

# The Music Box

Volume 20 Number 7 Autumn 2002  
Edited by Alan Pratt

*An International Journal of Mechanical Music*



## In this issue:

- The Origin of the Tuned Comb
- More Musical Mugs
- Auction Reports
- In the Workshop
- Plus our regular features



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



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# Your Contribution



Alan Pratt

**T**he success (or otherwise!) of *The Music Box* depends in large measure upon the efforts on our contributors and the articles they submit for publication. For our 'regulars' this represents a huge commitment in time and effort, allowing us all to share in their knowledge and research.

But variety is also important in preparing each issue, so that, hopefully, there is always something of special interest to all members. Over recent months, I have been heartened by an increase in articles submitted, many dealing with the more personal side of mechanical music. Anecdotes on how you got started; memories of how you acquired a particular box; or just a description of a treasured item in a collection. Following on from Anthony Bulleid's plea in the last issue for practical articles of the 'how to' variety, there has been an encouraging response, which will ensure that I can include at least one 'workshop' piece in each issue for a little while. But this does not mean that other new material is not wanted!

With this in mind, I thought it might be helpful to give some practical general guidance to anyone thinking of writing for the journal. First of all – how much should you write? Well, there is no formula for this. Write as much as you need to tell the story. Don't assume that everyone knows as much as you do about a particular subject, so explain things fully, and if you use abbreviations explain what they mean on the first usage. If you have drawn upon the work of others, then a bibliography at the end showing your sources is both good practice and is a courtesy to those whose work you have built upon.

Next, in what form should you send your work? Most people these days use word processors rather than a typewriter and articles written in

'word' are most easily handled at this end. Other programmes often do not translate into the program we use in assembling the pages, and figures, sizes in fractions, and especially accents on foreign words, can go astray. For this reason, always send a hard copy with the disk so that these details can be checked. Print the hard copy at double space (or 1½ if you prefer) as this gives room to make notes during editing. And finally, don't waste time formatting your work. Centres headings, drop capitals etc., and pictures within the text, all have to come out so that the finished work conforms to the style of the rest of the pages of the magazine.

Pictures are a vital part of any article. The old adage that a picture is worth a thousand words just about sums it up. Unless you have the facility to arrange proper lighting, it is probably better to take pictures outside against a plain background. Choose a bright day when it is slightly cloudy – this softens the light and prevents the hard shadows that you get with direct sunlight – or flash. Gloss prints, either 6" x 4" or 7" x 5" are fine, but please print your name on the back with either a caption or a reference number to captions on a separate sheet. With all the photographs that are submitted it is so easy to lose track of unmarked ones. By the way, write names/captions etc. on adhesive labels – not directly onto the print – ballpoint pens leave impressions on the front. If you have a digital camera the same rules apply for taking the pictures, but you can e-mail them to me as j pegs. Phone me if in doubt or for my e-mail address.

Remember, if you write for *The Music Box* you are writing to friends. If you think of it that way it doesn't seem so daunting.

Share your knowledge and interests with your fellow members. If it interests you, it will probably interest many others, so get writing. ■

Editor

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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.

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

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## Autumn Meeting- October 4th-6th 2002 at the Courtyard Marriott Hotel, Lincoln.

### Friday evening

Dinner in your own time, Table-top sale; will members try to support this event by bringing along any small item for sale. Demonstration of local members' boxes.

### Saturday

#### 8.30-9.15 a.m. Registration.

Organ grinders to be directed to their positions; each organ grinder group will have an official collector and dog. There will be a prize awarded for the best dressed organ grinder. At 1.15 p.m. visit to the Guildhall for a welcome presentation by the Mayor.

2.45 p.m. - coach will leave the Hotel for the Cathedral area (Westgate coach park). There will be a choice of Cathedral tours, one will be a general tour and the other will be a roof tour, which will involve some stair climbing, to view the bells and enjoy superb views of the area. There is also the chance to visit the Castle, antique shops, books shops, etc. in the area. The coach leaves the coach park at 5.45 p.m. for the Hotel.

Society dinner on Saturday evening - meet at 7.00 for 7.30 p.m.. This will be followed by entertainment from the Lindum accordion band.

### Sunday

Make your own way to the Westgate car park (only one mile from the Hotel). Members to split into two groups to visit the Toy Museum and Roy Ison's collection.

Members intending to bring an organ for the grind please contact Dorothy Robinson on 01673 843400.

*Directions to the Courtyard Marriott Hotel from North and South via A1.*

*Leave A1 at exit signed Newark & Lincoln A46. After 9 miles the A46, at a roundabout, becomes the Lincoln bypass; bear left and follow the bypass, still the A46, signed Lincoln Central. Continue on this road for 2.2 miles and straight over the next roundabout a further 1.5 miles to the next roundabout and straight over. A further 1.6 miles brings you to the roundabout signed Lincoln Central A57 to the right,*

## New Members

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

2805 N.Hawkins, London  
2806 M.Kibby, Lincs  
2807 Mrs A.Dixon, IOM

2808 D. Butcher, Essex  
2809 R. Schack, USA  
2810 Mrs E Colyer, Kent  
2811 P. Lattey, Hants  
2812 O. Cooper, London  
2813 J. Bickley, Bristol  
2814 S. Atherton Cheshire  
2815 B Hulme W. Mids

*follow this road. You will then pass an old grandstand and then start to enter a built up area (Carholme Road). Soon after passing a motor trade shop called "Tanvic's" there is a large traffic junction. Turn left at the lights and move into the right hand lane, turn right at the next set of lights onto "Newland". Go past the "National Car Rental" and then take the filter lane to turn right into "Lucy Tower Street". You are now approaching "Brayford Wharf", turn right at the bottom and a short way along you will find the Hotel on the right hand side. The first entrance to the Courtyard Marriott Hotel will lead you to the car park which has an automatic barrier.*

## Spring Meeting - Fleetwood - April 2002

Our Spring meeting this year was held at Fleetwood, just north of Blackpool. Our base was the North Euston Hotel, originally built during the rapid expansion of the railways, as the northerly end of the line to Scotland. It was envisaged that the rest of the journey would be by boat!

Mark Singleton, our local organiser, had prepared a full programme for the weekend, but with a slightly different content to our usual format. Friday was the regular informal get-together after dinner with a number of instruments on view and varied items for sale.

On Saturday we were given a conducted tour and behind-the-scenes look at Blackpool Tower. There can be few who have not visited the Tower at some time in their lives and on this visit it was fascinating to see how little has changed over the years.

The mighty Wurlitzer still plays in the ballroom and as we sat enjoying our afternoon tea we had one tune played especially to mark our visit. A new Wurzi organ, an electronic masterpiece that looks capable of sending a manned mission to Mars, is soon to be installed alongside the Wurlitzer. We were a couple of weeks too soon to hear it playing in the ballroom, but it looks impressive and requires the resident organists to have training courses to master its complexities.

The view from the top of the Tower is still breezy - and largely unchanged.

Our visit rounded off with a visit to the Tower Circus. Here things have changed. Gone are the animals. No more lions snarling with contempt at their trainers. No more elephants which, in the mornings, could be seen being walked down to the beach to romp in the sea. Now it is humans who perform their feats - marvels of balance and control, gravity-defying movements which leave you breathless for their safety. Hugely impressive, but was that a ghostly elephant to be heard in the distance? Perhaps not.

Before setting out for the Tower we had sufficient time to visit an interesting turret clock in a tower close to the hotel.

Sunday was another behind-the-scenes visit - this time to the Pleasure Beach. Some of the rides here are a hundred years old and it is a tribute to their builders that they are still operating alongside the hi-tech, gut-wrenching rides of today.

It is good to see that the present management respect their heritage, and



Fig. 2. Bernie Brown finds out what the butler saw!



Fig. 3. One of the Verbeeck organs providing music for the rides.

keep the older rides in full working order. On two of the rides they have Verbeeck organs which, contrary to expectations, are still playing from books. So many have been converted to play from computer disk that it was a real pleasure to go into the backs of the organs and see the book music in use.

The meeting ended in the only way possible for Blackpool - with fish and chips!

Our thanks to Mark for all his hard work in planning this rather unusual, but nevertheless enjoyable, meeting. ■

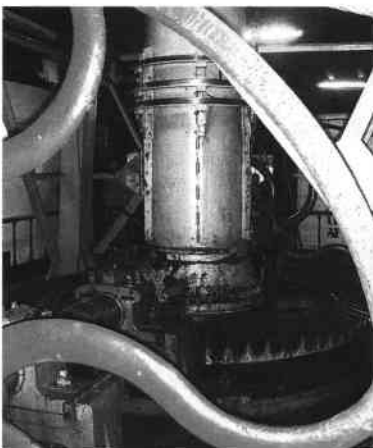


Fig. 1. One hundred years old and still going strong.



Fig. 4. Goodbye from Blackpool (Mark Singleton in centre on horse).

## society news and topics

### Future Meetings

#### Spring 2003

Birmingham - Local organiser: John Ward. April 4th-5th and 6th 2003.

#### Autumn 2003

Lake District - Local organiser: Arthur Cunliffe.

#### Spring 2004

Canterbury - Local organiser: Brian Campsie.

More details of these meetings will be in the next issue of The Music Box (Volume 20 No.8).

### Are you a Member?

The Musical Box Society welcomes new members. If you have had this copy of The Music Box passed on to you and you would like to pursue your interest in mechanical music, annual membership is only £24.00. Our Membership Secretary, Alan Wyatt will provide full details. Write to him at: P.O. Box 299, Waterbeach, Cambridge CB4 8DT, England.



### Murtogh comes Home...

At a small private ceremony, the ashes of The Hon Murtogh David Guinness were interred in the family vault at the 11th Century church of St Mary in Climping, near Littlehampton in Sussex. A small gathering of relatives and a few friends attended to pay their last respects to Murtogh who died on January 30th and was cremated in New York. Present at the ceremony and representing the MBSOGB and MBSI were Arthur W. J. G. Ord-Hume and Bill Nevard, both of whom had known Mr Guinness for more than 40 years, as well as Steve Ryder from New Jersey whose father, Hughes Ryder, was MBSOGB vice-president for many years. Meanwhile the future of the fabulous Guinness Collection of musical boxes and automata remains uncertain as executors and their advisers consider a number of possibilities. It is to be hoped that this priceless collection, result of Murtogh's life's work, can be preserved in entirety and preferably at a location where it can be appreciated by many.

### Christmas is a-coming...

*Our next issue goes out at the beginning of November, which could be a good time to tell members about things to buy for Christmas. I would like to have a feature devoted to gift ideas, so if you are offering items which would make good gifts, drop me a line with details including costs, ordering procedure (phone/mail/e-mail) and I will include them. Editor.*

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### Front Cover picture

Magician automaton - an early, unmarked magician with seven movements and twelve items (including thread, dice and fruit) which change mysteriously each time he lifts the cups. The cylinder movement in the base plays two airs. Sold on 23 May at Christie's for £9,500 hammer price.

*Photo courtesy of  
Christie's*

## Precis of AGM Minutes

**Precis of the minutes of the AGM held at the St. Albans Museum on Saturday 1st June 2002. There were 55 members present.**

Apologies for Absence; Seven members sent their apologies for being unable to attend. Minutes of the previous AGM; These were taken as read and there were no matters arising.

## President's Report

Christopher Proudfoot presented his first report as President. He noted that the Society had had a successful year continuing with the pattern of main meetings with extra events organised by local groups. A sad aspect of the year had been the very large number of deaths among members. On a more cheerful note the setting up of the Publications Committee, chaired by Paul Bellamy, had been a major step forward in the development of the Society. Christopher concluded by thanking all who had helped to make the Society such an enjoyable institution.

## Report of the Subscription Secretary

Richard Kerridge reported that our membership now stood at 532. One less than at the end of last year.

355 members	U.K.
67 members	Europe
78 members	U.S.A.
5 members	Canada
27 members	Australia & the Far East

## Report of the Membership and Correspondence Secretary

Alan Wyatt noted that 32 new members had joined the Society last year. Although there had been many enquiries on the internet only 5 had joined as a result. During the year 75 letters had been received all of which had been answered.

## Report of the Meeting Secretary

Roy Ison listed the forthcoming events to be organised by the Society.

**Autumn Meeting 2002** ....To be held at Lincoln.

**Spring Meeting 2002** .....To be held at Birmingham.

**AGM 2003**.....To be held on the  
7th June at a venue  
to be decided

**Autumn Meeting 2003** ..South Lakeland Meeting.

## Treasurer's Report

Richard Kerridge presented his annual report and balance sheet. £434 had been added to Society funds. The net assets of the Society now stood at £31,603.58 which included a Contingency Fund of £6,000.

## Editor's Report

Alan Pratt informed members that the page count of the Journal had risen with more pages being produced in colour. A wide selection of topics had been covered though material for the Journal came in largely from a small band of dedicated contributors. These people were to be thanked for their efforts. Alan would welcome more letters to the editor.

## Archivist Report

Kevin McElhone said that it had been a very busy year with many e-mail letters being received. Most requests for help had been dealt with within 48 hour. Kevin asked members to consider leaving a letter of intent with their will to leave books, catalogues and other written material to the Society Archives.

## Report of the Auction Organiser

David Walch informed the meeting that over £1,000 had been raised at our last auction. He reminded members that new rules and conditions had been drawn up for the auction and these forms must be used. David concluded by thanking all who had helped organise the auction.

## Subscriptions for the Forthcoming Year

The Treasurer proposed that the level of subscriptions remain the same for the coming year. This was warmly received by the meeting.

## Election of Officers

The following members were elected to serve the Society for the coming year:

<b>President</b>	Christopher Proudfoot
<b>Vice Presidents</b>	Paul Bellamy Coulson Conn
<b>Treasurer</b>	Richard Kerridge
<b>Editor</b>	Alan Pratt
<b>Subscription Secretary</b>	Richard Kerridge
<b>Membership /Correspondence</b>	Alan Wyatt
<b>Meetings Secretary</b>	Roy Ison
<b>Advertising Secretary</b>	Ted Brown
<b>Auction Organiser</b>	David Walch
<b>Recording Secretary</b>	Arthur Cunliffe
<b>Committee Members</b>	Robert Hough Hugh Morgan Daphne Ladell

## AOB

It was agreed that Ralph Heintz be elected an Hon. Life member of the Society. His Life Membership Certificate to be presented later in the year at an American meeting. Bob Ducat-Brown reported on the success of the Society's web site noting that it was receiving over 550 visits each week. Ted Brown outlined details of a joint meeting in the year 2005 with the M.B.S.I. Meeting to be held in this country. Kevin McElhone was praised and congratulated by the membership for his efforts in compiling his Organette Book. All felt that it would quickly become an authoritative work on the subject. The meeting closed at 11.45.

## European Tour 2002

The MBSGB European tour this year was timed to embrace the 7th International Waldkirch Organ Festival. This three yearly event is one of the highlights of the organ scene.

But there were other delights to be enjoyed before we reached Waldkirch. Our first stop was to Ehrenbrihtstein, just across the Rhine from Koblenz, where the Hotel Hoegg was to be our base for three days.

