

JOURNAL OF
THE
MUSICAL BOX
SOCIETY OF
GREAT BRITAIN

THE MUSIC BOX

a magazine of mechanical music



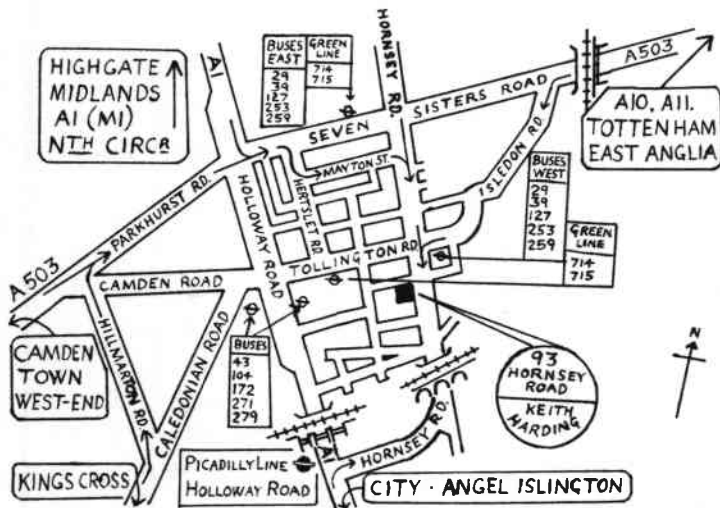
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W. K. Harding and C. A. Burnett

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THE MUSIC BOX

THE JOURNAL OF THE MUSICAL BOX SOCIETY OF GREAT BRITAIN

Volume 5 Number 4

SPRING 1972

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The Editor writes:

This year marks the 10th anniversary of the formation of The Musical Box Society of Great Britain. This is not to say that this Edition of The Music Box is an anniversary one. This honour is reserved for the next

Christmas issue, when it will be ten years since Arthur Ord-Hume published our first ever Journal, after the formation of the Society on 1st December, 1962.

The last Christmas issue, first Journal to be published under your new Editor, seems to

have been well received. For this we must thank the many people, Members and others, who submitted material. On behalf of the Society I extend gratitude and congratulations to these brave souls. They found it rewarding I am sure, and much less of a task than they expected. I sincerely hope that this will encourage many more Members to 'have a go'. Your letters, material, articles and whatever will receive my full attention. If you have an idea, and need aid to bring it to fruition, I am more than willing to help. In particular I feel that the 'letters' pages should be expanded and would like to see more Members voicing their opinions on the subject of mechanical music.

The new series 'Question and Answer' has received favourable comment from many quarters, showing that Members are very interested in practical knowledge. One thing though, unless Keith and Cliff get enough questions it will be very difficult to keep up the standard we have seen. Even if you have found the answer to a question, if you feel that it would be of general interest to Members, please send it in. It may well be that the answer given in the article will augment the answer you have already found. We should all remember that, if we find pleasure in reading the Journal, no one is rewarded in any other way for writing what we read than by giving us that pleasure.

It is not ever forgotten that a good proportion of our Members live outside the United Kingdom, particularly in North America. I think that Frank Metzger in the last Journal,

as others have before him, proved that the language can cross the Atlantic in a form readable by both Nations. Let me then say that the indigenous machines of your Continent are still much of a mystery to those of us in Britain and we would greatly welcome more participation in the pages of this Journal from you.

To change the subject: I have been asked by your Committee to re-iterate that the annual subscription to the Society is THREE POUNDS. Overseas Members are asked to pay by International money order whenever possible. The subscription is due on 1st January every year.

The announcement that our venue for the Annual General Meeting is The Great Western Royal Hotel will come as a surprise to Members who read in the last Journal that we were looking else-where for a meeting place owing to the large increase in the hotel charges. Thanks to the valiant efforts of our Hon. Secretary, Reg Waylett, the price of the rooms at the Great Western has been considerably reduced. Not, I'm afraid, to the original level, but since we are so well accommodated there, in spite of the huge charge for tea and coffee, it was decided in Committee that we should remain there for the time being. We can make the extra cost worth while if we do our best to take something for display and help the Meeting to be the success it has always been. May I also say that we are most happy to welcome any of our overseas Members who can travel to the Meeting.

GRAHAM WEBB



THE ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

The Annual General Meeting of *The Musical Box Society of Great Britain* will be held on Saturday and Sunday, 3rd and 4th of June 1972, at The Great Western Royal Hotel, Paddington Station, London, W.2. Full details will be circulated to Members as usual by the Hon. Secretary.

Members attending the Meeting are most earnestly requested to return their answer cards, the earlier the better. It is hoped that we shall have a good attendance and your Committee is making every effort to make the programme interesting and informative. There will be a Dinner on Saturday evening. Please arrange to bring some part of your collection for display if at all possible.



VENEERING A MUSICAL BOX CASE

by L.C. Thompson

Some time ago I bought a cylinder musical box at an auction sale locally. When I first saw the machine the mechanism was liberally coated in oil and grease, with plenty of black fluff adhering, but apart from all of the dampers being corroded and useless it was mechanically sound.

The case, however, was puzzling in that it was nothing more than grained and varnished soft wood. The type of finish which was applied to the very cheapest and late musical boxes. The finish was in poor condition and entirely unacceptable, in particular since the movement was an extremely rare B.A. Bremond "Mandoline Organocleide" playing 5 pieces from Oratorio together with 'Abide with Me'. I therefore decided to veneer the case and did so in rosewood with a crossbanding of tulipwood edged in boxwood and with a decorative inlay on the front.

I give here the details of how the work of veneering can be done, in the hope that my experience will encourage other members to attempt a similar exercise.

Here is a list of materials and tools required:

- Coarse sandpaper
- Medium sandpaper
- Garnet or flour paper
- Gauge 000 steel wool
- Veneer cutting knife
- Oilstone
- 2 feet long steel straight-edge
- Steel rule marked in 1/16 inches
- Electric iron
- Electric soldering iron
- Cork or wood sanding block
- Veneer
- Crossbanding or stringing
- Decorative inlay, if required
- 'Avco' glue film
- 'Brummer' stopper
- Duster

First sand the surface always with the grain with coarse sand paper to remove all old stain and varnish, glue etc., and to roughen the surfaces to provide a key for the glue. Cut a sheet of glue film to size place it glue side down on the surface to be covered and pass the hot iron over it. The paper

backing will then come away, leaving a thin film of glue on the wood. A piece of veneer should then be cut a little over size and place in position. Apply the hot iron to one corner of the veneer; this will immediately melt the glue. Remove the iron and press down hard with a duster; the glue will set almost immediately and the process can be continued until the entire piece of veneer has been laid. At this stage the overhanging edges should be trimmed, as if left they may be accidentally knocked and a large splinter could be broken out, extending far into the finished sheet. The edges should be trimmed with the knife, leaving a slight protrusion which can be finished with sandpaper.

It will be found that rosewood, if used, is particularly hard to cut, especially when working against the grain. Do not attempt to penetrate fully at the first cut, rather make four or five cuts, sharpening the knife frequently on the oilstone and holding the blade firmly against the metal straight edge, as otherwise it will tend to follow the curves in the grain.

The next stage is the insertion of the crossbanding. Accuracy is essential here, as few things look worse than gaps and badly mitred joins and if you feel unable to undertake this work satisfactorily, it is better to be content with the plain veneer. For those who wish to crossband, after measuring carefully take the sharpened knife and straightedge and score out as necessary making sure that you have penetrated right through the veneer; it does not





matter if you cut a little into the softwood beneath. When the scoring is completed, take the electric soldering iron and place it on one end of the strip of veneer which you wish to remove, slip the point of the veneer knife beneath it, and pull it up. You can then draw the hot soldering iron along and pull up the strip of waste veneer. Try the crossbanding in the gap; it should be an exact fit, but a little careful widening may be necessary in places. As some of the glue will have been removed with the waste wood it will be necessary to add more. Simply cut strips of glue flim to the correct width, discard the paper backing and place them in position, fit the crossbanding on top, having first mitred the corners, and lay it by means of the soldering iron. A little scorching does not matter as it will be removed in the sanding.

The mitreing of the crossbanding is tricky, as you are cutting at 45° across the grain and it has a tendency to split; it may be necessary to make twelve or more passes and keep sharpening the knife. Do not try to cut through at one attempt or the crossbanding will simply split.

At this stage it is a good plan to rub a finger over the veneer inch by inch and listen for the hollow sound which reveals that a part is not properly stuck down. If any parts are found, take the hot iron and deal with them.

The work may now be completed by filling any

splits or gaps in the veneer with "Brummer" stopper and sanding level with medium sandpaper wrapped round a wood or cork block. Finish with fine sandpaper, flour or garnet paper and fine steel wool. When perfectly flat the surface is ready for wax or French polishing as required. *Never* sand across the grain.

The veneers and similar material can be obtained from: The Art Veneers Co. Ltd., Industrial Estate, Mildenhall, Suffolk.

I have said that the machine in question is a B.A. Bremond 'Mandoline Organocleide'. The serial number is 19623. It has a 17 inch cylinder and there are 3 parts to the comb of 40, 83 and 40 teeth. A gilded brass plate on the inside of the glass lid reads 'B.A. Bremond, Manufacturer, Geneva, Switzerland. The trademark B.A.B. with the second 'B' backwards, is stamped on the escapement cock. The tune sheet is a Nicole of the latest pattern, obviously a replacement as there are signs of a larger one of about 12 inches by 8 inches having been fitted previously.

Now that the restoration is complete the box sounds magnificent, the mandoline effect is carried well into the bass. At a distance it truly lives up to its name by sounding more like an organ than a musical box.

MAYNE SWETE'S MUSICAL CLOCK

by Arthur W.J.G. Ord-Hume

THE KNOWLEDGE that some treasure "has gone to a museum" imbues one with a sense of satisfaction that the object in question will not only be preserved but will be displayed for the knowledge and benefit of others for times to come. This, quite naturally, is the basic idea behind forming a museum but one only has to take but a cursory look at our National collections to realise that ideals and actualities are separated by a sea of problems. These stem from two basic inadequacies – lack of space and lack of money – which reflect in many cases an under-appreciation of our past heritage.

So it is that within the stately portals of our museums, treasures may be rediscovered and appraised in a different light. Why, only recently, a number of astonishing discoveries have been made at the British Museum, not just amongst that vast storehouse of treasures which space dictates may never be exhibited, but amongst pieces actually on display.

It is well-known that the Victoria & Albert Museum in London has a vast collection of all types of musical instruments of all periods and recently a new gallery has been opened to display some of these. However, many of the pieces – especially the superb decorated spinets and harpsichords – still lurk elsewhere in the museum, their justifications disguised as examples of various types of case decoration, or carving, or marquetry. So it is with the musical clock made by a Devonian craftsman early in the 18th century.

This beautiful clock stands 9ft 8in high, is 3ft 5½in wide and 2ft 2½in deep and the case is of walnut. The clock is square with arched top decorated with acanthus moulding and fretwork frieze and side panels, surmounted by four scrolls which meet to support a gilt pineapple. It stands on a cabinet made in two parts: the upper half has a gilt pineapple at each corner with two doors in front with moulded panels and on each side a door, all with brass hinges and locks. The lower part has two matching doors in front with matching panels and rests on four small feet. Inside the upper half is the musical mechanism which consists of a clockwork driven barrel, 28 tuned bells arranged in semitones to play three octaves, and a keyboard with ivory and ebony keys. The pull-downs are jointly operated by the keyboard and the barrel keyframe. The clock itself has a gilt symmetrical design of openwork scrolls in the arch and in the spandrels similar ornament. It strikes the hours on one large bell of the 28. Additionally at the half hours it chimes the preceding hour and every three hours plays via the barrel "Hark! The Cock Crows" or "The Beau's Delight" and a Rigadoon. On Sundays the wooden barrel can be replaced by a brass barrel which is pinned to play a psalm.

The clock was made by Mayne Swete as a gift for his brother, Adrian Swete of Trayne, Modbury, South Devon, who was High Sheriff of Devon in 1724. Mayne Swete is said to have taken seven years to make the piece at a then cost of £200 and afterwards to have departed to Antigua in 1705. The facts concerning the construction of the clock were entered in an old family diary by Adrian Swete who died without issue in 1733. Mayne then returned from Antigua and succeeded to Trayne. He had, in 1730, married a girl called Esther (who died in 1781) and they produced one son, Adrian John, who died in 1755. In Esther Swete's death, she bequeathed all her property to her cousin, the Rev. John Tripe of Oxtou, Devon, on the condition that he assumed the name of Swete.

And so this curious piece came into the possession of the Rev. John Swete's great grandson, Fanshaw C.B. Swete who sold it to E. Lyall Swete in 1902 for the princely sum of £50. Its new owner spent £65 on restoring it to working order and finally sold it to the V & A for his total investment – £115 – in October, 1925.

It seems from the history available that this clock was begun in or about 1698 and it is known that the case was made by a Plymouth cabinet maker. Swete is not recorded in Baillie which lends support to the belief that he was a talented amateur. Whatever the truth, this most interesting piece is, for the present, mute evidence of considerable ingenuity more than two and a half centuries ago.



