

The Music Box

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Edited by Alan Pratt

An International Journal of Mechanical Music



The Journal of the Musical Box Society of Great Britain

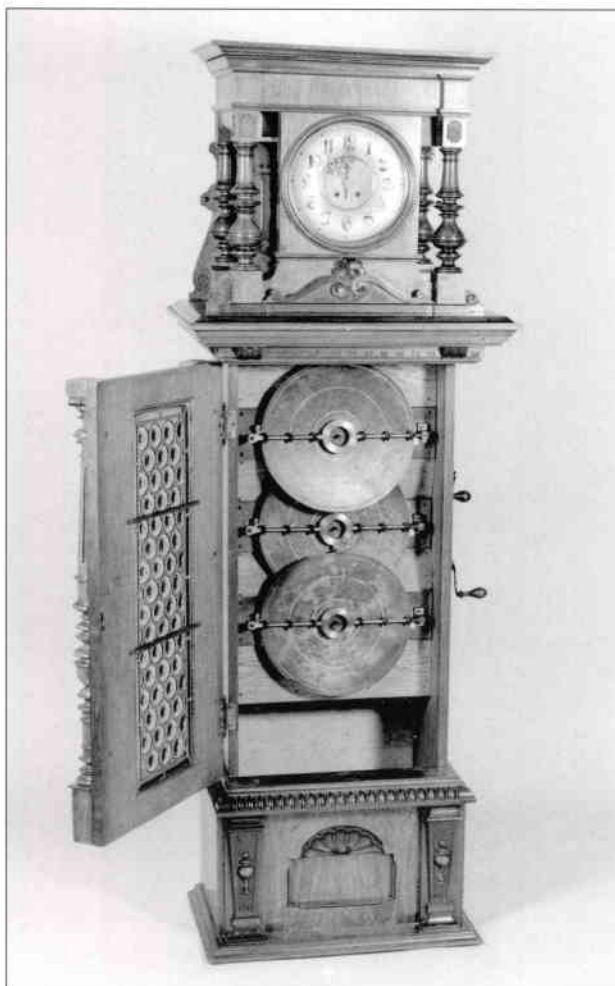
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MECHANICAL MUSIC

31ST October 2001

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The Way Forward



Alan Pratt

New Year. New Volume of Music Box. This issue starts our 20th volume and, hopefully, we will be able to include some new ideas.

To all of you who sent Christmas cards I send my thanks - and my apologies for not replying to everyone personally. If I had done this, I fear there would be no Music Box to start our new year. Some cards contained brief thoughts on our journal, and your thanks, which I am pleased to pass on to all of our contributors without whom there would be no Music Box.

Some of you also included suggestions for future content, and for these I am especially grateful. Notes like these, together with comments made to me at our meetings, are the 'market research' which helps in planning forthcoming issues. It is not possible to fulfil every request for a variety of reasons but no idea is ever discarded out of hand. Each and every suggestion helps to formulate the planning for future issues and gives a guide to those things you enjoy most.

A New Year note from our friends at the International Vintage Phonograph & Mechanical Music Society in Eindhoven expresses some concern about the proposed International Forum of Mechanical Music Organisations. C.G. Nijsen, their Secretary General, suggests that there is really no need for an 'all-embracing world organisation'. Certainly we all seem to agree that there is no place for the grandiose organisation which was originally discussed. The likely costs alone made this impracticable and the proposed benefits were of interest to only a minority of members.

Co-operation between Societies has to date been limited largely to

exchanges between friends or individuals who are members of more than one Society. Language is a barrier to the exchange of printed material but this should not prove an unsurmountable obstacle. The real stumbling block to earlier ideas was the sheer cost of creating an international archive of material and its subsequent maintenance.

However, the growth of the Internet has rendered many 20th century concepts of co-operation totally outdated. It is now possible to communicate either formally or informally on a speedy, low-cost basis. Once created a Website can be used as a forum for the exchange of views and ideas on a wide range of subjects and, more formally, material can be placed in an archive section. Access to this can, in principle, be controlled or limited to members of participating Societies but the old concepts of 'confidential' material are being eroded by the new electronic media.

The only people who should have serious concerns about the developments are the publishers of reference books who may see their markets shrinking. But for the rest of us the opportunity to share information should be welcomed. Personally, I think reading a book, particularly a well produced one with great illustrations, will always beat staring at a screen - but that should not stop exchanges of information via the Internet.

What we don't need is an organisation which spends too much time on bureaucracy at the expense of what's really important - bringing the enjoyment (in all its forms) of mechanical music to the widest possible audience. Perhaps you have ideas on how we should move forward. Let's have your views. ■

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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 a Monkey Harpist Automaton by Gustave Vichy C.1880. Created by one of the finest Parisian makers at the height of the 'golden age' of automata production, this simian entertainer has eight separate movements to accompany the two delicate tunes in his repertoire. However, the fearsome teeth and realistic features may put off its use on the bedside table for a lullaby! Photo courtesy of Michael Start, London

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Christmas Meetings

Sussex Open Day-
Christmas 2000

'A half century to welcome the New Century' would be an apt headline for a cricket match score. It is, in fact, a true statement relating to record attendance at a local meeting of the MBSGB. Ted and Kay Brown achieved another first with prospective members, new members and 'old stagers' combining to produce the grand total of 50 visitors at their Christmas 2000 Open Day.

Prior to the seasonal content of the meeting, Anthony Bullied presented an overview of Swiss box production at its peak during the mid 1880's. At £8,400,000 per annum (value in today's money), and with 99% of output going for export, this must have been a good little earner. Approximately one third went to the U.S.A., one-sixth to the U.K., one-sixth to Germany and one third to the rest of the world. Clearly it is only a small proportion that has survived the intervening years, to become the treasures we are now privileged to hold in our collections. Anthony also provided some amusing and interesting comments about his experiences and observations relating to mechanical music auctions.



Another novelty! Nicholas Simons at Wakefield.

New Members

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

2758 David Worrall, Hants

2759 Blanchards Town Library,
Dublin

2760 G. Howells, Shropshire

2761 V. Sowerby & J. Fisher,
Suffolk

2762 Ian King, Bedfordshire

2763 Mike Larmey, Mass., USA

2764 David Whitehead, Sussex

2765 P.G. Wilson, York

2766 Ron Bowyer, Norfolk

2767 Gordon Barlet, Dorset

2768 Brian Cornelius, Somerset



John Ward presents one of his collection.



Nicholas Simons with the Frattini orchestron.

From an early periodical entitled 'Work', we were to learn about Mr. G.H. of Bradford who outlined a novel means of creating a blast furnace in his living room hearth, for the purpose of glass blowing. The blast was provided, by rapidly pedalling a reed organ whose output was piped to the hearth. All agreed it would have been prudent to include a modern-day health and safety guidance note, warning not to use a vacuum operated American reed organ playing the 'Blaze Away March'!

The seasonal theme was well represented by numerous carols, Christmas songs and a wide assortment of wind-up and electronic novelties. There were many serious contenders and several

fun items amongst the demonstrated devices. It is difficult to select any single instrument/music combination as 'Star of the Show' but, in your reporter's opinion, the award must go to Ted's little twin comb eleven inch Polyphon, playing the Robin Timms arrangement of 'Ding Dong Merrily on High'. Those two combs certainly left the bells ringing in our ears!

As is always the case, a stalwart group of helpers provided sustenance, served with superb efficiency by employing the two canteen serving hatches to dispense mouth-watering delights, following which we enjoyed a recital of Christmas tunes by Daphne Ladell and Clive Houghton, on the 31 note Raffin organ.

Wakefield

John and Joyce Turner hosted the Wakefield meeting, ably assisted by John Powell who was out early putting up direction signs.

The venue was St. Mary's Church Hall, which was needed for the 26 people who attended. John Ward, our youngest member, gave a talk about some of the smaller items in his collection to prove that you can collect on a modest budget.

John Turner showed a video of a recent meeting of the Japanese Mechanical Music Society and Alan Pratt played his recently constructed 20-note organ. Lunch, by courtesy of Joyce and the ladies in the kitchen, was a fine example of Yorkshire hospitality - even though the menu included Lancashire Hotpot!



John Powell, Keith Reedman and Roy Ison in discussion with Ian Clayton (second right) from Yorkshire Television, at the Wakefield meeting.



A Tanzbar Concert.

There were several non members present and the lunch period was a good opportunity for them to meet members and, perhaps, decide that they would like to join the Society. There was certainly the lively discussions going on which seem to be a feature of all MBSGB meetings.

After lunch a short Question and Answer session raised some interesting questions (and answers!) before we moved on to a presentation by Nicholas Simons with some of his more amusing novelty items of mechanical music.

We rounded off with afternoon tea and more discussions. Our thanks to John and Joyce Turner and John Powell for all their hard work in making this such an enjoyable day.

Derby

Nicholas Simons takes great pleasure in springing a few surprises on us whenever he hosts a meeting. This time was no exception.

Before lunch we heard a selection from his collection - all playing superbly, of course, including his beautiful Piano Melodica. Two new instruments attracted much interest. A Model E Seeburg playing A rolls looks very handsome with its period stained glass front panel. This is based on the 65 note piano roll scale with the addition of mandolin, 25 flute pipes, sustaining and soft pedals. Fed with nickels (only the genuine coin will do!) this instrument sounds wonderful and is a great addition to the collection.

Just time for Nicholas to play his 28 note Tanzbar and lunch is ready, courtesy of Eileen Simons and the workers in the kitchen. As always, a lovely spread to sustain us for the afternoon session.

Another new addition is a barrel piano orchestrion of either German or Austrian origin. This plays piano, xylophone, triangle, side drum, bass drum and cymbal with additional registers for sustaining and soft pedals. The piano action is unusual in being a kicking cam system, rarely found on barrel pianos.

After hearing several old favourites we came to the instrument which attracted most attention. This orchestrion is probably by Frati and contains a 36 note piano covering 4½ octaves plus a separately keyed solo register of 12 violin pipes augmented by a glockenspiel controlled by a lock and cancel pair of keys. It also has a bass drum and cymbal, and a reiterating side drum. The total of 55 keys are operated from a thin card roll or endless band. Clearly, this has been subjected to a considerable amount of restoration work and the results are excellent.

A brief look into Nicholas's workshop revealed an interesting barrel organ in the early stages of a rebuild which promises much.

Thanks to Nicholas for all the wonderful sounds and to Eileen for such generous hospitality.

Spring Meeting - Guildford - 20/22 April

Plans for this weekend meeting are well advanced and bookings are coming in well. If you wish to attend please see the Booking Form in our last issue.

Raffle

A Raffle will be held - items for inclusion will be welcomed on the day.

Programme to date

Friday 20th Meeting at 9.00 p.m. after dinner with short presentation.

Saturday 21st - Visit to private collection including lunch (with entertainment). For the ladies there is an afternoon visit to the famous antique shops in nearby Dorking.

In the evening the Society Dinner will feature more entertainment.

Sunday 22nd - Visit to another private collection.

Lunch is available if required - See loose insert sheet

Autumn Meeting Advance News

The Autumn meeting will be held in Stratford-upon-Avon on the 19th/20th October.

Among other delights will be a backstage tour of the Royal Shakespeare Theatre. The Society Dinner will be held at Ashorne Hall followed by entertainment. Graham Whitehead is the local organiser and a full programme and booking form will be in the next issue of Music Box.

AGM & Auction

Yes it's time to start thinking about the Society AGM and Auction again. As usual, it will be on the first Saturday in June, so the date for your diary is June 2nd and the location is Kettering.

In our April issue we will have full details of location and how to get there; the programme; and an Entry Form for the Auction. The buyer's/vendor's premium is still only 7½% (all in aid of Society funds), so start looking out those items you have that are surplus - boxes, novelties, books, discs, parts, tools - in fact, anything associated with mechanical music. If you have a query on what may be suitable, call our Auction Organiser, David Walsh on 0117 968 4701.

Nicole Freres Research - Help Needed

I am trying to compile a list of Freres Nicole and Nicole Freres musical boxes from serial no. 200-20000.

If any member has a Nicole box in this serial no. range I would appreciate the details of serial no. and bedplate stamps, i.e. Freres Nicole or Nicole Freres, also cylinder size and number of teeth in the comb plus, if possible, any details of the tune sheet. I have received a lot of information from the MBSGB register but, unfortunately, a lot of entries do not differentiate between Freres Nicole and Nicole Freres.

If you have any information please write to:-

Roy Ison, 5 East Bight, Lincoln LN2 1QH, or Fax 01522 520782.

For security you need not enter your name or address if you prefer.

*Nicholas Simons
takes great
pleasure in
springing a
few surprises
on us...*

President's Message

At last we have reached the real start of the New Millennium and a new volume of our journal. We had an amazing Christmas meeting at Bucks Green, but more of that elsewhere in the journal.

I want to say a personal thank you to all members all over the world, those I know personally, those with whom I correspond and, not least, all other members who have a similar enjoyment of mechanical music. The thank you is for being a member of a society that enjoys the sounds, the arrangements or

just the mechanics of all forms of mechanical music. Please share your enjoyment with others, some of it may rub off on them. I gave a talk to an Old Peoples home just before Christmas and played a few "Music Hall" tunes before playing them Christmas carols on musical boxes and organettes. Their enjoyment and smiling faces when they heard these old tunes made my Christmas even better.

