

# *The Music Box*

Volume 19 Number 8 Winter 2000

Edited by Alan Pratt

*An International Journal of Mechanical Music*



**Automaton  
Barrel Piano  
by A. Ruth  
of Waldkirch**



**The Journal of the Musical Box Society of Great Britain**

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# Phillips

AUCTIONEERS

# Moving On

**H**ow time flies! This issue of Music Box brings us to the end of another Volume. For those of us who keep their copies in the binders (have you ordered yours?) it means finding space on the shelves for another item. I believe it's Murphy's law which says that possessions expand to fill the space available. Well, it certainly does in our house.

So the first issue of Volume 20 coincides with the start of the new Millennium. Yes, I know some of you celebrated that a year ago, but you can't mark the end of 2000 years until you get to the end of

year 2000! Anyway I think it's nice to start a new Volume at the beginning of a new millennium. Will collecting mechanical music still be going on in 3000? We'll never know.

Thinking about new volumes makes me think about the content of those future issues. From some of the presentations at the Havant meeting, it seems that there are a number of interesting projects going on which would make good feature articles for Music Box. How about it? Also, we keep hearing about boxes or instruments which have not been seen before. Do you have an interesting or unusual box? If you do, why not

share it with your fellow members. You could find out more about its history as members never cease to amaze with their combined knowledge.

Some extra information which will be in the next issue of Music Box is the first addition to the Tune Sheet Book. Anthony Bulleid continues his researches and as they become ready for publication we will include them in Music Box.

It may be a little early but, on behalf of myself and your Committee, may I wish you a happy Christmas and a peaceful New Year - and just from me, a happy new millennium! ■



Alan Pratt

The Journal of the Musical Box Society of Great Britain Volume 19 Number 8 Winter 2000

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.

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### Front Cover picture

Our cover picture shows an automaton barrel piano which features in Christie's next sale. The most interesting feature is the gent in centre front - a flasher with a difference; he opens his cloak to reveal a female figure which pops up as he does so! Last on the market in 1981, it was made by Ruth of Waldkirch. (Estimate £6,000-£8,000).

*Photograph courtesy of Christie's Auctioneers.*

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MEETING 2000

Shimmering sun on the surface of the sea and the lazy tugging of yachts at their moorings, evoked feelings of leisure and pleasure as we crossed the bridge to the island of Hayling, where the Langstone Hotel was to be the venue for our autumn meeting.

For our first evening, we were entertained by Terry and Ros. Longhurst who provided a varied show using their beautiful magic lantern, resplendent in mahogany and brass. The vivid colours of the hand painted slides never cease to amaze, and our presenters managed to keep their show on the road, despite the complication of one sticking slide carrier.

Those who remember Frank Holland, and the early days of the Piano Museum, found ultimate delight in Barry Wilson's showing of a colour film, made in Frank's heyday. This revived memories of the plumbing system in the vestry of the old Brentford church and the plastic tent which enveloped the 50 tons of instruments, with the purpose of restricting space heating requirements! Then there was the amazing and alarming multiple branched electrical distribution system, ready to trip or throttle the unwary. The twinkle in Frank's eye, as he took us on his own guided tour, was as much as to say 'You'll miss me when I've gone but



Fig. 1 Terry and Ros Longhurst with their Biunial Magic Lantern

## New Members

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

2746 David Ponting, Bristol

2747 Trudy Dalton, Cambridge

2748 Bryan Sparrow, Cumbria

2749 L. Martin, Derby

2750 Keith Bonnor, Stoke

2751 A.P. Clark, Croydon

2752 P. Kerr, Hants

2753 Robert Ain, USA

2754 Richard Colledge, Middlesex

2755 Peter Devoti, Cheshire

2756 Paul Mayhew, London

2757 George Beck, Yorkshire



I'll give you something to remember me by.' Many were the recollections and stories echoing round the room, long after the reel ran out. Equally hilarious was a film depicting an orchestra of cartoon animals, whose antics defied words throughout their rendition of Rossini's William Tell overture.

Saturday morning's scenic tour took us along the ridge of Portsdown hill from where we viewed the City of Portsmouth, Port Solent and H.M. Dockyard. Our destination was the Royal Armouries at Fort Nelson, one of the most respected collections of artillery in the world. The fort was completed in 1871, at a cost of £78,600. We marvelled at ornately decorated gun barrels which illustrated the skills of early iron and bronze founders. A field gun made a very noisy mid-day announcement, reminding us that our meeting was now really going with a bang.

Barry Wilson is one of an increasing band of members who are taking up the challenge of converting previously public buildings into private domestic dwellings, in which they can house their personal collections. In Barry's case it is an Old Village Hall in rural Hampshire, vacated when a replacement hall was erected a short distance away. These two halls were our venue for Saturday afternoon where, with typical enthusiasm, we divided into two groups for simultaneous presentations.



Fig. 2 Barry Wilson at the handle of one of his organs



Fig. 3 Nigel O'Shaunessy plays one of his newly built organettes.

Talks by Terry Longhurst on 'Musical Boxes', the 'Building of Organettes' by Nigel O'Shaunessy and 'Music for the Van Duren flute clock Organ' by Norman Dicker combined to provide a programme of varied interest. A member of the audience was able to identify previously unknown titles to Chinese tunes on one of Terry's boxes (is there no end to the knowledge of our members?). Having played several newly constructed organettes, and shown the inner workings of his current project, Nigel made a plea for lists of stockists able to supply the many raw materials and components needed in support of



Fig. 4 Norman Dicker with the Van Dieren flute clock organ.

new construction work. The highlight from Norman was the playing of the tune 'Portsmouth', which he and his wife Jane had recently arranged and cut, in recognition of the geographical location of our meeting.

Using his own unique sense of humour, Barry Wilson took us on a light-hearted and entertaining tour of his collection. Barry has a wide-ranging interest in collectibles but admits to Radios and Organs being 'equal first loves'. Amongst his collection of nearly 250 radios, there was the amusing little touch of French language emanating from radios of French manufacture! Organs, too numerous to describe

*...is there no  
end to the  
knowledge of  
our members?*



Fig. 5 The 116 note Aeolian Orchestrille in Barry Wilson's collection.

in individual detail, are displayed against all walls of the main hall. There are Bates' two stop, three stop and five stop instruments, the latter having a three barrel carousel with a total of thirty tunes. A 'Hicks type' barrel piano and a large 50 key fully chromatic barrel organ represent the work of Imhof and Muckle, whilst local organ builder Willis of Petersfield is included in the form of an instrument with six barrels. Barry's mezzanine floor has had to be modified to accommodate the bass pipes of an Aeolian 116 note pipe organ. Another Aeolian product is the 116 note Orchestrelle resplendent in richly carved case. Following an exuberant performance by a Seybold-Honer 70 key Organa with cymbal, snare drum, bass drum and accordion, Barry admitted that the village shop has closed down, the pub is now under new management, and the vicar has left, since he moved to the area some two years ago - he cannot think why! In a stunning departure from mechanical music, members Bernie Brown and Paul Morris combined at the Aeolian pipe organ and the Aeolian pianola to play a number of duets. Paul Baker subsequently squeezed onto one end of the piano stool to make it a six-handed concert! All too soon the illuminated Bush Radio wall clock indicated that our visit was sadly at an end.

*Bakelite  
radios and  
bamboo  
bicycles...*

Our thanks go to the local lady members, who worked so hard in providing home-made cakes, tea and biscuits to sustain us during the afternoon.

After the Society Dinner on the Saturday evening, the 'Society Singers' from Petersfield entertained us with old favourites and modern show stoppers. They concluded with a song entitled 'What I'd like to be'. Their choices ranged through Coal Merchant, Draper, Dance Instructor, Waitress and Auctioneer (with due deference to one member present!), and ended with wanting to be a Musical Box. This last desire finished with the refrain 'Wind me up Sir, Wind me up Sir, please don't break my spring'. Clearly a finale which met with much acclaim!

Following John Powell's demonstration of a restored box which reproduced the varied song of

the Nightingale, the strains of 'Daisy Bell' heralded Peter and Joyce Hoyt's arrival, appropriately dressed in cycling gear of an early period. We had more than our money's worth, in that the 'Bicycle made for Two' became two bicycles, each constructed from bamboo. Peter provided an interesting account of design and construction using this unusual material, claimed by the inventor, to be stronger than steel!

Sunday morning was the occasion for a further trio of talks.

Peter Howard used the title 'Cinderella' for his talk about the acquisition and rebuilding of a very

run-down and significantly modified early Musical Cabinetto. His 'Rags to Riches' story was accompanied by a series of 35 mm colour slides which illustrated some of the many techniques used for winding handle manufacture, case repair and replicating the original stencilled motifs and lettering, most of which had long since vanished without trace. Including the research for this unusual style instrument, the project had taken Peter some fifteen years to complete.

A fast canter through the world of Musical Mugs was ridden by our music-jockey Paul Bellamy, who described how the appearance of



Fig. 6 Peter and Joyce Hoyt with their bamboo bicycles.



Fig. 7 Peter Howard's fully restored Musical Cabinetto serial number 520.

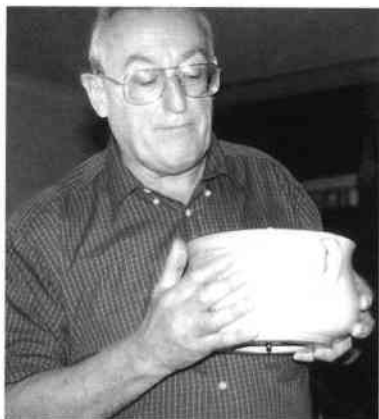


Fig. 8 Paul Bellamy indulges in some chamber music!

glazes, painter's marks and pattern registration numbers all help to identify the period of manufacture. Paul has bravely ventured into small music mechanism manufacture, including the casting of frames. He uses sheet brass, pricked and drilled 'in the flat' before rolling to create the cylinder. A result of his technique was 'The Sailor's Hornpipe' fitted in a mug depicting Long John Silver.

Ted Brown unveiled a rare 12 bar Mechanisches Glockenspiel played by projection-less disc. With massive air brake governor, it took a bold operator to adopt the recommended stopping technique, by poking a finger into the works! Following a number of tunes on a 16 note Kinter Ariston organette 'The Princess', Ted went on to demonstrate an Ariston 24 note model which boasted a 12 bar glockenspiel, in a deeper than normal case. Careful adjustment of the

pressure bar, keys and pallets allowed this instrument to successfully play both metal and card discs despite the former being only one half the thickness of the card variant.

Sunday afternoon provided an option to visit Hollycombe Steam Fair where early fairground rides are powered in the traditional way and supported by real organs. Depending on your degree of bravery, or recklessness, it was possible to sample a Bioscope, two sets of gallopers, chair-o-planes, swing boats, big wheel, Razzle-Dazzle and Steam Yachts.

Thanks go to all local organisers, for putting together another memorable occasion, and to all contributors whose 'front of stage' and 'behind scenes' efforts were the ingredients for a successful meeting. ■

## Christmas Meetings

The three meetings planned for the Christmas period have proved very popular again and only a few places remain at each venue.

### November 25th

Ted Brown at The Old School, Bucks Green. Tel: 01403 823533.

### December 2nd

John Turner at St. Mary's Church Hall, Horbury Junction, Wakefield. Tel: 01924 272418.

### December 9th

Nicholas Simons at Blagreaves Hall, Derby. Tel: 01332 760576.

*If you would like to go to any of these, please contact the member concerned immediately, on the number given above, for availability and location details.*

*Prior booking is essential as space is now very limited and it is necessary to have numbers for catering. Our thanks go to the members involved for making these meetings possible.*

## European Tour 2001

The Swiss visit mentioned in the last issue is now set for July 13th to 21st based at Interlaken. This will enable us to take in the Organ Festival at Thun - a major event in the organ festival calendar.

At the time of writing, there are just a couple of places left, so if you are interested please ring Alan Wyatt on 01233 860 332 as soon as possible.

## News from the Dutch Organgrinders

On the 10th November we have a meeting for English and Dutch organ owners with approximately 10 organs. At the end of February, or early March, we are going to have our normal 'open day' with a lot of organs. We don't know the exact date yet, but will confirm when agreed. All events are at the RBA building in Breugel, St. Genovevdrat 24 - 5694 AG Breugel (near Eindhoven). Contact phone number: 0031-499-471486."

## In our next issue -

### More on tune Sheets

**The Tune Sheet Book has been very well received, and has already become a standard work of reference for anyone interested in cylinder boxes.**

But new tune sheets continue to be discovered and researched, thanks largely to the efforts of Anthony Bulleid. To keep your information up to date we shall be publishing additions to the book, starting in the next issue of Music Box. These additional pages, some in full colour, will be in the same format as the Tune Sheet Book, making an invaluable addition to what is already a unique publication.



Fig. 9 The Hollycombe Bioscope which contains barrel piano and pianola as part of the show.

## Meetings

The Spring 2001 meeting will be held on 20th to 22nd April at Guildford, Surrey. Local organisers are Daphne Ladell and Clive Houghton. More details on the enclosed booking form and in the next Music Box. Please book early as this is a busy time of the year for hotels in the south.

## Local Organisers Needed for Weekend Meetings

**A plea for help from Roy Ison, Meetings Secretary**

Are there any members who would be willing to help to organise a weekend meeting in their area? This would involve the organiser in suggesting a location which has a suitable hotel, i.e. at least 35 bedrooms plus a conference room, and maybe one or two places of interest which members could visit, or local members displaying pieces in the hotel, indeed any ideas that might be of interest to members. Speakers for the meeting can be arranged by myself as can dealings with the hotel. All expenses are covered by the MBSGB, the local organiser is not responsible for any financial decisions.

Ideally, meetings should alternate among the various regions in the country to give all our members a chance to participate.

We are fast running out of locations being offered for meetings. Please think hard about the possibility of holding one in your area, as Meetings Secretary I am very willing to put on a meeting anywhere, but I do need your help in finding the locations. ■

## Auction Report

### Christie's South Kensington - July 27th 2000

The dominant feature of this sale was the Welte No.2 Cottage orchestrion, whose characteristic trumpet flare, complemented by an unusual and complex polychrome pattern on the front rank of pipes, filled the catalogue cover. It had been rescued from a near-derelict Scottish country house, and, as would be expected from such circumstances, a complete rebuild would be required before those pipes could sound again. Even so, there was wide interest in the instrument as a restoration project, and the hammer fell at £40,000. Restoration will take place in Germany, before the organ goes to its new home in the USA.

Other lots in the Pneumatic section included a gilt singing bird box by Bruguier with a watch in the front and an automaton scene in the lid. The latter had a lady playing a lyre and, half-hidden beneath an arch, a recumbent couple enjoying themselves. Their pleasure was perhaps more suggested than anatomically specific, but it was naughty enough to push the bidding up to £17,000.

