

**AUSTRALIAN JOINT COPYING PROJECT**

**THOMAS FIELDEN**

**Diary, 1925-26**

**Reel M939**

**Mr R.J. Fielden  
10 Edith Road  
Kemsing  
Sevenoaks, Kent**

**National Library of Australia  
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**Filmed: 1974**

## BIOGRAPHICAL NOTE

Thomas Perceval Fielden (1883-1974) was born at Chichester and educated at the Royal College of Music and Jesus College, Oxford. He studied piano at Berlin and subsequently gave recitals in Germany, France and the United Kingdom. He was director of music at various public schools, including Fettes (1908-12) and Charterhouse (1928-47). He was Professor of Pianoforte at the Royal College of Music from 1921 to 1952. He was the author of a number of books on music including *The science of pianoforte technique* (1927) and *Music and character* (1929).

For many years Fielden was an examiner for the Associated Board of the Royal Schools of Music (the Royal Academy of Music and the Royal College of Music). It was in this capacity that he toured Australia in 1925.

The Board first took steps to establish music examinations in Australia in 1897. Despite some resistance from universities and other local organisations, it went on to play a major role in music education in Australia until 1951. Examiners who toured Australia, apart from Fielden, included Arthur Benjamin and Thomas Wood.

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#### **Typescript journal, with photographs, 30 April 1925 – 10 March 1926 (647pp)**

The journal begins with Fielden's journey from London to Sydney (30 April – 8 June 1925), travelling by rail to Marseilles and by sea on *SS Malwa* (Marseilles- Colombo) and *SS Comorin* (Colombo-Sydney). It includes his impressions of Port Said, Aden, Colombo, Perth, Adelaide and Melbourne, the daily routine of shipboard life, piano recitals, and fellow-passengers, such as Prince George (later Duke of Kent) and the explorer Michael Terry.

Fielden travelled widely and almost continuously in the six months that he was in Australia. Among the dozens of cities and towns that he visited were Sydney (8 June), Armidale, Glen Innes, Stanthorpe, Toowoomba, Brisbane (14 June), Mackay (15 July), Cairns (20 July), Herberton (22 July), Townsville (30 July), Cloncurry (7 August), Longreach (13 August), Coolangatta (21 August), Grafton, Newcastle (29 August), Blue Mountains (9 September), Melbourne (19 September), Castlemaine (12 November), Bendigo, Swan Hill (18 November), Gippsland, Stawell, Adelaide (29 November), Angaston, Gawler (4 December), Flinders Ranges (7 December), Jamestown (10 December), Clare (12 December), the Murray towns (18 December) and Melbourne (20 December).

The journal is extremely detailed and wherever he travelled Fielden recorded his impressions of the towns and countryside, drives in the surrounding districts, and meetings and conversations with musicians, music teachers, officials and members of the public. He often recorded conversations verbatim. There are numerous references to his visits to schools, convents and colleges, the performances of students, vocal competitions, relations with local representatives of the Associated Board of the Royal Schools of Music, concerts, recitals and talks that he gave at various places. More particularly, he wrote about his experiences of Australian trains and hotels, sugar plantations, a cattle station and his first plane flight in Queensland, an exhibition of paintings of Thea Proctor, a bitter seamen's strike and action taken against the union's leaders, the 1925 Federal election, social and sporting events, receptions and dinners. There are references to the relations between local musical organisations, such as the British Music Society of Victoria.

Some of the people whom Fielden met during his journeys were the Reverend 'Tubby' Clayton, Michael Terry, Arthur Hull, A. Wesley Roberts, Gregory Ivanoff, Clive Carey, James and Louise Dyer, A.E. Floyd, Arthur Jordan, the Prockter Family, Alexander Leckie, Harold Davies and E.T. Sweeting.

Fielden returned to England on the *SS Malabar*, leaving Sydney on 3 January 1926. The ship made a number of lengthy stops and he wrote in some detail about time he spent at Thursday Island, Darwin, Surabaya, Batavia, Singapore, Suez and Gibraltar. The journal concludes with his general reflections on Australians (pp 617-37).

There are many photographs throughout the journal, but the reproductions are poor.