

The **Music Box**

An International Journal of Mechanical Music

In this issue - Special organ edition!

*The Organ Grinders of
London & Manchester*

*An Imhof & Mukle
Flute Organ*

*The Confusing World of
the Mechanical Organ*

*A Musical Pub-Crawl
During Lockdown*

The Journal of the Musical Box Society of Great Britain



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&

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*'... families had no idea they were sending their children into harsh conditions ...'
(see Robert Penna's 'Joy & Suffering', page 268)*



*'in German [and] one must rely on contextual interpretation to understand precisely what is being described ...'
(see Arthur J W G Ord-Hume, 'The Confused World of the Mechanical Organ,' page 285)*



*'... she had a whole drawer full of ladies' white kid gloves, a relic from the halcyon days of grand dinner parties and dances in the house where the organ used to play. She allowed me to cut them all up into 66 small squares ...'
(see Henry Bennett's A Family Affair', page 292)*



Front Cover: Detail of an Imhof & Mukle flute organ: the subject of a major feature in this edition, see page 292

'He was always on hand to dispense wisdom and criticism in equal measure ...' (see 'Memories of Jim Hall,' page 301)

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THE MUSICAL BOX SOCIETY of GREAT BRITAIN

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EDITORIAL GUIDELINES

When submitting content for the *The Music Box*, please do so electronically, although hardcopy will be accepted along with printed photographs. (Keep a copy!) Please note that hardcopy submissions will require (re)typing and scanning; scanned photographic prints may not do justice to the originals. Electronic text should be in plain text, Microsoft Word or Open Doc format, if possible; PDFs are the least preferable as they can't be easily manipulated. Accompanying photographs should be sent as separate (NOT embedded in a document), high-resolution, JPG or PNG files with filenames reflecting figure numbers referenced in the text of the article, e.g., "Fig 01.jpg." If you think an image might be worthy of being selected for the front cover of the journal, please make sure it is in *portrait* vs. *landscape* format. Captions for photographs or other graphics should be sent as a separate document file, with text formatted like the following: "Fig. 17: Reed pan showing shrinkage cracks."

Articles, letters and other contributions relating to the study of musical boxes and other mechanical musical instruments for publication in the Journal are welcome. We will get back to you if we feel any changes other than minor spelling or grammar errors or readability issues need to be corrected. We will also take care of fitting your images and captions into the text. Articles, questions and comments should be submitted electronically to editor@mbsgb.org.uk, or by post to The Musical Box Society of Great Britain, c/o The Grange Musical Collection, Palgrave, DISS, Norfolk, IP22 1AZ (Please note that this latter method will result in delay; if you are rushing to meet a deadline either email the editor, or telephone 01962 861350.) Any questions about how to format or submit an article should be sent to the foregoing addresses. Be advised there may be a significant publishing delay, as there may be other articles in the queue when yours arrives. We are also happy to receive feedback on previously published content.

The (Acting) Editor reserves the right to amend or reject any content we deem inappropriate, including, but not limited to, duplicative articles, articles with little affinity to mechanical music related topics, plagiarism, unauthorized or improper use of copyrighted materials, etc. Any contribution is accepted for publication on the understanding that the author is solely responsible for the correctness of the facts stated therein, and also for any opinions expressed within. Its publication does not necessarily imply the Society, its Officers, or the Editor agree with those opinions. The Society, its Officers and the Editor, do not accept, and hereby disclaim any liability for the consequences of any inaccuracies, errors or omissions in contributions which are published in the Journal. *The Music Box* is published quarterly by the MBSGB.

Editor's Column

Why a special organ edition? As material was accumulating for publication, it became apparent that a number of features complimented each other rather neatly, so a conscious decision was then taken to 'go the whole hog.' If as instruments organs are not of particular interest to you, I hope you will nonetheless read some, if not all of them. A most intriguing personal story is related in the feature about the Imhof & Mukle flute organ (page 293), whilst some fascinating life-style details are revealed in the article on Victorian organ grinders. Many of these actually turned barrel pianos, so it seems appropriate that an item by Kevin McElhone catalogues the public house locations of barrel pianos which passed through the hands of Canon Wintle. If at the end all this you fancy owning an organ yourself, we are reprinting an article from Vol 15, No 2 which details some of the things you need to take into account. It was written by one-time member Jim Hall, an organ builder himself, who recently passed away.

For newer members (and there are quite a few) we are publishing an article by Arthur W G J Ord-Hume illustrating how the term 'mechanical organ' can refer to several different types of instrument,

and focuses here on 'clock' organs – which can still refer to a confusing multitude of instruments. The recent Coronavirus 'lockdown' has had a double whammy of impacting on events and meetings we would otherwise report, while possibly creating more time for reading instead. We are therefore taking this opportunity to reprint relevant items of interest from previous editions, including the late H A V Bulleid's guide of things to look for to help identify your musical box.

If you still find yourself twiddling your thumbs, and frustrated at not being able to meet up with your friends to share your music, there are a number of books to keep you entertained. Copies of the supplement to *The Organette Book* are still available from MBSGB and those for *The Disc Musical Box Book* can be obtained from Kevin McElhone. For something a bit different – but still on the theme of organs! – there is *The Mortier Story*, reviewed elsewhere in this edition. Don't forget we are always interested to hear about your instruments and projects, or to receive any other submissions on a mechanical music topic. What better time to write than now?



(Left) Nicolas Frayling, former Dean of Chichester Cathedral and great-grandson of Daniel Imhof meets Henry Bennett (right), whose great-grandfather bought the Imhof & Mukle flute organ, subject of the article written by Henry to be found on page 278.

Update on the Flamephone:

The Editor has been contacted by a number of people as a consequence of reading about the Flamephone ('What the Blazes ...?', Vol 29 No 6), including one of our long-standing members whom we haven't heard from in a long time. All those responding remembered the meeting in Windermere, Spring 1990, but unfortunately very little about this curious machine. Meanwhile, our correspondent in California is pressing ahead with building his replica, and informs us that now that 'lockdown' has eased a little there, he is intending to test it with barbecue gas ...

Plerodienique Musical Boxes

We are grateful to MBSGB member, Peter Both, who is also the President of Schweizer Freunde Mechanischer Musik, our Swiss sister Society, for getting in touch following the item on plerodienique musical boxes, Vol 29 No 6. (I am not even going to attempt to include any accents, as yet another variation on the spelling has appeared.) The musical box PVF serial number 11250 [sic] featured in the journal, is now in his collection, and he informs us that there was a transposition of figures in the recording of the serial number last time in this magazine, and the correct number

is 11025. Those of you who read 'News from Other Societies' will be aware that Peter and his wife, Jacqueline, write a regular feature in the Swiss Society's magazine, based on instruments in their collection; this latest acquisition is destined to be the subject of a future article. We are looking forward to Peter sharing this with us. Meanwhile, he has spearheaded further research into plerodienique boxes; between him, David & Carol Beck in USA, and MBSGB Archivist Alison Biden, approximately 15 individual specimens have now been located and identified. This is an on-going project, and it is anticipated that further information will be forthcoming by the time of publication of the next edition of *The Music Box*. As was apparent from the discovery of PVF 11025, these exceptional and rare boxes are still coming to light, their owners (who may have inherited them) unknown to the international musical box community. If by chance you know of one, or hear of one, which may still lie 'hidden', please do contact us.

Members on TV

Jonny Ling appeared in BBC 1's *Bargain Hunt*, 10th July; one of the items he showed the presenter was a very ornate empty organ clock case: how appropriate given we have an in depth article about organ clocks by Arthur W J G Ord-Hume in this edition – see page 285.

Also appearing in the programme was auctioneer Elizabeth Talbot, whom we featured in *The Music Box*, Vol 29, No 3. We have also learned that Michael and Maria Start appeared in *Salvage Hunters: the Restorers*, Channel 12 on 8th July.

Problems with the MBSGB Website

We have heard that a number of people, often not members, have been experiencing difficulty in accessing the MBSGB's website. It would seem that there are issues depending on what operating system and browser you use, as additional security measures have been introduced by our website host in response to increased hacking attempts. This is not just our website, but globally many of those using the same format. We apologise for the inconvenience, and are monitoring the situation; a conscious decision was taken to maintain the protection of the site rather than relax its security. Ultimately we hope we can resolve the situation to everyone's satisfaction. In the meantime, if you are experiencing difficulties, you could try changing your browser and/or search engine. We have noticed that those using Google Chrome as a browser, for example, have a few seconds delay before being connected to the website, but otherwise they can access it without further problem.

CORRESPONDENCE TO THE MUSICAL BOX SOCIETY OF GREAT BRITAIN

On very rare occasions one or other Officer will receive a message to the effect that s/he hasn't responded to a communication which was requiring a reply. Contact details are quite clearly listed in the 'Officers and their Contact Details' column of each edition of the journal. Please respect the wish of some Officers not to have their personal contact details published, and use the published channels. Where applicable these are: a generic email via the website (e.g. 'editor@mbsgb.org.uk'), or, if you prefer to use 'snail mail', send your correspondence to **the Correspondence Address**: c/o Grange Musical Collection, Palgrave, DISS, Norfolk, IP22 1AZ. Be aware that this facility has an inherent delay, since items received here then have to be forwarded by post to the relevant Officer. In the absence of a Chair, please address your correspondence to the Correspondence Secretary, or the Business Secretary, both of whom at time of writing are Vice Chairs/ Vice Presidents.

The **Registered Business Address** is quite specifically for correspondence from 'officialdom' – i.e. statutory bodies such as HMRC or Companies' House needing to contact MBSGB on matters of governance - and not for items of general correspondence which are not forwarded to us. Its publication in the journal is merely a legal requirement and not for general use.

Once or twice in the past an email address has either been omitted, or incorrectly published; once spotted, the errors have been rectified. Delays to emails may be because the recipient's 'in-box' suspects the message to be spam, and deposits it in the 'junk mail' box. It helps the recipient decide whether an item is safe to open if **the subject line can be as specific as possible**. So, for example, rather than 'help sought ...' in the subject line, put 'musical box info sought', or something specific to your message. If you suspect an email address is incorrectly recorded, or that your message has gone unseen to a 'junk' box, try contacting that particular Officer again via another Officer. We hope that following these instructions will help prevent any frustration in the future.

Please note that the deadline for next edition is 15th September 2020.

EARLIER THAN NORMAL!

Copy deadlines are normally:

1st February; 1st April; 1st July & 1st October.

Publication dates:

1st March; 1st May; 1st August; 1st November.

We reserve the right to amend these dates as circumstances dictate.

New members

We would like to extend a warm welcome to the following new members who have recently joined the Musical Box Society of Great Britain:

Mike Boyd	East Sussex
William McCabe	East Sussex
Mike Edwards	Wales
Dr.Ved Sood	Notts
John Watson	Surrey
John Morgan	Surrey
Michael Huddleston	Lincs
Keville Nobes	Norfolk
Callum Duffy	Middlesex
Paul Matthews	Cambridge
Nicholas Nichols	Italy
Jane Hawthorne	Suffolk

DATES FOR YOUR DIARY 2020

5 Dec 2020	MBSGB Teme Valley Winders. Eastham, Tenbury Wells, Worcs. 11.00 start. Please contact John Phillips, 01584 781118. Status to be notified in Winter issue.
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ADVANCE NOTICES FOR 2021

2021	The two national meetings that were due to take place in 2020 have been postponed until 2021. Full details will be given in the Winter issue. Scarborough 18 – 20 March 2021 Llandrindod Wells 10 – 12 September 2021
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PLEASE CONSULT THE MBSGB WEBSITE FROM TIME TO TIME FOR UPDATES ON THE STATUS AND FURTHER INFORMATION ON MEETINGS AND OTHER ACTIVITIES.

From: English Mechanic & World of Science

By Roger Booty

On August 31st, 1888, the above weekly magazine published a letter from 'Orpheus' under the heading 'Query no. 66309.'

'(66309) Musical Box. — I was about investing in an expensive musical box but a friend observed to me that in all probability, before 12 months such instruments would be as obsolete as my Grandfather's clock. He said they would be superseded by a singing variety of Edison phonograph. I wish to ask my mechanical brethren if this is their opinion? — Orpheus.'

In 1888 worries of the phonograph superseding the, presumably, cylinder musical box that was being planned for purchase should perhaps have been better directed towards the up and coming disc musical box.

Unfortunately we will never know what was finally purchased, but there were two responses which appeared in the September 7th edition.

'Answers to Queries. (No. 66309) It is very probable that musical boxes will soon be superseded by the photograph, gramo-or graphophone; but then 'Orpheus' should remember that a thing of real value can never lose that value, but gains by age, whether it be a musical box or a grandfather's clock. If 'Orpheus' does want to hear mechanical music, he won't be 'done out' by getting a musical box. — Someone.'

'(66309) I do not think 'Orpheus' need be afraid that a 'singing variety of Edison's phonograph' will supersede musical boxes at an early date. The actual results

achieved at Menlo Park are out of all proportion to the newspaper twaddle concerning them. Our readers will remember the scare in gas shares some years ago consequent on some invention of Edison's; but gas shares are a splendid investment now, and electric light shares may almost be had for asking. Edison is a wonderful man, but reports of what he has done should be received CUM GRANDO SALIS. — Wm. John Grey, F.C.S. Analytical Chemist, Newcastle-upon-Tyne.'

The next piece concerning a clock with carillon, dates from September 1st, 1882, and the final copy is from September 12th, 1879. I wonder, does the carillon still exist and do any of our American members have any knowledge of the clock?

NEW CLOCK AND CARILLONS FOR BOMBAY UNIVERSITY.

A NATIVE of Bombay having munificently provided the necessary funds for a large clock and carillons for Bombay University, the Indian Government intrusted the work to the following firms:

The bells to Messrs. John Taylor and Co., of Loughborough, Leicestershire, founders of the new ring of 12 bells for St. Paul's Cathedral, and of Great Paul; the iron bell frame, designed by General Hyde, of the State Railway Department, to Messrs. Westwood, Bailey, and Co.; and the clock and carillon machinery to Messrs. Lund and Blackley, of 42, Pall-mall, by whom the whole of the work has been erected in London, preparatory to its shipment to Bombay. The bells are 16 in number, in the key of C (12 consecutive and four half-notes.) The largest weighs about 3 tons, and the whole peal about 10 tons; they are contained in a wrought-iron bell-frame, weighing about 7 tons more.

The clock will show time on four dials, each 18ft. diameter, glazed with opal glass for illumination, either with gas or electricity; has a two-seconds pendulum about 14ft. long, iron and zinc compensation, and a bob, 600lb. weight. Inside minute and seconds dials are provided for setting the exterior hands, and the necessary apparatus is applied, by which it can telegraph its time daily to the observatory, and synchronise to correct time all the other clocks in the building, Bombay city, and on any of the railways, and in towns having wire communication with it. The escapement is that known as Denison's double three-leg gravity, and trials made here of the going qualities of the clock show that it does not vary half a second from its daily rate. The quarters (known as the Westminster) are chimed on the 2nd, 3rd, 4th, and 7th bells of the largest consecutive 8, and the hours are struck on the 8th of the same number.

The carillon machinery plays 16 tunes (two barrels of eight tunes each) one, changed automatically.

On Week Days.
At 6 a.m.
„ 12.0 noon.
„ 5.0 p.m.
„ 9.0 p.m.

On Sundays.
At 6.0 a.m.
„ 1.30 p.m.
„ 5.30 p.m.
„ 9.0 p.m.

The tunes are:—
Sinfonia (Handel).
Those Evening Bells.
When the Rosy Dawn.
Luther's Hymn.
Hanover.
God Save the Queen.
The Harp that Once.
St. Bride's.
Blue Bells of Scotland.

My Lodging is on the Cold Ground.
March of the Men of Harlech.
Last Rose of Summer.
Rule, Britannia.
Home, Sweet Home.
Hymn to the Blacksmith.
Auld Lang Syne.

Any number of tunes can be added hereafter.