A well-known contributor to this journal was very happy with his £180 restoration project Herophon, but a fully rebuilt Frati Harmonipan 33-note portable organ was a trifle dearer, at £8,500.

Musical boxes opened with one of those that you buy as much to look at as listen to, its modest 6-inch cylinder dwarfed by two mandarin automata striking two bells each, while a doll

pirouetted in between. Audio-visual entertainment, and all for £1,900.

£3,800 saw the hammer fall on a Mojon Manger interchangeable, and also on a Bremond overture box. The Mojon had three 11-inch cylinders, and a drawer to keep them in, as well as a neat but non-original stand, while the Bremond boasted a degree of mandolin expression but was too late to match the best overture boxes of the key-wind and early lever-wind era.

Another interchangeable had four cylinders, also 11 inch, was unrestored but played gloriously, and was distinctively housed in a Sheraton Revival rosewood case with a matching table. They blended perfectly, and clearly belonged together, although it appeared on close examination that one had been made for the other, rather than the two having been designed as a unit. The slender, tapered square legs made a refreshing change from those ebonised whoppers so beloved of musical box table makers. £6,500 clinched this one.

Among disc boxes, a rather average 19½ inch Polyphon with no damper rails managed £3,000 and a handsome Komet (20½ inch) on stand, £5,800. The star of the show, however, was a 15½ inch table Symphonion, a late model with side-by-side combs and Art Nouveau bedplate, its plain walnut case on a purpose-made but non-matching oak stand holding no less than 175 discs, beautifully preserved with their original lacquered finish. It looked good, and sounded superb - the best table Symphonion I can remember, and it fully deserved its £4,200.

(Prices are quoted without the Buyers' Premium, which is 17.5%).

**Christopher Proudfoot**

## Who made this?

### The Answer

**Remember the picture (and question) in the last issue? Just as I thought someone had the answer.**

Alan Wyatt rang to say he has an almost identical instrument in his workshop at present. It bears the inscription:

*POLYCARPE*

*- ellmo constructeur des pianos cylindre*

*Rue Azat-capo*

*Constantinople*

This maker's location ties up with the sighting in Rhodes. Because of the basket on the right in the picture you cannot count the keys, but Alan's has 38 - plus a bell!

- Across:**
- (1) Cremona. (5) Organic. (9) Impacts.
  - (10) Glorify. (11) Paste. (12) Tunesheet.
  - (13) Additions. (15) Easel. (16) Sousa.
  - (18) Fish-plate. (21) Drillings. (24) Yield.
  - (25) Diorama. (26) Abalone.
  - (27) Sunbath. (28) Agendas.
- Down:**
- (1) Chiappa. (2) Exposed. (3) Orchestra.
  - (4) Asset. (5) Organists. (6) Gloss.
  - (7) Nailers. (8) Crystal. (14) Offenbach.
  - (15) Empty case. (16) Sad odes.
  - (17) Unicorn. (19) Aneroid. (20) Endless.
  - (22) Llama. (23) Scapa.

## Crossword Answers



## Chanctonbury Ring

There was a sense of welcome relief as we arrived for the August 2000 meeting of the Chanctonbury Ring group. Clearly it was going to be easier this time, to satisfy the theme for the day. 'All things Geographical' required no stretching of the imagination to fill the time available to us.

The general idea was to go on a journey around the world but we must admit it took us a little while to get started. First, we had to consider the thoughts of those left behind with 'Where is my boy tonight', 'Alice where art thou' and 'The Singing Girl' from *The Runaway Girl!* Then we were off. As luck would have it, we didn't have to plan the journey to use our air miles with the greatest efficiency. This was just as well because there were times when our compass must have been subjected to extremes of external magnetic forces and there were occasions when we seemed to get stuck in the same place for longer than first intended. Anyway, be it north, south, east or west, we

managed to cover the globe with no fewer than thirty-four tunes related to various countries, towns or rivers, leading to 'Walking my baby back Home' played on the Steck Duo-Art player piano. There was trauma on the way, represented by 'You left me alone in the sea of love', a warning that 'Mad Dogs and Englishmen go out in the Mid-day Sun' and a reassurance in the form of guidance from our tour operator with 'Follow the Man from Cooks'. The journey culminated with that age-old favourite 'Home Sweet Home'. I am sure we could have gone around the world for a second time, without visiting the same tunes again. However, we had now run out of time and money, despite having taken on the role of 'The Man who Broke the Bank at Monte Carlo' quite early in our trip!

Exhausted by our travels, it was nice to enjoy other contributions to the day. Peter Carr played his late 1880's 12 air lever wind box which needs research into an unrecognised maker's stamp. Brian Chapman showed a new Gasthoff dancing doll

organette case which he had constructed to house a previously orphaned Amorette mechanism. Royal Winton and Crown Devon jugs were demonstrated by Alan Clark and Paul Baker gave us a mind blowing performance on a Rollmonica. (We thought we might have to call for an ambulance towards the end of that bit!)

Members might like to give some thought as to the reason most of our geographical tunes were in the form of 15 ½ inch discs, shared between the Polyphon and the Regina. Is it that these sorts of songs were prolific at the same time as discs were in mass production, is it that the disc allowed a greater repertoire for original box owners, or is it something more obscure? Whatever the reason, our cylinder boxes were not able to contribute a great deal to the theme.

The next meeting is planned for 28th January 2001, when Sullivan (with Gilbert), Sidney Jones and Ketelby will provide our music. Contact Ted Brown for details on 01403 823533. ■

## President's Message

**I noticed in the American MBSI Bulletin that Coulson Conn (the American President) was giving a mention to the "British local circles" of Musical Box Society members who meet just to enjoy musical boxes and get to know each other informally.**

Although our biggest group, the Chanctonbury Ring, started by the late John Mansfield 18 years ago, has about 35 regular members, size does not matter. These informal get-togethers give members a chance to hear mechanical music and discuss repair techniques, tunes and, importantly, the variety of sound from all types of mechanical music. Along with the Summer and Christmas Open Days, I think the enjoyment shared

brings more members to our Regional meetings. It is a certain fact that it strengthens our Society by bringing amateur and professional together in a relaxed atmosphere. Our Society is its membership, and any way of getting members together and keeping them together must increase our membership.

If any of you want to have a little meeting of like minds in your area, put a letter in the Correspondence column of the journal, asking members to contact you and give a phone number or e-mail address. Alternatively, you could send some stamped addressed envelopes to the Subscriptions Secretary, containing invitations, and he will address and forward them to members within travelling distance in your area.

We plan to print a basic Directory of Members that will give just name, membership number, county or state and country, to give members an idea of where their fellow members are. At this stage we will not be giving other details until we see your personal wishes laid out on the back of the current Subscription Form in this journal. Also enclosed is the latest update of the Constitution and a registration form for the Spring Meeting that is to be held in Guildford, Surrey, in April.

As an aside, if any member wishes to appear on *Collectors Lot*, a Channel 4 Television production, contact me and I will give you the necessary details. They have re-formatted the programme and want to see Mechanical Music.

I wish you all a sincerely Happy Christmas and New Year. ■ **Ted Brown**

## Sussex Open Day

There were three new faces amongst the 37 visitors to the July 2000 open day in West Sussex. All those present were happily subjected to Anthony Bullied, in 'Galluping' mode, as he conducted a market research exercise to determine opinions about an 1896 Ami Rivenc Mandoline Tenor box, serial number 36797. There were differing comments about the musical arrangements themselves, the degree of musical decoration and the mandolin effect. This just goes to show we are all individuals, with our own likes and dislikes, and it gives comfort to realise, no-matter what a mechanical music device is, it will find a happy new owner and someone to love it, whenever it appears for re-sale.

Ted Brown took us on a trip around his collection spanning 250 years of mechanical music. We were fortunate to hear some of the less frequently played instruments and to enjoy his recollections of many early acquisitions, proving there is always a story behind the items we collect. Sometimes sad, sometimes funny and sometimes verging on the unbelievable - but always worth hearing. A small chamber barrel organ of about 1750 was the earliest dated item to be demonstrated. Although this was purchased several years ago, it had required a lot of time and effort to bring it back to playing order, especially as the barrel had become very eccentric with the passage of time.

Our lunch-break, held out of doors in glorious weather, benefited from accompaniment by organs kindly brought along by visitors. There was a 14 note McCarthy, a 20 note Hofbauer, a 22 note Van Duren flute clock organ, a 31 note Raffin and a 34 note Chiappa Trumpet organ - enough to make the birds of the Sussex countryside realise they had real competition for the day!

Following lunch we split into two groups, taking it in turns to enjoy Kevin McElhone's presentation of seven examples of pressure and vacuum operated cob roller organs and Ted Brown's demonstration of the many sizes of disc musical boxes. ■

## 4th Festival Internazionale dell'Antico Organetto, 9-10 September

At the invitation of Associazione Italiana Musica Meccanica (AMMI), six of us from MBSGB participated in this Festival.

Members who were on the Italian tour three years ago will remember Longiano for its charming town square and ancient buildings set in the beautiful Romagne region of Italy. This was the setting for the Festival.

John and Joyce Turner, Maurice and Wendy Adams and Doris and myself made up the British party, with other players coming from Belgium, Holland, France, Germany and even one from Slovenia.

Although Longiano is rather remote - certainly in terms of public transport - the two day event attracted nearly 15,000 visitors. The weather was exceptionally hot and we Brits were glad to seek the shade provided by the gardens on one side of the square. In all, more than 40 instruments were playing, including two street pianos and an organ generously provided for us by Franco Severi, our host.

Our thanks go to Franco and Silvia Severi and all members of AMMI for the warmth of their welcome and their generosity. ■

Alan Pratt



A special thanks to our Italian hosts - Franco and Silvia Severi.



The British Contingent.

## From the Archivist

I would like to mention how useful old auction catalogues can be for research purposes this time. The obvious comment about price trends is quite useful, but you must bear in mind that there are no accurate condition reports for auctions. Serial numbers of Cylinder and Disc Musical Boxes and some organettes can be useful in determining when production changes took place. The photographs are often useful to help identify rare and previously unknown instruments which still turn up each year and are often used, with permission, by members writing text books which will be covered next time.

I have a database with all of Christie's prices for mechanical music sales for the last 30 years on it (NOT including musical boxes so far, just organettes, Orchestrelles and Barrel instruments). This is very useful to help tell how rare an item is and also how many years you might have to wait to find another example for sale.

I am really short of Sotheby's since 1997 as we do not receive these into the archives as we do with Christie's

Please can you send me any details to help fill in the gaps for:-

Ariston	16,19,24,36 note card discs
Amorette	16,19,24,36 note metal discs
Helikon	16 note card discs
	(I need to buy some of these if possible)
Mezon/Iris	24 note metal disc
Diana	14 note
Lucia	12 note
Intona, Ariosa, Phoenix	16,18,24,37 note metal doughnut rings
In fact ANY organette discs / rolls	

and Phillips. If you have any auction catalogues from one-off sales, from Inauen and other European auction houses I would be particularly pleased to hear from you at any future meeting.

I continue to try to catalog the numbers, titles and composers (where given) of the following types of music and would like to put in my 'annual appeal for help'. I am also working on the following rolls:-

*Pianostyle 88 note*

*Aeolian 46 note Organ - 1,500 on list out of 3,000 + issued*

*Schiedmayer Scheola Organ*

*Wilcox & White 58 note organ/pushup*

Musical Box Discs - ALL types & sizes, particularly Polyphon & Regina which do not appear in the listings in the 'Disc Musical Box Handbook' by Graham Webb.

I have from 20 to nearly 4,000 titles on the various different lists.

### How to save time!

If you don't have time to list all of your discs, just send me a list of the number on each roll or disc. I will then check the computer files and let you know which numbers I need the titles and composers for, so you only need full details of those I don't already have.

Any help would be appreciated. If you have any unidentified music please ask, I may be able to help.

Already completed and available as booklets:-

*Aeolian 58, 116, 176 note organ rolls*

*Artona 88 note piano rolls*

*Gem 20 & 32 note roller organs*

Kevin McElhone

## Projects & Wants

### Cob discovery

Thanks to Richard Dutton, again, for finding more Gem Roller organ cob titles:-

568 Caracolillo (Spanish)

1231 My Own Iowa

1260 Emaline

1274 Mississippi Cradle

This is very significant, as 568 is from the missing 'run' of numbers 568-575 which it had been thought may never have been issued. The tunes prior to 568 are Spanish, so perhaps some of the other missing numbers are also Spanish.

There is a gap in the numbers also from 760 to 1000 with one exception, a cob with a particularly legible label "No.76x Brighten the Corner Where You Are" has been found. The only other missing number in the middle of the sequence is now 1262, and the highest found so far is 1297.

Who is going to find that last few numbers? Can you help? ■

Kevin McElhone

## OBITUARY

### Phyllis Van Marter

It is with great regret we have to report the recent death of Phyllis Van Marter. Phyllis, who was one of our American members, joined our Society some years ago and straight away became an active member by contributing articles to the magazine and answering queries in the letters column. She had a special liking for small musical movements and was quite an authority on them. Unknown to many, she did a great deal of work behind the scenes for the Register. She also conducted research on composers and tunes.

About two years ago Phyllis became seriously ill. Helped by her strong Christian faith, she bore her illness with great fortitude right up to the very end. She will be sorely missed.

She is survived by her husband, her children and grandchildren to whom the Society send their most sincere condolences. ■

## It's Easy!

Our thanks to Shirley Goddard for a little gem culled from the columns of **Evergreen magazine**. The item was originally in a publication called "Original English" containing essays by schoolchildren. This one is entitled "Music".

"There is many instrerments what you play: the banjo, the kornit, the pianer, the street orgin, and others. The pianer is the hardest to learn, and the street orgin is the easyest.

To play the street orgin, you've only got to turn the handle, and a tune comes out. When you want to play another tune, you just shift a bit of tin at the side of the handle, that's all. But you can't play as many tunes as you like, only about six. That's why the orgin man has to keep moving on, or else people would get sick of him.

My brother is saving up all he can to buy a harmonium, and he says he means to have one by next Christmas. What a nice house ours will be when we have a harmonium under the parler clock." ■

# Tuning, Pitch & Temperament

Part 2 - by John Harrold

## Tuning

One item that is essential is a frequency meter or sound generator. If like most people you use an electronic tuning meter, consider the following: Most meters are A=440Hz @ 20°C + 1-5 Hz steps. Suppose that you discover the fundamental note is A=430Hz you would then have to use the 440Hz scale and tune 40 cents flat. Most meters are centre-zero and only accurate to 20 cents each side of zero. As a minimum you really need a centre zero meter at 440Hz and 1-5 Hz shift both up and down, i.e. 435-445Hz. Then you can measure any frequency.