A tour of Siegfrieds Museum in Rüdesheim is always a worthwhile event, but it is especially good when the guide is Siegfried Wendel himself. (Fig.1). The collection, which was first opened in 1969, is housed in the Brömershof, an impressive old building dating back to the 15th century, with parts believed to have been built in 1310. Siegfried loves to tell of the history of the instruments in his collection and one such anecdote concerned a

Hupfeld Violana Orchestra.

Acquired in an incomplete state, the parts to complete this instrument were found as far afield as America and East Germany (as it was then). After much work, the instrument now plays on its three violins, with all the accompaniments, and sounds magnificent. Alongside this Hupfeld in the museum is a "double" six violin version built in Siegfried's workshops. And so the tour continued - fairground and street organs, bird boxes, cylinder and disc boxes. All are played to delight the eye and ear. (Fig.2).

The story of the Hupfeld and its reconstruction is contained in a new book published in English/French/German by Siegfried. Its 264 pages are packed with pictures and information about the collection, the workshops and the history of mechanical music. To mark our visit, Alan Wyatt presented Siegfried with a

copy of the new MBSGB Organette Book. (Fig.3).

The next day was a non-mechanical music one as we were off to Cochem and then on to a wine tasting at a typical Rhineland vineyard. Lunch was accompanied by around 12 different wines, and a brief stop at Bernkastel on the way back completed the day.

Day 4 and we are off to Freiburg visiting the mechanical music collection in the magnificent schloss at Bruschal on the way. Since our last visit here the collection has been enlarged by the addition of around 70% of the Carlson collection which unfortunately is now closed.

Starting with some of the earliest clocks from the region (Fig.4), the collection covers organ clocks (Fig.5) and then through some magnificent larger organ instruments, including an outstanding barrel organ built for the Titanic. Fortunately for us, this



Fig. 1. Siegfried Wendel, in front of the Weber Maestro, welcomes the MBSGB party.

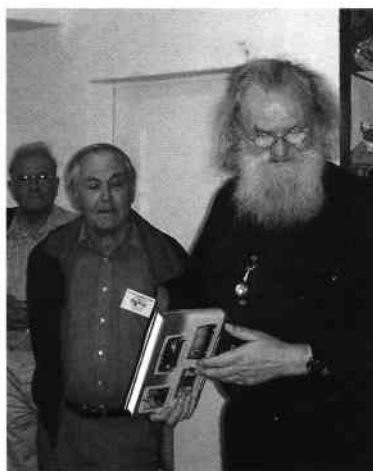


Fig. 3. Siegfried receives a copy of the Organette Book from Alan Wyatt.

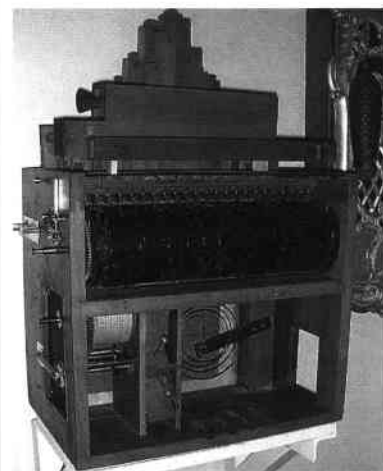


Fig. 5 Early barrel organ movement intended for clock.



Fig. 2. Siegfried with Harmonipan street organ.



Fig. 4. Early clocks - some musical.



Fig. 6 The Tel-Electric player piano (requires no pumping - "A piano the old folks can play").



instrument was not finished in time for that fateful first voyage and so we can hear and enjoy the sounds that were intended to entertain the first class passengers on their Atlantic crossing.

Among the many familiar instruments were a couple which many of us had not seen before. A rare solenoid operated electric player piano (Fig.6) marketed as the Tel-Electric and playing rolls about 5 inches wide. And on a much smaller scale, a Volks Klavier mechanical zither. (Fig.7). Bowers refers to this instrument (p.356) but shows no picture. The music is in the form of a heavy paper strip but we were not able to hear this instrument play, as it was

locked away in a glass case.

No visit to Bruschal is complete without the wonderful military band automaton. All the musicians have luxuriant 'Kaiser Wilhelm' moustaches and play with much enthusiasm. Great fun! (Fig.8).

And so it's on to Waldkirch. The weather had been very good and looked set to continue to enable us to enjoy the organs, most of which were outside. (Fig.10). Waldkirch has a proud tradition in organ building with most of the major builders having works here at some time. Over 100 organs were playing and, whatever your taste, you could find it here. (Fig. 11). In the evening we were invited

to the works of Jäger and Brommer, but before then there was an organ concert in the Protestant Church in Waldkirch. The music covered a wide range from Bach, Mozart and Handel, through to spirituals. (Fig.12). Two of the arrangements played were by Ian Alderman of MBSGB whose classical organ-roll catalogue and CD were reviewed in the last issue of The Music Box.

The visit to Jäger and Brommer gave the enthusiasts the opportunity to see organs in course of construction. Instruments large and small were on view and we were generously allowed to see all aspects of construction. After an outdoor



Fig. 8 Band automaton figures.

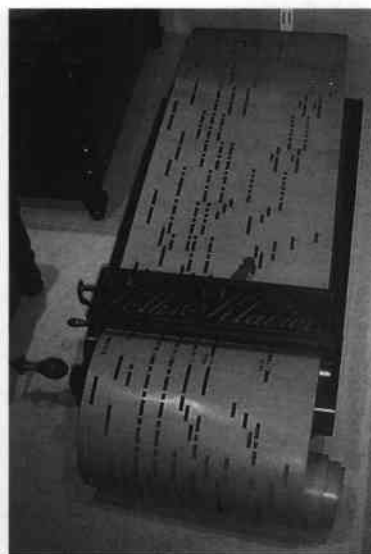


Fig. 7 Volks Klavier.



Fig. 9 MBSGB party outside Schloss Bruschal.



Fig. 10 Exotic costumes brightened the streets of Waldkirch.



Fig. 11. Small trumpet organ.



Fig. 12. Ruth with beautifully restored facade.



Fig. 13. Figures on organ now in the collection at Waldkirch.



Fig. 14. Wolfgang plays a Hicks style piano with figures.



Fig. 15. Orchestron with spiral-pinned barrel.



Fig. 16. Part of the Neiman collection at Schwarzwaldmuseum.



supper we gathered in the newly built Waldkirch Organ Museum where a collection of organs from the region is being assembled. Largely due to the efforts of Heinz Jäger and Wolfgang Brommer this new collection of finely restored instruments will trace the history from the earliest days. The instruments are in a wonderful setting (Fig.13) and we were privileged to hear many of them played by our guide Wolfgang Brommer. This collection is a 'must' on any visit to Waldkirch. (Fig.14).

Many of our group returned to Waldkirch on the following day, taking the train from Freiburg. Others explored Freiburg which is an easy blend of the old and the new with lots of eating places along the way.

On Monday our path crossed with MBSI members who were also on tour and we were at the Schwarzwaldmuseum in Triberg and enjoyed a combined conducted tour. Much extended since our last visit, the collection covers everything from towering orchestrions (Fig. 15), through workshop settings, to the recently added Neiman collection of street barrel organs - all playing excellently.(Figs 16 & 17). In the afternoon we moved on to the Deutsches Uhrenmuseum in Furtwangen. Primarily a clock museum, this has some fine examples of clocks incorporating automaton figures (Fig.18) and a modest collection of conventional mechanical music.

And so to our final day. We had once again been invited to

visit the collection of Dr. Rolf Jacobi in Cologne. On our previous visit we had not allowed sufficient time to savour all the instruments in this wonderful collection. (Fig.19). With many hundreds of instruments on display, it is only possible to show pictures of a few. (Fig.20). Rolf, his wife Heidi and their helpers played many of the instruments and they all sounded fine. (Fig.21). Afterwards we were treated to a veritable feast in the garden with the weather once again being kind to us. What a wonderful way to end our German tour. (Fig.22).

Our thanks go out to all our hosts for showing us such wonderful collections and especially to Rolf Jacobi and his family for inviting us into their home. ■



Fig. 17. Coin-operated organ/automaton.



Fig. 18. Automated clock by Droll with astronomical features/organ/automata/religious figures.



Fig. 20. Paul Bellamy plays the Steinway.

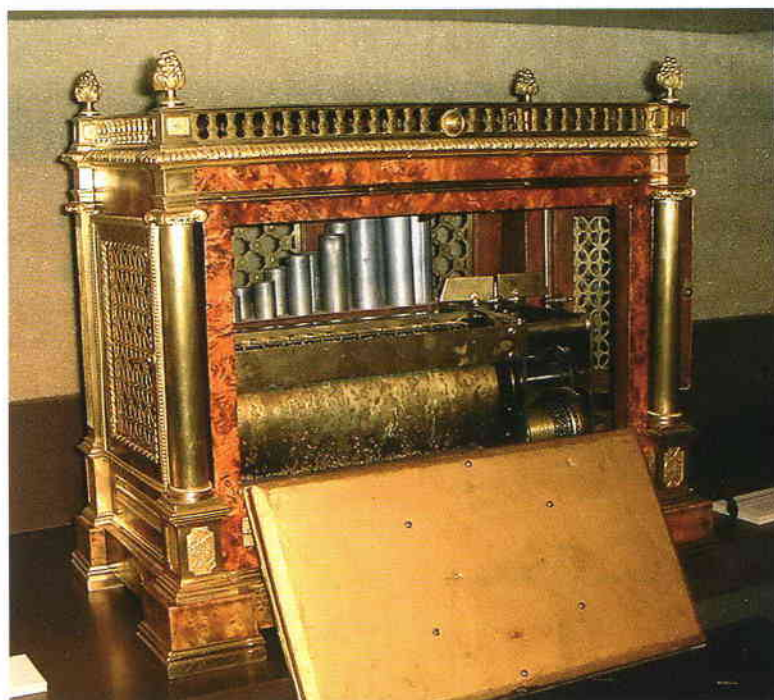


Fig. 19. Small Davrainville organ.



Fig. 21. Hupfeld - the beautifully restored violin section.



Fig. 22. Presentation of Organette Book to our host.

# More Musings about Musical Mugs

Part 4 - by Paul Bellamy

## Miniature Musical Movements

This article is intended to summarise the range of small movements fitted to the musical ceramic novelties made by Fielding's (Crown Devon), Winton (Grimwades) and Carlton Ware during the 1930's to 1960's. It is a continuation of the previous articles 'More Musings about Musical Mugs'. There are few reliable records relating to the movements fitted to the pots because there was little interest at the time and much information was destroyed or lost. With the exception of Reuge, all the firms supplying the movements no longer exist. These novelties now command a wide interest and ever increasing value. The more we know the better our understanding.

So far as I know, no attempt has been made to record the various types and makes of small movements used for the ceramic novelties. The subject is worth consideration for a number of reasons:

- The musical ceramics have their own unique place in mechanical music.
- Many are fitted with incorrect and missing movements that can affect value.
- Knowledge of the correct movements aids restoration.
- The type of movement is an aid to dating.
- We have a duty to pool knowledge and record as much as we can of the mechanical musical heritage invested in these ceramic pots.

This article must be considered as a first attempt in the hope that others will clarify and correct any errors, since most manufacturers records are lost or destroyed. There may be brochures and price lists still in existence somewhere that would be an invaluable aid. Much of the information in the article has been gleaned from the small

amount of published information that exists, from close observation of products for sale, including the Web, and from that provided by a few other collectors. When recording details of the movements, one has to be absolutely certain that it is original to the pot that is its host. We know that Fielding's, for example, sourced movements from several makers, particularly Reuge, Thorens and Lador. Early pots mostly seemed to have movements with 28/30- note combs. Later ones had combs with 22 teeth. Both 30-note and 22-note movements have components of similar principle dimensions. For example, spring case dimensions, size of governor and gears, particularly the great wheel fitted to the cylinders, are invariably the same for some of the early types of both 28/30- and 22-note movements.

The bases of the early movements by Lador and Reuge were of cast iron.

The combs for each of the two types, respectively, are mostly the

same size. Screws and screw hole positions vary slightly between makers. Thus it is possible to adapt components in order to effect a repair. It is also possible to make some of the components from scratch. Some movements were die-cast and others made from pressed, plated, steel. Even with die-cast movements, there is a significant degree of possible adaptation of their components such as spring cases, governors and combs.

The most important maker of pots was Fielding's. It makes sense to use our knowledge of their products to start the record. Winton seems to have been an early competitor for this type of market. It becomes apparent, as one studies the movements fitted to different makes of pot, that Winton probably sourced their movements from only one maker, Thorens, whereas movements for the early Fielding's pots seem to have been sourced from Reuge. If this assumption is correct, other makers of ceramic novelties, particularly unknown

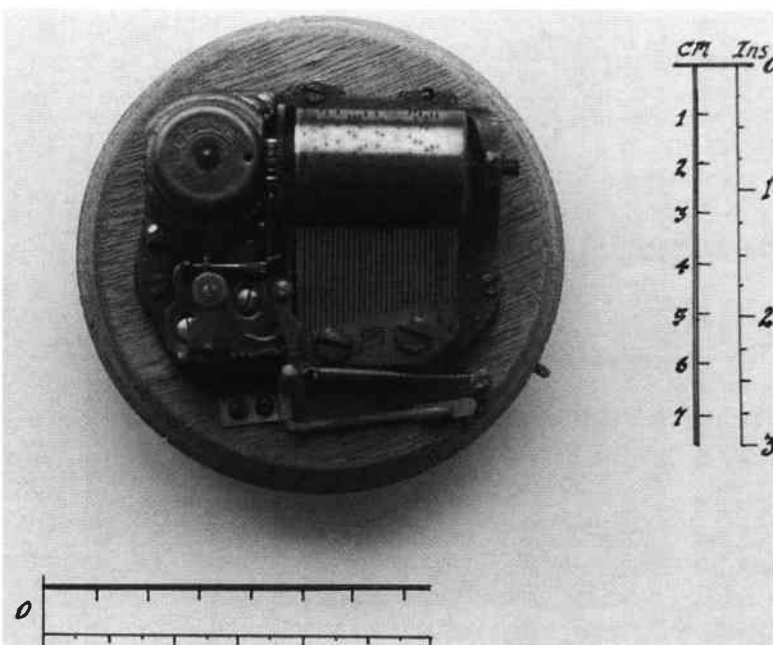


Fig. 1. Reuge cast iron based 28/30-note movement. Two lugs by cylinder. 29 teeth, 28 tuned and one broken off remnant. Reuge motif on comb, not always present. Spring case stamped Reuge, Ste Croix, Switzerland (sometimes plain) and blank hole with no stop work.



ones, can be dated by comparing their movements with the dating knowledge we have gained from movements fitted to Fielding's and other makers of pots.

## Fieldings: 28/30-Note Movements:

Reuge: Fig. 1 shows a typical Reuge movement fitted in the 1930's. It supplied a wide range of the early novelties with the curved-print back stamp, such as John Peel, Widdecombe Fair, Ilkla Moor, Auld Lang Syne, etc. Its cast iron base is distinctive as it has two screw lugs adjacent to its cylinder. When its comb is marked, it carries a

stamped motive of three little notes joined together (demi-semi quavers) on a staff.

