

Volume 24 Number 8 Winter 2010

The Music Box

An International Journal of Mechanical Music



In this issue:

- Restoration Matters!
- Griesbaum Whistling Figuers
- Bontems Singing Birds
- Making a Musical Box

The Journal of the Musical Box Society of Great Britain

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From the Editors' Desk

Summer is behind us and the winter lies ahead, but in between comes the season of mellow fruitfulness. The autumn colours have been spectacular this year and the 'Fall' part only just begun as we have had very mild weather and the gentlest of breezes.

However, as the nights close in and the temperatures drop we all have time to catch up on our reading and the little odd jobs around our collections. Now is the time to familiarise ourselves with *Restoration Matters!*, which has now reached Part 4 – tune cards.

The very interesting and informative article on Whistlers is reprinted from the American MBSI Journal and we are grateful for the generous permissions given by both societies to each other to use and reprint articles of interest and the mutual exchange of information resulting. There is a reference in the MBSI Whistler article to an article in *The Music Box* Volume 8 No. 6, Summer 1978, page 282, entitled *Whistling Man* – a 20th Century Novelty. This of course can be found on your Music Box DVD. It is a single page piece which illustrates a sailor figure which whistles the

Sailor's Hornpipe (tune no. 49 in the list of tunes on page 548).

The Bontems Bird Boxes seemed a natural pairing in this journal and this too is very interesting and informative.

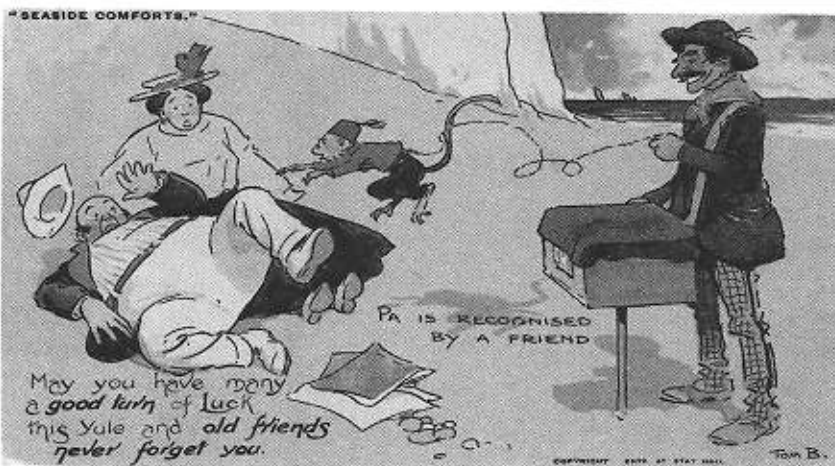
George Dutreih, an intriguing shadowy character in the world of mechanical music, may have manufactured musical boxes, or did he just retail them? Luuk Goldhoorn gives us some clues and we thank him, and indeed all our contributors to this issue, for the time and trouble they have taken to pique our interest and further our knowledge.

If you are proposing to contact one of the Society officers, please consult the contact addresses on page 535, as there have been some changes since the last issue.

Finally, on behalf of the President, Officers and Committee of the MBSGB, we wish you a happy and peaceful Christmas and holiday season, and a successful collecting New Year.

Front cover illustration:

Double Musician Whistling Men, from the Editors' Collection. After the first one plays, the second starts his tune.



Postcard from the Ted Brown Collection.

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The Journal of the Musical Box Society of Great Britain Volume 24 Number 8 Winter 2010

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Dates for your Diary

2010 - 2011

Essex Meeting Christmas Meeting

Saturday 20th November 2010

10am -4pm

**Hullbridge Centre
Windermere Avenue
Hullbridge SS5 6JR**

Bring your own lunch –
coffee & tea provided by us

Why not bring along your own
favourite musical item to show

**Please phone Bruce Allen –
01702 23 2040**

Chanctonbury Ring Christmas Meeting

Saturday 27nd November 2010

10.30 coffee for an 11am start

Lunch provided

**Please contact Ted Brown on
01403823533**

Teme Valley Winders Christmas Meeting

Saturday 4th December 2010

12 noon start

Including Buffet Lunch

**Please contact John Phillips on
01584 78 1118**

Spring Meeting 2011 Milton Keynes

Friday 15th April – Sunday 17th

Please see details in Journal

President's Message No. 18

These notes are being written at the conclusion of an action packed and exciting Society Meeting. Over seventy members attended the meeting at Woodhall Spa in Lincolnshire and were treated to a series of very varied and interesting events. Our thanks go to David O'Conner, Gill Maxim, Don and Dorothy Robinson, Daphne, Clive, Nicholas and Eileen plus all the others who worked so hard to make the event so memorable. No doubt there will be a report elsewhere in the Journal (too late for inclusion - will be in next issue - Ed), but rest assured we were treated to a brilliant weekend.

The Committee held their meeting on the Friday evening and made some significant decisions which will help to take the Society forward. Now I believe is both the time and the place to let you know the outcomes.

For personal reasons, Richard Kerridge and David Walch wished to resign from the Committee. We owe both Richard and David a great deal as they have served the Society so well for many years and have done it very efficiently. Both will be remaining as Society members and no doubt will offer their skills and expertise when required. I send my sincere thanks to them both as do the rest of the Committee.

We have been fortunate in that Kath Turner has offered to undertake the tasks of Treasurer and Subscription Secretary with the latter post to take immediate effect. Kath will be formally nominated for these posts at the 2011 AGM. We are deeply indebted to Kath for taking on

these extremely important tasks. Richard will be Treasurer until the AGM in 2011, but will be helping Kath establish her role in the intervening period.

John Ward and John Farmer have agreed to stand as joint Auction Organisers and I have no doubt they will run the annual auction in the same smooth and efficient manner created by David and Daphne Walch. Once again, we send our thanks. John Ward relinquished the post of Recording Secretary as he has found it impossible to attend Committee meetings on time due to his work commitments.

Having moved to become an Auction Organiser, John Farmer relinquished the post of Archivist not only to change tasks but also to allow him more time to lead the Restoration Project with the help of Nicholas Simons. Alison Biden, who has served on the Committee in past times, subsequently volunteered to take over the Archives and to arrange storage for them. This offer has been gratefully accepted and Alison will be co-opted on to the Committee as soon as possible with the intention that she be formally nominated and elected to the post at the next AGM.

The final, but by no means least important change to the Committee came when Paul Bellamy undertook the role of Recording Secretary until such times as a suitable candidate can be found to take over the job. Besides being a Vice-President, Paul has been "shadow" Recording Secretary for a number of years and is well versed in the role.

This I believe concludes a fairly

major re-shuffle of Committee posts which I am sure will work smoothly and will ultimately be of benefit to the Society. There is undoubtedly an air of enthusiasm among all Committee members. The sun seems to be shining!

Details of most of these changes have been listed at the front of this journal in the "Officers of the M.B.S.G.B." section. Please note carefully any address, telephone number or email link that may have changed. The Society P.O. Box number remains the same but will now serve for a number of people. Those wishing to write to the Webmaster should write to Bob Ducat-Brown whilst those contacting Nicholas Simons should address the envelope to him. I too can receive mail via this route.

Finally, it is coming towards the end of another year, so I will remind you that shortly your subscriptions will be due once again. Please continue to support the Society and help to keep us going in these difficult economic times.

Arthur Cunliffe

Would those members
accessing the
MBSGB Website

www.mbsgb.org.uk

please note:
The password has been
changed to
LANGDORFF

Chanctonbury Ring Open Day Meeting 17th July 2010

By Alan K Clark

Over 40 members and guests attended the latest Chanctonbury Ring Open Day and Organ Grind meeting hosted by Ted and Kay Brown at the Old School Bucks Green.

The programme included talks on Forte Piano cylinder boxes, a special Overture Box, Phonographs, Singing Birds and Whistling Men, plus the afternoon organ grind.

Terry started the meeting with a comparison of the different types of Forte Piano boxes, their history, and the range of volume produced from them. They were made from about 1845 to about 1880; some of the earlier ones used one comb and produced the two, or more, volume levels either by using long and short pins, or by raking the pins by different amounts. Most of the later made ones used two combs of teeth, one designed to play loudly and one softly. His first two examples used this latter method of achieving their aim, and one exhibited a much greater difference in range of volume than the other. His third box which was by LeCoultre and Grainger, dating to about 1842, had very heavily hooked teeth. This box showed the advantage of this method in that in places the volume of sound gradually increased as a crescendo, or decreased as a diminuendo, this was more expressive than the basic two volume sound produced from the two comb types.

