

# THE MUSIC BOX

JOURNAL OF  
the MUSICAL BOX SOCIETY  
OF GREAT BRITAIN



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## editorial



No man is born with knowledge, experience and wisdom. Because we all have to start somewhere, we all endure a painful procedure known as learning - often by experience and frequently to our cost. Many of our Members are concerned at the unrealistic prices being asked on the market for what might best be described as junk musical

boxes - cheap products which might not always be recognised as such by the beginner. Your Committee feel that some system of 'early warning' is warranted to guide collectors and, with this in mind, the suggestion has been made that we endeavour to value mechanical musical instruments. As a free service to Members, a team would assess a price based on fair present-day market trends on receipt of full details of a box. This will be discussed and put to the vote at our A.G.M. Do think it over. As an immediate measure, we publish in this issue an article on points to look out for when buying a musical box. Any and all comments are welcomed.

### MINDS WHICH THINK ALIKE

Much of the writing of this Editorial is completed many weeks in advance of publication date and it is thus interesting to record that, in the closing weeks of 1964, the then new Socialist Government sanctioned the start of the new London museum. Thus, the implications of this page in our last issue have, at least in part, been heeded. However, it must be remembered that this is but a small start to the solution of a big problem.

WHOOPEE FOR THE SPRING!

Don't expect a panegyric on Springtime to follow that heading - I just thought it a good one, that's all. Which reminds me of a most enjoyable evening I spent with our Secretary, Mr. de Vere Green, recently. The evening concluded, I was about to depart when he said "Well, that just about winds it up for tonight". Funny, I let 'em run down at night.

A WAY OF LIFE - A SAD STORY TO BE READ IN THE KEY OF F MINOR

When Mrs. Cartwright-Bulstrode rand, I was shaving. A quick towel and I picked up the receiver. Funny thing about soap - the way it clings to a beard, I mean. I had to pause whilst I hoiked from the mouthpiece the great dollop of froth forced into it from my chin fungus.

Some well-meaning Member, she cooed, had given her my telephone number as she wanted someone to repair her musical box which was SO old and valuable. It was at this point that I realised I had transferred an earful of lather to the other end of the receiver. It was a cold morning - you know what it is like in March. I kept up an intelligent solo passage whilst wiping lather from the ear end on to the curtain. I felt I should have a gentle go at her about 'phoning so early but she sounded affable and wealthy and, after all, it was nearly lunch-time. I should explain here that at this time I had a pathological fear of shaving before lunch on a Sunday borne of vivid stories told me when young and impressionable by my Uncle. He had been rescued by missionaries when on the point of expiration at the hands of some Turkish no-goods in the twenties who sprang on him at his camp (he was a mineral fumulgerant pneumismatist or something) early one Sunday morning as he sang 'Rule Britannia' whilst shaving. So now you can sympathise in my Sunday routine. To continue.

Mrs. C-B lived in Mayfair close to those places where you can find limousines parked six deep across the road proudly displaying a line-up of C.D. plates although what they have to do with Civil Defence I cannot imagine. I arrived there that evening armed with a cigar-box filled with "tools of the trade".

Mrs. C-B was one of those stoutly-built cocktail-party-conversation-leaders in her late fifties. She held out her hand limply at eye level as if to display a set of bruised knuckles. Instinctively, I took her fingers and curtsied politely, letting fall my cigar box which landed on the floor with a clatter. A glint of expensive jewellery surrounded her person. In the shadowey corners of the lofty room - places where the electrolier had abandoned all hope of ever injecting light, a tall penguin-like butler hovered like a drab dragonfly.

She said how nice of me to come, how this and how that and then she

turned slightly as if on castors (her feet were not visible beneath her carpet-length dress) and made a sign at the penguin who dutifully glided gently through the shadows and appeared at her side with an inlaid box about eighteen inches long and that much heavy.

"My grandmother gave it to my Mother and she passed it on to me and so it must be over 150 years old as my Mother died suddenly when she was ninety". Quite unable to resolve this quickly without aid of pencil and paper, I fell to examining the box. Now Mr. Dawkins did not make musical boxes until about 1880 but it was obviously impossible to put this across to Mrs. C-B. She studied me with callous indifference and unconcealed disbelief. "My boy, this is at least 150 years old!". I did not argue.

Six of the forty-one broad teeth were broken, several of the others had no points, the cylinder was pinned with fish-hooks and the three tin bells were rusty. I explained as tactfully as I could. She was crest-fallen. Would I like to buy the box then? I said how much and she said shall we say a hundred and ten and I said we wouldn't, so there it was.

I left perplexed and a little amused. She remained perplexed and disillusioned with a strong overtone of annoyance and I now shave before dawn on a Sunday. Funny how small things can completely alter one's pattern of life, isn't it. After all that, my old Uncle suffered an ignominious death beneath the odious wheels of a runaway Sussex farmer's dung cart whilst out walking with his Labrador one July evening in the early part of the war during a lull between two alerts. Alas, no recompense for the just.

#### BASE VERSUS TREBLE - MORALITY FOR THE MASSES

Lecoultre, reputed to be weak in the base, must be gratified to know that a friend of mine referred to a certain other well-cherished maker as "fine base but quite topless". This reminded me that, although we all thought we had heard the last of the topless dress saga, my newspaper is once more chuntering inanely on the subject. As an involuntary admirer of feminine pulchritude, I feel bound to admit that I find the topless girl in a dress far more lamentable than the more publicised variant....

#### WELL, WELL, WELL, - AND THIS ISN'T A FUNNY STORY

In the execution of my bread-and-butter work, I sometimes speak on the telephone to a charming young lady who works for an associate company. Following the appearance of Mr. de Vere Green on television the other month, she said "My girl friend's parents have a big Polyphon". I asked her to follow up the line of enquiry. The news finally came through. After much stealthy deliberation on my lady friend's part, she broke the news that I was about three years too late. The instrument had been used to block up an unwanted well. No comment.

## CHRISTMAS MUSICAL BOXES

I learned with surprise that there are still actually people around who have those old wireless set things. Remember them? Or are you too young to recall the dim, dark, bad old days before Television? Well, it seems the B.B.C. still puts out wireless programmes for these poor, few people and, to cheer them up on Christmas Day 1964, they played some recordings of my musical boxes. This was the result of an evening spent at the Camden Theatre recording studio. Tape session over, the technicians manipulated 'mike' and switches and boosted the Brachhausen machine until the whole theatre boomed with 'Silent Night' on the Regina. Jolly.

## MEMBERSHIP DIRECTORY

As you all know, we have published our Membership Directory with this issue. It is offered free of charge to all Members and additional copies are available price 5/- post free. Keep one in the car!

## DOWN IN DEVONSHIRE PLACE SOMETHING STIRRED.....

They are steady, simple folk who live in Devonshire Place, London. The women sit on their doorsteps knitting lobster pots and the ruddy-faced farmers of Regents Park smoke a lazy, quiet pipe by the rose pergolas in their front gardens of an evening. Well, these rustic people were set a-talking one wet January afternoon when a Huge horse-drawn Pantehnicon turned into the cobble-stone lane. When it stopped outside No. 11, the women put down their lobster pots, the menfolk lowered their briars and even the smithy appeared from his shop to take a look. Mr. de Vere Green had bought something new! The word spread like wildfire even as far as the neat cottages in Wimpole Street with their fresh green lawns and weeping willows. That the said gentleman had removed part of his banister rails was an obvious indication that this was no ordinary musical box. Heads nodded, puzzled glances were exchanged. The removal van gave up a vast mahogany cabinet of dimensions that would be beyond the descriptive faculties of even the most vociferous fisherman. Of great weight it was, too. This was evidenced by the many legs visible beneath it and audible by the grunts. The doorway proved only just big enough and for many hours to come villagers could hear the slow, painful progress of the vast THING through the house, up the stairs and into the back surgery where it dwarfed the dental chair and made the 24 $\frac{1}{2}$ " Polyphon look like a shoebox. What in the world could it be? The 'local' that night was agog with rumours but, as the days grew into weeks and no further developments transpired, the villagers soon forgot about the THING. Until one day when celestial tones echoed over the thatched roofs of W.1. For, in the back surgery, Mr. de Vere Green sat quietly pedalling his way through a Handel Organ Concerto on his new Aeolian Orchestrelle player organ. Rescued derelict from a Kilburn junk yard, he has restored it to its former glory and tone. And so the villagers are happy once more and genuflect to their musical Squire.- the Albert Schweitzer of Devonshire Place.

DER POLYPHON-WERKE, PORTOBELLOSTRASSE, LONDON

Some weeks ago, I was handed the top of a Heinz baked beans tin - straight, as it were, from the can-opener. One glance at it, however, set my pulse a shade faster for, punched into it, were projections of the disc musical box pattern.

This hastily-stamped test-piece was the first evidence of many months of work which culminated only a few days ago when I was shown a newly-manufactured, bright, shining 19 $\frac{5}{8}$ " Polyphon disc. The development of a disc-copying machine has been undertaken by Member Graham Webb with the close co-operation of a tool-maker friend. The instrument can copy discs up to 26" in diameter for any type of musical box, clockwise or anti-clockwise playing. The discs are made of polished tin-steel .015" thick and are faithful copies in every musical way.

Because each disc has to be punched individually, discs are rather expensive but, by concentration on scarce sizes of disc such as the 14 $\frac{1}{8}$ " Symphonion and the 14 $\frac{1}{8}$ " and 22" Polyphon, a collector with a limited repertoire of tunes for his machine has the chance to acquire one or two extra discs. It should be added that at present discs can only be copied from originals but a 'library' of masters is to be established.

Graham did not suggest the design (reproduced here) for his new discs.....



NEXT SOCIETY MEETING

The next meeting of the Musical Box Society of Great Britain is to take place at the Londoner Hotel, Welbeck Street, London, W.1. on Saturday, May 15th. As has become customary in these events, the meeting will begin with coffee at 10.30 a.m. and will continue, with suitable recesses for lunch and afternoon tea, until 6.0 p.m. A full programme of events has been prepared and details have been circulated to all Members by the Secretary. All Members are invited to attend and there will be ample space and facility for displaying your musical boxes. We are proud to say that several prominent American Members will be flying over to attend this gathering and we expect a record attendance. Members may, of course, bring guests. See you then!

Arthur W. J. G. Ord-Hume

MUSIBOX COLLECTY CHATTLE

Hear about the collector who was such a purist, he'd only play his Polyphon with 'bun' pennies?

A zither attachment is a thing fitted to a musical box so that you cannot tell that most of the dampers are missing.....