For the Queen's birthday, and other joyous occasions, a barrel is provided by which 150 changes on twelve bells, rounds and changes on eight bells, and firing will be chimed at full proper speed, as done by ringers in this country. There are two hammers to each bell, each held by wire connections by a separate catch in the carillon machinery, ready to drop and strike its blow; the pin in the music or change-barrel having only to withdraw the catch, like pulling the trigger of a gun, to discharge the hammer on the bell, the heavy action of relifting being done by a rapidly-revolving independent cam. The diameter of the pin-barrel is only 12in. instead of nearly 6ft., as it must have been if constructed on the old chimas plan, and the pin of brass 1-16in. diameter, instead of steel 1/2in. square, and being made of wood instead of iron one barrel is easily substituted for another, when it is desired to play eight other tunes, or to chime the changes.

The whole is so constructed that any one part can be removed for repair without disturbing the rest.

*English Mechanic
& World of
Science, No 910,
September 1st,
1882*

A REMARKABLE CLOCK.

THERE is now on exhibition in Detroit, Michigan, a clock (the work of Mr. Felix Meier, a mechanic), which is said to eclipse the famous clock at Strasburg in complexity and interest. It stands 15 feet in height, and is inclosed in a black walnut frame, elaborately carved and ornamented. The crowning figure is that of "Liberty," on a canopy over the head of Washington, who is seated on a marble dome. The canopy is supported by columns on either side. On niches below, at the four corners of the clock, are four human figures representing "Infancy," "Youth," "Manhood," and "Age"; each has a bell in one hand and a hammer in the other. The niches are supported by angels with flaming torches, and over the centre is the figure of Father Time. At the quarter-hour, the figure of the infant strikes its tiny bell; at the half-hour the figure of the youth strikes his bell of a louder tone; at the third quarter the man strikes his bell; and at the full hour the greybeard. Then the figure of Time steps out and tells the hour, as two small figures throw open doors in the columns on either side of Washington, and a procession of the Presidents of the United States follows. As the procession moves, Washington rises and salutes each figure as it passes, and it in turn, salutes him. They move through the door on the other side, and it is then closed behind them. The procession moves to the accompaniment of varied music played by the clock itself. The mechanism also gives the correct movements of the planets round the sun, comprising Mercury, which makes the revolution once in 88 days; Venus, in 224 days; Mars, in 686 days; Vesta, in 1,327 days; Juno, in 1,593 days; Ceres, in 1,681 days; Jupiter, in 4,331 days; Saturn, in 29 years; Uranus, in 84 years. As these movements are altogether too slow to be popularly enjoyed, the inventor has added a device by which he can hasten the machinery to show its working to the public. There are dials which show the hour, minute, and second in Detroit, Washington, New York, San Francisco, London, Paris, Berlin, Vienna, St. Petersburg, Constantinople, Cairo, Peking, and Melbourne. The clock also shows the day of the week and month in Detroit, the month and season of the year, the changes of the moon, &c. It is said that Mr. Meier has worked on this clock nearly ten years, and for the last four years has devoted his whole time to it.

*English Mechanic
& World of
Science, No 755,
September 12th,
1879*

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Joy and Suffering: The Organ Grinders of London and Manchester

By Dr. Robert F. Penna

At one time, there was quite a large number of organ grinders throughout Great Britain. Many old photographs of these entertainers and their instruments exist. They usually show a man diligently turning the crank on a barrel organ while being surrounded by children and adults with happy expressions on their faces. For children, organ grinders, who were often accompanied by a monkey or trained dog, were a welcome diversion and source of entertainment.

Organ grinders in England were a hard-working group of men who either pushed a mechanism on a cart or carried them with a strap across their shoulders, often resting them upon a pole when cranking the instrument. Nowadays photos of these grinders are viewed with nostalgia. Who were these men? Photographs demonstrate that they filled every age group from teenagers to old men. Yet, one wonders how did they get into this line of work? What were their backgrounds? Did they own and service their own instruments? Did they make a decent living?

Research demonstrates that many of the earliest organ grinders were disabled veterans. Here was a solution for indigent amputee veterans employed as early as the Seven Years War (1756-1763). By playing a barrel organ, disabled veterans could earn a living and not be a burden on society. This was especially encouraged in the German-speaking regions of Europe. Empress Maria Theresa of Austria was the first to authorize permits to crank a Leierkasten (barrel organ) in public. Licenses went to invalids to help them make a living. In 1810, Prussia copied Austria and issued permits as well.¹ This practice continued in Germany until after World War I. Joseph Roth's *Rebellion: A Novel* describes a German World War I amputee veteran who becomes a street organ grinder and the misfortunes that follow.² In the United States, following the Civil War (1860-1865), northern amputee veterans, of which there were many, were sometimes given street organs from charitable organizations and church groups in order to make a living.³

A review of the literature and newspaper accounts from the middle to late 1800s demonstrates that the predominant nationality of organ grinders in England was Italian. These Italian born street musicians were especially prevalent throughout the cities of London and Manchester.

Accounts demonstrate that in the second half of the 1800s, recent arrivals from Italy formed the largest part of the labour force of London's Smithfield Market. Besides street sellers and hawkers, barrel organs lent their voices to the

general sounds of pandemonium. Often motivated by sheer poverty, thousands of Italians left their rural villages between 1865 and 1900 and large numbers settled in Manchester and London.⁴

One source claims that by 1850, nearly 2,000 Italian immigrants had settled in London alone. The main Italian community of London's Little Italy was situated in the Clerkenwell section of the city, most notably around Back Hill, Eyre Street Hill, Saffron Hill, Little Saffron Hill, Warner Street, Baker's Row, Crawford Passage, Summer Street and Ray Street. Others sought the cheapest lodgings available around Great Bath Street where they lived in overcrowded conditions. In this particular area, numerous Italian organ grinders were known to reside.

If they were fortunate, they would have their own street organ that was mounted on a handcart. Other less fortunate wretches would have to hire a weighty contraption for the day, which they then had to transport by carrying it slung over their backs. Each man had his favourite haunt where he would set himself up, manually cranking the organ handle to produce the tunes, and hoping to earn some pennies. According to some sources, the street organ player, often incorrectly called the hurdy gurdy man, had become quite a common sight around London.⁵

These Italian immigrant organ grinders lived in the most appalling conditions. Clerkenwell had become a poor run-down neighbourhood. Many of the wooden tumble down buildings had been turned into basic boarding houses, most of which were squalid and unhygienic with no running water. Miserable, damp, overcrowded, rife with disease, infested with rats, the unwary immigrant became a virtual slave to unscrupulous padrones.⁶ Padrone is an Italian term that originally meant an employer who provides living arrangements and controls common labourers.

Young Italian children were especially targeted for exploitation. Agents of padrones would recruit youngsters from poor remote villages whose families had no idea they were sending their children into these conditions. The children would accompany the street musicians and beg for pennies. Sometimes, as they grew older, they would crank the barrel organs themselves. Yet all their earnings had to be handed over to the padrone. If they did not earn enough, they would be beaten and sent to bed hungry and threatened with expulsion or death. Many suffered in the worst conditions and the mortality rate amongst these youngsters was high.⁷

Fig 1: Posed photograph of a barrel organ grinder with monkey. Note the organ is carried by a strap over the grinder's neck and shoulder, with the additional support of a pole.



Fig 2: Photograph London 1895. (Copyright The Francis Frith Collection) Note the monkeys.



Fig 3: Hampstead Heath, circa 1901, produced as a postcard by G D & D, London.



Fig 4: Another scene from Hampstead Heath, from H G & L in their 'Living London' series, circa 1900.





Fig 5: Another from G D & D in their 'Star' series, London, early 1900s. The 'organ' (most probably a barrel piano) can be seen mid-range on the left hand side.

Fig 6: Town scene from the provinces, labelled Market Harborough (Leics.)



Fig 7: Ford & Barris Trio (also sometimes written as Barras) Ford and Barris were discovered 'performing' on the streets of London, and became entertainers touring music halls. They were joined by a third member to become the trio. (This photograph was featured on the cover of The Music Box, Vol 15, No 2, Summer 1991.)

Fig 8: Photograph taken in 1941 by former MBSGB member, the late Harold Smith. These street barrel pianos were used in Sutton Bonnington village in Leicestershire by Mrs. Nellie Haddon to raise seven pounds five shillings and sixpence in two hours for 'Warships Week' in 1941. Street instruments were often used for raising funds for 'good causes.'



An article from The Times of 24 August 1864 describes their living conditions:

“The chief colonies of the Italian organ-grinders in London are in the neighbourhood of Great Saffron Hill and Eyre Street Hill . . . with cases of overcrowded dwellings of a most dangerous character. In Eyre Place it was lately found that as many as 14 organ-grinders slept in one room, and, not content with that, beds were made up on the staircases. Dr. Gibbon, medical officer of health, on going into the rooms soon after men had left, found the stench unbearable, and he had in consequence an attack of low fever for a week afterwards.”

The Lancet, published in 1870, reported on an investigation of a lodging house on Eyre Place in Clerkenwell owned by Luigi Rabbotti, a notorious padrone, who controlled organ grinders. The article described:

“his basement and his house in the back . . . sublet to organ-grinders. The basement was formed into a sort kitchen, with shelves along the walls where the barrel organs might be deposited, a long table for the rolling out of macaroni . . . the floor, ceiling and walls were black with smoke and dirt . . . the house had no furniture, only double beds wherever they could be fitted. Two or even three men slept in each bed.”

Repeated reports of the over-crowding and inter-mingling of the sexes were reported in The Lancet. One described the homes of organ grinders:

“The dirt in these dwellings is appalling, and one house had not even been swept for two years. There were no basins, no towels, no means by which the organ-grinders who lived there could wash themselves.”⁸

For those who couldn't afford their own street organs, many were offered for rent. Rentals were set at such a rate that many grinders did not produce enough of a profit to escape the life of poverty. Several manufacturers produced barrel organs in both London and Manchester. In London, Chiappa & Sons, a firm established in 1864, is still in business and is well known today for producing excellent perforated cardboard books for fairground organs. Research demonstrates that not only did they manufacture organs but also imported some from the Belgian Hooghuys firm.⁹

In Manchester, the Antonelli family manufactured barrel organs and hired them out from their premises on the corner of Blossom Street and Great Ancoats Street. Domenico Antonelli was the ‘padrone’ to a large group of musicians. Antonio Varetto and Simon Rabino also manufactured barrel organs in Manchester. Rabino had learned the trade from his father and grandfather in Italy and was a graduate of the Marseilles College of Music. As a composer, many of his barrel organs played his waltzes. Unfortunately, when these instruments were destroyed, much of his music was lost as he had never published them.¹⁰

Several other families rented barrel organs out to the street musicians in Manchester - the Marrocca, Mancini, and Arcaro families. “It was even noted that Gavioli, one of the most famous of all the barrel organ manufacturers, was based in Jersey Street, Ancoats in the 19th century.”

In the city of Manchester, many new Italian immigrants settled in the Ancoats area. Ancoats soon became known as Manchester's “Little Italy.” Coming from a heritage that encouraged every man to play a musical instrument, it was quite common to hear the sounds of accordions, tambourines, mandolins and other instruments being played well into the early hours of the morning. According to the 1881 Census of England and Wales, nearly one in every three of the Italian immigrants was a musician.¹¹ A love of music and the desire to share it with an audience, as well as a way to make a living in a new land, lent itself to the playing of street organs.

A description of the Italian organ grinders in Manchester, England appears in Anthony Rea's *Manchester's Ancoats, Little Italy*. (3) He states,

“‘Little Italy’ was well known for its entertainers and especially its street musicians. They played many musical instruments, foremost the barrel organ. They would walk the streets of Manchester and surrounding districts playing their barrel organs and hurdy gurdies, some with monkeys in red waistcoats and hats, and a few with dancing bears.”¹²

It would seem that the living conditions for the organ grinders of Manchester were better than those living in London. The Ancoats area was the industrial part of the city and many mills were situated there. Around these mills were the rows of workers' houses, which were rented out to the Italian immigrants. Although these houses were over a century old, they had separate kitchens, living rooms and bedrooms with an outside privy. These were luxuries to immigrants arriving from the poor rural towns of Italy.

Prior to the arrival of the Italian immigrants, Ancoats had gained a reputation of being unhealthy and violent part of the city. In 1832, the Manchester Chronicle complained that it was dangerous to walk along Oldham Road stating, “At the ends of many streets stand groups of Irish ruffians who appear to feel no interest but in ill-treating the peaceable and unoffending inhabitants.” Upon the arrival of the Italian immigrants, the area became known as Manchester's Little Italy and organ grinders would then spread across the city playing and collecting pennies and earning a living.¹³

To many, the organ grinders brought joy and were a wonderful part of their lives. They never knew of the suffering often borne by many of these men. Besides often living in deplorable conditions, their days consisted of pushing or carrying a heavy instrument in all sorts of weather. Imagine standing continuously for long hours and monotonously turning a crank to hear the same few songs day after day. This assuredly took not only strength, but patience.

A poem written by Alfred Noyes summons the nostalgia felt by many. Entitled "The Barrel Organ," it speaks of the beauty of the music. Some of the lyrics include:

*Yes; as the music changes,
Like a prismatic glass
It takes the light and ranges
Through all the moods that pass;
Dissects the common carnival
Of passions and regrets,
And gives the world a glimpse of all
The colours it forgets*

*And there La Traviata sighs
Another sadder song;
And there Il Trovatore cries
A tale of deeper wrong;
And bolder knights to battle go
With sword and shield and lance,
Than ever here on earth below
Have whirled into – a dance!*

*Go down to Kew in lilac-time, in lilac time, in lilac time;
Go down to Kew in lilac-time (it isn't far from London!)*

(The full poem can be found at www.bartleby.com/103/117.html)

Yet, not everyone welcomed the organ grinder. Sometimes the loud unmelodic noise and repetitive tunes were considered to be a public nuisance. Charles Dickens wrote to a friend: "I could not write for more than half an hour without being disturbed by the most excruciating sounds imaginable, coming in from barrel organs on the street". Some exasperated businesses and households would simply pay the organ grinder some money just to get him to move away from their doorsteps.¹⁴

In 1859, George Augustus Sala was also angered with the sound of barrel organs near his home. He wrote :

"Yet, quiet as I am, I become at Eleven o'Clock in the Morning on every day of the week save Sunday a raving, ranting maniac - a dangerous lunatic, panting with insane desires to do, not only myself but other people, a mischief, and possessed, less by hallucination than by rabies. For so sure as the clock of St. Martin's strikes eleven, so sure does my quiet street become a pandemonium of discordant sounds. My teeth are on edge to think of them. The "musicianers," whose advent from Clerkenwell and the East-end of London I darkly hinted in a preceding chapter, begin to penetrate through the vaster thoroughfares, and make their hated appearance at the head of my street. – First Italian organ-grinder, hirsute, sunburnt, and saucy, who grinds airs from the "Trovatore" six times over, follows with a selection from the "Traviata," repeated half a dozen times, finishes up with the "Old Hundredth" and the "Postman's Knock," and then begins again.

I can do nothing with these people. I shout, I threaten, I shake my fist, I objurgate them from my window in indifferent Italian, but to no avail. They defy, scorn, disregard, make light of me. I am tempted - desperately

*tempted - to avail myself of my rights as a Civis Romanus, to summon the aid of the police."*¹⁵

Gone now from the streets, but the fascination and love of barrel organs still exist throughout many parts of the world. In England, the British Organ Grinders Association (www.boga.co.uk) provides a forum for interested people with links to repair and sales of hand-turned instruments.

Surprisingly, one old video from the late 1880s exists and is readily available to viewers. Filmed on February 20, 1896, it shows young girls dancing in the street on Drury Lane, London much to the delight of young men and the notice of an older well-dressed gentleman. It is well worth a visit to www.youtube.com/watch?v=xFRdEGPr5zo to get a glimpse of their behaviour. Another short video from 1921 shows the joy these machines brought to children. This can be located at www.youtube.com/watch?v=WpRrg9iTuEg.

For those who would like to hear authentic London, a vinyl record was produced by Contour Records (English version) in 1973 entitled, "Harry Smith – The London Barrel Organ" with 13 original tunes. The record is available on several websites.

