

The

Music Box

An International Journal of Mechanical Music



In this issue:

- MBSGB at Brentford
- An Unusual Necessaire
- National Communications Fair
- Church Bell Pianola

The Journal of the Musical Box Society of Great Britain

ISSN 0027 4275 Price £6.00. Available free to members on subscription.

Dreweatts¹⁷⁵⁹



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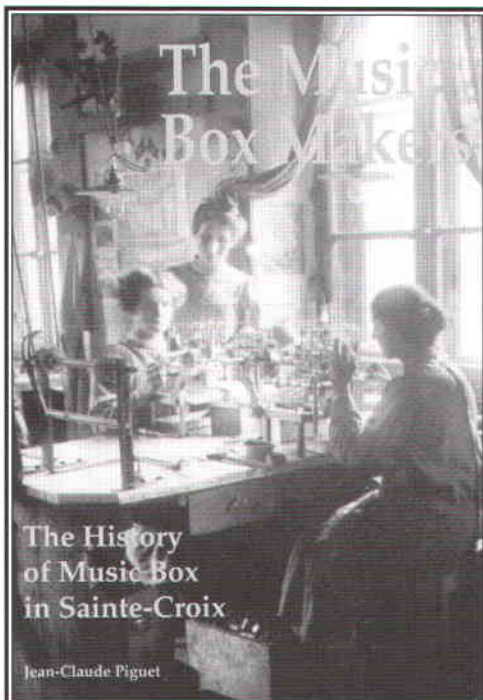
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From the Editors' Desk

When I was a youngster I remember laughing at the idea of a squirrel hiding cachets of nuts and then forgetting where they were "squirreled away" – just lately I find myself more in sympathy with the poor creature! As the days are noticeably drawing in the urgency to get the outside jobs done is increasing – autumn is rapidly approaching. I keep stumbling upon small tasks that I need to complete which, rather like nuts, have been overtaken by events that needed more urgent attention and then have been forgotten... I am sure that some of you at least will sympathise!

We have two articles in this issue where the writers are detailing something "new" to them. Luuk Goldhoorn's contributions are always welcome and interesting. A necessaire for writing accoutrements? Certainly something we have not seen and coupled with an interesting movement makes for an interesting illustrated article. The automatic bell-ringing device was a first for our family. As many of you will know, our son is an avid church bell ringer. He has been a member of the Ancient Society of College Youths for many years – a society founded in London in the 1600s and comprises a group of talented ringers who keep our cathedral rings going as well as their local churches. It was a link with a Vancouver College Youth (in his 60s!) which resulted in us having the opportunity to work on the bell "Pianola". Good fun. I read the Registrar's notes

several times, as they have implications for all of us. We have always brought a "could you make it for the money?" approach to our collecting habits and if the answer was an obvious 'yes' then we looked for evidence of replicas. The obvious immediate one at one time was the 'HMV' horn gramophone from India. Fairly easily spotted. The musical box is surely a deliberate policy to defraud. English clocks, longcase and bracket, and early watches, have long been a target for fraudsters – grind off the original maker's name and substitute Tompion, Harrison, Windmills, Edward East, Fromanteel etc. The rule with these was to look extremely carefully at the workmanship and style, and not to pay extra for a name engraved. It is a pain when people remove the original information to substitute another as it destroys honest information for future researchers along with the integrity of the piece. As the Registrar points out, there are clues in the F Nicole productions to lead to correct identification, but there is no substitute for experience. Look at every box you get the chance to – and listen! This is your best reason (excuse?) to attend Society meetings – for it is here that you have the best opportunity to both see and hear a variety of instruments and contribute, or listen to, informed discussion about them.

Cover Picture

Rogers Ampico grand piano from the Brentford Collection.
See article on page 204.

Contents

Society News	199
From the President	200
Teme Valley Winders	201
MBSGB at Brentford	204
Chanctonbury Ring Meeting	206
Register News	207
Book Reviews	209
National Communications Fair	211
A Church Bell Pianola	212
This, That & T'other	215
21st Century Mechanical Music	217
An Unusual Necessaire	219
Music Box Oddments	224
News From Other Societies	227
Letters to the Editor	229
Classified Ads	233

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.

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

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Dates for your Diary 2008

Overseas Trip 2008 **Speyer - Germany**

Tuesday 21st – Tuesday 28th October

**For more details please phone
Daphne Ladell 01737 84 3644**

**SEATS STILL AVAILABLE!
book soon with daphne**

Chanctonbury Ring

Sunday 21st September - 2008

10.30 coffee for an 11am start

Please bring your own sandwiches

**Please phone Ted Brown -
01403 82 3533**

Autumn Meeting 2008 plus Organ Grind

John and Hilda Phillips

Eastham Grange - Worcestershire

Friday 12th September -

Sunday 14th

Essex Meeting

Saturday 1st November 2008

10 a.m. – 4 p.m.

at the Parish Rooms, Holy Trinity
Church, Rayleigh, Essex

Bring your own lunch – coffee and tea
provided by us. If you have a favourite
musical item or two we shall be pleased
to see and hear them.

**Please phone Bruce Allen -
01702 23 2040**

Teme Valley Winders

Christmas meeting

6th December 2008, 12:00 noon

Buffet lunch and mince pies.

Please contact John Phillips on
01584 781118, so that adequate
catering can be arranged.

President's Message

No. 9

The forthcoming autumn meeting will be the first occasion when the "new look" silent auction will be tried. The success or failure of this venture will largely depend on how many members are prepared to bring in items for sale and also how many are willing to dig deep into their pockets to buy. I really hope that this new venture will work and that the silent auction will become a feature in many of our meetings. Further information on this topic is printed in a separate flyer with this journal. Take time to read all about this subject and you will quickly realise the potential advantages.

The 2008 AGM has taken place and a précis of the meeting will be found elsewhere in the journal. A report on the auction will appear in the next issue. The event was a resounding success and everyone seems to have had a jolly good time. It was particularly pleasing to see seven new members attending the meeting. Some were looking for their first musical box and I believe they succeeded. Others did not on this occasion, but used the occasion to gather information and gain experience. All reported that they had enjoyed the day and had found it entertaining and enjoyable. The village hall at Roade seems to be a popular place to hold the AGM as the members voted that we should use this hall not only for 2009 but also for the year after.

Our regular annual auction at the AGM is our premier event

and must always remain so. By supporting the AGM auction you are helping the Society. Also you can be fairly sure that any items you sell are going to an enthusiast.

There may be times when it is not possible, or convenient, to use either the AGM auction or our other selling events to dispose of your property. Consider then the various auction houses and dealers who are kind enough to support the Society by advertising in the journal. The Society cannot recommend any particular individual or auction house as it is our policy to remain strictly impartial, but at least these people have given us some help. The same applies to all the goods and services that are offered in the journal. In each and every case it is entirely up to the individual to decide what to do and whom to support.

I hope that all of you will take time to read the Register News in every issue of the journal, but on this occasion I would ask you to study the article carefully, take notice and inwardly digest. The Register was originally established many years ago to do two things. One was to provide a bank of knowledge and the second was to assist with security and authenticity matters. Now it is starting to look like a wise move to have taken all those years ago.

By the time you read these words, our new publication "The Postcard Book" will have

come to fruition. It is another step forward in that it looks at the place of the street organ in Victorian times. It also gives a glimpse of the social history of the time. It is a must for all of us. The publications committee have done a magnificent job in producing such a high quality book in full colour and at such a reasonable price. Well done the publications team!

The letters to the editor section of the journal has started to look thin again. I cannot understand this as in many societies the "letters" section is a major part of their publications. Please use it to ask questions or answer queries. No matter how trivial the request, I am sure it will be of interest to someone. To start things off, does anyone know of a source of those white porcelain handles found on manivelle movements? Another one would be what is the best way of bending up those tabs that hold manivelle movements in their cases without breaking them?

Half way through the year it is great to see that our membership numbers are holding up well. This in spite of all the prophets of doom who insist that all is lost and that nothing will ever be the same again. I am sorry, the sun is shining, my Nicole is playing well and I am looking forward to seeing good friends again at the next meeting whatever the cost! So to all of you, hang on in there, it's still a wonderful world!

Arthur Cunliffe.

Teme Valley Winders

28th June 2008 - Eastham Grange

Four new members made up for the absence of a few regulars at this meeting, which was opened by host, John Phillips who welcomed the newcomers – Norma & John Woodward, and Judith and Michael Izzo. (I think we now have 5 Johns in the group). John Phillips then invited all to take a quick tour of his new music room, now rapidly reaching completion. This will be the main venue for the Society's Autumn meeting.

Returning to the house, the meeting proper started with John Woodward who had brought along his 8 Air lever wind cylinder box recently bought at Bonham's in Knowle. The first tune played slightly out of register, but thereafter it seemed to play quite well. Two of the tunes were unknown, no one present was able to name them. The general view was that it was a good box, perhaps needing a overhaul.

Richard Manning departed from the musical theme this time, having brought an unusual clock mechanism. It was made almost completely from wood, but with iron pivots, brass escapement and a few wire springs. Richard, having researched the mechanism, believes it was made in Connecticut, USA, in the early part of the 19th century. The construction was very similar to that of some Black Forest clocks. Different wood had been used for different parts, and there was virtually no evidence of warping or splitting, and the

mechanism still runs smoothly. John Phillips followed up by demonstrating his "Organocleide" 6 tune cylinder box, recently restored by Alan Godier. Alan explained that, although it had previously been re-pinned, the pins had been ground slightly eccentrically. Alan had corrected this, as well as replacing two badly worn ratchet wheels, and the endless screw (the original had been soldered together in the middle). The case veneer had also been repaired and re-polished, and a new base added. John played all 6 tunes, and everyone agreed that the results were exceptional. The box was made by Charles LeCoultre, around 1870.

Next to present was Nicholas Simons, who had brought along several "novelty" items. The first was a recent purchase at the Society auction and was a 1950's musical card, which used a wire comb and a wide rubber band with "lumps" to play the tune. This was followed up by a modern miniature train set in which the track unfolds from the small box, the tiny train being clockwork, and sound effects produced by an electronic device the "station". Next was a "Blow-a-Tune", from the same era, being a set of plastic pan pipes which uses a card disc to produce the tune as the operator blows and turns a handle. This was followed by a Giro Cycle Top, probably from the early 20th century. This consisted of a string-pulled gyroscope fashioned to look like a unicyclist, which runs on a 5ft

long, ½ inch wide steel band which clips together to form a circular track. The gyroscope keeps the rider upright, and a simple friction drive from the bottom of the main shaft produces forward motion – quite ingenious.

John Farmer followed up with two modern novelties recently purchased from Japan. The first was a working plastic model of the traditional automaton archer. The item came in kit form and had taken about 4 hours to assemble and a few more hours to set up. Power comes from a clockwork motor that drives a series of cams which pull nylon strings to operate the various parts of the archer. He picks an arrow from a rack, raises it to his bow, draws and releases the arrow, which is projected at a separate target. The kit was very well designed and manufactured and, although the instructions were in Japanese, still fairly easy to follow. The second item was a modern take on the strip musical box. Instead of using a punched card, like the Sankyo movements, this item uses a paper strip with black stripes to produce music from an electronic "movement". This device manages to produce 36 tones (3 octaves) from just 7 rows of information on the paper, and can produce 8 different sounds including, apart from a music box-like sound, singing dogs, cats and frogs! Again, this box comes in kit form, so the box has to be glued up, and the circuit board assembled, total time about 4-6 hours.

John Moorhouse updated the group on his project to make a singing-bird egg, explaining his gradual development of the technique to produce a rigid silver egg shell which can be accurately engine turned to produce a uniform pattern. He passed around several examples showing this progression, and then explained the additional restraints resulting from the requirement to have the shell enamelled once it is complete. We all look forward to further developments of the egg. Kath Turner then showed her recently purchased (AGM again) Monopol manivelle. She is restoring the lid pattern herself (she has many artistic interests), but has been unable to play the box, so far, due to the lack of a small thumb nut which keeps the disc in place. She is hoping to receive one soon.

Hilda provided us with tea and cakes during the afternoon, and we finished up in the lounge listening to several of John Phillips' large instruments. The next meeting at Eastham Grange will, of course, be the Society's autumn meeting, when, hopefully, many of those attending will bring street organs and organettes to join in with the Organ Grind. Thus there will be no Teme Valley Winders meeting as such, but there will then be a Christmas meeting of the Winders on 6th December, 2008, starting earlier at 12:00 noon, with a buffet lunch and mince pies provided. Those wishing to attend **must** contact John Phillips on **01584 781118**, so that adequate catering can be arranged. Bring along any instruments to demonstrate – a seasonal theme preferred, but not essential.

IMPORTANT NOTICE

Annual Directory of Members The Society intends to publish an Annual Directory which will contain a list of all members showing Membership Number, Name and Home County, plus Telephone Number and email Address where these are known.

However, in order to address any member's wish for privacy, the Telephone Number and e-mail Address can be omitted if a member requires. If you wish to "opt out" of these two pieces of information, please complete and return the form enclosed with this issue. Conversely, if you want to ensure that they are included, please also use the form.

The Committee hopes that most members will NOT opt out so that members in the same locality can get to know each other, and perhaps form more local groups.

The first issue of the new directory will be published with the Spring 2009 journal.

Précis of the AGM

of the Musical Box Society of Great Britain, Held at the Village Hall, Roade on the 7th June 2008

Welcome

The President welcomed eight new members to the meeting

Agenda

Two items were added to the agenda, i.e. reports from the

Advertising Secretary and from the Publications Committee.

Apologies for Absence

Apologies were received from six members

Confirmation of the Minutes of the last AGM

These were accepted by the meeting and there were no matters arising.

PRESIDENT'S REPORT

Arthur Cunliffe thanked everyone for coming to the meeting and said that it had been a very good year. Much had been achieved by the activity of small working groups with project managers. Things completed or well on the way to completion included publication of the Postcard Book and another Tune Sheet supplement and search engine, preparation of a new membership list, re-establishment of overseas visits and the transfer of the whole Journal to digital format on a DVD. He expressed the Society's thanks to all those who had worked hard on these projects.

SECRETARIAL & OFFICERS' REPORTS

Subscriptions Secretary

Richard Kerridge reported that at the beginning of 2007 we had 474 members of whom 47 were joint members. By the end of 2007 we had 469 members of whom 58 were joint members. The current membership consists of 434 paid up members. A further 51 full and 10 associate members have not yet renewed their subscriptions.

Membership Secretary

Kevin McElhone reported that there were 40 new members in 2007 and we had acquired 23 new members so far this year. He urged members to make full use of the Membership leaflets and also

to encourage attendance at the local area group meetings.

Correspondence Secretary

Robert Ducat-Brown had received 95 pieces of correspondence in the year, mostly by Email. In his capacity as Webmaster he reported that our web site is now ten years old and the statistics are impressive - of 485,000 Mechanical Music sites listed by Google ours was No. 5 and has attracted 232,677 visits in the last four years - an average of 1,100 per week.

Bob detailed the history and current state of the project to digitise the Journal undertaken by a working group of 3 - Bob Ducat-Brown, Ian Birchall and Roy Evett. Bob expressed particular thanks to Roy who was project manager and carried a large share of the work involved. The basic Index used had been produced by John Powell and the project was dedicated to him. All members would be receiving a copy of the resulting DVD, a proof copy of which was demonstrated to the meeting and very well received.

