First Fifty Years* (Melbourne, 1994), pp. 93–109.

41 Examples include Mark Latham, *The Latham Diaries* (Carlton, 2005); Neal Blewett, *A Cabinet Diary* (Adelaide, 1999); Aitkin, ed., *The Howson Diaries* (Ringwood 1984); and Clyde Cameron, *The Cameron Diaries* (Sydney, 1990). Blewett, a political science academic before and after his career as a parliamentarian and minister, has also reflected on the diary essentially as a form of autobiography. See his “No secret selves?,” *Meanjin* 61, no. 1 (2002), pp. 4–19. New South Wales premier Bob Carr is one of the few State politician diarists. See Marilyn Dodkin, *Bob Carr: The Reluctant Leader* (Kensington, 2003), which includes diary extracts.

ber of diarists who attend the politicians as officials and staffers are equally rare. Australia never had a Samuel Pepys administrator perfectly placed to describe the development of its Navy, but one or two “insiders” have produced remarkably insightful diaries nevertheless. Sir Peter Heydon may stand for the former genre. Heydon was the Permanent Head of the Department of Immigration in the national government of Sir Robert Menzies. He produced 2000 pages between 1961–1971 to refresh his memory for a retirement project which, though never realized, yielded an invaluable first-hand account to scholars of how Australian immigration policy was liberalized.<sup>42</sup> Don Watson, the speech writer for Paul Keating, Prime Minister between 1991 and 1996, kept daily jottings for similar reasons, which we may now vicariously read through his diary-based Boswellian memoir.<sup>43</sup> Heydon and Watson are predictable diarists, but the wars they described at least wounded only with words.

### **Soldiers and Prisoners of War**

The documentary legacy of Australians’ involvement in war resulted from both kinds of motivations discussed above. Because war forms such a strong and enduring theme in our national identity, it almost self-selects as a separate theme in our history. Australians have participated in about a dozen wars and “war-like” operations, beginning with indigenous–settler clashes, the Maori wars in New Zealand and other 19<sup>th</sup> century colonial conflicts, and moving into the twentieth-century to include not only the two world wars, the Korea conflict, and the Vietnam War, but also recent conflicts such as those in East Timor, Afghanistan, and the first and second Iraqi conflicts.

Units on a war footing no less than in peace time produced official “diaries,” that varied in name and protocols both historically and between the services.<sup>44</sup> But in addition to the established military record-keeping processes, a topic large enough to justify a volume of its own, there developed during World War I a strong focus on recording the personal dimension. This was encouraged by the aforementioned C.E.W. Bean, a war correspondent who knew he was to be the official war historian, and by a War Records Section. From this section came not only appointments of official war artists, photogra-

42 See Sean Brawley, “The Department of Immigration and Abolition of the ‘White Australian Policy’ Reflected Through the Private Diaries of Sir Peter Heydon,” *Australian Journal of Politics and History* 41, no. 3 (1995), pp. 420–34.

43 Don Watson, *Recollections of a Bleeding Heart: A Portrait of Paul Keating P.M.* (Milson’s Point, 2002).

44 Second World War Australian naval ships for instance had deck logs, the Commanding Officer’s Monthly Reports of Proceedings and ships ledgers, and these were mirrored by the Naval Board’s Daily Narrative. For a fascinating discussion on these as sources, see Hugh Campbell, “Logbooks and Memories of H.M.A.S. *Tamworth* – Where is the real history?,” *THRA Papers and Proceedings* 40, no. 4 (December 1993), pp. 183–98.

phers and cameramen, but also an encouragement of proper official record-keeping and collecting for the Australian War Memorial established in the 1920s and built in the 1930s.<sup>45</sup> In time, the soldier's personal diary recording war experiences was not only valued by official historians, but also treasured by family members who increasingly share them via the Web; they are also sought out by publishers.<sup>46</sup>

