

The Music Box

Volume 19 Number 4 Winter 1999

Edited by Alan Pratt

An International Journal of Mechanical Music



The Journal of the Musical Box Society of Great Britain

ISSN 0027 4275

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Happy New Millennium



Alan Pratt

At the time you receive this issue of *The Music Box* we shall be only about seven weeks from that much-hyped event - the Millennium. Or shall we?

When Pope Gregory adjusted the Julian calendar in 1582 he corrected some earlier inaccuracies. By the time Britain adopted this version in 1752 we had added 11 days to the September of that year to make things right. So perhaps we are 11 days adrift with our celebrations?

Or maybe we are a year out, for as there was no year 0 in the transition from BC to AD, the start of the new

Millennium will be 1 January 2001. The year 2000 will be the last year of the millennium, but it has taken on extra significance because of the forecasts of computer failure which, if the doom merchants are to be believed, will affect everything from air traffic control to my microwave!

As collectors of mechanical music, however, we can go on, safe in the knowledge that our beloved clockwork miracles will continue to perform just as they have done for up to 150 years.

It's the timeless quality coupled with some outstanding workmanship which makes the early mechanical

music so desirable. I wonder what we are making today which will impress in the same way in another 150 years? Maybe the cherished instruments in our collections will still be a delight to both eye and ear at that time.

A final thought on calendars. This year in the Jewish calendar is AM5760; the Islamic is AH1420 and for Hindus the year is SE1921.

But whatever year you are celebrating may you continue to enjoy your mechanical music for many years to come.

Best wishes for Christmas and the New Year from the editorial team and all our contributors. ■

The Journal of the Musical Box Society of Great Britain Volume 19 Number 4 Winter 1999

contents

Society News and Topics	082
Luigi Vincenzo Tomasso	088
<i>A short history compiled by John F. Turner</i>	
The Pla Rola	091
<i>By Brian Chesters</i>	
MBSI Golden Anniversary	092
<i>September 28th to October 3rd</i>	
Musical Box Oddments no. 83	096
<i>Anthony Bulleid continues his series</i>	
The Music Box & Windows 98	101
<i>Part 1 - Sound, Image and text files by David Snelling</i>	
Register News	106
Letters to the Editor	107
Classified Adverts	108
Christmas Crossword	IBC

The Editor welcomes articles, letters and other contributions for publication in the Journal. The Editor expressly reserves the right to amend or refuse any of the foregoing.

Any contribution is accepted on the understanding that its author is solely responsible for the opinions expressed in it and the publication of such contributions does not necessarily imply that any such opinions therein are those of the Society or its Editor.

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The Music Box is printed for and published by the Society quarterly 27th February, 27th April, 7th August, 7th November, from the Editorial Office.

Back numbers obtainable from:
Roy Ison, 5 East Bight,
Lincoln, LN2 1QH

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Front Cover

Our front cover picture is of a Pla Rola organ. These and similar items were originally produced as toys but in recent years have become quite collectable. Not serious mechanical music, of course, but fun nevertheless.

A brief description of this novelty appears on page 91 in this issue.

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New Members**We are pleased to welcome the following new members to the Society:-**

2698	Derek Stevenson, Lincs	2703	Gordon Gudgeon, Leeds
2699	Dr. Henk Smit, Bristol	2704	Sean Hunter, London
2700	Alan Cottle, Surrey	2705	M.J. McCauley, London
2701	Robert Porter, Bristol	2706	John Goddard, Surrey
2702	Gregory Evans, NSW, Australia	2707	R.R. Ashdown, Essex
		2708	A.K. Burden, W. Sussex
		2709	Mrs. D.P. Whitelock, Suffolk

Precis of the EGM held at the Walton Park Hotel September 1999

The President of the Musical Box Society opened the meeting and gave the results of the postal ballot to the members present.

The results were declared as follows:-

The total number of ballot papers received numbered 72.

Of these 95% were in favour of Associate Membership and 5% were against.

65% of those voting did not wish Associate members to have voting rights. 29% wished to have voting rights and 6% did not express an opinion either way.

The President then asked the members present to ratify the results of this ballot. There was an unanimous vote to accept the result.

Ted Brown proposed that the annual fee for Associate membership be initially set at £6 commencing 1 January 2000 with the fee for subsequent years to be voted upon at the Society AGM. This was seconded by David Walch and put to the vote. There was a large majority to accept this proposition with one against.

As a result of this decision the Constitution and Bye-Laws of the Musical Box Society of Great Britain have been amended as follows:-

Article 3. Membership.**Section 1:**

There shall be the following classes:

- (a) Members.
- (b) Honorary Life Members.
- (c) Associate Members.

Section 2:

Members shall consist of those persons who make written application to the Hon. Membership Secretary, these applications are subject to the approval of the Executive Committee.

Section 3:

Honorary Life Membership may be conferred on any

President's Message

In common with most of our membership my aim is to introduce people to the sights and sounds of mechanical music and to do my best to preserve it for future generations. I was therefore so pleased to see that there are four 'Open Days' before Christmas, and hope members, new and old, will take the advantage and attend them. They are ideal for getting to know other members, their collections and interests. Anyone wanting to arrange an open day needs only to contact Roy Ison, with maximum numbers who can attend and a contact number, and we will put a note in the journal and help in any way we can.

Kay, my wife, and I have just returned from the USA, having attended their 50th Anniversary celebrations. As I have never visited the States before I thought I had better stay for a few weeks. Coulson Conn (MBSI President) and Kathleen his wife gave us an excellent first half to our visit, including a weekend trip "up State" to their lake side summer lodge. The 50th anniversary celebrations were, of course, the highlight of our trip and with well over 500 people attending, including a large contingent of British members. The second half of our visit was amply scheduled by Bob and Diane Yates. Every visit they arranged had items we had never seen. Everyone went out of their way to entertain us and show us their collections in great detail. Nothing was too much trouble. With so many enthusiastic and dedicated collectors having the same aims, I feel mechanical music is safe for years to come.

Our sincere thanks go out to everyone who made our stay in America such an enjoyable time and a great success.

Production of our new publication, The Tune Sheet Book, is now well under way thanks to a bequest from the late Mr. R.L. Mount of Kent, an anonymous, generous donation from a member and the dedicated efforts of the Registrar, Arthur Cunliffe, members of our Committee and, of course, Anthony Bulleid who actually wrote all this material. We have received all-round support, especially strong from MBSI members who welcome the reprinting of material previously seen spread over many issues of their journal.

And finally, I would like to send best wishes for Christmas and the rather special New Year to all members on behalf of all of us on the MBSGB committee. The programme of events for 2000 is an exciting one and I hope to see many of you at one or other of the meetings. ■

Ted Brown

member whose name has been proposed and seconded by two members and supported by the Executive Committee. The election of an Honorary Life Member shall take place at an Annual General Meeting.

Section 4:

Associate Members shall be subject to the following terms and conditions:-

- (a) Associate Membership may be granted to a partner or family member of an existing full member who is in good standing and who resides at the same address.
- (b) On cessation of membership of the Society by the full Member, then the linked Associate Membership also ceases.
- (c) Associate Members will not be entitled to offer themselves for election to any office within the Society.
- (d) Associate Membership does not entitle that member to a copy of the Journal of the Society.
- (e) The annual fee for Associate Membership be set at the AGM of the Society.
- (f) Associate Members will be entitled to a membership card.
- (g) Associate Members will not have voting rights at meetings. ■

The Recording Secretary.

Phillips Auctioneers offer concession to MBSGB Members

Phillips auctioneers have recently moved their mechanical music sales to their Midlands auction rooms in Knowle, Solihull.

MBSGB members offering items for sale can now enjoy a reduced Vendors Premium of 10%. This will initially apply to the first sale in 2000, but it is hoped that it will become a regular benefit to members. To qualify, members must produce their Membership Card.

If you would like to discuss services relating to mechanical music, gramophones, phonographs and optical items call Nick Hawkins on 01564 776151.

Our thanks go to Phillips for this generous concession which will be appreciated by many members. ■

Autumn Meeting - Clevedon - 3rd to 5th September

Local organisers Ann and Bernie Brown provided a memorable weekend for MBSGB members and guests - even down to organising the sunshine!

Our hotel for the weekend was The Walton Park which looks out over the Bristol Channel with its long association with pleasure steamers. On Friday evening Nigel Coombes, a director of The Paddle Steamer Preservation Trust, gave us a fascinating insight into the history and operation of the earlier half of this century.

Even today through the efforts of the Trust grand old steamers such as Waverley and Balmoral still operate pleasure cruises on this stretch of water. Later in the weekend Balmoral was to put Ted Brown right off his stroke - but more of that later.

Saturday morning saw Arthur Cunliffe presenting an early keywind box of unknown make. This 98 tooth 6-air box has some excellent arrangements and was delightful to the ear.

Next, Joe Watts made a short



Fig.1. Joe Watts' "Upside-down" Hicks piano.

presentation which could well be entitled "I haven't seen one of those before". This compact floor-standing instrument looks rather like a Hicks piano - but upside down. Closer inspection by some members came to a consensus opinion that it was indeed a Hicks but in a configuration not previously seen. Joe's dry Somerset humour was much in evidence

during this brief but interesting talk.

The morning's presentation concluded with a recital by Ted Brown on a series of Polyphon disc machines ranging from 6½" to 15½". Having reached the final instrument following a haunting rendering of "Alice where art thou", Ted was about to deliver his final punchline when someone (no names to spare her blushes!) cried out "Oh, there's Balmoral". Sure enough, the subject of the previous night's talk was passing the hotel. Somehow, Ted could not quite regain his composure after this unscheduled interruption. Never mind, Ted, the rest of the presentation was fine!

The rest of the day was taken with a visit to Bristol docks area which is being developed as a Heritage centre.

Highlight of the visit was, for most, a trip on Mayflower, the oldest working steam tug still in operation. Powered by a twin cylinder compound steam engine and with coal-fired boilers this lovely vessel made its stately progress around the docks with the quiet dignified power which only steam can supply.

*... made its
stately progress
around the
docks with the
quiet dignified
power which
only steam can
supply.*



Fig.2. Mayflower - built in 1861 and still going strong.



Fig.3. Paul Morris plays his Pianola push-up - complete with period Aspidistra in the background.

Other attractions worthy of note include the Industrial Museum, the S.S. Great Britain in its original dry dock, and the myriad of water ferries to all part of the city.

Following the Society Dinner, we were entertained by Paul Morris. Starting with some interesting rolls on his Pianola push-up, he then demonstrated his considerable keyboard skills playing well known pieces in the style of other composers. Beethoven's 5th in the style of Scott Joplin still lingers in the memory!

Paul was then joined 'on stage' by singer Miss Clarissa. Between them they successfully recaptured the spirit of the early Music Hall songs with their edge of naughtiness and rousing, sing-along choruses. Most enjoyable.

Sunday was to be the day when our hosts Ann and Bernie Brown

were 'at home' to the 70 plus members of the Society.

Player pianos, organs, phonographs and mechanical music in all its forms seemed to fill the house. Nicholas Simons could be found in one room demonstrating his player piano virtuosity, whilst Bernie entertained on his Melotone in another room. Out on the lawns two street organs could be heard over the buzz of conversation as members indulged in their favourite occupation - talking about mechanical music.

Lunch was a generous spread which would have put many hotels to shame. Fortunately the weather was magnificent and we were able to enjoy good food, good music and sunshine simultaneously.

After lunch Paul Morris made a cylinder phonograph recording of members. Something for the archives perhaps, but not destined for Top of the Pops!

To Ann and Bernie, and all their helpers, we say thank you. Inviting 70 people into one's home is a courageous thing. The Browns did it in style and rounded off an excellent MBSGB meeting. ■



Fig.4. Our hosts, Ann and Bernie Brown enjoying the entertainment.

... members indulged in their favourite occupation - talking about mechanical music.

Associate Membership

At the Bristol meeting, the results of the poll on establishing Associate Membership were presented to an EGM.

There was a large majority in favour of the proposal, with 73 in favour and only three against.

On the question of voting rights for Associate Members, the vote was much closer, with 49 being against and 30 for voting rights.