It is the original 'recorded' music on our instruments that can keep these tunes alive. One reason that I keep the Chanctonbury Ring thematic is to be able to bring out

the lesser known composers or tunes. Now the internet is available we can get the words to some of the mystical titles such as "Tiggy-woo", "Sister Mary walked like that" and "Little Teddy Brown down at Margit" (Margate). These tunes must have been popular in their day and were certainly enjoyed by many. It is our job to give them a chance to enjoy the 'limelight' again.

Alan Wyatt and I have an ample supply of membership forms if any members need any, and we can always send out a back number of the journal to a prospective member if interest is shown. I look forward to seeing many of you at the Spring Meeting. ■ **Ted Brown**

Musical Box Society of Great Britain

Minutes of Extraordinary General Meeting - Langston Hotel Havant, September 10th 2000

Purpose of the Extraordinary General Meeting

To consider further proposals submitted by the Executive Committee for changes to the Constitution and Bye-Laws of the Musical Box Society of Great Britain as requested by Members at the Annual General Meeting 2000.

Executive Committee Members present:

Ted Brown (President) Christopher Proudfoot (Vice-President) Alan Wyatt; David Walch; Roy Ison; Richard Kerridge; Paul Bellamy. The President declared the EGM open at 9.50.

Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence were received from: Alan Pratt; Arthur Cunliffe; Hugh Morgan; John Turner; David Pilgrim; Alan Clark; Wendy and Maurice Adams.

1. The President invited Members to confirm the published summary of the Minutes of item 11 of the AGM 2000 to which they assented.
2. The President noted that he had received a number of responses from Members who could not attend, but who supported the revised proposals. He had also received one response for further consideration to proposed Article 2 from a Member present.
3. The President suggested the business commence with discussions on Article 4 Section 1 to the end of the proposals, after which the Member present would be able to address the meeting on Article 2. Members agreed to this.
4. Members then discussed proposals from Article 4 Section 1 in turn and agreed to some minor changes to clarify the text in some places. They noted that the Section 3 in the original Constitution be omitted as it duplicated what was already in Section 5.
5. John Powell addressed the Members and asked for a minor change to the wording of Article 2 to be made. The Members assented to this change.
6. The President read out the revisions that had been made reflecting the changes requested from the floor asking for a proposer and seconder for the motion. John Powell proposed and Roger Brooks seconded that the proposals be accepted.

A vote was taken. Nicholas Simons acted as teller and confirmed that the votes had exceeded the required quorum, there being 43 in favour with none against. The Executive Committee Proposals as amended and agreed are appended to and form part of the Constitution and Bye-Laws of the Society.

There being no further business to discuss, the meeting closed at 10.30.

Record Review

I have recently been introduced to a series of CDs of mechanical music from Saydisc Records of Gloucestershire. Some of you may already know of this company but, if not, I recommend you explore their catalogue for it contains some real delights.

Within the restriction of space and finance it is not possible to own all the instruments we might like but, through well-made recordings, it is possible to enjoy the sounds. Five CDs from Saydisc cover a wide range of mechanical music interests.

■ **Music of the Streets (CD-SDL340)** is mostly street piano tracks with many of the well-known tunes of the 1900-1920 period. Also on this CD are recordings of Cabinetto, Celestina and Atlas organettes.
(Playing time - 55 minutes).

■ **Victorian Musical Boxes (CD-SDL408)** mainly features music from Polyphon and Regina disc boxes and Nicole Freres and PVF cylinder boxes. This recording captures the clarity of the original instrument which some records fail to achieve. The instruments are from the collection of the late Roy Mickleburgh.
(Playing time 57 minutes).

■ **Sublime Harmonie (CD-SDL303)** is once again music from both disc and cylinder boxes featuring favourite opera and popular tunes from the classics. With such a wide selection, you're bound to find your favourite on this disc.
(Playing time 49 minutes).

■ **The Gay 90s (CD-SDL312)** Played almost entirely on disc musical boxes, this is an 1890's version of 'Songs from the Shows' with tunes from, among others, The Runaway Girl, Floradora, Belle of New York and a selection by Stephen Foster. Not forgetting that disc favourite San Toy. You will already know most of the tunes but it's still a wonderful bit of nostalgia.
(Playing time 58 minutes).

■ **Victorian Sunday (CD-SDL331)** Described as "an uplifting selection of hymns from Victorian pipe barrel organs, musical boxes and organettes" this recording conjures up visions of a family gathered around their musical box for Sunday hymn singing. All the popular ones are here from Abide with Me, through Rescue the Perishing to Onward Christian Soldiers, and all played on instruments of outstanding quality. Ending, of course, with God Save the Queen. A wonderful record of a bygone age.
(Playing time 48 minutes).

■ **Mechanical Music Hall (CD-SDL232)** As a direct contrast to the previous disc, this is a musical journey through the music hall favourites, many of which still survive today. No words, of course, because they are all mechanical music, but I am sure you can fill in your own words! Just the thing for a party.
(Playing time 40 minutes).

If you really are too young to remember the words of music hall favourites then Saydisc have four CDs which you may wish to hear:

- **The Golden Years of Music Hall (CD-SDL380)**
- **Keep the Home Fires Burning (CD-SDL358)**
- **The Wobbly Wobbly Walk (CD-SDL350)**
- **Cockney Kings of Music Hall (CD-SDL413)**

All the famous artists of the period are here, all taken from original recordings on cylinder or 78s complete with some surface noise for that essential 'period' feel.

A final offering from Saydisc is "The Roaring 20's" (CD-SDL344). Featuring bands such as Paul Whiteman, Jack Hylton and the Savoy Orpheans together with a few piano rolls, this should get you dancing in no time! (Playing time 60 minutes).

All these CDs are available from Griffin & Co. Ltd., Church House, St. Mary's Gate, 96 Church Street, Lancaster LA1 1TD (tel. 01524 844399) by mail order.

Prices to MBSGB members are £11.50 each including p & p, with some titles available on cassette at £6.50 including p & p. If you are ordering for delivery outside the UK there is an additional £1.00 for postage. They take Visa & Access credit cards. Don't forget to mention Music Box when ordering to benefit from the special price. You can also contact by fax (01524 844335) or e-mail: sales@griffinrecords.co.uk

An excellent catalogue with sampler CD is available free on request.

...what I regard as the finest boxed set of records plus book I have seen.



Record Review (con'd)

Round the Town

I cannot finish this review of recorded Music Hall music without mentioning what I regard as the finest boxed set of records plus book I have seen entitled "Round the Town". The four CDs give over four hours of all the great performers of the period from around 1890-1915, taken from original cylinders and 78s. Florrie Ford, Gus

Ellen, Harry Champion, Albert Chevalier, Dan Leno - the list goes on. The recordings are of excellent quality but, for me, what makes this set so special is the accompanying book. This large, full colour production carries photographs of all the artists featuring their backgrounds, and the full words, verses and chorus, of their most famous numbers.

At £65 including p & p, this set is a 'must'. The cost is really only

what you would pay for four CDs, so the wonderful book is almost free!

For anyone suffering from terminal nostalgia this is the perfect gift - even if you have to buy it for yourself!

To order or for more information contact A. Barker, 68 Hawkes Road, Mitcham, Surrey CR4 3JG. Tel: 020 8646 4740. Allow a few weeks for delivery, but it's worth waiting for. ■

Chanctonbury Ring

We were pleased to welcome Rosanna and Bill Harris of the U.S.A., to the first meeting of the New Year.

The single-word title 'Percussion', selected for the talk by Anthony Bulleid, disguised the full breadth and depth of information he was to provide. Starting in about 1848, with the addition of bells hidden beneath the bed-plate, use of percussive instruments expanded to include drums, castanets and even gongs. By the late 1880s it was popular to see the percussion instruments being struck, visibility justifying engraved decoration of bells, and enamelled strikers configured in a variety of life-forms. Anthony described linkage mechanisms used to transmit comb tooth movement to the strikers. He explained how the compact and precise scheme employed for the 'hidden' location suffered when extended to reach the 'in-sight' position favoured in later years. This development hampered the accurate integration of percussion with the music itself. Some may argue it to have been a backward step. We were to hear a Lecoultre hidden bell and

drum box with an exquisite lid marquetry of dancing figures. It has eight bells actuated by sixteen teeth at the treble end whilst the drum is operated by twenty teeth at the bass end!

To aid further research, Anthony is urgently seeking the following information:

- Musical boxes having a volume control on the drum.
- Two per turn boxes with tune indicators identifying all tunes - i.e. the indicator moves on at the half turn stage in the cylinder's revolution.

If anyone is able to assist, please do it now - don't say you'll get round to it sometime because it rarely happens!

'Work' journal provided us with more amusing stories from Victorian times, including an original 'MFI flat-pack instruction sheet', about coffin construction. It provided dimensional data, emphasised the differences between the sexes and warned of the consequences, should a coffin be made too small. Most important was the use of nails to fix the head and the foot in place - we believe the instructor intended this to be the head

and foot of the coffin, not its occupant!

Composers Sidney Jones, Arthur Sullivan and Albert Ketélbey provided a limitless source of music to be played on many instruments. Barry Wilson showed the part of his video of the Berlin 2000 trip, in which the Museum of Mechanical Music Bacigalupo orchestrion played music from The Mikado. Peter Howard played various Sullivan pieces on Symphonion disc and Mojon Manger cylinder boxes, both in buffet format cases. Two lesser known Ketélbey pieces 'Dance of the Merry Mascots' and 'The Clock and the Dresden Figures' were played on the Steck by Kevin McElhone and Paul Baker respectively. The latter sent a torrent of notes cascading into the room with unbelievable rapidity, superbly handled by the player action. If you want a good test roll, this has to be it!

The next meeting will take place on 25th March when the main subjects will be Automata, Hymn Boxes and The Arrangers' Art. Remember to book early, or risk disappointment. ■

Events Diary...

Open House in St. Anne's

Brian Chesters is holding an Open House meeting at his home on Saturday 28th July.

Starting at 2 p.m. (until around 4 p.m.) it will feature music on player piano and musical boxes. Members are invited to bring along an item to play.

Brian is at 80 North Promenade, St. Anne's-on-Sea, Lancs FY8 2QW. Tel. 01253 711666. Please advise if you will be attending.

Collectors' Weekend

Amberley Working Museum at Houghton Bridge, Arundel, West Sussex, are holding their 3rd Annual Collectors' Weekend on 9/10th June. Many of the

exhibits will be in caravan awnings with some displays in the Museum buildings. A wide variety of collectors' interests will be on show with selected sales stands. If you would like more information ring 01798 831370.

Technology Fair

The next Vintage Technology Fair will be in Blackpool on 20th May. More details in next issue.

Antiques Trails

2, 3, 4 and 7 day antiques 'trails' are being offered covering Newark, Bath and London in the UK, and 21 mainland European destinations. For more details or a brochure ring In the Limelight on 01225 353344. Not just for mechanical music but could be of interest to those wishing to visit Fairs and Markets across Europe.

Reymond-Nicole

Musical Box No. 135 by John Powell

I was lucky enough to purchase this from a saleroom in Kirby Lonsdale in 1980 having paid, what I thought, was far too much at the time, but have not regretted it since. The cylinder size is 19.4cm (7.64") x 6.4cm dia. (2.52") and has 156 teeth. It plays on three revolutions, the music being overtures to *der Freyschuts*, to *Guillaume Tell* and the *Hailstone Chorus* from *Handel's Israel in Egypt*. The case that it is in now is out of keeping with the movement and is veneered in rosewood with inlays to lid and front, but more of that later. The condition of the movement proved to be good with very little wear to the tooth tips and few broken pins. The only work that appears to have been done is to the dampers. The original ones were put in with the normal taper pins but most of them are now soldered and don't work very well. The only work I have done is to dismantle and clean all moving parts leaving the brasswork as found.

The other feature of the pins is that most of them have had the tops chamfered...