With personal record-keeping and war, we see both patterns nominated above at work. The sensitive, the literary, and the officers could definitely churn out the words during war time. As for the typical "other ranks," in World War I especially, the impulse to record (and take photos, and collect souvenirs) has been likened to the motivations of a spectator. From a population of five and a half million, some 330,000 Australians embarked overseas and as Richard White has argued, another half century passed before the tradition of the trip to Europe was again so accessible to so many Australians.<sup>47</sup> As well, participation in an event of great personal and potentially historical significance was a factor which often overrode observing the prohibition on diary writing and the censorship of letters. In fact, the so-called "digger" experience of the World War I trenches in the Dardanelles and France brought forth innumerable diarists and photographers who, before and after the war, produced hardly a single archival document of their own. Their letters and diaries collectively form the only substantial body of writing by the Australian working class, documents raised to the status of precious relics through the work of the national War Memorial and scholars such as Bill Gammage.<sup>48</sup>

The discouragement on keeping diaries was tactical. In 1941–42 in the Far East with the approaching Japanese, the retreating Allies not only disabled equipment but also destroyed documents including personal diaries to prevent information being captured. In the case of prisoners of war, their captors had a

45 On the development of the War Memorial, Bean, and the Australian War Records Section, see Michael McKernan, *Here is their Spirit: A History of the Australian War Memorial 1917–1990* (St. Lucia, 1991).

46 The most recent example is Jonathan King, ed., *Gallipoli Diaries: The Anzacs' Own Story Day by Day* (Sydney, 2003). We might also note the newspaper publication of diary extracts mentioned at the beginning of this paper was also released as a separate volume. See Gabrielle Chan, ed., *War on our Doorstep: Diaries of Australians at the Frontline in 1942* (Melbourne, 2003).

47 Richard White, "The Soldier as Tourist: The Australian Experience of the Great War," *War & Society* 5, no. 1 (May 1987), pp. 63–77.

48 Gammage's Ph.D. dissertation, which drew heavily on letters and diaries of First World War soldiers held at the Australian War Memorial, was later published as *The Broken Years* (Ringwood, 1975) and republished and repackaged many times. For his account of how the collections sparked his interest, see "The Broken Years," *Journal of the Australian War Memorial* 24 (April 1994), pp. 34–35.

general suspicion of the practice and feared the details recorded might be used to support war crimes prosecutions, as indeed some were.<sup>49</sup>

Nevertheless, with some POWs, the urge to witness was very strong, and the Australian experience of captivity particularly under the Japanese, resulted in secret photography, drawings, and written accounts. The POW diarists almost warrant a separate chapter in our history. It required great courage to record, being a summary offence. Even if the prisoner diarist was spared, detection could result in savage punishment. It also took considerable physical effort, patience, and ingenuity to find writing materials, to write, and then to keep diary scraps hidden from searches. This effort to record and to keep was increased by disincentives such as time and weather. POWs certainly did not have “a room of one’s own,” nor thick paper, a fountain pen, healthy bodies, rested minds, digital cameras, and dry conditions. On the other hand, these same dreadful circumstances provided part of the reason they wanted to record, to witness, and to “testify.”

Even more remarkably, some diarists produced sketches and photographs. Although they worked as individual chroniclers, their group role was acknowledged to be that of unofficial war correspondents. They were protected by the much vaunted and debated code of “mateship,” illustrating how quickly “evidence of me” can become “evidence of [and for] us.” Some diary writing in captivity was almost literally a group project.<sup>50</sup> Some men for instance helped fellow servicemen known to be writing a diary to hide it (and radios, cameras, and other banned items), and provided warnings of imminent searches. A regard for one’s pals could work in reverse too: George Aspinall deliberately kept his camera and activities as solitary as possible, to avoid the chance of others being forced through torture by the Japanese military police,

49 Two useful introductory texts on the Australian POW experience in the Far East during World War II are Gavan McCormack and Hank Nelson, eds., *The Burma-Thailand Railway: Memory and History* (Sydney, 1993) and Hank Nelson, *P.O.W. Prisoners of War: Australians under Nippon* (Sydney, 1985).