Meetings Secretary

Daphne Ladell reported that the trip to Italy and the Coventry meeting had both been very successful and had been well described in the Journal. She asked for as many members as possible to bring instruments for the organ grind at the Autumn meeting, which will be at the home of John Philips. The Spring '09 meeting will be hosted by David & Lesley Worrall and details of the planned trip to Germany in October are in the Journal.

Treasurer's Report

Richard Kerridge presented the accounts and Balance sheet for the year to December 31st 2007. There was a surplus for the year

of £2250.82 despite a reduction in subscription income (due to currency fluctuations and fewer members subscribing) and clear funds on the balance sheet were £33,831.

Editors' Report

Arthur Cunliffe delivered the report received from the editors stressing that more contributions were always needed and that time sensitive contributions should reach the editors in good time!

Archivist's Report

John Farmer detailed various books acquired for the archive and reported that reciprocal journal arrangements had been extended to include another UK society and two German societies. A new membership list is to be published in the spring which will list name, membership number, home country/county, telephone number and email address but members will be able opt out of the last two items if they wish. Closely linked with this project is an intention to publish a list of restorers

Auction Organiser's Report

David Walch expressed the Society's thanks to Christopher Proudfoot for doing the auctions and to all the other members who help and support. 133 lots were offered last year

Advertising Secretary's Report

Ted Brown reported that Journal advertising revenue was £600/£700 per issue. He urged members to recommend the Journal as a worthwhile place to advertise to any firms with appropriate goods or services.

Publications Committee's Report

Paul Bellamy reported that publication of the Postcard Book, based on Ted's collection of cards, had been accomplished and copies were for sale. A revised supplement and search

engine to the Tune Sheet book had also been published, in colour this time. These had all been printed in Sri Lanka.

Election of Officers

The committee were all willing to stand for re-election and their election was proposed, seconded and carried nem con.

Subscriptions

The Treasurer saw no reason to change the annual membership subscription and did not intend to introduce a joining fee.

Webmaster

A new post of Webmaster was necessary and its introduction was proposed, seconded and carried.

AGM Venue

It was agreed that we should book the Roade Village Hall again for next year and for 2010.

AOB

Ted Brown passed on a message from Anthony Bulleid who would like to know of anyone who is knowledgeable on the subject of interchangeable cylinders.

Ted also mentioned that some new committee members would be welcome, especially if having some useful skill. Anyone willing to get involved should not hesitate to volunteer!

Chanctonbury Ring

Saturday 29th November
Christmas Open Day
10.30 coffee for an
11am start

Lunch provided.
Please contact Ted Brown
on 01403 823533 to confirm
your place

MBSGB at BRENTFORD

Society Members' Spring Meeting - 11th, 12th & 13th April 2008

The MBSGB Spring Meeting for 2008 took place in Brentford, Middlesex. Although based at the Holiday Inn situated alongside the Brentford Arm of the Grand Union Canal, interest was primarily centred on The Musical Museum in Brentford, with nearby Kew Bridge Steam Museum and Syon House as supporting attractions. With such an array to stimulate interest, the number attending the meeting, including Saturday's day visitors, was just under 80, the largest number to do so for some time. It was good to note that these included some new members who were attending their first such meeting and also to welcome our Vice President, Coulson Con, who had journeyed from the USA to be with us on this occasion.

The Meeting opened formally on the Friday evening with a private dinner, followed by a presentation by Richard Cole and Owen Cooper of The Musical Museum. Over a set of slides, they talked briefly about the history of the Museum, beginning with its opening in 1963 at the instigation of the late Frank Holland MBE in the then derelict St George's Church. Using his private collection of mechanical music instruments as a nucleus, he added further instruments to make it the basis of today's extensive collection. Initially the Church was meant to be a temporary home, but experience of life teaches us that there is nothing more permanent than 'temporary' and so the Museum stayed there for over 30 years; originally with sufficient accommodation but as the collection grew, increasingly short of space. Towards the end of that time the condition of the fabric of the building, never the best at the outset, was deteriorating to the point where the



The main gallery

condition of the instruments was in serious jeopardy.

Help was at hand however as the church stood on land of the erstwhile North Thames Gas Board. On the advent of North Sea Gas, the works there had been decommissioned and the land eventually sold to developers. Full development of the site required demolition of the old church and so the Museum was able to negotiate provision of a purpose built replacement. However, although the developers provided the shell, the Museum had to design, fund and undertake the fitting out of the interior and this would not have been possible without a substantial grant from The Heritage Lottery Fund and a considerable amount of dedicated work from the Museum volunteers. The MBSGB itself also made a contribution towards this work on behalf of its members, as reported in the Summer 2006 Issue of *The Music Box* [Volume 22, No 6, Page 23]. It is this building, some 200yds down the road, in which the collection is now housed. Richard and Owen talked about the undertaking to move the

collection there some 2 years ago. Accomplished successfully by their own volunteer staff, it was not without its concerns and issues that had to be addressed and overcome at the time. The pavement between the two sites still bears evidence of the great weights that passed over it and, indeed, rested upon it for a while during the move!

The evening ended with a Quiz session based upon a "Play It Again" piano roll produced by Ampico in the 1920's. However, as the hotel lacked a Pianola or similar facility, Richard and Owen had recorded one of the Museum's instruments playing the roll and so the music was re-played to us on tape. Twenty pieces of music to identify and name, all classical, of which the eventual winner managed to identify only around twelve.

On Saturday morning the meeting went to the Musical Museum to see and hear the instruments forming the collection. Our tour host was Richard. As we entered the main viewing gallery, we were immediately impressed

with the galaxy of instruments of different types that were on display. Unfortunately many of the instruments have yet to recover from the trauma of the move from the relatively damp atmosphere of the old church building to the drier atmosphere of their new purpose built home. The change in humidity has wrought havoc with some and they were awaiting a complete overhaul whilst others needed adjustments to compensate for the changes. However, some instruments were in playing condition and we enjoyed listening to a selection from them. The two cylinder musical boxes on display, a 10-air orchestral box by Baker Troll and a 4-air early key-wind by Nicole Freres were played. The Mills Violano-Virtuoso was played and sounded well enough, although in need of some attention still, but the Museum's Hupfeld Phonoliszt-Violina stood mutely alongside. We then heard and appreciated performances on an upright player piano, operated by Richard, and an Ampico Model "B" player piano, one of the very few to have been shipped to England. Finally, before leaving the main display gallery, we were privileged to hear the Museum's Aeolian Pipe Organ. This instrument had once been installed in the Phyllis Court Hotel in Torquay, Devon. Being aware of its existence but not its exact location, museum staff had travelled to Torquay in the hope of finding and recovering it for the Museum, only to find that a hotel of that name did not exist in Torquay. Eventually, however, after due enquiries and a lucky break, the organ was found, still in its original location, although the hotel had been renamed as Corbin House Hotel.

Leaving the main Gallery, we were also able to see the Museum's Street of Shop Windows, each containing displays of contemporary toys and musical instruments, before entering the Museum's educational display gallery. Here we were able

to see several displays showing how the instruments work, including a working model clearly demonstrating the action of a piano. The Museum also had on display a machine for producing Aeolian music rolls and a very interesting photograph of a factory workshop in which a dozen or more such machines could be seen in operation. In this gallery, too, we were able to listen to two disc playing musical boxes, a Regina table-top and an upright Britannia 9". Finally we heard a performance from a Hupfeld Animatic Clavist "S" piano for which the museum had been fortunate enough to obtain its companion Percussion Cabinet which produced the sound of a small jazz band.

Our tour of the Museum ended in the auditorium where we could see their "Mighty Wurlitzer", only partly installed, sitting in splendour on the stage. Lunch was served in the auditorium following which, the stage floor rolled back and the console rose from its basement home with Richard at the keyboard; although only partially installed, the Wurlitzer was able to come to life and give its first "public" performance in the auditorium, for the benefit of our members. We were treated to several pieces played by Richard

after which a member of our party, Don Robinson, was invited to take his seat at the instrument and to entertain us with his own selection of music for the theatre organ. The opportunity to play this instrument, from a console that had come from the Winter Gardens in Blackpool, made his weekend!

We then left for the Kew Bridge Steam Museum. For some of our members steam is an interest followed with as much enthusiasm as is mechanical music. Although not a full steaming week-end, we were able to see the smaller pumping engines in the main steam hall working but their larger cousins in the outer halls remained out of steam. However, the museum had other delights to interest us, The Magic of Meccano Show, organized by Meccano enthusiasts who had come from far and wide to display their skills with Meccano construction sets. Some of the models, all of which were working, were very sizeable and impressive, clearly demonstrating the engineering skills of the builder(s) concerned. It was intriguing to see the stalls selling spare Meccano parts and it took one back to boyhood days and the small Meccano sets that many of us had as children. Here they were again, now changing hands



Richard Cole at the Wurlitzer console

amongst enthusiasts of a much older age.

Leaving Kew, most members repaired to the hotel to prepare for the evening banquet whilst a few filled the gap with an informal wander round the Museum and one intrepid member even enjoyed a quiet “pub crawl” along Brentford High Street between the hotel and the museum to fill in the time. After pre-dinner drinks, a Banquet dinner was served in the auditorium of the Brentford Musical Museum, following which we were able to relax and enjoy our evening entertainment, in word and in music. This took the form of a very amusing Humorous Monologue, given by Richard, and a recital of musical items given by Vaninne Parker accompanied by the Museum’s Steinway Grand fronted by a Welte “Push Up”, operated by Michael Broadway. Together they gave an entertaining programme of period musical items culminating in a performance of Tchaichowsky’s 1812 Overture, for which Richard provided the “Triumphant Bells” and society members the explosions representing the cannon fire required by Tchaichowsky’s score. It was surprising how realistic a sound can be produced in such circumstances by the bursting of dozens of air-filled paper bags.

On Sunday morning members visited the nearby Syon House. Originally built between 1547 and 1550 by the then Lord Protector, one Edward Seymour, the house stands on a site previously occupied by the medieval Syon Abbey that had fallen a victim to the Dissolution of the Monasteries by Henry VIII in 1539. Reverting later to the Crown, the property was eventually gifted in 1604 by James I to Edward Percy, 9th Earl of Northumberland since when it has remained the spectacular London Home of the Earls of Northumberland. The house has been substantially modified several times over the

years, once such being undertaken by the designer Adam who created therein some of his most impressive interiors. These were to be seen and admired by the members as we toured the parts of the house open to the public. At the end of the guided tour lunch was taken in the cafeteria following which members said their farewells and departed for home.

And so ended another Society weekend. Our thanks and appreciation to all at the Musical Museum of Brentford for a very entertaining and interesting weekend and to Michael Broadway and Vaninne Parker for entertaining us so delightfully on the Saturday evening; to Daphne, our meetings organizer, a very big thank you for arranging this week-end. Our very grateful thanks on this occasion must go to our hosts, Richard Cole and Owen Cooper who provided us with a programme that was entertaining and most enjoyable. Finally, to those readers who have not yet visited the Musical Museum at Brentford, it is a must for your list of places of interest to visit.

Chanctonbury Ring Meeting 18th May 2008

By Alan K Clark

Twenty eight members and guests attended Ted and Kay’s latest meeting held at the Old School Bucks Green. Ted mentioned that Anthony Bullied was seeking an assistant to continue the interesting research that he had started on tooth harmonics. The next Chanctonbury Ring meetings were booked for; Open Day, Saturday 19th July, with barrel organ grind in the afternoon, (note, food provided); and Sunday 21st September, please bring packed lunch, but puddings would be provided.

The meeting started with Ted playing one of his latest organ

rolls purchased from a specialist roll auction. The music was Danse Macabre by Saint-Saëns and had clearly taken quite a lot of practice to perfect the stop changing required by this tricky tune. We then had a go at recognising the tunes on a members 1850-ish box, identified only with a stamped GR on the comb. This was followed with a 1916 letter from the Orchestrelle Company stating their terms and conditions, and charges for attending owners houses to regularly tune pianos, and to service Aeolian organs. Ted then gave a useful talk on repairing manivelle musical boxes. This included faults, how to replace missing winding knobs, card pictures, and case repairs.

We were then shown a Draper Organette which had retained its original stencilled wooden packing case, and various letters, tune lists, etc, dating to 1909. Ted then turned our attention to automata, with a demonstration and discussion of his Peter Pan Scotch Oats advertising figure. This post 2nd world war window advertising model was made by Fyfe Engineering powered by an ex military aircraft motor. The morning session concluded with the Ride of the Valkyries played on the Orchestrelle.

Following our excellent lunch provided by Ted and Kay, we continued with a few tunes played on an Ariston organette, one of the discs played the Absent Minded Beggar, by Kipling, and bore a label stating that all the proceeds were being given to Kipling’s fund. Anna then described the problems she had encountered in rebuilding her Bird Organ. This organ, which played 8 tunes on 12 pipes was made by Broderick and Wilkinson between 1798 and 1808. Her hard work was well rewarded as it played very well, and sounded very well in tune.

Our final treat was a very well researched talk by Paul Baker which

Chanctonbury Ring Report
(continues on page 230)

Register News. No: 60

Having recently written about Louis Jaques in Register News, it was surprising to turn up an auction catalogue for July 1975 and find such a box listed. The catalogue showed an illustration of the lid which was profusely inlaid in brass and silver. The geometric design covered most of the bombé shaped lid and looked to be exquisite. On the inside of the lid was a metal plaque inscribed "Fabrique de Louis Jacques & fils a St.Croix." The 6 air box was lever wind, 58 cm wide and was of excellent quality the inlay being equal, if not superior, to any grand format box. Unfortunately, the catalogue compilers did not think it necessary to list a serial number! It sold for £420 which was a respectable price for the time. Should you have this box in your collection, or know where it is, please let me know so that we can add to our knowledge of this maker.

One tune pinned on a very nice late period Ami-Rivenc box caught my eye the other day. It was "In my 'Ansom". This melody was composed by William Slaughter in 1895. It was composed for the musical comedy "Gentleman Joe" first produced at the Prince of Wales Theatre in London. I believe the lead part was taken by Arthur Roberts. William Slaughter was born in 1860 and died in 1908 at the age of 48. Strange to say only 2 boxes in the whole Register play this tune which would indicate that it was not a smash hit of the day!

After many years of looking at musical boxes and writing about them, I thought I had pretty well seen everything, but not so. Looking at a series of pictures of a musical box



Tabatiere by Cuendet

that was on sale in America, I was most surprised to see a picture of the underneath of the box that showed bubbles coming from an obvious split in the baseboard. On enlarging the picture it showed that someone had filled the crack using expanding foam. This substance is often used to fill cavities in building projects and sometimes in decorating, but never have I seen it used to repair a baseboard. I wonder if the foam had expanded inside the box gluing the cylinder to the bedplate or worse still fixing all the comb teeth together. How on earth would one set about cleaning up the mess? Surely this must be a first!

A new and disturbing event has come to my notice recently in that the people who are involved in making fakes and reproductions seem to have discovered musical boxes or rather those made by François Nicole. Obviously the prices realised for these outstanding boxes have attracted the attention of the criminal world

and the prospect of producing a François Nicole for a fraction of the real price has interested them greatly. To a fraudster, the hope of obtaining a box for a thousand or two and then selling it on for upwards of £25,000 represents a very nice profit.

It would appear that the fakers try to obtain a "fat" cylinder box playing overtures and then set about making some modifications. Any name on the bedplate is carefully ground out. Then the pins are dissolved and the cylinder scribed with the "squared" lines. Next a piece of brass with a groove is added to the end of the cylinder to further the deception. Often the "claw" that fits into this groove is missing from original boxes and likewise it is missing from the fakes, but they have been careful enough to drill dummy holes in the bedplate to make it seem as though there was one there originally. After re-pinning the cylinder and making other alterations, they are being offered for sale.