I had not noticed anything unusual about the pins except that they appeared to have worn rounded ends until I read, with great interest, an article published in the MBSI journal by Elton Norwood about an instrument by the same maker having shaved pins. Closer examination of No.135's pins showed similar modifications. Apart from curiosity about the condition, a movement by the same maker is presently being restored by one of our members and this feature is of significance to the project. My first attempt at taking photographs of the pins did not show sufficient details even though a full set of extension tubes was used. The subsequent purchase of a low powered binocular microscope (principally for other family interests) with a camera adaptor, did improve the

result, but the drawbacks were very limited depth of focus and the very low light levels transmitted into the camera. However, I hope that the resulting photographs, when printed, will show the previously published feature of the pins and illustrate other features of No.135 that have come to light by this more detailed examination. Fig.1 shows a clear side view of two pins with what appear to be file marks but

these do not seem to have been cut down low enough to provide sufficient tooth tip clearance required as indicated in the dimensional sketch Fig. 1(a). The other feature of the pins is that most of them have had the tops chamfered also. This can be seen in Fig.2. My first thoughts were that this aided the action of the damper, but further examination showed that the chamfer was on the trailing edge of the pin and not

Reymond-Nicole No. 135 Comb/Cylinder Dimensions

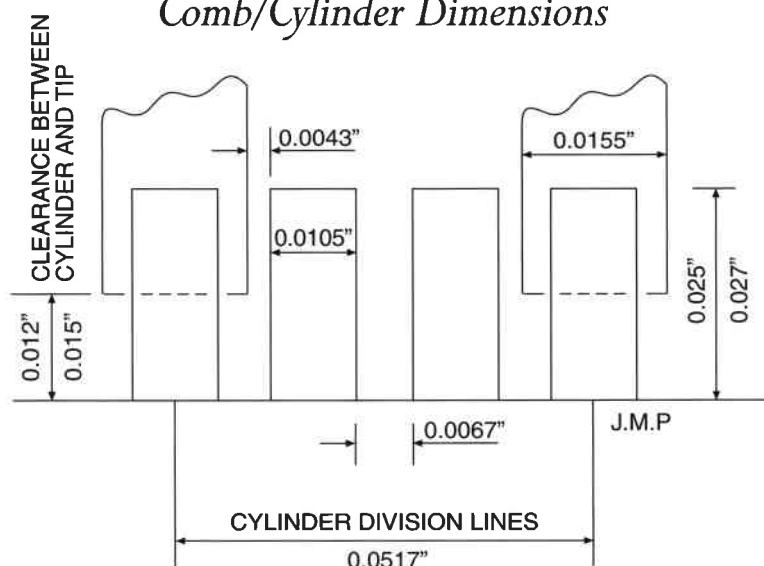


Fig. 1. (a)

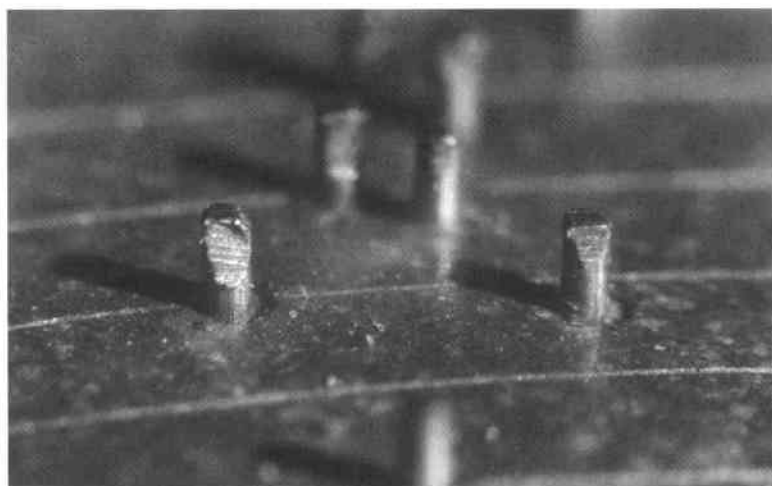


Fig. 1. (b) Side view of 'shaved' pins



Fig. 2. Side view of shaved pin with top chamfer.



Fig. 3. Pin located out of position.



Fig. 4. Group of pins playing four similar teeth simultaneously.

on its leading edge. This could have led to an earlier or cleaner release of the tooth although the size as shown in Fig.2 is not consistent with other pins.

Having measured all the relevant features of comb and cylinder, it soon became clear why some pins would require dressing. The sketch, which has been drawn to scale, shows that if absolute accuracy in pin positioning and drilling was maintained, there would be a passing clearance of 0.0043" between the tooth tip and adjacent pins. Obviously that accuracy could not be achieved. Quite a lot of work was done on comb teeth to align them although the stretch marks are very small and not easy to see. Fig.3 shows quite clearly that one pin at least was out of position and required a substantial cut off the side to clear. Another interesting feature of the pinning is shown in Fig.4 which is one of several groups of four teeth played together, and all teeth being tuned to the same note. It perhaps does something to enhance the effect but, to me, doesn't provide the forte effect that might be expected. I include two pictures of the underside of the comb. Fig. 5 shows how sharp the extreme tip of the tooth is due to the 'hooking' cutout, a broken tip which is not evident from the above and an original damper in what appears to be undamaged condition and still retained with its taper pin. Fig.6 shows that the 'hooking' runs out about two-thirds of the comb length from the base end.

There are two questions that come out of this. Firstly, why did the maker find it necessary to go to these lengths to achieve the desired result? The pins are vertical, by the way, and not raked. They are relatively short compared to their length and therefore stiff and would not have been easy to bend. The pins appear to be soft if they were filed and being stiff would not have been bent by the light load applied by the long thin comb teeth. Moving comb teeth from side to side for alignment has never been easy although was done to partly cure the problem. If the pins were filed the maker must

*... doesn't
provide the forte
effect that might
be expected.*

have made up a file to locate from the top of the pin as there is no evidence that the file ever slipped and touched the cylinder. He possibly decided that this was his easiest option even though there are several of his instruments that have these same features.

The second question is, how does one avoid these problems when a repin and comb work is required? The wide tip is partly the cause of the interference but I don't think I would want to reduce that. The other possibility is to have a longer pin which can be bent sideways. Modern steels, being more homogeneous than those available when these were made, would allow this flexibility. However, every effort would be needed to keep the replacement wire to a minimum diameter. Having made this suggestion, I am very glad that I do not have to practise what I preach.

Finally, the case housing No.135. I had always believed that the case was of a later date and, as you can see from Fig.7, it is veneered on the lid and front and completely out of keeping with the movement's age. Revelation came when I had the opportunity at one of our meetings to compare the underside of the box with another by the same maker - it was to all intents and purposes identical, as in Fig.8. I now think I have the original case which at some time has been enhanced. On one end there are two layers of veneer and, when I acquired it, an inner glass lid with a broken glass. When I replaced the glass the lid would not close because it came into contact with the barrel gear ring, hence, its broken condition. The lid has now been removed. I had thoughts of restoring the case but don't know what the veneer may be hiding and am fairly sure that the lid is a replacement, so for the time being it will stay as it is. The strange device in the centre of the lid inlay has not yet been identified but it has some semblance to the three-legged haggis which is said to inhabit the high peaks of Scotland which, during the mating season... but that is another story. ■

...I am very glad that I do not have to practise what I preach.

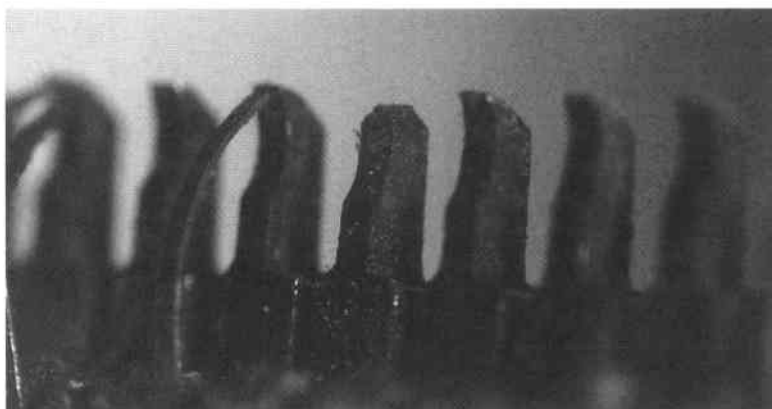


Fig. 5. Underside of tips showing damper shape.



Fig. 6. Transition from 'hooked' teeth to normal.



Fig. 7. Detail of 'enhanced' case.



Fig. 8. Underside of case showing original features.

A Musical Decanter

- A Victorian novelty by Repin

Musical decanters do not come to the market frequently, so there is considerable interest when one turns up at an auction house. Such a decanter was offered recently at Phillips in Knowle and it had the added provenance of being sold on the orders of Sir Francis Winnington Bart. and Lady Winnington of Brockhill Court Worcestershire.

The cut glass decanter is of late Victorian manufacture and very imposing. It is 38 cm (15") tall with the bowl being 15cm (6") in diameter. There is a dome cavity within the base used to house the musical movement. This is frosted in an attempt to obscure the movement. The neck of the decanter, slender and graceful, has a stylish pourer. An impressive cut glass stopper completes the item. (Fig.1)

One can easily imagine a dinner party taking place in Victorian times with the decanter filled with red wine on a table laden with the finest foods. Picture the astonishment there must have been when the decanter was raised and the music played. Here indeed a novelty!

These decanters must have been made specially for the musical box industry, probably for a limited market. Manufacturers and agents alike would have bought them and fitted a suitable movement. In this particular case the agent J. H. Heller fitted a 2 air movement obviously made for the German market.

The movement has a cylinder 3.2 cm long x 1.8 cm diameter playing on a 31 tooth comb. It is of a standard type made in their thousands for the novelty or trinket market. They were produced by a number of manufacturers. The serial number 639 is stamped on the bedplate. This particular item has been given the Register number R-6108.



Fig. 1

Heller must have had great difficulty fitting the movement into the decanter. The top of the spring barrel along with the end of the governor bracket had to be ground away to enable the movement to fit into the dome. So much had to be removed that the grinding has just broken through to show the threads of the governor fixing screw! Closer inspection of the bedplate shows that all 4 corners had to be chamfered off to allow the movement to fit into the available space. Obviously the designer of the decanter and the manufacturer of the movement had not consulted each other! (Fig.2)

Heller had his own design of circular tune sheet printed. (Fig.3) This was glued and stuck over the wooden base including the fixing screws, a practice that does not encourage the subsequent removal of the movement! One presumes that Heller had many of these tune sheets printed, so he must have sold a substantial number of these decanters or similar pieces over a period of time. The tunes, with translations, are as follows:-

1. Vergis mein nicht. Kelie (?)
(Forget me not.)
2. Ob Auglein sind blau. id.
(I wonder if your little eyes are blue)

We now have yet another type of tune sheet to add to the tune sheet

book. Should the translations not be quite accurate, please write a letter to the Editor correcting any errors.

Like all movements that have been exposed to dampness, the comb has suffered and show signs of surface rust. Fortunately in this case the rusting is light. The decanter seems never to have been immersed in water and whoever cleaned out the wine dregs must have done it carefully. There is no sign of water staining on the tune sheet. How this particular decanter came over from Germany to this country must for ever remain a mystery.

No doubt the poor survival rate of these decanters must be due in part to washing and cleaning. Movements must have quickly stopped working after immersion. Some movements would have been taken out and thrown away. In other cases the whole decanter must have been discarded. Somewhere out there must be decanters with the specially shaped domes and no movements. Quite puzzling to the uninitiated and a prize to those in the know. ■

Obviously the designer of the decanter and the manufacturer of the movement had not consulted each other!

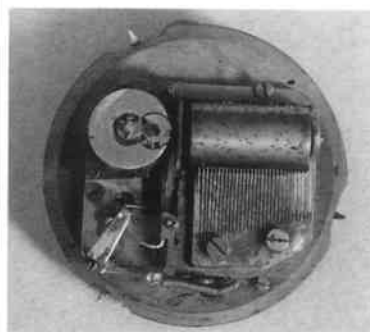


Fig. 2



Fig. 3

Home Sweet Home at Last

- Part 1 by Paul Bellamy

In 'The Music Box' Vol.19, No. 6 I referred to Mrs. Walton's Christie's Old Organ by saying 'of course, the illustration was not an organ but a Hicks-type barrel piano'. MBS member David Evans pointed out that other editions and lantern slides showed a 'monkey' or 'busker's' organ. Did she know the difference between a barrel piano and a monkey organ? Finally, 'the penny dropped' (no, it was not coin operated). She did indeed know that young Christie played a hand-operated organ. But this comes later. My quest to find out about her, the publishers and artists was a trail others had attempted but failed, with the exception of one person, Morna Daniels.

In 1985, Hendrik H. Strengers wrote in the American MBSI journal about Christie's Old Organ. He had a Victorian copy of her book published by the Religious Tract Society, London, England. He could find nothing about her but traced the name Whymper found on the print entitled 'Christie Finds the Clergyman with Treffy' (Fig.1). The print also carries the initials WLJ, attributed to W. L. Jones. Whymper was the engraver and Jones the artist undoubtedly responsible for the 'piano-organ' controversy.

"But who Mrs. Walton was, I do not know?" concluded Hendrick Strengers.

Ralph M. Heintz, Joint Vice President of the MBSGB, together with Angelo Rulli wrote another

article in the American journal about organ grinders depicted in children's books. Once more Christie's old organ featured with pictures of two American books. One, by the American Tract Society has the same illustrations as the RTS but the other by A. L. Burt Co. of New York, depicts a monkey organ. Were the American books tied in some way to the RTS? The answer is yes but details are lost. They had branches all over the world and were the first independent publishing house in Africa and Asia. They had a profound affect on the reading-life in Britain, Africa, Asia and North America in the 19th century.

The British Library, formerly part of the British Museum, supplied a printout of publications attributed to her under Catherine Augusta Walton overwritten by hand with Amy Catherine. Why the change? Archivist Morna Daniels said that much of the British Library archives were destroyed in WWII, including records of the RTS. Thus, the list was incomplete. Morna had a quest to find Mrs. Walton and e-mailed me the details of her research, which explains the change in name. She put me in contact with Lutterworth Press, RTS's successor. Colin Lester, Sales and Publicity Manager, provided leads and information summarised as follows:

Religious Tract Society. Founded in 1799 by 40 clergy and lay people of the inter-denominational Missionary Society who met for two days in a coffee house in St. Paul's Churchyard, London, England. Chaired by the Rev. George Burder, RTS was founded on May 10th that year. The committee members were all unpaid volunteers who met before going to work. In the first 6 years they produced two million copies of 78 tracts. In the late 1700's many people could not read and tracts, invented by Hannah More, were a

*Did she know
the difference
between a
barrel piano
and a monkey
organ?*



CHRISTIE FINDS THE CLERGYMAN WITH TREFFY.

Fig. 1 Fine engraving by Edward Whymper and artist W. L. Jones. Used on 2nd and later RTS editions.

popular aid. G. H. Spinney, (died 1939), researched this period, describing tracts as 'Sheep in wolves clothing', presumably inferring that the strong text images conveyed a more subliminal message. He dates the first tract publication as 3rd March 1795, ending November 1799, the founding year of RTS, by the independent printer John Marshall. Hannah had connections with Anglican philanthropists known as the Clapham Sect, which knew of their popularity. They published and distributed monthly issues of morality tales, 'broadside ballads' and Sunday readings under the title 'The Cheap Repository for Moral and Religious Publications', a precursor of the RTS.