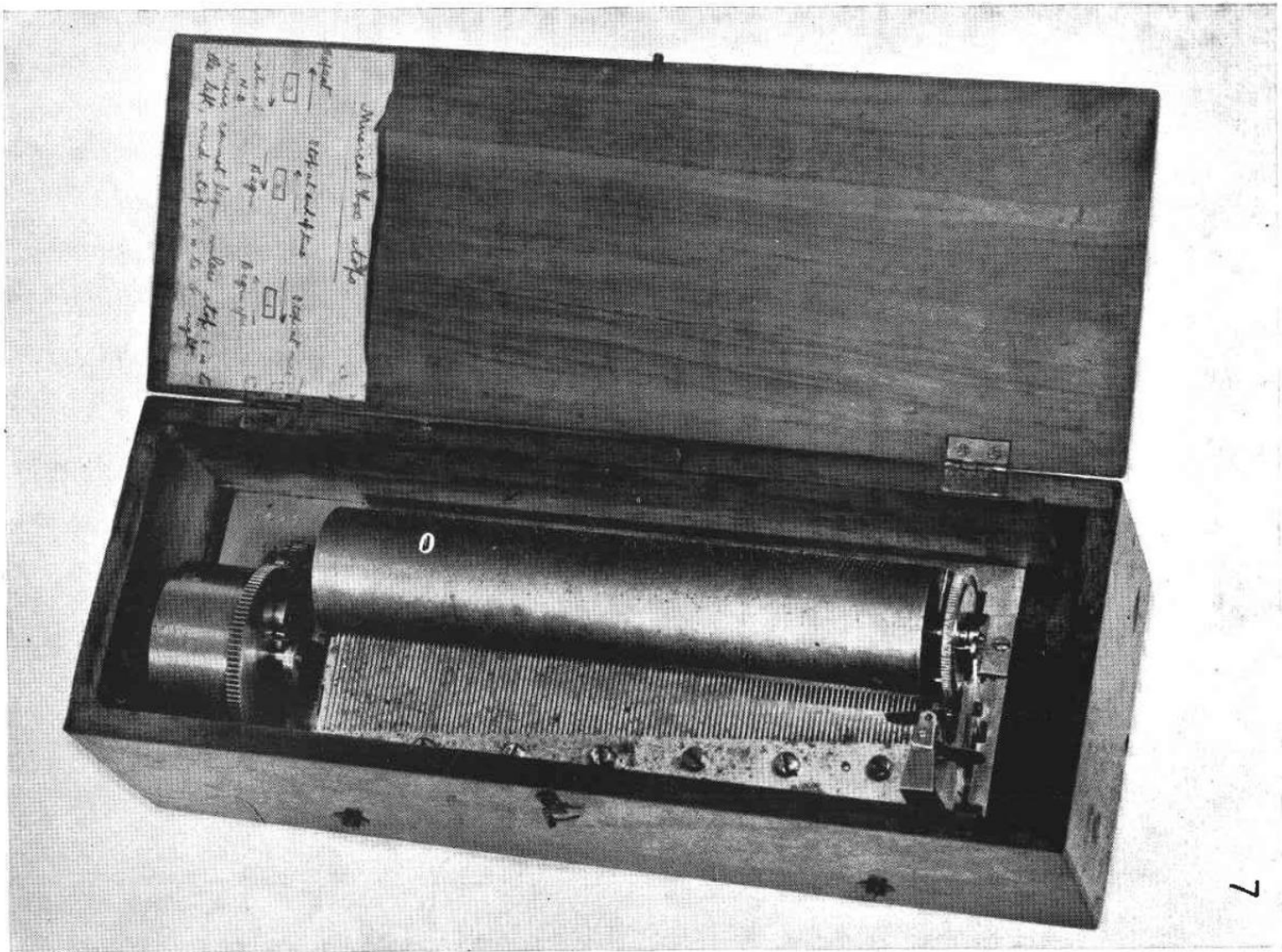
There was a lady who, anxious to acquire a player-piano, declined the offer of a Duo-Art Reproducing piano on the grounds that she would have no room for its offspring. She feared a quaver of spinets.

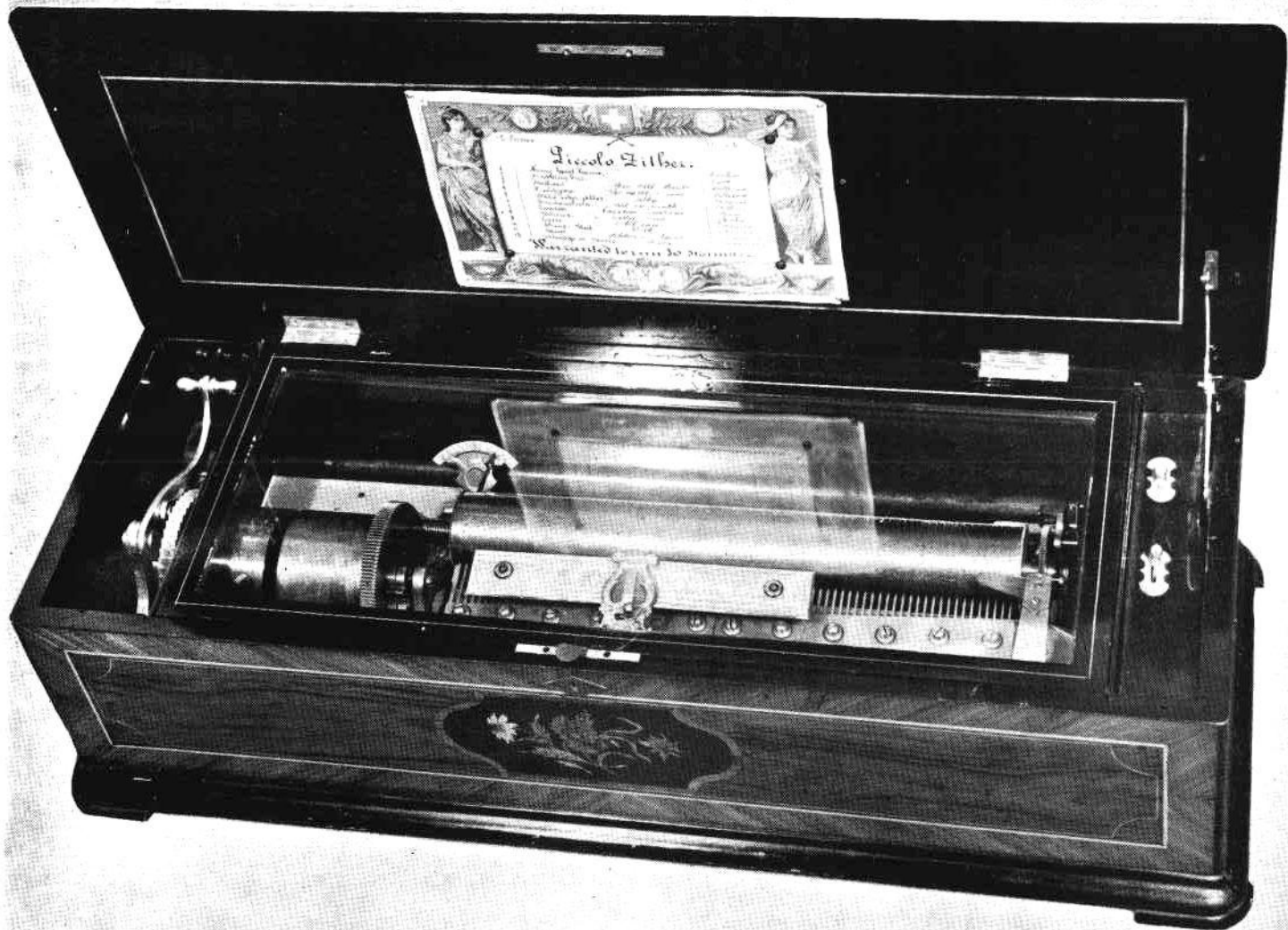
W.1, that celebrated area of London, is full of tales about a well-known dental surgeon who, having drilled small holes in a patients teeth, suddenly forgot himself and carefully fitted wire dampers held in with brass pegs. It isn't true, really. He hadn't got the right thickness of damper wire and had to send to Switzerland for some.....

**illustrations** The illustrations in this issue are printed on fine art paper and are donated by Gilchrist Brothers Ltd. of Leeds.  
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CAPTIONS TO PICTURES IN THIS ISSUE Page 7 (Facing) shows an early Lecoul-tre four-air key-wind No. 1429. The inner motor bridge is cut short level with the comb - this is clearly seen in this view. Gear train has typical early delicacy of this maker. There are no comb-screw washers. Note the small case washers. Similar movements exist in cases with end flaps. Page 8 shows a 12-air P.V.F. 'Piccolo Zither' with double springs, characteristic winding lever and short zither. Tune sheet reads 'Warranted to run 30 minutes'. Page 19 shows an uncommon full-organ box by Geo. Bender. 39 metal reeds perform 12 airs. An extremely large box, this has a very powerful motor. Pages 20 and 21 depict an unusual musical clock. Whilst the clock is made by Parkinson & Frodsham in London, the case is French circa 1810-1815. The musical movement is contained in the base and comprises a brass bed-plate 17" x 3½" with a cylinder 13⅝" x 1½" which is not wax-filled. 87 single teeth are arranged with the treble in the centre, small resonators being fixed to the extreme base notes only. Eight airs are played. The stop mechanism, the snail and the gear train are of unusual complexity. Undoubtedly this is a very rare and valuable piece. All the foregoing items are from the de Vere Green collection. Page 22 shows the front cover of an ebony-bound musical photograph album. Deeply incised into the black wood, oblique lighting shows to advantage this beautiful carving. Early 2-air musical movement. (from Ord-Hume collection). Page 33 shows the superb 112-note keyless Gavioliphone fair organ owned by the Show Organ Society and restored by Member George Parmley. A familiar sight at many Northern steam fairs, some of its music is available on a Decca record as reviewed in our Autumn 1964 issue. Page 34 shows the 26" disc size Fortuna Marvel Orchestrion playing 118-tooth combs, organ, drum and triangle. (from the Ord-Hume collection)









# THE FINAL CURTAIN

B A MOSS

**F**or four or even five decades, the musical box was the only compact and convenient form of mechanical music available to those of a musical inclination who lacked sufficient skill or patience to play an instrument to their own satisfaction. Then, quite suddenly, as the turn of the century approached, the musical box trade began to decline rapidly until by the outbreak of the Great War such musical movements as were then being made were of no consequence to serious music lovers and a once-flourishing trade was degraded to selling novelty and souvenir cigarette-boxes with 'sweet' tinkling music into the bargain.

What was the cause of this abrupt and untimely end which befell the numerous companies involved? Most collectors will assert that it was Mr. Edison with his croaking, scratchy old phonograph that did it.

Indeed, it was the phonograph that was the root of the trouble, although had only Edison been interested in this machine, the musical-box manufacturers would probably have remained in business for a much longer period of time. Edison was, of course, the first inventor to make a practical sound recording instrument, playing back his own voice for the first time in the summer of 1877. He regarded the invention as an irreproachable step forward in the service to mankind and was thus affronted that the phonograph might be regarded as a toy or a thing of amusement as, in fact, was now the music box. However, in the following year 1878, a 'parlour speaking phonograph' was marketed by the Edison concern in the U.S.A. at a price equivalent to just over £2. This phonograph worked essentially by imprinting sound vibrations on to a tin-foil cylinder and the quality of sound reproduction was decidedly poor, despite the vivid imagination of phonograph fanciers of the time. At such an early stage of development, this presented no serious threat to the existing musical box trade in spite of the apparent cheapness of the voice-producing rival and none of the forboded effects were felt in musical box circles.

Edison then suspended work on the phonograph for ten years but, during the interim, other parties had become interested in the invention and were quick to realise that here was a chance for speculation and overnight fortunes. This inspired - or rather pushed - Edison back into the production of phonographs. To add to the chaos emerging, a phonograph recording on to discs had been made by an Americanised German, Emile Berliner and, in 1889, handwound gramophones were produced by the German toy

makers, Kammerer und Rienhardt. These machines never pretended to be anything other than toys and were marketed in England and other European countries at 2 gns. each. The reproduction quality from these little machines was singularly poor, as it was in all these very cheap gramophones and phonographs, so that they could have in no way affected the sale of even the poorer quality musical boxes.

In the early 1890's, however, cylinder phonographs began to be made that were of an extremely good quality. The impact of this sudden production of beautifully-made phonographs was undoubtedly felt by the musical box makers. Those who were still in business were forced to reply, in the main, by an unfortunate cut in quality in an effort to lower the cost and increase production of their boxes. Despite the greater potential performance of the phonograph, the musical-box makers still managed to hold the trump card.

Musical boxes were still on the whole cheaper. An interchangeable cylinder box could be had from Nicole Freres in 1896 for a price around £25 (although they produced other boxes which cost up to £200 at this time), and the 19 $\frac{5}{8}$ " Polyphon "Sandringham" model was costing £17. 10. 0. where an Edison "Electric Motor Phonograph" of 1893 cost \$190 all in and the Graphophone Grand Phonograph cost \$75. How, then, were these excessively expensive novelties beginning to outsell musical-boxes both in the United States and Europe?

