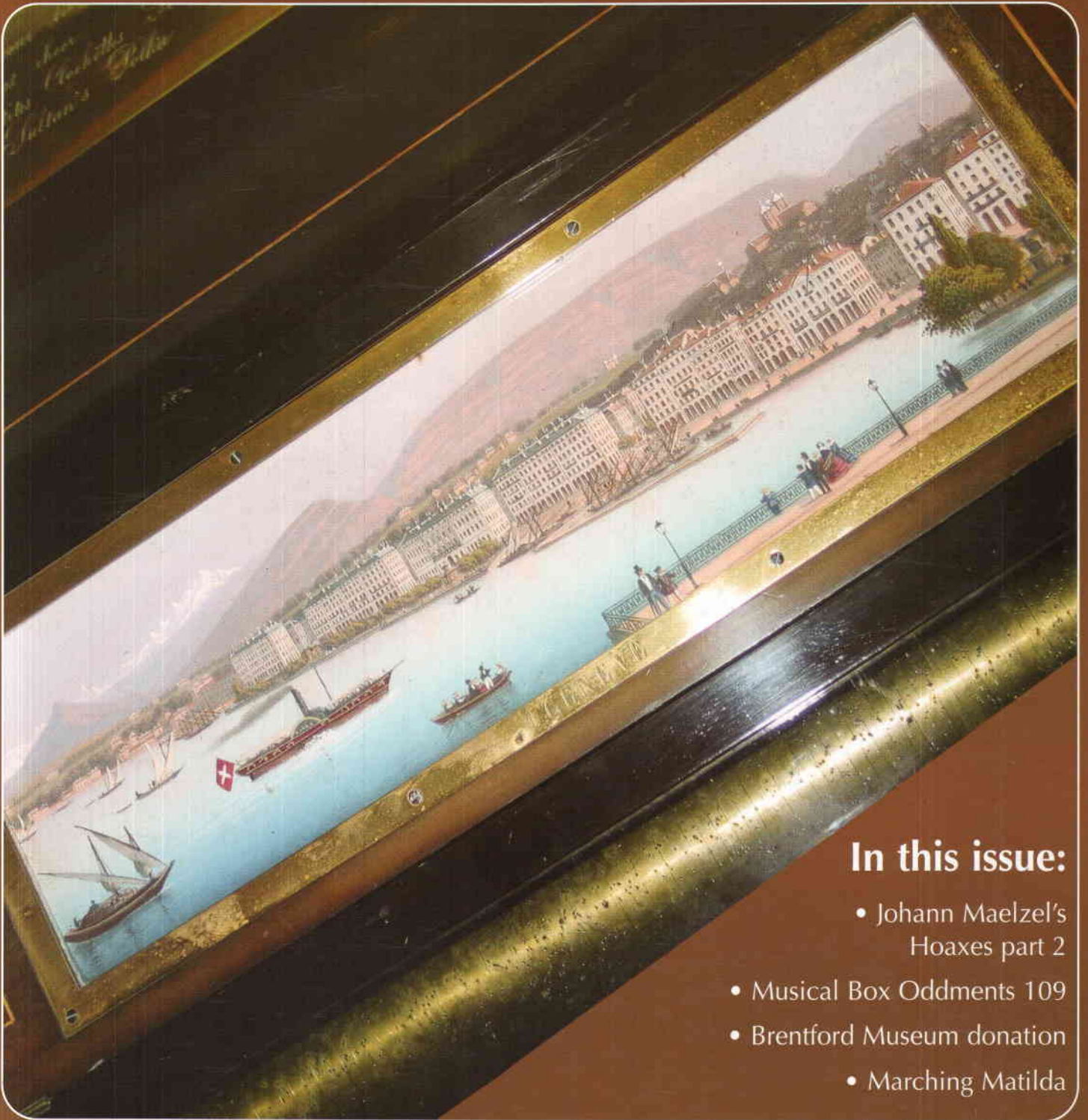


# The Music Box

*An International Journal of Mechanical Music*



## In this issue:

- Johann Maelzel's Hoaxes part 2
- Musical Box Oddments 109
- Brentford Museum donation
- Marching Matilda

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# MECHANICAL MUSIC AND TECHNICAL APPARATUS, INCLUDING THE GERALD STONEHILL COLLECTION OF DUO-ART

*South Kensington, 31 May 2006*

## CHRISTIE'S

SINCE 1766



# From the Editors' Desk

**E**ditng The Music Box has had a very odd spin-off for us, for it has made us very conscious of the weather. The magazine comes out quarterly and so does the weather slide through the seasons. Now we are going quite dramatically from Spring and into Summer. We saw our first bear of the season about two weeks ago, so hibernation is over and it is time to start moving around again! I came across a delightfully illustrated picture the other day showing a bear stretching in the sun and captioned "As I get older I can still do everything I always did - I just choose not to!". I can identify with that sentiment.

In our youth we often spent a day in London and would enjoy poking round Portobello Road Market before visiting Graham Webb's shop. It was with great sadness that we learned of his death and we extend our sympathy to his wife and family. His shop was an Aladdin's cave of boxes. Few newer collectors will have experienced a shop wall solid with stacked musical boxes of all sizes and many more scattered all around, and all for sale. After Portobello one was able to go round to Keith Harding's shop in Hornsey Road, Islington - it was there we were able to buy books and records on the hobby as well as admire his wonderful restoration workshops. These two shops always made a day in town a real treat and we were rather disappointed when Graham went to Cornwall and then Brighton and Keith to Northleach, although it then meant we could see Jack Donovan in London and still have an excuse for days out to Gloucestershire and Sussex!

Graham was editor of The Music Box for a couple of years (1972-3). The Music Box accepted occasional paid advertising from the first, and Graham's first advertisement appeared in Vol 1 No. 8, Christmas 1964. It is reproduced elsewhere in this issue. By Volume Three, advertising had settled

down, with Graham's advertisement occupying the back cover and Keith's inside the front cover, positions they continued to maintain for many issues. These are reproduced for the benefit of members too young to remember those far-off days! We are pleased that Keith, now surely one of the Society's most senior members, continues to place his advertisement with us to this day.

Looking to the future, we are still on the lookout for new contributors. For Society Matters, we are interested in exhibitions you have taken part in, boxes you have acquired, inquiries about the previous history of instruments now in your possession (some of us have memories that go back a long way!). As a group we should have a lot to say to each other. Pick up a pen, or a word processor, and write that letter or article you always meant to do. E-mail it to [mechmusicmuseum@aol.com](mailto:mechmusicmuseum@aol.com) or [David@revelstokenickelodeon.com](mailto:David@revelstokenickelodeon.com). We acknowledge within two days of receipt if we are here, and within two weeks if we are travelling. There is a saying that you get out of life what you put into it - do not just take from the Society - put something back into it!

Don't forget to attend the AGM at Roade on June 3rd if you possibly can - details on page 168.

Meanwhile, enjoy the conclusion of John Ward's Maelzel's Hoaxes article, Paul Bellamy's Marching Matilda and all the other excellent material in this issue. Have a great Summer and let the music play on!

## Cover picture

*Fine coloured print of Geneva on a so far unidentified 8-air transitional lever wound musical box with enamel and brass inlaid lid and brass tune sheet. Editors' Collection. There will be more about this box in the Autumn issue.*

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The Editors welcome articles, letters and other contributions for publication in the Journal. The Editors expressly reserve the right to amend or refuse any of the foregoing.

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# The Annual General Meeting

will be held on

Saturday 3rd June

2006 at 10.30 a.m. at

The Village Hall

## ROADE

near Northampton

## Open Day

for members of the MBSGB

on

Saturday 21st October 2006

at the home of

## Nicholas Simons

in

## Derby

All members are welcome but are requested to phone or Email to reserve a space. Anyone who hasn't been before will be sent details of the address and how to get there. All members coming are invited to bring an item, if they wish, to show to others. The meeting will commence at 11 a.m. and a buffet lunch will be provided. Nicholas may be contacted on 01322 760576 or by Email at [njas@btinternet.com](mailto:njas@btinternet.com)

## From the President

It was in 2001 that I was first elected to the Presidential Chair (and it IS a chair, for the President of this Society is what in most others would be called the Chairman), and at that time I said I would hold the office for three years. I was later persuaded to stay there for a bit longer, but five years have now passed, and it is time to hand over the reins.

This is therefore my last message to you as President, and I hope that you will make my successor as welcome as you have me.

This past year has been an eventful one in the Society's history, with the first International Meeting at Guildford, planned with such care and devotion by Daphne Ladell and her team, and I am particularly grateful to her for enabling me to step down with the Society in such good spirits after that, and also to Richard Kerridge, whose expert keeping of the accounts has put us in excellent financial heart.

It was gratifying, only this week, to be able to hand over a donation, on the Society's behalf, to the Musical Museum at Brentford, for their rebuilding fund. It is wonderful that the efforts of that indefatigable eccentric (and MBSGB Member) Frank Holland have been carried on by his successors to the extent that, for the first time in this country, a purpose-built museum of Mechanical Music is coming into existence. Indeed, the building already exists, and is abuzz with builders now fitting out the interior.

Perhaps, when this museum is open to the public, awareness of mechanical music will be enhanced, to the extent that we will no longer be considered 'quaint' (see the Cardiff Meeting report).

My thanks to you all for your support over the past five years, and keep those handles turning!

Christopher Proudfoot

## Scottish Meeting - 9th – 11th September 2006

All MBSGB members resident in the UK will, in the next few weeks, receive by post full information and Booking Forms regarding our Autumn Meeting in Scotland this year. All overseas members are invited, and anyone wishing to join us in Scotland should contact Daphne Ladell - Tel: + 44 1737 84 3644, or email [Daphne.Ladell@btinternet.com](mailto:Daphne.Ladell@btinternet.com)

Daphne Ladell

Meetings Secretary

Kevin McElhone thought those attending might be interested in the following:

"A Welte Orchestrion Style 3 is being restored for Kelvingrove Art Gallery in Glasgow as part of a £27 Million restoration taking 3 years. The Orchestrion will be finished for the re-opening in July 2006.

I have helped supply new music rolls to the restorer, Michael MacDonald, a pipe organ builder of 40 years standing. He has just joined the society following a purchase from me and following my recent visit he has agreed to write an article for the next Journal. I have also put Kinloch Castle in touch with Mr. MacDonald as they have an Imhof Orchestrion under the stairs which was shown on the B.B.C. restoration program last year. They are hoping to have this restored if funds permit. It is located on the Isle of Rum and is only accessible by the once-a-day Ferry which gives 2 1/2 hours ONLY on the island. Also in the Glasgow area is a James Watt pipe barrel organ in 'The People's Palace' plus a Cinema Organ as part of the Summerlees Industrial Heritage Centre which also has Trams and Steam Trains. Do not forget New Lanark World Heritage Village which includes steam pumping engines and a complete village built for mill workers. There is enough north of the border for at least a month's holiday. I have been visiting my wife's family in Glasgow for over 20 years and there are still new places to be discovered on each visit."

### New Mechanical Music

#### Museum in Israel

The Nisco Museum of Mechanical Music will be the first museum in Israel to devote itself entirely to the wonderful, almost forgotten, world of antique mechanical musical instruments.

The Nisco Museum takes us back many years to a musical period that is recreated through a marvellous collection of original antique musical boxes, organ grinders, Victorian manivelles, phonographs and other fascinating musical creations of the period. Aside from viewing these instruments, visitors can hear their enchanting melodies and songs by attending programmed concerts when many of the boxes will be played and explained. A special section will be devoted to children where a hands-on experience can be enjoyed with 100-year-old mechanical organs made especially for children.

The Nisco Museum of Mechanical Music will be an important addition to the cultural offerings of Israel. Its unique archive of Jewish recordings will help us remember the soul of a people whose song can always be heard. The founder is Nissan Cohen.

### Tune Sheet Book Supplement

The latest supplement to the Tune Sheet Book, containing another fifty identified tune sheets, together with Luuk Goldhoorn's Search Engine (no computer needed!) is now available free to members who have already purchased the book.

Please send £1 or \$2 to Ted Brown (address in the Officers panel on Page 98) in cash, cheque or money order (payable to MBSGB) to cover postage. Don't forget to include your own name and address too!

If you do not have the book yet, please send £12 + £3 postage and packing to Ted or you may be able to purchase a copy from Kevin McElhone at a local meeting. The price will include the book, both current supplements and a stiff cover to keep them in.

