

Volume 24 Number 6 Summer 2010

# The *Music Box*

*An International Journal of Mechanical Music*



## **In this issue:**

- Restoration matters
- Da Vinci's Drum
- The Melodette!
- Making a Musical Box

**The Journal of the Musical Box Society of Great Britain**

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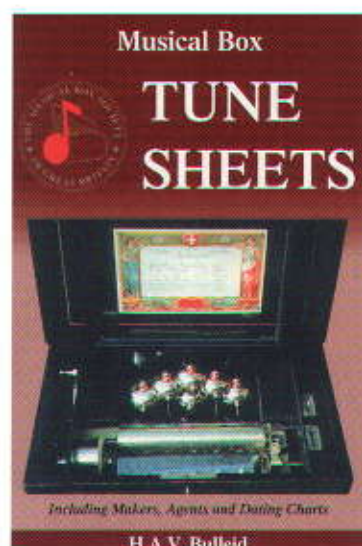
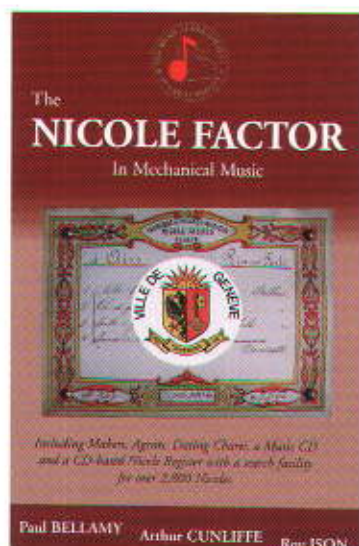
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# From the Editors' Desk

**A**s a society I am sure we all send our warmest greetings to Ted and Kay Brown on hosting their fiftieth Chanctonbury Ring meeting. One is always assured of a warm welcome there, as well as a wealth of experience and information at these gatherings – and that's without the puddings! Congratulations to you both and please keep up the good work.

We have a very varied content this issue – there really does have to be something for everybody here. From so far away, I love the Society News. It keeps me in touch with friends as well as the latest trends in collecting. The Derby meeting was certainly one that looks to have been most interesting. John Entwistle is a name from the dawn of the society and we found 'Musical Boxes and Me' to be a really enjoyable ramble down memory lane. We are hoping that he will perhaps consider a follow-up article on some of the characters we know as just names from the early days – Dr Robert Burnett, Cyril and Bertha De Vere Green, Gerry Planus, Graham Webb, Bruce Angrave – the designer of our logo and, of course, a noted artist and cartoonist – and others.

It was splendid to hear from our friend Keith Harding. His Nicole Frères 'Twins' are pretty amazing. The chances of having two boxes like this together in one place for comparison are remote, but here they are.

We have always wondered about Da Vinci's drawings, whether they were really similar to Nostradamus' predictions (you can fit them to any situation) or whether they were more practical. The Italian Society members have done a fantastic job of bringing one to life – read all about it on page 475.

Nicholas Simons' Melodette! (with exclamation mark!) is most intriguing. I have never seen one – far less heard one and so really appreciate the detailed description of the re-build, as I am sure you will too. We congratulate him on this restoration, as we know from experience it is often much harder to restore these inexpensively produced items than the more sophisticated ones. They were not expected to be re-built by their manufacturers and churned out accordingly.

Don Busby continues to build his musical box. In this issue he is designing and building the governor and safety device. We apologise for omitting Figure 1 of the last issue's article – the jig for drilling damper holes – and have included it on page 458.

To all of you who have contributed to this edition we extend our thanks.

Those of us who use the MBSGB web site ([www.mbsgb.org.uk](http://www.mbsgb.org.uk)) should note that the access password to the Members area has been changed. It is now LANGDORFF.

Have a wonderful summer!

The Editors welcome articles, letters and other contributions for publication in the Journal. The Editors expressly reserve the right to amend or refuse any of the foregoing.

Any contribution is accepted on the understanding that its author is solely responsible for the opinions expressed in it and the publication of such contributions does not necessarily imply that any such opinions therein are those of the Society or its Editors.

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### Front cover illustration:

*Seeburg Model L coin piano,  
seen and described at the  
Derby meeting.*

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## Dates for your Diary 2010

### 50th Chanctonbury Ring Meeting

*Sunday 9th May 2010*

10.30 coffee for an 11am start

Lunch provided

Please contact Ted Brown on  
01403 823533

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### Essex Meeting

*Saturday 22nd May 2010*

10am - 4pm

At the Parish Rooms,  
Holy Trinity Church  
Rayleigh, Essex

Bring your own lunch –  
coffee & tea provided by us  
Why not bring along your own  
favourite musical item to show

Please phone Bruce Allen –  
01702 232040

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### Annual General Meeting & Society Auction

*Saturday 5th June 2010*

Roade Village Hall  
Near Northampton

10.30 a.m. Start –  
Buffet lunch - midday  
Society Auction 1p.m.

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### Teme Valley Winders

*Saturday 19th June 2010*

1.30 Start

Please contact John Phillips on  
01584 781118

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### Chanctonbury Ring Open day

*Sunday 18th July 2010*

10.30 coffee for an 11am start

Lunch provided

Please contact Ted Brown on  
01403 823533

## President's Message No. 16

Recently I have received two messages from abroad. Both arrived unexpectedly and were a source of great pleasure to me. The first of these surprises came in the shape of a package all the way from Italy. Franco Severi and our good friends in AMMI have sent two DVD's and booklets showing the work recently undertaken by Franco and AMMI.

Their first project is bang up to date in that they had designed a machine and a computer programme which could "read" the music pinned on a barrel or punched on a music book. Now it seems as though it is possible to read and play electronically any music pinned on a barrel or punched in a book even if the rest of the instrument is missing! This was reported on in the last Music Box journal.

The second task AMMI had undertaken was to go right back in time and make a replica of the mechanical drum that had been originally designed by Leonardo da Vinci in the mid 15<sup>th</sup> century. This they have done with great care and skill and the completed drum now takes pride of place in the villa Silvia in Cesenza. Thanks to the kindness and generosity of Franco and AMMI, these documents and DVD's are now part of our archives. Any member may request sight of these items and copy as required. Brief descriptions of this project along with a couple of pictures are elsewhere in this journal.

The second source of great pleasure came all the way from Japan in the form of a letter from Sadahiko Sakauchi who is the Chairman of the Japanese Chapter of the MBSL. He requested permission to use one of our articles in their magazine. I happily agreed to this request and further suggested we could co-operate further provided the language barrier could be overcome.

This idea has been taken up enthusiastically by the Japanese who are now going to actively promote the MBSGB in their magazine informing their members about our society and what we do. I believe the problem of translation has been largely overcome, so I hope that in a short time we will receive articles from Japan telling us about what they are doing and what their interests are. In the meantime, I know they are going to publicise our books in their magazine to take advantage of our understanding and knowledge in the world of mechanical music. I know that the work and research of the Japanese Chapter will be of great worth and importance. We will benefit greatly from any exchange of thoughts and ideas.

The World Wide Web has made great changes to the way we live and we too must keep pace with all the latest developments and make the best of modern technology. It does seem such a shame that we do have to depend on modern forms of power to use these features as I would much prefer the internet to be spring powered or wound up by a handle.

Arthur Cunliffe

### Errata – Vol. 24 No. 5 – Spring 2010

Fig. 1 of the article "Making a Musical Box" on page 440 shows the movement of Alec Reid's Oriental organ musical box, not the jig for drilling damper wire holes. The jig is illustrated on page 458 of this issue.

In the article "Musical Box Oddments No. 123", starting on page 443, in reference to the Fahbach family, the spelling should include an 'r', viz: Fahrbach.

We apologise for the above errors.

### Autumn Meeting 2010

Lincolnshire

Host David O'Conner  
& Gill Maxim

Friday 10th September –  
12th September 2010

Details in next Journal

### Teme Valley Winders

Saturday 25th September 2010

1.30 start

Please contact John Phillips on

01584 781118

### Essex Meeting

Christmas Meeting

Saturday 20th November 2010

10am - 4pm

New Venue details in  
next Journal

Rayleigh, Essex

Bring your own lunch –  
coffee & tea provided by us  
Why not bring along your own  
favourite musical item to show

Please phone Bruce Allen –  
01702 232040

### Teme Valley Winders –

Christmas Meeting

Saturday 4th December 2010

12 noon start

Including Buffet Lunch

Please contact John Phillips on  
01584 781118

### Chanctonbury Ring

Christmas Meeting

Saturday 27th November 2010

10.30 coffee for an 11am start

Lunch provided

Please contact Ted Brown on  
01403 823533

### Chanctonbury Ring

Details of October meeting  
in next journal

## Teme Valley Winders

Easter Meeting – 13th March 2010 – from John Farmer

A mere 17 attendees made it to this meeting. Perhaps it was the remaining chill in the air, or the fact that Eastham bridge was closed resulting in a detour through Tenbury – who knows. However, it was good to welcome two newcomers, Alan Berrisford from Bromsgrove, and Stuart Scott from Sutton Coldfield, and it was also good to see Alan Pratt up and walking, if not running, after his recent illness.

No-one managed to fit the suggested Easter theme, but there was, as usual, a variety of instruments and subjects. Kath Turner started us off with a couple of rousing tunes on her 20-note Raffin street organ – the Radetsky March, and William Tell. Kath hopes to be at Tavistock with this organ. Next up was John Farmer who showed a small, 1950's German musical clock in plastic case with a miniature ballet dancer which twirls, and a Melody Player, tin-plate hand wound organette which plays from a paper roll. JF then showed a short slide presentation of the problems found within a 39 note, double reed Manopan, now fixed, and demonstrated the instrument in action. This was followed by a brief slide and movie show of the da Vinci Mechanical Drum project completed by the Italian society AMMI.

John Moorhouse gave an interesting illustrated talk on early Bontems singing bird boxes. As a result of carrying out some work on a box belonging to John Phillips, JM had realised that the box differed from the "standard" Bontems design. He also discovered that a third variation was pictured in the Mayson book. He concluded that JP's box was probably the earliest, and had some design faults which were subsequently corrected by



*Hilda Phillips with her unusual musical sewing box*

Bontems in at least two stages. This will be the subject of a full article in due course.

Nicholas Simons gave us a science and history lesson which, although not musical, was interesting. He explained how early electric motors were based on steam engine designs, and then explained the operation of the Sterling Hot Air engine, and the Thermo-Acoustic engine. These were all demonstrated by models from the Old Model Company, and Kontax ([www.sterlingengine.co.uk](http://www.sterlingengine.co.uk)). Bernard North took the stage next, with an appeal for help. In

restoring a 1700 long case clock he discovered that a small pinion gear was missing (the Pinion of Report, I think), but his attempts at making a replacement were proving difficult. Much advice was forthcoming!

New Boy Alan Berrisford was persuaded to tell us about his Wurlitzer theatre organ recently installed in his converted garage. Alan describes it as a "Virtual" pipe organ since it consists of a real Wurlitzer console (ex Victoria Cinema, Edinburgh) which he has modified to send MIDI signals to a computer running Hauptwerk



virtual pipe organ software and outputting to a high quality sound card and amplifier. (I have heard it – it is impressive!). Alan has also recently acquired a Symphonion disc box, which brought him into MBSGB – perhaps we will see and hear that at a future meeting.

John Harrold demonstrated his Black Forest built street barrel organ and explained that many of these were exported to countries such as Brazil with only one tune pinned. Locals were then trained to pin their own traditional tunes. This organ, of unknown make, had 9 tunes, 1 European and 8 Brazilian, probably used as a “dance” organ for a Brazilian village.

John Phillips showed us a couple of “Ebay” finds, first was a “watch the birdie” singing bird C. 1900 believed to have been used by photographers to attract the attention of children at the vital moment. It is a bird which wags its tail and moves its beak when a rubber bulb is squeezed. The air flow is also used to play a

whistle to give the bird song. This note is rather uninteresting until a brass container at the base of the whistle is filled with water. The note then changes to a much more attractive bird song. Second was a Hebdomas Patent 8 day Swiss Made Full Hunter pocket watch in a Pinchbeck case, C1900. It has a most attractive white enamelled dial with blue enamel circles containing black roman numerals and also showing the exposed balance wheel. Upon opening the back of the watch there can be seen a very large spring barrel practically filling the case, which makes it possible for the watch to run for 8 days on one winding.

Nicholas Simons returned to the front to play two excellent piano rolls – “Brazilian Maple Rag”, arranged by Robby Rhodes (of Mechanical Music Digest fame), as played by the Etiwanda Marimba Orchestra, available from Player Piano and Mechanical Music Exchange, and “Frog-I-More”, a Mike Meddings arrangement of the Jelly Roll Morton

composition, produced by Julian Dyer ([www.pianorolls.co.uk](http://www.pianorolls.co.uk)) under the Monrovia label.

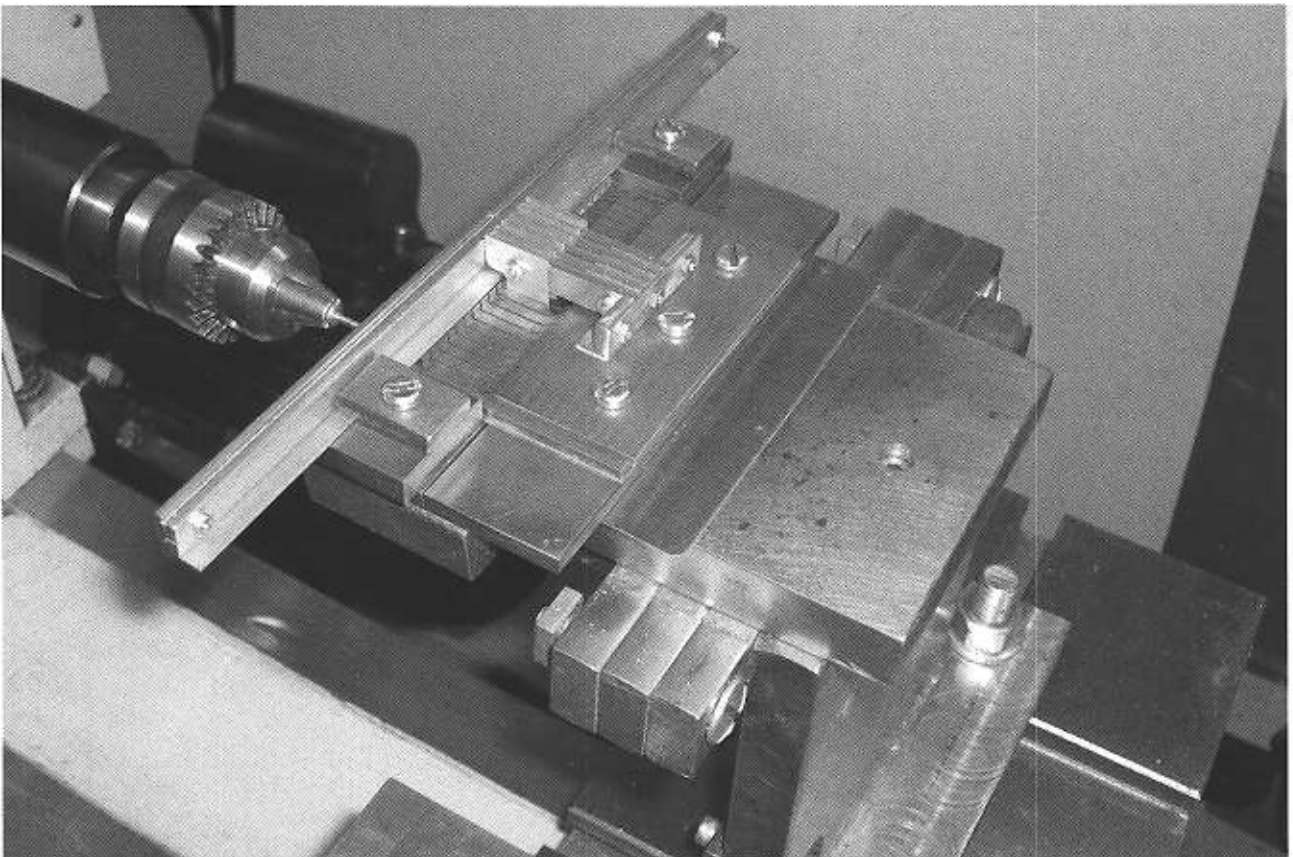
Finally, Hilda Phillips (who had previously provided us with tea, coffee, cakes and biscuits), showed her recent internet purchase, a very nice Musical Album, which opens up to reveal a sewing box instead of a photograph album.

The next meeting of the Teme Valley Winders will be on Saturday 19<sup>th</sup> June, 2010, starting at 1:30p.m. prompt. Those wishing to attend should contact John Phillips on 01584 781118 to confirm and get directions if required. Any instruments, clocks or items of interest are welcome.

#### Below:

Fig 1 of the article 'Making a Musical Box', which should have appeared in the Spring 2010 edition:

*Jig for drilling damper wire holes.*



## MBSGB at DERBY

Society Members Autumn Meeting - 9th, 10th and 11th October 2009

The MBSGB Autumn Meeting for 2009 was held at the Mickelover Court Hotel, situated on the outskirts of Derby. Our hosts for this occasion were Nicholas and Eileen Simons. Amongst the 59 members who attended, we were pleased to welcome several new faces, some of whom had travelled from Norway and Sweden. We were also very pleased to welcome our Vice President, Coulson Conn, who had journeyed from the USA to join us for the occasion.