Accordingly, it was carried that Associate Member status will be established but that those members will not have voting

rights. Associate Member status is intended for partners and family members living at the same address. By a show of hands it was agreed that the Associate membership would be £6.00 per annum subject to the same review as the full membership costs. ■

society news and topics

Summer Open Day 18th July

The list closed at 40 so we had 41 members and guests attend. By splitting the group into two halves and only allowing them to meet at morning coffee, lunch and afternoon tea, the day went well. It was extremely hot but the enthusiasm kept up with two tours of the main collection and some very good talks by local members, Anthony Bulleid, Terry Longhurst and Peter Howard.

One talk was on Musical Boxes and Tune Sheets, another on good quality cylinder boxes, and the third was a collection of Amorette Organettes from 16 note to 36 note (twin reeded). The talk included three different types of revolving doll movements and culminated in a run round the canteen with a musical wheelbarrow Amorette!

I think it can be safely said a good time was had by all. ■

Ted Brown



Chanctonbury Ring

The number attending was a manageable 27 and, as this time, members brought a packed lunch to go with the wine, the organisers and helpers prepared fresh peaches and cream as a sweet. (It was a trifle late in the season for strawberries). The morning contained the Anthony Bulleid slot. This was an explanation of how the system for producing musical boxes in Switzerland was similar to any

other business regarding tendering, buying in parts and, in short, producing the best quality at the most economic price. We heard two recently restored cylinder boxes belonging to members. There was then a run through some of the disc boxes present, playing the same tune on different sizes and makes of instrument to show the comparison.

After lunch (in the playground) we played a selection of Russian,

Croatian, Spanish and other more unusual tunes, to show how well they were handled by the German arrangers for disc box and organette. We then had both a 'Steck' and an Orchestrelle recital, and played some tunes on the Triola and the Racca. This, as usual was followed by afternoon tea before we all left for home.

The next Chanctonbury Rings are on 16th January and 26th March 2000. The theme of the first being Operas and Operettas. ■

MUSIC BOX BINDERS

As promised in the last issue, we now have a supply of binders for your magazine. Each binder takes eight issues plus index and this keeps each Volume as a valuable reference. The words "The Music Box" are in gold on the spine - looks great on the bookshelf! The binders come packed two per box and each box is priced at £12.00 plus postage. Postage is as follows:-

UK	£1.60.
Europe/EU countries	£2.42
USA	£5.57
Australia/New Zealand/Japan	£6.19

Orders, with cheque to MBSGB, please to:-
Alan Wyatt, The Willows, 102 High Street, Landbeach,
Cambs CB4 8DT, England.



Forthcoming Meetings One-day Christmas Meetings 1999

Please phone the organisers as soon as possible if you wish to book, this is important for catering.

November 20th

Roy Ison (phone: 01522 540406)

November 27th

Ted and Kay Brown (phone 01403 823533)

December 4th

Alan and Daphne Wyatt (phone 01223 860332)

December 11th

Harold Smith at Saddington Hall, Leicester, 10.30am - 12.30pm. This is limited to 20 members. Phone Roy Ison on 01522 540406 to book a place.

Spring Meeting 7-9th April 2000

The Saracen's Head, Market Place, Southwell, Nottinghamshire NG25 0HE. Local Organisers: Dorothy Robinson and Roy Ison.

Booking Form enclosed with this issue.

Programme to date:

Friday afternoon

There will be the opportunity for any early arrivals to have a guided tour of Southwell Minster.

Friday evening

If any members wish to bring items to sell there will be a table sale; also if any member who has an interesting item to show and talk about please bring it along.

Saturday morning

Registration followed by a talk on campanology by Dorothy Robinson "Bell ringing to bells used in mechanical clocks".

Coffee break followed by a talk from Alan Pell, organ builder; he will demonstrate at least four organs, comparing micro chip with paper roll.

Lunch

Afternoon - A visit to the Regal cinema in Newark to hear the Compton cinema organ, removed from the Savoy cinema in Lincoln in the 1950s, plus a silent film show. A trip by coach to Ossington Church to see and hear a rare hand wound barrel organ, still in use on Sundays for hymn singing, then a

quick demonstration of bell ringing on the church bells.

The Society dinner on Saturday evening will be followed by an entertainment still to be finalised.

Sunday morning

A visit to Upton Hall, the British Horological Institute, to see the fine collection of clocks and watches.

Southwell is a small and interesting market town with a selection of shops and is only about six miles from Newark, a town well known for its antique shops including seven antique centres.

AGM and Auction - Saturday 3rd June 2000 Kettering

Autumn Meeting 2000 8-10th September

The Post House, Havant, Hants.

Local Organiser: Barry Wilson assisted by Brian Chapman.

The programme will include a visit to Hollycombe steam attraction plus a display of organs, cylinder and disc musical boxes and other mechanical music from local collectors. Also a visit to Peter Hoyte's collection. More details in the next Music Box.

We urgently need members to volunteer as local organisers for meetings in 2001. If you can help please contact Roy Ison on 01522 540406.

Wind and Steam at Tavistock

From our West Country correspondent we learn that an opportunity for live steam enthusiasts and organ grinders will present itself at next year's Tavistock Steam Fair. The west Devon town of Tavistock will host a live steam fair and, for the first time, include fairground and street organs. This event will take place over the weekend of the 3/4th June. Any member interested should contact the organiser John Hobbs on 01822 615519 for more details.

Such an opportunity to "organ-grind" in Devon is a rare happening. John Hobbs is hoping to attract several enthusiasts to this event, so put this one in your diary.

The Tavistock area offers other attractions to visit, and so organ

grinders could enjoy a long weekend in Devon filling their organ bellows with pure Devon air as well as their lungs! Have some fun and go.

Vintage Technology Fair

MBSGB member Brian Chesters is organising the first mechanical music based fair north of Birmingham called Vintage Technology Fair. The first fair is on 26th March 2000 and will feature gramophones, phonographs, musical boxes, antique radios and TVs and similar items. For more information contact Brian Chesters on 01253 508232 or e-mail: brian@blackpool.net

Changes at Antiques magazine

Antiques & Collectibles magazine tell us that from November they will be publishing monthly (previously bi-monthly).

They cover a wide range of interests with excellent auction reports from around the country.

For more information, or to subscribe, call 01225 311 077. ■

Maurice's Music Day

Maurice and Wendy Adams are holding an Open Day at their home in Weedon, near Aylesbury, on 4th March 2000.

Members are invited to bring along an item from their collection for a day of music and chat. A light lunch will be served. Numbers are limited to 20, so an early call to Maurice or Wendy on 021296 641580 is advised. ■

Year 2000 MBSGB European Tour

Our European Tour for 2000 takes us to Berlin. The nine day visit runs from May 5th to 13th and will, as usual, be by the latest in air-conditioned coach travel staying in good quality hotels throughout.

As we go to press the details of the tour are being finalised, but the cost is £349 per person. At this price demand will be high and spaces are strictly limited by the size of the coach, so if you are interested ring Alan Wyatt NOW on 01233 860332.

Luigi Vincenzo Tomasso

A Short History Compiled by John F. Turner

Luigi Vincenzo Tomasso was born in the village of Arpino, Italy, an ancient hilltop village of Roman origin north of Cassino. In 1860 at the age of 12, Luigi, his brother Antonio and his sister Nicolina were contracted to a 'Padrone' (guardian) by the name of Arcitollo. The reason for this was, so I have been informed by a member of the family, was due to the fact that their father was in prison at this time.

The duty of the Padrone was to teach the children contracted to his care such things as how to play a musical instrument, sing, train live animals to perform, 'work the streets' and, last but not least, how to beg. Quite often to the Local Authority officials, many of whom found that this was an easy way to get the children off their hands, who were considered to be a burden on the Parish, it was also considered a social service.



Fig.1. Luigi V. Tomasso with one of his hire pianos, St. Mary's Place, Leeds.

*... and, last
but not least, to
teach them
how to beg.*



Fig.2. The organ grinders quarters near Hatton Garden, London 1875.



Fig.3. Wedding photograph of Domenica Capaldi and Luigi V. Tomasso.

The three Tomasso children together with other children set off on their long walk, through Europe from Cassino, Italy, over the Alps through Germany and France, eventually reaching the port of Calais. Not everyone that set off survived the long journey. Mr. Luigi Vincenzo Tomasso often related to his children and grandchildren the story of how one poor child was despatched, simply because he/she failed to keep up with the group. This had the effect of putting fear into the remainder of the party.

At Calais they boarded a ferry for Folkstone. Mr. Tomasso said that the fare for the three of them was 7/6d (37p in 1999). From Folkstone, playing his accordion, they made their way to London. Joining other Italian boys and girls they settled in the Italian quarter.

With the many other Italian children who were a feature of London streets in the 1800s they survived and eventually Luigi became an apprentice with the Guiseppe Chippa Organ Company of 6 Little Bath Street, Clerkenwell, London, making barrel pianos

After 10 years with this company Luigi Tomasso started his own workshop in London manufacturing barrel pianos, and in 1882 his brother Antonio started working for him and eventually took over the London workshop. After leaving London Luigi commenced the manufacturing and hiring out of 'tingalaries' in St. Mary's Lane, Leeds, and this was to become one of the largest business ventures of its type in the UK. He also had a workshop in Glasgow 1892-93. It is known that



Mr. Tomasso said that the fare for the three of them was 7/6d...

Fig.4. Tomasso family group.

Luigi Vincenzo Tomasso

a number of instruments were made in the Leeds workshop and shipped to Glasgow.

In 1887 Luigi married Domenica Capaldi, an Italian girl whom he met whilst she was playing a barrel organ. They had 12 children of which nine survived - Ernesto, Antonella, Bernadeto, Angelina, Laura, Stefana, Germano, Maria and Giovanni. All his family became talented multi-instrument musicians playing between them the violin, cello, trombone, saxophone, trumpet, harp, accordion, mandoline and the piano.

Mr. Tomasso was what one would call a typical Italian father. He always accompanied his daughters when they were playing at concerts and was even more vigilant, according to his daughter Laura, when they were entertaining the troops during the 1914-18 war.

Amongst Luigi's business interests was a grocery shop in Marsh Lane, Leeds. This was later taken over and run by Ernesto, his eldest son. The existing business of making and hiring of barrel pianos was carried out in a yard at the rear of the premises by Ernesto and his brother Bernadeto under, I am sure, the still watchful eye of their father Luigi who was still capable of pinning barrels when he was 81 years old. It is interesting to note the hire charge for a barrel piano in the 1930s was 2/- a day (10p in today's currency).

Luigi Tomasso died in 1944 and his wife in 1949. Both are buried in the same grave in the Killingbeck Cemetery, Leeds, as is his sister Nicolina who started out with her two brothers from Arpino in Italy. The other brother Antonio is buried in Highgate Cemetery, London.

Sources: Mr. Ernest Tomasso, Grandson; Mrs. Loretta (Taylor) Tomasso, Great Granddaughter; Mr. Paul Tomasso, Great Grandson. Yorkshire Post Newspapers and Yorkshire Evening Post; Yorkshire Evening News; D.P.L. Shipping Co.

Photographs by courtesy of the Tomasso family. ■



Fig.5. Photograph of Luigi V. Tomasso pinning a barrel in his workshop.

PUTTING MUSIC INTO BARREL-ORGANS

A Leeds Italian who is Ready for a Promised "Revival"

26 AUG 1938

"**F**ET ees a good-a way to make-a da money—da honest penny. Some men no like a-work. I work to make-a da pianos, but some men like-a da easy money for nothing. They no turn-a da 'andle."

Signor Luigi Vincenzo Tomasso, formerly of Cassino, Italy, and now of Bowman-Lane, Leeds, waved his hands expressively. He builds mechanical pianos—which is the name he prefers for what are classed as tingle-airies, hurdy-gurdies, and barrel-organs—and hires them out by the day, the week, or the year. He has a factory where the pianos are built, tuned, repaired, and where he equips them with new music by means of pricking holes in metal cylinders.

Once, as Tomasso will agree, he couldn't make enough mechanical pianos. Now he has a dozen or so lying idle.

"They like-a da dole—they no like-a to earn da money. For a long-a time they no take-a da piano. Now they come-a back for da piano. For two-tree years they no want-a to earn da money. Now they come-a back for da piano."

"A revival? That's-a right. I lendem more

now. I sell-a more now. I sold-a tree piano thees year. Last-a year I no sell a piano. I no sell-a piano for years till thees year."