50 Group projects of a kind could also be discerned in the diaries sampled in the review article (see note 6). No circle, be it a cricket team (Waugh), army unit (Friend), management team (Priestley) or cabinet room (Blewett) remained unaffected when there is a self-appointed diarist and photographer/illustrator in its midst. Clyde Cameron’s open note-taking unsettled the Australian Labor Party caucus in Canberra in 1977 – as did Richard Crossman’s in the Wilson cabinet in London in the 1960s. Even so, he saw his diary telling both his personal story and functioning as “a biography of the Leader and a number of others who played important roles in the Party.” Of course the duality of the diarist’s intention has an effect on what is captured and how it is recorded. Knowing one’s diary is being read, shared, stolen, or soon to be published, shapes the recording, and the silences too, as Friend admitted (c.f. entry for 6 June 1943, p. 244). For completeness we should add a simpler type of documentary “group project,” the multiple authored diary. For a recently researched Australian example, see Janet Doust, “Kinship and Accountability: The Diaries of a Pioneer Pastoralist Family, 1856 to 1898,” *History Australia* 2, no. 1 (2004), pp. 1–14.

the *Kempei Tai*, to admit they knew what he was doing.<sup>51</sup> The deep, deep anger at what their mates suffered, as much as what they personally endured, also motivated some diarists who were determined to ensure evidence of war crimes was collected. This sense of mateship is distinctively if not exclusively Australian, and has been identified as one of the factors for their higher survival rate in the Far East compared with other Allies in captivity. It is exemplified in the life and diaries of probably Australia's most famous diarist, the soldier surgeon Sir Edward "Weary" Dunlop.<sup>52</sup> One of the diarist-artists he protected was Ray Parkin, who may serve here to illustrate and summarize the preceding points. In his diary, which Dunlop ensured was hidden to survive the war, Parkin told of a time

... when I got to my tent, there-absorbing the sky, in the middle of the pouring rain – was our bed platform with our belongings on it, but no pack. I searched amongst the sodden mess and could not find it; my mind paralysed with red fury at the thief who had taken my diaries and drawings, which could be no good to anyone.

Just as I was about to give way to an open show of fury and anger, Buck Pederson came over and said, "It's all right – I saw them knocking the tent off, so I got your stuff. It's with mine under this tent flap here." I thanked him dumbly. He went on, "If you don't get them drawings back somehow, we've wasted our bloody time up here."<sup>53</sup>

The POW diary, produced and kept with such risk-taking and ingenuity, is one of many examples of the record created *in extremis*. In Australia, there are the near death diary efforts of explorers such as Burke and Wills who attempted to cross the continent in 1860–61; the Stinson aircraft crash victims scratching diary entries onto a piece of wing metal while awaiting rescue in 1937; and the terminally ill campaigner for voluntary euthanasia, Nancy Crick in 2002.<sup>54</sup> These by no means exhaust the list: explorers expiring in the middle of the Australian outback have their parallel extreme in the Antarctic; prisoners of war (both soldiers and nurses) have their parallel in convicted criminal

51 See Tim Bowden, *Changi Photographer: George Aspinall's Record of Captivity* (Sydney, 1984).

52 See Sue Ebury, *Weary: The Life of Sir Edward Dunlop* (Ringwood, 1995). Dunlop produced a selection of his diaries as *The War Diaries of Weary Dunlop: Java and the Burma-Thailand Railway, 1942–1945* (Ringwood, 1986).

53 The Burma-Thai railway diary and sketches were originally published as *Into the Smother* in 1993 and together with the diaries kept before and after the 1943–44 as Ray Parkin, *Ray Parkin's Wartime Trilogy* (Carlton, 1999), p. 507.

54 There is a large literature on Burke and Wills, but for a modern interpretation see Tim Bonyhardy, *Burke and Wills: From Melbourne to Myth* (Balmain, 1991). The story of the Stinson survivors is described by their rescuer, Bernard O'Reilly in his *Green Mountains* (Brisbane, 1940). Nancy Crick's Web site and final diary entries are preserved at <<http://pandora.nla.gov.au/pan/24513/20020424/www.protection.net.au/nancycrick/index.htm>>, accessed 3 March 2004.

diarists; assisted suicides going on-line might just as easily be someone wanting to record their battle with cancer.