Excellent as the above sounds were, they were soon eclipsed by the next item which was a Four Overture box by Falconnet and Reymond, serial number 86. This was demonstrated by Alan Godier who had just completed its overhaul. It had a 4inch diameter cylinder, 244 teeth and was dated 1830 on the mainspring. Each overture lasted

for a full 3 minutes and they were superb. Alan described some of the various tasks he had had to carry out, and showed the tuning scale that he made to record the tuning of the teeth. After listening to all four wonderful overtures, the sounds presented to us by the next speaker could hardly have presented a larger change, both in volume, and in quality.

Paul's talk was based on the history, and demonstration of phonographs and gramophones made by the ex-makers of musical boxes. The first phonograph shown was made by Thorens, and was one of the reversible lid design where all the works were mounted on the top of the lid, so it could be inverted and the works hidden in the polished wooden case for storage. These Thorens machines were very rarely marked with the maker's name, so they could be sold under any brand name. The next machine was a phonograph made by Paillard, and these always bore the maker's name. British Polyphon Ltd., made gramophones, and the one demonstrated bore the Dulcetto trade mark, (but this trade mark was used by other makers at different times). Following demonstrations of these machines, Paul turned to the records made by the Nicole firm which was the successor to the British part of Nicole Frères. These records were made from brown celluloid pressed onto cardboard discs, and were made in 7 and 10 inch sizes, between 1903 and 1906. Nicole also made cylinder records. The gramophone records produced by British Polyphon Ltd started off bearing the Polyphon name and by the outbreak of the First World War had gone through two changes to arrive at the name of Pilot Record.

The Aeolian Orchestrelle was then played by the writer using a hand cut roll of Walton's Crown Imperial. This was followed by the demonstration of a large collection of members' singing birds and whistling men. Ted's collection of birds in cages spans the whole range from beautiful and antique, to cheap and modern, (well 1950's). Paul showed two Reuge items, a singing bird box, and a bird in cage. Five whistling men had been assembled which probably covered most of their production range from the 1920's through to two of the modern products of MMM. Most of them played different tunes and it was interesting to compare the tunes, and their different styles of carving and painting. Next we tried to identify some tunes on a cylinder box, and then it was lunch time.

Following the consumption of Ted's excellent buffet lunch we started enjoying the various organs which our members had very kindly brought along for our entertainment. Paul had brought his Capital Cuff box, as he thought that some of the members may not have seen or heard one before. Richard and Keith spoilt us, as usual, with three instruments, an Alan Pell roll playing organ, a Chiappa barrel organ, and a Keith Prowse street piano. Other organs on display were by such makers as Gavioli, Imhof and Mukle, plus a Musical Cabinetto and Seraphone. Thus ended another very enjoyable day listening to mechanical music. Thank you Ted and Kay, and all those who helped and brought along instruments for our pleasure.

The next meeting will be the Christmas Open Day at the Old School on Saturday 27th November. The Spring 2011 meeting will be on Sunday 6th March. Refreshments will be supplied.

Register News No: 69

These days the main sources for finding new boxes to enter on the Register are; a) Auction Catalogues and b) Ebay. Both methods have their advantages and disadvantages in that serial numbers are not always given and there is no easy way of checking if the information given is entirely accurate. I am also amazed how "rare" and "outstanding" nearly all of the items seem to be on Ebay even when many teeth are missing from the comb. I must not be too cynical though.

Some of our new members have seen the wisdom of registering their boxes and I always try to help if I can by supplying extra information about any box if I am able to do so. I always return at least one copy of the Register entry for any box. This should be

kept with your records for security purposes whilst a second copy should be placed within the box to be passed on to any new owner should the box ever be sold.

Since writing the last Register News, I have been informed of three new Nicole gamme numbers. One gamme number was required for a box that was registered about 15 years ago. Unfortunately, no record of who owns any box is kept so I cannot let the owner know the tunes. If you have a Nicole that has a missing tune sheet and you have the gamme number, an e-mail message to me might help. There is a chance I might have been given the programme, but equally, it will be a long shot. Head your e-mail Nicole gamme number query so your message does not go in the "Trash" box.

For new members who might not know what a gamme number is, it is a way of noting the tuning scale and the list of tunes that box plays using those notes that are played by the comb. In the case of Nicole boxes, those having the same gamme number will play the same tunes. They might not always play them in the same order but the comb will be tuned correctly to play them. One exception is when the gamme number has "bis" after it as there may be an odd different tune, but it will still use the available notes. This has been very useful in the past for people who own a Nicole with a missing tune sheet. Providing they can tell me the gamme number, there is a chance I can give a list of tunes so that a reproduction tune sheet can be made.



Karrer tune sheet.



Inlaid lid of Karrer musical box.

Nearly all makers mark the gamme number on the lead of the bass tooth. Sometimes a serial number can be there as well. Again a gamme number can be scratched on the left hand end of the brass cylinder. Unfortunately the makers of parts for manufacturers also stamped numbers on items which can be confusing. If you have a spring barrel and a great wheel and other parts stamped with the same number, say 18, it is likely that is a batch number identifying which items can be used together.

Returning to Ebay for a moment, I find that all have photographs with the advertisement which help enormously when trying to write a description for the box. Most sellers do respond to a query and will try to answer any question. Few do understand the "gamme" word! Most vendors do look through rose tinted spectacles when describing their boxes, so as always look hard, ask questions and "let the buyer beware".

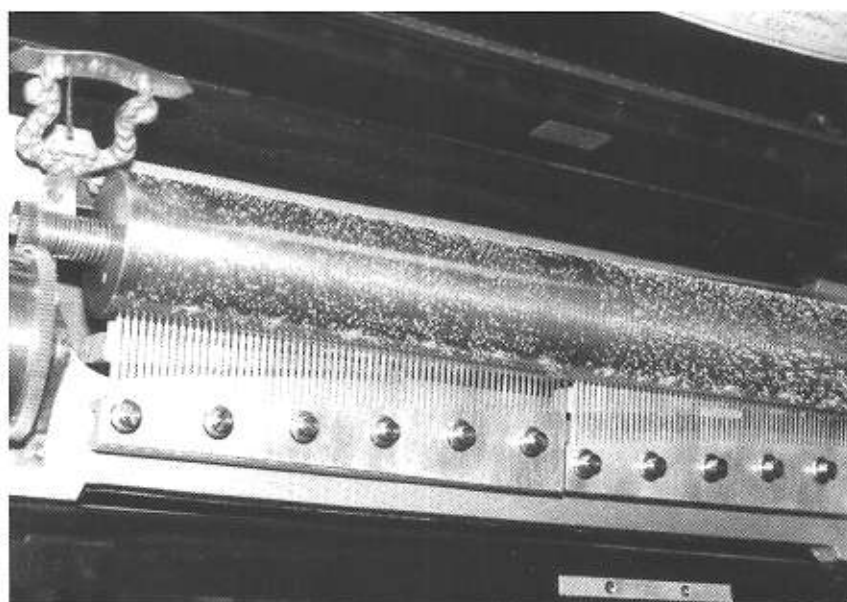
One of the lesser known makers was the firm of Karrer who were based in Teufenthal. Not only did

they make their own range of cylinder boxes, but they also made a great number of parts for other makers. I suspect that they played a much greater part in the musical box industry that we realise. They were certainly very proud of their achievements as witnessed by the way they illustrated all the various medals they had won in exhibitions on their tune sheets.

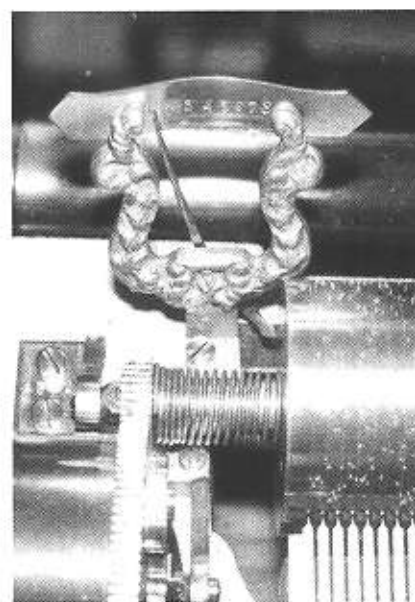
Karrer boxes are of good quality and often feature their unique geared winding system. Arguably this system is not quite mechanically the best, but certainly interesting. The mainsprings are narrower and longer than usual.

The example noted here is of the conventional type of Sublime Harmony type and has their design of tune changer. It is contained in a very good case with a pleasing inlay of musical instruments surrounded by a floral background on the rosewood lid. It is noted on the Register with the number R-4011. It is indeed agreeable to come across a box of this quality. My thanks to the member who sent me details of this box together with such good quality photographs.

Arthur Cunliffe



The sublime harmony comb arrangement.



Karrer tune indicator.

2012

Advance Notice

In 2012, the Musical Box Society of Great Britain will be celebrating its 50th (Golden) Anniversary.



Our celebrations will start in April 2012 with our spring meeting based in Kent; the Garden of England. This will be a full 4 day event with lots to do and see, arrive on Wednesday 18th April and depart Monday 23rd.