I believe that these boxes will not fool the expert or indeed the knowledgeable collector for the following reasons:-

1. There are not all that many François Nicole boxes about anyway and it is not very likely you will be offered one other than through an auction house or through a known and trusted dealer.

2. The casework of these boxes will not be like the early cases with exposed controls or the early drop flap examples. Early movements often only just fitted into the case. Even slightly larger cases would look wrong. Exotic inlays would also be totally incorrect.

3. The comb would not have the François Nicole name stamped in it and may show signs of having another maker's name ground out.

4. Genuine combs were all made in 4 or 2 pieces and are distinctive. They also have 20 teeth to the inch.

5. Whilst the arrangements and the quality of tone of these

altered boxes may be good, the tonal quality of the comb and the superb arrangements found in genuine François Nicole boxes will not be there.

6. Other points will arouse suspicion like the quality of wheel and governor work.

7. Please note that our new book *The Nicole Factor* also has a Register disc with it which catalogues many Nicole boxes. Use both the book and the disc as a reference to check on known boxes and on the methods these early makers used to produce their wares.

I have little doubt these boxes will be offered to those who have an interest in mechanical music and possibly be aimed towards the inexperienced. They certainly will be offered to the blinkered speculator who sees only a cash register at the end of the road. Please be on the lookout for such boxes and in the words of the old adage, "if it seems to be too good to be true, then it probably is."

Unfortunately, when the fakers and the reproduction specialists

enter any area of antique collecting, authentic articles tend to fall in value quite dramatically. I hope that the people responsible for making these fakes will quickly realise that there are easier ways to make money and stop before too much damage is done to our hobby. In the meantime, use your knowledge, consult all the books on musical boxes, talk to trusted friends, ask questions and above all else keep your hands firmly in your pocket.

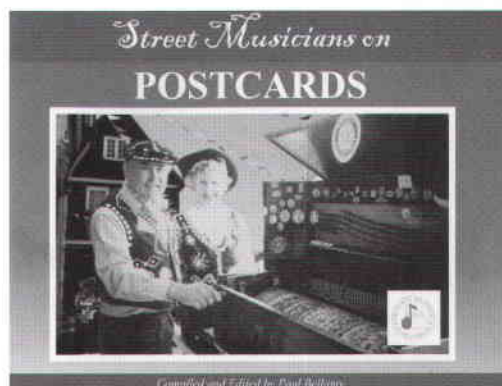
On a happier note, the box selected for this edition of *Register News* was made by Cuendet and it is a good example of the work of that maker. Again it illustrates the point that it is not necessary to think only of the large boxes with all the bells and whistles. This one plays 4 airs very well and is housed a tabatière type case. The whole thing is nicely presented and would not disgrace any collection. The cylinder is 7.15 x 3 cm and the comb has 52 teeth. The tune numbers have been scratched on the comb base.

Arthur Cunliffe.

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Book Reviews

by Arthur W. J. G. Ord-Hume

Begegnungen mit Conlon Nancarrow

Dr Jürgen Hocker.

283 pp. 175mm x 245mm (7ins x 9½ins). Pictorial boards.

Illustrated throughout, with CD record. Schott Musik International, Mainz. 2002. ISBN 3-7957-0476-6.

Text in German. €39,90.

Modern music may be anathema to the traditionalist brought up on the teachings of Ebenezer Prout, enslaved with harmony and counterpoint, and imbued with a pre-Bartokian affinity with consonance plus a devotion to 17th and 18th century European musical form. The carapace of formality, though, ought never to be impermeable to the extent that it excludes both adventure and exploration.

The avant-garde composers throughout history (and, in their times, they included Wagner and Prokofiev, remember) have always been contemporarily pigeon-holed along with clowns and eccentrics as the outcasts – a sort of non-conformist clergy of the real musical world. But as always happens, the progress of Time is rather like a stupendous steam-roller that gradually levels out what once were excrescences until they are ennobled with the acceptance of conformity. And almost imperceptibly the brandy-blossom'd hierarchy of stiff-collared musicologists grudgingly agree that their work can be spoken about without the follow-through of an antiseptic gargle.

Dub them minimalists (like John Cage), explorers (like György Ligeti) or incomprehensibles (like Schönberg, Hindemith and Scriabin) – and we risk revealing weakness in our own character. There is always the tendency to fear something we do not at once understand. At one level we close our minds to the unfamiliar: at the other we squash beetles and spiders because we don't like them yet know not precisely why. In the musical world we end up cosseted in a world of Vivaldi with no admittance of fresh or outside influence.

Conlon Nancarrow (1912-1997) was one of the most unusual of modern composers who has given us a whole new dimension of musical composition. He contrived a wholly-fresh calibre of musical sound and took a step further that venerable argument which avows that old Johann Sebastian Bach's music was mathematically contrived. Nancarrow's music is indeed mathematically originated but on a basis seldom if ever before approached. But the real interest to us – you and me – is that Nancarrow has selected one distinct instrument for his music – the player piano.

Unlike almost every other composer, Nancarrow lived and worked in isolation. Curiously taciturn and self-effacing, he spent his long life steadfastly avoiding publicity and remained largely content to compose in surroundings that inspire comparisons with a hermit.

Nancarrow was born in Texarkana (the Texas home of, among others, Scott Joplin) and enjoyed an average upbringing. For a while he was trumpeter in a jazz-band. Like many others of his time, he had a brief flirtation with Communism. At the time Mexico, under the progressive Cárdenas regime, was a meeting point for all the leftist intellectuals persecuted under McCarthyism in the United States. Nancarrow decided to emigrate to Mexico, settling in Mexico City in 1940. Here, in virtual musical solitude, he designed and built a 'drum orchestrion' controlled by two player pianos: it was a failure.

It was his incredible compositions for the player piano, all hand-punched on a hand-made perforator, which elevated him to a unique plateau in the world of new music. Yet very few people – and hardly anybody in the musical world – knew of him and, because of the nature of his compositions, even fewer people heard other than amateur-quality tape-recordings of his music.

The man who virtually brought Nancarrow 'in from the cold' was Jürgen Hocker, known to us in the MBSGB as the past long-standing president of the German mechanical musical instrument collectors' society – the GSM. Hocker's immediate fascination with Nancarrow's music resulted in Nancarrow grudgingly being coerced into emerging from his self-imposed exile in Mexico to visit Germany, France, Britain and even America.

Hocker's ace, though, was the ownership of a remarkable piano which he and his friends virtually re-made up from a barn-abandoned wreck – a Bösendorfer concert grand fitted with an Ampico A-system reproducing player action. This was prepared for performing Nancarrow's amazingly demanding player piano music. This was a task in itself involving hardening the hammers by soaking them in shellac, and then driving upholstery tacks (with their heads filed flat) into their ends.

The music, though, was so taxing of the mechanical player that that, too, had to be modified so that the instrument could play flourishes of sound at 200 notes per second! Speeding up the vacuum pump did the trick.

This is an extraordinary book, part personal diary, part pure biography and part raconteur. Inevitably we learn almost as much about the tenacity of the author as we do about the rather dysfunctional Nancarrow and his background (which includes three wives, at least two of whom surely matched him for eccentricity) as Hocker (who became a close friend of the composer and his third wife) relates his troubles and frustrations in getting people interested, organising concerts, having special piano rolls made and, not least, transporting a rather fragile piano around Europe for live concerts.

Remarkably some of the most influential and individualistic characters of the last fifty years pop in and out of the tale. If they were not real encounters, genuine influences, one might feel that somebody was name-dropping just for the sake of it. Paths cross with Ligeti, the Arditti String Quartet, Philip Glass and even the tantalising, free-spirited Anais Nin.

Hocker's sedulous promotion of Nancarrow's music has brought this unusual and talented composer into the world of music and through his devotion Nancarrow's unusual music has become not just approachable but popular.

He tells an amusing story illustrating the uphill task of promoting this genre. In 1964 a roll of 'modern' music was punched for a player but the owner didn't have an instrument on which to hear it. He took it to Aeolian's New York showroom, where new player pianos were then on show, and asked a floor-walker if he could play his roll. The employee did not bat an eyelid, even though the music was very 'contemporary.' But when he asked to hear the piece again, the manager, who had apparently overheard the first run, came over and apologized saying he was terribly sorry that the machine was obviously not functioning properly!

Nancarrow's concerts in Germany were not all well-received and this was reflected in some of the reviews. Under the headline *A storm of sound from the switchboard*, a hack for the *Kölner Stadt-Anzeiger* wrote: 'Nancarrow's lifework consists in punching rolls with accelerando processes that cannot be realized by a pianist's hands to be inserted into mechanically driven pianolas. Naturally a computer can do this painstaking work in a fraction of the time.'

Hocker reveals just how wrong this assumption was. Hearing that Bösendorfer had just produced the world's most sophisticated computer-operated reproducing piano, then on offer at 200,000DM (about £80,000 today), he and Nancarrow went along for a demo. On being asked if it could perform up to 200 notes per second, the salesman confessed that his new piano, which demanded an engineer on hand for regular service, could not cope since well below that figure the computer would 'clip' in overload and cut out for a few seconds! A victory for 19th century pneumatic technology!

The CD accompanying this book contains 17 pieces of music totalling over 63 minutes. It includes a good assortment of very approachable music and one track in particular shows us just what almost 200 notes per second actually sounds like: the whole piano becomes a reverberant wash of harmonics which has an extraordinary beauty.

Dr Jürgen Hocker's book is a splendid tale of the true meaning of perseverance and dedication. Financing and arranging for the rebuilding of Nancarrow's two worn-out player pianos in a pianolistically barren Mexico City proved an extraordinary challenge that was met by taking all the tools and materials in hand-baggage – something which I question would be possible (or allowed) today.

Amidst such tales there is also a dark comment about mechanical piano-collectors which, to me especially, rings true. An American association of piano collectors had made Nancarrow an honorary member and in return Nancarrow visited San Francisco to give the association a concert of his player-piano music. It wasn't a success. He felt that the association members were completely indifferent to music, merely relishing collecting instruments! Although he had offered explanations of his compositions and played several rolls, 'their interest was very limited.'

While this book breaks refreshingly new ground for the musicologist, it is a long-awaited addition to the resource of the player piano and reveals a great deal about the novel developments that Nancarrow and the author undertook to make an old machine, by Bösendorfer's own admission, quite unbeatable!

Spoiled only by an outstandingly poor index and the printer's curious intermixing, for no apparent reason, of large sections of text in sans-serif type amidst normal roman type, this book (the title, by the way, translates as 'Encounters with Conlon Nancarrow') is strongly recommended.

Arthur W. J. G. Ord-Hume

National Vintage Communications Fair 2008

from Kevin McElhone - Membership Secretary

Back in October 2007 I was contacted by Jeffrey Borinsky from the British Vintage Wireless Society which now runs this annual event at the Warwickshire Exhibition Centre near Leamington Spa. I know Jeffrey well through the Player Piano Group.

He explained that each year they have a display, play and tell area about 40 feet by 20 feet which they had used in previous years to display Radios or Televisions etc., but that in 2008 they would like to put on a display of Mechanical Musical instruments. Could I help? Well, to cut a long story short, after a lot of work contacting all the UK societies involved, a good display was put on.

There were between two and three thousand people through the door on the day, which was open from 9am until 4pm. They would have heard, whilst queuing, a large replica Bruder Fairground Organ provided by Sam Price of The Fairground Organ Preservation Society, outside in the main car park. Either side of the main entrance door were two hand-turned street organs played by Ron Leek and John Webb of The British Organ Grinders Association (B.O.G.A.) who kindly gave up one day of their two-day A.G.M. weekend to attend.

In the display area Peter Davis and George Fleming of the Player Piano Group had some display boards, a player piano stack, literature and rolls for sale. The F.O.P.S. stall included a large number of display boards, posters and an English



Interested NVCF visitors examine some musical boxes

Chamber Barrel Pipe Organ played by Russell Wattam and Peter Haywood. There were leaflets from B.O.G.A. and the Mechanical Organ Owners' Society (M.O.O.S.), whose AGM I had attended in March.

The rest of the area was set out with six tables of M.B.S.G.B. items, with membership forms, free sample back issues of the magazine and a vast array of instruments played by Daphne Ladell and Clive Houghton, Kathleen Turner, Nicholas Simons, John Farmer and John Phillips. I had a sales stall myself next to the display area and also talked to many visitors and directed them to the display. I am pleased to report that one couple has already joined following this event.

The photos speak for themselves (see colour centre fold – Ed) with cylinder boxes, automata, a Triola and plenty

of loud organettes - a good idea in a noisy display hall. At least one person e-mailed the next day to let me know they had lost their voice! The display generated a great deal of interest throughout the day, and I am hopeful that a lot of good was done through this event which cost the society nothing at all to put on, so a big 'Thank You' to all those who gave their time and expertise to an enjoyable but exhausting event.

It is hoped that more events can soon be arranged in other parts of the country where the general public can be introduced to mechanical music in this way.

We need more members - please invite your friends along to the three local area groups which meet in Essex, Sussex and Worcestershire, as it might be easier to persuade them to join when they have more of an idea of what we do.

A Church Bell pianola

By The Editors

During a recent visit to Vancouver, British Columbia, we were invited to view an automatic bell-ringing machine in St James's Anglican Church. The church was designed by an English architect who never came to the city to see the results of his work. The bells in the church tower ostensibly were donated anonymously and cast by Taylor's of Loughborough (England) in 1937 as a 42-hundredweight ring of eight. That is to say that the largest bell, the tenor, weighs two tons and two hundredweight, or 4704 lbs., (2138 Kg), the succeeding bells being progressively smaller and lighter. This puts it into the heavy class for church bells. The diameter of the tenor bell is 60 ½". The scale is a diatonic C to C. The usual arrangement for church bells in England is to mount them on headstocks (cross beams) with bearings at each end and a large wheel attached to the headstock around which is arranged a long rope. In operation the bell rests mouth upwards against a wooden stay unless the rope is pulled in the correct manner, in which case the bell rotates nearly 360 degrees until it is again mouth upward. A clapper hung inside the bell strikes the inside of it when it reaches a certain point in its rotation. This technique is known as circle ringing and requires great expertise, especially when the bell weighs more than many cars! Each bell requires its own human operator, a campanologist or bell-ringer, and they are rung in special arithmetically arranged sequences known as Methods.



Fig 1. The console, showing the keyboard.

As is common, the bells bear inscriptions cast into their sides. The smallest seven say 'John Taylor & Co., Founders, Loughborough, England, 1936' The smallest, the Treble, additionally has 'GOD BLESS THE MUSIC OF THESE BELLS AND TREBLY BLESS THE HARKER', an allusion to the 'anonymous' benefactor, one Father Harker, who reputedly was greatly amused by the inscription. The Tenor bears the inscription 'SOUND SOUND THE GLORIOUS GOSPEL TO THE PRAISE OF GOD

AND TO THE HONOUR OF ALL WHOSE WORDS AND DEEDS PROCLAIMED IT IN THESE PARTS 1881 TO 1936'.

