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Museum Storytelling: Collecting Stories, Inventing Narratives

An Intimate Collection of Pocket Diaries: Material Emotions and Fragmented Narratives

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An Intimate Collection of Pocket Diaries: Material Emotions and Fragmented Narratives

In conversation with Katie Sambrook, Head of Special Collections & Engagement, King's College London, and Dylan Jonas Stone, Artist and Collector

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Katie Sambrook is Head of Special Collections & Engagement (Libraries & Collections) at King's College London. She holds degrees from the universities of Oxford and York and from University College London and has worked at the University of Birmingham and at the London Archives. Her career has been in the field of rare books and special collections librarianship and she has spoken and published widely on related topics. She currently chairs the University of London Federal Libraries Group Civic Engagement committee and sits on the committee of SCOLMA (the UK Libraries and Archives Group on Africa) and on the Library, Museums and Archives committee of the Royal College of Surgeons of England and the Archive, Heritage Library and Museum Services Advisory Committee of the Royal College of Physicians.

Further information :

<https://www.kcl.ac.uk/people/katie-sambrook>

Dylan Jonas Stone is currently working with the Kunst Museet Nord-Trøndelag in Norway to create an exhibition of portraits of people affected by war. His painting *Barbara and David Stone's Bookshelves* is a 12' x 14' immense scale watercolour and captures a portrait of a couple reflected through their lifelong love of theatre and film books, this work was acquired by The Museum of Fine Arts Houston for their collection. Dylan's 26,000 photographs of New York City titled "Drug Store Photographs" was exhibited at the MoMA PS1 inaugural exhibition and at the Nicole Klagsbrun Gallery. Holland Cotter in *The New York Times* specifically highlighted the work and The New York Public Library acquired the entire piece for their permanent collection. His miniature rooms based on the 19th century photographs by Eugene Atget, were shown

at the Nicole Klagsbrun Gallery, reviewed by Roberta Smith, chief art critic for *The New York Times* and there was a lengthy review in *Hyperallergic*. Susan and Michael Hort purchased several of them for their collection, the Rema Hortmann Foundation. At The Museum of Children's Books in Turin, with a collection of over 50,000 historical children's books, Dylan was invited to create a graphic childhood story to integrate with the displays in the museum. He produced a series of prints and drawings of a boy travelling through various environments, walking, rowing, cycling, looking, thinking and drawing in the natural world. Dylan's current exhibition "Hand Writing History: 200 Years of Personal Diaries" is at King's College London in the Maughan Library. It was initially exhibited in New York in 2013 as "100 Years of Personal Pocket Diaries" and reviewed by Jerry Saltz. There is also a fantastic review on the arts website *Hyperallergic*. Later this year, Dylan's film *The Gardener's Theatre*, integrating painting, drawing and puppetry is his gay coming of age story. Using his childhood diaries written at the age of 12, they contain a history of sexual encounters that occurred at his parent's business with an older man and trusted employee over a number of years. As it is impossible for a child of that age to understand adult sensibilities of seduction, sex and secrets, now, 40 years later, Dylan is creating the imagery to tell this emotional account of his past events. He has performed *The Gardener's Theatre* live at The Moving Parts Arts Puppet Festival last April. Dylan's *Tiny Short Stories* are a series of miniature bronze sculptures depicting his sexual encounters that fit into the palm of one's hand. Nicole Klagsbrun showed them at her booths in the New York Armory and Frieze London and they were on the Deutsche Bank Top Ten List and also exhibited with Bill Arning Gallery, at The Houston Art Fair and they were featured in *Richardson Magazine*. His work is also in the collection of Albert Rafols Casamada Foundation, Barcelona, Spain. Dylan's botanical watercolours are in the collection of Carnegie Mellon University Hunt Institute for Botanical Documentation. Dylan has storyboarded films for Julien Temple, Johnny Depp and has started work on Anton Corbijn's new film.

<https://www.dylanjonasstone.com/>

Anne Chassagnol & Caroline Marie: Dylan, you have collected more than 200 diaries over the years, and part of your collection was exhibited at Maughan Library, King's College, London¹, in 2024. Before we discuss the exhibition itself, could you tell us how you came to collect personal documents from the past, what your criteria are, how you find them? Why are you particularly interested in such mundane and yet intimate notebooks? How did the collection begin?