Digital meters are not much use, especially for trying to discover the fundamental note. Ideally, it would be nice to have a multi-frequency meter, with a centre-zero scale, that ranges from A=390 to A=470, plus added tone generator, but they are expensive, and as I have already mentioned, not essential.

If you want to tune early pianos, organs etc. a multi-temperament range or a self-inputted range is ideal.

Try to choose a reed, pipe, set of strings or section of comb that appears to be the least altered and see if they are near or at the fundamental, i.e. as previously seen, they sing out sweetly and are fairly strong. If the instrument hasn't been drastically altered, you may be lucky, and find this to be the case. Note the frequency and see if you can tune the rest of the instrument without drastic alterations. Ideally you should pick a frequency that is fundamental and least alters what you already have; this can be the most time consuming, but is well worth it; it makes all subsequent tuning that much easier.

If the instrument has been totally butchered (as is so often the case) the discovery of the fundamental is bound to be somewhat arbitrary, but satisfactory solutions can be found in most cases. You may find it helpful to set out the notes of the scale that you know in pencil, leaving blanks for unknown ones. This will help you pick up the missing ones later on when you look at the chords that the machine plays.

starting note 1 as C<sup>3</sup> and so on. This produces a scale with more naturals and less sharps. With a multi-frequency meter you do not have to do this if you don't want to. Anyway, in this case all the notes are close enough to be able to determine what they are. Setting the scale out in order, in pencil, allows you to re-arrange a scrambled scale and to identify rogue notes, especially if you

Here is a real example:

The Gem Roller that I bought which sounded awful.  
20 notes. Pitch 452Hz. Actual readings taken from meter.

Key	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Note	A <sup>#2</sup>	D <sup>#3</sup>	F <sup>3</sup>	G <sup>3</sup>	G <sup>#3</sup>	A <sup>3</sup>	A <sup>#3</sup>	C <sup>4</sup>	D <sup>4</sup>	D <sup>#4</sup>
Amount out	P	20 <sup>s</sup>	35 <sup>F</sup>	10 <sup>F</sup>	25 <sup>S</sup>	17 <sup>F</sup>	23 <sup>S</sup>	P	9 <sup>F</sup>	20 <sup>S</sup>

Key	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20
Note	E <sup>4</sup>	F <sup>4</sup>	G <sup>4</sup>	G <sup>#4</sup>	A <sup>4</sup>	A <sup>#4</sup>	C <sup>5</sup>	D <sup>5</sup>	D <sup>#5</sup>	F <sup>5</sup>
Amount out	10 <sup>F</sup>	P	P	40 <sup>F</sup>	25 <sup>S</sup>	P	45 <sup>S</sup>	20 <sup>F</sup>	15 <sup>S</sup>	P

P = At Pitch S = Cents Sharp F = Cents Flat

Fig. 1. (a)

{ (1 A <sup>#2</sup>	{ (4 G <sup>3</sup>	{ (5 G <sup>#3</sup>	{ (3 F <sup>3</sup>
(7 A <sup>#3</sup>	(13 G <sup>4</sup>	(8 C <sup>4</sup>	(12 F <sup>4</sup>
(11 E <sup>4</sup>	(12 F <sup>4</sup>	(17 C <sup>5</sup>	(19 D <sup>#5</sup>

Fig. 1. (b)

As you can see, six notes were in pitch at A=452. By the time I had removed solder, glue and paint from the other reeds another eight were close to A=452. The rest (the ones that had been filed) were flat. It was fairly straightforward to tune the rest of the reeds once the above had been done.

Today we would not normally notate a modern scale as above but transpose it up a minor third,

rotate the music slowly or move the book, disc, pin barrel a bit at a time and note the chords. Most mistakes will become glaringly obvious. Sample of chords from Gem Roller.

Note:- Chords and notes that are too far apart (octave-wise) will not help, as they may not inter-act with each other. This system is particularly useful for pianos and organs etc that have no scale markings. I recently

...the discovery  
of the  
fundamental  
is bound to  
be somewhat  
arbitrary...



used it for a 44 key organ that had two scales marked on it, both wrong, and with 16 pipes tuned to the wrong notes, three totally incorrect pipes and two transposed pipes.

Once you have the notes in tune there is still much to be done. First, you will need to sound all similar octave notes, i.e. on the Gem example 3, 12, 20 all Fs. See if they sound harmoniously together, they probably won't, try tuning the two that sound nearest to each other together, then tune the third one to them. This may upset the notes with the rest of the scale, in which case you will have to start again and tune the pipes the other way round. Once you have got these three to sound harmoniously together, play them together with note 19 D<sup>#5</sup>, and see if it sounds musical. If it does all well and good, you can then tune the other two D<sup>#s</sup> nos 10 and 2 to sound harmoniously with 19. If it doesn't you will have to experiment by doing it in another order, re-arranging the ones that you use first, or picking on other notes to try to get it all to sound OK.

Note that two of the notes 3 and 12 were part of a chord that you noted earlier. You will have to sound all the previously noted chords together to see if they are pleasant and also all the octave notes, i.e. all the Cs, Ds, Es etc. All very easy to say but it can be tedious to get the whole scale to sound good, but well worth the effort.

Skilled tuners will check one note with a meter or tuning fork, usually middle C or A, and use a metronome to count the difference beats between the major and minor chords, but this is outside the scope of this article.

One way of getting pianos to sound harmonious is as follows:- To tune a note, say C<sup>1</sup>, depress it slowly and hold without striking the string, now depress and hold down note C. If the tuning is close the strings of C<sup>1</sup> will also vibrate. This is because you have caused the C<sup>1</sup> string to vibrate in

sympathy with the second harmonic of C. It takes some experience to hear the 2nd harmonic, but with experience you can tune the whole keyboard by this method by moving up an octave on the keyboard an octave at a time. The result is a really smooth and harmonious sound. If it is a multi-stringed instrument wedge all but one string, tune that one, then tune the others to it - not to the meter or fork. Why am I labouring these points? Just to demonstrate that tuning an instrument by meter, to mathematical perfection, is only the first step in making an instrument sound really musical. It is far more important to get octave notes to sound sweetly together and to get all the chords to sound pleasant. Tuning an octave note to be in sympathy with the second harmonic of its fundamental gives a harmonious, or sweet, sounding octave, which may actually have a frequency ratio slightly at variance to 2. This is why 'ear' tuning is always superior to 'meter' tuning. In an organ with several ranks, getting them all to sound similar notes and chords in different ranks is even more important. It takes time to note all the chords played, note them down and then play them together. To list all the ones on a 40 key street organ would easily fill this page!

Two more considerations in tuning:

### 1. Celeste (or Beating)

It is common practice to tune strings or pipes so that they 'beat', i.e. one string or pipe is at, say, 440Hz and a similar or adjacent pipe or string is tuned to, say, 443-445Hz or 435-437Hz. When they are played together a beating effect is obtained which may need adjusting to get the most pleasant effect. This is one way of increasing the harmonic 'colour'. The beat frequency is equal to the difference of the two frequencies.

Be careful - you can introduce harshness where there are already rich harmonics and partials. For instance, take a string tuned to 440Hz, play it together with one

tuned to 445Hz, the beat is 5Hz, usually OK. But, say the 7th harmonic is particularly strong  $440 \times 7 = 3080\text{Hz}$   $445 \times 7 = 3115\text{Hz}$ .

The 7th harmonic beating is too far apart to 'beat', but it may sound rough or harsh. Used with care it can be effective, and is a way of brightening up a dull instrument. It is often used on street barrel pianos where the strings are in pairs or triples.

The celeste effect is most commonly used in the Bourdon Celeste register in the Dutch Street Organ. Here, the bourdon pipe is stopped and of wide scale, giving a minimum of high harmonics and partials. The beating effect is therefore very effective.

Something I have noticed, some reeds don't take kindly to celeste tuning. The Aeolian Company tuned all reeds to pitch. If they thought it wise, I can only agree with them. Tuning above a note is usually known as sharp 'celeste', below it flat 'celeste'. You may find celeste tuning of reeds on the upper register of barrel reed organs or on double reed organs.

### 2. Stretching

This is also used to brighten or enhance an instrument and can be found on pianos, organs, musical boxes etc. This is a system whereby the notes in the lower octaves are flattened from the basic pitch of the instrument. Similarly, the upper octaves are raised. Surprisingly this does not lead to a feeling of being out of tune, as pitch discrimination in the human ear is acute only at mid range audibility, much less so at lower frequencies, and less so at high ones. This may not be true for animals and could be one reason for adverse reactions to some instruments. Nevertheless, to 'stretch' a scale is largely a matter of experiment. Set out below are three that you can try.

Experienced tuners and musicians will no doubt realise that this article is quite basic, but I have heard so many indifferently tuned instruments that I feel we need to pay as much

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*This is why 'ear' tuning is always superior to 'meter' tuning.*

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attention to tuning as to the restoration of the rest of the instrument. I would be delighted to have comments, positive criticisms, additions or even a tuning forum, to enable our knowledge to be enhanced, so that good quality tuning is regarded as the norm in all restorations.

If we can move forward significantly, it can only enhance mechanical music in the eyes and ears of the general public. After all, the most popular bands and orchestras (excluding most modern pop music) make their reputations on the way they sound, not the way they look.

You have only to see the public's reaction to a poorly tuned fairground organ to know what I mean. After all, only 50% of the public are indifferent to poor tuning (national statistic). It is even more apparent if the organ is

tuned unequally, as I mentioned earlier. It is essential that music arrangers are aware of this situation if they are arranging new books or rolls; otherwise they may use unsuitable keys, with poor results.

Finally, if the instrument you are tuning is to be used or played on its own, it only needs to be in tune with itself, nothing else. No one will know what pitch it is playing at, and few will know if it is tuned equal or unequal - the end result is all that matters! ■

© John Harrold

#### Editors note:

What do members think of John's idea for a Tuning Forum? Let's have your views.

#### Footnote:

Members wishing to know more on this subject may find it interesting to refer to:-

1. 'The Art of Organ Building' by George Ashdown Audsley, Vol. II Chapter XL. Originally published in 1905 this has been reprinted by Dover Publications in USA (ISBN 0-486-21315-3).
2. 'The Oxford Companion to Music' by Percy Scholes, published by Oxford University Press.
3. Tuning and Temperament by J. M. Barbour, Re-print Da Capo 1972
4. Interpretation of Early Music by R. Donnington, Faber 1974
5. Intervals, Scales and Temperaments, by L. S. Lloyd, Macdonald and James 1963
6. A Guide to Tuning Musical Instruments by J. Meffen, David and Charles 1982

...only 50% of the public are indifferent to poor tuning...

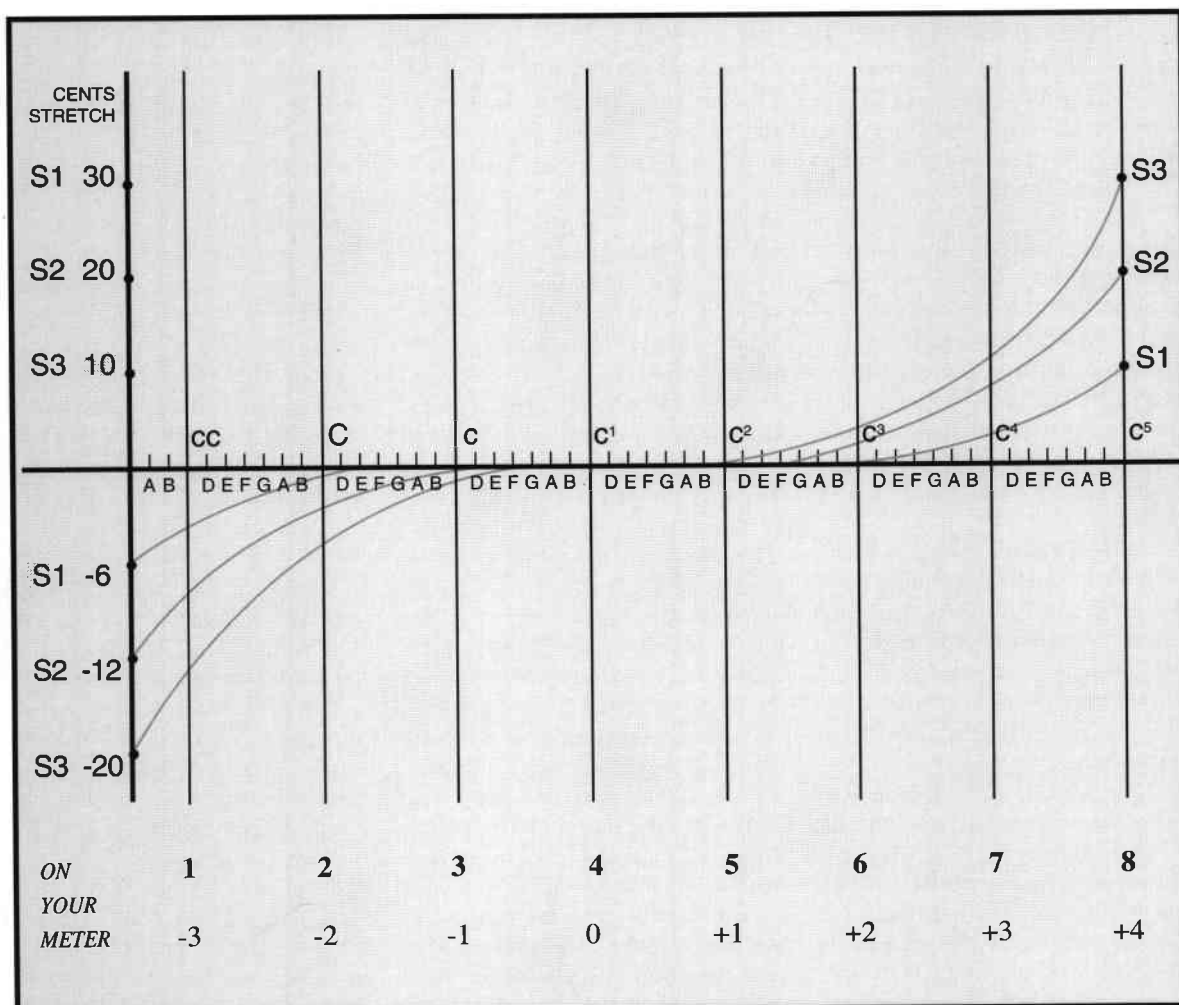


Fig. 2

## Tuning, Pitch and Temperament - A member writes...

### Re: the above article in 'The Music Box'

I read John Harrold's article on the above with great interest and would like to thank him for such an excellent dissertation on the subject. I came upon the problem of Equal Temperament versus Mean Tone tuning when working on a chamber barrel organ some years ago. Pitching the pipes at somewhere (anywhere...) near modern pitch of A=440 Hz revealed that some pipes were simply not long enough and others had their stoppers an abnormally long way down the pipe. The resulting 'tunes' just sounded wrong and rather disappointing! Reading up a bit on the subject of tuning, I found the attached table in 'Piano Tuning and Allied Arts' by William Braid White (5th Ed: Tuners' Supply Company, Boston, Mass, USA 1946 but originally published in 1917) together with a fairly detailed analysis of the subject. White says: '...it can be shown that 27 separate tones would be called for in each octave if even tolerable consonances are to be had in chords built out of tonalities remote from the starting point of the tuning. With the ordinary keyboard one can play tolerably in the six major and three minor tonalities nearest to the starting point, in this case C40.' (White numbers each note from the lowest bass string of a piano, A1, to the highest, C<sup>88</sup>) 'Chords or intervals called for outside these limits are intolerably too narrow or too wide. In order to make this clear, the following table shows the Mean Tone Temperament in comparison with the Equal Temperament, in Cents and in actual frequencies, using the keyboard of today with its seven white and five black keys within each octave.' The frequencies shown assume the 'standard' pitch of A=440 Hz.