### News

Nancy Fratti, formerly trading as Panchronia Antiquities, and a former advertiser in the Music Box, has downsized the scale of her business but is still very much IN business. She can still supply a wealth of musical box spares and materials, discs, tapes etc from her address at P O Box 400, Canastota, NY 13032-0400, New York, USA.

### Special Exhibition at Utrecht

Stop Press - as we go to press, news reaches us of a superb exhibition ROYAL MUSIC MACHINES at the Museum van Speelklok tot Pierement in Utrecht. This opened on April 12th, and a full report of the opening day is planned for our next issue. The exhibition includes some truly remarkable pieces from the Hermitage and The Forbidden City, Beijing - do try and get there if you can; it is on until July 30th.

## Progressive tooling for Musical Box Restorations

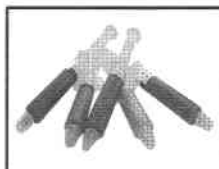
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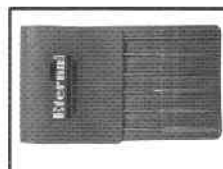
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## Teme Valley Winders

from John Farmer

The latest meeting of the Teme Valley Winders, held on 8th April, 2006, just over a year after the group began, saw no less than 22 attendees. John Phillips, our host, started off introductions, and introduced the first of a surprisingly diverse round of presentations. John Harrold had brought along a very large cuckoo clock, with a difference. The clock is German, but has no maker's mark. However, it does have a 6 tune cylinder movement in its base, as well as a rather nice "Cuckoo". The clock also plays the Angelus, with a 2-tone gong, whilst a carved priest appears from doors in the base of the clock, and proceeds to pull an imaginary bell rope in time with the gongs. The Angelus lasts for about 1 1/4 minutes and occurs 3 times a day. The mechanisms to produce all of these sound and movements at the right times are quite complex, but John, who has been restoring the clock for someone, seems to have sorted it out.

John Ward had brought along 3 musical boxes. First was a cylinder box with bells, probably by Bremond, having 6 tunes and 6 bells, which are employed very tastefully to enhance the tune. John then played a very nice small Symphonion disc box, followed by a Kalliope with 3 bells. Doug Pell showed a French coin operated Birds-in-Cage, restored by Jim Colley. It has 2 birds, which move their heads, beaks and tails to a very realistic bird song. Doug also played a 6 air cylinder movement No. 20514 by F Nicole, which has a new pearwood case, and plays very nice arrangements. Kath Turner presented her recently acquired Amorette organette



*John Harrold's fine spring-driven musical cuckoo clock*

with dancing dolls, which played very well. Kath had done some minor patching of the bellows, and cleaning and touching up of the case.

John Farmer presented a short "Workshop" on Player Pianos, firstly explaining the basic operation of the "Stack" with the aid of diagrams, and parts of a Pianola stack currently being restored. He then followed up with a demonstration of how to remove pneumatics from the stack, and how to strip and recover them with new rubbercloth. John Phillips played a small snuff box which he had borrowed. The owner thought it was brass, but John's investigation revealed that it

was, in fact, silver gilt, i.e. silver with a gold plating. Closer examination by John Harrold suggested the gold was possibly rolled on to the silver, rather than plated. Alan Pratt then demonstrated 2 organettes, firstly a 14 note Clariona from around 1885, and originally selling for 23/6 (twenty three shillings and six pence), being a very basic machine which uses the paper as the valve to admit air to the reeds. His second machine was the more sophisticated, and thus expensive, Celestina, from the same era, playing on 20 notes and costing \$20 (or £5 in England). It uses a single stage valve system between the paper holes and the reeds, allowing

much smaller holes and narrower paper whilst producing greater volume.

A musical interlude was provided by Maurice Adams, with his German electronic Concertina. He admits to not always giving away the secret to his faultless playing! Richard Manning played all 8 tunes on his large lever wound cylinder box in the hope of identifying more tunes (the tune sheet is missing), but to no avail. Mark Rozelaar showed the drive mechanism from a very unusual, and probably very rare, barrel organ. Mark had acquired the instrument at a local saleroom for a knock-down price because it is in pieces, but Mark is determined to re-build it. The organ appears to be by the Viennese builder Anton Beyer (or Bayer) and has 44 keys (some pipes missing). It came with 6 barrels, each playing a single tune, being spirally pinned. Only two of the barrels are intact. The case takes the form of a Secrétaire, and has ornate carvings applied with the names of composers. On the side is an inscription suggesting that it was presented by Verdi to Recordi of Milan in 1856, having been originally built around 1820. Mark has so far discovered only one other example, in a monastery in Italy (If you know of another, let me know – JF).

Carrying on the workshop theme, John Phillips instructed Kath Turner on how to safely remove a cylinder from a musical box. John had produced a check list, and used a yet to be restored organ box for the demonstration. John Moorhouse then gave a presentation on bird box mechanisms, explaining, with the help of slides, how Bontems had simplified the mechanism in 1885, whereupon all manufacturers followed his

design, apart from changes in the gearing. Earlier boxes tended to use fusees, whereas later ones employ a going barrel. John then showed an example of a double bird box, explaining how the single bird mechanism was extended to operate 2 birds. Coincidentally the MBSI journal, Mechanical Music has just published an article on Two Bird boxes, and John Farmer had provided a copy from the Archives to John Moorhouse to help his research. Alan Pratt then produced another bird box for which he had been asked to establish a maker. Unfortunately he was unable to remove the mechanism since a previous "restorer"? when re-fixing a presentation plaque to the base, had applied Evo-stik in addition to the original screws! The usual delightful exercise of devouring Hilda's marvelous cakes then concluded the meeting.

The next meeting of the TVW will be, on Saturday 15th July, 2006 at 1:30 p.m. prompt. All members are invited – ring John Phillips on 01584 781118 for directions and to confirm. If you wish to come early and bring a packed lunch, John and Hilda will provide space for you to eat it in.

*The late Graham Webb's first advertisement in Volume 1 No. 8, Christmas 1964.*

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BE  
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CUP OF TEA



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IS  
ALWAYS  
ON



### European Tour Special members' trip to **Switzerland** 24th June- 2nd July 2006

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For further information  
please contact

**Alan Wyatt**

via Email at  
[alan@wyatt102.fsnet.co.uk](mailto:alan@wyatt102.fsnet.co.uk)  
or Telephone/Fax  
01223 860332

### Chanctonbury Ring

The next  
Chanctonbury Ring  
meeting will be on  
**21st May 2006**

Contact Ted Brown if  
you would like to attend



# PRESS RELEASE

## THE MUSICAL MUSEUM

### BRENTFORD

### MIDDLESEX

## Substantial donation received

On Tuesday 28th March 2006 Mr Christopher Proudfoot, President of the Musical Box Society of Great Britain, presented Mr Michael Ryder, Chairman of the Museum with a cheque for £1,000 towards the development of the new museum building on Brentford High Street.

At the presentation Christopher said 'As a learned Society interested in all aspects of automatic musical instruments the membership wished to demonstrate its support for the first purpose built museum devoted to automatic musical instruments. It is also appropriate that the founder of the Museum, the late Frank Holland M.B.E., was a founder member of MBSGB and was active in the society for many years.

The Society, like the Museum, is entirely voluntary run and it is the enthusiasm of those volunteers over many years that has brought to the public these fascinating musical instruments from a previous age. I cannot wait for the re-opening of this wonderful collection in the splendid new facilities.' He concluded.

'The receipt of this donation could not have come at a better time' says Michael Ryder 'because with the input of Heritage Lottery Fund the £1,000 in effect means it is



*Christopher Proudfoot (left) President of The Musical Box Society of Great Britain presents a cheque to Michael Ryder Chairman of the Musical Museum, outside the new Museum building in Brentford.*

worth over £3,300 towards the project cost. So far the building works are on time and we should start to move the collection from the old church into the new building in June with a formal opening in early 2007.'

The Musical Museum is fitting out a purpose designed building

at a cost of £2.6m, grant aided by the Heritage Lottery Fund.

The Museum always welcomes donations towards the substantial cost of the project.

Contact Michael Ryder at [mrtyder@hfac.co.uk](mailto:mrtyder@hfac.co.uk). Further information about the Museum [www.musicalmuseum.co.uk](http://www.musicalmuseum.co.uk)

# Other of Johann Maelzel's hoaxes! - Part 1

*by John Ward*

Leonard Maelzel held a concert in the Regional Estates Hall at Vienna in 1828, when his Orpheusharmonicon was joined with Johann's Panharmonicon MKII. They not only played different works so that a comparison could be drawn between the quality of the two, but also a duet was performed by them. Apart from these two orchestrions, other devices such as the 'Mechanical Trumpeter' automaton were exhibited. Following Johann's death in 1838, Leonard continued to tour with his brother's machines. In 1847 a report was made of Leonard's exhibition which was a grotto of mechanical devices. It contained the 'Mechanical Trumpeter' automaton, a carrousel, the 'rope dancers' automaton, a mechanical elephant, a singing canary in a cage, a talking doll and an automaton of a boy who could draw ships, houses and write poems. All of these were announced, with the exception of his trumpeter automaton, as the work of his brother, Johann. The 'draftsman' automaton was donated to the Franklin Institute in Philadelphia in 1928 by John Penn Brook. It was believed to be the work of Johann Maelzel, and had been in a fire and so the museum staff were required to do a complete overhaul of the automaton. Once restored and working, it began to draw its repertoire of four drawings, and scribe three poems (two in French and one in English). It was in the last poem that the android wrote in French, "Written by the Automata of Maillardet." This of course meant it was not actually built by Maelzel rather it was really constructed by Henri Maillardet, it was just another of his showman's claims. However he had not just



*The front of the pianoforte score of Ludwig van Beethoven's 'Wellington's Victory, The Battle of Vittoria', Opus 89.. This is the piece which was intended to be played on the legendary Panharmonicon MKII, and the engraving shows quite clearly the attempt to capitalise upon British Nationalism.*

fooled his contemporaries, his own brother, but for over a hundred years Maelzel had hoodwinked people into believing that it was his work. This fine, magnificent and rare automaton is still in the Franklin Institute and it has now been restored to its original condition.

The talking doll was constructed by Johann Maelzel whilst in Paris in 1823, and it could say “Mamma” and “Papa”. This was achieved by a set of bellows contained within the doll which sent air through a leather flapping tongue. Each of the arms caused the device to say either of its words. This technology was later used by Maelzel in his rope-dancing automaton, and the idea was rekindled with the installation of phonographs into dolls at the

turn of the century (the penultimate one).

Johann's habit of claiming others' inventions as his own got him into trouble with the Dutch clock maker Winkle, to whom Maelzel demonstrated the Panharmonicon in 1805. Winkle had shown Maelzel his metronome in return, and Maelzel stole the idea even though Winkle had taken out patents on the device. Using Winkle's research he built a timepiece in 1813, and this was tested on Haydn's 26th symphony, the 'Creation' by Salieri. In 1815 he adapted this and unveiled his metronome in 1818 and claimed that he alone had invented it. Rows ensued as patents were checked, and although Winkle did get his assertion that the metronome was his from



*The 'Draughtsman' Automaton built by Maillardet, which can draw four pictures and write three short poems. Maelzel claimed manufacture of this android.*

independent assessors, the public at large continued to think of it as Maelzel's. Still to this day tempo is indicated by 'MM' which stands for 'Maelzel's Metronome'. However Winkle did get his revenge by building a superior orchestral organ in 1821 which he called the 'Componium'. The Componium was judged by an independent panel as being more advanced and superior to the Panharmonicon MKII.

It was when Johann was working in Stein's Piano Factory that Beethoven came into contact with Maelzel who constructed for him a number of different hearing aids. Maelzel was at this period trying to widen the repertoire of music for his Panharmonicon MKII. Maelzel decided that if Beethoven could be persuaded to write a piece for it, then this would improve his fortune. Beethoven for his part was intrigued and mystified by his inventions, and his curiosity eventually got the better of him. So when Maelzel heard of Wellington's Victory at

Vittoria in Spain on 22nd June 1813, he approached Beethoven with the idea of composing a very commercial piece which would go down well with the lucrative British music market. Maelzel even offered the composer advice, suggesting that both 'Rule, Britannia!' by Thomas Arne and 'God Save the King' should feature in the piece, further playing on the growth in British nationalism and the widespread euphoria that the victory had caused. Throughout composition Maelzel offered his advice and vision, and although not always welcomed by Beethoven, it did ensure that the piece would be a commercial success.