Footnotes:

- ¹ Buchner, Alexander. 1959. *Mechanical Musical Instruments*. Translated by Iris Urwin. London: Batchworth.
- ² Roth, Joseph. *Rebellion: A Novel*. (original title: *Die Rebellion*): a 1924 novel by the Austrian writer Joseph Roth. It tells the story of a German war veteran who has become a street musician after losing one leg. The novel was published in the newspaper *Vorwärts* from 27 July to 29 August 1924. A synopsis can be found at: www.librarything.com/work/2098435
- ³ Penna, Robert. "Barrel Organs and the Disabled Civil War Veteran," *Mechanical Music*, Musical Box Society International, May/June 2018
- ⁴ *Band on the Wall*, Archive/19th century history/Italian, Manchester: file:///Users/robertpenna/Desktop/England%20article-MBSIGB/Italians%20%3C%20Chapter%201:%20An%20Eventful%20Century%20%3C%2019th%20Century%20History%20%7C%20Band%20on%20the%20Wall.webarchive
- ⁵ "Italian Immigrants and Little Italy in Clerkenwell London," February 2019: www.atinaitaly.com/italians-clerkenwell
- ⁶ "Living Conditions in Clerkenwell's Little Italy," February 2019: www.atinaitaly.com/living-conditions-clerkenwell-london
- ⁷ "Clerkenwell Italian Children Street Musicians and Entertainers," February 2019: www.atinaitaly.com/clerkenwell-italian-children-musicians
- ⁸ "Living Conditions in Clerkenwell's Little Italy," February 2019: www.atinaitaly.com/living-conditions-clerkenwell-london
- ⁹ Penna, Robert. "The Hooghuis and Their Instruments," *Mechanical Music*, Musical Box Society International, to be published Sept./Oct. 2020
- ¹⁰ *Band on the Wall*, Archive/19th century history/Italian, Manchester: file:///Users/robertpenna/Desktop/England%20article-MBSIGB/Italians%20%3C%20Chapter%201:%20An%20Eventful%20Century%20%3C%2019th%20Century%20History%20%7C%20Band%20on%20the%20Wall.webarchive
- ¹¹ Rea, Anthony. "Music & 'Little Italy,'" *Manchester's Ancoats Little Italy*: www.ancoatslittleitaly.com/music.htm
- ¹² Rea, Anthony. "Hurd-Gurdy Men, Barrel Organs, and Bagpipes," *Manchester's Ancoats Little Italy*: www.ancoatslittleitaly.com/music.htm
- ¹³ Rea, Anthony. "Ancoats, The Early Years," *Manchester's Ancoats Little Italy*: www.ancoatslittleitaly.com/page1.html
- ¹⁴ Rea, Anthony. "Italian Organ Grinders of Clerkenwell," *Manchester's Ancoats Little Italy*: www.atinaitaly.com/italians-clerkenwell
- ¹⁵ Sala, George A. "Twice Round the Clock or The Hours of the Day and Night in London" 1859: www.victorianlondon.org/publications/sala-8.htm

Happy Jimmie - Portsmouth's Little Organ-Grinder

The last of a tuneful tradition

By Coralie Poulter

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

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

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

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



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

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

With his clothes tied up in a

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

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

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

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

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

of the fortnight with his fare to Eastbourne and a letter of good conduct. But the experience left a deep impression on him, and he did not go near to Hastings again. He often told the story, however, to encourage those who were facing adversity. All through that summer, he played his way along the south coast, reaching Chichester in the autumn, and wintering there. But in the spring he must have felt the pull of the road for he struck north-west and worked his way across country to Liverpool, where he met an Irish family who persuaded him that Belfast was the place for him to be.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

from his townsfolk.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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DEAN ORGAN BUILDERS

Canon Wintle Barrel Pianos, or 'A Musical Pub-Crawl during Lock-Down'

By Kevin McElhone



Fig 1: Canon Wintle is thought to have lived from 1881 - 1959 and is shown here with his family c.1915



Fig 2: Canon Wintle is on the left, the others have not been positively identified but may have been some of his employees

In 1923 Canon Algernon Ogle Wintle became rector of Lawshall in Suffolk. He played street barrel pianos in nearby Bury St. Edmunds and became well known to shoppers in the town over the next three decades. He made at least five radio broadcasts on the B.B.C. in 1954 and 1955 [M.B.S.G.B. has copies of some of these in the Archives] which led to a succession of small instruments being sent to him for repair. Barrel pianos can be broadly divided into two types: those intended for street playing, usually hand-operated and formerly commonly known as “piano - organs”, and those instruments known as “Automatics” (i.e. automatic penny-in-the-slot self-acting pianos) intended for indoor use in public houses, tearooms etc. Canon Wintle set up The East Anglian Automatic Piano Company, registered in March 1926, to supply the latter type of instrument and to take over that side of the business of Keith, Prowse & Co. He also provided employment to many local people in the village from the mid-1920s onwards. These pianos represented a resourceful business for Canon Wintle who bought the used instruments, renovated them and re-sold or hired them out under his name.

He is recalled as a rotund, grumpy man with a workshop full of barrel pianos. Ladies of the village used to trundle them up to his house, with the pins pulled out ready for him to put in the latest tunes. In 1954 he met Her Majesty the Queen and the Queen Mother at Sandringham House. For two important articles by Dr. Peter Whitehead please see *The Music Box* Vol.10 No.8, Christmas 1982, page 366 and Vol.11, No.1 Spring 1983 page 52 for interesting details. These can be viewed on the computer disc that all members who have joined in the last 15 years should have received and now are freely available on the Society website. Please contact the web-manager if you need help finding them.

It is rather unusual for index cards / sheets of automatic self-acting penny-in-the-slot instruments which had been placed all over the country by one person / company to have survived. About twenty years ago they were acquired by Mark James, from Brian Clegg in Norfolk, who said he had another couple of boxes. These were not found before Brian died some years ago so Mark sorted them into makers' names and placed them in envelopes. He lent them to this author last year and so during 'lockdown' I decided it was time for another project ...



Fig 3: Canon Wintle at work on a barrel and a keyframe



Fig 4: At work on a keyframe



Fig 5: Name transfer affixed to instruments repaired at Lawshall

Fig 6: A grip 'test your strength' machine

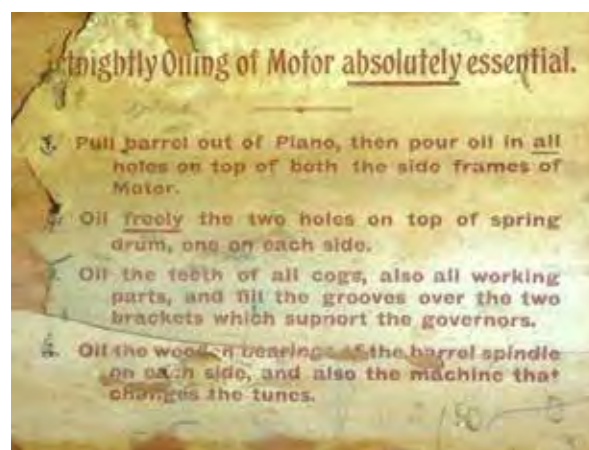


I found 1,267 index sheets/cards of which 16 were for 'Test Your Grip' amusement machines and are therefore not a clockwork barrel piano, leaving 1251 pianos. Many of the cards have incomplete information or illegible hand-writing or, indeed have been damaged thereby losing some information.

By County / Island there are, in Alphabetical order:

40	Bedfordshire	4	Manchester
11	Berkshire	1	Middlesex
21	Buckinghamshire	153	Norfolk
93	Cambridgeshire	45	Northamptonshire
27	Derbyshire	17	Nottinghamshire
12	Devon	14	Oxfordshire
94	Essex (including 1 of Essex/Suffolk in both counties)	1	Rutland
1	Gloucestershire	1	Shropshire?
2	Hampshire	17	Staffordshire
63	Hertfordshire	143	Suffolk
4	Herefordshire	20	Surrey
23	Huntingdonshire	50	Sussex
12	I.O.M./Isle of Man (via an agent)	36	Warwickshire
50	Kent	8	West Midlands (actually takes in a number of pre-1974 counties)
13	Leicestershire	9	Worcestershire
149	Lincolnshire	21	Yorkshire
1	London	118	with no county identified or unclear

Fig 7: Limited maintenance instructions



By Town / Village or the top 15, in Alphabetical order were as below:

20	Boston	11	Newmarket
21	Bury St.Edmunds	13	Norwich
14	Cambridge	26	Peterborough
10	Dover	8	Soham
14	Grantham	17	Spalding
10	Holbeach	12	Stamford
10	Kings Lynn	22	Wisbech
9	Long Sutton		

Most are large towns, Long Sutton is small. Some towns, such as Wisbech, include surrounding villages as well. The Black Swan at Peas Pottage, Sussex has seven entries, all signed by different people, it may be that they had more than just one instrument. Some landlords moved to a new public house and wrote to Canon Wintle asking for an instrument for their new location – see Wintle Letter No.3.



Fig 8: Tune card for Keith, Prowse 1797 Editor's note: These tunes which are all dances contrast markedly with those shown in Fig 9 which are popular songs.

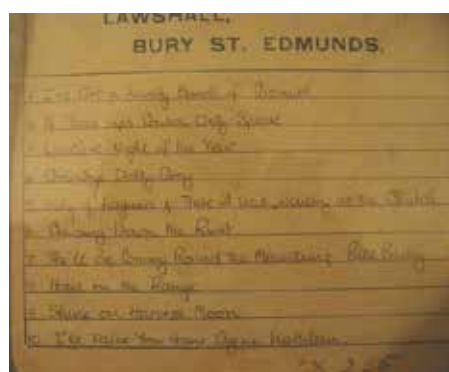


Fig 9: Tune card for Chiappa Excelsior No 255.



Fig 10: Chiappa Model Excelsior 55 note, image from Paul Baker Collection

Only 134 cards had the route / "round" number on them, the six highest number of instruments assigned to routes / rounds were:

Round No.		Quantity
28	Beds/Hunts	13
29	Suffolk	06
54	Norfolk A	07
42	Berks, Oxon, Herts	06
43	Leics	06
56	Norfolk B	08

Details of routes / rounds and collection can be found in Colin Williams' book (see below).

Purely for my own interest I sorted the file by name and found that the most common names of pubs were as below. I have included also 'name' and suffix in the count as well, this is not very accurate as some locations have two entries. The Crown and Red Lion have 41 each.

12	Angel	18	Kings Head
25	Bell / The Bell (not including Three Bells, Four Bells, Five Bells, Six Bells)	11	New Inn
		17	Plough
14	Black Horse	19	Queens Head (not including Queen this or Queen that)
11	Black Swan	20	Railway
21	Bull	41	Red Lion
22	Chequers	17	Rose and Crown
10	Cock Inn	14	Royal Oak
12	Cross Keys	25	Swan
41	Crown	29	White Horse
09	George and Dragon	20	Wheatsheaf (sometimes written as Wheat Sheaf)
15	Horse		
10	Kings Arms	16	White Hart

One landlord's name you will see is 'Mr.Binge'...

There is only one sheet with monetary amounts written on the back with no explanation, although the sum was over £4 10 0. (Four pounds and ten shillings) = over 1,080 pennies / plays.ⁱ There is no indication anywhere as to how frequently the coin boxes were emptied and shared out between The East Anglian Automatic Piano Company (EAAPC) and the landlord. The coin boxes all had locks on them with a hasp securing the box to the instrument. It is thought that they would have been emptied and counted back at Lawshall rather than by the employed men changing the barrels.

One of the types of 'automatic' on the database of cards is referred to by Wintle as a "Converted Rissone". Paul Baker has very kindly explained to me from his considerable first-hand knowledge working with barrel pianos that the Rissone instruments' design and arrangement of spring power could be potentially hazardous, especially with usage-related wear and tear as the pianos aged. If the barrel gear was worn the barrel could have a 'run' just like a cylinder musical box; indeed Paul described this happening to an instrument some years ago. In the conventional design of automatic pianos, a spring motor is often situated to the left of and underneath the tune barrel

whereas in the Rissone arrangement, the spring- motor is replaced by just a powerful main-spring which drives the ring-gear on the end of the barrel directly. Above the barrel and fitted to the inside of the case were further gears and a governor, as well as the coin escapement. This meant that the barrel ring-gear was thus an integral part of the gear-train so that the spring had to be allowed to completely run down (eight revolutions of the barrel on a full winding) before the barrel could be safely removed.

This system did have a chain drive from the spring, which allowed the winding handle to have a much higher position on the side of the case nearer to the tune selector, which thus afforded a more comfortable exercise for the customer when winding up the piano prior to inserting the coin.

To make things much safer Canon Wintle converted these instruments to use the kind of spring-motor used by the Keith, Prowse pianos, which was a self-contained unit with all gearing, the governor etc. in one piece, thereby allowing the barrel to be removed any time that the unit had finished playing the two tune revolutions and come to a stop. This was much safer for the men changing the barrels and the customers would not get a fright if there was a 'run'.

It was mentioned by the late Alec Todd who used to work at the E.A.A.P.C. that a really busy pub such as The Black Rabbit at Arundel (not in the batch of data available to this researcher) would have the coin-box emptied, and indeed the barrel changed, every five to six weeks in the summer. The takings might be as much as ten pounds which in five weeks would equate to seventy plays a day or between two to three hours being played each day. Just consider that each penny secured a double-play of a tune or two different tunes if you had the knack of changing the tune while the barrel was moving!

At its height there would have been quite an income from the large number of pianos even considering that some locations would be much quieter in terms of trade and noise, of course.

An example of barrel pinning can be seen here, but not by Canon Wintle www.youtube.com/watch?v=dHcmIcP7ouo

A useful, privately published book worth reading for much more information is *A Passion for Barrel Pianos* by Milly and Colin Williams c.2010. Moyse's Hall in Bury St.Edmunds has an E.A.A.P.C. Canon Wintle Barrel Piano permanently on display which he donated to the museum in the late 1950s.

When thanking Colin for his book he said that "anyone needing a Barrel piano or parts can always contact me by e-mail" zippy01@cwgsy.net

Some of the illustrations with this article come from a privately published set of two books about barrel pianos compiled from information in the collections of Paul Baker and Kevin McElhone. I would like to thank Paul Baker for his assistance in the preparation of this article.

ⁱ Editor's note: For overseas readers, or those born post-decimalisation, there were 240 ['old'] pennies (or 'pence') in one pound.



Fig 11: Close-up of coin box on Chiappa Excelsior No.255, suggesting it could be secured inside piano case.



Fig 14: The top pediment of the Rissone special, a rare example of a hiring agent's name other than EAAPC. (Dancer & Sons of Cardiff.)

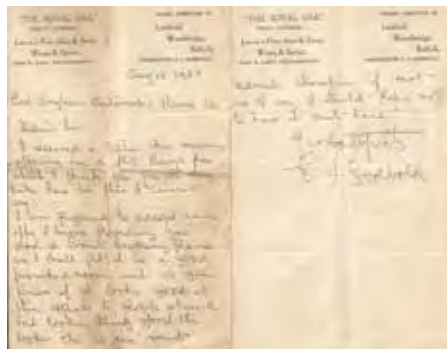


Fig 12: This new customer says 'I am prepared to accept your terms providing send a smart-looking piano as I shall put it in a good furnished room and as you know if it looks good it then appeals to people where a bad-looking thing spoils the look.... if not as I say I prefer not to have it sent here'.

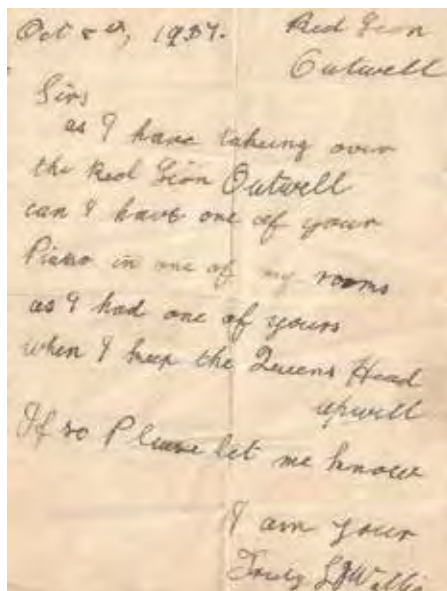


Fig 15: Example letter from 1937 of a licensee moving from one public house to another in Outwell wanting an instrument in new location; this might explain some names seen more than once in a town.