The comb is soldered to a separate base plate. It is worth noting that whilst spring cases are often stamped with the name of the maker they are, like some combs, sometimes plain. Usually, no stop work is fitted to the case although there will be a plain hole where the Maltese Cross might be fitted. The cylinders are deep pressed thimbles, i.e. closed at the non-drive end with the Great Wheel (main drive gear) mounted at the drive end adjacent to the spring housing.

Lador: The Lador cast-iron-base

version has one lug (Fig. 2). Remember, for the cast iron bases, one Lug = Lador. The combs are soldered to a separate base-plate and may be stamped with the letter L. The cylinder is closed at both ends by a cap. Again, spring cases may be plain, tooth or by access to an identical movement, one can retune any comb to match another cylinder, Thorens: Fig. 3. illustrates a movement of the same period as those in figs. 1&2 but its base and spring case are die cast alloy. The case carries stop work of the Geneva i.e. Malta Cross pattern. The movement is known to be circa 1937 and used on the commemorative George VI pots as well as Winton Floral Dance and Come to the Fair.

Fig 4. Illustrates another Thorens movement with pressed steel base but also with the conventional pressed-metal spring case similar to figs. 1&2 except that it is fitted with stop work. This type is known to have been fitted to the later type of pot with straight-print back stamp such as Daisy Bell and The Ash Grove. It is also found on some Winton pots e.g. Chestnut Tree. We do not know, at the moment, when the straight printed version of the Fielding's back stamp was introduced and to what extent, if any, it ran in parallel with the earlier back stamp. As it was a later stamp, it seems reasonable to suppose that the die-cast alloy version preceded the pressed plated-steel one.

In conclusion, the evidence to date is that Reuge was the first and main supplier to Fieldings from the outset of the 1930's but Lador and then Thorens were used as production output rose. Thorens movements are generally of a better engineering quality and mostly fitted with Geneva stop work. Thorens also appear to be associated with slightly later models of pots, the cast alloy appearing to precede the pressed steel version that is common on later Fielding's pots with the straight-print back stamp. The association of Thorens cast alloy bases with Winton pots supports this view in that they came into production about the mid- 1930's in competition with Fielding's.

*Usually, no stop work is fitted to the case...*

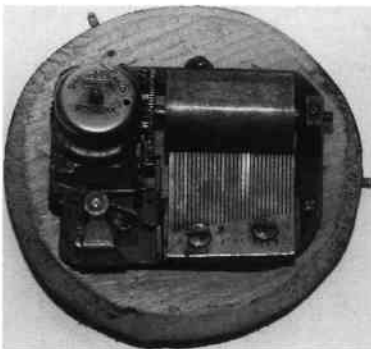


Fig. 2. Lador cast iron based 28/30-note movement. One lug by cylinder. Plain comb (often stamped L), 30 teeth, 28 tuned. The spring case stamped Lador, Ste Croix, Switzerland (sometimes plain, sometimes nickel or brass) and blank hole with no stop work.

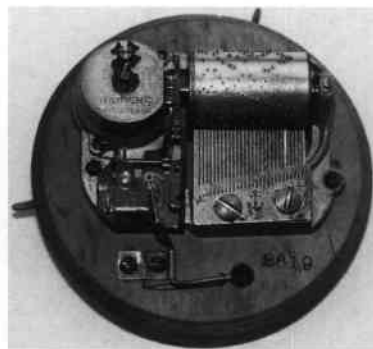


Fig. 3. Thorens die cast alloy base and comb case with stop work and Thorens, Switzerland. 30-note comb, 28 tuned, stamped with an anchor. Nickel-plated cylinder.

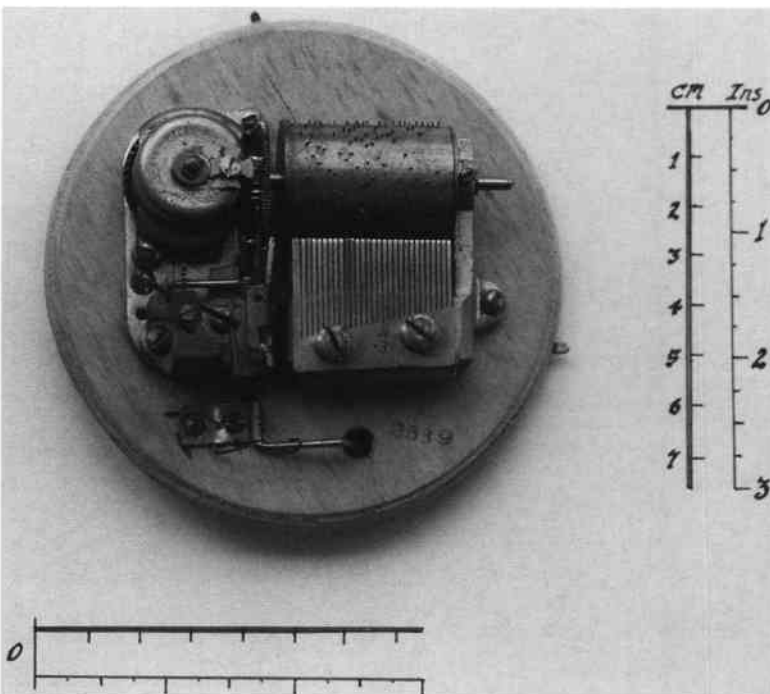


Fig. 4. Thorens plated pressed open-pattern steel base. Typical earlier-type brass spring case with stop work, stamped Thorens, Made in Switzerland. 29-note comb, 28 tuned, stamped with an anchor.

More than one maker supplied movements with the same tunes at the same period of time to the different makers of pots. Business must have been good! The tune arrangements for each maker are different. So beware, the combs and cylinders are not interchangeable between makers for the same tune.

For example, the tune John Peel will be a different arrangement for a 28/30-note movement supplied by Lador to that of Thorens or Reuge.

The same size of comb of one maker is interchangeable but has to be re-tuned. Between makers, the same size of comb has not only to be re-tuned but also its holes modified.

To re-tune a comb, one needs to know the 'scale' to which the original comb was tuned. The scale is not, of course, chromatic. Like all music box combs, each note will be allocated a certain pitch, some adjacent teeth having the same pitch if the tune repeats a note quite rapidly. For this reason, I have started to record the tuning 'scale' applied to the comb for each tune of each maker of movement.

## 22-Note Movements:

Reuge: Fig. 5 shows a typical Reuge 22 note movement. It is almost the same pattern as for the larger movement (Fig. 1) but there are no distinctive lugs. It is important to note, for restoration purposes, that all the component parts, excluding the comb and base, are compatible with the larger movements. I used this knowledge to get reproduction copies of the larger, 30-note base, cast by a local iron foundry so that I could re-create a 30-note movement from 20 note components. More of this in another article. The movement is fitted to later Fielding's pots with the straight back stamp. It is not known if the change to smaller movements was coincident with change of back stamp and re-modelling of the pots. (Earlier articles explain how costs were reduced by re-modelling and reducing the amount of relief moulding at the rear of the pot, thus reducing the amount of hand painting required.) One can find 20-note movements in pots with the older, curved, back stamp. I am not so sure if the reverse is true. We know that the use of back stamps for dating is not reliable in itself, thus all other factors must be taken into consideration. The right thing to do is to check very carefully that movement, base and pot are original to each other. Therefore, inspect screw holes for both the lugs that locate the base and for those that fix the movement to its base. Also, the movement will invariably leave a 'shadow' of its outline on the inside of the wooden base. If the movement does not marry up with this 'shadow', it will be a replacement. The movements illustrated are indicative of the post WWII period up to about the 1950's.

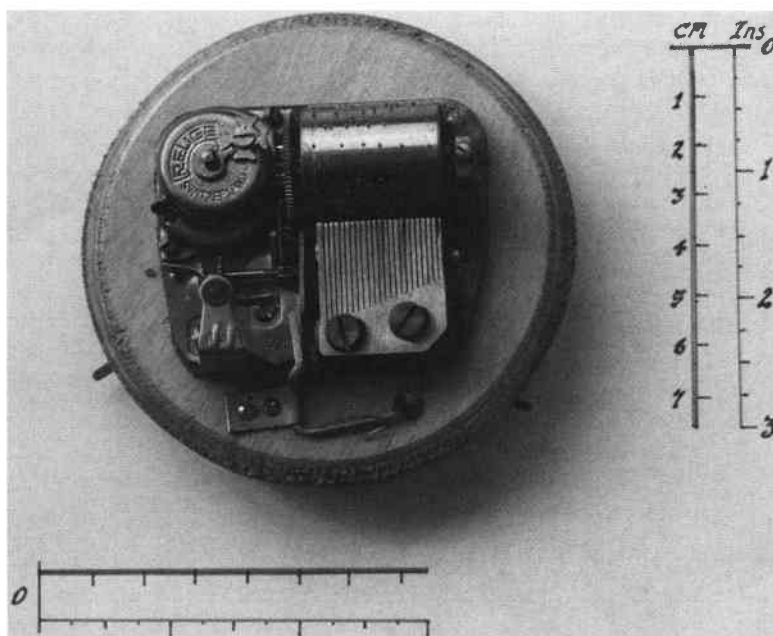


Fig. 5. Reuge cast iron base. 23-note plain comb, 22 tuned. Same spring case as for fig. 1.



Fig. 6. Lador die cast alloy base and spring case stamped Lador, Switzerland without stop work. Comb as for fig. 5. Nickel-plated cylinder.

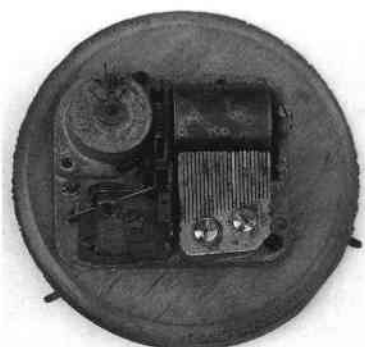


Fig. 8. Cuendet die cast alloy base and spring case stamped Cuendet, Switzerland, with stop work. 22-note plain comb plus waste piece at treble end.

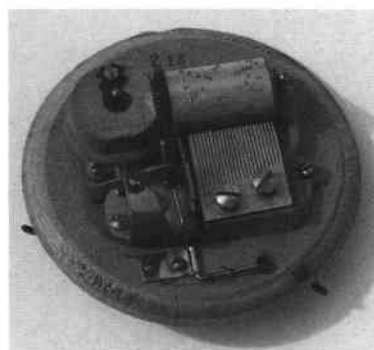


Fig. 7. Thorens die cast alloy base and spring case stamped Thorens, Switzerland with stop work. Comb as for fig. 5. Nickel-plated cylinder.

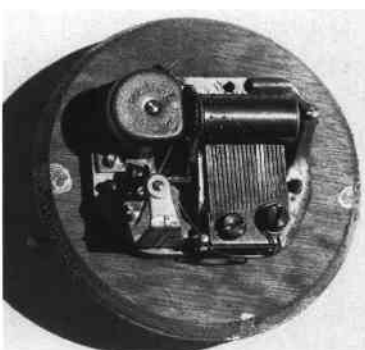


Fig. 9. Reuge die cast alloy base. Pressed spring case stamped Reuge, Fabr. France. No stop work. Plain 18-note comb. Note the smaller diameter governor and Great Wheel and governor gears.

*We know that the use of back stamps for dating is not reliable in itself...*

### Lador:

Fig 6, with its cast alloy base and case, is typically fitted to a number of models, particularly those exported. Again, inspection of one's collection will help to deny or confirm this. It is similar in style to the 30-note Lador (Fig. 3) and the 22-note Thorens (Fig. 7, below). For restoration purposes, the governors are all compatible with both the 22- and 30-note types and makes.

### Thorens:

Movements illustrated in fig. 7. are found on both Fielding's and Winton pots. This type was used as late as 1953, thanks to the evidence of dated commemoratives!

### Cuendot:

The illustration in Fig. 8. is similar in style to that of Lador and Thorens shown in figs. 6&7. It is known to be fitted in small numbers to Fielding's.

To summaries the 22-note movements, they relate mostly to the post WWII period up to the early 1950's. Reuge model fig. 5. and Thorens fig. 7 are probably the most common but Lador and, to a lesser extent, Cuendot also supplied Fielding's.

### 18-Note Movements:

Fig. 9 shows a cast alloy base with pressed metal spring-case model by Reuge, typical of the type fitted to late

transfer-printed pots. It is definitely circa 1953. The only component that is useful for restoration work is the winding spindle and its ratchet spring. The spindle has the same dimensions as the 20- & 30- note movements except in length. It is very easy to lengthen it. The ratchet springs, although slightly smaller in diameter, can also be used as a replacement on the larger models.

The governors have smaller wind-vanes and gears and cannot be fitted to the larger versions. If one has the skill, it is possible to use the endless and worm but this has to be fitted to a scratch-built frame and a larger gear wheel (driven by the Great Wheel) fitted to the worm-wheel shaft. Easy enough for a watchmaker or instrument engineer but not impossible for dedicated hobbyist. A later article will show how to scratch-build a small gear without using gear cutters.

### Summary of Winton Movements:

The typical 30-note movement made by Thorens is shown in fig. 3. It is known to be fitted to pre-WWII pots such as Floral Dance and Come to the Fair. Similarly, fig. 7 shows another Thorens movement applied to the post-WWII period up to circa 1953.

Fig. 10. shows an 18-note Thorens movement known to be fitted to the later Winton transfer-printed pots.

It seems reasonable to presume that Thorens was either the major or probably the only supplier to Wintons.

In conclusion, if those who have pots use the tips above to check and record that a movement is definitely original to the pot, we all gain a little more knowledge of the subject. Taking a photograph and comparing data with the contents of this article can improve the record. This will help to build upon the forgoing data and verify or reject the assumptions.

For any given make of movement, and providing one has the limited skills to remove and correctly refit a comb, then record:

- The number of teeth.
- The tune.
- The pitch of each tooth, counting from the base end as tooth 1.

One day, I hope to publish this information in the form of an appendix to a future article on restoration. Other contributions will improve and confirm the accuracy of such a record.