But the archivist-historian would want to ask questions even here. The urge to witness may overcome adversity, but is not the complete answer because the vast diversity of human behaviour is involved. To return to Australian POWs on the Burma-Thai railway, while we think we can have plausible reasons for their recording (to witness ill-treatment and atrocities despite the dangers), why out of the 13,000 Australian POWs of the Japanese did so few write diaries? Why did the aforementioned Ray Parkin, the senior petty officer, write diaries, and not his mate the Queensland machine gunner Buck Pederson who helped save them? And where does the “urge to witness” sit with comments of “Weary” Dunlop who insisted several times that it was just his military duty to record? that his diary was “written up each day as a record which, as a Commanding Officer, I was bound to keep.”<sup>55</sup> Why was William John Wills’ diary so detailed and meticulous and Robert O’Hara Burke’s so limited?; just because he was the expedition’s “navigator”? Does the archivist-historian also need to be a psychoanalyst?

### Conclusion

Australia’s history has ultimately provided the social, political, and cultural environment that conditioned what diaries have been written and kept. That history has been largely free of deep political upheavals. We have not experienced an apartheid or gulag regime, for instance, nor any of the other circumstances except war detailed in the “prisoner” chapter in Thomas Mallon’s study *A Book of One’s Own; People and Their Diaries*. Our location and size on the globe including the Antarctic territory, that geographical centrism so irritatingly regards as “down under,” help explain the navigators’ and explorers’ journals and subsequent immigrant and settler record-making. But a much richer set of factors go to explaining the complete picture, including universals such as the human response to adversity, trans-national categories like blogging and gender-based conventions, and local phenomena like mateship.

Some of these factors, in combination, will help explain but will probably never do so completely why Australia has never produced a Samuel Pepys, an Anne Frank, an Anaïs Nin or a Mackenzie King. By way of illustration and thus offering one final idea for a theme, take the black box flight recorder – put colloquially, the mother of all log books. It remains a happy mystery that its need attracted the attention of an Australian chemist specializing in aircraft fuels, Dr. David Warren. It may serve also to allude again to the problematic nature of the “diary,” the place of technology, and the limits on speaking about an essentially “Australian” record.

55 Dunlop, *The War Diaries of Weary Dunlop*, xxi and p. 436.

The black box's development is well documented and needs only the briefest summary here.<sup>56</sup> It was developed while Warren was Principal Research Scientist at the Aeronautical Research Laboratories, Melbourne in the early 1950s, and was prompted by the mysterious crash of one of the world's first jet-powered aircraft – the Comet – in 1953. Drawing on his schoolboy knowledge of electronics and having seen an early miniature “pocket size” recorder (the Minifron), it nevertheless took him five years to create a unit that would record and store four hours of speech and flight instrument readings prior to an accident, and fourteen years for his concept to be adopted. Its development had many features common to innovation in Australia, with officialdom taking little interest in adopting and applying the invention, partly because, at the time, we had a very good air safety record.

Through David Warren's invention, and several dozen other examples, we have canvassed some of the issues that will challenge the archivist-historian of Australian diary keeping. Here we have drawn on only published diaries, and have been highly selective in doing so, whereas a full scale project would have drunk deep of the originals held in private hands and in archival, library, and historical society collections around Australia. We have nominated a few themes, but there are others we acknowledged might have been included,<sup>57</sup> while urging that those who follow never to lose sight of the archivist's special area of interest within the historical enterprise. And we have endeavoured to explain why diaries and diary-like records are so significant and will so reward the writing of their own history.

56 For a starting point, see “The Black Box: An Australian Contribution to Air Safety,” at <<http://www.dsto.defence.gov.au/corporate/history/jubilee/blackbox.html>>, accessed 7 March 2004. See also Janice Witham, *Black Box: David Warren and the Creation of the Cockpit Recorder* (South Melbourne, 2005). It has also inspired a series of Australian innovation awards. See <[http://www.b2bcafe.com/awards\\_why.asp](http://www.b2bcafe.com/awards_why.asp)>, accessed 7 March 2004.

57 Scrapbooking for example. One further theme is fiction incorporating or structured as the diary. Andrew Hassam, whom we cited as an authority on the emigrant diarist travelling to Australia, is equally renowned for studies of English diary fiction. An instance of the innumerable dimensions available here is the writer Chuck Palahniuk, one of whose novels, *Survivor*, itself involves links to flight recorders and Australia!