For want of any information on the original pitch of the barrel organ, I set the pitch to A=440 initially. This proved to be too high, and by experiment I set the pitch to 437.46 Hz (i.e. 10 cents flat of standard pitch), and found one could tune the middle A pipe quite comfortably. As it happens, this makes C equal to Standard Pitch and turned out to be very useful, as one could simply take Standard Pitch on the tuning meter and tune sharp or flat by the number of cents shown in the table without further interpolation. Tuning in this way produced a delightful result with all tuning stoppers in sensible places, apparently more or less where they started in the mid-nineteenth century.

There is one point that I don't understand in John's article: in Fig 1 he shows a scale in C with treble clef, and underneath states 'Thus, 1 octave = 1200 cents = 300 Hz. i.e. 4 cents = 1Hz.' Surely for one octave to be equal to 300 Hz (I assume he means the difference between Middle 'C' and the octave above it = 300Hz) then, as the high 'C' is double the frequency of the low 'C' (i.e. an octave above it), the low 'C' must be pitched at 300 Hz. The high 'C' is then 600 Hz and the statement only works at this particular pitch. This would be a very odd pitch, as if A=440 Hz, Middle C would be 261.62 Hz. Obviously I am missing something here...

I look forward to Part 2 of this series!

David Evans

Name in E-T	Frequency in E-T	Cents from C	Frequency in M-T	Cents from C	M-T- E-T in Cents
C <sub>26</sub>	130.81	0	130.81	0	0
C#—D <sub>b26</sub>	138.59	100	136.68	76	-24
D <sub>26</sub>	146.83	200	146.24	193	-7
D#—E <sub>b26</sub>	155.56	300	156.46	310	+10
E <sub>26</sub>	164.81	400	163.49	386	-14
F <sub>26</sub>	174.61	500	174.92	503	+3
F#—G <sub>b26</sub>	184.89	600	182.76	579	-21
G <sub>26</sub>	195.99	700	195.65	697	-3
G#—A <sub>b26</sub>	207.65	800	204.44	773	-27
A <sub>27</sub>	220.00	900	218.73	890	-10
A#—B <sub>b26</sub>	233.08	1000	234.02	1007	+7
B <sub>26</sub>	246.94	1100	244.53	1083	-17
C <sub>40</sub>	261.62	1200	261.62	1200	0

## Reply

I would like to thank David Evans for his kind comments. I am glad that he recognised his chamber organ was not tuned to equal temperament. There are one or two around tuned equally, and very disappointing.

As he pointed out, White showed that 27 separate tones need to be used to play music that is close to pure tuning. A number of people have constructed keyboards to play thus, known as "just intonation". Probably the best known were by R. M. M. Bosanquet and T. Perronet Thompson. These keyboards had a key for each readily discernible interval, roughly 22.6 cents apart. This produced 53 keys per octave! Other attempts have been made to produce split keys for the notes A#/Bb or C#/Db etc. In equal temperament known as enharmonics, in just intonation this is not the case. Just imagine the mental gymnastics to play a passage of music on your own, let alone an ensemble!

Turning to his question regarding figure 1, I deliberately chose a straightforward number to illustrate the scale for two reasons:- (1) to keep the maths as simple as possible; there is nothing like awkward numbers for deterring people from reading articles. (I agree that the 'C' in question would be slightly over one whole tone from 'A'=440).

John Harrold

# Chemin der Fer de Rigi

- Or The Mystery of a Manivelle by Paul Bellamy

**W**andering through the local antiques fair earlier this year I came across a small manivelle about 3 inches diameter. It was not very attractive at first sight. The black case was split in three places where it had originally been screwed to the cast zinc-type alloy base of the instrument. A piece of plywood, crudely cut, had been stuck to the base with Araldite. The top of the manivelle seemed to have the picture of a train but it was encrusted with a thick layer of grime and dirt such that little detail could be seen. Definitely an object to be passed by. But curiosity prevailed.

"Does it play?" I ask the vendor. "Don't know," he says.

"Can I try," says I. It was worth the try. A pretty little tune, and plenty of it, came tumbling out as the handle turned. At least it worked and looked like another candidate for the workshop.

"How much," I ask. Too much was the gist of the reply.

After much haggling and price reduction, it seemed worth the risk.

Using a washing cream concentrate used for the clothes washing machine, some cotton buds, a bowl of clean water and a hair dryer, the layers of dirt were rolled away. The hair dryer drove off moisture as cleaning progressed to ensure that the picture did not saturate or colours run. In fact there were no colours, the picture being a photograph entitled *Chemin der Fer de Rigi et le Pilate*. (Fig.1).

The great thing about belonging to an organisation like ours is that there is always

someone who knows someone who knows something that you don't know. I mentioned the photograph in passing during a conversation with editor Alan Pratt. "Why don't you have a word with Graham?" he said. Now, Graham Whitehead is a bit of a steam buff, lucky enough to have a steam train all of his own which transports visitors around the grounds of the Nickelodeon. Supplied with an enlarged photograph and a quick reference to his library of books, back came some information and an almost identical illustration. It was a short step to the Verkehrshaus der Schweiz, the Swiss Museum of Transport and Communication in Lucerne. They supplied the following details and picture.

The manivelle picture was clear enough to show two small figures on the engine and another standing precariously on the foot steps at the rear, or front as it turned out, of the train. Were these amongst the people we see in fig. 2?

The Rigi-Klun-Railway was built between 1869 and 1871 when it was opened on the 21st May. The base station shown in plate 2 is called Vitznau, a small village 435 meters above sea level. The top of Rigi-Klun Mountain is 1750 meters above sea level. Two photographic studios, one French and the other Swiss, were involved in taking the photographs for the World Fair in Vienna in 1873. These photos helped the railway to win a diploma.

It was the first steam

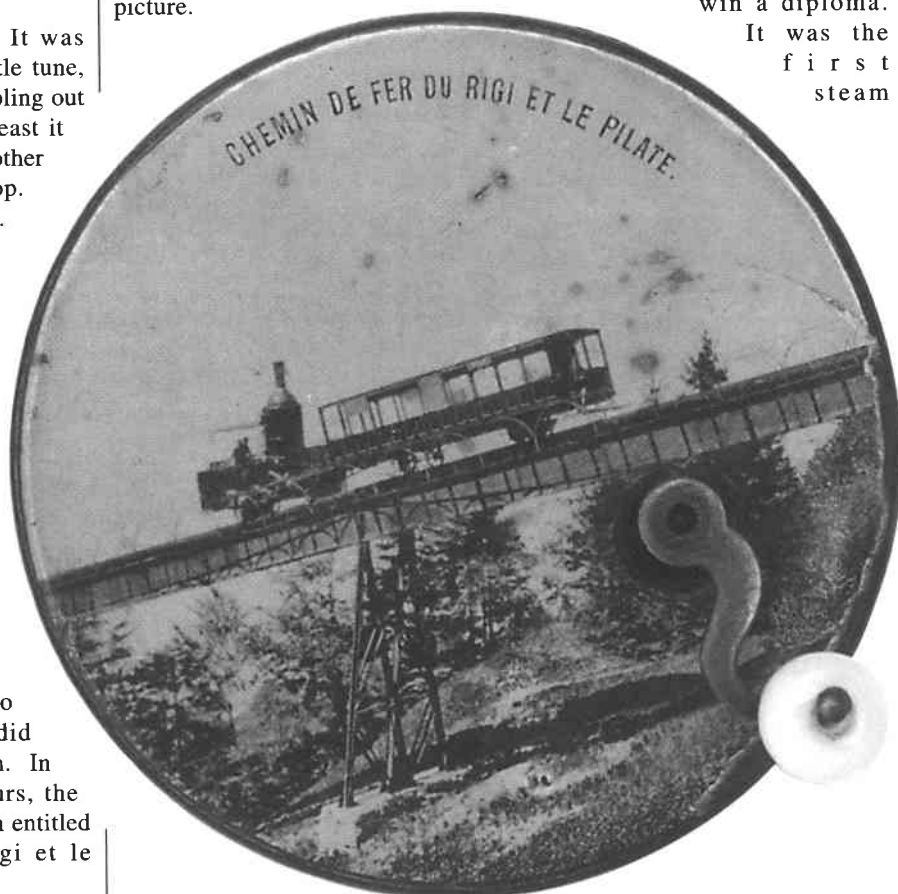


Fig. 1 The lid of the Manivelle showing a trestle bridge on the Rigi - Klun funicular. The loco boiler and trestle are vertical when viewing properly.

After much haggling and price reduction, it seemed worth the risk.



funicular of its type, the locomotive with its vertical boiler, pushing the single carriage up the track by rack and pinion. The locomotive was designed by Riggenbach, built in Switzerland and first commissioned in 1871. The boiler pressure was 10 atmospheres, with a speed of 3 miles per hour. The locomotive was 6.2 meters long. By 1914 it was obsolete and replaced with a more modern steam locomotive. In 1937 steam was replaced by electric traction. It seems that a similar funicular railway was built for Mount Pilatus, hence the two names on the manivelle. The manivelle was therefore probably as much a commercial souvenir as a child's toy.

The little manivelle therefore celebrated a significant event of the time. The repair was quite easy. The crude plywood base was rendered paper thin on the bench sander at which point it broke away from the case. The

case was a papier mache-type shell of very cheap construction but surprisingly strong, consisting of layers of thin card or paper impregnated and laquered. The shell, with its three splits needed reinforcing. A very thin piece of synthetic fibre black ribbon, bonded to the inside of the case with quickset Araldite produced an almost undetectable repair, thin enough to admit the movement. Before the adhesive set, a little was mixed with black powder paint and used to fill the damaged screw holes. The holes were then re-drilled and countersunk and the job completed with three small screws. A little cleaning, lubrication and replaced dampers completed the task.

On the remnant of the plywood base were the remains of the original label, face down in the Araldite used by the vandal who had attempted the original 'repair'. With nothing to lose, I

threw it into a bowl of warm water. Soon the wood curled away and, remarkably, the paper separated from the Araldite without loss of colour or further damage. In its damp state, it was re-bonded to a thin circular backing paper. I always save those plasticised backing papers used on self-adhesive sanding discs. Using a piece of this either side of the label, the label was then clamped between two pieces of plywood. When dry, the plasticised paper was peeled off and the old label and re-glued lacquered to protect it from further damage. As yet, the tune has not been identified. Was it written for the little railway or just a popular ditty of the day? So far we don't know. But of course, someone somewhere knows someone who does.

What wonderful little toys these manivelles are, still going strong some 125 years later. This one really is a 'transport of delight'. ■

*This one really is a 'transport of delight'.*

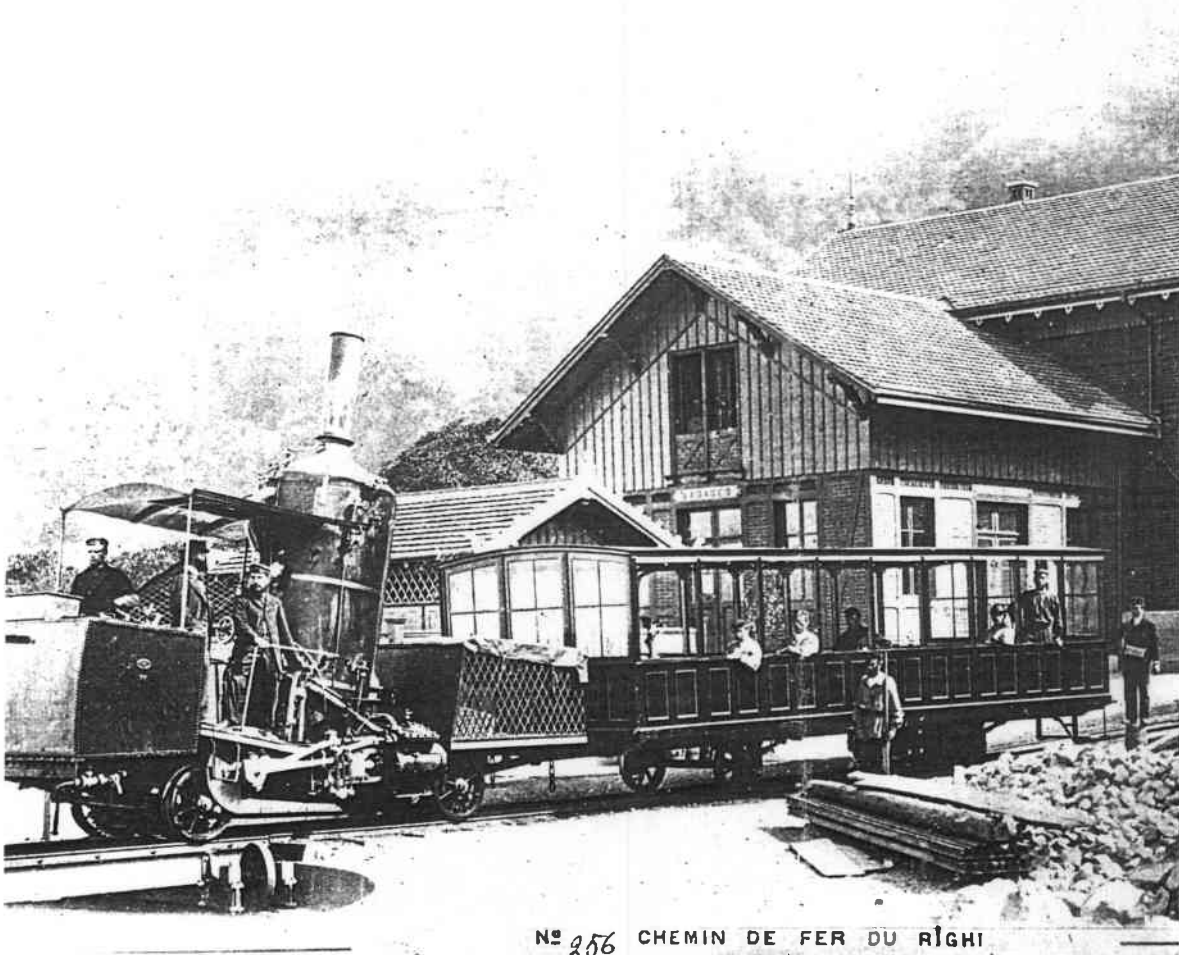


Fig. 2 The base station at Vitznam. The enclosure behind the boiler is for luggage, not coal.

