

Letters

It is harder to do it in Australia

No one will be more astonished than Philip Gray that I spring to his defence, but I do feel that the charge of "patronizing" by Esther M. Byers (RW, 5 June, p.508) is unwarranted.

I am sure Mr. Gray's intention was to express appreciation for the work of the organizer, sponsors and participants dedicated to improving ringing in Australia generally. I share the sentiments expressed by Mr. Gray, and I had not realized previously how perceptive is the non-resident Central Council representative of ANZAB. But then, most foreigners under-rate the Englishman, and colonials tend to regard any comment from abroad as patronizing.

Mr. Gray is correct to cite absence of skills and remoteness from centres of excellence as difficulties faced by ringers in Australia. Some basic skills are poorly developed here. My wife perseveres as a remedial bell-control therapist to correct the awkward technique still commonly taught by well-meaning but misguided local instructors. I well recall the humiliation and difficulty, after 13 years' ringing in Sydney, of being re-taught to handle a bell by Ruth Foreman at Hendon, yet I recognized the benefit of being able to ring a bell correctly. That faulty technique exists amongst even some of the most eminent ringers here is demonstrated by the apparent ease with which some experienced, elderly Englishmen manage our heavy "difficult" bells.

Some of us treasure the occasional opportunity to return to England to listen to quality ringing. Having listened recently to some of the more vaunted ringing locally, it is apt that Miss Byers should refer to Belfast, for the ringing often sounds as troubled as that disturbed city. It's all a matter of personal standards and opinions, I daresay. As Arthur Daley would say, some of the advanced-method ringing in Sydney doesn't half sound a bit dodgy!

Mr. Gray is right: in Australia, as in many parts of England "it is hard to make headway beyond a certain basic level". And, because it is not easy for individual ringers to attend practices, meetings, outings and peal tours where higher standards prevail, as Mr. Gray says "It is much harder to do it in Australia". All credit to those who try, and especially to those whose objective is raising the general standard of ringing here, as did the visitors from England whom Mr. Gray applauded.

I'm unaware that, in his letter, Mr. Gray sought to compare Australian and American ringing, let alone suggest competition. Miss Byers states it is not a contest, yet immediately throws down the gauntlet. Spare us, Mr. Gray: do not be tempted - some of us may have to listen to the consequence!

I'm not sure I agree with Mr. Gray that the drought is over. As a visitor to Australia, it is easy to be misled. Australians are effusive with hospitality (like Americans but, again, no contest, please). The local ringing tribe, numbers swelled by those experienced ringers who have abandoned the commitment of every-week ringing, assembles and guests are feted. When the visitors depart, Sydney returns to normal. As Miss Byers notes, there is a select

band of blue-line virtuosi which, having conquered the established city towers, is now eager to plan assault on the new ring of 12 at St. Mary's Basilica. There is also, in Sydney, a number of towers maintaining service ringing in conditions of continued aridity. Miss Byers may bathe in enticingly comfortable waters at her ringing oasis; alas, it is but a mean trickle that leaks into suburbia. It has long been thus. During the genesis of today's elite, and while a regular ringer at the suburban tower at Turramurra, I gave several years' consistent service ringing on that none-too-easy back eight of St. Andrew's Cathedral at a period when continuity of service ringing there was not assured. In vain did I hope for reciprocal help and, in time, my willingness withered in the drought.

I hope that Mr. Gray's observation about the ending of the drought benefits from the perspective that distance brings. And I suggest that Miss Byers be thankful for the good fortune that puts her in a fairly good position to judge, if to judge is her desire. But, having longer, and less exalted experience of ringing in Sydney than Miss Byers, I suggest Mr. Gray's letter deserves consideration, not condemnation.

Turramurra, NSW. WALTER KNIGHT.

Footscray bells and ringers

How wonderful it is that Footscray has a new set of bells! To me it is very exciting, and everyone connected with the project is to be congratulated. I hope they managed to refurbish the old weathercock, and give him a bright new uniform in which to peck his future tons of corn in accompaniment to the more tuneful sound.