Polyphon Disc—Lettering Styles

by Robin Timms

In the cellar of a certain shop in the Old Kent Road I once discovered a pile of some of the oldest $11\frac{1}{8}$ " Polyphon discs I had ever come across. Although not of the very earliest type (see below) they were all zinc, with serial numbers below 2400. The state of the projections demonstrated the point that zinc discs did not stand up to wear too well. In the attic of the same shop I found a pile of the latest Polyphon discs I had seen. The titles were in German only, and they must have been produced at the very close of the firm's lifetime.

There are many clues to the date of a particular disc: one of them is the style of lettering used, which varied considerably from one period to another. The following comments are based upon my own observations of $11\frac{1}{8}$ " discs, and it would be interesting to hear from other collectors who can supplement this information.

Example a disc 2013

The earliest $11\frac{1}{8}$ " discs are made of zinc and feature a very large gold and black trade mark which occupies about a third of the disc. The number, and title in French, German and English appear in small characters at 9 o'clock on the disc, the point at which the tune begins and finishes. These very early discs had only two holes at the centre, indicating that the earliest machines must have had but one pin, left of the centre spindle, to drive the disc. The hole on the right of centre in the disc illustrated has been made at a later date so that the disc can be played on the more usual type of machine with two pins. The latest disc of this type I have noticed is 2195.



Example b. disc 2176

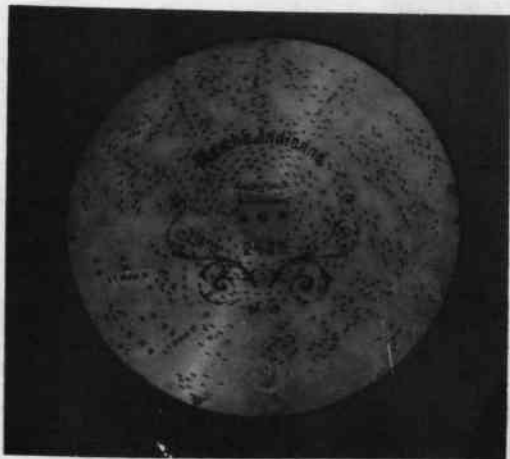
The trade mark, still in gold, has been considerably reduced in size, while the lettering is much larger and clearer. Capitals are often highly ornamented, and when the same capital occurs more than once on a disc, the ornamentation is usually different each time. Now that there is a hole on either side of the centre, one is added at 9 o'clock on the circumference to show that this is where the tune starts. (Previously, there was only one possible way of putting the disc on – unless you count the possibility of putting it on face downwards!) The change from zinc to steel came while this and style c were in vogue – about 1895? The latest zinc disc I have noticed is 2405.

It is important to realize that as each new style was introduced, earlier discs which were still being issued tended to be re-set in the current style. Thus it is possible to find a copy of 2001, the earliest disc, with the very latest style of lettering.



Example c. disc 2407

The serial number has now been placed above the title, and the words around the bottom of the trade mark are in French, instead of German and English. The latest disc I have seen with styles *b* or *c* is 2411.



Example d. disc 2420

The gold trade mark is now much smaller still and appears near the circumference at 6 o'clock. A different style of lettering is used for the title which forms a curve, the implied circle being completed by two large symmetrical designs.

Example e. disc 2443

More delicate ornamentation, giving a better balance, is now used to complete the circle. Styles *d* and *e* were originally used for about 2420-2459, and rarely appear on earlier discs.



Example f. disc 2015

The trade mark is now black and has been raised a couple of inches so that it forms part of the circle. The styles of lettering we have met so far are replaced by a variety of styles, some of which are illustrated in *examples f* to *l*. The present disc illustrates a typical three-language lay-out: German in bold lettering at the top, with French and English in smaller characters on the left and right respectively. The style of figure used here for the serial number was employed from about 1896-1901 and is by far the most frequently encountered. 2015, being an early disc, would not, of course, originally have appeared in this style. Note the amusing translation of *La belle Polonaise* – The nice Pole!

Example g. disc 2395

This illustrates a favourite motif used during this period to complete the circle.



Example h. disc 2488

This shows another and smaller version of the motif in *example g*. There are minute differences in the trade marks as they appear in *exx. g* and *h*: the former tended to be used on earlier, the latter on later discs.

Example i. disc 2390

This disc is unusual in two respects. The motif is the other way up from usual. I have seen only a few discs, all in the 2390's, where the motif in *exx. g* or *h* was this way up – perhaps they were among the earliest discs to use them originally. The lettering on the disc illustrated is all in yellow, the disc itself being a dullish brown similar to the colour on the underneath side of many discs.



Example j. disc 2496

Yet another variation of the same motif, and a favourite and rather elegant style of lettering.

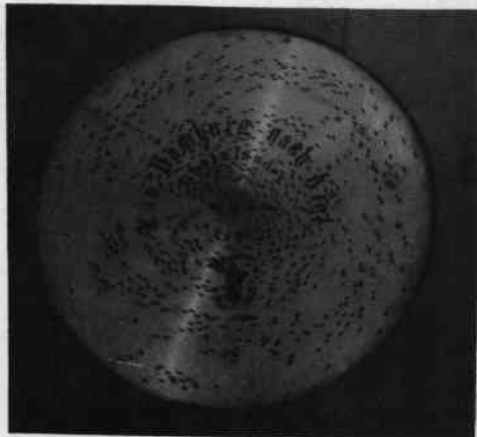


Example k. disc 2785

This shows two characteristics of some of the later discs of this period: the presence of minute versions of the favourite motif – in this case at the centre – and the use of a larger style of lettering for the composer's name, using lower case instead of all capitals. At about this time the practice of punching a small hole at the circumference to show where the disc started was abandoned. 2775 is the highest I have noticed with it.

Example l. disc 2816

Trade mark flanked by leaf-like motif. The title should read simply *The red, white and blue*; *Britannia* being the first word of the chorus. This is the latest disc I have seen using styles covered in *exx. f* to *l*.



Example m. disc 2937

All later discs used the style of lettering illustrated here. The subtitle, composer's name, and serial number are all set out in concentric curves. The figures used for the serial number are smaller than before. There is a complete absence of ornamentation, and the amount of information given on the disc is often minimal. This style appears to have been used from about 1902 onwards. The disc illustrated plays the *Brooklyn Cake Walk*, but bears the title *Von Hamburg nach Kiel*. Can anyone explain why?

Example n. disc 20001

Some of these late discs bore the legend *Manufactured by the Polyphon Musikwerke A. G. Wahren – Leipzig*. This disc also bears a ½d. duty stamp of the kind often stuck on the labels of gramophone records.



Example o. disc 2704

Not an authentic style, but a copy of an original disc lent by Frank Greenacre, and titled with *Letraset* by me!

Similar styles of lettering (except the last!) can be found on other sizes of Polyphon disc, although I have not come across the earliest style on discs above 15½". I suspect that production of the larger sizes began rather later. After the turn of the century production declined sharply and, according to the books I have seen, ceased in 1914. I have evidence to suggest that Polyphon were still producing new discs as late as 1917 – but that's another story!

SUNDAY VISIT

A series of articles describing places which are of interest to lovers of mechanical music.

by Graham Webb.

2 THE CUSHING COLLECTION.

This, the second in our series "Sunday Visit", deals with the organ and steam engine collection of Mr. G.T. Cushing of Thursford in Norfolk. To those whose first thought is that this Museum is too far away to be of interest let me say that, in my own opinion, the very distance to be covered, unless it really is too far, makes the journey worth while. Situated as it is in the heart of East Anglia the Museum is in the centre of countryside as yet untouched, or seemingly so, by the march of the so-called progress under which more and more of England suffers each year.

Tucked in the below-the-Wash bulge of Norfolk the Museum is not for the man in a hurry. Ideally it is for a family visit of a leisurely nature with a picnic on the way. It is served only by slow roads, perfect for wandering toward an objective with the children staring goggle-eyed at the pheasants and rabbits which are a natural part of the scenery.

It may have been noticed that this collection is not only of organs, although from our point of view of course these must take precedence, but also contains steam engines and these, in fact, do outnumber the organs. Here again we have what must, at first glance, appear to be a drawback but I dare anyone to stand dwarfed beside the huge wheel of the "Victory" Burrell special scenic showmans road locomotive and not feel just a little of the small boy return to him. In any case the steam engine is so much a part of the organ world.

To take the organs first, there are six on permanent view at the moment, seemingly chosen to give a very good overall idea of dance, concert and fairground or showmans organs. There is nothing at all in this collection which is small, the smallest of the organs being a keyless Wellerhaus showmans organ of 84 notes. There are no other forms of mechanical music such as musical boxes.

The Wellerhaus is a really beautiful organ with a fine sound for its size and extremely sweet. It is a German organ and very rare in this Country.

Another showmans organ is the Belgian Hooghuyts with 101 keys. The total length of this machine is 23 feet and it is 24 feet high. A particular feature of the organ is a dulcimer which is placed in the centre

of a beautifully carved and decorated front.

For a combination of workmanship and sound it would be difficult to find a showmans organ to beat the Marengi 98 key organ, which graces Mr. Cushing's collection. It can be seen from the photographs shown that the wood carving of the chariot and horses is of the very best craftsmanship. What cannot be seen is the fine sound which emerges from the 27 feet long, 25 feet high giant, which is sweet and full and with little of the usual raucous tone of such a machine.

Moving on to other types of instruments, the dance organ is well represented by a 112 key Mortier. Made as recently as 1938 the Mortier has all of the characteristic tone of such a machine. It is very large, 26 feet long and 18 feet high and, as one would expect from a late organ of this size, plays extremely well. Another dance organ in the collection is also by Mortier and is perhaps the more interesting of the two in that it is truly an automatic "dance band". There are no less than three accordions which move and play and two saxophones. The organ has 92 keys.

To round off what must be called a really fine collection we come to the 112 note keyless concert organ by Carl Frei. It has no less than 18 registers which include a set of tuned tubular 'bells'. There are 11 figures on the front of this organ of which 3 move, a conductor and a pair of large female drummers.

The steam engines which have been gathered at Thursford deserve more than a cursory glance as the visitor marches to and from the organs. Among



them are machines which have been closely connected to fair and showmans organs. Their size and power, the brass and decoration, recall a bygone age which cannot return and, although we know deep down we live in a better age, we can all regret it's passing.

Facts about the Collection.

Owner: The collection is privately owned by Mr. G.T. Cushing.
Address: Laurel Farm, Thursford, Fakenham, Norfolk.
Telephone: Thursford 238.
Opening times: Open to the general public every

Admission:

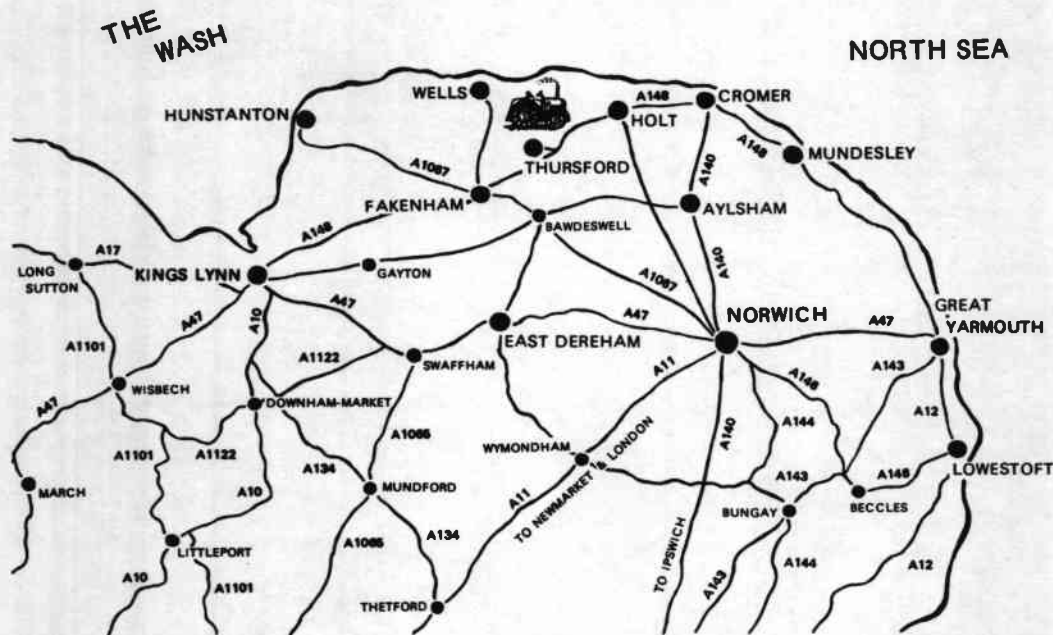
Sunday throughout the year at 4 pm. and every Tuesday from May to September, also at 4 pm. Other times can be arranged by appointment only.

There is no charge or commercial aspect of the Collection. Visitors may, if they wish, contribute to the upkeep of the machines which are on show.

Programme:

Normally the instruments are played in turn and a commentary given. Recordings of some of the organs on show are available.