Dinner on the Friday evening was followed by a presentation by Bob Betts, the Managing Director of Smith of Derby. This long established Derby firm, the largest and oldest tower clock company in the world, has been designing and manufacturing public clocks for over 150 years. Although a substantial element of its business today concerns the servicing and maintenance of several thousand public clocks installed worldwide, the company is also at the forefront of horological technology; a significant element of the business is concerned with designing, manufacturing and installing new public clocks to modern designs and using the latest advances in mechanical technology. These days, however, its main business in this respect is with Russia, China and the Middle East. We were shown illustrations of several very impressive clocks, the contracts for some of these having been won in the face of very stiff competition from home-based concerns. Amongst these was a clock for a country in the Middle East for which the contract specified that not only should it strike the hours, but also chime at Sunrise and Sunset! In this case, modern electronics had been used to assist the otherwise wholly mechanical clock with the



Arthur Cunliffe (left) receives the prestigious MBSI Trustees Award for 'Outstanding Contributions to the Field of Mechanical Music', from MBSI former President (and our Vice President), Coulson Conn.

solar timekeeping requirements!

The programme for Saturday morning included three talks given by members. Our first speaker was Alan Pratt who gave a fascinating and slightly offbeat talk about some details of the life history of an early 19th Century Chamber Barrel Organ that he had restored recently. The instrument, built in 1812 by Henry Bryceson of London and sold initially to the owners of East Keal Manor, Spilsby, Lincolnshire, had not received the best of treatment during its long life and Alan gave two examples

of this maltreatment. The most obvious example, to the eye, had been the covering of simulated oak varnish that, at some stage, had been applied to its mahogany cabinetwork! To the ear, however, it was the second example that was even more offending; someone had replaced the worm wheels on 2 of the 3 barrels, and in doing so had fitted the replacements off-centre and onto the wrong end of the barrels. This had three catastrophic and musically cacophonous results: the tunes were played backwards, some of the notes did not play at all and





*Meeting hosts, Nicholas and Eileen Simons with Weber Unika*

the pins and bridges for the treble and bass notes were swapped!!

With the organ were some late 19<sup>th</sup> century invoices and correspondence, amongst which was a letter written to the makers by the then owners, the Addey family. In the letter, they stated that they had bought the organ from "an old couple" and that they were now requesting advice concerning some repairs that appeared necessary at the time. The company, however, which by that date in 1893 had been re-named Bryceson Brothers, had replied to the effect that they could not help as the instrument was "not worth repairing as it was old technology, and could be valued only for its quaintness". Alan then went on to describe in some detail the work that he had done to fully restore the organ; how things have

changed! Alan finished his talk by playing a recording of some of the tunes now played by the restored instrument, including arrangements of "Blue Stocking" and of a Persian Dance. He intends to include details of his restoration work in an article to be published in a later edition of this journal.

Our second talk was given by John Farmer, who gave us an insight into the various aspects of the work involved in restoring a Seeburg Model "L" Coin Piano. These instruments were made in Chicago between 1907 and 1927 by JP Seeburg, a Swedish immigrant who had arrived in the US during the 1880's. The particular example on which John had worked was yet another instrument that had not been treated with respect over the years. The latest and most obvious

example of this maltreatment was the modern, white sealant that had been applied by a do-it-yourself restorer to try and seal the bellows. The results of his messy and not very successful efforts had been all too obvious to both see and hear! Fortunately, most of the adhesive had been applied to the bellows material itself and so could be removed and discarded without leaving any traces that would interfere with a more professional restoration. The instrument plays "A" Rolls that are based on the 65 Note Format. It has an attractive Art Glass front in the Art Deco style. As built, it was powered by a 110volt AC Pancake motor and this was still with the instrument, albeit that it was in need of restoration itself.

After the break, Ted Brown showed and played some of the smaller musical boxes that form part of his extensive and eclectic collection of mechanical music. The first item he showed was a model of an upright piano that contained a small musical movement. This had once belonged to his aunt and although the instrument itself did not work at the time, it had nevertheless attracted the attention of the young Master Brown to such an extent that it was eventually given to him on the understanding that he "got it playing". With a little effort on his part, he had succeeded in making it play and thereby became the proud owner of his first item of mechanical music. His enthusiasm thus ignited, his interest took off and, to use a phrase, the rest is history. The other items shown and played to the meeting by Ted were as interesting as they were varied and included: several snuff boxes; a very attractive musical Necessaire in the form of a book with a complete set of internal fittings; a musical Ink Stand; a deeply carved box of Chinese origin which contained another Necessaire and 3 cylinder movements, one playing operatic

airs; the second playing popular airs and the third playing sacred airs; two Photograph Albums; an original 1930's Whistler by Griesbaum; a Manivelle; and three small cylinder musical boxes, a 4 Air by Alibert, a 2 Air by Rzebitschek and a 3Air with 3 Bells by L'Epee.

The afternoon was taken up by two visits: first to the Derby Museum and Art Gallery; and then on to the Derby Industrial Museum. At the Museum and Art Gallery, we were given a short talk on the works of Joseph Wright, an innovative and experimental 18<sup>th</sup> century artist of note, the Gallery having a significant collection of his works on permanent display. Wright was a member of the Lunar Society, a group of men particularly interested in science and technology who used to hold meetings on nights when the moon was full, hence the name Lunar. Not only were the scientific and technical advances of the day discussed at these meetings but they also found expression in Wright's paintings and he is noted for his use of light and shade in a particularly dramatic way to emphasize these subjects. We were able to study these paintings on our own and then move on to view the wide range of other artefacts that were on display in the Museum including: three Egyptian mummies, the Hanson Log Boat, a fully representative collection of Derby porcelain and an exhibition associated with Bonnie Prince Charlie. Although it was a Saturday afternoon, we had company in the form of some organized parties of school children, busy studying subjects related to Derbyshire, including the natural history of the area.

At the Derby Industrial Museum, we were given a guided tour of the building, its history and its contents. The museum, located on the banks of the River Derwent, is housed in a building that had been built in 1702 as a Silk Mill. A water wheel, 23 feet

in diameter, driven by the river had been the original source of power for the building. Unfortunately, a disastrous fire in 1910 destroyed much of the original and most of what can be seen of the building today is a faithful reconstruction. After a chequered history of industrial use, the building finally re-opened in 1974 as Derby's Industrial Museum. Inside, we saw an interesting assortment of artefacts: those of the erstwhile Midland Railway whose headquarters and main workshops were once located in Derby; some examples of Derby's surviving, but much reduced, railway industry of today; and, of particular interest to many members, products of another world famous company located in Derby, the Rolls-Royce Aero Engine Division, represented by the Merlin Engine of World War II fame, and the RB 211 Jet Engine of more recent times. Other examples of Derby's industrial past were to be seen too: silk spinning, the lead mining industry, the frame-work knitters and the narrow-tape mills, the latter being represented by a loom that had been in use until the early 1970's.

During Saturday evening's banquet, the opportunity was taken to make a formal presentation. At its recent 60<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Meeting, our sister organization in the United States, the Musical Box Society International [MBSI], held its Annual Awards ceremony. There are several prestigious Awards, each recognizing different aspects and particular fields of the Mechanical Music interest. An Award is made only if and when, in the view of the MBSI Trustees and the Awards Committee, an individual has made significant contributions in the particular field recognized by that Award. This year, one of those announced, the Trustees Award for "Outstanding Contributions to the Field of Automatic Music", had been made to our own President, Arthur Cunliffe; awarded in recognition of his work to establish and maintain the

Musical Box Register. As a result of Arthur's dedicated work over the last 40 years or more, the Register now contains information for over 8,700 Cylinder Musical Boxes and, albeit to a lesser extent, for Disc-playing Musical Boxes as well. From this information, researchers such as the late Antony Bulleid, have been able to gain fresh insights into the production history of these instruments during the 19<sup>th</sup> century; a particular aspect of note in this respect being the working relationships that existed between the makers of Geneva and of St Croix over the supply of various components, something neither fully understood nor recognized previously. Antony Bulleid frequently used these results in his Musical Oddments series published in this magazine and also in his publication "*The Tune Sheet Book*". In Arthur's absence at the MBSI meeting, Ted Brown had accepted the award on his behalf. However, as Coulson Conn, our Vice-president, was present at Derby, the opportunity was taken to have the award presented to Arthur personally by a Former President of the MBSI. Our congratulations to Arthur for this well earned and justified award!

The banquet and presentation being concluded, we were then entertained by The Vivace Ensemble, a string quartet of very talented young musicians who included in their number, our hosts' niece. The quartet's programme was varied and interesting and provided a quiet and relaxing way to end a very busy day. It was much appreciated.

Sunday was given over to Open House at the home of our hosts, Nicholas and Eileen Simons. There, we were able to see and hear instruments from his extensive collection of mechanical music. Throughout the morning, over a good buffet lunch and on in to the afternoon, members relaxed and enjoyed seeing these instruments and hearing their music. Among the larger instruments of note seen and heard during our visit were the following:



A 36-Note Barrel Piano Orchestration with Xylophone and Percussion – built in 1919 by Paul Bretschneider and Co of Leipzig,

A 25-Note Street Organ with Flute and Violin Registers – built by Alan Pell in 1988,

An “Arburo” Dance organ with Saxophone, Accordion and Percussion – Belgium circa 1940,

A “Happy Jazz Band” Piano Orchestration – by Poppers, early 1920's,

A “Pianella” Piano Orchestration with Xylophone – by Philipps – just restored for the meeting,

A 50-key Fairground Organ – by A. Ruth and Sons of Waldkirch,

An “Orchestrone” – built in 1885 by The Monroe Organ Reed Co to the designs of Professor Merritt Gally,

A 73-Note Regina Sublima Piano “Mandolin Orchestra” – built circa 1909-10 - this instrument is a double-string piano with an all mechanical action and sounding very similar to a Racca piano,

A “Unika” Piano Orchestration with Expression and Violin pipe register – built circa 1924 by Gebrüder Weber of Waldkirch-am-Breisgau.

And so we came to the end of another Society weekend. Our thanks and appreciation to all at Derby for a very entertaining and interesting weekend; to Daphne, our meetings organizer, to the hotel and museum staff, to our various speakers, but particularly on this occasion to our hosts, Nicholas and Eileen, who did much of the organization and provided us with a programme that was entertaining and most enjoyable.

*Pictures kindly supplied by David Worrall.*

## Chanctonbury Ring Meeting 28th February 2010

By Alan K Clark

Ted started the meeting by announcing that this was the 49<sup>th</sup> Chanctonbury Ring meeting to be held at The Old School. Ted suggested we should try and arrange a special programme for the 50<sup>th</sup> meeting. The programme for this present meeting was to include:- Barrel Pianos, Sydney Jones and his music and musical albums. Amongst the “Parish Notices” Ted was pleased to inform us that Alan Pratt, who had been seriously ill, was back home and back in his workshop, which sounded like an excellent tonic.

The Barrel Piano topic was started by Paul Bellamy who talked about and demonstrated a Hicks Piano which rather unusually had a rosewood veneered case and was obviously an indoor table model. His second machine was a very early one (signed by Joseph Hicks) and was numbered No 68. This machine had been very heavily eaten by woodworm, and had been very carefully rebuilt by Paul using as much of the original wood as possible. Many of the components had been filled with resin and cherry sticks in order to strengthen them. Paul's next item was his street organ, which although it looked just like another barrel piano, was in fact an organ. The similarity of this organ both to the pictures, and the written description given in the famous book *Christies Old Organ* was mentioned, plus its past history of serious rebuilding. Paul listed just some of the major jobs he had needed to do in order to make it work properly. His time had been well spent, as it performed very well.

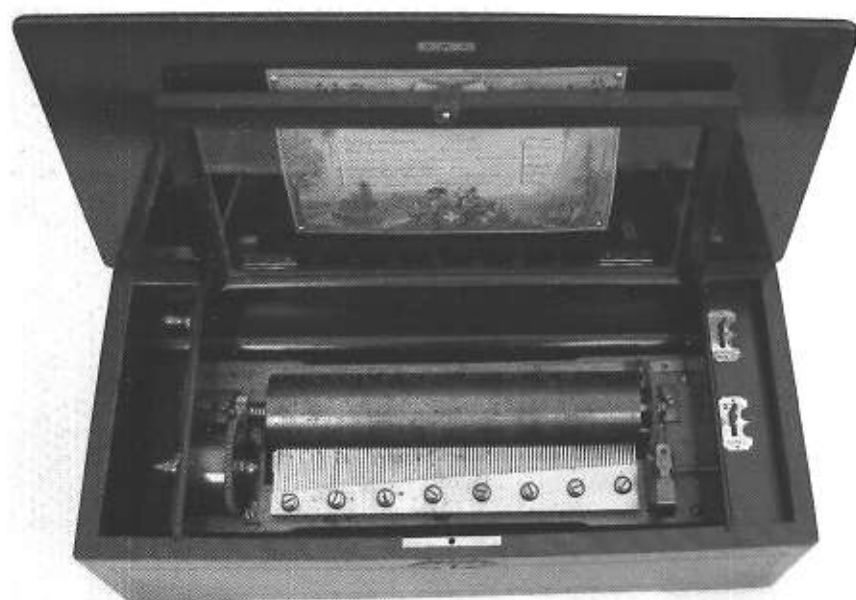
The piano topic was continued by Richard Kerridge who played a selection of tunes from the two barrels which came with his piano, all these tunes sounded fine, and there was lively debate about whether the tunes on the later barrel sounded better than the earlier one. Ted completed this topic with three tunes played on his George Hicks of Bristol No 196. We then heard two key wound cylinder boxes with the aim of identifying the tunes. Sadly we were not very successful with either box.

Next we ate the excellent lunch provided

by Ted and Kay, and following the consumption of almost all his puddings, moved on to the topic of Sydney Jones. Ted started with his history and recorded that he was a very successful composer of songs and musical shows. His show *The Geisha* for instance easily surpassed *The Mikado* in popularity. Using a good selection of the disc musical boxes available, and some organettes, Ted demonstrated the range of tunes found in *The Geisha*, *Don Juan*, *Chin Chin Chinaman*, *The Toy Monkey*, *San Toy* and *The Greek Slave*, plus of course, the music hall favourite, *Linger Longer Loo*.

Our final topic was the Victorian musical photo album. Ted had searched the reprints of period sales catalogues showing these albums to discover that 42 different designs were on sale during their heyday. Ted has a particular interest in these albums and despite many being away for bookbinding repairs, he was not short of examples to show us. The front covers could be of tooled leather, with different designs and colours, carved wood, plush cloth in red or green or celluloid. The pages could be plain, have simple gold borders, or be stipple printed with scenes relevant to the theme of the album embossed in gold on the front cover. The albums were generally of a standard size, but two very much rarer smaller ones, an octavo, and a carte-de-visit size were also shown. Most albums contained the usual two-tune cylinder movements, but they were also made with Symphonion 4 ½ inch disc movements. Your scribe commented that it is quite rare for the two-tune albums to be marked with the names of the tunes, this is because, (as I was told many years ago) the photographers who sold them kept a stock of different albums, and a stock of loose movements, so the customers could choose each separately. The tune titles were marked on a separate printed card which often did not fit any of the holding frames in the album, and was therefore left loose in the album. Needless to say they were often lost. Thus ended our 49<sup>th</sup> Chanctonbury Ring meeting and our thanks go to Ted and Kay, and their helpers for a very enjoyable day.

## Register News No: 67



It was Anthony Bulleid's wish that his notes and detailed records about all the cylinder boxes that had passed through his hands be placed within the Register so that the extra information he had gathered would be available in the future for others to use. This is being undertaken at the moment but as Anthony had kept comprehensive records on 200 plus boxes, the task is quite daunting.

There is always too much information on Anthony's cards to add to a computer file, so Anthony's record cards and notes have been attached to the paper Register record card and filed in the appropriate storage case. This sort of information will be of great use to future restorers, but to the dedicated researcher it may be going a little too far. I know most of us really do not wish to know such detailed facts, but thank goodness for someone who had the knowledge to undertake the job and to leave it for others to appreciate.

To give an idea Anthony's preciseness, we only have to look at his record for a Junod box serial number 1650. He notes that the comb had 62 teeth including the

first 6 for the bells. Teeth tuned to A at 400Hz were numbers 20 and 21 which equalled the 14<sup>th</sup> and 15<sup>th</sup> music teeth. The width of the teeth was 2.16, the thickness .70 and the length 24.5 mm. They had a relative stiffness of 300. The ratio of the gears to drive the movement was 1820 to 1. Anthony also noted that the latest tune was number 4, *Le Cid* composed by Massenet in November 1885. All this was written in microscopic handwriting occupying a space marginally larger than a postage stamp.

Changing to another subject, I hope that I can make an appeal to members to provide specific information about certain boxes. I would like everyone who owns an Ami-Rivenc box to examine the tune sheet on their box to see if the following applies to them. Two examples have turned up with quite specific marks written on the tune sheet just above the cartouche on the bottom of the card. Serial number 28844 has the letters "CFC 3531" written there. If you look at the example given in the Tune Sheet book number 114 on page 71, you will see the tune sheet for Rivenc

S/No 28806. This has "CFC 3522" marked on the card. I know there are others out there somewhere, but it would be nice to know about them if possible. I suspect these letters may be the stock numbers of an agent, but who is CFC? Of the 127 agents listed in the Register, I can find none with these initials.

There are still many Nicole boxes which are missing their original tune sheets. A list of tunes could be found for these boxes if members who have Nicole boxes with an original tune sheet could check and see if any match the following numbers:-

G/ 522 G/ 546 G/ 562 G/ 574  
G/ 608 G/ 627 G/ 627 G/ 644  
G/ 658 G/ 719 G/ 732 G/ 733  
G/ 894 G/ 806 G/ 827 G/ 833

If you have any success, please email me and head the subject matter as Nicole Gamme numbers. My email address is at the front of the journal.