The Cheap Repository sold at one halfpenny, one penny and 'seldom exceeded two pence for a drop-head title'. They had six leaves folded to make a pamphlet and carried an introduction by Henry Thornton, Member of Parliament. He said that the Repository's aims were 'to furnish people at large with useful reading, at prices so low as to be within reach of the poorest purchaser'. Quantity prices were accorded 'to Gentry' and there is a long list of subscribers, including the Archbishop of Canterbury. Nothing new about bulk purchase discounts! We know that tracts were read not only to children but also to adults, probably groups of young mothers and the like. Sarah Trimmer (1741-1810), in the quarterly periodical *The Guardian of Education*, wrote regular reviews about RTS publications in its formative years. By 1840 the RTS had a complex of buildings in Paternoster Row, St. Paul's Churchyard and Chapter House Court, at the heart of London's book trade. Here, the St. Brides Printing Library exists from which I found out about some of the engravers and their techniques. The publishing arm of RTS took the name Lutterworth Press late in the 19th century. In the early 20th century it was sold to James Clarke & Co. Ltd. The missionary part of RTS was renamed United Society for Christian Literature (USCL), now associated with an organisation called Feed the Minds.

They produced a bicentenary event (Ref. 1). Some archives of the RTS still exist (Ref. 2). Also, the Children's Books History Society (Ref. 3) produced a bi-centenary booklet for an exhibition of the RTS at the University of East Anglia in 1999. Currently, Christies Old Organ is out of print. Maybe this article will spawn interest in a further reprint. The illustrations will be a 'monkey' or 'busker's' organ and good illustrations they are too!

The RTS merged in 1932 with other missionary organisations and was renamed The Lutterworth Press (Ref. 4). This name had subsisted alongside the historic name of the RTS that finally disappeared in the 1940's. The name Lutterworth was chosen to reflect the work of John Wycliffe, a vicar of Lutterworth in Warwickshire. He strove to make the Bible available in the language of ordinary people. During WW1 the buildings in Paternoster Row and Bouverie Street were bombed. The entire stock and records were destroyed but some of the Press and magazines survived for posterity. By 1900, RTS published in 230 languages. Those interested in Christie can therefore search in practically every language.

What has the above to do with mechanical music? Hendrick and others have asked questions about Mrs. Walton, the RTS and the illustrations before. I find the social context of our hobby equally absorbing as the instruments themselves. The growth in literacy, influence of advertising, increase in wealth, demand for knowledge and entertainment were parallel forces. Musicians were scarce. Mechanical music could now be found in both wealthy and middle class households, supplying a huge demand for entertainment. Mechanical music was also to be found in the streets, providing entertainment and annoyance, as well as income, to itinerant musicians. Domestic instruments such as the Hicks, introduced c1820, were subsequently adapted for street use. The influence of RTS was enormous, embracing the work of Mrs. Walton who, unconsciously, was probably the most powerful influence on our image of street music.

Amy Catherine Walton is buried in the churchyard of the village of Leigh (pronounced Lie), near Tonbridge in the county of Kent, England. It is a modest grave (Fig. 2). The church is a picturesque old building on the high point of the village (Fig. 3). The Tonbridge Free Press recorded her death on Friday, 5th July 1939, the eve of her 90th birthday, as the widow of the former vicar of Leigh. She had either two sons, or one son and a grandson, and possibly two daughters. One daughter, Daisie, was unmarried and as befits the custom of those times, probably looked after her parents. Sir Cusack Walton DSCO, born in 1878 and probably a nephew of her husband, was an engineer on the Indian Railways. He rose to become Agent of the North West Railway in 1924 and was knighted in 1933. I quote this because Mrs. Walton seems to have been a very observant person. One of her stories, 'The lost Clue,' vividly describes a railway journey with him from Euston to Birmingham. Her writings give detailed observations of her times. Thus, was she likely to describe a piano instead of an organ? Later, it is absolutely clear that she knew and describes exactly what happens to an organ when Christie stops playing in the middle of Home Sweet Home.

Mechanical music could now be found in both wealthy and middle class households, supplying a huge demand for entertainment.



Fig. 2 Amy Walton's grave. "In very dear and loving memory of Octavius Walton who passed over March 7, 1933 aged 88. Also, his wife Amy Catherine Walton who passed over July 5, 1939".



Fig. 3 The church at Leigh.

When first catalogued, Mrs. O. F. Walton's initials were attributed correctly as those of her husband, a custom in those days. An error caused her to be identified as the wife of another O. F. Walton, a barrister, whose name was Catherine Augusta. Even so, the Times obituary makes another error by calling her Mrs. Olive Walton. Her earliest books were published anonymously but were so popular that she was granted the honour of her married name.

Born on 6th July 1849, her father was the reverend Deck, an evangelical vicar of St. Stephen's church, Spring Hill Street, Hull. In 1875 she married her father's curate, Octavius Frank Walton. She was 25 and he 30. Octavius took his degree at Cambridge, a centre of evangelism, and became curate of St. Stephens in 1873. Amy spent her early years in Kingston-upon-Hull, to give this Northern town its full name, publishing her first book 'My Mates and I' under her father's name in 1870. The RTS paid £24.

Society at large was undergoing change in the 1870's. Hull, like many towns, was expanding into and destroying the countryside. Migrants from country to town fell out of the habit of going to church. Family

ties were broken. Bright city lights caused people to 'succumb to sin'. There was also extreme poverty. Mrs. Walton wrote about these themes, endeavouring to re-convert backsliders. Her stories, or tracts, were morality tales of religious sentimentality based upon a simple and naïve belief that the country reflected beauty, purity and goodness. The towns contained poverty, drunkenness, ugliness and sin. A mother neglects her child and the child accidentally burns to death! ("My Little Corner"). Wow! Powerful stuff for the impressionable. Thus, in 1874, the year before she married Octavius, we have the birth of Christie's Old Organ or Home Sweet Home. Nancy M. Cutt (Ref. 5) states that the first book was published in that year under the title 'Home Sweet Home' apparently without the primary title of Christie's Old Organ. They were advertised as 'Shilling Volumes'. She says the first edition had a poorly drawn frontispiece and an additional last illustration of Christie as a preacher in a top hat. Figures 4, 4.1 & 4.2 show the poorly drawn frontispiece, top-hat picture and cover of a book of this description. The only difference is the cover, which has both titles. Two illustrations 'Old



Fig. 4 An RTS 1st edition frontispiece of poor quality, predating Fig.1 c1874

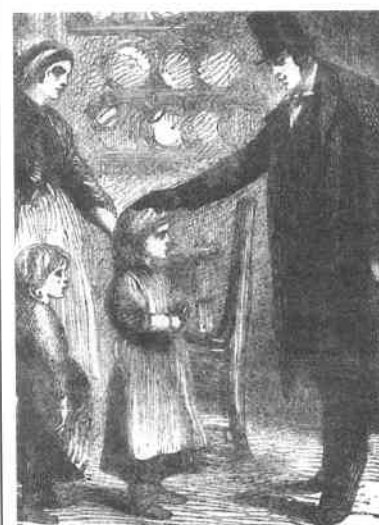


Fig. 4a The last illustration(ref Fig.4).

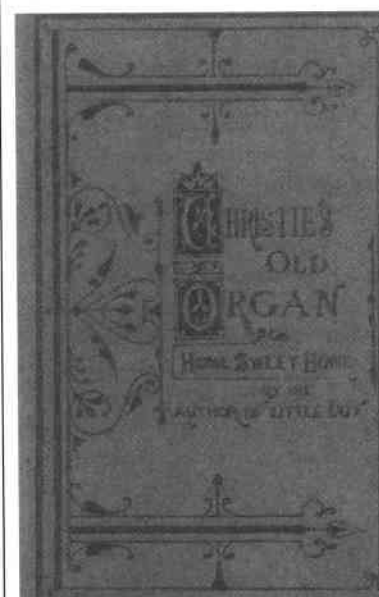


Fig. 4b Cover (ref Fig.4). The 1874 edition is said to have only Home Sweet Home as the title

Treffy Plays a Tune' and 'Miss Mabel's Snowdrops' are, however, the same as later editions, the latter of which is signed C. A. Ferrier. The RTS address is for Paternoster Row, St. Paul's Churchyard and Piccadilly. The printer is R. K. Burt & Co., London and there are 126 pages. It is important to note the addresses for dating purposes. We can conclude that this is a first edition but is there an earlier one without the primary title of Christie's Old Organ. Look to your archives! and please let me know.

RTS Editions or Impressions? Fig. 5 has 124 pages. As Nancy Cutt describes, the last illustration has gone and we now have the well-known illustration by Whymper and artist Jones. Its red cloth boards have embossed decoration with gilded title lettering. An advert at the back gives its price as 1s, or 1s 6d for gilt edges. 50% extra for decoration! The title page lists 'Little Dot,' 'My Little Corner,' 'My Mates and I,' another important indicator in dating.

Another book, with a hand written date of 1880 on the flyleaf (not shown here), appears at first sight to be identical to Fig 5 except that it has green cloth. Thus, I have called Fig. 4.2 a first edition, Fig. 5 a second edition and the green version of Fig. 5 a third edition. It might be better to classify them as impressions or issues. The import thing is their chronology. We can deduce this from a combination of factors such as: The limited archival information; whether three addresses (earlier issues) or two addresses (later issues) are given; references to previous publications, hand written dates, usually on a Sunday school prize label British Library listings indicate written dates by 'c' e.g. circa 1883.

As marketing seemed to be a feature of RTS, we find the editions, or impressions, with different type settings, different numbers of pages and the same illustrations often in different order. The covers are frequently similarly embossed but in

different colours. Others have different covers with the same text and illustrations. Despite this confusion, it should be possible to compare your possessions with the information and illustrations in this article and make a firm judgement as to chronology.

Returning to Fig.4.2, if the description by Nancy Cutt is correct, someone will have a copy of that first edition with the single title 'Home Sweet Home'. What a find that would be! There are many collectors who have copies of Christie's Old Organ. Do look at them very carefully and compare with the information collated here so that editions and impressions can be classified, confirmed and updated. As collectors of mechanical musical instruments and ephemera we have a duty to pool and record our knowledge. Amen. ■

Part 2 continues with more on the editions, life of Mrs. Walton and the story of Home Sweet Home.



Fig. 5. An RTS 2nd edition referring to 3 works, c1874. 6½" h x 4" w. An almost identical green version refers to 4 works, c1874

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...someone will have a copy of that first edition with the single title 'Home Sweet Home'. What a find that would be!

MBSGB web site for beginners.

By Bob Ducat-Brown

There must be those amongst us who are wondering what on earth a web site has to do with collecting, restoring and researching musical boxes, which after all belong to the last two centuries rather than this computer age. Although web sites require the use of a computer (a most uninteresting machine without a cylinder, governor or winding handle) It is a wonderful way of sharing information with anyone anywhere in the world.

For those who do not have access to the Internet you may be surprised just how much information there is on our web site. If we consider it part of our duty to promote interest in mechanical music then we are helping a great deal.

Anybody who has just discovered his or her first musical box either in an antique shop or in their granny's attic will find help. Perhaps they would like to sell it, in which case they will find a list of auction houses such as Christies, Sotheby's or Phillips who have specialist departments. If they would like to find out more about it we have a notice board where they may ask questions, which can be answered by anyone who may know the answer or have a suggestion. It is quite possible

that their newly discovered possession will not play a tune, but a visit to the web site will supply them with a list of members who could restore it for them, or books to buy on restoration. What we really hope is that once they have their musical box and it works, that they will join our society, full details are available on the web site to enable them to do so.

There are parts of the web site which members can make use of, or indeed take part in. The gallery page is designed so that we may look at pictures of other members' musical boxes. We are however a little short of material here, so if you would like to have a photograph of one or more of your instruments placed on the web site please send in a print, transparency or digital image. It would be helpful to include a brief description. We do not mention your name unless you would like us to.

The notice board is for the use of members and non-members so please feel free to make use of it. If you have a technical query, some useful information to pass on or can answer somebody's question, you can place it onto the site yourself. Also if you have any news about the society or coming events this will make useful information for the news section. Just

E-mail mbsgb@webtechnic.co.uk or drop me a line. We are now receiving between 350 and 400 visitors to our web site each week, and they are logging on from all over the world. You may ask, "how do they know where to find our web site"? Apart from having the address passed onto them by a friend there are two main methods by which we can be found. If a person is logged onto a web site, which has some sort of, relationship to us, such as Musical Box International they will find our address listed, all they need to do is click on our name and they will be connected to our site.

The second method is by using a search engine. The person requiring information may log onto a special web site called a 'search engine', they then type in words connected with the subject in question such as 'musical box' or 'Polyphon'. As we have previously supplied these key words to many of the search engines they will be offered a link to the MBSGB site, and need only click on our name to visit it.

If you have not yet paid a visit to the Musical Box Society of Great Britain web site, it may be found at: www.mbsgb.org.uk If you would like to post pictures or information the address is: Acorn House, 24 Birch Grove, Welwyn, AL6 0QP. ■

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Spinning Dolls

by John F. Turner

The opportunity came my way to obtain a 'Spinning Doll' whose features are like the young Mozart, dressed in a very smart flared brocade jacket adorned with small crystal spheres and bells, the hair tied back with a bow of black ribbon and on his head a tricorne hat and when operated plays an excerpt from the third movement of Eine kleine nacht music.