LOCATION OF THE COLLECTION



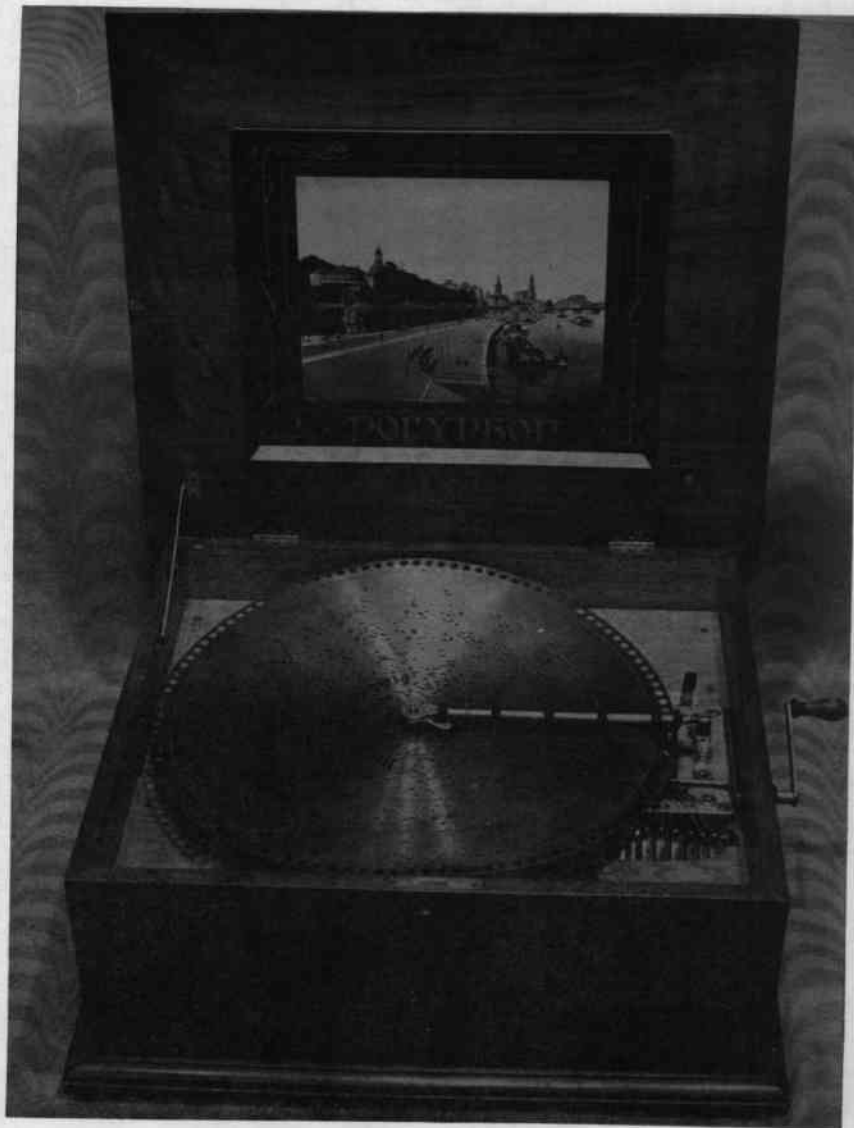
The photograph on page 201 is of a beautiful 98 key Marengi showmans organ which is part of the Cushing Collection.

SCOOP! A POLYPHON DISCOVERY

The Polyphon shown is from the collection of Member Vicki Glasgow. It is of extreme interest in that the disc size is 17½ inches. This represents a new size in the known range of Polyphons, at least to your Editor and the many people of knowledge to whom he has talked on the subject.

The machine has twelve bells and, as with other Polyphons, a comb set of the normal range is used to which is added the bell mechanism. In this case the comb set is that of a 15½ inch Polyphon. This is apparent, not only from the size of disc but also from the fact that the disc titles are the same but with a different prefix to the numbers. A point of interest is that the discs with the machine have titles taken from both of the 15½ inch series i.e. Stille Nacht is 1028 in the first series and 17028 for this machine, Die dollarprinzessin, 10530 in the second series, becomes 18530.

Vicki is to be congratulated on a most exciting find, and thanked for her photograph of the box. The picture on the interior of the lid, by the way, is a view of Dresden.



TWO CONTEMPORARY VIEWS OF THE STREET PIANO TRADE

We owe our thanks for the following articles on Street Pianos to that friend of the Society Ronald Pearsall. They are taken from 'Casell's Saturday Journal', one of the many volumes in this author's collection. The first article is dated February 15th, 1899. The second is from the issue of August 16th, 1899.

Accounts such as these are of extreme interest and historical importance. They are reports from people on the spot, and although reporting then, as now, was coloured by journalistic 'license', it is as near as we will ever get to the truth.

AT A HOSPITAL FOR STREET ORGANS.

The Alien will Apply Here in Vain.

If you walk along, not the Bois de Boulogne, but the sylvan groves of the Kennington Road and turn off at a certain unimposing-looking thoroughfare, you will arrive at an establishment which can appropriately be termed the London Piano-Organ's Temporary Home of Rest. The establishment opens on to a yard, and in this yard, if the clouds are tearfully inclined, you may discover twenty or more cripples and a similar number of piano-organs. The cripples are street musicians. Many of them possess only one leg, several are blind, half a dozen are in the last stages of consumption.

The dépôt is unique because, in a sense, it is the headquarters of that somewhat rare bird of passage, the British organ-grinder—the copper coloured Italian finds no favour

Foreigners
are not
Eligible.

here—and the proprietors are two Englishmen, who only let out instruments to those who can legitimately claim to have been born in the United Kingdom.

The other afternoon these gentlemen kindly conducted me (writes a representative) over their premises, and, in order that I should have every opportunity of forming a correct impression of the ins and outs of the organ-grinding world, they not only recounted their own experiences, but brought forward an old-stager who has played in London streets for the past ten years. The weather was wet and the dépôt was full, and, as the conversation proceeded, we were joined by the three resident specialists, or surgeons, whose services are exclusively retained to battle against the onslaughts of asthma and pulmonary complaints to which piano-organs are susceptible.

"I can tell you in a few words how we carry on business," the senior partner observed. "Our charge for an organ is eighteen-pence a day, or eight shillings a week, and on a fine day we dispose of about forty instruments. To-day they are all indoors, owing to the rain, and therefore not one of our customers is earning a penny-piece."

"For eighteen-pence a man gets an organ in

absolutely perfect condition, with all the latest airs. He pays nothing for tuning or repairs, as we attend to all this—the wear and tear of the machines cost us £4 a week—and allow no instrument to go out before it has been examined. Our surgeons, as you call them, get to work at nine o'clock every morning and inspect the whole stock. If we began earlier we should disturb the neighbours. By midday everything is straight."

"That's a bit late to commence, isn't it?"

"It's quite early enough. It is only late in the afternoon and at night that an organ is remunerative. You see, everybody who cares a straw about street music is at work during the day."

"You're right," interposed the old-stager referred to above—in years gone by he was a compositor. "I take out my machine at twelve

A Hand-to-
Mouth Life
at the Best.

o'clock and it's an uncommon day if I don't walk fifteen miles on my one leg before I get home again. Of course I've a mate to pull the organ—it weighs between four and five hundredweight—but it's a precious hard life. If I can clear three shillings a day I'm satisfied, but it's seldom I can do that. Yesterday I took three-and-six, out of which I had to pay eighteen-pence for hire and a shilling and the price of a dinner to the fellow who draws the load. It's a hand-to-mouth existence, sir, and there's more of the hand than the mouth about it."

"Talk about Parliament suppressing itinerant musicians," remarked one of the proprietors, "why, twenty of our crippled customers support over a hundred children. There isn't a man amongst them that isn't incapacitated from ordinary work, and if you're going to turn them off the streets so much for the ratepayers. The musicians will have to fall back on the workhouse!"

"I say nothing about the 'one-legged' who are gradually forsaking the organ-grinding profession in favour of the ice-cream, baked potato, and roast chestnut trades, which they find more profitable. They are able-bodied men, but these unfortunate creatures are really deserving. I recollect a young fellow of twenty. He was eaten up with consumption, yet he went out in all weathers to keep a widowed mother and two little sisters. Two days before he died he was grinding away for dear life."



"The game's all a question of luck," said the one-legged man sententiously. "I've known a chum to be out a whole day and not make a farthing. We get most of our money from the lower classes, and the best day of the week is Saturday, when the poor people receive their wages. Wednesdays and Thursdays are always slack. The finest day in the year is Boxing Day. Last Boxing Day some of our chaps took close on a pound apiece. But after Boxing Day things are terribly quiet for a long time."

"On an average," the expert continued, "I play at eleven places out of twelve without seeing even the colour of a coin. Not that I'm hard to please. If a person hands me a penny I'm quite willing to play ten tunes, and that occupies ten minutes! But, as I've said, it's all luck. We have regular customers, such as business firms and shopkeepers who expect us at certain hours of the week, but as for the rest, it's pure chance work."

"Wouldn't it be cheaper for the men to buy their organs?" I asked one of the proprietors.

"Organ-grinders seldom buy instruments. They're too expensive to keep. If a man had one of his own he would have to pay a shilling a week for a place to house it at night and another half crown a week to have it tuned. The weather plays sad havoc with street organs. But not only that; when a bass wire breaks it costs sixpence to replace it, and a penny for each of the others. Then, again, there's about five pounds to pay for every set of new tunes."

"How do you select the tunes? And which are the most popular?"

"The men choose their own airs—or, rather, the public choose them. People come up to the grinders in the street and ask them why they don't lay on certain tunes. Well, our customers bring us the suggestions that are made to them, and in this way we are able to judge of what is likely to be appreciated on each particular round. You may say that we provide each man with precisely those

tunes which he thinks will draw most money in the districts he is accustomed to exploit.

"We renew our music about every six months. After that a tune is generally out of date, though there are a few exceptions, notably 'Tom Bowling,' 'The Blind Boy,' and 'The Cottage by the Sea,' which are in perpetual demand. At the present moment 'Rosy O'Grady,' and the airs from the *Runaway Girl* and the *Belle of New York* are most popular. Curiously enough, a set of tunes that is received exceedingly well in one locality will fall completely flat in another."

"What is your opinion of the living that is to be gained by a grinder?"

"I agree with our friend here that it's chiefly a matter of luck. Some experience is required, however. You must be in a position to select a round that will yield at least some money, and, what is equally necessary, you require to be certain that you are not following immediately in the track of another grinder. Raw hands waste a great deal of valuable boot-leather at the start."

WHERE THE ITALIAN HIRES PIANO ORGANS.

A Few Interesting Facts and Figures.

It was a hopelessly wet morning; the rain fell in sweeping slants from a leaden sky, the gutters were running streamlets, and the Italian Quarter seemed deserted (writes a representative) as I made my way through it, in quest of a certain factory which is responsible for a goodly proportion of the piano-organs that perambulate the streets of London.

My guide—a voluble little Neapolitan, whose English was almost as faulty as my Italian—indulged in passionate comments on our national climate which are best left untranslated. In the midst of a laudation of sunny Naples he broke off abruptly, to plunge like a pantomime harlequin

through a pair of narrow swing-doors.

Following him, I found myself on the ground floor of the factory, a sort of stable around which about a dozen organs were comfortably stalled awaiting hire. A little knot of

Inside
a London
Factory.

rain-soaked Italians stood in the centre, waiting in the forlorn hope that the weather might improve sufficiently to enable them to take

out their instruments. Passing these sorry figures, we made our way up some narrow stairs to the factory proper, where the proprietor greeted us cordially, and, taking us from room to room, illustrated every step in the manufacture of his wares.

Piano-organs were everywhere, scores and scores of them, and in every stage from the mere shell of birchwood to the finished article, whilst several rooms were occupied by the makers of hammers and other small fittings. All the workers, I found, were Italian; bright-eyed, deft-fingered, smiling fellows, who looked up for a moment from bench and drill to explain brokenly their work to the "Inglese."

The mechanism of a piano-organ is best described as a combination of the cottage pianoforte and the musical box.

Imagine a trichord piano whose hammers end beneath in sharply pointed metal rods instead of the keyboard attachment. The keys are replaced

by a long wooden cylinder—the barrel of a magnified musical box—bristling with thickly studded metal pegs, which catch the hammer rods as the cylinder rotates,

thus driving the hammers themselves against the wires. Such is, in brief, the contrivance of the travelling tune-box.

A few words as to the barrel. In its rough state this is a mere hollow cask of poplar wood, its stout staves being straight instead of bulging, and being firmly glued in their places.

The cask is mounted on a lathe and planed as it revolves until a perfectly smooth cylinder results, which is coated with white paper in readiness for the marker. He mounts it in an ordinary piano-organ case, and, with his musical score before him, presses down the hammers of the notes indicated, slowly rotating the cylinder meanwhile to give the requisite intervals. As each hammer is depressed, its pointed rod pricks the barrel's paper coat, thus recording the score upon it.

Steel pegs are next inserted in the perforations—square-headed ones for single notes, bevelled pegs in runs and trills—and after testing for false or omitted notes the barrel is ready for use.

Change of tune is effected by slightly shifting the barrel lengthwise, the first set of pegs now missing the hammer rods, which are caught by a parallel second set. In this way ten tunes can be "pegged out" round a single cylinder.

Laying my hand on a smart-looking instrument, I asked its price.

"Eighteen pounds ten, brand new, with bright, up-to-date tunes," replied its owner promptly.

"That is our smallest size, and has only forty-

eight notes, but we have several larger stock sizes, running up to over £30. These are more expensive still," he continued, pointing

out several organs of aldermanic build, "but their barrels are double-sized, and so they play tunes of twice the usual length."

