

The **Music Box**

An International Journal of Mechanical Music



In this issue:

- The Speaking Book
- MBSGB Tour to Germany
- Pictures from Paris
- Making a Musical Box

The Journal of the Musical Box Society of Great Britain

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Dreweatts¹⁷⁵⁹



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From the Editors' Desk

Global Warming has become Climate Change, America has a new President, the global economy has taken a down turn – life goes on quietly for most of us, but change continues as history is made and the new century moves toward the end of its first decade. The Music Box begins a new volume with this issue. Our researchers continue to bring to light new information on machines and makers, and with this edition we also begin a new series on How to Make a New Musical Box! This promises to be a fascinating voyage of discovery and we fully appreciate Don Busby's efforts – not only his experimental and development work, but also his documentation of his trials and successes, so that we can benefit from his research if we wish to emulate him, or which may help us appreciate even more the amazing work of the makers of a hundred and fifty years earlier. It is a generous sharing of his experiences, to the benefit of the Society as a whole.

We are always delighted to receive emails from Luuk Goldhoorn, as they usually pressage an intriguing new piece of information or research. The great majority of us will perhaps have looked at the small composition snuff boxes and wondered about the scenes depicted on the lids. In his article Pictures from Paris, Luuk encourages us to use historical landmarks, as depicted in period publications, to help with dating and identifying such scenes.

Nicholas Simons has provided a detailed and well illustrated article on the Speaking Book he has added to his collection. As with practically all pneumatically operated machines and instruments, it is becoming rarer to find these still working well. Leather and rubber cloth have a finite life after all (and so will card).

The colour supplement features the wonderful Society meeting in Germany. The next proposed overseas meeting may well be in America. That too will be an amazing trip. Do try to take advantage of it and not just see the pictures afterwards in the Journal – 'get a slice of the action', to quote my young friends. It will be the trip of a lifetime!

It is amazing what is offered for sale on the Internet auction site eBay. There are so many millions of things offered for sale each week that it is hard to see and evaluate them all. We were most amused by Kevin McElhone's find of a bright blue painted Symphonion disc box (with bells, too!). I suppose it is in line with painting the family Steinway Grand with a few coats of white emulsion...

Cover Picture

Hupfeld Violina with double violins, seen on the German Museum Tour.

See article beginning on Page 282.

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Dates for your Diary 2009

Chanctonbury Ring -
Sunday 22nd February 2009
10.30 coffee for an 11am start
Lunch provided
Please contact Ted Brown
on 01403823533

Teme Valley Winders
Saturday 21st March 2009
12 noon start
Please contact John Phillips
on 01584 78 1118

Essex Meeting
Saturday 4th April 2009
10am -4pm
At the Parish Rooms, Holy Trinity Church
Rayleigh, Essex
Bring your own lunch -
coffee & tea provided by us
Why not bring along your own
favourite musical item to show
Please phone Bruce Allen -
01702 23 2040

Spring Meeting 2009
Hampshire
Hosts David and Lesley Worrall
Friday 24th April - 26th April 2009

Chanctonbury Ring
Sunday 10th May 2009
10.30 coffee for an 11am start
Lunch provided
Please contact Ted Brown on
01403823533

Annual General Meeting & Society Auction
Saturday 6th June 2009
Roude Village Hall
Near Northampton
10.30a.m. Start - followed by buffet lunch
Society Auction 2p.m.

Continued on Page 269

President's Message No. 11

We now have three local area groups within the Society and I am pleased to see that the newest group in Essex is now firmly established and flourishing. The formation of local groups within the Society is an excellent way to go so that members can have the opportunity to meet frequently, learn new techniques, enjoy mechanical music and generally have a good time.

Should you be interested in the idea of starting up a local area group, I believe that after making contact with the Society via the committee, a survey of the likely number of members who may attend would be the next move. The publication of our new Membership List should help here in that it would give an idea of how many members were living in a particular region. Add those in a surrounding catchment area of say fifty miles and a realistic number could be obtained. It would require at least ten members to be interested and they would have to be prepared to chip in £8 or so to cover expenses. This should cover the hire of a small village hall for a suitable period and maybe even be enough to fund a cup of tea!

Now the hard work really begins! Finding a meeting place, choosing a date and organising an inaugural meeting would come next and would be time consuming. No doubt the officers of the Society would help if they could, but the bulk of the work would fall into the hands of an individual. Once a meeting has been organised, the Society insurance would cover the event provided always the Meetings Secretary had been informed and there were no date clashes. Mix all this in with a large dose of enthusiasm, hard work and dedication and you have a recipe for success. The successful formation of a new group would be a great achievement for anyone

and would earn the gratitude of the membership.

Whilst on the subject of meetings, our Meetings Secretary has indicated that she is willing to organise a visit abroad this year. This will be a visit to America to attend the meeting of The Musical Box Society International when they celebrate their 60th year. Daphne will be working closely with the MBSI and I understand she will have all the latest information available elsewhere in this journal. Should you require further guidance or have questions to ask, please contact Daphne directly. As the event will be organised and run by the MBSI, Daphne will not be able to control the actual content of the meeting, but she will be consulting constantly with our American friends and have all the latest news

Other meetings for 2009 will take place as planned. We are constantly striving to keep costs down to the minimum. The booking forms have already been issued for the Winchester meeting and several options are available. The autumn meeting will be held in Derby this year and promises to be interesting. The AGM will once again be held at Roade and will include the Society auction. Please contact anyone on the committee, or better still Daphne, if you have any suggestions as to where to hold a Society meeting. Remember we do need an element of mechanical music in any programme.

Before too long, members will have access to the new "all singing, all dancing" Society DVD. This will enable us to look back into the past and rediscover all the interesting articles, features and illustrations that were published in our journal in times past. All of the older journals of the Society had much of

interest in them. There is a wealth of good workshop practice to be mulled over and occasionally an article that causes a wry smile and the comment, "That's out of date or we know better now!" For members who have recently joined the Society, here is a chance to go back and look at what the Society was doing all those years ago. A great deal is fascinating, informative and just as relevant today as it was then.

Should you wish to test the DVD, do have a look for the article that featured the Westminster Carillon that was in Volume 10 No: 5 on pages 170 to 172. By coincidence Arthur Ord-Hume published an article on the same instrument in the last edition of the journal. The two taken together make good reading and inform us of some of the trials and tribulations of the instrument in the 22 intervening years. At least, by the end of 2008, the bells should be sounding out again in their new home.

Do make contact if you feel that there is anything we could usefully write about in the journal. If you have any interesting snippets to do with mechanical music, pass them on to the editors so that we may all hear about them. Writing an article or a letter for publication in the Journal is a positive thing to do. For those who are struggling with a restoration problem, we may be able to help, provided you ask of course! If we cannot assist, at least we will have done our best. Remember the restorer's old adage, "There's a reason for everything. We just haven't found this one yet!" That I believe to be very true when we are trying to work out why some of the early musical box makers did things in the way they did.

Arthur Cunliffe.

Dates for your Diary 2009 Continued

Teme Valley Winders

Saturday 27th June 2009

12 noon start

Please contact John Phillips
on 01584 78 1118

Chanctonbury Ring

Open Day

Saturday 18th July 2009

10.30 coffee for an 11am start

Lunch provided

Please contact Ted Brown
on 01403823533

Teme Valley Winders

Saturday 19th September 2009

12 noon start

Please contact John Phillips
on 01584 78 1118

Chanctonbury Ring

Sunday 4th October 2009

10.30 coffee for an 11am start

Please contact Ted Brown
on 01403823533

Autumn Meeting 2009

Derby

Hosts Nicholas and Eileen Simons

Friday 9th October – 11th October
2009

Chanctonbury Ring - Christmas Meeting

Saturday 28th November 2009

10.30 coffee for an 11am start

Please contact Ted Brown
on 01403823533

Teme Valley Winders – Christmas Meeting

Saturday 5th December 2009

12 noon start

Please contact John Phillips
on 01584 78 1118

MBSGB SPRING MEETING HAMPSHIRE

Friday 24th – Sunday 26th April 2009

Don't forget to book !

Highlights - for David and Lesley Worrall's Spring Meeting

Friday night – Private Dining and Entertainment featuring

Sina Hildebrand & Gotthard Arnold (our hosts of our MBSGB
Overseas Trip 2008) from the famous Wilhelmsbau Museum Speyer
Germany will perform an automaton dance with musical accompaniment

Saturday - David and Lesley's Private Collection

Visit to the popular and renowned Silk Mill

Banquet Dinner and entertainment – "The Bishops Bells" A Hand Bell
Ringing Group

Sunday – Visit to Milestones Living History Museum where additionally
Richard Kerridge & Keith Hilson will display and demonstrate a range of
their Musical Instruments. After lunch depart for home

OVERSEAS TRIP - NEW JERSEY – USA

Join the MBSI 60th 'Diamond Jubilee'

Anniversary celebrations

Tuesday 1st September – Thursday 10th 2009

Highlights - Featuring The Murtogh Guinness Collection
'Tour & Reception'

The Don Neilson Collection

(one of the biggest collections in the States)

The MBSI Museum Collection

Open houses including Colson Conn's collection and lots more

Educational Workshops, Mart, Banquet Dinner and Historic Sites

(for more information please contact Daphne Ladell – 01737 84 3644 or
email Daphne.Ladell@btinternet.com)

MBSGB AUTUMN MEETING DERBY

Friday 9th – Sunday 11th October 2009

'Booking form and full details in next Journal'

Highlights for Nicholas and Eileen Simons' meeting

Friday Night - Private dining and After dinner illustrated talk by Bob
Betts, MD of 'Smith of Derby' Clock manufacturers

Saturday - 3 talks, buffet lunch, afternoon guided visits to the Joseph
Wright art collection and the Rolls-Royce
engine collection.

Banquet Dinner and entertainment –

'The Vivace Ensemble', a string quartet

Sunday - visit Nicholas Simons Collection, followed by buffet lunch
before departing for home at your leisure

Essex Meeting -1st November 2008

from Don Busby

Halloween gave way to a dull, cold Saturday morning for this fifth meeting of the Essex Group at Rayleigh Church Parish Rooms. Attendance of 14 was down from previous meetings due partly to the poor health of several of our friends - we wish them a speedy recovery. Other events were too recent for attendance by some. It was a pleasure to welcome four new faces on this occasion; two long-standing Society members who need no introduction to many were Alan and Daphne Wyatt and two recently joined members, Harvey Reeves and Shaun Burton. We look forward to their company at future meetings.

Making a musical box cylinder was the opening topic by Don Busby who outlined thoughts on what happens when a brass sheet is rolled beyond its elastic limit to form a cylinder. Soldering the seam and making and fitting end caps and dividers were explained. Finally, a dial gauge was used to check circularity of the finished object when it was found that, apart from slight oblateness at the seam, the diameter varied approximately 0.2mm about the mean. Several failures whilst learning and developing techniques were highlighted.

Roger Booty showed us a selection of plastic musical boxes, mainly Fisher-Price toys bought from charity shops. These toys simulated record players, radios, TV sets, a CD player and a video telephone. As well as entertaining children and us, they have an educational function by presenting moving pictures in association with the alphabet and numbers. A discussion ensued about the difficulty of repairing these devices because of the brittleness of old plastic. Roger also displayed a silver musical barrel that turned

out to be a cigarette dispenser from the 1950s. His pièce de résistance was a plastic drumming soldier standing about 15 inches high. In action the soldier has flashing green epaulettes and marches forwards playing his drum. Recordings of background whistles and parade ground orders could be heard.

"First Encounters, Mistakes and a Marriage" was the title of Robert Ducat-Brown's presentation. His *"First Encounter"* was when he spotted a cylinder box movement which had bent pins and missing teeth, on a barrow stall in Covent Garden. The stallholder suggested that with the help of a book from the library Robert should be able to mend it. He bought the machine for £10, a discount of £2 from the asking price. After borrowing a book by A. Ord-Hume and joining the Society, Robert was helped by Jim Colley of Bristol who sold him a cheap BHA on which he practiced before starting repairs on the Covent Garden purchase. Ron Morris made him a governor whilst Robert replaced some teeth and re-pinned the cylinder. He found that it played 5 tunes well, the sixth being a jumble of notes. On attending his first Society Regional meeting Robert was advised to temporarily place a business card between the tune change cam and the cylinder, which brought the last tune into play, he then made adjustments for a perfect 6th tune. He acquired a suitable empty box that completed the restoration. *"Mistakes"* started with a musical box with drum and 6 bells, purchased from Sotheby's. Several teeth had been filed away and some replacement teeth were too soft and needed replacing. Robert made a new set of 14 teeth for Alan Godier to tune, but had to make a second set as Alan rejected his first effort as being too soft. The drum

sounded tinny as Robert neglected to wet a replacement skin before stretching it. Ted Brown interjected with a warning not to stretch wet skins too tightly otherwise they could split whilst drying out. The finished box plays 6 tunes with a very nice tone. The *"Marriage"* of Robert's talk was his bringing together of two items purchased at separate Society auctions. One is a nice smoker's cabinet into which he has fitted his second purchase, a box-less Symphonion movement. Robert played two of his 9 1/2" discs.

The last talk before lunch was by Kevin McElhone who first showed us a box bought from a local auction in Southend and collected today. His disappointment was immediate; the machine had no comb, even though he had specifically asked if any teeth were missing. The lid, however, carries a nice picture, not seen before - one for his collection. His second disc player, last of the big boxes, had a warped lid when purchased, which has been replaced by well-seasoned wood from an old wardrobe. The player case had been nibbled round by a parrot and much wood filling was needed. An unusual feature is that its discs have humps around the periphery between drive holes, presumably for strength. One disc played, *"The Amorous Goldfish"*, another, *"Everybody's Doing It"*, dating it to circa 1910-1920. A plate covers the ends of comb teeth for protection- from the parrot? A Cuendet musical box, which Kevin has for sale, is known to have been with the same family since 1935 when a boy's uncle bought him the instrument in Wimbledon. It was transported in the sidecar of a motorcycle, covered by a tarpaulin, to Norwich where it has remained in single ownership to the present day. Its zither facility is covered by

a finely engraved plate and it plays, "The Blue Danube" and another air. Kevin's last display was a mandolin box in a plain walnut case with an unusual bird inlay on the lid. One tune played was "The Last Rose of Summer", the other two were unknown, the box having no tune sheet. Publication of Kevin's disc box book is not as far advanced as he would have liked, proofreading being rather slow.

The afternoon programme started with Alan Wyatt describing how he had bought a small musical box from two old ladies. It was not in working order and a nephew of the ladies had tried to mend it one wet summer holiday whilst staying with them. He had not been successful and pieces were missing after his attempts. The maker of this mandolin box is unknown and it has a Swiss music sheet with 4 German titles. The four intricate tunes were pleasant, but unrecognised by the audience.

Paul Bellamy gave the next presentation, describing a rare Taylor Organ bought in America. Taylor, a Bristol maker at 57 Broad Quay, was not far from piano maker Hicks. All was original except for pipes. They had been re-constructed competently but in the wrong type of wood. Voicing and tuning were poor. Extensive woodworm damage affected the joints at the casework sides as well as the well-named worm wheel. All rotten case wood had to be cut out and replaced by wood salvaged from an old piano, the joints being 'strapped' across the original joints for added strength. The worm wheel was re-made from beechwood. All areas of woodworm damage were saturated with commercial wood hardener and later drilled out and filled with sticks of wood using PVA wood glue. After trimming, sanding flat then tinting with a blend of spirit-based wood dye, the resulting finish was hard to detect and provided a good base for re-polishing. The original polish

was not capable of revival and so was stripped using a commercial chemical stripper. The treatment did not affect the underlying patina of the wood. There are 37 pipes in total for a scale of 26 stopped pipes; the treble end having open-ended helpers pitched an octave higher. The rear rank of pipes runs from bass at left to treble at right and then continues with the front rank of pipes and helpers from right to left. The tracker bar goes from left to right starting at lowest bass then highest treble so that the middle scale notes are at the right-hand end. The organ is thought to be the only one so far identified of the example illustrated in Mrs. O.F. (actually Amy Catherine) Walton's book, "Home Sweet Home or Christie's Old Organ", written about 1871. She is buried in the churchyard at Leigh in Kent. A new barrel is being constructed to play the tunes named in her book such as Poor Mary Ann (the tune of All through the Night), Rule Britannia and The Marseillaise. The Old Hundredth is pinned on the original barrel with 9 other hymns. The instrument operates on low pressure and sounds like a church organ. Articles appeared in *The Music Box*, Vols. 19/5&6, entitled "A Hick of a Problem". Paul then demonstrated a restored segmented comb key-wind cylinder instrument of the same vintage, the cylinder being only about 1" diameter but thick-walled and without cement, suggesting that this type of early movement could reproduce excellent tone and play for at least 35-40 seconds, comparable with the later cartel movements. Finally, he played a scale model 'Polyphon' that he built as an exact replica but fitted with an adapted Thorens 4" disc movement.