Little did I realise in my research into Spinning dolls, also known as Marotten, Poupees and Drehpuppen, how little has been written in the English language about these mechanical music puppets that gives an insight into their history.

In a number of Court paintings the Court Jester is quite often depicted holding a stick on which is mounted a replica doll. The origin of these 'dolls' is unknown, it was not until the latter part of the 18th century when they came into use by Ladies of the Court during the Ball season. The Puppets were

elaborately dressed in silk and lace and some were fitted with bells, and were used to attract the attention of men, and when held up with a small twist of the wrist the dress of the puppet flared out. Such was the popularity of these puppets that they soon became an accessory that no 'Lady' would be seen at the ball without one.

The early models were fitted with decorative turned wooden handles to which the body was fitted. The heads were carved from wood or made from papier mache - a few, however, had carved ivory heads fitted and the latter commanded a very high price. It was not unusual for the heads to resemble a well known personality of the period.

Early 19th century illustrations of the famous French ballerina, Ma'mselle Noblett, shows her performing at a Ball and holding doll with bells attached; the fact that a puppet is being used as a theatrical 'prop' indicates that it was considered an acceptable fashion accessory of the period.

During the period 1860 to around 1914 a very popular dance on the Continent of Europe called the 'Cotillon' was all the rage. The ballrooms at that time were extravagantly decorated. In the centre of the dance floor was a table and after every dance it was the custom for the gentleman to present the ladies with a small present from this table. The Master of Ceremonies for the evening gave a more expensive present such as a Spinning doll. The catalogues of manufacturers who were making the dolls at that time referred to them as Cotillons after the dance of that name.

The main centre for the manufacturers of Spinning dolls were based in Shalkau and Sonnenberg, a few kilometres inside of the border of what was formerly the G.D.R. (East Germany) north of Coburg. In Sonnenburg were Robert Karl Arm, Fritz Dressel, Adolf Greuling, Richard Metzler Jnr. and Phillipl Samhammer who obtained a patent for the musical dolls. In Shalkau area Adolf Zinner, Gottlieb

It was not unusual for the heads to resemble a well known personality of the period.

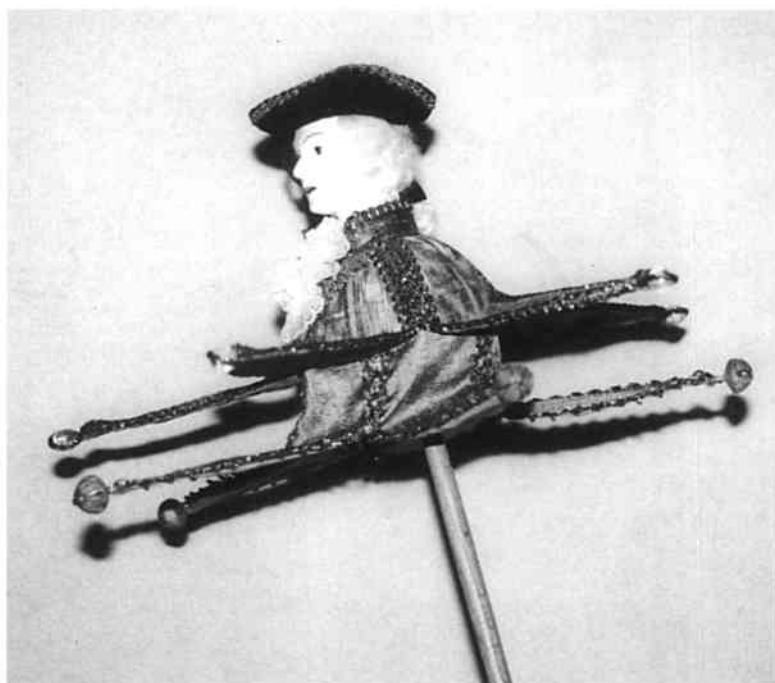


Fig. 1.



Fig. 1(a).



Fig. 2. French Ballerina Ma'mselle Noblett.

Zinner & Sons, Frenk Smidt and the partnership of Khan and Zinner. French manufacturers were Dechais, Julien and Raberyet Delphieu.

Depending on the cost of the dolls, some were dressed in plain material, whilst others were richly decorated. Most makers stopped supplying dolls with bells, (I am unable to ascertain the time when

this occurred) and fitted them with a small comb movement attached to the handle which was then fitted to the inside of the doll's body so that when twisted around it operated the movement and played a tune as if it was being turned by a crank handle used on a Mannivelle. *The diagram and the photograph of an original movement explains the simple mechanism and construction.*

Gottlieb Zinner & Sons catalogue in 1900 shows a large range of dolls varying in price from 7 marks a dozen upwards. Eight music note dolls with silk and cotton dresses cost 7.80 marks a dozen. Dolls with two colour dressed cost 12 marks a dozen. Eighteen music note dolls in cotton and flannel decorated with wooden balls cost 24 marks a dozen. Luxury dolls fitted with a 28 music note movement that played two pieces of music, dressed in silk and with a velvet covered handle, cost 33 marks a dozen. Twenty-eight music note dolls with two tunes decorated with Gold and Silver fringes and ribbons were 73.20 marks a dozen. In 1898-1900 one mark was worth one shilling. The value of one mark now would be approximately £4. Do not forget the prices quoted are ex factory.

A cheaper type of doll usually dressed as a Clown, Harlequin etc., did not have a musical movement but was fitted with a 'Quietscher'. Innumerable hours have been spent researching exactly what a 'Quietscher' is. I have been able to ascertain that it is a device that squeaked when pressed.

With the outbreak of the 1914-18 war in Europe production declined rapidly and production and sales never recovered. Around 1930 the musical spinning dolls disappeared from the market and eventually became collectors' items, especially by the dolls collecting fraternity. The reader will, I am sure, realise by the number of people manufacturing Spinning dolls that considerable numbers must have been made and sold. It is surprising that these musical dolls do not appear regularly in the sale rooms or on display in the mechanical music sections of museums. I could, of course, have been looking in the wrong places - maybe I should have been in the Toy section?

In my researches for this article I am indebted to Mr. & Mrs. Walter Dahler of Brugg in Switzerland for technical information and to Mr. & Mrs. Mash of Horbury for assisting me with the translation of papers and documents. ■

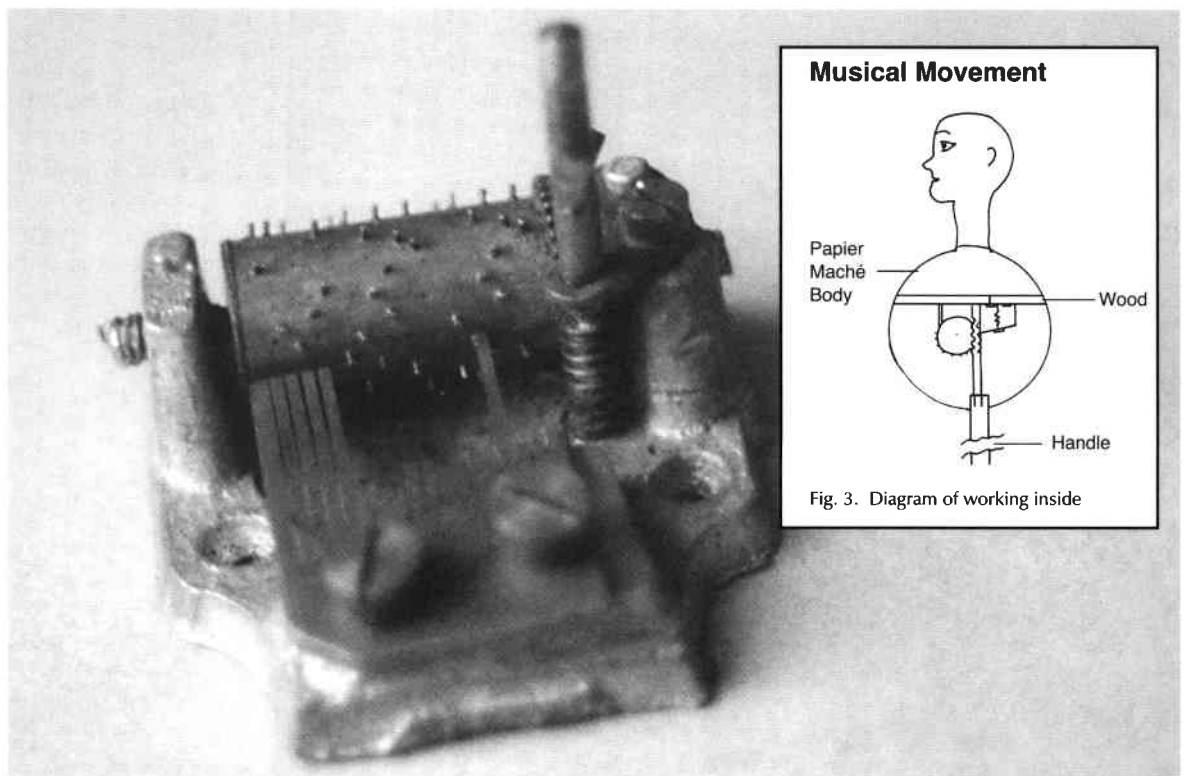


Fig. 3. Old movement

Tuning, Pitch & Temperament

The discussion continues - from John Powell

I read with interest John Harrold's articles on tuning, pitch and temperament which rekindled memories of my efforts to understand these principles shortly after joining the Society in 1974, although at that time my interest was sound produced from musical box combs. I considered it necessary to be able to determine the original characteristics of a particular comb before trying to tune replacement teeth or lead weights. I was able to show these in a graphical form which produced some interesting and unexpected results. I also am one of those who has a poor ear for music and has to rely on a meter from which I can record frequency and is independent of the use of the E.T. scale and the use of cents.

John did not make any reference to the music played by the Roller Organ cobs particularly to the keys in which they are set or to what system he restored its tuning. As the scale of the instrument is not fully chromatic, (9 reeds instead of 12), it could indicate that the music is pinned in a limited number of keys which could allow chords of pure intervals to be used to enhance the sound produced. John, quite rightly, decries the practice of universally tuning organs or any other mechanical instruments to equal temperament scales. However, the limited investigation carried out on my own roller organ, the tuning of which does not appear to have been got at, is very close to equal temperament and the cobs appear to be pinned in more than two keys. The lesson here is that more detailed examination is required before the full facts can be established.

I would like to amplify the foregoing paragraph by detailing the tuning of the two barrel organs

that I have completed over the years. The first is a Black Forest organ clock, the organ of which was made by B. Mukle & Söhne, Neukirch, and having three barrels of eight tunes each. It has 82 pipes in four ranks and a compass of $5\frac{1}{4}$ octaves. By referring to final and intermediate chords all tunes were found to play in the keys of C and G. Dr. J. J. Haspells, in his book "Automatic Musical Instruments, their mechanics and their music 1580-1820", describes on page 117 Ignaz Bruder's method of tuning small clock organs which play music in the keys of C & G. In short, Bruder tuned the most used intervals true at the expense of the lesser used intervals. The sound produced is, I think, excellent and has even had approval of some of our respected organ members. Incidentally, setting the pitch of the organ was by trial and error to accommodate two stopped pipes, one being on its upper limit of adjustment and the other on its lower. By fixing A at 362.2 c.p.s. (never have liked the use of the words hertz or cents) allowed these two pipes to sound at their correct pitch. I was fairly happy that the instrument might well be close to its original condition.

The second organ is a chamber one by Flight and Robson - London - which I restored before working on the clock organ. This also has three barrels but of ten tunes each. The general condition was fair when I acquired it although some of the metal pipes were badly damaged. I was able to repair these and tuned them to existing good ones and retained their original tuning where possible, the resulting sound being acceptable to my ear. Some time after completion of the clock organ I happened to notice similarities in the scales of both organs and checked the keys that the chamber organ music was set in. That also had all tunes in C and

G. I then compared its tuning to the Bruder system and found very little difference to that which we already had. I made a few minor alterations to some of the pipes and, to be honest, could detect very little change, but that instrument had always sounded pleasant. I wonder whether many other barrel organs of these types had their music set in the keys of C and G and would have been tuned to Bruder's system.

Regarding the question suggested by John Harrold and mentioned by our Editor as to whether a forum on the subject would be of value I, for one, would welcome it but fear that it would be of limited interest to most of our members. Many are of the opinion mentioned by John, that if it sounds right, it is the end result that matters, should be tempered by the remark that somebody in the first place has to make it sound right.

On the next page is a list of previously published articles in our Journal relating to sound aspects or tuning, and if there are any omissions I crave your indulgence. I suggest that a forum should consider the evidence and opinions of these articles and letters as a basis for continuing research, to which our Society is committed. Where possible it should be related to the various instruments that we are able to examine and study. I think that this could best be achieved by articles in the Journal. If these are to be of value, it would be better if unsubstantiated opinion could be excluded, although this may well limit the number of contributions offered.

John Harrold replies

I agree with John that more research is required, especially on comb tuning. It seems likely that each musical box producer had his

...Bruder tuned the most used intervals true at the expense of the lesser used intervals.

own ideas about tuning combs and also pitch. It would be interesting to compare boxes from early, middle and late periods to see if there was much change. For instance, were early individual tooth and small group combs tuned equally? Was there progression towards standardisation as the 19th century progressed? Perhaps someone who deals with large numbers of comb restoration could help here.