Originally Maelzel planned to perform the 'Battle Symphony' with his Panharmonicon MKII on tour in Europe, but soon the temptation of even bigger sales caused him to change his mind. It was decided instead that the instrument would go direct to Britain where the piece would be a guaranteed success. To raise the

necessary funds for the venture a live concert was arranged to raise the profile of the piece and promote sales of the pianoforte score. On the frontispiece of the Panharmonicon score Beethoven wrote "On Wellington's Victory at Vittoria, 1813, written for Hr. Maelzel by Ludwig van Beethoven". The relationship between these two men and the symphony tore their relationship apart, and with it the chances of it being performed on the Panharmonicon MKII.

For the concert Maelzel got Beethoven to work on an Orchestral version, whilst he worked his promoter's charm and deviousness. The funds raised from this first concert were to go towards a fund for soldiers who were fighting Napoleon. On the 8th December 1813, in the University Hall at the University of Vienna the concert took place. Beethoven had virtually lost his hearing by this time and a comic incident took place during the rehearsals for this concert that tragically show how deaf he had become. 'Thayer's Life of Beethoven' contains this anecdote related by Louis Spohr:

"Beethoven had accustomed himself to indicate expression to the orchestra by all manner of singular body movements. So often as a sforzando occurred, he tore his arms, which he had previously crossed upon his breast, with great vehemence asunder. At piano he crouched down lower and lower as he desired the degree of softness. If a crescendo then entered he gradually rose again and at the entrance of the forte jumped into the air. Sometimes, too, he unconsciously shouted to strengthen the forte... It was obvious that the poor man could no longer hear the piano or his music. This was strikingly illustrated in the second portion of the first Allegro of the Symphony. In one place there are two holds, one immediately after the other, of which the second is pianissimo. This Beethoven had probably

overlooked, because he began again to beat time before the orchestra had begun to play the second hold. Without knowing it, therefore, he had hurried ten or twelve measures ahead of the orchestra, when it began again and, indeed, pianissimo. Beethoven to indicate this had in his wonted manner crouched clean under the desk. At the succeeding crescendo he again became visible, straightened himself out more and more and jumped into the air at the point where according to his calculations the forte ought to begin. When this did not follow his movement he looked out in a startled way, stared at the orchestra to see it still playing pianissimo and found his bearing only when the long-expected forte came and was visible to him. Fortunately this comical incident did not take place at the performance" [*Thayer's Life of Beethoven*], Edited by Elliott Forbes, 1964. ]

In the original advertisements for the concert Maelzel claimed the work was his, however Beethoven reacted angrily and forced Maelzel to recognise him as the composer. This he reluctantly did, and the literature was amended. The concert consisted of a première of Beethoven's seventh symphony, a march by Dušek and one by Pleyel performed on Leonard's 'Mechanical Trumpeter' automaton (with full orchestral accompaniment), and the finale was a performance of Wellington's Victory itself.

The concert was a resounding success and it was repeated on the 12th December. Together the two performances raised four thousand and six Florins which were donated to the Imperial soldiers who were wounded at the Battle of Hanau in 1813. A rift opened between Beethoven and Maelzel, with the former pulling out to produce a concert on his own. Maelzel had therefore gained nothing from this venture, and Beethoven produced his concert which was highly successful and

profitable. Following this Maelzel attempted to reconcile himself with Beethoven, but to no avail. Meetings to resolve the deadlock were arranged by the lawyer Dr. Adlersburg, but at one meeting Maelzel failed to turn up.

Maelzel had quitted Vienna with the Panharmonicon MKII, and all the copies of the score that he could steal from the concert hall where Beethoven was rehearsing for a concert of the Battle Symphony to take place on the 27th February 1814, and fled to Munich. Here he produced two concerts of the Battle Symphony on the 16th and 17th of March 1814 as his own work. Beethoven immediately began legal proceedings at the Courts of Justice in Vienna. This action was forced to be dropped, the courts not having jurisdiction over foreign territories. However Beethoven was quick to realise that Maelzel was on his way to Britain to premiere the first performance of the Battle Symphony as his composition. A ludicrous race of the 'Wacky Racers' style ensued, as Beethoven charged a dispatcher to beat the 'Dick Dastardly' Maelzel to London with a hastily made copy of the Battle Symphony and deliver it to the Prince Regent, to prove that he was the composer. Beethoven's letter did get to London before Maelzel, but the Prince Regent did nothing with it.



*A 'Mechanical Trumpeter' Automaton of similar design to the one built by Leonard Maelzel in 1810 by Frerick Koffman of Dresden.*

After Maelzel's presentation of the work as his in London and various exhibitions, he returned to Vienna in 1817, and settled his dispute with Beethoven by giving him one of his metronomes. Beethoven was so grateful that he composed the beginning of the slow movement of the 8th symphony in thanks, using the ticking of the metronome as a basis for the 16 staccato notes. Yet all was not well, as the Prince Regent refused to acknowledge that he had received a copy of the score from Beethoven, and the Prince even refused to believe that the Battle Symphony was not Maelzel's work. The symphony was never performed on the Panharmonicon MKII as originally planned, as the arrangement never made it onto the barrel.

Johann Maelzel continued to travel before finally touring in the United States, where he continued to remain apart from two visits to exhibit in the West Indies. Whilst in America he presented performances with the 'chess-player' automaton, Leonard's 'Mechanical Trumpeter' automaton, the 'Rope Dancers' automata ( which he made whilst he was in the States ), a 'Bass Fiddler' automaton, the 'Speaking Doll' and the diorama, 'Conflagration of Moscow'. His touring and salesmanship - he continued to promote the 'Maelzel's Metronome' - took their toll on Maelzel as his health worsened. So he was forced to finally settle in Boston. During one final tour he died on the brig 'Otis' whilst sailing between Caracas and Philadelphia. Maelzel was found dead in his cabin on the 21st July 1838.

So in the end my quest to find out about the performance of the 'Battle of Vittoria' on the Panharmonicon led to me finding out little about the instrument, but instead I have found out about one of the most colourful and talented characters in mechanical music. Out of the Maelzel brothers' work, or supposed work, very few examples survive. One orchestron



(could have been either the Panharmonicon MK I, MKII, or the instrument built in 1808, accounts differ to which it is) was donated to the Industrial Section of the Wurttemberg State Museum in Stuttgart in 1905. It was lovingly restored back to working order by Herold in 1939, but then was destroyed during a bombing raid in the Second World War. Only a few photographs and an engraving contemporary to Maelzel are thought to exist of this instrument. (These can be found on Schott's CD-ROM, 'Encyclopaedia of Mechanical Musical Instruments') However, recently 12 barrels (measuring 1.25 meters, or 50 3/4 inches in old money, and 24 centimetres, 9 1/2 inches, in diameter) have been discovered in the museum's underground stores. These contain compositions by Cherubini, Haydn and Mozart. There are some flute clocks in existence along with examples of 'Maelzel's Metronome'. Maillardet's 'Draughtsman' automaton can be still be seen in the Franklin Institute, and can be considered to be more lucky than the 'chess-player' automaton, as it survived a fire in Philadelphia in 1851, whilst the 'chess-player' perished in one in the same city three years later. As our editor was correct in saying, mechanical music can annex you anywhere and anytime. It will continue to control me for the rest of my life.

When I set out on compiling this, I had intended it to be my first 'article' proper. However reading it through, I fear that it has transformed itself into a work of self-indulgence, because of the lack of technical substance. So the final article, this article, is not actually a real article, rather it has ended up like: 'Just another of Johann Maelzel's hoaxes!'

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My thanks must go to the staff of Birmingham Central Libraries, the

Franklin Institute of Philadelphia and of the Mechanical Music Digest. Images are by the kind permission of the American Library of Congress, the Beethoven Research Society and the Mission Road Antique Mall.

## Internet Sites for Mechanical Music Enthusiasts

In the last issue of the Music Box we published a notice about a new Internet group for Orchestrelle owners on Yahoo started by Eliyahu Shahar. The group now has fifty six members, sixteen albums of photographs, several hundred pictures in all, of different versions of the instrument. Many of the images are really well produced and there are a couple of case variations we have never seen before. There is lively discussion on matters ranging from restoration advice to requests for parts, identification of models etc. If you have one of these fine instruments and an Internet connection, it would be well worthwhile looking at the group. It can be found at: <http://groups.yahoo.com/group/orchestrelles>

If you have not already, you need to register with Yahoo to take part in the group and to see the pictures. This is an easy process, only takes a few minutes and is virtually instant.

Other mechanical music groups on Yahoo include Rollscanners, the e-mail group of the International Association of Mechanical Music Preservationists (IAMMP), a group of enthusiasts dedicated to preserving the music on paper rolls by scanning it into computers, thereby making it possible to cut new rolls and also to make MIDI files from the results. There is a useful database of rolls by many makers on their main site at [www.iammp.org](http://www.iammp.org).

*Continued on Page 179...*

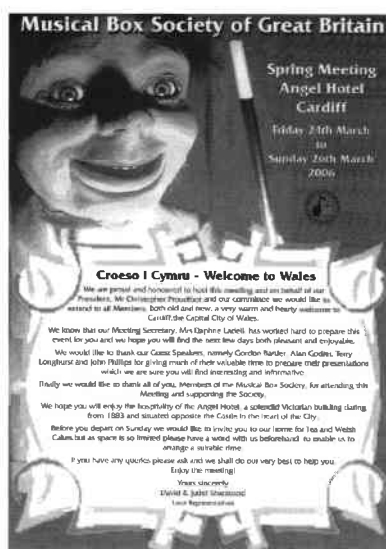
# The Spring Meeting in Cardiff

Members started to arrive about 11 o'clock on Friday morning, and most of us were at the Angel Hotel by mid-afternoon. In the hotel foyer, two large notice boards displayed the weekend's programme and list of those attending. Members received individual registration packs containing our hosts' welcome letter and details of the whole weekend.

In the time before dinner most people took the opportunity to meet friends over a coffee or beer. By 9 pm everybody was well fed and watered and ready to join our hosts David and Juliet Shankland, who entertained us with a Magic Lantern Show. They displayed the surprising versatility of the Magic Lantern from the simple stationary slide, to complex scenes of moving subjects and kaleidoscopic patterns. It is surprising that 'in those days' so much extremely fine detail could be painted on to such a small piece of glass.

Saturday opened with a hearty breakfast, after which we met for our first talk, which was presented by Alan Godier. He demonstrated and explained how to replace a spring in a barrel; his expertise made it look remarkably simple. He then showed us how to clean a brass cylinder, explaining which cleaning solutions to use, when and why.

After a coffee break, Gordon Bartlet gave a talk on comparisons, mainly between organettes. He started with two Gem Roller Organs, one pressure and the other suction. He demonstrated the difference in sound by playing the same roller on each in turn – apart from the greater



'attack' of the suction system, the later model was tuned a semitone lower. He then played an Atlas, comparing an old disc with a new, aluminium one which he had arranged himself. This was followed by two British-made organettes, a Draper's Orchestral, and a Maxfield Seraphone which operates through relay valves, unlike the simple Draper's, in which the holes in the paper are the valves.

For further variety, Gordon demonstrated two gramophones, one a Pathé 'Elf' of about 1914, which played Pathé 'hill and dale' centre-start records, the other an early 1920s 'Camera' portable, which wanted you to think it was a Box Brownie.

Before we knew it, it was lunchtime, and the weather had changed dramatically; it was raining 'cats and dogs'. At 2pm we all gathered in the lobby, whence David and Juliet took one group to the Castle and Clive and Daphne were left to escort the other group in the pouring rain for a 20-minute walk to the river boat. By the time we reached the boat we were all soaked

but still in good spirits. We boarded the boat only to discover it had a leaky roof; despite the bad weather we set off for our trip down the River Taff to Cardiff Harbour, which at one time was known as Tiger Bay. We all returned at 4.30, still in surprisingly good humour and wet, and we all thoroughly enjoyed the trip (ladies were betting who would have the best WET LOOK hairdo for the dinner).

The castle party had the advantage of a roof over their heads (we weren't allowed in the bits where it was leaking), and saw some of the remarkable interiors by the Victorian architect William Burges, carried out for the Marquis of Bute. His colourful and elaborate carving and inlay (not just on the building, but the furniture as well) was a tour-de-force, and when we entered an almost unaltered Georgian room (the Marchioness had said 'Enough is enough'), one almost felt a sense of relief. Our guide introduced herself and asked us to do likewise. 'Musical Box Society' intrigued her; 'Well .... I think that's quaint and lovely'.

