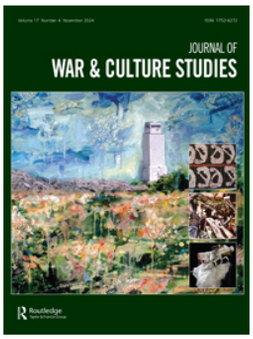

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Chronologies of Coping: Veterans, Experience and Resilience in Australia After the Great War

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This article investigates the modes in which two Australian veterans of the First World War sought to manage their experiences of service in the decades after the war. Building on a literature that has increasingly emphasized veterans' resilience rather than victimhood, it exposes how the process of managing past experiences shifted and changed over time, in relation to career and family development, ageing and wider circumstances. Through close examination of veterans' post-war writing, this study shows that the existence of wartime letters and diaries could complicate the processes of remaking memories of war. Efforts to deal with the sometimes difficult and embarrassing testimonies of former selves highlight individuals' shifting needs and priorities in their relationship to war. Coping with the experiences of war was never a question of mastering one's experiences absolutely, but a process of ongoing management in the effort to maintain one's resilience against the potential for breakdown.

KEYWORDS personal correspondence, resilience, coping, donation of records, First World War

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The question of how veterans coped – and did not cope – with their experiences of the First World War has been a matter of considerable interest since the war itself. In particular, the soldier-as-victim trope, so much a feature of the 'war books boom' of the late 1920s and 1930s, has proven highly durable for nearly a century. That trope

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presents ex-servicemen as victims of the war, their lives blighted by physical and mental wounds, and their silence offered up as evidence of their inability or unwillingness to process and articulate their experience for those at home. At the other extreme, the idealized image of the Anzac warrior hero has been central to public understanding of the war. Yet, as Crotty and Larsson (2010: 8) point out, the majority of veterans' experiences lie 'somewhere between these two polarised images'. Many of those who did experience trauma actually coped with their experiences and led successful lives after the war (Cook 2018: 319, Beaumont 2019, Pegram 2020: 169, Hodges 2022: 223). There is of course no simple division between those who coped and those who did not; rather, we need to understand how veterans managed their memories of war over time. Alistair Thomson (1994) pioneered the investigation of the process of struggle and accommodation that occurs between veterans' private memories of war and public narratives attached to that conflict. Michael Roper (2000: 184) has acknowledged that the public-private tension is productive, but insists that it does not emphasize sufficiently the emotional need to deal with – and often screen off – the past at different times in one's life. Roper has exposed individuals' making and remaking of memory as a way of managing trauma as much as negotiating disjunctions between private experience and public narratives of war. Further, Acton and Potter (2016: 12–14; 32–33) have argued that resilience and breakdown are not binaries but points on a spectrum, and that an individual's relationship to their war experience is not fixed on that spectrum. Nevertheless, it is much easier to observe this resilience, and to recognize its potential for change over time, than to demonstrate its actual operation in individual lives. Longer histories of veterans' coping and resilience are required to exploit those insights, and to show how efforts to cope with war experiences proceeded over time. This article aims to meet that need through an analysis of two Australian veterans' varying efforts to manage their war experiences over several decades.

In seeing inside the processes of coping, part of the difficulty has been to identify the kinds of records that will provide access to individual's reflections during their wartime service and at multiple points afterwards. One useful context for the creation of such records, as Anne-Marie Condé has shown, is in the processes of post-war collecting of soldiers' letters and diaries by public institutions. In her study of collecting at the Australian War Memorial and Mitchell Library she observed how such records could reflect veterans' changing relationship to their experiences of war. For ex-soldiers, it could take 'a long time […] to work out what sort of self had emerged from the war and what they wanted to say about it' (Condé 2005: 149). The two individuals at the heart of this article were themselves engaged in the process of dealing with the testimonies that they produced during the war, prompted as they were at different times in their lives to return to those documents, and to reflect on them in writing.

Examining Jack Bean and Bob Goldrick's written responses to their wartime experiences at several different points in their lives allows us to chart chronologies of coping more finely than 'during' and 'after' the war, and to see how changing life

circumstances, including career development, marriage, parenting and ageing affected their relationship to their experiences. Complex life cycles of remembering are on show here, in which the two veterans each exhibit different ways of coping at different times, varying from avoidance, to processing experience into acceptable narratives, through to revisiting and reckoning with those narratives in later life. Bean and Goldrick also show that while coping is an ongoing process, affected by life stages and contexts, the possession of – and reference to – wartime letters and other documents could be a complicating factor in building contemporary narratives of experience. Ambivalence towards their wartime selves suggests that not only *writing*, but *keeping* accounts of experience was an important dynamic in navigating one's relationship to war in the decades after 1918. Here the archival practices of these two men also demonstrate active management of war experiences and remind us that not engaging in remembering parts of the war was itself an active and legitimate choice that does not necessarily indicate a failure to deal effectively with the wartime past.