A subsequent article will also deal with repair and maintenance of the movements. With modest technical skill and the above knowledge a person with limited workshop equipment can at least service and carry out minor repairs. The more ambitious may be able to re-create and build a replacement movement. ■

*A later article will show how to scratch-build a small gear without using gear cutters.*

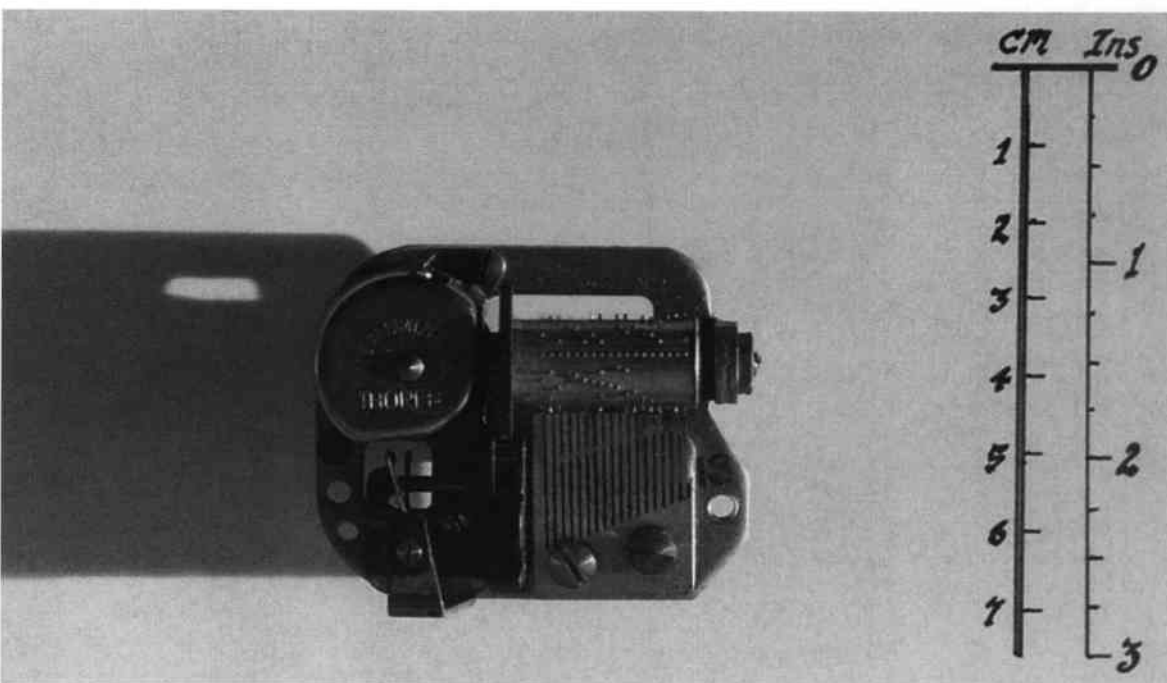


Fig. 10. Thorens Pressed steel plated base. Pressed spring case stamped Thorens, Made in Switzerland. No stop work. Plain 18-note comb. Comments on gears as for fig. 9.

# Restoring a Dumb Organist

*An exercise in patience - by Bernie Brown*

**A** couple of years ago I responded to an advertisement in *The Music Box* magazine and became the proud owner of a Walker dumb organist circa 1859 in very poor condition. I felt sure however, that with some effort I could make it play again.

The dumb organist consisted of a box, housing a pinned wooden barrel, a key frame and set of push rods (stickers) which when set on top of the organ keys would depress the keys as the barrel pins passed under the key frame. The means of turning the barrel is by a worm gear turned by a handle. (See fig.1). Really, it's just like a barrel organ but without the pipes. Two barrels came with the machine, each pinned with six hymns.

The first job was to strip the machine apart for cleaning. The mahogany case and frame had become extremely dry over the years, so I treated them with a boiled linseed oil, methylated spirit and turpentine mix which proved to be an excellent wood reviver. When the parts were thoroughly dry they were finally finished off with a good quality beeswax polish.

The keyframe was the next job to be tackled. I very carefully stripped it apart, then cleaned and polished the 46 rusted keys with wet and dry abrasive paper lubricated with paraffin, ending with a polish using 0000 grade wire wool. The keys were then lubricated and refitted into the keyframe. The push rods (stickers) were nearly all broken - they resembled the remains of an ancient Grecian colonnade! The only thing to do was to have new ones made. A local timber merchant supplied me with 46 new square section mahogany rods. These were polished using 0000 wire wool, then burnished with powdered graphite. Finally, I drilled a hole in the end of each rod and fitted fine

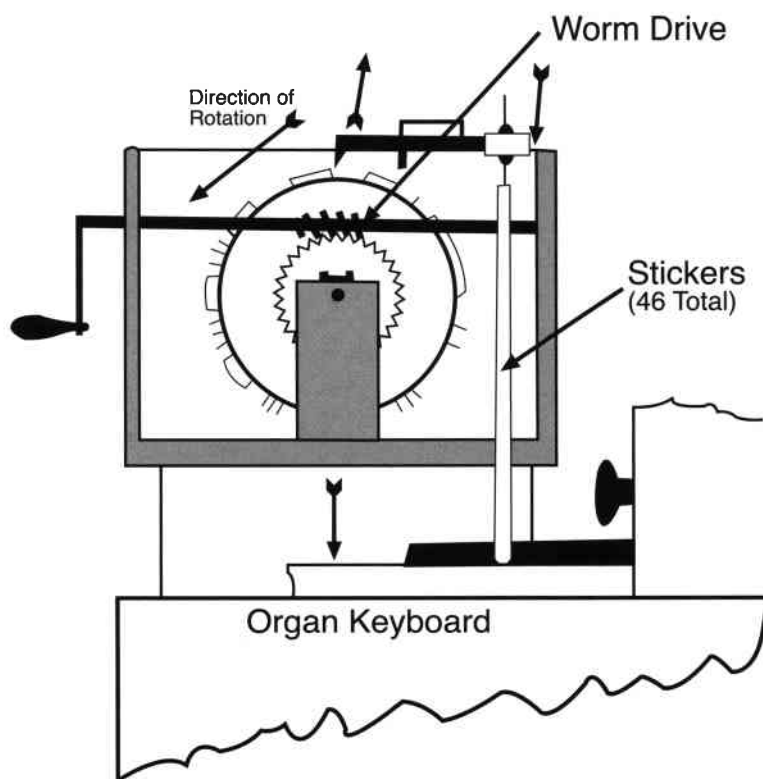


Fig. 1. Sectional view of 'the works'.

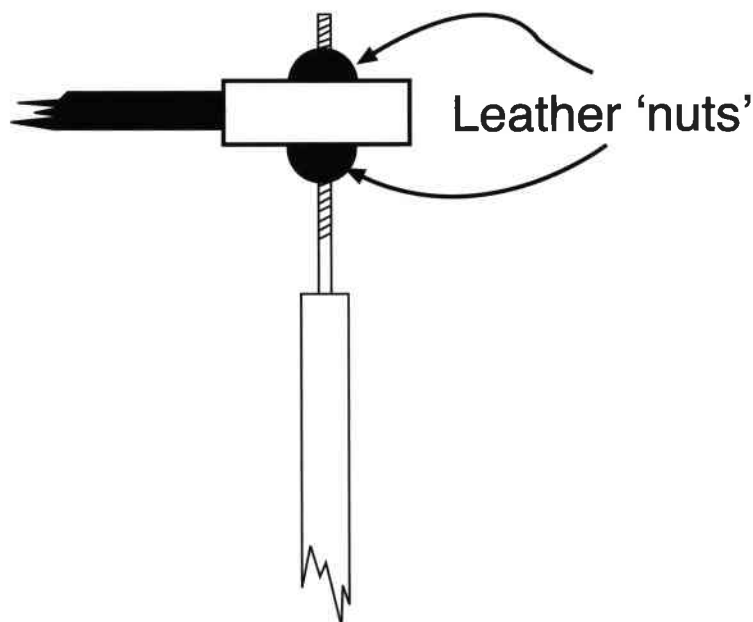


Fig. 2. Adjusters on the stickers

*Really, it's just like a barrel organ but without the pipes.*



threaded brass rods to enable me to adjust the travel of each sticker by means of leather nuts. (See fig.2). Finally, we came to the barrels. After a thorough cleaning, bent barrel pins and bridges were straightened where this was possible. There were many broken pins and bridges and these I replaced using rolled flat brass wire. I've heard it said that some people actually enjoy repinning barrels but for me it was a very long and tedious job!

The dumb organist was then reassembled and fitted over the top manual of an 1895 Trayser, two manual, pressure harmonium. After spending a weekend setting and adjusting the machine I was able to pump the bellows, turn the handle and listen to the hymns originally pinned over 140 years ago; very satisfying. Some of the tunes were known to me and some were not - here's the complete list:-

#### **Barrel 1**

1. Devises
2. St. Anns
3. St. Stephens
4. Rockingham
5. Warrington
6. St. Giles

#### **Barrel 2**

1. Old Hundredth or Savoy
2. Wareham
3. Truro
4. German hymn
5. Mount Ephraim
6. Carlisle

The dumb organist represents one of the earliest forms of key top players. It has the musical advantage of being able to play a full scale (chromatically) unlike many of its barrel organ cousins. Nowadays they are very rare, I have seen only three other examples. Do any other members know of any? If so, please let me know. The entire project took about six months of spare time and made an interesting change from the more familiar paper roll operated pianos and organs in my collection. ■



Fig. 3. The tune-change mechanism.



Fig. 4. "Some people actually enjoy pinning barrels".



Fig. 5. The finished organist in position.

# Single Comb Forte Piano Boxes

- Picture omissions

**I**n Vol.20/5 reference is made on page 141 to photographs showing the wear patterns on the pins. Unfortunately these were omitted. They are reproduced here. Apologies to John Powell and Alan Godier for this omission.

To quote from the original article, "Looking at the photographs, it can be seen that the wear patterns are different between vertical and bent pins and, in general, the comb tooth appears to contact the bent pin about the middle of its now reclining end. By reference to the sketch, a simple calculation shows that the tooth lift is just under 0.005 ins when new and 0.003 ins when worn. The tooth lift for a vertical pin appears to be about 0.009 ins." ■



# France - Birthplace of the Musical Comb

*Swiss claim finally proved incorrect*

*by Arthur W. J. G. Ord-Hume*

**P**opular history has always ascribed the invention of the tuned steel tooth, core feature of the musical-box comb, to Swiss watchmaker Antoine Favre. This is substantiated by the survival of a perfectly genuine, dated and authenticated document dated 1796. This fragment of paper, highly prized by the Swiss, is the sole evidence on which a mountain of myth has been built over the past half-century and more, for the Swiss have openly promoted this as proof that the invention of the comb-playing musical-box emanated from their country.

This has always worried me because the wording of that document – repeated too often in so many other sources (including this Journal) to justify repeating once again – is curiously vague and the persons concerned specifically avoid any suggestion that they have ‘invented’ anything, or that their use of a new principal is the first.

My own doubts were first aroused in the early 1960s when I was shown a comb-playing musical watch that was hard to date later than 25 years before Favre’s notorious piece of paper. Over the intervening years, a number of these pre-Favre comb-playing musical automata have surfaced to the consternation of the people that promote the popular Swiss version of history.

In 1996 the Swiss even issued a celebration set of postage stamps to mark the 200th anniversary of the musical box, the implication being that before that date the technique did not exist. All this is very curious since the student of mechanical musical history finds himself confronted with far too many anomalies by way of apparently earlier comb-playing mechanisms to be able to take such claims seriously. It is also strange

that while several notable researchers and historians of musicwork live and work in Switzerland, none has hitherto seen fit to question Switzerland’s assertion.

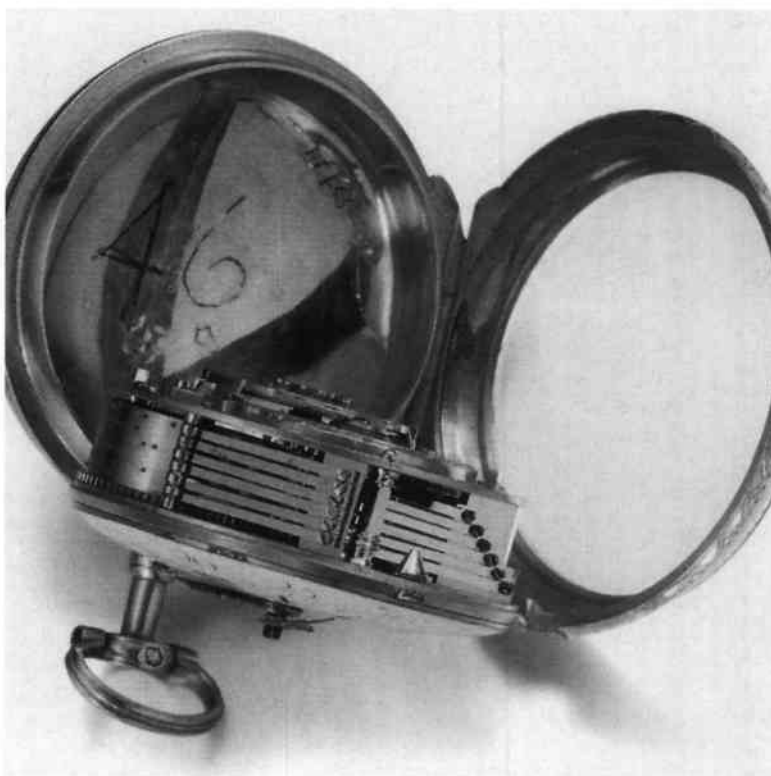
It is not difficult to trace the origin of this story. The person at the core of this claim is unquestionably Prof Alfred Chapuis whose extensive researches within Switzerland turned up the precious document upon which this belief has been constructed. That piece of paper was accepted without question as convenient evidence to justify a Swiss claim to pre-eminence.

Prof Chapuis wrote widely between the wars to establish his beliefs as incontrovertible evidence. It has, however, always been clear that Prof Chapuis, who was paid to carry out his researches by the Swiss watchmaking authorities, never attempted to investigate any possible discoveries or developments outside his native country.

In 1954 I was shown a French musical watch that bore no name but was of the style associated with the first three decades of the 18th century. Offered by a London dealer for what was then the huge sum of £350, this anonymous piece was quite original. I later heard that it had been sold to a foreign buyer.

In the United States, a notable private collector of high-quality pieces who has an eye for the unusual and important item acquired a silver goblet with a musical and automaton movement. The automaton part was simply a set of clockwork-driven wheels that moved the goblet along the table. In a concealed compartment in the base of the vessel was a musical movement. This rather primitive movement featured a *sur plateau* type of movement with ten individually attached iron teeth that played a distinct melody.

This piece is well-marked and bears a Hungarian maker’s name and address. The goblet itself is clearly



inscribed with the date 1651. While the belief is that the two may have been contemporary (the clockwork is mid-17th century), there is always the chance that the musical movement, although unquestionably early, might have been added at a post-1651 date. Priceless though this piece is, the evidence that it offers is unreliable since there is an element of uncertainty as to originality. The horologist, however, will have no difficulty placing the musical movement as no later than the first quarter of the eighteenth century – about 75 years before the Swiss invention. For a detailed and full-illustrated description of this important piece see *Music & Automata*, Volume 2, No. 5, March 1985, pp.2-4.

Other apparently pre-Favre comb-playing musical items have been found at intervals throughout the past fifty or so years. Several of these have been associated with the French maker Ransonet. We know that Michael Joseph Ransonet was born near Liège in 1705. He married at Nancy in 1748 where he became a citizen in 1748, and he received the *Prix de la Société et Belles Lettres*. It is recorded that he made a musical watch playing 'en duo' in 1770. He died in 1778.

A Ransonet musical watch was formerly in the Time Museum at Rockford, Illinois where it was catalogued No 46 in the collection. Some two years ago, the Time Museum was closed and the collection transferred to the City of Chicago which had originally

intended to present the entire collection as a permanent exhibit. Unfortunately it was decided that not all the pieces were required for such an exhibit with the result that many of the finest pieces representing the cultural cream of the collection would be sold off in New York. The second of the Time Museum collection sales took place in June and in amongst the rarities was the Ranzonet watch as Lot 73. The mechanism of this piece had not been seen before, certainly not by those who might appreciate its significance.