Fig 17: A Rissone Special; note the size of the very large coin-box.



Fig 13: A Keith, Prowse which, as stipulated in letter, is 'smart-looking'; supplied new to them by Gavioli.



Fig 16: Asking for 'a Penny-in-the-slot Piano in this house providing it is no expense to me. [A lot of people said this.] This is a rather quiet house but if you think worth while I will give it a trial'. (Others said for six months.)



Fig 18: Some sheets are hand-written on headed notepaper or even blank paper. They were not the earliest type: this example is from 1936. Usefully it gives all the information (unlike many incomplete entries), including the Collection route/round number.



Fig 19: Examples of postcards send to order an instrument.

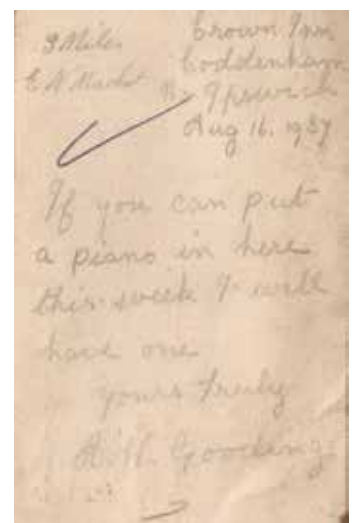


Fig 20: Reverse of card from 1937 says 'If you can put a piano in here this week I will have one'. This sounds like a lot of pressure from a new customer located 25 miles from Lawshall.

Note regarding files containing the data on Canon Wintle pianos:

There will be five files on the Society website, all in the members section, under the new (from June 2020) password, sorted into different sequences.

1. By County then Town then Name – to see the area spread of the pianos.
2. By Date then Town – you can work out some of the working days performed by staff driving around without the benefit of Motorways.
3. By Piano Name then Piano Number – Useful to see when Pianos were re-issued to new locations.
4. By Pub Name then Town – show which Locations had more than one instrument over the years, or even, sometimes, concurrently.
5. By Round or Route number then Town name – not many Round / Route numbers filled in but interesting to see how the locations were grouped for collecting the money and doing the repairs.

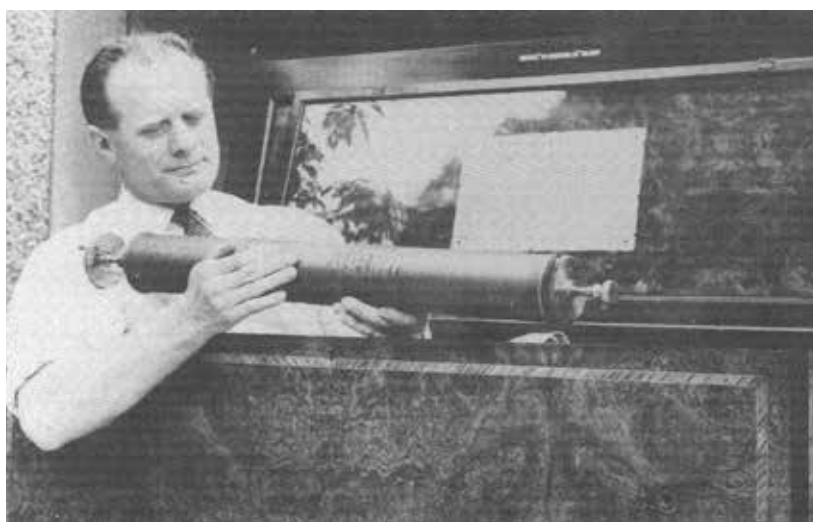
An sample of one of the files is shown overleaf on pages 282 and 283.

Old Friends No Longer With Us



Roger Booty sent this photograph for publication and says: The late Alan Wyatt, past Society President, with his 26 note WILHELM TIEDEMANN organ at the Society organ grind in Cambridge, 5th September, 1981. Anglia TV news' Owen Spencer Thomas is the reporter and his report was shown the following Monday evening. Earlier in 1981 Alan had appeared, again with his organ, on the BBC children's programme, Blue Peter. A further television connection can be found at this time as Hilary Kay, who is now frequently seen as one of the experts on the BBC's Antiques Roadshow, was then our Society meetings Secretary.

Jim Hall, long-time member of MBSGB, who passed away on 1st July, 2020. This photograph accompanied an article by him about a barrel pipe organ – although the cylinder he is holding is definitely not part of it! Published in The Music Box Vol 11, No 8, when Bob Leach was Editor, it looks as though it may be from an interchangeable orchestra box. Jim appears to be inside the massive case itself.



Date	Date R	Make	Key	Comments	Rd	%	County	Town	Now
15.01.??	??.01.15	Keith, Prowse					Beds	Ampthill	
26.05.37	37.06.26	Keith, Prowse		1598	28		Beds	Ampthill	
30.09.37	37.09.30	Keith, Prowse		1626	28		Beds	Ampthill	
12.02.37	37.02.12	Keith, Prowse		1756	28		Beds	Ampthill	
		Rissone conv					Beds	Arlesley	SG15 6TA
16.03.34	34.03.16	Keith, Prowse		1197			Beds	Aspley Guise	
		Rissone conv					Beds	Bedford	
05.10.36	36.10.05	Pasquale			28		Beds	Biggleswade	
							Beds	Dunstable	
16.07.??	??.07.16	RS	40				Beds	Dunstable	
							Beds	Dunstable	
							Beds	Gamblingay	
03.04.??	??.04.03	Exc					Beds	Hinlow	
01.12.36	36.12.01	Keith, Prowse		1626	28		Beds	Hitchin	
16.12.35	35.12.16	Pasquale					Beds	Kempston	
05.10.36	36.10.05	Keith, Prowse		1539	28		Beds	Kempston ?	
01.05.35	35.05.01	Keith, Prowse		1413			Beds	Leighton Buzzard	
		Pasquale					Beds	Leighton Buzzard	
							Beds	Leighton Buzzard	
							Beds	Leighton Buzzard	
??.08.??	??.08.??	Keith, Prowse		1127	45		Beds	Little Staughton	
		Rissone Cassey					Beds	Luton	
13.11.??	??.11.13	RS	40				Beds	Luton	
		RS	40				Beds	Luton	
		Keith, Prowse					Beds	Luton	
		Grip					Beds	Luton	
		Exc [E,X,] ?					Beds	Potton	
18.02.30	30.02.18	Keith, Prowse					Beds	Ridgemont	
21.06.??	??.06.21	Grip Machine					Beds	Sandy	
							Beds	Sandy	
		Exc					Beds	Sandy	
01.12.36	36.12.01	Keith, Prowse		1509	28		Beds	Sharnbrook	
01.12.36	36.12.01	Keith, Prowse		1539	28		Beds	Shefford	
13.11.??	??.11.13	Keith, Prowse					Beds	Stotfold	
17.03.??	??.03.17	Keith, Prowse					Beds	Stotfold M Arlesley	
22.12.36	36.12.22	Keith, Prowse		1539	28		Beds	Tingrith	
20.04.??	??.04.20	RS	40				Beds	Toddington	
15.01.??	??.01.15	Keith, Prowse					Beds	Woburn	
							Beds	Luton	
11.02.30	30.02.11	Rissone conv					Beds	Woburn	
01.12.??	??.12.01	Keith, Prowse		1080	48		Berks	Maidenhead	
		Keith, Prowse		In 700			Berks	Maidenhead	
27.10.??	??.10.27	Keith, Prowse					Berks	Newbury	
17.08.??	??.08.17	Keith, Prowse					Berks	Newbury	
17.08.??	??.08.17	Keith, Prowse					Berks	Newbury	
		Keith, Prowse		In 840			Berks	Reading	
01.05.??	??.05.01	Keith, Prowse					Berks	Reading	
14.04.??	??.04.14	Keith, Prowse		812			Berks	Reading	
		Keith, Prowse		In 670			Berks	Wokingham	
		Keith, Prowse		694			Berks	Wokingham	
22.12.36	36.12.22	Keith, Prowse		1564	42		Berks ?	Henley / Hurley	
		RS	48				Bucks	Aylesbury	
13.11.??	??.11.13	RS	40				Bucks	Aylesbury	
27.11.??	??.11.27	Keith, Prowse					Bucks	Aylesbury	
06.05.36	36.05.06	Keith, Prowse		1486	33		Bucks	Aylesbury	

Pub Name	Location	No.	No.	Signed	Witness / Comments / from top of page
Albion Inn				G.Goodge	
Kings Arms Hotel		832	144	H.B.Wilmotz ??	
The Albion		831	143	E.Goodys	
The Old Sun			143	G.F.Reed	
The White Horse				J.Auldich ??	
The Anchor				Florence E.Brettell	
The Lord John				L.Lewberry ?	
Rose Inn		790	136	Henry Foster	Pasq 453 at top of page
Cross Keys	Totternhoe			Mrs.Frances Turner	
Plume of Feathers				W.Willis	
Red Lion	Studham, near			Constance Allen	
Rose and Crown				W.L.Cracknell	
The Five Bells				C.G.Gilbert	Top Spec. Bott AB2 Pad XT6. [meaning?]
The White Horse	Deamans near (Deadmans)?	799	125	F.Fifchreest ? [Gilcreest ?]	
Smiths Arms	Morgetts ??			W.Wildman	Pasq 480 Fresh Piano
The Bedford Arms		789	135	H.P.Shirley ?? Unclear	P/789 F/135
The Black Horse				Bessie Down / Dawn	No.2 [second Piano ?]
The Black Horse				William James Down	Pasq. 1/1 due to Fred !
The Stag				M.Elliott	
The Stag				Annie E.Reanford ??	
Shoulder of Mutton				E.Manning	
?	61 Duke Street			A.Puddelphat ??	
Bedford Arms	Stuart Street			Elizabeth Norris	
Bedford Arms	Stuart Street			George Gomm	NEW Tenant. [un-dated]
Chequers	112 Park Street			C.Crearey ?	
Lilly Arms	Lilly, near			R.[?] M.Bullen	
Red Lion			 Yarks ?? Illegible	
White Hart				J.Corbett	
The Chequers	Little Gransden			W.G.Wright	
The Chequers Inn	Little Gransden			William George Wright	
The Cross ? Crop ?	Beeston near			W.Scutchings	
Railway Hotel		796	134	Albert Kennedy	
White Swan		798	129	Daisy ? Rockall ?	
The Coach and Horses				J.B.Saggers	
Black Lion				W.J. [?] Bigg	
The Swan	Bedford Road	800	141	W.Pearce	
Griffin				E.S.Smith	R33 [route ??]
Black Horse				F.Hall	
Four Horse Shoes	20 ?? Bank Street			F.Meh.... ?? Illegible	
The Bell Inn				Howard Ross	
The Bear Head				C.L.Ducksbury	
The Queens Arms				J.Roberts	J.W.Paget ?
Bacon Arms	10 Oxford Street			G. [?] W.Murton	
The Old Dog				J.H.Smith	Shaw. 'Plymouth' a top of page ?
The White House Hotel	255 Plymouth at top page				
Black Horse				G.F.Hainge ?	
Britannia Tavern	50 Caversham Road			John Hadley Dowell ??	
The Brewery Tap	Broad Street			J.Lawrence	
The Pin and Bowl ?				E.C.Wennis ??	
The Wheatsheaf				H.Chown	
Ye Old Bell	Reading Road	804	318	J.Williams	
Bricklayers Arms				Harold A.Ellis	
Greyhound Hotel				C.W.Parkinson	No.2 [does this mean a second piano ?]
Horse and Jockey				J.A.Dixon	
Start	Burton / Bierton ?	755	173	W.Worley	

Book Review: *The Mortier Story*

published by Kring van Draaiorgelvrienden, 2019

This book was published to commemorate the 65th anniversary of the Kring van Draaiorgelvrienden in 2019, an interesting choice of subject as the KVD is a Dutch organisation, and Theophile Mortier was Belgian. But as Tom Meijer explains in his Foreword, it is the culmination of several attempts to gather together in one place the vast amount of research material which had been accumulated by a number of well-intentioned individuals over the years. 'The documented history of individual Mortier organs and orchestrions as set down by Roger Duerinck and Jack Jacobs, has been an essential contribution to this book.' From the 1960s, Duerinck, a Belgian dance organ enthusiast had been amassing a large amount of material which he recorded on index cards. Anyone who has seen the original 'hard copy' of the A D Cunliffe Cylinder Musical Box Register will be familiar with this method. The material has been sourced from original documents, personal accounts, a welter of contemporary ephemera and images supplied by past and current owners.

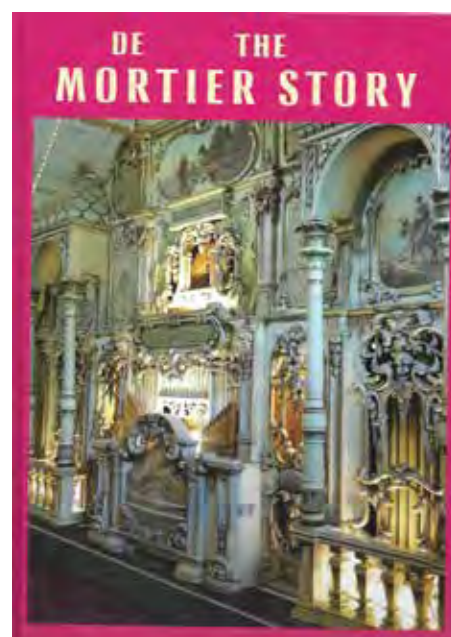
A hefty tome weighing 2.31kg (fractionally over 5lbs) and measuring 21.5 by 30 cm (8 ½ " by just shy of 12"), it contains 440 pages presented in Dutch with an adjacent English translation - a sensible decision by the publishers making it accessible to a much wider readership. Meijer compiled the book and is quick to credit the several of his expert colleagues who were well-qualified to assist him. The English translation was rendered by Björn Isebaert, Andrew Pilmer and Russell Wattam. The layout is easy to follow and easy on the eye, and the producers have

not stinted on the quality of the paper. (It was printed in Belgium.)

After an Introduction setting the scene by describing the dance hall/dance tent culture of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, the book follows a predictable, chronological order, with a brief family history of Theophile Mortier and the start of his business activities. This is followed by a section focusing on the organs built during the early years, before the firm's history resumes, again followed by a section detailing the organs from the corresponding era. As you can imagine, illustrations abound. It is unfortunate that due to the age of the subject itself, these beautiful creations are only rendered in monochrome; one can only imagine the psychedelic effect a colour version would have generated!

The book is fairly consistent with its established pattern, although we are only just over half-way through by the time of the demise of the Mortier brand in 1952. Slightly surprisingly, we then backtrack and examine the output of orchestrions, which Mortier considered a separate branch of the business – the two others were organ building and organ repairs. The final chapters cast light on the Mortier family, description of the factory and its development over the years, staff, wood carvers and façade painters, arrangers and music. It concludes with a list of organ and orchestrion serial numbers (not all were known), photo credits and designs for fronts of dance organs and orchestrions.

This cannot quite be described as 'everything you always wanted to know about Mortier' as although it is extremely comprehensive, it is acknowledged that not every detail one would wish to know was documented,



and more importantly, survived. It is somewhat miraculous that the Mortier firm managed to keep going through not one but two World Wars, despite initial hostile action from an aggressive Germany. In another respect it represents a catalogue of Mortier's prolific output, each recorded instrument with its own history. Whoever was responsible for authoring the text should be congratulated on his ability to conjure up the prevailing atmosphere of the times of the half-century or so that this story spans. Despite the lack of colour, it is not hard to imagine the gaiety and excitement these - huge machines and their equally huge volume – inspired. Equally moving is the tragic end of so many of them, whilst the sense of impending doom as the firm struggles through the 1920s and into the 1930s is well conveyed.