Our two subjects each left a substantial written record stretching from the war itself into the 1960s. John Willoughby Butler, or Jack, Bean – brother of Australia's official war correspondent Charles Edwin Woodrow Bean – was 34 when he joined the Australian Army Medical Corps in 1914 and served as the Third Battalion's Regimental Medical Officer. His correspondence with his father and mother in Tasmania was consistent and reciprocated. Robert Austen (Bob) Goldrick was a 25-year-old bank clerk when he enlisted in the Australian Imperial Force (AIF) in September 1915, ending the war as Captain in the 33rd battalion with a Military Cross. Like Bean, Goldrick's correspondence with his family extended to hundreds of letters. Despite leading full and successful lives beyond the war, their war experiences remained to be managed. At the behest of others, both would return to reflect in writing on their war experiences in the 1930s; each returned to their letters again in the late 1950s, prior to depositing them in public institutions; and to different degrees each maintained a correspondence with the institutions to which they submitted their papers. For Bob Goldrick, those records testified to participation in an event that remained at the centre of his life for the following five decades. Yet Goldrick's ambivalence towards the younger self who spoke through those letters also remained strong until, in his final years, his relationship to his war shifted again and realigned with attitudes that had once proven embarrassing. Jack Bean, by contrast, managed his engagement with his wartime experiences by limiting his writing about the war to his time with the Third Battalion in 1914 and 1915, eschewing much contemplation of his more difficult time in hospitals in the UK in the latter part of the war. Only in his old age did Bean re-engage with his original letters and attempt to assert greater control over his more challenging wartime experiences.

Bean and Goldrick's extensive wartime correspondence with their families functioned very much in ways that epistolary scholars have previously identified (see especially Hanna 2003, Roper 2009, Hunter 2013, Kelly 2017, Ziino 2020). In the first instance, regular correspondence provided mutual support and reassurance

in uncertain circumstances. Bob Goldrick's insistence (1916) that he was 'wonderfully well and awaiting your next mail' was both a response to what he knew his parents desired to hear and an assertion of their responsibility in the epistolary relationship. Keeping and re-reading those letters was an important way of sustaining the sense of closeness and care that they represented. Thus in Hobart, Edwin and Lucy Bean carefully kept their son's letters; in Sydney Robert Goldrick senior also diligently collected and stored his son's correspondence, and occasionally succeeded in having excerpts published in the local press. Secondly, as other scholars (Holmes 1990, Acton and Potter 2016) have noted, the very process of letter (or diary) writing could act to order and structure events, and even to contain difficult experiences by incorporating them within wider experiences. Bean and Goldrick were each engaged in heavy fighting with severe losses; correspondence with their families functioned as a critical element in the process of digesting those difficult experiences. Articulating experience in writing could take multiple efforts and months to achieve. For Jack Bean, it began early in his war, but only solidified months later. Wounded on the third day after the landing at Gallipoli in April 1915, Bean was evacuated to Egypt, where he began to compose his immediate account of what had happened. This was not easy. Even Bean (1915a) recognized that he had commenced the letter with an emphasis on the Battalion's heavy losses before he quite consciously sought to provide his parents a more deliberate sequence of events:

> Our regiment caught it very hot – poor chaps – so much so that they have I believe ceased to exist now as a separate unit. I hear they have formed a Battalion + a half out of the remnants of our Brigade left – whether that is true I don't know.
>
> Our casualties in the 3rd must amount to well over 400 out of the 1000 – but fortunately the great majority are slight casualties + should soon like myself be back again at work. … Well I have plunged 'in medias res' + shall never give you a systematic story that way.

Having said that, Bean insisted to his parents that his reaction to being in the thick of the action was much calmer than he had imagined for himself, and indeed that he was 'just joyously excited + felt I was really living at last'. In examining those feelings, he chastised himself as 'a callous beast for not being more concerned at the sights I saw – but the fact remains – the dead + wounded didn't appeal to me as terrible + sad'. Bean was already reflecting on how his account made him appear. Atop his account of the Gallipoli landings, Jack instructed his parents to 'KEEP QUIET OVER THIS LETTER. DON'T LET IT GET INTO THE PAPERS'. In signing off he apologized for 'such a long rigamarole of a letter + very egotistical'. He was pleased, however, to hear that he was 'wrong about the regiment – they are existing still – thank Heaven!'

