

The Music Box

An International Journal of Mechanical Music




In this issue:

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- Revelstoke Revealed
- Lacape's Barrel & Finger Piano
- Salzburg's Stier Organ
- Musical Box Oddments 111

The Journal of the Musical Box Society of Great Britain

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MECHANICAL MUSIC
AND TECHNICAL APPARATUS

South Kensington, 7 November 2006

CHRISTIE'S
SINCE 1766

From the Editors' Desk

Where did the summer go? For us it has been a mixture of fun and hard work. The museum is running and we are enjoying the visitors. We are slightly surprised by their reception of various instruments. The barrel organs were obviously going to be well received and valued for their antiquity and musical contribution, but the humble push-up? We restored a 65-note Simplex piano player some years ago. It has proved to be one of the stars of the show! It holds people fascinated as they watch the mechanical 'fingers' 'play' the actual piano keys. 'Better than an exercise bike' they grin as they pedal away. It is so interesting to be introducing people to a world they never knew existed. It is so important for the future of these instruments that people appreciate them. We all need to be taking every opportunity to educate the public - we seldom know what sparks a lifetime's interest. Hearing a street organ, a musical box, a pianola or something more exotic can be the 'port key' (Harry Potter-speak) for people to our hobby. As George Hopkins (the official Revelstoke photographer for Railway Days) remarked, "I love coming here - everybody is always smiling!". That is what it is all about, isn't it?

In this issue one of our vice-chairmen, Paul Bellamy, has smilingly insisted that we carry a review of his visit to Revelstoke. We archived the article on Happy Jimmie many years ago when it first appeared in Hampshire Magazine, and now share it with a more appreciative audience, perhaps.

The article on the Salzburger Stier organ airs again the ethics of restoration. This has always been a minefield which needs to be trodden carefully. David and I have always been in favour of conservation, or restoration to original, where possible.

We have spoken up in the past against the conversion of good, honest barrel operated fair organs to book playing instruments, 65-note player pianos into 88-note ones and the electrification of instruments plus all the horrors of modifications that enthusiasts consider 'improvements' and have expected us to applaud. The Stier organ is a very important instrument and we hope that much thought and discussion preceded the work - especially as the National Museum in Utrecht was involved in it. Arthur Ord-Hume presents his own point of view in this article and it should cause all of us to consider carefully the ethics of what we do in the name of restoration to conserve the, perhaps lesser but nonetheless to a degree historic, instruments entrusted to us. There are no clear, black and white guidelines, just common sense and experience.

The Aberdeen meeting looks to have been a happy event and our grateful thanks as usual to Anthony Bulleid for more Oddments. Paul Bellamy gives us an insight into the background of the Society's latest book production, The Nicole Factor. We have our copy and have greatly enjoyed listening to the CD which accompanies it.

To our complete astonishment, at the last moment we received a Letter to the Editor, and it is not about the first cuckoo in Spring either. How nice that one of the Essex members has been kind enough to thank the members who went to Leaden Roding to start a group meeting in that area. We wish the new group well. The Society owes a debt of gratitude to all members who have open days, group visits and arrange meetings generally.

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J Lacape's Barrel and Finger Piano.
See article on Page 254.

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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Christmas Open Day at the Old School, West Sussex

**Saturday 25th November
at 10.30 a.m.**

This usually gets fully booked, so contact Ted Brown early to ensure a place. Bring that friend you were hoping might join our Society. All refreshments are supplied.

WEB SITE NEWS

Unfortunately our web site forum is being abused by organisations who can automatically register hundreds of times, and give links to their own web sites, which have nothing to do with mechanical music. When we had only a few unwanted registrations I could filter them out, however the quantity is now impossible to handle. We therefore have no alternative but to make our Message Board/Forum for the use of members only. Each quarterly journal will give you the latest password required to enter the Forum. (*See also page 267 - Ed*)

Should you experience any problems please contact me (see officer's page). The password for the next quarter is **BHABRAHAMS** all in capitals, and the User Name is **musicalbox**. I am hoping to have the news page moved from the forum so that anyone visiting the site can read it.

Robert Ducat-Brown,
Correspondence Secretary.

**See also Page 244 for
more dates for your diary**

President's Message

The Scottish meeting went very well with many interesting items to see and exciting things to do. Although not quite as many members as usual attended the meeting, all seem to have enjoyed the event and voted it a great success. Once again our thanks to Daphne and her team for putting in so much work to make the event run without a hitch. A full report on the meeting will be found elsewhere in the journal.

Unfortunately, I had a call to attend hospital just before the meeting and was unable to make the journey to Scotland. I would like to thank all those members who sent me get well messages and cards. I understand it will be around three months before I can expect a full recovery, so please forgive me if I cannot undertake too many tasks during this time.

I would like those members who attend our meetings regularly to write or send an email to me with your views as to how we can make our meetings even better. These ideas will be shared with our Meetings Secretary and will be of great use. I know that Daphne is constantly working hard to improve the meetings and she is always ready to listen to members' points of view.

Some ideas expressed already have been, "Could we keep away from hotels in the centre of large cities as modern driving conditions and poor car parking conditions are so stressful." Another person has said, "Would it be possible to

suggest car sharing to and from any meeting to reduce costs and help the environment." At a personal level, I used coach travel when attending the recent Cardiff meeting and managed to obtain a special offer of £9 return for a journey of over 400 miles. Now that is real value for money and I did not have to press any pedals!

Regarding the content of meetings, we have a well tried and popular basic layout, but you may wish to see changes. Some may wish to see more workshop type of sessions whilst others may wish to see more collections or centres of musical interest. Do let us know what you want and also inform us of any suitable places or centres that are well worth a visit.

The one-day open house type of meeting seems to be becoming more popular and they are gradually becoming established as a part of Society life. If there are no members willing to hold an open house type of meeting within an area, then it may be possible for a small group of members to hire a village hall in a central location for £40 to £50 for the day. Should twelve or more people attend a £5 contribution should be enough to cover all expenses with enough left over to buy tea, milk and biscuits.

Organising the continuation of the continental visits that were so successful in the past is proving difficult. We need more volunteers to undertake helping with specific areas of the organisation and structure. Two members have indicated that they would assist, but

much more planning is required before a real start can be made. It would be a great shame for these continental coach visits to cease. Once again, the thoughts of those who went on these visits in the past would be of value.

Arthur Cunliffe.

A Bit of a Bind?



Now would be a good time to buy a Binder for "The Music Box" Journal as we are at the end of a volume. Each Binder will hold eight copies, a complete Volume, covering two years.

They are £6 each and may be collected from Kevin McElhone or Ted Brown at national or local meetings. Alternatively they can be posted TWO at a time in a made to measure box for £4 to UK addresses. Please apply for rates to other countries.

kevin_mcelhone@hotmail.com
or phone 01536 726759.

Report of Autumn Meeting - Scotland

From Daphne Ladell

By 7.30 on the Wednesday night most of our members had arrived at the hotel and settled in. We all met for dinner that was held in a private room and much to everyone's delight we all sat down round a single, very large, oval table decorated with candles. In total, 33 members attended for the weekend and we were pleased to welcome Richard and Jean Grace attending their first meeting. It was not long before they were enjoying being part of our big happy family.

The first visit of our 4-day meeting was an early start, leaving the hotel at 8.30. As we boarded our very comfortable coach we were introduced to our driver for the next 3 days, Graeme. We took the scenic route via the picturesque Cabrach Pass to the Speyside Cooperage with a short stop for coffee in the lovely little village, Dufftown. Although the trip took over 2 hours, the time sped by because the scenery was stunning and everybody chatted from the time we left to the time we arrived. At the Cooperage we were first shown a short video explaining how the Oak was grown, selected, machined and formed ready for the final operation of making the Whisky and Sherry barrels. The tour around the Cooperage was extremely interesting and informative, and finished at their shop and Tearooms where we were all treated to a wee dram of Stag's Breath Whisky Liqueur, followed by a light lunch.

Thanks to Robbie Gordon's considerable knowledge of the area, he became our own personal tour guide, and we made an impromptu stop at the Historic and attractive Castellated Craigellachie Bridge over the River Spey,

before continuing our journey to the Glenfiddich Distillery. The distillery tour was very interesting in its own right and became quite technical in response to our members' questions. Again, at the end of the tour we were able to have a wee dram or 2 (for certain members 3), of White Heather Whisky Liqueur. We arrived back at the hotel very satisfied with the day's tour (many of us laden with whisky purchased from the distillery) in good time to wash and change ready for another dinner around our very popular oval table.

Friday was a more relaxed (9.30) start, because of the much shorter journey to Fyvie Castle. At Fyvie Castle, where the Scottish National Trust had opened its doors especially for us, we were met by Susan who gave a brief history of this magnificent castle, and introduced us to the two guides that would be showing us round. Both guides were very informative and obviously loved both the castle and their job as a guide. They had each of our groups totally enthralled towards the end of the tour with the story of the resident Ghost. Finally, we re-grouped to listen to the Castle's organ. Here we saw the impressive pipes and console of an Angelus/Symphony 58-note pipe organ, the organ console in a Herbert Marshall Light Oak Case. Unfortunately the tracker bar had been taped over because they had some problems with the automatic mechanism, so we could not play it. After all this excitement we were taken to the Old Kitchens where awaiting us was a delightful light lunch, including some Scottish home made cakes and shortbread.

After lunch our driver Graeme took us to The Maritime Museum in Aberdeen, which is located in Historic Shiprow over-looking the harbour. The museum is in a very modern building spread over several floors and incorporates Provost Ross's House built in 1593. We could explore the museum, with its unique collection covering shipbuilding, fast sailing ships, diving, fishing and port history. It is also the only place in the UK where you can see displays on the North Sea oil industry. The museum is also very close to Union Street shopping area so members could split their time between the museum and the shops.

Dinner was again in our private room and because the weekend members had now joined us the oval table was now even bigger, as was the noise level from members relating the last 2 days events. After dinner, our hosts, Michael and Maria, had arranged for a surprise mystery guest to entertain us. Graeme, who is 'Mustow's Barrel of Fun', entered the room, pushing before him a Stuber 21-note pipe organ and his full size model chimpanzee strapped to his back. With his music and jokes he soon had us joining in with a sing-a-long to old time songs, he would have carried on all night but our members interest in seeing inside his organ got the better of him. It was well after 11.00 when sadly, I had to suggest to our members we let Graeme go home.

Saturday morning we eagerly set off for the highlight visit of the weekend, Michael and Maria's workshop. We were greeted with their happy smiling faces and a reception snack of champagne



Discussing the organ's tuning...

and nibbles they had set up in their old cobbled courtyard. Maria introduced us to her friend Kate, whom she had asked to take photos of the meeting. We started in Michael's workshop 'working area' where he showed us some of his current work and items that he is restoring for clients across the world. Next we went into the second workshop, which they had set up as a demonstration room complete with soft music and candles. Here Michael, very ably assisted by Maria, demonstrated some of their wide range of automata. Interest was very keen and Michael soon found himself in an active question and answer session. Maria had arranged lunch for us in the very old and original village Ceilidh hall. Even during lunch, Michael carried on entertaining us; he gave us a talk and demonstration on singing bird boxes.

After lunch, there was still much to see in the workshop and interest was still running high. When time started to run out, we took a vote and agreed to stay longer at Michael's and return later than planned to the hotel. Maria took a small party for a walk through the woods to see some 'special trees' whilst the

remaining members stayed behind and played automata. Michael and Maria have extended an open invitation and would welcome a visit from any members who may be holidaying in Scotland.

We arrived back at the hotel in time to quickly change for the Banquet Dinner, which was moved to a larger room with a Dance floor to accommodate the Ceilidh. Dinner was a grand four course traditional Scottish meal, which included haggis, neeps & tatties, which everybody seemed to enjoy.

The after dinner entertainment was a Ceilidh, and our compare for the evening was Bobbie Graham. Bobby introduced us to four young lady dancers from the Mylene School of dancing, Adeline's Dee Lites Quartet and our Fiddler, from the Banchry Strethspey Reel. Each of these groups gave us superb entertainment, appeared more than once, and gave us a thoroughly enjoyable and entertaining evening.

Sunday morning, our last day, started with a late breakfast; everybody was in high spirits and looking forward to the morning's talks. Our first guest speaker

Robbie Gordon gave us a talk on "50 years in the Watch Making and Antiques Trade". He brought along a very fine collection of watches, pocket watches and watchmakers' tools. A lot of these he handed round to the audience, which gave us the opportunity to see more closely the exquisite workmanship of times gone by. Robbie's love and knowledge of the trade really showed throughout the talk.