Pre-dinner drinks were full of laughter as people chatted about their afternoon visits. When we sat down for the dinner, on each table was a menu that David and Juliet had especially designed and printed for the occasion. On the front cover was a picture of one of David's many automata and inside were a mind puzzler and a reminder of schooldays in the form of a spoof Latin verse (Caesar sic in omnibus, Brutus sic intram). The chef had chosen for us a typical Welsh menu with a delicious main course

of lamb shanks, and Welsh cakes accompanied the coffee.

During the later part of the meal, our voices were hushed as we were entertained with relaxing classical music by Welsh harpist Lowri Morgan.

On Sunday, after another hearty breakfast, John Phillips was our first speaker and gave a very interesting talk and slide show on the QRS Piano Roll Factory. John had visited the factory a number of years ago and was lucky enough to be given an individual tour of the factory. He was able to take many pictures and tape recordings, which made for a fascinating audio-visual presentation.

Terry Longhurst followed, with a talk on 'Early key wind years', covering the period 1830 - 1860. He described and played several different early boxes, including a fascinating sectional-comb 'clock base' (probably actually a base for a glass dome full of wax flowers or something similar rather than a clock) which had once been in Reg Waylett's collection and had appeared in The Music Box over thirty years ago, and a two-per-turn in a case of light wood (? maple) inlaid with rosewood, an interesting reversal of the usual order of things. Nor were we confined to key-wind, for Terry's last two examples were wound by lever, one with hidden bells and drum, the other playing overtures.

After a coffee break, our last speaker was Bernie Brown (who unfortunately could not join us for the weekend but offered to come to Cardiff and talk). He presented a new slant by talking on 'Recorded Automatic Music'. There were two aspects to this; early recordings of fair organs and street pianos (starting with a

cylinder record) and records with mechanical music connections, such as a 'Pilot', a re-branded Polyphon record which still carried the Polyphon trade-mark, and a rare 10-inch Nicole. As will become apparent when the Nicole Factor book is produced, the last gasp of the Nicole company was in the production of disc and cylinder records, the discs being of an unusual brown laminated composition. Most were 7 inches (like 45s), but this ten-incher played remarkably well by 1906 standards. Wisely, Bernie played it not on a 1906 machine, but a 1928 HMV Model 109.

Bernie came with his wife Anne - a little bird told me that it was Anne's birthday that day, so thank you very much for joining us Anne; you could have had a nice meal in a restaurant of your choice.

Finally, it was Sunday afternoon, and it was raining again (well, we were in Wales, and some of us from the South-East were wondering how to take some water home), and time for a visit to David and Juliet's own collection. Here was something for everyone - a Falconnet & Raymond brought much admiration, as did a huge box playing 'Morning in five developments', a magician automaton, an end-of-pier Haunted House and a Flight & Robson barrel organ. How to house a fine collection in a tight space was one of the lessons we learnt, along with how to enjoy Welsh cakes and hospitality. The latter extended to a souvenir present for each of us, a mug for the chaps and a doll for the girls.

A thoroughly memorable meeting and congratulations to David and Juliet, and also to Daphne, the Meetings

Organiser whose first 'ordinary' meeting this was. People attending meetings are sometimes called 'attendees', a word which bothers those of us who feel an 'attendee' should be the recipient of attention rather than the provider. At this meeting, we were indeed attendees!

## Internet Sites for Mechanical Music Enthusiasts

....continued from Page 177

The Bandorganmusic group home page states: "This group is a place to discuss band organ, nickelodeon, orchestrion, calliope and music box music. We also discuss the history of mechanical music, repair of instruments and anything else related to mechanical music." There are currently 44 members. In practice most of the photographs on the site are of Wurlitzer band organs. Bandorgansandmechanicalmusic enthuses about 'the happiest music on earth', but the group is quiet to the point of being inactive.

To access any of these groups, go to

<http://groups.yahoo.com/group/groupname>

where groupname is Bandorganmusic or whatever is the name of the group in which you are interested.

The Mechanical Music Digest is probably well-known to those of you with Internet access. If not, it has an amazing archive, with good index, which covers the entire spectrum of mechanical music. There is no subscription but they do appreciate donations to help with the site running costs. It can be found at <http://mmd.foxtail.com>.

Happy surfing!

# Register News No. 52

## Summer 2006

by Arthur Cunliffe

Taking care of a musical box or any mechanical musical instrument is not too difficult but rather a matter of following good advice. These instruments were made in a time when houses did not have central heating and such good insulation, so looking after them is now a little more complicated than it once was.

Furniture does not like being by a hot radiator and musical boxes are no exception to this rule, neither do they like being kept in a baking hot room with little circulation of air. Modern dwellings do not offer the same storage space as a Victorian house, so it is tempting to convert a loft space into an extra room and to store your collection there. I really cannot think of a worse place to put any musical instrument. In winter a loft space tends to be cold and in summer the sun beating down on the roof tiles makes the place akin to central Africa. The expansion and contraction experienced by both case and movement must be enormous. The cylinder cement is very likely to go soft and gravity being what it is, the cement will gradually fall to the lower part of the cylinder. This leads to all sorts of complications. Placing a fan in that area will do no good at all as that only spreads the heat about and does nothing to control the humidity. Try to find a place to house your precious collection where there is a fairly constant temperature and humidity. There are many instruments available in the market place that give accurate readings of both temperature and humidity [and many that give inaccurate readings - the best use human hair as the sensing element - Ed] and they are well worth the purchase price. Try to keep the room around 17 to 20 degrees Celsius and the humidity between 50 and 55 degrees.

Keeping instruments in a cupboard that is against a cold outside wall will often lead to a "bloom", or even worse



a mould growing on the woodwork inside the box. The secret is to allow air to circulate and to use a wedge to keep any lid slightly open. Better to keep boxes on a shelf rather than a closed cupboard with a curtain drawn across to shelter the items from strong sunlight, prying eyes and to stop too much dust getting in.

Whilst on the subject of looking after musical instruments, I am not an expert on how to look after a string instrument. Obviously, if this type of instrument is kept in a damp environment [RH greater than, say, 70%. On the whole, more damage is caused to stringed instruments by keeping them in too dry an environment, say, less than 40% RH - Ed], strings and sounding boards will suffer greatly. I am equally sure that any string that is even slightly rusty will have lost its tone and quality and must be replaced. Having listened to several piano type instruments, those that have been re-strung always sound so much better that I have reached the conclusion that re-stringing every so often is a must. I have seen and heard instruments that appear to have clean and shiny strings with no trace of rust on them at all, but they still do not sound right when played. Maybe some restorer in the past has cleaned the rust off the string rather than replacing it.

I believe that when replacing a string, it is vital to increase the tension of the string a little at a time and allow the instrument to "rest" in-between adjustments. The action is much kinder to the frame of the instrument. If over 25% of the strings need replacing, then it is far better to replace the lot. Again, pulling the strings up to tension and final tuning is best done in stages to ease any undue strain on the keyframe. I may be completely wrong in all these assumptions and that is why I am asking those who work in this area of restoration to put pen to paper and write an article on re-stringing noting all the pitfalls and dangers. If ideas on repairing a split in a sound board can be discussed, then better still! There are many who would wish to try this sort of work but are unsure how to tackle the job. We need your help!

*[Editorial comment - rusty strings and copper-covered ones that are heavily encrusted with dirt and dust cannot give of their best. Cleaning the rust off is perfectly legitimate on the treble (steel) strings and will greatly improve matters, but it is not possible to satisfactorily clean the copper-covered ones. Bear in mind that each time the instrument is re-strung, it is essential to increase the size of the wrest (tuning) pins by one size. It is only possible to do this a few times, after which it becomes necessary to make a*





*The Ami Rivenc 6-air Mandolin Piccolo box mentioned in the text. Note the unusual inlay subject of a chicken and the lion mask keyhole escutcheon.*

*new wrest plank - usually uneconomic on all but the most valuable instruments. Once every 50 years or so should be often enough for re-stringing if the instrument is well looked after. One reason why an instrument with bright shiny strings does not sound right may be that it has been badly re-strung with incorrect sizes of string wire by someone who knew no better. The matter is dealt with very competently in Arthur A Reblitz's book 'Piano Servicing, Tuning & Rebuilding', Vestal Press 1976, though we think re-printed several times since then. Information is also available on the Mechanical Music Digest on the Internet.]*

In issue no. 51, I mentioned that there would be some advice on filling in the Register form. There is limited space in any database file, so some sort of editing has to be made. However, do not let that deter you from sending in as much information as you can so that it can be included on the handwritten Register cards. If you are unsure as to who made the box, note it as being "Unknown". Serial numbers are relatively easy to find to the majority

of cases, but dealer stock numbers and gamme numbers can cause confusion. Cylinder size is best noted in centimetres. Comb details cause a problem in that it is difficult to count the number of teeth without loosing where you are two or three times. I count in batches of 10's. Do mention if the box has 2 or more combs and if it has a key frame for an organ section. If the box has just one comb that has been made in 2 sections and joined together that too should be noted. Often these are early combs and the joins are so neat that they are difficult to see.

The "type" heading should note any special features that are marked up on the tune card. e.g. Forte-piano, Sublime Harmonie, Forte Piccolo or Mandolin. Where a box has a drum, bells castanets and an organ section, it is best to describe it as an Orchestra box. Naturally the number of airs and whether it is a key or lever wind. Ratchet winding is worthy of note.

If the box had no tune card nothing much can be done except to make a note of any recognisable tune and its position. Reading some of the tune cards is difficult as the florid handwriting of those days is unfamiliar to us. Added to this, the person who originally wrote the card probably did not understand or speak too much English and were just copying a text they did not fully understand. Please do your best and I will try to decipher strange words.

The comments section is useful for giving information on case dimensions

and details of inlays. Unusual marks or attributions could be mentioned here especially if they are of historical importance. There has one box noted as having a plaque on the lid which said, "Halifax Band of Hope. Extra prize awarded to Miss Hanna Taylor." These little jewels of information must be recorded as part of the history of that box. I wonder whatever happened to Miss Hanna Taylor and whether she kept on playing the piano!

The box selected from the Register for illustration in this issue is a 6 air Ami Rivenc Mandolin Piccolo lever wind box. The grained case has a faded rosewood lid with an unusual inlay of a chicken pecking at the ground within an ebony cartouche. The whole is surrounded by scroll work in boxwood and coloured woods. The lid is slightly domed which was always a sign that the case was of good quality and that the movement contained therein would be of equal quality. Another unusual feature of this box is that it has a lion head keyhole escutcheon. The box has the usual brass carrying handles that were so often fitted to this type of box. There are no other boxes on the Register that feature a hen as part of the lid decoration. The serial number 35461 indicates that the box must have been made in the 1890's.

The movement has a 28 cm cylinder and two combs with 124 teeth in total. The comb washers are the usual Rivenc rosette pattern. Unfortunately, the original tune card is missing, so a list of tunes cannot be given.

Arthur Cunliffe.

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## *Eastern Magnificance & European Ingenuity*

by **Catherine Pagani**. Published by The University of Michigan Press, 2001, 286pp  
9<sup>3</sup>/<sub>4</sub> ins by 6<sup>1</sup>/<sub>2</sub> ins (242mm x 163mm). Illustrated with photographs and facsimiles.  
Hardbound. No stated price. ISBN 0-472-11208-2. In American English.

It is well known that a major trade existed in musical and automaton clocks between the London makers and China from quite an early date. The reasons for this significant export business have fascinated students of mechanical music and horology for a very long time.

Subtitled 'Clocks of Late Imperial China', this curious book began life as the author's doctoral dissertation: she is now Associate Professor of Asian Art History at the University of Alabama. It was, we are told, inspired by an exhibit comprising 30 timepieces from the Palace Museum, Beijing, which visited Florida in 1987 which was, curiously, the year after the present reviewer had examined the same pieces in their original setting.

Pagani's approach is interesting in that it attempts to explain the history of Chinese clock-making in terms of the Jesuit Mission that lay behind the first attempts at 'evangelisation' of the Far East. In this respect the development of the Catholic Church in the 16th century is well documented as is Francis Xavier's first real attempt at penetrating China in 1552.