The settling of Jack Bean's account of his experience occurred in the wake of his return to the front several weeks later. Rejoining the Third Battalion, Bean remained at Gallipoli until wounded again in the heavy fighting at Lone Pine in

early August. Evacuated again, Bean was similarly affected by his unit's losses, noting that 'My poor battalion is wiped out. … It makes one very sad' (Bean 1915b). This time his recovery took him to London for an extended period. An invitation to speak to members of a British unit preparing to embark for France in October 1915 provided the cue for Bean to order and present his experiences in a way that would remain his standard recitation for the remainder of his life. This talk, taking as its subject his year as a Medical Officer, is something of a paean to the men of his battalion, dwelling long on the character of officers and men and their tribulations, as opposed to chronicling the action at the front. Bean was certainly impressed with the scale of the casualties, and spoke rather candidly of the effects of shellshock on men at Gallipoli. But what dominated his account were the personalities he wanted to celebrate: the Battalion commander R. H. 'Dad' Owen, the enigmatic medical man Wolsey, and the embodiment of the rough Australian's devotion to his comrades, Private Edward Small, or 'Smalley', so recently killed at Lone Pine. These were the regiment's 'immortals and should'nt [*sic*] go unsung' (Bean 1915c).

Bob Goldrick also sought to give his experiences shape, structure and meaning through writing after a searing experience at Passchendaele in October 1917. He found the process far from easy, and its benefits not necessarily immediately apparent. As a Company Commander in a failed attack on 12 October, Goldrick lost 53 men and was himself wounded and sent to hospital, deeply upset at what had occurred. Over several letters while he recuperated from wounds, Goldrick (1917a) recounted for his father the details of that failed attack, the events of which 'are branded in fire upon my brain'. When he had completed the task almost two months after the events, Goldrick suddenly insisted that 'There is much of this I should never have written. It were better left unrecorded'. He admitted that he had wished never to have commenced the narrative and declared that 'No matter what occurs in future, I shall never again go into details' (Goldrick 1917b). But Goldrick had indeed committed those experiences to paper, and in doing so had imposed some order on events, as well as affirming his own anger at what had transpired. Goldrick was not proposing now that he should forget, but like Bean was already entering into the long process of managing his difficult memories.

For most soldiers, realizing that one had survived the war in November 1918 was hardly the signal for an intensive confrontation with one's experiences, so much as it afforded an opportunity to refocus on futures that had been so contingent while the war continued. Life was very full for Bean and Goldrick in the 1920s, especially in terms of family and career. Bean married in 1922, amidst what he described (1934: 6) as 'five chequered and rather stormy years as general secretary of the Theosophical Society'; a year or two in private practice in Sydney ensued, before in 1926 he took on a position in Brisbane as medical inspector of Queensland state schools. Bob Goldrick returned to new responsibilities in his family, after his mother's death left him to see to his younger brothers' education and employment. Though pessimistic about postwar Australian society, and reluctant to

return to his own employment in banking, a new position in the bank rekindled interest in his work, and in 1929 he married and found new inspiration in his wife and the two children who soon followed: 'I found there was, after all, a life left over for me, and, greatest discovery of all, – a real romance to fill that life with happiness'. Reunion with wartime comrades was difficult, however, even on an erstwhile basis (Goldrick 1934a).

Given that fullness of postwar life, we should not be surprised that for all their importance in shaping a narrative of experience, neither Jack Bean nor Bob Goldrick showed a particular interest in their letters' fate for many years after the war. They returned to their former accounts of the war only at the prompting of others, and even then their excavations did not always go very deep. One rather suspects that Jack Bean would have been quite happy not to speak at all of his experiences after the war, though having a brother who was the official historian and founder of the Australian War Memorial must have complicated any such impulse. More directly, medical historian A. G. Butler sought out Bean for interview in Sydney in July 1924, focusing exclusively on Jack's experience of the Gallipoli landing and medical arrangements pertaining to it. This included Jack giving an account of his wounding at the landing and subsequent experience of medical arrangements. The subject matter did not extend beyond the template that Bean had first produced in October 1915 when speaking to the soon-to-be deployed British troops, though Bean did take an opportunity to correct Butler's notes, and seemed comfortable adding further detail. Tellingly, he also took the time to note that all the bearers who carried him to the beach, whom he named individually, 'were subsequently killed' (Butler 1924). Jack, it seems, also willingly provided Butler his copy of his 1915 script, and so separated himself physically from his wartime testimonies entirely, as his wartime letters otherwise remained in his now-widowed mother's care in Tasmania.