The answer can be found by having a brief look at the history of the development of the talking-machine, as it was then called. During the years between 1877 and the early 1900's, all had been on a note of chaos in the talking machine camp. Legal arguments concerning infringement of patent rights had raged almost continuously and take-overs and amalgamations were not infrequent. Although the patent arguments were to be dragged out over many ensuing years, by 1901 three major phonograph companies had emerged - Edison, Graphophone (U.S.A.) and Pathe (France). All these firms marketed their wares on the Continent as well as in the States in a big way.

The firm which was to emerge as the most successful in the end was not, however, a cylinder phonograph manufacturing organisation. The Gramophone Company in 1901 merged with the Victor Talking Machine Company and one of the most stupendous 'overnight' success firms was born. At its head was Eldridge Johnson, a one-time maker of clockwork gramophone motors. Due to this man's incredible business acumen, this company was to enjoy a virtual monopoly of all the gramophone market through the 1920's to the mid-30's. In 1901, this was a long way off, so Johnson embarked on a fantastically huge advertising campaign, the likes of which had never been seen before. Gramophones were literally proclaimed from the roof-tops

and the advertising mania was in general under way. These gramophones were well made at reasonable prices which far undercut the prices of any quality musical-box.

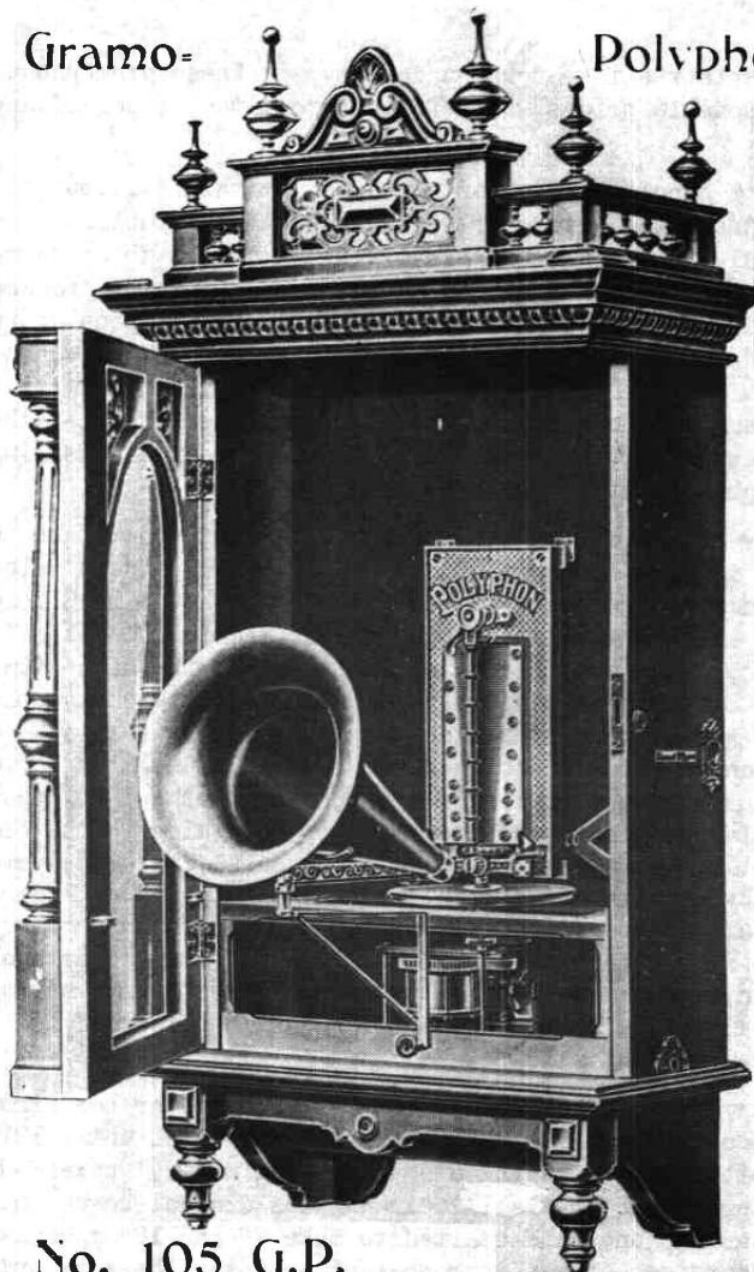
The last series of Nicole boxes was produced at this time but the quality was poor and the boxes were poorly presented to the public. No Swiss or German musical-box manufacturer really had a chance to advertise on the same scale as the phonograph and gramophone companies, backed as they were by the high finance of American and Continental speculators. It appears that cylinder boxes were mainly advertised through the wholesale and retail agents and dealers but the disc box makers did advertise their machines by name in the currently popular magazines such as the Strand Magazine and New Monthly. At the same time, Johnson was selling his gramophones through neon signs on sky-scraper roofs.

It was obvious by this time that the public were destined to take to the talking-machine, if only by force of availability and modern sales techniques, but what did you get with a phonograph that was so much more desirable than either a musical cylinder-box or disc machine? The limited repertoire of the cylinder musical-box was, of course, the main stumbling block for the Swiss manufacturers (even with the interchangeable cylinder models). But at the turn of the century this was no set-back to the German, American and Swiss disc box makers. When in 1899 Pathe could offer cylindrical records from a choice of 1,500 titles, the Polyphon catalogues for their larger disc sizes consisted of something in the order of 2,000 different titles. Added to this, musical box discs were easily mass-produced by stamping processes, whereas phonograph cylinders had to be made by a painful process of direct recordings so that only about half-a-dozen could be made at a time. With this short-term advantage, disc boxes remained in comparative popularity up until the first year of the Great War. This advantage was only short term as the recorded music catalogues visibly grew at fantastic rates.

During the first years of the 1900's most of the cylinder box firms folded up, although Messrs. Dawkins were able to struggle on until 1914 before going into leather goods, having started making musical boxes late in 1880. Nicole, after selling out all their surplus musical-boxes, put their name to a disc gramophone and started to make 7" and 10" records. However, without the services of really competent artists, these records were never a startling success. It seems probable that the 7" Nicole records were sold with the Gramo-Polyphons marketed through the Nicole Company (see note on Page 14). The manufacture of Nicole musical-boxes was finally abandoned in 1903. Nicole were not the only cylinder box makers concerned to attempt to jump on the talking-machine band-waggon; Paillard, either after giving up the serious manufacture of musical-boxes

Gramo-

Polyphon



## No. 105 G.P.

Latest Novelty in Automats

No. 105 G.P. - Size 60 x 32 x 16½ ins - 159 Notes, in walnut.  
Tunes 25 ins diameter.

Price including 6 Tunes . . . . . £31 10 0

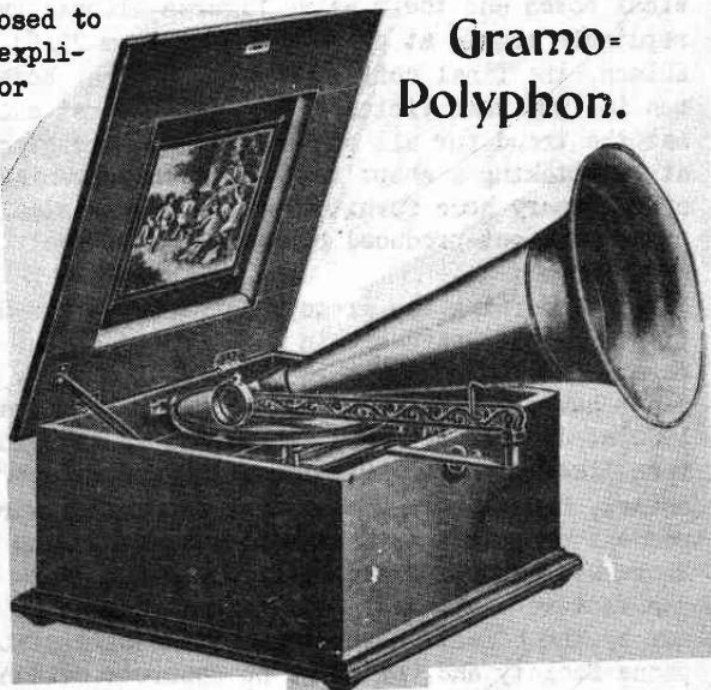
Extra Tunes . . . . .	6	each
Records 7 in . . . . .	2	..
Records 9 in or 10 in . . . . .	4	..

or very near the end, made and marketed a very attractive small cylinder phonograph called the "Echophone". As far as can be traced, no Pailliard recordings were made and the machine did not remain long on the market.

With their advantage of a wide and up-to-date repertoire, disc boxes remained in vogue right through the 1900's, but by the late years of this decade, the Phonograph and Gramophone Companies were in a position to produce cheaper and better machines with mass-produced records. In 1905, a "Puck" phonograph could be bought for as little as 5/6d - or even 3/6d provided you were not too fussy as to the tonal purity. A musical-box, even to approach this price range, must necessarily have been of a pretty gruesome quality. However, some disc box makers did make an effort to retain

the market for 'metal' music, for around the year 1902 the Polyphon works attempted to remedy the reproduction short-comings inherent in the disc type musical boxes by marketing the Gramo-Polyphon, a strange mutation between a gramophone and a Polyphon available in the larger sizes of machine. The scarcity of these machines is a fair indication of the difficulty which must have faced the Gramo-Polyphon salesmen in 1902-3. In 1907, the Polyphon Company took out a patent for an extraordinary gramophone to be called the 'Klingsor'. This machine found a more receptive public than did their earlier attempts at gramophones. In shape, it was not unlike an upright 15½" Polyphon, but less grossly Victorian, with no pillars and less flamboyant wood mouldings. The amplifying horn was of wood and was built into the top half of the cabinet, the turn-table and tone arm being mounted in the bottom portion. Across the end of the horn were stretched piano wires which were supposed to improve the tone by some inexplicable "Aeolian" means and for this reason it is known as an "Aeolian Harp Gramophone". Several of these finely-built specimens are in collections of vintage gramophones today, although they only had a short run on the market.

Polyphon were again not the only disc box manufacturers to enter the talking-machine race. A Symphonion horn gramophone has been unearthed in recent years but it cannot definitely be ascertained whether or not this was indeed made by the Lochmann organisation, although with Lochmann's ingenuity it seems unlikely that he should never have had a go at gramophones when we remember that before musical boxes, he tried to market steam-driven parlour fountains. A popular small



## Gramo-Polyphon.

No. 43. G. P.

Including 6 Polyphon tunes, 15½ in. dia.	£15 0 0
Extra Tunes . . . . .	2/6 each
Records, 7 in. . . . .	2/- ..
.. 9 in. or 10 in. . . . .	4/- ..

There is no need to say anything with reference to the quality and perfection of the Polyphon Musical Boxes, same being now well introduced all the world over, and as to working of the Disc Talking Machine in connection with the Polyphon we can only say that the idea of combining the two is carried out very well indeed, and the reproduction of sound is *clear, loud, and distinct.*

phonograph was also made by the Britannia people who made the pleasant well-known disc boxes and cheaper cylinder boxes.

Success in the talking-machine race was only offered to those firms with great drive and sufficient financial backing and unfortunately none of the musical-box entrants were able to muster the necessary capital. Had a firm like the Polyphon Company been successful in their talking-machine projects, one wonders if they might not have been able to re-introduce their musical boxes made from old manufacturing plant at a time when there might be a revival market for such things (as now - or would this be too much of a good thing!)

The perfection of mass-production methods of producing recorded music served to further establish the talking machines advantages over musical boxes and their sales figures climbed rapidly with many different reputable models at prices ranging from 22/6d for a Pathe to £200 for an Edison, the final coffin nail for musical boxes being driven home by Johnson in 1906 when Victor marketed the first enclosed horn gramophone. This set the trend for all subsequent acoustic gramophone design, the machine at last taking a shape that was both convenient and acceptable as a piece of necessary home furniture. Thus the musical-box had finally been out-priced and out-produced by this comparatively new invention.