Tomasso, now that the slight "revival" is upon him, is modernising some of his instruments. He is very proud of a mandoline piano to which he is fitting drums. These are something new on mechanical pianos, or are, at any rate, uncommon. At the moment the piano has one small drum, but it will later be equipped with a bigger drum and two smaller ones, which will beat a brisk accompaniment to the tunes he fits to the machine.

There is plenty of variety about a Tomasso piano. Tomasso insisted on giving a demonstration of an entire repertory from one piano—fairly new dance tunes, a selection from "Faust," a cheerful piece called "The Prisoner," and "The British Grenadiers."

Once Tomasso had visions of going back to sunny Italy to end his days. Now he has been in Leeds for 64 years, and says he will stay there so that he can be near his family. All the same, you could see Italy in his eyes when he turned the handle and clattered out "The Garibaldi March."

"It's a good-a tune," he said. "It's all-a right."

Fig.6. Extract from the Yorkshire Evening Post 26th August 1938.

"It's a good-a tune" he said "It's all-a right."

The Pla Rola

A novelty becomes a collectors item by Brian Chesters

Most of us have seen the popular musical novelties produced in the early twentieth century in the USA, The Rolmonica, The Play-a-Sax, Clarola and Trumpetto. These were musical novelties which were basically 12 or 16 reeds in a block similar to a harmonica and operated by a small paper roll passed over the holes.

Many enthusiasts were not aware however that at the time there was available a higher quality item called The Pla Rola. This was similar in that it played the larger 16 note rolls as did the Play-a-Sax however it was made of tin plate and was in the form of an organ. The front was hinged and opened to reveal the reed block. The roll was inserted inside and ran over the reed block in the same manner as the Rolmonica. The patent number was 1813337 and was manufactured by the Pla Rola Corporation of Easton, Maryland, USA. As with other instruments of this 'stable', the reeds played both ways so you could play by blowing or sucking. In fact the front of the instrument has the comment "If you can breathe, you can Pla Rola". I presume the only people who could not play one were dead! In



*... the only
people who
could not play
one were dead!*

comparison to Rolmonicas, these were much more robust, in fact one has been played once every Saturday and Sunday at a museum in America for more than 20 years.

In early 1960's, an attempt to revive the popularity was made by taking an identical item except in bright red plastic. The attempt failed, partly because the play and

re-wind handles were thin plastic and broke too easily. A dealer bought the remaining stock of red plastic Pla Rolas in the late 60s and the Pla Rola Corp. disappeared out of sight.

In my collection, I have one of the red plastic Pla Rolas and two boxed examples of the tin plate ones. ■

News from 'Down Under'

One of our Australian members, John Gloyne, writes from Western Australia with news of mechanical music activity in that part of the world. Despite the long distances which can separate members in this country, they have a thriving society - The Australian Collectors of Mechanical Musical Instruments. You can visit their website on www.zip.com.au/~job

John joined us at our meeting in Ampney Crucis and it seems that he has been on his travels again - this time to New Zealand. There are at least four collections in New

Zealand, including Melody Farm, owned by Leon and Yvonne Clements who were able to join us on our trip to Italy last year when they were visiting England. Having members from other countries is always a pleasure, and, in turn, John has given us some addresses of collections to visit if any members are planning visits to the Antipodes.

John Gloyne has generously invited anyone planning a visit to contact him. You can contact John and Carmel at P.O. Box 18, Bentley, Western Australia 6102. Tel: 08 9458 2400. Thanks John.

In passing, John mentions that the vertical cylinder box described by Anthony Bulleid (MB 19/1 p.22)

has been sold, with the closure of the Mechanical Music Museum in Lyndoch, Sth Australia. At auction, this box fetched \$6750 (at approximately 2.5A\$/pound, this seems a very reasonable price).

On October 10th the Herbert Berger Collection was sold by Christie's Australia in Melbourne. 272 lots covered everything from snuff boxes to orchestrelles and from a musical teapot to a Mills Violano-Virtuosa. Not to mention the cameras, gramophones and phonographs!

Mechanical music is clearly alive and well in Australia and New Zealand - we look forward to more news. ■

MBSI Golden Anniversary

September 28th to October 3rd report by John Turner

Members from all parts of the world gathered in Philadelphia to celebrate the 50th Anniversary of the formation of the Musical Box Society International. Our President, Ted Brown, and his wife Kay, were well supported by 16 MBSGB members.

To get things started the President elect, Dr. Coulson Conn of the MBSI, and his wife Kathleen invited all international members to their home to see and hear some of the rare and interesting disc machines in his very large collection. I do not think that I would be far off if I were to say that the collection consisted of around 100 instruments. Our host circulated amongst those attending both in his home and the building that housed his collection. Our President Ted Brown and Robin Timms spoke about and demonstrated a variety of machines. Being perfect hosts, Coulson and Kathleen invited all those present to a buffet supper, giving international members the opportunity to meet up once more with old friends.

Wednesday the 29th September found some members joining the various tours they had opted to take, such as the Historic Philadelphia Trolley Tour, while others enjoyed a day in the Pennsylvania Dutch countryside visiting an Old Order Amish house and farm and dropping in on the way back at an antique mall. On arrival back in Philadelphia we all met up at Lord and Taylor, a very large Harrods type store, for a concert on the Grand Court (formerly Wanamaker) organ. Dr. Richard V. Cartwright, A.A.G.O., organist and MBSI member, delighted us with a variety of music. Lord and Taylor's Wanamaker Grand Court organ is one of the largest and finest every constructed. It currently ranks as

the world's largest playable musical instrument. Originally designed by George Ashdown and built by the Los Angeles Organ Co., the organ was installed in 1911. By 1914, 8000 more pipes had been added with major additions being made in 1923 to 1930, including the present six-manual console. The organ had grown to 451 stops with almost 30,000 pipes(!) and weighing nearly two and half tons. Everything is within the player's reach, from six manuals to the 964 controls containing 42 accessories for the feet, 728 tilting tablets and 168 pistons - what an instrument - what a sound. Before wending our way back to the hotel we departed

for an evening meal to two well known restaurants close by - City Tavern and Bookbinders.

Thursday 30th September - early start to see the collections in members' homes we had chosen to visit some months ago. Several of us visited the homes of David and Nina Heitz, a very diversified collection including a computer controlled Wurlitzer organ in one of their lounges. They have utilised the roof arch to site ranks of pipes and the roof above the lounge to accommodate more parts and the mechanism that is required with such a large organ. We were treated to see and hear the roll mechanism at work and afterwards listen to a

The organ had grown to 451 stops with almost 30,000 pipes(!) and weighing nearly two and half tons.



Fig.1. A 27" Regina Automatic.



Fig.2. New MBSI President Dr Coulson Conn.

variety of pieces played on the console by Richard Schmidt. In their home we heard the Gothic-cased Weber Duo-Art, a Victor Auxetophone and the only well known surviving example of the Skelly Concertophone. Adjourning to the 'Barn' we were met with the most amazing collection of Edison memorabilia with over 100 phonographs - if Edison made it, it was there - what a wonderful museum. Then followed a first class presentation of the very first experimental sound recording machine and the first Edison 1894 movie films. Lunch on the patio in warm sunshine overlooking the gardens, grounds and lake, brought our visit to the Heitz collection to an end. Thank you David and Nina.

Our next visit was to the home of Dr. Lenwood. A fine selection of cylinder and disc musical boxes, band organ and a visit to the 1920's

soda fountain, juke boxes and coin machines etc., in the basement. Lots of antique glass, art deco figures, were much admired by the ladies in our party.

The third and final visit was made once again to Dr. Coulson and Kathleen Conn's, giving us another opportunity to examine and listen to machines we were unable to hear on our first visit. In the evening we were entertained by Ron Bopp with his slide show, "Escapades of the Bumbling Bruder Tour".

Friday 1st October - the day started at 9 a.m. with the "Mart". 102 tables offering a variety of merchandise of all shapes and sizes; if there was anything you were looking for related to our hobby, it could be found. It was exhilarating, exciting and, in some instances, expensive. In the years that we have been visiting the

MBSI meetings this was the largest mart we have experienced. Bob Yates presented the "50 years of MBSI Yates Show". Many MBSGB members were rather surprised to see their faces appear on the screen, some I might add looking younger! Bob's presentation was followed by the Awards Dinner at which I am pleased to report that Robin Timms received the Darlene Mirijanian award for creativity in the field of mechanical music to stimulate and encourage the production of new items of interest. Dr. Jan Japp Haspels then addressed all present speaking on the "Golden Treasures of the Czars; Musical Clocks in the Hermitage".

Saturday 2nd October began with all members meeting at 7.30 a.m. for breakfast followed by the MBSI Annual General Meeting.



Fig. 7. Euterpephon. Not many of these about In The Music Box Journal Vo.7 no.4. page 149.

"Member Q David Bowers recently sent in three pictures of yet another hitherto unrecorded disc musical box - the Euterpephon. This is the only specimen to have been discovered and appears to be not just a new brand name, but a completely new make of disc machine.

The box, which has a single comb and a plain bedplate, appears to play a disc of about 30cms diameter, but, according to David Bowers, plays quite well with an 11inch polyphon disc. The picture inside the lid shows the robed muse Euterpe blowing two trumpets, one facing to the left and the other to the right. The box is handle wound from the right side with the stop/start knob operating from the left. "

I took the picture of this machine because it interested me - I was unaware that it was such a rare machine. It does not appear in Bowers book because it was discovered after it was printed. How about then then!

*... if Edison
made it, it
was there ...*

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Dr. Coulson Conn was then installed as President. Starting early with breakfast ensured 95% attendance. A letter from our President Ted Brown, sending greetings to the MBSI congratulating them on achieving 50 years and to the newly elected President, was read out and received with acclaim.

Seventeen workshops were available for members to attend, impossible to attend them all - you had to choose the ones that interested you most. Christian and Sharon Bailly - "The making of Bird Trainer Automaton"; Bill Berkowitz - "Metal finishing of various Objets d'Art"; Wolfgang Brommer - "Two hundred years of German Organ building"; Coulson Conn - "Disk Identification"; Rod Cornelius - "New Zealand and the Music Box"; Glenn Grabinsky -

"The Hole Story - Perforations on Parade"; Dr. Jan Jaap Haspels - "The Imperial Nefs of Paris, London and Vienna". Phillip Jamison - "Modern-day Organ Builders"; Dr. Helmut Kowar - "History of music box movements from Prague and Vienna. Andrew Pilmer and Russel Wattam - "Restoration of an 87/89 Gavioli Fairground Organ"; Marvin Polan - "Gilding the Gilded Age 1880-1920"; Gary Rasmussen - "The Power Roll"; Ralph Schack - "Remove rust the easy way"; Craig Smith - "Restoring the Wurlitzer Harp"; Frank Ryder - "Black Forest Trumpeter Clocks"; Robin Timms - "Arranging Music for Disc Boxes"; and last, but certainly not least, Siegfried Wendel - "Griesbaum Singing Bird Workshop of Triberg, Germany".

In the evening we attended the



Fig.4. Robin Timms admires the Polyphon.

Anniversary Banquet where we were fed well and entertained by the very colourful "Mummers Band" playing ragtime and melodies from the 40s which got our feet stamping and some people on the floor dancing. Many members were dressed in period costume adding to the gaiety of the evening.

A hardback limited edition book comprising 231 pages, giving the history of the MBSI's past 50 years was presented to every member. The mammoth task of compiling, design layout and typesetting was carried out by Nancy Fratti, a member of the MBSGB and a regular advertiser in the journal - a superb job well done; many thanks on behalf of the generations of collectors yet to discover our hobby in the next 50 years.

A lot of our members present felt like children again waiting to open their Table Favors, and when they did what a delightful gift - a singing bird in a cage measuring seven inches overall - pleasure for a long time to come and great memories of a great event.