Regarding the ringers in days gone by and what has been rung there I may be able to help with some information. I first met James Browning about 1922 - he was then tower captain but had no ringers, and occasionally in the Summer he would visit us at S. Nicholas, Chislehurst, and join in the ringing for Evensong. He had a brother William who lived in Chislehurst at Ivy Cottage on Red Hill - his family and ours had been friends even when I was a small boy - I assume he would be the William Browning who rang the tenor in 1923. I did not know that he could ring. William's grand-daughter became a ringer and became the wife of Peter Shonk, a Metropolitan policeman - they lived at Blackfen, Sidcup and rang at Bexley.

As regards peals rung at Footscray, I had the pleasure of taking part in what I understood to be the first peal on the bells in October 1931, the method being Stedman Doubles. It was the idea of Thomas Groombridge Junior to ring a peal of Stedman in the year of the 300th anniversary of Stedman's birth. My records show the following:

Thursday, October 15th, 1931, in 2hrs. 25mins.

5040 changes of Stedman Doubles

42 different six-scores

T. Groombridge Sen.	Treble
Thos. Groombridge Jun.	2
Herbert E. Audsley	3
Robert Brett-Smith	4
Cyril Brett-Smith	Tenor

Conducted by T. Groombridge Jun. First peal on the bells and first of Stedman Doubles for the KCACR. To celebrate the Stedman Tercentenary.

I think two or three peals have been rung there since, not so many years ago.

E. BRETTSMITH.
Erith, Kent.

Schoolchildren - accident insurance

Guidance concerning insurance cover in ringing towers appears from time to time in *The Ringing World* and the following information may be of interest to tower captains who have young ringers.

There is now available to all Britain's school children an excellent Personal Accident Insurance Scheme, and no doubt many parents are aware of this because of the publicity both from schools and in the press. The scheme covers children 24 hours of each day throughout the year.

The scheme provides protection for ages from four to 19 year-olds, costing £10 per year for £50,000 cover (1 unit) and can be raised to £100,000 for £18 per year (2 units).

The initiative for this personal accident cover for all Britain's nine million school children has been launched by the National Confederation of Parent Teacher Associations.

The NCPTA is concerned that accidents can leave a child with a long term disability, eventually becoming a financial strain on parents.

All activities are covered, included bell-ringing and this should be of interest to all parents whose offspring are in the Guides/Scouts, outward bound activities, Duke of Edinburgh award scheme etc.

Parents who have not yet taken advantage of the scheme should direct their inquiries through their children's School Association (PTA) or further information to the NCPTA, 43 Stonebridge Road, Northfleet, Gravesend, Kent DA11 9SD.

While we are all careful and insist on safety, it is a fact of life that accidents do happen and young people are at greater risk than adults.

Hampstead NW3. G. F. MORLEY.

Method collection in place notation

I note that the collection to the end of 1986 is now available but I suspect that a major part of the cost goes in postage and packing. I have a copy of an old collection on microfiche produced by John Baldwin which is much easier to store and, fortunately, I have access to a microfiche viewer.

Could I ask the members of the various committees involved in the production of this collection if it can be made available in a form other than the tabulation - on microfiche or floppy disc for instance?

ALAN F. SCHOLFIELD.
Blackburn, Lancs.

Fascinated

I was fascinated by Mr. Jewell's letter (p.532) about the two "First of Stedman" on Ilfracombe bells. Teddy Barnett could no doubt be persuaded to look up the details in *Bell News*. The ringer of the tenor in the first peal is likely to be CAVE not CAME. Percy Cave, living in retirement in Norfolk, could no doubt give information about that, William A. Cave being his father.

Challis Winny probably did not have much to do with the peal band as his name is mis-spelt and he would have put THURSTANS' Four-Part.

P. A. CORBY.
Chiddingstone Hoath, Kent.