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The Music Box

An International Journal of Mechanical Music

In this issue:

- The Musical Watch, its History and Mechanism

The Journal of the Musical Box Society of Great Britain

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From the Editors' Desk

Welcome to the first issue of Volume 25 of The Music Box!

Elsewhere in the journal you will find early announcements of the celebrations planned for 2012, when the Society will celebrate the 50th anniversary of its inception. In the mean time, on a smaller scale, here we are at Volume 25. I read recently, probably in Reader's Digest in the dentist's waiting room, that people with an optimistic outlook on life lead healthier and longer lives than those who live with the glass half empty rather than half full. Well, looking on the bright side, raise your glass (tea cup, coffee mug etc) to the next 25 volumes in the MBSGB history.

In this issue we have an in-depth article on the workings of the typical musical pocket watch. Our friend Luuk Goldhoorn kindly drew this to our attention and liaised with the author for permission to translate and reproduce it and to provide us with his original illustrations. We have supplemented this with a brief history of these watches for those unfamiliar with them. Although the article is copiously illustrated there was not a picture of the complete watch so we have photographed a very typical one of our own for the front cover.

Alan Clark's detailed account of his work converting his Story and Clark reed organ into a roll-playing instrument is most intriguing and well documented. (Is this the Story of a Clark, Alan? We had to ask ourselves with a groan!) We have Bob Ducat-Brown's auricle introducing us to the new Society web site – congratulations are in order, for the site is now easy to use, clear and inviting.

If there are any members who have not followed Don Busby's articles on the building of his musical box we would urge you to follow his progress. As co-editors, we have had to discuss with Don that we can't necessarily proof read his work, but we can and do appreciate the challenges he has faced. The solutions and the skills involved in his work have given us an even greater feeling for and appreciation of the craftsmen of old who had to find solutions to their problems completely from scratch. Don's is a work that definitely needed to be recorded, and we are very grateful that he has taken the trouble to do it so meticulously for the magazine.

The European Project is an exciting International collaboration, instigated in part by our Vice-President, Paul Bellamy. It will result in an unique and important archive of mechanical musical instruments and their sounds the like of which has never before been contemplated.

The News from Other Societies is 'under new management', and we thank John Farmer for his regular contributions while he was Society Archivist. Welcome Alison Biden! It is always interesting to have a brief overview of what the other branches of mechanical music are researching and recording and if a subject particularly catches your eye you can, of course, contact the Archivist for the whole article.

Stripped screw threads are a common restoration headache and the Restoration Matters! Team is here with helpful advice!

The Registrar has been faithfully at his task for nearly forty years now, only gradually emerging as our hard-working Chairman/President. Read his article carefully and consider whether you should be the person to respond to his call for assistance.

So now, the snowdrops are out, Spring is in the air and we have a whole summer of activities to look forward to – what is there not to be optimistic about? Happy New Year!

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OFFICERS OF THE M.B.S.G.B. AND THEIR DUTIES

President: **Arthur Cunliffe**
MBSGB, P O Box 373, AL6 0WY E-mail: adcunliffe@btinternet.com

Joint Vice President: **Coulson Conn**
432 Old Forge Road, Media, Pennsylvania PA 1906 USA
Tel: 610 459 06711

Joint Vice President: **Paul Bellamy**
46 Longfield Avenue, High Halstow, Nr. Rochester. Kent ME3 8TA
Tel: 01634 252079 E-mail: bellamypaul@btinternet.com

Treasurer: **Richard Kerridge**
32 Queens Road, Reading, Berkshire RG1 4AU
Tel: 01189 577453 E-mail: richardkerridge@edwinsmith.co.uk
To whom all subscriptions enquiries should be addressed.

Acting Subscriptions Secretary: **Kath Turner**
36 Lime Kiln Lane, Lilleshall, Newport, Shropshire TF10 9EZ
Tel: 01952 608114. E-mail: antiquekate@hotmail.com
Subscription enquiries may also be sent to this address.

Membership Secretary: **Kevin McElhone**
MBSGB, POBox 373, Welwyn AL6 0WY
Tel: 01536 726759 E-mail: kevin_mcelhone@hotmail.com
To whom all applications and queries relating to new membership should be addressed

Webmaster: **Robert Ducat-Brown**
MBSGB, P O Box 373, Welwyn AL6 0WY
Tel: 01438 712585 E-mail: robert.ducat-brown@virgin.net

Acting Correspondence Secretary: **Nicholas Simons**
MBSGB, P O Box 373, Welwyn AL6 0WY
Tel: 01332 760576 E-mail: njas@btinternet.com
To whom all general correspondence should be sent

Meetings Secretary: **Daphne Ladell**
The Hollies, Box Hill Road, Tadworth, Surrey KT20 7LA
Tel: 01737 843644 E-mail: daphne.ladell@btinternet.com

Acting Recording Secretary: **Paul Bellamy**
46 Longfield Avenue, High Halstow, Rochester ME3 8TA
Tel: 01634 252079. E-mail: bellamypaul@btinternet.com

Editors: **David & Lesley Evans**
P O Box 3088 Revelstoke BC, V0E 2S0, Canada.
Tel/Fax: 001 250 837 5250 E-mail: mechmusicmuseum@aol.com

Archivist: **John Farmer**
8 The Lea, Kidderminster, Worcester DY11 6JY
Tel: 01562 741108 E-mail: john@musicanic.com

Acting Auction Organiser: **John Ward** (asst **John Farmer**)
Tel: 01217 437980 E-mail: wardjohnlawrence@aol.com

Advertising Secretary: **Ted Brown**
The Old School, Guildford Road, Bucks Green, Horsham, West Sussex RH12 3JP
Tel: 01403 823533

Committee member: **David Worrall M.B.E.**
Tel: 01962 882269 E-mail: worrall@ercall87.freeserve.co.uk

Co-opted acting Archivist: **Alison Biden**
MBSGB, P O Box 373, Welwyn AL6 0WY
Tel: 01962 861350 E-mail: ali_biden@hotmail.com

For your further information:

Publication Sub-Committee: (Non Journal)
Paul Bellamy, Ted Brown, David Worrall
See above for contact details

Website: www.mbsgb.org.uk E-mail: mail@mbsgb.org.uk

Dates for your Diary 2011

Chanctonbury Ring

Sunday 6th March 2011
10.30 coffee for an 11a.m. start
Lunch provided
Please contact Ted Brown on 01403 823533

Teme Valley Winders

Saturday 12th March 2011
1.30 p.m. start
Please contact John Phillips on 01584 781118

Essex Meeting

Saturday 26th March 2011
10a.m. -4p.m.
Hullbridge Centre, Windermere Avenue, Hullbridge, SS5 6JR
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 2011

Milton Keynes
Friday 15th April – Sunday 17th
Why not come and join us
Don't forget to book !

Annual General Meeting & Society Auction

Saturday 4th June 2011
Roade Village Hall
Near Northampton
10.30a.m. Start - followed by buffet lunch
After lunch - Society Auction

President's Message No. 19

It is with great sadness I have to tell you of the untimely death of Dr Coulson Conn, our Joint Vice-President. In spite of a period of intensive treatment, Coulson passed away peacefully on December 14th 2010. An appreciation of Coulson's life and work for the Society appears elsewhere in this journal.

The Committee has not really been resting over the Christmas and New Year period. We are constantly seeking ideas on how to attract new members to the Society. We have also been forming strong links with like minded people all over the world. We do have close bonds with our American friends and have established a good rapport with our associates in Japan.

Following an idea instituted by Franco Severi, Paul Bellamy our Vice-President and Past President Ted Brown are playing their part in helping to establish a method of linking similar societies from all over Europe. Progress to date has been most encouraging and Paul has written a report in this issue on what has already been achieved.

Bob Ducat-Brown has been thinking seriously about the Society Web-Site and how it can be improved. Thirteen years ago when the site was first established, it was a market leader. The advances and developments in the world of computing now mean we are ready for a serious re-vamp of the site. This is being tackled so that both older and the younger members will find it easier to use and more informative. I am hoping that when fully established and running our Web-Site will "take off" and continue to be one of the best platforms for communication and the dissemination of knowledge. I would like to see older members pluck up their courage to use the Web-Site to communicate much more. This would benefit less experienced members to gain from the expertise of long standing members. Take courage and have a go. Do not forget that we also have the Letters to the Editor section in the Journal which is there to be used. It is one of the first things I read when I receive my copy of the Journal!

Our AGM and Annual Auction is a well established event and is an occasion when members can help run the Society by putting forward ideas on future developments. Remember, ideas do not just have to come from the Committee, we can all help. The annual auction is where members can buy and sell not only complete items but also "bits and pieces" Added to this the commission rates are very favourable to all.

I am hoping that the Auction Organiser(s) and the Web-Master will be able to work together so that in the Forum section of the Web-Site an indication of some of the items that will be on offer in the auction will be available to view. This could amount to a sort of catalogue of items to be presented for sale. Of course this will require vendors to let the Web-Master or the Auction Organiser(s) know by e-mail in advance of the meeting of items they intend to sell. If this can be achieved, then members will be able to access the Web-Site a short time before the meeting and have a better idea of items that are likely to be at the auction. I am sure that if we all co-operate this can be achieved and the idea will work.

May I remind members wishing to submit matters that require Committee action that they should send correspondence and/or e-mails to the Correspondence Secretary or to me as President/Chairman. Following this route will ensure your request reaches the full Committee for their proper consideration.

Finally, please continue to support the Society in any way you can so that it can continue well into the future. Legacies and donations are most useful and have in the past enabled us to publish some of our reference works. There are other books being planned with one of them due to be published shortly. In the meantime, "Happy Collecting".

Arthur Cunliffe

Teme Valley Winders

Saturday 18th June 2011
1.30 p.m. start
Please contact John Phillips on 01584 78 1118

Autumn Meeting 2011 Scarborough

Friday 9th September – Sunday 11th
Details in next Journal

Open House Nicholas & Eileen Simons

Saturday 17th September 2011
Details in Journal

Teme Valley Winders

Saturday 24th September 2011
1.30 p.m. start
Please contact John Phillips on 01584 78 1118

Teme Valley Winders Christmas Meeting

Saturday 3rd December 2011
12 Noon start
Please contact John Phillips on 01584 781118

A European Project

The purpose of this article is to inform our members of a project for which your Committee is hoping to find support, from members willing to participate. The idea of the project started in September 2009, at the Longiano International Festival, Italy. President Franco Severi made a proposition to attending presidents of European mechanical musical societies for a joint venture, one that could benefit our members and those of our sister societies. The end result could also put mechanical music into the public domain for the benefit, study and enjoyment of future generations. He suggested a form of co-operation to reflect issues relating to mechanical instruments. The theme was "How to protect mechanical instruments and raise awareness of them". Dr. Giovanni Di Stefano, an associate of Franco, is a musicologist of Palermo University and a member of the Italian Mechanical Music Society. Together, they suggested that a multilingual technical glossary was essential to clarify some of the ambiguous terminology often met with in current literature. Ralf Smolne, President of the German society, also said there was often ambiguity in the way mechanical musical instruments are classified.

Giovanni is associated with a European project called Musical Instruments Museum On-line (MIMO), involving 11 institutions, musical instrument museums and music conservatoires in Belgium, France, Germany, Italy, Sweden and the United Kingdom. **The project's aim is to create a single on-line database with about 45,000 images, 1800 digital recordings and 300 film clips.** The consensus view was that all the societies could work together as a first step to create a multi-lingual database in line with these concepts. Thus a second meeting was convened for 2010 and took place in Ruedesheim, Germany, in September 2010.

The second meeting coincided with the German Society's weekend meeting and was a great success. Chaired by Ralf Smolne, President GSM e.V, Germany, those attending were:

France: Jean-Paul Arnaut, President, AAIMM with Jean-Marc Lebout and Michel Tremouille.

Belgium: Johnny Claes, President of Mechamusica.

Germany: Jens Wendel, Vice-President, GSM e.V, with Walter Tenten.

Italy: Franco Severi, President, AMMI, with Flavio Pedrazzini.

Switzerland: Raphael Lüthi.
Great Britain: Paul Bellamy, Vice-President.

Apologies for absence were from: Giovanni Di Stefano, Ted Brown (GB past President), Wim Snoerwang, President KDV, (Netherlands)

The main task was agreed together with additional tasks that could be pursued jointly. One is the present use of MIDI, its future development and standardisation in its application to mechanical music. Another is to study the complexities of performance rights, fees and copyright.

Organisation: Each society would provide a person to be the principal link through which all that society's information should pass. Together, the Societies have accepted Giovanni di Stephano as the project co-ordinator for all the participating societies. The means of communication is to be simple, using email to the relevant link person who will inform the project co-ordinator and other links as appropriate.

Thus anyone who can assist in any way to achieve the project's main aims or the secondary objectives concerning the use of midi and the problems of copyright etc, or who wants more information, can contact Paul Bellamy (see Officers Panel on Page 3).

Would those members accessing the MBSGB Website

www.mbsgb.org.uk

please note:
The password has been changed to

LANGDORFF

Register News No: 70

A short time ago, John Cowderoy kindly sent me a large number of Auction catalogues so that I could check and look for boxes that were not already on the Register. His kind action has resulted in nearly 150 "new" boxes being added to the Register and there are still many more catalogues left to go through. Many have helped in this respect and I would like to thank Keith Harding, Alan Godier and others for regularly sending in information on boxes they have seen. As a result of all this work, the total number of boxes registered in the database is now over 9,000!

I hope that the Register will eventually cover 10,000 boxes but it is going to be a struggle to reach this number and I will require a considerable amount of help to achieve this aim. If you have not yet registered your boxes, please do so as soon as possible. Forms are on the Society web-site and they can be downloaded and printed off easily. Once they are completed they can be sent of to me at MBSGB, PO box 373, Welwyn AL6 0WY. Please include a stamped addressed envelope for your reply.

There is no doubt that patterns are emerging from the Register especially with makers like Nicole Frères. Unfortunately, I have to spend so much of my time entering new information I have comparatively little time left to analyse it. When Anthony Bulleid was alive, he used the Register for research using what he had discovered as a basis for some of his Oddments. Alas we do not seem to have anyone willing to continue with this type of work at the moment.

Looking at the Register and the various catalogues it is possible to see trends and patterns throughout the 40 plus years that the Register has been in existence. In the 1970's there were a large number of boxes around which could be obtained quite easily. Good boxes were always expensive with common boxes costing considerably less, but at least they were there in large numbers. Taking into account depreciation, probably the value of boxes has stayed roughly the same over the years, but it is difficult to make true comparisons. After all a £10 purchase price in those early days could equate to £200 today.

There are a great number of facts within the Register and I have listed some of these below. They have been selected entirely at random. I hope that it will illustrate just how useful such information really is. Eventually I hope members will be able to access this information easily, but in the meantime, you will have to contact me with your requests and I will try to help.

The total number of boxes registered is 9,099. All have been given a unique Register number. Of these boxes, only 4,131 retain their original tune sheet. It seems as though over time, 2/3 of boxes have lost their original tune sheet.

Nicole boxes number 3,218 with around 700 having a photograph or illustration alongside the paper record cards. The gamme number file has details of 1,487 Nicole gamme numbers with the majority having details of the tunes they play.

In total there are over 3,000 photographs or illustrations of boxes stored with the record cards. Details of 130 composers are listed with details of their date of birth and death. Additionally, there are 1,258 records of the tunes found on tune sheets along with a note of the date of the first performance. This means various sub lists can be produce as illustrated below:-

The composer Verdi features on 761 boxes with Bellini coming a close second with 671 entries.

Home sweet Home is the most popular tune on boxes with 496 entries. Auld Lang Syne scores 307, whilst Blue Bells of Scotland reaches 208.

It is possible to classify which boxes have been sold in the past by an auction house and in most cases where and when. In the majority of cases lot numbers have been recorded. Up to the present day 4,289 boxes have been through the hands of one or other of the major auction houses. Please remember that boxes with little or no information will not have had much of an impact on the Register data other than being recorded as being in existence.

How do members benefit from all this information? I believe that the information contained within the Register along with all photographs stored in the file index system, provide an insight into what was going on in the world of mechanical music in the 19th century. Secondly, all the boxes that have been marked with a unique register number have a greatly improved chance of being recovered if stolen. The Neighbourhood Watch system that has been established among members helps in this respect. Finally, members who own a box without a tune sheet can often find out from the Register what tunes are listed for a particular gamme number.

The downside to all this has come as the computer database file used to compile the Register is now so old that modern computer systems struggle to recognise it any more. Additionally, the manufactures of printers no longer supply models that will print DOS based programmes. Even those older printers that do work for these programmes no longer have ink cartridges or ribbons available any more. So much for saving the environment! I trust that before long I will be able to find a computer wizard who will be able to "modernise" all my computer files as we do need to find a way of updating the database. Perhaps Microsoft's Access program would be the best, but how to transfer the files is another matter. I am seriously seeking someone who is able and willing to convert a DOS file and then import it into a readable Windows system. Are there any volunteers?

Arthur Cunliffe.

Teme Valley Winders Autumn Meeting – 25th September 2010

From John Farmer

Several regulars were unable to make this meeting, so numbers were down a bit, but the music still played! Alan Beresford was persuaded to give an impromptu concert on Martin Phillips' Viscount electronic pipe organ – but it sounded like a Wurlitzer! It was, in fact, emulating a 3-manual Paramount 310 Wurlitzer using a MIDI connector, a computer running Hauptwerk organ emulation software, and John Phillips' audio system. John Farmer had managed to configure the system earlier in the day as a bit of an experiment to prove it could be done, and it worked. The only casualty was one of JP's loudspeakers which couldn't cope with the Wurlitzer's bass pipes (even though they were "virtual"), and burst its cone.

To the meeting proper, Nicholas Newble started off with a demonstration of his newly acquired Lochmann 15 ½" table top disc musical box. Nicholas had acquired the instrument as a "wreck", and it was subsequently resurrected by Arno van der Heijden, in Holland, with some new teeth and attention to dampers, star wheels, etc. It was demonstrated with 3 discs, which all played very nicely indeed. Nicholas Simons was second, with a brief talk to explain his involvement with the import and restoration of David O'Connor's Poppers Happy Jazzband, which many MBSGB members saw during the weekend in Lincolnshire. Nicholas explained some of the problems of importing this instrument, and an instrument of his own, together into the UK, so if you ever need to do this, Nicholas is your man! The result was demonstrated by showing a short video (made with the Society's camera) of the Poppers playing, and with its covers off.