Note: Concerning the gramophone records made under the Polyphon label mentioned by Mr. Greenacre in Issue No. 3 of THE MUSIC BOX, these Polyphon records are of the type recorded in the early 20's and consequently could never have been intended to be used on the Gramo-Polyphon made in the 1900's. Judging by the sizes quoted in existing catalogues, it seems far more likely that the Nicole single-sided records were sold with these machines, being contemporary with them. These records are made of a dark red wax composition, mounted on stiff backing and are affectionately known as 'cardboard' records. Research into the exact circumstances of manufacture of the Polyphon marked records is at present being carried out by the Official Archivist of the City of London Phonograph and Gramophone Society and, although no concrete evidence is as yet available, it seems likely that these records were made at the same time as the Klingsor or after the Great War.

THE ILLUSTRATIONS with this article are taken from the 1902-3 Polyphon catalogue.

● SOCIETY BADGES! The Musical Box Society of Great Britain lapel badge is available, price 5/6d post free, from F. S. Greenacre, 164, Lowestoft Road, Gorleston-on-Sea, Great Yarmouth, Norfolk. When ordering, please state lapel or brooch fixing required.



**T**his article, written in an attempt to meet a genuine need for basic information by novice collectors, is not intended for the more experienced collector. Nor is it intended to encompass the entire gamut of mechanical musical instruments. It serves only as a starting point. There is no certain way to acquire knowledge of this type without practical experience and since a few unwise or misguided purchases by novices can often deter rather than foster their interest in the subject, a brief guide to points to watch is thus intended. Notwithstanding this, is there a collector amongst us who can, with unfaltering voice, claim he has never been 'sold a pup' - or made a purchase he has later regretted? The Author began collecting by paying too much for some junk boxes and feels he is thus qualified - at least in part - to infer if not direct the efforts of others who are on the threshold of the hobby.

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**BEGINNERS**  
GUIDE To  
**musical box**  
COLLECTING

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People will tell you that there are scores of different types of musical box, hundreds of different makes, dozens of different musical automata. This is so but, as far as we are concerned, there are only two types of musical movement - ones that work and ones that don't. Both of these have their logical sub-divisions. Amongst those that work we have ones that work badly through poor manufacture or subsequent mechanical failure. Amongst those that don't work are ones which are beyond all economic repair and ones which require only a little attention to restore them. The phrase 'only a little attention needed' has a surprisingly wide range of connotation between the purchaser and the vendor. Some people think that a 'little attention' is all that is needed to restore a toothless comb, smooth cylinder and shattered movement to perfection. We must always form our own appraisal of the situation by knowing what to look for.

Without confusing ourselves with sub-headings and so on, we can consider that, amongst our two basic types of mechanical musical movement, there are six different types of mechanical musical application which we may find in our quest for collective items. These comprise:

- a) Cylinder musical boxes where the tune is performed by a metal cylinder studded with pins which is clockwork-driven against a tuned steel comb
- b) Disc musical movements where the tune is performed by a clockwork-driven driven metal disc rotating against a tuned steel comb
- c) Organettes which have no tuned steel comb or clockwork motor but are pneumatic instruments, hand cranked, performing music on metal reeds from a card or metal disc, paper strip or pinned wooden roller, by an action incorporating air bellows

- d) Automata where either a small cylinder movement or a disc movement is coupled to a moving doll or dolls or a staged scene which moves to the accompaniment of the music and which is clockwork-operated
- e) Mechanical singing birds where sound is produced, apparently from one or more birds in a cage or mounted in a little casket, by a small pipe or whistle played by air pumped from clockwork-operated bellows
- f) Barrel organs where music is performed on organs pipes by a rotating wooden barrel pinned with projections which act on keys or 'fingers' which let air from bellows to the pipes. These are hand cranked or, in large instruments, clockwork-driven or worked by a descending weight.

From these six headings, there are of course many sub-headings to cater for barrel pianos, fairground organs, player pianos, miniature snuff boxes, musical beer steins (tankards) and fob watches, orchestrons such as the Blackpool Tower giant, and tiny gold seals which play a tune.

However, we must start with the most common items which the novice and general collector will come upon - the cylinder musical box, the disc musical box and the organette. What points are there to watch before considering whether one of these is a worthwhile acquisition? Let's take an enquiring look at each in turn.

Cylinder box. Here, the tuned steel comb and pinned cylinder are together responsible for playing music. The whole spring power from the motor is governed by a little winged fan, air-brake or butterfly mounted on the slender worm gear or endless screw. If this is tampered with unskillfully the entire spring force will be unleashed instantly, whirling the cylinder against the comb, breaking the teeth and bending the cylinder pins. If the box has no endless, it is quite likely this has been broken or lost as the result of such a catastrophe. Evidence of this will be borne out by missing comb teeth and bent or broken cylinder pins. Bear in mind that a repair may have been attempted following the 'run' and therefore you must look most carefully at the comb for signs of damage. Not only are the comb teeth frequently broken by such a mishap but, and much less obvious on quick inspection, the slender points of the teeth can be snapped off. Under each tooth is a small damper wire and, at first sight, this damper wire can be confused for a missing point. Check each tooth point carefully.

Have a good look at the cylinder pins to see if they are broken or bent or rusted away. All pins should be proud from the cylinder although on some boxes they are slightly raked forward (at a slight tangent to the cylinder spindle). Pins which are flattened are generally impossible to straighten as they are very brittle. If the surface of the cylinder is scored or gouged irregularly, especially at the base end of the comb, this is sure evidence of a 'run' having taken place at some time. A cylinder with damaged pins must be re-pinned - a task at present undertaken only in Switzerland at a cost of from £10 per cylinder upwards.

Comb teeth can be repaired but, again, this is expensive and it is only possible to replace a few teeth due to the difficulties of re-tuning the comb. Most of the people who repair combs charge in the region of £1 per tooth and ten shillings for a new point.

A broken or missing endless screw can be fixed for about £3 but remember that where damage has been sustained to this part, there is every likelihood that there is attendant comb and pin damage.

Missing or malfunctioning dampers can be detected by listening to the box playing. If it squeaks and squawks like a bevy of piglets in a hen run, then the dampers are awry. These can be attended to fairly easily.

When looking at a box for purchase always play the box and listen to every tune. A tangled, jumbled sound suggests bent pins and misalignment of the works. Worm in the case is not too serious if the rest of the box is worth having. A dull base tone means that the lead resonators have corroded together. This can be serious and needs further investigation. Where the leads have gone powdery, some of their weight has been lost and the tone of the box impaired. Leads are very difficult to replace.

Disc box. Most of the foregoing general points apply here, too. Missing teeth again present the most serious problem. Dampers are not so easy to replace or repair and should be considered a fairly major disadvantage if they do not work properly.

The presence of rust on the discs does not necessarily detract from their playing performance, although they are obviously not so attractive as bright, polished discs. See that the projections on the underside of the discs are all there - a missing projection means a missing note. More than a few missing notes and you have a 'thin' tune. Projections can be replaced, and this is a fiddly task you must do yourself.

Organettes invariably suffer from two diseases. One attacks the bellows and deprives it of wind, the other attacks the reeds and snaps them off. Moth grubs are also a grave pest, for they seem to love eating the felt which beds in the reeds! Tatty paper rolls, torn card discs and broken tune sheets are to be avoided - even when repaired they will never perform properly.

Leaking bellows are always due to splits or tears in the rubberised cloth. It is always best to strip the bellows and re-cover completely with new pianola fabric rather than try to patch them up. Broken reeds can be replaced; again this is a fairly chancy job depending on being able to obtain matching reeds. If all the reeds sound - or can be made to sound - broken bellows serve only to lower the price - you can repair them.

Automata require specialised skill in examining as they usually have a vast number of small, intricate parts which can wear and cease to work.

They are undoubtedly collectors pieces and are often priced as such, so you must watch your step when shopping for such items. The same goes for Mechanical Singing Birds and you are best advised to seek the advice of a more knowledgeable person before buying something which is not working in these fields.

Barrel Organs suffer from broken or bent pipes, split bellows, general looseness of the framework and, most serious of all, worm in the barrel which usually means that the barrel cog strips due to the frail wood. These are scarce items well worth collecting but, as with the last-mentioned items, take skilled advice before paying highly for one that may not be working well.

With organs we can also have a look at barrel pianos. Again, worm is a major problem along with rusted strings, buckled frames and broken pins. For these, again call for guidance. From barrel pianos, we look to pianolas or player-pianos. There are 65 and 88-note varieties, the so-called 'reproducing' or 'expression' pianos and various patent instruments with involved mechanisms. Generally speaking, an 88-note pianola gives a better performance and a reproducing piano such as the Duo-Art is to be preferred unless you want to enjoy your own performance and expression on each roll. Those pianos which employ rubber tubing from the perforated tracker bar (the piece over which the music roll travels) usually suffer from perished pipes and require a large amount of work to restore. The better makers used lead tubing and, except on the score of weight, these are to be preferred. The restoration of a pianola is a difficult, lengthy job but with good ones on the market sometimes as low as £20, you should not be in too much of a hurry to buy - have a good look around first.

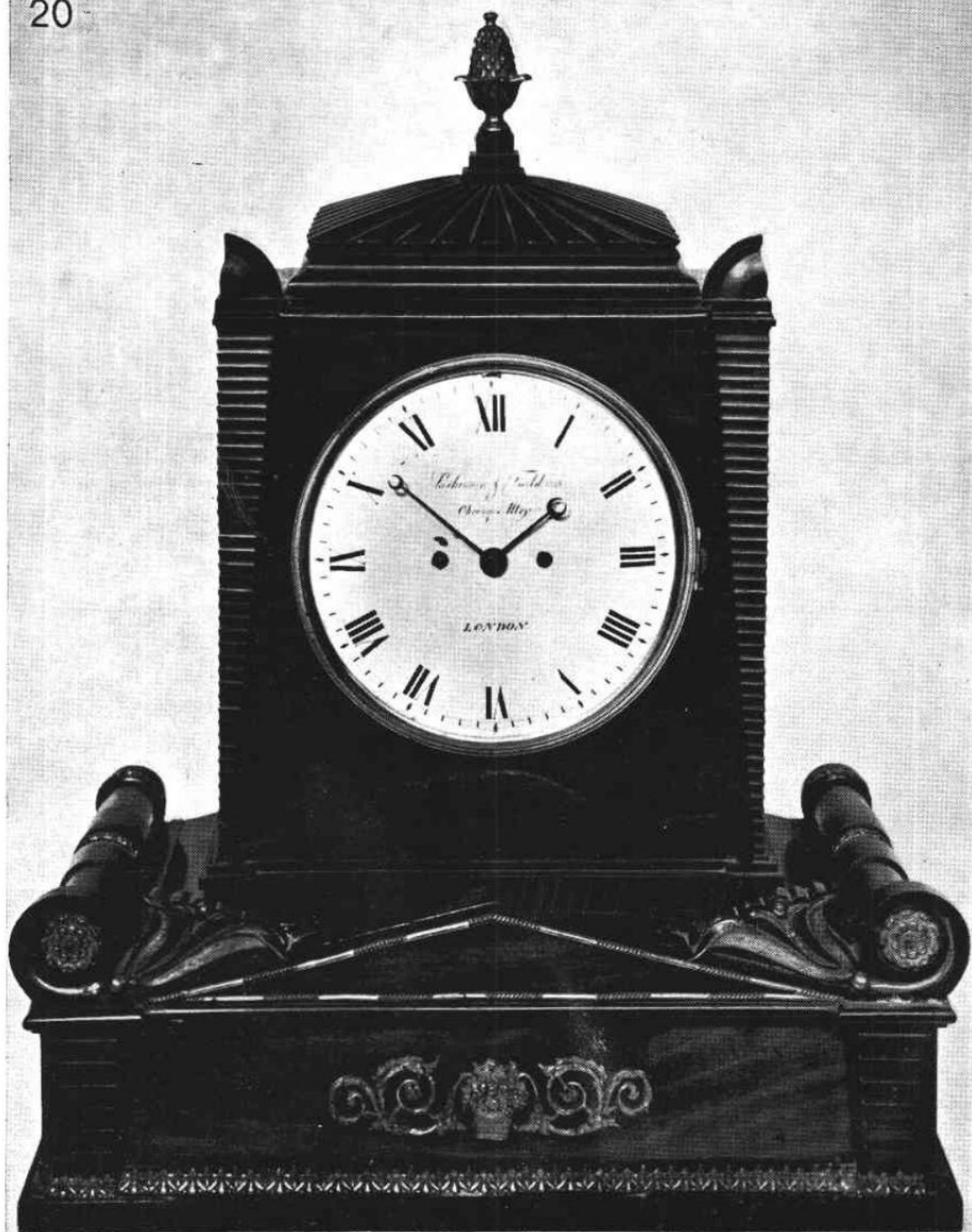
In conclusion, don't jump enthusiastically into a purchase without first of all examining the item carefully. If the price is too high, say so and offer what you feel it is worth to you. If the vendor is not interested and you are unsure, don't rush - take advice from someone else.