# Mexon or Mezon?

- A newly discovered missing link by Kevin McElhone

**T**his previously unknown organette found its way into my hands recently having been bought by well-known dealer Brian Chesters who told me he had something a little different for me. He got it from another dealer in Belgium. No previous history is known.

It is quite exciting to find an instrument not mentioned in David Bowers Encyclopedia or any other magazines or literature in my own or the Archives possession even if there is a large tear in the feeders and therefore hardly any pressure!

This is a rather large instrument being 13ins high, 18½ins wide and 16½ins deep. The case has a few lines of shallow incising which may have been 'gold' originally to match the names transfer. There is also a star shape on each of the four turned corner legs. (See fig.1).

The only possible clue as to who made it is that the turned corner legs are exactly the same as on a 24 note Manopan organette as pictured in a book from a German museum. This may mean they were made by the



Fig. 2

same company or simply that the same wood turner made the corner legs. On the other hand, one could have copied a successful design from the other! It takes 60 turns of the long handle to play one disc, not 59 like on an Ariston.

At first, before I had seen it, I thought it might be a member of

the Ariston 'family' but the construction is totally different. The hold down bar above the keyframe is ornately cast and has nine teeth in it, that is 3 keys stick up between each 'tooth' on the hold down bar. On an Ariston there are usually two keys between each tooth and sometimes just one, but never three.

The most significant difference is that the top lid does not form an airtight seal as part of the main reservoir. The reservoir is in the centre bottom of the instrument, and there are four pressure feeders at the sides of the reservoir. The air is pushed through two holes about 1 inch diameter into the reed

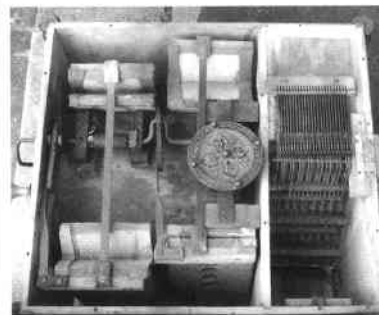


Fig. 3

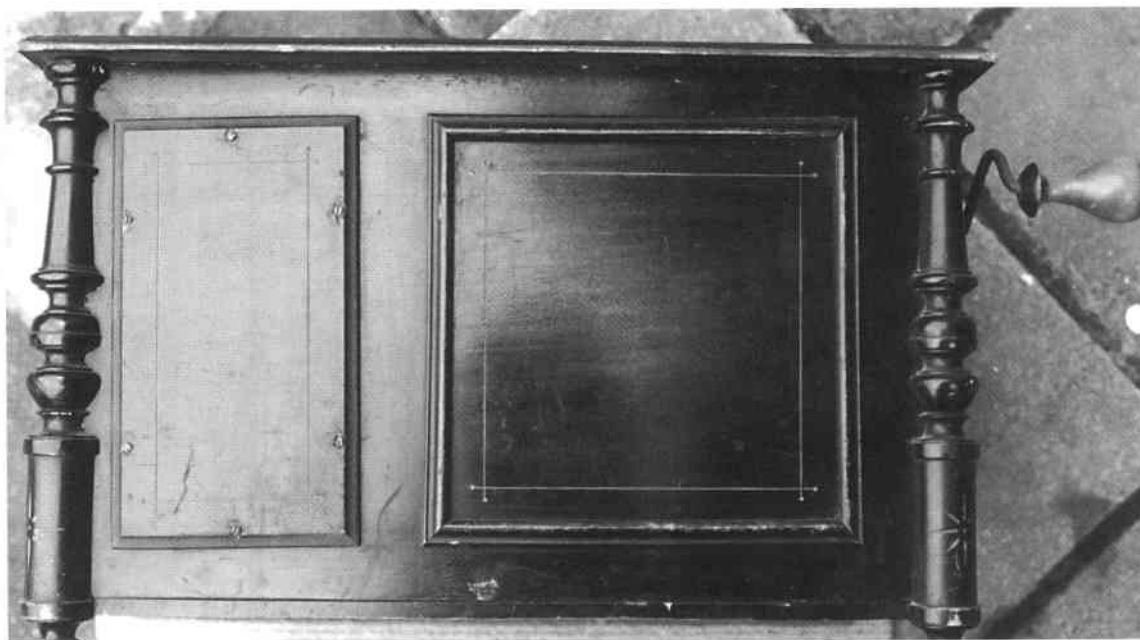


Fig. 1

chamber which contains 48 steel reeds which appear to be 24 notes tuned in Celeste.

There is a swell flap in the side of the instrument which is hinged at the bottom and is prevented from hitting the table top by a piece of pink ribbon. This might be a little like the Herophon or Manopan (neither of which I have in my collection for comparison). (See fig.2).

The central drive cog wheel is in brass and is of very thick and heavy construction. I can find no dates or names inside the instrument and the bottom boards have been renewed losing the serial number or date which may have been found there.

There is an enormous 'bedspring' underneath to give pressure to the reservoir in the way you would expect with a German made instrument.

There are only nine discs with the instrument, but it is interesting to note that six of them say 'Anfang' to denote the start, two say 'Commencement' and one says 'Beginning'. I think this shows that the instrument was made in Germany to be sold also in France and England.

The discs are 24 note and all are made of zinc. The diameter is 12 1/4" or about 323mm. There is one central locating hole and four drive holes which are further out from the centre of the disc than on an Ariston of 24 notes. The centre of the drive holes is 42mm from the centre of the disc. The outer track of music on the disc is much nearer the edge than on an Ariston, there being only about 2 1/2mm between the outside edge of the highest note hole and the edge of the disc. There is no decoration of any kind on these discs which are all considerably scored on the back by the pressure of the keys.

I would very much like to find out:-

- 1) *Who made this machine?*
- 2) *What is the tuning scale?*
- 3) *Can I get any more discs from anywhere for it?*

Any help would be appreciated.

## STOP PRESS

It has been noticed that this 'Mexon' looks exactly the same as the 'Iris' organette pictured on page 747 of Bowers. Also, the word may be 'Mezon' in fancy European script - see fig.1. Does anyone reading this have an Iris organette or spare discs

to fit one? I would like more discs to play when it is restored.

If you have any other unusual instruments, particularly anything not found in Q. David Bowers Encyclopedia of Mechanical Musical Instruments please contact the Archivist or write an article for us all to share your discovery. ■



Fig. 4

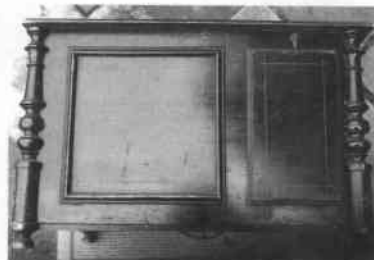


Fig. 5



Fig. 6



Fig. 7

## Mexon Tune List

3	Faust Walzer	Gounod	Anfang
244	Gasparone Mazurka	Millocker	"
2310	Tingelingeling Rheinlander		"
2341	Hulda Mazurka	Wolff	"
161	Rosina Walzer	Genee (unclear)	"
1550	Perlette Polka facile p.	Marin	Commencement
2436	Polka des English's n'.	Christine	Beginning
2430	Valse Bleu	Margis	Commencement
579	La Mascotte Polka	not given	Anfang
98	Colonia Rheinlander v.	Arndt	Anfang

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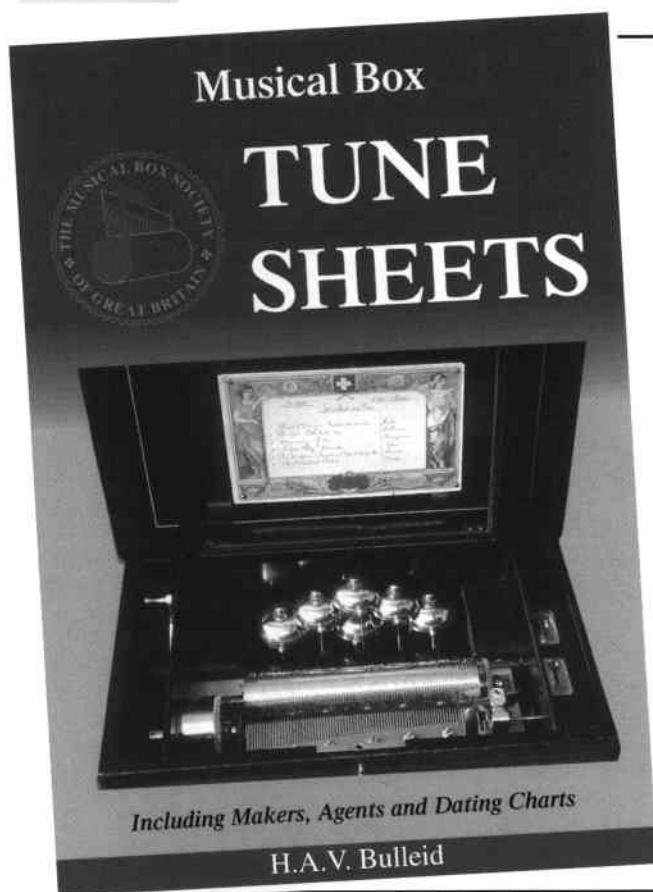
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# An Insoluble Problem

*Even the makers got it wrong sometimes!*

*by Keith Harding*

**W**e recently restored a six tune musical box by David Lecoultre of Geneva, serial number 10462, circa 1850. It had an original David Lecoultre tune card, and the characteristic square shoulders to the tips. David Lecoultre has been credited with being the first person to make cartel musical boxes with one-piece combs instead of grouped teeth, and his boxes are usually of good tone and high quality.

This particular box had been "got at" in the past, and among other things we found that the legs on the bed plate were of uneven length. In its dirty state we did notice that a few pins appeared to be missing from the cylinder, but we played the programme right through and none of the tunes sounded thin enough to make a repin seem essential. However, at a later stage in the restoration we found that in fact there were no pins at all on tune number six, and the tune had been deleted by an alteration to the tune change cam which was not at first apparent. The step for tune number six, the last tune, had been filed right down so that instead of playing tune number six (Stretta from Lucretia Borgia by Donizetti) it repeated tune number four, (Di Picator Ignobile from the same opera). Had the tunes been more familiar to us, or if the same tune had been repeated twice in succession, as usually happens when a repairer has

deleted a badly damaged tune, we might have noticed it sooner.

On closer examination, it appeared to our surprise that tune number six had never actually been pinned by the original makers, although it had in fact been marked out. The reason for this was that it was marked out too close to tune number one, and, had it been pinned, the pins on both tunes would have interfered with each other due to the tunes overlapping.

In the course of marking out the tunes by hand, at a rate of about fifteen hundred pins per tune, the original pinner would have started with tune number one, and progressed along the cylinder pinning the tunes in order until he reached tune number six. You will, I am sure, be able to understand that even the tiniest deviation in the setting of only a few thousandths of an inch along the cylinder would have been cumulative, so that the last tune would have been out by a factor of six. This would have caused it to overlap tune number one.

This was evidently a known problem, as is shown by a feature found on musical movements made by L'Epée. Most makers punched registration dots along the cylinder in the horizontal gap between the tunes in line with the pins on tune one. These were for aligning the tips of the teeth correctly with the tunes on the cylinder, and also, no doubt, the

pinning jigs. The firm of L'Epée were unique in that they put their registration marks in between the radial lines showing that they started marking out the cylinder on one of the middle tunes. The result of that was that any cumulative error would be halved, and it would be less likely that the first and last tunes would be accidentally marked out too close together, as indeed happened in the case of this musical box.

The cylinder maker would have had two options when he found out his mistake. Either he could scrap the cylinder, throwing away probably a week's wages, or he could do what he in fact did. He made a tune change cam in which the steps also reflected the error in tune spacing, with the exception of the last step, which he made much deeper so as to repeat tune number four.

It is by no means uncommon for us to find original maker's mistakes on musical boxes, often of quite a serious nature, although it is the first time in forty years that we have found this particular one. In every case it has been apparent that the makers got away with their mistakes, and that subsequent owners have not noticed the fault in their musical box, just as we did not at first notice this one. In many cases we have been able to put right the makers mistakes, but this was an original maker's fault which we believe could not, and should not, be corrected. ■

*This particular box had been "got at" in the past...*



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# Wood Gearwheels

*A new approach to their manufacture*

*by David J Davies*

**I** was faced with problems when asked to make a perfect match for a gear wheel for a street organ. The gear wheel was driven by a metal worm drive that had mangled and worn the wood gearwheel over many years, although still playable a replacement was necessary. The wood gear had 64 teeth and was just under 6" in diameter and 2.25" thick in total with the teeth portion at 1.8".

Examination showed that it was constructed out of a slice of log with log centre being the gear centre. An extract from an article showed to me by the owner of the organ merely stated that they were made up from a beech or ash log.

My first problem was the obvious one of how they had managed to mature a slice of log without the inevitable multi radial splitting. I have a large wood burning stove and annual deliveries of hard wood logs and have never found a large diameter log that has been without several radial splits on full air dried maturity. At the back of my mind was a solution that had worked some 20 years ago, when after reading an article about the use of Poly Ethylene Glycol 1000, I had successfully matured a load of thinly sliced oyster inlays without one split. Also I had read of the use of P.E.G. by wood turners who turned green wood slightly oversize, matured it, then finished to size. Thereby saving time and money. P.E.G. in a water solution will displace the natural moisture from freshly cut wood by the process of osmosis where it will set and stabilise the wood. The time taken depends on the strength of the solution, temperature, thickness and type of wood. Tables for time taken were rough and ready and were aimed at the wood turner with thin walled bowls and therefore rapid maturing.

