

WWI diary donated to college

St Ignatius' College students will have at their fingertips this Remembrance Day a unique historic insight into World War I thanks to the donation of a soldier's war diary from old scholars Belinda and Ben Sieben.

"The diary is a very moving account of a young man who just signed up on April 23, 1915, and went straight to the Mitcham Camp and by October that year was moored off Gallipoli," said St Ignatius' College teacher librarian Susan Reilly.

She said students were fortunate to have been bequeathed the World War I service diary earlier this year by Belinda (2006) and Ben (2010).

The diary belonged to their great grandfather, Sapper Leonard Sieben, and traces his time at war from April 1915 to July 1919.

It includes a letter Leonard wrote to his family on April 10, 1918, after sustaining shrapnel wounds on the battlefields of France. "Received a couple of wounds last Sunday afternoon," he says in the diary. "Small one in head, behind right ear and another right through shoulder. It's really nothing, only my arm is stiff and in a sling so that makes writing a bit hard."

The handwritten diary was meticulously transcribed from difficult-to-read cursive writing by Leonard's son Geoff. Geoff, 87, spent many months pouring over the original diary, verifying facts and adding footnotes. Typed copies of the diary were gifted to family members and one is included in the Australian War Museum. The original remains in the Mortlock Library of South Australia. Meanwhile, on November 11, thousands of parishioners and Catholic schools across the State will mark Remembrance Day with special Masses, liturgies and prayers.



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HISTORIC GIFT: St Ignatius' College teacher librarian Susan Reilly with the WWI war diary of Sapper Leonard Sieben (pictured left) – the great grandfather of old scholars Belinda and Ben.