Happy hunting, good collecting - and may all your finds be good ones!

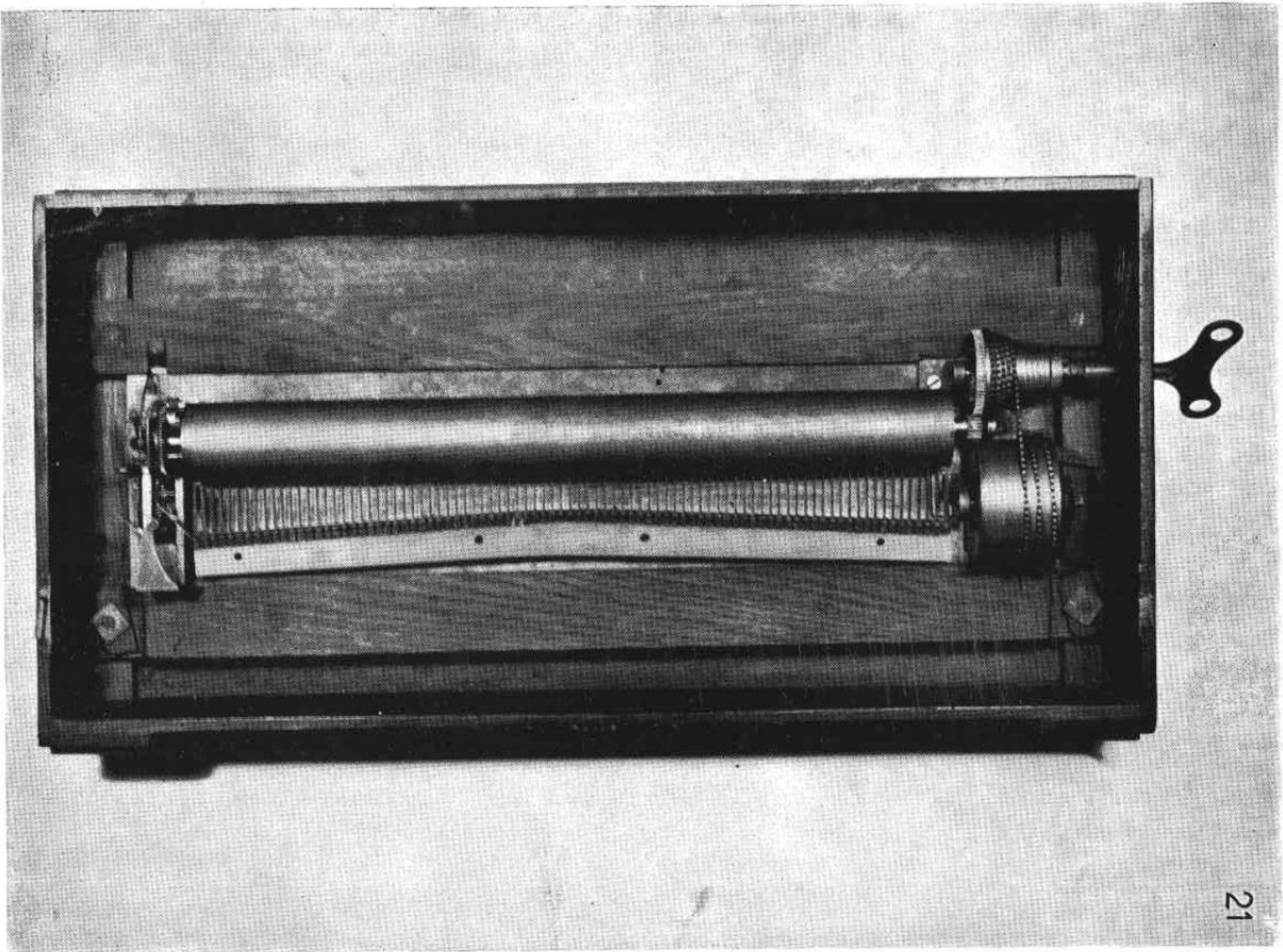


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**A** musical box with broken teeth presents a sad appearance and a singularly thin musical performance. A lot of guff is written and spoken about putting in new teeth and whilst it is not exactly an easy task, it is not a desperately difficult one. In replacing missing teeth there are two considerations - firstly there is the tone of the new tooth and secondly the appearance of the denture when viewed, so often critically, by the third party. Teeth can be put in 'invisibly' if the repairer is absolutely conscientious although the apparently poor 'botched' job may be quite tonally adequate.

The replacement of shattered teeth is an art almost as old as musical boxes themselves and the work of Metert in this field can often be found along with his precursors and contemporaries. All the early catalogues of repair sundries listed spare teeth which could be ordered as blanks of up to half a dozen or so.

**NEW TEETH**  
by  
**Endless Screw**

Repairmen today tend to favour the replacement of teeth by the fitting of ready-made teeth taken from an old comb. This 'robbing Peter to pay Paul' attitude is a fairly good idea where a sufficient supply of suitable old combs with suitable teeth exists but quite often one is faced with the decision whether to mutilate one comb to restore another. Where no scrap comb exists or where suitable teeth do not exist on scrap combs, one must make completely new teeth and this job is not really beyond the ability of the average fairly skilled model engineer or clock-maker. The real skills concern accurate, close work and, later, in tuning the new tooth to produce a matching tone to its neighbours.

To make a new tooth, you will need a small model-makers table vise with smooth jaws (not the usual rough, serrated type), several small and fairly coarse files, a selection of 6" smooth files, some fine emery cloth, a few sundry blocks of steel bar, wood and screws, the use of which we will explain as we go along. A gas-operated blow-torch (model engineers supply stores sell little ones which can be run off the domestic gas supply) and a large soldering iron will be needed, also a jewellers' saw.

The tooth is made of a high carbon steel. Originally, so-called 'graver-steel' was used but the nearest equivalent today and one which is ideally suited, is tool steel available in flat or round stock from an engineers' stockists. Unless one wants to do a lot of filing and sawing, flat stock is the best to use.

The comb itself is quite hard, but this hardness is often only on the surface. As it has to be filed, remember the basic engineering dictum that if you don't exert enough pressure on the file against the metal all you will do is chip the file! Practise soon makes relatively perfect!

If the new tooth is going to sound properly and approach anything like the tone of the rest of the comb it must be a tight fit actually in the comb. This is achieved by notching it in. Experts differ as to the amount by which a tooth should be notched, but it should be somewhere between  $\frac{1}{8}$ " and  $\frac{3}{16}$ " which is ample as well as not being too much to file.

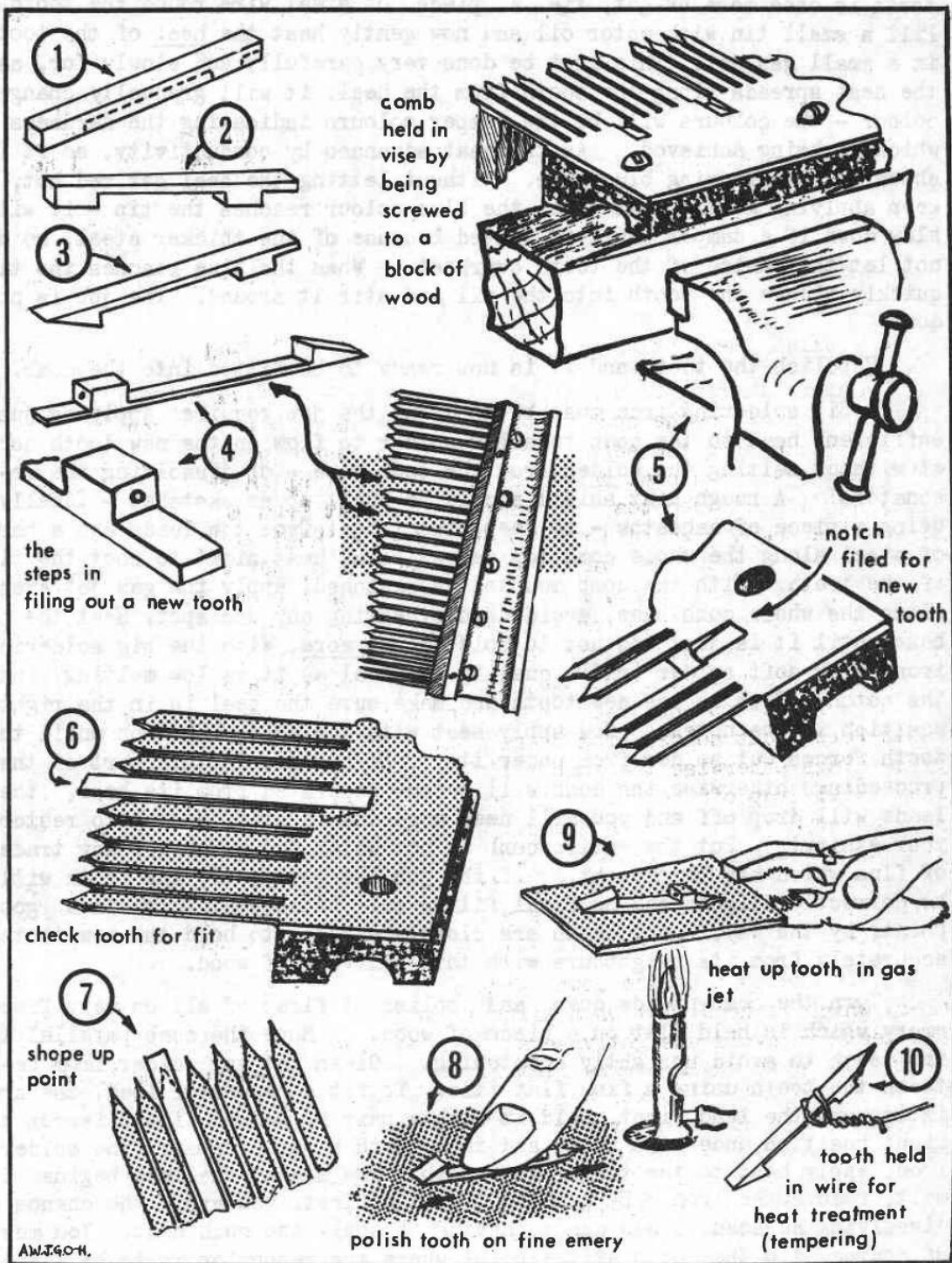
**MAKING THE TOOTH** Begin by making the new tooth or teeth. As a general rule, it is not possible to make more than two or three new teeth in a group - where more than this must be inserted, it is better to make two groups of new teeth and fit them in together. Choose a piece of tool steel wide enough to make the new tooth and of sufficient thickness to cut the heel portion. These steps are followed in the illustrations. If the note carries a damper or resonator, sufficient thickness must be allowed for this too.