I bought a perfect log of fresh cut beech from the Goodwood Estate forestry department, five foot long, straight, 8" diameter and with perfectly circular grain. Although there were ash logs available I was a little suspicious of the fibrous nature of the wood to cope with forces to be exerted at the tips of the teeth. I used my chain saw to cut it into slices about 3" thick and then chose the ten best slices. First I did an initial thicknessing in the prepared jig (fig.1) to give them perfectly smooth and parallel sides. This jig had a bed of pins snapped off to about 1/8" to hold the slice in position in the box.

The first side was cut by the router bit to a smooth finish. On turning over, the bit of the router was lowered to smooth the second side and finish the slice about a 1/4" oversize. The speed and size of bit can exert enormous torque so feed rate needs to be slow to prevent the slice being lifted off its base. The pins will sink into the end grain very easily and hold well for a lateral force only. You could jam it with wood offcuts for more safety.

I reduced the diameter to just oversize on the band saw and dropped the slices into two plastic buckets of P. E. G. solution.

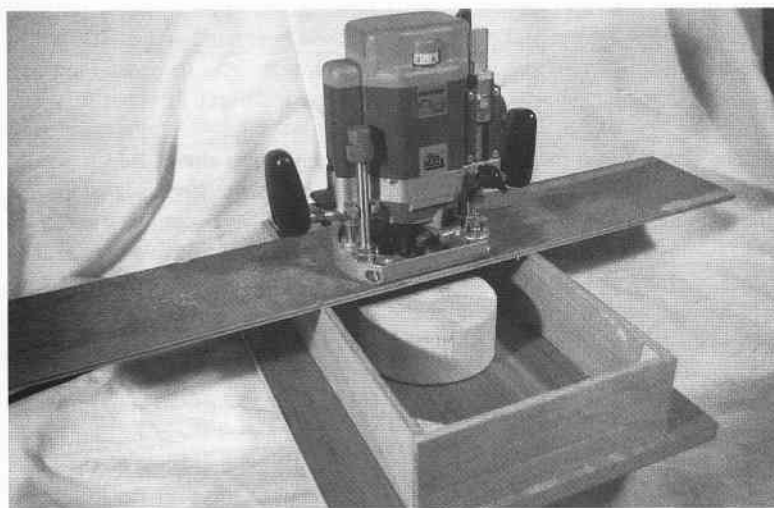


Fig. 1

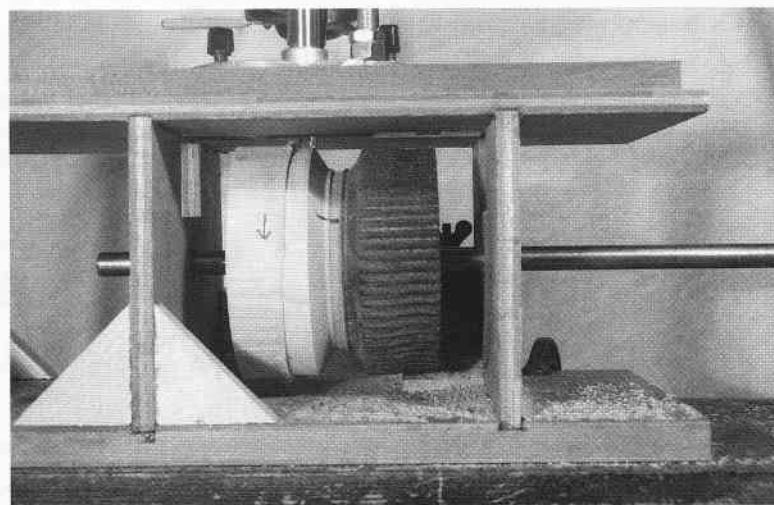


Fig. 2

My problem now was one of time in the solution, circumstances dictated that I was unable to keep the solution at other than outdoor temperature and it was not summer any more.

I thought that due to the thickness of the slices I would pull out the first one at 40 days and the last at 80 days and would mark and monitor the results. The solution tables are for 50% and 30% strength, but to cover all my slices properly with the P.E.G. I had bought I had a solution at about 40%. I had 2 slices that showed slight cracks after drying and finishing. The lessons learned were straightforward, 40 days is a good time if the solution is at 50%, temperature is summer or indoors and the solution is stirred everyday. Drying of the slices should be in a ventilated, normal room temperature setting and out of sunlight. Final thicknessing of the slices when the wood is dry and warm to the touch is the same sequence as

for the initial sizing. The slices can now be drilled through their centres, I used a drill press and a forstner bit the same size as the spindle on the organ and the spindle on the jig.

The next phase is cutting the correct diameter in a jig (fig.2). Because of teeth damage and a slight oval in the gearwheel this was a matter of averaging out and a little guesswork. The gear wheel and slice were now fixed to each other with an MDF spacer, I long screwed straight through (fig 3). The pen marks are to ensure correct assembly since I drilled through using screw holes of old gearwheel so transferring to new and therefore correct matching to the organ. The gear was turned with a hand underneath easing the slice back into the bit, the other hand holds the router firmly still, I used a 1/2" flat bottom bit. The gear wheel has a lower shoulder that acts as a spacer to the attachment point on the organ

spindle, this can easily be cut with a core bit to an approximate profile.

I found that despite damage to the teeth the bottoms of the original cuts were as crisp as the day they were made, which allowed the small planer blade I used, to index the teeth perfectly (fig 4). The planer blade was moved out then back in for each indexing and tooth cut. A 60 degree vee groove bit is excellent for the cutting but still needed a couple of passes between the parallel fences to be perfect. The depth of cut needed a little exploration by passing the bit through the old gearwheel at different points, with the router switched off of course. Indexing around and cutting was a little tedious but did show that the old gearwheel was cut by hand, so why should I complain. I have not given much on the making of the jigs, since most subscribers of The Music Box can easily see what is required to replicate or use variations or improvements with the materials they have to hand.

(Fig 5) shows customer Terry France trying out the new gearwheel, he had another as a spare. I still have the jigs and some blank slices for any future use. Usually I work on old or antique furniture so any work I do for Terry is a nice change. ■

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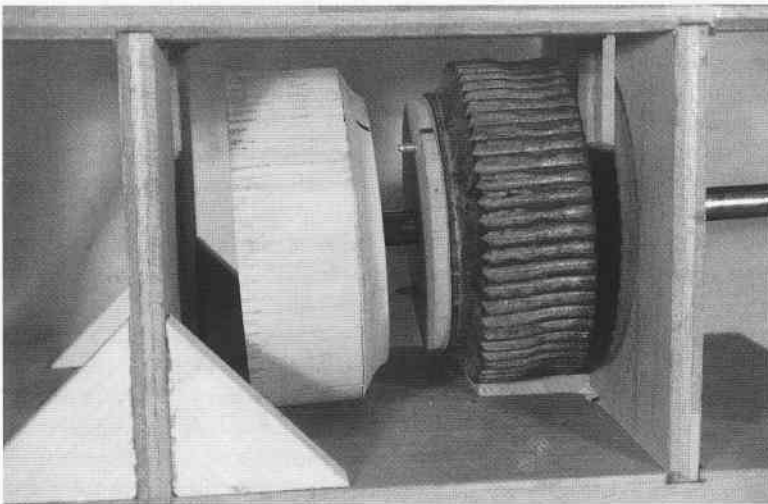


Fig. 3

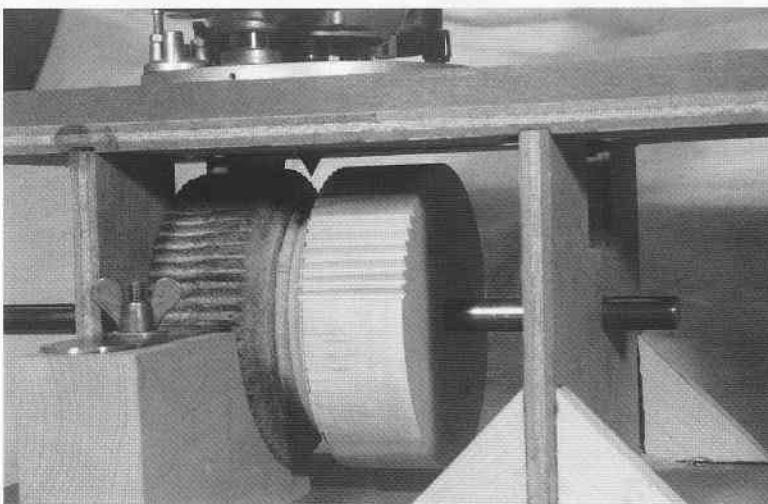


Fig. 4



Fig. 5

# Disc Renaissance

by Alan Pratt

**J**ust a year ago, in the Winter '99 issue of Music Box, we showed the first picture of the 24½" twin disc musical box made by Lester Jones of Renaissance Discs. At the time it was described by Keith Harding as "a major step forward in the design of the bigger musical boxes". Of the sounds produced these were said by Keith to be "probably the finest and most spectacular that I have ever heard from a disc musical box".

Before I could hear this machine it was sold and is now safely installed in its new home in Japan. Recently, however, I visited Lester at his workshop in Chichester where the second of these magnificent machines is nearing completion.

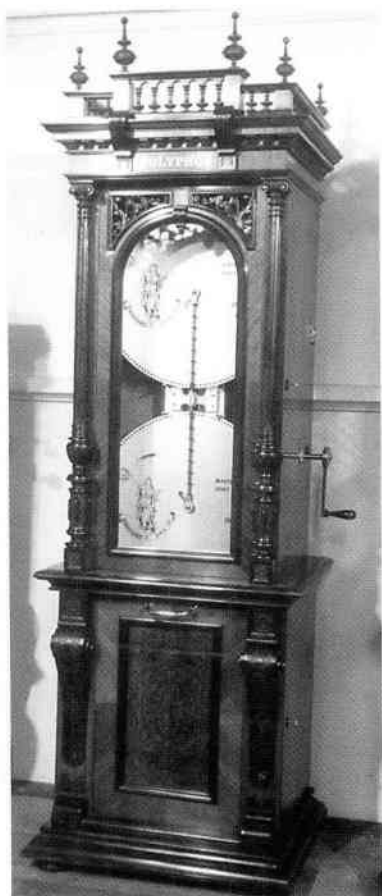


Fig. 1 The massive twin disc machine standing 8' 6" high.

I had heard the first machine on CD but no recording is able to capture fully the sounds produced. It has a clarity which I have never heard before, and it is difficult to grasp that the range from rich bass to ringing treble comes from just two identical discs.

Lester insisted that as the instrument is not fully completed there was still some final tuning to be done, but it is hard to see how the sound could be improved, even though I heard it in less than ideal circumstances in Lester's workshop.

Whilst I was there I also had the opportunity of seeing his computerised disc punching set-up in operation. These days we attribute all sorts of clever things to "a computer" forgetting that it's only as clever as the information that is put in, and the accuracy of the machine it controls. There is something almost hypnotic about watching a disc (in this case a 19½"

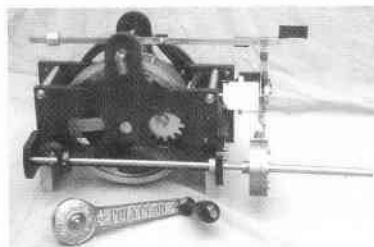


Fig. 2 The size of the motor can be judged from the winding handle in the foreground which is almost 10" long.

Symphonion) being created, with each position being selected by both radial and angular movements to an accuracy and consistency almost impossible by any manual method.

Many MBSGB members must be grateful to Lester for his work in making discs readily available and so bringing back into use instruments which would otherwise remain silent. Even the wonderfully flamboyant artwork on discs by Kalliope, Symphonion and Orpheus are faithfully reproduced, and with everything from 4" to 34" diameter being available there is really no excuse not to enjoy your disc machine to its fullest.

While I stood fascinated by the disc punching machine, Lester was busy with another restoration - a cylinder box nearing completion. A Style 45, 15½" Polyphon, waiting to go out sounded excellent and I couldn't resist asking Lester to play a 19½" self-changer awaiting his attention just for the pleasure of seeing the selected disc slide majestically into place!

Workshops fascinate me. To see how other people work and what can be achieved, sometimes with the most basic of equipment, is always interesting, but to see a disc being created in Lester Jones's workshop on the machine which he built was a new experience. ■

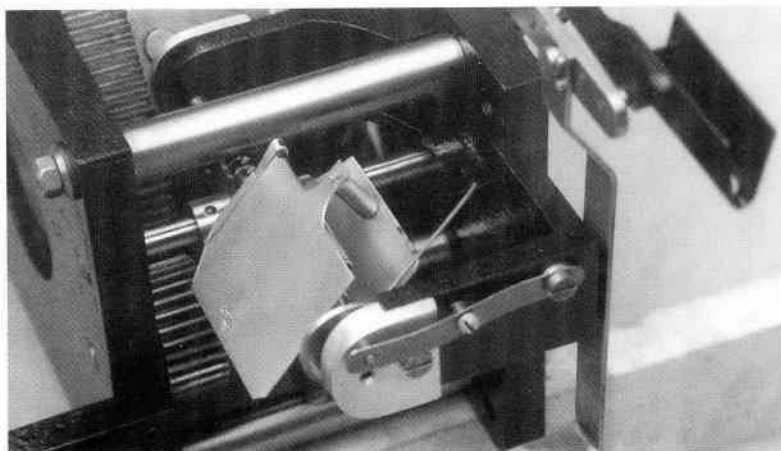


Fig. 3 Detail of the Governor.

*There is something almost hypnotic about watching a disc being created.*



**At the recent EGM at Havant, changes were made to the Constitution and Bye-Laws of the Society. Now for the first time the idea of registering musical boxes has been included in the Constitution becoming one of the aims and objects of the Society. Members still had some questions as to the reason for the Register and what it hopes to achieve.**

Initially the Register was set up to record just cylinder musical boxes in order to gain some insight into how many boxes have survived and who made them. All this was prompted by the fact a distant member of the Registrar's family had been given a musical box by B. A. Bremond years ago whilst she was living in the Bremond household in Switzerland. Curiosity took over and the Register was born.

The historical importance of gathering information soon became apparent and the Register really got started. Then came the realisation that there were many other forms of mechanical music and that they too should be catalogued. A little belatedly, disc machines and organettes were given a Register of their own.

Later still it became obvious that the theft of antiques and musical boxes was increasing and that any registered and marked musical box had a better chance to being identified by the police and returned to its rightful owner. The first case of the Register being used to prove ownership occurred many years ago when a box that had been stolen in Dorset was recovered in London. Paperwork was produced and the thief who had no answers to the Register papers pleaded guilty to theft.