The arrival of the first mechanical clock in China altered the Chinese perception of many things not the least being the West, time-indication, artificial mechanisms (automata) and the great craft of clock-making. Not surprisingly, by the end of the 17th century the Kangxi (1622-1722) emperor established (among other workshops) 'the Office of Self-Sounding Bells' in the Forbidden City.

British-made imported clocks were initially copied until local makers developed their own styles as a result of which some London-made pieces appear very similar to some Chinese-made items.

Pagani's work includes an important and major appendix devoted to the European clockmakers at the Chinese Court between 1601 and 1822. There are descriptions of the Imperial workshops and also a useful plan of The Forbidden City showing the location of the workshops.

This reviewer has the impression that the author is somewhat unsure of the true title of the influential Kangxi emperor who established these important workshops. He was, in fact, Xuanye who lived from 1654 until 1722 and was the second emperor of the Qing dynasty achieving the longest reign in China's history – 61 years on the throne and not even included in the Index!

Extensive annotations and an acceptable bibliography and followed by an Index that is better than most that emanate from US centres of learning. The only serious criticism of this otherwise good book is that it is printed on what American publishers call 'acid-free' paper which is straw-coloured and does little to enhance the truly dreadful reproduction quality of the otherwise outstanding photographic illustrations.

Although it is clear that Catherine Pagani is no horologist and there are a few inconsistencies in her terminology, and while some of her Chinese history may be a little shaky, her historical research and annotation on her subject matter cannot be faulted. And therefore, for those with an interest in the very rich period of musical and automaton clocks that began in London and migrated to far-off Peking, this is a most useful book that is a valuable addition to the bibliography of a singularly important part of music and automata's history.

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

## *The Music Box Makers: The History of the Music Box in Sainte-Croix*

by **Jean-Claude Piguet**. Trans by **Rebecca Galeazzi**. Published by The Musical Box Society International, 2004, 332pp 11<sup>1</sup>/<sub>4</sub> ins by 8<sup>3</sup>/<sub>4</sub> ins (285mm x 225mm).

*Illustrated with photographs, line drawings and facsimiles. Hardbound with decorative dust-jacket. \$77.50 in USA. ISBN 0-975559882-0-4.*

This is a translation into English of the original text by Piguet and published in 1996 under the title *Les faiseurs de musique: Histoire de la boîte à musique à St-Croix (Suisse)*. Piguet, it will be remembered, is a significant author and musicologist who, in collaboration with the late Swiss conductor Ernest Ansermet produced a thoughtful book *Entretiens sur la musique*.

When first this monumental study appeared it was at once apparent that this was probably the most significant work to be published on musical boxes since the works of Chapuis and Gélis. The content has already been reviewed by the present reviewer at the time of its first appearance and therefore it will not be repeated here.

In providing so thorough an in-depth a study of the musical box industry of this important region of Switzerland, it quickly became clear that it should be made available to a much wider, non-French-reading audience. This has now been effected by the Musical Box Society International which has produced this handsome – indeed, awesome – translation. From the original large octavo, this fresh edition is quarto sized and produced on fine-quality art paper. Unlike so many re-processed editions, the half-tone pictures are superbly reproduced and the impression is that they are fresh originations.

Translations are, by their very nature, but one person's interpretation of the original author's intentions. However in this case Rebecca Galeazzi has in general produced a remarkably authentic rendition of Piguet's original. One must accept the repeated solecism 'music box' for the original *boîte à musique* ('musical box'), and also the introduction of the occasional Americanism. These, though, are minor details, which cannot diminish the value and achievement of this outstanding work.

That Piguet's impressive research which chronicles the musical box industry of Saint-Croix right into modern times should be available for the English reader has to be the most important achievement of our American sister society.

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

These and other books on mechanical music should be available through all good book shops and also from our members who sell books and music rolls. Buying from our members at a meeting can save you postage and ordering costs.

# Marching Matilda

From Paul Bellamy

Mechanical music can lead one down all sorts of strange paths, sometimes in the most surprising ways. Just a few years ago, on our periodic jaunt through the local international antiques fair, well mostly collectibles and glorified junk actually but fun nevertheless, we saw Matilda. As usual, wife spotted her first, sitting on the top shelf of Eddie's stall. 'Got something that'll interest you', he said as we tried to pass by without catching his eye. But no, he had been in the business too long to let a sucker, sorry, a valued client pass without subjecting them to his timeless sales patter.

Without a pause from pressing a sale with another unfortunate showing too much interest in his wares, he reached out and lifted her deftly off the shelf. 'Take a look at this' he said in broadband, still without interrupting the closure of his current deal whilst eyeing up yet another prospect, 'be with you in a minute'. I thought only women were capable of multi-tasking.

With Matilda in hand, I eyed the price tag with a certain mount of trepidation, having caught sight of the notice on the stall: 'All breakages must be paid for.' Now, Eddie never thinks in terms of putting a 'sleeper' on his stall. Oh no, quite the contrary. There are no rich pickings to be had there. It is all in the art of bargaining. 'Do you a deal', he said, pocketing cash, dealing with the next client, 'never seen one of 'em before, 'ave yer?'

Nor had we. Matilda was bold and brassy in the pottery sense, being very well rounded with curves all over the place and painted in colours that only



Fig. 1: Diana Pottery Waltzing Matilda jug.

someone staring into bright sunlight could achieve, (Fig. 1). But she was lovely and she sang well:

Once there was a swagman  
camped in the billabong,  
Under the shade of a coolibah  
tree,  
And he sang as he looked at the  
old billy boiling,  
Who'll come a-waltzing  
Matilda with me?

Chorus:  
Who'll come a-waltzing  
Matilda my darling?  
Who'll come a-waltzing  
Matilda with me?  
Waltzing Matilda and leading a  
waterbag,  
Who'll come a-waltzing  
Matilda with me?

Down came a jumbuck to drink  
at the water,  
Etc. etc.

There were four verses  
altogether. Unlike the Fieldings

Crown Devon musical jugs and mugs, this one did not have the words printed on the body. Even if they were, you would need a 'Strine' dictionary to understand the language of Down Under. What exactly do some of the expressions mean? Well, a billabong is the effluent or the dead end of a river. The expressions 'leading a waterbag' and 'waltzing Matilda' must have some hidden meaning. As for jumbuck, it is 'pidgin' English for a sheep from the Kamilaroi dhimba Aboriginal language of South East Australia, the 'swag' of the sheep stealing swagman. Anyway, how on earth can a tune in 2/4 - time be a waltz? But I forget. Anything is possible when one has to spend most of ones life upside down in bright sunlight!

'Can I have a look underneath', I asked, realising too late the double entendre that gave rise to Eddie's smirk? 'Do what you likes wiv 'er for all I care', he



said, grinning at the thought. Out came the trusty screwdriver to release two of the three retaining tabs and reveal a 20-note Reuge movement of the post WWII period. A cast iron base and a typical Reuge spring case were all there was to identify this mystery object. The base of the jug, or ewer, was very wide, 6 inches across and the jug stood 7  $\frac{3}{4}$  inches high. Most musical pottery novelties, with the possible exception of the large Royal Doulton ones, suffer musically because there is little to radiate the sound. Not so with Matilda. Solid, large and robust was she but there was nothing to say who her parents were. Some under glazed lettering in the hollow base with the legend CW and E495 in a large black brush marks and the code E343 scratched into the inside rim were the only useless clues, (Fig. 2).

A few years passed. An Australian member of MBSGB gave me the gift of another Matilda pot in return for a favour (Fig 3). This one was a small tankard, 4  $\frac{3}{4}$  inches high and the same across the base, unmarked with the exception of an under glazed stamp: S 21, (Fig. 4). Now the mystery started to unravel for there was a large silver paper label on the wooden base plate with the words (Fig. 5):

*'Waltzing Matilda, Musical Jug. Design Registration No 28959-51, Made in Australia by Diana Pottery Pty. Ltd.*

Diana Pottery was rather a small affair in Marrickville, part of Sydney's west conurbation. The pottery is now long past but the large modern Powerhouse Museum houses examples of its wares, though none of the musical pots. Not even a mention of them. The pottery began at the outbreak of WWII in the backyard of a property, making vases and other small items. Within a year, business was good enough to allow



*Fig. 2: The underside markings of the jug.*

expansion to a new factory. The war was the driving force. Navy and military canteen cups and mugs, plus teapots and milk jugs for the civilian market, all directed by the Australian Government's Commonwealth Manpower Authority.

With the war over, business needed other avenues of production. Fieldings Crown Devon had been a popular import to Australia before the war. Britain had its debts to pay, the Marshall Plan and all that, causing the Home Country's government to pursue the acquisition of the dollar by an export drive from its British manufacturing base. There was very little for home consumption. In 1946 Diana returned to the production of fancy pottery goods, employing about 70 staff. It would seem that they wanted a share of the well-established Crown Devon market. Crown Devon produced a range of country-specific musical pottery items. Their Australian example was a jug with a Kangaroo as the handle, playing 'Advance, Australia Fair'. I hasten to add that it was the movement in the base of the jug playing the tune, not the Kangaroo! No other sizes were made, just the large jug, a very smart and patriotic version indeed.

Diana Pottery obviously thought they could do better. Their version of jug could hardly have been more different. Fig. 1 shows a faithful hound, looking up at his Swagman

master, gloomily contemplating his future and unaware of his imminent demise by drowning in the infernal billabong by the side of the coolibah tree, whilst leaning against a three-plank fence draped artistically with some musical notes. (Yes, three planks, not five! Well, it is Australia, after all). It must have been a success because Diana decided the jug needed a tankard to keep it company. Now, one would think this would be an equally impressive affair. After all, this is Aussie land. But no! As shown in Fig. 2, it was quite small.

Now we must return to good old Blighty and go back in time as well, back as far as John Churchill, the 1st Duke of Marlborough, 1650 – 1722 and forebear of the other great man himself, Winston. Marlborough had some fusiliers and they sang a song as they marched!

A gay fusilier was marching  
down through Rochester  
Bound for the wars in the old  
country  
And he sang as he marched  
through the cobbled streets of  
Rochester  
Who'll be a soldier for  
Marlborough with me?

#### CHORUS

Who'll be a soldier?  
Who'll be a soldier?  
Who'll be a soldier for  
Marlborough with me?  
And he sang as he marched  
through the cobbled streets of  
Rochester  
Who'll be a soldier for  
Marlborough with me?



*Fig. 3: The small Waltzing Matilda tankard.*



Fig. 4: The underside markings of the tankard.

In 1995, *Waltzing Matilda* was 100 years old, or was she after all? This more familiar version of the song certainly was because Australia's famous singer and writer, Banjo Patterson, wrote it. It was he who added the words of *Matilda*, the story of a travelling 'swagman' who steals sheep and, whilst running away from the troopers, jumps into a billabong and drowns, to the ancient British military march. His ghost haunts the billabong (pond) in the bush and, some say, can be seen and heard to this day!

My hometown is Rochester, England. Councillor Tom Mason, Former Mayor and Irishman with a good singing voice, recorded the song that, until recently, was to be heard in the town's visitor centre. The Australian Government commissioned a film crew from Queensland to make a documentary on the centenary of Banjo's song. They came to the City of Rochester, now just a town because the local council forgot to re-register boundary changes in its historic charter. History meant little to these revisionist heretics and so the charter was lost. The politically correct bureaucrats were more worried about the word 'gay', so they decided to change it to 'bold'. With a mind-set like that, it is no wonder they lost our ancient song as well as the city status that went with it. Bishop Gundulph, who founded the great cathedral of the walled

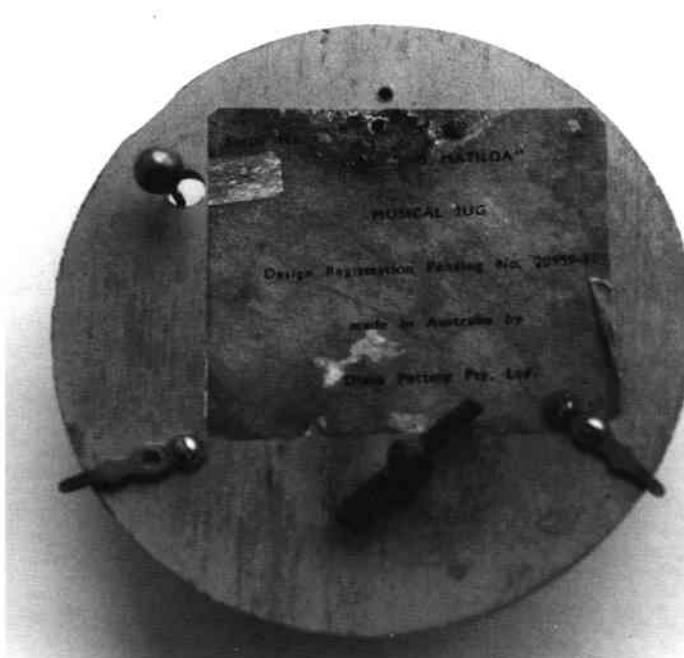


Fig. 5: The maker's label on the underside of the tankard, confirming that it was made by Diana pottery even though there are no records of its registration.

city of Rochester on the banks of the Medway, would have turned in his grave.