I apologise if I have failed to report on any matter that is considered "news worthy" my programme of events soon became littered with notes that I have found hard to decipher. ■

*... what a
delightful gift -
a singing bird
in a cage
measuring
seven inches
overall ...*

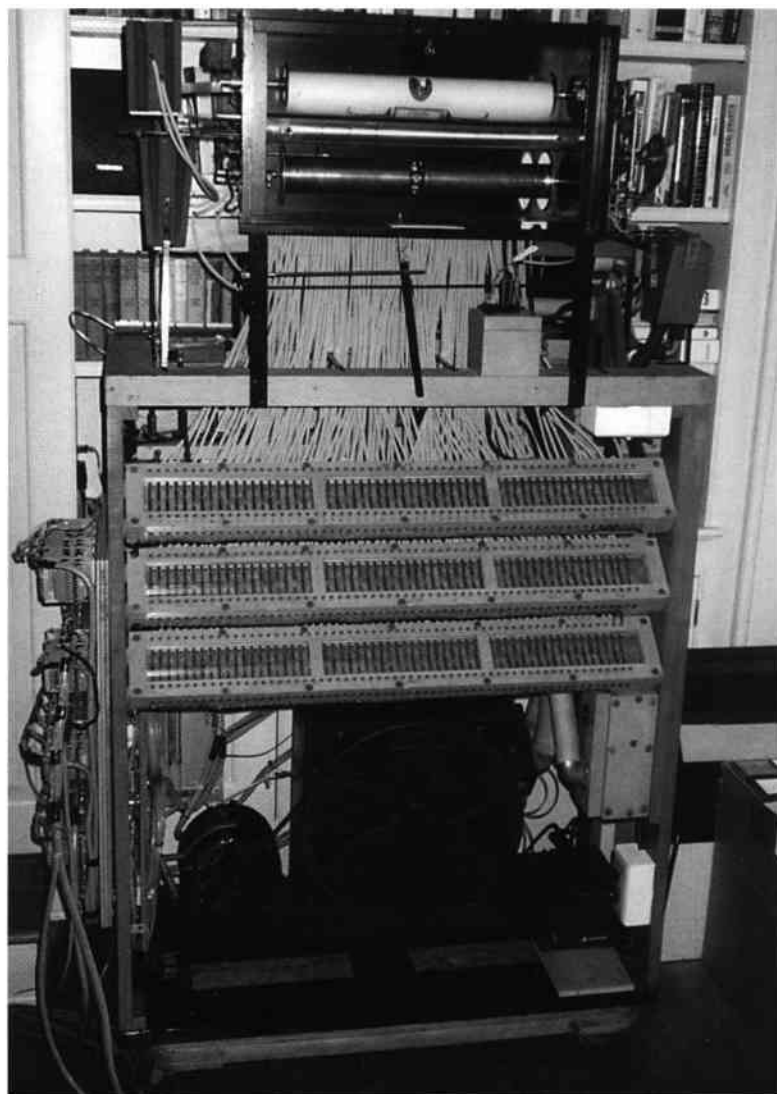


Fig.4. Roll playing mechanism for the Wurlitzer organ.

Puzzles keep turning up . . . here is one concerning L'Epée serial 283. It is a rechange box provided with three 13" (33cm) 6-air cylinders. Being rechange as opposed to interchangeable the tune racks remain at L'Epée's standard .018", allowing two 58-tooth sublime harmonie combs. Each cylinder has its own Thibouville-Lamy tune sheet, as shown in Fig.1, mentioning the Paris Show of 1889. The latest tune is *Le Petit Bleu*, 1883. But the well authenticated L'Epée dating chart puts serial 283 at 1880. Hence the puzzle.

B.A. Bremond

There are only two references in the Chapuis book to this very well-known maker; both illustrated. One is to his father who signed but certainly did not make a fusee-driven movement in 1859. The other is to B.A. Bremond himself who signed but probably did not make a small automaton in 1859. He was born in 1834 and joined Greiner as a "merchant" in 1858 until 1863. He was established as a

maker in 1866 and continued until about 1902, or 1908.

A chart of his output of cartel musical boxes from 1860 to 1884, serial numbers, 5,000 to 21,000, was in Oddments 59, Vol.16 page 107. A slightly improved version is in my 2nd book, page 65, indicating boxes numbered between 35 and 42 thousand. I test these charts as more boxes turn up, and there is no reason to doubt their general accuracy.

However, they still leave three questions unanswered . . .

1. how about serial numbers below 5,000?
2. how about numbers between 21,000 and 35,000?
3. can numbers above 35,000 now be dated?

Sorry, I cannot answer (1) because these boxes get mixed up with Greiner. And I cannot answer (2)



Fig. 1. Rechange cylinder no.3, numbered 612, for L'Epée serial 283. The three tune sheets do not record the box serial number.



Fig. 2. Often-used Geneva tune sheet, here on Bremond 41647. Latest tune 1876.

mainly because there are no boxes on the Register between 28,000 and 36,000. But there is progress on (3), largely thanks to the Register, and in particular a reliable batch of boxes in the 40 thousands, all with their gamme numbers written after the serial number on the tune sheets, a common Bremond practice, as follows . . .

41647/1439

11" 8-air standard, tune 8 on dots, see Fig.2.

42195/1608

6" 4-air standard, tune 1 on dots, "White cross above lyre" tune sheet, latest tune 1878.

43459/239

13" 8-air Flute, tune 1 on dots, Bendon tune sheet, see Fig.3.

45317/370

13" 8-air Flute, tune 1 on dots, Bendon tune sheet, latest tune 1878.

47070/3418

13" 8-air drum & six bells, tune 1 on dots, Bendon tune sheet, latest tune 1881.

All these five boxes carry a typical Bremond detail, namely their serial number is written in large, thick, black figures under the case, generally with the cylinder length in pouces, see Fig.4.

Bremond boxes normally followed the general Geneva practice of placing the lining-up dots on the last tune, and the change indicated above is not accounted for. It just shows up our alarming lack of information on Bremond boxes with high serial numbers. Also the latest tunes listed so far are from 1885 and yet they were still in production in 1902. So one would expect Bremond boxes with tunes up to

the late 1890s and serial numbers up to 50,000. Are they all sunk without trace?

Some large boxes with domed lids, elaborate stringing and fine marquetry, which open to reveal a comb divided to straddle a 17- or 18-note organ, give a strong impression of having been made by Bremond. Such a one is serial 43459, listed above, with the Bendon tune sheet of Fig.3 and the typical movement of this type, see Fig.5. Blank numbers are 4 on the SBI bedplate edge and spring and governor parts; and 29 on cylinder assembly.

Performance of these boxes, when in good nick and bellows active, is impressive, full rein being given to the voix celeste effect. The only possible criticism is that the organ overshadows the comb music in places. This is partly due to the comb tooth relative stiffness being about 180 which is rather low for the 1880s and distinctly low with an attached organ.

As can be seen in Figs. 6 and 7, two of these organ boxes have a distinctive letter F added to the inscription under the case. I think we can safely assume that this F simply stands for Flûte as written on the tune sheets. Notes about bells and marquetry were occasionally written on case bottoms since the early days, and this F is a logical extra link of mechanism to case. The writing on Figs.4 to 7 span a period of at least six years, so it no surprise that the style changes; but the size and arrangement were the same from early Bremond days.

Bremond boxes normally followed the general Geneva practice of placing the lining-up dots on the last tune . . .



Fig.3. Standard Bendon tune sheet, probably written by Bremond for their serial 43459, latest tune 1872.



Fig.4. Under a Bremond case - the overall height of that figure 7 is 8 cms!

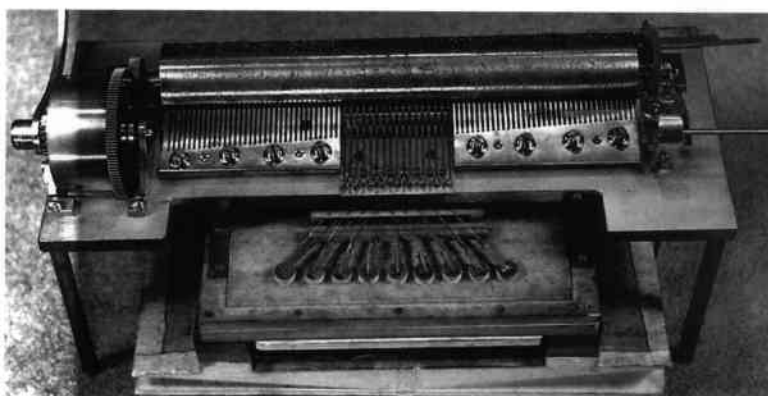


Fig.5. Bremond 43459, showing 9 of the 17 air valves. The 440Hz teeth are marked on the left 35-tooth comb.

musical box oddments no. 83



Fig.6. More large writing under a Bremond case, here with added F for flute.

A large F with serifs also appears on the great wheel of serial 43459. It is shown in Fig.8 which also shows the mysterious stamped IE in letters about .1" (2½mm) high and without serifs. I am sure they are combined on a single punch. They are reported on contemporary boxes by Conchon, Rivenc and Paillard-Vaucher. My best guess is that the stamp was applied by the supplier of the great wheel to the blank-maker. Not much help in dating!

All five boxes listed above lack Bremond's BAB stamp, probably because the agents liked to be considered the producer of the merchandise. Geo. Bendon sometimes applied his "G.B. & Co." stamp, and it appears on the governor cock of serial 45317.

There is (so far) no conclusive proof that all these high-numbered boxes were made by Bremond...

I have shown these boxes in a revised version of the 1993 dating chart referred to above. It is shown in Fig.9, and it provides extra dating fixes for the high-numbered Bremond boxes. It also shows up our lack of Bremond data after 1885. The latest tune so far recorded on one of his boxes is from 1884, and the highest serial number is 47070. He was conspicuously absent from the 1896 International Exhibition in Geneva.

There is (so far) no conclusive proof that all these high-numbered boxes were made by Bremond, but the circumstantial evidence is very powerful.

Ami Rivenc

The dating chart in Fig.9 also covered all Rivenc boxes from his take-over of Greiner in 1869 at serial number about 19,000. The highest Rivenc serial on the Register is 44467. The latest tune on a Rivenc box comes on serial 44191 and is from *The Shop Girl*, first performed end of November 1894.

So I have slightly altered the Rivenc dating line by moving the date of serial 44000 from 1895 to 1896. I still show the output dotted beyond 1896 because rate of production probably declined; and so now the highest Rivenc number

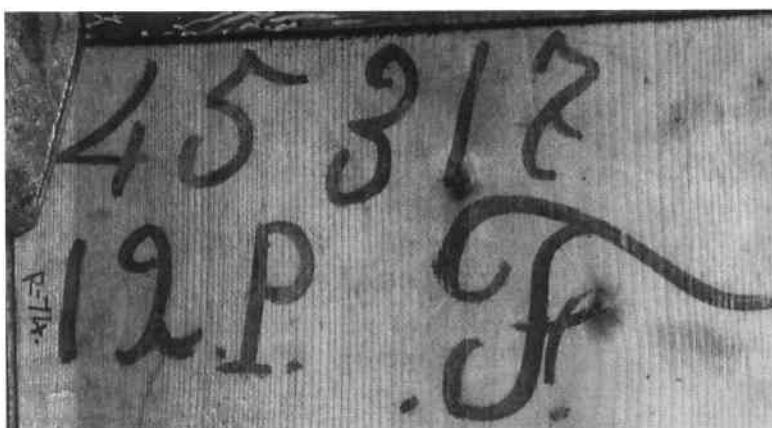


Fig.7. About four years later than Fig.6, with very fancy F for another flute.

