



# DCU Library

Special Collections & Archives

## **Seán Lester Diaries**

### **P1**

|              |  |        |
|--------------|--|--------|
| <b>P1</b>    | <b>Seán Lester Diaries</b>                                     | Page 3 |
| <b>P1/1</b>  | – Diary: October 1935 – January 1936                           | 8      |
| <b>P1/2</b>  | – Diary: January – June 1936                                   | 8      |
| <b>P1/3</b>  | – Diary: May 1936 – February 1937                              | 8      |
| <b>P1/4</b>  | – Diary: January – December 1937                               | 9      |
| <b>P1/5</b>  | – Diary: January – July 1938                                   | 10     |
| <b>P1/6</b>  | – Diary: September 1938 – March 1939                           | 10     |
| <b>P1/7</b>  | – Diary: August 1939 – April 1940                              | 11     |
| <b>P1/8</b>  | – Diary: May – December 1940                                   | 12     |
| <b>P1/9</b>  | – Diary: August 1940 – April 1941                              | 13     |
| <b>P1/10</b> | – Diary: April – December 1941                                 | 14     |
| <b>P1/11</b> | – Diary: 1942  | 15     |
| <b>P1/12</b> | – Address book   | 16     |
| <b>P1/13</b> | – Metal Case   | 16     |
| <b>P1/14</b> | – Television documentary: <i>Nation Builders – Sean Lester</i> | 16     |

**Reference Code:** IE DCU/P1  
**Title:** Seán Lester Diaries  
**Creation Dates:** 1935-2003  
**Level of Description:** Fonds  
**Extent and Medium:** 2 boxes  
**Name of Creator:** Seán Lester

**Biographical History:**

Seán Ernest Lester [baptised John Lester] was born on 27 September 1888 in Carrickfergus, County Antrim, to Robert John Lester and Henrietta Mary Lester (née Ritchie). The Lesters owned a grocery shop and Seán attended the Methodist College in Belfast until the age of 14 when he began working for the Belfast & County Down Railway in Bangor. Due to being colour-blind, he was forced to leave his railway job and began a career in journalism with the unionist *North Down Herald* newspaper in 1905, where one of his colleagues was Ernest Blythe. In the next few years he would go on to work for several newspapers including the *Dublin Evening Mail*, the *Dublin Daily Express*, and the *Galway Connaught Tribune*. During this period, he developed an interest in Irish nationalism and politics, Lester joined the Gaelic League, and subsequently the Irish Republican Brotherhood in 1908 and Sinn Féin in 1909. Lester was with Eóin MacNeill in 1916 when the Rising began and therefore did not take part in the fighting. He began working at the *Freeman's Journal* that year as chief reporter and then as news editor covering the ensuing significant years which saw the War of Independence, foundation of the Irish Free State, and Civil War.

Lester's friend and previous colleague, Ernest Blythe, who was by now Minister for Finance, suggested that Lester should join the Department of External Affairs, and thus in 1923, Lester took Blythe up on his suggestion and began working as Director of Publicity. He quickly rose up the ranks to the third highest position in the department, and in 1929, was chosen to act as Ireland's Permanent Delegate to the League of Nations in Geneva, Switzerland. Despite his reservations about his age (he took up his post at the age of forty), not being able to speak any languages other than English or Irish, or that he had never been abroad before, Lester quickly established himself as a diplomat of note in Geneva and worked towards getting the Irish Free State elected onto the influential League Council, which he achieved in 1930. His distinguished work for the Council and with various League committees in the following years led to his being seconded from the Irish service to the position of High Commissioner of the League of Nations in Danzig [Gdansk, Poland] in 1933. As High Commissioner, Lester came under increasing pressure over the next few years to maintain the authority of the League of Nations in the region, as the Nazis gradually gained more and more power. Following an increasing policy of intimidation and undermining of Lester's authority by the Nazis, which included placing guards around his house and questioning those who visited him, Lester was promoted to Deputy

Secretary General of the League of Nations in Geneva and left Danzig in December 1936.