Kevin McElhone followed with more discs, playing two 15 ½" inch discs of the same tune, one being a Polyphon arrangement, and one Regina. The difference was quite significant, with the general consensus in favour of the Polyphon arrangement. Kevin then played a piano roll on JP's Weber grand, this roll being an extremely ornate version of Onward Christian Soldiers, the tune being difficult to identify amongst the trills and arpeggios. John Farmer was next with a brief illustrated talk about Autophone organette restoration. John had coincidentally been asked to restore 2 of these machines, and had one of his own to restore, so ended up restoring 3 together. Interestingly, although they seem to be identical, all three were different in relation to the music sheet transport mechanism. It also transpired that instruments owned by two other MBSGB members were different again, making 5 variations in all. John finished by playing a music strip on one of the restored machines.

John Harrold was next to take the front spot with a few of his musical "snuff" boxes. (As John said, who on earth would want to keep snuff in them?). Of particular interest was one in a wooden box with an inlaid shield design on the lid. John believed this dated from about 1820, was probably made from Elm Wart, with the box made in Scotland. John Phillips then pointed out that he had three more, almost identical boxes, one having the inlay in silver. Another interesting box from JH was one with a 3 dimensional silver picture on the lid. A number of theories were advanced as to how the 3-D effect was achieved, but John believes it was made in layers, then acid etched to hide the layering. All the boxes played beautifully.

During the usual tea, coffee and cake break (thanks, yet again, Hilda), we were able to watch a digitised version of a film of Jack Donovan's automata. The video had been obtained by Nicolas Simons, from Michael Start, and is now in the Archives.

For light relief, John Phillips played one of his whistling birds, this one operated by a rubber bulb. It emits a plain "tweet" if used dry, but when water is added to the base, it sounds more like a bird whistle – the water moves under pressure and alters the pitch of the whistle. Nicholas Simons then demonstrated two new Pianola rolls from Julian Dyer, one being "Alons Vite" by Wilhelm Ganz, arranged by Adam Ramet (and it was very "vite"), and the second was "Bugatti Step" by Jaroslav Jezek (a good tester for any Pianola). Nicholas was then persuaded to give us an explanation of how to properly play a Pianola, with the help of the Aeolian Practice Roll, and then showed how this is all done automatically by a Duo-Art roll.

To "wind" down, John Phillips played a barrel on his Imhof barrel organ (which is playing much better now the humidity has increased), followed by Cavaliera Rusticana on the Racca Piano Melodico (48 note).

The date of the Spring 2011 meeting is Saturday 12th March starting at 1.30 p.m. Please phone John Phillips on 01584 781118 in advance of the meeting if you plan to attend.

Essex Group Meeting - 20 November 2010

from Don Busby

Eighteen members found their way to *The Hullbridge Centre* for our ninth group meeting. We were pleased to welcome Rod Tyrell-Price and Mark Natrass, John's son. A full and interesting programme arranged by Bruce Allen included the following topics.

Transposition of sheet music notes to pin positions on a cylinder by spatial and mechanistic methods, rather than by reading the music, was outlined by Don Busby. His first trial cylinder, now fully pinned with "Silent Night" and "Ding Dong Merrily on High", needs cementing and grinding; as yet unknown processes!

Roger Booty described how he also similarly prepares paper rolls. He uses a jig board with rails which guide a slider and cards carrying various scales to mark slot positions before cutting them out with a scalpel knife. Roger played a number of self-cut airs on an Organette and a Cabinetto. Roger pointed out that a significant increase in tempo can arise with airs of long duration due to diameter enlargement of paper on the take-up spool as the tune progresses.

A Nicole Frères musical box from around 1860 which he had bought at auction was played by Alan Clark. A few broken and bent teeth needed repairing, but the cylinder had very few pins. After a professional re-pin Alan still had to manually de-burr and correct many pins: holes had been missed, whilst incorrectly drilled but *marked* holes had been pinned unnecessarily. Alan demonstrated and played his most recent purchase, a 2-air per turn Nicole with a fat cylinder.

The morning ended with John Natrass explaining how he had

Roger Booty playing self-made paper rolls on Organette and Cabinetto

spotted that an early Victorian doll in a rocking chair was a replica or a fake, having a dress zip and Allen screws in its construction: thus was he able to decimate the asking price. A nice string-pull wind movement having 14 small comb segments, each with 5 teeth and housed in an oval wooden clock base, was identified as by Henri LeCoultre c.1832-1835. John's other pride was an Adler upright 14 ½" disc player bought on e-bay which he has brought to fine condition.

After lunch Robert Ducat-Brown gave a screen presentation of methods for finding articles on "The Music Box DVD of Journals". Later in the afternoon Robert explained the dos and don'ts of French polishing, including sourcing of materials, as a follow up to his earlier talk on veneering. Surface condition is important: holes are filled by melting in a matching coloured shellac stick, or by forcing wax in with a warmed old chisel, and the surface is smoothed with very fine sandpaper. Robert demonstrated how French polish dissolved in methylated spirits, as a 4:1 mix, is applied by light sideways passes using a *rubber*, made from cotton sheet and wadding, impregnated with polish. This is done 4 times at 15 minute intervals.

Bodying-up is now carried out using 2 drops of linseed oil and polish on the pad, firstly working in figures of eight several times, interspersed with rests, finally with several applications using small circular movements. After an hour the surface is finished with a polish-meths ratio of 2:1 using a fresh *rubber*. Finally, after 2

days the resulting high gloss finish can be toned down using 0000 grade steel wool and ordinary wax furniture polish.

A chamber barrel organ was demonstrated on video by Bruce Allen. It has two slow 4" diameter barrels and one long-playing 5 ½" diameter barrel. The smaller units play Scottish dances, the larger a mixture of airs. Because it is too heavy to carry, Bruce presented a video tour of his miniature church organ with 117 pipes. It is operated by a 65-track roll playing 58 notes; the other 7 tracks control *stop, tracking, reverse, etc.* The organ automatically re-rolls, sets up and repeats until stopped. Bruce purchased the organ from the Bob Minney estate and it is undergoing full restoration.

A miscellany of items by Paul Bellamy amused us; firstly with a small ebony box into which he had fitted a Paillard movement, then a cast iron 'monkey box' with a monkey, operated by strong spring action, shooting a coin into the money box via his master's hat. Paul's third piece was a model grand piano with a 2-air movement. Inside the piano lid, Paul has fitted a vanity mirror and a tray holding items such as a needle case, scissors, thimble and scent bottle.

Terry Longhurst explained how lengths of tunes can vary between musical boxes of similar size and external appearance. He showed and played three such boxes with playing times of 60, 90 and 120 seconds. The first two have 2 1/8" standard cylinders, the other has a 3 ¼" overture cylinder, all 13" long. It was suggested that longer playing times were in response to market demand at the time.

Only 3 out of 10 tunes were named by the audience in response to Kevin McElhone's plea for help in identifying airs on a musical box of unknown make. Kevin played three American discs copied from MIDI files on Bruce's 15 ½ "Polyphon, one air was "Spring" from Vivaldi's "Four Seasons"

A clock damaged in a road accident had been repaired by Patch Pierce and friend some years ago. Patch explained and demonstrated how he had changed its works to automatically correct day and month displays at ends of months with fewer than 31 days; it also copes with leap years. Prior to his modifications it was necessary to manually reset the clock.

The meeting ended with Bruce explaining how his grandchildren find many musical devices loud and brash. They are delighted with items like cuckoo clocks and musical figures such as clowns which he showed us: he suggested that perhaps more attention should be paid to these to encourage future enthusiasts amongst the young.

It was agreed that The Hullbridge Centre is ideal for future meetings, the next being set for 26th March 2011.

Teme Valley Winders Christmas Meeting – 5th December 2010

From John Farmer

Some of our long distance members were unable to attend due to weather concerns, but around 26 still managed to brave the ice and snow to enjoy the festive fun. We were pleased to have new MBSGB member Mark Hannam join us. Mark, previously Mechanical Music specialist at Bonham's, has now moved to Fieldings in Stourbridge, Worcestershire (see inside front cover of the recent Music Box). Fieldings is a relatively new auction house which is keen to get involved in Mechanical Music and had a number of MM items in an auction earlier this year, and now the Bob Minney collection in January.

Being the Christmas meeting, we started with an excellent buffet, laid on by Hilda who had provided more than enough for everyone. Once everyone was replete, Doug Pell started us off with an Eckhart Musical Christmas tree stand which, unfortunately, wasn't in a good mood and refused to start. However, his modern double singing bird performed impeccably as the birds twittered and twitched, the whole activated by the lifting of a pen in the central pen stand. Bob Dyke was next up with his 6 tune Nicole cylinder musical box. Bob was seeking help identifying the tunes. Although he now knew what tunes were played from the Gamme number, he didn't know in what order they played. Unfortunately, no-one was able to enlighten him.

Nicholas Newble presented a number of Christmas novelties, including a modern manivelle modelled on a gramophone, a Mr. Christmas disc musical box with 6 bells which uses a plastic disc, and a pottery musical snowman. He then treated us to the playing of two QRS piano rolls, "Let it Snow", and "Frosty the Snowman" – very appropriate. John Harrold then treated us to several tunes on his Peerless organette, which was one of the better organettes of the era, having a double valve system, and a very good tone. This was well demonstrated by its rendition of the Hallelujah Chorus – yes, on 20 notes!

Kevin McElhone was next with several 15 ½" discs which he played on John Phillips' 2-comb Polyphon and two-comb upright Auto-changer Regina, and a table-top Regina all

Catalina Newble's Bow-front 15 1/2" Regina

for comparison of the different tone achieved by these machines. Having finished his demo, Kevin said that when selling a machine it was his habit to remove and hand over the winding handle to the new owner as a sign of possession. He then handed the handle of the Regina to a surprised Catalina Newble, since the machine had been purchased by Nicholas for her Birthday in the near future!!

Another of our newer Winders, Stuart Scott, then told us about his efforts to create a silver lamp oil burner. The top of the silver tube burner is an intricate "organic" looking cylindrical piece in gold plated silver. The original plan was to have this cast as a single piece, with a view to going into "production", but Stuart was unable to find anyone able to do such an unusual casting, so it was eventually made in 3 pieces and soldered together. The finished item is a very beautiful piece. John Phillips then showed the result of his recent venture into silver-smithing. He is making a silver oval box, which will be a Christening present for his new grand-daughter. The box will have a small upper hinged lid, enamelled on its outer surface, and having an antique watch movement mounted inside, whilst the main hinged lid will open to reveal a small, early, segmented comb musical movement. John then adjourned the meeting for tea, coffee and mince pies, again provided by Hilda.

The meeting was reconvened by John Farmer, presenting a few Christmas novelties – a musical bottle opener; a movement activated (electronic) singing Robin, and a musical dancing reindeer. He then showed his "Paper Organ" made from a cardboard kit, and demonstrated it with a rendition of Noel! Noel! Another such kit (unmade) was then to be the prize for the Christmas Quiz, devised and presented by Alan Pratt. Alan had prepared a very professional electronic presentation of the 20 questions, which all had a Christmas theme. Alan had been concerned that the questions would be too easy – far from it! Not many could name all the reindeers in Rudolph's team, or even all three kings, let alone say when the first Christmas card appeared, and these were the easy questions. On completion, answer sheets were swapped, for marking, as Alan went through the presentation again, this time including the answers, whereupon there were wails of anguish as our miserable attempts were revealed. The maximum points achievable were 35, and it was soon revealed that the winner had managed a grand total of 15. (I think my 5 points was quite an achievement after all – JF). John Farmer then presented the winner with the Paper Organ kit, which we expect to see and hear working at the next meeting.

To finish off on a musical note (well, several,) Kath Turner played some Christmas tunes on her street organ, and Angie Harrold followed with a few tunes on John Phillips' Pell street organ. Everyone then said their goodbyes and seasonal greetings as they left. A very enjoyable afternoon, with many thanks to John and Hilda for providing the food and facilities.

The next meeting of the Teme Valley Winders will be on 12th March, 2011, starting at 1:30p.m. prompt. Those wishing to attend should contact John Phillips on 01584 781118 to confirm and get directions if required. Any instruments, clocks or items of interest are welcome.

Restoration *matters!*

5 – The Repair of Stripped Screw Threads

This article describes the correct way to repair stripped screw threads in wood.

Screw holes in wood can become stripped for a number of reasons, particularly when the item concerned is well over one hundred years old and may have been worked on many times over this period. When taking apart any musical machine it is important always to return all screws to their original positions. Early screws were not made to the close tolerances of today so mixing up screw positions can lead to holes being enlarged or the screw being loose, and this then leads to the screw being further tightened and eventually stripping the wood. The simple act of over-tightening a screw by an inexperienced hand can lead to stripping. It is surprising how low a torque is really required to fix a joint and there is the tendency for the amateur to over-tighten screws, particularly in a gasketed joint in a pneumatic instrument. One could argue that the modern invention of the electric screwdriver has no place in the mechanical music workshop and this is certainly true in the tightening direction. Only the experienced hand can feel the correct tightness for each screw in each application. The electric screwdriver is, however, very useful in dismantling large assemblies such as those found in player pianos. Another detail essential in preventing stripped screws is to feel for the existing thread within the wood when replacing the screw. Do not simply push the screw into the hole and tighten. This could lead to the possibility of the screw cutting itself a new thread midway between the grooves of the existing hole and in the process greatly weakening the screw's purchase. Always feel for the existing groove

Fig 1. Plug and wood inserted at right

by slightly twisting the screw as you insert it, particularly in the reverse direction, and you will feel it drop into place. After these few ground rules we can move on to how NOT to repair stripped holes.

How not to do it.

When restoring old and badly looked after instruments it is amazing what one finds stuffed down screw holes; matches, tooth picks, slivers of plastic wall plugs, dowels, glue and chewed up paper or card. Needless to say, none of these is acceptable. Screws should always run across the grain of the wood as this gives it something to bite into. Unless absolutely necessary, one should never fit a screw into end-grain. In this case the screw should be made much longer than usual as the joint is much weaker per thread. If at all possible one should insert a section of cross-grain wood into the joint to give the screw its correct purchase. I have seen this done on high quality German player piano stacks where the uprights are screwed into the ends of the stack. It is for this reason that you should not drill out a stripped hole and insert a piece of dowel.

It is advisable not to replace the screw with one of a larger diameter. This would necessitate drilling out the front piece of wood and possibly the countersink if there were one, and would leave the assembled joint looking unusual with different sized screws along the joint. Also, there is no guarantee that the larger screw would grip successfully in the already stripped hole.

The correct way.

The first method is the simplest but can only be used if there is sufficient wood available beyond the existing screw. This is to use a longer screw of the same gauge. f course, this method will leave the joint weaker than originally envisaged but bearing in mind my earlier points about joint strength it may well be adequate for the purpose intended. In pneumatic instruments, particularly, be aware of the possibility of the longer screw interfering with some other part thus inhibiting operation.

The best method is to replace the wood around the screw with new wood of the same type and grain direction. The first and better way to do this is only possible where access is available to the side of the wood containing the screws, such as when the screws are running down the edge of a board. Here, one drills a hole perpendicular to the direction of the screw a few millimetres below the joint surface. Make a plug of identical wood using a plug cutter of the same diameter as the drill used earlier. Scratch a few small grooves along the length of the plug and glue it into the hole ensuring that the grain on the plug lies in the same direction as that in the workpiece. The scratches will ensure that any excess glue can

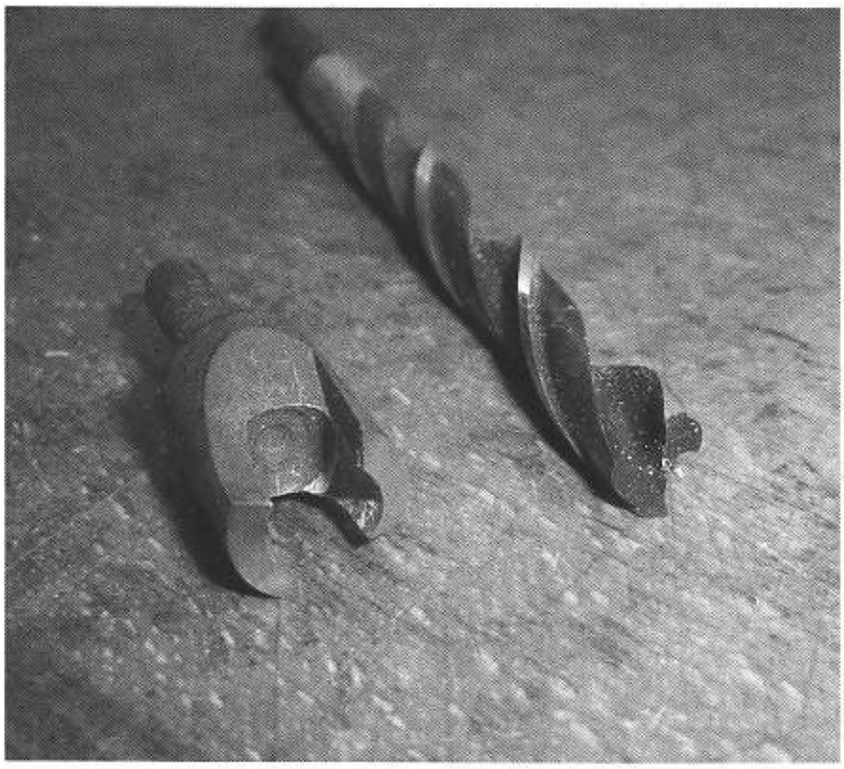


Fig 2. Plug cutter and wood boring bit

escape, rather than push out the plug. It is quite acceptable to use a modern PVA wood glue for this application.