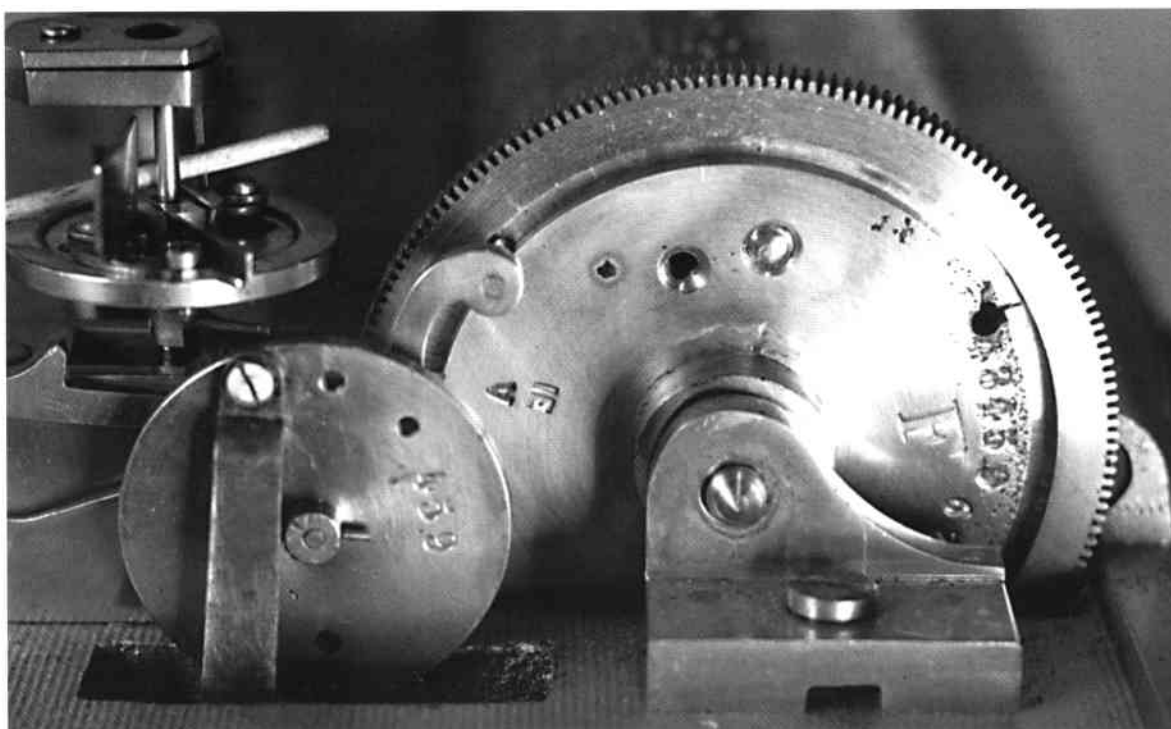


Fig.8. Reading from right to left:- serial number with large F and part of blank number 29; mystery stamp IE with A above; and 459 from the serial number on the governor wheel driving the bellows. The edge of a leaf spring on the compensated governor can be seen, it is far too stiff to allow any compensation. (Governor temporarily transfixed with toothpick).

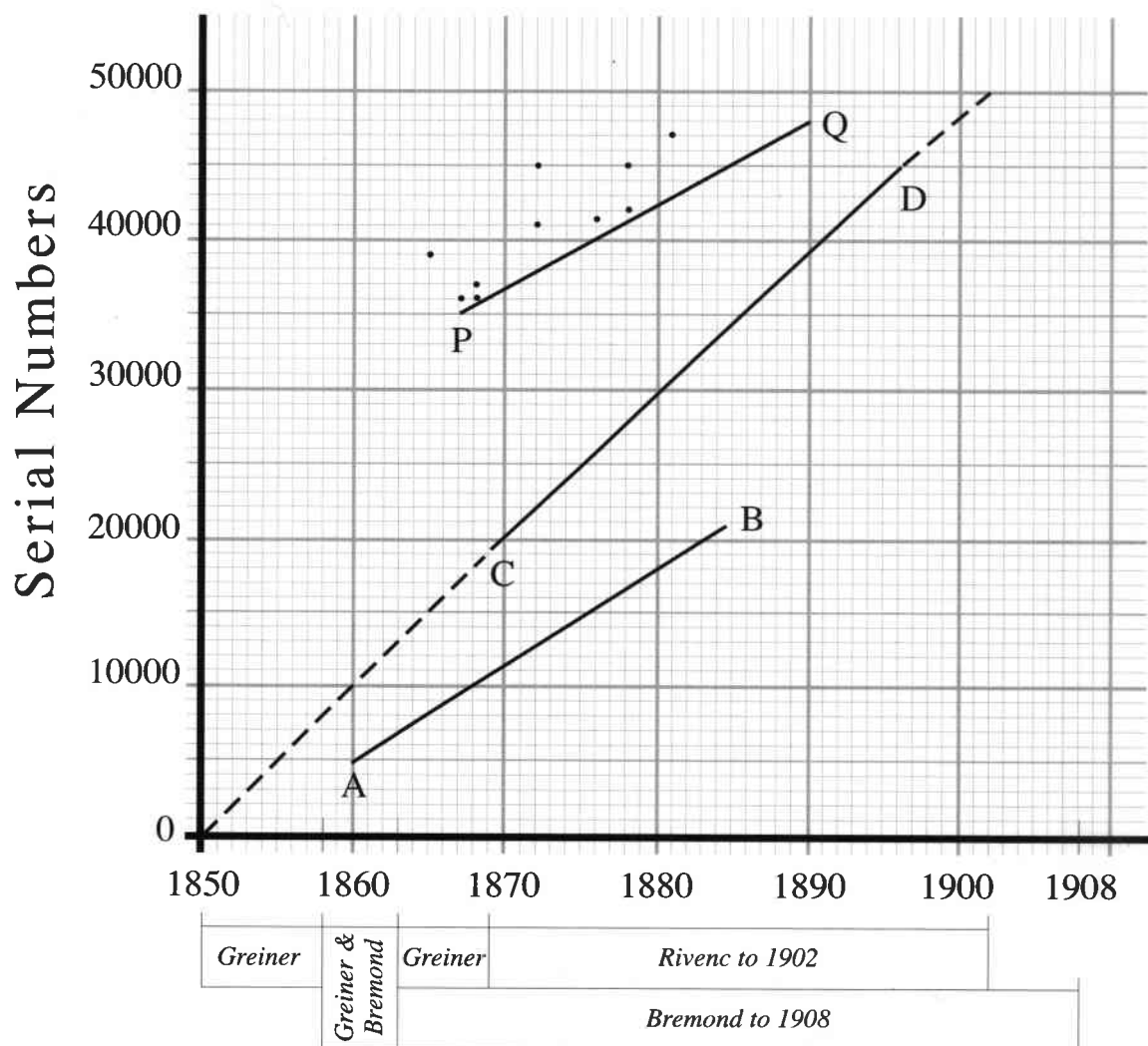


Fig.9. Line AB is for Bremond boxes, 5000 to 21000. Line PQ is for Bremond 35000 to 48000. Line CD is for all Rivenc boxes, which start at about 19000. Dotted line OC is probably safe for Greiner boxes serial 8000 and over. I have marked the ten fixes used for line PQ. Bremond boxes very often have their latest tune several years before their date of manufacture.

seems to be about 48 or possibly 49 thousand.

It certainly is surprising that so few popular tunes of the 1890s are heard on Rivenc boxes. Possibly it is because some are under convincing disguise, such as serial 44610 which was factored by B.H. Abrahams with his tune sheet, as explained and illustrated on page 84 of Vol.17. It has three 1896 tunes including, I am glad to say, *Soldiers of the Queen*.



Fig.10. E. & A. Paillard's identification, seen from their serial 896 to this one, 5880, the latest so far recorded.

If I had moved point D to 1897, which might have been wiser with that sudden trio from 1896, it would show that the highest Rivenc serial number is fairly certain to be below 48,000.

Early Paillard boxes

How often does one see a key-wind cartel box by Paillard? They must have made at least 5,000, yet I was quite pleased to be able to record just two in Oddments 60, Vol.16 page 142.

The Paillard brothers had been in business for a few years before they set up the formal company, E. & A. Paillard, in 1848. In that same year they opened a sales office in Paris. In 1850 they set up their New York office. Their earliest London office date I can find is 1871, but they probably had an agent in the 1860s.

That goes some way to explain the scarcity of their earlier boxes over here. Another reason is that Nicole Freres had almost cornered the UK market from the late 1830s. Yet another is that they are often only identified by their tune sheet: so, no tune sheet, no identity. At first their blanks were bought from Geneva, so most of their boxes looked like the contemporary Geneva key-winds.

Blanks (called ébauches in Ste. Croix)

Chapuis quotes an 1865 report to the Industrial and Commercial Society of Ste. Croix which recommended "the founding of an establishment, in the centre of Ste. Croix, for the production of ébauches, combs and springs for the large musical boxes. This would free us from dependence on Geneva

and would keep within our locality the money - amounting easily to almost 150,000 francs per year - which is currently spent elsewhere for these components."

Robert Jaccard, in his 1932 book page 141, says that soon after the middle 1850 a work-rooms were being set up for the production of ébauches for tabatieres and then, in 1873, for cartels.

The 1996 book by Piguet details these early efforts and implies that some blanks for cartels were made before 1873. But he only gives a passing mention to Edmund Fornachon, whose foundry at La Mothe was certainly involved. His name was cast in the brass bedplate of a hidden bells box made in about 1860 and sold by agents Sallaz & Oboussier, Vol.12 page 65. La Mothe is only about three miles east of St. Croix as flown by crow, and about seven miles by road, but it is nearly 2,000 feet lower being on the Neuchâtel Lake level. I checked all that when I found his foundry marks on another brass bedplate, for the Paillards in about 1850.

E. & A. Paillard key-wind serial 5880

This box, with neat side-flap case and rosewood-veneered lid showing inlay of flowers framed by three lines of stringing, looks Geneva-made until you notice the bottom right corner of the remnants of its simple flower-bordered tune sheet, see Fig.10. A complete version of this Paillard tune sheet is on page 143 of Vol.16 and another is no.22 in the MBSI series.

It seems pretty certain that the Paillards must have reached serial 5000 by 1850 when they already



Fig.11. The E F mark of the Fornachon foundry. He continued making blanks, and in 1886 he patented his design for bearings integrally cast with bedplates.

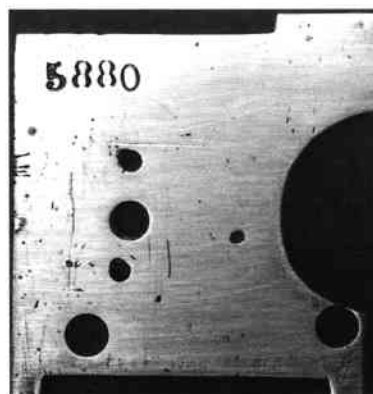


Fig.12. Only just enough metal for the spring bearing bracket screw.

had French and USA sales outlets. So we can estimate serial 5880 at about 1851. Its bedplate has Ed. Fornachon's casting mark, shown in Fig.11, and though of traditional Geneva shape it has a minor design error: it has been cast with an unnecessary circular cut-out under the cylinder drive gear. This leaves scarcely enough metal for one of the spring bearing screws, see Fig.12.

The blank was undoubtedly made locally, but it follows Geneva practice. Blank no.5 is stamped on the bass edge and on spring and governor details, and serial 5880 is scribed on the great wheel and on cylinder bass end with 5 and G7, the gamme number. The last three digits of the serial number are scribed on the bedplate under the

comb and on the comb base with only 80 on the cylinder bearings. The comb base and bass lead are also scribed 7.

The cylinder is 5¼ by 1½ inches (15 by 4cm) and must have been pinned at .09" per second because the tunes last 50 seconds.

The comb uses 81 of its 82 teeth. The 440Hz *a* teeth are nos. 23 and 24, with relative stiffness about 150, on the high side of contemporary Geneva practice; but one item is not significant! The governor ratio at 1312 is lower than expected.

There is nothing special about the arrangements of the four tunes, except for some powerful "snatches" in a Scottish tune which I cannot trace but hope to - *Logie O' Buchan*. But it is a classy little box, modestly shown in Fig.13. I cannot explain the large G stamped on the comb, but I am quite sure it does not stand for Geneva, where it was probably made.

The key of Paillard 5880, about 1851

Look again at the squashed key in Fig.13. It is a typical forged key, made from wrought iron, and stamped size 16 and C.A.I.G. The oval handle should be 2¼" long but it has been squashed and thereby widened to 2½" (from 57 to 67mm). Presumably the idea was to increase the leverage and thereby reduce the strain of winding. But wrought iron always contained small residues of slag and, sure enough, they show up here as flaws at each end - luckily not fatal. And worse! the key now scrapes the end flap during winding and has, in the course of time, created a large dimple. ■

I cannot explain the large G stamped on the comb, but I am quite sure it does not stand for Geneva...