Another Alan, this time A. Clark, gave an amusing and interesting talk on his project to automate an American reed organ. He started by making 10 cylinders and pistons to operate the keys. Unfortunately, a vacuum cleaner at full bore was

necessary to activate the pistons so he rejected this method for a pneumatic/electrical system comprising 12 volt motor with speed control to drive the spool box of a standard player piano via plastic belting, all sourced from "Hobby's". The organ's original exhausters provided 2 1/2" water gauge suction to operate the pianola "pouch board"; electrical contacts above the pouches allowed the 65-note roll (ignoring 4 tracks) to control the organ's 61 notes via solenoids under the keyboard, one per note. The roll motor and the solenoids were all powered by a computer power supply unit. Alan has found that the organ scale is suitable for modern music and intends to cut rolls to play pieces such as, "Music of the Night". The conversion took about 12 months. Because of its bulk, photographs of Alan's achievements had to satisfy our curiosity.

Rodney Tinson presented a musical box, possibly by Mojon Manger, which he had bought from a seller in Ireland. This was lever-wound and needed a cylinder re-pin and restoration of its case. It is a 12 air box of which only 3 titles were known. The audience helped to identify the other 9 with remarks such as, "sounds like a nursery rhyme", "an old English dance", "God Bless..." and, "look up 'Du und Du' on Google"! No firm identification was achieved. Rodney played all tunes, some with combinations of drums and bells. Rodney's second box was a Nicole Frères, Serial No. 23251, in a plain wooden case and not in too good an order. He was advised to clean up the comb and, only if it then rings well, to have it re-dampened.

Ted Brown commenced his talk on early key-wind boxes with good advice not to ignore small manivelles, particularly if there is a button at the front indicating a possible tune change facility. He produced a small, plain boxed example with two tunes, one of

Chanctonbury Ring Meeting

21st September 2008

By Alan K Clark

which was, "Awake my Soul and with the Sun". The first of two key-wind boxes was a Rebiczeck box made in Prague, with a movement generally incorporated into clocks, but which can be found as plain-cased musical boxes. It has 4 steps on its tune change cam, but only offers 2 tunes. Its treble teeth are to the left, at the spring barrel end, with bass notes at the governor end. Ted's second musical box was an Alibert, again in a plain wooden case with a wooden dowel in a corner of the box for key storage. Its 4 airs include piccolo sections played rapidly on several teeth tuned to the same note. Tunes run for about 1 minute and are very densely pinned.

Having earlier played, "Won't you buy my pretty flowers?" and "Oh for a thousand tongues to sing", on a 25 note Cabinetto from a roll cut by himself from sheet music, Bruce Allen rounded off the day's programme. On a GEM organette he played Mozart's, "Sonata in C", which was pinned on a modern cob from Dallas. The manufacture of these cobs is programmed from a computer that controls a pneumatic nail gun to inject pins which follow a spiral pattern for 3 turns round the cob. These organettes were mass-produced from 1885-1925 for a selling price of about £1. Bruce's recent purchase from France of a 36-note manivelle of 1890 is a very intricate wooden representation of a water mill, its wheel being driven by an under-race. A discussion took place about its origin, perhaps the Black Forest or maybe France, also if it was a commercial product or an individual piece by a skilled handyman of yesteryear.

Bruce is to be applauded for again arranging an interesting day with its well-filled programme. He also proved a deft hand at providing sustenance in Margaret's absence. We hope to see her in good health when next we meet, on 4th April 2009. At this meeting it is planned to demonstrate two of the rarer organettes.

A bright morning greeted those members and guests who travelled to the latest Chanctonbury Ring meeting. The good weather continued whilst we enjoyed our packed lunches, and devoured all of Ted and Kay's delicious puddings whilst sat outside, either in the sun, or the shade as preferred. The morning music also started brightly with the sounds of the Faventia piano playing a spirally pinned, three tune barrel. Next we tried to identify the four airs played on David's early, circa 1830's F Nicole box. Ted cunningly explained our total lack of success, by saying that as there were only four tunes to choose from, we did not have a reasonable chance!

Daphne then explained the long and complicated process that she, with Clive's assistance, had undertaken to restore a very rare instrument, the Cordaphon. This was an automatic zither played by metal discs. Tuning the strings had presented considerable problems, not to mention the damper mechanism. Despite the difficulties Daphne bravely demonstrated it, and doubtless the tuning difficulties will be overcome. Ted then played a tune or two on his Hicks of Bristol street piano. This was followed by Paul's talk, illustrated with gramophone records of the Music Hall. Some of these were the gramophone

companies versions of what they thought the Music Hall would have sounded like, some were the Music Hall songs sung by the original artists. Clearly the Music Hall was not quite the staid organised entertainment that used to be portrayed in the "Good Old Days" television show. As usual Paul's talk was well researched, very well presented, and very entertaining.

After lunch Daphne demonstrated a very pleasant sounding interchangeable cylinder box by Billon-Heller. I don't know how many sizes of these boxes were made, but this one with 11 1/8 inch by 2 3/8 inch cylinders must have been one of the larger, if not perhaps the largest, and was very heavy when the case was filled with all the cylinders. We then attempted to name some tunes on a buffet box for Kevin, and heard some tunes from Porter 15 1/2 inch discs. Ted then played us some tunes on his Triola, which he reminded us was patented in 1919. The afternoon ended with tunes played on the Aeolian Orchestrelle, and a mandolin version of a waltz played on the Steck Pianola.

Thus ended another very enjoyable Chanctonbury Ring meeting. Many thanks go to Ted, Kay, and their helpers, (i.e. members' wives.)

Chanctonbury Ring Christmas Meeting 29th November 2008

By Alan K Clark

As expected Ted and Kay had a full house for their latest Christmas meeting held at the Old School Bucks Green, two new members, and several of our regulars from the Essex meetings also attended. This meeting had an extra temptation with the possibility of purchasing extra musical items via one of the societies silent auctions. The items ranged from manivelles, through snuffboxes, to disc and cylinder boxes. The morning started with some excellent tunes played on Pete's Piccolo Zither box.

Roger Booty then gave a very interesting talk on the products sold in the UK by the Maxfield organisation. Serious research suggests that all these instruments were probably made in the USA, and modified in the UK to allow them to play the endless bands which Maxfield seemed to prefer for UK sales. In some cases even the tracker bar assembly was changed to one of a different size. The first organette music chosen was Cherry Ripe, this was played on a 20 note Bijou Orchestrone which used a roll of only 3 1/2 inch width. Needless to say the first carol of the day was not long coming, and was Christmas Day in the Morning. Ted continued the US made, UK modified theme by showing his 14 note Jubal Orchestrone.

Daphne then entertained us with tunes for identification on her "Nursery Rhyme Box", the members managed to name many of the 12 tunes, and some were indeed nursery rhymes. We next managed to identify about 2 1/2 out of 4 tunes on Bill Sargeant's box.

Following our fine lunch supplied by Ted, Kay and their helpers, we moved on to carols played on Ted's Faventia barrel piano. This was followed by a selection of new discs played on the 15 1/2 inch Polyphon and Regina machines. Mohan then demonstrated his twin comb 12 1/8 inch Porter Regina machine. This was followed in time honoured fashion with a selection of modern musical Christmas toys, the general idea being that the more zany the better. Sanity was restored by Bruce playing some rolls he had hand cut for his Cabinetto organette, and very good they sounded. Next Ted played us Silent Night on his Triola, and this was followed by more Christmas musical novelties, the more banal they were, the greater

the laughter. To return to serious music the prize for the best rendition of Silent Night however went to Kevin for his rendition of it, with variations, on the Aeolian Orchestrelle. The silent auction was judged a success with most of the items being sold.

Thus our festive season was started off in what to us Chanctonbury Ring members has become a time honoured, and eagerly awaited manner. A member of the group thanked Ted, Kay, and all those who helped to make the day such a great success.

Dates for your diary. The dates for Ted's summer meetings are: - May 10th, and the summer Open Day will be held on July 18th.



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An International Restoration Project for Mechanical Musical Instruments?

A survey of USA, European and UK restorers revealed their views on the future of restoration. The facts:

1. Restoration is a highly skilled activity. Those who practise have the personal skills, equipment and musical appreciation to perform all or part of a restoration/repair task.

2. Professional restorers have to earn their living and charge appropriate rates. Thus most work tends to be carried out on higher value items for customers who can afford the cost.

3. Restorers encounter the appalling results of amateur repairs, sometimes beyond restoration.

Almost without exception, professional restorers in the survey have the following problems/concerns:

4. Little or no time or resources and the high cost to train people.

5. Most professionals approaching a time where they can foresee retirement.

6. Very little incentive/interest shown by young people.

7. Those interested are mostly retired, with a mechanical and non-musical background.

8. The falling value of low and mid-range instruments.

9. The lack of public awareness about mechanical music. Several experts expressed an interest in passing on skills, both in retirement and as part of their working career. They also expressed ideas on how this could be done, such as master-class workshops.

Amateurs and Professionals.

All agreed that there is a huge gulf between these two categories but there was a general acceptance that amateurs with good mechanical skills, particularly when combined with musical understanding, was a basis upon which to build under guidance.

To summarise the restorers' views:

A serious shortage of professional restorers is likely within the next 10 years

Something needs to be done.

Societies should support proposals/initiatives to redress these concerns.

Discussion:

There are a number of good books on restoration but these are limited by their copyright.

There are many good articles

in Society Journals but they lie within those pages and are not easily accessible, even to society members. There is no public domain, such as the various Horological Societies, that supports and provides training and qualification standards.

The way forward???:

Ideally, an internationally accepted route, backed in principle by the various Society Executives to build up and make available:

1. A restoration manual, comprising the various elements required to restore each category of mechanical instruments. In short, a Workshop Manual, progressively produced, vetted by professionals and made freely available to those wanting to acquire appropriate skills in a staged manner.

2. A network of people to whom reference can be made and guidance sought in respect of a guided learning process based on the Manual. I.e. a 'Buddy' mentoring system.

How could this be done??

Both the USA and UK have had workshop seminars (Regularly at the MBSI Annual Convention as well ad-hoc by some member restorers; in the UK, Ted Brown's workshops with demonstrations on dampering, comb repair, pinning etc.)

MBSGB is investing in video recording and projection equipment, capable of use by the amateur, that may be useful to record any future workshop. Professional members, it is hoped, may wish to contribute their specific skills using this equipment.

If such a process, or the like, is agreed in principle, then it has to be controlled at Executive level, including funding. MBSGB would be willing to collaborate with any other interested Society to exchange ideas and bring such a scheme to fruition.

It will take much effort, a

long time, but would be of great practical value.

The Committee invites the input of members on this subject to help in the decisionmaking process.

Whether you are a restorer, professional or amateur, or a collector who requires restoration services, or you just have an opinion, we want to hear from you. Write or e-mail to the Correspondence Secretary with the heading "Restoration Project", and also state whether you are happy for your comments to be published.

All letters will be read and

some will be published in The Music Box in order to further encourage a dialogue. Bear in mind that we are referring to all types of mechanical music, not just musical boxes.

If you have any views on this important subject, please communicate them to the Correspondence Secretary as above, or to the Editors, who can forward them! -

Ed

This, That and T'Other. No: 4

Stemming from the interest in the publication of The Postcard Book, I was very pleased to have the chance to examine a copy of an old postcard of a barrel piano being used in a south Lakeland village. Accompanying the postcard was a request, "Did I know anything about the village of Holme?" Apart from knowing that it was in south Lakeland, I knew little else.

By now many of you will have looked at the picture and spotted that the card was posted in the year 1906 and that a barrel piano was the centre of attraction. A second look at the postcard showed that unlike most barrel pianos of the time which were pushed along by hand, this one was a single horse power model. The person operating the barrel piano

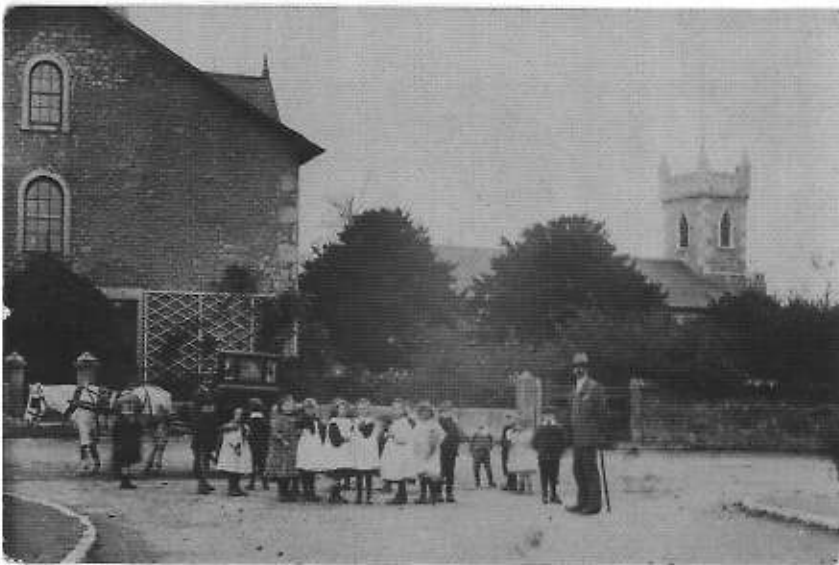
was also quite well dressed for the times totally unlike the poorer people often depicted in pictures of the period. How unusual! Here surely was a musician who had come to the village of Holme sometime between the year 1900 and 1906 to perform for the benefit of the locals.

Further investigation seemed to be appropriate, so a visit to Holme was planned to see what could be found out. Surprisingly, the exact spot in the village was located easily and little seemed to have changed during the past one hundred years. True, the road had been surfaced and had been painted with its allocation of white and yellow lines. Trees and fences had gone and a clock had been fitted into the church tower, but the gate posts of the

house were still in place announcing to all that the establishment they were about to enter was called Trinity House.

We were advised to visit the local historian who we were assured knew absolutely everything about everything in Holme. The next hour was spent delving into the history of Holme and viewing archival postcards of the period. Cutting a long story short, it was concluded that the gentleman with the walking stick was not the headteacher of the local school but a respected worthy of the village. His picture had been seen in other postcards of the era.

Local records show that in 1905, the village was trying to raise money to buy a piano for the local school. Maybe this was an

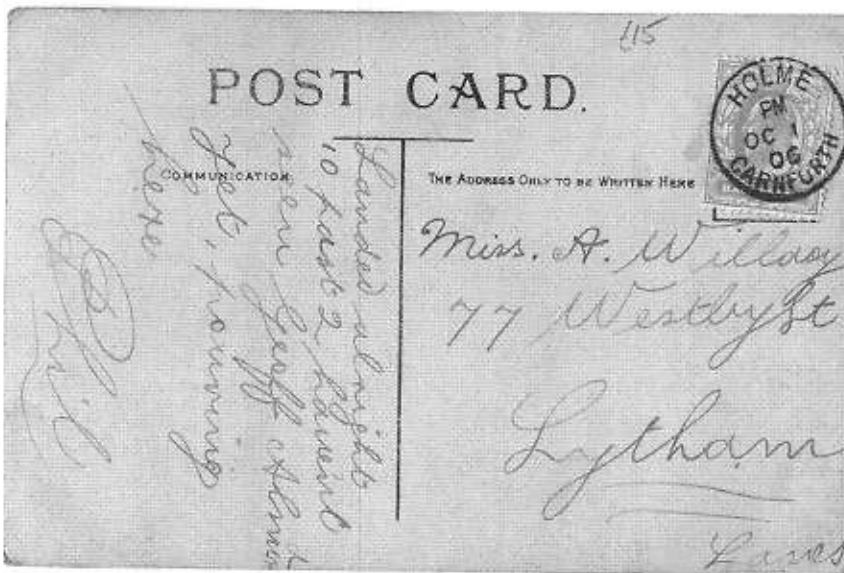


knowing full well that proud parents would wish to purchase a picture of their offspring resplendent in their "Sunday best".