During the 4 days we are lucky enough to have a full day visit to Jack Henley's private musical collection (which has increased considerably since our last visit) and Vintage Cars. Jack will also be holding an Organ Grind in his grounds.

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

We have arranged for two ½ day musical visits;

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

Also two ½ day non musical trips;

- 1 - A trip on the Bluebell Railway
- 2 - A visit to the local vine yard.

We will continue to celebrate our 50th with the Autumn Meeting in September; this meeting will be held in Worcestershire with John and Hilda Phillips as our hosts.

To end our year's celebrations we will have an extra special weekend in December (Saturday 1st – Sunday 2nd) for a celebratory dinner, which also happens to be the exact anniversary date of the society's inaugural meeting 50 years ago. This event will take place in the Warwick Area.

Watch this space

Restoration *matters!*

4 - Tune Cards

One of the first things to be noticed on lifting the lid of a cylinder musical box is the state of the tune card (sometimes referred to as the programme or tune sheet) that lists the tunes the cylinder plays. It is hardly surprising that given their age, many original tune cards are now damaged or even completely missing. If such is the case, with little skill and little time or money expended you can achieve a virtually instant aesthetic improvement to your box by repairing or replacing its tune card as necessary.

Repairing an existing card:

First you will need to remove the card gently from the box lid. If it is held in place by brass tacks, gently ease them out by sliding a knife blade behind the card. Keep these and any tiny detached pieces of the card underneath the tacks on one side for later. If the card is stuck to the lid with some sort of glue, you will have to steam it gently, and then ease it off. If it is stuck to the lid by adhesive tape, gently peel this off the lid. Peeling the tape off the card is not advised, as this may well remove the surface of the card, along with any print on it. Instead, the tape can be removed from the card by gentle soaking with surgical spirit for a few minutes, and any residual sticky edge by further gentle rubbing or scraping.

The card can now be cleaned by rubbing with either a soft artist's eraser (not India rubber which is too coarse), or a piece of fresh white bread. This latter is recommended if the card is particularly fragile. On some tune cards the design may be repeated. It may be possible to photocopy your original, which should be done at this stage, and use part of the photocopy of an undamaged area to complete the design in a missing or damaged one. Missing pieces, especially corners,

may be lurking under the bedplate of the box. If the original is badly damaged it might be better to use the copy in the lid, but keep the original safely within the instrument for future reference and research.

You should now firmly glue the original card to another piece of white card, to back it. Use a backing piece, which is slightly larger than the original, up to 1/16 inch (1.5 mm) thick and a suitable soluble paper glue, taking care not to get glue on the top face of the finished card. As you do so, make sure the edges of any feathered tears are stuck down in the correct order, and that you avoid creating any air pockets between the two cards. Now is the time to fix in place any detached pieces of the original card, taking care over alignment, as well as any photocopied parts (see above.) Leave under pressure until the glue is dried.

Your box will already demonstrate it has received some TLC, but if you are feeling skilled enough, you can now manually fill in the gaps in the card's design by drawing them in with pen and ink, or a fine-tipped felt-tip pen. If you intend to complete the process by colouring with watercolour paint, choose ink that is not water-soluble.

Unless attempting to repair a very elaborately coloured card, a small box of cheap watercolour paints should provide a sufficient selection for you to be able to mix any matching colours. In most instances all that is required is for a wash to be applied to the new, white areas, to match the background of the existing original. (Test for match on some spare card.) Apply with a fine artist's brush.

The final touch to the repaired card is to trim it to give it a neat, clean edge. Place the card on a firm, smooth

surface and with a sharp craft knife braced against a metal rule, cut the card 1/32 inch (1 mm) smaller than its original size. If you are working on a wood surface ensure the cut is the same direction as the wood grain for the best result.

Replacing a missing card:

Missing cards can be replaced either by using an existing blank card (for supplies, contact a committee member) or photocopying a suitable card borrowed from elsewhere - any extraneous information, such as tune titles, or incongruous maker's mark, can be masked with white paper before photocopying. You will need to check the inside surface of the box lid for the presence of tacks, in which case remove them. You may even find underneath them the remains of corners of the original card, giving a clue as to its design or colour. Use the tack holes, or any other visible evidence, to determine what size the original card would have been. (A rough rule of thumb is to gauge the size of rectangle made by the tacks or holes and add a margin of approximately 1/8 inch / 3mm all round.) If you know the maker of the box, and the size of the original card, you can look in the tune sheet book to see if there is an example of the original. Look though all the types of sheet for that maker. If you know the serial number, it will help.

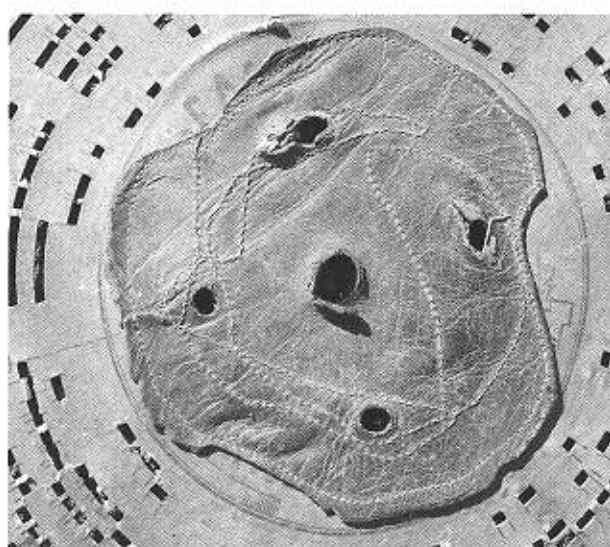
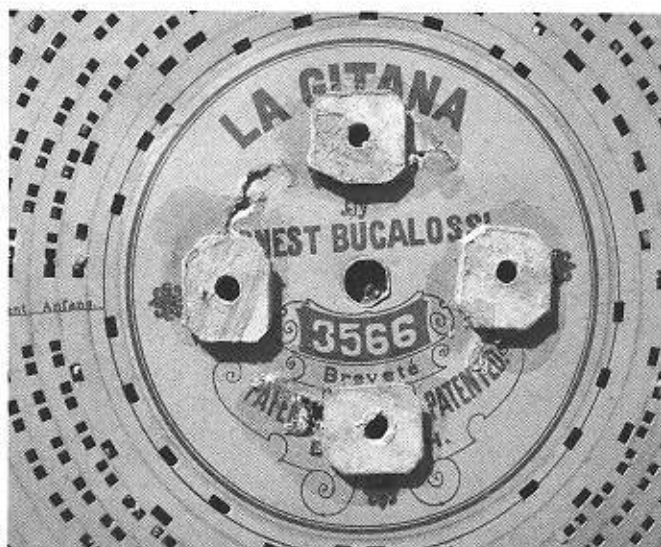
If using a paper photocopy, it is advisable to stick this thoroughly to a piece of card, before trimming to the required size. Better still would be to have the copy done directly onto thin card. List the box tunes on the card in the correct order of play, in a neat script handwritten with pen and black ink. For a more authentic look use an old-fashioned style or find a calligrapher to do it for you. Also note on the back of the card that it is a replacement.

Before fixing the repaired card to the box lid, clean or polish the lid as appropriate. Finally, once both the box and card are dry, fix the card to

the box lid with brass tacks, where possible using the original holes in the wood. (Refer to a committee member if you need some tacks.) If

you are reusing tacks, polish those first with a suitable product, e.g. 'Brasso'. Now enjoy the results of your labours!

How NOT to do it!



Three ingenious, but incorrect, ways to 'restore' Ariston discs, supplied by Kevin McElhone, and an internal flap valve from a cob organette discovered by the editors. This latter appeared to have been like that from the factory. The small pieces are wood chippings!



Karl Griesbaum Whistling Figures (Whistlers)

By Alan K Clark

First published in 'Mechanical Music', the journal of the Music Box Society International, Volume 41 No. 1, 1995 and reproduced by kind permission of the Editor of that journal.

About a year ago I undertook a project to compile a list of the different styles of Griesbaum whistling figures that were made and the tunes they play. To gather data on the whistlers, I asked for assistance from MBSI members via the "Project and Wants Column" of the *News Bulletin*, talked about the project at MBSI regional meetings I attended and sent out letters to members who have large collections of whistlers or who repair them. The response to my requests was better than expected. I received descriptions of whistlers and their tunes, tune lists, audio tapes, advertising literature, photographs and other general information. Some of the material I received has already been published in the *News Bulletin* (see the listing on page 21 of the September/October 1994, issue). In this article I will set forth some other information I have learned about whistlers.