Dylan Stone: When I was an art student in Barcelona in the late 1980s I found the belongings of someone in the street. All their personal paperwork dating back to the 1930s was in old suitcases. As an art student, I was looking for material for collage and making pictures with found objects. I found their 1930s pocket diaries and from that point on I began to collect them, at flea markets in any country I visited. I loved the handwritten aspect of the diaries and the items that may have been tucked between pages or into the covers. Because pocket diaries are small, this was appealing to me as a personal item that is easily carried around, and notes about daily life can be recorded. My mother loved junk markets also, the junkier the better, and used to buy them for me also. About twenty years ago she found one for £1, it was a very small notebook that had been used as a pocket diary from the year 1900, that of a woman travelling around the country on trains. I then decided to actively look for years that I needed to complete a century of personal pocket diaries.

I was moved to discover the handwriting in them. Different handwritings of different people. For me, it's like drawing, people express themselves in their handwriting. As an artist, I look at this as drawing, each diarist has their own handwriting and style. These notebooks are heart-warming. It's not about the writing, the contents, it's about the fact that people carried the diaries about them, and noted things that we might not care about, like the weather or appointments. Some of the diaries are beautiful for their design, the graphics on the covers. I tend not to buy them when there's nothing written in them.

Figure 1



A view of table showcase 9 (1976-2000) displaying various diaries published in conjunction with commercial companies alongside a tiny notebook containing sketches, notes on artists and lyrical prose, © Dylan Jonas Stone Collection, photographed by Anne Chassagnol and Caroline Marie, courtesy of King's College London and Dylan Jonas Stone

AC & CM: How did the idea of this exhibition, "Hand Writing History: 200 Years of Personal Diaries," emerge? Who contacted whom?

Dylan Stone: I met John Wilby, who is Katie's colleague at King's. Some of the diaries had been on display at Orkney, Scotland, where the exhibition was a huge success. I knew that the exhibition wasn't for an art show but was much more universally appealing as a cultural history show to be hosted at libraries and archives. There are no pretences when people go to see interesting social history institutions. I asked John if he might be interested professionally in the exhibition, and he introduced me to Katie and her colleague Adam Ray. There was no conceptual framework, no paperwork behind the show and it's part of its attractive nature. It's a very simple idea.

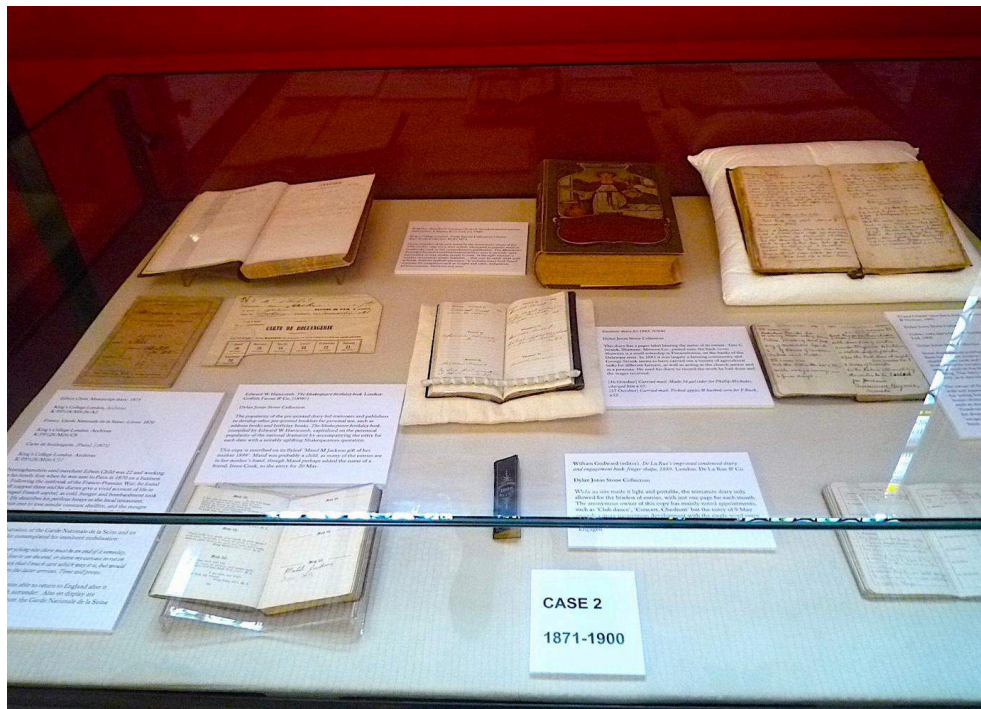
Katie Sambrook: We'd met Dylan several times when he donated his parents' archives.² So when John mentioned the exhibition we went to see it in Norfolk, at the

Aylsham Heritage Centre where it had moved after Scotland.³ We could see the interest of visitors, as well as the synergies with our own collections.