The second, and more usual method, is to insert the plug from the top, along the axis of the screw, again with the plug's grain running in the same direction as that of the workpiece. Some say that this arrangement will loosen with time due to the plug creeping upwards, but I have never encountered this happening. Ensure your plug is significantly larger than the screw, is a tight fit and use a good wood glue. Where the screw is close to the edge of the workpiece it may be necessary to insert a new section of wood. Fig 1 shows examples of both a plug and new wood being let in near an edge. The wooden insert is dovetailed to improve its grip to the original wood. Fig 2 shows a typical wood boring drill and plug cutter. These are available from any good tool shop. The wood boring drill is different to the more usual high speed twist drill in that it has extended cutting flanks on its circumference in order to make a cleaner cut in wood. The plug cutter can only cut the plug to a given length so if the hole is longer than this the required number of plugs should be stacked within the drilled hole. The top plug should be left proud and planed flat when the glue is dry. The new hole can then be drilled in the fresh wood. The exact position of the new hole can be found by previously making a card jig locating the hole relative to surrounding details.

Although using the correct method is harder and more time-consuming than the 'botch jobs' it is the only method guaranteed to last a lifetime, and surely we owe it to our treasures to do the job properly, and once only?

Web Site Society Auction Catalogue

It is intended to publish a catalogue on the web site of some items for sale at the Society Auction, after the AGM at Roade on Saturday 4th June 2011.

This can include descriptions and photographs of the items, which should be associated with mechanical music. Please send details and pictures by email or post, to the Auction Organisers or Web Master. You may like to discuss the matter first, contact details on the journal Officers' page. You can still just bring items along.

This idea will only be a success with vendors' input.

ERRATA

Regrettably one or two errors crept into the last edition of The Music Box. The article on Griesbaum Whistling Figures was unfortunately ascribed to Alan Clark and not to its actual author, Joseph H Schumacher. We apologise to both gentlemen for the error.

An error also occurred in the picture captions in the article on Bontems Singing Birds.

Please note that the titles of four of the figures are in error; 5a, 5b, 6, and 7.

The images are of theType 1 design and not type 4 as stated. We apologise to John Moorhouse for scrambling his instructions.

MBSGB in LINCOLNSHIRE

Society Members' Autumn Meeting - 10th, 11th & 12th September 2010

The MBSGB Autumn Meeting for 2010 was held at the Golf Hotel, Woodhall Spa, Lincolnshire. The arrangements for this meeting had been made by David O'Connor together with help and support from Gill Maxim and Don & Dorothy Robinson. The number of members present was 74 amongst whom we welcomed some attending for the first time.

Dinner on the Friday evening was followed by David O'Connor, who gave an illustrated talk on one of his several interests, early gramophones. During his talk he played a number of early recordings on the instrument he had brought with him. The evening ended with a short preview talk and video given by Don & Dorothy Robinson's Wurlitzer Theatre Organ. The organ was built during the 1930's for a cinema in Slough and we would be able to see and hear this organ later in the weekend

Don and Dorothy Robinson at the Wurlitzer console

Saturday morning's programme took us to Hagworthingham and the home of our hosts, David O'Connor & Gill Maxim. There, we were able to see, hear and inspect not only the mechanical music instruments, but also a collection of vintage and classic cars. Among the instruments we heard and enjoyed were: a 1920's Popper's Happy Jazz Band, a 1938 Street Barrel Piano by Thomasso of London with an excellent programme of very well arranged tunes on its barrel; a Welte Piano; an 1885 Barrel Piano by Luis Cascali of Barcelona; a 35 key Barrel Organ with Trumpet and Percussion; and items from the collection of organettes, disc and cylinder musical boxes. Meanwhile, whilst enjoying a refreshment break in the garden, members were able to relax and listen to "De Specht" [The Woodpecker], a 49 Note Trueman Show Organ built in 1998/9. It has 150 pipes, 3 registers, Glockenspiel and Percussion.

On Saturday afternoon, after an excellent lunch arranged by our hostess, the party repaired to nearby East Kirkby Airfield. Lincolnshire is sometimes referred to as "Bomber County" because of the number of airfields used as the bases by the bomber squadrons of the Second World War. East Kirkby Airfield was one of these but is now no longer operational. Instead, it is home to the Lincolnshire Aviation Heritage Centre, privately owned and run as a memorial to the many bomber aircrews who lost their lives during World War II. We were able to wander around the various static displays; an Avro "Lancaster"; a Handley Page "Hampden"; the many displays of personal stories and artefacts from the war; and the wreckage of several crashed aircraft recovered from far and wide by the Lincoln Aircraft Recovery Group.

As it was Battle of Britain weekend, some aerial activity was on offer as well: the Lancaster itself, performing a taxi run only as it does not have an air worthiness certificate; a Spitfire and Messerschmidt 109E engaged in a mock dog-fight; and a flypast from a Dakota. All this activity was viewed against one of the rather dramatic skyscapes to be seen in the flatlands of England such as Lincolnshire. Altogether, this was a rather pleasant afternoon, albeit a somewhat very noisy one at times.

The Saturday Banquet was held in the hotel during which David O'Connor was presented with a copy of the "Musical Box Tune Sheets" book, compiled by the late Anthony Bulleid, This was not only in appreciation of his being our host for the weekend, but also in anticipation that it would help him complete some of the missing information about his collection of cylinder musical boxes.

Entertainment followed the banquet and this took the form of a musical recital given by David O'Connor's daughter, on voice and viola, and a family friend on voice and guitar.

On Sunday, our first call after leaving the hotel was the "Kinema in the Woods", just outside Woodhall Spa. This local entertainment centre was established in 1920 and today retains many of the features of that pre-war period. It was requisitioned by the RAF during the WWII and was used for briefing many bomber crews prior to a raid, one of which concerned the now famous raid on the dams of the reservoirs that supplied water to the Ruhr valley industrial complex.

In addition to continuing to perform its original function, it has regular film shows of the latest releases for local audiences; Kinema in the Woods is home to some items of mechanical music interest. Here, we were able to inspect the 1930's Compton Organ installed there and then to hear a short recital given by the resident organist, Jim Green. We also heard a performance from a Steck Duo-art Player Piano.

Leaving the Kinema, we travelled north to Market Raisin and the home of Don & Dorothy Robinson. Here we were made most welcome, our first sight on the driveway at the side of the house being Don's Showman's Traction Engine, which was in light steam especially for our visit, and his Gavioli Fairground Organ.

Most of their collection, however, is housed in what Don & Dorothy euphemistically refer to as their "shed at the bottom of the garden". Some understatement! In that accommodation was housed the Wurlitzer Theatre organ, a barrel piano, a street organ, a second Showman's Traction Engine - "Mrs Bird" built in Lincoln, a Showman's Caravan and several other items of mechanical music. In addition, there was space enough for a cafeteria for 75 guests to sit, relax and listen to the music played by these instruments!

Divided into three small parties, members were given a tour to see and hear the items in the Robinson collection: the Showman's Engine and the Gavioli; the "inner workings" of the Wurlitzer; and then to hear the smaller items in the collection. Finally, to everyone's delight, Don gave a recital on the Wurlitzer.

After an excellent roast lunch served by local caterers, we were able to relax and listen again to some of the instruments in the "shed at the bottom of the garden" before bidding farewell to our hosts, to Lincolnshire, to one another and departing for home.

This was yet another very enjoyable Society week-end centred on most interesting venues. Our thanks and appreciation to all involved with this Lincolnshire meeting: to David O'Connor & Gill Maxim, our host & hostess; to Don & Dorothy Robinson and their helpers; and to Daphne, our meetings Secretary for the overall, behind the scene arrangements; together, you provided us with a programme that was as memorable as it was entertaining.

WANTED

The Warrington Model Engineering Club would like to invite a member of the MBSGB to give a talk at one of their future meetings. They meet on the first Thursday of each month and are looking for a speaker for a meeting towards the end of 2011. Reasonable expenses will be paid. Will anyone interested in representing the Society please contact the Correspondence Secretary.

Thanks!

Dorothy Robinson and Alan Pratt admire a barrel piano

Web Site Update

By Robert Ducat-Brown

The majority of our new members find us through the web site; we also get a good response from members of the public who would like information about a musical box, which they own. I understand that restorers and suppliers that they have had enquiries from the site. However I feel that as a membership we are not taking full advantage of the information that it offers us, particularly the forum and would like to tell you exactly what information is available and how we can be more involved with it.

News Page
Much of the news is copied from our journal so most of us will have read it. Although it shows prospective members what we have been doing at meetings etc .We are improving this and as you will see, we are now listing specialist auction dates and provided that the auction houses keep me up to date they will be on the site well in advance.

We now have a list of dates and locations for forthcoming events, which might be of interest to mechanical music enthusiasts. Most of these will be obtained from copies of other society journals, which our archivist receives. However we really need your input here, if you know of any event which could be of interest please let me know, so that it can be listed on the site. This could include exhibitions, organ grinds, fairs and talks.

If you have any news which you feel would be of interest, please let me know. It will be placed on the site very quickly.

Forthcoming Events
There is now a page on the site for forthcoming events, this is an up to date list of all future meetings of the society. Apart from telling us what has been organized, it also offers non-members the opportunity to attend a local meeting whilst considering membership.

Archives
The society has a very comprehensive archive containing hundreds of publications. This is for the benefit of us all. There is a complete list of every item listed on the web site. Also through the web site you can make contact with our archivist and discuss your requirements by email.

Musical Box Register
If you would like to register your musical boxes with the society you can print out a form. There are also comprehensive instructions on how to record the details.

Tune Lists
There are lists of all disc, cob and roll music listed by the society. Perhaps you can read a number on one of your discs, but not the title, these lists may have the answer. You have an opportunity here to add to the lists. On the page is a form via which you can inform the society of any tunes that are not yet listed.

Links
This page lists many other web sites which may be if interest to us, just a click on their address will take you to their site.

Restoration & Suppliers
These pages list only those who regularly advertise in the Music Box journal.

Journal Index
This contains the complete index of journals from 1963 to 2006, which we hope to bring up to date in the future. It is a great help when used in conjunction with the Music Box DVD or your old journals.

The Forum & Message Board
This is currently for members only and needs to be accessed by entering the user name and password, which is always printed in the "Music Box". Once on the forum it is quick and easy to register by following the instructions. You will need to decide on a user name and password to register with the forum. Your computer can remember these passwords to save time on future visits and automatically log you in each time, but please keep a note of them.

Having registered you will receive an email; just click on the link and you will be a member of the forum.

On the forum you can exchange ideas, open discussions with the membership, ask advice, pass on any tips and even offer instruments for sale or look for items, which you would like to purchase. I have used this facility and purchased an instrument myself. You do not need to disclose any of your details until you are quite happy about the arrangement. We must point out that this facility is purely to introduce members to each other and that the society or its officers has no involvement or responsibility for any transaction.

AGM Auction
As you will have read in the President's report, we intend to have a web catalogue of many of the items that will be for sale at Roade on 4th June. If you are bringing anything to the sale you may send a photo and details to either the Auction Organisers or to me, well before the day. These will then be shown on the web site nearer to the date of the auction. If you would like to discuss this in more detail, please contact us. The success of this idea relies entirely with the vendors.

Web site content at www.mbsgb.org.uk

Concluded on Page 18...

Auction Report

Bonhams – Knowle 7th December 2010

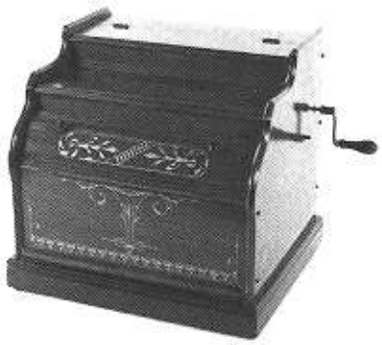
Despite the bad road conditions through ice and snow, there was a good attendance at this sale with quite a number of Society members present.

Among the gramophones, a rare Stollwerck toy machine (Lot 95) made £1300, and an EMG with typical moulded horn realised £3350.Three table top horn gramophones were in demand: an HMV 'cockleshell' model, an HMV Intermediate Monarch, and an HMV model 32 (lots 97, 98, and 99) making £1800, £1016, and £650 respectively. Another HMV, the model 460 'Lumière' in an oak case with gold plated fittings, was popular at £1426.

A Hicks style barrel piano by Thomas Taylor of Sheffield (Lot 107) in a particularly fine case but requiring work internally, made £868. An excellent Celestina organette (Lot 114) with an endless band adapter and a fitted case with approximately seventy five bands made £940.

Four singing birds were on offer. A Bontems in an excellent tortoiseshell case (Lot 118) made £1980 and another by the same maker in finely tooled gilt case realised £1855. Of the two caged birds, lot 121 with a square metal base decorated in Eastern

Lot 127 – A six air Nicole No. 36592 with original T grip key



Lot 114 – An Improved Celestina organette

style was favoured at £396. Using a similar mechanism, a Griesbaum 'Whistling Man', lot 117, made £470.

Lot 118 – A Bontems singing bird in tortoiseshell case

Among the thirty-two cylinder boxes, there was something for all tastes. A six-air Nicole Frères -serial 36595- was good value at £745 (Lot 127) whilst another six air, this time with bells, by Bremond made £2100. Less commonly seen was an Alexandra 'cuff' box (Lot 138) with six sleeves each playing six airs. With original tune sheet listing all thirty-six airs this instrument realised £1296. A handsome PVF eight-air box with the rarer right hand lever wind made £1012. (Lot 151)

Disc boxes on offer ranged from 7½ inch to 15½ inch. The smaller Symphonion was excellent value at £222, whilst an 8½ inch from the same maker made £518, and a 13¼ inch was £690. A style 45 15½ inch from Polyphon (Lot 168) offered in original unrestored condition made £2717 reflecting the quality of sound from the Sublime-Harmonie combs.

This year Bonhams will hold five sales of mechanical music in 2011. Dates and locations are:

Knightsbridge:
19th April and 9th November

Knowle:
17th May and 29th November

New York: early December (date to be confirmed early 2011)

To those who have not attended Knowle or London sales, you are in for a very warm welcome.

2011 marks the start of a special scheme by Bonhams – offering all members of MBSGB and MBSI a 10% discount on sellers' commission, with no extra charges. Please contact Laurence or Alan for details of how to consign to our international audience.

Thank you for a wonderful year – we wish you all a very happy and musical New Year.

Lot 151 – A right-hand crank P.V.F. c.1890

A Brief History of the Musical Watch

By David Evans

To accompany the technical article by Joseph Flores

"Musical watches were peculiar to Geneva", said Messrs Jaquet & Chapuis[1] , and this was about the only reference to them in the 1950's. Nevertheless, they did not originate there. One of the first to make them was John Archambo of London, working in the 1730's to 40's. Two examples are known, both fairly typical of the English verge watch in style, with silver champlevé dials and silver pierced and engraved cases. The movements played a simple tune on five nested bells. One example is a quarter-repeating clock-watch as well. [2,3]

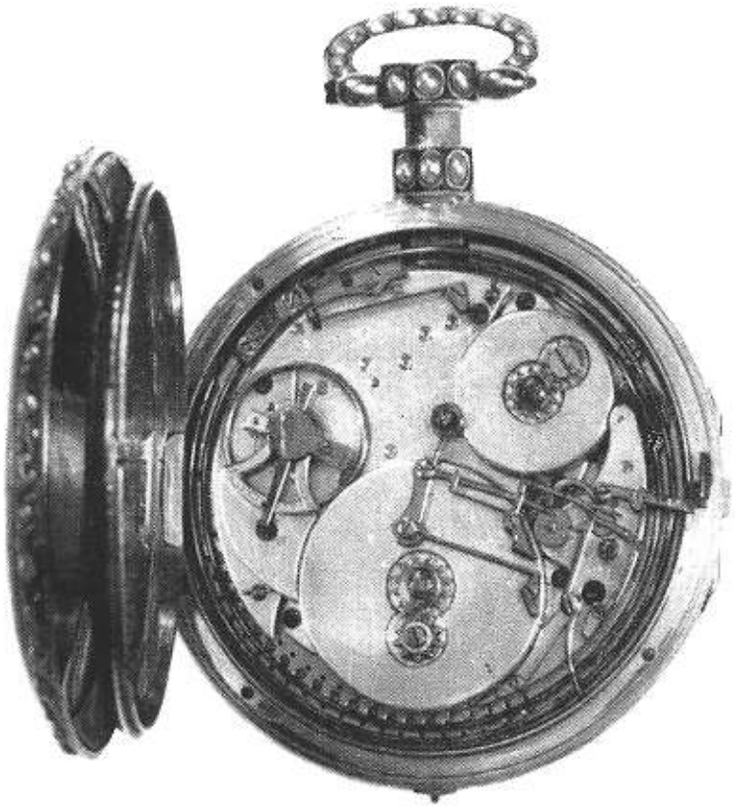
"Philippe-Samuel Meylan was the first to adapt steel tongues for use in these watches, and to arrange the mechanism for making the tongues vibrate. At first, the pins which lifted the tongues or 'teeth' of 'comb' were placed on either side of a disc. The alternate tongues of the comb were actuated from one side, and the others from the other side of the disc, this being necessary in order to leave sufficient space in which they could vibrate. The replacement of the disc by a cylinder or 'roller' was undoubtedly an improvement. The tongues could be placed very close together without interfering with one another, since they now vibrated at right angles to the comb. This system was later used for musical boxes. Little musical mechanisms were also placed in seals, which it was then fashionable to carry on watch chains etc., as well as snuff boxes. Musical watches played a tune, always the same one, each hour, and it could be repeated at will."[4] *(Not always true – some played two tunes on a two-per-turn of the disc basis— Ed)*

The beginning of musical box manufacture is now attributed to Antoine Favre in 1796. **"The significance of his creation took a few more years before it was utilised by Leschot, in 1802, as a novelty item in finger rings. Piguet (1775 – 1861) improved upon Favre's invention, and also fitted small five-note movements into novelty items such as finger rings and jewellery. By 1800 he was working in Geneva for Jean-Fréderic Leschot (1747 – 1824), a clockmaker. In 1810, Piguet started to work with his brother-in-law Henri Capt. About the year 1815, they fitted small musical movements into luxury pocket watches..... By 1828, Piguet and his son founded their own firm, making pocket watches, petites musiques and cartel movements."**[5] Bellamy *et al* state that Piguet's son was named Isaac Daniel. This may possibly be, but the father was also named Isaac Daniel. He was born at Le Chenit in 1775. He specialised very early in costly and complicated pieces: watches with carillons, and clock-watches which struck the hours and quarters in passing. In 1802, Isaac Daniel was the first to manufacture a musical movement placed in a ring, therefore independent of any watch making context.[6] He settled later in Geneva, where he was admitted a burgher in 1812, a year after he had gone into partnership with Phillipe-Samuel Meylan. Meylan (1772 – 1845) was born at Le Brassus. According to Jaquet and Chapuis, it was he who conceived the idea of adapting 'tongues' of sonorous metal for use in musical watches, as well as numerous other horological innovations, including minute repeating and barking dog watches. Isaac Daniel Piguet is recorded as being in partnership with P S Meylan and Louis Audemars from 1811 until 1828. In this year the partnership was dissolved, the firm continuing as 'I-D Piguet & Son'. Piguet and Meylan made large numbers of musical and other fine watches.