Bob Goldrick's relationship to his war records was rather more complex, even if he too had found no reason to consult them directly in more than a decade after the war. When the fledgling Australian War Memorial – located in Canberra and then engaged in a concerted effort to build its collections – approached him requesting donation of his records in 1932, Goldrick was less inclined to read them than to consider their place in his own self-conception. He was 'most reluctant' to part with about a dozen field notebooks, which contained his reports to fellow officers and superiors, until his two-year-old son had grown to adulthood and had a chance to examine them. Goldrick expressed some indifference about his letters, still with his father, which he described as 'although private, [they] are harmless' (Goldrick 1932). When War Memorial Director John Treloar became over eager, however, Goldrick became defensive, declaring that the records were integral to his own processes of remembering the war. Indeed, for the first – but not the last – time, Goldrick (1933a) insisted that his wartime service had become central to his own positive self-image:

> Now that the question of definitely parting with those records of mine has arisen I feel more essentially alive to the desire to retain them. They are my other ego, and as priceless to me as the memories themselves. Although those records are seldom referred to they are my sole authentication of the only really useful things I ever did in life.

We should not be so surprised at Goldrick's imbuing of his war experience with such significance. Wartime military service was at once a collective and civic endeavour, which already carried significant cultural weight in Australia (Beaumont 2007). Goldrick's reference to these documents as his 'other ego', however, immediately suggested a much higher level of risk in submitting them to a public institution. If he had previously described these letters as 'harmless', he was now more acutely attuned to his assessments of events and people therein. He therefore insisted that he must review the letters before he would consider depositing them.

If recalling the war could be fraught, both Bean and Goldrick were prepared to enter in limited ways into the public arena of remembering, even if at the behest of others. Goldrick and Bean each published elements of their war experience in the New South Wales veterans' magazine *Reveille* in the early 1930s, though being careful not to get too close to the more difficult aspects of their service. For his part, Bob Goldrick had been contemplating the causes of his survival through the war. He had been fascinated during the war by a series of coincidences relating to a hitherto unknown second cousin, Roy Arthur Goldrick, that extended beyond the same initials and surname. Both had risen through the ranks at roughly the same pace, each had been twice wounded in action in similar parts of the body, both had received the Military Cross and had returned to Australia at about the same time (Goldrick 1933c). Privately, Goldrick (1934b) saw in the coincidences a prompt to contemplate the question that had posed itself so starkly at Passchendaele: why had he survived when so many had died? Goldrick thought perhaps the similarities between himself and his cousin – including a series of numerological phenomena that he divined in their battalion numbers – might reflect the intervention of some greater force than impersonal chance and coincidence in his survival. 'What really afforded me so much protection … during those years of war?' he asked himself. 'God above? The Devil below? The Caul? The Bloodstone Ring? Fate? Chance? Kismet? – or Luck? or even the indistinguishableness of Numbers?' Goldrick was reasonable enough to leave the question suspended, though of course no closer to a resolution of his existential question. Prompted by John Treloar to publish a story on the series of coincidences with his cousin in 1933, Goldrick set about gathering further detail, though he soon discovered that Roy Goldrick had abandoned his wife and not been seen – even by his brother – for three years (Goldrick 1933). Still, Bob Goldrick found that he enjoyed recalling this relatively safe element of his war experience, despite its deeper connections to the more difficult question of his survival. He thanked Treloar for his 'enthusiastic assistance', insisting that 'you make it a real pleasure for me to awaken the peculiar past' (Goldrick 1933b).

Jack Bean entered into publication in ways that could still insulate him from too close a contemplation of difficult elements of the past. One way of doing this was again to focus his attention on tributes to others in the Third Battalion. Thus Bean (1930: 7) appeared first in the pages of *Reveille* with a public tribute to Private Small, who had so impressed himself on Bean as 'one of the bravest and biggest hearts in the A.I.F.', and whose death at Lone Pine so remained with him. Elsewhere, in response to a 1931 request to contribute to a history of the battalion, Bean retrieved his script from Butler and submitted almost entirely the same words that he had penned in 1915 (Wren 1935, 9–14). Thus even as he returned to the topic Bean found ways to avoid disturbing too many memories. The war, he told Butler at the same time, was receding for him: 'So much water has "flowed under the bridge", I have met so many & gone thro' such a lot one way or another, that the War & all connected with it is to me now only "a dim dream"' (Bean 1931). In allowing that water to flow, Bean was demonstrating what Acton and Potter (2016: 42) have noted well: that refusing to write certain memories can be an effort at containment, avoiding the kind of confrontation with the past that writing entails. Bean's resistance to deeper reflection persisted even as he acceded to producing a number of further articles for *Reveille*. Those articles effectively serialized his entire 1915 script while almost entirely avoiding other elements of his experience. While he did briefly point to his work in treating venereal disease in the UK – a question of considerable passion for him at the time – Bean quickly resumed his focus on personalities in the battalion. Aware that readers might be disappointed not to hear more of the actual detail of his war, he pleaded that the details of battalion life had 'largely lapsed into a vague and misty "hinterland of consciousness," from which I expect it may be very difficult to drag them forth, once more' (Bean 1934: 36). Bean could find comfort in remembering comradeship, and in the context of the Great Depression, he made of his reminiscences a homily on the need for Australians to be united, to 'bring back to all sections of our nation the … A.I.F. spirit' in the face of hardship (Bean 1935: 32). Too much contemplation of his war experience itself he managed successfully to keep at arm's length.