"But I should grow more than tired of any selection of airs very soon," I objected.

"For £3 10s. you can always have the barrel stripped of its pegs and new tunes put in," was the reply. "Or if you would rather hire than buy, we have a good stock of organs always on hand at prices ranging from 8s. to 12s. a week."

From my guide I learnt that the usual takings of an organ-grinder range from about 20s. to 30s. a week. Deducting the hire from these figures, and testing the weight of the nearest instrument, I concluded that a pen was more remunerative to manipulate than a piano-organ, and so declined the only opportunity ever offered me of a musical calling.

A chance remark on the *padrone* system, under which so many Italian organ-grinders are sent to England, opened the vials of the Neapolitan's righteous wrath.

"It is wicked, wicked!" he exclaimed passionately, proceeding in his halting English to explain that the *padrone* (master) frequently takes advantage of his servants'

ignorance of the English tongue and English laws to fleece them shamefully. Many are beguiled into leaving their native villages

by specious promises of, perhaps, £2 per month, with board and lodging and washing, during the time specified in their contract—the cash wages to be paid at the end of that period. Month after month they work, dragging their employer's organs about and earning a rich harvest for him, until their term of service is nearly completed.

Then comes the rascally *padrone's* chance. He accuses his victims of robbing him, even going so far at times as to put money in their pockets at night when they are asleep, in order to give colour to his story. He abuses them, maybe violently assaults them, and turns them out penniless into the street.

"Yes, there are many such rogues amongst the *padroni*," assented the proprietor of the factory.

"But some of them are honest enough, and pay up faithfully. It is no uncommon

thing for an organ-grinder whose 'bond-service' has just expired to come here and buy an organ with his savings. For the secret of

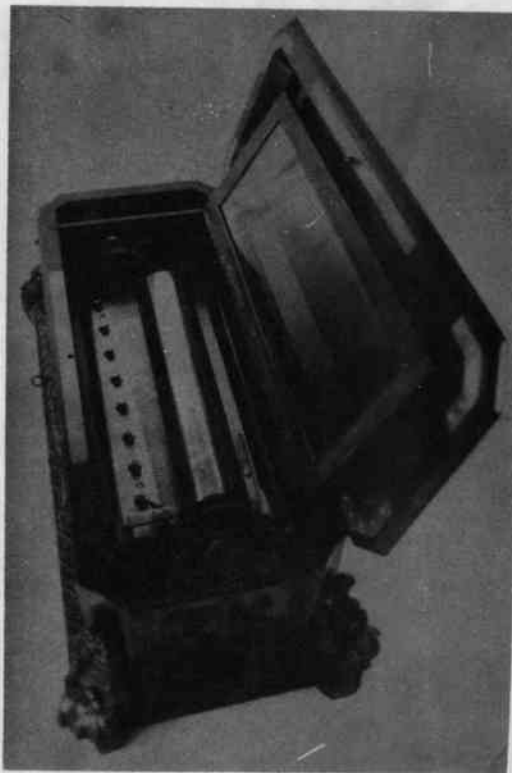
Italian success is thrift. The average English labourer spends his wages every week; an Italian on the same wages will save a little each week, and goes back home at last, the owner of a modest little fortune."

A Brighter
Side to the
Picture.

AN EXCEPTIONAL CASE

by Norman Brown

This remarkably beautiful musical box has been mine for some time now but however hard I try I have been unable to find out anything about it. The important things however, I am well aware of. First of all the fine carving of the case makes the box most unusual and lovely. Somehow, just by looking at it, one feels that it *must* sound wonderful. The great thing about it is that the music it makes really *is* wonderful. The sound has that truly rare bell-like quality which we have all heard at some time or other but had not hoped to own. I think much of the quality of the music is owed to something I have no seen before in a cylinder musical box; the case has a fretted sound-board which covers the bottom about $\frac{1}{4}$ inch above the true base.



FELLOW MEMBER

by Dick Baines

MRS. BERTHA DE VERE GREEN.

One of the founder members of the Society, the wife of our President, the owner of a very fine collection of Necessaires with musical movements, a person who – despite all this – has somehow managed to quietly remain in the background, Mrs. de Vere Green is the obvious person to feature as the subject of this article – the first of a new series.

She was born in England and went to live in Canada while still a baby. As she grew up her ambition was to study dentistry but her Father did not approve, considering it an unsuitable profession for a young lady. Eventually she persuaded him to allow her to follow the Dental Nursing Course, and, after qualifying, joined the staff of the Dental College, University of Toronto, where she remained for the next five years. It is typical of her modesty that she believes she was only accepted as a member of the staff because 'I was the only student in the class with long hair, and that made me look older than the others'. She first met Cyril de Vere Green when he went to Toronto to take his D.D.S. They were married in 1934 and then settled down in England. They have two sons, Robin and Trevor, and six grandchildren.

Dr. de Vere Green was given his first musical box, a large Bremond, when he was only two years old and clearly remembers its sound throughout his childhood. The box stopped working in 1926 and remained silent until enthusiasm was rekindled in America by the purchase of a book on Mechanical Music. On returning to England the box was taken to John Clark for repair, and so once again the distinctive notes of a musical box echoed through a well-known home in Devonshire Place.

It was from the captivating sound of that Bremond that two famous collections were born. Dr. de Vere Green's splendid collection of over four hundred boxes is acknowledged everywhere, but his wife's smaller collection is less well known. While being enchanted by the sounds of a musical box she was faced with the problem of what type of box to collect – no easy task with her husband being such an avid collector! Eventually she came up with an ideal solution which incorporated the sounds of the musical box coupled with the very essence of femininity of a past age – the Musical Necessaire.



Movements were concealed in boxes made to resemble miniature spinets and grand pianos. These boxes were masterpieces of the cabinet-maker's art, usually made from rosewood and often beautifully inlaid. The tiny keyboard was fashioned from pieces of black and white wood and sometimes ivory. A mirror was mounted on the inside of the lid with a gilt or pinchbeck surround, and the case lined with silk or velvet with special places hollowed out to take the thimbles, scissors, needles and all the impedimenta of needlecraft.

When purchased the spinets and pianos were

often incomplete and rather shabby. Mrs. de Vere Green informed me that she enjoyed replacing the velvet and sewing it with silver thread, replacing the mirror when necessary, polishing up the rosewood case, and finally searching for the missing thimbles and scissors. Some of the finest pieces in her collection were given to her as Birthday and Christmas presents by 'Guess Who?'. When a selection from Dr. and Mrs. de Vere Green's collection of musical boxes was sent to Holland for an exhibition the *Necessaires* were much admired.

Several well-known examples of automata are also housed in that *Aladdin's Cave* in Devonshire Place and these include the famous Dancing Dolls. Unfortunately the costume was in a sorry state and had to be completely restored. With her scrupulous eye for correct detail Mrs. de Vere Green researched at the Victoria and Albert Museum for the authentic style of costume. She next acquired some lace of the right period and painstakingly set about reconstructing the dresses. When completed her success in this difficult task may be judged by the photograph on page 144 of Volume 2 of the *Music Box*. They were exhibited at the Chelsea Antiques Fair in 1965, where visitors and the press were much taken with them – so much so that the Dolls were the highlight of the exhibition.

Apart from her *Necessaires* Mrs. de Vere Green has a superb collection of fans which she started compiling over thirty years ago. There are between four and five hundred examples, many of which are Museum pieces and unique in the true sense of the word. For the last five years she has been undertaking research into all aspects of the fan, and many discerning collectors are eagerly awaiting the publication of her specialized book on the subject. I saw large fans, small fans, plain fans, ornate fans; fans made from ivory, bone, wood, metal, mother o'pearl, paper, parchment, feathers – a most impressive collection. A few particularly caught my eye: the earliest is dated 1700 and is beautifully constructed painted with a wealth of intricate detail on either side. Another was an unusual Mandarin fan with one hundred tiny ivory faces applied on each side. There was a closed fan that a Mandarin might carry up his sleeve – at least it looked like a closed fan but in reality it was a scabbard concealing a wicked-looking knife! There were several exquisite examples of Vernis Martin fans, all with fine paintings on ivory. I can also remember a case holding a set of small circular fans which were used for cooling tea.

Mrs. de Vere Green collects not only fans but everything which is associated with them. I admired a fine Minton tea service – but instead of the conventional saucers the cups were balanced on open fans. I saw a case filled with small fan brooches made from cut steel and some delightful miniature doll's

fans. There were six designs for fans which were originally displayed at the Great Exhibition of 1851, each a masterpiece of design and colour. Finally there was a bronze of a young girl sheltering modestly behind her fan while a man tried to ogle her.

Royal, Military, and Private Family Crests are another of Mrs. de Vere Green's interests. She started her collection in 1937 and it has grown to include some 21,000 exhibits, many of which are displayed in a specially designed cabinet. I only saw a few, mainly the Royal Crests, many of which had been given to her by the late Queen Mary.

Having seen more treasures gathered together under one roof than one is usually privileged to see outside one of our larger Museums, I asked her if there was anything that her collections lacked, was there, perhaps, some choice piece that still eluded her? To my surprise she said that there was – a fan with a musical movement. She thought that there was one in Belgium and I note that John Clark mentions one in his book. Should any member stumble on a fan complete with a musical movement and a large crest incorporated into the design then the three collections could be combined!



After saying goodbye, and thanking them both for a most interesting evening, Dr. de Vere Green insisted on seeing me drive away. It was fortunate that my ancient car started on the button and did not require a push, and my last memory was of him standing under a fine eighteenth century fanlight. I hope that somewhere an architect realises that part of his design for the facade of Devonshire Place reflects one of the exciting collections of a remarkable lady who lives there today.

QUESTION AND ANSWER

Conducted by Keith Harding and Cliff Burnett

We would like to thank all those kind friends who have sent us lists of the gamme numbers, serial numbers and programmes on their Nicole Freres musical boxes, as requested in the last issue of the Journal. If everybody helps us in this way, we shall end up with a pretty comprehensive catalogue of great practical value to collectors. We have already been able to supply lists of tunes or written up tune sheets to several people who knew the gamme numbers of boxes on which the tune sheet was missing.

Remember that the gamme number is scratched on the end of the cylinder, and must not be confused with the serial number which is stamped.

We have so far found no case where two cylinders with the same gamme number play different programmes. If the gamme number does in fact refer not to the programme but to the tuning scale of the comb, then it appears that every programme needs a different tuning scale! This seems unlikely. The only exception is in the case of interchangeable cylinder boxes, where each cylinder carries the same gamme number but also a cylinder number. Melvin T. Werner of Ohio has given us details of his Nicole Freres No. 46450 with six cylinders of eight tunes each. The gamme number scratched on the lead weight and the ends of the cylinders is 3058. The cylinders also carry cylinder numbers between 51 and 61.

Roger Booty of Essex writes:—

Some of the card discs with my Herophon organette are badly torn and the discs of Aristons suffer similar tears. Can anyone suggest a good method for repairing discs of this type?

Any suggestions?

David Burke of Orlando, Florida, writes:—

Does it harm a cylinder box to move it from one place to another? A dealer recently told me that every time he moves his cartels he notices a difference in their performances. Should they be moved only when it is absolutely necessary?

No harm will be done to a cylinder box by moving it from one place to another provided it is not in mid tune. Musical boxes should never be allowed to run down any old how, but must be set to stop and the cylinder allowed to play to the end of the tune. If a musical box is moved in mid tune with the pins in contact with the teeth there is a chance of the cylinder moving along its spindle and causing damage. Even if pins and tips do not break it is liable to upset the dampers.

The performance of a musical box is affected by the surface it is standing on. If it is standing on a resonant piece of furniture such as a wooden table top it will produce a much better tone than if it is standing on a carpet which will deaden the sound. Also some rooms are much better acoustically than others, and a musical box will sound better in a very

quiet room with no background noise.

Mr Colley of Bristol wants to know what to do about a loose brake arm on an endless. He also found that the governor did not work after it had been cleaned.

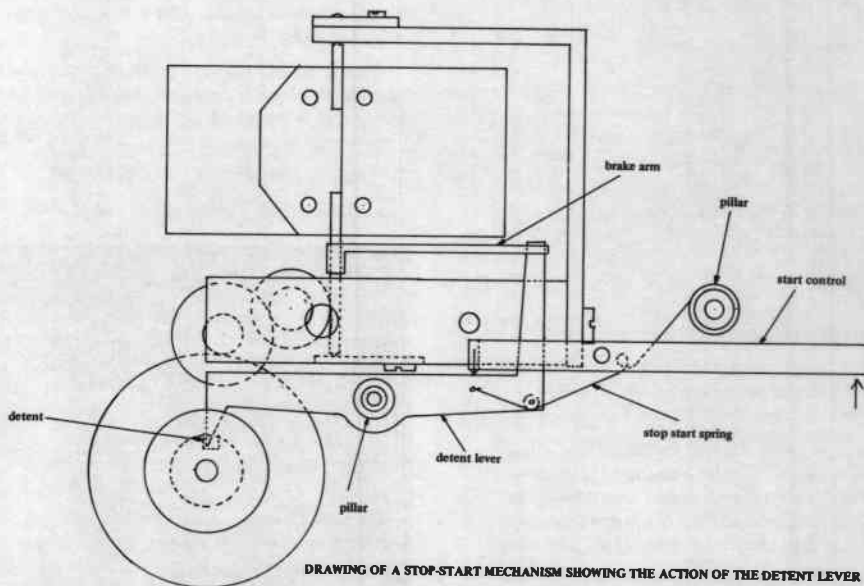
The loose brake arm must not be tightened in position or there is a strong likelihood of breaking the endless. First remove the fan assembly from the endless, preferably with a staking tool, but failing this support the bottom of the fan assembly on the jaws of a vice and tap the endless out of it using a hollow punch on the top pivot. Extreme care is needed as the endless is so delicate. Do not allow the endless to drop. Remove the brake arm in a similar manner and tighten it just as much as is necessary. The top part of the endless is, of course, tapered. The hole in the base of the fan assembly can be tightened by tapping a large ball bearing placed over the hole so as to spread the brass slightly.

