



## THE UNIVERSITY OF MELBOURNE ARCHIVES

<b>NAME OF COLLECTION</b>	Arthur Fenton Howells
<b>ACCESSION NO</b>	2003.0024
<b>CATEGORY</b>	Labour, individuals
<b>ACTIVITY</b>	Political activists
<b>DATE RANGE</b>	1932-1957
<b>SIZE OF COLLECTION</b>	2 archive boxes 3 newspaper folders
<b>HISTORICAL NOTE</b>	Arthur 'Bluey' Howells (1907-1986) was born and raised in Sydney. He left school at 14 and worked in a rubber factory as a storeman when, under the influence of Sydney "Wobbly" Charlie Reeve, he joined the IWW and began his years of political activism. In 1930 he was living in Narrandera and was secretary of the local Lang Labor Party. After the fall of the Lang government and back in Sydney, he joined the anti-war movement and began writing stories and articles. He moved to Melbourne in 1933, wrote for 'Smith's Weekly' and 'Labor Call', and was elected to the executive of the Victorian Council Against War. Howells was an unaligned socialist who never joined the Communist Party. In 1936 he married Margaret Kemp and they travelled to Spain in the dying days of the civil war. During WW2 Howells served in the RAAF in Darwin. After the war, Howells ran a nursery garden from his property in Olinda, where he remained for the rest of his life. In 1983 he published his memoirs, 'Against the stream : the memories of a philosophical anarchist, 1927-1939'
<b>DATE OF TRANSFER</b>	5 <sup>th</sup> March, 2007
<b>ACCESS CONDITIONS</b>	Open
<b>DESCRIPTION</b>	Correspondence, 1937; short stories, articles and personal memoirs, 1930s-1940s; copy for a RAAF newspaper, the 'No. 1 PRU Wall Newspaper', 1943; Photographs, pamphlets and ephemera from the Spanish Civil War; political handbills, 1930s; pamphlets and newspapers, 1934-1957; Howells' memoirs, "Against the Stream".
<b>NOTE ON COLLECTIONS</b>	
<b>NOTE ON LISTING</b>	
<b>LISTED BY</b>	Jane Ellen
<b>DATE</b>	1988

## THE UNIVERSITY OF MELBOURNE ARCHIVES

**NAME OF COLLECTION:** Howells, Arthur Fenton

**ACCESSION NO:** 103/24

**CATEGORY:** Labour, individuals  
**ACTIVITY:** Political activists

**DATE RANGE:** 1932 - 1957

**SIZE OF COLLECTION:** 2 archive boxes, 3 newspaper folders + one volume

**DATE OF TRANSFER:** 1988

**ACCESS CONDITIONS:** Open

**HISTORICAL NOTE:** Arthur 'Bluey' Howells (1907-1986) was born and raised in Sydney. He left school at 14 and worked in a rubber factory as a storeman when, under the influence of Sydney Wobblie, Charlie Reeve, he joined the IWW and began his years of political activism. In 1930 he lived in Narrandera and was secretary of the local Lang Labor Party. After the fall of the Lang government and back in Sydney, he joined the Anti-War Movement and began writing stories and articles. He moved to Melbourne in 1933, wrote for *Smith's Weekly* and *Labor Call* and was elected to the executive of the Victorian Council Against War. Howells was an unaligned socialist who never joined the Communist Party. In 1936 he married Margaret Kemp and together they travelled to Spain in the dying days of the civil war. During WW2 Howells served in the RAAF in Darwin. After the war, Howells ran a nursery garden from his property in Olinda, where he remained for the rest of his life. In 1983 he published his memoirs, *Against the stream : the memories of a philosophical anarchist, 1927-1939*.

**DESCRIPTION:** Correspondence, 1937; short stories, articles and personal memoirs, 1930s-1940s; copy for a RAAF newspaper, the 'No. 1 PRU Wall Newspaper', 1943; Photographs, pamphlets and ephemera from the Spanish Civil War; political handbills, 1930s; pamphlets and newspapers, 1934-1957; published memoirs, "Against the Stream"

**LISTED BY:** Jane Ellen  
**DATE:** 1988

Acc. No.