Further examples of musical watches may be found in 'The Music Box' Volume 4 No. 6, page 396, where an example by Henri Capt may be seen, and Volume 15 No. 1, page 13, for one by Piguet and Meylan for the Chinese market, in a fine gold and enamelled case with split pearl bezels and cylinder escapement, together with a description by Kenneth Goldman. The Camerer Cuss Book of Antique Watches illustrates a more typical example, unsigned, and very similar to the one described by Joseph Flores (see page 20 of this issue), together with notes by Theo Camerer Cuss, who was a greatly respected dealer and specialist in fine antique watches,[7] and his son Terrance. Jaquet & Chapuis, quoted above, also illustrate two examples for the Chinese market, one by Piguet & Meylan, the other by I D Piguet.

These watches were made in large numbers. Years ago (in the 1960's-70's) all the London salerooms had two or three of them in virtually every horological sale. They were often considered of somewhat mediocre quality, generally had rather thin gold cases (compared with the heavy ones of English watches of the same period, anyway), no jewels to the trains and the cylinder escapement, which was cheaper to mass produce than the superior lever type. They almost always use the 'sur plateau' type musical movement and have quarter-repeating, usually by depressing the pendant. On the odd occasion when versions with cylinder musical movements turned up, they gave the impression of being later, and often were even less well finished! Generally they made

around £200, compared with, in the same year, a large interchangeable cylinder Imperial orchestra musical box by Nicole Frères, with three cylinders, drum, castanet, six bells and organ (Christie's, £600), a nice 6-air Nicole Frères with 11" cylinder (Christie's, £130) or a 24 ½" upright Lochmann Original disc box with xylophone (Christie's, £320). One horological sale (Christie's, October 1971) had four musical watches, one in a gold and enamel case with a pinned cylinder (£1050), one extra-large gilt metal one (anonymous) with enamel and automaton rotating windmill and playing on five bells (£900), a more conventional one in gold and enamelled case but with calendar dials showing the day and date (£550) and a fine Chinese market example by Piguet & Meylan, sold by Leroy, in a heavy gold beautifully enamelled and decorated case, the inner cuvette enamelled as well (£4600.) This last was the only one they considered worth illustrating!



Above & right: musical watch by Piguet & Meylan in gold enamelled case decorated with seed pearls. Photos by courtesy of Christies.

Notes:

1. Jaquet, Eugène and Alfred Chapuis: **The Technique & History of the Swiss Watch;** Bern, Switzerland, 1953. (Chapter 6).

2. Clutton, Cecil and George Daniels: **Watches;** London, 1965.

3. Baillie, G H: **Watches, Their History, Decoration and Mechanism;** London, 1929 and 1979.

4. Jaquet and Chapuis; ibid.

5. Bellamy, Paul, Arthur Cunliffe & Roy Ison: **The Nicole Factor in Mechanical Music;** MBSGB, 2006.

6. Piguet, Jean Claude: **The Music Box Makers;** MBSI 1996.

7. Camerer Cuss, T P, and T A Camerer Cuss: **The Camerer Cuss Book of Antique Watches,** revised edition, Woodbridge, 1976.

Web Site Update

Continued from Page 15

Musical Box Register; Message Board / Forum; Membership; News; Auctions; Museums; Tune Lists; Archives; Suppliers; Restorers; Gallery; Musical Box Sounds; Publications; Contact Us; Forthcoming Events; Links to Other sites; Music Box Index; Stolen Musical Boxes; Books for Sale

If you think that you have any ideas to improve our web site, or if you have a problem with using the forum, or any other part of the web site please contact me (details on officers page of the journal) by telephone or email and I will be happy to help you. Try to telephone whilst by your computer if you have a problem.

Music and Repetition
A Voyage around the Heart of a musical pocket watch

By Joseph Flores

Originally published in 'Horlogerie Ancienne', the French watch-collectors' journal

A little research into the heart of a watch of this kind is always satisfying, and it will be rewarding to share the results with you.

This watch is unmarked, as musical watches very often were. It is not obvious why this was done bearing in mind the amount of work it required. As the title shows, this is a musical watch, playing on the hour as well as on demand, but it is also a repeater, repeating the hours and quarters at will. Let us examine how the different motions are configured without paying attention to its escapement, which is of the standard cylinder type. The gold case is 54mm in diameter, which means that the illustration (Fig. 1) of the movement plate is roughly full size. This is to underline the fact that if we put everything needed on a 49mm plate, it doesn't seem big at all.

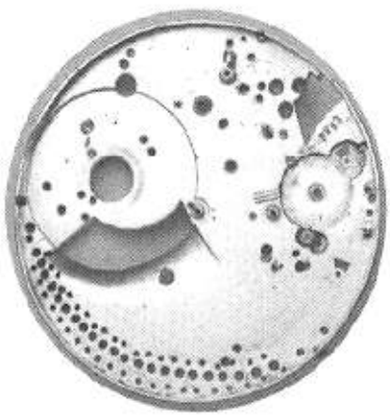


Fig 1. The bottom plate

Music: The sound production part

The musical sound producing part is of the 'sur plateau' type, as seen in fig.2, which is made using a disk pinned on each face and with 21 teeth, 11 on one side, 10 on the other. These parts are positioned on the motion work side of the main plate, which means beneath the watch dial. They take half of the plate surface. One of the disk faces is located at the rear (or bottom) of the main pillar plate, and in fig. 3 can be seen the other face with its pinion.

The wheel work: time and repeat trains.

These two trains of wheels are located under the same bridge; the whole thing is visible in Fig.4. The musical teeth are positioned on the other side of the plate surface, which allows us to see the music disc pinion protruding through the hole in the plate. There are 4 wheels in the time train including the escape wheel, and the same number regulating the repeat train, which include here a "fast and slow" pinion, allowing regulation of the speed of the repeat hammers, which are positioned as indicated here at 3 and 3' (Fig 4). Another part visible here but positioned under

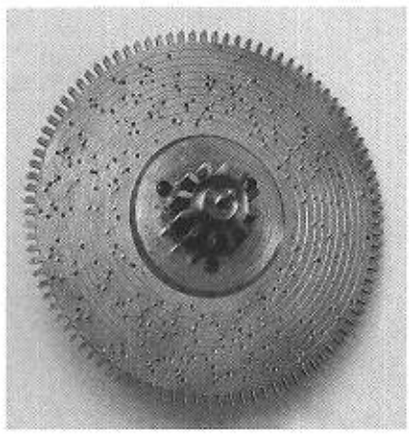


Fig 3. The Music Wheel

the upside-down bridge is the repetition spring barrel (4) which fits in the hole as shown by the white arrow.

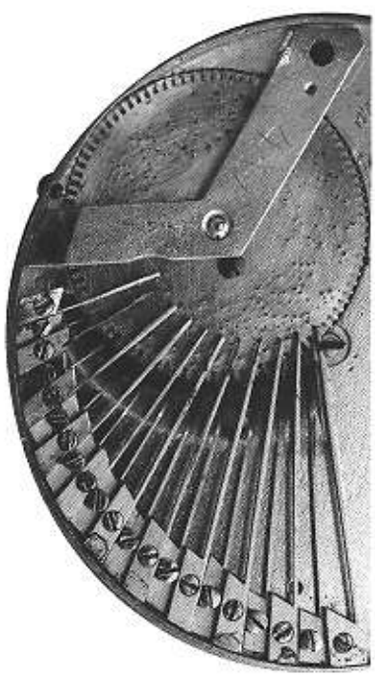


Fig 2. The Music Producing part

Music train and mainspring barrel

The music spring barrel bridge is fixed by two screws; the energy of the spring is controlled by a ratchet wheel with two clicks which is located underneath, as shown in fig.5. The music train is positioned under its own bridge, shown here separated. It is made up of four wheels and a pinion which allows adjustment of the music speed. Figure 6 could be misleading regarding the power transmission, as it could lead one to think that the train wheel drives the music wheel's pinion. This is not the case and it has to be understood that it is the **teeth** of the music disc **wheel** which mesh with the

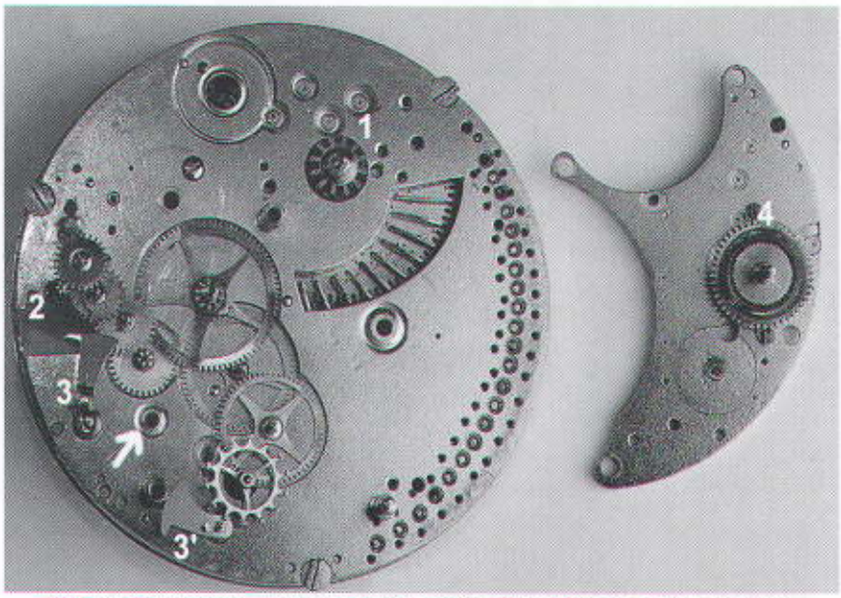


Fig 4. The going and repeating trains in position on the bottom plate, and their top bridge plate with repeat mainspring barrel.

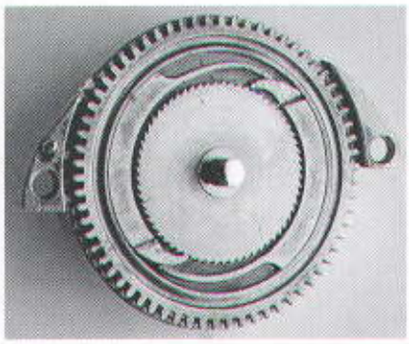


Fig 5. The Music mainspring 'standing' barrel.

1) Rack rail (tensioning) – 2) Hours hammer rising – 3) Hour snail – 4) Minute wheel with quarter snail – 5) Quarters lifting piece – 6) Quarters raising – 7) Hours and quarters raising – 8) all-or-nothing piece *(a device which ensures that, if the pendant is only pushed part-way down, the watch will not strike the hours and quarters incorrectly, or indeed at all. It will only do so if the pendant is pushed all the way down – Ed).*

pinion of the wheel marked (1), which drives the rest of the train. The music wheel pinion (2) gets the barrel's energy as described below. On the right, the music train bridge. The music spring barrel measures 25mm diameter (fig 7a is shown approximately full size), which is more than half the plate diameter. This remark is slightly astonishing, knowing that the hands are nonetheless located in the middle of the face. The fig. 7b shows the centre post (2) and one can easily imagine that a wheel carrying the hand will fit on it and therefore will mesh with the wheel carrying the quarter snail. (1).

We have seen here in fig. 3 that the music part of the watch takes nearly half the space of the plate surface. Here (fig. 7a) we see that its wheel also takes nearly half of the movement, the part which is located below the white line. Consequently, the remaining half has to be sufficient to fit not only all the different parts dealing with the time (hours and minutes) display but also those needed for the repetition as well. Concerning these two wheels, they are positioned inside the part shown by the black line. On the remaining part, here shown on the left side of the picture, the balance wheel with its bridge has to fit.

Quarter-Repeating: mechanism

Let us switch back to the motion work side of the movement, which is located under the dial, to find the repetition mechanism. It is fairly obvious at the bottom of fig. 8, which shows the whole of this train, the upper part being the musical part as we have seen previously. The repetition is the usual kind with quarters, and its parts can be seen in Fig 8:

This picture shows the above in this watch, it is this offset minute wheel which holds the quarters snail (fig. 8a) and that because it is off-centre, this allows the music spring barrel to be bigger than the plate radius. This offset wheel, which is driven by the time

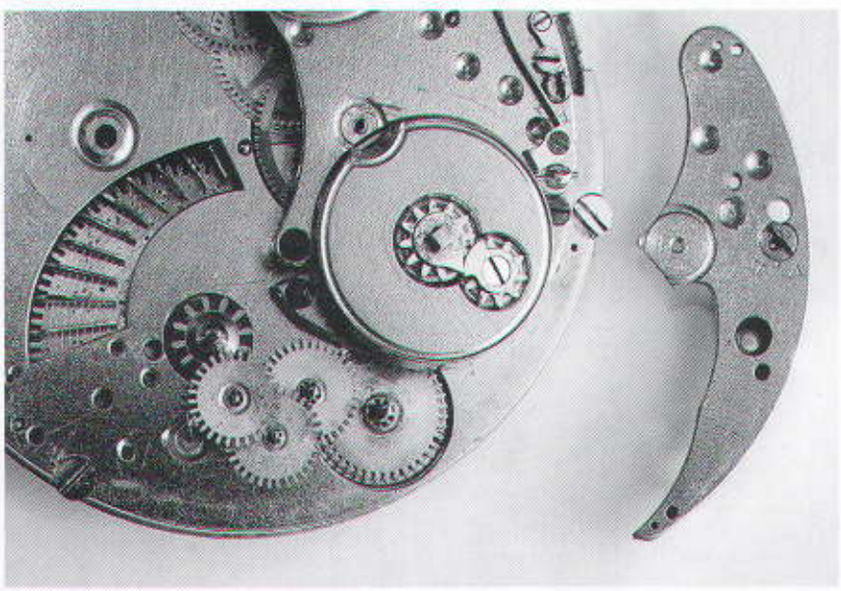
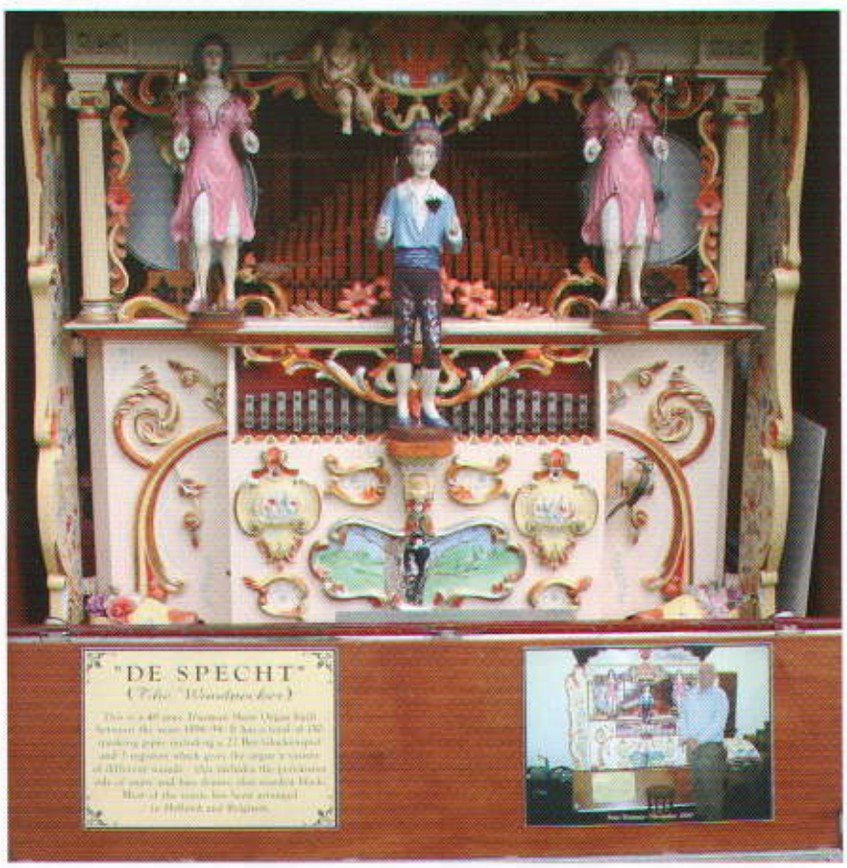


Fig 6. The music train (excluding its barrel), its top plate shown to the right.

Members relaxing in the Kinema in the Woods. The gentleman in the right forefront is the host, David O'Connor. See report on the Lincoln meeting on page 13.

Below: Don Robinson at the Wurlitzer in their 'shed at the bottom of the garden'.

A meeting of VIPs in Ruedesheim discuss the new European Project (see article on page 5). Left to right: Marc Lebout and Michel Tremouille, Johnny Claes, President of Mechamusica, Flavio Pedrazzini, Franco Severi, President, AMMI, Jens Wendel, Vice-President, GSM e.V, Walter Tenten (covered), Paul Bellamy (covered), Ralf Smolne, Jean-Paul Arnault, President, AAIMM with wife.



The Trueman 49-key Show organ 'De Specht' (The Woodpecker). David O'Connor and Gill Maxim's Collection.

See Meeting Reports for the Lincoln meeting on page 13.

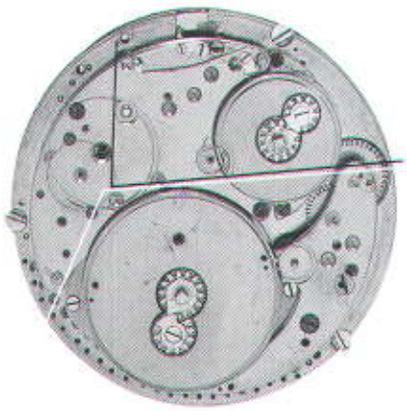


Fig 7a. The assembled movement

train, will mesh with the minute hand carrying wheel which will be fitted on the centre post (as indicated by the white arrow).