No doubt as more people gathered round, extra tunes were played and more pennies were dropped into the hat.

If only I had a barrel piano, a horse and a cart I could try to re-enact the episode again one hundred and three years later. Alas, I lack all of these adjuncts and anyway the road would be far too dangerous nowadays for such an exercise. I presume that the rules and regulations of today would not allow busking on the highway and goodness only knows what "Elf and Safety" would have to say!

Arthur Cunliffe.



event organised as a fund raiser for this purpose. We shall never know.

At first it was thought that the children had come out of school just for the occasion. Then it was noticed that they had been carefully posed for the picture including the small boy near the barrel piano with his back to the camera! Surely the musician and the photographer had contrived to work together to maximise the occasion. The photographer would be able to sell many more postcards to the local shop



Register News No: 62

Another milestone has been reached in that the number of Nicole boxes on the Register has reached to just over the 3,000 mark. If we assume that around 50% of the total number of boxes that were manufactured has not survived the passage of time, then we now have left a 10% sample on which to base any hypotheses. We can at last make some predictions that are likely to have some degree of accuracy.

It is important that we try to locate all of the surviving Nicole boxes that remain un-registered. I hope all members will take the trouble to record their own boxes, and additionally record the details of any boxes they may see in auction rooms or museums. If you have still not registered your boxes, please do so as soon as you can. Forms for registering are available on the Society website and can be returned to The Registrar c/o 5, East Bight, Lincoln. LN2 1QH or to MBSGB, PO box 373, Welwyn, AL6 0WY. In both cases forms will get back to me. I am hoping that in the near future it will be possible for anyone to send in returns via the internet. It is always useful to send me an email anyway so that I know that information is coming. I will then be able to inform you that your letter and information has arrived safely. The email address is: adcunliffe@btinternet.com. Mark it as MBSGB Register so that I know it is not junk mail! I hope that in the not too distant future Register forms will be included as a flyer in the journal.

The rest of this article will be about information taken from the Register on Nicole boxes. The total number now registered comes to 3,012 of which 1,448 are keywind, 1,463 are lever wind with 72 being ratchet wind. The remaining 29 remain unidentified. The surprise

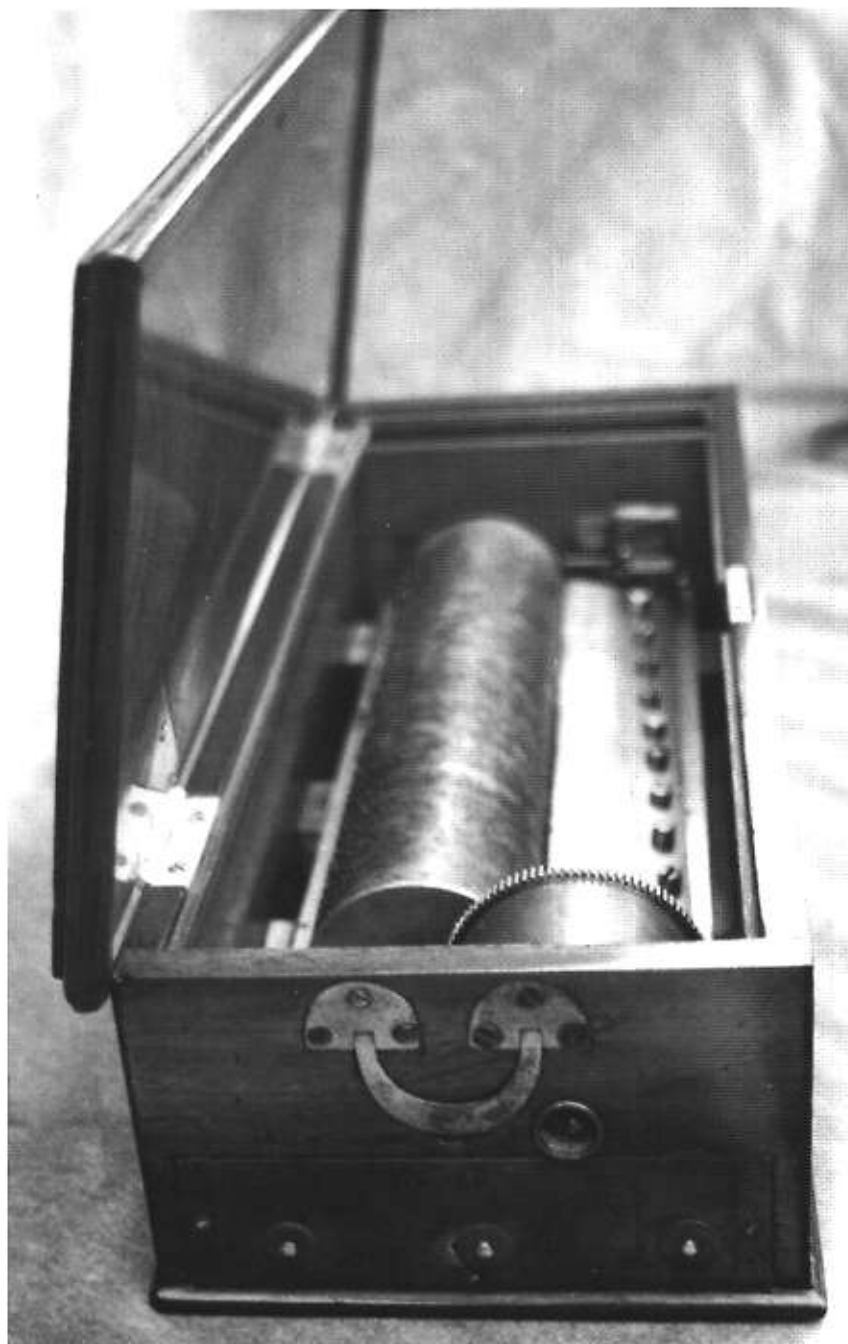


Fig 1. François Nicole box with the exposed "button" type controls.

here is the fact that keywind and lever wind are so nearly equal in numbers. It is also obvious that any box that has a ratchet winder must have been regarded as being exceptional in some way, or possibly have had one ordered specially.

I believe that Nicole gave up making 2 and 3 air boxes quite quickly and this is borne out in the survival figures for these types.

Just a total of 65 for both. After a brief spell making small 12 air 2 per turn boxes, Nicole dropped the idea for a few years developing it later to make the larger models with "fat" cylinders. There are 502 of this later type of box listed in the Register.

It appears that Nicole produced the majority of their 4 air boxes in the early to mid-period of their output. They were gradually dropped as it

was realised that, without changing production methods too drastically, the number of tunes could be increased and a "better value for money" box could be made. As a result only 352 of these 4 air boxes feature on the Register with none featuring in the later records.

The three types of box that became the mainstay of their output were the 6, 8 and 12 air boxes. There are 801 of the 6 air boxes, 899 of the 8 air and 493 of the 12 air boxes listed. Within these three categories are the Overture, Forte-piano, Grand Format, Mandolin and Hymn boxes. Overture boxes are much more common than one would expect coming in with 425 boxes. Boxes playing more than 12 tunes appear to be all of a later manufacture and feature in relatively very small numbers.

When Nicole first started making boxes they gave an individual number to each tune. Quite quickly they must have realised that this way of working caused problems, so they devised the gamme number system. We know they had at least one book of tunes, but no example of this book seems to have survived. The hope is that one day such a record will be found. The change to using the gamme number system appears to have taken place around the 13,000 series. A computer record is being kept of all individual tune numbers in the hope that someone in the future may be able to unravel the puzzle of which tune had which number.

In the later years it looks as though Nicole rather lost their way and ceased to be the foremost musical box maker. The founders of the firm had died and their successors had grown old and were ready to retire. When the firm was finally sold, it was in a much reduced state with other manufacturers having taken over the lead role. I realise that these are bold statements to make and I would welcome comments from anyone who feels that they



Fig 2. Later Nicole Frères box.

disagree with these views. If you think that you can add anything else at all, please do so by writing a letter to the editor so that we all may benefit.

The two pictures for this edition of Register News typify the earlier work of the Nicole firm. The first shows a François Nicole box with the exposed "button" type controls. It illustrates perfectly the high standards that were commonplace at the time. The second picture also shows that, although time has

marched on a few years, the high standards had not been forgotten. My personal belief is that Nicole made their finest boxes during this period with boxes made pre and in the 20,000 series being superb. Between 30,000 and 40,000 the boxes are still excellent, but to my ears just not quite as good tonally. However, that could be me getting it wrong or my hearing letting me down!

Arthur Cunliffe.

Playing the Blues...

A Symphonion doesn't have to be a boring brown colour - this one is in beautiful blue paint with flowers! - seen by Kevin McElhone on eBay.



Pictures from Paris

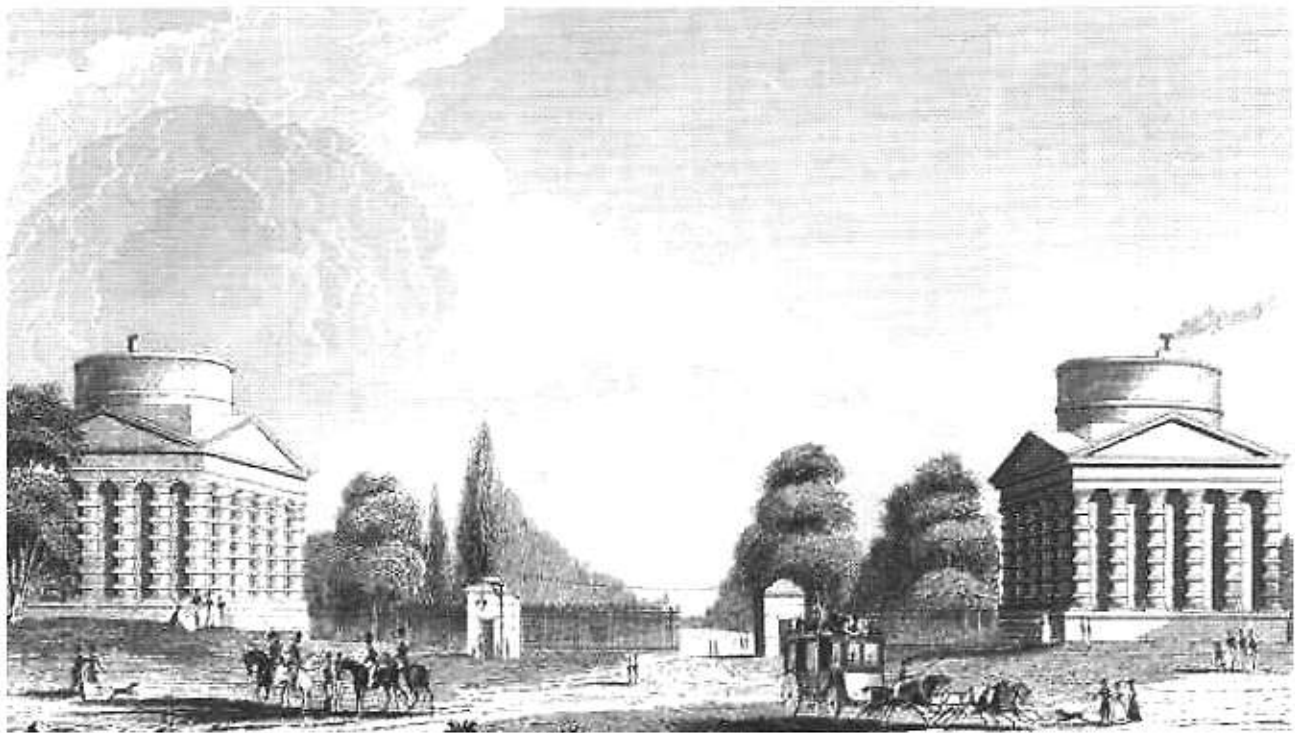


Fig 1. from 'Paris and its Environs' circa 1830, and lacking the Arc de Triomphe.

Favre's invention was reported in the annals of the Société des Arts from 15th of February 1796 as a musical work in a "boîte de fer blanc" - in a blank tin box.

But watch makers thought Favre's invention could be more favourable for their business so they incorporated the musical work in expensive objets de vertue. So the earliest examples which are known are rings, pendants, knives and watches.

It lasted until 1809, when the first snuff boxes appeared, and of course the boxes were made of gold, often decorated with pearls and enamel pictures.

Another ten years were to elapse before the first musical snuff box was made of wood, sometimes decorated with silver or gold work but often with a cover with a painting under glass. In those years also tortoiseshell boxes were introduced. They lasted until the mid 50's for the more expensive boxes.

In the mean time the manufacturers

had discovered that there was also a market for the not-too-expensive boxes, which resulted in boxes as Favre had shown at the Société: a simple tin box. These boxes were mostly decorated with Swiss scenes and became a well appreciated souvenir for the tourists.

When, around 1825 the French mastered the art of making mouldable plastics out of pieces of surplus horn ground up with lamp black and rubber, it became possible to mould the case. In the beginning they were only decorated with a lozenge or oval in which the owner could place his initials*, but quite soon most of them were decorated with geometric forms, allegoric themes and titled scenes mostly from Paris.

From then on and until at least 1870 almost all the tabatières were made of tin or of this plastic-like material.

The tin boxes were decorated with local scenes and assembled in Switzerland, the black composition boxes were made in Paris. A huge

number of musical works were exported, and boxed in Paris, and as the tourist market was a good part of their economy, the lids were decorated with scenes of Paris.

One can find almost all the main Parisian buildings on musical snuff boxes e.g. le Dome des Invalides, le Chambre des Députés, l'Arc de Triomphe, la Bourse but of course not the Eiffel tower which was not completed until 1889.

Were these pictures made from original sketches or were they copied?

Both statements are partly true as was discovered by accident.

A musical snuff box was decorated with a picture of the "Barrière de l'Étoile". Readers may remember in Paris the name "Place d'Étoile" (Since 1970 the place is baptized Place Charles de Gaulle) with, in the centre, the "Arc de Triomphe". But before this Arc was built and the place got its name, it was called Barrière de l'Étoile.

Searching in Google brought a

The Speaking Picture Book and How it Works

By Nicholas Simons

The Speaking Picture Book was a popular novelty, made in the early part of the 20th century. It consists of a large, hard bound book, just slightly larger than today's A4, comprising only 22 sides of print or pictures, but containing within its very deep back an intricate set of mechanisms which can create very realistic imitations of the sounds of the farmyard, and more.

The frontispiece states that the book can be had at all Booksellers and Toy Shops in English, German, French and Spanish editions. Mine is a seventeenth edition and has a hand

written inscription dated 1913. The book is designed to be read to a child and used under adult supervision, as in those days children were to be seen and never heard! The introductory rhyme ends thus;

**It's meant for children good and mild,
Not for the rude and naughty child
Who cries and stamps with rage.
But you, I know, deserve this treat,
So, side by side, upon the seat
We'll turn each pretty page.**

Each double page comprises a rhyme

describing a farmyard animal and on the right-hand margin an arrow indicates which string to pull. There are nine strings up the right-hand side of the book, each one operating a bellows mechanism that creates the required sound. The strings, starting at the bottom, create these sounds;

Cock, Donkey, Lamb, Birds, Cow, Cuckoo, Goat, Papa and Mamma.

Fig 1 shows the complete book. The majority of the thickness is taken up by the box for the mechanism, and this leads to stress on the page bindings. It is common for the pages to become loose and this is the case on my example. The nine strings can be seen, along with the carved apertures along both the bottom and top sides of the box which let out the sounds.

Fig 2 shows the internal view of the entire mechanism. The book's spine is along the top edge. The bellows assigned to each sound are; Cock, top left, Donkey, bottom left, Lamb, middle left, Birds, open bellows, Cow, top right, Cuckoo, centre, Goat, middle right, Papa and Mamma, bottom right.

Papa and Mamma both use the same bellows by a set of linkages and valves.