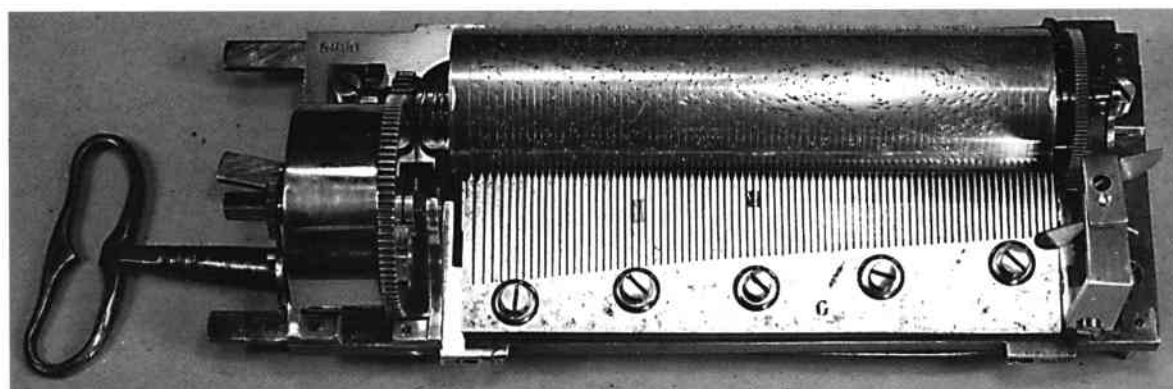


Fig.13. Paillard 5880 with 440 and 880Hz teeth marked; G stamped on the comb; and its squashed winding key.

The Music Box & Windows 98

The Music Box

Part 1 - Sound, Image and text files by David Snelling

It may, at first sight, seem incongruous to have an article on computers in a publication dedicated to old technology. But computers are now to be found in many homes and their use to catalogue and record mechanical music collections will have been contemplated by many MBSGB members.

David Snelling's article should help those who may be struggling with their computers, and give encouragement to those who have yet to venture into the world of 'windows'.
Editor

As I was entering into part time retirement I purchased a computer in April of last year as an adjunct to my hobby activities and, in particular, to be able to record the details including pictures of the musical boxes in my collection. Getting to understand how to use the computer effectively has involved a steep learning curve the results of which I would like, with some deference, to pass on to MBSGB members who may be entertaining similar thoughts on how to apply the vast capabilities of their computers in the context of collecting music boxes.

Fairly early on I realized that it would be marvellous if, in addition to recording text and pictures in searchable form, the computer could be used to create a data bank of musical box tunes linked to tune cards where possible. This part of my article will deal with sound, text and image files and Part 2 will suggest how these files can be organized so as to create a comprehensive inventory and, if desired, to allow all or any of the recorded data to be transmitted by e mail. These functions have become practicable for the home computer user during the last few months due to the exponential growth in hard drive capacity which is now

measured in Gigabytes with 10Gb or more being not unusual on new computers at very reasonable cost. The other major event in this period has been the development and totally free availability of new recording software using MP3 sound file formats which enable the creation of high quality digital sound files on home computers using a minimum of computer memory.

Windows Sound Recorder

Windows 98 has a habit of hiding a lot of its goodies under a digital version of the biblical bushel but there is a program known, unsurprisingly, as Sound Recorder the shortcut to which can be found using "Find files or Folders" in your computer's Start menu and placed on your computer desktop using the Drag and Drop method.

This program can be used to record from external sources such as a minidisc or cassette recorder using the line input socket on your sound card at the back of your computer or from a microphone plugged into the microphone socket. Your computer will probably have been delivered with a microphone if it has a sound card but, if not, almost any inexpensive microphone will do.

However two limitations very soon become apparent. The first is

that the length of your recordings is limited by Microsoft to one measly minute although this period can be extended (if you can work out how!). This is obviously not helpful as many music box tunes last more than one minute in addition to which it is desirable to identify each tune verbally on a recording before starting to play the tune which adds to the length of the recording. The other problem is that each recorded tune will be found to be one or more Megabytes (Mb) in size which led me to put my research on hold for a while as it severely limited the use of sound files for the purposes I had in mind.

Then along came the new sound format known as MP3 about which quite a lot has been written in computer magazines in the last few months. One of the advantages of MP3 sound files as that they can, if desired, be made considerably smaller than WAV files which is the format used by Windows 98. Such reduction in file size is achieved at the cost of somewhat reduced sound fidelity which is, I believe, acceptable for the purposes envisaged by this article.

MusicMatch Jukebox 4.2

Coupled with emergence of the MP3 format numerous new

Getting to understand how to use the computer effectively has involved a steep learning curve...



Fig.1.

software programs have become available which can be downloaded from the world wide web enabling the creation of quality sound recordings of acceptable file size on home computers. The program of choice is currently, I believe, MusicMatch Jukebox 4.2 the web site address of which is shown at the end.

MusicMatch Jukebox 4.2 (hereafter abbreviated as MMJB 4) enables one, inter alia:-

1. To download music in either MP3, Windows Media or WAV formats from web sites many of which contain music files which can be downloaded free of charge.
2. To make recordings from external audio inputs such as cassette or digital recorders.
3. To make microphone recordings.
4. To convert WAV files into MP3 files at various levels of fidelity starting with genuine digital CD quality files of large file size down to much smaller files using only 100 or 200 Kb.

... I found it necessary to use the various applications several times to become skilled in their use.

The help notes to the MMJB4 program and the drop down tab menus explain how to make, organize and replay recordings but I found it necessary to use the various applications several times to become skilled in their use. The rest of this part of this article assumes the necessary skill has

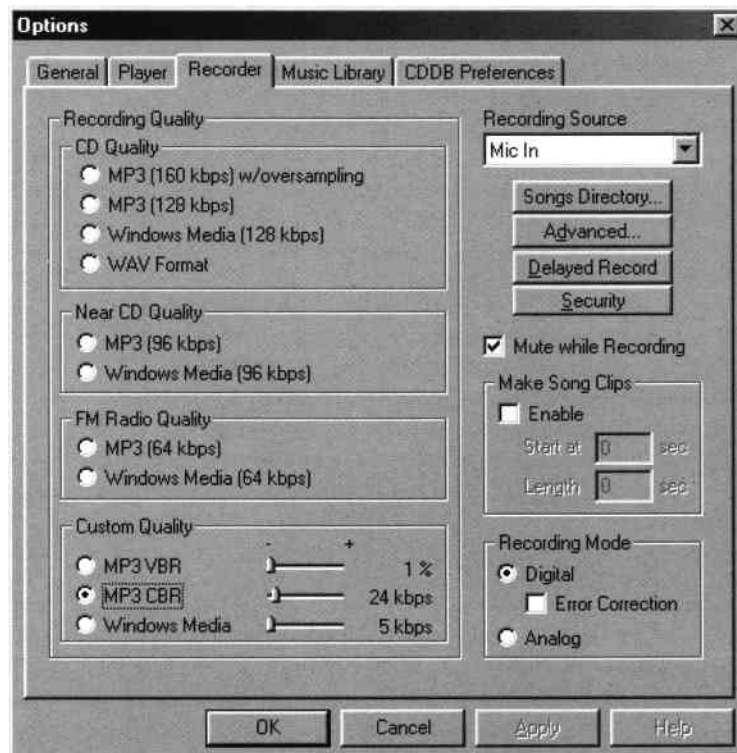


Fig.2.

been or will be acquired.

The first step before making any MMJB 4 recordings is to set the level of fidelity (file size) you wish to use. To do this start MMJB 4 by clicking on its icon so that the virtual control panel (Fig.1) is displayed. Then click on Options in the control panel which will produce a drop down menu. Then click on Settings which will produce the window illustrated in Fig.2 which provides a number of implementable choices. Bearing in mind that it is not necessary to make high fidelity recordings for

inventory purposes it is adequate to settle for custom quality recording at, say, 24 Kbps. However you might wish to make test recordings of a tune at the various levels of fidelity shown in Fig.2 and to compare their sound qualities and file sizes before settling on any particular level in case you prefer higher sound quality to lower file size. A high quality sound file can be converted to a smaller file size at a later date if desired e.g. if you want to send a sound file by e-mail but you may need to download another program (see below for

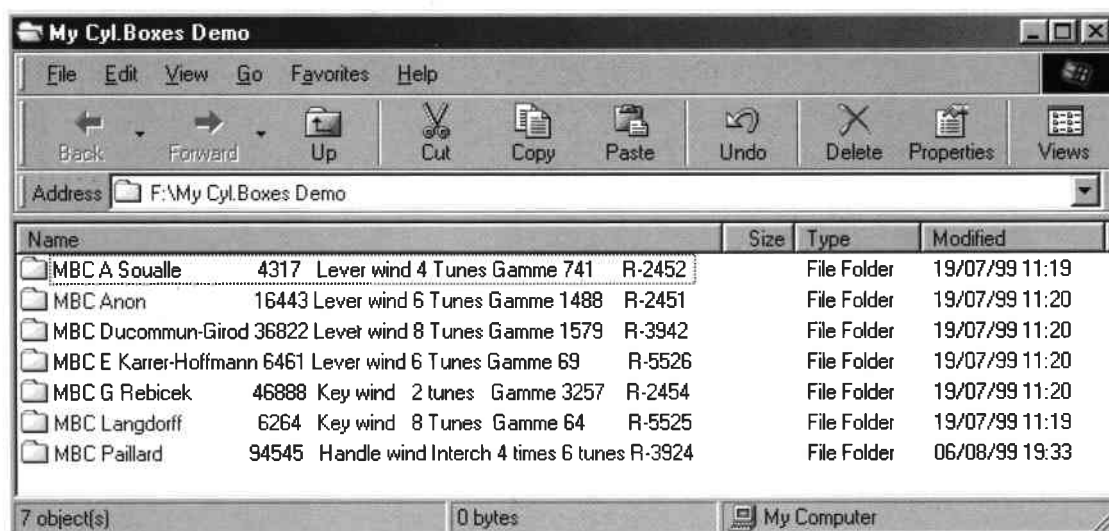


Fig.3.

details of ACMStation) to do this as the file conversion utility included in MMJB 4 has some inbuilt limitations. However, MMJB4 does allow large WAV files to be converted to small MP3 files.

Having chosen your recording format select one of your cylinder music boxes and, if not too heavy, move it near to the computer and the microphone. Then, following the MMJB 4 instructions, make your first recording via the microphone not forgetting (a) to enter (edit) the tune details into the MMJB 4 recorder console in accordance with the prompt on the screen and (b) when you have pressed the record button to speak those details verbally into the microphone before starting the music box. To avoid mistakes simply read aloud the details you have just edited into the recorder console on the screen. Don't forget first to set Mic In as your recorder source.

If the music box is not readily movable make an "on site" recording using a portable digital or cassette recorder and rerecord the disc or tape onto the computer by connecting the line output socket of your recorder to the line input socket of your computer via a suitable cable.

If you already have WAV music box recordings on your computer or you have any tape or disc recordings you can now also, if you wish, convert these into space saving MP3 files by using the "convert" facility referred to above. My experience is that a typical tune which would result in a WAV sound file size of, say, 1.25Mb using the Win98 Sound Recorder application would record or convert to a file of less than 200Kb in the 24Kbps MP3 file format.

Although not essential it is worth checking that your computer has an installed copy of RealPlayer. This is free and if not installed by your computer supplier can be obtained from numerous sources such as free CDs on the cover of computer magazines or downloaded from the web site given below. You can then choose to replay your MP3 files by clicking on the RealPlayer icon on your task bar if you prefer. RealPlayer is a very useful utility in its own right if you spend time

surfing the net and want to listen to web sites with running audio content.

Image files such as photographs

Images are easily created and stored with the assistance of Windows 98 which has its own imaging program. If not already installed on your computer (look under Programs/Accessories) it can be installed with the help of the Windows 98 CD-ROM. There are also numerous commercial imaging programs such as Adobe Photoshop which are often bundled free with a purchase of hardware such as a scanner.

If you have a digital camera your music box images can be downloaded and saved as files in various formats. Alternatively, depending on the hardware available to you, your photographs or their 35mm.negatives can be scanned into your computer and saved. They will probably not be in the most suitable format but they can easily be converted into another format using your imaging program in order to reduce their file size. My preference is to convert them into JPG images of the smallest file size attainable. If you compare the image quality of your JPG files with the original saved files eg. TIFFs or Bitmaps you will probably not even be able to detect any difference between them. By storing your images in your computer you avoid the need to create masses of printed photos and you can find or print your images with ease at any time at the press of one or two keys.