Examination of this movement displayed a six-tooth musical comb (mis-catalogued as a pair of stacked combs: there was only one musical comb with an attendant comb of action springs and neither was in any way stacked) playing one melody from the pinned spring barrel – in other words a barrelled movement.

The detail of the mechanism was most unusual since the comb and barrel were interspersed by sprung levers that plucked the teeth of the comb. In many ways it was the same as the sprung star-wheels on disc-playing machines.

Of paramount importance was the inscription that read: 'L'instrument a été inventé par Ransonet a [sic] Nancy', and the case which was dated Paris 1772. Estimated at between \$12,000 and \$15,000, the hammer price was \$37,500 exclusive of the auctioneers' commission. An illustrated description of the

musical mechanism and its strange lever-plucking mechanism is shortly to appear from Dr Frank Metzger in the *MBSI Journal*, *Mechanical Music*.

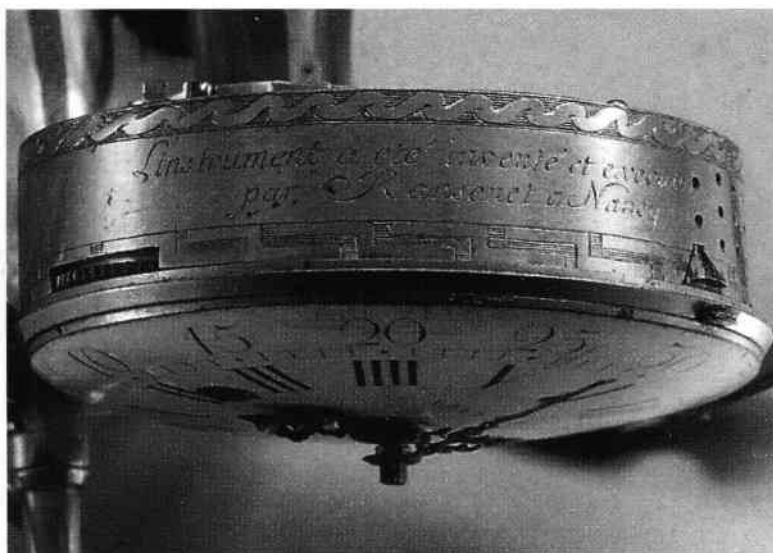
The significance of this watch lies in the fact that it is the first dated piece to give a positive confirmation to the long-suspected belief that the Swiss did not invent the tuned steel tooth but that the French were using the system up to half a century earlier.

It remains unchanged that the Swiss founded and developed the first industry devoted to making musical movements but to link this with the assertion by Chapuis that the French invented the tuned steel tooth is now known to be totally without foundation.

So long as auction houses publish incorrect descriptions of items, it is possible that other pieces as important as this have gone unrecorded in the past and that they may continue to go unrecorded in the future.

At least it would be interesting to have a reaction from the Swiss who are probably mere victims of decades of incorrect teaching that has to be laid at the feet of Alfred Chapuis, who was guilty of failing to consider any contribution to musicwork beyond the frontiers of Switzerland. Unfortunately, that indicates poor scholarship.

*The Author wishes to acknowledge his indebtedness to Sotheby's, New York, for permission to reproduce these copyright catalogue illustrations here. ■*





# Toothache in the Workshop

- More on the subject ~~on~~ wood gearwheel manufacture

by Peter Howard

**T**o have a barrel organ with the wood gear wheel broken or missing is a bit of a problem. To have an organ with two barrels of different diameters, each with broken or badly worn wood gear wheels (again of different diameters) could be described as rather unfortunate, rather careless - or by any expletive of one's own choosing. Add that the organ's owner lives in another part of the country, you have only the defective barrels, the instrument cannot easily be visited nor can it be easily moved to your own workshop and you get some idea of the problem facing a would-be repairer. This short article sets out to explain and illustrate how a little forethought, together with the provision of a simple jig, enabled a satisfactory result to be achieved. Then there was an unexpected but happy ending to the whole affair.

## The repair challenge was twofold -

- One gear wheel had only a small section of teeth remaining. The other had all teeth present, albeit that they were so badly worn away it was not possible to decide on the true outside diameter. Without the organ, I could not tell the distance to the winding shaft worm. I was therefore missing the full information for gear wheel diameters and tooth numbers.

- The gearwheels are better described as gear-rings, each being bored out to locate on a large diameter boss at the end of the associated barrel. This presented a high risk of bursting the thin ring across the weak direction of the wood grain whilst boring out to a snug concentric fit on the barrel boss.

My description of the first part is a bit 'engineering heavy', but hopefully the second part will be found in somewhat lighter vein.

To tackle the first challenge, the larger barrel, with the few remaining teeth, was set in its cradle, on a surface plate and a height gauge was used to establish the centre line of the barrel axle. The barrel was then positioned so the available gear wheel teeth were at their highest point and this distance from the surface plate was also measured. From these measurements it was possible to calculate the radius

(and hence the diameter) for the replacement gear ring. As yet the full number of teeth was not known.

The crests of the teeth on both gear wheels has to be at the same 'twelve o'clock' height from the underside of their barrel cradle if both barrels are to engage equally with the winding shaft worm. This measurement, already available from the larger barrel, would therefore apply to the smaller barrel which, together with cradle, was set on the surface plate for measurement of its own barrel axle height. From these

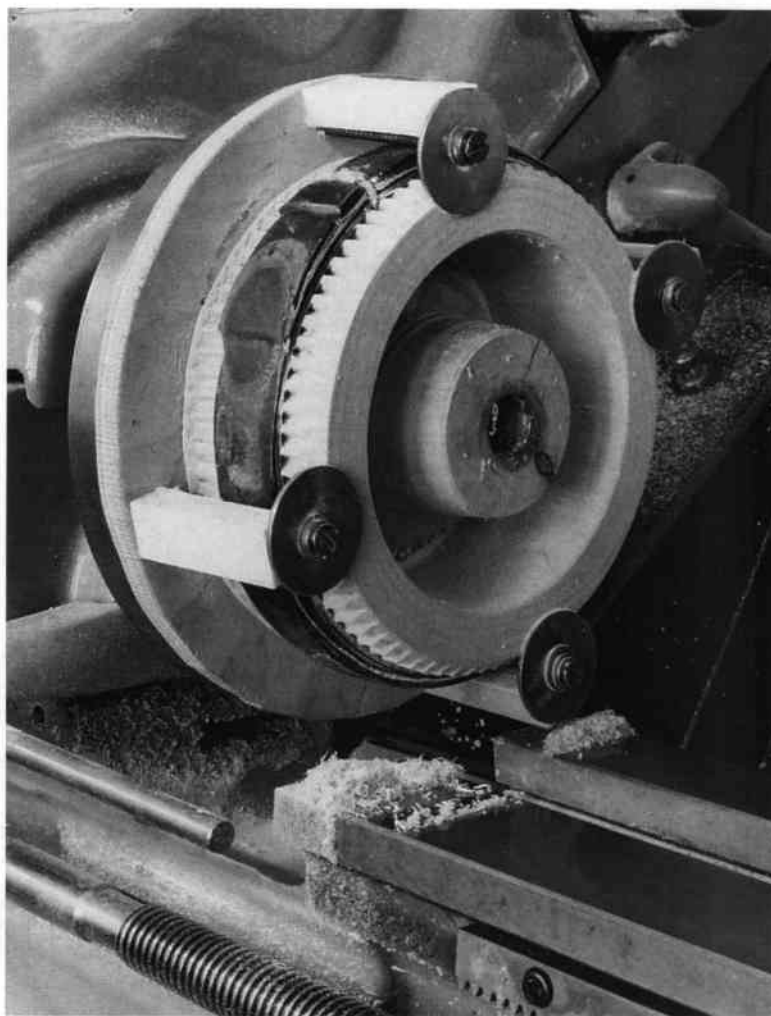


Fig. 1. The Gearwheel.

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*To have an organ with two barrels of different diameters, each with broken or badly worn wood gear wheels (again of different diameters) could be described as rather unfortunate...*

---

dimensions it was a simple matter to calculate the outside diameter for a replacement gear ring and, for this one, I did know the number of teeth required.

Next it was a case of bending engineering rules. I reckoned metalworking precision was not necessary for wooden components, especially as the mating worm shaft was known to have a degree of spring loading to take up slight errors in size. Out went the pitch circle, the addendum and other engineering complexities and in came the use of the two known facts about the one gear, the circumference and the number of teeth. The circumference divided by the number of teeth, gives the pitch dimension around the circumference, from a point on one tooth to the same point on the next tooth. To mesh equally well with the worm, the teeth of both gear wheels need to be pitched to this same dimension around their circumferences. I then divided the circumference of the smaller gear by this pitch dimension to get the number of teeth that it required. For the engineers amongst us, this is a bit like circular pitch, but I am applying it to the outside diameter and not to the imaginary pitch circle diameter, part of the way up a tooth's height.

The solution to the second challenge is probably best illustrated by pictures rather than words. Prior to the figure one stage, the gear wheel had been turned to outside diameter and width, and the teeth had already been cut. However, the small bore used to mount the blank in a tooth-cutting fixture remained and this had to be opened up to fit over the barrel boss. As shown in fig.1, the blank has been glued to a ply wood backing disc with a thick paper sheet inserted between the two. The paper is intended to ease separation at a later date. Posts, screws and washers have been clamped around the edge to make the fixing more secure. In anticipation of the bursting stress, which may arise during the bulk removal of wood, a strip of motor car inner tube has been stretched tightly around the circumference and the end held down with an adhesive repair patch. A final safety device is the piece of strong twine threaded several times through one tooth space and over the rubber strip, this being knotted and then glued. Yes, the centrifugal force will pull the knot apart if you don't glue it. The next trick was to get the whole assembly concentric with the lathe mandrel, achieved by using a centre

in the tail-stock pushed hard against the existing bore in the gear wheel. Only then were screws inserted from the back of the faceplate, into the ply wood disc as a final fixing. After that it was fun time, producing all those lovely wood shavings. Some of this turning work was completed with the added security of the tail-stock in place, but there were times when deep access became problematic and the tail-stock had to be backed off to give greater elbow room for the turning tool.

Fig. 2 shows the finished gear ring removed from the jig, the jig with remains of the gear centre and the available broken parts of one original gear, which, of course, is where it all started!

In conclusion, as the two barrels are of different diameter, it is reasonable to assume each group of tunes plays for a different duration (unless you wind the larger one faster!). Interestingly I shall soon have the answer because the organ itself has now come into my own collection. How much easier it might have been to allow for the passage of time and await this good fortune, but there would have been less of a learning experience and then there wouldn't have been anything to write about! ■

*After that it was fun time, producing all those lovely wood shavings.*

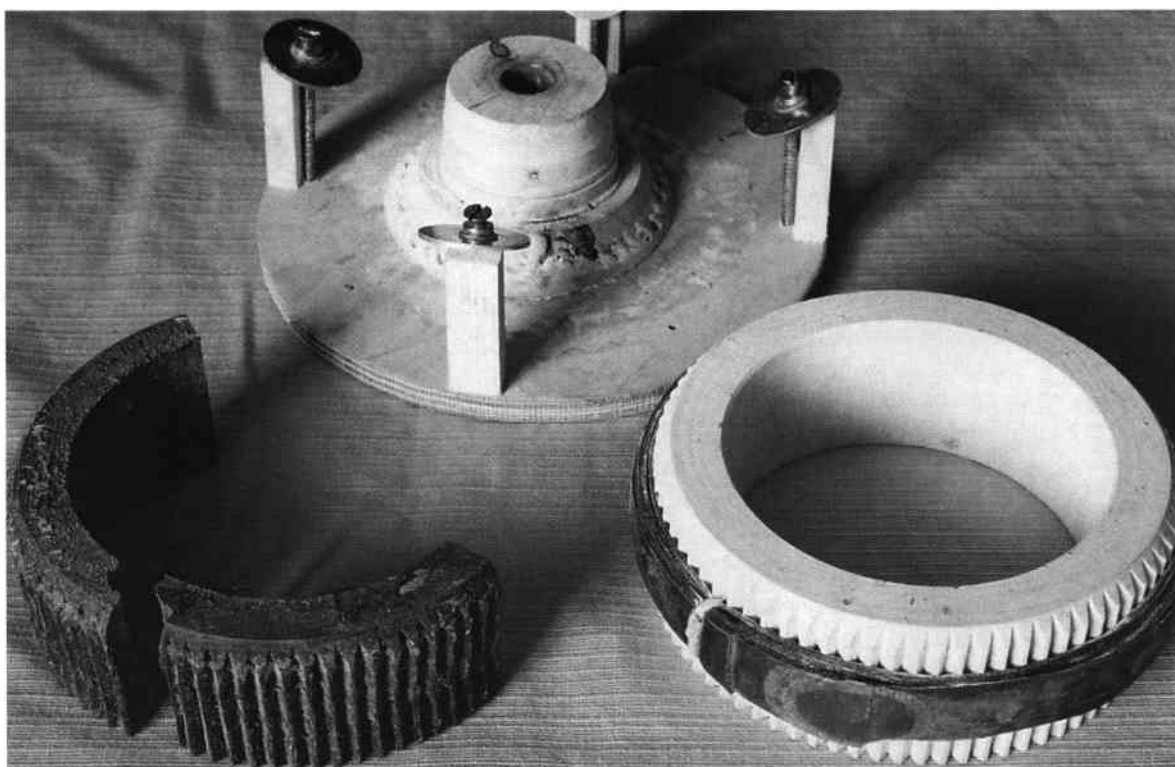


Fig. 2. Shows the finished gear ring removed from the jig.

# The Salzburg Stier

## - An update

**W**ork on restoring the Salzburg Stier continues apace, and the Castle walls are vibrating to the wail of craftsmen installing oversize beams to support the giant main pumps and bellows. These will replace the electric blower fitted in the 1950s.

The music barrels and key frame work is being carried out at the National Museum in Utrecht and work is expected to start soon on pinning the 12 original songs of Leopold Mozart pinned on the barrels around 1759.

As reported in the Music Box Vol.20 No.4, p.105, the celebration of mark the completion of the work is to be on October 26th 2002. A grand festival is planned with many

organs at the Stier will play (or roar!) every 20 minutes.

You can find the latest news on this project on [www.geocities.com/salztstier](http://www.geocities.com/salztstier) ■



This close up view of the second barrel shows the way the pins are placed. The various lengths or bridges tell the organ how long to hold a note. At the beginning of each song the Stier barrel organ lets out a loud bellow. This first tells the good people of Salzburg that the organ is about to play and that their daily activity is about to begin and is also said to honor an age old legend.



This is one of the two remaining barrels. This one was pinned by Leopold Mozare with 12 songs, one for each month of the year.



This picture shows the inside of the little room that the Stier has sat in for over 500 years. This room is actually hung outside the great wall for Fortress Hohensalzburg. When the organ is played the windows are swung open to allow the music to be heard in the city of Salzburg far below.