It is common to find that a governor does not work after cleaning. It seems that the accumulated dirt and hard oil has been acting as a running surface, and when this is removed it exposes any wear or pitting on the metal underneath. It is often necessary to polish wear marks out of the endless, which is really a job for a clockmaker. It may also be necessary to rebush the bearings and dome the top of the endless top pivot.

I have recently bought a Symphonion Musical Box taking 5 1/4" discs, as it was not in working order I have stripped it down but am puzzled by the mechanism behind the smaller (top) lever. I presume this to be a start/stop control, stopping the mechanism at the end of the revolution, and it would work as such if the main spindle turned clockwise. Unfortunately as it turns anti-clockwise the second, spring loaded lever slips out of the hole apparently provided for it in the small brass cog on the main spindle, as the tip of this lever which enters the hole, is apparently angled the wrong way.

The upper lever is indeed the start/stop control. Before dealing with this particular machine let us examine the basic principle common to all such mechanisms. In the type of clock work found on a musical box, the motive force in the form of a powerful mainspring is connected through the gear train to the regulating device in the form of an endless screw and air brake. At the beginning of the gear train the gears are slow moving and exert considerable force, but by the end of the gear train the parts are fast moving and exert little force. It follows that any start/stop mechanism must operate at the fastest moving part where the force exerted is least. All musical box governor mechanisms carry a brake arm mounted on the endless next to the fan, and they are stopped when one end of the start/stop

lever gets in the way of this brake arm. This happens when the other end of the start/stop arm drops into a detent after one revolution of a slower moving part. In the case of cylinder musical boxes, the detent is in the cylinder wheel. In the case of this Symphonion, the detent is in a brass collar mounted on the centre spindle which also drives the disc. Thus at each revolution of the disc, one end of the detent lever will drop into this detent and the other end will come into contact with the brake arm and stop the mechanism. To start the musical box, the detent lever is lifted out of its detent in opposition to the start/stop spring. The tip of the lever which enters the hole, and which you say is apparently angled the wrong way, is deliberately made this way so that it cannot stop the mechanism on its own, but will ride out of the hole or detent. This is in fact a necessary safety measure, as in some of the larger disc machines, the power of the main spring is strong enough to damage the mechanism if it is stopped in this manner without also stopping the brake arm. It may be that the brake arm is missing from your governor, in which case you will have to make a new one. It should be a tight, but not solid fit on the endless. It should be made to slide tightly on to the endless before the fan assembly, and on no account must it be tightened in position or you run the risk of breaking the endless.



DRAWING OF A STOP-START MECHANISM SHOWING THE ACTION OF THE DETENT LEVER

Norman Brown of Dumbartonshire writes:—

All of the experts have neatly 'pigeon-holed' the Nicole boxes by relating the serial number to the date of manufacture.

Clark's book, 'Musical Boxes-a History and an Appreciation', is the accepted authority on this, and most other authors seem to accept Clark's figures.

Clark states that the numbering of the Nicole boxes starts at 19000 in the year 1839, (see page 140 of his book — third edition) but on page 145 he refers to a Nicole key-wind box, with glass lid, number 1711 and gives it's date of manufacture as 1857. This must be a small box, and probably their numbers do not fit into the date scale.

Ord Hume in his book refers to the Nicole boxes starting at number 17000 manufactured until 1839, and says that he has taken these facts from Clark. I cannot find any reference in Clark's book to the 17000 series, but Graham Webb in The Cylinder Musical Box Handbook' states, "There have in fact been instances of Nicole Freres movements stamped with numbers in the 17000 and 18000 range, although this is extremely rare".



All of this frantic research came about because I recently purchased a musical box which quite frankly has me baffled.

The box is number 17002, but does not appear to be an early box. I may be barking up the wrong tree in thinking that there is some discrepancy in the dating system, however the following description of the box will show the reasons for my confusion.

Serial number 17002, Gamme 297, 8 tunes, cylinder 11 $\frac{1}{4}$ " x 2", comb 79 teeth. Tune sheet (missing) 7 $\frac{1}{4}$ " long by 3 $\frac{1}{4}$ " deep.



Box 19" x 7" plain rosewood with boxwood stringing on lid. Full length glass inner lid. Drop end on left hand side, giving access to 3 levers.

The movement is lever wound and I don't think that there has ever been a key since there is no hole in the end for a key to go through.

It is possible that it has been an early factory conversion to lever-wind on a box originally intended to be key-wind.

The bedplate appears to be of brass plated cast iron, or an alloy, is screwed into the case from below and is stamped:

17002
NICOLE
A GENEVE

exactly like that, no initials or other marks.



The cylinder and other parts of the movement are stamped 17002, and the comb which is one piece does not have the maker's name on it.

I feel that there is a very strong resemblance in this movement to the Thibouville – Lamy boxes I have seen.

The comb seems very similar in construction and shape – the bedplate, which is very similar in shape, and in the type of metal used, is fastened into the box with 3 bolts through the bottom of the box into the bedplate legs. There are no drillings in the bedplate for side fixing bolts.

What a mystery! Is this box early or late, is it perhaps one of the reject boxes Clark refers to, dug up in the Brunn and Kruger era, fitted with lever wind and put out perhaps some 70 years after it was first manufactured.

Did one of the Nicoles at one time manufacture the Thibouville-Lamy boxes or vice versa?

Hardly likely . . . but there must be some explanation.

On page 145 of his book, John Clark would appear to be confusing the Serial number with the gamme number.

F. Nicole serial numbers appear to carry straight on into Freres Nicole and Nicole Freres serial numbers. I have number 8544, with teeth in groups of five. We have had many boxes with F. Nicole on the comb and Freres Nicole on the bedplate, and there is a complete continuity of style between these and later Nicole Freres boxes. I am going to make the revolutionary suggestion that F. Nicole stands for Freres Nicole and not for Francois Nicole at all. Let us have your views.

Nicole is a common name in Switzerland, rather like Smith in Great Britain. Nicole on the Thibouville type movements probably had nothing at all to do with Nicole Freres.

The Editor comments: These boxes are identical with those commonly thought of as by L'Epee. I have had several of them, including two which had inscriptions as presents. They were dated at around 1881 and 1882. These boxes present a real mystery, it is generally thought that they are either forgeries (a little unlikely), or that they were purchased by Nicole at a later date to be sold by them.

H. Smith of Saddington Hall writes:—

Polyphon No.5. Ten disc, 22" diameter. Music Box, Vol. 3, No.5, reprint of Guldman

catalogue, referring to this and similar models, states: "Each Automaton is arranged to play once or twice for one penny."

Where is this control? I am familiar with the control fitted to the normal single disc Polyphons, but the No.5 mechanism is entirely different."

The machine in question is an autochange model. At the right hand side of the case, below the bedplate, is a wheel with a detent in it which operates the stop on the disc drive and also controls the disc changing mechanism. This detent can be covered with a little flap to cause the disc to play twice.

Claes Friberg of Copenhagen writes:—

Why does my Mojon Manger interchangeable have pins on the cylinders where the very upper tooth is missing?

It is very common to find this on a musical box. In this case, there quite definitely never was a top tooth, as there is no place where a tooth has broken off and the top of the comb where the tooth would have been is finished off with a bevel.

Is there a way to redamper snuff boxes which can be tried by the absolute tyro without the risk of ruining the box?

We suggest attaching feather dampers with stick shellac, a drop of which is melted onto the tooth by applying a small electric soldering iron to the tooth. The melting point of the shellac is low, so no damage should be done to the temper of the tooth, as the required rise in temperature is relatively small. The new damper can be supported by a strip of thin wire, as described elsewhere. Incidentally, we do use part of the feather as described in Jacots book, rather than a piece of the quill.

I am cleaning my first cylinder box. Can you tell me if any harm can come to the mainspring if I place the whole assembly in clock cleaner?

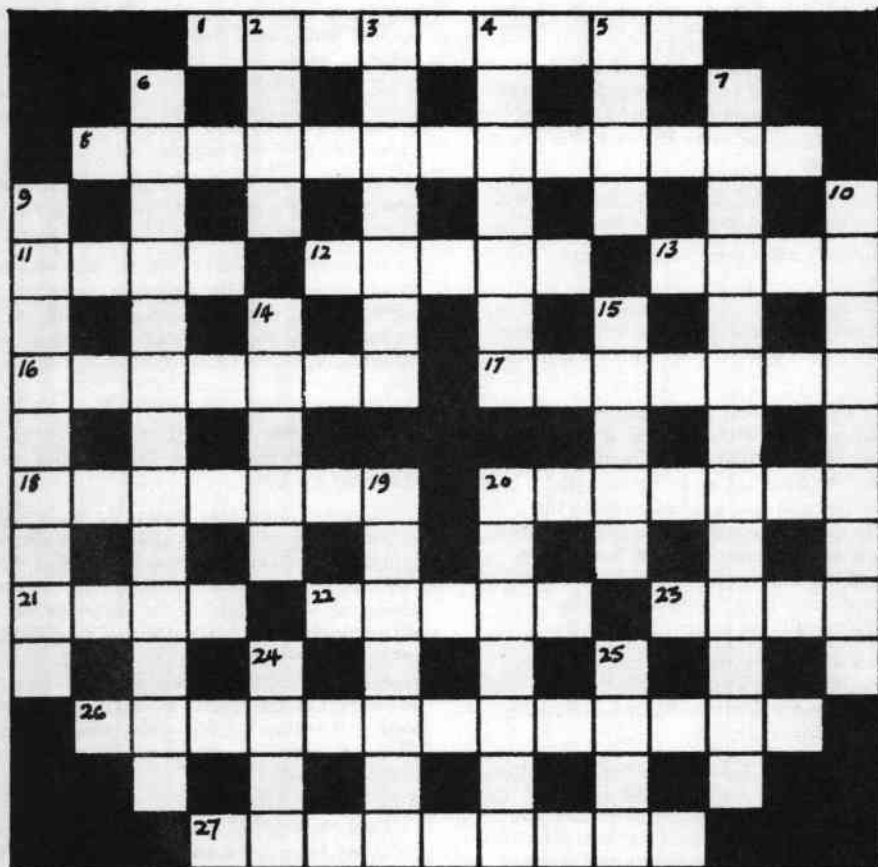
Clock cleaner must only be used if it is stripped down to its component parts as otherwise it will cause corrosion. We suggest cleaning spring barrel assemblies in paraffin, if possible partially winding the spring while in the paraffin. All trace or paraffin must be removed afterwards, perhaps by washing in methylated spirit.



GRAND CROSSWORD

Compiled by Grace Thompson

(Solution on page 223)



Editor's note: Members are particularly invited to submit their own efforts for publication in the Grand Crossword series. It may be that, however mistakenly, you feel that you are not erudite enough to write an article for us. Leaving you no excuse at all I say that any one of our fine body of Members is capable of composing a crossword. Sit down and try! At worst it will exercise your mind, at best it will pass a pleasant hour for other Members. Those of us who live overseas are reminded that, although distance may lend enchantment to

the view, it does not allow exemption to an Editorial plea.

Although it is suggested that the size of fifteen squares by fifteen should be followed, and that as many mechanical music clues as possible be included, there is no need to do more than rough out the crossword since it has to be redrawn in any case. There is no need for the clues to be typed.

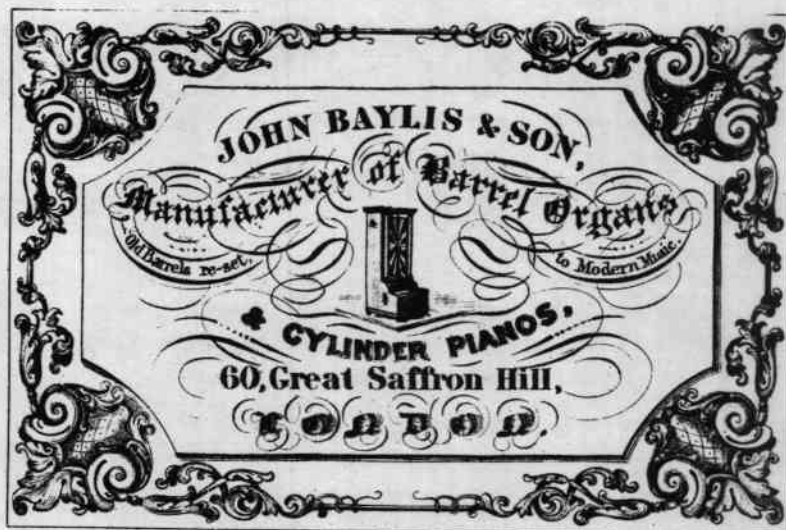
Please hurry, remember that only four can be published in a year. First in, first printed, if suitable.