Fig 9 (above). The music release mechansim.

Music: release

After having described the different parts of this mechanism, there is still one thing left: the music release. There are 3 modes of operation of the watch: 1) Music playing every time at the hour. 2) Manual release at will. 3) Silence. To allow this, several judiciously placed pieces suffice; they are all shown in fig. 9. After naming them, we shall outline their function.

1) The stop piece, moveable from the outside of the case, allows the music to play for one revolution or continuously until the spring is run down.
2) Moveable piece from the outside of the case, 2 positions: on and silence.

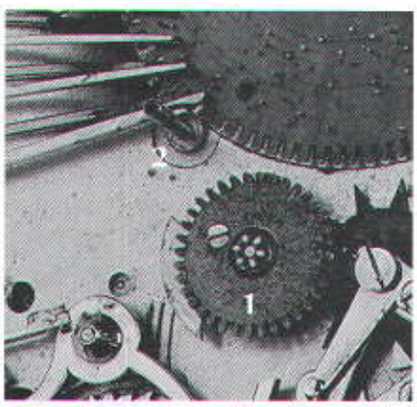


Fig 7b. The hand motion work and centre post (2 above).

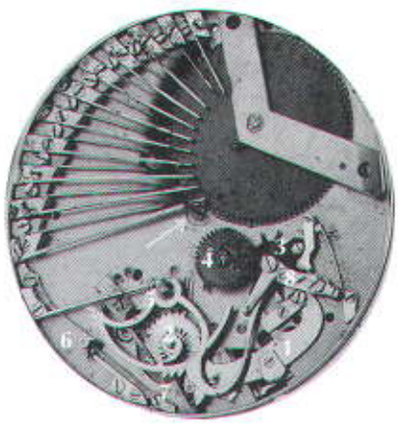


Fig 8. The quarter-repeating work, beneath the dial.

3) Release trigger, set off every hour.

R2) Release spring.

R1) Maintaining spring.

4).Notched heart-shaped cam.

Plus several other springs.

In fig. 10 only the pieces #1 and #5 from fig. 9 are visible. Piece #1 has its tip resting on the cam #5 (lower white circle), which tip can fit into a notch in this cam. That is the position shown in the picture, the position in which the music is blocked. It is blocked because piece #1 has a pin attached which passes through the bridge plate as shown in fig. 11, viewed from the side, and we can see that it locks one of the music wheels' teeth (white arrow). If we pull the lever #1, the tip in the notch on cam #5 will lift out and simultaneously the pin will release the wheel. If the barrel is already wound the music begins. Knowing this, we appreciate that to make the music work, it needs the mainspring to be already wound and to get the piece #1's tip out of the notch located in the cam #5. To achieve that aim, this operation can then happen automatically. In Fig. 12, piece #1 is therefore in the same position as in fig. 10. Piece #3, called the "release trigger", comes into action, but prior to seeing how, it has to be described, it is shown by itself in fig. 13. It is of a tee square shape, but made of 2 arms which are pivoted together by a shouldered screw as pointed out as V1. The tee square can then be opened or closed at this point. It is attached on the movement, in fact on the top of the repeat barrel (which is stationary), by another shouldered screw as pointed out as V2. It is under the tension of two springs R1 and R2. The R2 spring always brings the piece to the same position and spring R1 maintains it under tension "pulling" the small added arm B. Then this piece #3, tee square shaped, has its notched tip D resting against a vertical pin attached to piece #1. At the right hand end of the release trigger, its short arm P (see Fig 13) rests

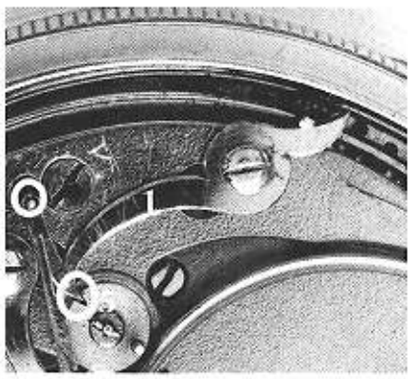


Fig 10. Detail of the music cam and stop piece (5).

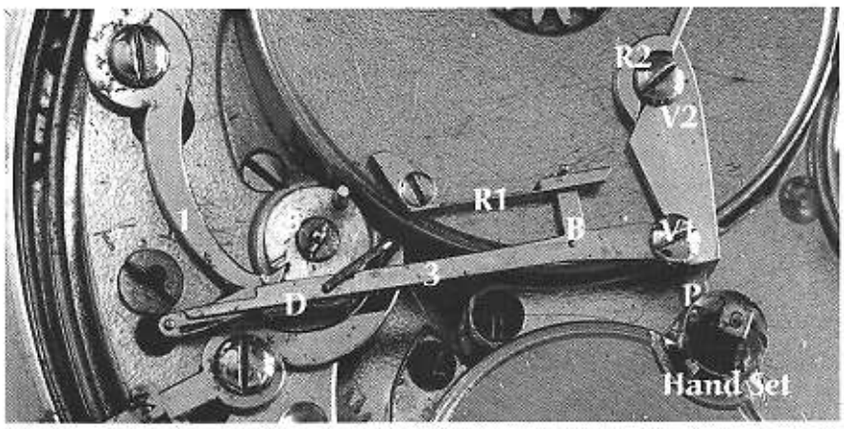


Fig 12. The music train locked.

on a spurred cam attached to the hand-set square, which makes one revolution every hour, and moves the arm P to the right on each revolution.

Now let us examine the release.

Music: automatic release

It has just been said that it is the spur on the hand-set arbor, operating at a rate of one revolution an hour, which will set off the music at each hour. The extremity of the cam is shown in fig. 14, from which it can be discerned *(just – Ed)* that it has a spur at E. This spur meets the release trigger's tip P, and moves it to the right. In fig. 15, the operation can be seen more clearly, the white arrow on the releasing trigger showing the direction in which it moves. The first effect is to tension the releasing spring #4. Simultaneously, the other releasing trigger's extremity moves away from the pin attached to the blocking piece #1. This is visible in fig. 16 (centre) where the notched end of the release trigger is now to the right of the pin on piece #1.

The spur on the hand-set cam drives the releasing trigger slightly further, which tensions the spring slightly more (4), until the time when the spur releases the releasing trigger. At this point the tip of piece #1 is lifted out of the collar #5's notch, the cam #5 is therefore free and the music plays.

Fig 13. The release trigger.

Music: silence

It has already been mentioned that it is possible to turn the music to silence; this is as indicated on the inner cuvette next to a small control lever (Figs 17 and 22). This lever can take one of two positions, which can be seen in fig. 17. Each of these positions is indexed by a spring having 2 notches, (white circle). What happens then? Simply that the control lever carries a pin at its end which prevents the releasing trigger from unlocking the blocking piece #1 which therefore remains in its notch in cam #5. At every hour, the hand-set arbor pin indeed arms the trigger, and then releases it, but without any effect.

Some insights

This watch probably dates from the beginning of the XIXth century. A clue, if not tangible proof, is a date scratched on one of its springs; I think it is from June 1811 (fig. 18). The case and the dial are made of gold. On the case, besides the number 7257, which is found on several other parts as well, only one hallmark has been discovered, which didn't bring me any insight, you will maybe more likely to figure out what it really is... *(Almost certainly a case maker's mark, not a dating aid – Ed)*

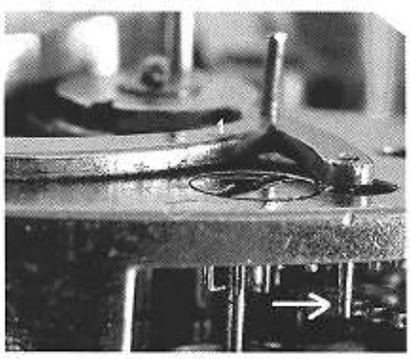


Fig 11. The music stop pin.

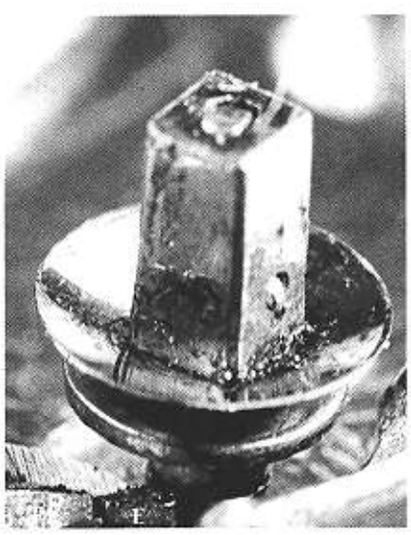


Fig 14. The hand-set square and cam with spur beneath it.

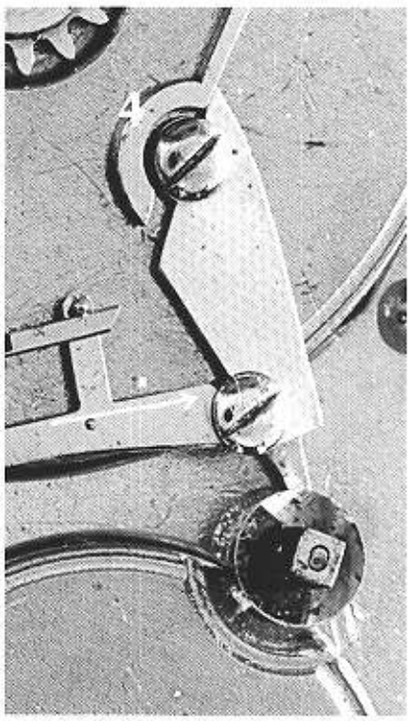


Fig 15. The hand-set square from above - the spurred cam beneath the dust prevention dished washer.

The gold dial (fig. 20) has enamel hour cartouches, like its minute ring which is also painted on an enamel circle. The hands are made of blued steel. The inner cuvette of the case (fig. 21) is made of brass with 3 holes, two for winding, one for hand setting, around which the inscriptions : "Music – Watch – Hands" are engraved, plus the "Silence" already shown.

Editorial note: The Editors would like to thank their friend Gregory Doizi of Paris for kindly assisting with the translation from the original French, Luuk Goldhoorn for providing the article in the first place, and for liaising with M. Flores, and especially M. Joseph Flores for giving his permission to translate and publish it and for kindly providing a CD with the original illustrations thereon.

As no photograph of the complete watch was provided, we have taken the liberty of photographing a similar item from our own collection for the front cover.

Fig 18. The 1811 date scratched on a mainspring end.

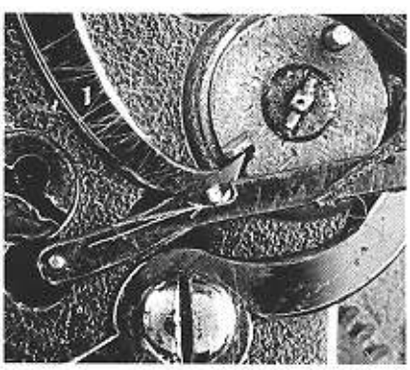


Fig 16. the music cam about to be released.

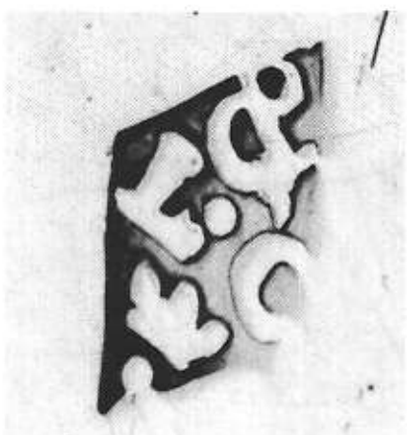


Fig 19. Case hallmark.

Fig 21. The brass inner cuvette.

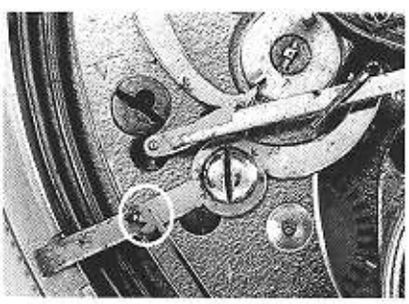


Fig 17. The music play/silence lever projecting through a cut-out in the band of the watch case.

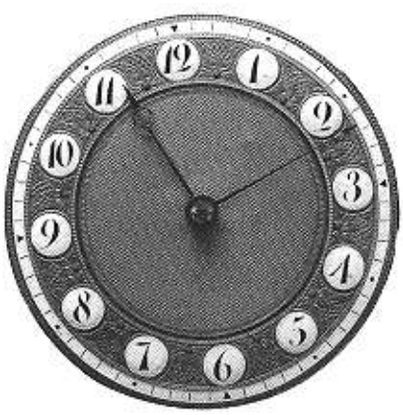


Fig 20. The gold dial with white enamel cartouches.

Fig 22. The music/silence control lever.

Convert That Organ

By Alan K Clark

In which Alan describes how he converted his manual American Organ to play from paper rolls.

Introduction

For years we have owned a Story and Clark American Organ which was bought for the children to play. Since they have left home it has stood silent because none of us can read music. For many years I have fancied owning a player organ, so the obvious solution was to investigate whether it could be converted to play mechanically. Well it can be done, and this article shows how that aim was achieved. In general old musical instruments should not be modified without good cause, but in the case of this organ it could be justified by saying that it is of comparatively low value, it can still be played as a manual instrument, and now it a useful musical instrument, fulfilling the role it was made for. These conversion methods were not necessarily the best ones, but they were methods that could be easily comprehended or devised, using components that could be obtained or easily manufactured. You may ask why I did not just buy a player organ. I did take advice and was told that many of the smaller organs only played automatically on less than their full scale, played rolls that were not easy to find and sometimes had only a few ranks of reeds. Converting this organ has produced a normal sized organ with 3 ½ ranks of bass reeds, and 4 full ranks of treble reeds. It will play all its 61 notes when used with 65 note piano rolls, (I chose to ignore the 4 bass notes on the rolls), all 58 notes on Aeolian Grand organ rolls, and could play 61-note Phoneon rolls. Using the 58 or 65 note rolls does mean that the music is played in a different key to that intended by the roll arranger, as this organ uses the older organ scale of f to f.

In order not to waste too much valuable space in our journal this article is not intended to be a full step by step guide, but rather to show how to achieve the aims, and to point out some of the possible problems and pitfalls that needed to be overcome during the construction. As no other written guidance appears to have been published on this subject, this may prove useful to any keen constructor. If the topic has been covered before, I apologise. I would also like to extend my grateful thanks to the following society members for their help, advice and encouragement with what to me has been a unique and absorbing project, Ted Brown, Kevin McElhone, Paul Baker, and Bruce Allen.

Overview of Method of Operation

Being a lazy soul, the obvious ideal was to use already manufactured units as far as possible. Therefore the player action was based on parts from a second-hand 65-note piano player pneumatic action. The original spool box was used but fitted with a variable speed low voltage electric motor in place of the original air motor. The upper 61 holes on the tracker bar in the spool box were connected to

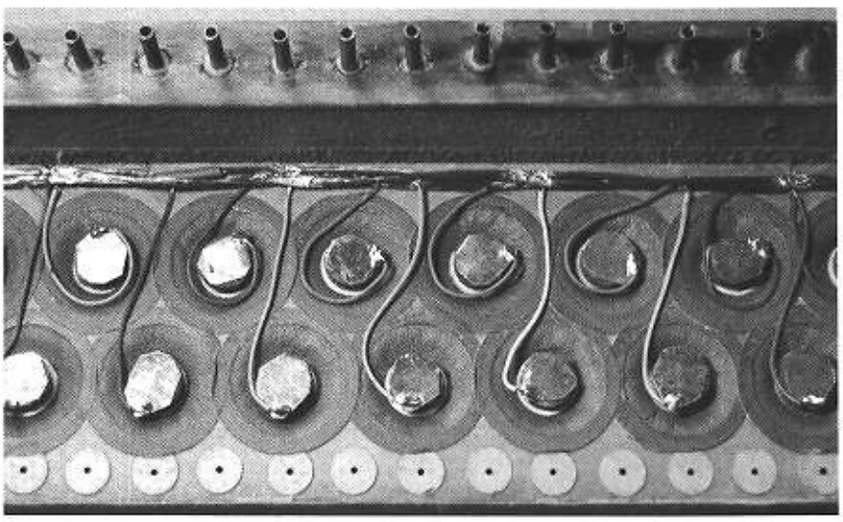


Photo 3.

the original primary pouches on their board which was supplied with suction from the reservoir on the organ. The pouches were modified to close electrical switches which were wired up to a bank of solenoids mounted under the front of the keyboard. Thus when a hole in the paper roll allowed air to pass through a tracker bar hole, the appropriate pouch would rise and close the switch connecting the electric current to the solenoid, the movement of the armature in the solenoid pulled down the key, sounding the appropriate reed. The electrical power for the motor and the solenoids was supplied by a second hand power supply from a home computer.

Serious Points for Consideration based on the above Method of Operation.

A. Electric motor drive to the spool box was chosen because the original air motor was missing and it was thought that the very low suction level produced by the organ pneumatics of 2 ½ inches water gauge was probably too low to operate an air motor successfully. The choice of the electric motor was difficult because the full original speed range for Pianola rolls is 10 to 130, i.e., a 13 to 1 ratio. The motor chosen was a 12volt motor with built in gearbox designed for use in model boats. An electronic speed control was available to match the motor and this was used to give the speed control. However, coupling this control to the original speed indicator scale from the roll box proved difficult. The rotational angles needed to give the appropriate roll speeds were nothing like linear, and did not match the printed scale at all. Therefore the speed indicating pointer needed to be pulled along by a fine cord wrapped around a specially made cam to allow the speed that was set by turning the control knob to be approximately correctly indicated.

B. The motor was connected to the operating shaft of the player action by modern plastic chain. Whereas the air motor could be turned by hand whilst the roll was being fitted or removed, the geared motor could not be manually turned and the operating lever for the play and re-roll actions had to be modified to have a central neutral position.