I have been gradually increasing the file on the tunes found on musical boxes. The Internet should be a good source for information on tunes and composers, but I do not seem to have a great deal of success up to now. Probably this is because I am not searching correctly or do not know the Web sites to log on to. If you have found useful Web sites for tunes and composers please let me know by email. Many thanks.

Selected from the Register is an example of one of those boxes that has the ubiquitous "Isle Rousseau" tune sheet. Originally this box was thought to have been made by Paillard, then by Junod but finally because of the serial





Tune card of the Aubert &amp; Junod box

number and other features, it is now thought to be a Junod and Aubert box. The box came into this country having been in a celebrated continental collection for many years. All the tunes are written in German and of all the composers mentioned only Strauss is instantly recognisable. Others like Dellinger and Schilf are not so well known!

Playing on a comb of 103 teeth with a 28cm cylinder there is nothing that immediately marks this box as being exceptional. The tune sheet is headed "Mandoline Expressive" and the usual number of repeat teeth are present in the comb but that is all. The arrangements are very good and the unusual tunes are lively and appealing. It is one of those boxes that becomes more and more interesting and attractive the more it is listened to, so that may be the reason why the box stayed so long in a well known collection/museum.

Arthur Cunliffe.

#### Editorial note:

*Just as an exercise, I tried to find something about the two composers Arthur mentions. Grove's Dictionary of Music was no help at all. Google yielded the information that the waltz, from the operetta 'Don Cesar', by Rudolf Dellinger was written in 1885. The march 'Die Banda Kommt', by the Austrian composer Theodor F Schild (not 'Schlif') was very popular in the last couple of decades of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, but I was unable to find a date for it. It appeared on many organette music lists. One of the references Google came up with was the MBSGB Archive of 11" Ariosa discs, in which the piece occurs on disc number 1712! I placed the complete title of each piece within double quotes. This way Google will only look for the whole expression and not each word separately viz: "don cesar". Then I added the composer, viz: "don cesar" waltz dellinger. That way you maximise your chances and do not get bogged down in tens of thousands of irrelevant hits.*

## Annual General Meeting

Please note changes to the schedule

Start time now 10.30 a.m.

on Saturday 5th June  
at the Village Hall, Roade  
The Society Auction will  
start at 1.00 p.m. sharp

"To comply with our Bye-Laws, members are reminded that any proposals to change the Constitution must be with the Correspondence Secretary at least 6 weeks before the AGM."

## 2012

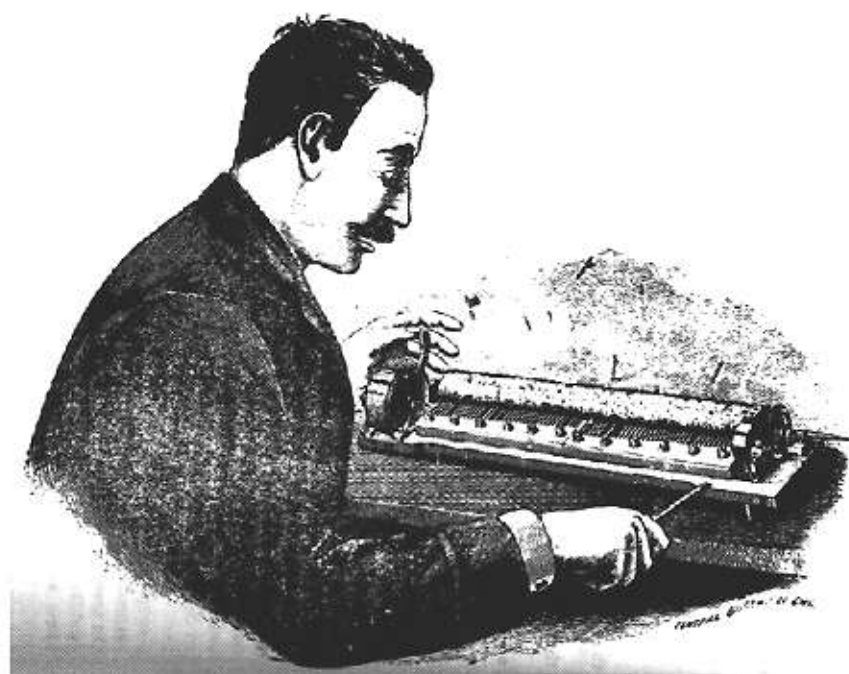
### Advance Notice

In 2012 the Music Box Society of Great Britain will be celebrating it's 50th (Diamond) Anniversary. Celebrations will start in April 2012 and take place in the South East of England. More details in the next Journal

# Restoration matters!

## 2 – Horror Stories

There is much debate about the desirability of the sharing of repair knowledge with the inexperienced owner/would-be repairer. Some are of the view that a little knowledge is a dangerous thing, and it is inadvisable to encourage the inexperienced to experiment. Others take the view that the novice will experiment anyway, and the more he can be forewarned, the better he will be forearmed. No one, including the enthusiastic novice, would want to see an instrument in a worse state as a result of tinkering, or of a well-intentioned but ill-prepared attempt to put it in better working order.



There is nothing new about this debate – concerns have been voiced throughout the history of the society, centred on the harm that might be done to both instrument and person, through ignorance, lack of experience and practice, and lack of appropriate tools. By no means comprehensive, the following is meant to illustrate to the uninitiated reader some of the problems or dangers inherent in tackling a repair job. Some are examples first related in an issue of *The Music Box*. (Apologies for the bias towards cylinder musical box.)

First and foremost it is absolutely essential that any would-be repairer understands completely the principles of operation of the instrument. Description of the workings and how safely to dismantle a movement will be covered at a later date. Suffice here to state that, in the case of a cylinder musical box, for example, one needs to understand the relationship between the spring motor, the cylinder and the governor assembly, and be familiar with the correct procedure for dismantling. Failure to do so is more than likely to result in serious harm:

the movement may well suffer a run, breaking comb teeth and cylinder pins alike; the repairer may well be hit by detached flying components! Damage may be so great as to render the movement irreparable and/or the repairer seriously injured.

In his book *Musical Boxes*, the late John E T Clark relates the story of a Burnley tram conductor who was struck in the stomach when he tried to dismantle a large box while the main spring was fully wound. He died in hospital two days later having suffered a serious injury to his small intestine. Anthony Bullied noted that removing a spring '... is a dangerous job because the free diameter is well over a foot and it flies out to this size if removed from the barrel without restraint', and recommends getting professional help. It goes without saying that a spring should never be removed without the proper equipment.

Another contributor to the journal in the past was concerned lest the tuning of the comb was affected by some inappropriate action. 'The

haphazard whittling away of the perfection of a musical movement is only a slower way of achieving what you can do far quicker by just smashing out the endless.' The view is that a comb will not go out of tune unless it has suffered some drastic change, such as rusting badly, or the lead resonators have become oxidised. Loss of tune may also be due to over rigorous (or vigorous!) cleaning of the comb, or incorrectly replaced dampers. The cause should be addressed rather than attempt to compensate by retuning the comb. It is necessary first to ascertain what is wrong, why it is wrong and whether there are some other forces or circumstances at work to produce the effect that may have been wrongly diagnosed.

Another 'horror story' related by Clark concerns a large, good quality Nicole box in which the holes in the cylinder to take the spindle had been unnecessarily enlarged by a fraction of an inch, with the result that the cylinder wandered from side to side while playing, and forward and backwards, sometimes



completely losing contact with the comb.

'Musical boxes have always had a fascination for a certain type of meddlesome men,' writes Clark, 'and the operations and meddling of such men amount at times to almost childlike and arrogant vandalism.'

No doubt anyone who has responsibly carried out informed repair work on a number of boxes has a store of 'horror' tales to tell, and given time one could probably fill a book with them. The important part of repair work starts before you ever pick up a screwdriver or file. It starts by thinking – thinking

out carefully just what you want to do and then deciding in your own mind (a) if it can be done, and (b) if you have the skills to do it, and (c) the correct tools. Please don't join the ranks of 'meddlesome men.'

<sup>1</sup> Cylinder Musical box Design & Repair, p155.

## Three Musical Notes

by Maggie Morris

Firstly I would ask you to look please at the lady whose likeness is shown on the back of a current English five-pound note. She is - or was - Elizabeth Fry. "Betsy" Gurney, as she was called, was born in Norwich in 1780 in a white house in a court off Magdalen Street. The house still stands and can be glimpsed through a passage, shops now occupying the front garden. At that time Norwich was the largest city in Britain and second in importance only to London.

Later, the Gurney family moved to Earlham Hall just outside the city; that building which now houses the Law School of the University of East Anglia. The Gurneys were a rich family of wool-merchants and bankers in Norwich. They were members of The Society of Friends, generally called Quakers.

If you look again at the back of your fiver, you will see on the left-hand side a scene taken from an early print showing Betsy, by now having married and become Elizabeth Fry, sitting at the left of the table among the prisoners in Newgate Gaol in London, and reading aloud to them from the Bible.

Betsy became a noted prison-reformer, travelling often uncomfortably by coach and horses

in the early 1800's all round this country and abroad, to try to improve the conditions of the prisoners which were dire. Newgate had men and women living together in filth, with vermin and lice, being shackled at ankles and waist. Babies and children were there, too. You might consider that in those days you were luckier if you were hanged; there were a lot of hanging offences: for example you could have been hanged for passing a forged note.

The Quaker religion was in those days strict and unostentatious. No written prayers, no vestments and no music in the Meeting House. Bible-readings and extempore speeches only were allowed at their Services. Betsy married John Fry, also a Quaker, who was a merchant and banker of East London. She herself was very strict, but John liked music and the theatre, and he also read those lu-rid novels called "penny-dreadfuls", all things which were frowned-upon by Betsy and the other Quakers.

### 'Note' Number One.

When they moved home, John bought a piano for the family's entertainment, much to Betsy's horror and disapproval. He and Betsy had eleven children.

### 'Note' Number Two.

When their daughter Richenda got married, there was music at the

wedding-celebration, something that was deeply criticised by Quaker friends. However Richenda said that it was an organ-grinder who had wandered from the street into the grounds unannounced and uninvited (although possibly enjoyed). I myself think that it was probably an ex-prisoner with a barrel-organ who wanted to ex-press his thanks to Betsy. Personally I cannot think, though, of a life without music. It is my great-est love, and I would be sorely deprived without it.

Betsy was internationally fêted for her work to improve the awful prison conditions of the times, and she was entertained by politicians and royalty, and so deservedly she appears on the back of the fiver, just as many other famous British people are to be found on notes of other denominations.

### 'Note' Number Three.

Nothing to do with Betsy Fry. I trained in London with Hilary Elgar, a great-niece of the composer who used to be shown on the back of the twenty-pound note. She played the violin and we sang to-gether in the choir. She was an unassuming person, and I believe that she still lives in the Worces-ter area, where Edward Elgar was born.

## This, That and T'Other - No: 6

by Arthur Cunliffe

I wonder how many of you have had a senior moment! You know the sort of thing when you go upstairs to get something only to find you have totally forgotten what you are going for. Fortunately, going downstairs again often solves the problem. My latest lapse of memory was like this in some ways except that no matter how many times I went up and down the stairs, I could not recall where an article I was looking for could be found. I am hoping that someone who reads these words will come up with an answer before I finally end up in a secure home for the bewildered.

I know that I had seen an article about a highly decorated musical box. The box was an Austrian Rzebitschek box that played the usual two tunes, but the case had been painted all over with a traditional Austrian pattern of flowers and designs. Search as I may, I cannot locate the article or discover which book or magazine had that story.

Strangely, a second example of this type of box has turned up and it is very frustrating not to be able to make any comparisons between the two. The example illustrated here has been highly decorated not only on all four sides but also on the lid.



*The decorative case*

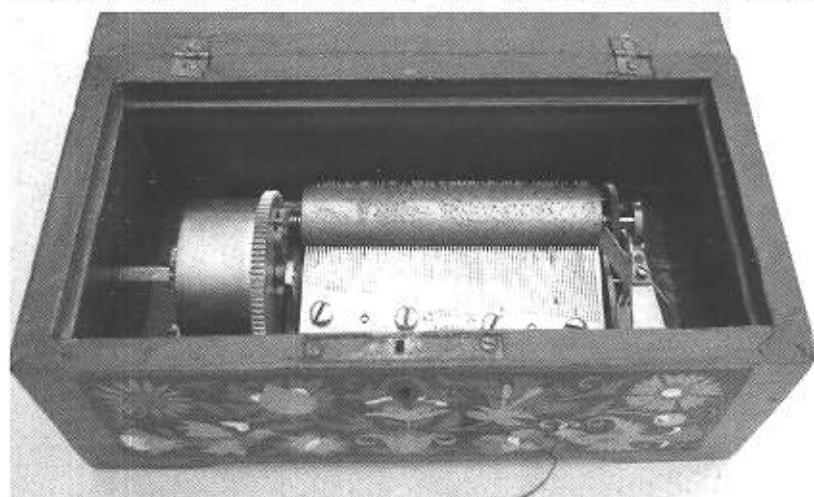
The pattern is typically Austrian and reminds one in some ways of the traditional paintings found on our canal boats and on their fixtures and fittings. The Rzebitschek movement is numbered 43645 and is typical of the period. It plays 2 airs on a 10 cm cylinder. The comb has 84 teeth and the gamme number is 3539. One tune is Mira O' Norma from Bellini's opera of the same name, but the other has so far eluded identification save that it is obviously operatic. The Register statistics would suggest this box was made in the latter half of Rzebitschek's production run.

Underneath the case there are the remains of several labels. Unfortunately the original tune card has not survived but it must have

been similar to that illustrated in the Tune Sheet Book No: 186. Careful examination of the other label shows that it may have been an agent's receipt either for the box or for the painting work. The date may be 1887, but no one can be sure. If you are able to decipher any of the information on the labels as seen on the pictures, please let me know or write in to share the information with all of us.



*The label beneath the case*



*Movement*

The Austrians do not seem to have been over concerned about the quality of the cases for their movements and most are quite poorly made. This I believe is because most of the "string pull" instant start movements were made for use in clock bases or automata and cases were not a priority. Those cases made to house specific movements are often made out of pine and are of a very basic construction with plain "picture frame" corner joints. Lids were attached by a small cheaply made



*Signed comb*

brass hinges with just a one screw fastening to each hinge. There seems to have been little effort to make a quality box. Indeed, this could be the reason why this particular box was decorated in the first place as the original owner wished for something better.

I hope that someone will have come across other examples of boxes decorated with a traditional design, especially those obviously from Austria. Any further information would be most welcome and would make a good topic for a letter to the editor!

**Arthur Cunliffe**

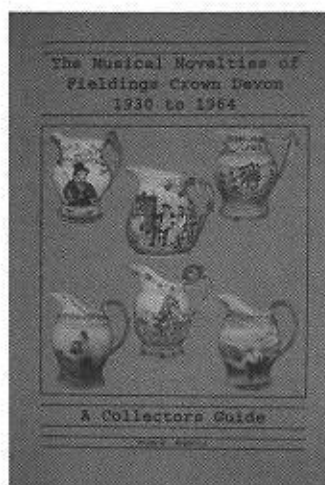
## Book Review – reviewed by Alan K Clark.

### **The Musical Novelties of Fieldings Crown Devon 1930 to 1964**

A Collectors Guide, written by  
Alan H Roberts

Many members of our society collect musical novelties as well as the larger examples of mechanical music. I therefore thought you might be interested to know that the above publication has recently been completely re-written to describe and illustrate all 320 of the musical pottery items so far known to have been made by the Fieldings company.

The book starts with an introduction by Eric Knowles, FRSA, and moves on to give advice on buying restored or perfect items, the brief history of the two types of decoration used on these items, namely the relief moulded range, and the transfer print range. Mention is made of fakes and reproductions which exist, but which are fairly easy to spot, (once you know what to look for). A section is devoted to the movements to be found in these musical items, the most common makers are listed, and advice is given



on the likelihood of the movements being original or replacements, and on simple maintenance. The different plain coloured glazes used on some of Fielding's products are described, as are the various different forms of many of the jugs and boxes etc. The author's text includes information on the registration numbers used; the capacities of the mugs and tankards, which often bore little resemblance to that stated by the makers of ½ or 1 pint; backstamps and specially commissioned items.

The main part of this book is given up to an illustrated listing of all the known jugs, mugs, tankards, boxes,

salad bowls, etc. The author has sought coloured photos of all these, often very rare items, from many collectors, and although the picture quality is not always perfect, it is more than sufficient to identify these otherwise un-named collectibles.

This excellent and colourful book is published by The Fieldings Crown Devon Collectors Club at a price of £15 including UK postage. To join the club or buy the book they can be contacted by email at [fedcc2003@talktalk.net](mailto:fedcc2003@talktalk.net) they have a web page at [www.fieldingscrowndevclub.com](http://www.fieldingscrowndevclub.com) or they may be contacted by post at P.O. Box 462, Manvers, Rotherham, S63 7WT UK, telephone 01709 874433.



*The Gracie Fields jug, complete  
with street piano*

## Musical Boxes & Me

by John Entwistle

Today (in July 2009) I am looking at one or two pieces in my second collection of musical boxes and thinking about how it all started.

My earliest memory of a musical box takes me back a long way – indeed, more than 80 years – to the birthday party of another little boy held at his grandmother's farm near Fleetwood in Lancashire.