ACROSS

1. Tone roars? Perhaps these need attention
8. Denial of pieces when our tea is mashed! When you buy a box make sure of this. 2-5-3-3
11. Assorted teas! A woodworm does it
12. Telegrams, when wetter before, may improve the sound
13. It mellows a barrel piano
16. After pride, for the position of your overture box
17. A short salesman before part of television mixed to make you fed-up
18. Out in front at replacing resonators?
20. A woodworm does this too. 5-2
21. An inharmonious trio could cause this
22. Examine the pins in reverse. If good, could be this to buy
23. Material for snuff boxes or a musical instrument
26. A mixed up Fortuna buster makes Aladdin lucky in his work
27. A paper hanger may find your row of resonators useful

DOWN

2. This drunken Welshman slows things down, governor!
3. The marquetry is always here
4. Mix a rum tea? Very unprofessional
5. So take the money or — the box
6. Bore on a fox pit, confused, would be most welcome to a collector
7. Over polishing may well produce these. 8-5
9. The French cutler disturbed about ring usually makes a good box
10. Teens slip crazily, useful for dressmaking, make sure your box has enough. 5-4
14. The lever wind is this to the key wind
15. Adjustment to a pair of 2 DOWN could increase this
19. Different word, same meaning
20. Sounds like the centre of musical box government
24. Could be mixed late or co-author. 2-2
25. Could be used instead of sawdust to put cleaned parts in to



The label illustrated was found on a miniature street piano by Member Grace Thompson. There appears to be no record of this maker.

AN 'OPERATIC' ALBUM

by Norman Brown

Lohengrin, son of Parsifal in Germanic legend was called Knight of the Swan and was attached to the searchers for the Holy Grail (like Sir Galahad in the Arthurian legend). He first appears in Wolfram von Eschenbach's "Parsifal", epic poem about 1210 AD and is developed in later German romance epics (and of course is hero of Wagner's opera of 1847). His story is as follows:

Lohengrin is the deliverer of Elsa (or Ilse) Princess of Brabant, who has been disposed by Tetramund and Ortrud. He arrives at Antwerp in a small boat drawn by a swan (in some versions actually *on* the swan), champions Elsa and becomes her husband on the sole condition that she shall not ask his name or lineage. But, like most females, she is curious and on the wedding night asks him his name — and since he is a Knight of the Holy Grail he must tell the truth and at the instant of disclosing his identity, vanishes. He reappears as the swan comes for him and he goes, but not before re-transforming the swan into Elsa's long lost brother Gottfried who had been turned into a bird by the evil Ortrud. Gottfried looks after Elsa and protects her, and Lohengrin rides off into the sunset on his never-ending quest for the Holy Grail.

Gustav Dore, the German artist, did a series of engravings on the Parsifal/Lohengrin/Siegfried legends in the 1880's. The lid of this album is probably based on one of those engravings.



THE TRUTH ABOUT TENNYSON'S WORKS

It is often supposed, even by your Editor, that the firm of Nicole Freres was the result of a partnership between two brothers in the year 1815, but recent research amongst the papers of the Patent Lightning Conductor Company is making it clear that this is not the whole of the story. If it were so, where does Alfred, Lord Tennyson come in? The reader might well ask, well, where does he?

The significance of the date of the partnership of the two brothers should not be forgotten, for this was the year of the Battle of Waterloo. The two brothers, in fact, were in the arms business; there was also a sister in the firm, which in full was Nicole Freres et Genevieve (often seen corrupted on musical boxes to Nicole Freres a Geneve). They might be making arms still, but one day they happened to be perusing Tennyson's poems when they came across the lines

But spring, a new comer,
A spring rich and strange,
Shall make the winds blow
Round and round.

With the subsequent career of the Nicole brothers in mind, it is easy to see that this is a reference to a musical box combined with an organ mechanism. Where were the Nicole brothers, realising the implication of these lines, going to find "a spring rich and strange"? There could be only

one answer: England. Tennyson's works were then being built along the Great West Road (see illustration) and here the Nicole brothers sped.

They were kept waiting a long time, for "Alf" Tennyson was writing poetry, not attending to the his true business of running an engineering firm. So much so, in fact, that his workmen had misread the musical box blue-prints, and were producing musical boxes twenty feet long instead of twenty inches. These, as might be imagined, only had a limited market, for the sound was so great that many noble houses were destroyed (see illustration) before the error was rectified.

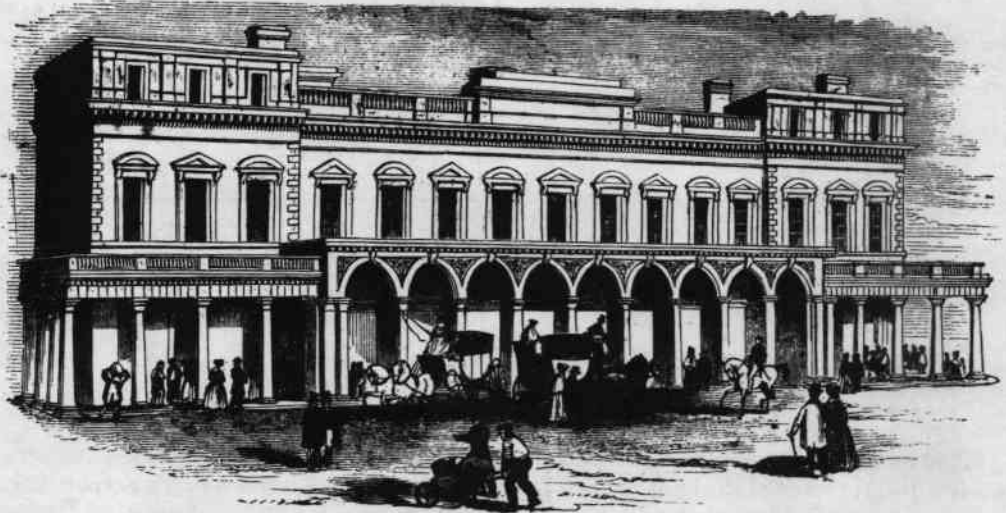
Tennyson, daily expecting his knighthood for his contribution to the export business, was distant. The two brothers thought that he had delusions, for he kept quoting to them his latest poem

I would be a merman bold,
I would sit and sing the whole of the day.

"How can you?" asked "Dave" Nicole, "when you can't hear yourself speak with that damned noise going on?"

Tennyson did not answer the question; instead he went on with another poem

I would be a mermaid fair;
I would sing to myself the whole of the day;
With a comb of pearl I would comb my hair.



The Tennyson Works on the Great West Road. Note the carriage trade.



This home once housed a Tennyson musical box.

"Kinky", commented Pierre ("Pete") Nicole, and they were about to go away and start the musical

box business without any help from the Englishman when Tennyson called them back. Eventually they made a deal. The terms were higher than the Nicole brothers had hoped for, and as revenge they stamped parts of their musical boxes NF. This is often thought to mean Nicole Freres but in actual fact they indicate Not Fair.

As they embarked on the ship to Europe they heard the strains of "Home, Sweet Home" played on a Tennyson box boom across the harbour. A great Georgian mansion on the cliff opposite crumbled. All that was left was a big key sticking out of a pile of inch thick planks.

"Do we have to make them so big?" asked one brother, "Tennyson says that they weigh twenty tons each." The other pondered on this. "No", he said slowly, "we can make them quite small. So small that they could go in a watch." Pierre Nicole looked at his brother closely, and told the captain that it might be necessary to restrain Dave as he was suffering from over-work.

"Go in a watch!" he exclaimed clutching the Tennyson contract, "the crazy Swiss fool. I'd better get him back on cuckoo clocks before he finally breaks."

So ends the saga, a little-known episode in the history of the musical box. So far as is known, there is no Tennyson box extant, for which we may be immensely thankful. R.P.

This interesting advertisement is from The Illustrated London News of November 14th, 1903, in the collection of the Editor.



LATEST TOY.
MECHANICAL
DRUM
PLAYS ITSELF. 2/9
10 in. diameter.
THE UTILITY CO., LTD.,
5, New Oxford Street,
LONDON.

SOME CURIOUS AUTOMATA

By Jack Tempest

I have recently come across an old book titled "The Wonders of Nature and Art — Comprising Nearly Three Hundred of the Most Remarkable Curiosities and Phenomena in the Known World" (published by William Milner of Halifax in 1839) in which there is a section devoted to "Mechanism". Mention is made of the famous automaton duck created by Vaucanson, the writing automaton of Maillardet, & the notorious 'chess-player' which apparently was eventually revealed to have been

operated internally by a diminutive human.

Lesser known mechanical curiosities are also mentioned — the Tarantula Spider, an automatic opera, & automaton coach & horses. This is what the book says about them — the latter two evidently being quoted by the anonymous author of the book from the 'Edinburgh Encyclopaedia:

AUTOMATON TARANTULA SPIDER

This surprising piece of mechanism, made of steel, was exhibited at Week's Museum, Titchborne-Street, Piccadilly. This singular automaton comes independently out of a box, and runs backwards & forwards on a table; stretches out & draws in its paws, as if at will; moves its horns & claws, & opens them with ease.

This wonderful little figure must fix the attention of the curious, having no other power of action than the mechanism contained in its body. The thing might have been thought impossible, on account of its smallness, & the difficulty of putting together, it being composed of *one hundred & fifteen* different pieces."

AUTOMATON COACH & HORSES

A more extraordinary piece of mechanism than the foregoing, is that described by M. Camus, who says he constructed it for the amusement of Louis XIV., when a child. It consisted of a small coach drawn by two horses, in which was the figure of a lady, with the footman and page behind. According to the account of M. Camus himself, this coach being placed at the extremity of a table of a determinate size, the coachman smacked his whip, and the horses immediately set out, moving their legs in a natural manner. When the carriage reached the edge of the table, it turned on a right angle, and proceeded along the edge. When it arrived opposite to the place where the king was seated, it stopped, and the page getting down, opened the door, upon which the lady alighted, having in her hand a petition, which she presented with a curtsey. After waiting for some time, she again curtsied, and re-entered the carriage; the page then resumed his place, the coachman whipped his horses, which began to move, and the footman, running after the carriage, jumped up behind it, and the carriage drove on."

AUTOMATON OPERA

"Towards the end of the 17th, century, Father Truchet, of the Royal Academy of Sciences, constructed for the amusement of Louis XIV., an automaton, consisting of a kind of moving pictures, which was considered as a masterpiece of mechanics. One of these pictures, which the monarch called his *little opera*, represented an opera in five acts, and changed the decorations at the commencement of each. The actors performed their parts in pantomime. This moving picture was only 16½ inches in breadth, 13 inches 4 lines in height, & 1 inch 3 lines in thickness for the play of the machinery. The representation could be stopped at pleasure, and made to recommence at the same place by the operation of a catch."

It seems that automata figures could be made to walk, smoke, balance, walk the tightrope, play musical instruments — in fact do practically anything but talk. We had to wait for the Edison days for the talking doll. However the book reports:—

THE SPEAKING MACHINE

We have often heard it said, of a clever automaton, 'it can do everything but talk;' we are now to have one, it seems, that can do even that. The *Carlsruhe Gazette* mentions a piece of mechanism which perfectly imitates the voice of a child, and produces distinctly every word with its proper undulation. The mechanism, it says, is very simple, consisting of sixteen levers answering to the sixteen simple sounds, moved by so many keys, like those of a harpsichord, so that these, properly touched, produced any articulate sounds required."

Some Workshop Notes

by R.P. Atkinson

An Eccentric Cylinder

I recently obtained a Lecoultre Freres-Geneva — musical box. The particulars are as follows:
Plain Case, White Tune Sheet, Huit Airs.
Marked No. 8041 Top left hand, L.F. Top right hand, B.B.C. Bottom centre. Musical Instruments on Border.

Tunes: 5 International Quadrilles. Polka, Waltz, Galop.

Cylinder $13\frac{1}{8}$ ins. long, $2\frac{1}{8}$ ins. diameter. Comb 102 teeth.

11 Cheese Head Screws.

L.F. — GVE, in lozenge-shaped border stamped in centre of comb.

Flat ratchet Wind (2 wheels) under glass lid.

Three levers right hand side.

No. 33390 stamped left hand of brass bedplate, at back.

After getting over the first flush of ownership, it was noticed how softly the box played at the start, and end of the tunes, and also how harshly it played half way round, the transition was uniform.

The pins, and possibly the cylinder were eccentric. This was checked with an Engineers "Dial Indicator" at each end of the cylinder, there being just sufficient plain cylinder available to accommodate the Indicator probe.

The actual cylinder was found to be + and - $\frac{1}{4}$ thousandths of an Inch eccentric, i.e. total, 3 thou. Ins., in line, and at the positions indicated by the tunes.