AC & CM: Katie, what types of personal documents are in Maughan Library? How did the Library come to preserve them? Were they acquired or donated? Is the Department of Special Collections still gathering such pieces, and do they have well-defined criteria or does the process rely on individual interests?

Katie Sambrook: Our Special Collections have been built up since the foundation of King's College London in 1829 and incorporate many collections transferred from other institutions, such as the historical medical schools of Guy's and St Thomas's Hospitals and the historical library of the UK Foreign, Commonwealth & Development Office (FCDO). Like most large and complex collections, they have grown through a mixture of deliberate, targeted acquisition, on the one hand, and what you might term chance (but is more accurately the result of existing connections, personal and institutional), over the centuries. Nowadays, with both space and funding subject to constraint, we have a formal collection development policy⁴ and seek to acquire, by both gift and purchase, items or collections which build to our strength. Our collection development policy is subject-based, rather than format-based, so we do not in the main deliberately set out to acquire diaries; rather, we may acquire them if they fall within larger collections we acquire for their subject content or because their content addresses some of our collection strengths (e.g. we might acquire a manuscript journal relating to 19th century British colonial history because this is an area of collection strength for us). I should also add that our special collections are largely book-based, i.e. bound volumes (print or manuscript), rather than loose papers. Our sister department in the King's College London Archives houses the Liddell Hart Centre for Military Archives, which collects the papers of 20th century senior UK military personnel, so they might acquire, for example, a set of diaries of a senior British army officer during the First World War.

Figure 2



A view of the second table showcase (1871-1900) displaying diaries from the Dylan Jonas Stone collection (a condensed diary and engagement book: finger shape, 1889; an Excelsior diary for 1883; the Scottish Provident Institution diary & prospectus, 1899; TJ and J Smith's post diary with an almanac, 1893; Collins' ruby diary for 1900) alongside items from King's College London's Archives and Foyle Special Collections Library (a manuscript diary, 1871; a French livret of the Garde Nationale de la Seine, 1870; a carte de boulangerie, 1871; Manchester Evening Chronicle household medical adviser, ca 1900), photographed by Anne Chassagnol and Caroline Marie, courtesy of King's College London and Dylan Jonas Stone

AC & CM: Is there a history of the way institutions have gathered personal documents and of the criteria determining which are deemed noteworthy to be preserved? Have these evolved much over the years?

Katie Sambrook: When archivists assess a collection of personal papers there is a rigorous process of appraisal to ensure that everything worthy of retention is preserved and, equally, that material of little permanent value is not taking up valuable space and staff resource.

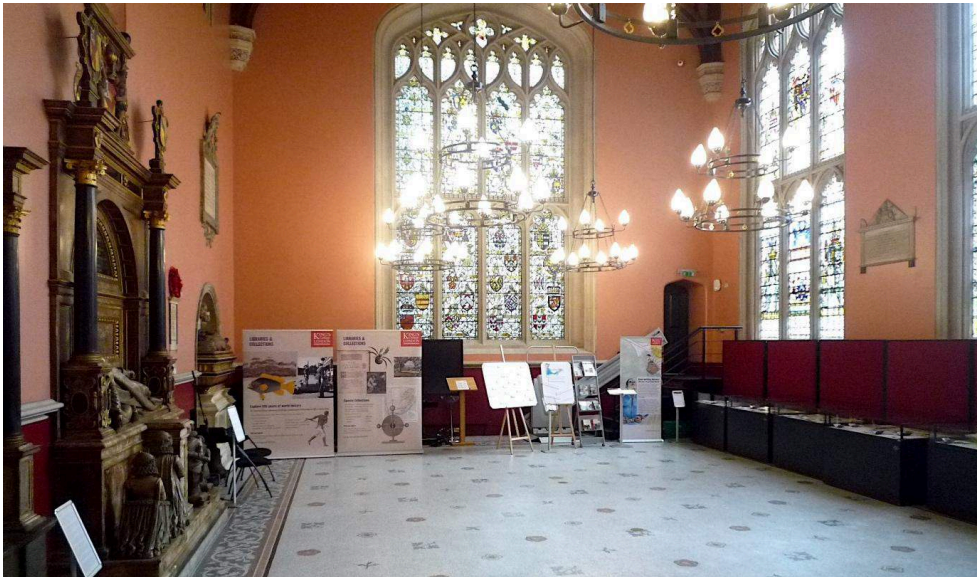
I may say that we don't accept all donations. We have to have a strict policy not be overwhelmed, we focus on themes such as exploration or travel or history of medicine because these are important in our funds, and we want to build to existing strength.