With the outbreak of the Second World War, Lester struggled to keep the League headquarters in Geneva running as its staff and resources were slashed, various sections were moved to Princeton, USA, and Montreal, Canada, and the pro-Nazi Secretary General, Joseph Avenol, resigned and left for Vichy France in August 1940. Lester then assumed the role of Acting Secretary General of the League, and courageously held out in Geneva with a skeleton staff and limited resources until the end of the war. At the final assembly of the League in April 1946, he was awarded the title of Secretary General, retrospective from 1940. His final task as Secretary General was to formally dissolve the League and dispose of its assets.

Lester returned to Ireland and retired initially to County Wicklow and then to Recess, County Galway, where he indulged his passion for fishing and spent the remainder of his days. He had received the Woodrow Wilson award in 1945 for his courageous service to the League of Nations during the war, and received honorary doctorates from Dublin University and the National University of Ireland in 1947.

### **Archival History:**

The Seán Lester Diaries were donated to Dublin City University by Patricia Kilroy and Ann Gorski, daughters of Seán Lester, on behalf of the Lester family in 2008. The diaries had a remarkable journey in getting to this final destination: as the Second World War progressed and fearing that the Nazis could invade Switzerland at any moment, Lester placed his diaries in a metal case (which also forms part of the collection at DCU) and buried this case next to a bench in the Palais des Nations, the headquarters of the League of Nations in Geneva. This accounts for why the diary entries stop in 1942. After the war ended, Lester dug up the case of diaries and returned with them to Ireland. The diaries were then kept in the possession of the Lester and Kilroy families.

### **Scope and Content:**

The collection mainly consists of eleven diaries written by Seán Lester from 1935-1942 when he was High Commissioner of the League of Nations in Danzig [Gdansk, Poland], then Deputy and subsequently General Secretary of the League of Nations in Geneva, Switzerland. Lester's diary entries and the numerous letters, telegrams and other documents included in the diaries give an invaluable insight into his work in the League of Nations, the momentous historical events that were taking place, and his personal thoughts and struggles during this period. The first diary opens with the following entry by Lester written in October 1935: 'So I've opened a diary at last, the odds are against a dozen entries.' In fact, Lester would go on to write hundreds of entries over the next few years, recording the background workings of the League

of Nations with accounts of meetings, public events, conversations with political leaders and diplomats, transcripts of telephone calls, copies of letters he sent, and many of the letters he received and pasted into the pages of the diaries. They provide an invaluable insight into some of the most significant historical events during this period, including the rise of the Nazis in Danzig, the increasing persecution of Jews, the failed attempts to appease Hitler in the run-up to war, and the eventual outbreak of the Second World War.

They also chart Lester's career in the League of Nations as it developed in tandem with these events: the increasing pressure and intimidation he faced as High Commissioner in Danzig from the Nazis as they undermined the authority of the League, his promotion in late 1936 to Deputy Secretary General in Geneva (essentially as a form of appeasement to the Nazis), and his assuming the role of Acting Secretary General of the League after Joseph Avenol left Geneva for Vichy France in 1940. The diaries also show his courage and determination to keep the League (albeit, only its basic functions) running throughout the course of the Second World War.

Details of Lester's personal life and struggles during this period are also recorded, particularly the torment and loneliness he felt being separated from his wife Elsie and three daughters Dorothy Mary, Ann and Patricia following their evacuation from Geneva to Ireland in 1940. Ireland is never far from his thoughts during the period, and the diaries feature numerous correspondence with Irish friends, accounts of brief trips home for Christmas and family holidays to Connemara in the years up to 1940, and reflections on Irish current affairs and political figures. One of the most notable entries in the diaries is Lester's extensive account of his meeting with James Joyce and his family in Geneva in December 1940. The Joyce family had fled their home in Paris the previous May and sought Lester's help in obtaining a visa for their daughter Lucia; the Nazis had refused to issue her with a visa and she remained in a mental health clinic in German-occupied France. A related letter from Joyce to Lester prior to this meeting is also included in the diaries, as is correspondence between Lester and members of the Joyce family and friends following the death of James Joyce in Zurich less than a month later.