The Vancouver bells are mounted in a fixed position with their mouths downward and are rung by means of a heavy hammer or clapper hung centrally inside each bell and controlled by a wire rope and pulley system, permitting the bell ringer to sound the bell when required. As in this case, the ropes in such installations are often connected to a set

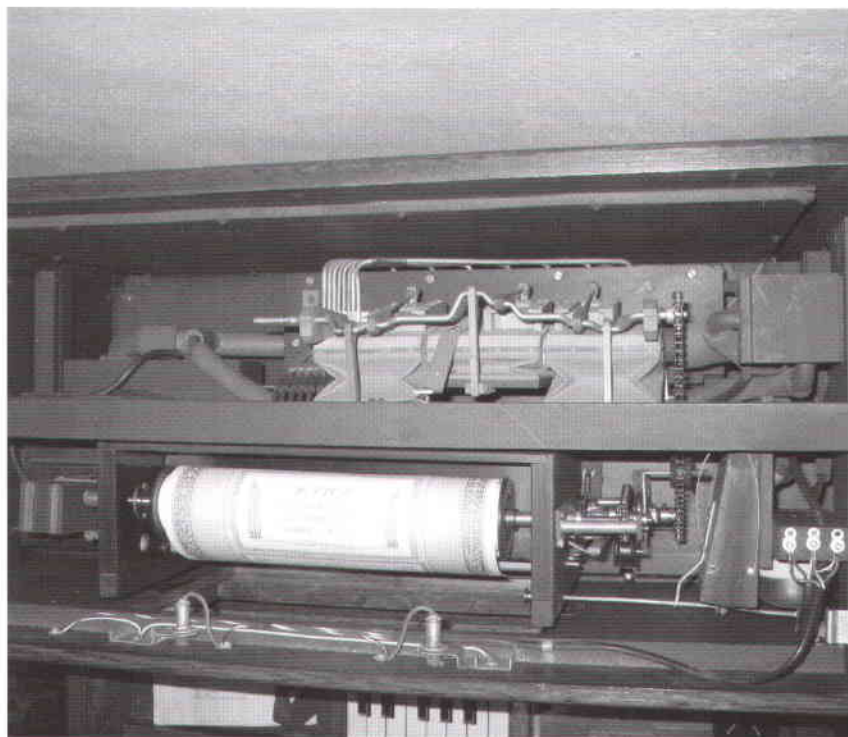


Fig 2. Inside of console unit from above. Note the typical roll motor.

of carillon levers, or Clavier, so that a single operator may control them in such a way that music or other arrangements can be played. (At the time of installation it was felt that it was unlikely that a team of eight experienced circle ringers would be available to ring in the British manner, despite the fact that Vancouver Cathedral, only a few miles away, had had a team of ringers for the past twenty five years.)

At St James's there is in addition a 'player' mechanism, resembling a player piano, which can also play music or other sequences on the bells, which was the reason for our visit. The installation was made by the Automatic Piano Player Action Company, successors to the Aeolian Company. The console, in a spacious corridor on the main floor of the church just behind the High Altar, resembles a small player piano with just a thirteen note keyboard (the accidentals do not work – it is simply an octave from C to C', the eight

white notes). The tracker bar has 27 holes in total, 17 note holes spaced at $\frac{1}{4}$ " intervals, although only eight are used, plus two pairs of two tracking holes, a Stop hole and apparently a pair of unused ones either side of the note holes, one of which may be for re-roll, but not apparently connected. The four-hole tracking pneumatic operates on the tracker bar in the manner of late Aeolian

player instruments. Vacuum is provided by a standard Aeolian Duo-Art box pump with attendant electric motor, controlled by the usual Aeolian brass-covered switch in the roll box area. The roll motor is of the conventional late Aeolian pattern. The conventional primary valves operate switch contacts rather in the manner of Aeolian pipe organ touch boxes. A multi-way cable running the height of the tower connects the console to the bell-ringing unit in the room just beneath the bell chamber.

Eighty-four narrow wooden stairs in a spiral have to be negotiated to reach the ringing chamber. Therein one finds the carillon levers for manual operation of the bells and the secondary action of the automatic system. This consists of a tall wooden framework with detachable panels in the manner of a small wardrobe or closet about five feet tall. Emerging from the top are the eight steel rods that are connected to the bell hammers via the steel wire ropes and pulleys mentioned earlier. Each rod is loose-coupled via a length adjuster to a large wood pneumatic some fourteen

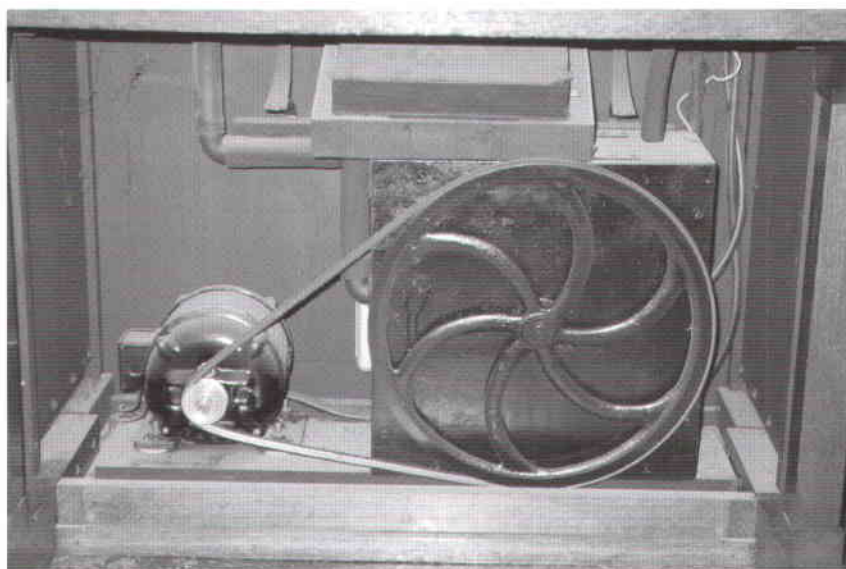


Fig 3. Console box pump with reservoir mounted on top.

inches or so deep and perhaps six inches wide, covered in heavy bellows cloth. The eight valves controlling these are in a separate box below the two rows of main pneumatics. These in turn have electro-pneumatic primary valves consisting of double-coil electromagnets with small leather-covered disc pallets mounted on their armatures. Signals for these are conducted up the multi-way cable from the console. Vacuum supply for this unit is provided by a second Aeolian box pump and motor and an impressive reservoir with six externally mounted leaf springs. Also mounted in the action chamber is the 24-volt dc power supply that powers the electrical part of the action. Since church bells are not required to 'repeat', the heavy and somewhat cumbersome build quality is not in any way detrimental to the system's performance.

A plate on the console states 'Automatic Carillon, Built 1935, re-built 1986 by H Slot, Richmond BC'. Harold Slot was a Canadian player piano restorer, now in his eighties, we were told. His name and address also appear on the leader of the one paper roll, which is of conventional 88-note dimensions and format. Whether he cut the roll or merely appended his leader paper to the front of an original roll is uncertain. The music on the roll is in two parts, one of which is entitled 'Westminster', though as it is an 8-bell arrangement, it bears no relationship to the British 'Westminster' quarters, more correctly known as 'Cambridge Quarters', having been originally composed for the clock at Cambridge hospital.

To summarise, although this

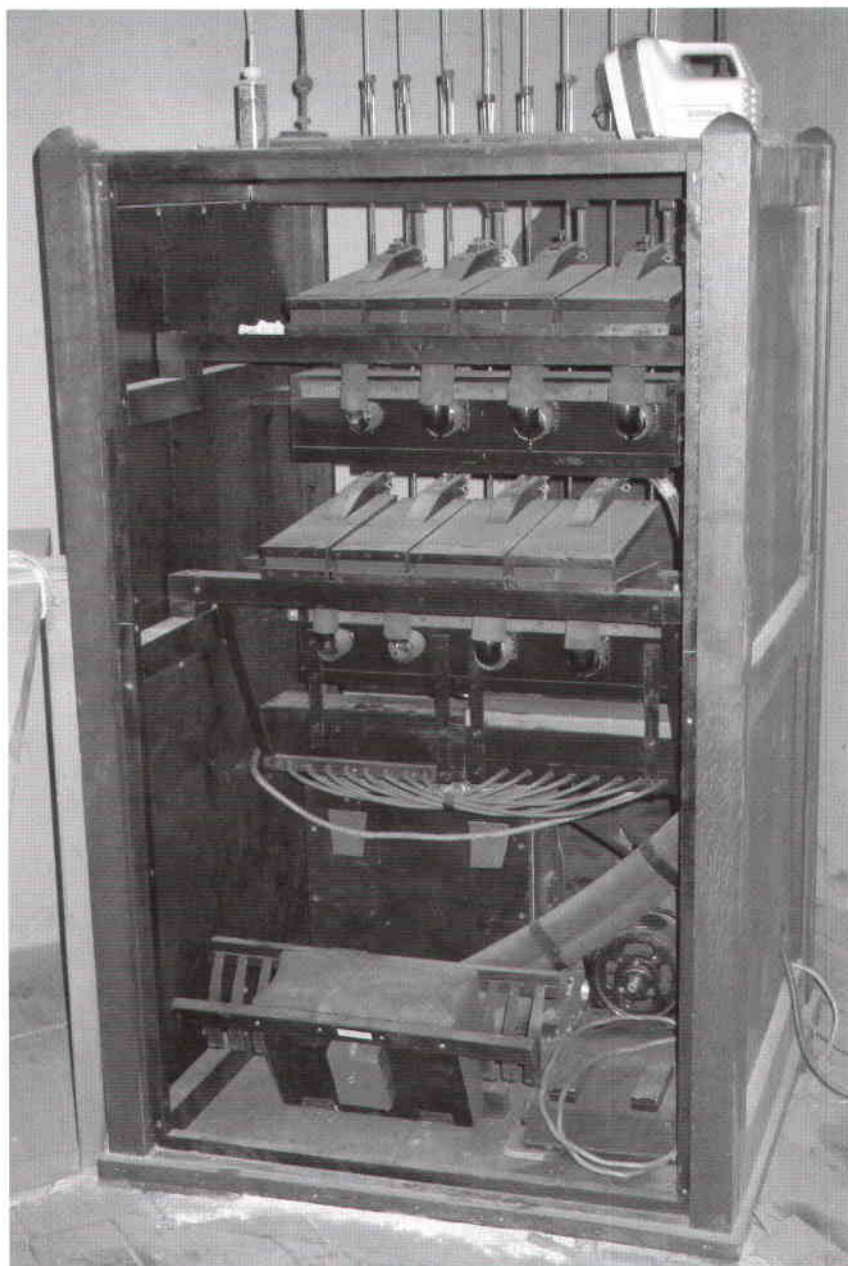


Fig 4. The upper action chamber, showing the eight pneumatics and 8 pull down rods at the top (next to torch) which connect to the bell clappers.

ring of bells cannot be 'rung' in the true sense, (that is, by circle ringing), they can be played by a carillonneur, by a roll mechanism or by playing the eight white notes on the 'piano' keyboard. On our brief visit we were able to effect a repair to the instrument which resulted in all eight bells playing again, which pleased a lot of people, as the following day was Mothering Sunday and also a special celebration of a 100th birthday for one of the congregation.



Fig 5. The carillon 'Clavier'.

This, That and T'Other No: 3

Luck can play a great part in life. Sometimes she comes with a smiling face and at other times with a distinct frown. Being an optimist, I always try to remember the former when everything went well and the days were sunny and bright.

One of these optimistic days happened way back in the year 1976 in the days when the young dressed up in strange clothes and danced about in a demented manner trying to emulate the pop stars of the time. I have never done demented and my dancing skills have always been very suspect, so I would normally be found searching the world for the next musical box. On this particular day luck, (bad) dictated that there would be a hold up on the motorway and it would take a long time to clear. A diversionary tactic was planned. We left the motorway at the next junction and headed towards an antique centre which was housed in a Tudor Hall. They held antique fairs as part of their fund raising activities.

Luck, (good), dictated that a completely new selection of items had been recently put out for sale in a number of rooms and all were new to the market. Among the items on a table in the first room was an Edison Gem phonograph. Along came the initial burst of excitement closely followed by the realisation that perhaps we didn't really need to buy it. Want it yes, but need it probably no. I am sure many of you will have experienced the same feelings. We reluctantly parted company and turned into the next room to pastures new.

There at the end of the far table was a box that looked quite old



and may just contain something interesting. Surely that plain fruitwood box with hook and eye catches must contain a musical box. This time luck, (good) dictated that within the box was a nice early 4 air keywind musical box with a fine comb in good condition. Moreover the comb was very fine and undamaged. Now thoughts turned to want it yes, need it yes and a decision to buy it was taken almost before even listening to the box!

Wonders of wonders, it did play and the first tune was instantly recognised as a particularly impressive arrangement of the Vicar of Bray. The other 3 tunes were unknown but most pleasing. One tune played with a trill that lasted for around two thirds of its duration. On examining the cylinder and the comb, it was discovered that 10 teeth or so in the treble end were tuned to the same note with a further smaller set of repeat notes above that. Surely this box must have required

a lot of effort to make and maybe the trill was a maker's attempt to produce a sustained note.

Who would go to all that trouble to produce a 4 air box with so many repeat notes? We shall probably never know, but the box shouted quality. Then I remembered that a founder member of the Society had told me that in the early days of the musical box industry, small 4 air boxes were made where musical quality and the arrangements of the tunes was of supreme importance. Production costs seemed not to be considered in an effort to make something of quality. Surely, was it my luck, (good) to have found one of these boxes?

The box had many attributes of an early keywind with a serial number 349 stamped in small numerals on the bedplate. The walnut case was completely devoid of decoration and was nicely made to take the movement exactly. Even the drop flap had 3

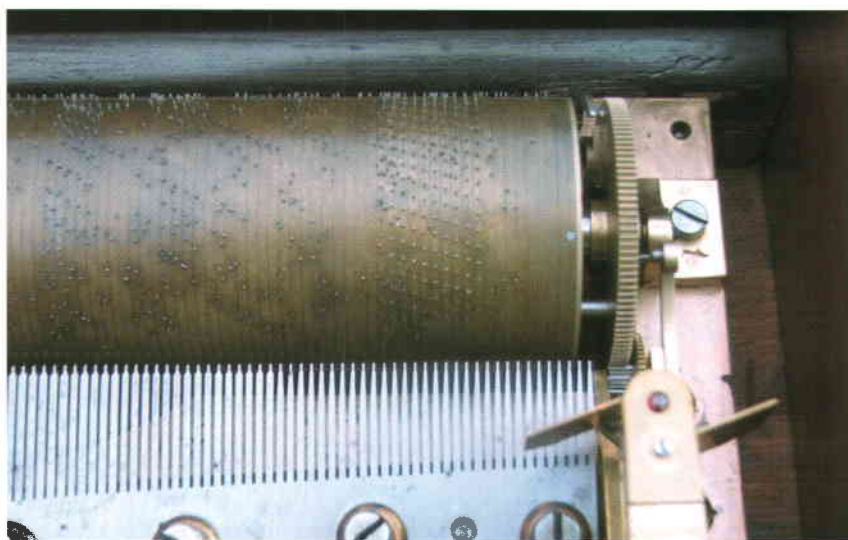
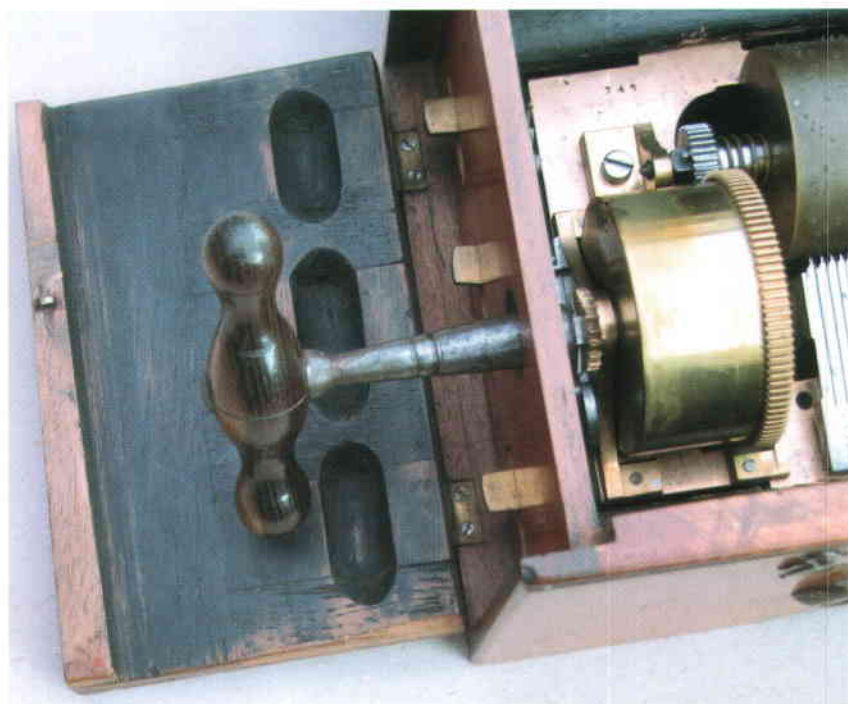
hollowed out sections to take the ends of the control levers. The key had a turned wooden grip part to match the case.