CM: The exhibition was shown in The Weston Room, which is a former chapel including 16th and 17th-century funeral monuments. It is visually striking as well as historically and emotionally charged. Was this grandiose room an important element in the scenography?

Dylan Stone: The moment I saw this room, I wanted to display my collection there because I knew it was going to look absolutely fantastic. I must say I am lucky because in the four places my collection has travelled, it's looked amazing. Each had a very special display. But here at the Maughan Library, it's been taken to a wholly new level. I realized that the cabinets we used in Scotland would not do for King's! Here

the cabinets are magnificent and they make the collection of diaries look different altogether.

Figure 3



View of the temporary exhibition "Hand Writing History: 200 Years of Personal Diaries" in The Weston Room, Maughan Library, King's College, London, photographed by Anne Chassagnol and Caroline Marie, courtesy of King's College London and Dylan Jonas Stone.

AC: Visitors have to undertake an amazing journey through the building. You have to walk through a series of corridors and spectacular doors. You don't really expect such as a vast space.

Katie Sambrook: Yes, it's like you follow a trail through the building, and follow students congregating and staff offices and then you enter this surprising, spectacular room which was once a chapel with funerary monuments and a mosaic floor. That's part of the attraction of it as an exhibition space, the journey to the site. It's a university library not a public space at all, the only public space is this exhibition room so that coming to see the exhibitions is a means for the general public to have access to this space. This is often reflected in the comments that visitors leave in the visitors' book.

Dylan Stone: When you look in the courtyard, the garden in the middle is wonderful too. It's a very special place.

AC & CM: Your collection was shown in different places but was it the same selection every time or did you reinvent the exhibition with each institution? How did you select items from Dylan's collection and Maughan Library's archive funds?

Dylan Stone: The other three times, I was involved in the selection but this time Katie, John and Adam were in charge, and it was very nice to have the three of them look at my collection so thoroughly and come up with their own ideas.

Katie Sambrook: Yes, Dylan pointed out his favourites and a few items he thought particularly worth including, which we did include. But as we said, we had the privilege of visiting the entire collection at the barn where it is stored after the closure of the exhibition in Norfolk. John Wilby, Adam Ray and I divided the curation between us broadly speaking chronologically. Because we have nine exhibition cases in our exhibition space, we took three each. We thought it best to each concentrate

on a historical period because we got a sense of themes, of the different types of material, or voices. It doesn't convey a narrative in a conventional sense.

AC: When you were in that barn, were you looking for specific items?

Katie Sambrook: Dylan had helpfully included paper markers in some diaries that had been exhibited before. His collection is organized chronologically in boxes with tabs indicating the years, so we all sat down with a set of boxes and worked our way from year to year so we didn't know what we were going to find. There was a long preliminary period of just sifting through material and reading through diaries and then pulling out a long list of potential documents to be included. Then we discussed touch points. We quickly agreed that we would like to include materials of our own collection, so we also had the themes of our collections in mind as well as the necessity to find counterpoints. It's not a conventional exhibition because it doesn't tell a unified narrative but rather many fragmented narratives.

Dylan Stone: I have to say I learnt so much from these three, the way they made their selection, and the way they wrote about the items on display. I found out that some diaries could not be included because of GDPR (General Data Protection Regulation⁵) regulating the privacy and confidentiality of people who might still be alive. There were quite a few diaries you would have liked to see included for their interest but there was too much in them that might have helped identify people who may still be alive.

AC: Do you mean that you actually own diaries that belong to people who don't know that their ancestor is in your collection?