After games in the garden and a glorious tea my friend's Gran said she had a treat for us – so we all followed her to the drawing room where, on a table near a window, was a large box with its lid open. There was coloured decoration on the lid but we couldn't see inside it because none of us was tall enough. Gran said there was a prize for anyone who could tell her what was inside it – 'And you're not to say, Sidney Greenall, because you've seen it before and you know what it is!' So we all walked round the table and tried to think what it might be – 'Was it full of presents?' asked one little girl, hopefully. 'No' said Gran, 'but it is full of surprises!' 'Is it a gramophone?' someone else asked – and it wasn't a gramophone even though it had a handle sticking out of one end – and what else had a handle like that, anyhow? 'Sit down, all of you!' So we sat on sofas and chairs, some of us on the floor and were each given an ice-cream cornet [a great one for home-made ice-cream was Grannie Greenall]. Gran went over to the box and turned the handle a few times and then moved something inside and – Lo! there was music! And I had never before heard music that sounded like that. I'd heard the orchestra that played in the Floral Hall on the pier in the summer months and I'd heard the organ in the parish church and, of course, a piano, but that box produced sounds quite unlike anything else. A stool was pushed up to the table and we

took turns to stand on it and look inside to see where the music was coming from – I can see the scene even now – a long barrel slowly going round [I didn't know then that it was properly termed a cylinder] and several brilliantly painted butterflies sometimes hitting what looked like golden bells.

I was smitten. I remember thinking 'When I grow up I'm going to have one of those!' – and I couldn't grow up fast enough! But it didn't happen for a long, long, time.

At one time I had relatives living in Edinburgh and, just after the Second World War and in the early days of the Edinburgh Festivals, I was visiting two aunts who lived just outside the City. At that time, on the High Street there, near John Knox's House, was Mrs. Esther Henry's antiques shop and one of the Festival attractions that year was Mrs. Henry's exhibition of musical boxes! After all those years the birthday party scene came to my mind without any bidding. Two disc machines were by the shop doorway – one of them playing delightfully. So I went in. The item which intrigued me most of all, among so much that was fascinating was, so Mrs. Henry assured me, made of solid gold in the form a little chest of drawers. She had bought it at the sale of items in the collection of King Farouk of Egypt. There were, I think, six drawers in the chest and on opening each one a different tune was played. I wonder what happened to it for, some years later, Mrs. Henry and her husband were killed in an air crash in South America. That's by the way, though – none of the items in her exhibition was for sale since they were her own pieces.

I had already come across the first edition of John E.T. Clark's book

on musical boxes and visited him several times at his home, then in New Malden. He showed me a Regina table model and a writing-desk with a large musical movement concealed inside it – and, on one occasion, a large box full of old combs. And he told me about the American Society and about several of the well-known collectors in this country, among whom was the Hon. George Bennet at Greenlaw, in the Scottish Border country.

On my return from Edinburgh to my home in Nottinghamshire I called on the Bennets – and there it was that I made my first notable purchase – a Nicole Frères four-overture box superbly playing, among other things, the overture to Mendelssohn's 'A Midsummer Night's Dream' – Serial No. 41433 if I remember correctly. At that time my only transport was a motor-bike and I wasn't allowed to strap it on the luggage grid! 'I'll be visiting Nottingham soon and will drop it off for you'. And, shortly afterwards, he did just that.

When I advertised in my local newspaper for Victorian musical boxes I received several replies, one of which described a musical box and matching table, with six cylinders – I couldn't believe my luck! The owner was quite elderly but still in business hand-making bicycles – 'It's upstairs' he said 'come and have a look'. So in the room above his shop I found what his letter had described – though he hadn't mentioned a price. No tune-card but it played well – no broken teeth and all the cylinders looked to be in good condition. So I expressed my interest as a possible purchaser and was invited to return to the shop so we could talk about it.

It didn't take long and there was no haggling. 'I think £10 would be fair'



he said. And so the deal was done. The man said the table legs could be unscrewed and I could then probably get it all in a taxi - which is exactly what happened. Looking round the shop I noticed on the floor in a dark corner something that looked like a musical box and asked what it was. 'Oh! that - that belongs my wife; it went away for overhaul and came back without the barrel. So it isn't really much good'. 'May I have a look at it?' I asked, thinking I might be able to use some of the parts - the spring and governor, for example. 'Go ahead' said the man. The box was about 18" x 10" x 12" high but in its dark corner I couldn't see very much and asked whether that, too, was for sale. 'I'll go and ask my wife' - and off he went, returning shortly afterwards to say that as it couldn't be played - well, yes, his wife said I could have it for a pound. So another pound changed hands and we set about dismantling the table and carried it all down to the shop and I went off to find a taxi.

After I had set up the table at home and played one or two of the cylinders I was delighted with my purchase and thought I would look at the other item. A white metal escutcheon provided a keyhole so that the lid could be locked but, in a decent light, I could see what I had not noticed in that dark shop - a second escutcheon near the bottom of the case. Clearly this was a drawer and the drawer was locked. After trying a number of small keys I found one that turned. And inside were three nickel-plated cylinders - each one perfect and each playing well-known music by Gilbert and Sullivan. The next day I went to tell the bicycle man that the cylinders weren't missing at all, but had been locked in the drawer. I asked whether I should now return it or, if his wife was still willing to sell it, what price would she now ask for it. Another consultation behind closed doors! Then both man and wife came into the shop to tell me they had agreed that I should keep the box and not

pay anything more - 'because you have been honest about it'. I can't imagine that happening today!

Another item I had added to my growing collection was a 24.5" Polyphon with about 30 discs. John Clark once told me that the date when a Polyphon was finished was stamped on the copper rivet at the outer end of the spring and, on the spring rivet of my Polyphon were figures indicating a date in March, 1901.

One day early in 1958 I had a letter from the Borough Librarian who said he had heard about my musical boxes and enquired whether I would be agreeable to give a small exhibition later in the year, for a month, say, in the Mansfield Museum. By that time I had acquired several more boxes - nothing exotic - though I had found a tortoiseshell snuff-box that played well and sounded superb and an early Regency period musical bracket-clock that played a different tune each day of the week on 13 silver bells. Among other tunes it played the Easter Hymn on Sundays and 'Miss Baker's Hornpipe' on Saturdays. The name on the dial was Thos. Nelson, Market Deeping and I was told by a friend - third generation of a family of clockmakers from Bourne in Lincolnshire - that Nelson had been apprenticed to Thos. East, one of the well-known London-based clock makers in the 18<sup>th</sup> century. I had bought the clock from an antiques dealer in Grantham who told me it had come from Threackingham Hall, just a few miles away.

Through my employment I had met the Duchess of Portland and I had taken the opportunity to ask whether there were any musical boxes at Welbeck. 'No, there aren't any - but I have a little French automaton that belonged to my mother and I can't wind it up; I think something must have broken'. Did I know anyone who might be able to get it going again? I said that was a difficult question to answer without knowing what was the problem, but if I might be allowed to look at it and its repair

was within my own capabilities I would be delighted to try.

By this time, although I still had a motor-bike, I had also acquired a car - a Daimler Consort formerly belonging to a member of the family recently deceased, so off I went to Welbeck where I was shown into the Duchess's sitting room. From a little cupboard Her Grace produced an oval ebonised base on which was mounted a harbour scene with a three-masted ship in the foreground. Towards the back was a bridge with a George Stephenson type long chimneyed locomotive pulling a string of coal wagons - the whole scene being covered by a painted glass dome. 'It won't wind up any more' I was told and, true enough, there was no pull-cord - and if that was all that was wrong then I could certainly provide a new cord. So it was agreed that I would take it home. Thinking of the forthcoming exhibition in Mansfield Museum, I asked whether it might form one of the exhibits - all of which would be contained in locked exhibition cases - 'Of course. I would be delighted for it to be shown' was the reply.

Before I left the Duke came in and said 'I hear you are interested in clocks and such, Mr. Entwistle? Well, I have two Tompions. Would you like to see them?' So I was shown two long-case clocks by Thomas Tompion and then, to my delight, the Duchess put into my hands a gold minute-repeater watch that had belonged to the Duke of Wellington. That was quite a morning!

I set off home with the automaton safely ensconced in the car boot. The main gates to Welbeck Abbey, on Sparken Hill at Worksop, are arranged in a large semi-circle - the 'Golden Gates' the Duchess called them - and on the gravel there, when the gates opened to let me out, was a police car, the driver in his seat but his colleague standing by the vehicle and he snapped off a smart salute as I drove by; I felt quite important for

a few minutes. How easily one's ego is flattered!

The little automaton was provided with a new silk cord and, after fashioning a new 'sea' on which the ship rocked gently to the sound of a little two-air musical movement it was all again in working order - the coal train passed over the bridge shortly followed by a similar locomotive pulling a train of passenger carriages - their design clearly based on the horse drawn coaches of the early 19<sup>th</sup> century

The Mansfield exhibition was planned to last for four weeks but it proved so popular that it was extended for another eight weeks. I would go along to the Museum on Saturday afternoons and talk to any visitors who were interested and maybe wanted to hear one or other of the exhibits.

The Duchess's automaton proved very popular and so, too, did one very small piece that attracted a lot of questions - it was not even as big as a packet of five Woodbine cigarettes - for those who can remember such things! On one side of its pierced silver case was a beautifully chased address in Manchester Square, where the Wallace Collection is now housed. Its musical movement was one of the 'sur plateau' pieces which produced only very quiet music on a small number of teeth. Indeed, that piece only joined the other exhibits a week or two after the show opened and followed a visit by one of the local Magistrates who saw that there wasn't a piece like it in any of the cases. 'Might it be included as one of the exhibits?' I was asked - and it was duly added to the other items.

My 24.5" Polyphon was too big for any of the Museum cases so it was placed in a position where it could be played by visitors on the insertion of a penny and the Museum Attendants looked after the winding-handle. At the end of the exhibition it had 'earned' more than £3 - representing

more than 700 playings. No wonder all the Museum Attendants were able to whistle the Polonaise from Mignon when I took it home!

On one occasion I attended an auction sale at a house in Nottingham where there were a number of long-case clocks, [two with Dutch organ movements] a 27" Regina and a 15.5" Polyphon. The Regina sold for a higher price than I could then afford, especially as I had already had successful bids for the Polyphon and, inadvertently, a long-case clock [though not one of those with a musical movement]. At the end of the sale I had a word with the Regina purchaser and asked whether he would allow me to hear it after he had got it home - to which he very kindly agreed. When I went to hear it he said that if ever he had to move to a smaller house and had to sell it, he would give me first refusal, at the price he had paid at auction. Many years later I had a telephone call from him to say that he was about to retire and he and his wife had bought a bungalow in one of the south-coast towns but he wouldn't be able to take the Regina; would I be interested? So, for a while I had a 15.5" Polyphon, a 24.5" Polyphon, a 27" Regina and a 25.5" Symphonion and, with my ordinary furniture, was beginning to run out of space.

I should tell you how I came to acquire that Symphonion - a bit of serendipity, I suppose... Not far from where I live is a row of stone-built cottages. One evening as I walked past, the front room in one of them was illuminated and the curtains were open. There, against the back wall, was what looked very much like a large disc-playing musical box. I knocked on the door and asked whether it was indeed a musical box. I was told that it was and asked whether I would like to hear it - so I was invited in. The owner was a retired watch and clock repairer and he had obtained

it when a customer who couldn't pay for an expensive repair to a clock had offered the musical box instead of cash. 'I don't really want it, my wife doesn't like it - and it takes up far too much space in a little room like this. Would you like to buy it?' When I gave the only possible answer he said - 'Alright, I'll toss you for it. If you win you can have it for a fiver and if you lose you'll pay me £6! Lucky John! I parted with a fiver and the next day made two trips with a wheelbarrow - one for the important part (it didn't have a disc bin) and the second one for the discs.

Following one of my visits to John Clark I wrote to Mrs. Ruth Bornand to enquire whether the American Society would be agreeable to the formation of a British Chapter of their organization, but no reply ever came. And it wasn't very long afterwards that I had a letter from Cyril de Vere Green about the possibility of forming a musical box society in Britain. If it went ahead, would I be interested in joining? Well, we all know now that the Musical Box Society of Great Britain was duly formed. I became member No. 29. Subsequently I became a Committee Member and, indeed, was Vice-President during the Presidency of the late Dr. Robert Burnett. The Society prospered and members joined from all points of the compass with the result that the prices of musical boxes started to rise fairly rapidly - the simple application of the law of supply and demand.

In 1968 the Society's Committee decided to hold a Provincial Meeting in Nottingham and arrangements were made for the meeting to be held in Nottingham Castle. A Civic Reception was given to Society Members by the Lord Mayor and Sheriff in the City's Council House and there was an exhibition of Members' boxes in the Castle's Long Gallery for a period of four weeks.



Then a number of burglaries occurred in the area where I live. I was working each day so my collection was unattended for long periods. The question naturally arose - what would I do if my boxes should be stolen and not recovered? I might be compensated to some extent by insurance - but that wouldn't give me back what I had lost. Should I perhaps sell my collection?

Just about that time a proposal had been made that I should succeed Cyril as the Society's Secretary. And at almost the same time I had a change of duties requiring a great deal of study. It seemed to me that I would be unable to undertake my new duties and also devote as much time to the Secretaryship as I would wish. So I wrote to the Committee withdrawing my candidature for the Secretaryship and subsequently allowed my MBS membership to lapse until, in 2007, after many years of happy retirement, I decided there was no reason why I should not try to form a second collection of musical boxes - better late than never!

So I applied to re-join the Society and was delighted to be accorded my original membership number - 29.

I count myself extremely fortunate also to have re-acquired a piece originally in my first collection - a piece which, when I first saw it, in the 1950's, had an almost naked cylinder. It looked as though someone had started to re-pin it but after doing about two inches or so at the bass end had given it up. There were no broken teeth and, with the comb removed, the governor turned under the slightest pressure. As the man in the shop said - 'As you see it is as it came to me - no case, no list of tunes and not very many pins - which is why it is so cheap'. But what intrigued me, despite its bald appearance, was the way in which some parts

of the cylinder had been drilled - as though for the rapid repetition of notes. After a re-pin by George Worswick it proved to be a mandolin movement of the type later described by Anthony Bulleid as 'super' mandolin. The cylinder is 13" long and the comb has 198 teeth. I showed it to Bob Burnett, then living in Nottingham. He and George were of the opinion that it might have been made by one of the Lecaultres, possibly in the 1850's or 1860's. Bob very generously gave me an empty, quite plain, Nicole case, originally housing their movement No. 28507 according to the number stamped on the underside of the bottom plank. Using Anthony Bulleid's dating chart for Nicole gives a date of the mid-1850's for 28507 so that the case and the mandolin movement it now houses are roughly the same age. The case required only the slightest elongation of the case-screw holes to accept the movement.

It plays four dance tunes and although one of them, a waltz, seems vaguely familiar I don't know its name nor, indeed, the names of the other three. It is one of the items exhibited in Nottingham Castle in 1968.

I have also managed to find [through the kind help of one or two of the Society's members] one or two interesting items including a table-model Regina with what appears to be hand-painted floral decoration and a document issued by the MBSI showing that it was shipped from the factory in 1897. Newly made discs put it through its paces remarkably well.

Ideally I would like my second collection to contain one of the so-called 'variation' boxes - Handel's 'Harmonious Blacksmith' for example. I seem to remember from boyhood days rather ambitious arrangements by Thalberg for the piano of items like 'Home, Sweet

Home' and 'Alice, Where art Thou' some of which, I know, have been transcribed for the musical box. I can't think it is likely to happen nor can I imagine that I am ever again likely to come across one item that was a part of my first collection.

It had a fat cylinder, it played overtures, each on two revolutions and then two pieces each on a single revolution; it turned out to be one of the early single-comb fortepiano movements [though I only learned that when I got it home] and the names of the music it played were engraved on brass - it was in a rosewood case decorated with mother-of-pearl and brass stringing - and it cost £5!

If this little note is published it is perhaps just possible that a Member might realise that he or she now owns the Nicole box playing 'A Midsummer Night's Dream' that I mentioned earlier. If that were to happen I would be deeply grateful if the owner would kindly get in touch with me through the Editors because although I would never again be able to have it as one of my own pieces, I would dearly love to have a recording of it. And I can still do recordings!

To those who have struggled through and at last reached the end, thank you for your patience and sharing an old man's thoughts.