Operating principles

All but the Birds and Cuckoo use reeds and resonators to create their sound. This is the same principle



Fig 1. The Complete Book

Pictures from Paris (Continued)

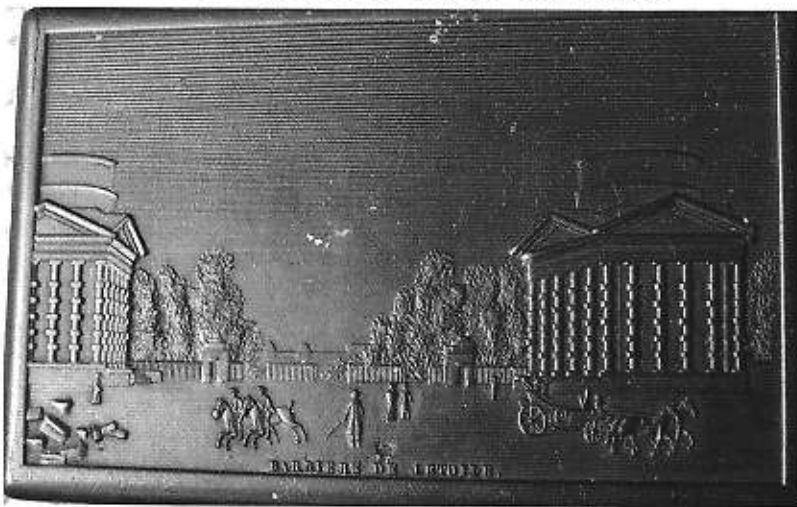


Fig 2. Snuff box top

picture of that Barrière taken from a book called Paris and its environs, published by Jennings and Chaplin in London 1828-1830.

Comparing this picture (fig. 1) with the snuff box (fig. 2) makes it clear that the buildings are copied from the engraving, but in the foreground other people, horses and carriages are depicted.

As the Arc de Triomphe was completed in 1836 (the building started already in 1806) such a box

must have been completed before that year, but not before Jennings' book was published. So the box can be dated 1830 - 1835, and that fits with its comb with sections of four.

There remains the question: are most of the Paris views on snuff boxes copied from this book or is the Barrière just an exception?

*) It is remarkable how few boxes with engraved initials have survived

used by fairground organs for trumpet and trombone pipes. The metal reed vibrates under the pressure of the wind, and the resonator's shape and length help to create the correct characteristic of the sound. The resonators are either parallel or conical and someone has spent a lot of time getting the combination of reed and resonator just right for each sound. The Cow's sound is the deepest and this is created by having a resonator twice as long as the bellows and bent round 180° at one end.

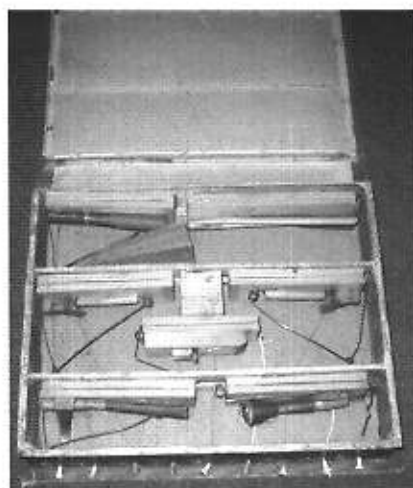


Fig 2. The interior

All but the Birds have a small flap valve in the stationary board of the bellows so that the bellows can fill with air when the string is pulled and the bellows is opened. These bellows are sprung closed by a wire spring fixed to the moving board and connected back to the fixed board by a wire at the opening end of the bellows. This wire plays a very ingenious part in creating the sounds on certain bellows. On releasing the string, the bellows closes under the force of the spring, causing the air to be expelled through the reed.

All bellows are covered in a thin, shiny, card. There is no rubber cloth or leather used. In spite of this, all bellows are in good condition, a testament to parental supervision.

The Birds is a simple 'sprung open' bellows with a small hole in the moving board. This whistles when the bellows is opened and closed.



Fig 3. The Cock mechanism

Cock

Fig 3 shows the detail of the Cock bellows. If you look carefully at the wire holding the end of the spring you can see three small 'joggles' bent into the wire. A wire loop stuck into the opening end of the bellows runs along this wire and the change of resistance imparted to the bellows as it closes creates 'cock-a-doodle-do'. Very simple, but ingenious.

Goat

Fig 4 shows the Goat bellows. The principle is the same, except that the spring wire is wound in a small diameter helix. This time it is a small nail that runs along the wire creating the undulating call of the goat.

Cuckoo

Fig 5 shows the Cuckoo bellows. This is shown in the open position with the string pulled. A flue type organ pipe is affixed to the moving board and this has a supplementary flap valve in the top surface. When the bellows is open, this flap valve is also open. Half way to closed, the flap valve



Fig 4. Goat bellows and Mama & Papa

is allowed to close by means of a spring and wire. Closing the flap valve causes a change to the effective length of the pipe and the pitch therefore changes. The result is a very realistic cuckoo.

Papa and Mamma

These two sounds share a single bellows which is shown in the bottom of Fig 4.

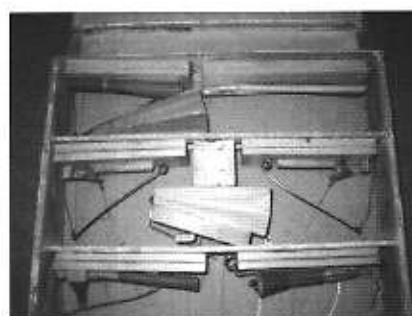


Fig 5. The Cuckoo bellows

Each string passes through a wire loop in the bellows moving board and then passes down to a slide valve at the side of the bell-end of the resonator. This either opens or closes a small hole depending on which string is pulled. From its fully open position, the bellows closes by spring force and a wire follower runs along the bent wire sticking up at the right hand end. This movement is transferred to the resonator bell-end by a thin wire link where it operates a circular valve either opening or closing the opening, in a similar way to how a trumpet player uses his mute. The only difference between Papa and Mamma is that the small hole in the side of the bell-end is either closed (Papa) or open (Mamma).

Today's children have no need for such novelties, having at their fingertips such electronic wonders as MP3 players, Blu-ray and the Internet. Let us not forget that one hundred years ago a lucky child could have the sounds of the farmyard in his nursery, all by the wonders of modern pneumatic technology!

MBSGB Overseas Tour to Speyer, Germany

Society Overseas Tour for 2008 gives members an excellent opportunity to gain privileged access to some of the outstanding and unusual Mechanical Music collections to be found on the continent, in Speyer, Bruchsal, Beilngries and Basel, as well as an opportunity to visit tourist attractions in Nuremburg and Heidelberg.

The high standards of Musical Box Society of Great Britain Overseas Tours established over the past 20-25 years were very well maintained by our latest tour. On this occasion, the tour was centred on Speyer in Germany and our hosts were Sina Hildebrand and Gotthard Arnold. They had worked very hard indeed with our Meetings Secretary to make the detailed arrangements for our stay and had been responsible for assembling what was to prove an excellent programme of interesting and varied visits, both musical and non-musical in content and interest.

Day 1 – Travel to Speyer.

To avoid the ridiculously high prices quoted by the airlines for group travel tickets, individual members were made responsible for their own travel arrangements to & from Frankfurt Airport. Although this approach saved the better part of £100 per person, it did mean that several members had to spend some time waiting at Frankfurt airport for other members of the party to arrive. More significantly, such arrangements carried the risk that our tour could get off to a very late and very disorganized start.

However, this was not the case and at 6.30pm on Tuesday 21st October 2008, with all 24 members on the tour safely in Frankfurt, complete with luggage, we were on our way by coach to our hotel. This was in Speyer, some 60-70 miles to the south on the banks of the Rhine where, on our arrival, we were met by Sina and Gotthard, our hosts for the visit.

The hotel is located on the campus of the Speyer Technik Museum, which, together with its sister site in nearby Sinsheim, houses the largest private collection of Mechanical and Technical artefacts in Europe, from very large steam locomotives and aircraft, such as Concord or a Boeing 747, down to models and toys.

Day 2 – Bruchsal & Speyer.

On Wednesday morning, we went to the Deutsches Musikautomaten Museum in Bruchsal. There we were privileged to have a conducted tour, in English, around the 450 or so mechanical music instruments that form this superb collection which is considered to be one of the largest and most versatile of its kind in the world.

On our tour, we were allowed to examine and hear more instruments than would have been the case had we been just visiting members of the public. Among the many instruments that we saw and heard, the following were of note:

- an Accordion Boy with Negro Drummer;
- a barrel Piano by L Spiegel of Ludwigshafen, one of only 2 known to exist, the other being in the possession of a Society member;
- a Bacigalupo street organ - which we were allowed to play and Roger Brooks obliged;
- several organ clocks;
- an 1829 Street Organ with dancers & musician automata - another instrument that we were allowed to play and on which Ted Brown did the honours;
- a Bruder Organ with an orchestra of automaton figures dressed in the uniforms of Baden state firemen; this had been made specially for a successful immigrant to the USA from Baden who settled in Coney Island and, in 1912, decided to have something that reminded him of his place of birth.

- A large organ constructed for a wealthy citizen, with pipe work that extended upwards through the three floors of the house and from which the music could be heard anywhere in the house;

- Finally, we were shown a Philharmonia Organ built by Michel Welte of Freiburg in 1912 and, from documentation found inside the organ during restoration, is now believed to have been built for the Titanic but was not installed before that ship sailed on its ill-fated first voyage.

Leaving Bruchsal, we returned to our hotel for lunch, and then walked across to the Wilhelmsbau block on the museum campus for a visit to the Speyer Museum's own collection of Mechanical Music instruments. Sina and Gotthard are responsible for the restoration and maintenance of the instruments in this collection, which also includes some of their own personal items. Consequently, we were privileged to have close access to every instrument of the collection that was on display and the opportunity of listening to many of them play as many times we wished or time permitted.

On our first entry in to the main room of the collection, the sight of a human "automaton figure" dressed in Pierrot costume greeted us. This proved to be Sina who then gave a performance based on the famous automaton piece "The Pierrot Letter Writer" made by Michel Bertrand. During her performance Gotthard played the hand

organ that Sina herself had designed and built whilst studying for her degree in engineering.

We were treated next to a musical concert as Sina and Gotthard played in turn the instruments that form the backbone of the Speyer collection, the Organs, the Orchestrions and the Player Pianos. Whilst some sat and relaxed, others went behind the protective screens to examine the instruments in closer detail, but all, however occupied, revelled in the music being played by a varied range of well housed, well presented and maintained mechanical music instruments.

Amongst the instruments of note that we saw and heard were:

- a Hupfeld Phonoliszt-Double Violina – a special design with two violins playing together;

- 2 large Pipe Orchestrions built in 1861 & 1892 by Imhof & Mukle

- a "Roland" Orchestrion of 1928 by Popper of Leipzig, regarded as marking the peak of Orchestrion development, technically and musically – it is fitted with swell shutters, wooden in the base and glass in the top, and a Lotus Flute, a stopped flute with a tremolo device that produces a rising & falling tone to imitate the human voice;

- a "Unika" Orchestrion of 1920 by Weber of Waldkirch in the Black Forest;

- a "Pepita" Orchestrion of 1908 by Hupfeld of Leipzig;

- a "Grandezza" Orchestrion, circa 1923, by Weber of Waldkirch in the Black Forest, designed to play xylophone solos too complex to be played by the human hand;

- a Cinema Organ built in 1925 by Robert Morton of the USA, with two manuals, 88 keys, illumination and sound effects;

- a Pipe Violin by Hupfeld of Leipzig, built in 1912, another very rare instrument of which only three examples are known to exist worldwide;

We were then given an extended tour of the rooms on the other three floors of the building housing other items of mechanical music, the cylinder and the disc musical boxes, and again we were allowed privileged access to examine them closely as well as hear them play.

The instruments that we saw and heard at Speyer were by no means exhaustive of the full collection as other items are either in store or located at the sister site in Sinsheim.

Following dinner we were delighted to find that we had a surprise addition to our programme. Through their role as mechanical music technical support to the Museum, Sina & Gotthard had been able to arrange for us to enjoy a private visit to the Museum's main Technical Exhibition housed nearby in the Lille Hall. Here are displayed not only many of the museum's transport exhibits, but also, 5 Street/Fairground organs and one Carousel.

We were very privileged indeed, as members of the MBSGB, to be able to enjoy this private viewing in a hall devoid of the public and other extraneous noise. During this visit we saw and heard the following instruments:

- a 1940's Dance Organ by Decap of Antwerp
- a second Decap Dance Organ built in 1969
- a 1922 Mortier Dance Organ, the longest ever built with a frontal width stretching for 42 feet [12.5 meters],
- a Welte Philharmonic Organ built in 1916 by the Welte subsidiary firm in New York;
- a Two Floor Carousel built around 1890 complete with 20 carved wooden horses and 2 boats, the music being provided by a Bruder organ built around 1850 & now converted to run with a 33 key Ruth key frame.

As this was a private visit, Society members were able to take a ride on either the horses or in the boats of this superbly presented Carousel, a privilege certainly not available to the public in these health & safety conscious days!

Listening to the music of these organs and riding on the Carousel in the quiet of an otherwise deserted & dimly lit exhibition hall, made an altogether nostalgic and magical end to a very full & successful day! On our return to the hotel, one member was heard to remark that the first day's visits alone made the whole tour worthwhile!

Day 3 – Beilngreis.

On Thursday, we boarded the coach with our overnight bags for a visit to Beilngries, a small town situated between Nuremberg and Munich. On arrival at Beilngries we were met by our host, Marcus Pregler. After lunch he took us to the Musikapparate anno dazumal Museum, Beilngries [The Old Musical Instruments Museum], the first occasion members of the MBSGB had visited his museum. The collection is housed in the RossTurm [Horse Tower], a small tower situated in the centre of the town, originally built around 1520AD and formerly part of the stables and living quarters of grooms & other stable staff of Bishop Gabriel von Eyb.

This is a museum location totally unique in its character, with its entrance set high in the walls of the tower and the open beam work to the stairs and rooms inside. The collection is spread over the three small rooms available, each on a different level of the tower. Thus, standing either on the small floor area afforded in each of the rooms, or on the stairs and peeping through the open beam work, we were able to view and hear this small collection of organs and musical boxes and admire one of the largest Flute Clocks in the world.

Amongst the instruments in the collection the following may be mentioned:

- a large Flute Clock which, with 144 pipes is one of the largest such items in the world but, unfortunately,

because of a snapped weight line, this could not be played for us;

- a large street organ with flutes, trumpets & glockenspiel built around 1850 by Riemer;
- an unusual and very attractive small Libellion manivelle.

This relatively small collection illustrates well the point that a museum does not necessarily have to have large numbers of instruments in order to be worth visiting, but just a small and varied selection of items with some interesting background history and stories attached to them!

Leaving the Museum, we visited the nearby Technik Museum Kratzmuhle. Here we saw an extensive array of old tools, instruments and machinery of both commercial and domestic origin. These included, early washing machines, cooking appliances, a small printing press and a fully working, and therefore most impressive, example of a 19th century industrial workshop in which the several items of machinery are operated by a belt and shaft system.

Dinner, all the arrangements for which had been made by Marcus, was held in the Beilngries Spielzug Museum [Toy Museum]. There, sitting at tables set amongst items from the nurseries and playrooms of yesteryear, we enjoyed a good, typically Bavarian, meal and afterwards wandered around the three floors of the museum enjoying the exhibits.

Views of Speyer - MBSGB Tour to Germany



Left: Kay Brown and Sina Hildebrand dance to an orchestration.



Above: Members arranged by size!



Left: Seybold 'Piano Accordion Jazz'

Below: Sina's automaton dance, accompanied by Gotthard Arnold.



Left: Enjoying a piano orchestration - Sina, Arthur Cunliffe, (unidentified), Jack Henley, Ted & Kay Brown.





Above: Accordion Boy at Bruchsal



Right: Peter Rohrer with an automaton organ clock.

Below: Is this going to be the subject of Kevin McElhone's next book?



Below: Members examine an Andersson Pianoharpa.



Left: A huge Komet double-disk musical box.