A coffee break enabled us to chat informally and question Robbie more closely on a subject he obviously still holds very close to his heart.

Our second guest speaker of the day was Dr John White, who had travelled all the way from Ireland to give us a talk on how he had designed and built a chamber organ from scratch. John showed slides and explained very clearly, and in great depth, how he tackled this project from the beginning to the end. How he made an endless from a normal machine screw has certainly got my mind and other members' working overtime. How he made the barrel and marked out the tune was also very fascinating. This project took him 5 years to complete and he is still on the lookout for another tune to add to the barrel. At the end of his talk he showed us a video of the finished organ and we were able to hear the tune it played.

Lunch was served at 1.00 pm; this marked the end of a very successful 4-day meeting. Even the weather had been kind to us; we all departed for home, some of us a little sad that this meeting had come to an end.

I would like to thank David Worrall and Michael Start for all the photographs they sent me.

The Nicole Factor

The story behind the *The Nicole Factor in Mechanical Music* started four years ago when the Committee recovered most of the funds it spent on The Organette Book. Thus encouraged, we ventured once more to produce our third book, this time on the subject of the Nicole family. This fitted well with our policy to revisit, update and re-print past articles. Anthony Bulleid formulated the structure for the chapters, provided unrestricted access to all his published research and, most important of all, wise counsel.

The first draft, produced by the old fashioned 'cut and paste' approach, was a manifest failure. Individual articles written for the Journal did not fit the book's structure. It was the same with all other sources. There were also problems of style, the need to avoid or resolve conflicting opinion, the need to check on past references and to research new ones, to name but a few. Here, Christopher Proudfoot did sterling duty in reading the edited drafts. As well as correcting grammatical and other errors, his advice was to quote verbatim whenever possible from previous author's texts. Also, those who read the introduction will observe that we decided to 'digress once in a while to recount something of interest.' These digressions, in early drafts, sometimes interrupted the flow and Christopher advised the use of footnotes when such was the case.

At an early stage the supposed editor also became the *de facto* author, a necessary pre-requisite for the work of Roy Ison and Arthur Cunliffe to be integrated. Some 160 journals, all of Anthony Bulleid's works, MBSGB and other publications such as the seminal works of Piguët, Webb, Chapuis, etc. were scoured for Nicole and

Nicole related factors. Illustrations were a major problem. None had been archived so we had to resort to copies from journals and other sources, including public archives, to avoid copyright problems. There were also gaping holes in the subject matter. Finally, conflicting views were manifestly apparent.

A number of policy decisions were made at this juncture:

- 1: All views and conclusions of past authors to be respected and retained in the text.
- 2: All past references to be rechecked at source, if possible.
- 3: New archival material to be sought where possible.
4. Anthony Bulleid to be the technical arbiter.

The basis of all research is to seek out fact where possible and then draw conclusions or make suppositions. Without the courage of authors to do this and be challenged, authorship becomes a meaningless exercise. Hence, past conclusions recounted in the book are deemed neither as right nor wrong but respected as a necessary step for others to build upon. Problems arise when suppositions get re-quoted as fact, so we have tried to avoid this trap and present a balanced view of past works to which has been added much new research.

The lives and work of the Nicoles could not be told in isolation to the myriad of events affecting them and all the other Swiss musical box makers for nearly one hundred years. The demise of the Nicoles of Geneva, as makers, was influenced by the growth of Ste. Croix. Although the 'true Nicole' era ended in 1879/80, the name was so influential that it

survived under different ownerships for at least another twenty-five years. After that time, title to the name remained for many years with at least one other company. They recorded this fact by using the term 'incorporating Nicole Frères' in its letter heading. It was at this point that the title of the book became obvious: *The Nicole Factor* in Mechanical Music.

We are also deeply indebted to our Publisher, The Printed Word. Despite the contractual requirements which were met through competitive tender, manager Dave, Kate and other members of his staff went 'beyond the call of contract' in order to ensure that they could take as much pride in the work as us. Much of the artwork was quite inspirational and they ensured optimum use of colour work, an expensive element of production.

What is a book about musical boxes without the music of the boxes? We had decided to incorporate a CD of music. This decision was easily made but difficult to fulfil. Without the dedication of our sound recordist, Barry Wilson, it may never have been brought to fruition. I cannot name the other participants because of the need to maintain collector confidentiality. They know who they are and the Society has a debt of gratitude to them. The technical problems and the variety of locations of those who allowed us to record their instruments was a logistical nightmare. Having completed recording and after seeking competitive bids for producing the CDs, one husband and wife team came to the fore. The wife was skilled in art work and the husband in editing the musical CD. It was a privilege to work with Helen and Gray Cooper, he a highly skilled musician in his own right who knew exactly how to edit a soundtrack without 'defacing'

Essex Meeting 3rd September 2006

From Ted Brown

the original recording of these old instruments. Here, there is a similarity to proof-reading a book. Instead of the rogue omission or inclusion of full stops and commas, he had to contend with the cooing of a dove, the faint intake of breath at the end of a recording when the last note was still ringing four seconds after it was plucked, or the distant sound of a church bell, let alone the balance of volume between one musical box and another. Sometimes the clunk of the start stop mechanisms or shift of cylinder was 'a tad' too loud for sensitive ears and had to be, literally, toned down, an apt expression not always intended to be used in this context. It is surprising how the human ear fails to detect these sonic interventions when concentrating on and playing back the many 'sound takes'. The reality is that the modern microphone is so much more sensitive than old ears. All in stereo as well!

Instead of burdening the book with appendices, a second CD fulfils this purpose. Whilst MBSGB manages the Register of musical boxes, it is an international register open to all sister societies, for those who wish to use it or contribute to it. Thus we made the decision to sort out all Nicole-related Register information and give it to you, the purchaser of *The Nicole Factor*, free of charge as part of the book, including illustrations of old Nicole catalogues.

So that is the story behind the story. Or is it? The Tune Sheet Book and The Organette Book were spurs to further information from collectors all over the world. We hope The Nicole Factor in Mechanical Music will prompt others to reveal more information about this extraordinary clan of musical box makers and their contemporaries. PB.



Fig 1 (above). Essex local group meeting at Leaden Roding village hall.



Fig 2 (left). Alan Clark displays a lot

Leaden Roding in Essex was the venue for a day meeting of local members of the Society. Fourteen members attended the village hall, bringing some of their own instruments and a packed lunch. Before the meeting was arranged it was decided by regular attenders of the Chanctonbury Ring that we would supply speakers and their props and Essex would supply the audience. The speakers were Paul Bellamy, Roger Booty, Ted Brown, Alan Clark and Bob Ducat-Brown. The subjects were: cylinder boxes, organettes and musical plates, jugs, pots etc. There were about forty items in all.

After tea, coffee, talks and packed lunch we had more talks, discussions on construction and repair and an interlude on the Triola Zither. It is amazing how a fairly bland looking instrument

can hold an audience once it starts to play. There were several offers to relieve the present custodian if it was too heavy to take back home.

A very good day was had by all. My thanks go to all helpers and we hope Essex will have another meeting in the not too distant future. If anyone feels they would like to try a local day meeting in their area and would like to chat about it, please contact me. (See the Officers panel on Page 235 - Ed)

Since writing the above, news has come in that it is hoped to hold a second Essex meeting on SATURDAY 31st MARCH 2007 at Rayleigh Parish Centre (30 minutes from the Dartford Crossing). Anyone wishing to attend is requested to contact Bruce Allen on 01702 232040.

Happy Jimmie - Portsmouth's Little Organ-Grinder

The last of a tuneful tradition

By Coralie Poulter

Our grandparents and our great-grandparents remember them, and always with affection. The tunes of the organ-grinder were among the last of the musical sounds of the streets and now they have gone, along with the muffin-man's bell and the cry of the rag and bone man.

James Samson, or Happy Jimmie as he was affectionately known, was a lame and near-blind little man who trundled his barrel-organ, on a three-wheeled truck, around the streets of London, Belfast and Portsmouth for forty years, playing and singing hymn tunes and, according to the testimony he has left, bringing hope to many a lost soul.

Jimmie, who died in 1932, spent the last ten years of his life in Portsmouth enjoying, towards the end, the relative comfort of a small pension from the Institute for the Blind. But this brave little man had travelled, if not the length, then certainly the breadth of the land and had sailed across the Irish Sea to Belfast, where he had stayed for almost thirty years. All this time he was earning a living for himself by means of his barrel-organ, and contributing what he could spare to good causes and to the church.

It was one of the accidents of life that brought Jim to his life's career. If it hadn't been for a family argument, he might have spent his years in a London market place selling fruit and vegetables. When he was eighteen years old, his father, with an eye, no doubt, to



being kept in comfort in his old age, bought a donkey and barrow, and packed Jim and his older brother off into the Old Kent Road to make the family fortune.

But Jimmie's part in the business was to be short-lived, for one dark day the donkey bolted leaving carrots, parsnips, apples and gooseberries scattered all over the road, only to be as quickly gathered up and taken home by the local inhabitants. When told, the father's sense of humour deserted him. True to type, he reached for his belt, and although the elder brother got away, Jim, being lame, didn't and he endured such a beating that he vowed it would be the last. Taking a sorry farewell of his mother, he left home, determined to make his own way in life.

With his clothes tied up in a

towel, and eighteen shillings and sixpence in his pocket, he went into a musical instrument shop kept by an Italian in the area. His intention was to buy a whistle pipe, with which he could become a street entertainer. Perhaps his confidence sprang from a boyhood memory of the day he had sung a solo at a children's festival in the Albert Hall, in the presence of Queen Victoria. But the old Italian, after trying to persuade him to return home, offered the boy an instrument which, he felt, was more suitable.

Taking him to the back of the shop, he showed him a little barrel-organ on a truck, which played hymn tunes when the handle was turned. Although the price was five pounds, the Italian agreed to take five shillings as down payment, and whatever Jimmie could afford to pay weekly, the only proviso

being that he should not leave London until it was paid for.

So, packing his things in a little cupboard in the truck, Jim set out to make his way in the world. Before he left, he made a call on his much-loved Aunt Emma, who made him promise that whenever possible he would use his music to spread the word of God, and that he would never play his organ in the streets on a Sunday for money. Now, Jim was a deeply religious boy, who had regularly attended a London Mission, and he vowed that, as well as becoming completely self-reliant, he would dedicate himself to doing good wherever he could.

Eventually he left London and made his way into Sussex, where life was hard for him, for villages and towns were often far apart, and sometimes he slept in a cottage and sometimes under a haystack. At length he reached Hastings, full of hope, for here was a thriving seaside town. But on the first Sunday he had no money and no food and, rather than break his promise to Aunt Emma, he approached the back door of a big house and asked for a crust of bread. Noblesse oblige was found sadly wanting, however, and the law, at this time, was not lenient towards beggars. Poor Jim, who had never begged in his life before, was taken before the court and sentenced to fourteen days imprisonment as a rogue and a vagabond. In fact, he was given hospital treatment in the prison, and sent off at the end

of the fortnight with his fare to Eastbourne and a letter of good conduct. But the experience left a deep impression on him, and he did not go near to Hastings again. He often told the story, however, to encourage those who were facing adversity.

All through that summer, he played his way along the south coast, reaching Chichester in the autumn, and wintering there. But in the spring he must have felt the pull of the road for he struck north-west and worked his way across country to Liverpool, where he met an Irish family who persuaded him that Belfast was the place for him to be.

Now, Jim spent the greatest part of his life in Belfast, thirty years with the same landlady, becoming a familiar figure on the streets. Once established, he was able to set aside two shillings in every pound for the church. It was in Belfast that he earned the name of Happy Jimmie.

And then the incredible happened. Some ruffians set about him one day and kicked his barrel organ to pieces, leaving him lying in a ditch. Jim was badly shaken, but determined. He asked his landlady to write a letter to no less a personage than King Edward the Seventh, explaining his loss, and asking him for help. At the bottom of his letter he boldly appended his cross.

And what did the sovereign do about the plight of his little lame and near-blind subject? He came, himself,

to the Guildhall in Belfast where, with all due pomp and circumstance, he presented Jimmie with a brand new organ containing all the hymn tunes his old organ had played. The king had sent a gentleman of the court to announce his decision and to prepare Jim for the presentation. He was very grateful, but took it all in his stride, and obtained permission to have painted on the front of the organ, "Patronised by Royalty . . . and God is Love".