There must have been close co-operation between the tune chooser, the arranger, the comb maker and tuner. The arranger often needed more than one tooth of a particular note, or even whole groups of teeth at particular notes to accomplish the arrangements. We don't seem to have much information on this,

often we have first class technical details but very little on the musical side. Is there a danger that we are tuning everything uniformly and to a certain pitch to satisfy modern hearing? I don't know the answer to this one. As David Evans pointed out in his letter in the last journal, the correct solution can be a revelation.

Dealing with the roller organ, I agree with John regarding the missing notes in the scale. Perhaps the original inventor's plan was just to use two keys? Some early cobs are in C¹ or G¹. But the idea took off and people demanded more tunes. The only answer is to tune equally to enable the arranger much more scope

I have spoken to a couple of people who passed the comment,

"my cob organ seems to play the early cobs better than the later ones". Both these instruments are quite early (late 1880s) Were they tuned just for C¹ and G¹, are they out of tune, have they been 'got at', or is it just coincidence? I don't know, but since I wrote the article I have checked two more cob tuning scales and they are both equal, both quite late (1910 and 1914) and appear to be original. So, no conclusive evidence at all. I re-tuned mine equally and it plays various cobs nicely, so it seems to be the answer at present.

Just one other comment regarding John's Mukle organ clock. Is the pitch really as low as A=362.2 Hz, i.e. approx. 1½ tones below modern pitch? If so, a very mellow sound. ■ **John Harrold**

Articles and letters published in Music Box on this subject:

Martin Drivel - Theoretical Environmental Behaviour of a Vibrating Steel Tongue (Vol.1.4-33)

David Tallis - Comb Tuning (Vol.5.3-160)

Bob Minney - Tuning and the Clavioline (Vol.5.6-306)

Keith Harding - Tuning and the Musical Box (Vol.6.1-35)

Alfred Thompson - What Determines the Tone of a Musical Box? (Vol.6.5-315)

Marina Worswick - Is Your Box Musical? (comb tuning). (Vol.9.2-68)

John Powell - Tuning Characteristic of Musical Box Combs (Vol.9.7-316)

Anthony Bulleid - M.B. Oddments. Beats, Sublime Harmonie (Vol.10.5-209)

Gerry Planus - Letters - Comb Tuning (Vol.10.5-224)

John Powell - Letters - Sublime Harmonie & Paillards Patents (Vol.10.7-338)

Anthony Bulleid - Sublime Harmonie & Paillards Patents (Vol.10.7-338)

Gerry Planus - Sublime Harmonie & Tuning Combs (Vol.11.1-54)

Anthony Bulleid - M.B. Oddments. Vibrating Teeth (Vol.12.2-66)

Anthony Bulleid - M. B. Oddments, Dead Teeth. (Vol. 13.1-28)

Robert Leach - Fair organ Tuning (Vol.13.2-52)

John Powell - Letters - Dead Teeth (Vol. 13.2-62)

Gerry Planus - Letters - Dead Teeth (Vol.13.3-94)

Anthony Bulleid - M.B. Oddments, Single Comb Sublime Harmonie (Vol.14.4-109)

John Powell - Sublime Harmonie & Paillards Patents (Vol.17.1-18)

John Harrold - Tuning, Pitch & Temperament (Vol.19.7-175)

John Harrold - Tuning, Pitch & Temperament (Vol.19.8-202)

There must have been close co-operation between the tune chooser, the arranger, the comb maker and tuner.



Keith Harding

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A member recently contacted me about the activities of Ami Geneux asking if I knew if they really were makers of boxes or just component manufacturers. Looking at the Register and the 4 boxes noted I think that the chances of them being a manufacturer is remote. Serial numbers range from the 200's to the upper 16,000's. Surely if over 16,000 boxes were made, more would have survived? Only one box has been seen with the name clearly on view. All the others have Ami Geneux stamped on comb bases where it is well hidden. I know some retailers disliked names being stamped on movements and wished to sell them as their products. That may have prevented the stamping of visible names in some cases. It could be that Geneux were manufacturers of combs and/or comb bases. It is unlikely that the answer will ever be known for sure, but more research may come up with an explanation. Restorers keep on looking please!

In the 18th century, the piano was a very different instrument to the piano of today. Originally developed in Italy by Christofori, the piano had a wooden frame and thin strings. Christofori had devised the basics of the key and hammer actions, but the instrument could only play softly and very softly. The difficulty was in dealing with the enormous tension of the stringing which can amount to several tons!

During the first quarter of the 19th century, great improvements were made to the instrument. Iron bracing was introduced which featured on the pianos of Broadwood and the French maker Playel. By the mid 1820's both makers were using iron frames, thicker strings and harder hammers. At last the piano with the improved hammer release mechanism could play forte in the true sense of the word.

Further improvements and the arrival in 1853 of the piano makers Bechstein, Bluthner and Steinway, paved the way for the golden age of the piano. Many called the newly developed instrument the forte-piano simply because it could now play loudly, whilst others called the instrument the pianoforte. For a time both names were used, but eventually the name pianoforte

became universal, and the older name was dropped.

Musical box manufacturers seem to have been rather conservative, (with a small c) and called their loud and quiet boxes Forte-piano and seeing no reason to change continued to do so until the end of the musical box era. I doubt if we shall ever see a Pianoforte box registered

It is always a delight to hear of a musical box or indeed any mechanical musical instrument that has a history with it. These scribbled messages and engraved plaques are like a tiny time capsule that give an insight into past times. One such box recently turned up for registration having originally been presented to Mme. Guiditta Pasta (nee Negri.)

Pasta, (1798 - 1865) was in her day a famous Italian soprano. She was so famous that it was said that Bellini had her singing in mind when he wrote the rolls of Norma and Amina in his operas. By the year 1837, her voice was deteriorating and by 1850 she had to retire from singing altogether. Sometime after this she must have been presented with a musical box. Unfortunately, the tune sheet has not survived, but the airs are said to be operatic. My guess is that some of the airs will have come from the pen of Bellini

These little pen portraits are so interesting and must be preserved along with the boxes. If you have a box that has a history, please share it with us. All will be noted in the Register and will survive in the archives.

The bulk of the Register work at the present time is taken up with correcting and organising the Nicole part. To date there are just over 2,300 Nicoles's listed and about 1,350 of the gamme numbers noted. The majority of the Nicole's have white tune cards with a few using either green or blue coloured cards. No one really knows why this was done for sure, but there must have been a reason.

In the early days of the Society, the late John E. T. Clark stated that, "Nicole used blue tune cards for their second quality boxes." This statement was made without any supporting evidence and should be totally ignored. Firstly, I do not believe that Nicole released any sub standard boxes on to the market and secondly, boxes with a blue tune card are predominately of good quality with many features associated with the more expensive movements. e.g. Ratchet winding, forte-piano and Oratorio boxes.

Green cards seem to have been used largely for Grand Format and Overture boxes but not exclusively. However if a Nicole has a green tune card, one can be pretty sure that it started life as a very good quality box.

The Register is just starting to show a pattern of use by Nicole of their coloured cards. There is a certain overlap of use, but the green cards were used first with the blue cards continuing on for a longer time. Much more information is needed, so may I appeal to all to have another look at your Nicole and let me know all about it. My thanks in advance. ■

The Registrar

I am not convinced that the Victorians believed much in a throw away life style, so where have they all gone?

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Aeolian (meaning wind-operated) Harps had bursts of popularity from way back in the middle of the 18th century. They consist of four or more strings of different diameters stretched over two bridges and all tuned to the same pitch. Mounted on a thin wooden box about 15cm wide by 10cm deep and 60 to 90 cm long, they make mild, "haunting" music when set up in a moderately windy position.

In Geneva their name is Harpe Eolienne; and this is occasionally seen on musical box tune sheets of the 1870 - 1890 period. There is absolutely no vestige of any similarity between the music of an Aeolian Harp and the music of these boxes; but it may well have proved a good sales gimmick because they were made by Conchon, Paillard, Bremond and certainly some others. The first two are in Vol.11 page 249 (and my first book page 39).

Their basic arrangement is a main comb with a smaller, secondary harp comb with zither. About half the harp comb teeth are in the same pitch range as the treble half of the main comb but the others extend the range at the piccolo end. With this set-up a good arranger can make an interesting and distinctive accompaniment to the main melody from the harp comb; but that was not always achieved. Sometimes the harp comb is over-used, giving a florid effect. Sometimes the zither covers all or part of both combs, giving a routine zither effect like a Harpe Harmonique movement. A tune arranger's opinion on the subject would be very interesting. Certainly some of them did not really know what to make of a Harpe Eolienne, and this type does not appear in the makers' "Book of tunes" described in Vol. 18 page 219.

The tune sheet of a good orthodox Harpe Eolienne 6-air box serial 43534 is in Fig. 1, and its mechanism in Fig. 2. It was almost certainly ordered on Bremond by an agent who wanted all the kudos because it carries Bremond's anonymous Geneva tune sheet. It is also identified by Bremond's typical marking under the case, see Fig. 3.

*With this set-up
a good arranger
can make an
interesting and
distinctive
accompaniment...*



Fig. 1. The central cartouche has Bremond's typical entry of serial/gamme no.

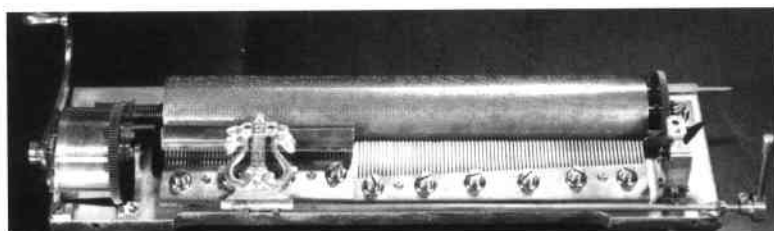


Fig. 2. Bremond 43534 gamme 2011 Harpe Eolienne with "remote control" of the zither.



Fig. 3. Under the case, with serial number and 12 pouces cylinder length noted in the usual Bremond style. The screwed-on foot is an addition.



Fig. 4. Harp comb of 43534, showing the whole front length of the comb base stretched, more severely at the treble end. Every pitch change is scribed, with sol fa notation.

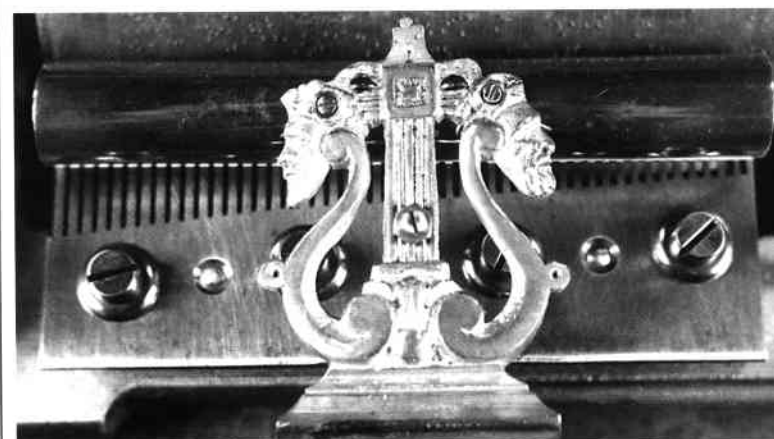


Fig. 5. Surely this zither holder was special to Bremond, with its golden lyre and masks. I added the central adjusting screw, not too blatant I hope.

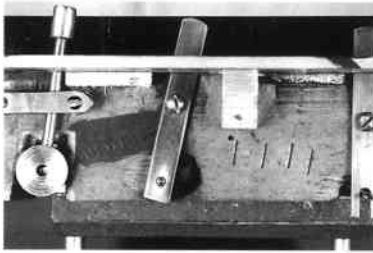


Fig. 6. Replacement lever and stops for zither. I think the travel of the original lever depended on the length of the slot in the control platform.

The 13" (33cm) cylinder is entirely conventional. One turn lasts 66 seconds and tune 1 is on the cylinder dots as often in Bremond's 40,000 series. The harp comb with 49 teeth is at the bass end, probably to ensure that the zither could cover all its teeth which is prevented by the fan blades at the treble end. Its lowest note is *b* 492Hz and it has four groups of 4 and five groups of 3 teeth tuned to the same pitch. Unusually, the comb base was stretched to increase volume as can be seen in Fig. 4.

The main comb of 75 teeth has *a* 440Hz at nos. 27 and 28, and five groups of 4, three groups of 3. Its highest note is the same pitch as no. 29 on the harp comb. Corresponding teeth on the two combs are of equal stiffness.

Some early Harpe Eolienne boxes had a permanently fixed

zither tissue roll under the harp comb teeth; but most had an on/off lever, sometimes operated from the control lever platform, as here on Bremond 43534. It is a replacement; the original control was missing, and the zither was permanently "on" when this box turned up at auction. The zither holder is very unusual, being a polished casting instead of the more usual nickel-plated flat, and thereby representing Bremond's "Golden Lyre" - embellished with two rather sinister profile masks, as seen in Fig. 5. The control mechanism I had to fit appears in Figs. 2 and 6. I added an adjustable positive stop to the zither holder because I thought the stop at the control lever was likely to be unreliable, - as its history seems to have proved.

The movement of serial 43534 is typically Bremond, made about 1881, castings by SBI, blank number 39 on bedplate, spring and governor. Placing the harp comb at the base end involved cutting away part of the bedplate to clear the leads of the main comb. The case had no feet, and no relief under the front and sides, so it must originally have been mounted on an item of furniture. I added four conventional feet each secured with two half-inch (12mm) csk screws, shown in Fig. 3.