Day 4 – Nuremburg

On Friday, we went for two short, guided tours of Nuremburg. For the first of these we were taken to that part of the city most associated with the darker period of Germany's history, the years when the Nationale SoZialiste party was in power. Here, at the Nazi Party Rally Grounds, we saw the buildings and other civil engineering works constructed by the Nazi's for their parades and meetings; where the unfinished Nazi Party Leaders Congress Hall, the now partly demolished Tribune at the Zeppelin Field, and the Gross Strasse [Main Parade Road] stand in silent witness to the megalomania that gripped the National Socialists in the 1930's.

Lunch was taken at the "Zum Gulden Stern" [The Golden Star], the oldest sausage restaurant in the world having been built in 1419! Here we lunched, in typical Nuremberg style, on thin bratwurst sausages, deliberately made thin, we were told, so that they could be passed through the keyholes of the prison doors by the citizens of Nuremberg to the members of their families incarcerated therein!

After some free time to walk & shop in the city centre, we had our second guided tour, part walking, part by coach, to see some more of the significant buildings in Nuremburg, including the International Reconciliation Walk, the War Crimes Trials courtroom and the medieval city walls and towers, before walking up to the Nuremburg Schloss for a view over the city as dusk approached. Then we boarded our coach again and returned to Speyer.

Day 5 – Basel.

On Saturday we travelled to Basel, where our arrival was over an hour behind schedule due to traffic problems on the way. Nevertheless, our hosts for the visit, Peter & Hannelore Rohrer, made us very welcome. Two European members of MBSGB, Walter Dahler and Denis Margot, joined us for the picnic lunch that was awaiting our arrival. Also awaiting our inspection was Peter's newly created museum. "Wunderwelte der Mechanischen Music" [The Wonder World of Mechanical Music]. Through his determination and initiative, a small museum had been constructed recently in the Rohrer's own back garden in which their collection of organettes, orchestrions and street organs, as well as disc and cylinder musical boxes and flute clocks are now housed, displayed and played. It was good to see Peter's enthusiasm as he showed us around his collection that included a good cross representation of instruments including some quite rare street organs.

After a group photograph taken outside the new building, Peter took us for a walking tour of Basel; first across the River Rhine to Basel Town Hall where we were given a formal welcome in the Council Chamber by Herr Robert Heuss, the Mayor of Basel. After the welcome, he took us on a tour of the building that included a climb up the tower to small meeting room situated at the top with all-round views out over the city.

We continued our walk, going first on to the cliffs overlooking the River Rhine for views of the eastern side

of the city. We then re-crossed the river by means of a unique foot-ferry with a very unusual and ingenious source of power; being attached by a cable to another that stretched from shore to shore above the river it is able to use the very strong current and the setting of its rudder to obtain the power necessary to cross to the other side. How "green" can you get!

Dinner was held at the Brauerei, in the centre of Basel, during which we were entertained by Peter, playing one of his many street barrel organs, and by a guest flautist, Verena Schaad-Gasser, who played two pieces accompanied by Peter on his organ. First she played "Whistling Rufus" by Kerry Mills and then the "Rondeau" from the Flute Quartet No. 1 in D, KV 285 by Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart. The organ rolls for both these pieces were obtained from Jan Alderman.

Unfortunately EU regulations spoil the party as we were forced, very reluctantly and with many apologies, to make an early departure for Speyer to avoid our driver working excess hours that day!

Day 6 – Speyer Technik Museum

Sunday was an "At Home" day when we could exercise our "Freedom of the Museum" tickets and visit all the exhibits. These included the Space Hall, the aircraft, many of which are mounted at flying angles around the campus, including a Boeing 747 that had once been part of the Lufthansa fleet, a post war German Navy submarine, the "U9", and a Russian Antonov "22" cargo plane, similar to that used in the Bond film "The Living Daylights".

In the main Exhibition Hall we could view again the motor transport exhibits, the fire engines, the German steam locomotives and the five Street/Fairground organs and the Carousel housed there. During normal opening hours both these and some of the other technical exhibits are coin operated. So, using our 1 Euro tokens given to us by Gotthard, we were able to make these instruments & exhibits play again, not only for our pleasure, but for that of the visiting public as well.

Included in our ticket was an admission to the IMAX Dome Cinema for "Die Alpen", a film about climbing the north face of the Eiger.

Finally we returned to the Wilhelmsbau building for another session with Sina and Gotthard. This opened with another automaton routine by Sina and Gotthard, this time with organ and singing bird box. Afterwards, we were allowed to select once more those instruments of the collection we particularly wished to hear again.

Day 7 – Heidelberg

On Monday we visited Heidelberg, going first to the Heidelberger Bergbahnen, two funicular railways ascending nearly 1500 feet up the steep sides of the Neckar valley at gradients averaging between 27-41%. At the time of our visit, however, it was raining and low cloud obscured the views of Heidelberg and the Neckar valley normally available from this summit location. Whilst at Molkenkur, the transfer stage between the two railways, lunch was taken in the Berghotel.

Returning to the town, we had

time for a walking tour and to do some shopping. Finally, many of the party found time to walk out onto Heidelberg's old bridge, the Karl-Theodor Brücke, a fine structure in red sandstone that crossed the river Neckar. Built in 1786 to replace earlier wooden affairs that were continuously being damaged by floods, ice and fire, this was a good vantage point from which to view the river and the surrounding hills, or that portion of them which the persistent low cloud allowed us to see!

We returned to Speyer and our farewell banquet. This was held in the Domhof Restaurant in the centre of Speyer. It was a lively evening during which Gotthard entertained us, and the other customers, with his organ. The dinner provided some of the company with the opportunity to sample the regional dishes on offer. A very relaxing final evening and one enjoyed by all.

Day 8 – Departure and a Reflection

Tuesday was for packing, departure from Speyer and our return to the UK, taking back with us some very happy memories of the welcome we had received, and the sights and things we had seen and heard amongst some very good company. Above all we carried a very deep impression of the extent of the planning and preparatory work that had been undertaken on our behalf by our hosts and their helpers to make our visit so memorable and worthwhile.

A final reflection on the visit; when choosing a name for his new museum in Basel, Peter Rohrer had chosen the title "Wunderwelte der Mechanischen Music" – The

Wonder World of Mechanical Music; there could be no better illustration of this most apt description of our interest than that provided by the instruments we had seen, heard and enjoyed during our short stay in Speyer.

Acknowledgements.

So, our thanks to all involved; to the staff & guide at Bruchsal who, on our departure, had extended an invitation to us to return as soon as possible so that she could play a different set of instruments for us; to Marcus Pregler and his Museum at Beilngries and the staff of the Technik Museum at Kratsmühle and the Toy Museum in Beilngries as well as to our city guide in Nuremberg; to Peter & Hannelore Rohrer, Robert Heuss, the Mayor of Basel, our flautist, Verena Schaad-Gasser, and all the other helpers who together made us so welcome and organized the various events during our short time with them in Basel.

To Herr Layher, founder of the Speyer Museum must go our special thanks for allowing us so much freedom to enjoy and appreciate the exhibits of his museum as well as our apologies for not being on site the day he visited especially to meet us.

To our Meetings Secretary, Daphne, whose determination overcame the many issues that beset the organization of the tour from time to time.

Our particular thanks must be reserved, however, for Sina and Gotthard. Without their hard work and efforts our visit to Germany would not have been either the success or of the quality that it undoubtedly

was! As a result of their hard work, Society members enjoyed a memorable tour with a programme full of interesting and stimulating visits.

Footnote. What follows will not mean much to readers who were not present on the tour without some explanation. Suffice it to say that our Meetings Secretary, Daphne, introduced the awarding of Red & Yellow Cards as a means to try and encourage good behaviour amongst certain members of the company. It proved to be the source of much hilarity and was so well received that it became as much a part of the tour as did our various visits.

Cards were awarded for misdemeanours, whether by word of mouth or deed that, in the view of our organizer, breached laid down rules of conduct and other aspects of good behaviour. It contributed so much to the spirit of our visit to Germany that, for the record, this report must conclude with a statement on the awards that were made within the various divisions of what has since come to be known as "The Most Distinguished Order of the Red & Yellow Cards". Awards were made as follows:

First Division: The Red Card
- 2 Awards were made

NB This card also carried with it the following command:- "The Drinks are on You!"

Second Division: The Yellow Cards

Sub-division "A":The 2nd
Warning - 3 Awards were made;

Sub-division "B":The 1st

Warning - 8 Awards were made.

Awards were progressive and so, based on the number & class of the of awards listed above, which total 20, readers may best judge for themselves as to whether or not behaviour such as would attract one, or more, of the awards was either

encouraged or discouraged during our time together!

Finally, provisions of the Data Protection Act prohibit the names of those receiving these awards from being published and so curiosity, as to who received them and who was guilty of the worst behaviour, must remain unsatisfied!



New Polyphon Discs for Addenbrookes

The picture (above) shows one of the children in the cancer ward at Addenbrookes Hospital, Cambridge, standing in front of the Polyphon the society donated to this ward a few years ago. We wish to record our thanks to members for supplying a few new discs with Christmas and Children's music.

The hospital and Children are most grateful for this and extend their thanks for members' kindness.

Alan & Daphne Wyatt

Making a Musical Box

by Don Busby

Comb Design

So, you want to make a musical box from scratch, do you? So does this novice machinist who, in a series of short articles, will describe deliberations and operations he has undertaken in his efforts to make music. They are penned by a novice for the novice.

After trying unsuccessfully to devise a keyboard using free-ended piano wire, the Society was approached to ask where a tuned comb could be purchased. This would be used with an electrically driven cylinder that had been developed on an ad-hoc basis. Back came a reply, you will need to make your own comb which will require a lathe to machine it out of gauge plate. Oh, by the way, would you like to join our Society? So, early in 2006 a lathe was purchased and the Society was joined. Membership has proved invaluable, with friendly and helpful advice gleaned at half-yearly meetings of the Essex Group. The lathe was a new 'toy', such never having been used before. Of necessity, attention has been divided about equally between learning how to use the machine and how to make a musical box comb.

This first article seeks to set out what a newcomer to this field will need to consider in procuring materials and designing a comb. Sizes of components given are specific to a Chester UK "Model B Super" combined lathe and mill which determined sizes of work pieces to be worked. The reader will need to adapt sizes to his own situation.

So, what is gauge plate? This is known variously as tool steel; ground flat stock (GFS); BS-B01; and DIN-1.2510. This material, which will now be referred to as GFS, is a

medium-alloyed, oil-hardening steel, supplied in various precision-ground sizes in an annealed condition. After machining it can be hardened and tempered: in our case, to provide the 'springiness' needed for a musical box comb tooth and to withstand wear and tear from the deflecting force of cylinder pins.

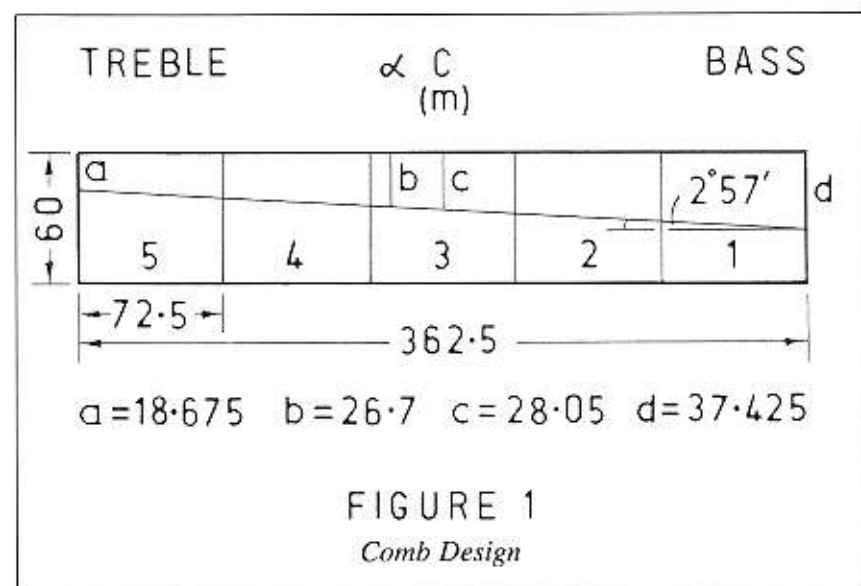
What size of GFS should be bought? A convenient size to suit comb design described below is 3" x 18" x 3/32": this will allow 'grain' from the grinding process to run along lengths of teeth if such finish is not to be finally polished out. There are many sources of GFS; one is Sheffield Gauge Plate Ltd.-Telephone No. 01142 335 291.

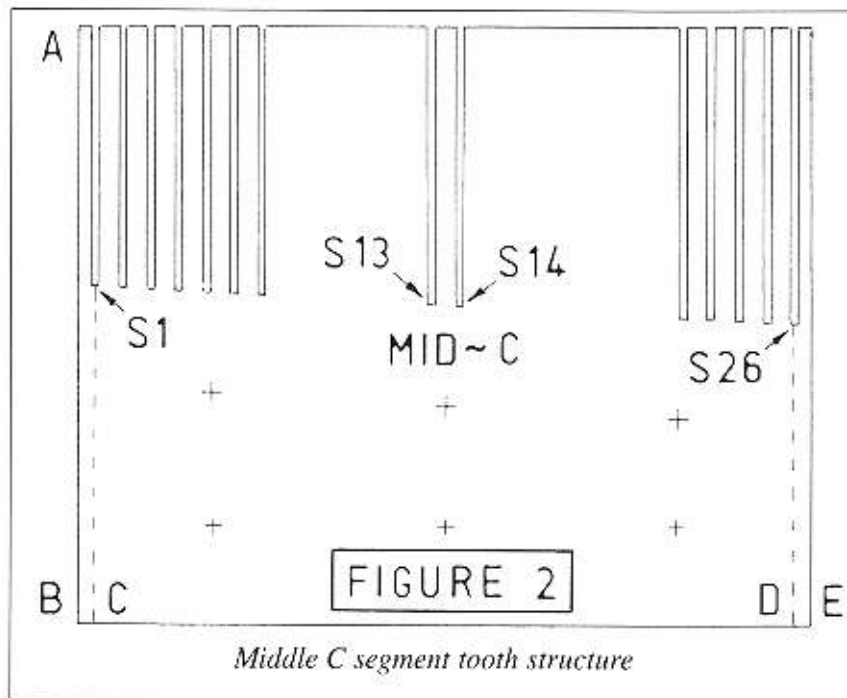
When the GFS has arrived, how can it be turned into a comb? After taking advice and studying tuning of musical box combs, it became apparent that it is usual for a comb to be tuned to satisfy the requirements of the musical programme to be pinned on its associated cylinder. The writer's initial thoughts were to produce a fully chromatic keyboard of 8 octaves, emulating a piano.

This would allow interchangeable cylinders in order to pin a wide variety of music, not just a small set programme of tunes. In the end, in order to allow for a moderate degree of repetition of notes, it was decided to double up notes on the comb and reduce the range of octaves to 5, thus allowing simple tune arrangements with plenty of musical 'colour', but without multiple repetition of notes. After considering a selection of musical boxes, Nicole Frères box, Serial 40200, was selected for the scale range but unlike a conventional comb, his was to be fully chromatic as explained above. Parameters for this box given in Table 4, Reference 1 also matched his needs, having a cylinder length of 13" and 97 teeth. The α tooth, frequency 440 Hz, was sized as below. Unless stated otherwise dimensions are in millimetres:

Length (L) 26.7mm Width (W) 2.24mm Thickness (T) 0.61mm

Based on a α tooth length of 26.7mm, a plan was drawn up for the comb as shown in Figure 1.





Middle C segment tooth structure

This illustrates the underside of the comb since this will be uppermost for many of the operations of its manufacture. The lengths of the extreme treble and bass slits, and that of Middle C tooth derive from four parameter decisions, namely: have Middle C as centre tooth; have an α tooth length of 26.7mm; slit for 125 teeth at 2.9mm centres and increase/decrease successive slit lengths by 0.15mm. Initially a 0.5mm wide slitting saw was used across the range of 5 segments so, since cutting was at 2.9mm centres, resulting tooth widths were all 2.4mm which equates reasonably well with the Nicole Frères data. Segments are numbered 1-5 starting from bass. Towards the end of this article Relative Stiffness (RS) of teeth will be discussed, consideration of which led to a widening of slits from bass towards treble. Details of saw widths finally used will then be listed.