# An Agreeable Relief

by John Leech, Punch



Fancy portrait of the noble Lord who finds organ-grinding an "Agreeable relief."

# From My Collection

## Pandora's Box - Full of Eastern Promise!

by Alex Reid

**D**uring all the years I have been interested in mechanical music, I have never noticed an article on dancing doll boxes. So, here is how I acquired, and restored, mine.

On a typically cold January morning in 1998 I was browsing through my local auction house goodies, as I often do, when I was confronted by a box. Not just any box, but a most unusual box, propelled by four large wheels. What was this odd looking object, I asked myself. Covered in red velvet and decorated with numerous brass studs, it looked like something out of the Arabian Nights. Loose on top was a gilded, sort of half round, cage. With a glass front and a mirrored back it was surmounted by a domed lattice roof. Initially, I thought it had nothing to do with the box and cast it to one side.

Opening, what was to become my "Pandora's Box", I was immediately hooked or, as they say, under its spell.

There among an assorted jumble of broken bits of wood and packaging material nestled a couple of small dolls and a rather large cylinder movement, still connected to its six bells and strikers, and still more or less intact. But no governor and minus one bell.

Like a lamb to the slaughter, I knew there and then, in spite of the pitfalls, I had to have it. My mission was to rescue this pitiful looking object and somehow bring it back to life. This was my fate, my destiny. Anyhow, what serious collector could resist such a challenge. Not me, that's for sure.

My enthusiasm erupted like a volcano. I wheeled it home after the sale, cage in tow, triumphant.

This enthusiasm knew no bounds it seemed. I wanted everyone to know of my "great" find. The winds, however, were to

blow far colder than I had expected. Eminent members cast gloom and doom. I was deflated. Curiously, this only served to spur me on, and determined to succeed, I sought the help of a local restorer. He did indeed restore it, but still in its upholstered overcoat.

The little dolls danced merrily in their beautiful gilded cage, the colourful butterflies struck their bells inside... But wait, that cannot be right, it was never intended to be like that. Why had it taken so long for me to see it.

Without a second thought, off came the velvet and studs, revealing a lining of Moroccan newspapers from the early 1950s. The wheels, similarly removed with the help of a hacksaw, revealed washers made out of Moroccan coins of the same period.

Now at last, I was able to get the flavour of what I had really bought. Luckily, a well established firm of dealers/restorers, were willing to take up the challenge, and after some months and one or two hiccups, they brought it back to its original 1900's condition. However, there was, is and

will continue to be some unanswerable questions about this box. Like who made it? For what it is worth, Cuendet springs to mind, and seems as good a bet as any. A small fragment of original tune sheet tantalizingly reveals a flash of gold swirls, and this may prove another clue. The box's number is 23110.

On a more positive note, its not unattractive tunes, Eastern in flavour, may explain how it got to Morocco (I now call it my Moroccan box). But, who so drastically altered it, and who brought it back to England? A titled family, frustratingly, is all the auction house will reveal.

Having been so horribly damaged in transit, it must have become unloved and unwanted, and put into auction, where it was fortunately left for me to find, claim and restore.

This then is where we came in, and, for now, where my story ends. Can you add anything, do you have a similar box? I would be pleased to hear.

One last thought. Does anyone know a couple of dancing "dolly birds" looking for a gilded cage? I happen to have the very thing! ■



Just as it was found.

*Now at last, I was able to get the flavour of what I had really bought.*





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## Organocleide

The musical box maker who first applied this name to a typical Mandoline Basse movement rightly reckoned that it added desirable mystique. I have never seen it in a maker's catalogue and it does not appear in lists of musical box types such as Bremond's 1880 list of interchangeable boxes. Nor is it in the Ste. Croix "Book of Airs" – though I must say, neither is Mandoline Basse.

In its very rare appearances on tune sheets, Organocleide sometimes acquires either an acute accent on the first e (é) or a dieresis on the (i) or both. These are entirely superfluous, and of course bogus, but they do add to the mystique. (More information about the derivation of the word can be found in my first book page 24.)

With Organocleide on its tune sheet a box should certainly be of the Mandoline Basse type, which means that groups of teeth tuned to same pitch will start near the bass end. That involves a very large quantity of teeth, – at least 160. So for six airs, a 16" (41cm) cylinder is needed. The most lavish boxes used over 200 teeth, which for only four airs needs a cylinder at least 13½" (34cm).

So, compared with standard movements, the Mandoline Basse was extremely expensive. Accordingly several makers, including Baker-Troll, offered Bariton-Zither or Barytone Harmonique or other alternatives. Rivenc offered Mandoline Ténor as described in Oddments 88 with 144 teeth. They all offered sustained notes and I expect they all tapped only the wealthy market.

There are only 15 Organocleide boxes on the Register, and five of them are titled Mandoline Organocleide. Most have between 150 and 180 teeth but the maximum is on Bremond 2656, with 228 teeth. Surprisingly, there are only two Mandoline Basse boxes on the Register.

However, Mandoline Basse is the best name for these top class movements, and a good example, titled Organocleide, is serial 5959 shown in Fig. 1, with its tune sheet in Fig. 2.

The only markings on the mechanism are blank no. 2 stamped on cylinder assembly, governor, spring and bedplate, Fig. 3, and serial 5959 scribed on bass lead, great wheel, and bass end cap. No gamme number is recorded.

The comb is in two halves, total 165 teeth of which 142 are in groups of the same pitch. They are in three groups of 3 teeth, five groups of 4, two of 5, seven of 6 and three of 8 teeth. All pitch changes are marked by the usual line on the comb base, and teeth tuned to g are indicated by a pair of dots as seen in Fig 4. These g notes range from 96Hz at tooth 1 to 1534Hz in the group ending at tooth 164, – four octaves. The relative stiffness of the 440Hz a teeth is 165.

The tooth dimensions are all quite conventional, but the highest note is an octave below most standard combs. That must be why Mandoline Basse combs are sometimes referred to as "tuned an octave lower." But the lowest note,

here g 96Hz, two octaves below middle c is typical of most boxes with large cases. It is the lowest frequency that is effectively radiated by its sound board of periphery 71 inches. (explained in my first book page 8 and Table 1.)

The cylinder diameter is 2.6" so the circumference is 8.2" and, pinned at 0.1" per second each turn of the cylinder takes 82 seconds, – tunes about three seconds less!

Tune 1 is pinned on the cylinder dots, so the maker is sure to be from the Ste. Croix region. Governor and spring bearings are fixed from under the bedplate. The tune change lever is a hybrid from the key-wind type. The case interior is red except for the tops and the glass lid which are black – a step towards the all-black interiors. So all these factors suggest the box was made about 1870.

The only unusual features are a large M cast in the comb bases, and their polished convex outer edges as shown in Figs. 5 and 6.

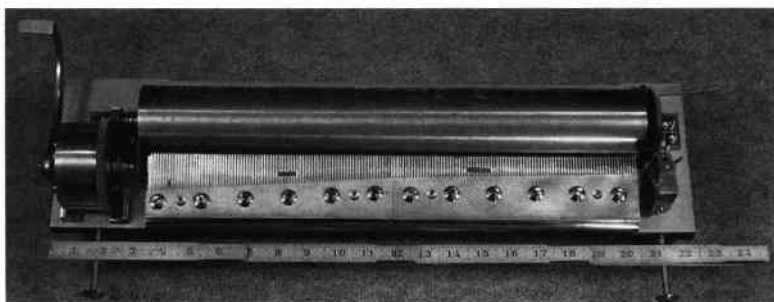


Fig. 1. Mechanism of serial 5959 with 440 and 880Hz with a teeth marked. The scale in inches balanced on the case screws is an old Swedish wood rule one yard long folding to a compact 7 inches (18cm).



Fig. 2. This version of the common design omits Geneve. I added an enlarged copy of the cartouche to show the dieresis more clearly; it hopes that the vowel will be separately pronounced, as in naïve. The *William Tell* overture has 4 parts: Romance, Alpine storm, Pastorale, and galop. Tune 5 is the pastorale for which the Swiss word is ranz.

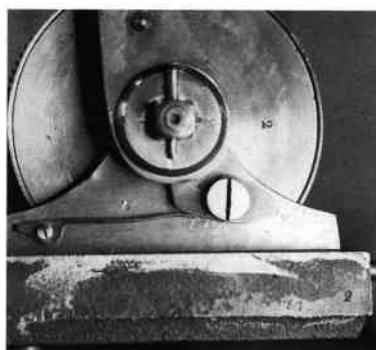


Fig. 3. Blank no. 2 on bedplate and spring details.

These expensive movements usually came in ornate cases, and some are known in model cathedrals. The case of serial 5959 measures 27¼ by 10½ by 7 inches (69 by 27 by 18 cm). It is grained, the sides conventionally but the front with a strange, squiggly effect supported by two rectangles and four geometric patterns of stringing, Fig. 7. The flat, veneered lid has elaborate banding and stringing and a large

geometric marquetry inlay shown in Fig. 8

The hard-to-read 6-air tune sheet of Fig. 2 offers four classic opera tunes and two popular hits of the early 1860s. Best known is tune 1 of 1862 which lends itself to the sustained note treatment, being a slow waltz. The other tunes all respond well to this bass-mandoline style of music. In particular tune 5, the slow moving *Ranz des Vaches* is a real treat played with sustained notes for 80 seconds; it is often rushed through in 30 seconds or less on boxes playing the complete overture. Here it marvellously evokes those cow bells heard in a distant Swiss pasture towards evening.

Serial 5959 achieves these effects by maintaining an average playing rate of about fifteen notes per second. So it can maintain sustained notes while adding an accompaniment. The cylinder has 7160 pins,- about 1200 per tune. Their mandoline playing merges into sustained notes at around 8 notes per second towards the bass end whereas it requires a higher rate at the treble end. That seems to be why the sustained note effect is so good on Mandoline Basse boxes.

## C. Lecoultré, Geneva.

In 1865 François Charles Lecoultré handed over to his son, Charles François. At that time the business was known as F. C. Lecoultré and I think the name was not changed until 1871 when it was taken over by Auguste Perrelet. He advertised his Company as "Successeurs de F. C. Lecoultré." The serial numbers continued unaffected by these two changes. Many tune sheets also survived the 1865 change; serial 36766 in 1868 had the old standard type with *LF* under the top border and agent *BB&C* in the cartouche,- no. 17 in the Tune Sheet book. The earliest recorded distinctive C. Lecoultré tune sheet is on serial 37453 made in 1870. It is diamond shaped, Ord-Hume no. 43. Its top margin states, in small italic capitals, C LECOULTRE A GENÈVE.

*Here it marvellously evokes those cow bells heard in a distant Swiss pasture towards evening.*



Fig. 4. Bass half of 5959 comb. Pairs of dots indicate *g* teeth, 192 and 384Hz. I added the numbers of teeth tuned to the same pitch, as indicated by the scribed pitch lines on the comb base.



Fig. 5. Foundry mark M cast in both comb bases.



Fig. 6. Curved and polished outside edge of the comb bases, very unusual.



Fig. 7. Bizarre case front of serial 5959. Someone must have liked it.



Fig. 8. Flat lid of 5959 with complicated stringing, banding and central inlay. The left side was badly damaged and this photo flatters my repairs.

## musical box oddments no. 94



Fig. 9. This C L GENEVE stamp with complete diamond border is a rarity.

Like most proprietors, he also had his personal stamp made. It simply had C L and GENEVE in small sans serif capitals in a diamond frame. It was rather casually used, and sometimes on curved surfaces so

you could only see bits of the diamond. If it was in use throughout the Charles Lecoultre period, 1865 to 1871, it could be on serial numbers about 34,000 to 39,000. But I think it was only sporadically applied and I hope the reason will one day emerge. It is partly seen on the winder of serial 37918 and shown in Fig. 9.

### Quality 6" (15cm) cylinder boxes.

Many choice 6" (15cm) cylinder boxes were made in the 1830 to 1880 period, the best playing 4 airs on combs of about 82 teeth. They were mostly key-wind or early lever, - wind types, turned out by most makers. Their first three or four bass teeth were too wide for the 4-air spacing, so their spacing was widened with an unpinned track beyond tune 4. Paillard serial 5880 of about 1851 is a typical example and the bass end tooth spacing can be seen in Fig. 13 on page 100 of Vol. 19 no. 4, winter 1999.

Now another interesting example has appeared with 82 teeth, very early lever-wind, red case interior with hinged glass lid. Its serial number is 3704, with blank number 13, see Figs. 10 and 11. Gamme number 138 is scribed on the bass lead and also on the comb base with unrecorded initials JLM, as shown in Fig. 12.

These boxes are naturally associated with brass bedplates on which their serial number is often stamped in the usual back left position, but serial 3704 has a cast iron bedplate. It has the fine ribbed surface associated with planing the casting for a flat top face on which stamping figures is difficult. So it became normal practice to stamp the serial number on the bass end cylinder bearing. I think Fig. 12 shows an unwise early attempt.

There was a curious incident about the tune sheet of serial 3704. It was missing but two of its pins survived. The fragments under these pins were not faded and were free from the usual verdigris staining. So they were optimistically saved by Ted Brown!

Printed in pale blue on clear white paper, they showed very fine vertical hatching. Only one known tune sheet has this feature, the early type used widely in Ste. Croix, sometimes with a maker's initials at bottom right as shown in Fig. 13. So we know the tune sheet design but alas! not the maker.

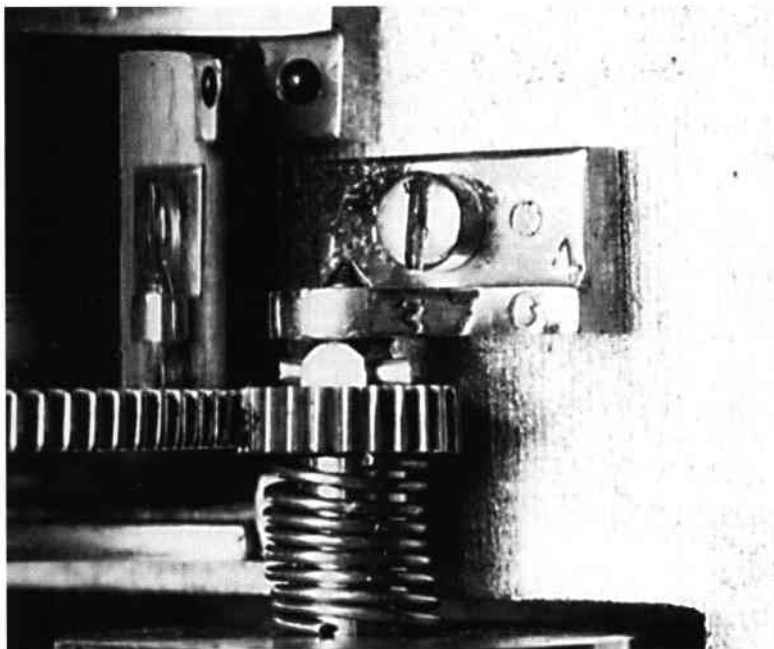


Fig. 10. 3704 stamped on the cylinder bearing, with 370 on the concave curve and 4 finishing faintly on the flat.