The collection also includes a metal case in which Lester – fearing that the Nazis could invade Switzerland at any moment – placed his diaries before burying them next to a bench in the Palais des Nations, the headquarters of the League of Nations in Geneva. This may account for why the diary entries stop in 1942. Also included in the collection is an address book kept by Lester during the period of the diaries, and a television documentary about Lester written and presented by John Bowman which includes a segment on the diaries.

**Arrangement:**

Numerous letters, telegrams, cards, newspaper cuttings and other documents were pasted, stapled or simply inserted loosely by Lester into the leaves of the diaries. As far as is possible, the original order of these items in the diaries has been maintained and/or recorded. Any loose items that could potentially fall out of the diaries during consultation, or material that needed to be removed from the diaries for conservation reasons, have been rehoused in archival folders.

Sometimes the dates of the correspondence inserted by Lester into the diaries does not match up with the dates of the diary entries – this is usually due to the fact that letters were received at a later date (once war broke out, letters often arrived weeks or months after they were posted). Lester also sometimes places a letter with a diary entry discussing similar topics. The covering dates for the individual diaries do not always lead cleanly from one to another – some covering dates overlap, usually due to correspondence with earlier or later dates being inserted in with the diary entries. Again, the original order of the correspondence has been maintained but it is possible that some of the loose material fell out of the diaries at some point over the years before they were donated to DCU and was placed into a new location in the diaries.

**Access Conditions:**

Available by appointment with the archivist at DCU Library Special Collections & Archives.

**Language:**

English, French and German. Lester's diary entries are written in English, but he often includes quotes from individuals he is discussing in French and German. Many of the newspaper cuttings and some of the correspondence is in French or German.

**Physical Characteristics:**

Numerous items are written or typed on very thin paper which could tear or crease very easily from handling. Many of the letters and other documents that were inserted into the diaries are crumpled in parts from being exposed from the edges of the diaries. Numerous letters and diary entries are handwritten and can be difficult to read in parts. A finding aid and quite accurate transcriptions of the majority of the diaries are available on the UN Archives in Geneva website. See: *Pp 274 Sean Lester's Diary, 1935-1947 (Series)* (<https://biblio-archive.unog.ch/Detail.aspx?ID=32586>). Diary P1/3 does not appear to been included in these transcriptions.

**Finding Aids:**

A finding aid is available on the DCU Library website and in the DCU Library Special Collections & Archives reading room.

Another finding aid and transcriptions of the majority of the diaries are available on the UN Archives in Geneva website. See: *Pp 274 Sean Lester's Diary, 1935-1947 (Series)* (<https://biblio-archive.unog.ch/Detail.aspx?ID=32586>). Diary P1/3 does not appear to have been included in this finding aid.

**Related Material:**

See also UCD Archives, Seán Lester Papers, P203:

<https://www.ucd.ie/archives/t4media/p0203-lester-sean-descriptive-catalogue.pdf>.

**Publication Note:**

Gageby, Douglas. *The Last Secretary General: Seán Lester and the League of Nations*. Dublin: Town House, 1999.

McNamara, Paul. *Sean Lester, Poland and the Nazi Takeover of Danzig*. Dublin: Irish Academic Press, 2009.

Walters, FP. *A History of the League of Nations*. London: Oxford University Press, 1952.

**Archivist's Note:**

Felix Meehan, Archivist, Special Collections & Archives, DCU Library.

**Rules or Convention**

*ISAD(G): General International Standard Archival Description*. 2nd ed. Ottawa: International Council on Archives, 2000.

*Irish Guidelines for Archival Description*. Edition 1.0. Ireland: Society of Archivists, 2009.

**Date of Description:**

Finding aid prepared January 2019.

**Reference Code:** P1/1  
**Title:** Diary: October 1935 – January 1936  
**Creation Dates:** 25 October 1935-[?14] January 1936  
**Level of Description:** Item  
**Extent and Medium:** 85 pages  
**Name of Creator:** Seán Lester  
**Scope and Content:** Consists of handwritten and typed diary entries relating to Lester's time as High Commissioner of the League of Nations in Danzig.