In his fascinating book, *The Mechanical Music Cabinet*, published in Germany in 1984, Siegfried Wendel writes, "K. Griesbaum founded his workshop in 1905 in Triberg. He was prevailed upon to do this by a dealer who considered the young craftsman talented enough to make copies of singing bird boxes. From the original model he developed a somewhat simplified, but very robust, singing bird mechanism and soon he manufactured cages containing up to three moving and singing birds. Some years after his death, I [Siegfried Wendel] bought the contents of his workshop..." In addition to the singing bird boxes and the small singing birds in a cage, he developed the whistling figures and added them to his line of products in the late 1920's. He was the sole maker of these hand-carved whistling figures.



Photo 1. *The Poet*, an earlier whistling figure, plays tune no. 7, *Ännchen von Tharau* Ist's.

Griesbaum carried on his business under his own name with the initials KG following it. In 1973 his letterhead read: Karl Griesbaum KG, Singvogelwerkstatte, 774 Triberg/Schwarzwald, Germany, Telefon 07722/4267.

The Black Forest (Schwarzwald) wood carvers developed a distinctive type of carving done in a whittled style.

Griesbaum's figures, in particular, are well carved and beautifully hand painted giving them a lifelike look. They have a realistic facial expression of someone pursing his lips to whistle. The figures vary from the simpler carvings like the Poet (Photo 1) and the Beer Drinker (Photo 2) to rather complex carvings like the Tramp (Photo 3) and the double Musicians (Photos 4 and 5). Some carvings are better than others — the ones I like best were carved in the period from 1950 to 1975. Many different figures were made over the years. I do not know the number, but I have either seen in person or viewed pictures of 30 different figures at one time or another. *Illustration 1* is a page from an undated Griesbaum sales brochure which shows a number of styles. You will notice that half of the figures are Whistling Tramps. The Whistling Tramps were the most popular by far, and more of these were made than any of the other figures. The tramp usually has a wine bottle sticking out of his coat or pants pocket.

The earliest pricing information uncovered on the whistlers is from 1969. The Griesbaum 1969 price sheet listed 11 whistlers ranging in price from 166 DM to 218 DM (Deutsche marks), about \$42.00 to \$55.50 in U.S. currency, and two double whistlers priced at 368 DM and 379 DM (about \$93.50 and \$96.50, respectively), less a 20% wholesalers' discount (*Illustration 2*). Griesbaum's prices on the whistlers increased almost every year thereafter. For example, figure no. 40E, a tramp leaning against a lamppost, sold for 218 DM in 1969, 280 DM in 1973, 320 DM in 1976, and 450 DM in 1981 (\$55.50, \$105.00, \$127.00 and \$199.00, respectively). The U.S. dollar declined against the Deutsche mark from about 4 marks



Photo 2. *The Beer Drinker*, figure no. 59, plays tune no. 18, *Bier Hier, Oder I fall Um*.

per dollar in 1969 to about 2.3 marks per dollar in 1981. This decline in the dollar and the increase in Griesbaum's prices substantially raised the cost of the whistlers to the American buyer (over three and one-half times in just 12 years).

Elpa Marketing Industries, Inc. of New Hyde Park, New York, offered four types of Whistling Tramps in their 1970 catalogue. Figure no. KG-40 (the same as figure no. 40E) sold for \$150.00, f.o.b. New Hyde Park, New York, with a 5% discount allowed on orders totalling \$200.00 to \$499.00 and 10% discount on orders of \$500.00 or more. In the same year Hildegard Studios of Hartford, Connecticut, pictured the identical four whistlers in their mail-order catalog which featured Swiss music boxes and ANRI hand carved figures. They sold figure no. KG-40 for \$140.00 plus 65 cents postage.

Many of Griesbaum's movements are stamped with his trademark—a bird and the initials K.G. (*Illustration 3*). Some movements have the initials D. R. G. M. (Deutsches-Reichs gebrauchs muster) and the patent number 885983. However, some years ago, in response to my request for information on this patent number and a copy of the patent, Jiirgen Hocker of Gessellschaft Fur Selbstspielende Musikinstrumente E.V. (German Society for Self-Playing Musical Instruments) stated: "This is not a German Patent Number! The D.R.G. M. numbers were lower than a patent and have never been published. The originals have been destroyed during the last World War in Berlin. All I can send you is a notice in a Music Journal with the date and the title" (*Illustration 4*). Jörg Wendel of Mechanische Musikwerke Manufaktur in Rudesheim, Germany, sent me an original tune list with tune numbers containing over 150 titles for the Griesbaum whistlers along with these comments: "We cannot see in our materials if they used special tunes for each figure. As far as we found out they did whatever the customer wanted." Of course, we do know that certain figures were supplied with a particular tune. For example, the Baseball Player whistled *Take Me Out To the Ball Game*; the Trapeze Artist whistled *The Man on the Flying Trapeze* and Uncle Sam whistled *Yankee Doodle*. (For other examples of these whistlers with special tunes, see the *News Bulletin*, September/October 1994, previously referenced).

Also, Griesbaum would make up movements with custom-made tunes if the customer sent them the sheet music. One of their advertising brochures dated 1973-1974 reads, "On orders of special melodies, please do send sheet of music." The brochure does not say whether there was a minimum quantity order on the figures with these custom-made tunes. Not all of the 150 tunes were readily available when ordering. In a 1963 sales sheet, Griesbaum



Photo 3. *The Tramp with cigarette holder and ashtray*. Figure no. 60, plays tune no. 37, *Show Me the Way to Go Home*.

listed 20 melodies from which a customer could choose.

Alfred Chapuis and Edouard Gelis in the book *Le Monde des Automates* stated, "Shaping the cams is relatively simple to produce a tune, but it is much more difficult to imitate a bird." It astounds me that Karl Griesbaum was able to design the many different song and air cam wheels that were required to produce this number of tunes.

The number, which is sometimes rubber stamped on the base of the



Illustration 1. Page from an undated Griesbaum sales brochure showing a number of different whistlers.



Photo no. 4 - Double Musicians, figure no. 50, plays 'Esmus Was Wunderbares Sein' and 'For He's a Jolly Good Fellow'.

figure, is the figure number and not the tune number. For example, a tramp leaning against a lamppost, in our collection, is stamped no. 60 on its base, but plays tune no. 37, *Show Me the Way to Go Home*. The tune number is marked on the air cam wheel of the whistling movement; but in order to see this number, it is necessary to remove the movement from the back of the figure. Then, with the movement in motion, the number can be seen through the three holes in the front (or bottom) plate (Illustration 5). Other numbers scratched on the back (or top) plate of the movement and/or written in pencil on the back of the figure are most likely assemblers' markings.

To remove the movement from the figure, first take off the wooden back held in place by small headless nails at the top and bottom. The movement should be in the stopped position (at the end of the tune). The earlier movements are attached to the back of the carved-out cavity with small wood screws which go through the front plate. After taking out these screws, the movement can be lifted out. Care should be taken not to bend the end of the song cam follower where it connects to the piston wire. This follower usually sticks out from the movement. The later movements (the ones most often encountered) are fastened to a spring-loaded mounting plate which is screwed to the back of the carved-out cavity. The mounting plate has flat-headed locking pins which go into keyhole-shaped holes in the front plate of the movement. Some of these figures also have two small box nails in the left top of the cavity to further secure the movement. These should be removed or preferably bent out of the way. The movement can then be detached from its mounting plate by pressing on it while pushing slightly upward. On a double whistler, when the first movement finishes playing, a crossover lever activates the second movement. This lever, which is held by tapered pins at each end, must be removed before the movements can be taken out of the figures.



Photo no. 5 - Back view of the double Musicians showing the whistling movements.

Pfeifende, handgeschnitzte Holzfiguren **Whistling figures, handcarved in wood and painted**

Höhe — Height — Hauteur — 25 - 28 cm — 10 - 12 inches
Net. Wt. 800 - 1400 Gramm — Netto 800 - 1400 Gramm

1 a	Mit Pendelührchen — with pendulum-clock	218.—
59	Figur — figur	198.—
44	Figur mit elektr. Handlaterne — figur with lantern	218.—
40 U	Figur mit Eintagependeluhr — with pendulum-clock ..	218.—
40 E	Figur mit elektr. Laterne — figur with lantern	218.—
60 E	Figur mit elektr. Laterne — figur with lantern	218.—
250	Gruppenfigur — double-whistler	379.—
252	Gruppenfigur — double-whistler	368.—
6	Figur — figur	166.—
62	Figur — figur	166.—
63	Figur — figur	166.—

Melodieangabe, bei Bestellung unter Nr. Angabe angeben.
Verzeichnis siehe Abbildung.

*Illustration 2 - Griesbaum price sheet dated 1969 listing
11 models of whistlers.*

On later movements, it is just a wire hooked through holes in the appropriate levers.