Katie Sambrook: People might still be alive, you know, people just throw away their diaries.

Dylan Stone: The majority of places where I find these things are junky flea markets, not antique flea markets but the lowest kind of flea markets where you're going to find cardboard boxes or wooden drawers taken straight from the piece of furniture full of rubbish nobody wants, on the floor on a shower curtain. I bought many on Ebay but in Europe that's where you find diaries.

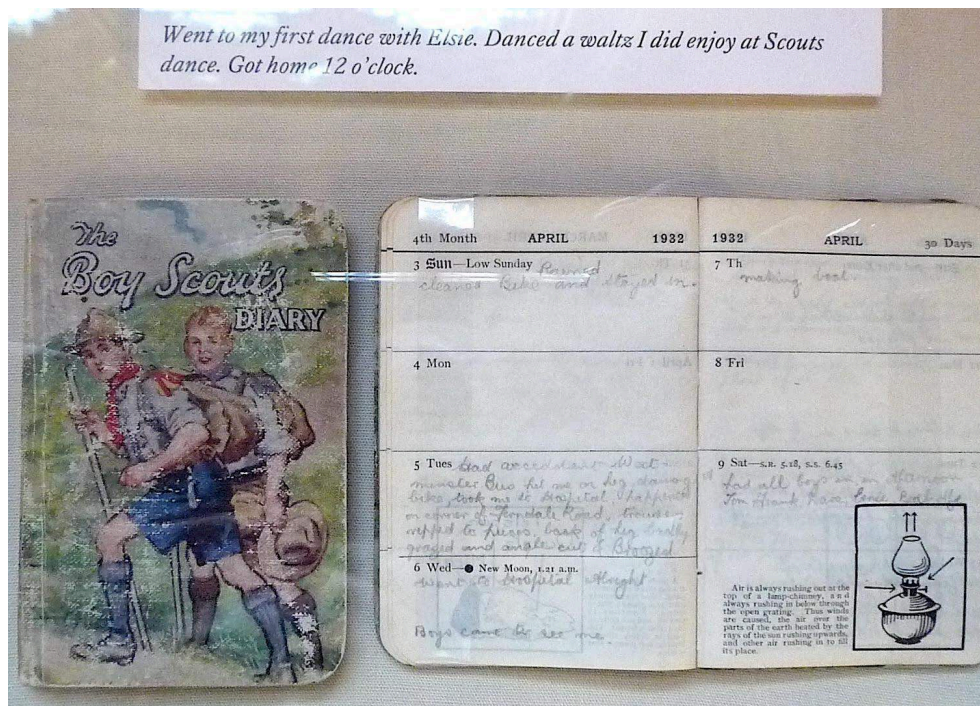
I have a friend who was a militant Labour movement organizer throughout the 1960s and 1970s, in unions, and many important strikes are listed in his diary. He was in the early gay movement also. His diary was on display, even though there are names.

Katie Sambrook: Dylan was mentioning the GDPR, as we don't have any rights for the recent diaries or are unable to trace the rights to even earlier material, we decided not to digitize this exhibition and to be very careful with the openings we're showing.

AC: In your feedback notes, did visitors identify names?

Katie Sambrook: I don't think anybody identified who wrote any of the diaries but a lady who visited from East Anglia sent us an email about the wartime diary where the diarist describes fishing in a pond near a mill. She recognized her family home, and she was very pleased to read about it in an exhibition she visited by chance.

Figure 4



Boy scouts note book and diary for 1932 and 1933 in table showcase 5 (1931-1938) continuing the narrative of a young man's life captured in a previous diary displayed in case 4 (1914-1930), photographed by Anne Chassagnol and Caroline Marie, courtesy of King's College London and Dylan Jonas Stone

CM: How did you decide what to display? Would you say that you selected whole diaries, spreads or single pages, or even single notes?

Katie Sambrook: It's quite difficult because some of the diaries don't have very much written in them, people leave most of their diaries blank and just put in the odd entry, in those cases there weren't many clues to who the persons were and to their backstory. There's less value in those as exhibits. The ones we tended to select were diaries where, by reading through the whole documents, we were able to build up a picture of that person, get a sense of their life, their family relationship, although we could only select one opening for display, in the label texts we could give quotes from other entries so that that the visitors could get more of a sense of the writer's life, their way of writing and the kinds of things they would write about. That's one of the ways in which we whittled down our choice, we selected the diaries which allowed us to have a fuller idea of their owners.