The First World War came, and Jim heard that his father had passed away. He felt no great sense of loss about the man who had been the cause of his leaving home. But all through the years Jimmie had kept in touch with his family, and came the day when a letter arrived telling of his mother's serious illness, and of how she was asking to see her youngest son. He had no second thoughts. He booked a passage, said goodbye to his many friends and to 'dear old Belfast', and sailed for England. The reunion with his mother was tearful, as well it might be, after an absence of thirty years, but his return gave her a new lease of life, and it wasn't long before he took to the road again.

Staying sometimes overnight in a farmhouse, and sometimes sleeping in a barn, he played his way through Guildford and Haslemere, and on until he reached Petersfield, where he met again, quite unexpectedly in a teashop, the man who had been the go-between for King Edward and himself in Dublin.

He was given royal treatment, in the form of a sumptuous meal, a five-pound note in an envelope, and the gentleman's card which would give him access to help whenever he needed it. Plainly, Happy Jimmie brought out protective instincts in people.

It took him two days to travel from Petersfield to Portsmouth. He was made welcome in cottages in the evenings, and through the day he stopped to play and sing on the roadside, and crowds of villagers gathered to listen to him. No doubt an organ grinder was something of a rarity on the, then, quiet country roads.

Somewhere along the way to Portsmouth, possibly at Waterlooville, 'Something happened' to make him turn off the main road, for he next looked for lodgings in Bedhampton and Havant. He was directed, 'just up the road on the left', to the Union, (and we can still find Union Road, off West Street, Havant,) or, 'to a nice comfortable place next to the church', a lodging house called The Old House at Home, which, one assumes, is the very old inn still standing in South Street by Havant Church. Here he stayed for a month or more, working round Emsworth and Westbourne and Prinsted, making his music and an honest living. We can imagine him playing and singing his hymn tunes outside the old cottages which still grace the shoreline village of Prinsted.

He must have been a hardy little traveller, despite his disabilities, for he made his way over to Hayling Island, which was fairly remote, and not then served by the kind of main road it now has.

Again he felt the urge to move on. In any case, he was determined to get to Portsmouth, but somebody advised him to

try Fareham and Gosport first. And so he retraced his steps and went through Portchester, where a cottager, who first took him to be a burglar, took him in for the night. Fareham didn't seem to make much of an impression on him or, for that matter, him on Fareham. His only recorded encounter there was with a man who asked him how far away he would go for a shilling!

It was when he came to Gosport that he began to make contacts which were to be valuable and lasting. Here, he got lodgings in South Street, and it was here that he started to attend the Bethel Mission, just down the road. He recalled that he was treated like a brother, and he was to return to the services, from time to time, throughout the rest of his life. But, according to Jim, the police were afraid that he might get knocked over and, in their concern, even threatened to lock him up! And so he took the ferryboat to Portsmouth, landing at Point, and made the town his own.

At first he stayed at a lodging house in Oyster Street, which was not the sort of place he cared for although, while there, he met some 'fine fellows', who were compelled to sleep in the house, or somewhere in the neighbourhood. One, it seems a white-bearded old fellow, had once been the Mayor of a town in the west with a prosperous business, but who was reduced to selling bootlaces in Commercial Road because of family avarice. Another, called Jim Sunshine, living a few doors away in a dismal cottage with only half a roof, was an odd-job man and beachcomber. It seems he was also a part-time life-saver, for he was reputed to have saved forty-eight lives from drowning and fire for which services Happy Jimmie thought he deserved better recognition

from his townsfolk.

Jim moved out of the lodging house as soon as he was able to get a room of his own, which he did in St. Thomas's Street with some friendly people. With a secure base to return home to at night, he moved out into the town where he became a familiar figure. But first he had to get used to the new streets, and one day he unwittingly set up his truck and organ and began to play and sing in front of the County Court. He was given a shilling to move on and, having sent his thanks and apologies, was ever afterwards able to maintain friendly relations with authority!

Gradually he worked his way around the town, district by district, finding some areas more generous than others. Once, however, at Eastney he contributed rather more than he gathered in from passers-by. He was working near Eastney Barracks singing and playing one of his favourites 'Where is my Wandering Boy Tonight?' Perhaps it was a particularly calm day, for the strains of his music reached the barracks cell of a hardened prisoner whose heart, it seems, was touched. He vowed to the officer-in-charge that he would be a reformed character henceforth, and the officer was convinced to such an extent that he personally came out and recounted the story to Jim.

Whether the man really did mend his ways we can never know but, certainly, experiences such as this spurred Jim on to do good whenever the opportunity presented itself. Milton Eastney seems to have been a good area for him. The people of Winter Road always treated him kindly and it was in Essex Road that he met a man who was to become a lifelong friend and who introduced him to the Portsea Brotherhood.

He invited him to attend the Thursday evening meetings of the Inn of Good Fellowship, and here Jim made other lasting friendships. Many of the members were men down on their luck, finding encouragement and comfort for a few hours. His old friend Jim Sunshine was there, and he introduced him to two other Jims — Shove-ha'penny Jim and Jim Daniels. 'Here is number four', he was gleefully announced. And, of course, it was not long before he was asked to accompany a sing-song evening with his organ. Several of the men were blind, or nearly so, and Jim felt himself to be in company who understood each other's problems.

But the world in general was not so kind. The late 1920's saw the big slump in trade, and the ensuing unemployment. Portsmouth Dockyard was not spared, and there was a huge discharge of labour. This, in turn, affected Jim. People who were hard put to feed themselves had little to spare for organ grinders. Where once he might have been given sixpence, he would be lucky to get a penny. His health began to suffer, and he became unhappy because he could no longer send sums of money to his mother, and he found it hard to pay his rent of six shillings weekly.

By now, he was in fairly regular attendance at the Sunday gatherings of the Portsea Brotherhood in Arundel Street, and influential members came to his aid. It was felt that he would be entitled to a blind person's pension because, although he was not completely blind, he was no longer really capable of earning a living. But, although grateful, he would not accept this straight away, as he would have had to put away his organ and, although he took no money from them, there were sick people who relied on the

cheer he brought them with his Gospel songs. Came the day, however, with his health progressively failing him, when he was persuaded to take the pension, and he was able to spend his days in warmth and comfort with old friends, recounting bygone days.

At last came news of the death of his old mother, and Jim went home for her burial. He was broken-hearted, for he had visited her whenever he could manage it, and had never lost touch with her. For a time he carried on, enjoying the benefits of his small pension, and the companionship of his friends. One day, he fell, however, and fractured his spine — a week later he died. The year was 1932. Jim Samson, organ grinder, had passed away, and with him, the last notes of a tuneful tradition.

- Originally published in 'Hampshire' magazine, January 1988, and reproduced here by kind permission of the Editor of that journal.

Kevin's Open Day

Saturday 30th
December 2006

*[a flat day between Christmas
and New Year]*

Times 10.30 – 4.30.
Numbers will be strictly limited
to around 12/15 due to space.

*For address & directions
please contact*
Kevin_mcelhone@hotmail.com
or phone 01536 72 6759

Teme Valley Winders

Saturday 25th
November 2006

To be held at Eastham Grange at 10.30 for 11.00 start, with a buffet lunch provided. It is intended the meeting will have a Christmas theme, so, if possible, bring along Christmas related tunes or novelties to "Show and Tell".

*It is essential that you contact
John Phillips on 01584 78 1118
if you wish to attend*

Spring Meeting

Friday 23rd March to
Sunday 25th March 2007

Our spring meeting will be held in Oxford. Here we will visit the Amersham Fair Organ Museum, which is now home to the Teddy Reed Collection and also Keith Harding, at The World of Mechanical Music Museum.

*Booking form and Information
sheets are loose inserts in this
Journal*

Brentford Musical Museum

An up-date

The Musical Museum has now moved the collection into its new building. The move was undertaken entirely by the volunteers in just three months. Many of the volunteers that completed the move had already retired looking forward to a restful life. No such luck! They must have moved over 50 tons of instruments, equipment, music rolls, archives and shop stock. The move started at the beginning of June and was completed by the end of August.

A limiting factor during the move was the lack of a lift within the building. Due to factors outside everyone's control our building contractor was let down repeatedly by the lift manufacturer. In the end they installed a builder's hoist in the lift shaft which allowed most of the objects etc to be placed on the appropriate floor but the hoist was not capable of moving some of the larger objects which have become marooned on the ground floor. The hoist was removed at the beginning of August on the expectation the lift would be installed. This has meant that anything that had to go to the upper floors had to be carried there up the stairs and there is a lot of them!

The last thing to leave the old church was the many thousands of music rolls and the shelving on which they are normally stored. While all the shelving was walked up the stairs, the boxed music rolls were too heavy and have filled Gallery 2 on the ground floor.

As a result of the lack of lift the Museum is not able to commit to an opening date yet. In the meantime work is progressing assembling the large instruments and checking out many of the others. It has been a great thrill to hear the new building filled with familiar sounds of the instruments. It will take some time for the instruments to settle down and get used to the new environment. Even now when an upright piano is opened up you get a strong smell of the old church.

We have held a number of meetings already in the new building and everyone seems quite impressed by the facilities. The building is full of the latest electrical circuits, plant and equipment, alarm and fire systems as well as the usual PA and digital phone systems. The plant room seems like the inside of a submarine and is fully automatic with sensors all over the place.

As well as instruments, work progresses on new graphics, signage, and information boards.

As soon as the lift saga is resolved we will be able to announce our opening date. I will keep every one informed. We should also by then have revamped our web site.

MJR

See the colour centre-fold for pictures - Ed

Letter to the Editors

*from Mr Don Busby of
Billericay, Essex*

Sir,

Thanks to the efforts of Ted Brown and other officers of the Society a very interesting and rewarding day was spent at the village hall of Leaden Roding, Essex, on Saturday 23rd September.

The aim of the day was to bring together old and new members in the Essex area for a demonstration of a miscellany of mechanical music devices. Fourteen Society members attended and enjoyed a wide variety of musical machines.. Publications of the Society and other useful sources of information and books were made available by Paul Bellamy. Essex members gained a lot from the wide range of demonstrations: the 'locals' brought some of their own musical devices for display and for suggestions to solve any problems they were encountering.

As a novice in the subject I gained invaluable help and advice in my efforts to manufacture and tune combs for a musical box which I am trying to develop.

I wish to record my personal thanks for a very enjoyable day. It was obvious, from the amount of equipment brought in by the presenters, that much effort had been put in to make the day successful.

Thank you all.
Don Busby

Revelstoke Revealed

from Paul Bellamy

Those eight Brits who visited the MBSI Bellevue annual meeting had a wonderful time, meeting old friends and making new ones. We collectively thank Annie Tyvand and her hard working team for such a superb welcome to the state of Washington, the excursions to the various private collections, visits to the unique Museum of Doll Art, the Kitsap County Historical Society Museum, the rail trip with dinner around the lake, and so much more.

Some of us used the venue as the focus of other arrangements. Some toured Canada both before and after the venue, others stayed a few days extra. For me, it was an opportunity to see Canada for the first time. Thus membership of MBSI has so much to offer for those who wish to travel and have the opportunity of meeting people across the pond with their legendary hospitality. In fact, many MBSGB and MBSI members take advantage of this 'dual nationality' and we are both the better for it. Our Journals are complementary, as are our collections.

My first thoughts were to hire a car and see Vancouver, Vancouver Island and take a trip on the Rocky Mountain Railway. Fortunately, timing caused me to abandon all this, particularly the railway because, starting on a Thursday, it was too late for a comfortable return to Old Blighty and thence to the Aberdeen meeting. As it was, there were only a few hours

between landing in the UK and setting off once more to bonny Scotland in the early hours of the following morning.

Fortunately? Well, this was because of my planned day trip to Revelstoke, the home of our editors, David and Lesley Evans, which turned out to be nearly five days.

The reason is obvious to anyone who goes there. Highly recommended! It lies some hundred miles along the Trans Canada Highway, parallel to the Canadian Pacific Railroad. From Vancouver, the highway follows the railroad through the most magnificent Rocky Mountain scenery imaginable (*the Selkirks, actually - Ed*). A continuous panorama of mountains, high desert plateaus, deep green valleys, lakes and rivers. The road criss-crosses the railway many times and sometimes the rail track divides and skirts either side of lakes and rivers.