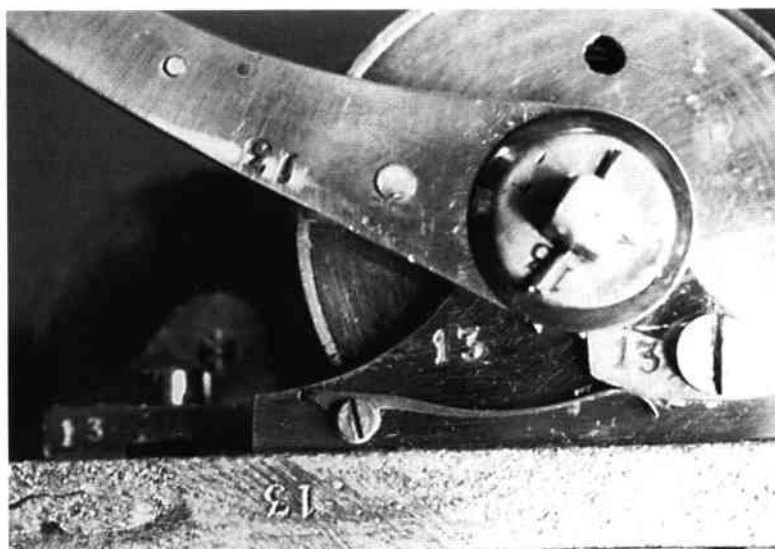
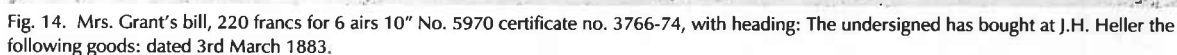
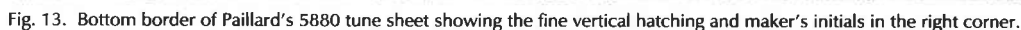


Fig. 11. Blank 13 on the cast iron bedplate edge and the cylinder bearing, and on four items of the spring assembly.



Fig. 12. Stamped JLM and scribed 138 on serial 3704 comb base.

*So it became normal practice to stamp the serial number on the bass end cylinder bearing.*



These boxes are often comparatively cheap at auctions, because they are nothing to look at and have only four tines. But what combs! At least eighty teeth and often with sparkling arrangements. People will say "play it again," which is seldom asked of a 6" ten-air box.

This column has reproduced many letters, bills, catalogues and adverts plus monograms and stamped marks of makers and agents. Also, of course, tune sheets.

Fig. 15. Tune sheet of Heller 5970. Tunes 1, 2 and 6 date from 1880. Box probably made in 1881, maker and serial number not known.

I therefore had another search through the Czibulka tunes, and found that *Stephanie* was his opus 312 dated 1880. So this correction is needed on page 238 of my second book. Sorry, but it is a good example of indirect as well as direct help from these items of historical data. ■

*But what combs!  
At least eighty  
teeth and often  
with sparkling  
arrangements.*



# Organette Book

*To mark our 40th Anniversary*

## THE ORGANETTE BOOK a new publication from MBSGB

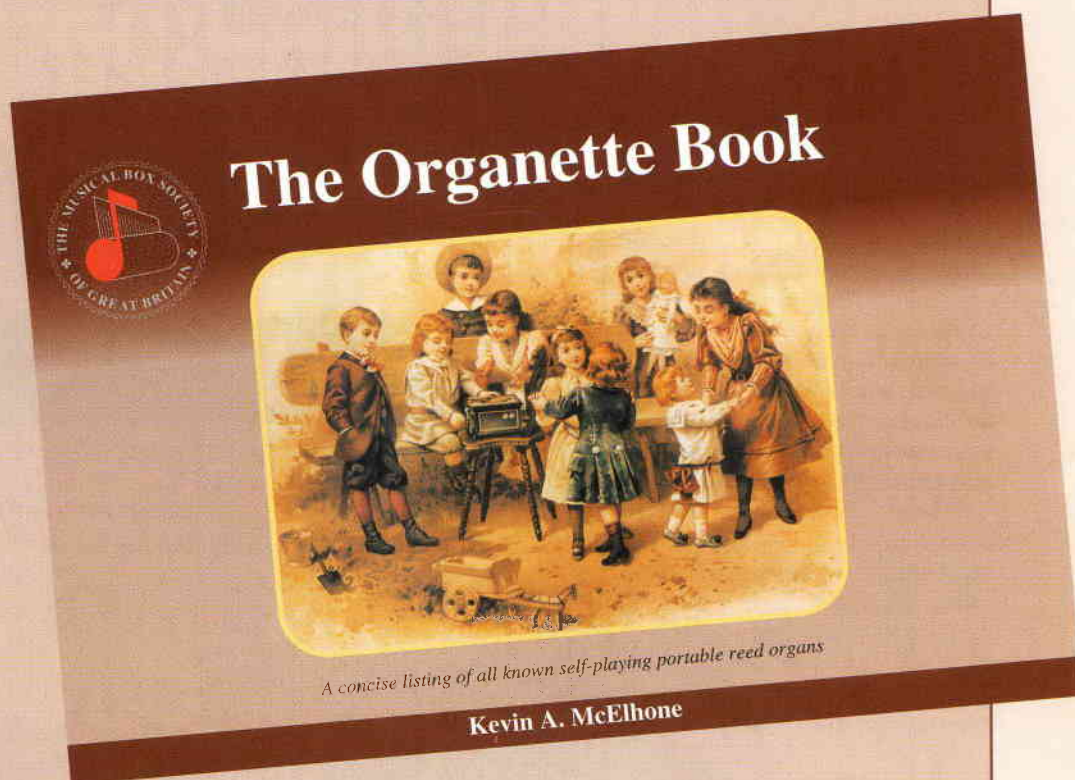
This limited edition of The Organette Book contains over 700 plates, many in colour, illustrating some 560 different makes, types and models of organette plus important historical adverts and documentation. Most of the illustrations were taken by author Kevin McElhone and have never been published in a definitive work such as this. The plates are supported by a comprehensive text, indexed A-Z for easy reference by either make, model or by name of owners and agents. The Organette Book is the story of the organette, defined as a small, hand-operated, portable reed instrument. The book is an historical account intended for anyone with an interest in all forms of

mechanical music as well as a reference work for novice, collector, expert, auction house or prospective purchaser. Instruments not quite fitting the definition are included rather than excluded.

It is possible that many of the illustrations have never been published in a work such as this. Much of the book's content has been derived from material contributed by collectors from around the world or from prime sources. Our technical editors and contributors revealed many instruments previously unrecorded in reference works on mechanical musical instruments.

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# Chanctonbury Ring

**T**he annual Summer Open Day at Bucks Green in Sussex was, as usual, a day of mechanical music for all members or prospective members of the Society. Over 30 members attended, of whom three had joined recently. After the usual morning tea and coffee we all sat down for some easy listening. We heard an early Lecoutre box that had just been restored having had 16 replacement tips and a re-damper. It sounded excellent. The next instrument was a 24 note, twin reeded, barrel organ that was tuned celeste. Eleven of the reeds had replaced reed tongues. It came with two barrels playing secular and sacred airs. The arrangements were very good and with all the pneumatics replaced should play for many years.

After brief excerpts from an 1891 issue of 'Work' magazine on how not to replace pallets and how to ensure conical bellows had no puckers on the corners, we started the main session of listening to music. Starting with an extremely bright snuff box from about 1840 and an early Alibert cylinder box, we moved through the cylinder boxes to disc boxes. Here, by playing six in fairly quick succession, we were able to hear the differences in both arrangement and tonal quality.

The break for lunch came all too soon and after the buffet and selection of sweets had gone down we were given a relaxing hour outside, of street organs of various makes and sizes including Raffin, Pell, Hofbauer, Van Duren and a splendid Chiappa trumpet organ, which brought round some of the 'locals' from the nearby pub.

We reluctantly went in for the afternoon talk but were soon absorbed by the captivating manner of long standing member Freddy Hill. After giving us anecdotes from the early days of the Society and some of its characters, he played some arrangements made by a

friend, Ian Miles, in 1984 on his Hofbauer organ. These compositions, entitled Waltz for Little Wind Chest, Pipe Parade and English Intermezzo, which described in music a village fete and local church bells, showed the amazing versatility that can be obtained from these little 20 note pipe organs.

He then went on to remind us that as well as our Society's anniversary it was the Queen's Jubilee, and reinforced it musically by playing Rule Britannia and The National Anthem on a variety of small, early chamber barrel organs. We were all surprised by the complexity of the arrangements from instruments with so few notes. As usual, the time went all too quickly and the call came for tea. Everyone felt the day had been worthwhile and looked forward to the next one. ■

## Dates for the next Chanctonbury Rings:

**Sunday 18th August** (still a few seats available). Bring a packed lunch, we supply the puddings.

**Sunday, 19th January 2003** (Refreshments to include School puddings!).



"Do you want to buy the organ or not!" Ken Dickens with Brian Thompson.



Freddie Hill in fine form.



Paul Bellamy entertains with the Jager and Brommer 20 note.



Ros Longhurst plays the Hofbauer 20 note.



# The Organette Book

**O**n June 1st, at our AGM, we launched this, our MBSGB 40th Anniversary project. The Organette Book fills a huge gap in the history of mechanical music. Together with the Tune Sheet Book these are benchmark publications worthy of our Society.

President Christopher Proudfoot has established a Publications Committee, and a further major publication by our Society on mechanical music is already underway. Each one of us has a birthday, an anniversary or an annual celebration such as Christmas. Maybe you have a friend who would appreciate the book as a gift. How many times do we find ourselves at a loss when asked 'What would you like?' If the answer was 'The Organette Book' overheads would be recovered, a quality gift would be given and funds regenerated for the next publication. Please take advantage of the £50 offer price to members and associate members and order your copy now.

These are just a few of the testimonials from all over the world supporting this, our unique, limited edition:

**■ Ralph Heintz, Vice President MBSGB (Retired June 1st, 2002), Senior member of MBSI:**

*"It has been a pleasure to support the work on the Organette Book, which I consider the most significant contribution to this area mechanical music in the past quarter century. Organettes and their associated musical toys have been sadly neglected in the literature, mainly, I believe, because their low initial cost resulted in lack of interest in preserving them. With the more costly musical boxes, the investment was sufficient to inspire the owners to care for them and to protect them from harm. Kevin McElhone has done a magnificent job of bringing together the widely scattered information on these delightful instruments in a volume, which will stand as the definitive work on organettes.*

**■ Gerard Dabanot, France:**

*The book... is very interesting. Congratulations on your work.*

**■ John Farmer, UK:**

*Congratulations on producing a very comprehensive and interesting book. I find it is the sort of book one keeps 'dipping into' during relaxing moments. The prints of original adverts, etc. add enormously to the overall feel. I'm glad I bought it.*

**■ Franco Severi, The Piano Melodica/ G. Racca club, Italy:**

*Compliments, the book is very beautiful, really well done and particularly interesting.*

**■ Philippe Rouillé of the French Society of mechanical music, AAIMM:**

*Françoise Dussour, who is in charge of the Musée de Mirecourt, has made a good review of your book which has been published already in a French e-mail discussion group and will be reproduced in the next issue of our Journal.*

**■ Nick Dean (of Dean Organs):**

*A well documented book, very thorough and will be of invaluable use as a reference for many generations to come.*

**■ Robert Ducat-Brown (MBSGB):**

*This is a very attractive hard cover book; it is packed with all you would ever need to know about organettes and contains over 700 pictures and photographs with descriptions and often history of hundreds of instruments. Anyone with an interest in mechanical music should find room on their shelves for this excellent and informative publication. Congratulations to the author and Publications Committee.*

**■ Todd Augsburg (Member of MBSGB and MBSI):** *This will be one of the most useful and interesting books for my reference library. Covering more than 550 makes of instruments, and profusely illustrated, the book is sure to become the standard reference text for anyone interested in organettes, collectors, restorers, or for anyone who appreciates mechanical music in general. The author has not only documented instruments I've never*

*seen, but included enough depth to expand what I "thought" I knew about common models. A job well done, and a pleasure to read - I recommend it HIGHLY!*

**■ Robert Hough, Committee Member, MBSGB:** *The publication of "The Organette Book" is not only a major achievement but it also fills a significant gap in the range of reference books available on this subject. Destined to become the definitive work on these underrated music machines. Well done to all concerned!*

**■ Luuk Goldhoorn (Netherlands):** *What a fabulous work you have done! Congratulations. Although not specifically my interest, nevertheless I think I am able to judge how important such a book is for our Society.*

**■ Ralf Smolne, President, der GSM e. V. (Germany):**

*Congratulations to you for this really very successful work. This book is a 'must' for collector, friend or for anyone who loves mechanical musical instruments. The text is comprehensive, easy to understand and well composed. It also reveals hitherto unknown details. With the comprehensive historical documentation, the reader receives an insight into the developing story of the mechanical musical instrument industry of that time.*

**■ Mick Doswell, the Rye Treasury of Music, England:** *This is an extremely worthy book bringing together so much previously unpublished information on these often overlooked machines. I recommend this book to both novice and professional alike; remember, it will never be published again.*

So there you have it! Testimonials from around the world and many more to come. Little instruments, some relatively inexpensive, just right for the novice and expert alike. Easy to maintain, a good repertoire of music. No collection should be without one and no collector, beginner or otherwise, should be without this book on their shelf. ■

**Paul Bellamy - Vice President.**

## Organette Book Costs

The organette book is now available at:

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(non-members-Europe)

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(Surface mail)

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advert on Page 226

# Auction Reports

**T**he period from 23rd May through to the Society AGM saw a flurry of selling activity. Christie's was the first sale where the top lot was an Edison electric pen which made £13,000.

In the mechanical music sections there was a strong demand for early or rare musical boxes and pieces in original condition, once again demonstrating the selectivity of the market. A six-bell box with bird strikers sold for £2,200; a French hidden drum and bells in boule case attributed to Soualle made £2,000; a lever-wind Nicole playing four airs on an 8 inch cylinder reached a surprising £1,600, and a four-air Freres Nicole continued the trend at £2,400.

Amongst the disc boxes, a 15% inch and a 19% inch upright Polyphon sold for £3,400 and £3,500 respectively; a 25% inch upright Symphonion (minus coin drawer, pediment, damper rail and a working spring) sold for £3,500.

A musical hall chair made £650, while the rarer musical table sold for £1,600. However, a Gasparini fairground organ and an unusual chalet-style Boite de Gare failed to sell, while a large wax working model of a gorilla will be back by popular demand for the next sale.

Once again some of the highest prices were achieved by automata,

with strong bidding in the room and over the phone, including an early magician at £9,500, a rabbit in cabbage at £1,500, and a Roullet et Decamps Rose Bebe (similar idea to the rabbit) at £4,000.

The following week saw the sale of the collection of the late Harold Smith at Saddington Hall in Leicestershire.

The largest item, the Imhof and Mukle orchestrion, made £95,000 and is believed to be staying in Europe. (*It is going to Speyer in Germany - Ed.*). Musical boxes started high with an 8-inch table Polyphon making a staggering £920. An 11-inch disc Polyphon hall clock (incomplete) made £1,500, and a similar Symphonion with 13% inch discs made £1,600. A very nice-toned wall mounted 19% inch Polyphon made £4,200 and a Mikado made £6,000.