AC & CM: And the different ways in which they use their diaries. The exhibition tells that story, too. Among the items exhibited, surprisingly few are actually used as conventional diaries to simply write down appointments or to-do lists. They become something else, something more, for people from all walks of life, society ladies, workers, farmers, boy scouts...

Katie Sambrook: Yes, there are other ways in which we selected material. People might use diaries for other purposes than simply recording what's happened on a given day or what's going to happen next week. They might use their diary as a container and put things between the pages, flowers or scraps of material or other objects. We thought that was interesting, and could give variety of format, shape,

colour and texture to the exhibition which, otherwise, ran a slight risk of being rather monochrome. After all, they're all pocket diaries with writing in them!

The other thing we looked for is when people's ordinary life touched on history. We thought this was something that this collection embodies very well, particularly with the world wars, where you have people's humdrum existence set against the backdrop of world events and the two often juxtaposed on the same page, such as "went to tea with so and so" and "D-Day".

Dylan Stone: In the last few months, one of my Barcelona friends sent me a fantastic Catalan pocket diary from the 1950s, written in Catalan during the Franco era, when this language was forbidden. Tucked inside the front cover is a miniature Catalan flag and a couple of very personal items. It's a gorgeous little thing.

CM: It must have been experienced as a personal, secret space of resistance.

Dylan Stone: Yes, but some are interesting simply on account of their book covers, especially in the 1920s and 1930s, or because they were produced in a particular context. For instance, a lot of American companies printed diaries for their employees with the company's name on the cover. But I tend not to buy them if there's no handwriting in them.

CM: Precisely, the exhibition also tells the history of writing and its materials. It points to how precious paper used to be, how important thrift was, or on the contrary to the waste of notebooks abandoned after a few entries. Visitors might expect extravagant inks but most diarists used lead pencils.

AC: Yes, they're fascinating as miniature objects. Some of the writing is incredibly tiny. Magnifiers were provided in the exhibition room, which was a brilliant idea!

Dylan Stone: I have carried a diary constantly around on me for decades, so that's something I understand. I have two, in fact, my notebook from a German notebook company and another, Italian one. I wouldn't want anyone to read them!

Katie Sambrook: I agree, it's private. You need to remember that you only write in it for yourself, so you know you can read your own writing even if other people don't.

Figure 5



Magnifiers provided for visitors in The Weston Room, Maughan Library, King's College, London, for the temporary exhibition, photographed by Anne Chassagnol and Caroline Marie, courtesy of King's College London and Dylan Jonas Stone

CM: Quite often exhibitions that simply put books alongside books can be unexciting, whether showing pages or book covers, but here the handwriting makes a world of difference. The sensuality of the notes makes the fact that they were carried about, manipulated, visible. We felt the exhibition also addresses visitors emotionally.

Katie Sambrook: I think a lot of people responded to that. We can see that in the comments that our visitors made either on the visitor's board or in the visitors' book. They said how moving they found the exhibition; they said they were moved to tears. Museums are more and more interested in the personal. These objects make sense as a group. They refer to a practice that is shared by very varied categories of people. It is a history of literacy but it is also embodied knowledge. The exhibition covers a period when literacy became far more common. The further forward you get, the wider the demographic you get of people who keep a diary.

Dylan Stone: The oldest diary I own is in a notebook by a woman who traveled to Ireland, landed in Manchester, takes coach and horses, it's an incredible read. You can read it so easily.

Katie Sambrook: Yes, and it's a tiny little notebook, half a hand.

AC & CM: It also tells the story of the making of diaries: when were the first diaries produced?

Dylan Stone: There is no printed diary before 1800. Someone gave me two printed diaries from 1800 and I have just collected nice handwritten diaries. But before, what you tend to find are land deeds, wills, list of collecting debts.

Katie Sambrook: A lot of people in the feedback were worried that the current technology would not allow us to archive diaries in the future. In the early 2000s, different initiatives emerged such as the New Opportunities Fund, for example, to digitalize collections but for many of these projects, the digital output is now technically obsolete.