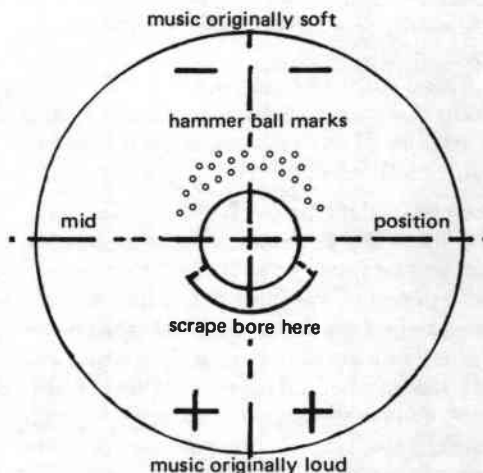
The cylinder was carefully marked on each end plate indicating the positions by + and - signs scratched on.

It was decided to peen the end plates of the cylinder near the bores at the - signs, and scrape the opposite + signs with a small half-round Engineer's scraper.

The box was dismantled, and the cylinder spindle removed. The hammer used was a BRADES — 1721 — 4 ozs. weight, and known as a Ball Pein Pin, or Telephone Hammer.

The smaller bore was tackled first (spring, or pinion end), keeping the ball marks about $\frac{1}{10}$ th ins. away from the actual bore of the cylinder end. Using the - sign as the centre point of the ball marks, eventually leaving a crescent-shaped pattern of "dints".

The cylinder was wrapped with several thicknesses



Cylinder end plate, showing position of hammer marks and scraping relative to the + and - positions of the cylinder.

of newspaper, held with one hand, or rested on the bench vertically, and steadied. Going easy with the hammer to start with, and keeping away from the mid-position of the + and - signs.

It was now found the small end of the cylinder spindle would not enter the bore. The bore was now scraped at the opposite, + sign, keeping away from the mid + and - position, and not being afraid of the look of the brass "scrapings" (probably removing less than $\frac{1}{4}$ thous. ins. at one time) scraping the bore until the end of the spindle would just enter its full length, and being careful not to loosen the end plate in the actual cylinder.

Exactly the same operations were done at the other end of the cylinder.

It is a big help if "Engineers Blue Marking" is *thinly* smeared on the spindle landings, indicating the "high" parts of the bores to scrape. At this stage I was satisfied when the spindle would go through both bores (not a sliding fit).

Re-assembling the spindle and cylinder only in the bearings on the bedplate, and again checking both ends of the cylinder with the Dial Indicator probe. An improvement in concentricity of the order of $\frac{3}{4}$ to 1 thou. Ins. (total) was found. Four

cycles of operations were required to correct the cylinder exactly.

Eventually the bores were eased, by scraping slightly to get a good sliding fit on the spindle, observing the "Blue Markings", and favouring the concentricity, if necessary. The improvement in playing had to be heard to be believed.

The question is now asked whether the box was like this originally, or whether the eccentricity had developed over the years. The matching marks on the cylinder, and end plates coincided. I have no idea of the date of manufacture, and any comments would be appreciated.

It is felt that other musical box cylinders may suffer from this defect, and the foregoing experience will show it is not a difficult matter to "correct".

The "Dial Indicator" may be awkward, possibly one could be borrowed from a garage, or nearby engineering works.

A compromise could be affected by securing a fixed "datum" under a Comb Screw at each end of the cylinder, and using "Engineers Feelers" between the datum, and each end of the cylinder. All else failing, you would need to be guided by the sound of the tunes, and your ears.

Cylinder Box Dampers

One hesitates to add anything to the excellent articles in *The Music Box* on the dampering of cylinder box combs, by Mr. de Vere Green, Cliff Burnett and Dr. Peter Whitehead.

However, I would just like to suggest that before finally screwing the comb face-down on the wood, take a piece of plain white paper about 1 inch wide, and a little longer than the dampered section of the comb, and place this under the comb teeth about half the width of the paper, screw the comb down lightly.

It may be found that the paper is not gripped the full length, when tested by pulling here and there. In this case, pack under the back of the comb with 2, or 3, thicknesses of paper at the wood screws. Test to see all the teeth are resting on the paper, and are not in mid-air, when screwed down.

Besides ensuring support to all the teeth, the paper shows the comb up; is useful to make notes on, i.e., which tooth you are working; thickness of dampers; where changes of thickness take place.

Incidentally, you may have noticed some additional marks on the tuning scale below the comb, these are where the dampers change thickness, and even when there are no tuning marks, these damper marks are nearly always shown, even on the poorest class of box.

Escapement Adjustment

When adjusting an escapement, held in the hand for free running, (propelling the gear wheel with a finger), it is often found the Cheese-Headed screw which controls the lower bearing of the "fly" is difficult to turn anti-clock-wise. This may be due to

a heavy burr on the edges of the screw-driver slot, and if adjustment is persisted in, you will finish up with a wide slot in the lower bearing shank.

These particular screws always seem very sharp on all edges of the head, and slot.

Remove all sharp edges with a very smooth file, especially on the screw-driver slot.

In making the final adjustment to the lower bearing, always finish with the screw turned clockwise, this will prevent the lower bearing from moving out over the years.

Registering a Cylinder

If a comb is out of "register" with the cylinder, before adjusting any stop screws, check that the cylinder spindle has no end-play in the baseplate bearings.

This is easiest done when the main spring is down, and the stop-work acting, and at the end of a tune.

The spring on the cylinder spindle, at the pinion end, (keeping the cylinder stop against the stepped cam on the large gear wheel at the opposite end), is often far too strong, resulting in a heavy blow to the right-hand bearing when the stop falls off the top of the cam, (last tune) to the first tune, eventually bending the right-hand bearing outwards.

The forces generated by these "mechanics" can be quite heavy, depending on the weight of the cylinder, and the velocity when it is finally brought to a practically instantaneous stop, say in $1/1000$ of a second.

It will usually be found that the "register" can be restored, if end-play is present, by pressing the large cylinder gear wheel, and spindle against the left-hand bearing on the bedplate.

Final correction can be made by removing the cylinder, and spindle from the bearings, and filing the underside of the right-hand bearing, nearest the actual bearing, (l.h. side). Alternatively carefully bending the bearing back to its original position, to eliminate any end-play on the cylinder spindle.

A too-strong spring can be weakened by removing one turn, to start with.

Removing a Comb

It is sometimes difficult to get hold of a Musical Box Comb, even if the whole movement is lifted out of the Case, the screws and washers removed, and the comb prized-up from the bedplate, by a screw-driver in the slots invariably provided in the comb support.

Take two old table knives and push the blades under the comb support at each end, outside the steady pins.

If you place both thumbs on top of the comb, and four fingers under the blades of the knives, near the comb, you will find you have firm hold of the comb, and it can quite safely be lifted and removed from the bedplate.

The comb should only be removed from the baseplate at the end of a tune, of course!

A LINK WITH THE PAST SEVERED

IN JULY, 1888, a son was born to a poor piano-tuner and his wife at their mean attic home in Clerkenwell. At the age of 11, the boy began work at the factory where his father worked, that of John Broadwood in Camden Town. His trial period proved a disaster – very nearly a real disaster when he accidentally started a fire in some wood waste – and so he was apprenticed to a jeweller in Hatton Garden. Almost immediately, he was presented by the sight and sound of a musical box and immediately decided that it was on these mechanisms that he wished to work.

A vacancy as a storeman/improver with Metert at 21/22, Ely Place (the old Nicole Freres London warehouse) caused him to break indentures which resulted in acrimony with his parents which was never to be reconciled. However, at Ely Place his job included affixing and writing tune sheets – no mean task for a lad of 17 who had never really learned his pen, and who had been deprived of formal schooling. The opportunity of a job as travelling representative and engineer for the New Polyphon Supply Company took him from Metert and in his new position he mastered the intricacies of self-changing disc machines. "It wasn't always possible to get a machine back to the repair shop for a major overhaul and many's the time I would have to take one apart on a stone floor and retrieve the pieces kicked across the flags by the customers in a pub", he told me once in a taped interview. "Once in a while, one of the Italian street musicians would come in for a pint and, if he owned his own instrument as many of them did round the West End, he'd ask me to fix it. I never really did like working on those old organs. They were often full of horse-droppings where they'd stand them in the gutter. And after all that, they would begrudge paying the few coppers I'd ask for maybe an hours' work".

At the age of 23 he became manager of a business selling piano players, playerpianos and player reed organs. "We had a model called the Orphic I remember. It was so simple, it couldn't go wrong, or so they said. But if you got one which chose to be a bit perverse, they were swines to work on. The chests would unglue and you'd have wind everywhere. There was also a player piano called the Pistonola – now that could be a bitch when it went wrong although a good one was a really good one. About every tenth one had a jinx, though".

During the first war, he was shot in the Battle of

the Somme, given up for dead and spent two days mostly unconscious lying in a shell-hole beneath the bullets from both sides. Invalided out, he was told he would never walk again. He celebrated Armistice Day in 1918 by playing a round of golf, a game he had never played before and has never played since. "I didn't even like the game, but it was my way of proving that even the most dilapidated mechanism can be put into good order".

He married in 1920, inherited a surprise sum of money and lived comfortably in Wandsworth, south of London. He knew John Clark – they were youngsters together. He built up a collection of musical boxes, specialising only in the unusual types. "I had a huge PVF with telescoping cylinders which was made for the Great Exhibition, and there was also several experimental disc machines which had been left in my care before the first war and never reclaimed. One was made by Lochmann and had a helical tune sheet, another was a table-model self-changer and another was a pipe-organ like a Polyphon and played by a steel disc". He also knew a fiery Irishman nine years his senior – Hamilton (later Sir Hamilton) Harty, and the former musical box mechanic, now suburban music teacher, was also a long-standing friend of father of the "Proms", Sir Henry Wood. "I once stood in as rehearsal organist at the Queens Hall – that was the nearest I ever got to being a concert performer".

In 1941, his home received a direct hit from a German bomb. He was dug out of the rubble alive; his wife and two daughters were dead.

Home was now with his widowed sister, eight years his junior, in Braintree, Essex. Here he grew roses and listened to music. He followed the progress of our Society although he always countered my suggestions that he should become a member with the rejoinder "I'm not a society man", the word "society" spoken with a sombre awesomeness. He retained a clear and perceptive mind and in recent years contributed books reviews to musical publications including THE MUSIC BOX. His favourite home-from-home was Padua in Venetia which he 'discovered' in the 'thirties and a place to which he was to return several times since. He went there on holiday in November and there he died in his sleep on December 8th, 1971. One more link with the past was severed. His name was Francis Cecil Buckley.

A. O-H.

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HELP WANTED. Will and Member owning a box matching the description below please contact D.S.Swan, Telephone 043-481 319, evenings only. Triumph Piccolo interchangeable cylinder musical box with 5 air arborless cylinders 9 inches long, 2 inches diameter, with raised end plates. Comb with 81 teeth, one not used. Information only required.

STELLA MUSIC BOX owners: register with me now so we may find out what parts and discs are available. P.A.Charlebois, M.D., 3000, Lawrence Avenue East, Scarborough, Ontario, Canada.

KEY WIND needing attention offered in exchange for ratchet or disc box in similar condition. Miles, Rock Cottage, Mountfield, Sussex.

LONDON MEMBER required to give a little of his time to the Society. The Hon. Secretary is looking for someone to help with some of the paperwork needed to keep the Society running smoothly. The job is not difficult and the rewards are great. The pleasure of serving others in a good cause.

THE EDITOR is looking for a Member, living in London, to assist in the preparation of the Journal for printing. The work is light but of importance. After initial instruction this Member will be responsible under the Editor for carrying out certain set and constant tasks for each issue of the Journal. The work can be done in the Member's own home and no experience is required. A chance to learn something of preparing work for offset litho.

GRAND CROSSWORD SOLUTION

ACROSS

1. Resonator 8. No parts are out 11. Eats 12. Wires 13. Felt 16. Of place 17. Replete 18. Leaders 20. Chews up 21. Riot 22. Snip 23. Horn 26. Fortunate rubs 27. Plumbline

DOWN

2. Evan 3. Amateur 5. Open 6. Forte piano box 7. Tuneless combs 9. Lecoultré 10. Steel pins 14. Later 15. Speed 19. Synonym 20. Capitol 24. Et al 25. Bran

Notes on THE HEROPHON ORGANETTE by Roger Booty

An unusual contender for a share in the booming market for organettes in the 1880's was the German Herophon, a machine which, judging by its rarity today, appears not to have been sold in any great numbers in this country. There were, according to advertisements, nine different models of the Herophon. These all appear to have used a basic 24 reeds, some used steel reeds, and various models used double tongues on either some or all of these.

The action of the Herophon is unusual in that the movement revolves when the handle is turned while the 'disc' remains stationary. I use the term 'disc' although the tune sheet is actually a square of card reinforced with thin metal strips round the edges to stop buckling. The music is cut in a circular pattern round the card. The card is the same type of material used for the discs of the Ehrlich Ariston organette. The advertisements say that the tune sheets were also available in metal, but since I have not seen one, I cannot comment on this.

The twenty four keys of the instrument are held down by the disc until a slot cut into the disc corresponds with the position of a key, when it is allowed to rise, opening a valve to let air under pressure escape and sound the reed. The operation of the valves through pieces of shaped wire from the keys is also very similar to the operation of the Ariston.