C. Easy switching of the power to the motor was achieved by mounting a small micro-switch next to the play/re-roll lever so that the motor was switched on only in the play or re-roll position. Photo 8 shows part of the motor, modern plastic chain and speed control

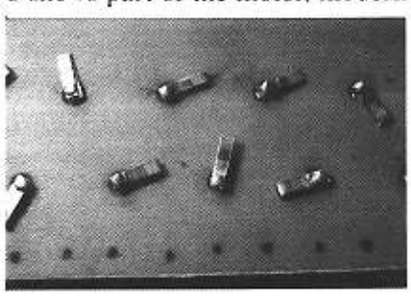


Photo 4.

D. The choice of the 65-note Pianola action had several advantages over using an orphaned organ tracker bar and spool box. Firstly the 65-note Pianola actions are much easier to find, the 65-note rolls are also easier to find, and the tracker bar and spool box can easily be modified to make it play either 58-note, (Aeolian Grand) or 61-note (Phoneon) rolls as well as the 65-note variety.

E. Using the original Pianola pouch board saved considerable construction time. First the original leather pouches were used, and these survived many hours of playing before the problems with them became obvious. I have now replaced them with the thinnest rubber covered cloth. The suction provided by the organ is rather less than that generated by the original Pianola exhausters and the pouches need to be very flexible, and very airtight if they are to operate well. My switch design was very simple. The pouches needed to be weighted down with a small weight such as a disc of lead *(bear in mind the toxicity of lead – Ed)*, otherwise they would not return

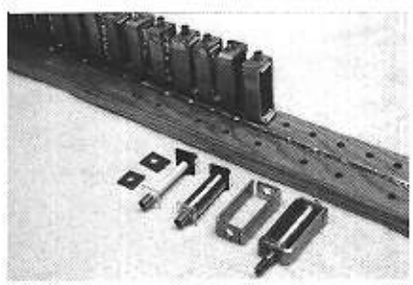


Photo 5.

after the tracker hole was closed. The top of the lead disc carried a glued on disc of silver with a thin flexible wire soldered on to it. See photo 3 for a view of part of the pouch board. The pipes at the back are where the tubing from the tracker bar connects. The top closure of the pouch board contains holes that used to be occupied by the Pianola action primary valve, these holes were used to support wood screws which each had a sprung silver contact soldered on to its tip. See photo 4 for a view of these contacts. The

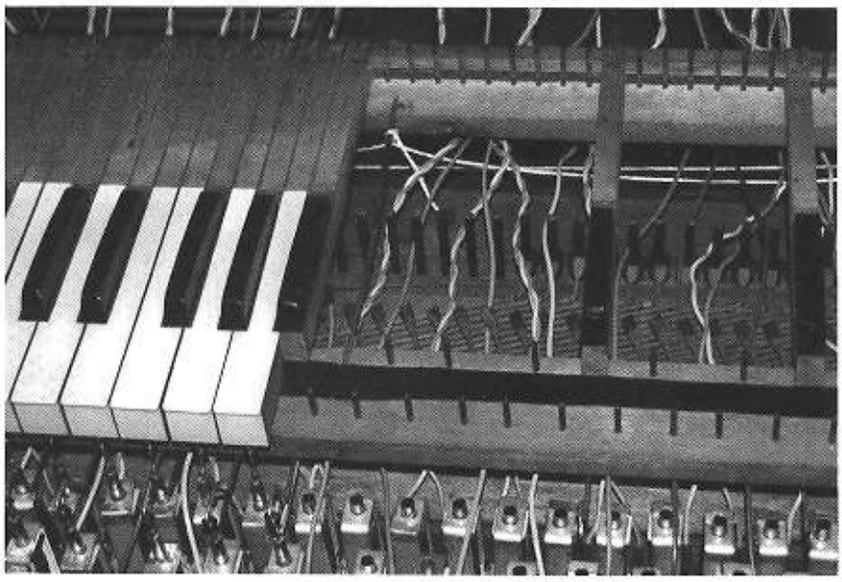


Photo 6.

spring loading of these contacts was an added later feature to increase the duration of the very short notes and it also reduced the contact noise.

F. Finding suitable solenoids proved difficult, so they had to be made. The first design was not sufficiently powerful, but a larger version worked fine. If anyone wants the technical details please contact me via the Society's Officers. They were made from brass tube, plastic sheet, enamelled copper wire and steel strip cut from sheet and bent up for the side pieces. Finding available soft steel for the moving armatures proved difficult and mine were made from iron nails, this was a mistake as the nails were far from straight, and of very variable diameter. The moral is to find your armature material first, then choose the brass tube to suit. Each coil had 1000 turns, but these were easily wound on a home made coil winder, cranked by hand. Photo 5 shows some of the solenoids mounted on their mounting board and the various components used to make the solenoids.

G. Using an old computer power supply was convenient as it supplied 12 volts for the motor and 5 volts for the solenoids. Unfortunately the solenoids needed most of the 5 volts in order to work, and when 10 solenoids were first connected to the supply, the voltage at the solenoids dropped due to the resistance of the thin cabling used. Therefore all the wiring from the power supply to the pouch switches and to the solenoids had to be thicker than planned, and as short as possible. This meant that the wires from the switches to each solenoid had to go under the organ keys, which makes it difficult to move the solenoids out of the way to get to any of the front reeds when they need cleaning. Photo 7 shows the computer power supply, cut out, wiring and part of the pouch board before the tracker bar tubing was fitted.

H. The maximum number of keys that were played simultaneously on 65-note Pianola rolls appeared to be ten. This was chosen as the design standard for this organ as it was well within the 15 to 20 amp ratings of the power supplies obtained, Clearly however overload protection was required should a torn roll be played and all the tracker bar holes be uncovered at once. It was doubted that the power supply would survive a 50 amp load. The solution was to make a small circuit using a short thick coil of wire which carried the supply to the pouch switches. When the current through the coil rose above about 12 amps a small metal armature was lifted against gravity and closed a switch which energised a 12 volt relay which was wired, a, to break the supply to the solenoids and b, to remain energised until the main power to the solenoid switch was manually switched off . Obviously all you modern electronic types could do better using electronics, but this method works fine, and if it goes wrong it can be repaired.

I. The only original features of the organ that could not be used were the octave couplers. Use of the couplers more than doubled the operating force required to move the keys, and the solenoids were not sufficiently powerful. The wires to the solenoids also had to take the shortest route, and this was directly through the octave couplers. The octave couplers remain in place, but the operating levers have been disconnected. The organ is in a small room, and more than loud enough.

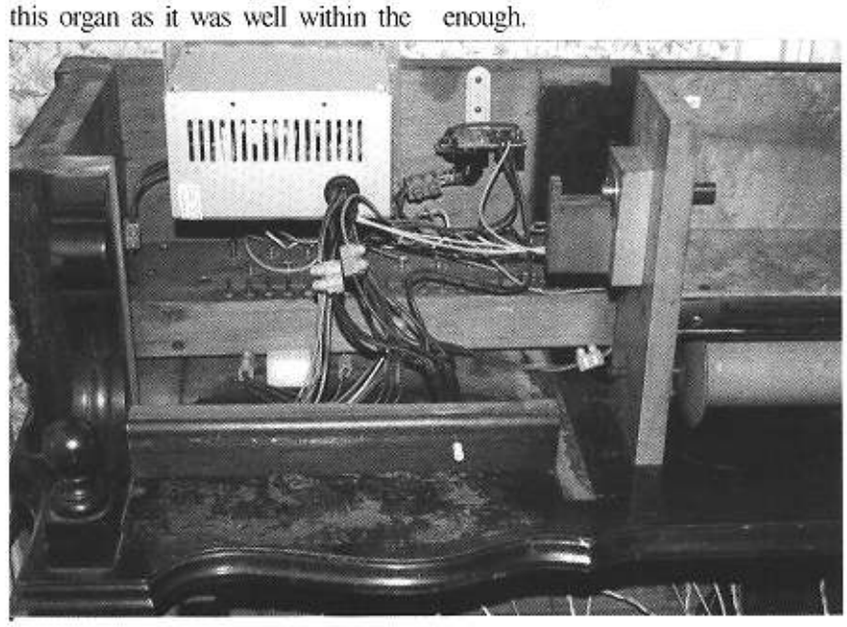


Photo 7.

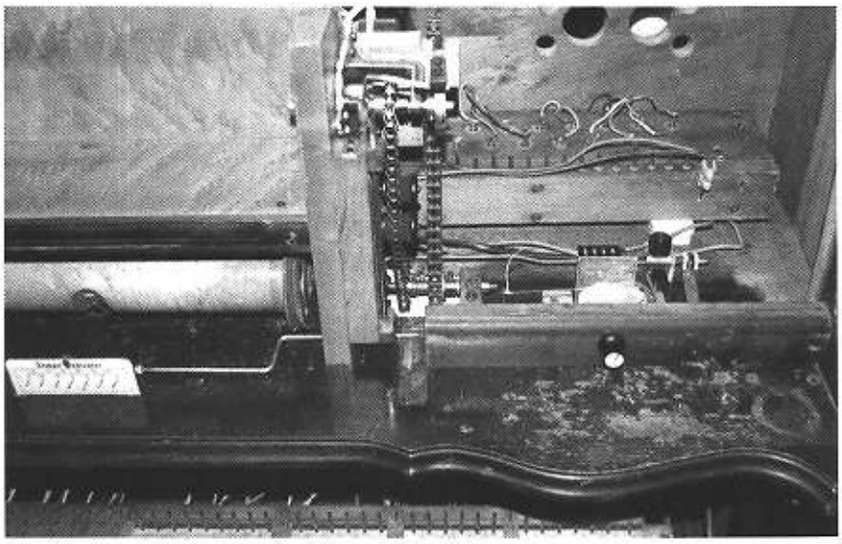


Photo 8.

Space Considerations within the Organ.

Photo 1 shows the organ before conversion. It was lucky that the superstructure above the keyboard cover was empty and the ideal position to mount the spool box assembly, electric motor, speed control, pouch board and power supply. It was pledged not to enlarge the organ case any more than was strictly necessary. Photo 2 shows the organ after conversion; I think I have succeeded in keeping it looking reasonable. When not being played the music stand clips back in place and hides the spool box. The organ is now 1 ½ inches taller, as the spool box could not be cut down any smaller. The whole of the front of the top part has been rebuilt to move it forward and make it easily removable. The lid is now hinged and has 3 inches added at the back. Before starting this conversion the organ was examined to find out how access could be gained to the pitmans under the keys. The easiest way seemed to be to mount the solenoids directly under the front of the white keys. The black keys had to have wire extensions fitted into their undersides, which were bent down and forward to end up above a second row of solenoids mounted in front of the first row. The design incorporates small rubber "O" rings as couplings between the armature wire links and the keys to reduce any noise from the solenoids being transmitted to the keys. The addition of the solenoids meant that the decorative cover in front of the keys had to be moved forward one inch. Photo 6 shows the general arrangement of the solenoids and linkages during re-assembly of the keys.

Suggestions for Possible Improvements Based on Experience.

It was not fully comprehended at the start that the switch system chosen would give a shorter duration of note than that produced by a normal piano action. Anyone planning on converting a pouch board could consider using a different system. If a micro-switch, or switch consisting of two springy blades, was mounted so as to touch the centre of a small card disc glued to the pouch, as soon as the pouch started to rise it would close the contacts, and the switch would allow the pouch to continue to fully expand. When the tracker bar hole was closed and the pouch started to be sucked down via the bleed hole the switch would remain closed until the pouch was almost returned to the rest position.

The reason for this suggestion, and the time spent spring loading my contacts, was to increase slightly the duration of the very short notes. This could be important if you wish to play a particular type of organ roll. Some of the "Aeolian" rather than the "Aeolian Grand" rolls have rows of closely spaced holes instead of slots. Despite the spring loading of my contacts my organ will still not play these rolls correctly. Clearly the Aeolian organ mechanism must have had a longer dwell time, or a much slower switch off time if they could play these rolls correctly.

The position chosen for the solenoids works fine, but is not ideal, as it makes getting at the front ranks of reeds to clean them rather difficult. Only after making all the solenoids, etc., was the organ stripped down to remove the keys, and only then was a potential alternative position for the solenoids found. Behind the pitmans and under the keys was a space which possibly would have been a better position in which to have mounted the solenoids. These could have worked directly onto collars fitted around the pitmans. I know there are dozens of different makers and models of American Organs, but it may be worth looking at yours if you consider making this conversion.

Suppliers of Materials.

Electric motor with gearbox, speed control, plastic chain and sprockets, thin wall brass tube for solenoids, micro-switch for motor, all from Hobby Ltd, Knights Hill, London SE27 OHH.

Enamelled copper wire, from Wires.co.uk, London E18 1HW.

If any of you wish to pursue this activity I wish you lots of spare time and patience. The reward of being able to play all types of music, mechanically on a serious form of instrument is to my mind well worth the effort. A wide range of music is available on rolls, and the Wagner opera overtures really do sound well. Also remember that modern music, and any tunes that are not available can easily be "cut" onto rolls, and we do have five octaves of fully chromatic notes, so the possibilities are endless.

When is a mandoline box not a mandoline box?

By Laurence Fisher

At the start of January, I was expecting four musical boxes for inclusion in our April auction and there were four packages on the shelf ready for inspection. It is always nice to see these in "in the flesh"; only a general understanding of any item is conveyed by photographs in the first instance from clients, so it is good to see the real pieces as soon as they come in.

One such box among the four waiting, as I had seen from the pictures, was a pretty and early key-wind mandoline, in a plain polished rosewood veneered case, most probably by Nicole Frères and in superb condition. When unwrapped, it became apparent that the case was a bit more special. Sunken and shaped campaign handles either side, which appear on other Reymond-Nicole boxes of this period, the end-flap had a lock and it was a good deal heavier than your usual four-air mandoline.

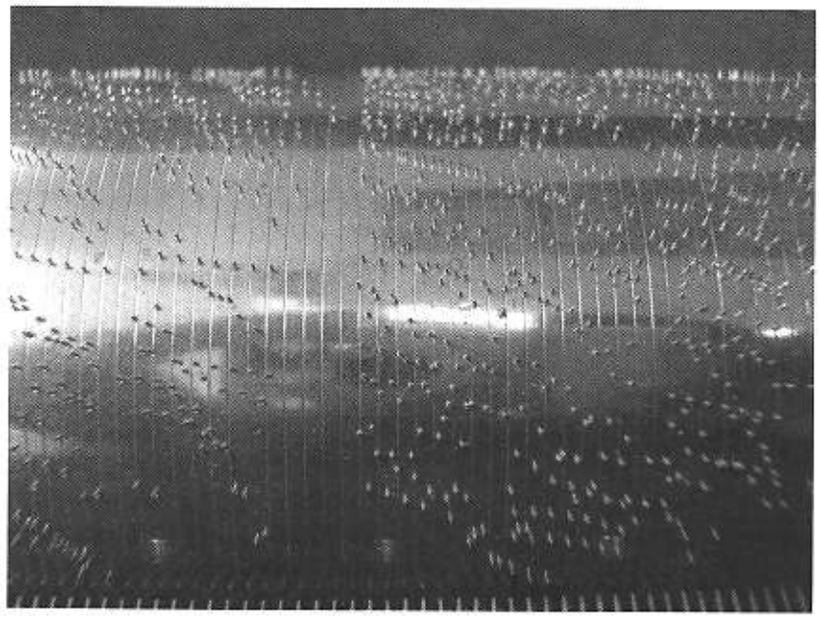


Fig 1. Section of the cylinder showing the 'mandoline' pinning of the cylinder – notice also the bands created between each cluster running the circumference of the cylinder, which is another trademark of mandoline boxes.

Opening the lid confirmed the level of quality, for it was a very early Réymond Nicole and the cylinder was indeed pinned to the mandoline format. What's more, the serial number stamped top-left on the polished brass bedplate was extremely low – 99. This makes it the earliest known box from this maker on the MBSGB register, with a date of manufacture circa 1832.

The client had followed my instruction of leaving this as un-wound as possible, at the end of an air, with instant top actuated and a folded slip of tissue paper through the governor. Good to know that there are some out there who take notice of what we say!

Fig 2. View of the double-section comb with the Réymond Nicole stamp – all twelve screws are dot-stamped.

Before playing, I checked the tension of the spring and the grouping numbers of the same-pitch teeth on the comb. I was expecting perhaps five, maybe six, however this lovely box had no fewer than eight teeth groupings across 2/3rds of the comb. An exciting number.

The pinning on the cylinder was very good, with uniform clusters of pin lines going diagonally across areas where the note would be supported by the mandoline effect.

Then came the surprise – it was not mandoline. On playing the first air (Weber's popular and ever jolly Freyschutz), at no point did our usual interpretation of what the mandoline effect sounds like come into the notation. Perhaps the effect was not pinned for this air? The second air

played and that, too, was lacking the effect. Six minutes later and airs three and four had concluded their performance without mandoline.

What I had in front of me was a Réymond Nicole musical box, clearly apparently pinned and the comb grouped for mandoline, but not sounding at all anything like a mandoline box. Why would they do this? Would the limitation of the note range towards the treble end infringe on the number of airs one could pin on one cylinder? Clearly not, for the range of music with regards to speed, feeling and association differs greatly between the four airs.

Those wishing to get closer to this part-overture box can do so at the forthcoming view days of the 19th April Fine Mechanical Music and Scientific Instruments sale at Bonhams in Knightsbridge.

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.

3083 Mike Moran, Switzerland
3084 Andy Gardham, Yorkshire
3085 William Parks, U.S.A.
3086 Michael J.Doherty, U.S.A.
3087 Stephen Wedge, Norfolk
3088 Ian McLaughlin, Herts
3089 Raymond & Lorraine Richardson, Surrey
3090 Stephen Swinfen, Northamptonshire
3091 Jamie P.Smith, Norfolk
3092 Mark Littler, Yorkshire
3093 Stephen J.Tanner, Sussex
3094 John & Jane Chapman-Andrews, Sussex (Joint)
3095 Keith Howell, Bucks
3096 Marylyn Cranfield, Beds
3097 Werner Pluss, Switzerland
3098 Jean-Marc Cerutti, Switzerland

2012 - Advance Notice

In 2012, the Musical Box Society of Great Britain will be celebrating its 50th (Golden) Anniversary. Our celebrations will start in April 2012 with our spring meeting based in Kent; the Garden of England. This will be a full 4 day event with lots to do and see, arrive on Wednesday 18th April and depart Monday 23rd. During the 4 days we are lucky enough to have a full day visit to Jack Henley's private musical collection (which has increased considerably since our last visit) and Vintage Cars. Jack will also be holding an Organ Grind in his grounds.