103/24

A.F. Howells Papers

Quantity: 2 archives boxes.

<u>Box:</u>	<u>File:</u>	<u>Contents:</u>
1	1/1	Correspondence relating to the Howells papers
1	1/2	Script: "Wouldn't it slay yer? - An Erk's eye-view of the R.A.A.F., 1942-45."
1	1/3	Copy for the <u>No.1 P.R.U. Wall Newspaper</u> , Darwin, 1943
1	1/4	Newsclippings collection, 1934-36
2	2/1	Script: "Them Wuz the Days: Cameos from Childhood."
2	2/2	Script: Draft of proposed booklet on fascism 1936
2	2/3	<u>Short stories &amp; correspondence:</u> - A Short stories and articles, 1930s - 1940s - B Extracts of letters, Darwin, 1942-43 - C Correspondence, 1937
2	2/4	<u>Spanish Civil War Material:</u> - A Photographs - B Pamphlets - C Ephemera
2	2/5	Political Handbills, 1930s
2	2/6	Pamphlets and Newspapers, 1934-57
2	2/7	Photograph of A.F. Howells

## BIOGRAPHICAL NOTE

Arthur 'Bluey' Howells (1907-86) was a Labor and peace movement activist during the 1920s and 30s. Born and raised in Sydney, he left school at 14 to work as a messenger-boy at Angus and Robertson's. He later worked in a rubber-factory as a storeman when, under the influence of the Sydney Wobblie and Domain orator, Charlie Reeve, he joined the I.W.W. and thus commenced his years of political activism.

In 1930, he moved to Narrandera where he became secretary of the local branch of the Lang Labor Party and organized two election campaigns. Returning to Sydney after the fall of the Lang government, Howells joined the Anti-War Movement and began writing short stories and articles. In 1933, he moved to Melbourne and worked for a time as a reporter on Smith's Weekly. He continued his involvement with the Anti-War Movement (later renamed the Movement Against War and Fascism), wrote for Labor Call, was elected to the executive of the Victorian Council Against War and organized the Egon Kisch Reception Committee in 1934.

Howells was an unaligned socialist, never belonging to the Communist Party; a distinction which he felt marked him off in some ways from other members of the Movement Against War and Fascism.

In 1936, he married Margaret Kemp and they spent the following 18 months travelling north along the coast as vendors of women's underwear, returning to Melbourne in 1938 in order to set off for Spain. En route, they spent 6 weeks in London where they took part in demonstrations against Mosely's Blackshirts and against the Munich Agreement. Arriving in Spain just at the point when the International Brigades were being repatriated, they were nevertheless given a tour of the war-torn sites of Catalonia by the Republican government. Back in Australia, the Howells worked for the Spanish Relief Committee and brought out their pamphlet "We went to Spain". They then bought a small property in Olinda where they raised a nursery garden and - except for the years 1941-45, when Arthur Howells joined the R.A.A.F. and served as a guard in the Northern Territory and Melbourne - remained there for the rest of their lives.

In 1983 Arthur Howells published his memoirs of the 1920s-30s, "Against the Stream : the Memories of a Philosophical Anarchist, 1927-1939" (Melbourne, Hyland House).

### Contents Note

The University acquired the A.F. Howells Papers in 1988 from his widow, Margaret Howells.

The collection comprises scripts of Howells' autobiographical and creative writing, material acquired during his years of involvement of the labor and peace movements of the 1930s, which included going to Spain in 1938, and his wartime service in the R.A.A.F.

In addition, there is also a significant pamphlet collection, part of which has been integrated into the McLaren Pamphlet Collection.