Returning now to our stock GFS, work pieces were cut off at 60 along its length. Let us consider one of these, that for the central segment depicted by figure 2.

The figure shows our work piece and several of its teeth, viewed from underneath.

Key to figure 2

- AB = 60mm as cut from length of GFS
- BE = 76.2mm = 3" width of GFS
- BC = DE = 1.85 being centres of first and last slitting saw passes
- S1 = 26.175
- S13 = 27.975
- S14 = 28.125
- S26 = 29.925

S1, S13, S14 and S26 are slitting cross-feeds at the points shown

The mean length of Middle C between S13 and S14 is 28.05mm, as per figure 1

• The figure shows the comb truly proportioned with slits resulting from a 0.8mm wide slitting saw, as finally chosen for this segment

• Six centres are shown for holes as follows:

3 parallel to BE for 4mm dia. screws to fix segment to work jigs, 3 parallel to S1-S26 for 6mm dia. screws to fix segment to bed-plate

After slitting S1 to S26 the two end 'half-teeth' are sawn off, through to C and D, by backing off the slitting saw by half its width. Thus CD=72.5 and segments will butt together leaving teeth at correct centres of 2.9.

The observant reader will notice that tooth tips shown in figure 2 are full width, whereas those in figure 4 are tapered. Tapering involved time-consuming efforts of preparing and using a fly-cutter. Wide tips are recommended for a musical box having a fixed cylinder.

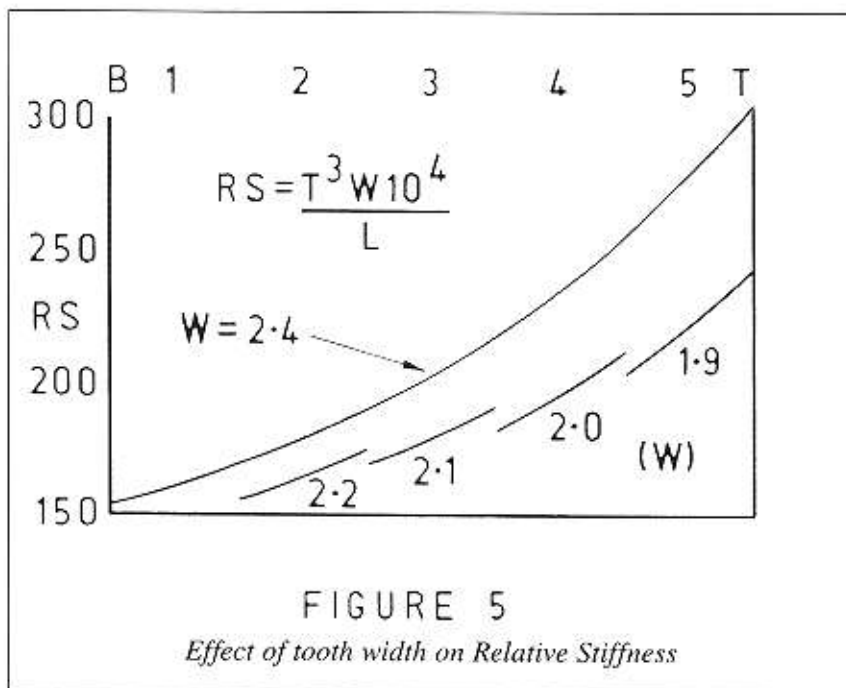
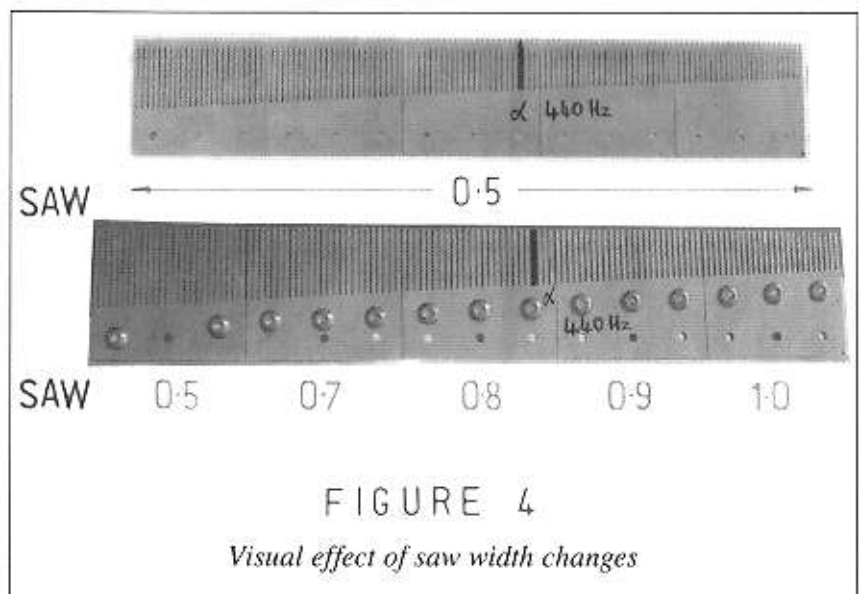
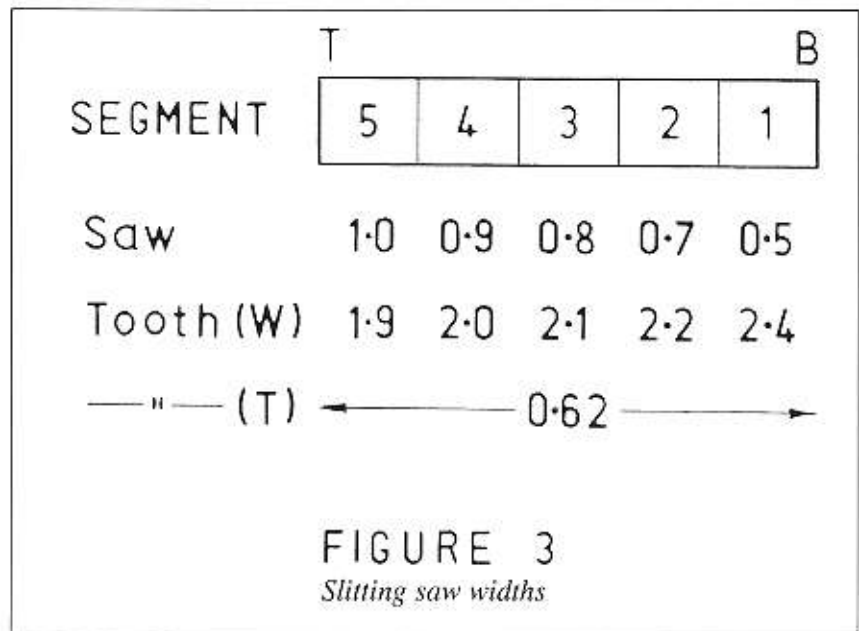
Whilst cutting off lengths of GFS for the 5 segments two similar-sized blanks were made. One, with only the lower set of holes, but drilled at 2.5mm dia. instead of 4, was to serve as a template. The other blank was drilled at 4 dia. on centres shown, with a further 3 equally sized holes on a line 5 nearer to the base of the blank. These holes are for fixing to a jig for milling the underside of the comb.

We turn now to the topic of Relative Stiffness (RS) to which attention was drawn by the fact that, having cut all 125 teeth using a 0.5mm wide slitting saw, teeth towards the treble end would be too stiff. The error had been to form all teeth with constant width and thickness without taking RS into account. After experimentation, saw widths shown in figure 3 were finally

used; the new aim was to reduce RS at the treble end whilst maintaining a uniform appearance across the comb. Of course, appearance must not be to the detriment of acceptable sound. Figure 4 shows the initial tooth profile compared with the final arrangement.

Reference 1 gives RS for the α tooth as 190, the initial target for all teeth. Figure 5 is a graph illustrating the resulting RS for the segments before and after the changes. It can be seen that teeth are still rather too flexible at bass end and too stiff at treble end. It is hoped that this variability will not affect performance of the comb. In any future manufacture of combs thickness of teeth will be varied across the comb, as well as width, to achieve better control of stiffness.

If after reading of the writer's experiences in making his first comb you feel like having a go you will find that in Figure 6 he has summed-up the main parameters you



will need to cut teeth as he did. But wait! The underside of your comb will need to be milled out, leaving platforms for lead weights and damper wires, before any teeth are slitted. These two processes and their jigs will be described in later articles. In the meantime, after cutting and drilling your segment blanks, it is best to polish out the GFS grinding marks on the upper surface of your comb segments. It is difficult to do this after milling and slitting.

Good luck if you decide to

join the writer in his first efforts to make a musical box. You can pre-empt some aspects of his later articles by viewing www.chesteruk.net/store/customer-projects.htm, which is linked with the Society's website.

Reference 1: "Cylinder Musical Box Design and Repair"
H.A.V. Bulleid ISBN
0-930256-16-6
Almar Press Binghampton New York 13903

(* see fig 2)	SEGMENT					
	T	5	4	3	2	B
Saw		1.0	0.9	0.8	0.7	0.5
* S1	{	18.675	22.425	26.175	29.925	33.675)
* S13	{	20.475	24.225	27.975	31.725	35.475)
* S14	{	20.625	24.375	28.125	31.875	35.625)
* S26	{	22.425	26.175	29.925	33.675	37.425)

Summary of slit-sawing parameters

FIGURE 6

News from Other Societies

from John Farmer

Mechanical Music, Vol 54, No.5, September/October 2008
(See also www.mbsi.org)

An unusual automaton – a Cambodian Dancer, is described by Robin Biggins, who also gives some of the history of Cambodia which probably led Roulet et Decamps to make it. There are only two examples currently known and both have achieved exceptionally high prices at auction in recent years. Small movements with mainspring in the cylinder is Etienne Blyelle-Horngacher's subject in this well-illustrated article, which is a response and extension to Joseph Schumacher's article in *Mechanical Music* Vol. 44 p. 31.

The Poppers Ohio Orchestron in Siegfried's Mechanischen Musikkabinett in Rudesheim am Rhein suffered a minor disaster in the Winter of 1996/97 when a water pipe burst sending water and soggy ceiling plaster onto the instrument. Although an initial cleanup was done, it took nearly 10 years to schedule the required full restoration, but this has now been done and Jens Wendel summarises the work in this article, with some detailed pictures.

Chet and Ramsay detail 4 "Treasures of a Musical Box Dealer", the first being a Conchon cylinder box with 6 engraved bells in a large case with a matching table. Its Spanish documentation describes it as a musical writing desk. The second is also a cylinder box, but unusually, fitted with an internal clock which can switch on the box once an hour. Item 3 is an upright Symphonion 13 5/8" clock, but driven by a 75lb. Weight, rather than a spring. The final item is a 15 1/2" Serpentine Regina disc box with an unusual "Crystaloid" lid picture, with special cleaning instructions.

Vox Humana – Spring/Summer 2008

A reprint from L'Illustration of 2nd July 1892 recounts the First Barrel Organ competition in Paris, an exciting affair it seems. Somewhat more up to date is Dave Wright's report of the 19th Swallowfield Street and Fair Organ Festival held in March 2008. Into the past again is a memory of the 1968 Seend Traction Engine Rally.

After 41 years away from "home", Nick Baker's 64 key Bursens organ

"Carillon" returned to the Haarlem Organ Museum in Holland to be star guest at the "Tante Heintje Day". "The Puffin" is a new 52-key, Limonaire scale organ, built by Bob Wallington over a period of 12 years. It made its debut at the South West Fair Organ festival in April 2008. David Dingwall reports on the first 2 day organ gathering at Hollycombe steam collection in July 2008, and Mark Jefford tells of his outing to Seewen to hear a newly restored Welte Philharmonic. David England considers the cardboard v. Chips (MIDI) question, and Ian Dalgleish tells how theatre organ makers took to roll players.

Reed Organ Society Quarterly, Vol XXVII, No.3, 2008

This issue has a distinct Mason & Hamlin theme, first, "One that got away" (it was scrapped due to a previous botched repair and missing parts), "...And one that didn't" (an art case instrument which survives), followed by Marcia Lawton's story of a reed organ actually replacing an electronic one, at the United Methodist church in Felton Delaware. Another M&H being restored was found to have a replacement wind

source made up from four cut-down Electrolux cylinder cleaners, and the 3-manual and pedal M&H at Stockton Church (Worcestershire) is described by Jason Fisher, [who happens to be the young man who played the piano at our Society's Autumn meeting at Eastham Grange, a few miles from Stockton].

Another M&H almost identical to the Stockton one, apart from one stop, was discovered by Thomas and Patricia Gregory in Cape Cod, and Jake Enriquez and friends describe a 3 manual only M&H at the Rancho Guajome Adobe in San Diego. Coleman Kimbrell describes the restoration of a style 806 M&H in Alabama, then to break the sequence, Marilyn Swett tells of giving a concert on a children's model Estey, and Nelson Pease tells "The Long Journey Home" for Estey No. 100,000.

Organ Grinders News, No. 66, Autumn 2008

(See also www.boga.co.uk)

Dennis and Pili Baumber report on Waldkirch 2008, and John Webb reports on the Banbury Organ Festival. Brian and Klaz Munt report on the BOGA gathering at Dingles in August 2008, and John Smith and John Pettifer report on the First Lavenham Street Organ Festival.

Player Piano Group – Bulletin 188, October 2008

(See also www.playerpianogroup.org.uk)

The PPG is 50 in 2009 and a number of special events are planned, starting with a concert at St. Albans Organ Museum on 31st, January 2009. Also, there is now a supplement to the PPG Bulletin in the form of "Pianola Interactive" at www.playerpianogroup.org.uk/interactive.

Tony Clayton gives the history (albeit shortlived), and technical summary of the Artrio Angelus, with a more detailed technical description to follow in part 2. An extract from the book "Godowsky – The Pianists' Pianist" considers some of the piano rolls recorded by Godowsky between 1907 and the late 1920s for Ampico, Duo-Art and other labels. Should you be interested in South American music rolls, you should check out www.pianolapatagonia.4t.com, where you will find Horatio Asborno's description of the roll making industry in that area. Makers covered in this article include Pampa, Concert, Condor, Mundial, Olimpo, Paris, Patria, Pianauto, Onix and Rollo Mexico.

If you are thinking of moving a piano, or similar instrument, you

might want to read Peter Davis' tales of Movers and Shakers, whilst Terry Smythe explains why he has created electronic copies of some 150 pieces of original literature, and made them freely available at his web site <http://members.shaw.ca/paud122/docs.htm>. He suggests other PPG members might want to contribute by adding literature to the PPG web site [This is also something MBSGB should consider doing – as Archivist I will look into this. JF].

North West Player Piano Association Journal – Christmas 2008

(See also www.nwppa.freemove.co.uk)

Less-well-known reproducing systems, 4 – Pleyela – The Dea-Pleyela and Della-Pleyela were full reproducing, and limited-expression instruments, respectively, made using Hupfeld actions. WWI saw the end of that arrangements and led to the Auto-Pleyela which was a simplified version of a full-reproducer. "A question of tempo" considers the accuracy of tempo markings on rolls, and generally concludes you should play your rolls at a speed which "sounds right". In keeping with Christmas tradition, the carol "In the Bleak Midwinter" is investigated. It was written by the poet Christina

Antique Musical Box Repairs and Restoration

Comb Repairs

Jim Weir F.B.H.I.

Cylinder Repinning

22 Marywell Brae,

Releading and Tuning

Kirriemuir,

Organ Bridge Work

Angus DD8 4BJ

Dampering

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Georgina Rosetti (1839 – 1894) some time before 1872, and eventually set to music in 1904 by Gustav Holst.

Famous Musicians looks at Arthur Friedheim (1859 – 1932) who studied under Anton Rubinstein and Franz Liszt. He recorded 76 piano rolls for 7 different companies, and they are listed with the article (most of them are Liszt pieces). Jim Spriggs writes about another Rubinstein – Beryl Rubinstein (1898 – 1952). He was a classical pianist and close friend of George Gershwin. He recorded rolls for Wilcox and White, and QRS, and some rolls are mentioned in the text. Moving on to the Song Roll Collection, No. 4 is Home! Sweet Home! The words came from John Howard Payne (1791 – 1852), and music was by Sir Henry Bishop (1786 – 1855). More on songs comes in Songs that won the Wars, part 3 – Songs of the Second World War. This includes 3 pages (3 columns per page) of songs from the period 1937 – 1945.