If you want to learn more, copies can be obtained by contacting Andrew Pilmer, via the website, www.acpilmer.com. Be warned – once you start to 'flick through' the pages, you will soon find yourself engrossed.

The Confused World of the Mechanical Organ

by Arthur W. J. G. Ord-Hume

The student of music, mechanical and otherwise, quickly comes to the regrettable conclusion that he has met his match as regards terminology when it comes to the organ for there is surely no musical instrument so given to confusion and misunderstanding. Throughout musical history, people have talked glibly of 'the organ' without stipulating whether it is a four-manual pipe instrument in a cathedral, a compact suction harmonium in a domestic drawing room, or pressure American reed organ in the parlour.

To make matters worse, others talk of 'barrel-organ' when they mean street piano. And, in middle ages literature, 'the roar of the organ' could have referred to just about anything, even men blowing animal horns.

We make the early discovery that the term 'musical box' is confusing and even our American cousins cast acid into the water by using the term 'music box' which, far from being musical, relates merely to a container for music and not a maker of music. This is preparation for the infinitely worse that lies ahead when we consider the organ.

No, the term 'organ' is one that demands definition by way of further explanation. And, just in case that sounds a bit basic,

then have a look at Fig. 1 and ponder on the many types of instrument that the word might refer to. The water-driven hydraulic organ, such as the one in the Quirinale Palace, Rome, the restoration of which I was involved in some years back, calls for a knowledge and awareness of the old science and art of using flowing water to provide compressed air for blowing pipes, while the mechanical instrument found in Central European musical automata of the late 16th century demands a delicacy of adjustment with pipework voiced at pressures below one-inch water-gauge.

And when we somewhat carelessly use the terms 'clockwork organ' and 'musical clock' we tread on ice so thin that total submersion cannot be more than an iota away! How often have we heard that Mozart wrote those rather nice pieces of music K.594, K.608 and K.616 for musical clock! It comes as something of a surprise to learn that, in fact, he wrote them for an instrument called the *Flötenuhr*. This is readily and popularly translated as 'flute-playing clock' and only really goes to highlight the fact that the German language has no direct distinction between 'clock', meaning a device to indicate the passage of time, and 'clockwork' meaning

a device for regulating the power of a descending weight (kinetic energy) or a tensioned spring.

The simple fact is that while the English language has a clear distinction between the release of kinetic energy through a gear train and escapement or fly, and a time-indicating instrument, that distinction is not found in German and one must rely on contextual interpretation to understand precisely what is being described. Throughout musical history, that has not been appreciated.

There are, in fact, two types of mechanical pipe organ associated with clockwork. The type for which Mozart composed his three pieces and Beethoven his five was a pipe organ driven by a clockwork mechanism. The presence of a timepiece would have been useful but incidental. The organ-playing musical clock was a rare compound novelty made by a few specialist makers. Where such an amalgamation was required, it was common practice for the organ-builder to team up with a clock-maker to produce the timepiece. There is no recorded history of any supremely talented artisan who excelled in both organ-building and clock-making!

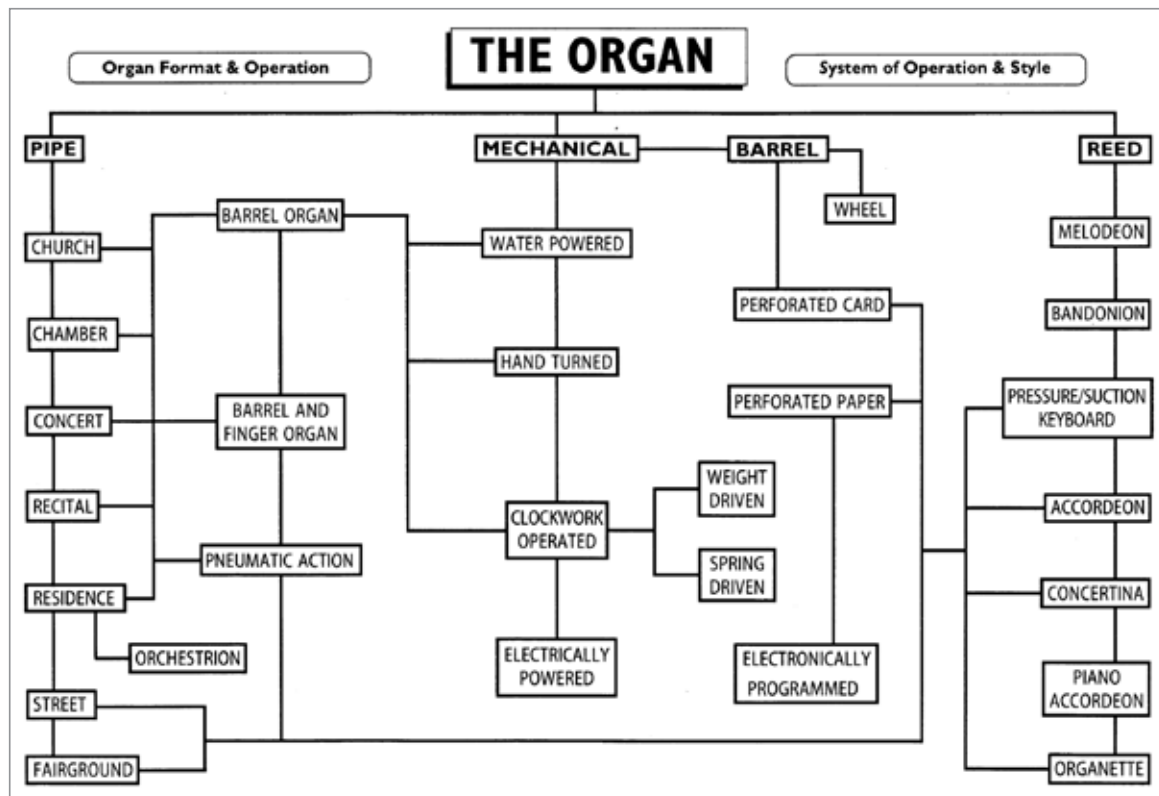


Fig 1: The instrument we all know as the Organ comes in various types and styles as shown here.

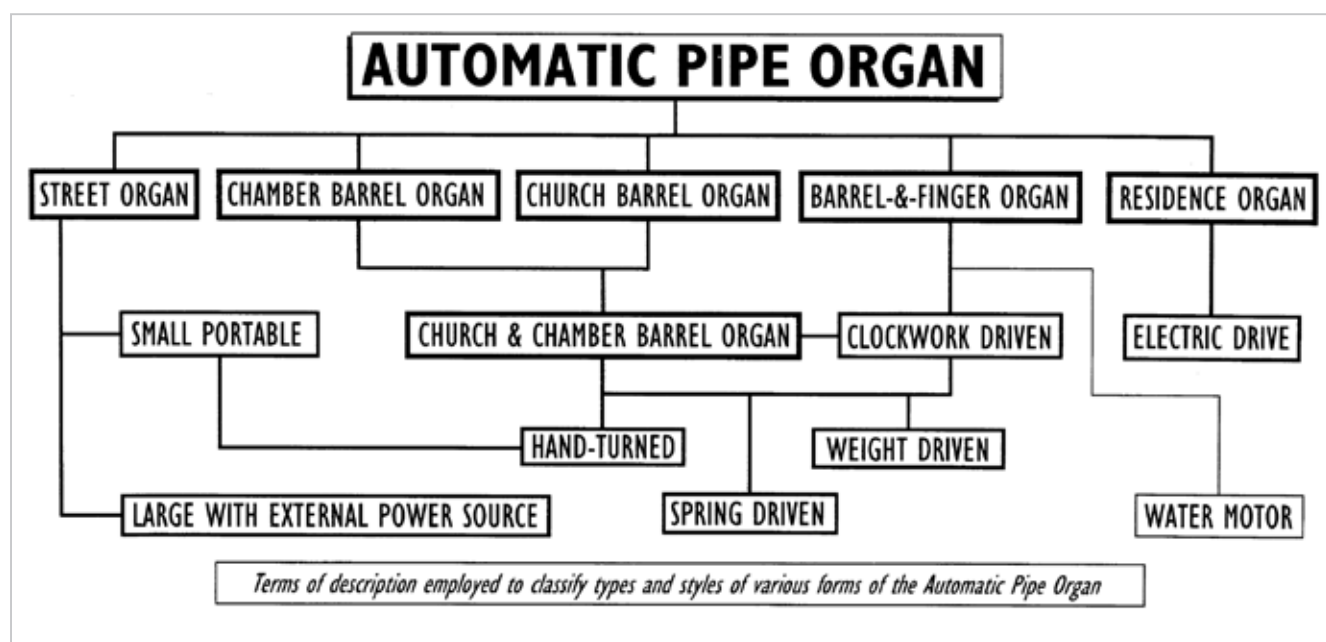


Fig 2: Self-playing or automatic organs come in their own variety of forms, the commonest of which are set out here.

The organ-playing musical clock was thus a combined effort between an established organ-builder – and some specialised in this type of bespoke work such as Joseph Beloudy of North London – and a maker of time-indicating clocks. In the case of the highly specialised musical clocks created by makers such as George Pyke, Charles Clay and one or two others, this partnership often extended further to include other out-workers such as specialist case-makers, decorative brass makers such as the artist Zoffany, and specialist dial-painters.

If we investigate the horological industry of London in the 17th and 18th centuries, we find that this type of co-operation was far from uncommon. And one of the great yet largely unknown organ-builders of the 19th century was Joseph Beloudy, mentioned earlier. His work in producing the instruments for all manner of musical automata, not just timepieces but works such as the great Peacock and Pagoda automaton attributed to James Cox is a case in point. He is also known to have made mechanical organs for Charles Clay, Joseph Merlin and many others. In fact, his work has also been found in mechanical organs signed by many other makers of organs and of musical automata and timepieces.

Joseph Haydn composed 32 pieces of music for clockwork organ. One of the instruments for which he wrote was also a timepiece and it is probably the well-known and long-term display of this instrument, which resembles a handsome two-train mantle-clock, which has misled some generations that have followed. Indeed, when I produced my

book on these instruments and their music (Joseph Haydn & The Mechanical Organ, Cardiff University Press, 1982), I managed to locate the other two then-known clockwork organs for which he wrote and then found a fourth and hitherto forgotten instrument, it was interesting to find that two were in large cabinets surmounted by a small, detached timepiece.

My late friend and colleague, the American-born Howard Chandler Robbins-Landon (1926-2009), was a renowned Haydn scholar and he avowed there were only three such *Flötenuhr* created by the talented librarian Pater Primitivus Niemecz and pinned with music under the guidance of Joseph Haydn under the tacit sponsorship of Prince Nicholas II of Esterházy. In fact, I managed to discover not just one but two more instruments by this illustrious duo. Sadly this was after the completion of not just my own book but of *The New Grove Dictionary of Music & Musicians* of which I was on the editorial committee charged with describing the Haydn clockwork organs.

The world we have entered here is that of the automatic pipe organ. Fig. 2 explains the various types and this goes back to the age before mass entertainment when music was a rare commodity. The ordinary person very seldom had the opportunity to hear music other than that sung in public houses, the church or performed by the annual travelling showmen who saw music as an enticement for the visiting community.

This explains why, from earliest times, the fairground enjoyed a rich popularity

with all classes of people, for those early showmen understood the attraction of melody to the ordinary person. They capitalised on this by employing bands of musicians who played all types of music. This was at a time before the rise in popularity and consequent availability of the fairground organ. At a time when there was no differentiation between classical and popular music or the church hymn and the street performer, inventive musical harmony was a great leveller.

Not, one has to admit, that church music was always all that it seemed. The pipe organ was a luxury at one time and many churches relied on bands of musicians of varying talent and type. And those that had organs did not always have anybody to play them. For some the word ‘organist’ was viewed as an occupation which, like any other unskilled work, one learned on the job and we find advertisements which called for somebody to fill the position of organist with the plaintive proviso ‘must have a knowledge of music’.

Organ-builders understood that not everybody could operate their instruments and that trying to sell an instrument to a church that did not have anybody to play it was a recipe for financial disaster. It was for this reason that the church barrel organ was invented. And, for those establishments where the organist was frail, unreliable or, as oft the case, peripatetic, the organ-makers created the barrel-and-finger organ. This usefully combined the automatic facility of the barrel mechanism with the keyboard access for a manual player.

In fact, the barrel-and-finger instruments were seen by church wardens as offering the best of both worlds. These combination organs reached the peak of their popularity from about 1820 right up to the 1880s. If the real organist could only attend every third week, the church could still have its organ music at each Sunday's service without fail – so long as there was somebody with the skill to turn the handle and, perhaps, change the stops a few times!

Barrel-and-finger instrument grew ever more adventurous in their design. J W Walker, for example, created the self-changing barrel mechanism in which three pinned wooden barrels were mounted in a large frame that could be rotated by a lever which brought another barrel into play. Each barrel could perform up to twelve hymn tunes. With three barrels, the repertoire was elevated to 36 – and that sort of repertoire could keep a church going for some while.

There was one useful if unplanned advantage of these instruments. The keyboard action was quite independent of the mechanical one. The person who operated the barrel mechanism stood behind the organ while the manual performer sat, as expected in the front. A human keyboard-player could therefore, if so moved, accompany the barrel arrangement... I know, for I kept one of these instruments for many years: it is now to be seen and enjoyed in Utrecht's National Museum.

But to return to the availability of domestic music, for the wealthy, there was always the attraction of the automatic machine that would play familiar melodies. This is where clockmakers enthusiastically embraced an extension of their horological talents to embrace the bell-playing mechanisms of musical clocks. This work was to call for great clockmaking skills and, while many of the craftsmen understood music, most left the pricking of their brass or wooden musical cylinders to specialists who were musically savvy.

The sound of the clock that operated a carillon of bells was all very well, but there was a limit to the instrument's ability and that was due to a mixture of its carrying power and sustained resonance. A few makers cured the latter with complex damper systems, but still it had to be said that a room full of guests would be hard-pressed to hear 'Rule Britannia' performed by a softly-playing carillon-equipped clock. A louder instrument was needed – and the organ showed every sign of fulfilling that requirement.

There was only one problem. Few clockmakers knew anything about organ-building and pneumatics. Enter the jobbing organ-builder who would manufacture an instrument exactly to the specification raised by the clock-maker. It was his name that appeared on the dial of the clock, leaving the organ-builder with the opportunity to hide his name inside

the organ chest – as, fortunately, most of them did.

Organ-playing clocks attained their highest perfection in Germany where Frederick the Great established the Berlin school of mechanical organ-making. Makers from this facility attained the very highest quality of organ-building and associated musicality. Men such as Christian Möllinger (fl.1754-1826) and Christian Ernst Kleemeyer (fl.1766-1805) set standards that are highly prized today. Almost contemporary was the Neuweid region that produced many makers who all practised a similar style. Notable here was the works of Röntgen & Kintzing who were renowned for their highest-quality clock and cabinet-making. And, with them, musicwork which elevated the art to the utmost echelon.

To listen to the work of these makers is to hear mechanical music at its highest level of perfection. While the Italians were masters at the development of harmonic variations of the popular songs on their street pianos, this was a different peak of excellence. In the world of classical music, these were wholly-new standards of perfection.

The old German Empire produced its retinue of the highest-quality makers of musical clocks and clockwork organs including Peter Bofenchen whose work extended from Hanover into Paris. And the French capital was the home of the most remarkable and talented of the Gallic makers – the family Davrainville.