The place of one's wartime correspondence in managing experience so far remains obscure here. In finding comfortable ways in which to engage with the war in print, neither Bean nor Goldrick had actually taken up their wartime letters. Jack Bean would continue to ignore them; the Australian War Memorial's pursuit of Bob Goldrick's papers, however, eventually caused Goldrick to reckon with them. While the letters authenticated his claims to having served honourably, they also induced discomfort and embarrassment. In light of a positive response to his *Reveille* article, Goldrick had become more comfortable with the idea of donating his letters, now in his possession following his father's death. He deferred both reading and donation pending creation of a typescript copy, a process elongated by his transfer to a rural bank. By mid-1934, bank employee Phyllis Macauley had made two copies of the letters, one of which Treloar (1935) enthusiastically accepted ahead of the promised originals. The other copy Goldrick intended for

his son. In one sense Goldrick rendered this encounter with his letters as brief and procedural. Forced to deal with the letters following his father's death, he had found them a new and secure home:

> I return, however, to the subject of these 'dead letters' of mine. They are of another day, and have been temporarily exhumed from the tombs in which my late parents, as guardian angels, embalmed them. The letters are now to be re-inhumed in Canberra. (Goldrick 1934a)

In another sense, however, Goldrick obliged himself to reckon with his past self, especially given his determination to pass the typescript on to his son (even if he also had a younger daughter) as a record and an inspiration. The process of reading them showed how awkward and difficult it could be to reconcile past testimonies with versions of the past developed to facilitate coping in the present.

Goldrick found that recalling the war through his letters was both affirming – in terms of the value of his service to the nation – and discomfiting, in terms of his embarrassment at the version of himself that he found there. The note he prepared for four-year-old Brian Goldrick in August 1934 spoke to both responses. Firstly, he presented the letters as proof that he had fulfilled expectations of an Australian man in wartime, as he linked his experience to broader narratives surrounding Australian soldiers:

> with my gallant comrades I went into the line and out of the line, pigged it through carnage and stench, through heat and snow and gas, through quagmire of mud and hard fragmenting terrain; in raids, patrols, and battles; cold, hungry, frightened, tending each other's wounds; lousy, rat-bitten, beaten, yet triumphant and victorious, laughter alternating with curses and tears, with ever depleted strength, our only holidays our hurts, volunteers everyone of us – proud members of the only non-conscript army in the world! (Goldrick 1934c)

For all that, however, Goldrick also asked his son for some consideration. Deeply upset at the deaths of his men at Passchendaele, Goldrick had reported his anger at the higher command to his fellow officers and even – as he later claimed – forcefully to his Brigadier. In his correspondence, he found a young man whose self-assurance and criticisms of his superiors sat awkwardly with his sensibilities 20 years later. Now less inclined to such blame, he admitted his reactions to reading 'are not altogether pleasant ones', as the letters spoke to a man he accused of 'undue war time egotism, brazen criticism of my betters, and assumptions of infallibility'. He was inclined to read the letters as 'representing my ego of other times, or perhaps, the outpouring of some other person', but finally concluded that 'I realise that I don't care much for myself as I was in wartime'. He had contemplated destroying the letters, but found they still had a function in the present as evidence of wartime service of which, ultimately, he was proud. The letters were, he insisted, 'the sole authentication of the only really unselfish things I ever seemed to have done in life'. As a sign of how uncomfortable he remained about the kinds of

things he had said about particular people in his letters, Goldrick sought and received a guarantee that AWM officials would use their discretion in making the papers available only to bona fide researchers (Goldrick 1934b).