In recent years Insurance companies have changed their terms and conditions and it is now no longer as cheap or as easy to buy insurance as it once used to be. Insurers now look at many details including post codes, claims records and statistics of all insurers used. The number of years any policy has been held is another factor, especially when claims are made. Any idea of the contract between the policy holder and the insurance company being a nice cosy gentleman's agreement has long since gone.

Alarm systems are often required as a matter of course along with other security features. Being in a Neighbourhood Watch system and taking steps to identify and secure your property helps to improve a risk rating. The Register can help in this direction, showing that extra steps have been taken to protect your property. Remember too that information contained in the Register can be of great use to the Police should a theft take place.

Cylinder boxes are given a R- prefix followed by an unique number. Disc machines have the D- prefix whilst organettes use an OR- prefix. To be of any use, these numbers must be marked indelibly under each machine. In the case of cylinder boxes mark underneath in the rear left hand corner on the sound board.

A couple of members have reported that they have not had a reply to Register queries and worse still not had registration details for their boxes. There is quite a severe backlog of entering boxes at the moment, but should you not receive details after four months of waiting, please write again to The Registrar, c/o 5, East Bight, Lincoln. LN2 1QH. Further action will then be taken.

Organettes are not my first love in mechanical music, but not being a complete Philistine, I do look at them with interest and wonder.

What has occurred to me recently, is how relatively few of them seem to have survived the passage of time.

History relates that they were made in their tens of thousands outstripping the production of musical boxes many times over. What has become of them all? In the early days of the Musical Box Society, organettes were regarded as being the poor relation and not taken very seriously. Those members who bought them paid £10 or under for them, kept them for a while and then tried to sell them on either for the same price or for a slight profit. I am not convinced that the Victorians believed much in a throw away life style, so where have they all gone? I for one would welcome letters or articles in the Journal trying to answer this question.

In the last Journal, John Ward reviewed a book entitled "The Crown Devon Musical Novelties Collector's Handbook". Being interested, I sent for the book and a few days later was delighted to receive a publication that added greatly to my knowledge of Crown Devon. In my opinion the book is worth every penny of the asking price of £15.95 including postage. The colour illustrations are excellent and depict all of the 267 pieces the factory is known to have produced. Definitely a book to have. ■ **The Registrar.**

*...the thief who had no answers to the Register papers pleaded guilty to theft.*

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# Nicole with 22 inch cylinder

**N**icole Freres are not noted for flamboyant tune sheets. Their typical black-on-buff 12 by 9cm style is shown in Fig. 1 for serial 40746. It is more commonly seen on their standard 13" (33cm) 8-air boxes.

Here, however, it is dwarfed at the centre of the 32" wide lid over a 22" (56cm) cylinder. That was near Nicole's maximum cylinder length of 60cms. The diameter of this one is 62mm (2.4") and the circumference 7.6" so, pinned at .1" per second, each turn lasts 76 seconds. The tune gap is rather wide, about .6", so tunes last 70 seconds. The wide tune gap was possibly intended to enhance the piano opening of most tunes by not coming too soon after a forte finale.

Despite its modest tune sheet, this is a mandolin forte piano movement, extremely rare with eight tunes. The forte comb has 123 teeth, with several groups of three and four plus five groups of 5 and four groups of 6. The first group of 6 starts at tooth 49, a 880 Hz. The piano comb has 49 teeth with several groups of three and four. To provide 172 teeth with a 22" cylinder the tune tracks were reduced to just under .016". The forte teeth are about 75% stiffer than corresponding piano teeth. Relative stiffness of a 440Hz forte teeth is 270, the same piano teeth 150. There are two setting-up screws in the bedplate for the long forte comb, about 4" apart.

The movement, shown in Fig. 2, was made in 1864. That was about twelve years before sublime harmonie came in and side-lined forte piano. The expense of these mandolin forte piano boxes naturally stunted their appeal; most of those on record are earlier and smaller. Langdorff 11258 made in 1859 has 162 forte and 55 piano teeth but plays only four airs with 39cm cylinder. Nicole had made another 8-air box exactly the same size as 40746 back in 1858, serial 35359.

The combs of Nicole 40746 have pitch lines scribed on their bases and *sol fa* notation. They are both also stamped with a small JAJ

- size about 6 by 2mm, see Figs. 3 and 4. This JAJ stamp is also reported on the comb bases of Nicoles 40767 and 45888, but its owner is not yet known.

I borrowed this box on its way to being restored, and despite missing six bass teeth and suffering sundry bent pins it gives a powerful performance. I never like to apply

the word cracking, it can be misinterpreted. Nicole secured really excellent tune arrangements on these extra-special boxes. The tunes that start with mandolin piano follow with increasingly powerful mandolin forte effects and variations. The full repertoire of eight tunes lasts ten minutes and is certain to demand an encore.



Fig. 1. Nicole seldom included the type of movement on their tune sheets.



Fig. 2. Nicole 40746 with their usual forte piano comb arrangement. Marked teeth are a, 440 and 880Hz.



Fig. 3. Piano comb of 40746, bass end at left (because it is upside down), with JAJ stamp in the ut group of 4 teeth.



Fig. 4. Forte comb, bass end at right, again with JAJ stamp.

The expense of these mandolin forte piano boxes naturally stunted their appeal...

### Rare details on tune sheets

It is rare to see a printer's credit on a Nicole tune sheet, though common with most makers. Fig. 1 shows an exception in the left corner of the bottom margin: *Lith. Brumm Chevalu 4*. They saw no need to mention the city. Chevalu is a small square on the north bank of the Rhone, about 400 yards west of the Brunswick memorial, and in the city centre.

Even more rare is a note on the back of this tune sheet, written before it was pierced by pins. It is in one line of which the legible first half reads: *Levé 1 er clavier...* i.e. Lift off the first comb... My guess is that, at final inspection, a fault appeared in the piano comb and to be sure of a complete cure the forte comb had to get out of the way or lifted enough to clear the cylinder pins. Just like what we have to do now.

### Nicole in disguise

Imagine my consternation and despair when, due to some trivial error, I got a large box I did not want from an auction. It had a routine anonymous Bendon tune sheet listing twelve Sankey hymn tunes, two of which were almost eliminated by a run which had also removed the male Geneva stop from one of the large double springs.



Fig. 5. Nicole Freres stamp, rather the worse for wear, on 50727 comb (it is seen three times in Fig. 2 ). Their later replacement stamp had larger, plain capitals.



Fig. 6. Serial number on the planed cast iron bedplate just below the double slot for the peg on the tune change lever.



Fig. 7. Cast AK and stamped 50727 on comb base.

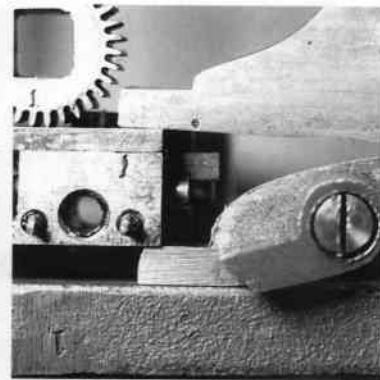


Fig. 8. Bedplate and components with blank number 1.

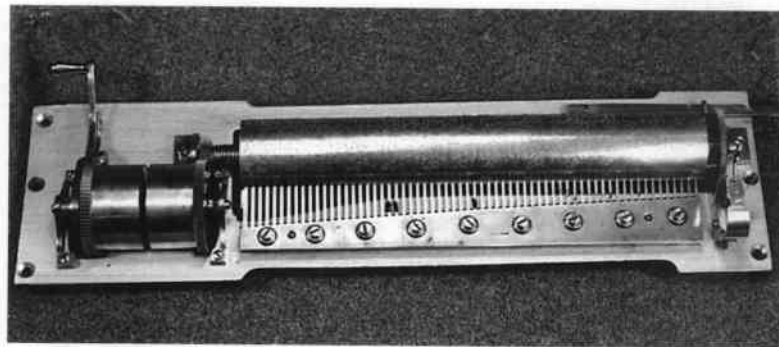


Fig. 9. Nicole 50727, 13.5" (34cm) cylinder, 64-tooth comb, marked teeth a, 440 and 880 Hz.

A plain zither covered most of the comb. Its tissue had been replaced by a neat roll of pages from the Brighton Evening Argus of Nov. 10, 1980. A false economy. I think the zither was a later addition, it was mounted on the usual sort of bracket from nos. 5 and 6 of the nine comb screws. In that position it covered the maker's name stamped on the comb - surprisingly, Nicole Freres as in Fig. 5. I cannot recall any Nicole boxes factored by Bendon, but this one appeared after the take over by C.E. Brun in 1881 and has serial number 50727, see Fig. 6. But, unusually in the 50 thousands, it was made by Nicole, with the last tune on the cylinder dots and with gamme number 3047 which was first used by them in 1871.

The comb base is by Karrer, Fig. 7, and the blank number 1 on several components is in Fig. 8. The massive cast iron bedplate seen in Fig. 9 weighs a bit over 10lbs and five hefty csk screws fix it to the large case - 27 by 11" or 69 by 28cm. This all helps the powerful bass chords; but here on gamme 3046 there is always a delightful addition of calm decorative passages. Patrick

McCossan confirms that this was a feature of Nicole boxes with Sankey hymn tunes which were given these special arrangements when they became very popular in the early 1870s.

### Another digression

The large case of Nicole 50727 had one of those wide keyhole escutcheons embossed decoratively in thin brass sheet. It had had a rough life but was still fixed to the case though one end was almost bent off and the other end was detached but luckily in the case. I was searching for a suitable replacement when Brian Chapman took the bits and restored them with delicate silver soldering. He added a useful tip for fragile embossed items: fill up all the hollows at the back with slow-setting (i.e. standard) Araldite. When it has settled, after about an hour, invert the item onto a flat surface protected with a sheet of backing paper from self-adhesive stickers. Apply small uniform weight and leave for 24 hours. The backing paper will then peel off easily and leave you with a safe and solid item, as shown in Fig. 10. (*Over the page*).

*It is rare to see a printer's credit on a Nicole tune sheet...*

## musical box oddments no. 87



Fig. 10. An escutcheon restored... all but its long lost lower extremities.

### Alternate tips

These notes are mainly about combs with alternate tips, but I must start with the tune sheet in Fig. 11. It is basically the "curved damper panels" design, but it differs vastly in detail. The damper-describing panels are now S-curves; the side columns not only taper but are shaped and ornate; and they are topped and tailed with large musical cherubs. The printer is Picard, Geneva and the box was probably made soon after 1881, maker not known.

The serial number of the box is 6698. The 6" (15cm) cylinder plays 8 airs on a comb made with 87 teeth to play 4 airs but now with alternate tips removed leaving 44 playing teeth. So the comb was originally intended for high-class music, but this demand for quality was being overtaken by demand for quantity in the 1880s. That must have been the reason why several makers had to convert some combs from fine to coarse. The resulting pain for tune arrangers was reduced a bit as they coaxed more music from fewer teeth.

The only unusual feature of serial 6698 is its tune change lever made of brass. Otherwise it is very conventional, of the usual and expected high quality, with tune 1 on the cylinder dots, and very up-to-date with seven of its tunes dated between 1879 and 1881.

The other alternate tip box is Lecoultré 30490, gamme 6890, with 13" (333mm) cylinder playing ten airs on a comb of 167 teeth of which only the alternate 83 have tips. This box got a mention in Vol.

11 page 75 (my first book page 53) mainly because it must have been first planned as that great rarity, - a five-air box. Also, to get the 167 teeth, the tune tracks were reduced to .0156" as Lecoultré did from time. That would allow music of overture box quality; but perhaps even before 1860 sales were easier

and prices possibly higher for a ten-air box, still fitted out with a useful 83 teeth.

The box was made in 1857 and a section of its comb is in Fig. 12. The gamme number 6890 is scribed on bass lead and cylinder end cap, and closely fits the date of its serial number. So the whole alternate tip procedure could have been a rare event, veiled in secrecy. Everyone looking casually at these two boxes would think they had remarkably fine combs for so many tunes.

### A Justin Bornand mystery

The musical box whose tune sheet is shown in Fig. 13 is a typical-looking 4.5" (114mm) cylinder job made in the mid 1880s. Its cast iron bedplate is fixed to blocks in the case, tune 1 is on the cylinder dots, and the base of the 49-tooth comb is stamped JUSTIN BORNAND, see Fig. 14. The serial number is 11437.

...the whole alternate tip procedure could have been a rare event, veiled in secrecy.

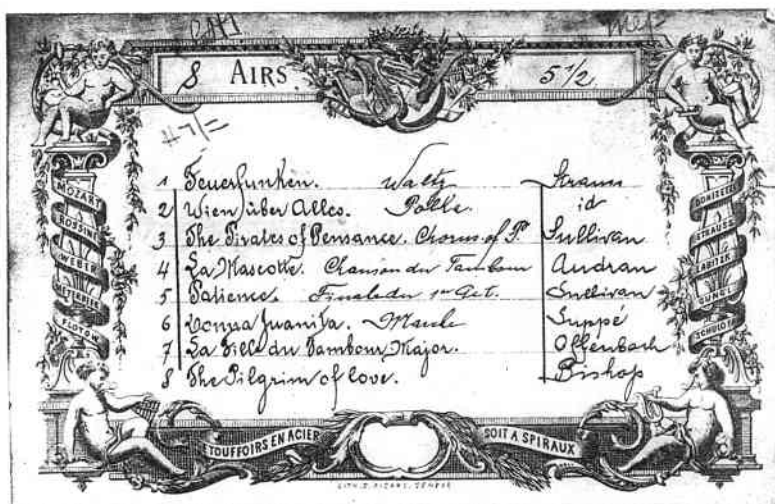


Fig. 11. Serial 6698 tune sheet with reversed-curve banners in bottom border. Tunes 1 and 2 are by Ed. Strauss, 1880 and 1879. Data thanks to John Young.

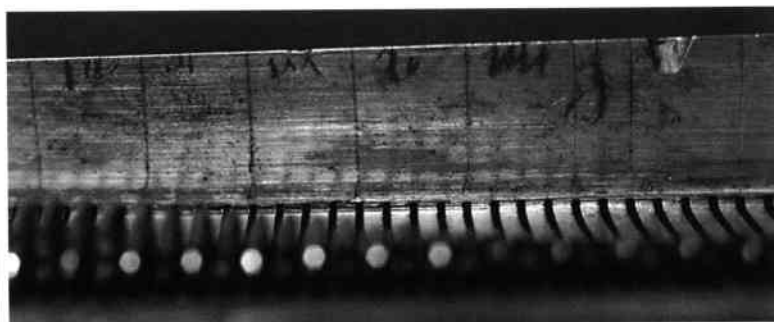


Fig. 12. The middle part of Lecoultré 30490 comb with conical slot at right for the setting-up screw; sol fa scribing cut away when the comb base was adjusted for height; pitch marks showing groups of four teeth so two of each pitch survived; and white blobs reflected from the out-of-focus dampers on the surviving tips.