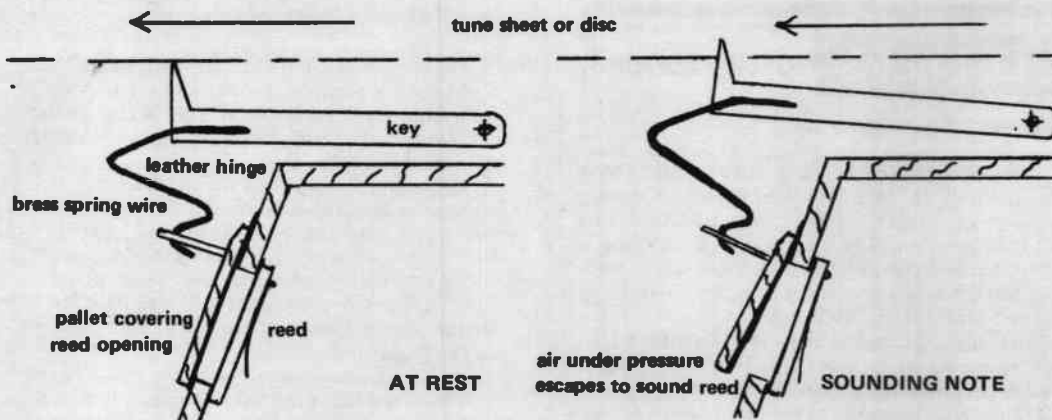
The discs on my machine are 13¾ inches square

and have a circular hole in the centre of 3¼ inches. There are also small quarter circles cut from each outside corner of the disc to locate it on the machine and prevent lateral movement. When a disc is on the machine, the pressure arm, which is entirely detached from the machine, fits at one end over a metal dowel pin at one side of the centre circle and is held in place by a bracket on the other side of the circle.

The action, which turns anti-clockwise, is capable of playing an ordinary Ariston disc provided that a suitable hole is made in the centre of the disc and a means found to keep it still while the movement revolves. Ariston owners may think this not possible since their discs turn clockwise. With a pause for thought, however, it will be realised that the movement needs to go in the opposite direction to the normal motion of the disc.

The case of the Herophon is finished in polished black. The measurements are 19 inches square by 12 inches deep. On my machine there is a swell flap on the side of the case measuring about 11 inches by 6 inches. The air pressure is supplied by two long feeders fixed to the interior of the bottom of the case. Between them an erect brass tube is fixed. The top end of this tube is stopped with a piece of dowel which has a polished brass cap. The cap is visible in the centre of the disc clamping fixture on the top of the action. The bottom end of the tube





THE HEROPHON ORGANETTE ACTION (about half actual size)

opens in to a chest between the feeders. The action, consisting of a large wind chest, the reservoir and the reeds and valves, fits on to the tube. The air comes up through the tube and passes out through three holes in to the wind chest. The action revolves via a worm gear on the end of the crank rod of the handle. A leather seal surrounds the tube where it passes through in to the wind chest to ensure an airtight fit.

As can be seen in the illustration, the top board of the machine, which is 15½ inches in diameter, is finished with a floral design which features five well known composers, Wagner; Offenbach; Strauss; (probably Johann the younger) Mozart and

Beethoven. The colouring of this design gives the whole machine a gay and festive look.

Unfortunately I have been unable to discover anything about the manufacturer of the Herophon, or over what period of time it was sold. It was patented in Germany; Austria; France and Great Britain; so that despite its present rarity it would seem that there were once great hopes for its future.

If I were to hazard a guess I would say that it is possible that the Herophon, playing as it can the Ariston disc, was a novelty venture by Ehrlich, or possibly an attempt by another maker to make a similar machine in such a way as to avoid patent infringement.



LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Member A.J.L. Wright writes:

Referring to Mr. Cunliffe's letter on Page 186 of the last issue of "M.B." things written on boxes seem to add to their interest. I have a Nicole Freres 12-tune box No. 25429 which has on the bottom "Mrs. Cameron, 61, Princes Squ. Bayswater." and the Serial No. in a neat script. Was she the first owner? Does the place still exist?

Another 12-tune box has a tune sheet identical with those shown on pages 380/1 of Vol.3. No.5. and on the edge of the glass lid in pencil is the date 28/2/87. Did the maker of the case perhaps put this on when he made it? It seems to line up with the age of the box.

On a George Bendon organ box there is written on the tune sheet the earnest message "Please keep the glass closed." In fact, it does give a better balance of sound that way.

Finally, I liked your first issue very much and look forward to the next.

Member David Burke of Florida, U.S.A. writes:

Having been a member for over a year now, I must say that I have enjoyed the benefits of the Society more than other similar Organisations. First of all, the Journal has much more to offer in disc and cylinder playing musical boxes, instead of player pianos, fair organs and pneumatically played instruments. As I specialise in cylinder boxes I must tell you how grateful I am that THE MUSIC BOX has so much to offer in the way of technical information, especially Messrs. Harding & Burnett's new QUESTION & ANSWER column which I find to be invaluable. Keep up the excellent standards of this most informative Journal!

I have a rather strange request to make. Could you recommend me Members who are 18-35 years old and would be interested in corresponding with me? I'm nineteen, and am just starting a collection, though I've had an interest in all sorts of mechanical music for about seven or eight years and am the proud possessor of one cartel, a Langdorf six-air, 11" cylinder instrument from the 1870's. I would like very much to start communications with Members my age in the British Isles, and hopefully make some pen-friends via the Society.

Editor's note: David's request deserves encouraging results. Here is a chance to learn something of a fellow Member's country. The full address is: 2084, S. Rio Grande, Orlando, Florida 32805, U.S.A.

Member Jocelyn Walker of Surrey writes:

I have read with interest Richard Jefferies' letter about the gramophone record "A Casey Concert" featuring a street piano. There were in fact a number of records dealing with mechanical music issued, as was his, in the early 1930s.

Having conferred with a friend who is a prominent member of the City of London Phonograph and Gramophone Society I offer the following information: Mr. Jefferies' record is one of six which appeared during that period concerning the "Casey Court Kids". They were produced by George Buck. Here are the titles and serial numbers; The first five are on the Regal label.

A Casey Court Concert	MR 448
The Casey Kids Christmas Concert	MR 713
Casey Court Seaside Outing	MR 599
The Casey Kids Beano	MR 575
Stormy Weather in Casey Court	MR 1139
and the last is on the Regal Zonophone label	
Christmas Eve in Casey Court	MR 1486

These all feature a street piano and other sound effects.

Among my own collection of "78s" is a Zonophone record No.6032: The Volunteer Organist up-to-date, being a "sketch with barrel organ". The latter is again a street piano. The 'organ grinder' is probably George Jackley and it is interesting in that it contains a reference to a "jolly little speed indicator" and then goes on about changing the tune. As do the Casey records this contains nice period traffic noises.

Among other mechanical music records of that period I have before me Regal MR334 English and Scottish tunes played on a "gigantic orchestrion" which seems to be a mechanical piano with a large percussion department. Regal MR 396 street barrel piano, two Imperials of barrel pianos with vocal and accordion support, Regal Zonophone MR 329 street piano.

The foregoing is doubtless an incomplete account and I shall be interested to see if other members can increase this list of pre-war recordings of mechanical music.

What a fine effort: - the "new look" Music Box.

No comparisons to be made with all the preceding journals which add up to a unique and valuable document but this first edition "under new management" is a triumph for the Editor and publishers which whets the appetite for the next issue. Congratulations.

Arthur Ord-Hume Writes:

Having at last been able to find a little spare time to devote to my own mechanical musical instruments, I have come up against something

unusual and I am wondering if there are any members of the Musical Box Society who might be able to assist me. ,

I have a quantity of unusual music rolls which, because they have words printed upon them, I assume to be some sort of song roll. The rolls, however, do not fit my piano since they are too narrow and they are also of too great a diameter to fit into the spool box. This suggests to me that, rather like the later Ampico rolls, they must play for upwards of half an hour. Sadly, all the rolls I have appear to have lost their leaders but, remarkably enough, all the rolls seem to be copies of the same single song, the name of which I do not know. I am inclined to think that perhaps these might be rolls for a sort of jazz-piano, playing probably either African native chants or modern pop music since the music consists of well-spaced, full-compass chords (judging by the perforations) and the repeated single word "Bronco".

I was told by an expert that these rolls operate on a simple wire hook screwed to the wall, but this tells me nothing about the music-producing parts of its use. The same person has told me that he once had some similar rolls and these must have come from a similar section in the catalogue because the rhythm was apparently the same, but the chant was "Izal".

Anybody any ideas?

Editor's note: it is good to see that in spite of putting himself out to pasture as far as the Journal is concerned, A.W.J.G. O-H. is continuing serious research.

Dr. Martin Karrer of Zurich Writes:

I thank you for your letter of September 16 1971 and should like to apologize for my late

reply

I have inquired with my family members in the meantime but there was no documentation available; it seems that everything has been lost or destroyed when my great-grandfather closed his business. However, I am in a position to give you the following data:

His name was Samuel Karrer, born in Teufenthal near Aarau/Switzerland. His father had an inn in Teufenthal, and it seems that my great-grandfather then learned the business of a merchant. However, I do not know how he learned the business of manufacturing mechanical musical instruments but it seems that he did not take over an existing manufacturing plant but that he formed one on his own in Teufenthal where he was living until he died in 1910. His business was closed around 1905 due to the fact that he had no heir or other successor to take it over; my grandfather studied the law and settled in Zurich. I do not know how big or important the Teufenthal manufacturing plant was but it seems that he was quite successful in his business and exported a considerable portion of his production to places all over the world.

Editor's note: Dr. Karrer is, as we see in this letter, the great grandson of Samuel Karrer, listed in most books on mechanical music as: Karrey, S., Teufenthal, Germany. We now see that Teufenthal is in Switzerland, a fact which should have been verified in a gazetteer. (Yes, I'm guilty too).

I met Dr. Karrer last Summer and when I found who he was I naturally asked him if there were any papers or records of the family business still in existence. This letter is in reply to a reminder I sent. One more piece in the jig-saw of the history of mechanical music.



The rubbing shown was taken by David Tallis from a good quality tortoise-shell snuff box with mother-of-pearl control buttons. The movement has a sectional comb in groups of five teeth and plays two unknown airs very well.



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- 530 J.C. Martin, 3, Harding Street, East Northport, New York, 11731, U.S.A.
- 531 R.J. Byrne, 1600, Bayview Avenue, Toronto, 17, Canada.
- 532 National Museum van Speeldoos tot Pierement, Achter den Dom 12, Utrecht, Holland.
- 533 D. Gregory, 108a, Looseleigh Lane, Crownhill, Plymouth, Devon.
- 534 M.I. Levy, 1600, S. Woodland Road, Cleveland, Ohio, 44120, U.S.A.
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- 547 R. Holmes, 11, Red House Estate, Etherley, BP Auckland, Co. Durham.

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- 324 Dr. Sidney Malitz, 181, Waverly Road, Scarsdale, New York, 10538, U.S.A.
- 213 James N. Hirsch, c/o House of Scotch, Inc., 15, Glenville Street, Glenville, Conn. 06839, U.S.A.

MUSICAL BOX SOCIETY (INTERNATIONAL)

The Musical Box Society (International) is to hold the Annual Meeting this year in Crete, Chicago, Illinois, on 29th and 30th September. One session of this Meeting is to be held at Al Svoboda's Nickleodeon Tavern and Museum in Chicago Heights, Chicago.

Members of The Musical Box Society of Great Britain have always been most welcome at these Meetings and any Member requiring further information should write to the organiser of the Chicago Meeting, who is: Mr. James J. Doheny, 3625, McCormick Avenue, Brookfield, Illinois 60513, U.S.A.

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What for? What good does the Society do? The Society brings together fellow collectors from all over the British Isles and many foreign countries including Switzerland — the accredited birthplace of the musical box as we know it.

The Society publishes a quarterly Journal called THE MUSIC BOX which is devoted to articles on all aspects of musical automata, repair and overhaul tips, descriptions of fine and unusual musical movements and; of course, it circulates Members addresses.

Membership to the MUSICAL BOX SOCIETY OF GREAT BRITAIN opens up a whole new world of musical box appreciation. Wherever you live, up-to-the-minute news of members and collections reaches you through THE MUSIC BOX. Twice a year, a full day meeting is held at which all members and their guests are invited to attend. Regional meetings, film

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How much does all this cost? Just **THREE POUNDS** (U.S.A. \$8 per year! If you are not convinced that Society membership can benefit you, why not send 10/- (50p; \$1.50) for a specimen copy of THE MUSIC BOX? Judge critically, for yourself.

The Journal of the Musical Box Society of Great Britain, THE MUSIC BOX, is devoted to articles and material of interest to collectors, antique dealers, historians of mechanical music and enthusiasts in general. As a work of continuing reference, THE MUSIC BOX publishes much material which has never before appeared in print as well as reproducing contemporary advertisements, descriptions, articles, patents, tune-sheets, lists of types of boxes and lists of tunes which they play.

Additionally, it acts as a clearing house for the opinions and researches of Members throughout the world and carries advertisements for Wants and Disposals. The main purpose of the Journal is, of course, to act as the mouthpiece of the Musical Box Society of Great Britain and is recognised as the leading authority in all matters concerning mechanical music and mechanical musical instruments. The Society maintains archives and publishes in facsimile much out-of-print material in its Journal.

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