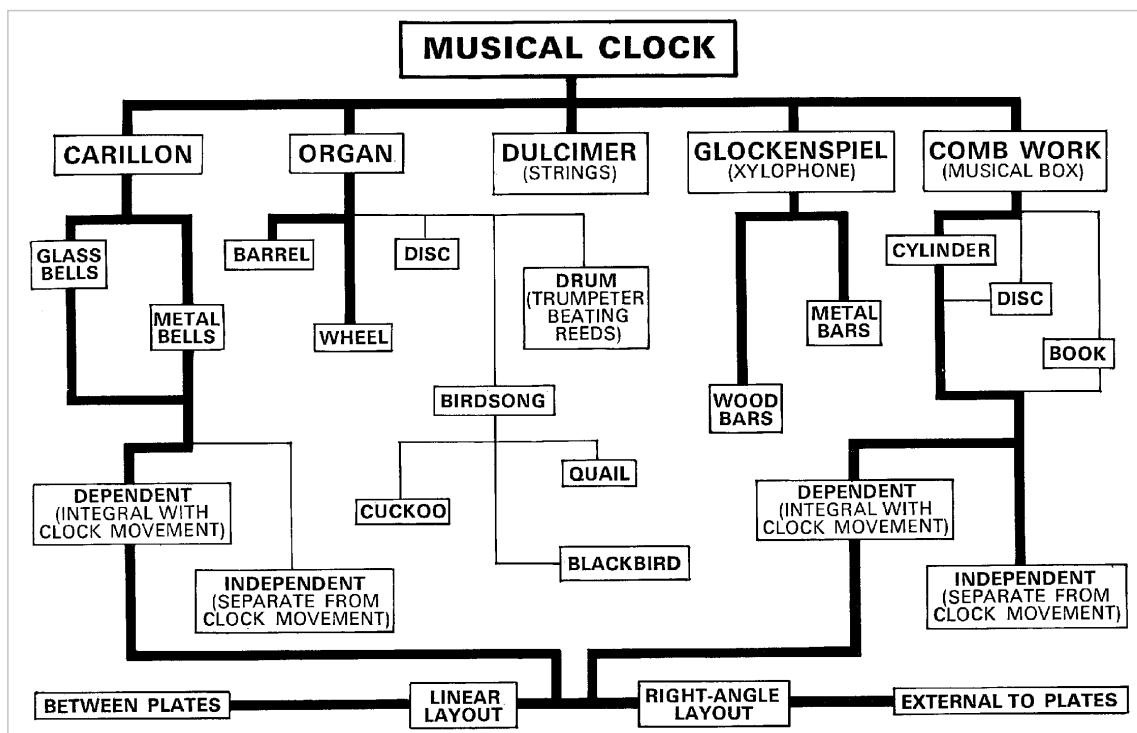


Fig 3: The term 'musical clock' is another where the description requires refinement.



Fig 4

As the melding of clock-making, clockwork and organ-building developed, so evolved the 'compound' instrument. Usually this involved the combination of a pipe-organ, itself possessed of two registers (a pair of open and stopped ranks, sometimes all-wood, sometimes with the open rank being of metal) and a strung wood-framed dulcimer played with hammers in an action similar to that of a piano.

There were some interesting varieties. The Dutch master organ-builder Diederich Nicolaus Winkel (1777-1826), made a table-organ that played eight melodies on a two-rank pipe organ and a 12-bell carillon of saucer-shaped bells each with its own damper. He also made a remarkable clockwork organ that is, like the instrument just mentioned, now in the Museum Speelklok, Utrecht. With a repertoire that includes a cylinder devoted to Mozart, this organ has only one wheel, every operation of the organ, including bellows pumping, being derived by levers and cams, the whole driven by one very large weight. This organ is housed in a plain and unobtrusive cabinet that resembles a common or garden wardrobe.

Fig 4: The most outstanding exponents of musical clockmaking to emerge from the Berlin school were the makers Christian Kleemeyer and Christian Möllinger. A master in the craft of organ-building, creator of exquisite musical arrangements, Möllinger's pieces were supremely elegant examples of the late 18th century neo-classicism although his fondness for using time-globes with a rotating chapter ring made actual time-telling a ponderous challenge. For the glory of his musical work, however, this was but a small price to play. Built in the late 1780s, this weight-driven clockwork organ plays Mozart's K.598. The time, incidentally, is indicated by the rotating ring at the top of the case – if you can see it!

Fig 5: From a famed automaton display piece called 'The Orange Tree', this clockwork organ by the Parisian maker of musical automata Alexandre-François Debain comprises just one rank of all-metal pipes arranged very compactly to fit inside the base of the piece.



Fig 5

Among those organ-builders who chose to specialise in the clockwork instruments were men who evolved individual and unique styles of organ construction. Among these was Per Strand (1756-1826) of Stockholm who became the Swedish Royal organ-builder. He teamed up with master clockmaker Gustav Er Andersson who developed a style of timepiece which included the time-release mechanism for Strand's organ. This intricate interface was made by a maker called Wassberg.

Strand's organ comprised a narrow, double windchest having superimposed airways and pallets that allowed his ranks of pipes to be planted both on top and underneath the central chest. The whole

organ was built into a slender frame or stand which supported the whole in its case. At the bottom was the wind department.

A special feature of the musical clocks that were the result of the partnership between Andersson and Strand was a means of holding the bellows reservoir up, meaning full of air, at the end of each tune. This meant that each time the organ was set into motion to play a melody, the clockwork did not have to fight the combination of start-up friction plus the resistance of the bellows, for the bellows was already full and the music could start at once at the correct tempo with a full air reservoir.

Fig 6: The organ-playing musical clocks of Stockholm maker Per Strand are characterised by having pipework that is all-wood, but extremely narrow in physical width by the simple expedient of arranging the pipes both above and below the wind-chest. The timepiece, made by Gustav Er Andersson, is seen in the centre.

Fig 7: John Hallifax of Fleet Street, London, made this spectacular musical clock with organ-mechanism in about 1745-1750. Standing ten feet high it has a single eight-tune barrel: originally there would have been more stored in the base of the cabinet but these are now lost. Housed in an ebonised case decorated with wheel-engraved mirrored glass plates, the whole case is devoted to the enhancement of its location and the figure in the temple-like structure at the top strikes the hour on her bell after the music has played. The second chapter ring beneath the clock dial displays the day of the month. The music played comprises popular tunes that are inventively arranged.

Fig 8: A stunning musical clock made in Berlin by Christian Ernst Kleemeyer who was working between 1766 and 1805. The repertoire of 12 barrels plays a variety of pieces by Ignace Joseph Pleyel and the Austrian composer, Carl Ditters von Dittersdorf. This instrument illustrates the pinnacle of the musical clock industry's production. From the collection of Walter Behrendt of Kandel, Germersheim, Rhineland-Palatinate.



Fig 6

Mechanical organs normally comprised three or four registers – occasionally five, rarely more. The large orchestrion organs manufactured in Germany by makers such as Welte, Imhof & Mukle and others were different and were small concert organs in their own rights that were perfectly adept at automatic register-changing and achieving many of the effects that the human organist seeks in an instrument.

While the era of the roll-playing pneumatic-action organ made the matter of registration and stop-changing a simple matter of opening and closing a pneumatic valve, some of the mechanical actions of the 18th and early 19th century were both very clever and effective. 'T'-shaped levers in the keyframe operated by special barrel pins were one method but it fell to John Flight of London organ-makers Flight & Robson to invent the most subtle single-acting stop-selection key in 1820. Using a simple latch system set in motion of a strip spring, Flight only needed one barrel pin to select a register 'on' or 'off'. This was pioneered on the remarkable barrel-and-finger recital organ they created – the Apollonicon.

But there were other methods of using stops. Mention has already been made of the Dutch maker Winkel. He managed to make a virtue out of the very thing any human organist worth his salt would not



Fig 7



Fig 8

tolerate – the changing of registration in mid-chord! Winkel realised that unison stops could add volume to a note or a chord without the complexity of a swell-box and so, on some of the instruments attributed to his workshop, we have the almost heretical feature of registration changing in the middle of a musical passage. The manner in which this is done, however, at once puts one's mind at rest as we realise that we are in the presence of somebody who was a mechanical musical genius! Winkel also understood that in a sustained chord, the brief introduction of a second stop created an almost orchestral effect that no human organist could easily achieve.

From the foregoing summary, it may be appreciated that the subject of mechanical organs and their individual approach to musical performance is a complex one. In this connection it is important to make mention of one organ-builder who took his craft to a distinctively different level. Largely he was that unsung genius of the 18th century, Joseph Beloudy, the subject of an article in *The Music Box* Vol.8 Number 6, Summer 2018, pp.217-222.

Throughout its years of evolution the automatic organ became ever closer in performance to that ultimate goal – equality with the human organist.

This goal was undoubtedly reached by the opening decades of the 20th century. The First World War was to be accused by historians of just about everything but, as far as this writer is concerned, it served to put two decades of ever-increasing braking force on our quest for perfection in the arts.

As the Duo-Art reproducing piano action was applied to the pipe organ so the market for this form of player instrument declined. Player pianos were probably the last automatic musical instruments to be retailed in the normal way while musical boxes had long ceased to be musical interpreters and were now merely novelty souvenirs. The 1930s saw the expansion of wireless and the gramophone not to mention 'talking pictures' in the cinemas. The outcome was a collapse of the market that was to begin with the start of the Second World War. By the end of that conflict, mechanical musical had long been forgotten.

It is a curious quirk of social development that the moment perfection is achieved in an area of achievement, interests wane. Aeolian in London made several astounding reproducing organs in as late as 1935. One was installed in a house in Primrose Hill, North London. The owner

gave several invitation concerts on this remarkable instrument. In the world of the classic pipe organ, however, Aeolian's work was not highly regarded, the tonality being dismissed as weak in foundation.

It is true that Aeolians preferred metal pipes to the traditional, rich-sounding wooden diapasons of the European organs, but in all other respects the organs were mechanical marvels. Today they are forgotten, the Primrose Hill instrument destroyed along with the house by developers who have covered that part of once exclusive residential London with blocks of flats.

The confused world of the pipe organ now exists entirely in the world of the historian and, possibly, the collector. For the rest of us, largely inured to the world of digital performances, computerised players and chips of the type that eschew any association with vinegar, sub-divisions of the organ and its music savour of the quirks of earlier time, old age, a past world that nobody wants to remember – or can, even.

But if you are intrigued by the past, by the rich world of history and endeavour, then it's all worthwhile remembering!

Suggested Further Reading:

Ord-Hume, Arthur W J G: *Barrel Organ*, George Allen & Unwin, London, 1975

- .. *Defining a Musical Clock*, *The Music Box*, Vol 9, No 8, 1980
- .. *Joseph Haydn and the Mechanical Organ*, Cardiff University Press, 1982
- .. 'Charles Clay's Musical Clocks', article in *Music & Automata*, Vol 2 No 6, October 1985
- .. 'Mozart's Mechanical Music', article in *Music Automata*, Vol 4, No 16, March, 1992
- .. *The Musical Clock*, Mayfield Books, Derbyshire, 1995
- .. *Repairing Musical Boxes & Musical Clocks*, Mayfield Books, Derbyshire, 1997 2.ed 2005
- .. *Automatic Organs*, Schiffer, Atglen, USA, 2007
- .. 'Joseph Beloudy', article in *The Music Box* Vol 28 No 6, Summer 2018, pp.217-222

Author's Note:

This article is based on and adapted from a paper presented by the present author to *Organist's Review* and published in that specialist journal's September, 2019, edition.

Arthur W J G Ord-Hume



Fig 9: Charles Clay was a master builder of organ-playing mechanisms, some in conjunction with a timepiece, others not. Through his close friendship with Handel he managed to persuade him to produce number of pieces for various organ-playing mechanisms that he made. Here is a massive weight-driven clockwork instrument having a 20-note organ playing on three selectable registers of all-wood pipes comprising 8ft stopped diapason, shaded principal (4ft) and stopped fifteenth. The entire repertoire is by Handel. Picture by gracious permission of Her Majesty the Queen.

*Photograph of the
Imhof & Mukle
instrument which
prompted the Editor to
commission the article
(see facing page), seen here
undergoing restoration
in the workshop of
Goetze & Gwynn.*



A 'Family Affair': the Intriguing Tale of an Imhof & Mukle Flute Organ

by Henry Bennett

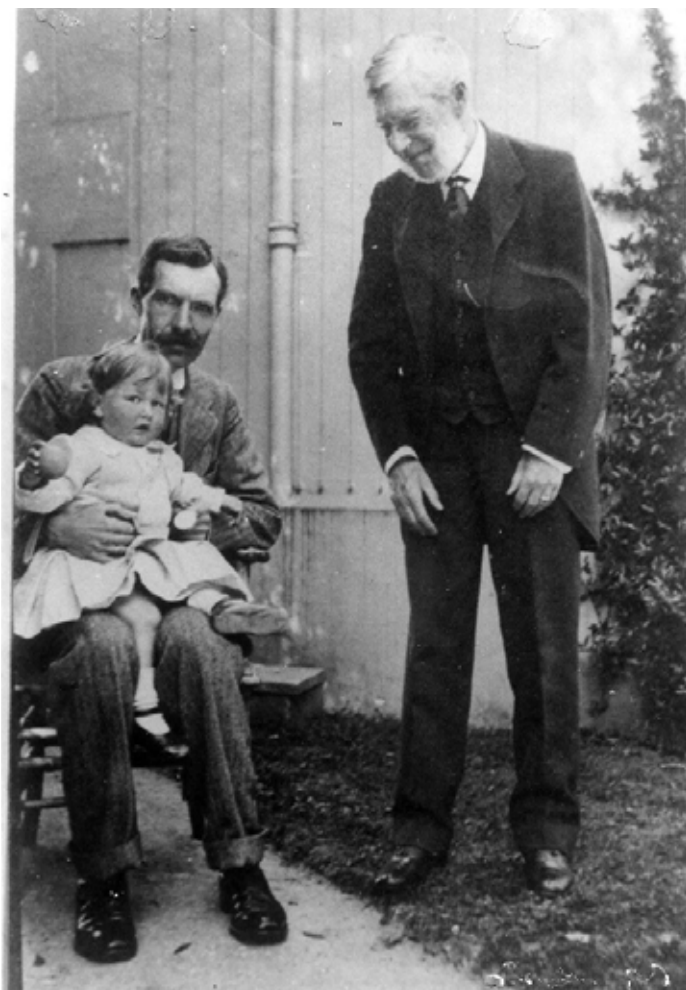


Fig 1: Photograph taken in about 1910 of three generations in the story, the author's great-grandfather Thomas Bazley who bought the instrument, his son Gardner who had it converted, and his son (the author's uncle Thomas) who allowed Henry to take it over.

It was a rainy afternoon in the autumn of 1963 when, as a bored teenager, I accompanied my mother to collect something she remembered from her childhood home. We drove into a dark wood near the village of Eastleach in the Cotswolds that intrigued me as it was known as Macaroni Wood. I was further intrigued when we came to a rectangular clearing deep in the wood and a gloomy looking Nissen Hut left over from a secret Second World War camp. My mother produced a key and inside was a veritable Aladdin's cave of stuffy Victorian artefacts which had been hastily removed from nearby Hatherop Castle when it was requisitioned for wartime use by the military. Ignoring chandeliers and stuffed animal trophies galore, my eyes lit on a couple of wooden cases on the floor, one

bulging with iron wheels and levers, the other stacked with strange looking wooden organ pipes. I was learning to play the organ at school and, typical for a boy, had become fascinated by their complicated mechanisms. But what on earth was this? All carefully packed up, but the pipes were not normal pipes and I could see a mass of lead tubing but no keyboard. "Oh, that's the old Flute Organ" said my mother casually and continued rummaging around. But on the way home I quizzed her endlessly and begged to have another look. Thinking back, it reminds me now of Tutankhamun's Tomb! We lived on a farm and had a large outhouse where we boys spent our days with games and gadgets. A plan rapidly developed in my head to approach the relevant uncle and my long-suffering parents and persuade them all that I was just the one to rescue the instrument, whatever it might turn out to be. I have no memory of who helped, for help was certainly needed, but a trailer was found and in due course an extremely heavy object found its way to our outhouse.