Back in Australia, we find documentary evidence of the application for registration of the Diana Pottery *Waltzing Matilda* by one John Stranaghan Christopher, its director. This was on 21st March 1952. Registration was granted on 11th November 1952. There are no records showing separate registration for the tankard but a Diana catalogue refers to both a jug and a mug. Unlike Fieldings Crown Devon, Diana Pottery musical pots vary considerably in decoration, particularly the Jugs. Some have sombre colours and others are quite bright. One can only speculate as to the reason for this. Perhaps it was as a result of sales that a different colour scheme was tried. There are so few of these items known to be in existence that these questions are likely to remain unanswered.

The supply of movements from Switzerland seems somewhat haphazard. In the short three years of production, three suppliers of movements are known, Thorens, Reuge and Dalco. The tune arrangements, i.e. tuning scale of the comb and

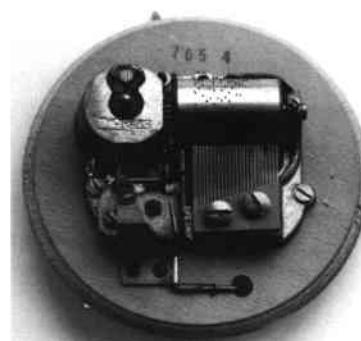


Fig. 6: The tankard's Thorens movement.

pinning pattern on the cylinder are different between Thorens and Reuge. One assumes the same applies to Dalco. With *Matilda* being in production for such a short time, one may assume the jugs and tankards are quite rare. It is also interesting to note the difference between the Reuge movement, with its old-fashioned cast iron base and the Thorens one, Fig. 6, using cast alloy, both of the same vintage. It is indicative of the fact that Thorens were of a better design quality at that time.

Oh, and one final thing. Banjo Paterson never wrote: Once a jolly swagman.... etc. as is often heard today. His version is the one above. I still prefer the gay fusiliers though!

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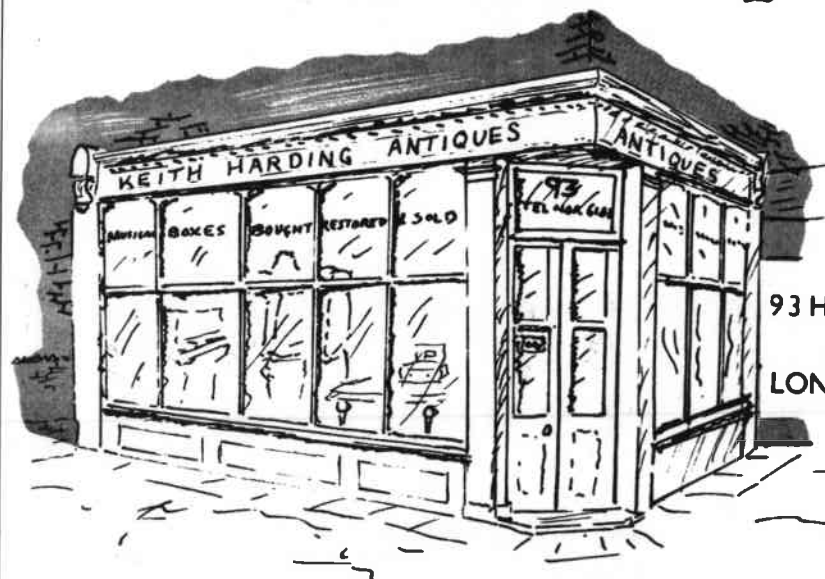
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*Nostalgia - the two principal advertisers in Vol 3 No 1 Easter 1967 edition of The Music Box*



Fig. 1. Geo. Baker serial 15473, Sublime Harmony combs with 44 and 43 teeth, Piccolo 35, double spring drive, Nickel plated. Catalogue price was 196 Swiss francs, equal to £8 sterling in the U.K. in the 1890s.

### Geo. Baker in the 1890s.

Baker-Troll had a sizeable business in Geneva as makers and agents from about 1874, but they separated again about 1891, each taking over parts of the business. Their 1891 or 1892 catalogue was featured in Oddments 76, Vol. 18 page 134. Page 20 listed their thirty-two Sublime Harmony Piccolo boxes, ranging from six airs with 11" cylinders to ten airs, 25". Serial 15473 with 13" by 2.125" diameter cylinder is at the cheap end of the range, but has quite an imposing movement as shown in Fig. 1. The three combs total 122 teeth. The 440 and 880Hz a teeth are marked, and the other two marked teeth are of the same pitch in the piccolo and its adjacent comb.

The tune sheet is no. 97 in the series, with Baker-Troll rather indistinct but the BTB monogram included; it is



Fig. 2. The BTB long lasting luxury leather lid lifter on serial 15473. Lasted about 115 years, so far.

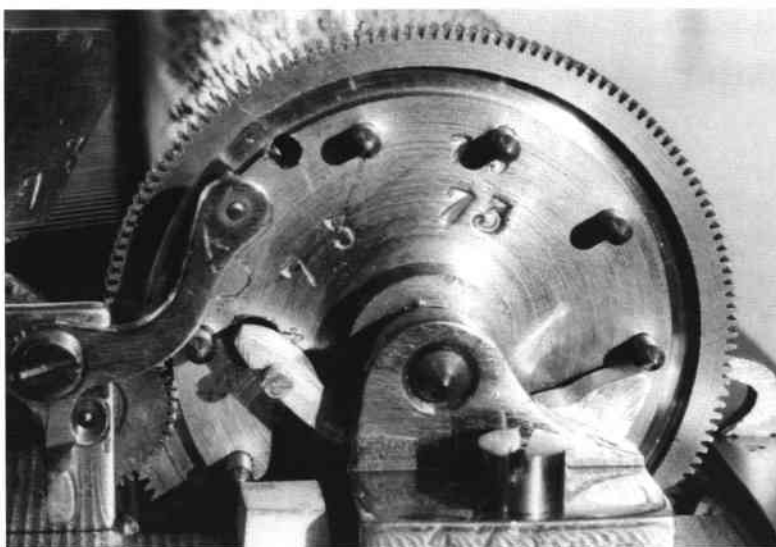


Fig. 3. Pegs in the great wheel keep lifting end A of lever AB to keep end B clear of the pegs. If the wheel speeds up end A has no time to fall far enough so end B is trapped as shown and the cylinder is stopped. A click is heard each time end A falls onto a peg; bolt X falling onto rubber pad Y is a home-made silencer.

also stamped on the lid lifter, Fig. 2.

The 25" (63cm) case has showroom quality veneers on lid, front and sides, the lid with quadrant corner double stringing.

Tune 1 is pinned on the cylinder dots and track lines, which seems to be typical of late Baker-Troll boxes. Previously they were in line with Geneva practice, having the last tune on the dots, and the change even caused

suspicion that their boxes were being made by Paillard. By 1891, production costs in Geneva were way above Ste Croix costs and Baker-Troll were certainly selling, quite openly, boxes from the cheaper source. But many Samuel Troll boxes were pinned on tune 1, so why not Geo. Baker? Also, serial 15473 has the Baker-Troll safety check, shown in Fig. 3.

To complete the evidence that Baker was the maker, his



Fig. 4. Geo. Baker's transfer (or decal after crossing the Atlantic)





Fig. 5. Nicole's transfer, under the case with stencilled 15473.

transfer inside the case, Fig. 4, is a fair indication that he had taken over by the sale date. There is, actually, another transfer, this one applied under the case and claiming to be manufactured by Nicole Frères, see Fig. 5. So this box must have been handled by Nicole whose Head Office had been in London for ten years by 1891.

For the absolute clincher, to use an up-market term from the 1920s, note that **WARRANTED GENEVA-MANUFACTURE** is stamped on the tune change lever, incidentally turning it into an oddity – see Fig 6.

There is nothing special about the blank for this serial 15473, except perhaps that its double-spring bedplate was designed for a single comb. That meant a slot had to be cut to clear the bass tooth leads of the second comb. The blank number is 4, stamped on most components. The serial number is stamped on winder lever and cylinder bass end, and parts of it, generally 473 or 73, appear on various items and brackets – not unusual with Baker-Troll. Each comb has the pitch numbers stamped on the brass base. The bass end comb is very unusual in having the serial number

stamped, not scribed, on the bass lead.

In reporting the performance of 15473 I must admit my dislike of its Piccolo. It often sounds a bit harsh partly I think because the teeth are too stiff. They are as wide as the other comb teeth which have the extra stiffness typical of the after-1885 period, the noisy '90s. The shortest piccolo tooth is only 9mm long. I would have preferred to lose some top piccolo teeth and add the rest to the sublime harmonie combs where they could be more musically employed. I always try to keep the glass lid closed when this box is playing, - that certainly limits the ping of the Piccolo.

Interestingly, the first quarter of the cylinder surface is bare of piccolo pins except for a short boost to the start of tune 6, the Toreador's song from Carmen. The tunes all lend themselves to noisy treatment: they include Wagner's Wedding March and the Music Hall "See me dance the Polka," very entertaining. The arranger also scored very well with a quite evocative version of Monastery Bells. Only disappointment comes in tune 1, Tales from the Vienna Woods, where a rather complicated arrangement



Fig. 6. Notice on tune change lever of serial 15473.

seems to lose the Strauss melody. I wonder if all those other Sublime Harmonie Piccolo boxes offered in the catalogue were similar.

Going back fourteen years to 1878, S.Troll had recently made serial 6551, noted in Oddments 71, Vol. 17 page 216. It has combs of 50 and 51 teeth, relative stiffness about 170 compared with about 220 on Geo. Baker's 15473. It has a noisy tune with the Polka from Cloches de Corneville which it performs with zest and style. But it scores equally on a quiet operatic song tune Mira O Norma, almost flattering Bellini with some magical music. On these two boxes, Troll was in front of Baker. Their tune sheets are nos 95 and 97.

A Sublime Harmonie Piccolo box serial number 47928 by Jules Cuendet is on record, with the three combs having exactly the same numbers of teeth as serial 15473. It also plays the Toreador's song! If anyone should chance to meet it, please report on performance.

### Harpe Harmonique Piccolo.

That is the title covering all Harpe Harmonique musical boxes in the Ste. Croix LIVRE D'AIRS or Book of Tunes. It lists hundreds of available tune arrangements and is the third largest section of the book, coming after Standard and Mandoline boxes. Harpe is

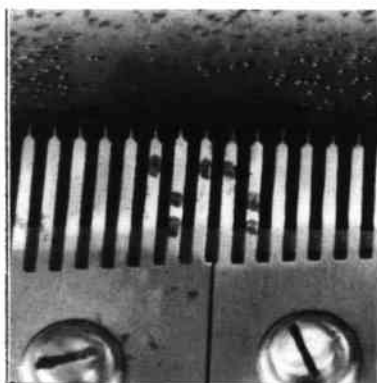


Fig. 7. Single and double dots indicate two successive pitches on serial 49793.

merely the French spelling of harp. Piccolo merely indicates that more use is made of the top treble teeth. Their pitch is no higher than on most standard boxes.

The main feature of these Harpe Harmonique boxes is that they have two combs, - one twice the length of the other. They come in two distinct types. Type A has the two combs making up one complete scale. Type B has the larger comb covering the complete scale with the smaller comb supplying additional notes.

An extraordinary and unexplained feature of Type A is that there is always a discontinuity of one or two pitches at the junction of the two combs see Fig. 7.

The Book of Tunes offers three qualities of music in these boxes, with 74, 94, or 120 teeth in the two combs. The combs normally come with 50 and 24; 62 and 32; and 76 and 40 teeth - naturally with minor variations. All the boxes have zithers, which seem to have been compulsory on anything labelled "Harpe." Some were attached to the bedplate, others fixed by a comb screw. Make sure the zither is firmly held when switched off, to prevent rumbling noises.