A price was agreed and we departed for home. On reaching the motorway luck, (good) dictated that all the cars had gone leaving us a clear and pleasant route home. So the final luck score came to, bad 1 and good 4. I told you I was an optimist!

Arthur Cunliffe.

Fig 2 (right). the fine key.

Fig 3. (below), showing the treble trills.



My late uncle, John Mansfield, used to say that treble end trills were often used by Ducommun Girod. Where he obtained the information I am not sure, but many years ago he gave me a small walnut cased box by Ducommun with the remains of just such a trill on its 'run' cylinder. 'Use it for spares, my boy!', he told me. Fortunately I never found a use for any of its parts, and eventually we repinned the cylinder, repaired the comb etc and it turned into a really nice box of the just-lever-wound period. We still have it! - Ed

Brentford Now



*Above: The new museum building
Right: The Poppers Claribella piano orchestrion*



I have mentioned MIDI several times in previous articles, and most of you will have heard of it somewhere, but what is it, what does it do, how does it work, and what is its relevance to mechanical music? I will attempt to answer these questions without getting too deeply into the technicalities.

MIDI stands for Musical Instrument Digital Interface, which is fairly descriptive, because it is, indeed, a digital interface for musical instruments. MIDI was born in the early 1980's, following the development, in the 1970's, of electronic synthesisers, drum machines, electronic keyboards, etc. There was a desire to be able to join all these instruments together, in some way, so that they could talk to each other and synchronise their music. So the Digital

instrument what to do, and when to do it. The complete MIDI specification allows for quite complex commands to be sent, but I will just deal with the basics in this article. There are three main types of signal required to play music on any MIDI instrument: -

Channel number – MIDI allows for up to 16 channels of information, which means that any one MIDI controller can play up to 16 different instruments at once.

Note data – MIDI allocates numbers, from 1 to 127, to musical notes, with middle C being 60. This gives a range of over 10 octaves. The data also specifies whether the note is being turned on or turned off.

Velocity – Velocity emulates the speed with which a note is struck

If we now think about a paper roll for an organette, or player piano, how does it transmit the music data to the instrument? Through the holes, of course, and they are digital data (hole or not-hole, 1 or 0). The position of the hole across the width defines which note is played, and the start and end of the hole define when the note starts and stops. The similarity breaks down a little when we come to velocity, or volume, but if you look at a Duo-Art piano and its rolls, it uses two sets of four holes to define the volume at which the next note gets played, giving just 16 levels of volume. Most other mechanical music instruments don't control volume automatically, of course.

So what use is all this to mechanical music? Quite useful in the 21st Century, actually. Increasingly,

21st Century Mechanical Music

By John Farmer

Interface was proposed, discussed, and eventually standardised and agreed by all principal electronic instrument manufacturers.

MIDI provides a facility for easily connecting together a variety of electronic musical instruments so that, for example, one keyboard can control several others and produce a wider range of sounds than a single instrument can achieve. Sequencers were also developed which send out MIDI signals and produce a musical sequence. Since all these connections are digital, it was a simple step to involve computers and enable a computer to control a whole orchestra of electronic instruments. Thus, with appropriate computer software, it is relatively easy to compose and play complex music.

The MIDI signal consists of a string of numbers that tells each

(if it were a keyboard instrument), and so equates to the volume of the note being played. This, again, can have a value between 1 and 127, giving a wide dynamic range.

So if you could read a MIDI signal as it was being sent, you would see sets of numbers being sent to define which instrument the next message was for (Channel number), which note to turn on or off (note number), and at what volume (velocity). All this information is sent down just two wires, since it is in digital form, and sends the numbers as strings of 0's and 1's, one after the other. The speed with which this data is transmitted is such that the interface can actually transmit data for several hundred notes in a second. Every MIDI-enabled instrument operates to the same standard and will play the same note sequence (although the sounds they emit might be different).

electronics is taking the place of paper rolls, discs and other physical media to hold the music. A small memory chip, like you might find in a digital camera, can hold several hundred tunes, in MIDI format, so you could keep all the tunes you are ever likely to need, in your pocket, instead of needing a room full of shelves. Good examples of this are the new German concertinas and accordions owned by several Society members. These are real instruments, but the tunes are held in memory chips with 500 or more tunes, and the instrument contains a MIDI controller which reads the memory chip and operates tiny solenoids to allow the air to the appropriate reed. If you have ever tried playing a Tanzbar, you will realise how much easier these new instruments are to play. Some street organs are now being similarly equipped, as is the

Yamaha Disklavier piano. It is also possible to convert an original player piano to a form of MIDI control. I don't think anyone has yet converted an Organette or a musical box to MIDI though!

There are also now a number of designs available for MIDI controlled punching machines. These enable the owner to compose their own music on a computer and then use the same computer to control a relatively simple punching machine to produce custom made paper rolls for their mechanical music instrument. Some enthusiasts have even developed sophisticated punchers able to punch piano rolls at reasonable speeds. However, these punching machines are not available "off the shelf", only the designs for you to build your own.

Both of the above require the tune itself to be in MIDI form before it can be played or punched. For short, simple tunes, this can easily be done on a computer with appropriate software, but what if the tune only exists on, say, a piano roll? Fortunately another group of enthusiasts has developed designs for, and built, roll scanners which are able to scan piano rolls and convert them to MIDI files. These files are available to anyone through the Internet.

Several small companies are now using MIDI-controlled machines to punch paper rolls, make musical box discs and cob organ cobs on a commercial basis. If you can provide them with a MIDI version of your favourite tune, they will produce a "hard" copy for you in the required physical form. It is also technically possible to drill and insert pins in a musical box cylinder under MIDI control, but I'm not sure whether anyone actually does that on a commercial basis.

I hope this has given you an insight into MIDI, and why it is

becoming increasingly important to mechanical music in the 21st Century. If you want any further information on this subject, please contact me. Now, I am running out of ideas for future articles in this series, so I would welcome

any suggestions, or contributions, from members. Do you have an unusual modern instrument? Have you built your own street organ (perhaps MIDI-controlled)? Let me know, send me details, and we will make an article out of it.

Robert Clarson Leach 1917 - 2008

Robert Leach was born during the First World War in 1917, the eldest of three brothers. He spent all but three years of his childhood in Wallasey by the River Mersey. He won a scholarship to Wallasey Grammar School.

He excelled at sport, and by 1936 he was Cheshire county athletics champion. He was a potential competitor for the 1940 Olympic Games, had there been one. Bob also excelled as a musician despite being largely self-taught. This was achieved by reading a piano tutor and listening to players like Charlie Kunz on the radio.

On leaving school, he joined the Ordnance Survey. He loved the combination of drawing maps in an office and being outdoors surveying. Sadly those happy days were ended by the war. He joined the Royal Engineers Survey and was sent to HQ Cairo for five years. This gave him a lasting love for Egypt, which he revisited in 1980. He wrote of his war experience in the book *Massacre at El Alamein?* which was published in 1995.

He took advantage of a government scheme and trained as a music teacher at Trinity College, London and in 1948 he married and later had two children, Robert and Fiona. He worked long hours as a schoolteacher, evening class lecturer, piano teacher and dance band pianist.

In the 1960s, he worked as head of music at Lambeth Comprehensive School — an inner city school of 1,000 boys of all races. He inspired them with a love of music in all its forms, including classical music.

In 1967 he remarried, and enjoyed 40 years' happiness with Daphne, a fellow music teacher.

In 1979, a severe heart attack forced him to give up teaching and take early retirement. Robert was soon so busy that he said he did not know how he ever found time to work.

He had five books published including a biography on the composer Berlioz, which is still selling. He edited the *Music Box* magazine, in which capacity he was presented to the Queen. He acted as a literary agent, and wrote his memoirs.

He enjoyed being a grandfather to his five grandchildren. In his twilight years, he enjoyed the company of his friends and became an active member of the Savage Club, who honoured him with a dinner in his name. He gave his last performance as a musician at the Savage Club at the age of 84. Bob Leach was a man who lived a full life for almost 91 years. He was not to be stopped just by six heart attacks, three strokes and more angina attacks than he could remember.

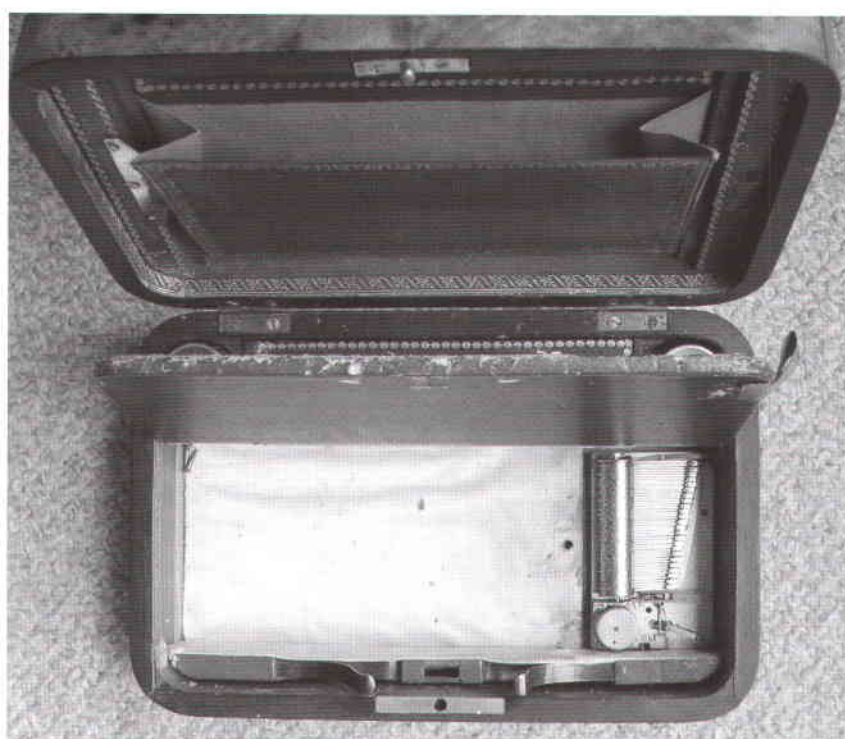
He leaves behind two children, five grandchildren, five published books, many musical careers and countless happy memories. May he rest in peace.

An Unusual Necessaire

By Luuk Goldhoorn



Fig 1, 1a and 1b. The box opened and, the musical work unveiled and, as a detail, the knobs at the front and the right side



In today's vocabulary a necessaire is a box with sewing utensils, but the word comprises more, generally speaking 'all that you need and have packed together'. There existed, for example, necessaires for picnic, travelling and toilet utensils. But it seems that only the sewing necessaires sometimes have musical work.

Maybe that has to do with the rather long period that those sewing necessaires were in vogue. Their heyday was between 1820 and 1830, but they never totally disappeared from the stage.

Discussing such a musical sewing box would be something like bringing coals to Newcastle, but here is an unusual necessaire. At least, I have never seen another one, not in collections, not in museums, or even in an advertisement. It is the only known existing writing necessaire. (Figure 1) It has a ruler, an inkbottle and a sand canister (even with the sand in it!), a paper knife, a plume

(feather) sharpener, a scraper and a pen and a pencil holder. The utensils have the Paris silver hall mark for 1798 – 1809. Is that enough for an article in the MBSGB? No, but when I show you the musical work which is in it, you may change your opinion.

Although the utensils are to be dated before 1810, in the lid that covers the musical box the year 1815 is scratched. Quite a difference which nevertheless is seen quite often. But it is also possible that this necessaire was without a musical work in the shop until it was bought by someone who wanted to have a musical work in it. And why this extravagance? Because **he** (of course it was a **he**) hoped to impress **her** more!

It is almost unknown that a musical box is dated. Here we have such an exception and the year 1815 sounds very reasonable, because the comb has sections of two teeth. Only the very early tabatiere-works have these



sections of two and soon afterwards sections of three came in use.

The necessaire itself is a bit bigger than a normal sewing box, about 24 by 15 by 9 cm (9 1/2" by 6" by 3 1/2"), and the only strange thing you can see at the outside is that there is a knob at the front and one at the right side. (See figure 1). Normally the start/stop and the change lever in sewing necessaires are operated by levers that protrude through the bottom. Not a very efficient way of handling, because you have to lift the box to start the music. In any case the person who assembled this musical work and the necessaire found another solution. Should he

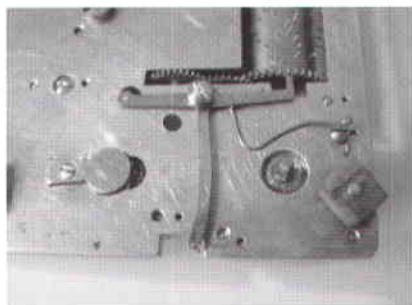
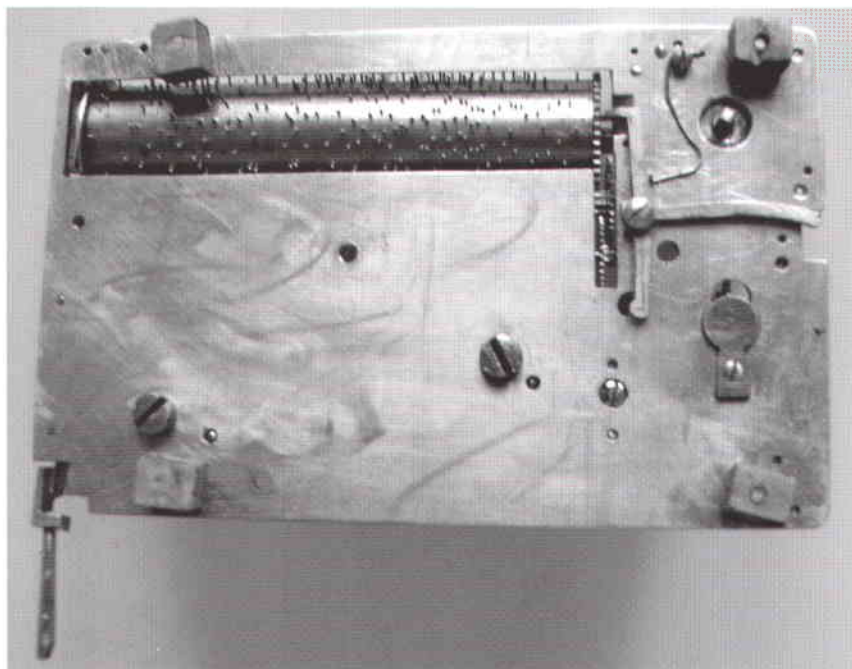


Fig 2, 2a The start/stop lever and - as a detail - enlarged

have had a 'normal' early musical work, with the change lever at the front and the start stop lever at the back, it should have been impossible to avoid the lifting. But his work has the start stop lever at the left side and the change lever at the normal position: right on the front. (See detail of figure 1). How this previously unknown construction worked is shown in figure 2.