The stopping places are not so spectacular, such as the sprawling town of Kamloops, the smaller places such as Hope and Merrit that, perhaps much loved by their inhabitants, had little hope or merit for me. However Revelstoke was a revelation.

It sits in the broadest of green valleys nursing the Illecillewaet River, which gently spreads itself out to form broad water meadows absolutely full of life, beauty and tranquillity, surrounded completely by verdant and sometimes snow

capped mountains, before joining the Columbia River that also borders the town.

Not exceeding the speed limit too much, my journey started just after five o'clock in the morning from Bellevue, in the dark, with about 1000 kilometres ahead to my destination. By eight o'clock, a quick passage through Canadian customs and immigration (that can take two hours to negotiate at peak times) then to seek out The Highway via numerous and not-so-clearly marked byways surrounding the outer reaches of Vancouver. A few stops en route for sustenance and freshening up. The Buick's air conditioning was a welcome adjunct to the warmth of the day.

By seven o'clock I had arrived at the Evans' abode, a large wooden dwelling set amongst the forested lower slopes skirting the river, just a mile or so from the town. Within a few minutes, we all dashed to the windows to see an extraordinary sight. A black bear ambled nonchalantly across the drive, skirted the side of the house, chomped some vegetation and looked for its mate. She was climbing a tree to see what goodies could be found aloft. Then, after hubby had crossed by the house into the woods (with never a glance towards those inferior human beings, dashing from window to window), mum and her baby trotted after. A sight to remember for a lifetime. This is bear

country but, by all accounts, cause no harm if treated with respect. One must never turn and run but stand calmly and talk whilst avoiding eye contact. (*That works with the Editors, too - Ed*) So perhaps this was why the Evans' chose Revelstoke for a museum of mechanical music and musical entertainment.

It was some fifteen years ago when they first visited the place, subsequently several times in all seasons. The winters have snow, sometimes ten feet high on the roofs of houses and two feet is common. It is huntin', shootin' and fishin' country. The railway skirts the main road that tees off The Highway. Mile-long trains amble slowly along the tracks, one-hundred-and-ten wagons or more, the crossings clang out their coming and the giant locomotives blast their harsh two-tone arrival, hardly Voice Celeste, sometimes within a quarter of an hour of each other at peak periods and the traffic waits patiently. There are no fences to the tracks. The town is laid out like a square-pattern cylinder lying alongside the dentil sleepers of the iron rails, like an elongated comb. Each square plot has a neat timber house in open plan. The avenues are broad. 1st street parallels 2nd street, and so on with Connaught Avenue, McArthur Avenue, Pearson street etc crossing at right angles. A pattern that started in Milford Haven, Wales, of course, with the Pilgrim Fathers and then extended to the new territories of Canada and America.

The Nickelodeon, 100 feet deep, 40 feet wide and with three storeys, including the basement, dominates the small shopping area. It is an historic building. Yes, 1911 is historic in these parts! Originally with a wooden sidewalk alongside

an unmade road, typical of frontier territory, it had a remarkable interior, now restored to its full glory by the Evans' and son Michael. Previously a mini-market with low suspended ceiling, Michael shone a light up into the cavity above, only to reveal the golden lustre of unique ceiling tiles. These are formed from pressed sheet steel, tin coated, giving the impression of gilded plasterwork. That ceiling, sixteen feet high, has now been fully restored. They even found a company to make a press and to copy the form of these unique tiles so that the damaged and missing ones could be replaced. This is one of the largest preserved ceilings of its type in British Columbia.

Son Michael, with little assistance, gutted the building, saving everything that could be salvaged. Even the transport packing cases were recycled into stands for the instruments. There were 14 rooms on the main floor to dismantle, walls to be patched up, air and humidity conditioning to install, the central supermarket corridor to remove with its shops on either side and of course, the suspended ceiling.

The Magical Musical Tour of the museum's contents takes well over an hour to demonstrate. The instruments range from great rarity to modern 1970's juke boxes. If only one person enters, the tour will start. Others may join and the tour will continue until all have seen the entire display. Thus one may start in the last century and finish in the 18th century, or the other way round and maybe somewhere in between, a circular tour in time. The rare Debain mechanical piano, operated by a string of pinned wooden planchettes that have

to be fed and re-fed by hand to repeat duplicate passages of the complete air, is a remarkable sight of ancient innovation and modern dexterity as Lesley swiftly puts the planchettes in the correct order, some of them repeated, in order to reproduce the tune as each one marches across the top surface of the piano. Circa 1850, this unique piece was once owned by Princess Eugenie, wife of Napoleon III before passing to (now the late) Harold Smith at Saddington. The giant Aeolian pipe organ, yet to be fully fitted out (they have only been open seven weeks at the time of my visit) fills the hall with music. Built in 1912 for the Marquis of Camden of Bayham Abbey in Lamberhurst, Kent, it plays 58, 116 or 179-note Duo-Art rolls on 10 ranks and 700 pipes via a two-manual keyboard and pedals. Then there are so many other instruments, from the Italian Piano Melodico, the rare 1946 AMI Model 'A' Jukebox, the first to play both sides of the 78 rpm discs; 18th century domestic barrel organs, musical clocks, and one of the largest Paillard Dinner Musical Boxes made, to name just a few.

The entertainment does not stop here. David and Lesley have an incredible collection of phonographs, magic lanterns and other interesting artefacts. Very much part of the local community, they participate in community events, including the recent Railway Days. This is a festival that involves the Revelstoke Railway Museum, which houses an excellent collection of Canadian Pacific Railway memorabilia centred on a fine cow-catching steam locomotive, No. 5468. The local Chamber of Commerce is very active, supportive, co-operative and receptive of their new venture. Just days before I arrived the Evans' also hosted a meeting of the

American Magic Lantern Society, who turned out in force to support the Railway Days Magic Lantern Show, featuring Professor Mervyn Heard from England.

The Nickelodeon is not just a museum but a centre of musical entertainment and education. The Local Authority did not even have a classification for this type of venue. To give an example of the range of topics on offer, talks and demonstrations are given on The History of Mechanical Music, Magic Lantern Shows, Silent and Early Movies (and yes, with piano accompaniment!) and Railway Days (the shows being adapted to suite this Revelstoke Festival). Community contacts are also to the fore with demonstrations provided for schools and disadvantaged groups.

So how did they do all this in such a short time?

Revelstoke began to grow on them as a place to settle and to counter the invasive pressures of modern life, particularly in the South of England. Having made a decision to try and uproot, it took three long years of prevarication by the Canadian authorities with reams of paperwork and red tape. Enough to put off anyone but not our intrepid Editors. They found and bought the building which became the museum even though the move was uncertain. They even became our editors and produced all the Journals, sometimes on a laptop en route between trips to and from the UK. Then, suddenly, permission was granted. The move involved four forty-five foot long containers of valuable and rare instruments. Four men worked for four weeks to pack the items. Shipped from Tilbury to Montreal,

then across the Great Plains by rail to Vancouver, where the second shipment of two containers soon joined the other two, and then back by truck to Revelstoke, just before the onset of winter. Eventually all four containers had to be carefully unloaded and stored in the as yet unprepared building. It was one of the biggest domestic removals ever undertaken from the UK. Still they produced our Journal.

That move started two years ago. Before leaving, Peter Webb hosted a big party with such as Bernie Brown and Paul Morris on the Rutt theatre organ, and many others giving them the send-off they deserved. In the meantime, they found rented accommodation before finding their present lovely big house with the black bears as temporary neighbours. (Hot weather had forced them to the lower slopes to forage for food). Having gutted and restored the hall, once used as a pool hall, the upper floors (once reputed to have been used as a bordello and later as apartments) and the lower floors (still with dental drills from the last occupant but originally used as a bowling alley) also had to be cleared. Even the boiler room is a working antique and will probably be preserved. Without the help of Michael this gigantic project would not have come to fruition.

Thus I abandoned all thoughts of a one day visit, just wondering with admiration how this couple could achieve such a remarkable move without having a nervous breakdown and still keep our Journal going. It is a salutary lesson in loyalty. They deserve our unreserved gratitude. They also deserve our help to ensure the Journal

has articles of breadth and quality that MBSGB deserve. Now it is up to all of us to support them. If you happen to pass that way, there will always be a welcome and you will not regret a visit to the Nickelodeon. *(Now that the collection no longer fills 90% of our living space, there is indeed room for friends! - Ed)*

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.

2954 Russell P. Smalley, Notts
2955 Paul Merrick, Derbyshire
2956 Terry Tetlow, Herts
2957 Annie Tyvand, U.S.A.
2958 E.M. Helides, U.S.A.
2959 Neil Easter, Derbyshire

I wonder when we will reach the 3,000 mark, 2,000 was reached in 1985. Do remember we have new membership forms in colour now so if you have any contacts or friends who might help us reach the landmark membership number do let me know

KevinMcElhone@hotmail.com
01536 726759

Subscriptions for 2007 due

MBSGB subscriptions fall due on 1st January 2007. There will be a flyer with all the information you need to renew your subscription with this issue of 'Music Box'.

The Teme Valley Winders

from John Farmer

Numbers were down a bit at the 15th July meeting, with several regulars on holiday, but the weather was glorious. John Harrold started the presentations by explaining he had recently broken one of his own rules. He doesn't usually buy "late" cylinder boxes because they are poorly arranged, but he had recently found the presented box at a local auction and decided it was worthy. It was a 6 tune Paillard from around 1885, and did indeed play some very well arranged tunes. With well over 100 teeth and only 6 tunes the box had mandolin-like sections in some tunes, and seemed able to produce a "piano-forte" effect too due to the excellent arrangements. John had removed the zither attachment, since he "hates" them and they can damage the teeth.

John Phillips circulated a number of brochures and catalogues collected on the recent trip to Switzerland, and played two examples of Reuge cylinder movements. One was a single tune movement fitted in a non-Reuge box, and the second was a 4 tune movement. Both were pleasantly sounding boxes with well-known tunes. Richard Manning had brought along a 6-tune lever wound Nicole numbered around 41000. He thought it unexceptional, but the audience felt it was a nice box with 6 recognisable tunes.

Doug Pell first showed a modern Sankyo paper strip music box, in which he had

installed his own punched paper loop with "Grandfather's Clock". He then showed a very nice Polyphon lever wound disc box with a "bow front" case. His next item was a Cameraphone, a portable gramophone which, when folded up, looks like a Box Brownie camera. With an oval Bakelite sounder instead of a horn, it gave surprisingly good volume. Doug played several songs including "What can you give a nudist for her Birthday?" – the question was never properly answered... Doug finished with a Phonograph, the Home model, which plays both 2 minute and 4 minute cylinders.

Kath Turner had not brought instruments to show, but was persuaded to bring in two items she had brought for John Harrold to repair. The first was a Phoenix Organette whose keys seemed to be jammed preventing the pallets from closing under the doughnut type disc. John (and several others) had a quick look inside and concluded that the linkages all needed adjustment. (Kath may have inadvertently caused the problem herself when previously removing and replacing the top). Her second item was a small barrel organ she had obtained fairly cheaply at auction. It was described as a "Chappa" (not Chiappa), and had the name inscribed on the barrel, but the conclusion was that it was a home-made item, and was fitted with reeds, not pipes. However, it should work with a little attention to the key frame.

John Phillips returned to the front having been requested to play his 6 tune Bremond. It has a split comb with a zither on the smaller comb, and is a "Harpe Eolienne" box. John demonstrated the effect of the zither, which produces a rather unpleasant "buzz". John then showed several bird boxes, including two recently purchased at a well-known Midlands auction house. The boxes had been dismantled by the auctioneers, presumably to photograph the mechanism, and had been left in that state for the auction. In one case the pull-to-start chain had become wrapped around the endless screw, and some minor components were missing. A case of buyer and seller beware!! Fortunately John was aware of their condition before bidding.

The next meeting of the Teme Valley Winders will be on Saturday 25th November. The meeting will be a slightly different format, starting at 10:30 for 11:00, with a buffet lunch provided. It is intended that the meeting will have a Christmas theme, so, if possible, bring along Christmas related tunes or novelties to "Show & Tell". Other interesting items will still be welcome.

NOTE: - It is ESSENTIAL that you contact John Phillips on 01584 781118 if you wish to attend, so that numbers for the buffet can be counted.

The City of Salzburg

Home of the Stier organ



The somewhat forbidding Festung Hohensalzburg, expanded by the Archbishop Leonhard von Keutschack between 1495 and 1519, dominates the city of Salzburg as much today as five hundred years ago. The organ enclosure can just be seen to the right of the base of the tiny spire left of the main bulk of the skyline building. See article on Page 256.