All six tunes are commonly heard on Bremond boxes, but here they have undoubtedly received special treatment to make the harp accompaniment a distinctive feature. It suits some tunes better than others, tune 1 naturally setting the pace, which suggests that the box was chosen or ordered more for its tunes than for the (so called) Harpe Eolienne effect. Or was it just a joke to choose tune 4, *Doux Zephire* meaning *Light Winds*.

Mandolin Ténor by Rivenc

The tune sheet in Fig. 7 is on an "imposing" case, overall 27.5 x 13 x 8.5 inches (67 x 33 x 22cms) including the domed lid and podium. The front, sides and lid have crossbanded burr-walnut panels and the glass lid frame is crossbanded to match. Quite elegant.

It has a 15¼" by 2¾" diameter cylinder (39 by 6cm) with the last tune pinned on the cylinder dots and track lines. One turn takes 75 seconds. The mechanism with its rosette comb washers is shown in Fig. 8. Not visible, I am sorry to say, is the winged lion which is stamped on the governor cock.

The 144-tooth comb is in two halves and there are 62 pinned, 44 soldered and 20 feather dampers. Part of the bass end half is shown in Fig. 9.

Not visible, I am sorry to say, is the winged lion which is stamped on the governor cock.

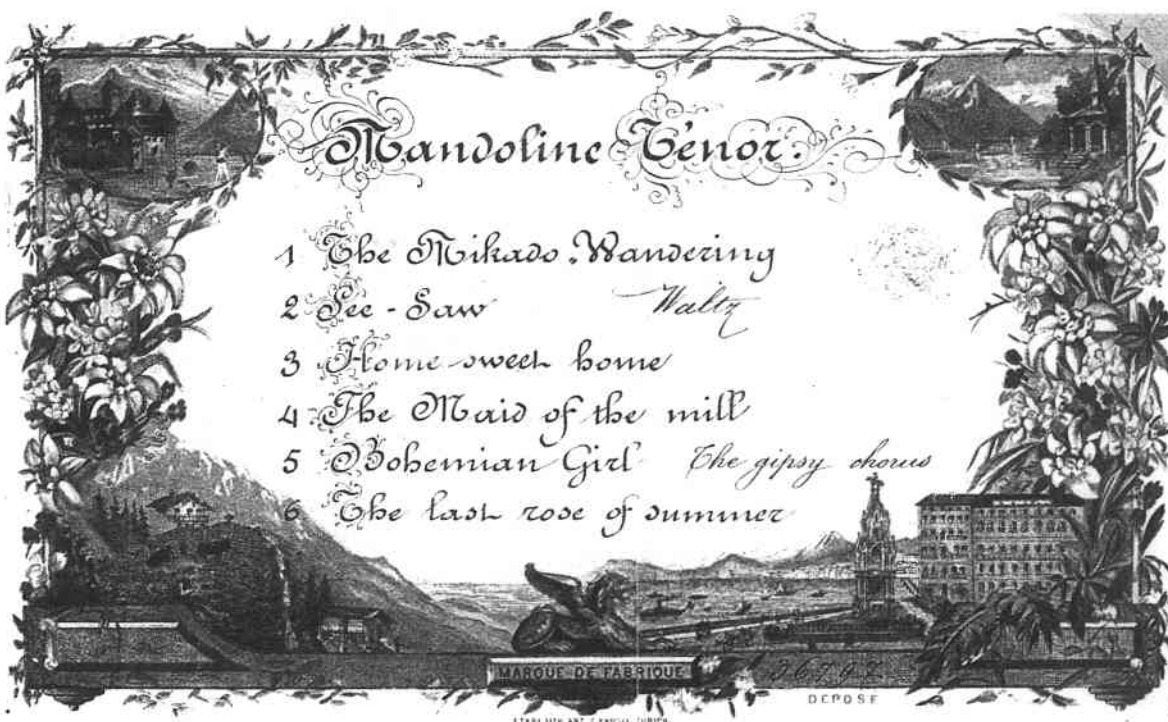


Fig. 7. Rivenc 36797 tune sheet with the Brunswick Memorial. Tune 1 is the latest, 1885. Tunes 2 and 4, 1884.

musical box oddments no. 88

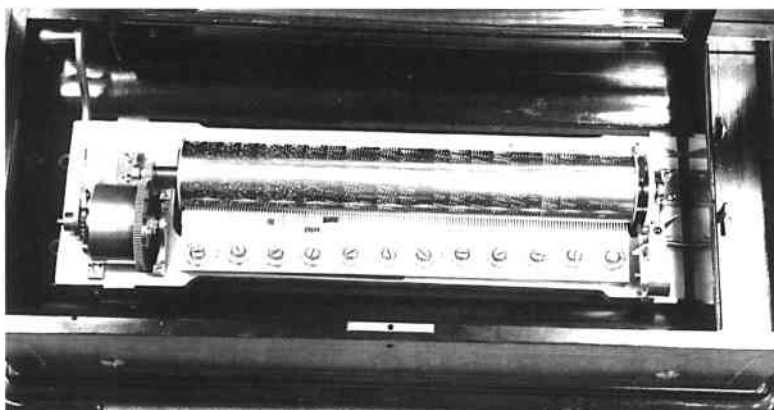


Fig. 8. Serial 36797 mechanism, with the two 440Hz and five 880Hz a teeth marked. Also marked is the second group with teeth of the same pitch.

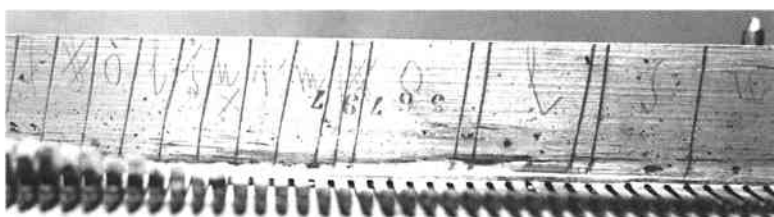


Fig. 9. Bass half of the two-piece comb, stamped 36797, with every pitch change scribed and with abbreviated sol fa notation.

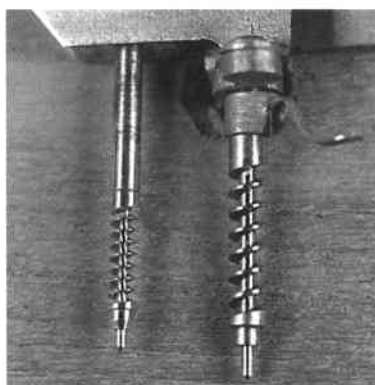


Fig. 10. Endless worm of serial 36797, attached to its stop tail and governor, compared with the usual type.

That zither must have been bought as an extra. I discarded it as a menace.

Blank no. 2 is stamped on the bedplate edge and on spring, cylinder and governor components. Serial 36797 is on the winder, cylinder bass end and the great wheel - which is an impressive sight at $2\frac{3}{4}$ " (7cm) diameter. It has 172 teeth. The governor gear has 60 teeth, and the two pinions 12 and 10 teeth as usual, so a coarse endless worm is fitted engaging a 20-tooth wormwheel. The overall ratio cylinder to endless is 1 to 1720, well within the normal range, see Fig. 10.

The box came with a conventional type of anonymous zither, with nickel-plated bracket and circular tissue holder, length

14.4" (365mm). The bracket was held by the two middle comb screws. Unluckily, one of these screws happened to be further than normal away from the cylinder, and despite the bracket slot being elongated the tissue could not be set in its correct position. That zither must have been bought as an extra. I discarded it as a menace.

The heavy cast iron bedplate has the usual two legs at the treble end and one at the bass. When, perhaps a hundred or more years ago, this box was dropped from a considerable height and the bass end hit the ground first, the bass end leg buckled the sound board into a split curve which nearly reached the bottom of the podium - a good inch (or a very good 2cm) - below the bottom of the case sides. I think it must have remained in this condition for a very long time, because when I got it the sound board was absolutely set in its distorted condition and the mechanism was held up by the two (badly distorted) bass end case screws.

I was advised to coat the cracks with Resin W wood adhesive and clamp the distorted area flat, using all necessary force. This I did with several small screws with large washers inside

the case into a sturdy piece of 1" by 1" aluminium angle under the case - assisted, the case being upside down, by several heavy weights on what had been the distorted area. I left it untouched for a week, and it now seems quite happy back to its correct shape; but I have left the angle fixed underneath. Rivenc's rubber stamp of the winged lion was applied in this area, but is now so pale that I have outlined it anew.

This box has a wide range of grouped teeth and it excels in giving the effect of sustained notes. As usual, this success is due to the aftersound from all the neighbouring teeth in each group. A zither damps out this aftersound - surely not Rivenc's plan for his serial 36797. Sustained notes in the tenor range do call to mind a tenor singing airs like tune 1. That might possibly have inspired the tune sheet heading. (The French version of tenor has their acute accent on the e.)

Rivenc performance

The bass notes are used to good effect, but perhaps too sparingly. The piccolo end is brilliant and very tuneful, and more than usually effective. These opinions were expressed, the latter almost unanimously, at a Sussex Open Day last July. Also, someone raised an interesting point which is seldom discussed, - namely that the rather complex arrangements on these large boxes are best enjoyed when you already know the tunes, - tune 1, for example, but not tune 2. This was generally agreed.

Tune arrangers probably got a very free hand on those special "Variations" boxes which usually played only two to four tunes on 4 to 8 turns of the cylinder. More modest and practical boxes like Rivenc 36797 play their tunes in slightly lengthened versions, also with variations. Their aim must have been to incorporate enough variety in the tunes to keep them attractive after many repeats.

All this makes a strong case for playing a simple version of a tune before repeating it on a box such as Rivenc 36797 which will then be all the more appreciated.



Fig. 11. Typical 75 by 45mm (3 by 1.8") black on white tune sheet with borders slightly superior to mere "printers borders." Serial 154652 in lower border.

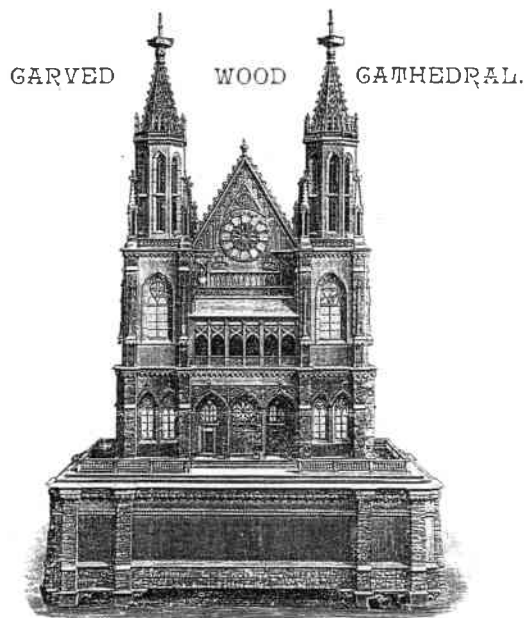
Three illustrated snippets. . .

1. I think the *petite musique* whose tune sheet is shown in Fig. 11 was made in 1873 or 1874. Tune 1 is the smash hit of 1872 and tune 2 from 1869 is better known as *Wine, Woman and Song*. The printed tunes and the number 164 suggest that many of these small boxes played these two extra-popular tunes. Thousands upon thousands of them were made so it is no surprise to see that one maker notched up serial 154652 by the early 1870s.

2. Hendrik Strengers kindly sent replacements when he read in Oddments 76 that my Baker-Troll catalogue lacked two pages. One is well worth an airing, see Fig. 12, with its impressive cathedral. What a good box for a fine sublime harmony movement! The "various sizes and models" offered must have included a stunner at the top end of the range, considering that the cheapest cost 750 Swiss francs in the 1890s... then worth £30 but now in AD2000 worth about £2100.

3. The tune sheet in Fig. 13, I am quite surprised to report, belongs to Baker-Troll serial 8473. The governor cock is stamped TROLL & BAKER, so I am sure they were the makers. Therefore this design must have been in general use, and only used by Billon-Haller when their butterfly trade mark was added at top centre. This box was sold by Paillard's New York office, see Fig. 14. Both Figs kindly supplied by Tim Reed. ■

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Fig. 12. Page 64 of the 1892 Baker-Troll catalogue.



Fig. 13. Black and sepia on white, about 1880, for Baker-Troll 8473, 13" (33cm) cylinder, - inches on tune sheet mean poudres, "Swiss inches," that bit longer. Early tunes; I think the first is the latest, 1871 by Edouard Strauss.



Fig. 14. Paillard pinned their Agency label on the lid overlapping the tune sheet - which carries a tiny reference number, 241, near the left end of the lower border, as here indicated!

What a good box for a fine sublime harmony movement!

AUCTION REPORTS

Christie's

South Kensington,
14 December 2000

The highlight of this sale was a delightful 18-key Waldkirch barrel-piano with five automaton figures (featured on the cover of our last issue - Ed.). In the centre was a 'flasher' with a difference: swinging aside his cloak, he revealed no improper parts of himself, merely a diminutive lady-friend in décolleté attire. This piano had appeared at South Ken once before, nearly 20 years ago, when the late Claes Friberg's Mekanisk Musik Museum was sold. It raised £3,800 then, but this time the hammer fell at £24,000.

Exactly half that amount was achieved by a Nicole overture box. No, not a Grand Format, just a standard 12 x 3 1/4 inch cylinder playing four overtures, such as one might expect to bring about £5,000. However, it didn't need teeth seeing to, its dampers all damped, it had not been 'restored' and every time I started it, I felt I could listen quite happily all afternoon. So, obviously, did at least two other people. You can't quantify that sort of thing - I do not expect the next Nicole overture box to make the same. When something just 'sings' at you that this is the best example of its type you are ever likely to see, you will, if you are sensible (and rather well-heeled) go for it regardless.

