

Letters

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SCOTTISH HOSPITALITY

Dear Sir,—It is a great pity that the Ringing Master of the Scottish Association should write a letter to the *Ringing World* giving the impression that ringers from England are not welcome; it has been my experience that the converse is true.

Ringers from Cheshire have made visits to Scotland on a number of occasions in the last 15 years, ringing peals at Glasgow, Edinburgh, Inveraray and Inverness, and on all occasions we have been made to feel most welcome. Following the recent peal at Inverness we were invited to go there again by the charming lady who is the secretary of the local band (Mr. Halls please note). We have particularly pleasant memories of the regal way in which we were entertained at Edinburgh when we rang a peal to mark the Commonwealth Games held there, and we hope that we may have the opportunity to return the compliment on some future occasion.—Yours, etc.,

ROBERT B. SMITH.

5, Mill Drive,
Ratby, Leicester.

INVERNESS

Dear Sir,—I would agree with Mr. Halls that the local association should be given "every freedom and opportunity" to ring the first peal on a new ring of bells, even if this means waiting a year or two. But enough's enough. The Scottish Association had an attempt for a peal. It failed, and it appears from Mr. Lewis's letter that after "a year or two" they still had not even applied for a second attempt. I hold no brief for the Chester Guild but in the circumstances I suggest they did not behave unreasonably.—Yours, etc.,

DAVID WOODWARD.

46 Percy Road,
London W12.

PENSNETT BELLS

Dear Sir,—I was not a little surprised that your cover article (Sept. 6) on Pensnett bells did not mention a story in circulation among the "old guard" in Birmingham in my pre-war youth to the effect that the back six were specially cast for an exhibition in 1891, at the Woodlands Bell Foundry, Grove Lane, Smethwick, of Charles Carr, Esq., and proudly proclaimed as "a maiden peal, perfect in tone and tune", qualities which were conspicuous by their absence from bells cast at this now defunct foundry as witness the unfortunate affair at Smethwick's old church where a ring of eight supplied in 1897 in connection with celebrations concerning the longevity of a certain elderly widow whose name escapes me, were quietly removed and re-cast in 1899. But worse befell and the second "tin can racket" was worse than the first. They were sold as scrap (except one) in 1965.

The "perfect" six of 1891 were hawked about the country and displayed at any

likely exhibition, accompanied by similar eulogistic propaganda and brought in a little business until the events of 1914 put an abrupt stop to such perambulations and they cluttered up the foundry until the Pensnett order of 1924 provided a heaven-sent opportunity of getting rid of them.

I well recall the late Tom Miller (1858–1950) relating how, when the two trebles were cast for Pensnett, they came out so wildly out of tune and the price charged being a bit "tight", that nobody at the foundry knew what to do as re-casting them could not be afforded, so he and Jimmy Groves were summoned hastily, spending some considerable time chipping the old six and taking some bits out of the trebles to knock the whole lot into some semblance of an octave. It is the only instance I, at least, have ever known where a ring has been tuned or attempted to be tuned to the treble.

As to the result of all this I prefer not to comment as I have only heard them once and that was in 1938!

I do not think, although open to correction, that the Woodlands Foundry cast any bells after the above little escapade, although they were trying to get bell work up to 1939 in spite of always having a very flourishing business in industrial non-ferrous castings. They were acquired by a larger organisation only a few years ago and closed down. They cast rings of eight for Lundy Island and Fenton, Staffordshire, in 1897 and 1899 respectively, beside various rehangings and augmentations.

I wonder if anybody else has heard the above story about Pensnett bells.—Yours, etc.,

W. E. BOX.

140 Wentworth Road,
Harborne,
Birmingham 17.

P.S.: The title of the firm in later days was Charles Carr Ltd., before that very much "Esq."—

ST. GEORGE'S, GRAVESEND

Dear Sir,—The picture and description of our church (Sept. 13) were both second-rate. There are now no tombstones in the churchyard, and the clock-dials show the same time.

By a plate existing in it, St. George's became the official parish church in 1544, and was attended on all civic occasions by the Mayor and Council.

All the bells were re-cast before 1900, and were recast and re-hung by Taylor's in 1923. During the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries they were in continual use by visiting bands, prominent among which were the College Youths, and the peal boards have interesting features, including a long peal of some 8,700 changes, and the first "Edward" peal.

The original peal-book started shortly after the bells were first hung, and seems to have disappeared during the '30s, not before one ringer (Mr. E. J. Beer) had copied out a fair amount of the earliest entries in it.

When the great town-planning craze began in the late '40s the Corporation were going to bull-doze the church, until a letter to the local press, on the value of the bells

reminded people that there were other items of value in it, among which were the two memorial windows insetted by American people to "Princess" Pocahontas, who was buried there. In consequence the then rector, Dr. Daunton-Feare, toured in America and raised interest and money enough to give the place a thorough overhaul. So in a way, the bells helped to preserve the church.

As there were two other churches in the same area, St. George's was for some time used as a Chapel of Unity, open to all denominations. Ringing naturally suffered, token practices only taking place monthly. With the demolition of St. James's and Holy Trinity in the '60s, St. George's once again became the parish church, and a few years ago received a further re-decoration, Rectory, and Parish Hall, with an organ salvaged from St. James's. As the original organ of 1739 is still in place, it rather unusually has two.—Yours, etc.,

F. A. CLUETT.

164 Parrock Street,

Gravesend DA12 1ER.

P.S.: The article should have read: George II, not George III.

[We thank Mr. Cluett for his corrections to our article. It was taken from a Newsletter circulated in Kent earlier in the year and was a last-minute "filler" when the cover picture and story booked for that week did not materialise.—Ed.]

MINOR DETAILS

Dear Sir,—Imagine my surprise recently whilst reading your very wonderful paper to all but fail to recognise an over-edited report of one of my peals.

I do not see why peals of Minor should have their method details and names of composers/arrangers omitted when peals of Major, etc. have all the numbers of rows of each method and number of changes of method included. After all "5472 Spliced Surprise Major (9 methods, all the work, A. J. Pitman)" tells us all we need to know without the addition of "comprising 1024 London, . . . with 125 changes of method".

If Major ringers are entitled to full details, then so are Minor ringers—is this current practice Ringing World committee policy or mere personal whim? I very strongly resent peals of Minor being afforded second-class citizenship in this way and look forward to some improvement in future.

Furthermore, I may add that in your over-zealous application of the blue pencil you have recorded the methods in the wrong order and have turned 1440 Cambridge into "2 extents" which is not the same thing at all.—Yours, etc.,

GILES B. THOMPSON.

CLEAN AND SENSIBLE

Dear Sir,—Well done Geoffrey Strickland. Mr. Editor—please note. — Our Ringing World is not an advertisement for ale, pubs and drinkers, including CAMRA, good beer guide, etc., etc. Keep our Ringing World clean and sensible.—Yours, etc.,
"North Col", W. FRANK STENSON.
142 Minshull New Road,
Crewe, Cheshire CW1 3PF.