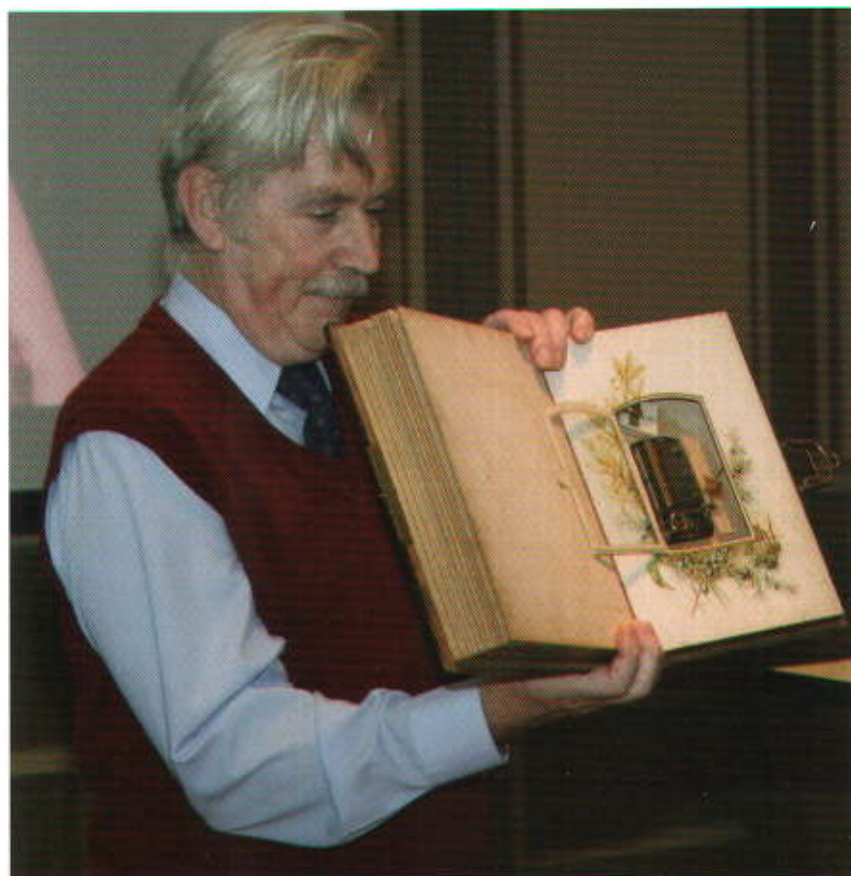
Would those members  
accessing the  
MBSGB Website

[www.mbsgb.org.uk](http://www.mbsgb.org.uk)

please note:  
The password has been  
changed to  
LANGDORFF



*Ted Brown demonstrates a musical photograph album at the Derby meeting.*



*Ted presents Arthur Cunliffe with one of the table favours from the MBSI Awards Ceremony Dinner (below). Derby meeting.*







*The Melodette! mechanical glockenspiel - see article on page 477*

*A colourfully painted Rzebitschek musical box - see article on page 467*



*The AMMI team dragging the Da Vinci mechanical drum. See article on page 475.*



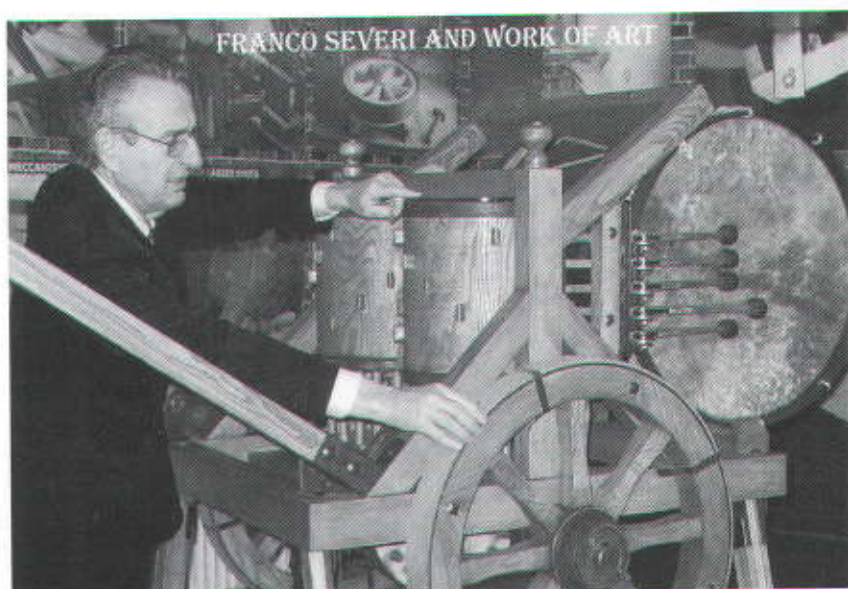
## Leonardo Da Vinci's Mechanical Drum

from Arthur Cunliffe

AMMI, under the guidance of their President Franco Severi, sponsored a project to copy an idea for a mechanical drum originally designed by Leonardo Da Vinci somewhere between 1490 and 1495. Leonardo had been concerned by the great loss of life suffered by the drummer boys who led the troops into battle in those days. Drums beaten by hand were often difficult to hear over the noise of battle, so a great number of them were required all along the front line of the battle. Naturally this situation led to a great number of the drummers being killed.

Leonardo's idea was not only to make a large drum that could be heard more easily but also to make a mechanical drum that could be pulled by a horse or pushed by a drummer. This would be far more effective and save many lives as fewer drums would be required. Leonardo left a drawing of his idea but no one knows for sure if any drum was actually made or if the idea would work.

Recently a team of dedicated enthusiasts from all over Italy came together to see if Leonardo's design would work but also to see if his design could have influenced the development of mechanical music. Craftsmen from all areas in Italy came together to work using the materials and techniques available at the time to see if a mechanical drum could be made. Each stage was carefully recorded with Leonardo's plans being followed as closely as possible. By the end of 2009, the project was completed and the mechanical drum was paraded at the Longiano Festival. Several visitors at that event have since testified that the drum did indeed make a very loud noise! Later the drum was taken to



the Villa Silvia where it is now on permanent display. (See picture in colour section page 474 - Ed.)

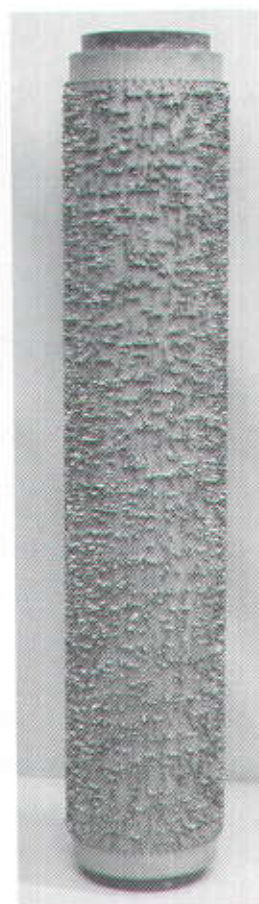
AMMI have thoughtfully sent us brochures and two DVDs about the making of Leonardo's drum

which take us through the various stages of the project. Thanks to their kindness, these are now kept in our Archives and are available for members to view. Members who are interested should contact our Archivist for further details.

### What is it?

If you have any ideas, please  
contact the Editors!  
Another of Da Vinci's designs?

*Found by Kevin McElhone on eBay.*





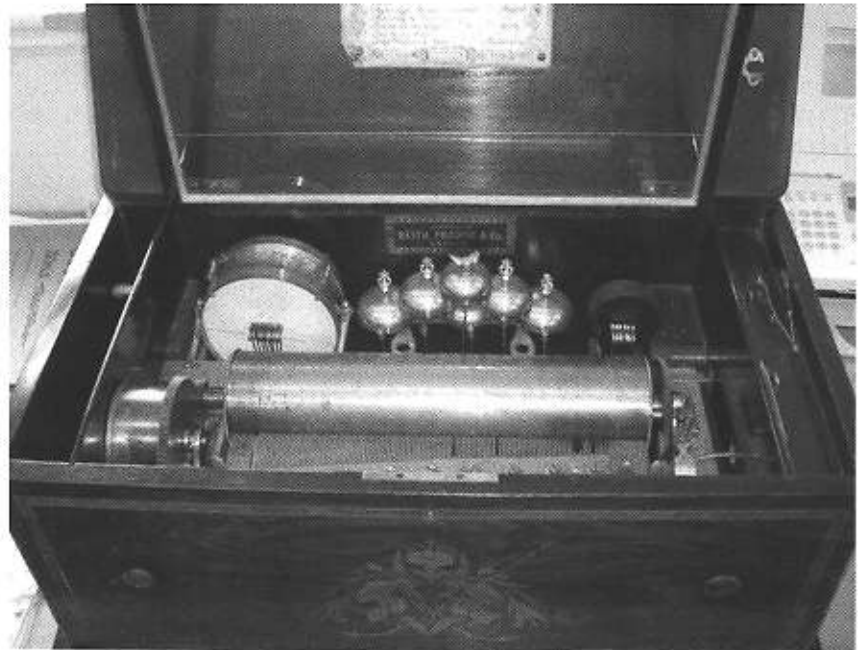
# Nicole Frères Twins

from Keith Harding

A pair of Nicole Frères orchestra boxes with adjacent gamme numbers (2968 and 2969, neither of which has hitherto been recorded) has turned up.

Unusual at the best of times, for two to turn up together is probably an unique occurrence. With serial numbers 45217 and 45219 respectively, the pair does have somewhat differing cases.

Nicole Frères of Geneva serial number 45217, giving a date of manufacture of circa 1874, playing a programme of 12 airs, gamme 2968 as listed on the original tune card is pinned "two-per-turn" on a cylinder 35.5cm x 8.5cm. Accompanied by a seven beater engraved snare drum, six tuned bells (five topped with lyres), the middle one with an eagle, it also has a six beater castanet. The case is veneered and banded on three sides and the lid, the lid and the front being decorated with magnificent military and floral trophies in marquetry of coloured woods.



*Serial Number 45219 prior to restoration.*



The second, Nicole Frères serial number 45219, gamme 2969, has largely the same specification, but is housed in a splendid floral marquetry case.

*The case of No. 45219*

## Gamme 2968

The programme is:

- |                              |                     |           |
|------------------------------|---------------------|-----------|
| 1. I dreamt I dwelt.         | The Bohemian        | Balfe     |
| 2. Ah! che la morte          | Trovatore           | Verdi     |
| 3. Gloire de nos aïeux       | Faust               | Gounod    |
| 4. Le Soleil Choeur          | Lucie de Lammermoor | Donizetti |
| 5. Libiamo me                | Traviata            | Verdi     |
| 6. Carnival de Venise        |                     | Burganini |
| 7. Beautiful Isle of the sea |                     | Thomas    |
| 8. Come back to Erin         |                     | Claribel  |
| 9. Blue bells of Scotland    |                     |           |
| 10. Last Rose of Summer      |                     | Flotov    |
| 11. The Power of Love        | Satanella           | Balfe     |
| 12. Home Sweet Home          |                     | Sinclair  |

## Gamme 2969

Its programme is:

- |                                  |                  |
|----------------------------------|------------------|
| 1. God Save the Queen            |                  |
| 2. Rule Britannia                |                  |
| 3. Partant pour le Syrie         | Reine Hortense   |
| 4. La Marseilles                 | Rouget de l'Isle |
| 5. Die Wacht am Rhein            | Wilhelm          |
| 6. See the Conquering Hero Comes | Handel           |
| 7. Vital Spark                   | Harwood          |
| 8. Hallelujah Chorus             | Messiah Handel   |
| 9. Helmsley. Lo He comes         |                  |
| 10. Jerusalem the golden         | Ewing            |
| 11. Sun of my Soul               |                  |
| 12. Death March in Saul          | Mendelssohn      |

## The Melodette!

By Nicholas Simons



*The Melodette! Illustrated in colour on page 474.*

The Melodette! is a small self-playing glockenspiel made around 1880 and sold by the Massachusetts Organ Company of Boston, USA. Its name actually includes the exclamation mark at the end, and this is proudly announced on the keyframe pressure bar where the following words are cast 'THE MELODETTE! PAT'D. JANY.1.1878.'

The Melodette! is rather cheaply made and crude in its music making. Contemporary advertisements describe it in glowing terms. 'It can be played by a child as well as by a grown person, and will furnish music for social gatherings of any description, playing hour after hour, without any knowledge of music being required in the operation.

The most wonderful of musical inventions; a machine which in a purely mechanical manner produces any kind of music. Waltzes, Polkas, Marches, etc, without any practice or knowledge of music whatsoever. In this respect far superior to any music box'. And so it goes on, and on, and on.

The Melodette! was retailed at \$5.00 US, including a selection of popular tunes. Agents could obtain the same for \$3.25, and were advised that they could easily make \$50 per week selling these. A similar instrument, The Piano-ette, was also available. This played the same music with the same operating mechanism, but appears from contemporary advertising to

be a closed-in box rather than open-framed.

The instrument plays 17 metal bars by means of small wooden hammers which are sprung upwards underneath the ends of the bars, such that they rest just a fraction below the bars. The thick paper music strip is fed through the tracker bar where it first passes between a pair of rollers. The bottom roller is rubber covered, and the top roller is plain wood and sprung downwards onto the lower roller to grip the music. The music strip then passes over the 17 keys and under a cast, recessed, pressure bar. The keys are held down, against their springs, by the paper, and where a hole passes through, the corresponding key rises





*Showing the glockenspiel bars*



into the recess in the pressure bar. The hammer on the end of the key wire then rises and hits the metal bar on its over-travel, falling back just a fraction to permit the bar to ring freely. The mechanism is rather crudely made, with a single bent wire serving to act as pivot, arm, key and hammer support. An additional bar runs across the instrument above the 17 key wires. This is used to lower the wires, and hence the keys, when inserting the music. This is sprung out of the way when playing.

The music strip has a width of  $9 \frac{3}{8}$  inches and the 17 tracks are laterally spaced at  $\frac{1}{2}$  inch. The scale, transposed into C, is; C, D, E, F, G, A, Bb, B, C, D, E, F, G, A, Bb, B, C.

The Melodette! is simply constructed

from two main side frames, nicely detailed in cast iron with motifs of musical instruments. These are joined together by a pair of U shaped soundboxes and the keyframe elements. There are two rows of bars,

numbering 8 and 9, nailed across the upturned sides of the soundboxes, with cloth washers above and below each bar at their mounting positions, to allow the bars to ring clearly. The bars are positioned such that their inner ends each lie in a straight line under which are the two rows of wooden hammers.

The instrument, as found, was lacking seven bars and the pair of drive rollers. The original bars appeared to be made from iron. I used black steel bar to make the replacements. Luckily another, complete instrument was available for taking dimensions, and the scale, so after a lot of filing I had seven new bars. Even though I had tried to get the dimensions as close as possible to the originals the new bars were out of tune, by as much as a couple of tones. The length of each bar could not be changed as this had to fit in with the original, both in terms of appearance and hammer position. Glockenspiel, and xylophone, bars can be tuned by removing material from the underside. Removal from under the ends (both ends equally) raises the pitch, whereas removal from the centre lowers the pitch. Again, after much filing and checking by ear, all bars were in tune. The Melodette! is hardly a quality musical instrument so I decided that aural tuning was adequate.



*The ornate cast iron side members*



*Detail of the top of the instrument.*

Music was another problem as the instrument arrived with none. Luckily Ed Schmidt in the USA cuts music for many types of organette and can reprogramme his cutting machine

easily to new scales and sizes of music. The punch size used here is the same as used on the popular 14 note organette although pitch, width and speed are different, so a number of

new tunes were punched, rearranged from other scales.

The restored instrument is shown in the photos. The original green and black finish on the side frames was still in perfect condition. All 17 bars were repainted in gold and installed with brass upholstery pins and washers cut from piano bushing cloth. The hammers were carefully adjusted to sit just below the end of each bar with no music present. On such a cheap instrument there is no adjustability built in, you just have to carefully bend the wire.

The resulting music is exactly what you would expect from such a cheap and crude instrument, but still makes an interesting addition to a collection of contemporary organettes and musical boxes. Whether it is 'far superior to any music box' I leave to the listener's judgement.

## PROBABLY THE WORLD'S MOST FAMILIAR TUNE?

by Edward Murray-Harvey

A tune that is played hourly throughout the day throughout the world; everybody knows it and recognises it. Wherever it is met-with, it is normally pinned on a barrel. And yet when I consulted my copy of *The Oxford Musical Companion* it is not even mentioned!

So what is this tune I am talking about? I'm referring, of course, to the Westminster Chimes. It was composed by William Crotch, who was born in Norwich in 1775. William Crotch was a child prodigy and was expected to grow up to be another Mozart. In fact he didn't exactly do that, although he became Professor of Music at Cambridge University, being more of a performer than a composer.

The Chimes were originally

composed by Crotch for the clock in Great Saint Mary's Church in Cambridge, and they were formerly known as the Cambridge Quarters. It was not until the tune was used for the clock in the tower of the rebuilt Westminster Palace in the eighteenth century, called Big Ben after that clock's largest bell, that the tune became known as the Westminster Chimes. Some people say that the tune is a version of "I know that my Redeemer Liveth" from Handel's "Messiah", and certainly there is a slight resemblance.

Not many people know or realise that the tune of the Chimes is five bars long. Wherever it is found it is pinned on a barrel so that it is continuous; thus the five bars are equally-spaced. Every hour, the tune is played twice through.

This is how it goes:

First quarter (a quarter past the hour) Bar One.

Second quarter (half-past the hour) Bars Two and Three.

Third quarter (a quarter to the hour) Bars Four, Five and One.

Fourth quarter (on the hour) Bars Two, Three, Four and Five.

Ready to start again at Bar One. A brilliantly clever arrangement. Not only are there clocks using these Chimes to be found throughout the world, but Big Ben is also frequently broadcast on the wireless by the B.B.C. Next time you hear the Westminster Chimes, instead of dismissing it from your mind as a mere indicator of the time, please remember its interesting history.



# Making a Musical Box

by Don Busby

## Governor, Run-arrest and Hand-wind Units

A bed plate has been fitted with cylinder and gear train which now need power and control facilities. A governor has been developed for controlling power from the mainspring unit when this is eventually made. In the meantime cylinder turning is to be effected by a hand-wind mechanism which works through the governor via an intermediate run-arrest device. This article describes these three units which function at the great wheel. It has been brought forward in the series to illustrate the stage reached at the end of 2009 on this musical box development, work having commenced in Spring 2006. It is also a prelude to the next article which compares power requirements of components of the machine.

Where does a novice start when making a governor for his musical box? Our governor design is based on reference 1.1 with clarification from refs 1.2 & 1.3, supplemented by advice from fellow members of the Society. Parameters for gearing were decided by consideration of ref 2. An overall idea of principles of operation of governors was gleaned from the literature. This did not of course give details for making such a device which had to be worked up from scratch as described in this paper.