Figure 6



A view of the visitors' boards, photographed by Anne Chassagnol and Caroline Marie, courtesy of King's College London and Dylan Jonas Stone

AC: Do you see yourself as a rescuer of narratives? When we visit the exhibition, we get a sense that these intimate stories are extremely precious. Nobody was really meant to read them and yet, they give us a sense of daily life 200 years ago. They are incredible testimonies.

Dylan Stone: I have a family friend who thought he rescued objects from flea markets. I wouldn't use that word, but I love old things. Katie's colleague, Professor Brant, asked me a 3000-word essay about being a diarist in which I did disclose very personal stuff that I have only shared with very few friends and my therapist. I certainly wouldn't want anybody to read my diary. These things are so real. I don't buy diaries that belonged to celebrities.

CM: How did you write the labels? Were you all involved? Did you discuss to know what to put forward?

Katie Sambrook: Most of our exhibitions have an academic slant to them. Our exhibitions are open to the public but as King is a university, visitors are mostly academics and students, as well as tourists and people passing by. Here, the labels were written differently. We made sure we included historical background and context. The usual label format was preserved, as it's also important to us to present King's to the world as an institution.

Figure 7



A view of table showcase 7 (1946-1960) displaying items from the Dylan Jonas Stone collection (Lion's pocket diary for 1946; the Dataday diary for 1947; Lett's Schoolboy's diary, 1948; The Federation Diary 1952: specially compiled for the staffs of the Ministry of Labour and National Service; the filmgoer's diary, 1953; the international film diary for 1951; Lett's diary, 1957) alongside *The form and order of the service... in the coronation of Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II*, 1953, King's College London, Foyle Special Collections Library, with their labels, photographed by Anne Chassagnol and Caroline Marie, courtesy of King's College London and Dylan Jonas Stone

AC & CM: Is the exhibition a success? What is the visitors' response? Is the exhibition going to tour?

Dylan Stone: I chanced to meet two filmmakers who make very elegant documentaries and I introduced them to Katie and her colleagues. They come from academia and would like to film a documentary about the diaries, which will be funded by the Maughan Library. The film could be on the festival market and be bought by the film circuit. It will be a short film but it will be part of competitions as well as available on their Youtube channel. They have a film background. The film is soon to be released, they're in the last stages of editing.

Katie Sambrook: The exhibition is a success and still attracts a lot of visitors.

We've had a lot of feedback and comments, some in Chinese and Arabic, we had visitors from all over the world, Ukrain, Syria, South America. Some visitors declared they would now keep a diary, or improve their handwriting. A 7-year-old boy from Nebraska told us he has a diary and intends to keep it as he wants to be a writer, a gentleman in his 90's recounted how he keeps a full diary of all his activities on his birthday which he will then pass on to his grandchildren after his death, a visitor who is a writer will use the diary entries as inspiration for short stories. We had so many thoughtful and moving comments and feedback in different languages.

AC & CM: In a way, the exhibition prompts people to remember personal stories or to invent new stories.

Katie Sambrook: This really struck a chord, it's not academic, it's something that anybody can relate to. People feel a connection with these anonymous people from the past. Younger people do not often encounter such handwritten documents. These people may not have *thought* like them but they *felt* like them.

AC & CM: Is there an item you particularly like?

Katie Sambrook: There are many items I particularly like but I will just mention three:

1. The diary and associated documents from the papers of Edwin Child, the young seed merchant who travelled to France on a business trip in 1870 and found himself trapped by the Siege of Paris (see figure 1).

Edwin Child. Manuscript Diary. 1871

King's College London, Archives

K/PP128/MS.26/A2

France. Garde Nationale de la Seine. Livret. 1870

King's College London, Archives

K/PP128/M26/C8

Carte de boulangerie. [Paris], [1871]

King's College London, Archives

K/PP128/M26/C17

Nottinghamshire seed merchant Edwin Child was 22 and working for his family firm when he was sent to Paris in 1870 on a business trip. Following the outbreak of the Franco-Prussian War, he found himself trapped there and his diaries give a vivid account of life in the besieged French capital, as cold, hunger and bombardment took their toll. He describes his perilous forays to the local restaurant, dodging from tree to tree amidst constant shellfire, and the meagre meals of thin soup and pancake that he gratefully wolfed down.