The work itself is in all respects an early one: The bedplate measures 93 by 48 by 2 mm, the cylinder 52 mm. Its diameter is 13 mm and there are only $24 \times 2 = 48$ teeth.

There are a lot of peculiarities that need your attention:

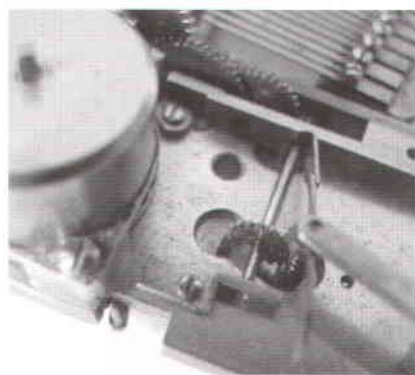


Fig 3. The bearing for the endless drive shaft

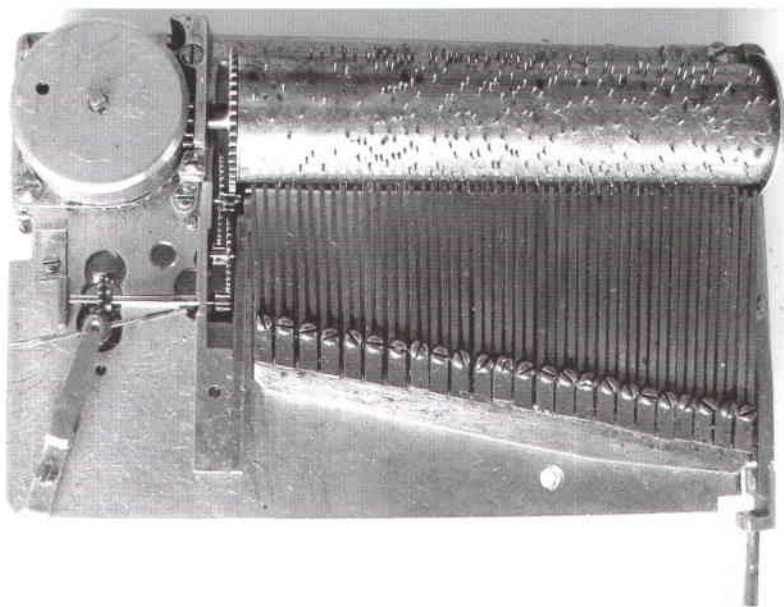


Fig 4. A picture of the work with the dividing of the regulator parts clearly seen

1. The construction of the start stop lever as discussed here above. (Figure 2)

2. The bearing for the endless drive shaft is 180° turned from the usual position. (figure 3)

3. The regulator has –as normal- two parts but in this case the broader part is at the left side and the smaller at the right. (Figure 4)

4. The opening in the regulator is too small to let the endless drive shaft pass through it. The regulator has to be unscrewed, the endless shaft placed in position and then the whole can be screwed to the bedplate. (Figure 5)

5. In early works there is a bridge between the cylinder arbor and the spring barrel. Later the function of this bridge was incorporated in the spring barrel housing. This bridge is quite complicated to manufacture. (Figure 5).

6. Another peculiarity is the form of the right cylinder support. The maker used only one screw but the form in a hook (figure 6) is quite different

Fig 5. The bridge separating the cylinder bearing from the mainspring barrel.

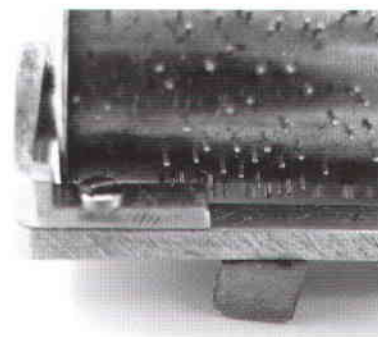
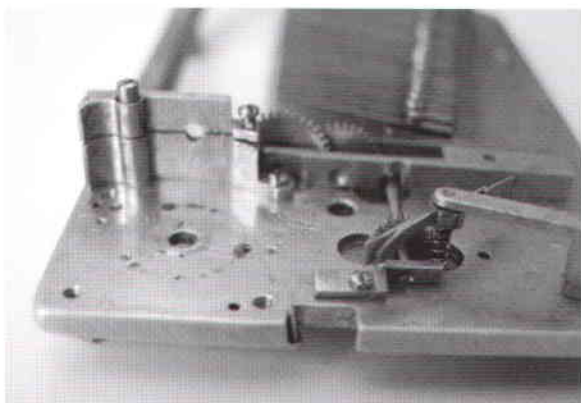


Fig 6. The right cylinder support

from what we are used to. One screw was saved, but the spring barrel is screwed down with three screws, so this saving was compensated.

7. The Geneva stop has disappeared, but in any case there was not a spring to prevent the female part from moving. (Figure 4 gives a general view of the work). So it was fitted with the construction we also find in musical boxes of ordinary size: a little spring under and in the male part of the Geneva stop.

8. As may be expected, there are no dampers, the bass teeth are made from a thicker part of steel and have no lead weights. But there is cement in the cylinder, and that is a thing which is not quite common in early snuff box works.

9. The change lever has no adjustable stop at the left side: the cylinder goes flat against the great wheel. For the right hand position a small pin is inserted in the bedplate. (Figure 7)

With all these particulars who wouldn't want to know who the maker was? And yes it is unveiled in the lid. (Figure 8). Unfortunately it is not a very clear photo of it but it says: *Abm Chapuis Zoller fécite à Genève 1815.*

Research by Suzanne Maurer tells us that Abram François Chapuis was born in 1777 as a son of a watchmaker named Jean Pierre Chapuis. In 1803 he married Suzanne François Zoller and since then called himself Chapuis-Zoller.

In 1810 he formed a partnership with another watchmaker, Jean Paul Désiré, born 1772, to manufacture and trade in musical boxes under the name Désiré & Chapuis. Products by this partnership are not known. Intended to run for 6

years, the partnership was already dissolved after one year. Chapuis-Zoller worked since then on his own. He died in 1832. A big box with a chevron comb has survived and it is depicted in our journal, Vol. 7/5 p. 181/182.



Fig 8. The name of the maker scratched at the inside of the lid that covers the musical work.

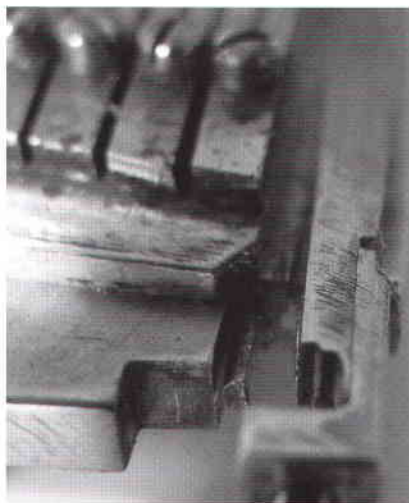


Fig 7. The construction of the bridge (screws loosened a bit)

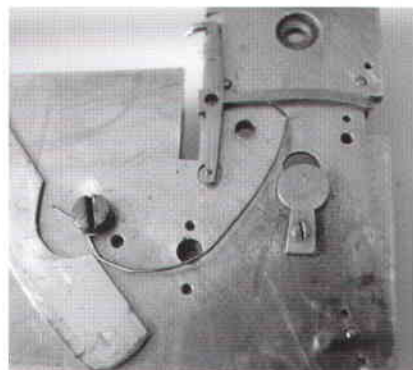


Fig 9. The left stop of the change lever

Datenspeicher-Musikinstrumente

(Data Storage Musical Instruments)

Siegfried Wendel.

265 pp. + xiv advts. 215mm x 302mm (8½ins x 12ins). Pictorial boards.

Illustrated throughout, mostly in colour. Siegfried's Musikkabinett, Rüdesheim. 2002.

ISBN 3-00-000836-5. Text in English, French & German. €40,00.

It's on the tourist trail, so it must be good! Like Disney World and Alton Towers, Siegfried Wendel's Musical Museum in Rhine-side Rüdesheim is heavily promoted by the tourist industry. Each day, throughout the year, happy holidaymakers descend on the narrow streets of this beautiful mediaeval town on Germany's great River Rhine. They come by charabanc, train and, of course, boat. Hordes of them looking to do what tourists the world over do – have fun, be entertained and, probably, have a drink. And after 35 and more years, Siegfried Wendel's truly outstanding museum must have notched up close to two million visitors.

There is always a fear that where something becomes too popular it has to play down to its clientele and risk an ever-steepening descent to maintain pace with the spiralling expectations of a general public. Siegfried, who has attended MBSOGB and MBSI meetings in the past, manages to draw a fine line between the tat (largely catered for where it ought to be – the Museum Gift Shop) and the serious (the galleries of instruments).

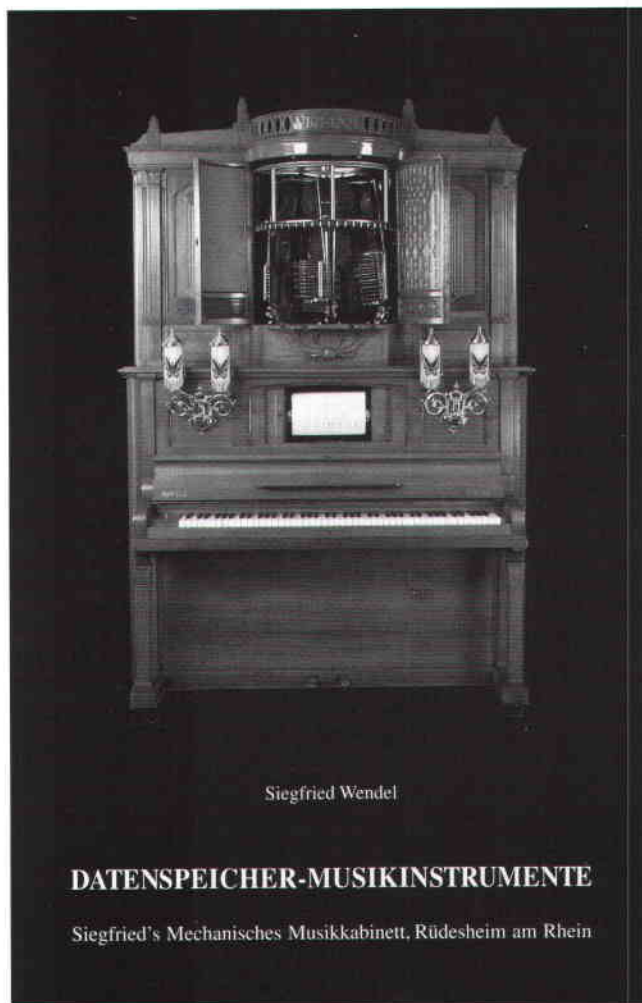
A visit to the museum usually means joining a tour with a guide who has learned a patter by rote and has a vague command of mechanical music that is sufficient, usually, to answer the simple questions normally asked by visitors such as 'How does it work?' and 'Where's the Gents?'

As so often, though, the informed visitor will quickly find much more through his observation and thereby gain infinitely greater pleasure in the collection.

The Wendel collection is impressive and contains some remarkable pieces extending from a superb and representative collection of organettes (including a working Clariophon) and musical boxes through to a gold and silver singing-bird pistol embellished with precious stones.

What is thought to be a unique Polyphon housed in a stunning columnar case redolent of a Berlin-school *Flötenuhr* of a century and a quarter earlier serves to highlight that there's always something new to learn, even about disc-playing musical boxes.

Other exhibits in this genre offer some exquisite rarities including Ludwig's Orpheus side-by-side double-disc upright only made in tiny numbers in 1900, and a double-comb upright Komet having each comb made in five segments, thus demonstrating that the race for large pieces of comb steel really was won by the Swiss.



Siegfried Wendel

DATENSPEICHER-MUSIKINSTRUMENTE

Siegfried's Mechanisches Musikkabinett, Rüdesheim am Rhein

Those with earlier leanings will relish musical clocks by Kleemeyer, a singularly rare table clockwork organ with horizontal pipework dating from 1790 and performing works by Ferdinand Paer, and an 18th century *secrétaire de dame* complete with timepiece and containing a fine pipe organ. The clock is by Balthazar, Paris, the case is marked by a London maker – and the barrels are made in Lübeck!

All these pieces and a huge number of others including numerous large orchestrions and dance organs, are illustrated mostly in colour and described in this excellent guidebook to the collection. The last section of the book – some 76 pages – tells the story of how the Museum started and also described Siegfried's amazing achievement in bringing back to life the Hupfeld Phonoliszt-Violina which he put into limited production some years ago. He also created the Double-Violina – a Phonoliszt playing six violins – which Hupfeld designed but is thought never built. A good colour picture shows just how authentic Siegfried's work actually was. In fact, this amazing achievement did not, in this writer's opinion, receive a fraction of the credit it deserved.

The title of the book is, as far as the English reader is concerned, rather off-putting and while it makes better sense in German, the whole point is lost through a too-literal translation. The French title *Instruments de musique à programme pré-enregistré* is nearer the mark. Here's a clear-cut instance when it is best to strike out afresh and translate the idiom rather than the words. 'Mechanical instruments that recorded music from a past age'. There!

The parallel texts in German, English and French are adequate in that instrument dimensions, number of notes and suchlike are provided, but for the serious student musical scales and repertoire are, in the main, absent.

The English translation is rather basic, only adequate and, disappointingly, redolent with obvious mistakes and wrong spellings. Names correctly spelled in German and French are garbled in English suggesting poor proof-reading – viz. 'Kueschnachs' for Keuschachs, 'Unterkimach' for Unterkirnach and so on. The German *Stücke für das Laufwerk* (Pieces for Clockwork) is translated as 'The Barrel Work'. Ariston becomes 'Artiston'; Eckardt is posed as 'Eckard'. While these mistakes are mere annoyances, gross errors of fact such as describing a Libellion table-style book-player as a 'musical clock' reveals an underlying production and editing carelessness. Well, for the non-German-reading reader *any* English is probably preferable to none!

All this aside and despite there being no index, this is still a useful addition to the mechanical musical instrument book shelf and the presentation, on quality gloss paper, is nevertheless commended. The illustrations alone are impressive!