Cut the steel at least half an inch longer than the tooth's total length plus its heel. This is to allow plenty to hold it by. Begin by filing it to its correct width. Now file the heel to shape - the correct angle to match this is afterwards cut into the comb.

Fix the comb with ordinary wood screws to a block of wood, clamp it into the vise and file the groove for the heel into it. Keep the groove nice and square at the edges and see that it is not rounded either in section or elevation. Try the tooth into the groove to get the heel angle correct and make certain that the side of the heel is a very tight fit in the sides of the comb groove. See that the new tooth is more or less level with the rest of the comb teeth when pressed into its notch. Remove the comb from the wood block and pencil the position of the damper anvil or resonator block where applicable on the underside. Pull out the tooth, hold it carefully in the vise (remember that it is quite soft as yet) and, keeping a watch on the pencil marks, shape up the underside but do see that you are filing parallel in length and width of the tooth.

Try the tooth back in the comb and mark out the point. Cut and shape this, leaving it about  $\frac{1}{32}$ " long to allow for trimming and grinding later. Put the tooth upside down on a block of steel covered with a sheet of fine emery and polish it by moving the tooth up and down the emery until all the file marks are removed. A final polish on leather shines it up. Finish filing up the underside of the tooth until it is exactly the same thickness as the next adjacent longer tooth in the comb (ideally, check on this with a micrometer, although an eyeglass comparison is often adequate. Drill the damper hole in the anvil if required.

**HEAT TREATMENT** This is frightfully easy! Put the finished tooth on a steel plate and heat it up until it is red hot. Quench it quickly in water and polish it again to remove the scaling from the heat. When the



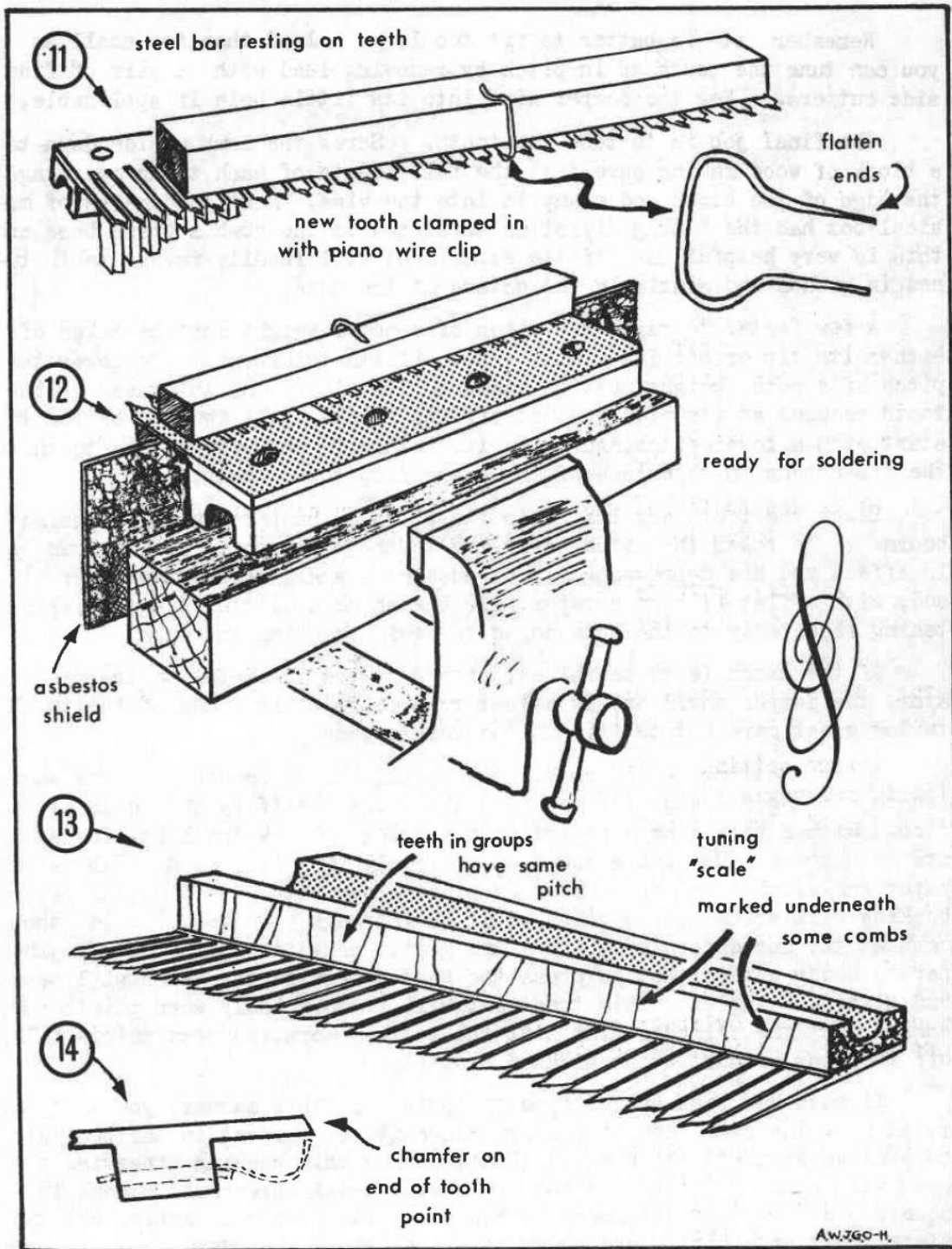
tooth is once more bright, tie a piece of steel wire round the tooth. Fill a small tin with motor oil and now gently heat the heel of the tooth in a small gas jet. This must be done very carefully and slowly for, as the heat spreads along the tooth from the heel, it will gradually change colour - the colours will be the temper colours indicating the hardness which is being achieved. As the heat advances by conductivity, so it is shown by an advancing blue line. Without letting the heel get red hot, keep applying gentle heat until the blue colour reaches the tip - it will slow down if a damper anvil is fitted because of the thicker steel, so do not let the centre of the tooth overheat. When the blue reaches the tip quickly plunge the tooth into the oil and stir it around. The job is now done!

Repolish the tooth and it is now ready to be fitted into the comb.

A big soldering iron must be used and the job requires applying just sufficient heat to the comb to allow solder to flow on the new tooth socket without melting the solder from the comb base - or dissolving the resonators! A rough heat shield should be built up as sketched - ideally using a piece of asbestos - to keep direct heat from the leads and a bar of steel along the whole comb top serves as a 'heat sink' to cool the tips of the teeth. With the comb mounted as sketched, apply the gas jet evenly along the whole comb base, avoiding overheating any one spot. Heat the comb base until it is just too hot to hold and no more. With the big soldering iron, flow soft solder (radio quality is ideal as it is low melting) into the notch. Push in the new tooth and make sure the heel is in the right position in the notch. Now apply heat with the soldering iron until the tooth forces out solder from under it. Do not overdo this part of the proceedings otherwise the comb will become separated from its base, the leads will drop off and you will need more than a stiff Scotch to restore your sanity! Put the entire comb in hot water and scrub off any traces of flux which may be present. If the job has gone well, the tooth will be correctly aligned and no final filing will be needed. It is a good point, by the way, where teeth are closely spaced, to hold the new tooth accurately from its neighbours with thin slivers of wood.

Turn the comb upside down and polish it first of all on very fine emery which is held flat on a piece of wood. Move the comb parallel to the teeth to avoid unsightly scratching. Clean out any solder from between the teeth using a fine flat file. To fit a resonator lead, the art is to warm the lead first, hold it with a pair of warmed fine pliers in the right position under the tooth and then, with a radio repair fine soldering iron, apply heat to the top of the tooth. The moment the lead begins to melt, remove the iron. By heating the lead first, you avoid the chance of dissolving adjacent leads due to having to apply too much heat. You must, of course, tin the tooth at the point where the resonator is to be fitted.





Remember it is better to fit too large a lead than too small as you can tune the tooth up in pitch by removing lead with a pair of fine side cutters. Peg the damper wire into its little hole if applicable.

The final job is to tune the tooth. Screw the comb upside down to a block of wood making sure that the full length of each tooth overhangs the edge of the block and clamp it into the vise. Most good makes of musical box had the tuning divisions scratched on the comb's brass base and this is very helpful as a little experiment will readily reveal teeth tuned in groups and similarly the octave of the note.

A few facts. To raise the pitch of a note, weight must be taken off either its tip or off its flanks - not off its thickness. To lower the pitch of a note, weight must be added to its tip or the thickness of the tooth reduced at its middle - not off its flanks. It is thus better to start with a lower pitch and raise it. This is why we made the tooth to the dimensions in thickness of the preceding lower tooth.

Pluck the tooth and listen to its pitch as compared with its neighbours. To lower the pitch, lift the tooth (the comb is upside down so in effect you are depressing it) by pushing a small screwdriver under it and, with a flat file or scraper file the shank a little at a time, listening repeatedly to the note so as to avoid removing too much.

If the pitch is to be raised, either reduce the metal on the resonator, the damper anvil or, as a last resort, file the sides of the tooth taking great care not to file the adjacent teeth.

Before setting up the comb, the points must be honed to the same length and angle - you will see that the point itself is angled in elevation. With a very fine abrasive stone, bring the new tooth in line with its neighbours. Now get a sheet of extremely fine 'wet or dry' abrasive paper and stick it on to a sheet of plate glass with water - the paper backing will wring to the glass if it is thoroughly wetted. Hold the comb at the correct chamfer angle and gently move it up and down on the paper, being careful not to press too hard otherwise the teeth will bend and alter the angle. This treatment will restore badly worn points and ensure that the cylinder pins lift the teeth. Worn, rounded points fall off the pins without being plucked properly.

If much has been ground from the points in this manner, you will have to pack up the rear edge of the comb when it is screwed to the bedplate to achieve adequate plucking. Don't overdo this packing otherwise the comb will sound metallic and the teeth will easily break off - back to square one again! A thickness or two of writing paper is ample. All the steps dealt with herein are shown in the attached sketches.

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## FORTE PIANO MANDOLIN BOXES

being a letter from Dr. ROBERT BURNETT



I was very interested in the last part of the letter from Mr. Tallis published in the Autumn 1964 issue of THE MUSIC BOX. Mr. Tallis says there that he has a Nicole Freres mandolin forte-piano box of which he does not think many were made.

I would agree with this, giving as the main reason that forte-piano boxes were among the first types to be made after the simple single comb boxes, whilst mandolin boxes were introduced later at a time when the manufacture of forte-piano boxes, which were rarely entirely successful musically, was declining. As evidence of this I would say that, in my experience, the majority of forte-piano boxes are key-wind, while nearly all mandolin boxes are lever wind. And, in case anyone should think that I do not appreciate forte-piano boxes, let me say at once that I share the view of most collectors that they are among the most desirable boxes to acquire and I am always on the look out for one. I think that the achievement of the forte-piano effect with the two combs represents a mechanical tour de force, which one must admire, but I think one must recognise that the very nature of the music from a musical box makes the achievement of a really satisfactory contrast between the loud and soft combs well nigh impossible. The reason is that, if the contrast is great enough to be immediately appreciated, then the ringing tone of the louder comb - one of the most attractive features of musical boxes - continues after the louder comb has stopped playing and drowns the first few notes of the softer comb. As a result, unless one is on the look-out for the softer comb, one may easily be left with the impression that the box has stopped playing altogether when the louder comb stops. This is certainly what happened the first time I heard my most successful forte-piano box.

Thus the forte-piano boxes present a choice between a contrast - which is not immediately apparent and is therefore musically unsatisfactory - and a good contrast accompanied by drowning of the softer comb whenever it starts to play after a loud passage. The only forte-piano box which I have come across which avoided this difficulty was quite a small one in which the two combs had little resonance. The result was thus obtained at the sacrifice of one of the most attractive features of a musical box.