For a period of at least two years I was left entirely to myself on the project. I knew nothing myself and obviously my family knew even less, but they listened to my daily frustrations with great patience and helped where they could. At first it was just a matter of careful dismantling and observation. Then gradual replacement of worn materials, but looking back on my youth and the marked isolation of our life on the farm, I have no idea how I was able to obtain leather of the right grade or master the art of mixing hot animal glue, though miraculously we already had the proper cast iron glue pot and we came to love the smell of the glue. The main feeder bellows were simply a matter of copying what was done before. There were three pairs of these, two pairs to supply the wind for the pipes and the third pair working in opposite mode to provide a vacuum for the playing mechanism. But that mechanism was far more delicate, a three stage process where each note is triggered by a row of tiny needles popping up through holes punched in the paper music roll. These needles let air into two rows of "puffers", about the size of a matchbox and lined with very thin leather. They in turn are connected to larger bellows, the size of fish fingers, which collapse under vacuum, and those are the fingers which play the notes. In theory - of course! I do remember the endless persistence and some major setbacks. How, for instance, to cover the

little “puffers” which required some extremely thin and sensitive material. My mother “came up trumps” – she had a whole drawer full of ladies’ white kid gloves, a relic from the halcyon days of grand dinner parties and dances in the house where the organ used to play. She allowed me to cut them all up into 66 small squares and glue them in place. At last everything was back in place for the great test, the first sounds in 50 years and I pressed the button – but absolutely nothing – complete silence! That got me talking to a wider circle and I happened on an organ builder who sent me some Zephyr pigskin made from unborn piglets. I still remember it arriving and starting the laborious process all over again, and with much better results. Then the original 1905 electric motor was thought to be unusable so I bought something second-hand with my pocket money on *Exchange & Mart*. It was pale green and completely unsuitable, and the result was a scary rendition of the Corelli *Pastorale* played at least double speed! The original motor had a wonderful switch comprising two open pots of mercury into which prongs of a fork dipped in and out with blinding flashes (which had terrified my mother as a girl). Sadly, that switch has been lost but eventually I was able to adapt the original motor which still ran as good as new in perfect silence.

It was only when these first faltering steps progressed to some amazingly virtuoso, yet wholly unreliable, performances that anyone (besides me) took the slightest interest in “the Flute Organ”. Only at that point did my mother mention that my uncle still had the original organ case where it took pride of place in his house as a very splendid wardrobe. Nothing is ever complicated when one is young, but I can imagine now that she needed a great deal of tact in persuading her brother to give up his main wardrobe for his nephew’s “white elephant” project. But it seemed to me quite normal that we should turn up at his house with a trailer and remove it. The instrument came together properly for the first time in 50 years – indeed it had probably not functioned since before the First World War. But its future was bound to be precarious. Initially I loaned it to a village museum in Bibury where it shared company with

ancient water wheels and flour milling machinery, and there it languished while I went off to university.

Parental pressure then piled on, and a scheme was hatched whereby John Bailey, an organ builder friend from Bishops and Sons in Ipswich, undertook to restore the instrument to greater reliability and loan it to the Cotton Mechanical Music Museum in Stowmarket. Our family heirloom went out of my life entirely for some 40 years. I entered working life and this obsession of teenage years was forgotten entirely.

But not for ever.

Is this what they mean by second childhood? Approaching retirement, I looked back one day and suddenly wondered what had become of the old Flute Organ? I rang my long

lost friend - as if breaking a spell. The Cotton Museum had just reported to him that they could no longer house the instrument unless they owned it, so what should he do? By any standards this was a “white elephant” but could I really let it go? Surely all problems are meant to be solved!

Our garden near Cambridge had a small barn which had nearly collapsed but the flint walls and tiled roof had been rebuilt. Cold in winter, cool in summer, much like a church in fact, so why not have an organ? A real retirement project. But it soon

became obvious that its decades in the museum had been far too peaceful. Its whole life has been a cycle of triumphs, doldrums and rescues, and the “white elephant” was clearly not functioning. But once again its luck would change in the shape of Goetze & Gwynn, a firm in Welbeck, Nottinghamshire dedicated to the restoration of historic pipe organs and to the manufacture of new classical organs, including reconstructions of historic organs. My brother worked for them but, since a nineteenth century automaton was hardly typical of their normal work, I never dreamt of involving them. However, Dominic Gwynn was obviously intrigued and contacted me. He had the perfect person, Joe Marsden, who loved complicated mechanisms. So here in Fig 2 they both are, coaxing it across our garden to spend a year under their tender care.



Fig 2: Dominic Gwynn and Joe Marsden of Goetze & Gwynn easing the organ out of the author's garden.



Fig 3: Markings found on the organ

Meanwhile, a little history? The organ was built in 1862 in Vöhrenbach in the Black Forest, Germany. This is the region famous for its cuckoo clocks often built by farming families to keep themselves busy during cold winter months. Vöhrenbach became the hub for more and more complex musical devices that appealed to rich customers throughout Europe and America before the advent of gramophones or radio. This one is signed by F Heine, one of a large family in the orchestrion business, probably Fidel noted in the catalogue of the Black Forest trade exhibition in 1858, where it says “Fidel Heine from Vöhrenbach - a lovely Viennese flute work with 2 rollers, in which the lovely flute tone is particularly praised”. The family traded with their friend Daniel Imhof (of whom more later) who also set up a base in London to serve the new market being fuelled by the Industrial Revolution.

My great-grandfather Thomas Bazley moved down to Gloucestershire in 1867 from Manchester where he had prospered in the cotton industry. He was a true Victorian polymath, educated at Trinity College, Cambridge, with wide ranging interests in every new development. He was a keen astronomer and one of his telescopes has just been restored to full use in Southport, Lancashire. He owned a Holtzappfel lathe and produced intricate engine turned works in ivory. He wrote the definitive book on the Geometric Chuck used to produce the complex patterns on bank notes designed to prevent forgery. He gave Gloucester Cathedral their new tower clock. He also had a Welte Mignon piano player with wooden keys to fit over a piano keyboard. Here he is pictured in Fig 4 on his Otto Dicycle in Cirencester.

The Flute Organ was procured for him by Daniel Imhof in London. We don't know the exact date, but we do have a letter from 1964 recalling the “Flute Instrument” in 1897, still with large wooden barrels 30-36 inches long

and wound up with a tool like a car handle. Apparently, it did not stop itself, and “I never hear the end of the Mendelssohn Violin Concerto without remembering the wild dash down the library to put it off lest it spoil the barrel”. I hope that Mendelssohn would have been amused that such wonderful music could be pinned onto a wooden barrel!

The letter then says that Thomas Bazley's son had it “electrified”, ie converted to their pneumatic system by Imhof & Mukle during the early years of the century, and adds that

they were later asked to repair it when it no longer worked but “they no longer do that kind of thing – they only go in for wireless etc.” World War One dashed all hopes of repair, and in fact nothing is then heard of the instrument until I discovered it myself in 1963 carefully packed away. The house itself continued in full swing between the wars. One hears of parties and even motor rallies, but I suspect the Flute Organ, large though it was, simply languished.



Fig 4: Thomas Bazley on his Otto Dicycle

A 'Family Affair'

Meanwhile, back in the workshop, it received proper treatment at last, bearing in mind that every stage was new and experimental. The original maker's signature was discovered inside some wind trunking

but all his work was found to be in generally good condition and superbly made.

The Imhof & Mukle mechanism added later was more complex and required much more care and adjustment, including replacement of all leather work.

Naturally, something so different attracted much interest from the usual clientele and led by a happy coincidence to the appearance of Nicholas Frayling, retired Dean of Chichester Cathedral, for the very good reason that he was the great-grandson of Daniel Imhof. A special meeting was arranged in the workshop for him and myself, great-grandsons of the maker and purchaser respectively, and we marked the completion of the restoration with a grand performance of Wagner's overture Tannhäuser.

The organ has 150 wooden pipes all with round mouths, commonly termed Viennese Flute and somewhat unusual in normal organ design. These are played from wooden cassettes of manilla paper, 200mm wide and extremely tough. Spring loaded needles pop up through holes punched in the card and trigger a three stage vacuum pneumatic mechanism.

The pipes are arranged in three ranks or 'stops' - loud, medium and soft, controlled by needles at the edge of the roll to vary the volume, and another needle rewinds the music at the end and switches the motor off.

The original collection was 26 cassettes of classical music, Beethoven, Wagner, Tchaikovsky etc. Sadly four of them went missing from the museum and it would be lovely to trace them.

Their general character is very lively but sweet toned, very redolent of a bygone era before gramophones brought music in the home to a wider public.

And so this chequered history of over 150 years ends on a happy note, for the time being at least. But what of the future? It was always perhaps a rarity, many would say a White Elephant, but nonetheless a fascination. I would love to hear from anyone with interest in or knowledge of anything similar, or with ideas for its future. Obviously it would be sad for the family connection to be broken after so many years, but if this article results in any new connections that would certainly be good.

Henry Bennett

Editor's note: Please make contact with Henry in the first instance by emailing: editor@mbsgb.org.uk

Fig 5: Detail of some of the pipes



Fig 6: The keyframe



Fig 7: The unique Imhof & Mukle music cassettes



*Fig 8: Joe Marsden of
Goetze & Gwynn who
was in charge of the
restoration*



Fig 9: The final result

This That and T'Other No 31

So much is altering so quickly nowadays that I feel that we are in a constant state of change. The feeling of being left behind and being subject to the whims of a computer is stronger than ever and quite frightening to those of advancing age.

The current trials and tribulations make it much harder to follow our hobby of collecting antique musical boxes. I doubt if there ever was a "good" time to build up a collection but I would urge those who are interested in musical boxes as a hobby to keep going and do your best to build your collection.

I think that from 1906 to the start of the Great War in 1914 the hobby of collecting cylinder musical boxes was in steady decline. The rapid improvement of the gramophone and advances of other things like the motor car opened up different avenues for people to spend any spare money they had.

Life changed again for everybody during the Great War with a short period of relaxation coming in the early 1920s. The recession of the inter-war years and life-style changes of that period saw the decline and near extinction of the musical box as by now they seemed quite out of date.

In the period 1939 to 1949 the need to collect scrap metal for the war effort, especially brass, saw the end of many cylinder boxes as most people thought the cylinder was solid brass and valuable! Unfortunately I am old enough to remember this

happening but was too otherwise occupied to do much about it.

After the Second World War, only a very small number of dedicated collectors kept the hobby alive. So many boxes were scrapped at this time it was unbelievable. Cylinder boxes were being sold in, or often outside, antique shops as decorative door stops. Ordinary run of the mill examples were sold with a price tag of £5 to £10. Unfortunately I never seemed to have any "spare" money in those days and my collection remained static. My single venture into dealing at this time I remember well. I found a small L'Épée box for the sum of fifteen pounds. I sold it three months later for eighteen pounds which made me realise I was not really cut out to be a dealer.

The founding of the American Musical Box Society International and the Musical Box society of Great Britain came along just in time to save the musical box once again. These two worthy organisations have played their part in keeping interest in musical boxes continuing. In recent times musical boxes are collected as a specialist undertaking with relatively few people avidly collecting them. A few specialist sales are still held from time to time but nowhere in the numbers that were held sixty to seventy years ago. Probably these days there are fewer than 2,500 dedicated people in total who are keeping the hobby going. I do hope that I am wrong and that in the near future there will be another surge of interest in the cylinder musical box.

Arthur Cunliffe

Register News No 106

The Register continues to expand but as always it is becoming increasingly difficult to find new boxes to enter up. Most now are found in the catalogues of auction houses. Fortunately there is a dedicated member in America and a couple of similarly enthusiastic members over here who seem to be able find different boxes for me to enter up, so all is not completely lost!

I always appreciate hearing from members with details of boxes they have found. Sometimes the information is about boxes I have already on the Register but there is always some little gem of information that was not there before.

One of the advantages of the Internet and various database programmes is that there is now a vast source of information available on the Internet about tunes and songs of yesteryear. Like all good things there is also a down side in that there is so much information there it is becoming more difficult to absorb so much. We have gone from too little to too much in a very short time.

A couple of late period boxes that came to light recently that played melodies from the period 1880 to about 1906. They provided a glimpse of what was entertaining people in those far off days.

Occasionally in the olden days a musical box was returned to a manufacturer for repairs but not always to the firm

that originally made it. Part of the repair was to replace a missing tune sheet, and it was considered perfectly acceptable for the repairer to substitute their tune sheet for the missing one.

I remember the late Anthony Bulleid telling me he had seen instances of this being done. This makes the job of any historian or researcher almost impossible very difficult indeed.

This practice still happens today outside of the musical box world as one can find household appliances that are marketed with different names and model numbers on the outside but have identical workings on the inside.

It is always good to check carefully the details of what is on offer. Many auction rooms don't really know what they are selling or know best how to describe them. I have seen an a forte-piano box listed as a Victorian Musical Box and another one playing the basic theme of an overture on one of the tunes and this was being listed as an Overture box. Strictly true of course but I feel that all the melodies being played on an overture box should be overtures and nothing else. The term Part Overture would be a better description. The moral of this story is keep a good lookout and check on what is being offered.

Arthur Cunliffe

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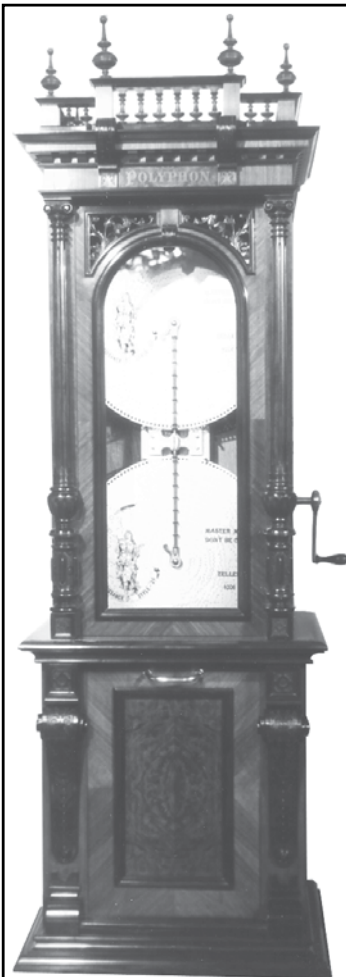
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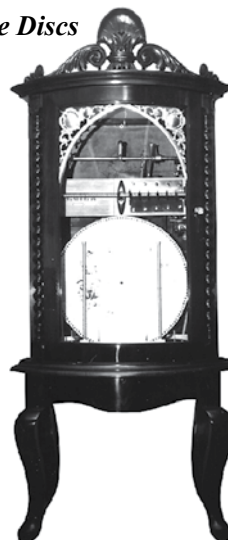
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From Musical Box Oddments no 111

by H A V Bulleid

(first published in The Music Box, Vol 22, No8, Winter 2006)

List of essential data.

Serial number, and where stamped or scribed.

Cylinder length

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

Percussion details

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

Which tune is pinned on the cylinder dots.

Blank numbers, stamped on:-

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

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

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

Maker's markings, scribed or stamped:-

on cylinder bass end
on great wheel
under the case

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

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

How to Identify a Musical Box.

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

These queries to name the maker still keep coming in, often still with hopelessly inadequate data. Even experienced

inquirers often omit essential details. So I think another attempt to extract all available data is justified. That 31 -item list may have provoked the "not b-likely" feeling often induced by questionnaires, so perhaps the shorter list tabled herewith may help.

It is rather boring, but very important to keep in mind when opening the lid of a musical box, this fact.... that everything you see, including the case body, was supplied by a blank maker. The only exceptions were the combs, the cylinder pins, and the case lid.

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

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

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

Help in finding all this information...

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

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

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

Memories of Jim Hall, 2nd July, 1921 - 1st July, 2020 *by Alison Biden*

Long time former member of MBSGB Jim Hall passed away on 1st July, 2020, only hours short of reaching his 99th birthday. Since being widowed in 2014 he had been living in a residential home near his daughter in Newcastle-upon-Tyne, and although we have not been informed of cause of death, it was a relief to learn that no Covid 19 cases had been experienced in the home.

Jim was a controversial figure in the Society, who held some very strong views on how it should be run, and was not shy to share them with the membership, often at Society General Meetings. He was a stickler for how things should be, which often earned the exasperation of whoever formed the administration at the time. After many years he let his membership lapse, but later still his wife Kathleen confided that he was missing it. Eventually he rejoined again for a few years, although once again his membership had lapsed by the time of his death.