The Musical Museum

Brentford



The Imhof and Muckle orchestrion is re-assembled and playing again, seen here in Gallery 1 (there are 3 galleries and a 'street scene' when complete). See article on Page 245.

The Musical Museum

Brentford



The Popper awaiting the fitting of the top and bottom panels in Gallery1

The Photoplayer on the stage awaiting connection of the blower etc



Wurlitzer Console on the stage awaiting the organ lift to be fitted into the 'pit'





Revelstoke Revealed

see article on Page 246



Clockwise from top left: a typical Revelstoke town house, Mt Begbie & Illecilliwaet River, 110 trucks trundle through the town, Lesley (Editor) with two young enthusiasts, Mt Begbie from the town, Evening by the Illecilliwaet River, Paul and David (Editor) relaxing, Revelstoke Nickelodeon Museum. Pictures by Paul Bellamy. See article on Page 246.





Revelstoke Nickelodeon Museum:

*Clockwise from bottom right:
Paillard 15-cylinder interchangeable,
Juke Box Alley, Mills Violano,
Philipps Pianella, HMV Corner and
Aeolian pipe organ.
(Most photos by Paul Bellamy).*



Aberdeen Meeting

see article on Page 237



Michael Start explains his work



Fyvie Castle



The group of happy members!



Left: Local organiser Robbie Gordon (2nd from left) with members examining his display.

J Lacape's Barrel and Finger Piano

by David Evans

The firm of J Lacape and Co of Paris appears to have been a minor player in the piano manufacturing field. The first name of the principal is apparently unrecorded, there being no record of the firm at all in the *Pierce Piano Atlas*¹. An Internet search revealed 'an old piano by Lacape, Paris' for sale, with no further information. It was not stated whether or not it was mechanical.

Lacape's Barrel and Finger piano is shown on the front cover. Fig. 1 shows the two barrels, the upper one is the operating one, the lower is in storage. There are seven tunes listed in ink on each barrel, see Fig. 2. There are 62 (barrel) keys, the left hand most one being a damper lift key, which operate the piano jacks via rods which pass through the key bed behind the finger keys.

British Patent number 4346 of 12th September 1882 was awarded to 'William Robert Lake of the firm of Haseltine Lake & Co, Patent Agents, of Southampton Buildings, London, for an Invention of "Improvements in Mechanical Pianofortes and similar musical instruments"', a communication to him from

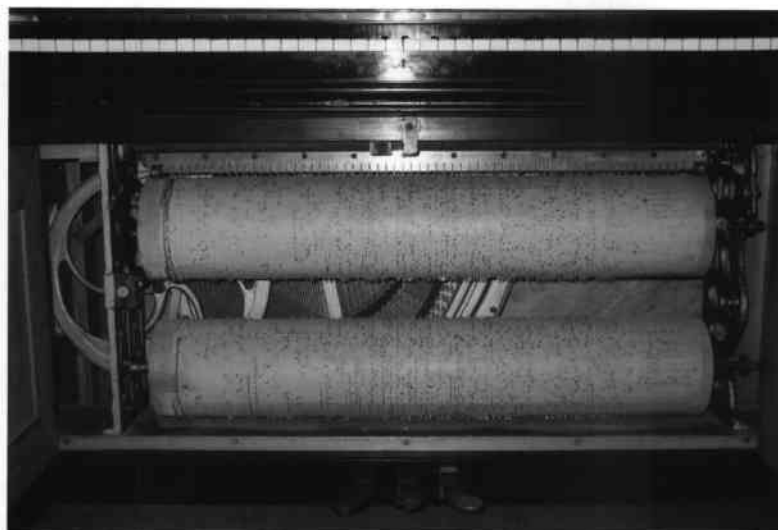


Fig 1. Inside the base.

abroad by J Lacape and Co of Paris, France.'

There are two principal mechanisms which are novel, if not unique to Lacape. The first is the pedal-operated flywheel which rotates the pinned wooden barrel, the second is the screw threaded nut which is attached to the right hand end of the barrel, and which acts as a tune locator. The barrel mechanism and key frame are mounted below the finger key bed, the keys being connected via guide rods and springs to the wippens in the piano action. The instrument is

foot cranked from a brass pedal or lever mounted to the right of the conventional hammer rest rail and damper pedals. The up-and-down movement of this pedal is transmitted to a long wooden pivoted bar or lever, which in turn is attached via a connecting rod to a cast iron flywheel mounted at the back left of the piano. The flywheel is connected through a ratchet wheel and pawl to an endless screw which drives the main barrel wheel. If the flywheel starts in the reverse direction the pawl simply clicks around the ratchet wheel without imparting drive to the barrel and hence

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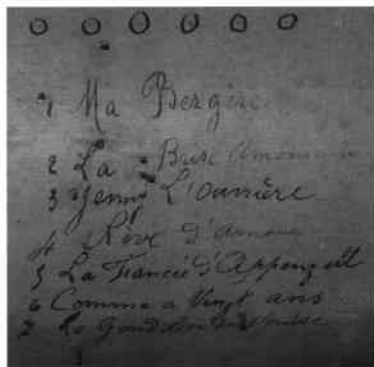


Fig 2. Barrel 1 tunes.

protecting the barrel pins and keys from damage. Experience illustrates the probable reason for the failure of this design to become popular - more often than not, it does start backwards!

The tune change arrangement is unusual. The barrel is located longitudinally by a fairly conventional bevelled brass gate lever which locates in one of a set of grooves in the barrel's end spindle. A (left hand) threaded nut is screwed on to an extension of the end spindle; a small rod which is attached along a radius of the nut locates against a long steel pin fixed to the frame of the mechanism and which arrests the rotation of the nut until it has unscrewed itself along its thread sufficiently for the rod to no longer contact the pin. At that point the nut rotates with the barrel and spindle until further notice. If the key frame is lifted by the draw-knob provided for the purpose, the grooved barrel spindle ceases to be located by the brass gate lever, and the barrel slides to the left under the influence of a longitudinal spring. It would do this until it had reached the end of its range were it not for the aforementioned threaded nut. The barrel spindle (and nut - Fig 3) move far enough to the left for the back of the nut to contact a steel post attached to the frame. At this point further movement is prevented and the barrel remains in that position until the tune change draw knob is pushed back in. This returns the gate lever into one of the grooves in the barrel spindle and lowers the key frame.



Fig 3. Patent Nut (above 'A')

The barrel is now located again and the next tune can be played. The thread pitch and geometry are arranged so that the amount of movement permitted to the barrel by the threaded nut is exactly equal to the distance between two adjacent grooves on the barrel spindle, thus enabling the next tune to be played automatically. The advantage of this mechanism is, of course, that the tune does not change until the tune-change draw knob is operated. Until it is, the instrument continues to play the same tune, permitting, for example, several verses of a song, or several measures of a dance, followed by a rapid change to the next tune when desired. The drawback is that, at the end of the seventh tune, the operator must get down on his knees and manually rotate the threaded nut back to its starting point, or Tune 7 will be played for ever more!

The patent observes that 'It will be obvious that some of the said improvements are applicable to mechanical musical instruments operated in a different manner from that above described.' It is hard to imagine how the treadle lever could be used, but the tune-change system could, perhaps, have been usefully applied to a church barrel organ, where several verses of a hymn could be played. On the whole, the tried and tested systems still seem to be the best.

Part of Lacape's patent specification appears in 'Pianola' (1958) by A W J G Ord-Hume, and the author would like to thank Arthur for supplying the patent number.

Note 1: The edition consulted was the 7th (1977), by Bob Pierce, Author & Publisher, Long Beach, Calif.



Fig 4. Lacape's brass signature inlaid into the fall board.

Salzburg's Stier Four Years On

- the Moral Dilemma of Conservation -

A personal view from Arthur W. J. G. Ord-Hume

Our world is filled with occasionally simple-sounding questions that are nevertheless of such hidden complexity that the best brains in the land may struggle in vain for a solution. If you use a surveyor's water level between two points on the Earth's surface do you create a horizontal line or merely a 'level' line that follows the curve of the Earth? And what is the weight of an object suspended in a total vacuum?

Perhaps less philosophically-challenging but none the less one which will always cause controversy is the question 'When does a restoration go too far?' And when does the result exceed the lamentably ill-defined bounds of conservation? Even museum directors have to rely on committees in order to obtain a consensus of opinion on that one!

This paper, as you will quickly deduce, is both controversial and pragmatic and shall be interpreted by some to be aiming shots not just across the bows of a number of astute players, but targeting their very powder magazines.

Now that a warning has been delivered, an obvious question might well be as to why I should propose to offer comments that shall certainly cause ructions in some high quarters. My answer is unequivocal in that our activities as enthusiastic collectors, practical restorers, important museum institutions and admirers of mechanical music and mechanical musical instruments, may only survive so long as we understand the basic tenets of conservation and restoration.



A detail of the new musical cylinder being prepared at the National Museum, Utrecht.

Fundamentally you can only restore an item to a known point in time and that point may not necessarily be coincident with its original creation. For example, a street barrel organ that was converted to play book-type perforated music in the 1920s can only be restored to the post-conversion condition. You cannot easily make new what is no longer there, nor may a restorer decide to make new out of the old in the way that he would create an original piece from scratch.

It is, perhaps, akin to restoring an aged motor car where fresh bits are made and added until the result looks authentic while a closer examination reveals the glass-fibre bodywork and plastic upholstery.

There was a particularly low point, some few years back, when certain American collectors had rare types of pneumatic instruments converted to play types of music roll that were more readily available. Many

thoughtless acts of that time have deprived serious American collectors of owning instruments in original and rare condition on the slender ground that a wider musical repertoire was available for a different model.

Happily this type of vandalism has now been all-but stamped out by the slow process of education and instrument appreciation. Not that such practice was restricted to the United States and in Great Britain many player pianos were altered in the 1920s under the guise of 'modernisation'. One company made a sizeable business out of selling kits of parts to convert 65-note players to 88-note roll-playing ability. That this was fraudulently achieved by teeing back top and bottom notes to 'play' 88 notes that may not all have ever been there in the first place! That the process was both artificial and deceitful while also damaging to the original instrument was of little concern.

Around the year 2000, moves were made to have the famous Salzburg Stier mechanical organ restored in time to celebrate 500 years of its continual existence. The programme was encouraged by a Canadian, Mr Ron Schmuck who visualised a festival to mark the event. It is to his credit that, remarkably, he succeeded where other recent attempts at initiating restoration had failed.

Mr Schmuck's persistence certainly paid off although there is doubt that, as a professional restorer himself, he would be sanguine at the outcome.

Built in the year 1502, the great hand-turned barrel organ in the mediaeval castle wall of



Viewed from a close-by terrace high up in the castle walls, this shows the shedlike structure for the organ protruding from the side of the mediaeval building.

the Festung Hohensalzburg is arguably one of the most important historical instruments in the world of mechanical instruments. It has survived the rigours of time quite well with a few periodic rebuilds. Mr Schmuck's campaign to have the piece restored inspired the City of Salzburg which, like so many civic authorities all over the globe, was both oblivious to the history of the organ and blasé as to its potential. It will be seen that this attitude unfortunately remains unchanged even today.

In the late 1960s I was invited to Salzburg, Austria's fourth largest city, by a local historian and researcher, now deceased, and asked to conduct a feasibility study on the repair of the instrument which at that time was still playable but in a condition of advancing decay. I was accompanied on this visit by Prof Lässig from Bavaria who had a wide knowledge of this style of organ known in German as *Hornwerk*.

On a bitterly cold winter's day we boarded the then rather aged and rusty funicular rail car that slowly clanked and groaned under the strain as it climbed its seemingly impossible path up the near-vertical cliff-face upon which the castle stands.

After a bracing walk inside the castle walls where once defending warriors would have done whatever they did to marauders attempting to scale the rock-face we ended up at the little doorway to the organ room built half into the castle and half outside where it was protected from the elements by a wooden shed-like structure with a red-tiled steeply-pitch roof. The shutters that were opened to allow the sound to project and then closed to keep the snow and pigeons out were past their best and the organ was dirty, dusty and liberally coated with bird-droppings.

With barely enough room for one person inside, photography was virtually impossible, certainly with the equipment that I had with me on that occasion. Nevertheless a few snapshots were taken showing a modicum of detail.