As usual, there is lots more in this journal, but these were the highlights.

The Musical Museum and Friends Magazine, Issue 42, Autumn 2008

In this issue new Chairman of the Friends, Phil Fortey, introduces himself, and Bob Bean covers the official opening of the Museum on June 9th 2008. Other reports include the Friends' visit to the Royal Albert Hall in June (unfortunately they weren't able to hear the famous Willis Organ), and the 2008 AGM. A visit to the London Coliseum is planned for November.

Mike Messenger continues "What's that tune?" with some details of Albert Ketelbey (Birmingham 1875), whose most popular compositions were In a Monastery Garden, In a Persian Market, Bells across the Meadows, and The Sanctuary of the Heart. Phil Fortey writes about the hidden secrets of the "Lettuce" barrel organ, discovered during its restoration and, inspired by the Museum's 1940s

weekend, writes on Wartime rationing and other memories.

Non-English journals

Het Pierement – October 2008

(See also www.draaiorgel.org)

Highlights:-

- Waldkirch 2008
- Street Organs in Chile
- Restoration of "De Negentiger" (90 key Carl Frei)
- History of the dance organ in Zeelandic Flanders
- The composer Francis Popy (1874 – 1928)

Musiques Mecaniques Vivantes – 3rd. Quarter, 2008

(See also www.aaimm.org)

Highlights:-

- How to tune an organ (Part 2)
- The polygonal tune changing device
- Some guidance to prospective organ grinders
- About the construction of pipes

DasMechanischeMusikinstrument (Gesellschaft für Selbstspielende Musikinstrumente), No. 103, December 2008

(See also www.musica-mechanica.de)

Highlights:-

- Mechanical Piano Orchestrions from Leipzig – Noise boxes or Technical Masterpieces?
- Wolfgang, Karl Wolfgang and Ernst II Blessing
- The Empeco standard piano roll
- The theory of bellows
- Cleaning cases of instruments
- A barrel xylophone
- Reproduction Hupfeld catalogue with journal

L'antico Organetto (Associazione Musica Meccanica Italiana), September 2008

(See also www.ammi-italia.com)

Highlights:-

- A new book about Fabbrica

Italiana di Rulli Sonori Traforati – F.I.R.S.T., piano roll makers.

- The first restoration at the new museum Fondazione Carisbo di Bolgna
- Paris in Waldkirch, June 2008

Other journals received:-

Newsletter from Schweizerischer Verein der Freunde, December 2008

(See also www.sfm.ch)

Nieuwsbrief from MechaMusica (Belgian Society), October 2008

(See also www.mechamusica.be)

Fine Mechanical Music and Scientific Instruments sale, Bonhams, London, 18 November 2008

Laurence Fisher

When making notes to create an auction report, one usually looks at the highlights, the mids, lows and the interesting, but it seems that here, we also have to look at the market as a whole to understand what is happening out there in the big bad world.

Larger than the three previous sales at 68 lots in the mechanical music section, the viewing over the three days was very well attended, with some members not usually seen flocking in to examine, listen and handle the wares with a ring in their ear and a smile on their face. Our regulars were the first through the doors.

As always, the sale kicked off with wireless and gramophone lots – just three, but with a near-perfect HMV 202, an HMV 194 with an invitation to a workshop, and most probably the only fully original Baird Television wireless receiver found in the UK, all going for £6,000, £2040 and £12,000 (lots 2, 3, 1) respectively.

Continued on Page 301...

Musical Box Oddments No. 120

By Anthony Bulleid

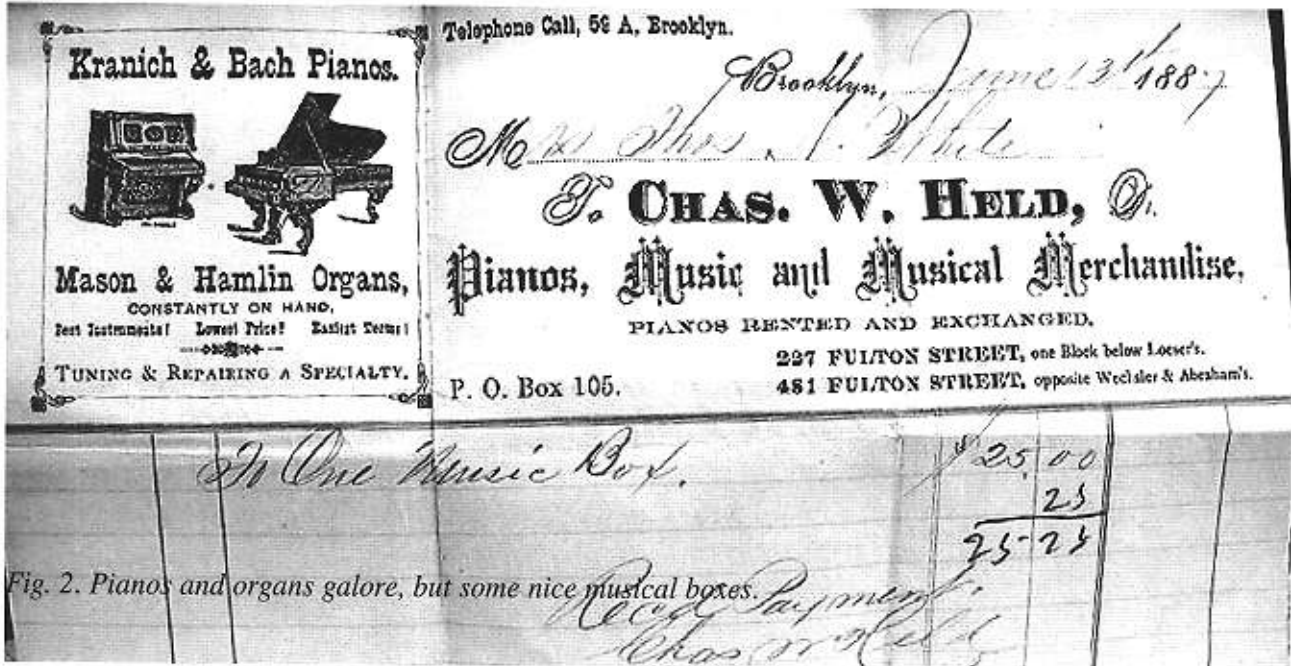


Fig. 2. Pianos and organs galore, but some nice musical boxes.

Imagine you were in New York in the year 1887, and had been asked or told to buy a musical box for a friend's daughter's wedding present – “up to about 25 dollars and make sure it has a nice case and at least six good tunes.”



Fig. 1. Who could fail to enjoy most of this selection?



Fig. 3. This agent's tune sheet for serial 12,281 includes an unusual view of the lake at Geneva and the Isle Rousseau.



Fig. 4. Serial 6526 tune sheet, same design as our no. 299 but stamped, in red. B. A. Bremond / Geneve. That surely carried some recommendation.

At that time there were no disc boxes so the tune list had to appeal. I finally decided on the list in Fig. 1, with famous composers at nos. 3 and 7 and the current top hit at no. 6 and that rousing march at 7, - the bridegroom might like it as much as the bride favoured the female slant in nos. 2 to 6. The exchange rate was nearly \$5 to £1 so for a bit over a fiver I got an 8" cylinder box with a nice case. There was a wide choice, but it was a large

music shop, or store as they have it, with pianos and organs galore. So I was duly congratulated on making a wise buy, and the bill (with NY State Sales Tax) is in Fig. 2.

The box, serial number 12281, was probably made by Cuendet and sold through the American agent J Howard Foote whose mark is in the small oval cartouche of his tune sheet, in Fig. 3. Another Foote tune sheet is in the series at no. 315.

Large petites musiques.

There seems to have been a strong demand, during the 1890s, for cheap small boxes with extra tunes at the expense of fewer comb teeth. One way to meet this was to use the standard mechanism for petites musiques but fit a comb and cylinder of about the sizes in cartel boxes.

The one I am thinking about has a 4.5" (12 cm) cylinder which allows 70 teeth for 4 airs. But the current demand was for eight airs and the resulting 35 teeth were apparently considered adequate by that quality conscious B. A. Bremond who acted more and more as an agent in his later years. The box concerned has serial number 6526 and the tune sheet in Fig. 4. Also I can hesitatingly reveal a look at the mechanism, which is shown in ghastly run-down condition, now to be restored, in Fig. 5. Yes, you may well look again, what you are seeing is true - it only has alternate tips. How else could it play 8 airs? I expect there was a lot of understandable moaning by the better tune arrangers.

Karrer in the 1880s.

Karrer serial 6466 is typical of their quality output in the 1880s. It has an 11" (28cms) cylinder with 70 music teeth and six on a separate comb for 6 decoratively engraved bells with bee strikers. Its tune sheet is in Fig. 6, their 8-air version, here with 7 composers on the left column and 8 on the right (a rare majority of one on a tune sheet). And, strangely, no mention of the bells.

The spring is mounted on the cylinder arbor, and the winder is geared about 3 to 1 so one pull winds the spring about one turn = 1 tune. The female Geneva stop has eleven slots, allowing ten turns of the spring = 10 tunes. Both shown in Fig. 7. The detent or click holding the wound-up spring is under the bedplate.

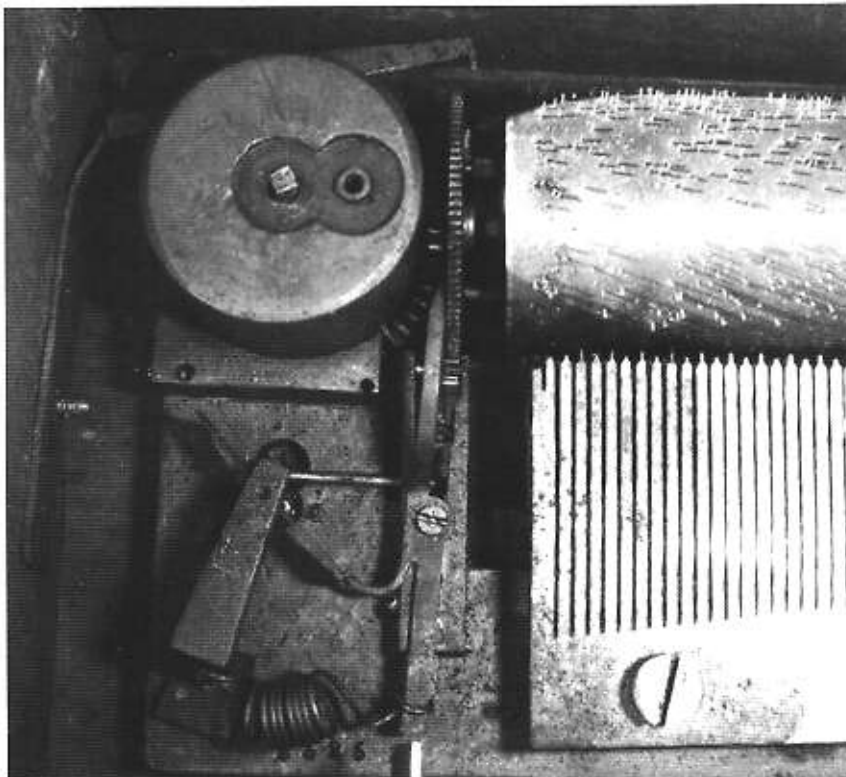


Fig. 5. Sad condition. On/off lever spring partly obscures serial number 6526, bottom left. The remaining tips all seem OK except first bass, which needs a retip.



Fig. 6. Karrer 6466 tune sheet with their 1876 and 1878 medals. The background of the four borders is coloured pale green. I think the word EXPRESSIF is not intended to have any meaning, but simply to be fashionable. (Like no. 325 in the series).

Musical boxes that get beyond repair yield lots of useful spares to restorers including clicks and their springs, snail cams, etc. etc. One such appears on this Karrer 6466, - the jewel plate on the governor. It is a Mermod, stamped with their shield trademark.

Karrer correction.

A member has kindly written, pointing out a frightful howler I made in Oddments 118. I claimed that there were two villages named Teufenthal and that Karrer started in the one near Thun. Both wrong. The one near Thun is spelled Teuffenthal, which is different, and Karrer started at the other one which is near Aarau and, incidentally, about 22 miles north-west of Lucerne (usually Luzern, being in the German speaking area).

I think it is well known that Karrer supplied combs, complete blanks, and sundry components to the Ste. Croix makers. His castings, such as

comb bases, had their casting mark A K. Some combs were etched with the "Ord-Hume 4" mark shown on page 125 of Vol 13 and again, but as no. 21, on page 50 of Vol 21.

The makers who bought from Karrer include Cuendet and Mojon-Manger.

Thanks to Tim Reed for most of the illustrations.

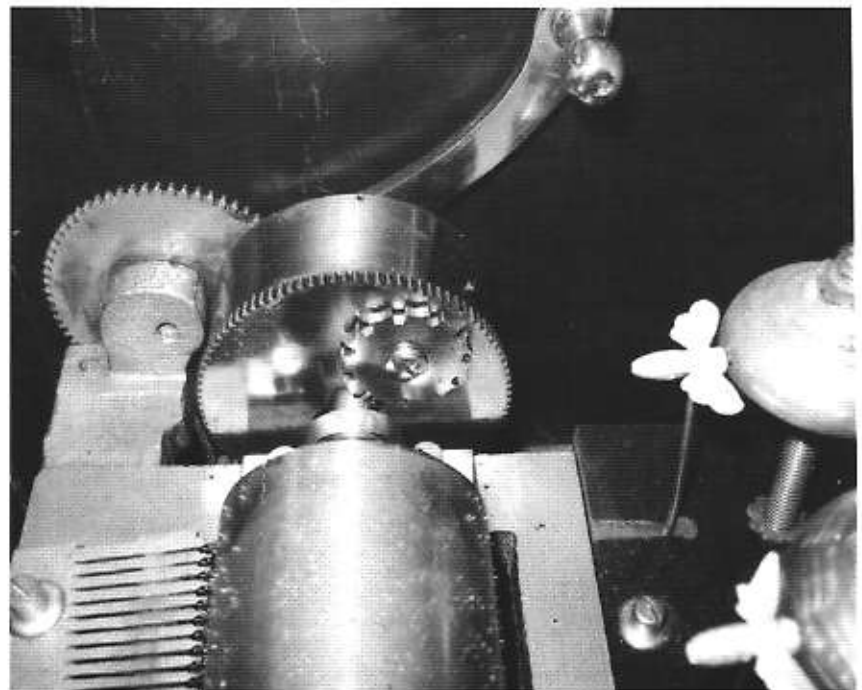


Fig. 7. (left) The multiplying gear wheel on the winder and the 11-slots of the Geneva stop on Karrer 6466.

Almost a bitter end...

by Laurence Fisher

Originally intending to recall and write this down at the time, I have realised that in this so-called age of doom and gloom we could all have a laugh (or cry) about a certain incident which happened to me one day when I was at Christie's.

The telephone often rang, and still does, with people asking what their beloved items would be worth. Usually these poor souls are the victims of daytime telly, where ill-conceived programs such as Bargain Hunt and Cash in the Attic are regularly aired within the four walls of their home. It is always sad to tell them that the well-polished and doily-clad harmonium that resides in their best sitting room, is not worth quite as much as the £25,000 some nutcase on one of those shows claims they should be hammered down for.

It was a warm day and looking forward to an overseas visit the week after, I was catching up with the last sales-worth of paperwork. The phone rang. Was it to be another disappointment-making reply call, or was it something nice?

"I've got an original music box made by 'Six Airs!'" came the loud predictable voice.

"So have I," I sang back, hoping to raise the level of humour.

"It's all original, no problems, so how much in your shop?" enquired the voice, with an undertone of hope and salesman-like talk.

"Well, we offer musical boxes from £80 to £50,000 – may I ask to see a picture or can you bring it in for me to see?" I asked.

"I'm round the corner, I'll come in now."

Marvellous. No more shouting, no more questions; the box, whatever it

is, would be in and I can see just how good or bad it is.

The biggest problem I think any auction specialist has with first-contact musical box enquiries is that until you see and hear the piece, you simply do not know what you are up against. Usually, the box would fall into the £200-1000 bracket, but every now and again, you get a Grand-Format, a two-per-turn, or if one's really lucky, an early Francois Nicole hidden under a blanket in the loft. These types of musical box do still come in from properties that look like Steptoe & Son's house – and they are getting more common.