Other entries were less exalted, but noteworthy, if not especially expensive for what it had to offer, was a Mandoline Quator P.V.F. with a 17 x 3 1/4 inch cylinder, two (not four) combs and a beautifully engraved plate over the solid part of the comb, announcing 6 Airs - Mandoline Quator Expressive - Accord Parfait. Some work was needed to dampers and comb settings, but it was going to be a stunner when done. A good buy, I'd say, at £4,500.

Fob seals seem to be down a bit; one struggled to a mere £400, while another managed £1,600. As it had an automaton scene (quite innocent, this time, just a lady

harpist) that, too, was not over the top.

It is a truism to say that buyers do not want goods that either need or have had extensive restoration; what catches the eye, time after time, is the 'good, unrestored' state. A layer of dust, congealed oil, sticky toffee or whatever, is just fine. So, just to prove that

there are no rules, a 10-air 'bum and drells' in need of a re-pin more than doubled its £500-£700 estimate to reach £1600. It had once belonged to the actor Bransby Williams, known to Edison enthusiasts for his declamations on cylinder. Were there two Bransby Williams fans after it? I doubt it.



19% Polyphon with two door base.



A Swiss musical chair made £376.



Left hand image: Pistor organ which sold with a price of £23,000 on the 24th January.



Right hand image: A Longman and Broderip which realised £2,000.

Disc boxes are steady as she goes at present - £2,600 for a double-comb table Polyphon, £850 for an 11-inch top winder, £3,200 for an upright 15" and £3,000 for a 19" on stand. The latter was original, but not the usual hinged 'bin' type. Fixed racks were hidden behind two conventional doors with some incised carving in the panels. Both these uprights were pediment-less and in average unrestored state.

On the 24th January, in a sale entitled "Works of Art from Country Houses", we had two chamber organs and two musical boxes. One of the former, a 25-key organ by Pistor, circa 1770, made auction history by reaching £23,000, while a more typical example by Longman & Broderip, in need of an overhaul, made £2,000. The musical boxes were a 12-air, nine-bell job with a 17-inch cylinder, sold at a very creditable £3,400, and a triple-comb Sublime Harmony changeable cylinder by John Manger, which made £4,500. Sadly, each of its combs had suffered some not very neat tooth repairs.

(Prices quoted are without the Buyer's Premium of 17.5%)

Christopher Proudfoot

Phillips of Knowle 17 January 2001

There was considerable interest in mechanical music items in this sale, the star of the show undoubtedly being a Symphonion 'Eroica' musical clock playing triple 14" discs which, together with 27 sets of discs, made £16,800. A 19" by the same maker, lacking pediment and coin drawer, made £2,100.

A number of smaller cylinder and disc boxes realised between £200 and £600, but two Nicole Freres interchangeables numbered 44420



Triola mechanical zither.

and 44827 made £3,500 and £4,500 respectively. This latter box came with nine cylinders each with six airs.

A late 19th century mechanical picture with three cardboard cut out dancing cats reached a surprising £420.

Among the less frequently seen items was a Hicks-style barrel piano. The wormed case accounted for the price of £320. A restored Triola mechanical zither in a very nice condition was good value at £900 with 10 rolls.

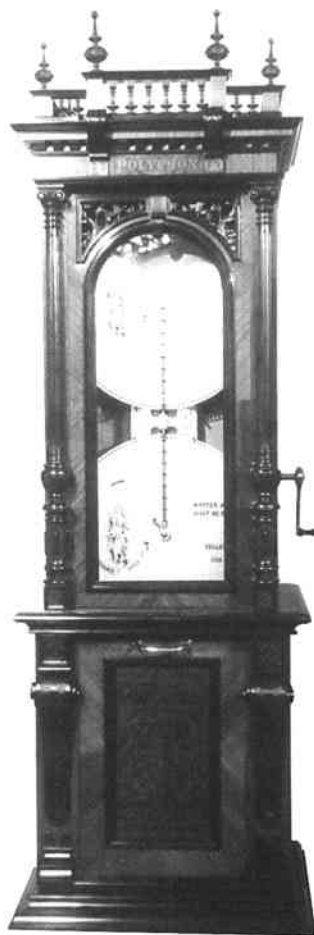
With 40 items of mechanical music there was something to suit most budgets and interests. ■



This 1920 German Automaton realised £820.



Nicole Freres interchangeable cylinder box no. 44827.



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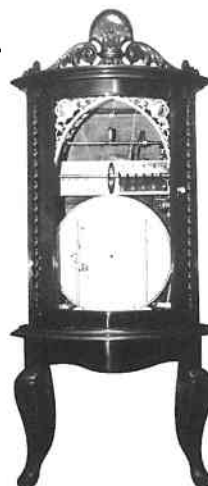
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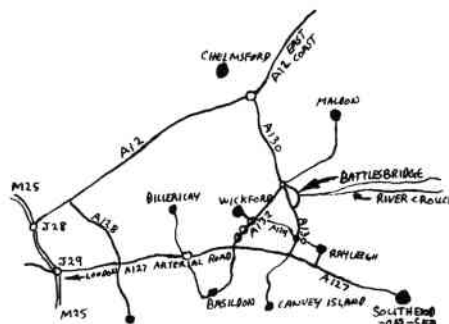
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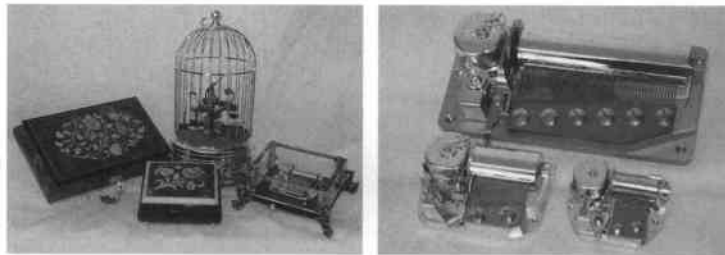
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From the Registrar

URGENT

POSSIBLE PROCEEDS OF CRIME CYLINDER MUSICAL BOX

Description:

Probably by Cuendet (tune sheet style 42 in Tune Sheet book)
5 Bells, Drum and Castanet
12 Airs, Inlaid lid, Transfer on front
Serial No. 37213 on bottom
No MBSGB Register Number
No Post Code or other markings

This box must be returned to the present 'keeper' by mid March if the owner can not be traced.

It may have come from a house on the Eastern side of the country.

If you have any information please ring Ted Brown.

Remember, this could happen to one of your boxes if it is not registered!

letters to the editor

I think that Keith Harding, in his article 'An Insoluble Problem' in the 19/8 edition of Music Box, has made a somewhat surprising mistake. He notes that if there is a cumulative error in pinning in a musical box cylinder, then by the time the setter reaches the last tune it could overlap the already-pinned first tune. He then states that L'Epée put the registration marks on one of the middle tunes because that would halve any cumulative error!

Consider the situation where there is a +10 thou' cumulative error. If one pins the whole of tune one first, then by the time one comes to the last tune its pins will be too close to the pins of the first tune by 10 thou'. If one starts in the middle pinning the later tunes first then, true enough, the last tune will be only 5 thou' too close to the position of the first tune. However, the early tunes have not yet been pinned, and this is only the EXPECTED position of tune one. If one now works back from the middle the first tune will actually be 5 thou' out from its expected position, so once again the first and last tunes are still 10 thou' too close!

Anthony H. King

Reply from Anthony Bulleid to letter from A.H. King, ref. Keith Harding's article.

I have been asked to reply because I originally made this statement in Music Box Vol.15, page 19, Spring 1991.

Anthony King's explanation is absolutely correct for all boxes other than those by L'Epée, as his example shows. But he has missed out the main purpose of the L'Epée system,

which added an extra definite fixed pricking position between the already fixed track lines.

Therefore in his example on a L'Epée box the early tunes have already been accurately pricked. The total error is limited to the half after the dot tune, and so the total error is halved.

Perhaps I should have emphasised this point in my note.

Referring to the P. Shrouder letter on page 222, also in the current Music Box, this box must be Arthur Junod's Jurassien as shown on page 158 of Vol.15. **H.A.V. Bulleid**

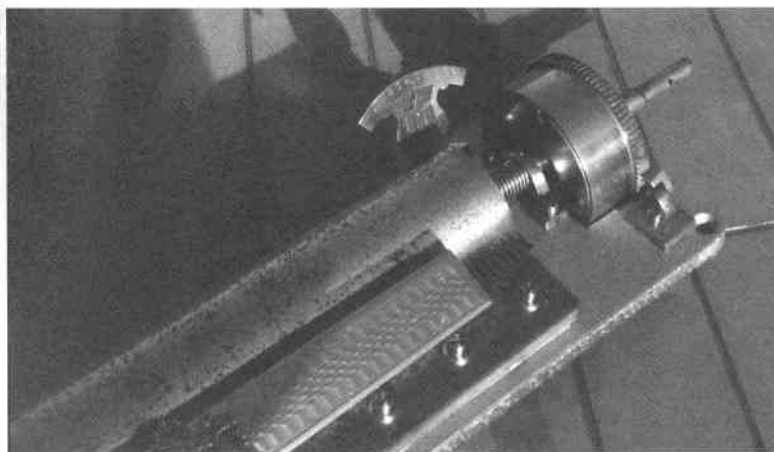
Referring to the co-axial drive box in Mr. Shrouder's letter (Vol.19 No.8), by a coincidence, I recently came across another box with a strong family resemblance. This was a 10-air, 13" nickel-plated movement with a 74-tooth comb on a very heavy cast iron baseplate. The manufacture was of high quality with, unexpectedly, equally good tune arrangements and, to me, had a hint of Paillard about it!

There was a Serial no. 7531 on one foot but no manufacturer's name.

The arrangement of the spring barrel and drive was virtually identical with Mr. Shrouder's box, but strangely, the governor was at the left-hand end as in a conventional box. The disadvantages of the light mainspring, as mentioned by him, were emphasised by the very robust winding handle which allowed an enthusiastic winder (we all know them!) to break the end off the mainspring with the greatest of ease! In fact, it could be wound quite easily by turning the barrel with the fingers.

There were some differences between the movements which might be significant. Mine did not have knurled end cylinder endcaps, nor did it have Dawkins-type comb washers. The zithers, too were different, but these often get removed and replaced. Could these two movements be experiments by the same manufacturer?

Lyn Wright



See letter from Lyn Wright - above.

MUSIC BOX BINDERS

The last issue of Music Box completed Volume 19, so this may be a good time to remind you about binders for your magazines. Each binder holds eight issues plus the index (which is included with this issue) and ensures that they are kept in good condition for future reference. The binders come packed two in a stout cardboard postal box price £12.00 plus postage as follows:

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Alan Clark's short review "More on Wade" of musical novelties produced by Wade was most interesting, not the least for the list of ten designs seen so far and for the comment that movements so far seen are of Reuge or Thorens manufacture. I can now add two new pieces of information.

There was an eleventh - a sailing ship. I have one in the 135mm style. Both it and a "My Fair Lady" tankard by Wade, which I have, each contains an 18 note Lador mechanism. The ship design plays "Killarney"; the other plays "I could have danced all night". As "My Fair Lady" opened on Broadway on 15 March 1956 and in London on 30 April 1958, this particular design can be dated with some degree of accuracy as not earlier than 1956. Lador mechanisms are found in several other brands of musical novelties, at least in New Zealand. I have examples in pieces by Crown Devon (22 note mechanisms), Sandland (18 notes), in a pewter

tankard (22 note) and in two German steins (18 and 22 notes).

Alan J. Robb, New Zealand

I am seeking information of the Schmoele Brothers, Henry and William, of Philadelphia who built an orchestrion for display at the 1876 Centennial Exhibition in Fairmount Park, Philadelphia. Known as the electropneumatic orchestra, this instrument was displayed in an upper gallery of Horticultural Hall and was played for the entertainment of visitors. Music sheets for the instrument were sold to visitors (25 cents per tune) to be played and then taken home for a souvenir. Does anyone know: (a) what happened to this instrument after the exhibition closed; (b) are there any other orchestrions known to have been produced by this firm; (c) are any Schmoele Brothers instruments extant? where? (d) has anyone seen any music from this instrument?

I've been researching the 1876 Centennial for over 20 years and have not been able to answer these

questions. I am aware of the content of Bowers Encyclopedia and have already corresponded with Dave Bowers, Terry Hathaway, the curator of music for the Metropolitan Museum, and the curator of music for the Smithsonian.

Information can be sent via e-mail to: brian.e.shaw@aero.org or to my home address which has changed since the printing of the MBSI Directory and is now 20447 Hemmingway Street, Winneta, CA 91306.

An Apology

In the last issue of Music Box we omitted to say that Lyn Wright was the compiler of the Christmas Crossword - somehow it slipped through the system. As well as the Crossword, Lyn is a regular contributor to these columns and is also responsible for the Annual Index - the latest of which goes out with this issue. Where would we be without members like that? Sorry for the omission, Lyn.

IN OUR NEXT ISSUE...

In the next issue of Music Box, due out at the end of April, we continue the story of Christie's old organ, learn about the restoration of a truly massive revolver box from Australia and go on a guided tour of a 'Magician' automaton with Nick Hawkins - and there's bound to be more! Plus all the regular features and Society News, of course.

If you have any News, Views, Dates for the Events Diary or Advertisements please send them as soon as possible to be sure of inclusion.



classified advertisements

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