A full day will be spent in the hotel using 4 of their conference rooms to hold a series of 'Demonstration, Play & Display'. We will be able to see and hear mechanical music from members representing the north, south, east and west regions of the country.

We have arranged for two ½ day musical visits; 1- to Salomon's Museum and in their Victorian Theatre we will be treated to a recital on their famous Welte Organ; 2 - a visit to Finchcocks Musical Museum, this Georgian Manor House is home to a celebrated collection of over 100 historical keyboard instruments.

Also two ½ day non musical trips; 1 - A trip on the Bluebell Railway 2 - A visit to the local vine yard.

We will continue to celebrate our 50th with the Autumn Meeting in September; this meeting will be held inWorcestershire with John and Hilda Phillips as our hosts. More information in the Summer magazine!

TO ACCESS THE MBSGB FORUM ON THE WEB SITE

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:

User name: **musicalbox**

Password: **LANGDORFF**

Coulson Alan Conn MB Vice President, MBSGB

May 27th 1938 – December 14th 2010

I know that I and many other musical box enthusiasts have lost a dear friend and colleague, but one who fortunately has left a legacy of information about disc musical boxes and their discs. Coulson and I were introduced to each other by Norman Vince, a Norfolk dealer and collector, at an auction in London. We had both bought Troubadour disc boxes and were able to share each other's discs and get them copied. That was in the early 1980s, and from then on we became firm friends. Working on lists of disc box tunes and lid pictures, makers and models, he created the germ of an idea that was picked up by the editor of the soon-to-be published Disc Box Book, which will be a worthwhile project for our Society and its members.

Coulson was a member of our society for thirty-five years and was an ex-president of the MBSI. He had been a keen enthusiast of Gilbert and Sullivan, so much so that as well as being a member of an American G & S society, he also attended and performed at the Buxton G & S operettas. I remember him turning up at our house with a spear sticking out of the sun roof of his hire car. He had brought it over from America in his hand luggage, because the previous time he played the character in Buxton he felt the spear they gave him wasn't up to the standard his character needed.

We will all miss him, but our thoughts go out to Kathleen and the rest of his family.

Hopefully Coulson's enthusiasm will continue to rub off on us all.

Ted Brown

Passing of Coulson Conn

With deep sadness we report on the passing of MBSI past president Coulson Conn, He was diagnosed with malignant mesothelioma in late 2009. He died early in the morning on December 14, 2010, with his wife, Kathleen, by his side.

I spoke with Coulson several times during his illness. Though he knew he was gravely ill he always seemed to hope for the best.

Whether it be as a collector or in his profession as a physician Coulson was there for anyone who needed help. I consider myself fortunate to have known him and that he thought of me as a good friend.

Coulson was a past president of MBSI and was recipient of the Q. David Bowers Literary Award for his many interesting articles pertaining to disc musical boxes, He was chairman of the MBSI nominating committee for many years and served in that capacity when he was stricken with the illness.

Ralph Schack

Cliff Burnett

November 5th 1935 – January 28th 2011

It is with regret that we have to announce the death of Cliff Burnett, business partner of Keith Harding of Northleach. Born in Bromley, Kent, he was evacuated to Leicester during the war. He went to Suez on National Service in the RAF as a radio technician and because of his expertise was moved to Cyprus to help set up a radio repair shop. He helped set up a 'blind' landing system for pilots and worked on electrical systems for the TSR2 aircraft and Blue Streak missiles.

Jim Weir first met Cliff in the early 1970's in the shop on Hornsey Road, where he and Keith Harding were giving a talk about repairing and restoring musical boxes; Cliff was very generous with his information. Cliff was like that, telling and showing people how to do things; sharing his knowledge and love of musical boxes.

Cliff was the workshop man, someone who understood and could work on whatever they had on the bench. He was the first person in the U.K. to work out a practical way of re-pinning musical box cylinders commercially and later, he had a pivotal role in designing the Jubilee 1958 Polyphon; the first new Polyphon to be built in 70 years! In many ways it was a sad decision, to close the shop and move to Northleach, but it made sense. Both he and Keith could follow their dream of having a permanent museum, plus front shop, plus an extensive workshop all on the ground floor.

He was a good man to talk with and had a very subtle sense of humour. He could understand what people meant, not just what they said. He will be greatly missed not just for what he did, but for who he was.

Contributed by Ted Brown and Jim Weir.

Making a Musical Box

by Don Busby

Adding Leads and Initial Tuning

The comb segments have been cleaned and polished following the hardening and tempering process. They can now be brought approximately into tune by the addition of lead weights before damper wires are fitted and final tuning is carried out. This article describes the initial stage of adding lead to achieve the range of scales which were chosen for the comb. The final step of adding damper wires and final tuning will follow in the next article.

The design aim for the finished musical box is to have a keyboard with a range of 5 octaves around Middle C so that a variety of music might be pinned on interchangeable cylinders. Each octave is to cover the full tonic range, including all natural and modified notes, such an octave from C through to B having 12 notes. The comb segments have been made with 25 teeth; therefore each could be tuned to cover 2 octaves plus one extra note. However, as discussed in the first article, "Comb Design", it will be desirable to repeat notes with short intervening intervals; therefore the comb will be tuned to carry at least 2 of each note. In order to simplify tuning when adding lead weights, and later when pinning music, all comb segments will be identically noted but, at a new segment, changing to the next octave. Thus, each segment will span one octave with pairs of teeth tuned to the same note, from C through to B. The spare 25th tooth will be tuned to C of the next octave to match the first pair of the next segment. The resulting arrangement is as shown in this example of the middle segment which carries the Middle C octave:

Segment 3

Bass Treble

4c c c# c# d d d# d# e e f f f# f# g g g# g# a a a# a# b b 5c

(M)

This is a further change from the concept described in "Comb Design", namely to have the centre tooth of the whole comb as Middle C. Now, by tuning for Middle C at teeth numbers 51 and 52, the comb of 125 teeth will range from 2C to 7C. Surprisingly, on checking tuning of the hardened and tempered comb before adding any lead, it was found that the range of notes was quite limited, running from 4D# through to 6C, with Middle C approximately at the centre. Thus, most teeth need to be greatly modified from their natural state to achieve the required range 2C to 7C. With hindsight, the author would probably change comb design to have an angle greater than 2° 57' for the rake of his comb root slot. This would give a greater change of tone from bass to treble. The longer bass teeth would be milled thicker to maintain Relative Stiffness.

The next question confronting a novice maker of musical boxes is, what type of lead to use and how much to add for a given change of tone? One practice of makers of old was to add lead to the comb metal before slitting teeth. How did they then harden and temper the comb without losing the lead? Perhaps a strip of lead was added after heat treatment of the steel and the slits between teeth re-sawn through the lead. In the author's situation it will be necessary to use tweezers to hold lead weights whilst they are being soldered to pre-formed teeth. The widths of his teeth range from 1.9 to 2.4 and, in order to use a common source for all teeth needing modification, he chose to cut lead weights from standard roofing lead 1.76 thick, which was convenient for handling during soldering operations. Experimentation to check the effects of various amounts of lead on a trial segment gave some pointers on how to tackle the task of tuning 125 teeth. Data from this experimental work and that from the actual tuning of the comb proper are presented at fig 1. This is a graph of change in semi tones (y-axis) against volume of lead added (x-axis): this latter axis is also calibrated in grams, based on specific gravity of lead as 11.315. However, it was found most convenient to think in terms

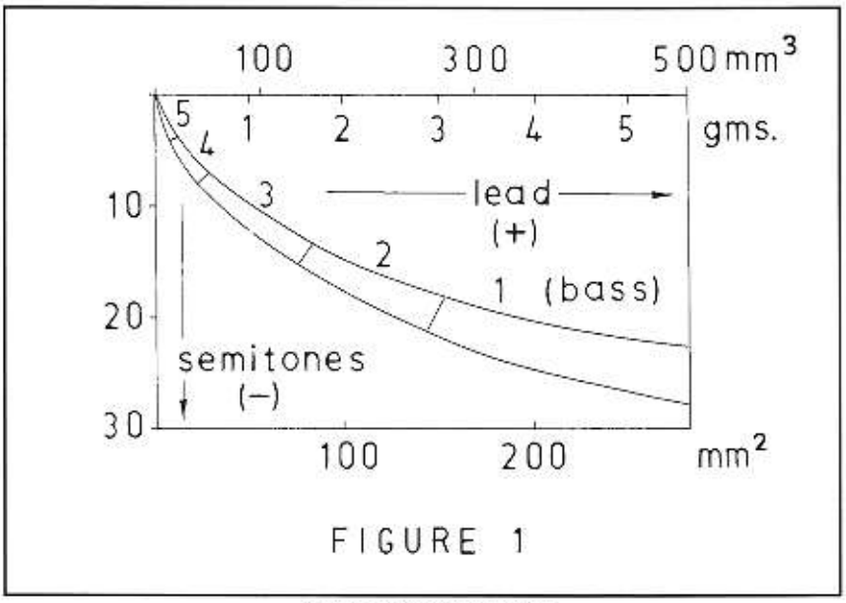


FIGURE 1

Effect of lead on tone

of what area of lead to add to produce a given change, as shown along the bottom axis of the graph. The graph is intended only as a guide to the amount of lead to be added, which is specific to this tuning operation. In practice, as tuning progresses along a segment, the amount of lead added to a note gives a good guide as to the amount needed for its neighbour. There was a degree of variance within the envelope plotted, but the data fell within the boundaries indicated for the different comb segments which number 1 to 5 starting at bass end.

Having theorised about the subject, what are the practicalities of adding lead and tuning the teeth of our comb? It was decided to use solder with a composition of 99.3% tin-0.7% copper, with a non-corrosive flux core in its 1mm dia. cross-section. A temperature controlled Antex, 50W TCS electric iron was used, giving a temperature range of 200-450°C. The temperature control within its handle was set by trial and error to give sufficient heat to melt the solder and allow it to flow between the lead weight and comb tooth. A *spade* tip for the soldering iron, as illustrated in fig 2, was fabricated from pieces of brass angle and tubing which were sawn and filed down to the dimensions shown. All facets of the *spade* are drawn, the top right being what is seen by the operator during soldering. The centres shown are for brass studs and nuts (2mm dia.) for securing the brass tube to the angle: the tube fits tightly over the round end of the iron.

A soldering jig was prepared to hold a segment upside down with its teeth pointing towards the operator, placing bass teeth to the left as shown in fig 3. The treble tooth was treated first, working towards bass for reasons to be explained shortly. At the first tooth, the lead platform was tinned by inserting the long leg of the soldering iron tip in the first slot between teeth, pressing it gently against the first tooth. Baker's Fluid ('killed spirit') was spotted onto the lead platform which was touched with solder as melting point was reached. Next, with a small pool of solder on top of the *spade*, which is over the second tooth, the lead held by tweezers was dabbled in the pool to raise its temperature and then slid across into position on the first tooth, transferring with it a small amount of solder. Then, *spade* withdrawn, the lead was held upright and in line with its tooth until the solder set. Any slight misalignment was corrected with the tweezers. The tooth was then tuned, as described a little later, before proceeding to the next tooth when the lead of the first gave some indication of the amount of lead needed for this new tooth. Working now with the *spade* in the second slot, the first slot proved a sufficient thermal break for the first lead not to be affected. The reason for working from treble to bass is now apparent because, as one proceeds along the segment, trimming of the larger fresh lead is not encumbered by the smaller, trimmed leads.

Tuning of a tooth was carried out before moving on to the next

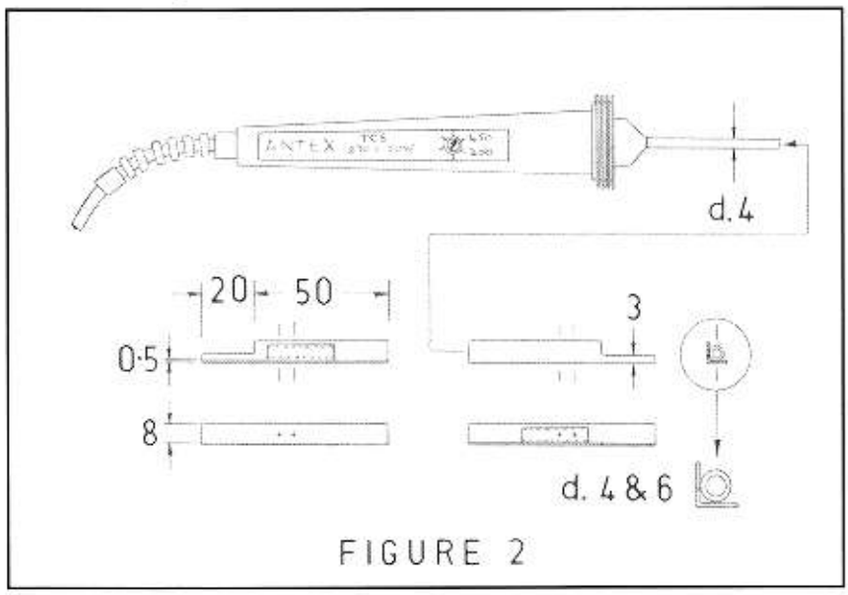


FIGURE 2

Soldering iron tip

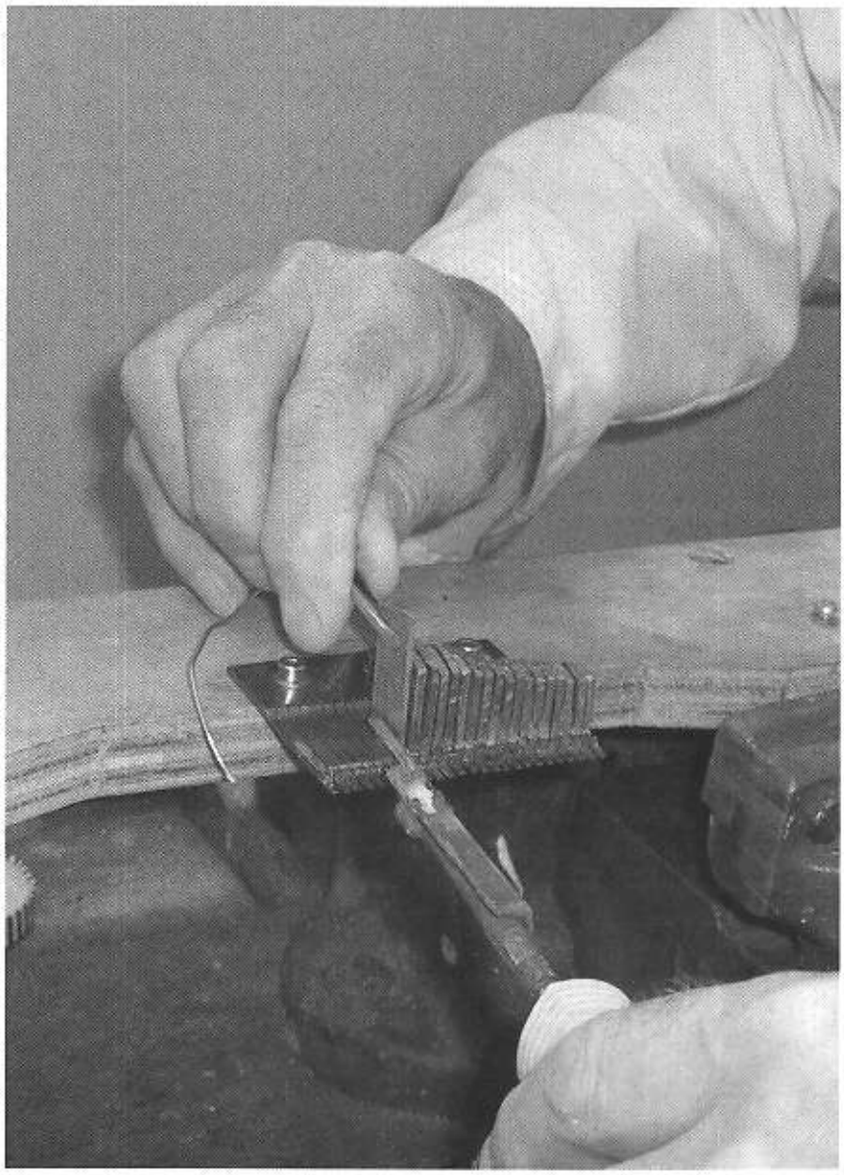


Fig 3. Soldering jig

tooth. After the lead and tooth had cooled, its note was checked using one of two electronic chromatic tuners. One picked up airborne sound, the other detected vibrations through the material to which it was attached. These are illustrated being activated by a tuning fork in fig 4: the tuner on the right picks up sound through a small microphone under the central "Mode" switch. The sensitivities of the two devices differed depending on how or where they were placed, either on the wooden soldering jig or in contact with the comb segment itself. Best practice was a matter of trial and error, with consistent read-outs usually being obtained: listening to the note also helped to establish required tuning. Subsequent to this work whilst cutting out his bed plate, the author decided that final tuning, the subject of his next article, might best be carried out on a metallic jig. After determining the note immediately after adding lead and, taking account of the accruing data which makes for fig 1, small amounts of lead were snipped off the end of the lead weight using side-cutters. The resulting change of note was read off using one or both of the chromatic tuners. Then, with ever diminishing amounts of lead being removed, towards the end replacing the side-cutters by a sharp knife to remove tiny lead parings, tuning was halted when the note was about 5% below the required frequency. The reason for this is that it will be relatively easy to bring the tooth to its correct tonal value, after the dampering stage, by removing a little more lead. Taking account of advice from a fellow member of our Society, it has been decided that at the final tuning stage a degree of dissonance between similar noted pairs of teeth will be introduced to provide for Sublime Harmonie. This exercise will be helped by having pairs of teeth initially at lower frequency than their final status.