**A.F. Howells Papers**  
**Box 1**

1/1 Correspondence relating to the Howells Papers

8 letters and memoranda that relate to the transference of the A.P. Howells papers. Correspondants are Dr Alan Powell and Lyn Ridett (Darwin Community College), Verity Burgmann and Juliet Flesch and Jock Murphy (University of Melbourne) and Margaret Howells.  
1983-87

1/2 Script: "Wouldn't It Slay Yer? - An Erk's eye - view of the R.A.A.F., 1942-45" Ts., 146 pp. n.d. (3 copies)

Arthur 'Bluey' Howells' account of his wartime experiences serving as a guard in the R.A.A.F. between 1942-45, picks up the narrative at the point where he left off in his published volume of memoirs "Against the Stream"\*. Here he records the flavour of life - the bureaucratic mishaps, the cynical and humourous attitudes of the men, the tedium and diversions of military service - as he experienced it in 2 Squadron and No.1 Photographic Reconnaissance Unit in the Northern Territory between 1942-44 and in No.2 Transport & Movements Ordinance in Melbourne in 1945.

\*Howells, A.F. "Against the Stream: the Memories of a Philosophical Anarchist, 1927-1939"  
Melbourne, Hyland House, 1983.

1/3 Copy for the No.1 P.R.U. Wall newspaper, Darwin 1943-44

Ts., 18 items covering 26 sheets. 2 black & white photos.

Whilst Howells was serving as an Orderly Room Clerk in the No.1. Photographic Reconnaissance Unit in Darwin in 1943, he founded and edited the Wall newspaper, a single, weekly newssheet that was inspired by similar newssheets apparently being produced by Soviet factory workers and army servicement. It was entirely written by the men of the No.1 P.R.U. and was intended as a mixture of the serious and the profane.

1/4 Newscuttings collection 1934-36

Glued into an exercise book and three large, handmade scrapebooks, the newscuttings are all on political events in Australia, Germany, Britain, Russia, China and Japan.

1. Exercise book: Nov. 1934 - Feb. 1935
2. Scrapbook: July 11 - Aug. 26, 1935
3. Scrapbook: Aug. 26 - Oct. 5, 1935
4. Scrapbook: Oct. 5, 1935 - Jan. 11, 1936

## Box 2

2/1 Script: "Them Wuz the Days: Cameos from Childhood". Ts., 127 pp, n.d.

Howells' memoirs of his Sydney Childhood (c.1910 - 1920) in which he records, amongst other things, a child's perceptions of the First World War. With copies of illustrations by Joan Radriguez.

2/2 Script: Draft of a proposed booklet on fascism to be used as speakers' notes for the Movement Against War and Fascism. Ts., 33 pp, 1936.

2/3 - A Short-stories and articles:

1. "Taking a Rise out of Sammy" (short story) Ts. 3pp. 1936.
2. "The Adventures of Morva Pt.I: The Koala's Food Taster" (Children's story) 7pp., n.d.
3. "The Adventures of Morva Pt.II: Jack" (Children's story) 5pp., n.d.
4. "Untitled story: "When we were on Coogee station..." Ts., 4pp., 1933.
5. "Never Too Late" (short story) Ts., 11pp., 1932?
6. "Why do People Go Camping?" (article) by Margaret Howells. Ts., 2pp, n.d.
7. "The Meeting" (short story) Ts., 4pp., 1936.
8. "Anti-Gas: an Anti-War Sketch" (play) Ts., 6pp., 1936?
9. "The Charm" (short story) Ts., 7pp., n.d.
10. "Not Reliable" (short story) Ts., 4pp., 1932
11. "Pantisocracy" (short story) Ts., 2pp., 1932
12. "The Wrong Move" (short story) Ts., 16pp., n.d.
13. "Dead Easy" (short story) Ms., 7pp., n.d.
14. "The Anti-Sentimentalist" (short story) Ms., 4pp., n.d.
15. "Impromptu" (short story) Ms., 8pp., n.d.
16. "The Book - A Sketch" (short story) Ms., 10pp., no.d.
17. "The Great Chief" (short story) Ms., 30pp., n.d.
18. "The Great Panic" (article) Ts., 4pp., n.d.
19. "The Invention of the Electric Telegraph" (article) Ts., 4pp., n.d.