During development of the power gear train, the topic of an earlier article, it had been decided to take governor drive from the great wheel, with the *first pinion* attached to a shaft leading to the *first gear*, as distinct from the usual double-spur gear arrangement. This was to allow flexibility for placement of the governor. An advantage that has accrued is that as well as

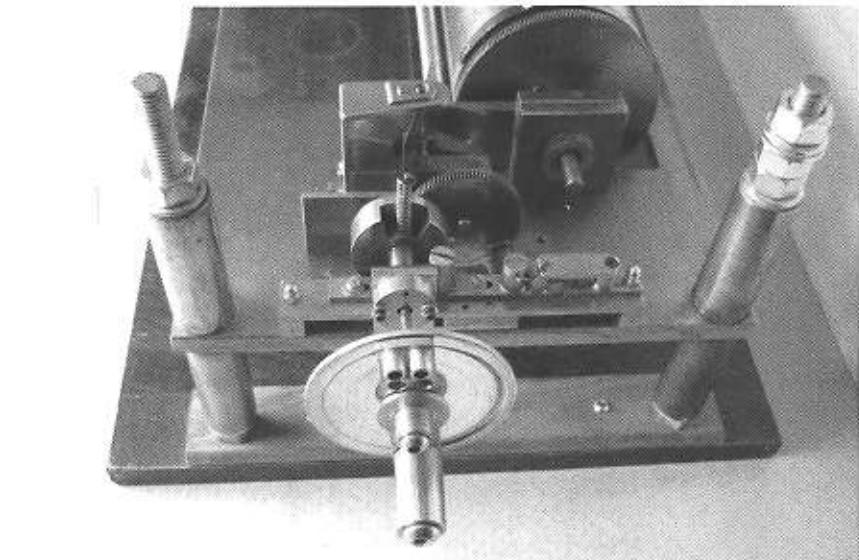


Photo 1. Governor, run-arrest and hand-wind units

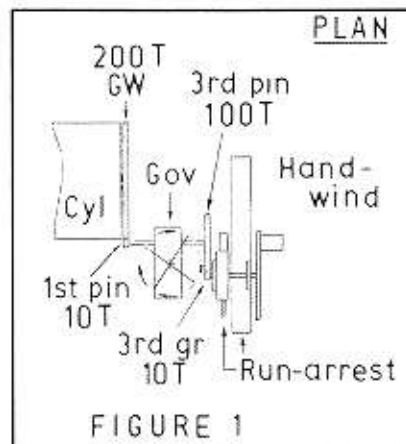


Fig 1. (left) Interrelation of governor, run-arrest and handwind units

are shown in fig 2 and photo 2: more detail is listed in the key to the figure. Photo 3 shows the unit fully assembled.

### Key to figures 2&3

AB=12.5 BC=9.525 AD=40  
DF=20 GH=10 HI=22.5

M - Main block ex MS 60x20x32.5

L - Recess for gears 40x10x27.5

NI - Bottom lip 5 thick, tapped M5 (2 No.) to secure unit through bed plate from below

K - detachable side plate, ex 3 thick GFS, fastened to M by M4 screws (2 No.) at end F and, at end A (1 No.) into NI

J - Plate ex 3 thick GFS, drilled to support R and sweated to K

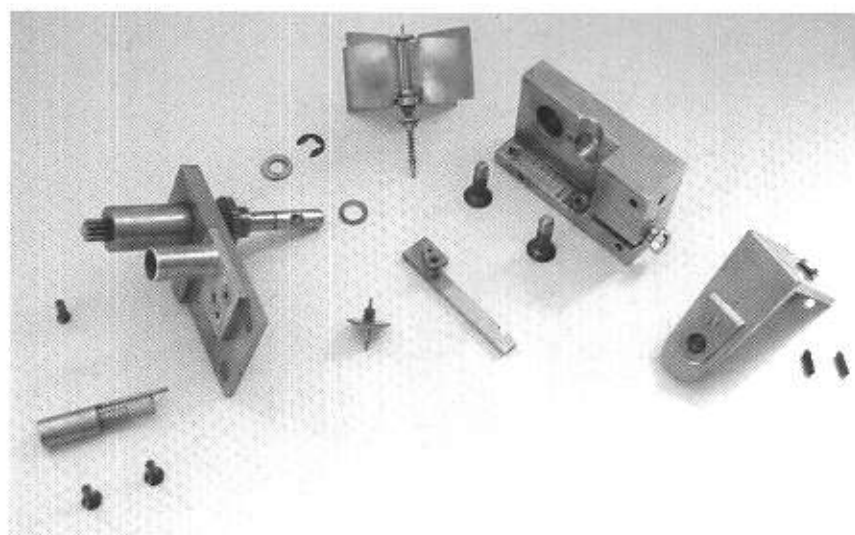
O - Potence plate ex 3 thick GFS for longitudinal adjustment of endless bottom bearing

P - As O, but for lateral adjustment-

driving the *pinion of the second wheel* the shaft can continue through the governor to link with two further facilities. The first of these is a run-arrest mechanism based on ref 1.4. The second is a hand-wind unit which will serve three purposes: namely, testing of governor and run-arrest device; checking fitment of comb to bed plate and; test-playing of pinned music pending provision of a mainspring unit. The interrelation of these three devices is shown schematically in plan by fig 1 and photo 1.

### Governor Unit

Major aspects of design of the governor and its component parts



secured by M3 socket head screw into tapping in O

Q - Bottom of 3 deep x 5.5 wide slot in M to accommodate O. QI=8.

BL - Gear train bracket, defined in "Power Gear Train" article.

#### Gears

f-200 0.5 MOD Great wheel (GW)

g-10 0.5 MOD First pinion-sweated to its internal arbor finally, thus embracing J/K

h-50 80 DP First gear-sweated to its arbor

i-10 80 DP Second pinion

Photo 2 (above), Governor component parts. Fig 2 (right), Governor design - plan and end elevations.

j-36 Pitch 1.1 Worm wheel or bay leaf gear - NF WG609 (ref 3)

Worm Pitch 1.1 Endless - NF W33 (ref 3)

#### Arbors

B through to GW - Centralising arbor- dia. 6, reducing to 3.175 (1/8 in.) (h-50 to K), reducing to 3. Drive take-off to run-arrest unit.

R - Supporting arbor-holds g-10 in

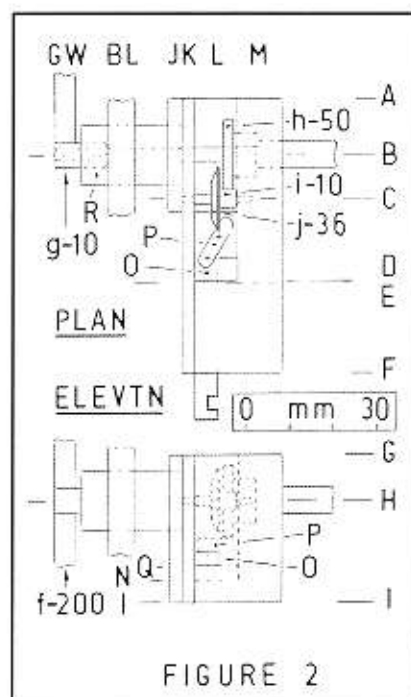


FIGURE 2

mesh with f-200-o.d. 13mm with internal bores of 3 and 6.5mm (o.d. of g-10).

i-10 ) Assumed by measurement to be 3/64" dia. Suitable j-36 ) holes were drilled with a 1.15mm dia. bit.

E Line of 3 dia. arbor through M and K to carry 3<sup>rd</sup> gear at centre distance of 27.75mm from 3<sup>rd</sup> pinion (see fig 1)

Endless bottom bearing Measured 1 dia. A bearing hole was formed in P with a 1mm dia. bit.

The author chose to purchase bay leaf wheel, endless, end jewel and cock plate from Nancy Fratti (NF above), rather than attempt to make his own. All gears have also been bought in.

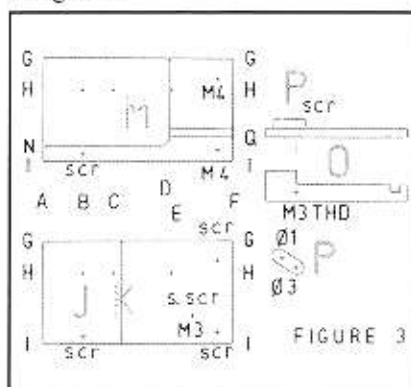
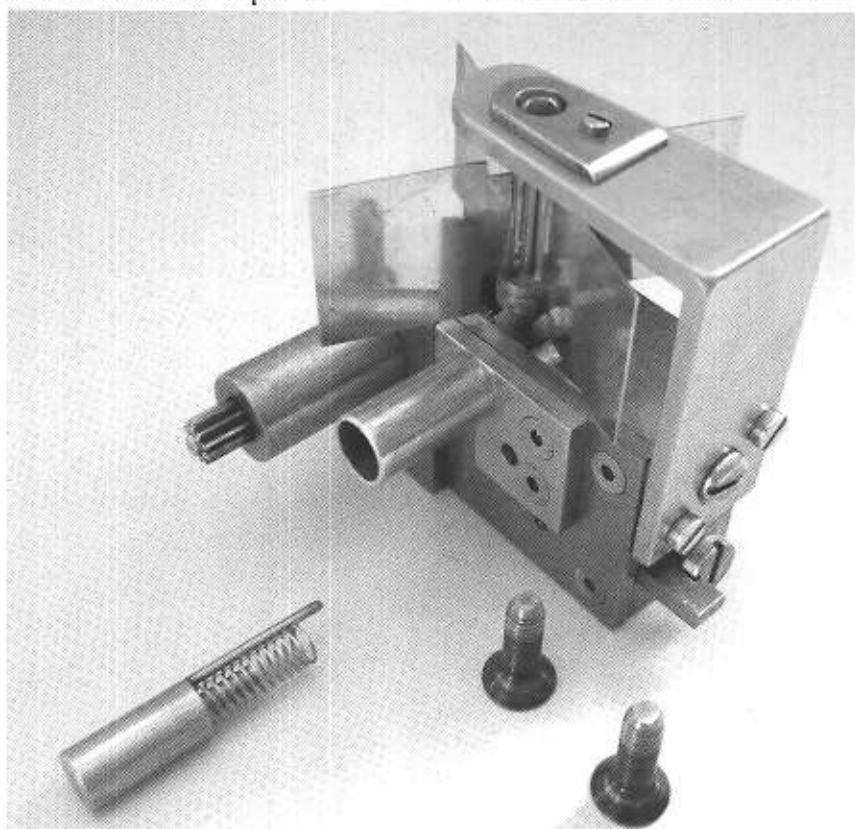


Fig 3 - Governor side elevation and details of potence plate



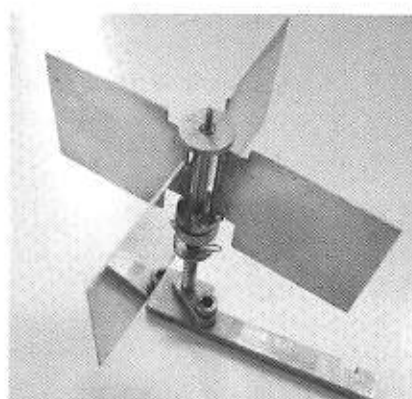
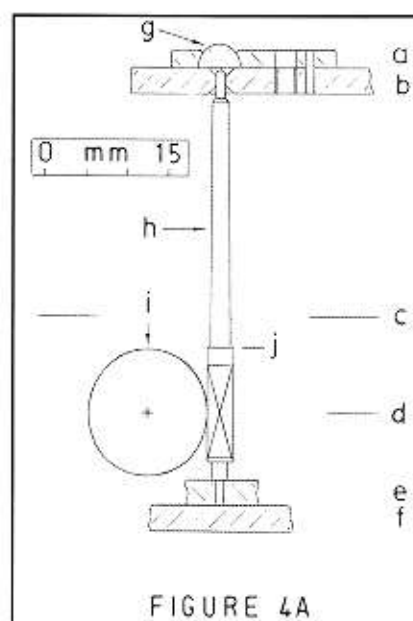


Photo 4 - Endless bottom bearing lateral adjuster. Fig 4A (right) - Endless bearings and meshing with bay leaf gear

Features in this build which are additional to normal governor design contained in the references are:

- a lateral adjuster for the bottom bearing of the endless screw - this is screwed to the top of the fore and aft adjustable potence plate (photo 4)
- a set screw lock to hold the potence plate in position after adjustment
- a stop spring in lieu of a stop sprag - winding up of the spring, stopped by a plunger, supplements the usual friction between sprag and tapered stem of the endless (photo 5)
- set screws in the annulus carrying the stop spring allow adjustment of friction with the taper of the endless



- additional screws to hold side plate to block\*
- positive fixing of block to bed plate\*
- positive fixing of cock to block.\*

\* Countersunk screws and set screws, in lieu of dowel pins, allow for dismantling and re-assembly of components, necessary for testing and modifications before design is finalised.

Gearing of the governor, which is in line with data in ref 2, is as follows:

Gt.wheel 1<sup>st</sup>pin. 1<sup>st</sup>gear 2<sup>nd</sup>pin.  
2<sup>nd</sup>gear endless

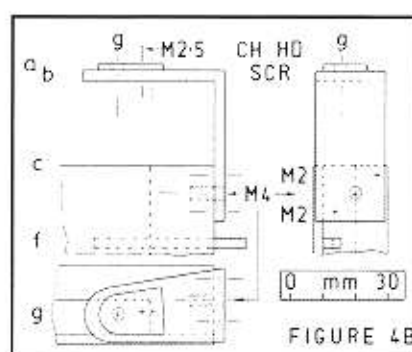


Fig 4B - Cock and cock plate fixing details

As fig 2: f-200 g-10 h-50 i-10 j-36

Revs 1 20 20 100 100 3600

(Great wheel drive to the 1<sup>st</sup> pinion is shown in Fig 6)

Cylinder design, described in an earlier article, led to a cylinder which, when pinned for a crotchet tempo of 120 to the minute, will take two minutes to complete one rotation. Based on the gear ratios listed above, our governor fan is therefore rotating at 1800 rpm, or 30 revolutions per second. This seems the right order of magnitude for an overture machine and bears comparison with gear ratios and speeds of rotation listed by ref 2.

Elevations of block and side plate of the governor together with details of potence plate and lateral adjustment device, which provide

## Antique Musical Box Repairs and Restoration

Comb Repairs

Jim Weir F.B.H.I.

Cylinder Repinning

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After fully reorganising my workshop and installing new equipment I can now offer all manner of musical box work on disc or cylinder boxes. Services offered range from full restorations to individual comb repairs and cylinder repins. General comb and cylinder repair costs can be obtained by contacting me by phone or email.

Typical turnaround time for cylinder repinning is less than 3 months.

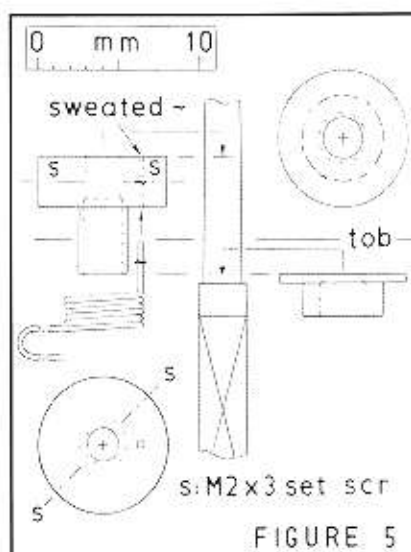
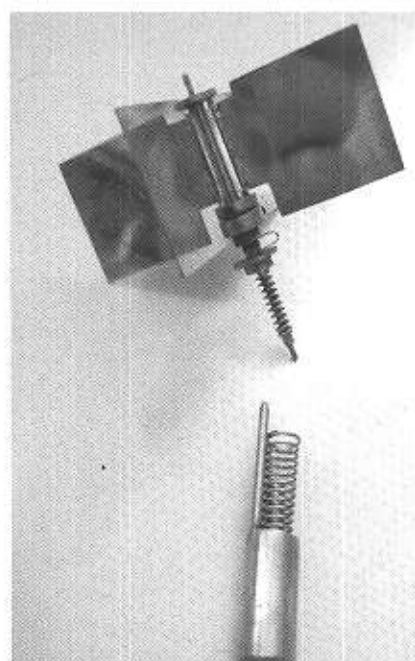


Photo 5 (left) - 5. Stop spring and plunger. Fig 5 (above) - Stop spring

bottom bearing for the endless, are shown by fig 3. Governor cock and endless bearing details, including cock plate and endstone, appear in figs 4A&B.

#### Key to Figs 4A & B

- a Cock plate pin to
  - b Cock - tapped M2.5 for screw through a ) locate
  - c Top of block (tob)
  - d Centre of bay leaf gear and worm
  - e Lateral adjuster of endless bottom bearing
  - f Potence plate-fore and aft adjuster of endless bottom bearing
  - g Gemstone
  - h Shaft of endless tapers in diameter from 2.5 to 2.0mm over its length of 28mm
  - i Bayleaf gear.
- cd=10 c to top of e=18.5 j to bottom of b=29  
c to bottom of b=25.5 Fan blades can be 20 deep.

All round clearance for blades from axis of h is 29.

Why so thick a wall on the governor block? This stems from the initial intention to attach run-arrest and hand-wind components to the block. For various reasons,

it was decided to produce these as separate units. By the time this decision was taken the block had been milled and is retained at its original thickness.