**Reference Code:** P1/2  
**Title:** Diary: January – June 1936  
**Creation Dates:** 16 January 1936-26 June 1936  
**Level of Description:** File  
**Extent and Medium:** 97 pages  
**Name of Creator:** Seán Lester  
**Scope and Content:** Handwritten and typed diary entries relating to Lester's time as High Commissioner of the League of Nations in Danzig. Includes telegram from Bishop Edward O'Rourke, Catholic Bishop of Danzig, to Lester dated 17 March 1936 with best wishes for St Patrick's Day, and letter from the Danzig Police President dated 21 March 1936, inviting Lester to the opening of the Danzig Trophy Show.

**Reference Code:** P1/3  
**Title:** Diary: May 1936 – February 1937  
**Creation Dates:** 6 May 1936-1 February 1937  
**Level of Description:** File  
**Extent and Medium:** 67 pages  
**Name of Creator:** Seán Lester  
**Scope and Content:** Consists of unbound typed diary entries, documents and letters relating to Lester's final months as High Commissioner of the League of Nations in Danzig. Lester



left Danzig on 22 December 1936 having been promoted to the position of Deputy Secretary General of the League. He took up his new appointment in Geneva on 16 January 1937. File includes:

- Document written by Lester outlining the context for the file: 'The following fragments are the only notes I have of my last six months in Danzig ... The reason they are so fragmentary ... was that the crisis in Danzig developed so quickly and in such uncertainty that I could not safely keep any record of certain matters, either in my house or my Office. For three months at any rate I was not at all sure that my house and Office might not be occupied any day by the political Police or the Storm Troopers [sic].'

- Document comprising of two diary entries, the first from 6 May 1936 (pages 1-3) and the second from early July 1936 (pages 4-9) combined together as a single entry. The section from 6 May 1936 is duplicated in the diary covering the period January-June 1936 in the collection [diary P1/2].

- Diary entries (some marked 'Private Diary') from the following dates: 8, 17, [?20], 23 (two entries with this date, one titled 'Relations with Greiser'), 24, and 28 July 1936; 3, 5, 6 and 7 August 1936 (two copies); 12 September 1936; 16, 19 and 24 October 1936; 22 December 1936 and 1 February 1937. Entries were all written in Danzig apart from the final entry (1 February 1937) which was written in Geneva. File also includes undated notes on Albert Forster, the Nazi Party's Gauleiter in Danzig, that was originally filed between diary entries from 24 October 1936 and 22 December 1936, and was thus possibly written during that period.

- Copy letters from Lester to Joseph Avenol, Secretary General of the League of Nations, from the following dates: 11, 14 and 24 July 1926; 1 August 1936 (two copies of two different letters from this date). Most of the letters are marked 'Personal', 'Personal and Confidential', or 'Personal; Secret'.

**Reference Code:** P1/4

**Title:** Diary: January – December 1937

**Creation Dates:** 21 January 1937-[?28] December 1937

**Level of Description:** File  
**Extent and Medium:** 127 pages  
**Name of Creator:** Seán Lester  
**Scope and Content:** Handwritten and typed diary entries relating to Lester's time as Deputy Secretary General of the League of Nations in Geneva. Includes newspaper cuttings and a programme for a St Andrew's Day dinner, hosted by the Caledonian Society of Switzerland on 4 December 1937 (at which Lester was a speaker).

**Reference Code:** P1/5  
**Title:** Diary: January – July 1938  
**Creation Dates:** 28 January 1938-25 July 1938  
**Level of Description:** File  
**Extent and Medium:** 45 pages  
**Name of Creator:** Seán Lester  
**Scope and Content:** Handwritten and typed diary entries relating to Lester's time as Deputy Secretary General of the League of Nations in Geneva. Includes draft letter from Lester to Anthony Eden, British Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, and copy letter to HR Cummings, London representative of the Secretary General of the League of Nations.