2/3 - B Extracts of letters Ts., 25pp., 1942-43

The extracts, presumably from letters to his wife Margaret, were written from Darwin when Howells served in the R.A.A.F. They primarily contain descriptions of the animal and plant life he observed in the Northern Territory but there is also some description of air-force life - his fellow-servicemen, Commanding Officers, entertainments, food.

2/3 - C Correspondence

1. To 'Len, Mary, Dorothy and Ralph' from A.F.H. Ts., 4pp., 11.7.1937. Written from Macksville, N.S.W.

The recipients are presumably Len Fox, Mary Wren, Dorothy Alexander and Ralph Gibson, Howells' colleagues in the Movement Against War and Fascism. Howells describes his and wife Margaret's travels along coastal N.S.W. where they worked as travelling salesmen of ladies underwear in 1937. He also describes their meeting with a young German gold prospector and their subsequent political discussions, and his impressions of the local dairy farmers, including an example of the usual conversation he has with them.

2. To 'Natty' from A.F.H. Ts., 3pp., 18.3.1937. Written from Raleigh, N.S.W. 'Natty' is Nat Seeligson, Howells' flatmate and co-worker in the Movement Against War and Fascism. Howells describes the country they are travelling through, their meeting with the young German and discusses the political situation in Spain.
3. To 'Walter' from A.F.H. Ts., 2pp., 8.8.1937. Written from Bellingen, N.S.W. Written to Walter Langcake, Howells' close friend, the letter describes the district around Bellingen, and the problems with their car.
4. To 'Walter' Ts., 1p., 24.8.1937. Written from Broken Head, N.S.W. Howells describes the death of their dog and the local characters encountered at Evans Head.
5. To 'Bill' Ts., 1p., 24.8.1937. Written from Broken Head, N.S.W. The recipient is apparently, Bill Thomas, who like Nat Seeligson, shared rooms with Howells and worked for the M.A.W.F. The letter mentions, amongst other things, the death of their dog and a forthcoming trip to Brisbane.
6. To 'Willie and Mrs Willie' Ts., 1p., 19.9.1937. Broken Head, N.S.W. This letter, presumably to Bill Thomas and his wife, describes the Howells' visit to Brisbane and their meetings with peace movement people there, and also Howells' friendship with a young boy from Byron Bay.
7. To 'Walter'. Ts., 2pp., 19.9.1937. Broken Head, N.S.W. Written to Walter Langcake, Howells described their impressions of Brisbane, the kindness and relaxed nature of the people, amongst other things.



## Howells Papers

### Box 2

#### 2/4 Spanish Civil War file:

#### 2/4 - A Photographs

1. One x (6 x 10 cm) b & w snapshot of Jack Lang. n.d.
2. One x (6 x 10 cm) b & w snapshot of four Australian nurses leaving for Spain. Left to right, front row: Sisters Una Wilson, Mary Lowson, May MacFarlane and Agnes Hodgson, A.F. Howells. Back row: Len Fox, Helen Baillie, Dorothy Alexander, Joyce Metcalfe and Nettie Palmer. October, 1936.
3. One x (5 x 8 cm) b & w snapshot of refugee children south of France. n.d.
4. One x (5 x 8 cm) b & w snapshot of the funeral of Antonio Sese, secretary of the Catalan Unión General de Trabajadores and member of the government, who was killed in the battle that broke out in Barcelona between leftist factions in May 1936.
5. One x (8.5 x 12 cm) b & w studio portrait of Aileen Palmer. n.d.

#### 2/4 - B Pamphlets

1. 'Australians in Spain' by Nettie Palmer and Len Fox. 1948 (2 copies)
2. 'From the Battlefields of Spain: Vivid Pen Pictures from Australian Nurses'. Published by the Spanish Relief Committee. n.d.
3. 'Spain! The Spanish People Present their Case' with a Special Article by Nettie Palmer. n.d.
4. 'We Went to Spain' by A.F. and M.J. Howells. 1939?
5. 'For God and Spain: The Truth about the Spanish War'. Published by the Australian Catholic Truth Society. 1936.
6. 'The Tragic Week in May' by Augustin Souchy. Published by the CNT-FAI, (Barcelona). 1937.