These three quality levels are offered in many sizes, with six to twelve tunes and cylinders ranging from 8 to 19 inches (20 to 48 cms). Most of the known boxes are in the middle range. Typical examples play 8 airs with 13" cylinders or 10 airs with 16" cylinders, both with

combs of about 62 and 32 teeth, see Fig. 8.

As a group, however, these Harpe Harmonique boxes are very elusive - and for two reasons. If the tune sheet is lost, they are difficult for a casual owner to classify. If the tune sheet is not lost it can still be difficult because makers and agents applied numerous fancy titles, generally including one or two of the words Guitare, Mandoline, Tremolo, Piccolo, or Zither. The Registrar made a grand effort to find out how many were on the Register. He listed all boxes with Harpe or Harp, then Harmonique, and then Tremolo. Of course many were quite different, including 15 Harpe Eoliennes and several Sublime Harmonies and a whole lot of sundries including two "Harpe Expressive" dodgers by agent J. H. Heller. The net result came to 45 Harpe Harmoniques on the Register, but we certainly must add the famous caution: e. and o.e.

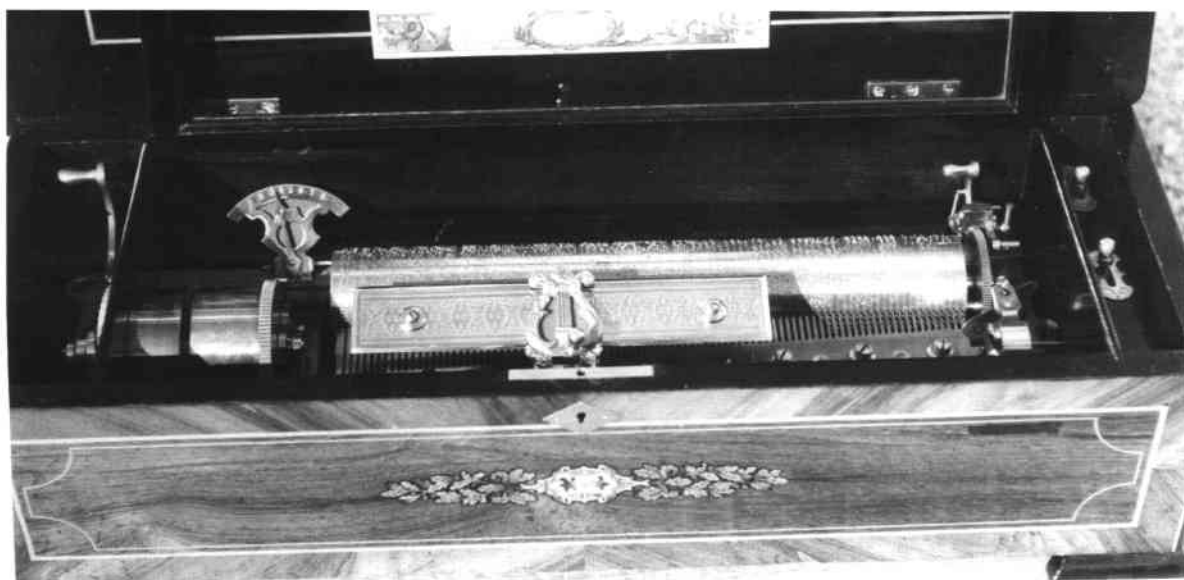


Fig. 8. Paillard Harpe Harmonique (named PICCOLO - ZITHER on its tune sheet no. 135) has double spring drive; tune indicator; tune selector and safety check. Posh inlay on the domed lid but only a (nice) transfer on the case front.

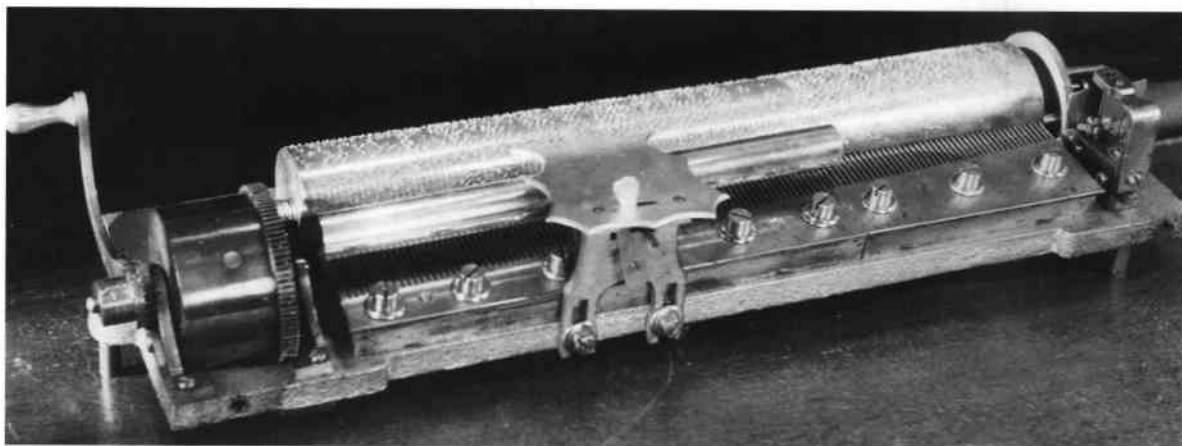


Fig. 9. Rivenc serial 28806, made in 1878, 13" (33cm) cylinder, six airs, comb teeth 81 and 43. The pitch overlap involves two pitches and seven teeth. The zither is fixed from the bedplate. These zithers invariably acted on the larger comb, the tissue not covering the lower bass notes.

I am fairly confident that the majority of Harpe Harmonique boxes are Class A, that is with two combs making up the full scale. Also, it is a fact that the general shape and the stiffness of the teeth in the two combs are always the same. So the combs could just as well be in one piece.

Possibly two combs were adopted as a hint of superior quality; but as early as 1874 single comb versions turned up. They were made by Karrer and Baker-Troll among others and, rather ludicrously, they included the pitch discrepancy. Patrick McCrossan had only just discovered and told me about these single-comb versions when another Baker-Troll appeared, with single comb and continuous scale. Positively no pitch discontinuity. It is on Baker-Troll 8473, made in 1880.

However, single comb versions did not prevail. Some of the very best Harpe Harmonique boxes were made by Rivenc in the 1890s, with two combs and that apparently immortal pitch discontinuity.

"To what" you might well

ask, "does all that add up?" Well, if you take two good eight-air boxes with 13" (33cm) cylinders, one of them a standard single comb box and the other a same-size Harpe Harmonique, you will always hear a superior performance from the latter. I have found that easy to demonstrate, by keeping mine available and set to play "the Last Rose --" which will see off any 13" 8-air standard box. Mine is the 1887 Paillard shown in Fig. 8. It just walks away from my own 13" 8-air Nicole.

#### Top quality Harpe Harmonique.

These boxes have about 120 comb teeth, and makers included Ami Rivenc with his serial 28806, tune sheet no. 114 see Fig. 9. The combs have 81 and 43 teeth, with overlap of two pitches covering seven teeth. It also does well with "The Last Rose," but not anywhere like as much better as 33% more teeth might suggest. Its greater size also helps it with the drinking song from "La Traviata," with impressive bass.

The ultimate cylinder size record (or almost the

ultimate, he cautiously added) may well be held by Langdorff serial 20615, made in 1882 and described as Douze Airs Harpe Piccolo on its typical Langdorff tune sheet of the period. The twelve airs include three from the 1887 "Cloches de Corneville." The cylinder length is 20 1/2" (52cm) and the two 6-air combs originally had 130 and 78 teeth. These were reduced to alternate tips to provide 12 airs, resulting in combs of 65 and 39 teeth. As usual, there is an overlap of two pitches

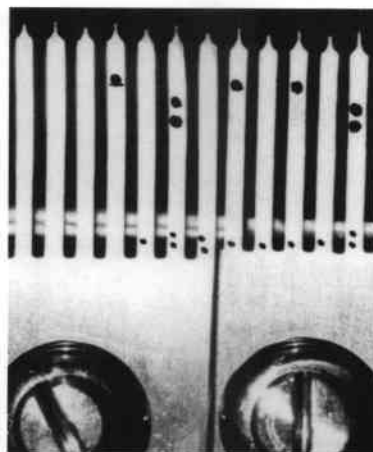


Fig. 10. Junction of the two combs on Langdorff 20615. Large single and double dots denote playing teeth of the same two pitches. Tiny dots copy this information on the tipless teeth. Photo and data thanks to David Worrall.



Fig. 11. The "lyres and stars" tune sheet of serial 5255 differs from the usual P.V.F. version by having 5-point stars and the central cartouche moved from top to bottom border. Also, a banner appears in the top border: HARPE ZITHER ACCOMPAGNEMENT, a very rare example of the movement style being incorporated in tune sheet design.

at the junction of the combs, see Fig. 10. At 32 inches the case is both large and elegant. The bass volume is helped and the piccolo, as claimed on the tune sheet, scores with its extra teeth. Music and case are both impressive, but remember to

leave the lid and glass lid open to air the piccolo.

This big Langdorff 20615 and my smaller Paillard 49793 were put to comparative test at the Chanctonbury Ring meeting on 16/10/2005, audience of

just over forty. After much discussion voting was done by shows of hands. It was a close thing, but the clear winner was the Langdorff. It skilfully used its extra teeth.

That result supports my own opinion that the "top class" provides so many teeth that some florid effects are heard. To support that, I only have to introduce a larger member of the "middle class" whose tune sheet in Fig. 11 is shown (despite already being no. 43 in the book) to allow it a better caption. This 10-air box with 16" (40cm) cylinder does wonders with the rainstorm in tune 4. And the Carnival of Venice almost upstages its unexpected setting in Bolton, Lancs with the crashing of Dibnah's falling chimneys.



London, Organ Grinder, 1895

'OrganGrinding' in London in 1895 - looks like it could BE an organ this time! Postcard from the Ted Brown Collection

# News from Other Societies

from John Farmer

## **Mechanical Music, Vol 52, No.1, January/February 2006**

This is the first issue of the "New Look" Mechanical Music which will be published 6 times a year and will replace the "old" Mechanical Music and the Bulletin. The first half of the journal consists of the "educational" articles and the second half covers the chapter reports. (My reviews will tend to concentrate on the educational items and only mention the Chapter reports when something unusual catches my eye).

The first article is, indeed, very educational. Joseph E Roesch has been persuaded to reinstate his "Shop Notes" feature previous seen between 1970 and 1976. Some will be new Notes, some will be reprints. The first one is on Polishing and Buffing and comprehensively covers polishing compounds, powders and papers, Rubberized abrasives and Buffing wheels, and finishes with a set of instructions for successful buffing and polishing.

Tim Reed writes about cylinder box 4341 by Henri Joseph Lecoultre, which is another forte-piano box stamped as Malignon, similar to those previously mentioned by Messrs. Karp, Beck & Beck in the Spring 2005 Mechanical Music. Robin Biggins illustrates and describes a number of bird boxes having two birds. These were produced by several makers, but the majority seem to have been by Bontems of Paris. Most boxes are difficult to distinguish from the normal single bird boxes, until activated, since they are generally similar in size.

Wurlitzer Automatic Roll Changers – Part One, by Art Reblitz, covers the history and design changes of these mechanisms which were fitted to coin pianos and orchestrions.

Several black and white close-up photos help to explain the changes described. Part two will discuss which parts deteriorate, how the changer works and how to regulate it.

## **The Key Frame (Issue KF4/05)**

In this issue Robert Heywood, a younger FOPS member, takes full advantage of the Key Frame's excellent colour pages with pictures of some of his favourite fair organs. Amersham Fair Organ Museum is mentioned in two articles. First is Jory Bennett's description of the ex-Wookey Hole Marengi 49 key organ on loan from owner Richard Evans, and second is Paul Davies' coverage of the Museum's 89 key "Sleighbell" Marengi. There is also an update on Amateur Organ Builder's weekends with pictures of builders and their organs.

Colin Middle adds to the growing list of Mystery organs with his written and photographic evidence of an organ on Weston-Super-Mare's now defunct "Bimbeck" pier. The organ was, apparently, supplied by Keith, Prowse & Co., but could have been any of Gavioli, Marengi, Mortier or Gaudin. An international flavour is added by Rudy Nijs with news from Antwerp's "Night of the Musea" on August 12th, 2005, and Aldo Laus writes a more general News and Views from Italy. Dave Smith gives details of new developments at Dingles Steam Village in Devon where the Fairground Heritage Trust is establishing a Fairground Museum with the help of lottery and other grants. Finally, Bjorn Isebaert gives a short history of the organ builder Julius Vander Beken.