**Reference Code:** P1/6  
**Title:** Diary: September 1938 – March 1939  
**Creation Dates:** [?] September 1938-30 March 1939  
**Level of Description:** File  
**Extent and Medium:** 99 pages  
**Name of Creator:** Seán Lester  
**Scope and Content:** Handwritten and typed diary entries relating to Lester's time as Deputy Secretary General of the League of Nations in Geneva.

Includes copy letters from Lester to: Joseph Avenol, Secretary General of the League of Nations, and RM Smyllie, editor of the Irish Times.

Includes letters to Lester from: Daniel Anthony Binchy, University College Dublin lecturer and former Irish diplomat; John Marcus O'Sullivan, TD, academic and former member of the Irish delegation to the League of Nations; Alfred O'Rahilly, professor of mathematical physics at University College Cork, mainly concerning the potential promotion of O'Rahilly's new book *Electromagnetics: A Discussion of Fundamentals in Switzerland*; James Cousins, Irish writer and lecturer at the University of Travancore, India.

Includes copy letters from: Arthur Sweetser to [?Lewis Lerwin] 'in the USA', and HR Cummings, London representative of the League of Nations Secretary General, to Joseph Avenol. Also includes a list of names and occupations of individuals in the museum sector who attended at luncheon on 8 March [?1939].

**Reference Code:** P1/7

**Title:** Diary: August 1939 – April 1940

**Creation Dates:** [?] August 1939-10 April 1940

**Level of Description:** File

**Extent and Medium:** c. 120 pages

**Name of Creator:** Seán Lester

**Scope and Content:** Handwritten and typed diary entries relating to Lester's time as Deputy Secretary General of the League of Nations in Geneva, the outbreak of the Second World War, and the evacuation of his wife and three daughters from Geneva to Ireland.

Includes letters and cards to Lester from: Jack T Mayo ['an English fishing companion']; Ambrose B Wareing, the Danzig correspondent for the *Daily Telegraph* newspaper (letter dated 16 June 1937); Isidro Fabela, Mexican diplomat; Pierre Stoppani, League of Nations Economic Relations Section; Eóin MacNeill, Professor, National University of Ireland; Vladimir Sokoline, Under Secretary

General's Office, League of Nations; Stephen Gwynn, former MP for Galway city, academic and journalist; S Pelychuoniades, Hellenic Delegation to the League of Nations; Joseph MN Jeffries, author and journalist; Phyllis Manning, a friend who it seems, also holidayed in Connemara and who worked at the Agricultural Economics Research Institute in Oxford, and GC Greene, 'British Sporting Agency Ltd', Digswell Vale, Welwyn, Hertfordshire, UK.

Includes extract from letter written by Raymond Fosdick, Rockefeller Foundation, to Arthur Sweetser, League of Nations' Public Information Section.

Also includes a handwritten 'note for talk with S.G.' [Secretary General, Joseph Avenol], dated September 1938, newspaper cuttings, poems by Patricia E Lester [Seán Lester's daughter], and black and white photographs. First photograph features the following individuals chatting beside a bench in a garden or park 'at luncheon to [Iroguiera]': Luis Podestá Costa, League of Nations Under Secretary General; Frank P Walters, League of Nations Under Secretaries-Generals in charge of Political Section Office; Lester, and Isidro Fabela, Mexican diplomat. Second photograph features Lester, Alberto Guani, Uruguayan Foreign Minister, and [Iroguiera] in Lester's office.

There are two gaps in the diary when Lester did not record entries for months at a time. This diary opens with '[n]ot a line written in a notebook for months', and an entry on 31 January 1940 notes that '[n]othing written for 2 months'.

|                              |  |
|------------------------------|--|
| <b>Reference Code:</b>       | P1/8   |
| <b>Title:</b>                | Diary: May – December 1940   |
| <b>Creation Dates:</b>       | 29 May 1940-2 December 1940  |
| <b>Level of Description:</b> | File   |
| <b>Extent and Medium:</b>    | c. 160 pages   |
| <b>Name of Creator:</b>      | Seán Lester  |
| <b>Scope and Content:</b>    | Consists of handwritten and typed diary entries, letters, postcards and other documents. Topics include Lester's |

final months as Deputy Secretary General of the League of Nations; his assuming the role of Acting Secretary General following the resignation of Joseph Avenol on 31 August 1940; the dire state of the Secretariat finances, and a bus crash in August involving several League of Nations employees, including Alec [Alexander] Loveday, while travelling to Lisbon, Portugal, as part of the transfer of the Secretariat's technical services to Princeton, USA [a photograph of the crashed bus is included in diary P1/9].