The usual stop sprag which is operated by the stop/start lever has been substituted by a torsion spring device as shown in fig 5 and photo 5. Rotation is decelerated by this stop spring absorbing energy. The task of the spring is supplemented by friction between the annulus carrying it and taper of the endless. Two set screws allow friction between annulus and endless to be adjusted. Fig 6 gives details of the stop/start control which interfaces with the stop spring when operated by the stop/start lever. Air brake

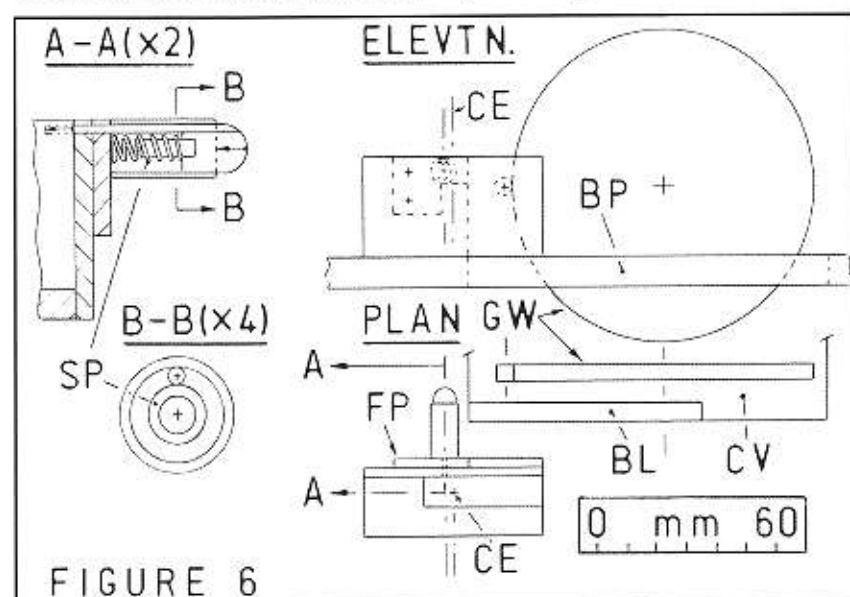


Fig 6 - Stop/start control and interface with stop spring.

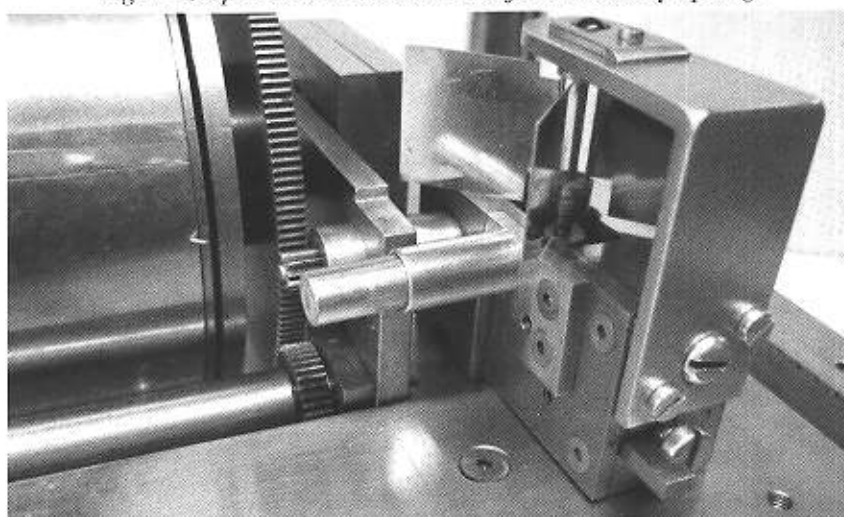


Photo 6 - Great wheel drive to first pinion.





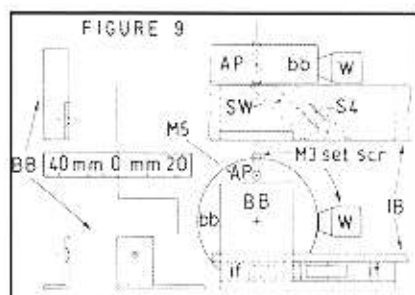


Fig 9 - Run-arrest triggering components.

### Run-arrest Unit

The great wheel has 200 teeth and a 10 tooth pinion is the smallest practicable take-off gear for operating a run-arrest device based on ref 1.4. Our cylinder is designed to turn at  $\frac{1}{2}$  rpm, therefore the counter-balanced mass of a device will rotate at 10 rpm if operated with the above gearing ratio. Before a run is arrested the great wheel will have turned several degrees and pins of a number of bars of music and associated teeth could suffer damage. Design of the hand-wind facility, to be described later, includes a gear ratio step of 1:10 beyond the through shaft of the governor. Thus, the normal running speed of the resulting final gear shaft, which is to be the input from the hand-wind unit, is 100 rpm. It was decided to use this increased shaft speed for a faster responding run-arrest device, giving rise to the design shown in fig 8, central portion of photo 7 & photo 8.

It operates in the usual way in that, when cylinder speed picks up to say three times normal, the increased centrifugal force on mass W overcomes the light restraining force of spring S3 and the arrest mechanism described below comes

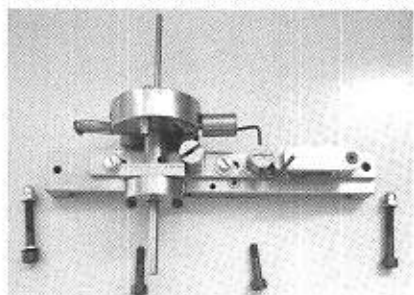


Photo 10 - Run-arrest set for normal running.

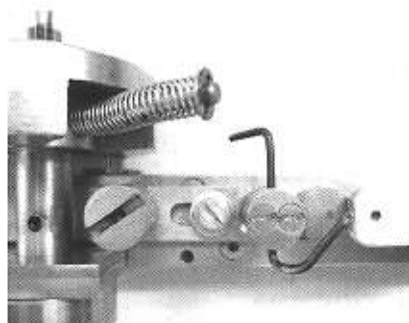
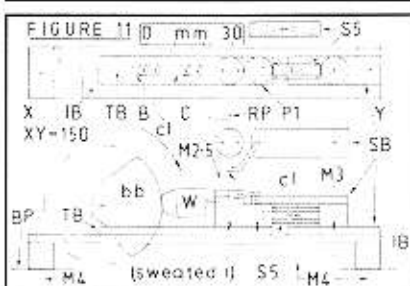
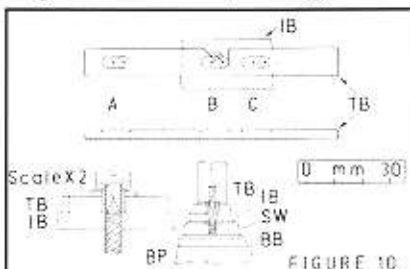


Photo 11 - Run-arrest triggered.

into operation. Spring S1 absorbs impulse of a cylinder starting from rest, whilst spring S2 re-balances the unit when such impulse has been absorbed.

Centrifugal force on a body is a function of  $v^2/r$ , where  $v$  is its tangential velocity and  $r$  the radius of rotation. Our unit is rotating 10 times faster than normal, therefore, all else being equal, it is 100 times more sensitive than if taken straight off the great wheel.

How does mass W flying out stop the cylinder from turning? The usual way is for the weight to be caught by a bar across its path, where it is held until the fault which caused the run has been corrected. The author has deviated grossly from the above for two reasons. Firstly, the design at fig 8 restricted the diameter of the rod carrying mass W to 3 mm: one concern was that impact on stopping might bend the rod, although this is



Figs 10 & 11 - Run-arrest triggering components

UNIT	CYL	GOVERNOR	RA	HW
ITEM	GW	1P 10 2P 2G E	3P 3G	
TEETH	200	10 50 10 36 Y	100 10	
REVS	1	20 20 100 100 3600	20 200	INPUT

FIGURE 12

FIGURE 12

Fig 12 - Hand-wind unit gear ratios.

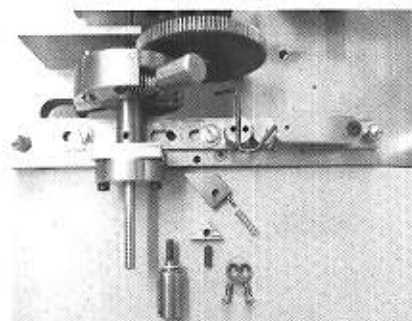


Photo 12 - Sliding wedge and associated parts.

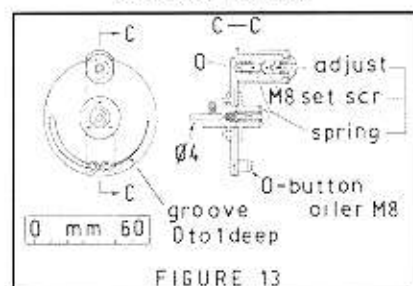


Fig 13 - Hand-wind unit design.

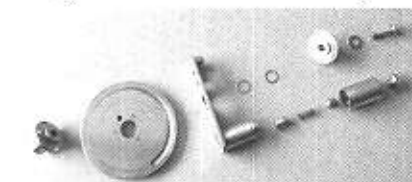
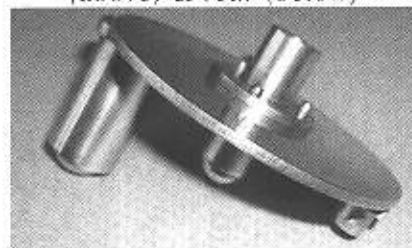


Photo 13 - Hand-wind unit component parts.



Photos 14 & 15 - Hand-wind unit assembled - front (above) & rear (below)





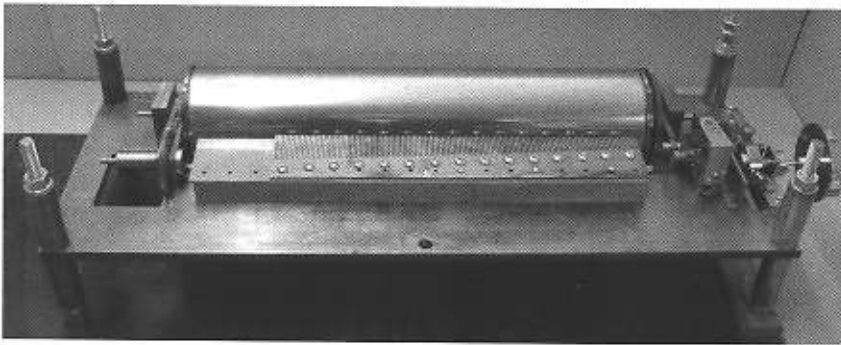


Fig 16 - State of build.

now thought to be unlikely. A second worry was that as a *run* developed, mass **W** might not be fully caught and the unit might 'chatter', with no firm capture. This led to the system depicted by figs 9-11 and photos 9-12. A bottom bracket (**BB** in fig 9) provides support for the axle between run-arrest and hand-wind units. Bracket **BB** carries an intermediate bracket (**IB**), underneath which is sweated a double brass channel carrying a sliding wedge of GFS (**SW**): GFS infills (**if**) are bolted between **BB** and **IB**. If a *run* occurs, **SW** is pushed by spring **S4** towards, but not to touch, brass body (**bb**) of fig 8. An arrest pin (**AP**), threaded through **bb**, comes up against **SW** after no more than one revolution of **bb**, so arresting further progress of the *run*. Fig 10 shows details of top bracket (**TB**), the intermediary which releases wedge **SW** after retaining pin (**RP** in fig 11) is deflected by mass **W** as the *run* starts, so allowing spring **S5**, part of the spring bracket (**SB**), to push **TB** 4mm to the left.

Figure 10 portrays the device halfway through its action after a *run* has triggered **RP**: the pin at **B** will next be pushed to the upper dot by spring **S4** of fig 9. Settings for normal running are shown in fig 11 where spring **S5** is compressed ready for action if a *run* occurs. Clearances *cl* ensure a clean release of **RP** from **SB**.

The dotted circle (fig 11) indicates the triggered position of pillar **P1**: dotted lines on **S5** show normal and triggered lengths of this spring.

Building of the unit was a matter of trial and error: dimensions are not

listed, figures however are drawn to scale and the 'mm-rule' gives a guide to the sizes of components.

Whilst testing the unit it was found that the 19.05mm dia. centre gave insufficient support to the 3mm dia. axle of the 10T 3<sup>rd</sup> gear which is an integral part of the bulky brass body (**bb**). Smooth running was achieved by fitting a bracket, **XB** in fig 8, also shown at the tops of photos 7&9. This bracket will also serve as support for manual control levers to be specified in a later article.

The informed reader will realise that there are drawbacks to having a run-arrest mechanism remote from the great wheel since there is more scope for linkage failure if its services are ever required. Consideration is being given to duplicating this unit, taking its drive directly from the great wheel to provide a back-up unit, albeit with the aforesaid lesser sensitivity.

#### Hand-wind Unit

As mentioned earlier, the through shaft output from the governor is stepped up by a gear ratio of 1:10. This value was chosen so that 200 turns of the winding handle will produce one turn of the cylinder. Cylinder design allows for its circumference to carry 240 crotchet beats, so a crotchet tempo of 120 per minute requires a handle speed of 100 turns per minute - a practicable and reasonable cranking rate. Input gear ratios and their relationship through to the great wheel are given by fig 12.

The above considerations led to a design for a hand-wind unit interfacing with the run-arrest

mechanism as depicted at fig 1 and photo 1. Its design and make-up are laid out in fig 13 and photos 13, 14 and 15. If excessive force is applied when winding clockwise, the adjustable spring-loaded ball (**O**) within the handle overrides the detent at the end of the sloping groove, to prevent damage to whatever is resisting rotation. In the reverse direction the ball gains no purchase, thus making winding ineffective. The button oilers at the tail end of the handle are to counter-balance **O** against the back-plate.

Design and build of the three units covered by this article has been an interesting and challenging exercise, essential before setting of comb on bed plate could be undertaken. That stage of work is the subject of a later article. Only when the comb is in place can trial pinning of our first cylinder be evaluated and refined. The next article will describe tests of performance of the governor; commissioning of the run-arrest unit and; measurement of power needed to drive the various components. In the meantime, photo 16 gives an overview of state of build of the musical box at the end of 2009 after almost four years of effort, in between gardening and other retirement chores.

#### References

- 1 "Restoring Musical Boxes & Musical Clocks" - Arthur WJG Ord-Hume ISBN 0 9523270 2 3
  - 1.1 Fig II/25 (p64)
  - 1.2 Fig II/1 (p25)
  - 1.3 Fig II/2 (p27)
  - 1.4 Plate 2/22 (p65)
- 2 "Cylinder Musical Box Design and Repair" - HAV Bulleid ISBN 0-930256-16-6

Table 2 (pp16-17)

3 Nancy Fratti Music Boxes

PO Box 400 Canastota NY 13032  
USA Tel: 001 315-684-9977

## News from Other Societies

from John Farmer

**Mechanical Music, Vol 56, No. 1, January/February 2010**  
(See also [www.mbsi.org](http://www.mbsi.org))

In "Dutch Street Organs and Popular Music" part 4 Tom Meijer takes us from the end of WW2 up to 1970. Many organs survived the war, but only a few rental companies. Also, many Belgian dance organs, no longer in use in cafés and dance halls were converted to street use. The general surplus resulted in some organs being exported to England and the US, for example, during the Fifties, but the growth of enthusiastic amateurs also helped to preserve many organs, and resulted in the formation of the KDV in 1954. As popular music developed in the 50's and 60's, many tunes were arranged for these organs, and recording companies also found it worthwhile making recordings of the organs themselves, particularly well known organs like The Arab and The Turk.

The development of early disc musical boxes, particularly those using cardboard discs is covered in two articles. The first, by Daniel De Bie and Jean-Marc Lebout starts with the Polyphon's first such instrument exhibited at the Leipziger Messe in 1890, but rejected within the first week as being an infringement against Symphonion, although, in fact, having some fundamental differences. In parallel with this article is a re-print of "The First Polyphon" from The Music Box Vol 17, No. 7 by Niko Wiegman and Luuk Goldhoorn. The main article continues with the Excelsior types 1 & 2. The second article by Coulson Conn and John Olson, provides more specific details on the first cardboard disc Polyphon, which had 41 pluckers (not starwheels).

Charles H Wilson describes "a Machinist's Tooth Replacement", well illustrated to describe how he uses a milling machine and simple jigs to create the slots, and shape the teeth, when replacing musical

box teeth. Hendrik Strengers provides more "News from the Netherlands" with a report on last year's "Haydn Live" events at the Utrecht museum, including a symposium which has now been committed to a book (ISBN 978-90-801699-6-8), available from the museum. He also reports on a new CD comprising 65 pieces from 5 different organ clocks, 32 of the pieces being composed by Joseph Haydn. (CD OEQW PHA 29 from Phonogrammarchiv der Österreichischen Akademie der Wissenschaften, [verlag@oeaw.ac.at](mailto:verlag@oeaw.ac.at)). Finally, Laurence Fisher asks if you have a mouse in your Musical Box? Apparently quite desirable in violins, etc., these are accumulations of dust and other debris gathered since the instrument was made. They roll back and forth inside getting slightly bigger all the time, and are said to enhance the sound (but Laurence thinks not in the case of Musical boxes).