## **The Key Frame (Issue KF1/06)**

The FOPS AGM will be held in

Scarborough on 1st April 2006. April also sees the commencement of the "Royal Music Machines" exhibition at the Utrecht museum "From Musical Clock to Street Organ". This exhibition will run until from 13th April until 30th July, 2006, and will show many unique items of mechanical music with Royal connections, some on loan from museums around the world.

Events reviewed are The 2005 Great Dorset Steam Fair (Peter Mackett), the North West Group's Rally, Widnes, 2005 (Peter Clarke & Robert Heywood), and the Wagga Wagga (Australia) Organ Rally, October 2005 (Elaine de Saxe). The North West Group is also the subject of Nick Marler's reminiscence of the group's formation, whilst Andy Hinds goes back further to recount 35 years (to be continued). To continue the historical theme, Andrea Stadler writes a history of Les Freres Limonaire (translated by Bjorn Isebaert), and Nic Iljine writes on Barrel Organs from Odessa (Russia), with a brief history of the Sharmanka.

## **Vox Humana – Winter, 2005/6**

The Editor (Shane Seagrave) writes a comprehensive piece on the MOOS "Giant of Westerlo" tour in November 2005 to Belgium and Holland. This was an intensive 4 day tour of several venues to see and hear a range of fair, dance and street organs. John Goode provides an update on Amateur Organ Builder's weekends.

Richard Dean gives a brief history of the recently restored 58 keyless Wilhelm Bruder Sohne No. 3416 Concert organ, now owned by Francis Stapleton. Margaret Cook recounts the events leading up to her 93 keyless Ruth organ being an "Extra" in an episode of ITV's

Midsomer Murders (transmitted late February 2006 – did you notice ?).

### **Reed Organ Society Quarterly, Vol XXV, No.1**

In addition to the Secretary's report for 2005 and a list of proposed Byelaws, there are several articles covering history or restoration of individual organs. First is Arthur B Hess's story of the restoration of a derelict Loring & Blake style 20 which was missing much of its top structure, and was rebuilt with a somewhat lower superstructure.

John Semmens follows with a brief history of a Smith American organ in a "Goldrush" church in Australia, and a more detailed history of a Hill & Sons Vocalion,

which had a long history in St James' Anglican church in Adelaide. Another Vocalion, this time a Mason & Risch in Oregon, USA, has its history explored by Jim Tyler.

### **The Musical Museum and Friends Newsletter, issue 4, February 2006**

Fitting out of the new building is going well with most of the interior partitions in place. The lift is due to be fitted in April and the friends hope to start moving in May.

A group of 17 Friends visited the Royal College of Music, Kensington, on 22nd October, 2005, for a tour of the Museum of Instruments. The next planned visit is to the Homiman Museum, on 22nd April, 2006. The

museum includes an extensive collection of musical instruments from all over the world.

### **Other Non-English journals**

#### **Musiques Mekaniques Vivantes – 1st Quarter, 2006**

Highlights:-

Who are you, Dr. J J Haspels – an interview by Philippe Rouille.

How to build a small cylinder organ (Part 1).

Automatic Zither in cylinder boxes.

How to repair Organ Books.

Why are we so moved by Barrel Organs?

## **Obituary**

# **Graham Webb 1930 - 2005**

from George Glastris

Graham Webb, a man who jumpstarted the collecting of mechanical music, passed away in November after a short illness. He was 76. Graham was the first person in England to deal exclusively in mechanical music, and his shops in London and Brighton became the hub for collectors from around the world.

Graham was born in Oxford in 1930. His father died when he was young, and he was raised by his grandmother and mother. At the beginning of World War II he moved to London, and lived with his mother in the boarding house she ran in the Bayswater neighborhood. London during the Blitz was an adventure for a boy, and like many he played in bombsights, searching for bits of scrap metal. At one point he even worked for one of the ubiquitous



barrow boys, selling whatever the boss could "obtain" in those days of serious rationing; bananas for instance were big sellers.

After leaving school at fifteen he went to work for a contractor who took English stubbornness to extremes. This job was during the months of the second Blitz on London with V1 and V2 flying bombs. The V1 could be heard coming, whereas the V2 could not. Either way, the elderly roofer wouldn't come down during

attacks, and if he wouldn't descend, Graham couldn't. To hear him tell the story, even in his characteristic deadpan way, you could tell he still couldn't believe he went along with it.

After the War Graham served in the Royal Navy and then as a steward on an ocean liner. He enjoyed his trips to Australia and, apparently, was the only straight steward on board and "they treated me wonderfully...even made me tea in the morning". That memory was very telling about Graham's character; he always remembered the little kindnesses people did for him. Once, when an auction house lost a purchase of his, what he commented on was how bad the person felt - the loss was secondary. Graham didn't want the other person to feel bad. Back in London he worked as an assistant



to the general household goods auctions run by the Whitely department store, where he made his first "deal". A woman came in looking for a stove. Knowing one hadn't made its reserve, Graham bought it and sold it to her, at a profit. He then went to work for an antiques dealer, buying Georgian fireplaces out of the ruins of bombed houses. They paid £1 for them, stripped them and sold them for £2. He later tried his hand as a door-to-door vacuum cleaner salesman in the North of England, where the wives "were in charge".

In 1956 Graham met the love of his life, Josephine O'Sullivan, a vivacious young beauty with whom he was immediately smitten. Together they raised three wonderful daughters, Rachel, Ruth and Jojo. Graham once told me that he had had a lot of luck in his life, but the luckiest thing was meeting Jo. Every year he would mark their anniversary by writing her a poem and then wrapping it around flowers.

In 1963, back in the antiques business, Graham took over the lease of a shop at 93 Portobello Road. He and Jo moved in, and it was here that they not only raised their family, but also where, after a chance purchase, and quick re-sale of a "stack" of unexamined musical boxes, he became the first dealer in antique musical boxes in England. It was during the next ten years that collecting mechanical music really became the pastime it is today. Of course there were collectors before, but there was little centralization. It was during the 1960s that the London auction houses began offering musical boxes as a category, far more Americans were coming to Europe, Victorian antiques were being taken seriously and the economy was strong. Of course, Portobello Road was the centre of "swinging London", and the place to go for antiques. As a dealer, Graham also had a seemingly endless supply of mechanical music. Antiques become antiques in cycles, and in the 60s disc and cylinder boxes were still leaving

the homes of their original owners. Early morning forays to street markets often yielded a carload of machines. One time a rag-and-bone man with a horse drawn cart came in and sold Graham a "wall full" of phonographs. At auctions he would often be the first with his hand up and the last with his hand down. Auctioneers always knew they could look over to where he sat to get the bidding started (although he said it was just to get the sale over faster so he could go home). All this activity brought in the crowds. On weekends the shop would be packed. Although most were just browsers, the collectors were there to buy. All the major collectors bought there, Murtough Guinness, Bob Burnett, Cyril De Vere Greene, Ralph Heinz, and Benoit Roose amongst them. Many a person walked in just to look and left a dedicated collector. Today most collectors have never experienced the feeling of walking into a musical box shop and being able to choose; we have to take what we can find. But at Graham's the selection was immense, often more than one hundred boxes, of all types and quality, were available. Those days ended when Graham retired a few years ago.

Graham had a natural head for business; who else could swap musical boxes for a house in Putney? But, he was the fairest, most honest gentleman in the business. Many a time he would let a buyer take a machine with the words "pay me when you can". He educated as he sold, would nudge collectors to buy the "right" piece, irrespective of the price. He knew the difference between good and valuable, and if you listened to him carefully, because he was subtle, you would get the best possible piece for the money.

The shop wasn't just for buying and selling though. Knowledge was readily shared. Graham wrote two books on musical boxes, both still widely used. Other writers, such as Jan-Jap Haspels, David Tallis, Anthony Bullied, Frank Metzger and Arthur Ord-Hume, would spend hours speaking with

Graham, gleaned the kind of information only someone with his experience could supply. Along with his books on mechanical music, Graham edited *The Music Box*, the MBSGB's renowned journal [1972-73 - Ed], as well as serving as its President. Much "club work" was done in the kitchen above the shop. All his efforts were recognized in 1994 when he was selected for the Q. David Bowers Award by the MBSI and in 1997 he and Jo were the Keynote speakers at the Convention in Seattle. Graham spent hours writing and rehearsing his talk. It was so popular that the transcript was even published in the Bulletin.

Friendship, however, was the biggest draw. Graham and Jo had an ability to make anyone who visited feel welcome. Graham enjoyed nothing more than a good chat, and more often than not, that chat was about anything but mechanical music. Jo, of course is everyone's friend. For some people a weekend wasn't complete without a visit to the shop. Regulars even had their own coffee mug.

For me, the ten years I lived and worked in England would never have been nearly as fulfilling if it had not been for Graham and Jo. Of course my understanding and love of mechanical music would never have been as deep, but my life and the way I looked at it would have been the lesser. The genuine kindness they showed me, the interest they took in me, and the way they made me part of their lives, is something I think of every day. To sit in the shop and listen to Graham just talk about life or tell the driest of the dry joke was joy. And to spend a Christmas day with their family, something only an expatriot understands, was truly the meaning of friendship.

George Glastris

## New Members

We welcome the following new members who have joined us since the last journal was printed.

If you would like to get in touch with members near to you please contact the correspondence secretary.

2938 Douglas Saunders, Essex

2939 Philip Jago, Somerset

2940 Stephen Jelleyman, Devon

2941 John Stockbridge, Berkshire

2942 Mr.W.H.Jones, Sussex

2943 Linne Dose, USA

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*A French planchette piano by Alexandre Debain, formerly the property of the Empress Eugenie, wife of Napoleon III of France. Editors' collection, and shortly to be on display in the Revelstoke Nickelodeon Museum of Mechanical Music in Revelstoke BC, Canada.*



# Keith Harding

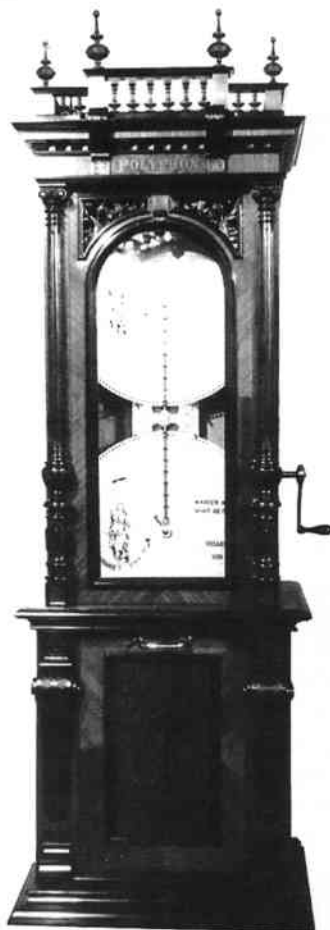
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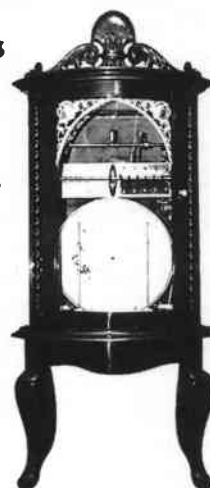
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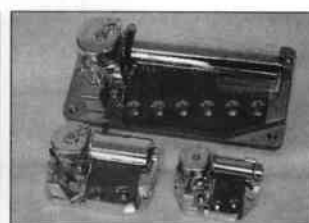
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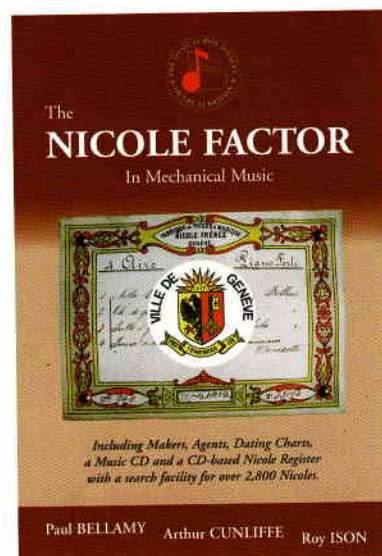
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