Clearly postwar resilience amongst veterans was not something simply to be attained, but involved a process of negotiating one's way around its difficult contours over time and in the face of change. Acton and Potter (2016: 42) identified the role of silences in medical personnel's writing and how they worked to contain particularly challenging experiences by not admitting them to memory through writing. In this way, avoiding engaging with difficult memories functions as another way to contain and cope with the war. Goldrick felt ongoing upset, anger and guilt at the loss of his men at Passchendaele; confrontation with his former self had reminded him of perceived failings and weaknesses. Jack Bean had been on guard against his own egotism even as the war proceeded, which might have produced an aversion to discovering the same thing that Goldrick had discovered about his earlier self. But Bean had also been finding a way to avoid returning to the wartime controversies in his personal practices that had so marked the latter part of his war. Bean's return to active service in 1916 took him to France, and several hospitals behind the lines, but never back to the Third Battalion. The remainder of his war was spent largely in the United Kingdom, treating men in convalescence or suffering from venereal diseases. Bean's often chaotic and erratic approach to work, however, led him into a series of administrative errors and clashes with his fellow officers, until finally he was relieved of duties in mid-1918, at least until his brother Charles smoothed the situation over. No doubt the situation was embarrassing, and professionally frustrating, as his superiors increasingly passed over Jack's ideas. This is probably why A. G. Butler – probing Jack for his thoughts on medical issues associated with the war in 1935 for the much-delayed volumes of the official medical history – found Jack much more reluctant to pursue this area of his experience. When Butler had received, via Charles Bean, some thoughts from Jack, he was keen for more, though he was conscious this might come at a cost:

> … the last thing that I want is for him to put himself to mental distress by returning in memory to those unhappy times and events; or to spend his mental energy on resuscitating well-buried memories when it should be lying dormant with himself under his native apple-trees. (Butler 1935)

Butler and Jack did not speak further.

Given that there so often remained painful and difficult elements in their war experience, as men aged and retired the existence of their war letters could loom as an issue requiring some form of resolution. As Roper (2000) has shown, particular experiences in the war could demand that their potential psychological impact be addressed. Both Bean and Goldrick resumed military duties at home during the Second World War, but found afterwards that their experience of the previous war continued to demand attention. Goldrick had retained his field notebooks, which found a new life after 1939 as he spent part of the Second World War training

compulsory servicemen in the citizen forces, but would turn them over to the Australian War Memorial in 1946. The typescript copy of his letters he still retained, transferring it from vault to vault in the banks he managed. Jack Bean had moved temporarily to Tasmania, following his wife's death in 1939, and commenced to care for his mother, who herself died in 1942. The family home was sold, though even then Jack did not reclaim his letters. Happy to continue avoiding engaging with his previous experiences and former self, the letters were transferred to the care of a nearby relative.

Nevertheless, the very existence of wartime letters could complicate the processes of adaptation and remaking of memory over time, and so the disposition of those letters required attention. Even if Bob Goldrick's letters had so often been packed away in the bank or in his home, the urge to secure his records and exert some control over them persisted. His adult son was well on his way to becoming a notable surgeon, and apparently less in need of the inspiration his father had hoped he would find in those documents. Believing the Australian War Memorial would not want his further records, in 1959, now aged 69, Bob Goldrick approached the Mitchell Library in Sydney with the typescript letters and related correspondence accumulated over the past quarter century. Keen to accept, and aware of Goldrick's anxiety that what was in the letters might be considered 'somewhat betraying, damaging, libellous', Public Librarian Gordon Richardson suggested a closed period on the records, until 1975 (Goldrick 1959a). Such an assurance of control through restriction was surely satisfying. Perhaps more impactful, however, given Goldrick's preoccupation with coincidence and fate, was the striking discovery that he and Richardson shared a great grandfather on his mother's side. Goldrick (1959b) wondered whether, since he had shared such a close relationship with his mother in life, she was now guiding him – by a 'strange telepathy' – to a further safe haven for his letters, 'so that the transcripts will not be lost by disinterested posterity'. The librarian's acceptance of his letters came as a great relief, both in terms of Goldrick's angst about his commentaries on others and his distaste for his wartime self. The volume had become, in Goldrick's words, a kind of Frankenstein's monster, pursuing him and reminding him of past indiscretions. That ambivalent relationship to his own letters re-emerged as powerfully now as ever before, as Goldrick declared that he was 'glad to have such an overburdening "Frankenstein" off my back', without indeed the need to confront its contents. 'I was becoming afraid', he wrote, 'that if I re-read it in my senescent years, its contents would hasten my destruction, – or that, in remorse and disgust, I would involuntarily destroy it'. Even now, when he could leave it to the future, Goldrick repeated his hope of a quarter of a century prior, that future readers would be kind to 'my weak but well-intentioned writings' (Goldrick 1959a).