Arthur W. J. G. Ord-Hume

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Musical Box Oddments No. 118

By Anthony Bulleid

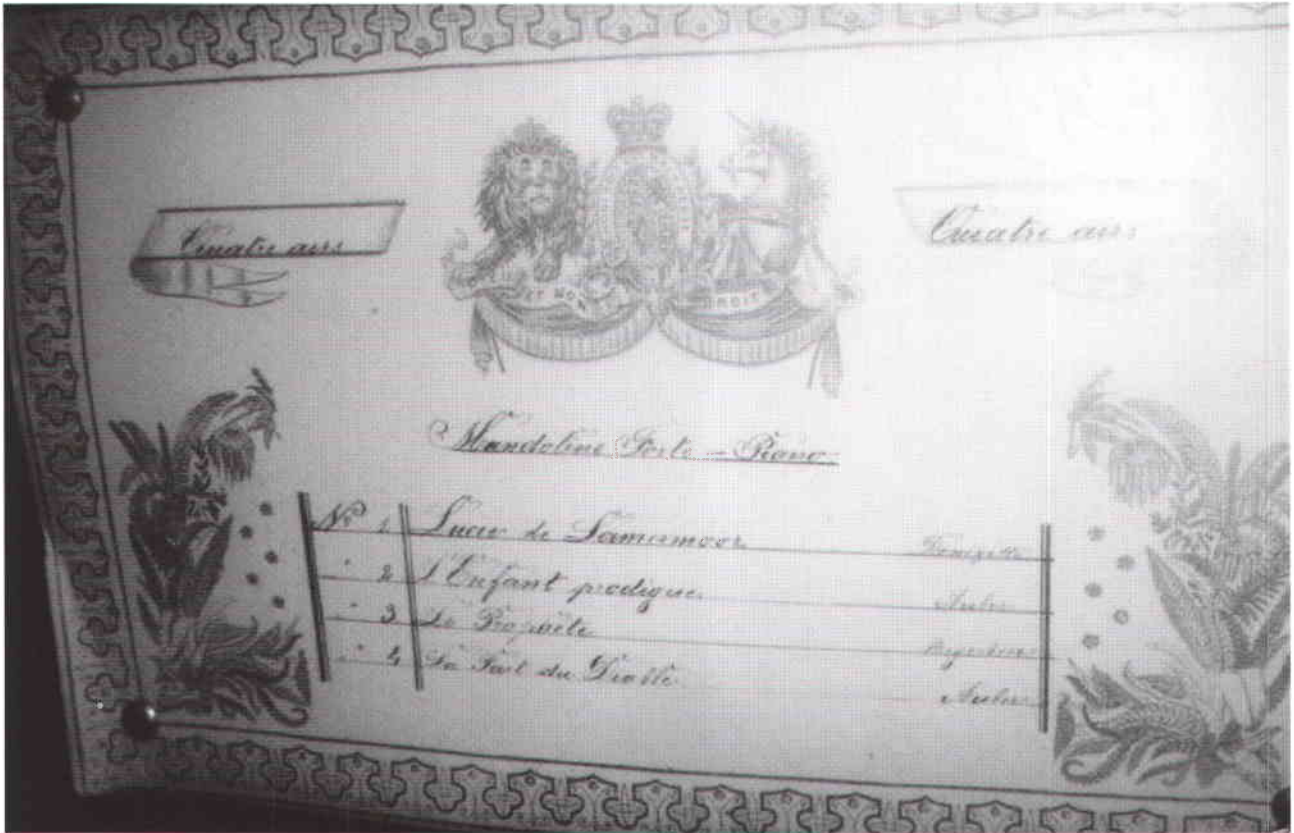


Fig. 1. The embellished version of Geo. Bendon's tune sheet design. The Mandoline Forte - Piano heading is absurdly modest, compared with the fancy decorations.

Tune Sheets.

The tune sheets of Geo. Bendon have appeared several times in the series of 400 and are noted for their large central Royal Arms and plain backgrounds. But suddenly one has turned up with a fancy printer's border all round and lush floral embellishments each side of the tune list, see Fig. 1. The large 4-air musical box so favoured has a 16" (38cm) cylinder and combs of 146 and 76 teeth. Latest tune is no. 2, 1850, but being lever wind the box was probably made in 1860.

In contrast, Fig. 2 shows the small but rather special case of a 6-air tabatière, deepened to allow cigar space above the music. There is a silvered shield at the centre of the lid, still waiting to

be engraved. It has the usual play and change knobs at front and side, and key wind from beneath.

It plays modest versions of four very popular classic tunes and two extremely popular "hits." And



Fig. 2. A nice, but not grand, cigar case.



Fig. 3. The general purpose tune sheet, like no. 299, only just fits inside the lid. Latest tune is no. 6,1860. Probably made about 1880.

so, how come the dramatic claim in the cartouche of its tune sheet as seen in fig. 3? No less than Grand Format!

Chevob & Co took over Geo Baker soon after 1900 and his early tune sheet as seen in Fig. 4 is the only one I have ever seen or heard of. It is on a petite musique in a cigar box and was found by Tim Reed with this auction copy of the tune sheet, which is not good enough for the series. Here we can explain that the fuzz in the top left corner consists of the 2-sided Arms of Geneva. The motto POST TENEBRAS

LUX above the Arms and the description Geneva Coat of Arms below are set in a roughly oval format.

Stickers on tune sheets... and, occasionally, on cases.

I try to avoid showing stickers in the tune sheet series, unless reasonable interest also abides in the item stuck on. Fig. 5 shows a sticker neatly applied to an often seen Greiner or Bremond tune sheet whose white-cross-in-sunburst device is not completely obliterated. Baltimore was already a large town in the 1870s and important for its Baltimore



Fig. 4. This Chevob design has a printer's border of two thick lines between two thin lines, of which the inner has mildly decorated corners.

& Ohio Railroad which took manufactured produce from Ohio industrial towns for export from the Atlantic seaboard... and, of course, for imports - including the one in Fig. 5.

A modest 1890-ish box with 4" (10cm) cylinder and 40 teeth and all early tunes has the "Isle Rousseau" tune sheet with Gautschi sticker shown in Fig. 6. That essentially Geneva tune sheet is not rare on late Ste. Croix boxes like this one, probably made by Cuendet. Latest tune no. 5, 1868. But its case has the rarity of a Gautschi repair sticker still readable underneath, and here in Fig. 7.

Trills.

During the winter of 1988, about the time of Oddments 39, there was a lot of discussion about trills on musical boxes. A trill was regarded as the active ingredient of mandoline and tremolo and guitar effects, and there was general interest in sorting out the relevant patterns of the cylinder pins involved, - including the interesting but quite immaterial difference between "uphill" and "downhill" helical lines of pins.

I think it is generally accepted that a trill requires a rate of eight notes per second. The same tooth cannot be played again within one second, so eight teeth tuned to the same pitch are needed to sustain a trill of one second or longer. But a trill is defined in the Oxford as "a rapid alternation of sung or played notes" and many musical box trills are made up of two notes, or more. That was certainly the way on the early Ducommun Girod boxes, which were noted for featuring attractive trills in many of their tunes. They never had more than four teeth of the same pitch.

Some excitement has recently been caused by the First Appearance of the French word TRILLES on the tune sheet of serial 6258.



Fig. 5. Small but comprehensive sticker of Canfield, Brother & Co. on a classy (as expected in Baltimore) Forte Piano box serial 11,718, probably made by Bremond about 1862.

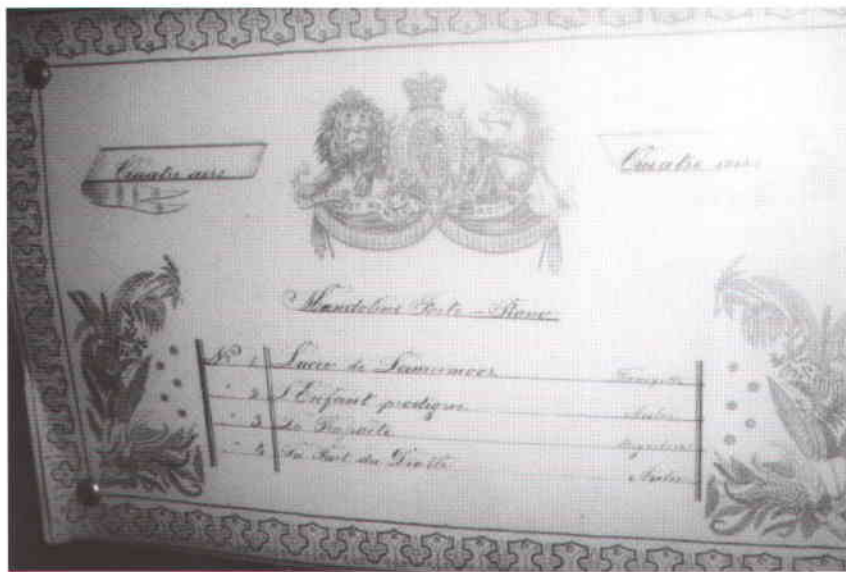
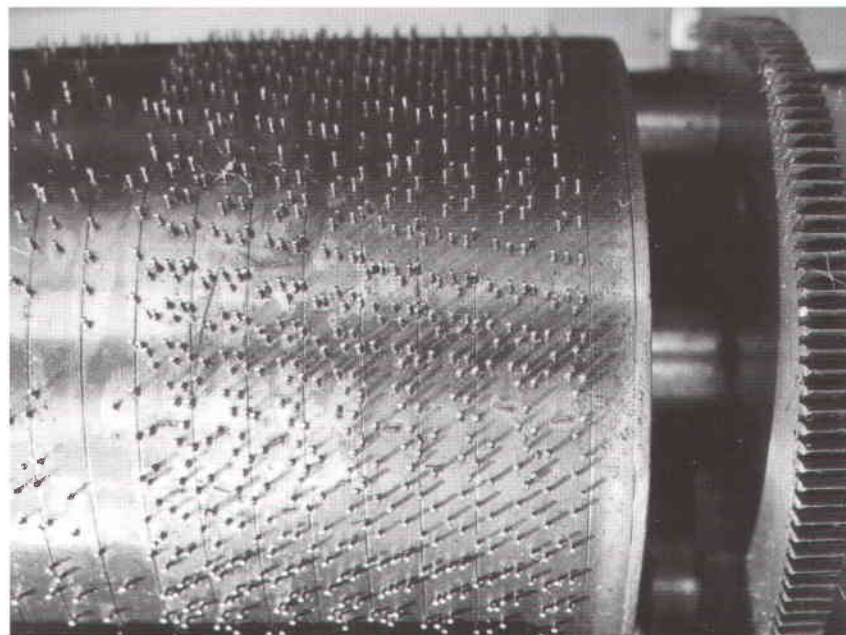


Fig. 6. Late use on early tunes, and with typical Gautschi sticker, on serial 18,536



It has an 8" cylinder, 58 teeth, and plays eight airs, generously served with trills. That involved abnormally heavy pinning for the eight highest treble teeth as can be seen in Fig. 8. Of these 8 teeth, 4 are on the highest note and the next four one pitch lower. Then comes a single tooth one pitch lower. Then the next three groups of two are each one further pitch lower. So that accounts for the top fifteen piccolo notes, on a quarter of the comb teeth. In contrast, the normal top notes on Harpe Harmonique Tremolo boxes are often like this: starting at top treble, numbers of teeth in each pitch are two, three, three, two, two accounting for the top twelve in five pitches. Sometimes a single note on one pitch is inserted.

There is an interesting oddity about Fig. 8, caused by all the top treble teeth being heavily used. As can easily be seen, there are no pins on the extreme treble end track line. Therefore the last tune, with cylinder peg on highest step of the snail cam, must be pinned on the previous track; and so the first tune must be on the previous track line. That makes it 99% certain that the box was made in the Ste. Croix region... actually at L'Auberson, by Cuendet.



Fig. 7. Repair sticker under serial 18,536 case. (All eight Figs, thanks to Tim Reed!)

Fig. 8. Treble end of serial 6258 cylinder, showing eight top treble teeth facing heavy pinning for trills. No pins on the end track line so tune 8 must be on the last pinned track. Therefore tune 1 must be on the previous track line.

News from Other Societies

from John Farmer

Mechanical Music, Vol 54, No.2, March/April 2008

Arthur Reblitz describes the Kit Carson Carousel, its "Monster" organ, and the adjacent Carousel Museum in Burlington, Colorado. The carousel was made by the Philadelphia Toboggan Co., and has 46 hand-carved animals, 4 chariots and 45 oil paintings, with a 45-foot diameter platform that runs at 12 miles per hour at the perimeter. The Monster organ is a Wurlitzer 105, sporting a 100-hole tracker bar with 10 bass notes, 10 trombones, 11 Accompaniment, 25 melody, 18 piccolos, 21 trumpets plus drum, cymbal and control holes. Arthur was heavily involved with the restoration, which he also describes.

Robin Biggins found a Bremond Musical Box with the cylinder filled not with the normal resinous cement, but with plaster of Paris, which he believes is original. Was this an attempt to resolve the problem of cement melting in hot climate? Larry Karp explains how he came to collect cat-related automata, and describes several examples, including manivelles with cat pictures, and animated cat-panorama. Henri Noubé's brief article on Musical Photo Albums present several photographs of different styles of album.

Reed Organ Society Quarterly, Vol XXVII, No.1, 2008

Organs described in this issue start with a Bilhorn Style K discovered in Hinton West Virginia by Lawton Posey. The organ, still operational, is a small folding type, and had, in the past been taken every Sunday to the local jail to play for the prisoners. Horace Sellers describes a Chadwick and Percifal Seraphine which has a set of five strings on their own soundboard in the top of the case, presumably to provide sympathetic vibrations. Another

Seraphine, having stirrup pedals is described by Sue Bacheller, who also goes on to discover the history of the maker, Dr. A Stewart of Roxbury.

Robert F. Gellerman decided to investigate the history of two reed organ makers with the name Swan, originally assuming they were related. However, Amos Swan was born in Arlington, Massachusetts in 1818, and Swen Swan was born in Sweden in 1844. The lives of both are covered by Robert's article. Restoration of a Prince Melodeon is described by Jonah Stiriz, with work and a further three Melodeons being recounted by Coleman Kimbrell, and Jim Tyler details work on yet another, supported by many photographs. Appropriately, the centrefold is an extract from a Melodeon music book.

Player Piano Group - Bulletin 186, April 2008

"Automated Music for the Huddled Masses" by Bob Berkman and Mike Kukral is reprinted from AMICA bulletin Nov. 2006, and discusses the production of "Ethnic" piano rolls. Rolls for Greek, Ukrainian, Syrian, Hungarian, Spanish, Jewish, Polish, Italian, German, Austrian, French, Czech communities are all covered. Julian Dyer examines the history behind the standard 88-note roll scale, and the "Buffalo Convention" of 1908 which made it the standard, replacing 58, 65, 70, 82, 85 and possibly other scales.

"Right Hand Left Hand" is the title of the autobiography of Sir Osbert Sitwell, and Neil Ramsay uses the same title in his review of the first 4 volumes of the original autobiography, picking out musical and pianola references from Sir Osbert's work. Adam Ramet unravels the Shoe Medley Roll, discussing the historical aspects

and how the music probably ended up on rolls. Adam also gives a new insight into rolls with "tremolo" effects, often referred to as Mandolin arrangements. Adam believes they fall into several categories, and also concludes that the Barrel "Piano" was never meant to imitate the conventional Piano, more likely the Mandolin or Cymbalon was the inspiration.

North West Player Piano Association Journal - Spring/Summer 2008

Highlights from the 25+ articles start with part 3 of the less-well-known reproducing systems series covering Apollo and Artechco. These were made by the Apollo Piano Co. Of De Kalb, Illinois using parts from the Amphion Company, which also made parts for Ampico. The Apollo system is similar to Ampico, but has a few technical differences. It was technically good, but was defeated by the greater marketing efforts of the big names. No. 59 in the Famous Musicians series is Alexander Brailowsky (1896 - 1976) who was born in Kiev. He became a concert pianist and moved to America in 1924. He played many composers' works but became well known for his renditions of Chopin's works.