Repairs to the whistling movement can be made by a good clock or a musical box repairer specializing in whistlers. The bellows of the whistler, as one would expect, is a most delicate part of the mechanism and, if recovering is required, great care must be taken to do it properly. To my knowledge nothing has been written on redoing these tiny bellows. However, there are several good books on rebuilding player pianos with sections on the basic techniques of recovering bellows, and one or more of these books should be read to become familiar with the basics before attempting this work. If you have a satisfactory method

for recovering the bellows, continue with it. Here are a few tips on certain aspects of redoing the bellows which were given to me by a fellow MBSI member who does a lot of this work. (I will not attempt to describe the entire recovering procedure.)

There are six valves in these tiny bellows: four paper flap valves in the bellows/reservoir and two brass diaphragm-type valves, one at the base of the whistle and one relief valve (*Illustration 6*). Unless all six

valves are inspected and/or replaced, the bellows will not operate properly.

Replacing the flap valve is the most troublesome part of the recovering process. After the old bellows material is removed from the boards and the boards are ready for recovering, one can work on the flap valve. Before removing the old bellows valve, trace around the outside of it and mark the end where it is hinged. Then take off the old valve. Any old glue must be scraped or sanded from the wood without altering the surface of the wood. Only extra-fine sandpaper should be used (if necessary). The board is now ready for the new valve. The valve, $\frac{1}{4}$ " wide x $\frac{1}{2}$ " long (6.3 mm x 12.7 mm), is cut from a clean, flat piece of Mylar .001" (one-thousandth of an inch) thick. The new valve (*Illustration 6*) is placed on the board in the same position as the original valve. The hinge (the long end of the rectangle) is glued sparingly to the board with PVC-E glue. Excess glue should be squeezed out. The valve must lay perfectly flat on the wood. Next, cut a strip $\frac{1}{8}$ " wide $\frac{3}{4}$ " long (3.2 mm x 19.0 mm) from zephyr skin for the valve holding strip. After the glue is thoroughly



*Illustration 3 - Karl Griesbaum's
trade mark*

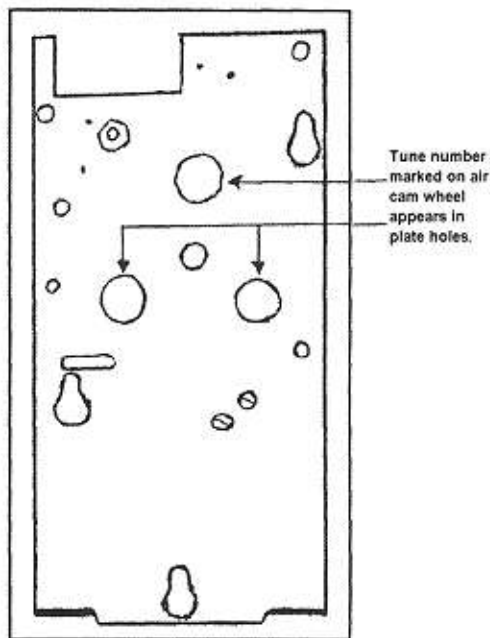


Illustration 5 - drawing of the front plate of the whistling movement.

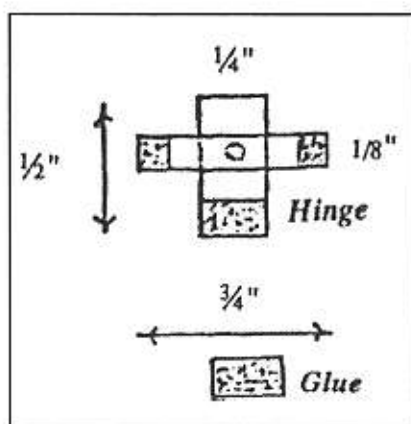


Illustration 6 - Drawing of the bellows flap valve.

dry on the hinge, the valve holding strip can be glued in place. This strip lies across the valve centered on the air hole in the board. Each end of the strip is glued sparingly to the board with PVC-E glue. This strip should be loose so that the bellows can open easily. (Important: do not draw the strip down tightly — the valve has to move freely.) This strip may not be absolutely necessary because Mylar is used for the valve instead of the paper originally used; but the valve works well with Mylar so this restorer uses it. With the valve in place, the bellows can be recovered. Zephyr skin is the best material to cover the bellows (Illustration 7). This material is flexible, featherweight and airtight. Before gluing the zephyr skin to the boards, moisten the edges of the wood with a little water using a small camel hair brush, then glue the edges sparingly with PVC-E glue and apply the zephyr skin to the boards. After the glue is dry, peel off the old stiffeners from the original bellows and use them on the new bellows if possible. If not, new stiffeners can be made from heavy paper using the old stiffeners as patterns. Finally, glue the stiffeners onto the zephyr skin with PVC-E. When the glue is thoroughly dry, coat the zephyr skin with mink oil. This preserves it and keeps it pliable.

As interest heightens in Griesbaum whistling figures, more and more will be learned about these fascinating

musical novelties from our recent past.

I want to extend my thanks and sincere appreciation to all those who sent information to me for this project. This is a list of some of these people: Kevin Conn, Rick Cooley Jr., Rick Cooley Sr., Ed Fear, Jim Feller, Vicki Glasgow, Danilo Konvalinka, Stephen Leonard, Don Levison, Gordon Marchal, Angelo Rulli, Hendrik Strengers, Jörg Wendel, and Siegfried Wendel.

Other members requested information about whistlers in their collection. These inquiries were also appreciated.

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JOE SCHUMACHER IS A LONGTIME CONTRIBUTOR TO

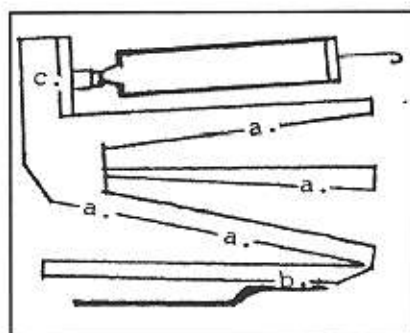


Illustration 7 - Valve positions: a - flap valves, b - relief valve, c - Pallet air valve.

THE MBSI NEWS BULLETIN AND JOURNAL OF MECHANICAL MUSIC. HE IS A COLLECTOR/SPECIALIST IN THE AREA OF MUSICAL NOVELTIES RESIDING IN WILMINGTON, DE. (Delaware - Ed)

STAN LINS is an MBSI member and German translator who resides in Bloomington, MN. (Minnesota - Ed)

HEDI KESLER, Eden Prairie, MN, a native of Germany, is familiar with German folk songs.

Busker tells court of plight after accident

FROM THE NEWS, 1910

Walter Newman told the court that he earned £1 a week playing a street organ. It had cost him £18 10s 6d, he'd spent £5 for new tunes, twelve shillings on a new wheel, and three-and-six on tuning. A motor car had run into it, causing considerable damage. A 4-year old boy who had been in the shafts was knocked over and his hands were cut. The instrument would have to go to London to be repaired, costing at least £3. He had another organ which his son took out. He was awarded £5 for damage to the machine and £3 for loss of earnings.

from Alan & Daphne Wyatt

LIST OF KNOWN WHISTLER TUNES

LIST PROVIDED BY JÖRG WENDEL, RÜDESHEIM, GERMANY. TITLES TRANSLATED
INTO ENGLISH BY STAN LINS with HEDI KESLER

¹ Spelling changed. No known dialect changes made.

² Alternate word or title.

³ Meaning unknown.

[] All notations in brackets made by translator.

1. Im Lauterbach Ha'an I Mei Strumpf Verloren - I Lost My Socks at Lauterbach
2. Little Bo Peep
3. Ich Bin Der Dr. Eisenbarth - I Am Dr. Eisenbarth
4. Grad Aus Dem Wirtshaus Heraus - Just Left the Saloon
5. Old King Cole Was a Merry Old Soul
6. Gaudeamus Igitur Juvenes¹ - Let Us Rejoice Then in Our Youth
7. Annchen Von Tharau Ist's - It's Little Annie from Tharau
8. Du, Du Liegst Mir Im Herzen - You are in my Heart
9. Oh Alte Burse hen Herrlichkeit¹ - Oh the Magnificence of the Good Old Student Days
10. Yankee Doodle
11. Auld Lang Syne - The Good Old Days Long Past
12. Muß I Denn Zum Stadtele Naus - Must I Then Leave this Little Town
13. My Old Kentucky Home
14. I Won't Go Home Until Morning
15. O Du Lieber Augustin - Oh You Dear Augustine
16. An Der Schönen Blauen Donau - By the Beautiful Blue Danube
17. Eia Popaia
18. Bier Hier Oder I Fall Um - Bring Some Beer or I'll Fall Down
19. Jodler Von Der Kapler Alm - Yodeler from the Kapler Alpine Pasture
20. Im Wald Und Auf Der Heide - In the Woods and on the Heath
21. God Save the King
22. How Dry I Am
23. Ich Hab Mein Herz In Lauterbach Verloren [*Heidelberg is more common*] - I Lost my Heart in Lauterbach
24. Bald Gras Ich Am Neckar — O Du Lieber Augustin - Soon I'll be Grazing by the Neckar + [*repeat of 15*]
25. Morgen Kommt Der Weihnachtsmann - Tomorrow Father Christmas Comes
26. Deutschland Über Alles - Germany Above All
27. Internationale
28. La Madeline
29. Heideröschen - Little Rose of the Heath
30. Valentine
31. Du Bist Verrückt Mein Kind¹ - You are Crazy, My Child
32. Trink Wir noch A Tröpfchen¹ - Let's Drink Just Another Little Drop
33. Der Geisbub [Der Geißbub]² - The Goatherd
34. S'Brienzer Bürli - The Boy from Brienz [Swiss canton]