Jim's joining number was 167, and he liked to boast he was a founder, as well as the MBSGB's oldest surviving member, with a long period of continuous membership. Whilst he may have been the oldest member at one point (it is unverifiable) he was not a founder, nor was his membership uninterrupted.

During his first period of membership he was an active participant, contributing articles for *The Music Box*, giving presentations at meetings, and organising and attending events. He arranged a number of national meetings in or near Kendal. Who could forget the meeting in April, 1983 when Jim called upon a friend to entertain us after the Saturday dinner? The friend 'pretended' to be an incompetent conjurer (shades of Tommy Cooper if anyone remembers him), promising to perform the famous tablecloth trick, but with such ineptitude and interruptions the audience was convinced he couldn't, and wouldn't, do it. Just as we were all dozing off and thinking what a con he was, whoosh! There was the cloth separated from its table, with every item of crockery, cutlery and glass

still exactly in place. It has to be the most memorable of all the Society 'entertainments' – all thanks to Jim.

Despite his membership lapsing, Jim remained in touch with a number of members of the MBSGB. He would often tell me he 'wasn't one for tittle tattle' – and then he would proceed to gossip about all the people we knew, and some that I didn't! He was an amazing raconteur, and had I written down at the time the stories he told, and the many capers he got up to, I would be better equipped to write this now. I believe it was Jim who conjured up visions of early gatherings of enthusiasts in some unprepossessing cigarette smoke-filled premises in the Portobello Road, where heaps of boxes lay among stacks of 'girly' magazines. He had a wry and wicked sense of humour, often glimpsed at in his cutting descriptions of people's appearance and personality. Being a 'Southerner' as I am, he struck me as the epitome of the 'bluff Northerner' – and sometimes a curmudgeonly one at that - though always with a twinkle in his eye. Despite all the foregoing, or possibly because of it, it was not difficult to like him. 'Jim was a character and I have many good memories of him and his wife,' says Mark Buckland, who often saw him in Kendal. 'He was always on hand to dispense wisdom and criticism in equal measure relating to mechanical music.' I am sure Mark speaks for many, especially those seeking Jim's expert knowledge and guidance which he would always share.

He was extremely interesting and knowledgeable, and it was fascinating to hear about his time with Durham organ firm Harrison & Harrison where he had learned his trade. For many years he earned his living as an organ builder in Kendal, and also carried out restoration work. It is hardly surprising therefore that his collection of mechanical instruments was well maintained in exceptional playing order. He constantly seemed to be adding to it, or possibly it was ...*(continued on page 304)*

So you want to buy a Street Organ

by Jim Hall

You have for some time toyed with the idea of having a suitable mechanical organ for playing at rallies and other functions, and for Charity events in the streets.

One of the first things you must do, is to try and sell the idea to your wife, - the willing horse, because she will be involved in many ways, as well as helping you to operate the thing. It is great if she has put forward the idea in the first place. Perhaps you have a birthday coming up? You will not move from square one if you do not have her whole hearted consent.

Over the first hurdle, but many more to go.

There is the question of size. How much room have you got at home to house the instrument, when you are not playing it. You cannot put it in the loft, with the spare suitcases, anyway it would be too warm for it up there. What about under the stairs? In the garage, but that may be full already, and if unheated, the organ would deteriorate in Winter. It cannot forever clutter up the hallway, but if the wife is agreeable there is always the spare room!!

How much money can you and your wife afford to spend on this item, after all it is not going to be played all that frequently. £500?, £1000?, £5000?, or more? You have no set figure at this stage, and your ideas are still pretty flexible, and anyway the Premium Bonds or the Football Pools may come up, in the meantime.

You attend a function or a rally where there is an "organ grind" hoping for ideas, and you may be allowed to operate some

of the instruments yourself, and this can get you really hooked on having an organ. You ask questions from the owners, but some can be a little evasive when asked about their particular instrument, for they may be biased, or they do not like admitting they have bought a "pig in a poke". Pricewise, you get answers like "It cost an arm and a leg" or it cost me two years pension, (whatever that may be).

Each organ has its merits and faults, if you look for them. There are many different instruments, ranging from small reed organettes, to large fair organs. There are barrel reed organs, pressure and exhaust action, barrel pianos, barrel pipe organs, some with more than one set of pipes. Organs played by cardboard books of music, others playing music from a roll or spool. Keyed and Keyless. Side effects, such as Drums and Bells and Tremolo are also available at extra cost on some versions. Some are hand cranked, others foot operated, some worked by electricity via a generator or batteries.

This musical instrument has to be transported from your home to the venue for playing. If it is a large item, it may require its own van to house it, or an open or closed trailer to hitch on to your car. Organettes being small, are the easiest to handle and transport. Anything larger can become a problem to the small car owner. The organ should stand upright, then there is the wheeled base, box of music, maybe a detachable front, rain cover, sunshine umbrella, probably a couple of folding chairs, and other bits and pieces, to pack into the car, along with

suitcases and other items if you are staying away. You certainly have a job to take any other passengers when you and your wife are in the front seats, unless it is a large estate car. A car where there is not a level platform to lift on to, can be a problem. Lifting over the lip at the rear of the boot, tests ones patience; as one gets older it is a trial of strength, and you could be a candidate for a hernia or slipped disc.

You may have thought about building an organ yourself, but have never really got down to it, because you never had the time. How about a "Do it Yourself" kit from the Continent? Are you good with tools, and have a workshop, and can you follow a plan, and instructions which could be in a foreign language, and can you voice and tune it when complete?

Having discarded the idea of building one yourself, you wonder what is available on the secondhand market, and what the makers of new organs have to offer. You peruse the periodicals such as "The World's Fair" and "Exchange and Mart" and eagerly await the next Journal or Magazine you subscribe to, dropping through the letter box. Catalogues from the various auction sales are scanned, and you make numerous telephone calls, and write many letters, of course enclosing a stamped and addressed envelope, and travel the length and breadth of the country in search of your desired instrument. What was described over the telephone, as needing a little attention, turns out to be totally unplayable, full of woodworm holding hands to keep it together, and scratched to blazes, bent wire, string, drawing pins and knicker elastic, along with knitting needles, sticking plaster, Bluetack, stamp edging and Sellotape are other favourite items of the bodgers repair kit which you may come across in your travels. Even if the instrument on the face of it, is not too bad, is the

price right, is it value for money? What would be the resale value if I did not like it or the wife did not? Are there any bits missing, would tuning improve it. If it is a private individual you are dealing with, you may ask yourself, - Why is he selling?

You now decide to find out about new organs, and send away for brochures and price lists from the various builders, whose adverts you have seen in the Journals, and magazines, and to addresses given to you at the last organ meeting.

More decisions:- Do I buy British or Continental? If I buy abroad, how will I get it? will it be delivered, or will I have to cross the Channel to collect it. What will be the rate of exchange? How do I pay for it, any tax? Import duty. What if it develops a fault? Any guarantee? Do I purchase from a well known builder, who is long established, and whose organs have stood the test of time, or do I purchase from an up and coming builder, and your organ may be the first of a new model, and you are a sort of a guinea pig for his experiments, whilst he extends his knowledge at your expense. There could be no VAT with a small builder. The brochure may state that the organ is made from selected hardwoods, which could mean Rammin wood from the DIY shop down the road. You could be dealing with someone who does not telephone back when you have left a message, or is reluctant to put pen to paper in case he commits himself unduly. Someone who thinks himself God's gift to organ building, or at least a Patron Saint to organ grinders!!

If I purchase this particular organ, is the builder the only source of supply for additional music, or are there other suppliers he has to compete with. Will it be an odd scale. This is a point to consider, because it is nice to have music from different arrangers. If there are several tunes on a book or spool, is there a spacing between the

tunes, so that one can have a rest, pause to talk, answer questions, listen to the address system, without having to stop and start again in midtune, - which can sound a bit like bagpipes starting up. Are tunes available which appeal to children.

Are you going to purchase a wheeled base, trolley, bogie, or make one yourself. Within reason the larger the wheels the better, for wheeling across uneven roads and bumping over curbs, pavements and grass fields. Wooden wheels with spokes and steel rims are very nice on photographs, but in practice can jolt the organ around, sending it out of tune. Wheels with rubber tyres are pretty noiseless and do not dig into the ground or carpet, as much as a solid wheel.

Will the organ have wood or metal pipes? will they be in racks or have stays to support them, and can they be easily removed for maintenance. Are the pipes permanently glued into place at the foot, so when you break the glue seal to remove one, glue gets down the pipe hole and causes problems. Are the pipes tuneable with proper stoppers, slides or shades, or are they dead length causing tuning problems when the temperature changes.

How many notes in the Bass, Accompaniment and Melody, what scale, what pitch? what wind pressure, will it be soft, loud or harsh in tone. I was playing a street organ outside a butchers shop in Kirkby Lonsdale, during the Victorian Fair, and the chap came out and told me that the organ was so high pitched, that he had to keep going to the toilet, and in fact had relieved himself three times in the last hour. - I moved elsewhere.

If you have bought a second hand barrel piano or barrel organ you have finished with decisions, but say you are going in for a new book or roll playing organ, are you going to have a

painted case with decorations, polished or veneered. What about the organ front, are you going to make it yourself, or be supplied with one from the maker, either plain, decorated, carved, traditional, Fair organ type, Continental, etc. Do you want a handmaster figure, male or female?

Organ grinders differ as to choice of music, some say so and so's "Tulips from Amsterdam" is better arranged than someone else's. It is a matter of taste. Christmas music is really only used at Christmas. You tend to purchase some music blind, because you know the tune or title, - beware!

You have made your final decision, ordered the organ, probably paid a deposit, and have been given a delivery date, and you hope it will be satisfactory, and not made from too much plywood, hardboard, chipboard, plastic and cheap glue, and held together with staples and cross eyed screws.

Your wife is dreaming of that new kitchen you may have promised her, before you take delivery of the new organ. You are like a big kid with a new toy, and you cannot wait to try it out, but wait your wife and you should be dressed up for the occasion. Off you go to Oxfam, the Red Cross Shop, Cancer Care looking for bowler hats, fancy waistcoats, Victorian dresses, feather boas, etc. That is not all, you now find that you need a licence to play music in public, from The Performing Rights Society who hold copyright on certain music.

Grinding an organ for a whole weekend is very tiring both mentally and physically. You will have played some music several times over, and know when to expect every trill, run or hiccup. I personally find three or four hours is quite long enough, at one stretch.

HAPPY ORGAN GRINDING, and hope you give much pleasure to the listener. ■

(continued from page 301)... more of a 'turning over' of many items in his collection as he refreshed its contents. On a bad day he would complain that the members of MBSGB were all dealers (and imply they were 'shysters'). Ironically – or typically – he was not averse to conducting the odd deal himself! He drove a hard bargain on mechanical instruments – although he was *very* generous with the home-grown rhubarb.

A trip to Cumbria wasn't complete without calling in on him and Kathleen, when over tea or coffee more stories (and boxes) would come out. I have in my collection now no fewer than five items which had once been Jim's, including an organ box. Given that these are so often eschewed because they underperform, this one is much admired, no doubt due to having been on the receiving end of his expert care over the years.

He often had some curio to show us which he had acquired since our previous visit, from which I concluded he was an

inveterate hunter of salerooms and antique shops. Jim also 'introduced' me to the recondite history of the Dent knitters, and made me a 'knitting stick' (which I still have.) He once lent me a book about the knitters of Dent, and gave me one about how to be a proper 'chairman' – he was very blunt about the fact that he thought I needed the instruction! And from time to time he would pass me or send me a press cutting he had come across which he thought I would find of interest.

Once he had moved to Newcastle it became more difficult to maintain the contact, especially as his hearing deteriorated. However, we continued to exchange Christmas cards, and the occasional item of correspondence. I count myself privileged to have known him and Kathleen. His friendship, experience and stories have enriched our lives and will be a source of extraordinary memories for years to come.

Alison Biden

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Kevin McElhone / 01536 726759 / kevinmcelhone@live.co.uk

LATEST COMPLETE COLLECTION DISPERSAL

The next collection I have been asked to sell is also located in Hampshire, making 3 in that county alone. This latest collection has 50 instruments including Novelties, Manivelle, Marotte, Toby Jug, Whistler, Snuff Box, Keywind and lever wind Cylinder Boxes by Nicole, Henriot, Reuge, Lecoultré including one on a matching table. Disc boxes such as Roepke case, Regina 12", Polyphon 6", 11", 19 5/8" (two) 24½", Symphonion 11 7/8 "19 1/8", Stella 9", Kalliope with Bells, Komet 13", Britannia 9", 17", Monopol 17", McCarthy Babe Street Organ, Faventia Barrel piano, Ariston, Autophone, Concert Roller Organ, Melodia and several Kalliston Organettes with bells. Edison Standard Phonograph, Singing Bird cage, Serinette.

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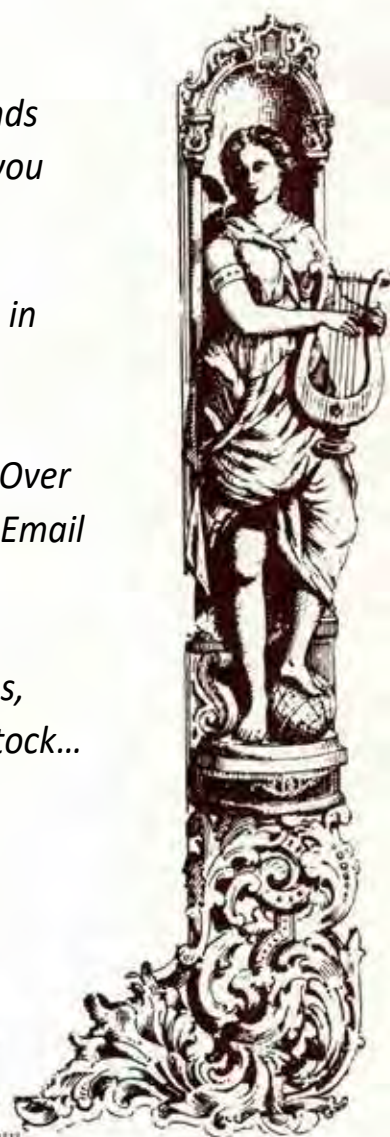
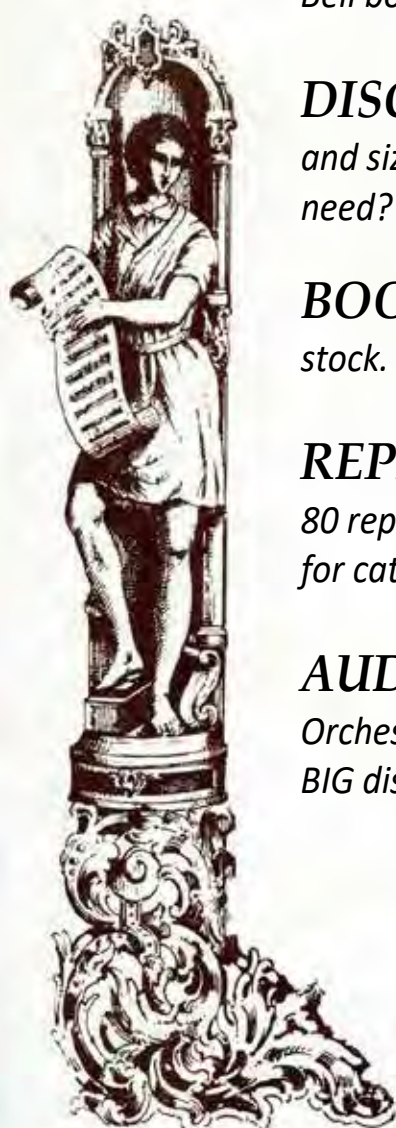
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Rare Empire Timepiece with
Organ, probably Christian
Ernst Kleemeyer, c. 1800
Sold: 9.700 € / \$ 10.475

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– Illustrated are just a few of our highlights from last sales in 2020 –

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