This detail clearly showed the bellows and the wind reservoir on the floor underneath the large and rather split barrel. The reservoir was weighted with several large and naturally irregularly-shaped rocks so as to provide the correct air pressure for the organ. The original hand wheel was resplendent with the patina of many years of human hands, polished by the gloved one in the

winter and abraded by the sweaty one in the heat of summer.

While the organ suffered from questionable mechanical planning which must have gone back to its earliest times, it was all capable of working. Curiously (and extensively) bent stickers translated movement from the keyframe to the various organ pallet positions in the chest. While later organ-builders would have probably used a roller-board mechanism, here the stickers were merely shaped like a Mansard rafter. This ancient feature is not all that foreign to us today and is occasionally to be found on musical clocks well into the middle of the eighteenth century.

To make a perfect restoration, the conscientious restorer will invariably choose to make new what he finds jarring to his eyes by way of age, wear and damage. By contrast, the conservator will go to great lengths to preserve the original and make his restoration as transparent as he possibly can. New wood carefully let into the old can be almost invisible to the eye.

For Salzburg's great *Stier* organ, a huge sum of money has been expended on its restoration by the City of Salzburg and it has the satisfaction of having an instrument that will now last for many, many years before attention is further required.

And in this we have our dilemma. While rejoicing in the musical restoration, the physical work on the organ has not been that of conservation but one of total restoration. To the purist, the historian and the student, however, the result is a shock to the system for the instrument is now new.

Gone is the mediaeval wind department with its stone weights. Two gleaming new wind trunks pass from the newly-made organ chest down and under the floor of the organ chamber, under and

through the wall, beneath the floor of the narrow corridor outside and into an adjoining chamber where a wholly-new bellows mechanism has been installed.

Gone is the old hand-wheel, replaced by a replica in modern timber which, incongruously, no longer has a handle affixed to its side, but is instead driven by a bright and brand new flat plastic belt that passes around the wheel and down to some concealed drive-pulley through a hole in the floor from whence rotary motion from an electric motor is applied from another room. It is the modification that successfully motorised many an Amsterdam *piement* in the post-War years.

The musical department cannot be faulted and the new barrel, made by the National Museum in Utrecht, now plays the repertoire associated with the 1753 state of the organ. As a point of interest this pre-dates the written-down instructions for the *système de l'échelle* as published by Dom Bedos in his momentous *L'art du facteur d'orgues* published in Paris between 1766 and 1778.

The restoration of the organ has been superbly conducted and the outcome is testimony to those superlative skills of the modern organ-builder which have converted the uncertain old mechanism into a faultless and reliable new order.

My concern is that it is not *restoration* that was required so much as *conservation*. Assurances that the parts of the original organ have been faithfully preserved and are in a separate store do little to alleviate the pain of seeing this travesty of a revamp that has truly made new out of the old.

To the ordinary and uninformed visitor who is allowed the peer through the little glass panels in the door to the organ chamber what he sees is spectacular only by historical analogy. In the same way that Vienna's so-called

Mozart Museum has none of Mozart's artefacts but is furnished 'after the style of Mozart's time', the Salzburg *Stier* is now a 20th century organ. The import of a mediaeval-type of organ (I qualify with the word 'type' because we know it has been repaired and restored on numerous previous occasions) is now removed.

The last major restoration was that of 1753 and the original proposal (Ord-Hume/Lässig 1968) had been to attempt a return to the condition in which the whole organ existed in 1753. This included the original (and admittedly rather tedious) screw setting which shifted the barrel between its melodies. This latter feature is now replaced by a knife-and-bolt system that, while quick and accurate, is not authentic to the period of the Salzburg *Stier*.

It is painful to have to criticise the outcome of such good, honest and honourable intentions, yet the fact remains that in celebrating 500 years of the Salzburg *Stier* we have actually managed to lose it along the way. The instrument we have today is the *successor* to the original, not a *continuation of history*. The baby has been thrown out with the bathwater.

Yet amidst all this, surely the City of Salzburg, having spent so much of its money on the new organ, would at least capitalise on its investment. One would naturally expect to be able to buy picture postcards of the *Stier* as well as compact-disc recordings of its great sound while tourist leaflets describing (in suitably tourist-type short bites) the history and repair of the organ ought to be found all over this famous tourist resort.

It comes as a shock to find that none of this exists. Few people know of the existence of the thing, no picture postcards exist and certainly no recording is on sale. It is as if, after the celebrations of October 26th 2002, everybody just went back to work and forgot

about it! Maybe we shouldn't be too surprised at this consignment to oblivion, for the *Stier* is not the only musical attraction in Salzburg. There's also the famous *glockenspiel* that plays music by Mozart who, of course, lived in Salzburg. This great tower is in the middle of the old town and is thus infinitely more accessible than the *Stier*: you don't need to pay money and take a funicular railway to it, but can sit in a street-side bar drinking your Salzburg beer while admiring it and hoping it might play. You will then find that it plays three times a day – at exactly the same time as the electric motor powering the *Stier* is switched on!

Amazingly, there's nothing in the way of a souvenir of this great mechanism either. No postcards, no CD, no descriptive literature. Even the sympathetic Tourist Information Office on the other side of the square is at a loss to help and that is in spite of the fact that the father of the young lady in charge is actually responsible for periodically repinning the carillon cylinder.

Salzburg clearly demonstrates a rather maverick attitude to its historic musical instruments. True you can buy recordings of the great church organs including the veritable cornucopia that is represented by the no fewer than five organs in the great cathedral, but as for that rather special 500th anniversary I am afraid that it's already been forgotten. Which I personally find very sad.

As an aside, I mentioned Salzburg beer just now. The city's oldest brewery has been making beer for more years than the Salzburg *Stier's* existence. There's always the chance that its original builder imbibed the same brew while creating it as I drank while bemoaning its fate half a millennium later.

For more illustrations please see our colour centrefold - Ed

The playing of every musical box note in the bass and middle range takes at least half a second for damping and lifting, before sudden release at the moment required by the tune. Therefore manual playing is impossible, so if you really delight in these fresh, clear, and in fact limpid and harmonic-free notes you gotta have a musical box That is why they keep getting re-discovered, and why more light keeps getting shed on their main final development - now over a hundred years ago. Among the leading players at the time were the Paillards.

As mentioned before, in Oddments 89, and emphasized in the MBSI's English version of the Piguet book, Paillard made spectacular progress after their first factory really got going in 1875. By 1882 they were making their own blanks and by 1885 their weekly product outputs were: cartels, 150; petites musiques, 450; and manivels, the hand-operated toys, 900. In 1887 they turned out 9000 cartels, rising to 10,000 a year.

Obviously they developed

continually improving production techniques, so they must have produced blanks far more cheaply than the comparatively old-fashioned Geneva makers who faced higher labour costs and knew their market was dwindling. Therefore I am now quite sure that after 1885 all the Ste. Croix makers bought their blanks from Paillard and I think some Geneva makers did the same.

I expect someone will ultimately discover that Paillard was making large complete musical boxes for at least one famous Geneva name, - such as Geo. Baker.

How to Identify a Musical Box.

Ever since the early days of this magazine, the 1960s, there has been this constant query - "Who was the maker of my musical box?" Unfortunately these queries are generally bereft of the necessary clues. So, way back in Summer 1998, in Oddments 77 I offered a "complete list" of 31 items needed to identify the probable maker of a cylinder box.

These queries to name the maker still keep coming in, often still with hopelessly inadequate data. Even experienced inquirers often omit essential details. So I think another attempt to extract all available data is justified. That 31 -item list may have provoked the "not b-likely" feeling often induced by questionnaires, so perhaps the shorter list tabled herewith may help.

It is rather boring, but very important to keep in mind when opening the lid of a musical box, this fact.... that everything you see, including the case

body, was supplied by a blank maker. The only exceptions were the combs, the cylinder pins, and the case lid.

The single- or double-digit figures stamped on many components were done by the blank maker or by the cottage industries which provided the parts, as a normal assembly procedure. They are usually called the "blank numbers".

L'Epée made their own blanks, which can always be recognised by their clock-type click springs, their wider tune tracks and their cylinders pinned with a middle tune on the dots in the tune gap. Rebicek and Olbrich boxes can be recognized at once, with their bass teeth at the governor end. Paillard started making his own blanks soon after 1875.

There is also a fundamental difference between boxes made in the Geneva and Ste. Croix regions. All Ste. Croix boxes have their cylinders pinned with the first tune on the cylinder dots. Most Geneva boxes have their last tune on the dots.



Fig. 1. The cylinder peg is resting on the highest step of the snail cam, which advances one step when its teeth engage with the finger of the tune change lever, -seen at the top.

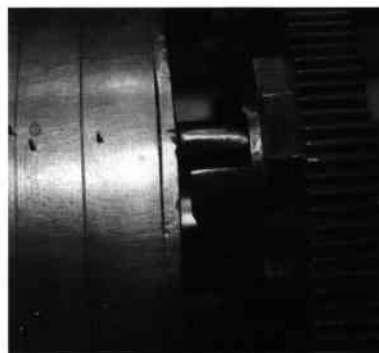


Fig. 2. Here the cam has advanced one step, so the cylinder peg is now on the lowest step of the cam, which is for tune 1, pushed there by the coil spring at the bass end. The step to tune 2 can be seen just beyond the tip of the peg.

List of essential data.

Serial number, and where stamped or scribed.

Cylinder length

Comb types, nos. of teeth and markings on top.

Percussion details

No. of tunes (and whether more than one-per-turn)

Which tune is pinned on the cylinder dots.

Blank numbers, stamped on:-

Bedplate, bass edge, and on parts of the
Cylinder assembly and
Spring assembly and
Governor.

Comb base:- brass, iron, or white metal*
scribed pitch lines*
musical notation*
serial and gamme numbers*

Comb teeth:- data scribed on bass lead*
nos. stamped or scribed on leads*

Maker's markings, scribed or stamped:-
on cylinder bass end
on great wheel
under the case

Foundry marks cast:- under the bedplate*
and under the comb base*

If there is a tune sheet, or its remnants, note the nearest type in the tune sheet book, using the Search Engine if necessary.

Help in finding all this information...

The starred * items involve taking the movement out of its case; and if you have not done this before, it should be read-up or, better, a call made for help from a member of the Society. Here are hopefully helpful hints about the others...

Serial number may be stamped on the bedplate, or the bass end cylinder bearing, or the winding lever; and scribed on bass end of cylinder.

Comb types. Give nos. of teeth

and any descriptions from the tune sheet. List percussion types, drum - bells - castanet, number of comb teeth involved, and whether in separate combs.

Which tune is pinned on the cylinder dots?

The drill for finding which tune is pinned on the cylinder dots is not difficult but it involves

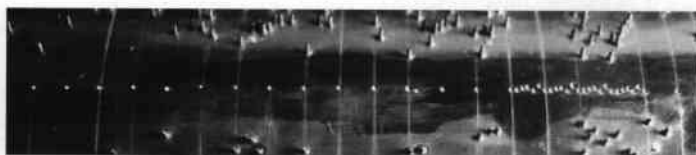


Fig. 3. Dots in the tune gap of a six-air box, in their usual position - on each track line. Being a 6-air box with tune tracks each 0.017" wide, their standard width, the scribed tune tracks at one per comb tooth are $(6 \times .017) = .102$ " wide, usually reckoned as one tenth of an inch. Before starting to "prick" the cylinder to mark the pin positions, many craftsmen (which includes all craftspersons) checked the tracks of the other five tunes with dots also here shown.

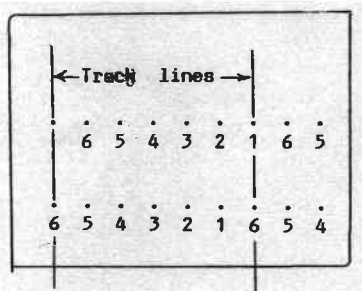


Fig. 4. Tune track positions at the bass end of a six-air box. Top, first tune on dots. Bottom, last ditto.

understanding the snail cam and taking certain precautions. Fig. 1 is a close look at the treble end of a typical 12-air box. It is stopped in the middle of tune 12 and the peg on the cylinder end rests on the highest of the 12 cam steps, so the cylinder has been pushed as far as possible towards the bass end. Six of the 12 snail cam teeth are visible; they are advanced, one each revolution, by the finger on the tune change lever. Fig. 2 is a closer look.

Fig. 3 shows a typical line of cylinder dots on the track lines in the tune gap. The importance of the tune gap is that it is the only area of the cylinder completely free of pins. Therefore the cylinder must never move sideways unless the comb teeth are in the tune gap. A sideways movement with the cylinder in any other position is likely to cause broken tooth tips.