#### 2/4 - C Ephemera

1. Illustrated calendar for 1939 published by the Comité Nacional de Mujeres Antifascistas de España.
2. Spanish postcards:
  - i. A colour caricature of Franco's supporters.
  - ii. A colour card issued by the Comisión de Auxilio Femenino.
  - iii. Two b & w photo cards in a folder depicting 'Catalonian Mountain people and their costumes'.

3. A theatre ticket to the Gran Teatro del Liceo in Barcelona. 1938-39.
4. An invitation card from the Spanish Relief Committee in Sydney to a Memorial Meeting for the twenty-eight Australians who died in Spain. February, 1939.
5. A program for a Spanish Festival, 'Tributo a Espana', held in Melbourne. Oct.-Nov. 1962.
6. An article entitled 'Democracy or the Devil' on the Spanish Civil War, Weekend Australian, 5.7.1986.

2/5

Political handbills:

19 handbills, mainly from the Melbourne labour and peace movements, 1935-36:

1. Germany demands Equality of Rights A speech by Hitler printed in Germany and distributed on Melbourne railway stations. Jan. 1935.
2. Third Grand International Concert Souvenir programme, October, 1935.
3. International Labor Defence's Thaelmann Rally announcement. March, 1936.
4. Announcement of a meeting by the Comitato Centrale dei Gruppi Italiani dell'Australia Contro la guerra e il Fascismo. March, 1936.
5. Tom Mann's 80th Birthday Celebration's Public Meeting. April, 1936.
6. Can War Be Prevented? Announcement of Public Meeting. April, 1936.  
(2 copies)
7. Anzac Celebrations Meeting organized by the United Peace Council. April, 1936.
8. Monster Combined Public Anti-War Meeting organized by the Melbourne Railways Union and Tramways Union. May, 1936.
9. Is the League Worth Saving? Announcement of meeting organized by the Australian League of Nations Union. May, 1936.
10. The Demand for Colonies. Announcement of a lecture series organized by the Australian League of Nations Union. 1936.
11. Announcement of a debate with Wilfred Burchett. September, 1936.
12. War Must be Outlawed. Announcement of a public meeting. Victorian Council Against War and Fascism. N.d.
13. Unionists! Information leaflet distributed by the Victorian Council Against War & Fascism. N.d.
14. Australian People Duped and Robbed. Information leaflet distributed by Alexander Pollock. 1936.

15. Conscription. Announcement of a meeting by the Anti-Conscription Celebration League. N.d.
16. Conscription. Information leaflet distributed by the V.C.A.W. & F. N.d.
17. Second World War - Can It Be Stopped? Announcement of a meeting organized by the V.C.A.W. & F. N.d.
18. Melbourne Peace Society's announcement of an address. October, 1936.

2/6 Pamphlets & Newspapers, 1934-57

1. The Communist Review, Vol.3, No.10, Oct. 1936, (Sydney).
2. Gibson, Ralph, "Socialist Melbourne", 1951, (Melbourne).
3. Civil Liberty, Vol.13, Nos.1-2, July, 1957, (Melbourne).
4. News from Germany, No.1, March, 1936, (London).  
An English-language bulletin of information on the German left, issued in London.
5. News Review, Vol.6, No.12, Sept. 22, 1938, (London).  
A British pictorial newsmagazine with a special feature on the Munich Agreement.
6. World News and Views, Vol.18, No.54, Nov. 12, 1938, (London).
7. Regards, No.246, Sept. 29, 1938, (Paris).  
A French pictorial news magazine with a special edition on Czechoslovakia.
8. Action No.136, Sept. 24, 1938 (London).  
Newspaper for British Fascists.
9. Blackshirt No.63, July 6, 1934 (London).  
Official newspaper of the British Union of Fascists.
10. The Daily Worker (2 editions)  
No.1890, Feb. 5, 1936  
No.1898, Feb. 14, 1936 (London).

2/7 Photograph

1. One x (20 x 25 cms) b & w photograph of A.F. Howells. N.d.