35. Morgen Wenn D' Sunne Lacht - Tomorrow When the Sun Shines
36. Die Gauslou³
37. Show Me the Way to Go Home
38. Gioviezza
39. The More We Are Together
40. Fuchs Du Hast Die Gans Gestohlen - Fox, You Stole the Goose
41. Auf Der Berge Grüne Saume (Schafer Figur) - On the Green Edges of the Mountains (Shepherd figure)
42. East Side, West Side (Smith Figur) [Smith Figur = blacksmith figure?]
43. Hänschen Klein - Little Hans
44. Marching Through Georgia
45. Hymne National Ägypten (R. Neger)¹ - Egyptian National Anthem (R.³ Negro)
46. Tiroler Holzhacker Buben - Tyrol Lumberjacks
47. Hail, Hail the Gang's all Here (Soldier)
48. Sidewalks of New York (newsboy)
49. Sailor's Hornpipe
50. In Rixdorf ist Musike (A. No. 32) (same as No. 32)? - In Rixdorf There's Music
51. Siehst Du Wohl Da Kimmst Er¹ - Do You See Him, Here He Comes
52. Was Magt Der Mager Am Himalaja - What's Mager³ Doing by the Himalayas
53. Du Bist Wie Eine Blume - You're Like a Flower
54. Ich Weiß Nicht Was Soll Es Bedeuten - I Don't Know What It's Supposed to Mean
55. Halleluja (Figure No. 105)
56. Nachtigall (Melodie Für G) Nightingale (melody in G)
57. Parade of the Wooden Soldiers
58. Und Der Hans Schleicht Umher - And Hans Sneaks Around
59. Alle Meine Entchen - All my Little Ducks
60. Mädele Ruck, Ruck, Ruck, Ruck an Meine Seite - Girl Come Back to My Side
61. This is my Lucky Day
62. You're the Cream in my Coffee
63. The Star-spangled Banner
64. Three O'clock in the Morning
65. Kadetten-Marsch - Cadets-march
66. The Campbells are Coming (Dudelsack) (Bagpipes)
67. Show Me the Way to go Home (Zweistimmig) (for two voices)
68. I Can't Give You Anything But Love
69. Wedding of the Painted Doll
70. Repeat of number 8
71. Guter Mond (Zweistimmig) - Good Moon (for two voices)
72. The Stars and Stripes Forever
73. Der Hart Gesottne Junggeselle - The Confirmed Bachelor
74. Button Up your Overcoat (Orgelmann) (Man Playing Organ)
75. Let It Rain
76. Was Streiten Sich Die Leut Herum¹ [Da Streiten...]² - There the People are, Quarreling
77. Hört Ihr Herren, Lasst Euch Sagen - Listen You Men, Let Me Tell You

78. Turner, Auf Zum Streite¹ - Athlete, Rise to the Challenge!
79. Es Klappert Die Mühle Am Rauschend Bach - The Mill Clatters by the Rushing Brook
80. Show of Shows (Singing in the Heath)
81. Sunny Side Up
82. Waldes Lust [Waldeslust]² - Longing for the Woods
83. It's a Great Life
84. Special Melodie Für Bes (Her.)³
85. Come Join in the Band
86. Der Mai Ist Gekommen - May Has Come
87. Was Kann Der Siegesmund Dafür - Siegesmund Can't Help It
88. Die Ganze Welt Ist Himmelblau! - The Whole World is Heavenly Blue
89. Es Mus Was Wunderbares Sein - It Must Be Wonderful
90. Repeat of 89
91. Ungarisches Lied - Hungarian Song
92. Repeat of 91
93. C'est Pomnou Papa³
94. Quand Madelon³ - When, Madeline?
95. Happy Days Are Here Again
96. With a Hundred Pipers
97. Ein Prosit Der Gemütlichkeit - A Toast To Pleasantness
98. Sarie Marais
99. Jodler - Yodeler
100. Fa-La-Bells
101. West Point Cadet
102. Fritz Bleib Hier! - Fritz, Stay Here
103. Daß Du Mich Liebst - That You Love Me
104. Geh Mach Dein Fenster! Auf!¹ - Go Open Your Little Window
105. The Farmer in the Dell
106. Home on the Range
107. The Man on the Flying Trapeze
108. Alt Heidelberg Die Feine [Du Feine]² - Old Heidelberg, You Splendid City
109. Üb Immer Treu Und Redlichkeit - Try to be True and Honest
110. Bielein Rinn³
111. Doing the Suzi (Bill Robinson Figure)
112. Hot Time in the Old Town Tonight
113. Kleefs Schuster Kes Vers³
114. Kleefs Schuster Kes Refrain³
115. It Ain't Gonna Rain No More
116. Repeat of 71
117. Flötenserenade - Flute Serenade
118. Ihr Kinderlein Kommt - Come Little Children
119. England Lied - England Song
120. Ach Wie Ist's Möglich Denn - Oh How Can That Be Then

121. Vogelbeerbaum¹ - Mountain Ash Tree
 122. Haisel Am Barg [Berg?] - Haisel by the Mountain
 123. Araber Melodie - Arabian Melody
 124. Lili Marlene
 125. In München Steht Ein Hofbrauhaus - In Munich is a Hofbrauhaus [Court Brewery]
 126. Von Meine Berge Mus Ich Scheide - I Must Leave My Mountains
 127. Home on the Range (cowboy)
 128. Take Me Out to the Ball Game (Baseball player)
 129. Seems Like Old Times
 130. Sweet Peggy O'Neil
 131. Sunsweet and Mott Song
 132. Frère Jacques (Dormez Vous?)- Are You Sleeping, Brother John
 133. La Valentine
 134. Las Mañanitas - Dawns
 135. Rosita Alvires
 136. Goldene Abend Sonne [Gold'ne Abendsonne]² - Golden Evening Sun
 137. Trink, Trink Brüderlein Trink - Drink, Drink, Little Brother, Drink
 138. The Most Beautiful Girl
 139. Der Steiger Kommt - The Climber Comes
 140. Dein Ist Mein Ganzes Herz - Yours is my Heart Alone
 146. O Mein Papa - Oh My Papa
 149. Deutscher Sänger - German Singer
 150. Ein Vogel Wollte Hochzeit Machen - A Bird Wanted to Get Married
 151. Laterne, Laterne Sonne Mond [und]² Sterne¹ - Lanterns, Lanterns, Sun, Moon and Stars
 152. Sing Ein Lied Wenn Du Mal Traurig Bist¹ - Sing a Song When You're Sad
 153. Ich Hab Dich und Du Hast Mich¹ - I Have You and You Have Me
 154. Wir Machen Musik - We're Playing Music
 155. Für Eine Nacht Voller Seeligkeit - For One Night of Bliss
 156. Hoch Droben Auf Dem Berg - High Above on the Mountain
 157. Wer Soll Das Bezahlen - Who's Supposed to Pay for It
 160. Harry Lime Theme (Third Man Theme) (Third man = Dritte Mann)
- No numbers: 141-145, 147, 148, 158, 159.

ILLUSTRATIONS OVERLEAF:

*Bontems singing bird box -
see article on page 556.*

*A rare Tournaphone organette from
the Nicholas Simons collection.*

*Unidentified Griesbaum whistling figure,
perhaps a Hiker, or possibly another version
of the Tramp. At least 30 different figures
were produced by the factory. Editors'
Collection. See article on page 543.*



*A Merry
Christmas, and
Happy Holidays,
to all our readers!*





Above: The beautiful inlay design on a Karrer musical box lid - see Register News on page 538.

Below: Bill Cooper's unusual 'snuff box' movement in its tin box. Note the comb screws (upside down) and the unusual stop work. (Male part missing). See Letters page.



SPECIAL CHRISTMAS OFFERS

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Stuck for Christmas gift ideas? Then buy our Postcard Book of Street Musicians, a wonderful heritage of postcard history in colour, suitable for all ages.

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The book (12 x 8.5ins, full-colour centrefold, + another CD of period advertisements)

includes a CD of superb music recorded of some instruments portrayed in the book.

Offer includes: £48 (UK), \$70 (USA/Canada), Europe 55euro.