In connection with mandolin boxes, I would say that some boxes deserve the term more than others. In my view, the only boxes which deserve the term fully are those having no less than eight teeth tuned to the same pitch for each note in the greater part of the treble. With this

number, the time between the sounding of the first and the last of the eight teeth is sufficient to allow the first one to be sounded again immediately after the eighth has been sounded. It thus becomes possible for a single note to be sounded continuously with a mandolin effect for an indefinite period. This gives a very satisfying effect, which, incidentally, is also found in the 19 $\frac{5}{8}$ " Polyphon and other large disc machines.

The only 'full mandolin' cylinder box which I have been able to acquire has a cylinder thirteen inches long and plays four tunes on a comb with about 190 teeth. In the course of the time I have been collecting, I can only recall having seen three others of this type in collections of friends. I think it may be said, then, that 'full mandolin' boxes are pretty rare.

Mandolin boxes with fewer teeth in the comb are much more common and are to be found with combs having from about 90 teeth upwards. In these the number of teeth for each note in the treble is from three or four upwards and the mandolin effect is limited to this number of repetitions of any given note of the melody. The effect is still very pleasing and where the notes of the melody are of short duration, the effect is the same as in a full mandolin box. For notes of a long duration, however, the mandolin effect is limited to a short burst at the beginning of each note.

I think it would be very interesting to know what is the serial number of Mr. Tallis's box and how many teeth there are on the combs. I myself have a large forte-piano box by Nicole Freres having a 23-inch cylinder and a total of 171 teeth in the two combs. The box plays eight airs and the musical arrangement would certainly justify the term mandolin, although this does not appear on the tune-sheet. The serial number is about 35,000 and the winding is by means of an early-type lever. I also have a later box by Nicole Freres, serial number about 45,000, which is described as a mandolin box on the tune-sheet. This has a 17-inch cylinder and plays eight tunes on two combs arranged in series giving a total of about 135 teeth. Musically the mandolin effect is no more pronounced than that of the earlier forte-piano box.

One may conclude perhaps that initially the term 'mandolin' was used only to describe full mandolin boxes but that later, for commercial reasons no doubt, it was used more widely to describe boxes in which the mandolin effect was only partial.

In conclusion, I am finding life in Uganda interesting and rewarding but I certainly miss the long hours I used to spend working on my boxes and the interesting discussions with my many friends among Members of the Society. To all of these I send my very best wishes until the time when I am able to see them again.

Dr. Burnett's address is: Butobere School, P.O. Box 90, Kabale, Uganda ●

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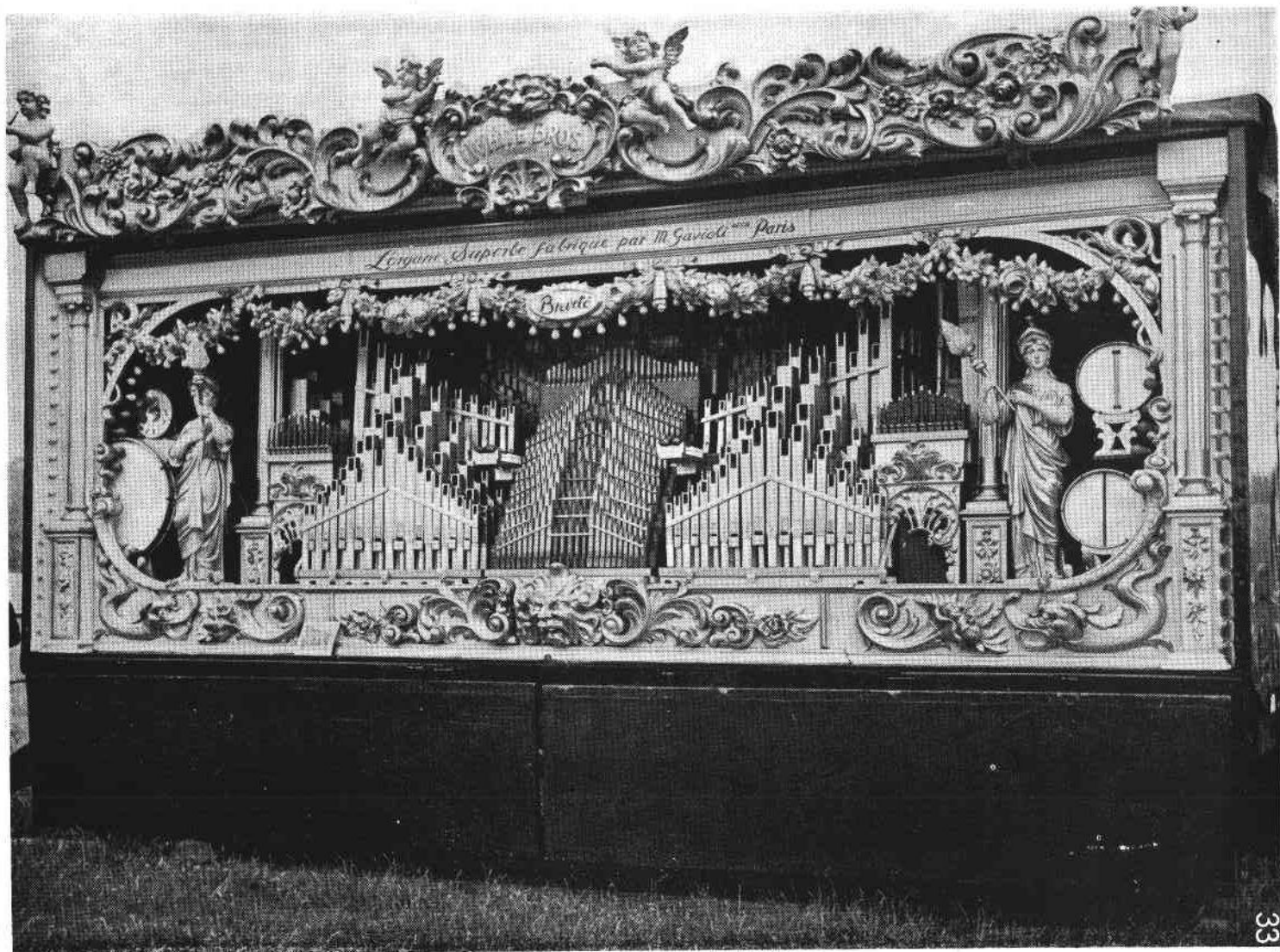
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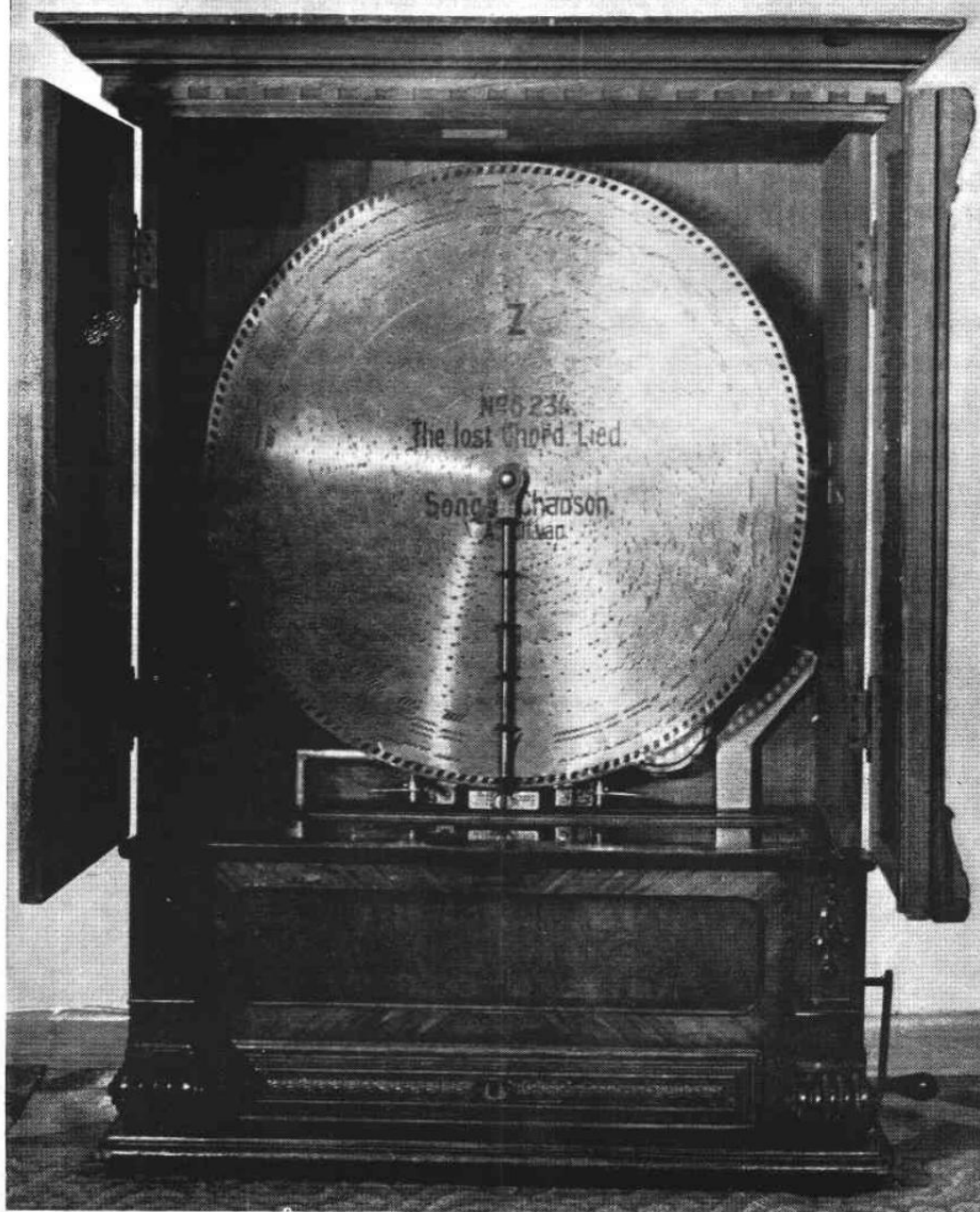
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THE ADVERTISEMENT, reproduced on the left here, was contributed by Member Bruce Angrave. Taken from a magazine dated about January, 1891, it makes quite extraordinary reading. The "Demon" magic lantern was probably manufactured as an export model by the well-known German makers of cheap lanterns whose name is unknown but for a trade mark 'E.P.', suggests Mr. David Francis of the British Film Institute who is also a collector of early cinematograph apparatus. Whilst the "Demon" might have been produced for the British market it is not inconceivable that it could have been a discontinued 'job lot'. Since the company of D. Fowler is not listed amongst the 1891 directory of magic lantern distributors it seems likely that they were general wholesalers selling cheap lines direct to the public through mail order. As to the quality and make of the musical boxes contained in this package deal, one can only assume that they were of the very cheap and tawdry type which, in the face of the competition created by the phonograph (see elsewhere in this issue) flooded the market in the 1890's. Anyone with experience of the magic lantern will note that the poor demon literally has the hot seat....







# TUNE UN-IDENTIFICATION 31



by BRUCE ANGRAVE

WHEN, towards the end of last year, the opportunity of conducting a Tune Identification Panel came up at a Committee Meeting, I volunteered with enthusiasm. I was glad to have the chance as an extremely lay member with no highly specialised qualifications such as damper dexterity, tooth transplantation, barrel rebristling, aptness for accounting, organising ability nor editorship expertise, of justifying my preserve on the Committee. An invitation and set of instructions having been rapidly devised and sent off to Members, the expected deluge of tapes was awaited. I was even able, after a supreme effort of organisation, to get both my tape recorders back from the repairers at the same time. But for several weeks no tapes appeared and furtive telephone calls began to be exchanged between Committee Members with a view to stimulating response by more drastic measures. However, we had underestimated the industry of our Members. They were all busy, as it subsequently became apparent, borrowing or buying tape recorders, learning to use them and cultivating loud ringing voices with which to preface their recordings. One Member even travelled to the M1 Motorway (or so it seemed) in order to enrich the quality of his music by contrasting it with the ugliness of the sounds of modern life. It appeared to pay off for two of his tunes were identified! Another accompanied his music with the charming and domestic sounds of family life, to wit a baby in the background, whilst a third included a singing bird, probably mechanical, but possibly from some sylvan glade, a-twinkle with Polyphonic cherubs, hard by his house. For these and the other submissions, fourteen in all and including ones from Geneva and comprising nearly a hundred tunes, I was very grateful.