Noel Coward is the subject of *When They Were Young*, No. 20. He was born in Teddington in December (hence the name Noel), 1899. He spent a few years at Chapel Royal Choir School and then continued to enjoy singing and dancing. He became a junior actor in his early teens, and began to write plays. His work started to become popular in the early 1920's and he never looked back.

No. 3 from the Song Roll Collection is "Silver Threads Among the Gold". It was written as a piece of

verse in 1872 by Eben Wrexford (1848 – 1916), who eventually sold it (for \$3) to Hert Danks (1834 – 1903), who wrote the music and published the song in 1873. The sheet music had sold over two million copies by the end of the 19th Century. It then moved on to even greater success when the song was recorded by Richard José on the Victor label in 1903. Plus many more interesting articles.....

Other Non-English journals

Musiques Mecaniques Vivantes – 2nd. Quarter, 2008

Highlights: -

- The Phonograph - Sound and Emotion
- This Disc Musical Box isn't in Bowers (a small Kalliope with 2 bells).
- Water manometer - pressures and leaks.
- Organ Tuning - part 1
- Two odd books with speaking images

Das Mechanische Musikinstrument (Gesellschaft für Selbstspielende Musikinstrumente),

Following a glitch in receipt of this journal, now corrected, there are 4 issues to review: -

April 2007 Highlights:-

- An interesting "Flotenuhr" of Martin Meyer from Neustadt
- The "Flotenuhr" of Ignaz Bruder in Oschatz museum
- "Handharmonicas" from Leipzig (Tanzbar and others)
- A Hegeler & Ehlers Player Piano
- The Salzburg Glockenspiel
- The difference between e-MIDI and e-Roll
- Restoring black finishes (on organettes, etc.) Part 1

August 2007 Highlights:-

- Paul Zacharias, Leipzig, manufacturer of parts for Player Pianos
- Franz Einsdl and Johann Sagan

of Vienna (musical box makers).

- 77 note Piano Rolls
- Austrian Cylinder mechanisms
- Restoring black finishes (on organettes, etc.) Part 2

December 2007 Highlights:-

- Poppers Ohio at Siegfried's Mechanischem Musikkabinett
- Philipps Duca – Technical details
- Were Willenbacher and Rzebitschek of Prague serious competition for Switzerland?
- The origin of the Welte Philharmonic Organ at Seewen.
- Restoring decorations on glass.
- An unusual Manivelle

April 2008 Highlights:-

- Organs and Barrel organs of Pekarov
- Giacomo Puccini and Welte.
- The Hupfeld building and the international Building –Trade exhibition in Leipzig, 1939.
- Is there Clockwork Music in Heaven?
- The Glenn-Gould Robot (Piano).
- A Portrait of J. J Haspels

Schweizerischer Verein der Freunde Mechanischer Musik

Highlights: -

- A Curious Gramophone (in the seat of a chair).
- The restoration of a large Waldkirch Limonaire Concert Organ.
- W. Grigorowitsch – the Organ Grinder of St. Petersburg
- Function of the regulator in a Pneumatic Piano.

MechaMusica No.2 June 2008

Highlights: -

- The history of mechanical music (Part 2)
- The Orchestrion on the Isle of Rum
- Expo 58 and its influence on Organs
- Louis Thys, noteur (1881 – 1961)

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. If you would like to start a NEW Local area group please contact Kevin McElhone on 01536 726759 or kevin_mcelhone@hotmail.com or Ted Brown on 01403 823533 as either will be pleased to advise,

3021 Leslie Patrick, Kent

3022 Karen Dickens, Shropshire

3023 Peter Ruf, Sweden

3024 Harvey Reeves & Shaun Burton, Herts

3025 N.P.Morphet, Somerset

3026 Andrew & Jane Redfern, Northants

3027 J.A.Woodward & Mrs.N.J.A.Court, West Midlands

3028 Mrs.Heather Hancock, Warwickshire

3029 Mr. & Mrs. Leslie Franklin, Worcs

3030 Mrs.Judith Izzo, Worcs

3031 T.Phizakerley, N.E. U.K.

If you have any friends or visitors who show interest in your collection and who might like to join please contact Kevin for a free sample back-issue of the magazine or a supply of joining forms. To get the most out of your membership - join a local group.

Question - would new members from the past year or two value a 'new members day' meeting in centre of UK to ask questions view instruments and find out more? Please let me know if this might be of interest?

Letters to the Editors

Dear Editors,

In Register News No 59, The Music Box, Volume 23 No 6 [Summer 2008], the Registrar asked for information concerning the Airs appearing on the Tune Sheet of a 12 Air Hymn Box by Gueissaz et Cie of L'Auberson.

The five airs from the Gueissaz box are known as Gospel Songs and were used by Sankey and Moody in their evangelical campaign meetings. Some further details of these songs follow:

Safe in the Arms of Jesus: The first line of this gospel song reads "**Safe in the Arms of Jesus**" as does the chorus; tune composed by WH Doane [1832-1916] to words written by Frances Jane Crosby [Mrs Frances Jane van Alstyne] (1820-1915). She was a member of the Methodist Episcopal Church, USA and is credited with writing over 2,000 hymns. Both she and her husband were blind. [Sacred Songs & Solos No 25 - see below]

Hold the Fort: The first line reads "**Ho, my comrades! See the signal!**" whilst the first line of the chorus reads "**Hold the Fort, for I am coming**"; both words and music by PP Bliss (1838-1875), originally a Methodist but in 1874 he joined with Rev DW Whittle of the Congregational Church, Chicago. [Sacred Songs & Solos No 1 - see below].

Jesus of Nazareth Passeth By: The first line of this gospel song reads "**What means this eager, anxious throng**"; the music is by TE Perkins [1831-1912] set to words written circa 1863 by Miss Etta Campbell. [Sacred Songs & Solos No 20 - see below]

Title - **Oh to Be Nothing:** The

first line reads "**Oh to be nothing, nothing! Only to lie at His feet**"; the words by Georgina M Taylor set to the music arranged by PP Bliss [Sacred Songs & Solos No 133 - see below] NB Note the corrected words in both the title and the first line compared to those appearing in the Register News.

My Prayer: The first line reads "**More holiness give me, More strivings within;**" both words and music by PP Bliss. [Sacred Songs & Solos No 94 - see below]

I have included both title and first lines of the song and, where appropriate, the chorus, as those who prepared Tune Sheets seem to have used either indiscriminately.

Dwight Lyman Moody [1837-1899] originally from Northfield, Massachusetts, and Ira D[avid] Sankey [1840-1908] originally from Edinburgh, Pennsylvania, were both very active in the field of Christian Evangelism during the 1870's, 1880's & 1890's both in the USA and in the United Kingdom and their impact was profound. Moody was the preacher and Sankey the supporting vocalist and it is the songs sung by the latter at their meetings in his dramatic baritone voice that became so popular that Musical Box makers felt confident enough to pin complete programmes of them for some of their cylinder musical boxes. PVF Serial No 1079, on the register, is a typical example, being a 10 Air box with all its airs to be found in Sacred Songs and Solos – see below.

Sankey & Moody's first evangelical campaign in Britain ran from 1873 to 1875 so readers may best judge as to the date from which "Sankey & Moody" tunes began to appear on cylinder musical box programmes. The music has been described as "popular, simple melodies with an evangelistic

message, often heavily overlaid with emotion". However, although it has come to be referred to by the epithet "Sankey & Moody", much of the verse and the music came from the pens of other mid to late 19th century evangelists. That said, Sankey himself did compose the music for a number of the gospel songs used at the various evangelical meetings.

Information concerning the songs came from "Sacred Songs & Solos" - 750 Pieces compiled and sung by Ira D Sankey and published by Morgan Scott Ltd at the Office of "The Christian", 12 Paternoster Buildings, London, circa 1906; the numbers given above indicate where a complete version of the song may be found in that publication. The few biographical notes came from The Methodist School Hymnal published by the Wesleyan Methodist Church Sunday School Department at Ludgate Circus, London, circa 1910, and from the Encyclopaedia of Evangelism.

I am unable to offer much information on the two tunes from the L'Epée box mentioned by the Registrar, other than to say that "Haxton Chapel" and "Wanstead", almost certainly, will be hymn tune names and that LM stands for Long Metre, the metre of the verse to which the tune can be set or sung. There is an area of Salisbury Plain in Wiltshire, United Kingdom, known as Haxton Down. The whole of the Plain was taken over for military training purposes around the end of the 19th century but whether or not there ever was a "lost" village nearby with a chapel is unknown. All attempts to gather any further information, so far, have failed. May be others can take this further

Yours sincerely,

David Worrall
MBSGB No 2758

From: Professor NH Gale MA, PhD, DSc, BSc, ARCS, FSA, University of Oxford

Sir,

I was surprised to read [Vol. 23 part 6, p. 183] that disc boxes are made in the 21st. century only by Porter in the USA. Keith Harding [19(4), pp.105, 107] had already published in 1999 a photograph of the Lester Jones double 24½" disc 'Polyphon', which he wrote "produces what is probably the finest and most spectacular sound that I have ever heard from a disc musical box". Alan Pratt gave more details of this machine in the Winter 2000 Music Box [19(8) p. 214]. It seems still to be available in the 21st. century, according to the advertisement from Renaissance Discs on page 196 of the Summer 2008 Music Box. The same firm, with which I have no connection, also produces new discs for all disc musical boxes. Let us not downplay such a spectacular English success. Sincerely,
Noel Gale.

From: Mr John Farmer

Sir,

Many thanks to Professor Gale for bringing to light my unfortunate omission. I have contacted Lester Jones and apologised for my oversight. To put the record straight, Lester, of Renaissance Discs, still makes his Double 24½" Disc Musical Box, with 8 combs, in an exquisitely carved and veneered walnut case, as regularly advertised in The Music Box. How could I miss it? I must have had a Serious Senior Moment. John Farmer

From: Mr W Cooper, Shoreham, Sussex

Sir,

I do not mind writing letters so here is another one. How annoying it is to me to go to an auction and see a musical box being pulled and poked about by people who I don't expect have any interest in it. At a recent auction

this was so, the box in particular was a non-runner, seized up completely, even the fan was solid. Otherwise the comb was complete, also the pins were OK.

Having purchased it for £400, I found in no way could I run it down and it was so tightly wound that I could not release the click. I had to put steel rods through the centre of the barrel shaft, pull it forward, then take off the governor, it took hours to me it seemed until it was finally let down. Having taken the governor to pieces, a long human hair was twined around it. It did not dawn on me until later that once I let the spring down a bit I could have cranked it down.

The box is now OK. It is a PVF box 10airs – 3825

The Old Granite Slate
Chocur Dartchand
Welcome Home
Guillaume Tell
Hoanisha Des Satineurs
Mocking Bird
Le Sosillon Oamour
Apple of My Eye
La Fille Du Mme Angot
Ely Noasom

Yours

Bill Cooper

I believe that some of the above are incorrectly spelled – it is often very difficult to read some of the ancient handwriting on old tune sheets. I have corrected the ones I recognise - Ed

From: Alan K Clark.

Sir,

In his article titled Cheap China Roger Booty asks whether we can date his two musical pots by reference to the type of musical movements that they contain. In a word I think the answer is no, but let me give some information based on a single fact, and observations of the movements found in some other musical items.

The Thorens movement shown has their pressed steel base, this design was

patented in 1927 and used for 18, 28, & 36 note movements. Thorens were still using this pressed steel design for some of their movements fitted into the 1936 and 1937 coronation items, but by this date they were also using ones with diecast zinc bases. Thorens continued to supply pressed steel base movements well into the 1950's as most of the Royal Winton Opera Series mugs have this type and they bear a base stamp "Regist'd Canada 1954". Crown Devon also fitted pressed steel based movements into some their Transfer Printed musicals which started production in 1956.

The Cuendet, (note the first letter is a C not a G) has a cast iron base and is therefore equally difficult to date as these were used from the start of production of these novelty sized movements, ca 1900(?) up to the 1950's.

In conclusion I think Roger's dating of the stein is probably correct as 1950's or slightly earlier, whereas I would date the plain shaped, transfer printed mug as being made in the 1950s or later, as most makers prior to WW2 tended to produce what was then fashionable, i.e., relief moulded items with hand colouring.
Alan K Clark.

Chanctonbury Ring Report (...concluded from page 206)

demonstrated that although artistes who used particular tunes and songs may have claimed to have written them, the tunes, and words, were often stolen from other writers. Using piano rolls and gramophone records the true history of several songs including Daisy Bell and Down at the Old Bull and Bush, were revealed to us. One that caused much humour among the members was the well known Laughing Policeman song which had previously been recorded as Laughing P C Brown, but was actually American in origin.

Thus ended a very enjoyable meeting and Ted, Kay and their helpers are to be congratulated.

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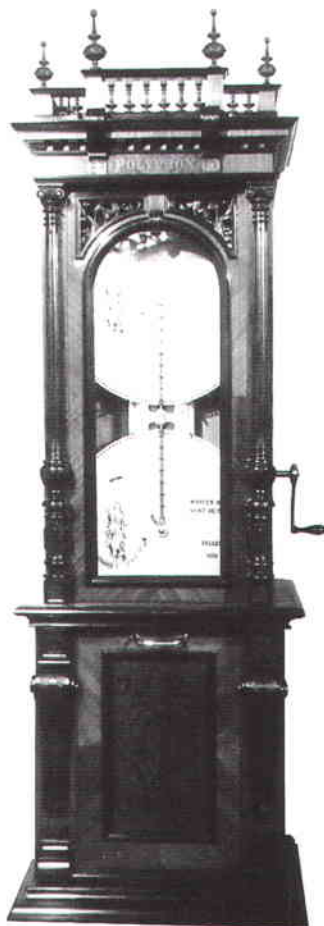
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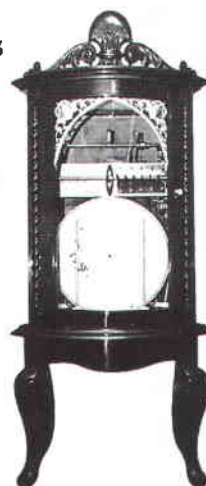
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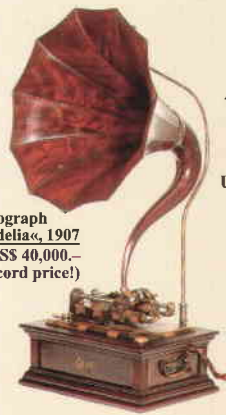
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Phonograph »Edison Idelia«, 1907
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Mechanical Music Automaton »The Clown Little Tich«, by Rouillet & Decamps, Paris, 1910 (I-02)
Sold for: US\$ 27,110.– / £ 17,881.– (World record price!)



Doll Automaton »The Monkey Magician« by Phalibois, Paris, c. 1880 (II-04)
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Bonhams¹⁷⁹³

Mechanical Music Sales at Bonhams London and Knowle

We are currently accepting entries for our forthcoming Mechanical Music sales:

Tuesday 30 September Knowle
Tuesday 18 November London

For further information about these sales, or for a free valuation with a view to selling at auction, please contact:

Laurence Fisher
+44 (0) 8700 273 633
laurence.fisher@bonhams.com

Catalogue

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Illustrated:

An important and fine gold and enamel musical snuffbox in the form of a book, Swiss, circa 1815, the movement signed Nicole & Meylan a` Genève, lerit, the case most probably by Piguet
Sold for £38,400 in March 2008

Bonhams

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