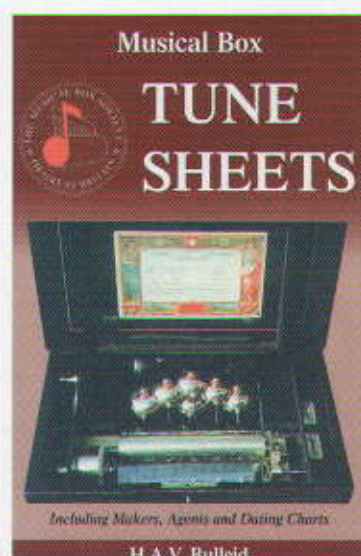
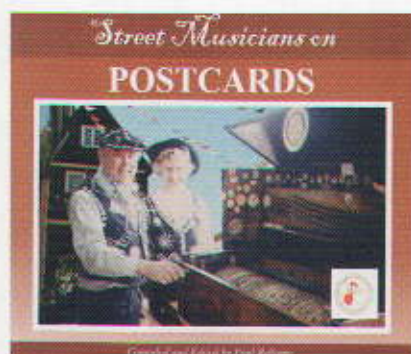
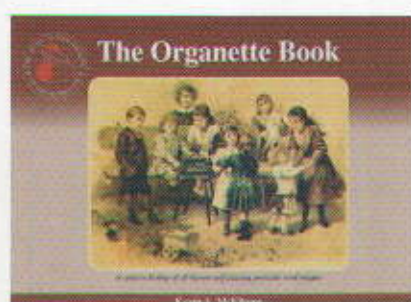
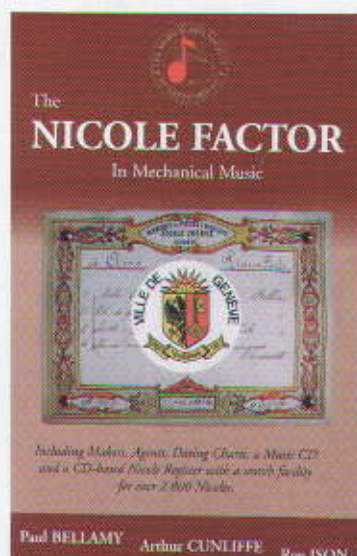
The Tune Sheet Book + its 3 supplements and a 'search engine' to identify missing tune sheets.

A must for the musical box collector, the auction house and museum archivist.

Offer includes post: £18 (UK), \$30 (USA/Canada), Europe 20 euro.

The Organette Book, the most complete account ever produced about these small reed-playing instruments. A 10 x 7inch quality landscape production of 417 pages packed full of information and illustrations.

Price including post: £50 (UK), Europe 60euro, USA/Canada \$90.



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Special reductions for two or more items available upon request.



A pair of Griesbaum 'Whistler' Tramps, possibly from different carvers. The bases hold batteries and the metal 'lanterns' (top missing on right figure) have small torch bulbs which illuminate when the mechanism is operated. Both play 'Show me the Way to Go Home'. (From the Editors' Collection)

Bontems Bird Boxes

by John Moorhouse

including a postscript by Alan Pratt

In his book 'Mechanical Singing-bird Tabatières' Geoffrey T Mayson gives us an excellent account of the development, design and repair of both fusee type and the later going barrel type movements. It was the Bontems family who designed the going barrel type movement which was a major step forward since it made the mechanism much easier to make, having many fewer parts.

One disadvantage is that the going barrel movement has a much shorter song, about 15 seconds, compared to the earlier fusee type movement of about 30 seconds. This is because it has a single song cam rather than a stack of 4 cams played in a selected sequence, sometimes with a mixture of cams for bird song and melody. Another failing is that it lacks the very effective smoothing of power output which is provided by the fusee. It relies solely on the speed limiting fly which is not able to provide good control, giving a performance which is lively when fully wound and sluggish when winding down. Nevertheless, the new overall design was a neat and reliable movement with safe interlinking of the various actions on opening, operation and closing. Mayson suggests on p132 of his book, 'so far as is known,

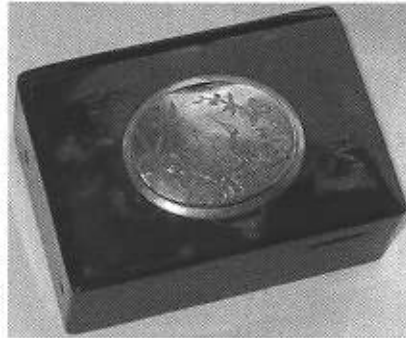


Fig 1. Bontems bird in characteristic tortoiseshell case.

these boxes were all fitted with a standardised movement'.

It is testament to Bontems that they produced a design which was then so closely followed by all other subsequent makers with only minor changes. However, the question that arises is, 'Did they achieve this new efficient design at their first attempt?' My recent examination of a Bontems tabatière movement, housed in his characteristic tortoiseshell case (Figure 1), has strongly suggested that this is not so. In fact, it would be too much to expect of Bontems to have achieved perfection in their first design, because there are a number of interrelated features

which have to be correct to achieve the desired level of safe and reliable performance.

Figure 2 shows the movement which I believe is an early design, and I will designate this as Bontems Type 1. For comparison Figures 3 a) and 3b) show diagrams of the general layout of the Bontems movement suggested as being the standardised design by Mayson. I have designated this as Bontems Type 4. For comparison a 20th century Griesbaum type movement is shown in figure 4.

There are a number of differences between Type 1 and Type 4, as follows.

1. The cam assembly at the bottom of the barrel has the bird rotation cam between the song cams and the barrel, as shown in Figure 5 a), and not at the top as in Type 4. This necessitates a follower, as shown, located at the rear of the movement, rotating on a tube around the adjacent movement pillar. This follower operates a long lever above the barrel and whistle as shown in (Figures 5 b), and c). Bird rotation is achieved by a link at the end of this lever pulling on an eye at the base of the bird. (Figure 6). This is a simple system but gives only a limited range of rotation, not enough to give an effective bird performance. Also, the operating end of the long lever is in the same location as the flap acting on the lifting pin for the wings, tail and beak, and can inhibit the flap's movement. Bird rotation is much improved when it is replaced by the rack and lever system, as adopted in the Type 4 design as shown in Figures 3 a) and b), thereby ensuring a much greater range of movement. (The initiative for adopting a rack and pinion system may have come from the

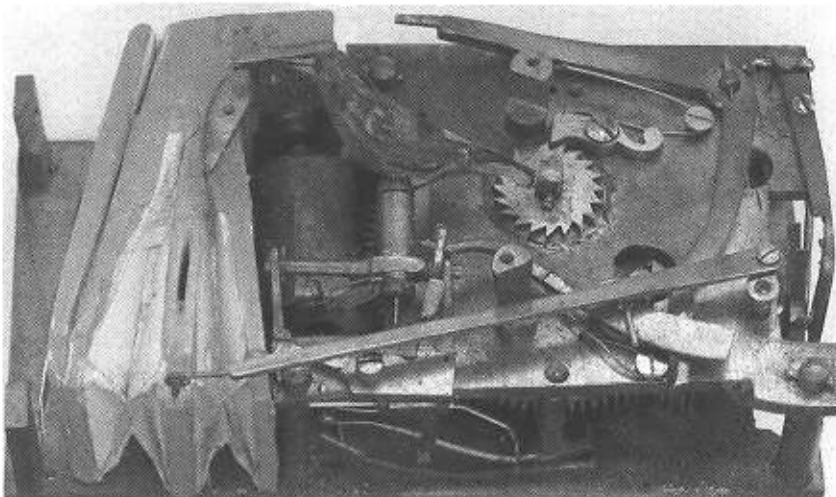


Fig 2. Early Bontems movement of Type 1.

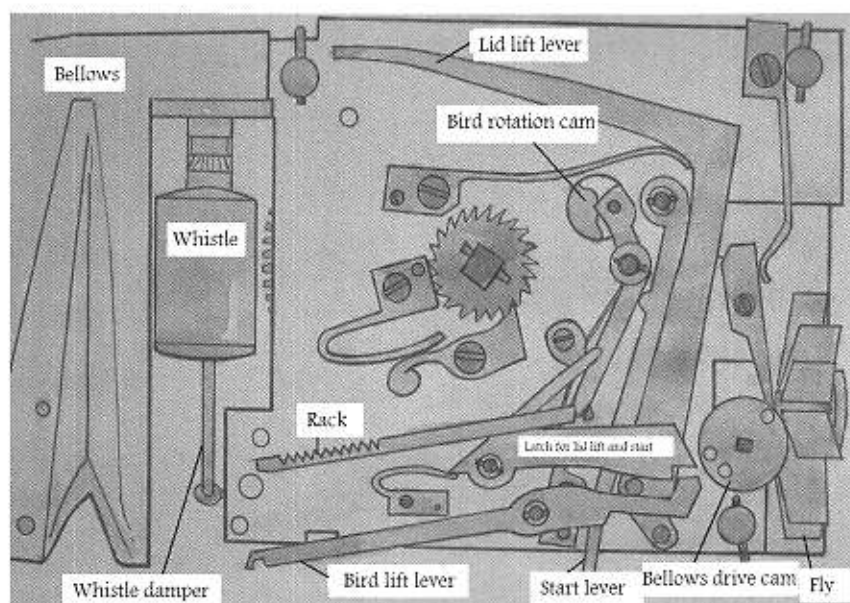


Fig 3a & 3b. Layout of the later standardised movement.

adoption by Bontems of a double bird tabatière using one rack to simultaneously rotate two separate bird pinions.)