With the cylinder at tune end, the comb tooth tips are in the tune gap and the snail cam is beside the finger of the tune change lever, - often a rather dark corner, so get the box in a good light to adjust the snail. Then with a finger or thumb on the cylinder end cap push and hold the cylinder towards the bass end. That frees the snail cam so it can be turned using a pencil until the lowest step is opposite the peg on the cylinder. Then release the cylinder, which will be on tune one. Start the movement



Fig. 5. The other winged beast of the Brunswick Memorial. Not exactly ingratiating, actually.

and then stop it again after one second, when the cylinder dots should be just above the tooth tips. If the tips are "on the dots," tune one is on the dots. If not, the last tune will be on the dots, - as you can confirm by putting the cylinder peg on the highest step of the snail. If neither first nor last tune is on the dots, either the box is by L'Epée or the snail cam has been altered, - extremely rare and possibly due to the last tune being deleted on account of a "run".

All musical boxes have their first tune on the lowest step of the snail cam, but in case you found it difficult to visualize where the tunes lie, I have added Fig. 4.

Ami Rivenc Trade- Mark.

When the Brunswick Memorial in Geneva was completed "on his very doorstep" in 1879,

Rivenc chose the winged lion as a trade-mark. He could have chosen the other beast, which also had a coronet on its front paws, as illustrated in Fig. 5.

David Langdorff Trade-Mark.

Langdorff adopted the Geneva Arms at top centre of his later tune sheets in about 1876, about serial number 18,500. A typical example is no. 129. I wish I had put a bit more historic data into its caption... the arms were those of Geneva citizens in the 15th Century. At the time of the Reformation the citizens declared themselves an independent republic and they kept their arms. Then in 1815 Geneva became a Swiss Canton so the arms became those of the canton and the town was under cantonal administration. But in 1842 the citizens obtained municipal autonomy and they



Fig. 6. Paillard's casting mark on serial 31747 bedplate. That 39 is probably the pattern number. Photo by George Worswick back in 1996 when he was helping with data for Oddments 72 and 76.

took the same arms as the canton.
A neat completed circle.

The Pioneering Paillards.

When brothers E. and A. Paillard were bankrupted by a serious fire in 1857, their relatives took them over as Caroline Paillard & Cie. By 1874 all the creditors had been fully reimbursed and in 1875 the brothers regained full control of the company, retaining the name C. P. & C. Their new factory, planned in 1872, was rapidly extended and soon included a foundry as they started making their own blanks. Fig. 6. shows their casting mark on the bedplate of serial 31747, made about 1884.

Advertising Bremond.

It must be exceptionally rare, to see a musical box maker advertised on a key-hole escutcheon. But here it is, in Fig. 7. Why bother so much, when you can turn out these excellent musical boxes. This is



Fig. 7. A sumptuous escutcheon, decorated with an eye to publicity, by guess who...

Fig. 8. (Right) Bremond Exhibition medals nonchalantly emphasized by pins with golden lyre heads.

an Organocleide by Bremond with 160-tooth comb divided at the centre for a six-tooth comb working the six bells. Serial number 12,333 made in 1870. A more conventional advertising card of the early 1880s is shown in Figs. 8 and 9.



Fig. 9. Bremond's eye view of the Brunswick monument as built, and before the huge bronze horse with rider was taken down to ground level as a safety precaution. Figs. 7, 8, and 9 thanks to Tim Reed.



News from Other Societies

from John Farmer

Het Pierement – July, 2006 (Reviewed by Peter Whitehead)

News of the formation in 2005 of a new street organ society in Scandinavia, 'Nordi ske Lirekassevenner', emerges in this issue of Het Pierement. The society's interests are roughly similar to those of its Dutch sister society and it is aimed at those in Norway, Sweden and Denmark, the plan being to hold a yearly street organ festival amongst other activities.

The committee is centred in Denmark, where, interestingly, a previous organ society existed from 1909 to 1934. The secretary is Hendrik Jacobsen, Mosekrogen 6, Bløvsrød, 3450 Allerød, Denmark. The website is www.lirekassevenner.dk and if you would like their Englishspeaking e-mail address, this is jorgen@rosland.dk.

Bontems singing birds are briefly discussed by Hendrik Strengers in an article which acknowledges Peter Schuhknecht's excellent book, *Mechanische Singvögel*, published in 1977.

The loose ends of the Limonaire story are tied up in the last of a series on the topic by Andrea Stadler. It seems the last time the name Limonaire Frères was used, was when the remains of the firm had been bought by the General Consortium for the Fairground Industry, who ran it from 1930 to 1935. The word 'Limonaire' lives on in French dictionaries as a generic term for a fair organ, much as, in English, Hoover refers to a vacuum cleaner, Polyphon indicates a disc musical box, etc.

Mechanical Music, Vol 52, No.4, July/August 2006

Walter Moore describes the Mantel Orchestrone as probably the smallest Pneumatic Paper Roll Organette. It uses 2-inch wide paper rolls, has

14 notes and measures 16 inches wide, 11 inches deep and 10 inches high. It was made by the Monroe Organ Reed Company, and was first patented in 1878. Larry Karp also writes about small collectibles, in the form of Organ Grinder Figurine Banks. He describes a representative sample of 12, most of which are fairly inexpensive, and made in a variety of materials – ceramics, wood, plaster, metal, etc. dating from about 1914 to 1960.

Switching to Automata, Nick Hawkins writes about Alexandre Theroude and some of his Automata. Nick came across 2 automata, over a 3-year period, for which a maker could not be identified, but then in 2003 found a barrel organ monkey of similar construction. The figure appeared to be identical to one shown in a Theroude patent from 1862, and had other Theroude attributes – problem solved. Nick also gives some history of Theroude, and describes other automata by him. Don Day maintains the automata theme with his article about Musical Boxes and Automata in Japan. He writes about the "World Karakuri (automata) Contest", the Japanese Musical Box Industry, the New Namura Museum in Tokyo, and the Japanese chapter of the MBSI. The Japanese automaton tradition dates back to at least 1840, when Tanaka Hisashige made the Archer Automaton. The technical section of this issue is rounded off with Joseph E Roesch's "Shop Notes" about Cleaning, Polishing and Lacquering a musical box cylinder.

Mechanical Music, Vol 52, No.5, September/October 2006

Welte Orchestrions, "The Age of Opulence" is the title of Durward R. Center's impressive article on these marvellous machines. Durward has had the privilege of restoring 13 Welte orchestrions over the past 34 years and this has given him a

unique insight into the mechanisms and design aspects of the machines. Using this experience and research and examination by others, he has compiled a wealth of information on a whole range of "Styles" from the early pinned cylinder machines (of which only 6 are known to have survived), through to the Philharmonic organs, of which 14 are extant.

Some orchestration Styles, namely 0, 8,9,10 appear to have no surviving examples, whereas there are 5 style 1, 9 style 3, 8 style 4, 2 style 5, 4 style 6, 1 style 7, and 14 style 2 (with the highest survival rate). There are 6 Piano orchestrions (styles A, C & D). The article is profusely illustrated with pictures of the various styles and includes tables of pipe ranges and other instrumentation as well as other information about the various styles. This is a significant repository of information for anyone interested in Welte orchestrions, extending to 25 pages of the journal.

The Dawn of the Japanese Music Box was originally told to members of the MBSI Japanese Chapter, and is here repeated with an English translation by Toshi Yamada. Mr. Yoshito Yoshida was the original teller, and he started production of music boxes (Oruguru) after WWII, when Japan was trying to boost its industries to earn foreign currency. The first company, Japan Oruguru, was started in 1946 but collapsed in 1947 after many technical difficulties followed by flood damage after a Typhoon.

Tokyo Oruguru was then started soon after and had some success selling musical boxes to GIs, but also collapsed after the start of the Korean War. Mr. Yoshida then started Tokyo Pigeon Co., which proved more successful, developing miniature movements for cigarette lighters, etc. and eventually joined with Sankyo in 1960. Tokyo Pigeon eventually stopped making

movements in 1967, and began making tape recorder mechanisms.

Vox Humana – Spring/Summer 2006

Austin Burgess decided to chase The Belle of New York after hearing the overture to this late Victorian musical stage production. His researches revealed a host of facts about the show, which opened in New York in 1897 but ran for only 56 performances. After a slightly better showing in Boston it was taken up by the 10-year old Shaftesbury Theatre in London and proved an overnight success with 697 performances. It showed in various other theatres from time to time, in England, USA and Europe until around 1952. It was released as a silent movie in 1919, and as a Fred Astaire movie in 1952.

Picking up the movie “theme”, Editor Shane Seagrave tells of his life long obsession with the movie “Operation Amsterdam” in which the music is entirely played by a mechanical organ. He first saw the film as a youngster in the early 1960’s and was so taken by it he continued to watch it every time it was broadcast, eventually making his own video recording. The organ seen in the film was “De Vijf Beelden”, but the sound is from “De Cello”. The film is still available on MGM Home Entertainment DVD 1004527.

Elsewhere in this issue, Shane recounts his visit, with several other members, to Andrew Pilmer’s workshop for an impromptu concert by a just-restored Ruth model 38, probably the biggest Ruth even seen in Britain. Linda and Boz Oram give a detailed account of their visit to the Berlin Drehorgel- Fest 2006.

Reed Organ Society Quarterly, Vol XXV, No.2, 2006

Hybrid Organs seems to be the theme of this issue, starting with Colin Adamson’s 5 manual instrument in Australia. This started out as a 2 manual Estey Grand acquired 14 years ago. This was expanded 12 years ago with 2 manuals from

an organ builder, together with a Yamaha keyboard (keyed from the 2nd manual) and another Estey organ connected to the third manual using rocker arms and twine. The 5th manual was added 4 years ago and is another Yamaha “MIDI’d” to the second manual. (A diagram in the journal explains all this much better). Colin feels the reeds and electronics work very well together. Colin is an accomplished organist playing in churches and doing recitals. [For those with good Internet connections, Col has produced videos of the organ on <http://www.reedsoc.org/downloads/adamson.htm>]

David Leeuwenburgh, in Holland, has taken a different approach to his hybrid, starting with a Vocalion providing the Great organ and then adding six ranks of pipes in a swell box for the Swell organ, and creating a Pedal organ from the Vocalion bass with additional reed stops. The completed organ has 22 stops, 4 pistons and a swell pedal. The project took 5 years. The third example is a hybrid of a different age, having been built around 1850 and later installed in St. Paul’s Anglican Church in Abbotsford, Quebec. This is not a modified organ, like the previous examples, but an early example of mixing reeds and pipes. It has 2 keyboards, the Great playing the 6 ranks of pipes and one of free reeds, and the Swell playing only free reeds. The pedal board can be coupled to both and plays its own 16’ freed reed rank.

Also in this issue, is an account of a recent restoration workshop in Michigan, (these are held every month from April to October), details of a beautiful Estey organ in the Manual Historical Library in Albuquerque, an analysis of period Reed Organ Method books, and a one page sheet music entitled “Pelerinage”.

Organ Grinders News, No. 58, Autumn 2006

The front page of this issue of the BOGA journal confirms details of the annual gathering due to be held on 30th September/1st October,

2006 at Snibston Discovery Park, Leicestershire. Events reviewed inside are the Hunstanton Organ Grind on 15th/16th July, 2006; Downham Market Organ Grind on 2nd June, 2006; History in Harmony tour to the 12th Les Gets Organ Festival in July, 2006; and the Heart Link Steam & Vintage Festival which raised £8,500.

Tony Cragg, the Nottingham Organ Builder has more reminiscences, including work on all sizes of organs, from single rank church organs to the gigantic Birmingham Town Hall organ. Despite the church organ scene being a “pale shadow” of its former state, he claims that there is a trend to return to “tracker” style organs, old tuning system and even hand blowing.

Player Piano Group – Bulletin 179, July 2006

Duo-Art roll number 080, Korngold’s Ent r’ Acte from The Snowman, was a very rare piano roll, but no longer. PPG members Robin Cherry, Julian Dyer and Patrick Handscombe discovered there was such a roll in Gerald Stonehill’s collection and, before the collection and associated instruments went to auction at Christie’s, Gerald allowed them to copy the roll with a roll scanner. This has enabled a new perforation-accurate master to be produced from which copies can be punched. If you are interested, check out www.pianorolls.co.uk .