Re-recording proved surprisingly straightforward. I set up my two tape recorders with an electronic link between them, playing the Members tapes on my Uher machine and recording them consecutively via my Cossor on a single large spool. The speeds of different recordings varied between  $3\frac{3}{4}$ " and  $7\frac{1}{2}$  i.p.s. and the modulations differed but these were easily adjusted to a common level on the Cossor tape.

Friends sometimes look at me with undeserved reverence when, after I have heard two notes from a Symphony being broadcast by the B.B.C., I say "That's Vaughan Williams' Fourth" or "Shostakivitch's Fifth" or "that comes from Bloch". But this reverence is wholly unmerited and the abil-

ity applies only to music which I bought as records when young and played incessantly at full volume to the distress of my parents.

Unidentified music on musical boxes is entirely another matter. The only unidentified tune which I recognised among those submitted was "Ain't it orl a bleedin' shime" and Mr. Henry A. J. Lawrence, its owner in a subsequent letter, hotly denied that his collection was so debased as to include a title of such vulgarity. The panel of musical experts - Dr. John Hawkins, Dr. Massey Gawkins and Mr. Golding, dodn't fare much better and I fully agree with them that the appreciation of a tune on a musical box often requires special tonal skill. Particularly in recordings where resonances in electrical equipment impinge themselves upon the already prevalent harmonies of the musical boxes, twiddly-bits and decorative passages often sound much louder than the actual theme music. In fact I noticed after several of the playings necessary when making the Cossor tape that I became aware of familiar themes which I hadn't unravelled at first hearing.

In order to cheer the panel up a bit at the beginning of things, by giving them something to recognise, I inserted two pieces from one of my own machines and was very disconcerted at the unanimous shouts of recognition given by the whole of the attendant company. This, I felt, made me look very ignorant as I could not very well confess then and there that I secretly knew the names of the tunes all the time. However, of a total of 48 recordings played, I was happy to find that more than 20 were recognised, mostly by Members of the audience. Of these, Mr. Lawrence had one from his Lecoultre box identified as "When your days of philandering are over" from Mozart's "Figaro". One of Mr. T. Jones offerings was identified as "True is my love" but Mr. Coombs was unlucky with all of his whilst Mr. Horngacher of Geneva and his Pailliard Sublime Harmonie were rewarded with "It's Love that makes the World go Round" by Sullivan and something which I thought (probably wrongly) was whatever "Where O where has my little dog gone" is in French. Mr. Speaight was lucky with two of his tunes and Mr. Ridsdill with an aria from The Magic Flute. Mr. Greenacre's disc machine netted "You hold yourself like this" from Patience and it was thought an early version of Jingle Bells followed by a polka by Strauss. Mrs. Gilchrist's musical doll discovered that it had been warning us "Here comes the Bogie Man" and Mr. Cramp was told that he was the possessor of Fra Diavalo by Auber though this was subsequently altered to Babylonian March from Act lll of Nabucco by Mr. Massey.

Mr. Atkins, our most distant attending Member, returned, alas, empty handed but Mr. Radford collected something from The Grande Duchess by Offenbach followed by one of Rossini's less recognisable works. Mr. Sherriff's box also produced a recognised tune thought originally to be Don Pasquale but subsequently altered to the Brindisi from Lucretia Borgia by Donizetti.

Mr. Lawrence's jumble sale box sounds that "The bloom is on the Rye" and another of his pieces from an unknown interchangeable cylinder box was identified as "La Belle Amie" from Norma. Mr. Hornbacher found that Carl Millar was confessing "I only kissed her shoulder" and Mr. Lubbock, whose tape arrived late somewhat and had to be played on the 'second time round' had a Bremond piece partly identified as a Waltz by Godfrey. The last piece to be identified before the Company moved on to further pleasures was Mrs. Gilchrist's "Killalore".

For my part, I thoroughly enjoyed the exercise, even though, on returning home and playing the monitor tape recorded on Mr. de Vere Green's Phillips back on my Cossor, I found that a discrepancy between the two machines had turned the entire gathering into a general meeting of chipmunks. Mr. Ord-Hume sounded like Pinky and Mr. Coombs like Perky and as for those resonant decorative passages ..... But all was made clear as ever even though a little shrill, so nothing of relevance was lost.

Note: Those among us who have heard Mr. Bruce Angrave's amusing and interesting broadcasts on Mechanical Music will be delighted to learn that Bruce has prepared a talk on fairground organs entitled "The Pipes of Pandemonium" to be broadcast on B.B.C. Third Programme on June 5th.



## WHAT THE PAPERS SAY

### MORE PIPER WINDOWS

**J**OHAN PIPER, the artist who designed the windows for Coventry Cathedral, has designed three windows for Pershore Abbey, in Worcestershire. It dates back to 689 A.D.

The windows are to be 12ft. tall and one foot wide. He and John Betjeman visited the abbey last year and decided that the shape of the windows precluded any representational design and their distance from the congregation made symbolism pointless, so they settled for a richly-coloured abstract.

### BARREL-ORGAN COLLECTOR

Mr. Piper designed the windows for Pershore Abbey at the request of the vicar, the Rev. Dr. Peter Moore, who is also the chairman of the four-year-old annual Pershore Festival of arts and music—"the only subsidised festival that makes a profit," he claims.

Dr. Moore is a collector of 18th century barrel-organs. "John Betjeman sends his love to them every time he writes," he told me.

**PRIZE** for ingeniousness in Christmas presents goes to a device advertised in the U.S. which consists of a toy house on a stand with several figures. To set it working, you open upper window inside which is an undressed girl. A workman climbs ladder to look, hits woman bystander with a plank. She smacks another bystander, who kicks a ball towards policeman. Policeman deflects ball into manhole. Up pops workman from manhole. You then discover the whole thing is a cigarette lighter, and you light your cigarette from the workman's blowlamp.

... a real Jaquet-Droz and no mistake.....



A.314. The Times, E.C.4. 223.—Write condition.—Write Box E.424, The Times, E.C.4. HAVE YOU RECEIVED A ...

Ah yes! But what sort of music does he want it to play?

"We just managed to get out of the way in time. The house hit two vehicles which were passing each other outside."


I'll bet that one went down well in court....!



**LAST WORD** THEY met when Miss J who is a keen horserider and lover, was on holiday riding in the Yorkshire Dales. —Waste Trade World magazine. Sporting type, eh?




David Tallis, 83, Moss Lane, Pinner, Middlesex, writes:

I own two of the unknown maker boxes which Mr. de Vere Green mentioned in his letter in the last issue. The first is a forte-piano mandoline box which I bought to the last meeting. It is a converted key-wind box playing four airs. The end-flap is retained but a brass winding handle has been fitted between the motor barrel and the case end. The second box is a crank-wind eight-air. Points of similarity are as follows: (i) Tune sheets are both the same as the photograph; (ii) the bed-plates are polished brass; (iii) the comb washers are small and of polished brass; (iv) the numbers are 11258 and 14149 respectively stamped on the bed-plate; (v) both cases have the workshop assembly numbers 641 and 170 written on them - these numbers are scribed also on the cylinder, drive wheel and bed-plate indicating that mechanisms and boxes are from the same workshop; (vi) written inside the bottom of each case in ink is the word 'Marquettee'; (vii) the cases have identical locks and hasps; (viii) both wheel trains are of similar construction. Finally, I am of the opinion that both boxes are of a very high standard of manufacture and that their make is not one of those normally encountered. The first box was bought from a dealer in Meissen and the second one has at one time been in the possession of 'E. Marshall, The Firs, Enfield'. I hope that this information is of interest to Members. 

Post   
Bag 

Frank Greenacre, 164, Lowestoft Road, Gorleston-on-Sea, Norfolk, writes:

With regard to the questions asked in Mr. Tallis' letter (issue No. 7) I am able to provide a little information on his National Musical Box. These instruments, which always seem to be of the cheaper type, were marketed by The National Fine Art Association, Farringdon Road, London, E.C. They advertised themselves as being 'makers' but it is extremely doubtful if, in fact, they did manufacture mechanical musical instruments and, more probably, they purchased quantities of ready-made instruments and attached their own tune-sheets and transfers. They also marketed a 'National' organette having 14 reeds and quite obviously hailing from America. These play the standard 7 $\frac{1}{4}$ " bands made by the Automatic Paper Music Co. I also possess a 'Nicole a Geneva' box in plain drop-side case similar to that described by Mr. Tallis, with the tunes listed in two columns of three. The box is of good quality and Mr. Clark assures that it is a Nicole, but I cannot understand why the serial number does not fit into place with the products of this firm as it is much lower than the commencement of the Nicole Freres numbers. One could assume that it was made before the brothers went into partnership but, in my own case, several things point to the fact that the box is not so early as this. 



Mr. Gerald Planus, 6, Vanbrugh Fields, Blackheath, S.E.23, writes (again);

With reference to my article "There are Fairies at the Bottom of my Garden" (MUSIC BOX No. 8) which you deservedly published in the last issue, I have been approached by numerous Members who have cast aspersions on my integrity and in some cases have expressed disbelief. May I therefore substantiate my verification by letting these Members know about the following incident which recently happened to me.

I was walking along the street. A stranger came up to me saying "Lofty! You buy musical boxes, don't you?" Yes, I says. I've got one, he says. Well? I says. Yes, he says, I've got one at home. Tell me where, I says. I will, he says, and he does.

I now own a Nicole Freres No. 37078 Grand Format 4-overture box, inlaid with Brass, Mother o'Pearl, Enamel, Buhl - and all in perfect order.

You know, there are fairies at the bottom of my garden.....



Editor's Comment: Incredibly enough - and for a reason that I cannot explain even with the aid of dark glasses and mirrors, the facts of the latest piece from the Planus pen (above) are quite true! I saw him on the evening of the event and his face was alternately sparkling with pride and ashen at the realisation of Fate which had singled him out for this odd happening. He has, since that date, grown a beard and tells everyone he's Ord-Hume. I now walk the streets of London hoping I look a typical Planus on the prowl.

Mr. C. W. Bruce, Ridgemount, Long Lane, Tilehurst, Reading, Berks, says:

May I congratulate you on the Christmas issue with its fine illustrations on art paper. I hope that you may be able to give more articles on the matter of identification of musical boxes - illustrations of programme sheets might well help here. Regarding woodworm troubles discussed in the last two issues, I was given a tip by an antique dealer years ago which I have found effective. The cure is the application of Sloan's Linament by use of a drop stopper or fountain-pen filler. Drop linament into each hole, keeping the box flat with the holes uppermost and doing one side at a time to keep the holes in the right position. Apply again a week later and the cure is sure. If you can take out the movement and leave the box out in cold weather somewhere dry, your troubles are gone.



Editor's Comment: Musical box identification is one thing we will concentrate on with the help of Members who have knowledge. So many makers used a variety of tune sheets that it cannot always be taken as a sure guide. Having treated a wormed box with the above cure, my neighbour came in with a bowl of hot soup saying that, having had a whiff of the linament, she thought I might be unable to manage to reach my cooker. Jolly thoughtful, I reckon.



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 136. R. C. Cherry, 76, Grange Crescent, Grange Hill, Chigwell, Essex  
 137. B. F. Wootton, "Woodfield", 2, Cranfield Lane, Harlington, Hayes, Mdd  
 138. L. R. Munsick, 7, Beechwood Drive, Morristown, New Jersey, U.S.A.

CHANGE OF ADDRESS

55. E. M. Bruton (NAG Press), 258, Gray's Inn Road, London, W.C.1  
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