The musical box arrived on the front counter and I was waiting for it. I longhaired man at 6'6" struggled to place it on the table. It was certainly Grand-Format size and although impressive, the weight was intriguing.

Suddenly, disaster – inches from the safety of the table, he drops the box. Holding it with adequate care from underneath, he didn't bank on the plinth moulding to give way, sending it toppling to the floor – the concrete floor. It had been caught before full contact, but had fallen end-on with very little resistance on the way down.

Rushing to the rescue, I made sure the lid was kept shut, cushioning any damage to us from the spring should that decide to fail.

The noise was terrifying. How many joint cracks, how many shards of glass were waiting to greet us from within once the lid was lifted?

"Oh its ok, don't worry" bellowed the scruffy owner now smiling. "I dropped it down the stairs getting it out the door at home too!"

My reaction was rather difficult to put in words, so I remained silent smiling through my vibrating face, hoping instead for Jeremy Beadle to appear. He didn't.

Upon opening the lid, nothing was broken. No glass, no teeth, no joints – nothing.

It reminded me of when I dropped a light bulb in the kitchen. It fell 12 feet, bouncing on the solid floor three times before coming down softly on the fourth and smashing violently.

So what was this box? A rather good Nicole Frerés six-air overture box, No. 43145. Not a 'golden-age' box by any means, but something about this box made it more special than any six-air box I'd seen at the in-coming counter.

The case and domed lid were profusely inlaid with Egyptian figures, symbols and a full landscape – including the temple that marks the start of the Valley of the Kings and two of the Pyramids at Giza. The colours were so good – delicate with their tone but one could feel the texture of the stone that they so convincingly replicated.

But the condition was awful. Some inlay had disappeared, and the mechanism was dry, corroded and battered. What was left of the ebonised plinth after its gravity-induced impact was no longer ebonised.

"Bit scraped, 'cos its been in the hall at home on the floor for twenty years, but the Hoover just goes round it – in fact you can see the marks where the Hoover has touched it one or twice," the owner proudly explained.

The 'once or twice' Hoover incidents were in fact ¼-inch grooves, which were cut into the plinth. Such a shame.

And then came the sobering observation.

Not only was this box on instant stop, but also on instant stop in the middle of an air. The endstone was missing and had been replaced with a small piece of card, over-spilling from all around the jewel plate. The endless screw itself was not at 90 degrees with the bedplate – not making much contact at all with the gearing assembly.

I then looked at the spring and noticed that the motor bridge only had one screw holding it to the bedplate, with the metal now bent slightly through pure strain over time, and upon feeling the tension on the crank, it was fully wound. Fully meaning so much, even a de-wind would be deemed tricky.

“I tried to crank it up, but it don’t work – does it need some oil on the big round bit; get it going again?” asked the ‘helpful’ soon-to-be remembered legend.

I started to understand the real meaning of a last-chance opportunity to save something before its downfall.

Once I had written a consignment form out and said a gleeful bye-bye to my visitor, I used a jig which I had made so one could hold a cylinder in place whilst counting great wheel snail steps, and then clamped this to the back of the case after I had carefully removed the lid. With a good check to see that the cylinder would not move should the endless give up hope, I then de-wound the spring using the painfully slow method of ratchet back-and-forth release until all tension was off.

You could feel the whole musical box breathe a huge sigh of relief when the spring was finally retired.

And so did I.

Next, the cylinder pins. My attention earlier was taken up by quite a few distractions, however now that this box was no longer emitting serious danger, I could see what we were

up against technically. The first impression wasn’t that bad, with perhaps up to 95% present. Any less than 90% would encroach upon the score, so with this, a re-pin would be advisable for the purists.

Teeth-wise, a dentist’s visit was not necessary – just a quick clean would do, but the dampers did need a good going over. Amazingly, on asking the owner at the counter if this had been played since it was enlisted to the post of hall carpet minder, the reply came as “no.”

So this beauty had been sat, fully wound, in the middle of an air, for nearly a quarter of a century.

And none of the teeth or tips were bent.

After obtaining the correct bedplate screws, some high-quality oil and a very soft brush, it was time to run at least half a revolution so that it came to its finish proper.

After final checks, the spring was wound to a quarter and the instant stop pulled off. It went, slowly, but surely and sounded very good. The dampers looked bad, but the sound was quite good.

But hey, surely after what I had witnessed and what was in front of me, it probably sounded quite bad. But it worked safely.

After running it to the stop, I noticed another problem. Because it had sat for so long in one position, the cement had set more to one side and looking at the veneer colour to the rear of the case, it might well have been next to a radiator. This had created the usual issues concerning cement movement, but the most troubling observation was the amount of oil resting on the cylinder. So much in fact that the thickness of dried and hardened muck was making contact with the teeth.

Using a very fine toothbrush, sponge and many days doing a bit more and a bit more, most of this was removed,

but the stain left behind was not a pretty sight.

Entered for sale in a working, but sensitive state, it sold in 2005 to a good home where I knew it would be tended towards full recovery.

At what point does a musical box stop shining and start moaning? At what point do we look at a piece that has fallen on hard times and agree that nothing can be done? With this box, the opposite was true – for the owner thought the world of something that what getting worse and worse. Never before, and I question if this particular scenario will be repeated, have I dealt with a musical box that almost didn’t make it in this manner.

Months later, I was invited to see a disc musical box laid out with a collection, whereupon the one next it caught my eye with similar Egyptian inlay decoration. It was the same box, fully cleaned, sensitively polished, ebonised and the mechanism fully and professionally over-hauled. And it looked and sounded magnificent.

Perhaps it is just my emotional-side for this subject coming through more than ever, and this wasn’t a very fine piece, but it was a piece that was saved. Some musical boxes you just remember more than others. They do not have to be the best ones, but they are usually attached in some way to a story of birth, life or in this case, recovery.

I checked to see if any further boxes resided in the house where this had been tortured in, but the reply was notable,

“No, no; cos this box is the only example with the round thing inside ‘init’ – I don’t think you will find another like this cos they are too large to survive,” was the telephone response; I kid you not.

Remembering I was late meeting my friends for Russian roulette with an atomic bomb that afternoon, I rang off thanking him for his time.

Oh dear, dear me.

Saleroom Report *concluded*
from Page 295

The concluding part of Gerald Stonehill's Duo-Art and Ampico collection, this time with all the catalogues and leather-bound reference books, went to Russia for £1080 (lot 4).

In the world of the finer musical box selection, the healthy range here brought £8400 and £7200 (lots 17 and 18) for the two gold and enamel musical watch keys, each with barillet movements of the finest calibre, £5760 (lot 19) for an intriguing cylinder musical travelling quarter-repeating alarm timepiece, and three of the five barrel organs offered selling well.

For snuffboxes, this covered F. Nicole to Reuge, with notably the most commented on, the tortoiseshell 2-air snuffbox No. 2040 making far higher than the reserve at £2880 (lot30). The following lot, also an F. Nicole, but a two-revolution, single-air tinplate cased variety finding a new home for £1560. The other examples in the world of miniature movements also proved popular, all going to international members inside the estimates. In the land of bargains, first prize must go to the tri-revolver interchangeable 'Sublime-Harmony' cylinder musical box by George Baker,

No. 16005. This gorgeous and imposing box simply needed a clean and when this went for £9000 (lot 40), guilty faces started to appear wishing they had bid more. And they should have. Never mind - I have another one here for the next sale. For the strong-hearted, £1440 (lot 43) would have bought a 12-air 'Grand-Format' box, but a re-pin, endless manufacture and a complete cabinet re-polish seemed to draw the perspective sharply.

The unusual Karrer mandoline-Harpe-Piccolo drew much attention when viewing parties noticed the patent folding crank, and although the sound was nice, the noise of clicking camera shutters proved the crank design was more enjoyable. This was gavelled down at £1200 (lot 44) - modest when you consider we don't trip over these everyday. The singing bird section was not a selling winner on the day, but good homes were found for the mid-range fusee models, namely by Charles Bruguier and Marguerat. The top lot here, a Rochat Frères gold, enamel and split-pearl fusee singing bird box with timepiece actuated sur-plateau movement (lot 47). One member who has been handling musical boxes for over 40 years was heard saying that this was the finest he had seen. It failed to sell, but was enjoyed by many for its pure quality, and this made up for that.

French, German, Swiss and a few American clients came to see the sale, with a total of nine countries being represented on the books at one point. However, our Russian friends were not able to make it, being inconvenienced by the financial situation. It must have been very heartbreaking for them, as their passion for the higher-band level of the subject is what has made them tick for so long. And with so much already assembled within the walls of the largest country in the world, upon completion, the vast walls of their very own mechanical music palace will I am sure be as stunning as everyone imagines it will be. We wish them much success with the collection and hope to welcome them back in the near future.

Next year, we will be directing our usual four sales, with one or two extra events as well. Be assured that whether we are looking at society auctions, our auctions, or further out, new market estimates will have to be applied. The sold figures of old are no longer considered accurate benchmarks for use in the future. But surely when one wishes to purchase a musical box, they should be looking to buy something they like, not just because it happens to be worth a certain price? For the real reason we are connected to this wonderful subject, let's hope so.

**TO ACCESS THE
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In order to prevent large amounts of 'spam' being posted on our web site, you now need a user name and a password to access the forum.

The password will change regularly. Currently it is:

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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 look at the new members list or 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.

You will get far more out of your membership if you come along to a local or national meeting, you might make some new friends and hear wonderful instruments..... If you are not sure then just book in with our meetings organiser as a day visitor the first time.

3034 Geoffrey McArdle

3035 R.H.Arnold F.B.H.I.,
W.Yorks

3036 Terrence Newberry,
Hampshire

3037 Robert Dyke, Gloucs

3038 Major Patrick J.Puttock,
Somerset

3039 Roy Russell, Essex

3040 Noel Vaughan, Eire

3041 Stephen Kearney, Kent

3042 Russ Gittings, Notts

3043 Roland Craft, Yorkshire

3044 Mr.C.J.Hales, Dorset

3045 David Horne, Surrey

3046 Jack Lowther, N.Lincs

The Music Box DVD

by Robert Ducat-Brown

In this copy of the Music Box you should find your personal DVD, which contains every copy of the journal from 1963 to 2006. That is 22 Volumes, 176 journals and almost 7000 pages. The index contains about 3000 links to articles.

The DVD is based on the Index compiled mainly by the late John Powell and is therefore dedicated to him.

The matter was first discussed at the AGM in 2007 and permission to proceed was given by the committee in October 2007 when I was able to present an example of how it would work and costs involved. Work commenced soon after and I was able to demonstrate an early, draft version in May at the 2008 AGM. Since that time, work on the production has continued, sometimes waiting for outside sources to complete parts, but in most cases with the efforts of our own members.

Certain members must be thanked for their efforts to produce this DVD. The one who has done more than anyone is Roy Evett, the project manager. Roy has spent an incredible amount of time, perfecting and correcting the project and improving it to a standard far beyond that which I ever envisaged.

John Ward has produced an additional index which has allowed us to include volumes 21 and 22 in the publication.

Ian Birchall and John Farmer have helped a great deal in function testing, proof reading and proving of the index links.

Kathleen Turner has been able to completely regenerate the society's logo and has used this to produce the artwork for the DVD label.

Thanks should also go to Ted Brown and Roy Ison who supplied the original journals for scanning.

Instructions to get started are on the back of the sleeve. There is also a comprehensive User Guide, on the DVD itself, which includes a facility to install "Adobe Reader" for those who may not have an Internet connection. The "Letter" and "Author's" indexes are not included but may be used by obtaining a copy of the Music Box Index from the society. It is expected that this will be available on the web site soon.

In the unlikely event of your having problems loading or using the DVD we would like to hear about it. Please contact us and we will endeavour to provide a solution. In these circumstances it will help us to diagnose the problem if you tell us which version of Windows you use (98, 2000, XP, or Vista), which web browser you use and the details of the problem.

If you have any comments, or find any errors please let me know in order that it might be amended for future versions. My details are on the Officer's Page.

We hope you enjoy using this new addition to The Musical Box Society of Great Britain's library of Mechanical Music publications.

Letters to the Editor

From Mrs Monica Sands:

Sir,

Following the sad death of my husband John, I would like to thank all the members at the Autumn Meeting of the Musical Box Society for the wonderful help and sympathy shown to me and for the many cards sent to me.

I would like to thank particularly Daphne Ladell and Mary Bellamy for getting me to the hospital to which John was taken and for staying with me until the first members of our family arrived.

Musical boxes were very much a passion of John's and we shared many happy meetings with you all.

From Mrs Alison Biden:

Dear Sirs

Thank you and Roy Evett for the illuminating article about the Cuban Street Organ in Vol 23 No8. Though I cannot remember how I became aware of it I discovered somehow during a visit to Cuba in 2002, that there was a little street organ industry in Holguin, so much so that in one mad idle moment I wondered whether the Society might mount a trip to Cuba to see it!

We didn't get as far as visiting Holguin itself, and when I

asked some musically inclined Cubans elsewhere if they knew anything about it, I got rather vague or negative responses, so it was good to learn a little more detail from Roy's article.

I wonder if this will start a trend in the Journal of noting mechanical musical items in unexpected places? During my travels I have come across the following:

A 'pianola' (I use the term loosely) in a mountain restaurant in the French Alps, much distressed by its location adjacent to a roaring log fire, but I was assured that the Italian patron who had donated it made a pilgrimage once a year to play it!

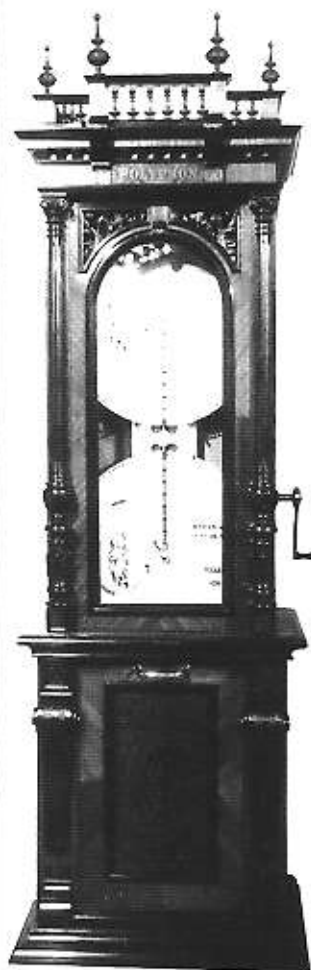
An item in the Ushuaia Town Museum, which I have noted in my diary of 2004 as 'a Mills and Co. novelty musical box.' If memory serves me well, it was in the form of a cash till (?)

But for me the most bizarre was in the Bogd Khaan Palace Museum, Ulaan Baatar, Mongolia. The Bogd Khaan had been the last Mongolian ruler, and was thought of as half king, half lama, despite leading a very debauched life as a puppet of the Russians,

who showed their gratitude by building him the palace, the first European-style building to be constructed in Mongolia.

One has to remember that by 2000, the palace and its contents had deteriorated somewhat. However, I was able to make out through the very dirty glass of one display case, a very large cylinder musical box. Unfortunately there was no explanatory label, and no guide to ask about it. Another exhibit, equally neglected, consisted of a very large model of a Chinese (?) boat made out of ivory or pearl, which on closer inspection looked suspiciously as though several parts of it were meant to move mechanically! (Reminiscent of the silver nefs.) Both of these seemed totally incongruous in the palace collection of an erstwhile nomadic yurt-dweller!

My curiosity has been aroused but not satisfied: are there any other members who have seen any of these items and can supply more information? Having found one item at 'the end of the world' in Argentina, and two others in a country whose name is synonymous with the ultimate in isolation, what other finds wait to be discovered in far-flung corners of the world, I wonder?



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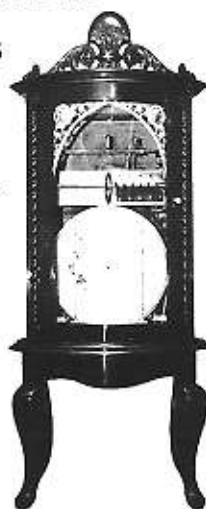
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