Christine H. Robinson was recently inspired, on hearing “Estudio de Concierto”, Op.14 No.4, to learn more about the composer, Ernesto Drangosch. He was born in Buenos Aires in 1882, to German parents. His father owned a music store and became so impressed by his son’s talents that he made sure his son received the best tuition in playing and composition. The young Drangosch made his professional playing debut at the age of 9 and went on to be accepted at the Berlin Royal Academy, and then became a soloist with the Berlin Philharmonic. However he was keen to return to Buenos Aires and took up a teaching

post there in 1905 and dedicated his life to composition, teaching, conducting and performing. Christine has discovered only a dozen or so piano rolls of his music.

Accenting devices, which bring out the melody, were fitted to most player pianos sold in the UK, although they were less common in the US. Julian Dyer explains that although accenting was standardised on 88 note piano rolls (the well known "snakebites"), there are at least three quite distinct approaches to the mechanisms within the player pianos. Julian explains the differences with reference to the Standard, Aeolian Thermo-disk, and Hupfeld systems, with the latter being the most sophisticated.

The Musical Museum and Friends Magazine, issue 38, 2006

As to be expected, this issue of the A5 size magazine (rather than the newsletter), contains further information on the move to the new building, and updates on progress. This includes Bob Bean's account of the difficult job of relocating "The White Shed" to the new site. By the time you read this the physical move should be nearing completion, with opening expected early in 2007 (of the museum, that is, not

The White Shed!).

Richard Cole recounts his recent acquisition of a 3 manual 7 rank Wurlitzer from the Ritz, Barnsley. He was visiting a widow to examine a grand Pianola, when she asked him "Can you tell me what to do with this" – the Organ console. It then transpired that the organ was more or less complete, but was stored in every nook and cranny in the bungalow. The 16' Diaphones were in the kitchen, "Toy Counter" drums hanging from the ceiling and the Bass drum in a wardrobe. The last items to be found were 29 swell shutters, crammed into the roof apex above an attic workshop, and the blower and 5hp motor tucked away in the eaves. Richard is now busy building the organ into a custom building at the bottom of his garden.

Accompanying this issue is a DVD of the 1970's short film "One Man Band" which shows the founder, Frank Holland, the collection at the time, and his life at St. George's church. If you knew Frank, this is a great reminder, if you didn't, it will give you a great insight into his life's work. I understand there are plans to put the DVD on general sale once the move is complete and the new premises are open.

Other Non-English journals Musiques Mecaniques Vivantes – 3rd. Quarter, 2006

Highlights:

History of the Gavioli firm, part 2
How to build a small cylinder organ, part 3
Do you know what Sound is?
Royal Music Machines and the Kunkels.
A musical box with a simplified gear train.
A barrel organ in the USA, featuring Napoleon from an 1855 document.

Das Mechanische Musikinstrument (Gesellschaft für Selbstspielende Musikinstrumente), No. 96, August, 2006

Highlights:

The Water Organ at Villa d'Este
Mechanical Music Instruments and components from Leipzig (a list of makers, products and dates).
Workings of the Triola zither.
Ignaz Bruder and the development of the organ industry in Schwarzwald.
Ignaz Bruder in Simonswald.
A small Bird Organ.
Also in this issue – a CD-ROM of issues 1 to 45, and a printed directory of members.

Register News No. 53

I remember writing some time ago a spoof table of measurements that had "squidgens" as the main unit of calibration. Strange to say the old units of measurement used by some manufacturers of musical boxes in Switzerland in the 19th century sound just as ridiculous, yet we see them mentioned occasionally on their tune cards. I refer of course to poudces.

These curious units of measurement pre-date the adoption of the metric system and seem to have been used by some, but not all, of the manufacturers of musical boxes long after they had become an anachronism. The system of units is based on a very early French linear

dimension, the Pied. This method of measuring has, by tradition, been attributed to the Emperor Charlemagne. It could be argued that he was largely responsible for the survival of civilisation at that time and it is perfectly possible that he established and laid down these systems. His rules were amplified and developed in France and other parts of Europe in a somewhat haphazard manner during later centuries.

By the time of The French Revolution, its further use was considered to be unsatisfactory by reason of the confusion it engendered. Finally, it was superseded by the Metric system.

This was introduced in France by a legal enactment dated 2nd November 1801. There were, however, some exceptions made following pleas from industry and commerce whereby the old system could remain in use jointly with the new for a further period to facilitate the changeover. It was not until 4th July 1837 that a decree was issued stating that as from the 1st January 1840 the metric and decimal system should be used to the exclusion of all other measurements.

Those who have lived through the changeover period in Britain from the Imperial to the Metric system will see many similarities and will readily see how such exceptions



Fig. 1. Bremond tune sheet with trade sticker at bottom right.

were thought desirable. Even now in this country, I believe the majority of older people think in terms of feet and inches rather than meters and millimetres but those of school age are completely puzzled by these old terms. As for pounds and ounces, I leave that for you to decide!

Returning to the story once more, if the musical box really developed in France as some historians believe, could it be that some of the early musical box makers emigrated to Switzerland in those far off days taking their skills and the units of measurement they knew with them? Certainly there was a great influx of people into Switzerland at that time to avoid political and social unrest in other parts of Europe. I doubt if Switzerland had a great engineering background and most raw materials would have to be imported, so why would anyone choose to develop an industry there unless stability and security was a deciding factor. Of course the manufacturing of clocks and watches is synonymous with that country, but did the immigrants or the indigenous people start it all off? Further, it has been suggested that members of the Nicole family originally came

from France because of the unrest. They no doubt brought with them all their knowledge and expertise. Could it be that the development of the musical box industry came as a result of immigration into Switzerland? These new settlers had at last found the ideal place for producing musical boxes and were able to work without hindrance. To add to the argument, the case put forward recently that the musical box with the tuned steel comb came not from Switzerland but from France supports this argument.

At this stage I feel that I ought to be setting some kind of examination question beginning, "Discuss and expand on not less than three pages."

I cannot say with certainty what sort of system of measurement was in place in Switzerland pre 1790, but I suspect that Pouces and Lignes would have been very familiar. In many of the Swiss cantons the use of pouces and lignes remained in force long after it was abandoned elsewhere. The remote nature of these areas could have been a deciding factor along with a desire to, "stick with what you know."

Checks on many early musical pieces confirm the units used in manufacture were based on the ligne and not the millimetre.

Tabulated, the old units of measurement were as follows:-

One Toise = 6 Pieds
One Pied = 12 Pouces
One Pouce = 12 lignes
One Ligne = 12 points

Therefore the Toise equalled 6 Pieds or 1.949 metres, the Pouce a twelfth part of the Pied, namely 0.027 meters (27 millimetres) and the Ligne a twelfth part of the Pouce, namely 2.256 millimetres. Thus we get:-

One Ligne = 2.256 mm
(0.895 ins)

One Pouce = 27.072 mm
(1.065 INS) = 12 Lignes

One Pied = 324.864 mm
(12.7899 INS) = 12 Pouces

One Toise = 1.9492 metres
(6 ft 4.7323 ins) = 6 Pieds

A number of manufacturers used these ancient terms on their tune cards, but Paillard and P.V.F were the most prolific. Illustrations of tune cards showing these old terms of measurement are to be found in the Tune Sheet book on pages 17, 38, 26, 40, 48, 50, and 81. No doubt there will be other instances in the book or in one or other of the supplements. The Tune Sheet book is an absolute must for all who have any interest in cylinder boxes as it illustrates many types of tune cards and is a cross reference document for a number of boxes catalogued in the Register.

Looking back in a previous journal of the society, I came across a warning to members not to always trust what you read on a tune card. Someone had come across a BHA 8 air 3 bell box with a very neatly typed up tune card. Unfortunately, they had listed the composer of A Greek Slave as being Monckton when of course the real composer was Sydney Jones. The Greek Slave was written in 1898. Mistakes on tune cards were made long before this of course and all makers and agents are guilty. Many of the writers of tune cards were trying to copy from a language that was not their own, so they had no idea if they had made a mistake or not. Worse still, I know there is one Nicole gamme number listing that is wrong when it came from Nicole's original listing. Unfortunately, I have lost the record



Fig. 2. Bremond number on winding lever.

of which gamme number it was, so if anyone knows please let me know so that I can publish details later on.

If anyone knows the date when the composer Jakobowski (sometimes spelt Jacobowski) died, I would be very pleased if you could write to me, or email at adcunliffe@btinternet.com and let me know. I know he was born in 1838, but Groves has no mention of him at all. I require this information as I am compiling a file about the tunes found on musical boxes and their composers.

The illustrations for this edition of Register News has again been chosen from the 700 photographs now held in the filing system and shows a standard box made by Bremond. It has a style of tune card that Bremond used frequently. What is a little out of the ordinary is that it has a green coloured label carefully stuck on the lower corner of the card. I have seen this label many times and I think it was a type used by the smaller retailers and not the importers. Nearly always these

people stuck their label on carefully so as not to obscure any important part of the tune card. One presumes this trade label was affixed to all the products they sold. This particular example reads, "J. G. Needham. Watch Maker and Jeweller. 36, College Street, Rotherham."

The second photograph illustrates very well how Bremond stamped the serial number on the flat face of the winding lever. Finally I think that tune 1, The Perfect Cure, was referring to Gin.

Arthur Cunliffe.

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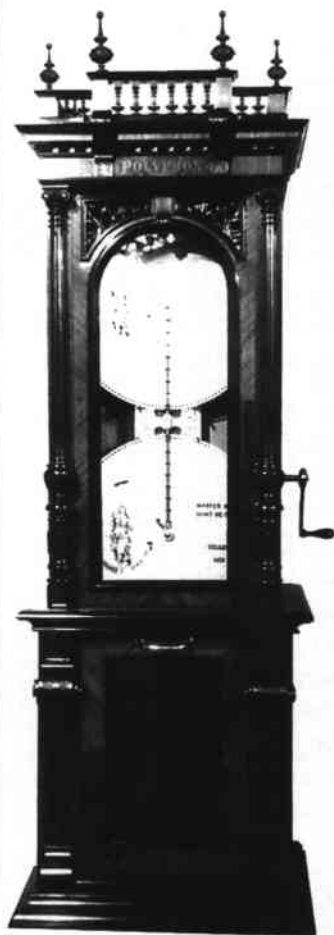
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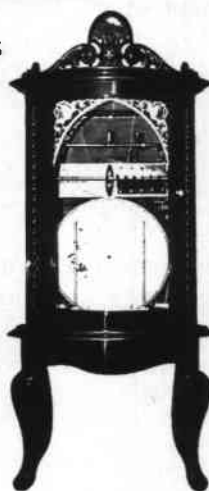
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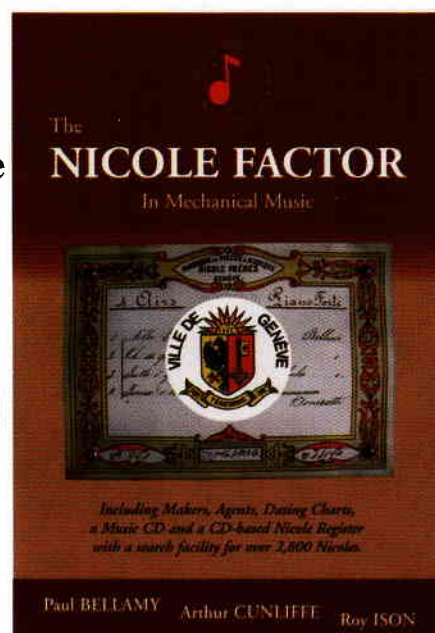
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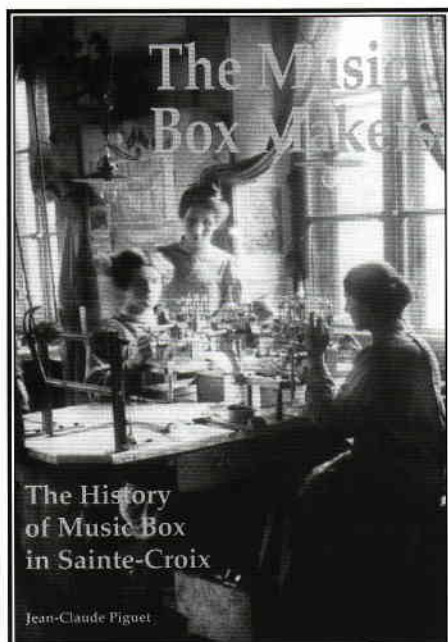


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