**The Key Frame (Issue KF3/09) –**  
(out of sequence)  
(See also [www.fops.org](http://www.fops.org))

Most people will have heard of Suppé, not least for his Poet & Peasant Overture, but did you know his full name was Francesco Ezechiele Ermenegildo Cavaliere Suppé Demelli? He sensibly shortened it to Franz von Suppé. Andy Hinds gives a potted history of Suppé's life (1819 – 1895) and works, which included several well known overtures.

Dr. Andrew Leach provides a pictorial description of the restoration of a Welte style 2 cottage Orchestrion once owned by his father. The instrument is now in America where the restoration was carried out by Durward Centre in Baltimore, who kindly supplied the pictures. The pipework plays on an exceptionally low 2 inches water gauge. Musical Roots this time is dedicated to Eric Coates (1886 – 1957) the composer, who became

famous when his "Knightsbridge March" was used as the theme tune to the radio programme In Town Tonight in 1933. Eric went on to compose other popular tunes including "Calling all Workers", (the theme tune to Music while you Work), and The Dambusters March.

Fred Dahlinger Jr. continues with part 2 of his "Big Wheels and Band Organs" with details of the Royal American Shows Giant Ferris Wheels Gavioli. They had two giant wheels side by side, with the organ in between, however, there is only limited information, and possibly only one picture, of the actual organ. Sometime later the organ was replaced by a recorded music system fronted by an automaton clown and a faux organ.

Events reviewed in this issue were the 2008 Great Dorset Steam Fair, memories of past Llandrindod Wells festivals, Bromyard Gala 2009, and Tyndale Rally, 2009.

**The Key Frame (Issue KF1/10)**  
(See also [www.fops.org](http://www.fops.org))

In Big Wheels and Band Organs part 4, Fred Dahlinger, Jr. deals with the James H Drew Exposition Shows band organ, probably the largest and finest still on tour today. Following several rebuilds through its life, it is difficult to be sure of its original maker, although extensive research, and various comparisons with other organs seem to favour it being made by Gebrüder Bruder, with Ruth as a possible second.

The centre of this issue is occupied by the annual Organ Availability Register, this time listing over 260 instruments. Event reports include Michael Clarkes visit to the organ festivals in Amsterdam, and Geraardsbergen (Belgium), and Mike Green's reports on the 11<sup>th</sup> Boconnoc (Cornwall) Rally, Fairford Steam Rally and Cheltenham Steam & Vintage Fair.



David S Smith provides details of the Spokane (Washington State, USA) Carousel and Ruth organ. David provides edited highlights from the internet, including the site <http://spokanecarousel.org/bandorgan.html> (and yes, it has got 2 r's in carousel). The carousel dates from 1909, and its Ruth model 36 organ from pre-1903. Musical Roots in this issue mentions Joseph LaCalle, (1860 – 1937), composer of "Amapola" (Spanish for poppy), who was also a clarinetist and band conductor. Also mentioned is Adolphe Adam (1803 – 1856), famous for his ballet "Giselle". He trained as a pianist and also spent some time as a journalist, and music teacher.

**Vox Humana – Spring/Summer 2009**  
(See also [www.moos.org.uk](http://www.moos.org.uk))

"Chiappa Continuitas" provides a comprehensive history of the well known London firm as it continues into a third century of business, starting with Guiseppe Chiappa. A number of illustrations support the article, together with a family tree. Another important character in the organ world was the music arranger Albert Decap who died in May 2009 and is remembered by Peter Craig.

On a tour of various countries, seeking out organs, Jim and Sarah Harper visited Mexico where they found a thriving street organ community of a couple of dozen grinders playing regularly on the streets of Mexico City. Their organs are mostly of German origin, but are now considered national treasures and not allowed to leave the country.

On a trip through Scotland, the editor found a 1923 92 key Mortier dance organ in the Grampian transport museum at Alford, which played beautifully when requested. A different instrument altogether was found in a 1930 issue of Popular Science – a Grand piano sized (and shaped) pipe organ "for homes". It

had 2 keyboards and a row of stops controlling some 231 pipes hidden in the case.

Many will remember John Nixon (1950 to 2009), and Robert Wichall pays tribute to him, whilst Shane Seagrave and Robert Harris cover the auction of John's instruments in November 2009. Mark Jefford recalls his trip to Waldkirch 2008 during which he also visited Vöhrenbach town hall to hear an Imhof & Mühle piano orchestration, and visited various places in the town associated with several other orchestration builders.

**Reed Organ Society Quarterly, Season Year, Vol XXVIII, No.4, 2009**  
(See also [www.reedsoc.org](http://www.reedsoc.org))

Mark V Herr tells the story of the Miller Organ Company, which was started in 1872 by Adam Miller, who was joined by Abraham Miller in 1873. These were both sons of farmers near Lebanon, Pennsylvania, but were unrelated. It is believed the company produced some 44,000 instruments before it closed in 1911. Mark includes a full time line for the reed organ in general and Millers in particular.

The centre spread sheet music is Partita on "Miller" by H Schwing, arranged by Daryl Hollinger. The rest of the journal is given over to a pictorial report of the ROS gathering at Lebanon in 2009.

**Organ Grinders News, No. 72, Spring 2010**  
(See also [www.boga.co.uk](http://www.boga.co.uk))

Events reported in this issue are the January committee meeting, Widnes Organ & Vintage Rally, and Bedford Victorian Christmas Market and Organ Grind. Gerry Woods tells of the day his space saving portable stool collapsed in front of a crowd at a charity fete, and Don and Yvonne Gurney recall how they started "grinding", and a few adventures on the way. John Smith announces his latest (and possibly final?) organ design – Topsy 3, a

68 key MIDI controlled organ with 100 pipes (8 Bass, 12 Accomp., 3 x 22 Melody, 14 counter-melody), plus 22 note glockenspiel, drum, woodblock and triangle. John's ambition was to have an organ capable of playing classical music, as well as fair organ tunes, and is very pleased with the outcome. The design should be available later in the year.

Forthcoming events are 18<sup>th</sup> Little Downham organ extravaganza, 27<sup>th</sup> March; BOGA Annual gathering, Snibston Discovery Park, Coalville, Leicestershire 15<sup>th</sup> – 23<sup>rd</sup> May; Swanage 150 yr. Anniversary 17<sup>th</sup> – 23<sup>rd</sup> May; BOGA Summer Gathering, Rural Life Centre, Tilford Surrey, 31<sup>st</sup> July – 8<sup>th</sup> August; Lavenham 2010 30<sup>th</sup> May – 6<sup>th</sup> June; Bridlington Festivals 11<sup>th</sup> July, and 12<sup>th</sup> December (grinders sought).

**Player Piano Group – Bulletin No. 193, December 2009**  
(See also [www.PlayerPianoGroup.org.uk](http://www.PlayerPianoGroup.org.uk))

Free with this bulletin was a CD containing all the technical articles published in sister society AMICA's bulletins.

Nicholas Simons writes about his Hupfeldt Phonoliszt expression piano which is still going strong after 100 years, with no major restoration. Nicholas provides some background on other Hupfeld instruments and technical detail on the phonoliszt.

Julian Dyer writes an extensive article on the birth of Hand Played rolls, covering makes such as Hupfeld, Welte, Aeolian's Metro-Art and Uni-Record, QRS and others, the article being supplemented with several extracts from the Musical Trade Review.

**The Musical Museum and Friends Newsletter, issue 44, Autumn 2009**  
(See also [www.MusicalMuseum.co.uk](http://www.MusicalMuseum.co.uk))

Duo-Art roll 01118 (The Lambeth Walk) has some secrets – the performer is stated as “The Sherry Brothers”, but this is, in fact, a cover name for Aeolian staff pianist Frank Milne, whilst the composer “Noel Gay” was actually Reginald Moxon Armitage, who changed his name to the “snappier” title. He composed many popular songs including “Leaning on a Lamppost”, and the musical “Me and my Girl”.

Dorothy Akers recalls how she started the sale of sheet music in the Musical Museum shop, where Mike Messenger recently bought “The Pekin March”, which was probably written to commemorate the 1900 march on Pekin during the Boxer rebellion.

The 3<sup>rd</sup> April 2009 saw an unusual show at the museum – Fast Forward Figaro, an 80 minute spoof on Mozart’s opera by three artists from the English National Opera. Amazing changes of costume and hats made up for the shortage of performers! A special visitor to the museum recently was Gerald Kunz, son of the well known 30’s pianist Charlie Kunz.

#### Non-English journals

**Het Pierement – January 2010**  
(See also [www.draaiorgel.org](http://www.draaiorgel.org))

- A new organ from Elbert Pluer “De Vijf Prominenten” (The 5 prominent people, meaning AntonPluer, Gijs Perlee, Carl Frei, Romke de Waard, Feite Posthumus, who are all pictured on the organ)

- Ferdinand Demetz – sculptor of organ figures
- Glorious Organs 22 – De Atlantic Jean Schwartz (1878 – 1956), composer.

**Musiques Mecaniques Vivantes – 1st. quarter 2010**  
(See also [www.aaimm.org](http://www.aaimm.org))

- Visit to “Théâtre des automates” in the Musée des Arts et Métiers, Paris
- A Barrel piano...Mandoline/Organ – mysterious.
- 65+ years of Mechanical Music – Philippe Rouillé
- Disc musical boxes, some technical precisions
- Musical boxes in the Oberhofen museum.
- Included with this issue, a CD of music to celebrate 35<sup>th</sup> anniversary of AAIMM

**Das Mechanische Musikinstrument (Gesellschaft für Selbstspielende Musikinstrumente), December 2009**  
(See also [www.musica-mechanica.de](http://www.musica-mechanica.de))

- “Felix von der Au” – Blessing player piano with drum playing automaton.
- Digitisation of Welte piano and organ rolls.
- Kästner Autopiano AG

**The museum for clocks and mechanical music – Oberhofen am Thunersee**  
33 note Sankyo musical movements

**Nieuwsbrief from MechaMusica (Belgian Society), February, 2010**  
(See also [www.mechamusica.be](http://www.mechamusica.be))

Gebrüder Weber, orchestrion builder in Waldkirch

Deleika street organs

MIDI in organs (3)

REMINDER – All of these journals are held in the Society Archives – contact John Farmer.



*Symphonion Chimes - see article on page 490*

#### TO ACCESS THE MBSGB FORUM ON THE WEB SITE

In order to prevent large amounts of 'spam' being posted on our web site, you now need a user name and a password to access the forum. The password will change regularly. Currently it is:

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## NEW MEMBERS

We welcome the following new members who have joined us since the last journal was printed.

If you would like to get in touch with members near to you please look at the new members list or contact the correspondence secretary. If you would like to start a NEW Local area group please contact Kevin McElhone on 01536 726759 or [kevin\\_mcelhone@hotmail.com](mailto:kevin_mcelhone@hotmail.com) or Ted Brown on 01403 823533 as either will be pleased to advise.

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

3069 Mrs. Jean Smith  
Lancashire  
3070 Robert Wingerd  
U.S.A.

### re-join

2021 Mr. Steve Greatrex,  
Devon

Would any of the new members from the past couple of years like to describe how they got on at their first meetings with us?

## Symphonion Chimes in Canada

By David Evans

In The Music Box Vol 11 no. 8 for Christmas 1984, Jim Marke reported locating a 27 1/2" Symphonion with bells in Canada. Now, twenty six years later, that same machine has surfaced again and, by the time you read this, will be safely installed in the Revelstoke Nickelodeon Museum in British Columbia. We were offered the "Symphonion Chimes" out of the blue, as it were, by a couple who had visited our museum at some point in the past and thought it an ideal place to house their instrument. We had to do a little fund raising, but have now concluded the deal and will collect the machine at the beginning of May.

The "Symphonion Chimes", declared as such in gold letters on its galleried pediment, was made by the American arm of Symphonion. The double comb movement has a total of 192 teeth plus another 12 to operate the saucer bells. The whole thing stands seven feet tall on its disc bin. The final

patent date is March 1899, so it is probably safe to assume that it was made between then and the end of 1900.

In the late 1890's Symphonion opened a sales office at East 24th Street in New York City and a manufacturing facility at Bradley Beach, New Jersey. The trade mark "Imperial Symphonion" appeared on the music discs made there. Q David Bowers (Encyclopedia of Automatic Musical Instruments) states: "The largest Imperial Symphonion known to the author is a tall upright "Imperial Symphonion Orchestrion," an instrument with music combs, 12 bells and which uses a 27 5/8" disc. This instrument is virtually identical to the German-made Symphonion Orchestrion No. 118 GI."

Should any member be visiting BC, Canada, a warm welcome will await you at the Nickelodeon!

## Letters to the Editor

### From Arthur Cunliffe:

Dear Editor

I read with interest Don Busby's letter in the last journal about the late Geoff Mayson and the musical box he had made completely from scratch. Mr. Mayson was indeed a fine and competent engineer who knew exactly what he was doing.

The latest information I have is that the box was completed. Someone arranged the music for him and possibly worked out a pinning pattern. Geoff then pinned the cylinder and completed the box. Fellow member John Entwistle remembers hearing the movement play and remembers it being a very nice box with a good tone. The music was an arrangement of Schubert's Trout Quintet.

Unfortunately, no one knows its whereabouts today, but I would imagine it will have remained with the Mayson family. If the person who helped Geoff with the music reads these words, perhaps you would be kind enough to come forward and give us more detail about what was a fascinating endeavour.

Every now and then the carved wooden "whistler" figures turn up on the market. I know they are relatively modern but seem not to be very plentiful. I have seen the drunk leaning against a lamp post, the doctor figure and have been told there is a figure of a clock seller. There must be someone in the Society who knows all about these carved wooden figures so please come forward and write an article about who and where they were made. There are many people in the world of mechanical music who know little or nothing about them. I, too, would like dearly to learn more about them, so please put pen to paper or finger to keyboard and write something for the journal.

### From André Ginesta, Switzerland:

Dear Editor

Referring to your article in "The Music Box" Volume 24/2, I can inform you that I bought a musical harp very similar to the one you repaired. It was also sold by the Ward-Stilson Company and has the same design. However, my harp is much bigger, measuring 35" in height and 21" in width.

In my specimen, the movement is from Mermod Frères, No. 961. It plays 6 operatic melodies. The comb has 45 teeth, the barrel measures 90 mm in length.

For me, the question is as follows: did Mermod Frères buy the harps and put in the movements, or did Ward-Stilson Company buy any movements they thought suited the harps? As the movement in my harp is not cheap but a rather valuable one, it leads me to believe that there must have been some understanding between the manufacturers. Also, the harps were probably sold at a high price.

With regard to your harp I suspect that the movement is a replacement and that the original movement was removed. I would be surprised if the harp did not date from around 1870/1880. Your movement, however, looks like one of those that were - and still are - included in those novelty articles sold by the hundreds in the 20<sup>th</sup> century!

It would be interesting to investigate why the combination of harp and musical box was done in the first place. Was it because of the similar sound? Did one expect that the strings would enforce the sound (like in some old gramophones)?

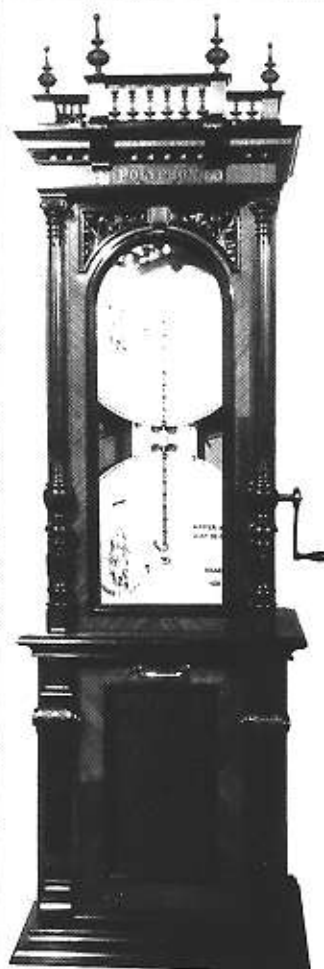
Even though I am unable to answer your question regarding the maker of the movement, I still hope that my information is of some value and interest to you.

### Editorial Note:

*Thank you for your letter. Your harp is as you say very much larger than the one I wrote about. The movement in the small one is indeed reminiscent of those used in novelty items and I think probably dates from the first twenty years of the 20th Century. It is undoubtedly original to the harp. I think it improbable that the harp was intended to copy the Klingsor gramophone. In fact I don't think its musical capabilities were at all relevant at the time.*

*The Ward-Stilson Company was a specialist supplier of artefacts and regalia to fraternal organisations, including the Independent Order of Oddfellows (IOOF), and the harp features in their catalogue under the IOOF section, together with many other items used in their rituals. It is, as far as I can tell, the only item of mechanical music they carried, so it is most improbable that they either assembled or manufactured them, but bought them in from a manufacturer probably within the United States. It is interesting to learn that yours has a Mermod Frères movement. It has proved impossible so far to find out how the harps were used in the rituals, but it is probable that the higher the rank of the IOOF member, the more elaborate his regalia became. Since IOOF is a secret society, they do not publish information regarding their rituals, though some information can be found on the Internet. IOOF originated in England in the mid-eighteenth Century and lodges were prevalent by 1796. In 1806 the Five Brothers from London set up the Shakespeare No 1 Lodge in New York City, from whence the organisation spread throughout North America. It is still in existence.*





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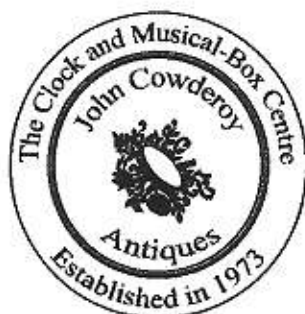
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**More Classified  
Ads on  
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