Child joined a battalion of the Garde Nationale de la Seine and on 12 January 1871 he contemplated his imminent mobilisation:

[I] suppose that like everything else there must be an end of it someday, wonder whether I shall live to see the end, or leave my carcass to rot on the field of battle, cannot say that I much care which way it is, but would like to stick a Prussian before the latter arrives. Time will prove.

Child survived the siege and was able to return to England after it was lifted, following the French surrender. Also on display are Child's livret (service booklet) from the Garde Nationale de la Seine and his bread ration coupons.

I think these items demonstrate one of the themes we wanted to explore in our selection, that of how ordinary lives can be touched and changed by world events. Child kept his bread ration coupon, perhaps as a memento, perhaps accidentally, and as a result this fragment of history has survived.

2. The Nottingham lace draughtsman's diary:

Pettitt's Pocket Diary for 1912. London: Straker's & Crane's Diary Co Ltd

Dylan Jonas Stone Collection

The owner of this diary was Sidney George Oldham of Attenborough, Nottinghamshire (1897-1982). In 1912 he was 15 years old and already working as a lace draughtsman, one of thousands of Nottinghamshire people involved in the county's famous lace industry. He has used his diary as a working notebook for lace designs, with diagrams, lace samples and notes. The diary also contains strands of thread, wound on card, and on one page Sidney Oldham passed an idle moment in calculating the ages of various members of the royal family.

I like this diary, partly because I was able to identify the diarist, which was rewarding, and partly because it illustrates some of the different uses to which people put their diaries: as somewhere to doodle in idle moments, as a notebook for work and as a repository or container for objects (lace samples and strands of thread wound on card, in this case) (see figure 8).

Figure 8



A view of the table showcase displaying *Pettitt's Pocket Diary for 1912*. London: Straker's & Crane's Diary Co Ltd., photographed by Anne Chassagnol and Caroline Marie, courtesy of King's College London and Dylan Jonas Stone

3. The wartime diary of a young boy:

Collins Compact Diary for 1942. London: William Collins

Dylan Jonas Stone Collection

This beautifully clear (and unusually legible) diary of a young boy gives a simple but evocative account of day-to-day life activities, set against the backdrop of war. The opening shows the first week of the year, with the call-up of an uncle noted. Later in the week, the award of a prize at Sunday school is set against the Russian advance on the eastern front.

This is one example out of many that I could have chosen from Dylan's collection which again illustrates an ordinary life set against the backdrop of world events. For the diarist the award of a Sunday school prize is just as worthy of note as the Russian advance on the Eastern Front. This illustrates one of the themes which I think have emerged from this exhibition: what do people consider important enough to put in their diary? Or do they in fact record the important things in their lives? Not always, I think.

Dylan Stone:

- a. A boy scout in the early 1940s writes in his diary everything he hears on the radio in the news about what is going on in the war, and he draws pictures also.
- b. A woman travels around England on trains in 1900.
- c. A woman takes a boat from Ireland to England in 1806, she then takes a coach and horses to an inn to stay the night before visiting relatives.
- d. A teenage girl in the 1950s makes lists of all the films she goes to see.
- e. A Belgian school girl is in Paris in 1906 and sees in the newspaper the notices about the earthquake in San Francisco and writes down the headline in her diary.
- f. Favorite, not included in the show: a film critic who interviewed Kubrick; all it says is Kubrick.

NOTES

1. "Hand writing history: 200 years of personal diaries," The Weston Room, Maughan Library, 17 April–19 October 2024.

<www.kcl.ac.uk/events/hand-writing-history-200-years-of-personal-diaries>.

2. Barbara and David Stone were American-born filmmakers and film producers who worked in London. Their archive was donated to the Department of Film Studies, King's College, London.

<<https://www.kcl.ac.uk/news/legendary-filmmakers-barbara-and-david-stones-private-materials-including-original-documents-relating-to-the-black-power-movement-donated-to-kings>>.

3. See a review in *North Norfolk News*, Daniel Hickey, "Aylsham Heritage Centre Displays Stunning Collection Pocket Diaries, 8 March 2023 :

<www.northernorfolknews.co.uk/news/23370683.aylsham-heritage-centre-displays-stunning-collection-pocket-diaries/>

4. This document is accessible on line:

<www.kcl.ac.uk/library/assets/special-collections/special-collections-collection-development-policy-2022-25.pdf>.

5. The official PDF of the European General Data Protection Regulation is available on line :

<<https://gdpr-info.eu/>>.

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