Even for Jack Bean, whose memories remained well buried and dormant, the future of his letters still required consideration. Jack had returned to Sydney and remarried twice in the post-war period. On a return visit to Hobart in 1958, in which he was also packing up his library of Theosophical texts for transfer to

Sydney, the now seventy-seven-year-old finally turned to his wartime correspondence. Whether prompted by the fact that he did not have children to whom he might pass on his letters, or perhaps at his brother's urging, Bean had in mind the donation of his records to the Australian War Memorial, rather than their destruction. Bean's engagement with his letters in 1958 and 1959 served not as a major shift in his modes of coping with his war experiences, but as a brief interregnum in which his approach to managing his memory of the war's more difficult parts shifted from avoidance to immersion. This would allow him to place boundaries around those experiences and manage against their unregulated release into the public realm. Jack's experience of re-reading his letters was not without some level of discomfort. Bean had shown himself self-conscious in his letters as early as 1915, when he had apologized to his parents for his egotism in describing events at Gallipoli. In his self-reflection and assessment, Bean was especially critical of the self he found during his more difficult period from 1916 to 1918. Letter 138 of July 1917 he describes as 'a hypochondriacal and egotistical effusion'. Part of letter 156 – December 1917 – he declared 'very egotistical' in his discussion of Annie Besant, India and the second coming of Christ. Letter 165, he declared, had 'a hypochondriacal "Kick off"' and letter 170 contained detail of an injury incurred playing soccer followed by 'a bit of moralising then' (Bean 1917a, 1917c, 1918a, 1918b). Despite such reactions, however, Bean did not seek to exert control over his records through restriction, but set about consciously shaping the experience of anyone who might read his letters in future.

Over the next several months Jack re-read each letter, returned it to its envelope and then placed each in a new envelope on which he wrote information to direct those who might access his collection. In his 'NOTE! – to explain things' (Bean 1959) he wrote 'I've written some sort of précis on each envelope cover – to give an idea of the nature of its contents, the points of chief interest in it' (later appending 'to myself, anyhow'). In identifying what he insisted were the key elements of each letter, Bean was consciously shaping the reading of his letters for future readers, especially in relation to the difficult period after 1915. The integral partner of presenting and contextualizing his letters for an imagined reader was that Jack was at the same time finding ways of reconciling himself to his wartime experiences and his wartime self. As he read, the volume of notes on each letter increased, to the point where Bean imagined that researchers might not even have to remove the ageing letters from their envelopes. While some early envelopes feature fairly rudimentary notes, details became more and more full, especially from the point at which Bean left the Third Battalion. Where Jack had previously been reticent about re-examining the latter part of his war, in 1958 he was prepared to engage closely with what he had previously written. Summaries were sometimes not far off the same length as the letters themselves, and contained bloody and graphic detail, but at the same time presented a barrier between the letters and the historian. Jack's hope that the future reader might not even need to open the letters, apparently in order to preserve their physical state, also served to contain the most difficult aspects of Bean's wartime experience to

the safety of the inner envelope. By the time he arrived at letter 136, of July 1917, Bean (1917b) was supplementing the contents of the original letter. In this way his donation of his materials to the AWM might satisfy a desire for recognition, and a desire to please his brother, but in a way that continued to contain those experiences. Bean held himself up to critique for his perceived failings, but with a wish that the future historian need not read the detail of what happened. Read like this, the increasing detail and summaries on the later letters functioned at once as an attempt to explain his actions and an attempt to limit his exposure.

While Bean and Goldrick's wartime and post-war writings were now securely deposited, this did not necessarily mean that the war itself receded in their lives. For both, it seems, older patterns of venerating the dead reasserted themselves strongly as they themselves contemplated their mortality. For his part, Goldrick continued to attend Anzac Day and battalion reunions, and in January 1965 visited the Australian War Memorial in Canberra. He took the opportunity not only to visit the galleries, but to check in at the library, for, 'having something there myself for so many years back, I could not resist having a peep again' (Goldrick 1965a). Here, he struck up a friendly correspondence with the Keeper of Written Records, Clem Coady. That correspondence, which continued over the last 12 months of Goldrick's life, revealed how intensively Bob Goldrick was still reviewing his war and attempting to grapple with its most difficult elements. Most apparent was his preoccupation with those who had died in the war, as Goldrick bound his own life and its legacies ever more tightly to the war and those who had fought it. Still fond of insisting that his activities in the war were the only 'unselfish things' he had ever done, he idealized his comrades in the terms familiar in the most fervid popular characterizations. Such thoughts surely served one's own sense of importance; for Goldrick they were also comforting: 'What wonderful blokes', he wrote. 'I felt I had no right to survive them. … I mourn those fine men even more now as I write to you privately and confidentially about them'. (Goldrick 1965a)