Fig. 13. Rarity! A 4-air box with bogus tunes 5 and 6 added, on a general-use tune sheet which has been reported on Baker-Troll boxes. Data thanks to Antoine Stroucken.



Fig. 14. Justin Bornand stamped none too well at second attempt on the comb base of serial 11437.

Of the many Bornands, Justin was in the musical box business from 1883 to about 1898. His premises were in the centre of Ste. Croix, near the Post Office. I cannot explain the high serial number, unless it includes *Petites Musiques*, or started at 10,000. It is very unlikely that he supplied combs for other makers. So I think this is the first Justin Bornand box on record; Piguet (page 279) could find out nothing about his production.

When serial 11437 was made, the era of interchangeable cylinders had started and they were all pinned with .022" tune tracks compared with the normal .017" (.56 cf .43mm). Sometimes these wider tracks appeared on ordinary standard

cylinders. It makes the comb coarser in the ratio  $22/17 = 1.3$ , which is getting near to the ratio of a 6-air to a 4-air comb = 1.5. That is what happened to serial 11437 whose 49-tooth comb plays 4 airs but looks rather like a 6 air comb to match the tune sheet of Fig. 13. A closer look shows tunes 5 and 6 written by a different hand, though still in the same style!! A 4-tune snail ignored, bogus merchandize added, but still the box was sold. Probably more interesting now than at the time.

#### Another non-Nicole

A nice 4-air 8" (20cm) cylinder key-wind in a plain case came up in a recent auction, serial 7858. It looks just like the serial 8458 and others

described in Vol. 17 page 23 and has the same wide 2-column printers border flimsy tune sheet. (These tune sheets are sometimes printed with A B for Alliez and Berguer). It was made about 1854 and, beside its serial number on the brass bedplate, has a neatly stamped Nicole à Geneve in a rectangle.

The real Nicole 7858 had already appeared before 1830. So why was this name of high prestige added? Probably with an obvious and sinister motive.

#### Clue to old time modern pub

Written back in 1928, Fr. Ronald Knox's detective story "The Footsteps at the Lock" includes a list of the many items banished from a riverside pub near Oxford in order to modernise it. The lengthy list concludes... There are no stuffed animals in glass cases, no sentimental pictures with explicit legends in the manner of the later nineteenth century; no strange sea-shells on the mantelpieces, no horse-hair sofas, no superannuated musical-boxes.

It goes to show that musical boxes really were past it in 1928... for a time. ■

*It goes to show that musical boxes really were past it in 1928... for a time.*





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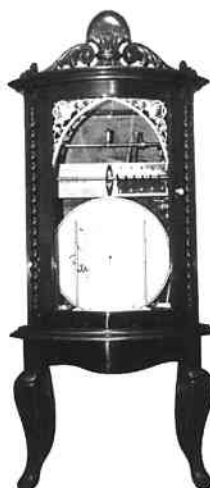
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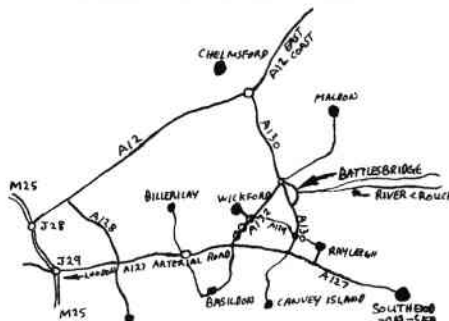
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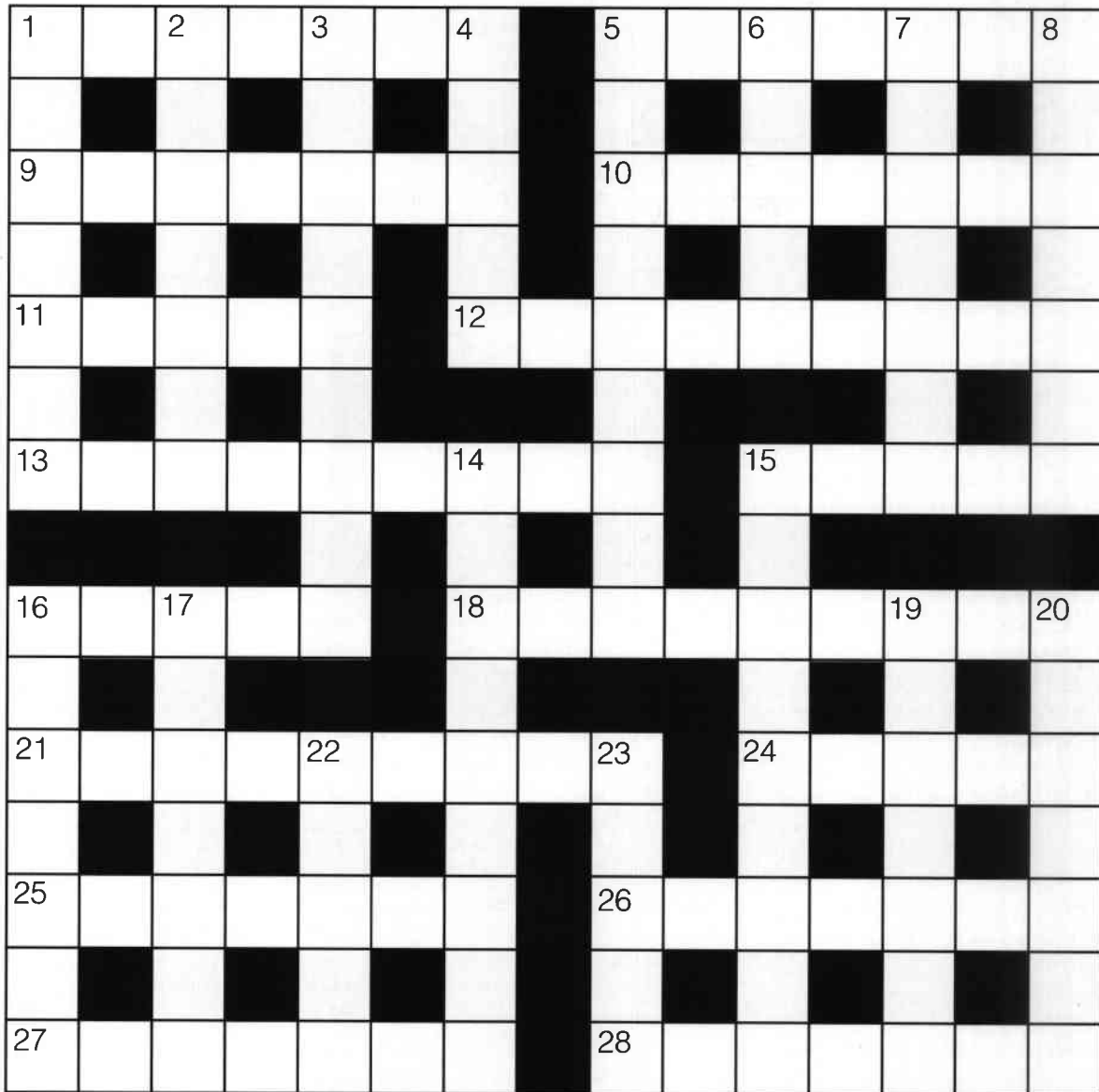
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## Questions

### Across

1. Place for stringing-up in a 10-acre monastic area. (7)
5. Musically pure food? (7)
9. Repeated blows disperse mist cap. (7)
10. Extol girly of mixed make-up. (7)
11. Sticker of past era. (5)
12. Lay lines on a card. (9)
13. I sit and do some extra things. (9)
15. Slide in pupil to support Old Master. (5)
16. So go to U.S.A. or phone, — sort of! (5)
18. Angle dish to hold the line. (4,5)
21. Product of Holy Creations? (9)
24. Give way to the crop. (5)
25. A rod? Am I to make a scene? (7)
26. Give the sailor a single mollusc! (7)
27. Defined exposure to a hot body. (7)
28. End a gas mixture at A.G.M's. (7)

### Down

1. Mobile music-maker which I apparently held. (7)
2. Changing ox-speed shown up. (7)
3. Player group from an alternative box artist. (9)
4. Cello, double bass, etc., hold a value for 24 across. (5)
5. Pipe blowers subjected to various roastings. (9)
6. Patina resulting from missing gravity. (5)
7. L.N.E.R. is a place for pin-tappers! (7)
8. A bit of rock said to make clear. (7)
14. No fab chef here, just a confused musician! (9)
15. Vacant accommodation needs shiftily occupant! (5,4)
16. Add Esso mixture to sorrowful verses. (3,4)
17. Spiky feature on a Bendon box. (7)
19. N.E. Radio holds the pressure rating on the air. (7)
20. Revolver that will last for ever? (7)
22. Try to tell a man a woolly animal is around! (5)
23. Off you go to a Scottish loch! (5)

For answers - see page 198

**'TLC' for a Musical Box**

The musical box arrived on my bench courtesy of a regular client, a bit dusty and in need of a lot of 'TLC', but not immediately attracting my attention. Then I noticed that there was a winding handle sticking out of the right hand end of the box. Now we all know that the majority of boxes have the main spring barrel on the left, be they key wound or ratchet lever wound. I could not start the job straight away as I had other work in hand and so I put the box on one side to await its turn.

When I came to take the job 'down off the shelf' for repair I rapidly became curious about a type of mechanism that I had not seen before. I think that here, I should give a description of the box so that you, the reader, will be able to compare this description with the photographs and have a clearer picture in your mind's eye.

The dimensions of the box are 20ins long and 10ins back to front and 7ins high, the corners are rounded off both on the lid and on the base and the pad feet are nicely moulded to match. The lid has an inlaid picture of flowers and leaves surrounded by three lines of stringing, the inner one having astragal corners. The back, ends and inside of the lid are scumbled, and the front is resplendent with a transfer of pan pipes, tyrolean hat, walking stick etc. Surrounded by two lines of stringing, the inner with astragal corners. From the right hand

*Then I noticed that there was a winding handle sticking out of the right hand end of the box.*

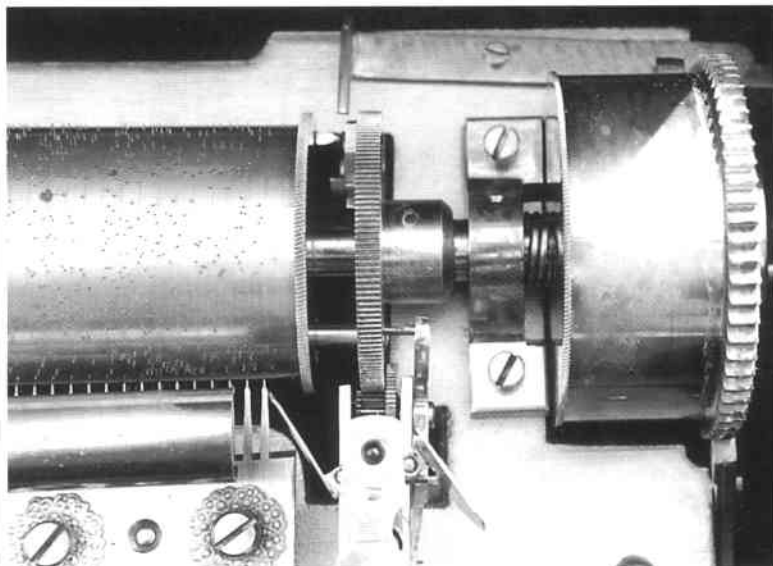


Fig. 2 Detail of the drive and governor.

end as mentioned previously there protrudes a winding key that screws in to the barrel and two operating levers. The tune sheet is missing.

On opening the box one sees that the movement is laid out unusually in that the 11ins tune barrel with its eight tunes is mounted on the same axis as the main spring barrel, with the barrel on the right, as I said before, but the governor assembly is also on the right hand end and consequently the left hand end of the movement looks very empty. The bed plate is of cast iron and the governor assembly, main spring barrel and bearing blocks are all nickel plated. There is a tune indicator on the left at the back that I think is a standard pattern applied to many different

boxes. It becomes immediately apparent that the main spring having a direct drive on to the tune barrel and not being geared to it as normal meant that one turn of the main spring barrel gave one turn of the tune barrel. This, however, does mean that the power needed by the mechanism to play a tune is less than with the conventional mechanism as there is no gearing between the two barrels and so a weaker spring can be used. However, (and there is always one of those isn't there?) it does also mean that the movement runs faster when wound up than when run down and there is no adaptation to the standard governor to try to overcome this. The governor is a simple air brake. Something about the general style and the knurled end caps to the tune barrel make me wonder if this is a George Baker or Baker-Troll box, but I have no way of knowing if I am right or not, so any help and suggestions that anyone can give would be greatly appreciated by both myself and by my client.

I know that the first two tunes to be played are (1) I dreamed I dwelt in marble halls, and (2) A wandering minstrel I, from Gilbert & Sullivan. The other six tunes are not identifiable by me but do play very nicely and are very "obvious and tuneful" so I would suspect that someone, somewhere, would listen to them and know them. ■

**Paul Shrouder**

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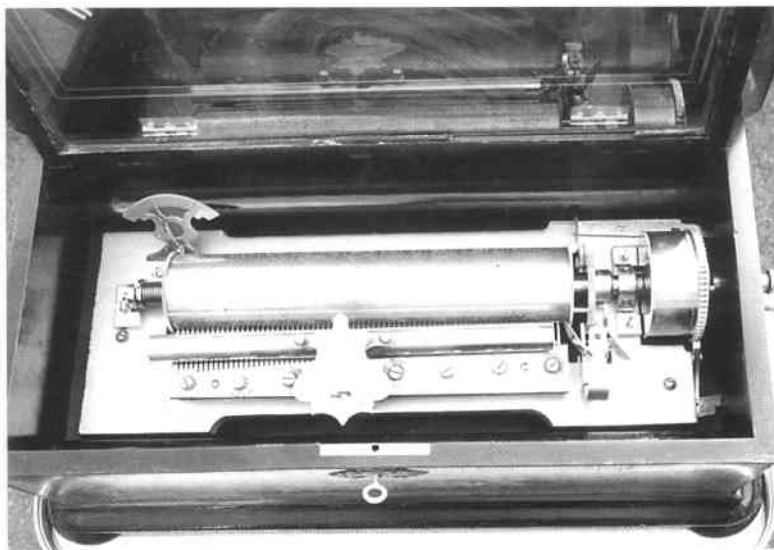


Fig. 1 General view showing right hand wind.

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