Text Files

In order to record details of your musical boxes you will also need to create detailed text files for each box. These can be set up in any format you might wish to create using Microsoft Word or Works or your word processing program of choice.

You could also use the tried and tested format which has been adopted for the Music Box Register which you could copy when you receive printouts of any music boxes you submit for registration.

Web Site Addresses

The downloads from these sites are either free or mainly free but subject to modest charges for upgrades to better or full versions.

MusicMatchJukebox 4.2

<http://mp3software.simplenet.com/lst.html>

RealPlayer

<http://www.real.com/products/player/ACMStation>

This program includes a useful audio file converter but was giving trouble at the time of going to press. <http://tucows.cableinet.net/miscaudio95.html>

End of part one ■

Tip

In order to avoid net congestion do your downloading between 5am and 6am on a weekday when the United States east coast use of the web is at a minimum and cheap telephone call rates apply.

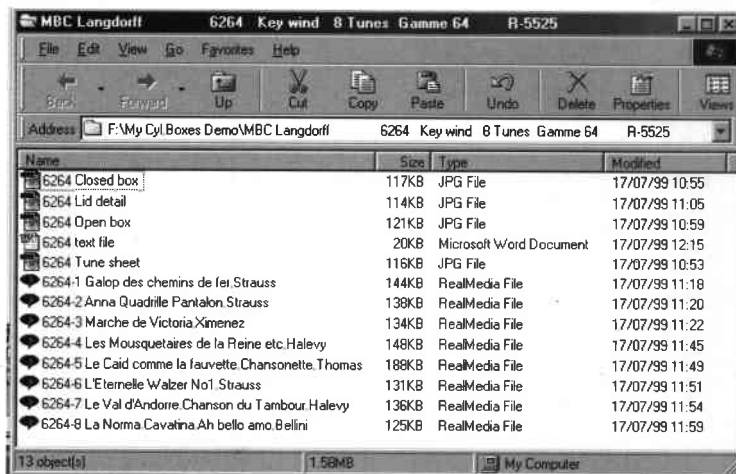


Fig.4.

International Meeting in Bruschal

Fellow members of the MBSGB, it may seem strange to you to be receiving a report concerning the Bruschal meeting from the President of the MBSI, but I have been a member of the MBSGB for 20 years. Since so many of our members traveled to Philadelphia to help the MBSI celebrate its 50th anniversary, there was no other British member present at Bruschal to report. Moreover, Ted and Kay Brown, along with Robin Timms, spent 10 days prior to that MBSI meeting in my home, and the two Presidents found our views concerning the aims of the Bruschal meeting to coincide. As Ted's health precluded another long trip, I was happy to present his views for him.

Probably many of us have had the pleasure of visiting Schloss Bruschal, with its marvellous paintings, fine architecture, and wonderful mechanical music collection, along with other museum pieces. The musical collection was that of Jan Brauers, and has been well supplemented by the Museum. A reception/lunch featured speeches

by the Mayor of Bruschal, the Head of the Museum and Dr. Jurgen Hocker, President of the Gesellschaft. The afternoon was devoted to workshops and lectures; one in German and one in English were given every 50 minutes, for four periods.

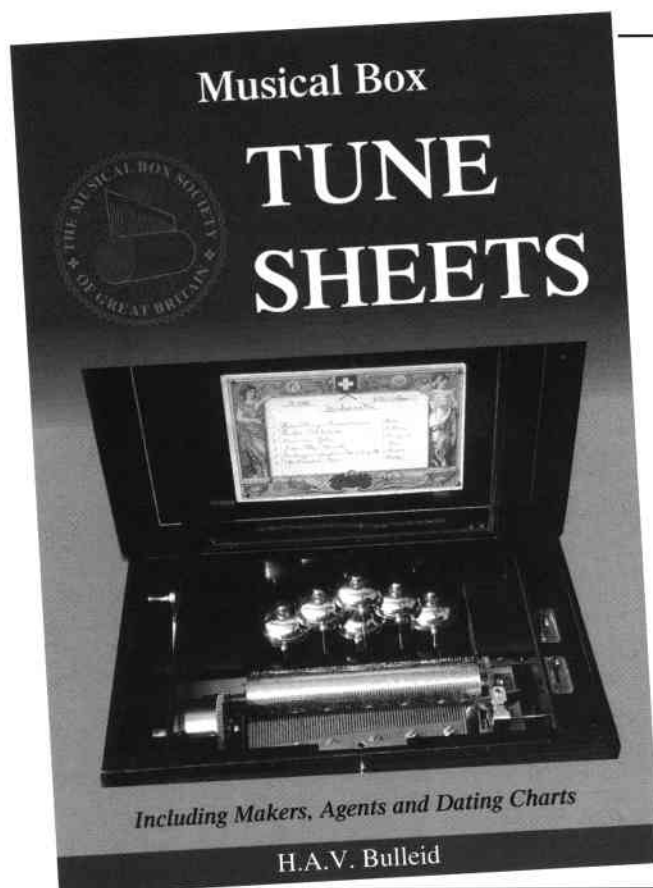
That evening featured a banquet, with street organ music by Pierre Chayard,. Sunday gave another opportunity to enjoy the instruments and mingle with new friends. Meanwhile, representatives of seven mechanical musical organizations met to discuss ways of furthering co-operation to mutual advantage. I distributed a letter from President Ted Brown, and then we started with statements of desired goals. These ranged from finding ways to attract new members, exchanging back literature, improving communication via the Internet, increasing access to the various archives, to a proposal for a formal organization. It quickly became apparent that the main consensus was for gradualism - crawling before walking - that each society wished to retain its own identity, and that some first co-operative project should be undertaken for its own

sake and as a trial to evaluate future co-operation.

There was a proposal by Dr. Frank Metzger to compile the back literature of the co-operating societies into one medium; this was generally accepted as a worthwhile project. There ensued a discussion as to whether Internet or CDs would be the best medium of use, but it was agreed that this was actually the second step, and that the first, the cost of scanning in this much material, should be ascertained by a sub-committee of four, one from France, Germany, The Netherlands and the USA. I was not prepared to suggest a similar person from Great Britain. The above four representatives will keep, in touch, and report back to all the societies in six months. I also invited Dussour Francoise to pursue her request for archival material through the "Projects and Wants" columns in the MBSGB and MBSI journals.

The meeting ended on a positive note of friendship and hope for future advances, but with the realization that no society felt that any firm commitments had been made. ■

Coulson Conn



MBSGB Millennium Project Tune Sheet Book

"Tune sheets are the only documents spanning the long lives of musical boxes. They are, so to speak, birth certificates . ." So writes Anthony Bulleid in his introduction to this fascinating book. Produced by the dedicated efforts of Anthony together with Registrar Arthur Cunliffe and other members of the Society, it brings together over 200 tune sheets, some in full colour, together with detailed descriptions and dating charts. A must for every cylinder box collector. A5 size - over 200 pages.

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An order form is included with this issue of The Music Box. Place your order today - *it is unlikely that this will ever be reprinted.*

Saleroom Report **Mechanical Music at Phillips** **Knowle, 13th October**

The third mechanical music sale at Phillips' new location in Knowle included a good selection of cylinder and disc musical boxes, attracting international interest both from collectors and dealers.

Among the cylinder boxes was a classy L'Epee part-mandoline box, playing well and realising £820. An impressive looking Ami Rivenc drum and bells box and a late Junod drum and bells box (standard except for being in its original pine carrying case) made £2,500 each, whilst an early Bremond interchangeable with table and three cylinders stole the show at £5,000.

Disc boxes included an upright 191/8 Polyphon - with a good tone but a black painted case - at £2,350. A 191/8 upright Symphonion in restored condition made £1800, and the empty oak case for a Symphonion longcase clock reached £2,900 after lively

bidding in the room and on the phone.

In the automata section were two non-fusee tortoiseshell singing bird boxes at £860 and £1100 and a rocking ship at £620. A Roullet et Decamps walking cat left the room at £460, while a Vichy black lyre player made £4,400.

Gramophones and phonographs included an Edison Bell Picturegram at £900 and a Biophone tinplate phonograph at £620.

The next sale of mechanical music at Phillips will be on 9th February 2000. ■ **Nick Hawkins**

Christmas Crossword

Answers

20. Walton. 21. Tercet.
16. Antiphon. 17. Ascetics. 19. Tierce.
8. Automata. 13. Skittle pin. 15. Stickers.
4. Overturned. 6. Endstone. 7. Elite car.
Down: 1. Player. 2. Letter. 3. Piquet.
27. Internet.
24. Echoic. 25. Operatic. 26. Sancti.
sheets. 22. Chimes. 23. Ultimate.
12. Stream. 14. Broken part. 18. Tune
9. Antiques. 10. Addict. 11. Elements.
ACROSS: 1. Polyphon. 5. Geneva.



The Lester Jones twin disc 24 1/2" - see Letters to the Editor

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Tune Cards - Fully illustrated catalog of 83 different types of single and multi-colored tune cards for cylinder boxes. #TC1000 - \$4.50 postpaid

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E-mail: musicbox@sover.net

To keep members informed of the progress of the Register to date, the total number of cylinder boxes registered now stands at 5,750 and growing slowly. Most information coming in is from the repairers of boxes or from details taken from catalogues of the various auction houses. Unless there is an unexpected input, it will take some time to reach the magic 6,000 target.

As many of you already know, the Register is kept in two ways. First, there is the computer file which is excellent for sorting and searching for information quickly and has the added attraction of being highly accurate. There is no comparison with fingering through a series of record cards in a filing cabinet. Secondly, there are the cards in a filing system that are mainly kept as a backup to the system and for the archives. Paper records also stand the test of time and barring accidents should be around in a couple of hundred years.

There are now 285 boxes which have photographs and 154 boxes which have extra photographs of their tune card. Some have a series of photographs showing detail so the actual number of prints must now be well in excess of 500. Now that photographs are included in the documentation, these visual records should survive for quite a number of years. Maybe some computer expert can tell us how long a disc will last before the data fades away assuming it is just left in a drawer and not re-written from time to time?

I am beginning to receive requests for help. Most of these either relate to finding a maker for a box or identifying a programme from a gamme number. An Australian member recently sent me details of an interchangeable cylinder box that was numbered in the 61,000 series and had some distinctive features. It could not be very early box, but the owner wished to know who made it?

A computer search for all interchangeable boxes numbered between 60,000 and 80,000 was completed in seconds and came up with a list of makers and quite a

number of boxes. Sure enough, there in the list of Paillard's were a number of boxes that had similar characteristics. Not only that, the serial number of these boxes were not very far away from the sample box.

It must be reasonable to assume that the box came from Paillard. A note saying "almost certainly a Paillard box" has been put on the record card and on the file. It will also give the owner of the box an indication of what sort of replacement tune card should be fitted to the box especially if he has a copy of the new book on tune sheets to help him!

The publication of the new book on tune sheets, or tune cards as I stubbornly persist in calling them, should prove to be an invaluable reference work and help to advance our knowledge by leaps and bounds. Various assumptions were made in the early days and books written detailing the thoughts and learning of the time. Much more has been discovered over the intervening years and some of the early written work needs to be revised and updated. This new book will help in correcting a few errors.

Often it has been said, "there is nothing new under the sun." The idea of assembling a series of parts and presenting them complete with an imposing logo is commonplace these days. In the computer world it is possible to buy a circuit board from one supplier, a monitor from another, a storage system from a third and so on. Buy a ready made case, stick a badge on it and yet another new make of computer is born.

Much of the same sort of thing must have happened in the musical box industry of long ago. We know various blank manufacturers supplied rough castings or semi finished parts. Motor bridges, bedplates and comb bases are examples. So any box may have had its component parts come from quite a wide area. When we say, "I have a box made by Bremond" it may be more accurate to say, "assembled by" or even "completed by" that maker. I feel that most of us we will stay with tradition and

wish to give a name to our treasures or spend an inordinate amount of time trying to find an attribution. As long as we realise that these people did not make their products from start to finish I feel it matters little.