Diary includes letters to Lester from: Alec Loveday, Director of the Economic, Financial, and Transit Department of the League of Nations; Seymour Jacklin, Treasurer of the League of Nations; Carl Hambro, Head of the Supervisory Commission of the League of Nations; Thamassis Aghnides, Director of the Disarmament Section of the League of Nations; Arthur Sweetser, League of Nations' Public Information Section; Hugh McKinnon Wood, Counsellor and Legal Adviser at the League of Nations; Laurence C Tombs, a former official in the Transit and Communications Section of the League of Nations; Edward Joseph Phelan, International Labour Organisation, and Carl Jacob Burckhardt, International Committee of the Red Cross [and previously, Lester's successor as League of Nations High Commissioner in Danzig]. Also includes newspaper cuttings and black and white passport photograph of an unidentified man.

|                       |   |
|-----------------------|---|
| Reference Code:       | P1/9  |
| Title:                | Diary: August 1940 – April 1941   |
| Creation Dates:       | 25 August 1940-17 April 1941  |
| Level of Description: | File  |
| Extent and Medium:    | c. 148 pages  |
| Name of Creator:      | Seán Lester   |
| Scope and Content:    | Handwritten and typed diary entries relating to Lester's time as Acting Secretary General of the League of Nations in Geneva. One of the most notable entries in this diary is Lester's extensive account of his meeting with James Joyce and his family in Geneva in December 1940. The Joyce family had fled their home in Paris the previous May |

and sought Lester's help in obtaining a visa for their daughter Lucia; the Nazis had refused to issue her with a visa and she remained in a mental health clinic in German-occupied France. A related letter from Joyce to Lester prior to this meeting is also included in the diaries, as are letters from Giorgio Joyce, son of James and Nora Barnacle [Joyce], and Carola Giedion-Welcker, a German-Swiss art historian and close friend of the Joyce family, following the death of James Joyce in Zurich less than a month later.

Diary also includes letters and telegrams from: Alec [Alexander] Loveday, Director of the Economic, Financial, and Transit Department of the League; Sir Walford Selby, British diplomat; Arthur Sweetser, League of Nations' Public Information Section; John Gilbert Winant, Director-General of International Labour Organisation; [Humphrey] Hume Wrong, Canadian Advisory Officer to the League of Nations; Elizabeth Wiskemann, British historian; Royall Tyler, Economic and Financial Section of the League of Nations; Carl Hambro, Head of the Supervisory Commission of the League, and René Massigli, French diplomat.

Also includes letters and telegrams to: Ned [Edward Joseph] Phelan, International Labour Organisation; Carl Hambro, Head of the Supervisory Commission of the League; Elsie Lester; copy letter from Seán Murphy, Irish Minister Plenipotentiary in France to James Joyce, author; Nora Barnacle, wife of James Joyce, and Frank P Walters, Deputy Secretary General of the League of Nations. Some of the diary entries and correspondence feature codenames with later annotations by Lester giving the individuals' real names.

Diary also includes two black and white photographs: one of the overturned bus that Alec [Alexander] Loveday and others had been travelling in when it crashed near Grenoble, France, in August 1940, and the other is of a Connemara pony taken by Ann Lester [Gorski].