A very clean Aeolian 46-note organ reached £1,850, beating a Model W Orchestrelle, including electric blower, at £1,400. Bargains were to be had in the piano department with an Aeolian half Duo-Art upright at only £210, but included were 88 Duo-Art rolls. Worth it for the rolls alone! A Hupfeld Solophonia and Angelus upright went for £35 and £20 respectively. A nice sounding re-cased Black Forest 51-key barrel organ with six barrels fetched £3,600. A 30 note Piano Melodica in need of a complete restoration made a creditable £1,250 and also included 25 music books, pretty rare these days.

The most surprising bargain of the 79 musical lots was the Debain Antiphonal piano of around 1850. This is in remarkable condition in its rosewood case and included eight sets of plchettes in their original boxes. This only made £2,500.

All in all, a day of highs and lows and, sadly, the end of an era.

The same week saw the mechanical music sale at Bonhams in Knowle. Over 100 lots were on offer starting with a partly dismantled Nicole Freres two-per-

turn which made a surprising £1,400. A very handsome six air box by the same maker fetched £3,300, while a Lecoutre Mandoline with twin combs made £2,100. A musical photograph album entitled 'The British Army Album' aroused interest and was sold at £250.

Among the disc boxes, a Style 45 Polyphon 15½ inch fetched £2,600, while a Britannia Smokers cabinet 17¼ inch made £1,900. A collection of snuff boxes raised little interest with the highest price of £270 going to a sectional comb box by M. Bordier. Singing birds and automata were in demand with an early 20th century coin operated two-bird box making £1,600 despite a faulty motor.



6 air Nicole Frere at Bonhams.

Overall, it was clear that the best items still command good prices but there is less enthusiasm for the more mundane items.

The final sale of this period was the MBSGB auction which followed the AGM. This attracted over 200 lots ranging from a Hicks style piano, disc and cylinder boxes, through to workshop equipment and boxes of parts of the kind we all accumulate in our workshops. Books were in demand and there was interest in most lots.

For those seeking specific items or just generally browsing this has been an interesting few weeks. ■

*Thanks go to Nick Hawkins at Christie's, Frank Barnet at Bonhams, and to Nicholas Simons in the preparation of this report. - Editor.*



16" Orphenion Table Disc Musical Box.

# Looking back

By Arthur Cunliffe

**I hope that on this occasion, members will allow me to take a look back into early days of the Society instead of dealing with Register topics. Work on the Register is ongoing, but it is in a period of correction and development.**

Many present day members of the Musical Box Society will know little of the early days of the Society when musical boxes were very easy to find and were relatively inexpensive.

The Society was formed in 1962 when on December 1st thirty people attended the inaugural meeting at the Mandeville Hotel in London. Much has been written already about the very early days, so I will not dwell too long on that particular period. Mr. De Vere Green, a London dental surgeon, soon found he had been elected Secretary. John E. T. Clark was elected President and a Mr. "Gerry" Planus became Vice-President. Arthur Ord-Hume was chosen to be editor. Frank Greenacre became Treasurer. A few months later, Frank noted that he was in charge of the sum of £2 being his own subscription to the Society. We had late payers even in those days! All who came to that meeting became founder members, but sad to say there are too few still with us.

By the Summer of 1963, the Society had over 70 members and appeared to be mainly concerned with disc machines. Soon the Society enrolled its first member from the Continent, Mr. Hornacher from Switzerland. Another dentist, Lt. Col. Jackson Fritz who was serving with the United States Air Force at Alconbury brought his great knowledge of musical boxes to the Society.

When the Society was just one year old, member Bruce Angrave provided the BBC. with an auto change Polyphon for use in the Archers radio programme. Bruce was one of our well known

celebrities who contributed to many programmes on radio in those days. In this particular edition of the Archers, Walter Gabriel found a Polyphon in a barn, did it up and presented it to Peggy Archer at the Bull Inn.

This broadcast aroused enormous interest in mechanical music and the script writers had to continue the theme for quite a time. On January 15 1964, the Radio Times printed a picture of Bruce Angrave standing beside his 22" Polyphon which Bruce had now mischievously named "Autoglockenpolyphon." The Archers story was developed by the script writers. The Polyphon was taken out of the Bull and sold to a dealer for £40. The dealer mentioned the Musical Box Society and said any collector would give him a £100 for it. Eventually the Polyphon was written out of the programme when it was sold for £135.

Another celebrity of the time who joined our ranks was the magician and illusionist David Nixon. Many will remember his series of programmes on television. He had a keen interest in mechanical music. In subsequent years other famous people joined our ranks often preferring to remain anonymous.

Among the many interesting and informative letters to the editor, one from a Mr. Skinner gave an insight into the Polyphon trade mark. He said, "Actually, she is a fully fledged woman and she stands for German Industry, her name being Germania. You will notice by the transfer that Germania is already crowned with success. Further success is hers by the wreath of laurels that she carries in her right hand. Regarding the shooting star, this speaks for itself."

On the other hand, I do like Bruce Angrave's description when he described the trade mark as, "a stout nymph in garters clutching a laurel wreath in one hand and a harp in the other, about to be struck on the head by a comet."

There were a number of technical articles in the early journals. Robert Burnett wrote in the 1963 Summer edition a lengthy and well researched treatise on the date of the invention of the musical box. A matter not fully resolved even to this day, but on the evidence available at the time, Robert concluded the year would be around 1796 and the inventor Antoine Favre. He reached this decision on the basis that the writings of Chapuis were the most convincing and did not seem to be based on hearsay.

*(The debate continues, with the latest contribution by Arthur Ord-Hume in this issue. Editor).*

In the Christmas edition of that year, founder member number 30 a certain Mr. F. Hill submitted a fine article on the English Barrel Organ along with detailed drawings of how a simple barrel organ works. How pleasing it is to note that Mr Hill is still a member of the Society. Indeed he delighted members at the Godalming meeting in 1996 when he demonstrated his bird organs.

1963 was the year the emblem to represent the Society was chosen. Designed by Bruce Angrave, the disc with a pinned cylinder and a crotchet remains our badge to this day.

The early meetings of the Society were held in London and usually finished up in the home of Mr. De Vere Green. In these meetings, members gave demonstrations of how to restore musical boxes. Cylinder polishing, comb slitting and the making of dampers were just some of the topics undertaken. The interest in disc machines was paramount with members trying to sort out the best way to make new damper rails for the Polyphon.

In volume 4, Arthur Ord-Hume brought the organette to the attention of members and pointed



out that they were worthy of consideration, "making a refreshing change from musical boxes." He also published three excellent drawings showing how various types of organettes worked and how the reeds sounded.

An article on making tunes for organettes was published in 1964 being a reprint of a piece in The Boys Own Paper dated July 6 1895. The author, Dr. Reginald Bennet noted that, "it is quite easy to cut music for the organette and no knowledge of music is required except the names of the notes. He noted that, "the standard fourteen note organette at its best, is not a very musical instrument, but the Organina, Celestina and other instruments of that class are vastly superior, the "voices" being prompter." So there you are! Get busy cutting miles of music please.

The first advertisement offering musical boxes for sale came in Volume 7 when Bruce Angrave offered an interchangeable box together with a matching table plus an Ormolu Empire style musical clock, a musical picture and a 19th century flute pipe organ for sale. No prices were mentioned, but I presume they all sold.

For sale and wanted advertisements did not seem to feature in early issues of the Journal and it is only by Volume 2 number 2 that regular adverts came along. Just three members placed regular repeat advertisements. One asked for musical snuffboxes, another

would like antique clocks and musical boxes whilst the third wanted barrel organs. Between them they ought to have done very well.

One particularly interesting advertisement came from a Manchester based firm of Insurance Brokers. They offered a special service to members quoting the equivalent of fifty pence per cent of the total value of any collection as a basic premium. Minimum premium had to be £1 and the insured to stand the first £2.50 of any claim. As far as I am aware, this is the only time any Insurance Company has advertised in our Journal.

The time honoured problem of starting a collection and the value of musical boxes worried members in the early 1960's just as it does today. In the very first volume, "Idiophone" wrote, "let us maintain honest and honourable transactions without at the same time hitting ourselves in the eye. You can still find bargains at thirty shillings to five pounds." On the subject of how much is it worth?, I certainly like his response, "it's valueless really - except in the eyes of someone who really appreciates these things". Maybe present day members could adopt that retort when dealing with the curious masses.

In the nineteen sixties, boxes must have been easily obtained and inexpensive, but the following account of a Practical meeting held at the Bernes Hotel must make conservationists of today gasp in

horror. "Before the widening eyes of the meeting, Gerry Planus wound up a box from his collection and then tampered with the endless screw. With a frightful screech, the mechanism flew and, as teeth flew high in the air, the full meaning of Mr. Jacot's cartoon in his repair manual was brought home to us all. The report concluded with the remark, "Gerry has a box for sale, teeth in a cardboard box." Nothing like that could ever happen today of course, but it does show that in those far off days the scrapping of movements was not thought to be too horrendous. It should also serve as a warning as it was common to cannibalise boxes to make one good one. Many of these movements are with us to this day with their transplanted motors and governors making the recognition of makers and their work even more difficult.

An advertisement that had been written originally in 1857 was mentioned in Journal number 8. I wish the language used to describe that sale could be used today by the leading auction houses. It would be much more gentle.

*"Great and attractive sale of the magnificent assemblage of property at Broom Hall, accumulated during the last sixty years within this abode of taste and virtue; the whole selected at an enormous expense and with great judgement."*

Words like "virtue, taste and judgement" sit well with our hobby, but "enormous expense" strikes a chord with some wives I feel.

Arthur Cunliffe

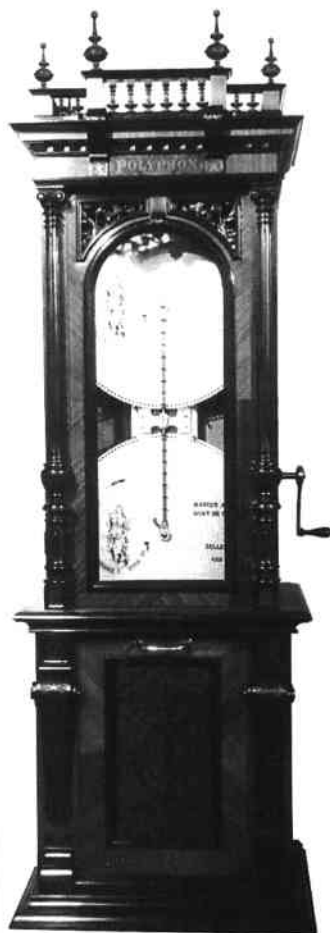


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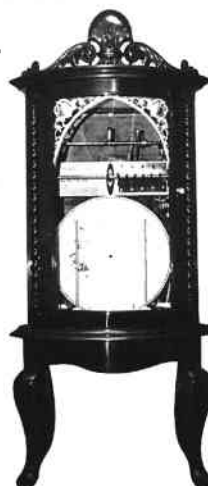
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# Tuning

Thank you for allowing me to reply to Peter Howard. Peter, you are quite correct, a cent is not a fixed unit of frequency, merely a convenient way of dividing up an octave. The octave of 300-600 Hz was merely an example to show the relationship of one to the other. Moving on to tuning an English chamber barrel organ, there are some important points to consider. What is its fundamental frequency? To least alter the pipes (particularly metal ones) the frequency is unlikely to be A=440 Hz. If it is not, and you are using Hz or C.P.S, you will immediately run into mental arithmetic gymnastics. The last barrel organ I tuned turned out to be tuned at 433.6 HZ (this meant I only altered a small number of pipes). At this frequency the pipes fitted the mean tone scale very closely. Imagine trying to re-arrange mean tone, today published at 440 Hz to 433.6. Easy on a calculator, but guaranteed to confuse when you are trying to apply to a set of pipes (or strings for that matter). How much easier to do it in cents. Here is an octave, with cent values for mean tone (see above).

If you use cents you will find it much easier to match scales to pipes. How often do you see organs recently tuned with metal pipes opened out too far, stoppers way out of normal, and shades glued to the tops of open pipes? Most of this is unnecessary if you are careful and play with scales a bit.

If you are drastically altering pipework, it is most likely you have the wrong frequency and/or the wrong tuning scale. Incidentally, only tune the fundamental pipework, often the diapason, or in street organs, the violin rank. You can then tune the other ranks to them either pitch, sharp or flat celeste, depending on the type of instrument.

Good luck, and if you get any problems, shout up, I will be glad to help.

John Harrold

# Cylinder Sequence

I was very pleased to acquire, at the recent AGM, a copy of John Clark's 'Musical Boxes', which contains a mass of information that I am sure would be virtually unobtainable today, particularly his various anecdotes. He has a very readable style, and a certain charming inconsistency – for example, on page one he says that the "Polyphon was, without doubt, the best of its kind ever made", - and two pages on he praises a Regina 27 inch as being "undoubtedly the finest disc musical box made either before or since"!

However, one particular comment intrigued and frustrated me. On page 124 he discusses the virtual impossibility of duplicating cylinders, a certain USA patent on the subject being impracticable, but he then notes in parentheses "A method of achieving easy duplication of cylinders has been suggested to me, and it seems so simple that it is difficult to understand why the musical box manufacturers... did not think of if themselves". Unfortunately, he does not reveal this method, and this is the only reference to it anywhere in the book! Does anyone know what this proposal was, and would it work?

On another matter, I believe it is generally agreed that one of the design drawbacks of the multi-tune cylinder box is the hefty thump on the snail cam caused by the return from the last tune to the first, to the extent that some makers put a step halfway down in an attempt to reduce the speed of return. The solution seems so obvious that there must be an argument against it. Instead of playing the tunes in the order 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, why not 1, 3, 5, 6, 4, 2, 1 or similar – result, no large return step. I can't see the double lift on the cam causing any problems, as we are only talking of, roughly, 34 thou. instead of 17 thou., but I await enlightenment!

Tony King

# More on Orphenion

When I was compiling the article about my Orphenion which appeared in Issue 6 of the present Volume, I could not have imagined the interest that it would cause. Can I take this opportunity to thank all those who have contacted me, especially Alec Reid who sent me a copy of the article about the Ariophon from Issue 7 of Volume 7, which is proving extremely useful.

However, a number of errors have been pointed out to me in regard to the spelling of some of the names that I have used, and I would like to rectify them here: "Baucer" should be *Bauer*; "Röder" – *Röder*; "Siefert" – *Seifert*; "Porter" – *Polter*; "Alder" – *Adler*; "Oberlander" – *Oberländer*; and "Jukes Heminem Zimmerman" should be *Jules Heinrich Zimmerman*. This I hope will resolve the mistakes that I have made and which, therefore, are my responsibility. Hopefully, my article will lead to more research about Rükert's activities and that my errors will not damage any future research on this topic.

John Ward



## In our next Issue...

- More from the Workshop
- Avoiding the 'Runs'
- Spot the Difference
- Our regular features

	C	C#	D	D#	E	F	F#	G	G#	A	A#	B
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