At the end of each soldering session, the comb segment was immersed in a saturated solution of sodium bicarbonate with un-dissolved crystals in evidence, to neutralise acidity resulting from heated Baker's Fluid. Finally, the

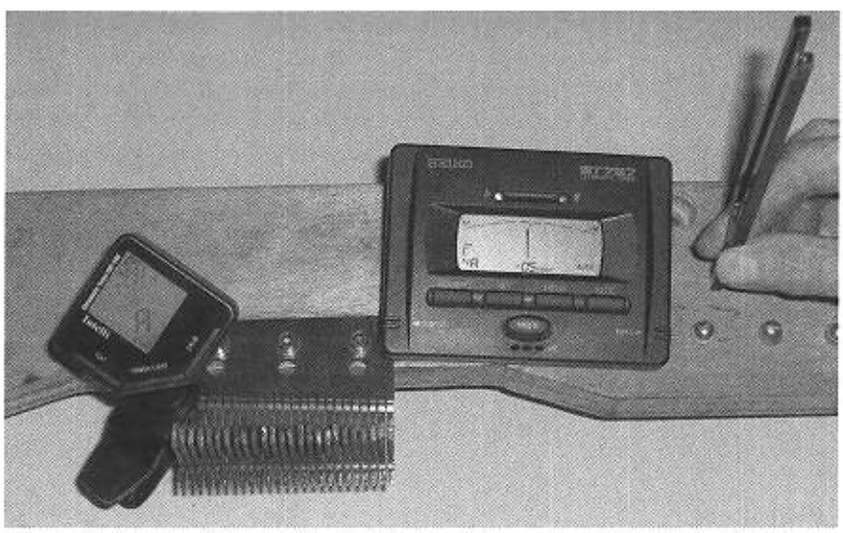


Fig 4. Chromatic tuners responding to a tuning fork

segment was rinsed in hot water, excess water dabbed off and dried quickly in warm air. A light spray with thin oil gave protection until the next soldering exercise, oil being cleaned off before soldering re-commenced.

A view of the underside of one segment with leads added appears at fig 5. The next step to complete the comb is to add damper wires and fine tune teeth to the range of notes defined earlier. This work will be described in the next article.

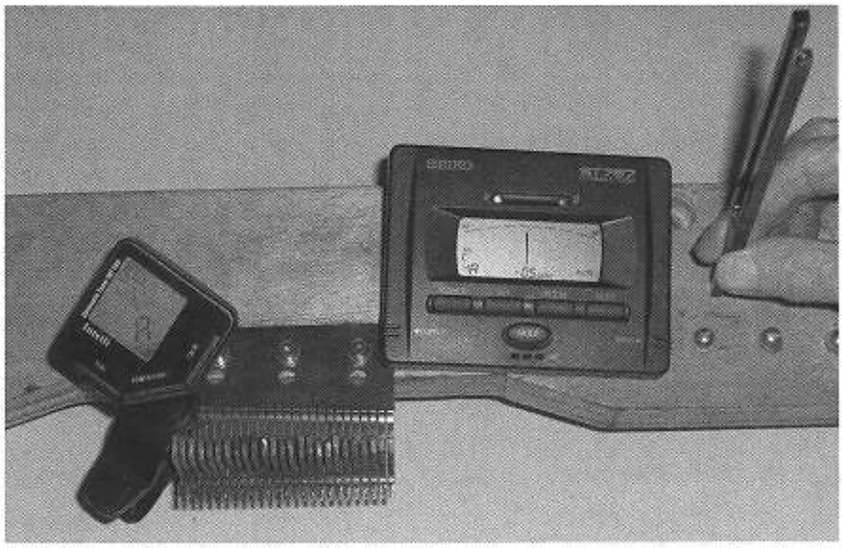


Fig 5. Segment with leads

News from Other Societies

compiled by Alison Biden and Nicholas Simons

Mechanical Music, Vol. 56, No. 5, September/October 2010
(see also www.mbsi.org)

The first article is a useful one on how to reduce the noise made by small organ wind supplies. After a brief commentary by Luuk Goldhoorn on an advertising sheet showing an early Polyphon, there follows a longer article by Bill Wineburgh, about the Music Arranger, Octave Felician Chaillet. Chaillet was one of the best and most prolific composers/arrangers for the Ste Croix musical box industry, who moved first to Leipzig, where he worked for Symphonium, and then the USA, where he arranged for Regina. There follows an article comparing a couple of Miraphones. The musical box component of these machines was made by Mermod Freres in Switzerland, whilst the phonograph elements were made by Victor for the earlier machines, and Columbia for the later ones. Frank Metzger then relates how he acquired a rare Courvoisier bird-in-a-cage clock/automaton via Christies in London, and the frustratingly little information available about this manufacturer, followed by an article by Tim Reed on Tune Sheets, part of his tune sheet project. This features ten tune sheets, and three agents' stickers, all beautifully photographed. Next is a description, by Robin Biggins, of a method of ensuring cylinder cement will not foul the shaft found in an example of a Paillard box.

Hendrik Strengers supplies news from the Netherlands: the fiftieth anniversary of the Museum in Utrecht (now to be simply called Museum Speelklok) and the inauguration of the restored 'Cello' organ at the Arnhem Open Museum in June.

Mechanical Music, Vol 56, No.6, November/December 2010
(see also www.mbsi.org)

An article by Luuk Goldhorn on François Nicole and his suppliers looks at the early history and development of F Nicole snuff boxes, where even those with close serial numbers are surprisingly different from each other. The author attributes these, in the main, to different makers supplying the various parts, which were then assembled by F Nicole.

An article by Larry Karp on Stollwerkechocolatercordscontains a description and brief history of these extraordinary items, which were played on a phonograph type of machine which operated on the manivelle principle. Unsurprisingly, no surviving examples have yet been located, whilst the account of the unfortunate Heinrich Stollwerk who drowned in a vat of chocolate reads like something out of Roald Dahl.

Q David Bowers writes at length in a first instalment about San Francisco's Cliff House, an entertainment complex that went through several incarnations between 1858 and 1909 due to its being destroyed by fire. Along with the adjacent Sutro Baths, it afforded a venue where larger mechanical music instruments, including many different pianos and orchestrions, could be seen and played.

Other items include an article outlining the introduction of the Jazz-Flute, the most characteristic, and Vibraton registers in Belgian dance organs of the 1920's, along with extensive reporting of the MBSI's Annual, Business and Trustees Meetings at Dearborn in September.

The Key Frame (Issue KF3-10)
(See also www.fops.org)

The Key Frame continues to improve, with many colour photos in its A4 format.

Editor David Smith continues reporting on his recent holiday in the USA with a description of The Burnaby Village and its carousel and organ. This is a heritage village which exhibits a well-restored C. W. Parker carousel from 1912 complete with Wurlitzer 146B organ.

Well known organ owner Boz Oram describes taking his Hooghuys organ, 'Sharharazad' to join Carter's Steam Fair at the 30th anniversary event at Pinkney's Green. The organ was set up within the Palace of Varieties front, along with a steam engine, to recreate the true ambience of an Edwardian fairground show.

Andy Hines continues his series of interesting articles on popular composers who found themselves arranged onto cardboard, this time with Harry Parr-Davies. Parr-Davis was a musical prodigy who talked his way into Gracie Fields' dressing room and became her resident pianist and song writer.

Jonathan Holmes gives us a comprehensive history of the Wilhelm Bruder Starkton organs made towards to end of the Bruder dynasty when organs were struggling to compete with other forms of music making on the fairgrounds. The article is complemented with some excellent colour photos and we can look forward to part two when Jonathan will describe the restoration of his own organ.

Elsewhere, John James describes his own manufacture of a 54 keyless organ, complete with 12 ranks on melody; quite a challenge for a first-time builder.

Reed Organ Society Quarterly, Vol XXVIV No 3, 2010
(see also www.reedsoc.org)

This has a review of a concert given by Artis Wodehouse on three free-reed instruments, a Mason Hamlin Lizst, a Mason Hamlin 86K and a Victor Mustel No 1199-907. Douglas C Warren then provides part two of The History of the Clough & Warren Organ Co, consisting of Chapter II, covering the 1870's to 1890's, and Chapter III, the production of Pipe Organs. This expansion by Clough & Morgan is attributed to John Turnell Austin, an English-born organ designer, who joined the company, and his unique invention of the Universal Wind Chest. There is nothing unique about the challenges faced by Milt Bacheller in his account of the acquisition and restoration of a rare Ithaca Bell Organ. Milt concludes his article with an account of the Ithaca Organ Company, containing well-researched potted biographies of the people involved, which evolved from a window sash and blind company, and was manufacturing for just eight years. Three pages in the centre of the magazine are devoted to the reproduction of the sheet music for Arthur Bristow's Parlour Polka.

Organ Grinders News, No. 74, Autumn 2010
(See also www.boga.co.uk)

This issue includes a report from the 50th anniversary celebration party held by Joseph Raffin and his company in Uberlingen, in southern Germany. Joseph Raffin started as a church organ builder but became one of the first to move to small hand-cranked street organs over thirty years ago and many of his organs can be seen at organ festivals around Great Britain.

Elsewhere, there are reports from the Ilfracombe and Swanage Victorian Festivals which were well attended by suitably dressed organ grinders.

Organ Grinders News, No. 75, Winter 2010
(See also www.boga.co.uk)

This issue kicks off with a report from MBSGB members Chapman, Dicker and Murray on the 2010 Berlin Organ Festival, where they are regular attendees. John Smith, the designer of the very popular self-build organs, writes an article

describing the wind supply for small organs and gives advice on how to ensure that an even and sufficient supply is provided.

Player Piano Group – Bulletin No 196, September 2010
(See also www.PlayerPianoGroup.org.uk)

This issue is packed with interesting articles with something for everyone.

The modern Dutch composer, Jan Van Dijk (no relation to Dick) created his Pianola Concerto in 1978, hand punching it onto a number of paper rolls. These rolls have now been hand carried to Julian Dyer in the UK where they are being scanned and copied for posterity.

The Player Piano is getting serious exposure with two concerts of classical and jazz by Michael Broadway in Shrewsbury and Julian Dyer in Cambridge respectively.

Julian Dyer has now had time to delve into the technicalities of the large hoard of rolls recently imported from Uruguay and gives us an insight into South American popular music of the period.

North West Player Piano Association Journal – Christmas 2010
(See also www.nwppa.freeserve.co.uk)

Another bumper edition of this twice yearly publication includes numerous erudite articles written by the editor under a number of anagramatical 'noms des plumes' alongside historical reprints. Of particular interest is a report on the conversion of a Lipp upright piano from a rather average Kastner player system to a full Ampico reproducing piano. In their day, Lipp pianos were highly regarded and rivals to Steinway. Vera Lynn is the latest subject of the When They Were Young thread, and Carl Friedberg is this issue's Famous Musician.

Friends of the Amersham Fair Organ Museum - Newsletter 3, December 2010

After only one year this group of organ enthusiasts has grown to 70 with the aim of supporting the museum and arranging organ related visits and events. A walking tour of Little Italy was the first organised event where a group of 16 Friends toured this area of London which was the home of over a dozen organ makers over the last 150 years. Lunch was had in traditional style in a historic 'pie and mash' shop. The museum's Sleighbell Marenghi celebrated its centenary at a special concert, which is reported, along with a well researched article on Charles Marenghi, the builder of this magnificent organ.

Musiques Mecaniques Vivantes – 4th Quarter, 2010
(See also www.aaimm.org)

A short article by Étienne Blyelle narrates the development from cartel musical boxes to disc machines.

Jean-Pierre Arnault then writes at length about Les Gets in Savoy being 'the beating heart of mechanical music', starting with the 14th International Festival of Les Gets, which felicitously coincided in 2010 with the 150th anniversary of the reunification of Savoy with France, and which was taken as the theme for the festival. Via a potted version of the convoluted history of Geneva and Savoy, the author points out that Savoy narrowly missed being the cradle of the musical box, but nonetheless enjoyed a healthy exchange of ideas with Geneva following the latter's independence, relating to clock making as well as musical box manufacture. Indeed, one Geneva manufacturer of 'musical pieces' relocated in 1825 to Cluses in Savoy where labour costs were a third of those in Geneva. Savoy could also account for three manufacturers of mechanical pianos, and possibly the inventor of the Juke Box.

The next article, by Etienne Blyelle, describes in great detail the interchange mechanism of the *Gloria* cylinder musical box.

This is followed by a poignant item about the fate of four hundred *Brunophones*, a type of mechanical piano, destroyed by the descendants of their inventor, unable to store them in their great numbers when they fell out of favour in cafes after the invention of the amplifier.

Jean-Pierre Jouander then writes about the Star machine for cutting rolls for 88 note pneumatic pianos which were in vogue between 1920-30. The Star machine is considered superior to the better known Leabarjan as it could cut all notes of a chord simultaneously. The only other make capable of such results is the Acme at twice the size and ten times the weight.

In a brief but highly technical item, Philippe Petitdemange proposes a method of arrangement which will ensure chords cut in card organ books are perfectly in tune.

Jean Nimal and Yves Strobbe then treat the reader to two pages of reviewing some of the mechanical music items posted on YouTube. This features a wide range of subjects, perhaps one of the most intriguing being Kevin Wright's version of Robert-Houdin's famous trapeze artist automaton, Antonio Diavolo, in which Mr Wright reveals the enigma (though the authors decline for the time being!)

Newsletter from Schweizerischer Verein der Freunde Mechanischer Musik
(See also www.sfmm.ch)

The latest newsletter is available to download in German, direct from their website.

Nieuwsbrief from MechaMusica (Belgian Society). December, 2010
(See also www.mechamusica.be)

This is available as a download in Flemish.

Letters to the Editor

From Christopher Proudfoot

Dear Editors,

Perhaps, as the auctioneer, I could be permitted to respond to Nicholas Newble's letter in the Winter issue (p. 571.)

Firstly, one important aspect of auction as a means of selling is that a vendor can remain anonymous. While many vendors may not care two hoots about this, some will, and client confidentiality is ingrained at birth, so to speak, in an auctioneer's culture. So there can be no question of my risking revealing a vendor's identity by asking for a change of instructions in front of a room full of bidders.

Secondly, it is suggested that bidders be 'asked if they would be prepared to pay… more for the item.' I am baffled by this suggestion; it is what I have been doing in every auction I have taken for the last 35 years! Admittedly, I don't specify an amount (reserves, like vendor's names, are strictly confidential), but this is how a reserve works:

Let us suppose that a lot has a reserve of £70 (which only the vendor and the auctioneer will know). A bidder bids up to £50, then the auctioneer, bidding on behalf of the owner, calls the next bid, at £55, and looks again at the bidder to see if he is still bidding. If there is no further response, the auctioneer looks round the room for any further bids. If there are none, he brings down the hammer, and the 'hammer price' is £55. The £50 bidder is the 'underbidder', and it is made quite clear to him, before the hammer comes down, that if he wishes to bid more than £55, he is being invited to do so.

I might add, that in many cases in Society auctions the hammer price is so far from the reserve that, however hard he tries, the auctioneer has little hope of reaching the latter! Buyers should be prepared to pay the going rate (and they usually are, to be fair, if they really want the item), and vendors should remember that a reserve is not a device for forcing the price up, merely a failsafe to prevent it going too cheaply. The higher the reserve, the greater the likelihood of no sale at all, which is of no use to anybody. On the other hand, we should not expect members to pay the full commercial price for things that they don't really want!

In Christopher's example above, in various society auctions (not the MBSGB it seems), when the bidding reaches the £50 level the auctioneer does not bid on behalf of the owner. Instead, if no further bids are received from the floor, the auctioneer withdraws the lot from sale as the reserve is not met. No further opportunity is presented to the high bidder to bid up to the reserve even if he is quite prepared to. Under these circumstances the auctioneer might just as well state what the reserve is so that the high bidder can match it if s/he so wishes. I have personally, frustratingly, experienced this on a number of occasions in (other) society auctions, this being perceived by some people as one of the methods used by a few 'professional' salerooms to artificially boost prices! I am confident this is not the case in reputable rooms, of course. - Ed

From Bill Cooper

Dear Sir,

I expect some time or other the handles on musical boxes have been mentioned. Do you think no handles were original? Most I have come across are not modern ones. I have at the moment three with handles, one a Nicole Frères; however the last box I bought from a dealer had handles. Both have a lady's fan on them and on the lid is a transfer of a lady's fan. The musical box is by B H Abrahams, 1898. A while ago I asked if anyone had seen plain glass on the governor instead of a ruby. Still I don't know Come on readers, get your pens out!

Yours truly, Bill.

Synthetic 'ruby' (actually usually agate) is generally used to take the thrust from endless screws in governors because it is easily machined and polished to the right shape, is cheap and is hard enough for the job - Ed

From Don Busby

Dear Editors,

Karl Griesbaum Whistling Figures

May I presume to proffer possible translations for two unknown titles in the list of Whistler Tunes which accompanies J. Schumacher's article on the subject, as reproduced in The Music Box Journal-Winter 2010 Vol. 24 No. 8?

The article indicates that Griesbaum figures are generally male musicians or tramps. However, the list of tunes suggests that female and rural figures might have appeared, evidenced by Tunes No. 2, 7, 28, 33, 40, 53, 59, 60, 69, 104, 105, 130, 138 and 150.

Tune No 36 Die Gauslou

Has misspelling occurred?

Eine Gans is a goose. Die Ga*n*slou could be goose-girl, gosling, silly goose (silly woman). Ein Gauner, eine Gaunin is a swindler, trickster.

Die Gau*n*lou could be cardsharp, cheat. ----lou remains unknown.

Tune No. 110 Bielein Rinn

----lein forms the diminutive of the noun to which it is an adjunct.

eine Biene is a bee. Eine Rinne is a channel, groove, gutter. Eine Rinnen is a run, flow.

Bie(*n*)lein Rinn could be Flight of the (Bumble*) Bee, A Worrisome Bee.

*Eine Hummel is a bumble bee.

Eine Biegung is a bend, curve.

Bie(*g*)lein Rinn could be a drunk staggering homewards, perhaps whistling "Show me the way to go Home", see Tunes No.37 and 67. It might be Skater's Waltz, tobogganing (Cresta Run), a ski run.

A knowledge of the full range of Griesbaum products might support or deny the above suggestions.

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