Following on from the last paragraph, as enthusiasts we all know that boxes stamped Thibouville-Lamy on the bedplate were supplied by L'Epee who in turn made them from parts supplied by others. It is no good though telling a policeman to look for a stolen L'Epee box when Thibouville-Lamy is stamped all over the bedplate. In fact it would be distinctly unhelpful.

When compiling the Register, it is important to be aware of this and record exactly what can be seen. Names like Bendon, Heller, T.S.Beswick and so on are all recorded so that in the event of a theft, useful clues and positive identification can be quickly sent out to those needing to know. Whenever possible, a note of the name of the actual supplier is put on the record card and on the file for the more knowledgeable.

It is most agreeable when the Register can be used to find missing information. Two people wrote in recently asking if I could find the programme for the Nicole's they had. One member gave a serial number and the other gave a gamme number, but in both cases the information was there to hand on the Register. Often the information is missing but just occasionally it all works out and the Registrar can shout joyfully! Two more boxes that had missing tune cards can now have reproduction cards fitted and become complete.

Finally, can anyone please advise me where to look to find out information about composers and when they wrote their compositions. Groves Dictionary of Music is useful as is Tower's History of the Operas, but I am wondering if information is now on the world wide web. Is it possible to get into the library of the Royal College of Music for instance? Are any of the search engines of any use in looking for the history of music. Please help if you can. ■

Registrar

... but just occasionally it all works out and the Registrar can shout joyfully!

Dear Sir,

I was delighted to read the letter from Geoff Mason in the last issue of the Music Box. I too enjoy collecting some of the more modern movements housed in items like cake stands, powder compacts and cigarette lighters.

Unlike Geoff, I started the other way round and commenced collecting items like the older snuffboxes and manivelles. Soon I discovered that many of the modern items were just as interesting and were a natural development in the history of mechanical music.

The top quality items made today have the same manufacturing integrity as articles made in the Victorian era. An example can be found in the Reuge 3/72 movements that play 3 airs on 72 comb teeth. These are just as fine a quality as those produced years ago and better than some.

Perhaps Geoff could continue in the opposite way to me and now look for good quality snuffbox movements housed either in those black composition cases or in a tinplate box. Look also for those movements with sectional combs or items that are housed in cases that have finely painted landscape scenes on the lids. Note though that when this stage of collecting has been reached, an interest has certainly become an obsession. Wives tend to look worried and talk of psychiatrists and taking full charge of the bank account!

I hope some member will be able to answer your queries about Reuge and other makers of small movements. Cuendet for example must have made thousands of small movements for fixing into a

multitude of boxes and trinkets. The Quality Excelsior mark is the trade mark associated with Charles Ullmann boxes. These too must have been made in large quantities. Many have been seen in musical photograph albums.

To purchase a powder compact or a cigarette lighter for under £5 these days must be regarded as being a gift. Either that, or the Mason family know which car boot sales to attend. One item for them to look out for must be the musical hat or coat hook. These were made to fasten to a wall and played a tune whenever a hat or a coat was hung on the hook. After that, then there is always Crown Devon pottery of the musical kind. If you don't know anything about that, see the excellent articles written recently by Paul Bellamy.

Finally, I would ask Geoff to come along to one of our meetings sometime in the future to demonstrate and talk about his modern collection. I am sure we would all enjoy the experience.

"Repin".

**By e-mail from Mike Knapp.
Knapp Barrel Organs
- help wanted**

I am the great grandson of Henry Knapp of the company Knapp Barrel Organ Works. I am looking for anything that will give me information on the Knapp barrel organ. Mike Knapp, 1945 22nd Street, Santa Monica, Ca. USA 90404.

MKnapp6931@aol.com

Dear Sir,

It gives me great pleasure to write to you about a truly wonderful achievement by a fellow craftsman in

this country. I refer to the new double 24½" disc polyphon manufactured by Lester Jones of the Mechanical Music Collection at Chichester, which I had the pleasure of listening to recently for the first time.

Lester's machine produces what is probably the finest and most spectacular sound that I have ever heard from a disc musical box. This is partly because of its excellent "sublime harmony" tone, but also because of the way the doubling of the notes brings out the expression in the music to a degree I have never heard before. This is more apparent even than in our own twin disc Gemini which, of course, had only 236 notes compared with the 318 notes in Lester's instrument. When I first heard that Lester was making it, I thought that he was just trying to be one up by producing a bigger machine than ours. Clearly, I was wrong, and the larger disc size and the wonderfully well designed and well made cabinet have resulted in what I would describe as a major step forward in the design of the bigger disc musical boxes.

Listening to Lester's polyphon is rather like listening to a full orchestra, and it is even possible to pick out in imagination the different orchestral parts. It has a wonderful rich organ like bass, and when there is a trill in the treble it produces the effect of a string section. I look forward to hearing it again, when we have more time available to enjoy it at leisure. I am sure a lot of the biggest collectors will want to buy it, and if I win the lottery I shall most certainly want to buy one myself. Lester deserves to do well with this project, and we are already grateful to him for developing his disc making facility now that Patch Pearce is no longer making discs.

Keith Harding

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have ever heard
from a disc
musical box."*



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22" Polyphon with bells on bin, **19% Polyphon**, other disc boxes. Several cylinder boxes. Several **Organettes** including 32 note Grand Roller, **Gramophones** and **Phonographs** including HMV Lumiere, Bakelite teles and radios. **Barrel pianos, organs** and carts. *Details from Brian Chesters, 01253 508232. Similar items wanted.*

Rolmonica Roll Boxes Good quality colour reproductions. Supplied flat, you cut out, fold and glue. £1 or 1.50 each inc. postage. Minimum order 3 boxes. *David Snelling, The Old Vicarage, Church Road, Santon, Isle of Man IM4 1EZ, British Isles.*

Most of the insides of an upright Pedal Electric Duo Art Weber reproducing piano, including the Expression Box, the Stack, the various valves and the square pump, but not the pedal unit and reservoir bellows. £250, delivered to the Spring of Summer 2000 MBSGB meeting. Suitable electric motor can be supplied as a chargeable extra. *David Snelling - phone/fax: 01624 823483. E-mail: d.snelling@virgin.net*

Scrap Amorette organette, for reeds and worm gear. *Thompson 01526 832679.*

Discs - 7" Kalliope centre drive. 7" Lochman, 8½" centre drive Britannia, 14" Kalliope, 14½" Symphonion and 6½" Piccolo. *Ted Brown 01403 823533.*

A video of some of my instruments is available - approximately 1 hour. £10 plus 70p p&p UK. *Ted Brown 01403 823533.*

CLASSIFIED WANTS

Any old catalogues and musical box or organette ephemera. *Ted Brown 01403 823533.*

Old auction catalogues, tune lists, etc. Contact Archivist, Kevin McElhone - address in Society Officers list.

WANTS (cont'd)

Organette music wanted. Any Dolcine card music any condition. 14 note Melodia and Clariona music (on spools) All other organette music, bands, spools, discs, any condition considered. Contact Ted, Brown 01403 823 533

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Alan Wyatt on (01223) 860332

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Contact Kevin McElhone, Archivist, on 01536 523988.

To fill this space call
01403 823533

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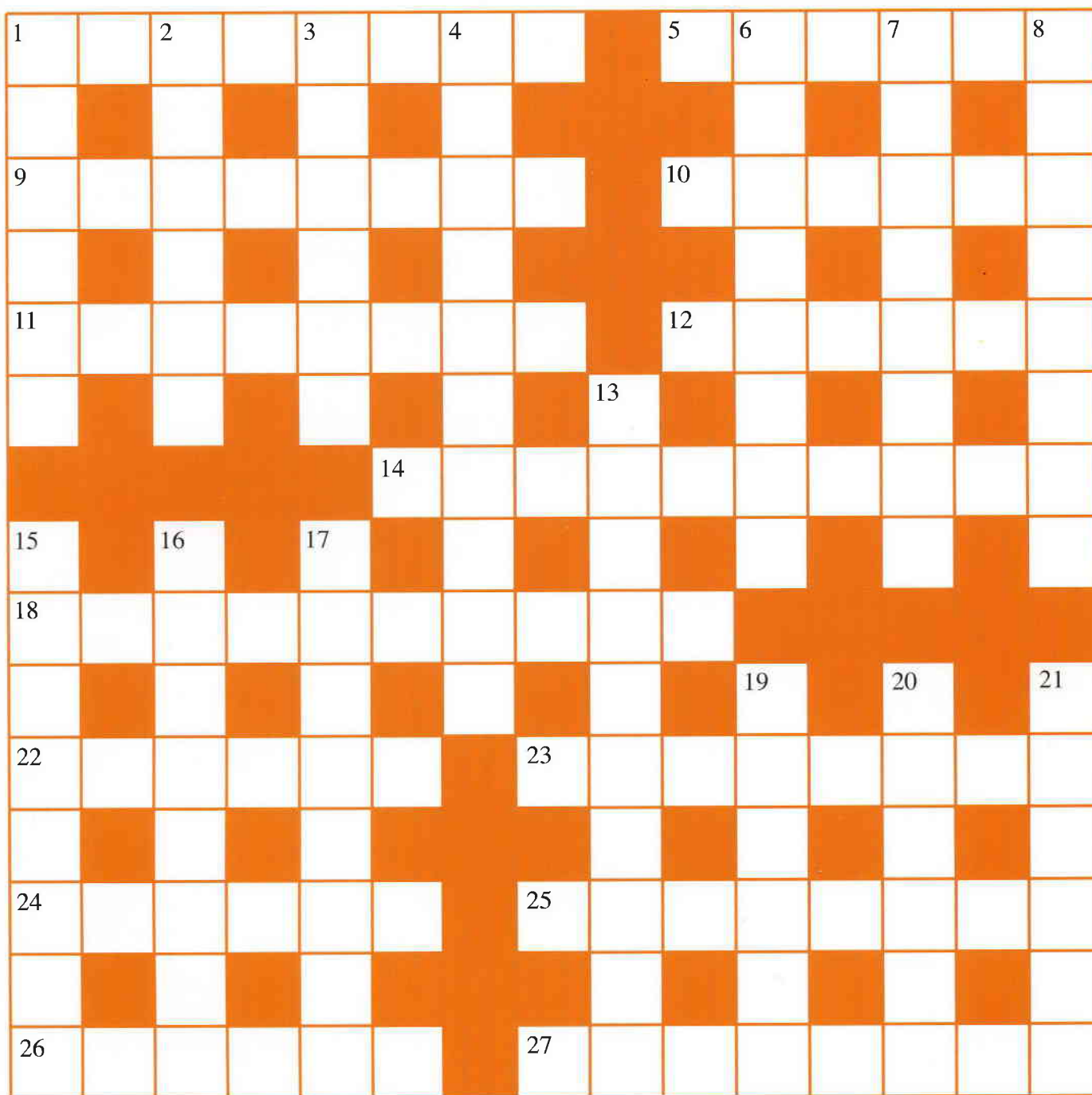
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Christmas Crossword

Compiled by
Lyn Wright



For crossword answers see Page 105

Christmas Crossword Clues

Across

1. German musical roundabout ? (8)
5. Swiss stop in trouble from oxygen evaporation (6)
9. Old boxes, perhaps, found in a quest (8)
10. He is compelled to put on one hundred tons (6)
11. Steel men subjected to weather conditions (8)
12. Flow master (6)
14. Bank porter will stop any movement (6, 4)
18. Lay leaves to put on airs (4,6)
22. Bell ringing in which I mess about (6)
23. Last and possibly best (8)
24. Just like it sounded, it's said (6)
25. A pot Eric turns airily dramatic? (8)
26. Even the least mad can make this (6)
27. If you've got a site, you must be on it! (8)

Down

1. A piano can have one before or after! (6)
2. Landlord's post? (6)
3. Two of 1 down on the cards (6)
4. Upset tuner drove around (10)
6. Last monument is for bearing (8)
7. Posh marque we all want to drive! (5,3)
8. The car mother says thanks for mechanical devices (8)
13. Bowled over, perhaps, by pest in kilt (7, 3)
15. Posters to prod the pallets (8)
16. 'Oh, Tin Pan' the psalmists sing (8)
17. They keep to themselves in the S.S Ice Cat (8)
19. Third in time for a Mortier celebration (6)
20. A noted knight, — some say a fisherman! (6)
21. Needing three musicians to play it, perhaps? (6)

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