**Reference Code:** P1/10  
**Title:** Diary: April – December 1941  
**Creation Dates:** 18 April 1941-22 December 1941

|                              |  |
|------------------------------|--|
| <b>Level of Description:</b> | File   |
| <b>Extent and Medium:</b>    | c. 190 pages   |
| <b>Name of Creator:</b>      | Seán Lester  |
| <b>Scope and Content:</b>    | <p>Handwritten and typed diary entries relating to Lester's time as Acting Secretary General of the League of Nations in Geneva. Includes numerous diary entries and correspondence concerning Lester's threat to resign his position in June 1941 following his discovery that his name was apparently on a British secret service 'watch list'.</p> <p>Diary includes correspondence with Seán T Ó Ceallaigh [Sean T O'Kelly], Minister for Finance; James John McElligott, Secretary of the Department of Finance; James Dillon, TD (letter from Lester was unsent); Seymour Jacklin, Treasurer of the League of Nations; Carl Hambro, Head of the Supervisory Commission of the League of Nations; Hugh McKinnon Wood, Counsellor and Legal Adviser at the League of Nations; Arthur Sweetser, League of Nations' Public Information Section; Frank P Walters, Deputy Secretary General of the League of Nations; Roger Makins, British Foreign Office; Anthony Eden, British Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs; Alexander Cadogan, British Permanent Under-Secretary for Foreign Affairs; David V Kelly, British Legation in Berne, Switzerland; Harry Livingston, British Consulate in Geneva; Lord Davies [David Davies, 1st Baron Davies]; Robert Cecil, 1st Viscount Cecil of Chelwood; Robert Collis, doctor and author; Frank T Cremins, Irish Legation in Berne, Switzerland; Ernst Grunwald ('[an] Austrian textile trader, who was in a civilian camp in Switzerland with his wife and obtained visas thanks to S. Lester's help', according to the finding aid for the Sean Lester collection in the United Nations Archives, Geneva. See reference: PP 274/2/871-873); Gretta Lester, Seán Lester's sister, and Frank Lidgett McDougall, Australia House, London. Also includes several Christmas cards and business cards from various diplomats, dignitaries and friends.</p> |
| <b>Reference Code:</b>       | P1/11  |
| <b>Title:</b>                | Diary: 1942  |
| <b>Creation Dates:</b>       | [?September 1942]  |

**Level of Description:** File  
**Extent and Medium:** 2 pages  
**Name of Creator:** Seán Lester  
**Scope and Content:** This diary is blank apart from a handwritten note on the very last page ['Rev. Fr. Victor Dillard, French Jesuit, economist, ed. "Cité Nouvelle". Visit Sept. 1942'] and the inclusion of a business card for Monseigneur Henri Petit, Prêlat de sa Sainteté, Vicaire Général, Geneva, with a handwritten note in French on it.

**Reference Code:** P1/12  
**Title:** Address book  
**Creation Dates:** [?1935 – 1942]  
**Level of Description:** Item  
**Extent and Medium:** 36 pages  
**Name of Creator:** Seán Lester  
**Scope and Content:** Includes the names and addresses of several of the individuals discussed by Lester in the diaries and those he was in correspondence with during the period.

**Reference Code:** P1/13  
**Title:** Metal case  
**Creation Dates:** [?1942-1945]  
**Level of Description:** Item  
**Extent and Medium:** 37.5 x 26 x 11.5 cm  
**Name of Creator:** Seán Lester  
**Scope and Content:** Fearing that the Nazis could invade Switzerland during the Second World War, Lester buried his diaries in this metal case next to a bench in the Palais des Nations in Geneva. This is likely why the diary entries stop in 1942.

**Reference Code:** P1/14  
**Title:** Television documentary: *Nation Builders – Sean Lester*



**Creation Dates:** 2003

**Level of Description:** Item

**Extent and Medium:** 1 DVD, c. 45 minutes

**Name of Creator:** Seán Lester

**Scope and Content:** Part of a three-part '[h]istorical documentary series on prominent Irish public servants' by Esras Films. Documentary tells the story of Lester's life with contributions from his three daughters: Ann Gorski, Dorothy Mary Gageby and Patricia Kilroy. Documentary also features footage of Lester's diaries and the metal case they were stored in during the Second World War. Series produced by RTÉ and ESB. Documentary written and presented by John Bowman, directed by Neal Boyle, and produced by Peter Kelly.