Goldrick's ruminating on his losses at Passchendaele in particular showed that the angst he had once felt about his reactions in 1917 had begun to dissipate, as his antagonism towards his superiors found a new vitality. Writing in January 1965, he reminded Coady that he had lost '80% of my own Company, killed wounded or engulphed in the quagmires and suffocated'. The now seventy-four-year-old man remained irritated at higher command not only for their direction of the battle, but for their failure to recognize his own efforts with a decoration at the time. (Goldrick 1965a) The letters that Goldrick had been so careful to restrict in the archives now became the proof of the legitimacy of his attitudes in old age. Where in 1959 he had been loath to return to reading them, now he was prepared to test his current sentiments against his earlier expressions. On consulting his letters in the Mitchell library, he was pleased to find that he was as angry in 1917 as he felt now: 'I knew quite well I had been so upset concerning the loss of so many fine men under my leadership' (Goldrick 1965b). As a way of rationalizing the continued restrictions on access to his papers, he insisted that he was protecting

others' embarrassment at not being mentioned. 'The names of my men mentioned in my works are "sacrosanct",' he wrote. '[O]ne must consider relatives and friends and those not mentioned, might wonder why I forgot them' (Goldrick 1965a). For himself, Goldrick (1965c) declared that his war was 'a most exhilarating time, and I regret none of it – except the deaths and woundings of so many worthy comrades in arms'. Goldrick allowed himself to be carried away into a reverie of his men once more – 'I could weep in my elder years – as I think of them'. Bob Goldrick died on New Year's Day, 1966, leaving his widow to express her comfort that 'even though the years go on there will always be a small memory of him in … safe keeping in Canberra'. (Elma Goldrick 1966)

Ageing and a sense that one had successfully negotiated their wartime records seemed to allow the likes of Bob Goldrick a freer hand in composing their war memories, especially in the way that the friends he still mourned grew in both proportion and character. Had it then been liberating for Jack Bean to revisit his letters? The donation of his papers, via his brother, in 1959 doesn't tell us much, though a donation of some further papers in 1961, suggests that the modes of his remembering had not changed substantially, in that he continued to emphasize his time with the Third Battalion and wanted still to celebrate the characters he had found there. The now 80-year-old Bean asked the memorial to accept into his papers a printed copy of his reflections on 'Smalley' from 1930. He desired that his 'tribute to one of the very noblest, bravest, kindest, and most unselfish men who ever graced the "1st A.I.F."' should be included with his own letters. Perhaps, like Goldrick, Bean's thoughts were much with those who had died in the war, as he insisted that 'anything that can perpetuate the memory of and admiration for "Smalley" – is – I feel, important and essential'. Tellingly, Bean declared that while as a Medical Officer his official home was the Medical Corps, his emotional home remained 'that grand 3rd Bn. [which] exceeds even the love I felt for the A.A.M.C. units I was privileged to serve in' (Bean 1961). This might have reflected the fact that Bean had contained so much of his remembering of the war to this phase of his experience, though perhaps it also reflected the same kind of increasing preoccupation with those who had died that so affected Bob Goldrick.

A close investigation of veterans' active processes of remembering and writing is crucial to our ability to understand how these men and women sought to manage their war experiences over the course of their subsequent lives. Such histories enable us to see the 'tension between breakdown and resilience' (Acton and Potter 2016: 39) in its temporal guises, shifting and changing with life stages and circumstances. Bob Goldrick and Jack Bean built successful postwar lives, despite experiences of war that marked them deeply. Their remembering of war, however, was characterized by careful emphasis on certain episodes and the limiting of exposure to others. In the processes of remembering, the physical presence of one's own testimonies could prove a genuine complication: traces of their former selves, with their preoccupations and prejudices, could make it difficult to free oneself in the effort to remake the past. Bob Goldrick's relationship to his own writing was long characterized by a deep ambivalence towards his younger self, yet those same records

provided legitimacy for his insistence that his participation had been meaningful and worthy. Jack Bean's determined evasiveness both in the act and the terms of remembering his war reflected the fact that dealing effectively with one's wartime experiences might reasonably involve an effort to ignore them, as so many veterans clearly did. Confronting them involved a reckoning with a past self as much as past events. The two men's efforts to prepare their records for donation and future readers reveal again that same negotiation with memory over time. Both thought carefully in their efforts to limit or shape the future reader's interrogation of their subjects. Commencing that effort in his middle age, Goldrick's struggle with the man he found in his youthful testaments gave way again in his latter years to the sense of loss and anger that had so framed his wartime account of Passchendaele. It gave way, too, to a more intensive veneration of those who had died, and of his fellowship with them. Jack Bean only confronted his letters when he was advanced in years himself. In one sustained effort he sought to confront and explain his wartime self; while he might hold himself up to critique, Bean still presented his testimonies to his future readers in the most controlled terms possible. Sufficiently satisfied, Bean too, it seems, returned to memories of comradeship and communion with the dead and their representation of the ideal Australian soldier. Here both men showed again that the need to manage the war in one's life was an active and ongoing process, and a key expression of the resilience historians are coming to recognize more fully in veterans. Jack Bean and Bob Goldrick are evidence that it was not found cheaply or easily, but nor was a functional relationship with the war and their part in it necessarily beyond their capacity.

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