Another important feature of this Type 1 design is that there is no direct linkage between the action of closing the lid with the rotational position of the bird. Rotation is purely determined by the cam and follower and any sticking of the follower can leave the bird in a rotational position unsuitable for the lid to close safely, with consequent damage to the bird and plumage. In the Type 4 design the rack is automatically withdrawn on lid closing so that the rotational position must always be correct. This is a much better and safer design.

2. Type 1 has four supporting pillars between the plates. The pillar adjacent to the bird is omitted in Type 4.

3. The cam followers for the air valve and whistle damper are pivoted using brass tubes coaxially on one arbour as shown in Figure 7 a). This gives rise to greater friction and this arrangement has an influence of the ratios of each of the two followers/levers. Separate arbors are adopted in Type 4.

4. The lever system to cause erection

of the bird, shown in Figure 8, uses a crude pin in a slot system which allows considerable backlash. Type 4 uses a short eccentric link on the axle which rotates the bird into position. There are other detailed differences between Types 1 and 4 in the method by which the lift lever is linked and latched to the start and lid lift levers.

5. The drive for the bellows is from a simple crank lever (Figure 2) rather than the circular cam in Type 4. (Figure 3 a)) This provides less support for the lever and does not allow easy scope for altering the extent of the throw of the cam to alter the rate of supply of air if excessive or inadequate.

6. It is noteworthy that Mayson on p164 shows a photograph of a Bontems movement which is very similar to the one that I have described above as Type 1. However it is not identical, hence it is designated here as Type 2. It is a four pillar movement with all of the cams remaining at the base, as in Type 1. The only difference is that the barrel teeth are located at the top of the barrel. Type 2 appears to be an intermediate form between Type 1 and the Type 4 design because it includes this important change

which is adopted in Bontems' later designs.

Use of a barrel with the teeth at the top ensures that the second wheel and pinion are also at the top. This leaves space on the top of the barrel for the bird rotation cam, without making the movement any deeper. It is not clear from the photographs of Types 2 and 3 whether the bird rotation cam is at the top but it is likely that this is the case.

This is clearly the best design for the location of the cams and this is adopted in all of the post-Bontems designs, such as the Griesbaum shown in Figure 9.

There is additional information on Bontems' tabatière designs shown in the two photographs on page 340 of 'Flights of Fancy' by Bailley. The lower photograph shows a movement with the trackers rotating on the same arbour. This suggests a movement similar to Types 1 and 2. The upper photograph shows a different movement which is the same as Types 1 and 2 except that the trackers now rotate on separate stub arbors and it is a three pillar movement. Both of these aspects are present in Type 4. We can therefore designate this as a movement Type 3, since it is a design prior to the use of a rack and pinion for bird rotation.

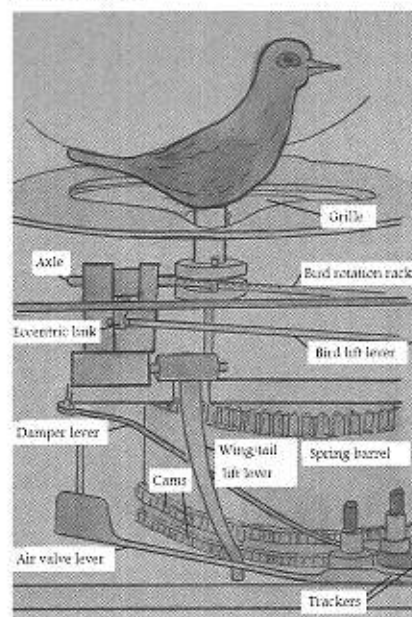


Fig 3b.

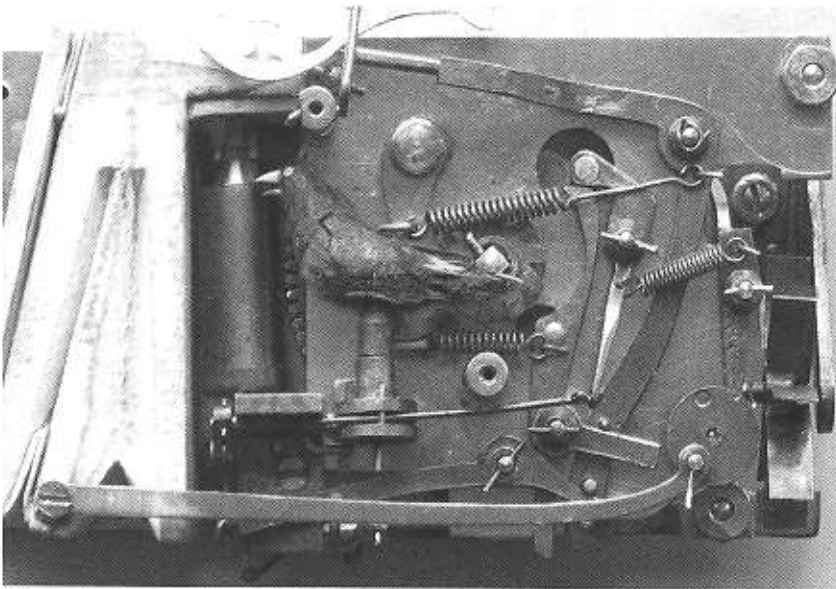


Fig 4. A 20th Century Griesbaum movement.

We have therefore identified four different Bontems movements en route to a reliable and safe system. The Type 4 design was so good that later makers found it necessary to introduce only minor changes. One such was the method of lifting the grille; a spring on the operating lever to positively lift the grille.

7. The train of the Type 1 box is significantly different from later designs. The following table lists the details of various trains, for which I have information, taken from one example for each maker.

In Bontems Type 1 the fly makes 1960 rotations for each rotation of the barrel, this being much greater than all other Bontems' tabatières. As a consequence the train has to run faster to achieve the same outcome and is therefore travelling

much faster at arrest. A faster train also gives a faster bellows pumping rate since each rotation of the drive pinion provides one pump on the bellows. Bontems Type 1 provides 78.4 pumps per rotation of the barrel/cams compared to 45.1 for Bontems Type 4. As a consequence a stronger mainspring will be required to drive the train. A faster train and a stronger mainspring will both lead to greater risk of train damage or failure. It is no surprise therefore that the train on the Type 1 movement which I have described above has had five major repairs (new second pinion, second wheel repaired twice, repaired barrel teeth and replaced mainspring.)

8. The fly shown in Figure 10 has particularly fine blades to achieve the

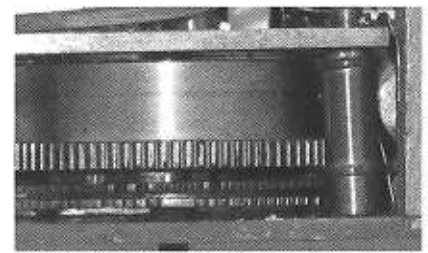


Fig 5a. The bird rotation cam between the song cams and the bottom of the barrel on Bontems Type 4.

faster rotation but as a consequence it is a poor controller of the train.

It is clear from the above table that the Type 1 design has a number of weak features and those early models will have suffered in use as a consequence. The table indicates the progressive development to overcome the observed shortcomings in the earlier designs until the standard design was obtained. From the photographs of various other Bontems' movements shown in Bailly it is clear that the Type 4 design was achieved by the year 1880 at the latest.

A Griesbaum movement is also included in the table which shows how closely the Bontems Type 4 movement was subsequently copied. There is however one key difference which Griesbaum introduced and this is the location of the arbour on which the whistle tracker rotates; it is located with the tracker nose on the LHS of the arbour ensuring a longer tracker arm. This design change has the following

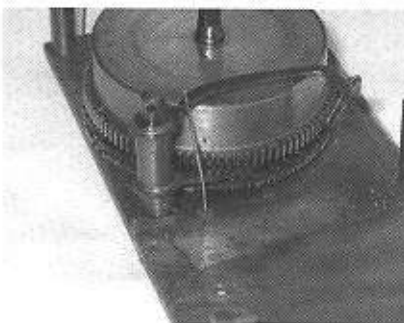


Fig 5b. The bird rotation cam follower lever above the barrel. Type 4.

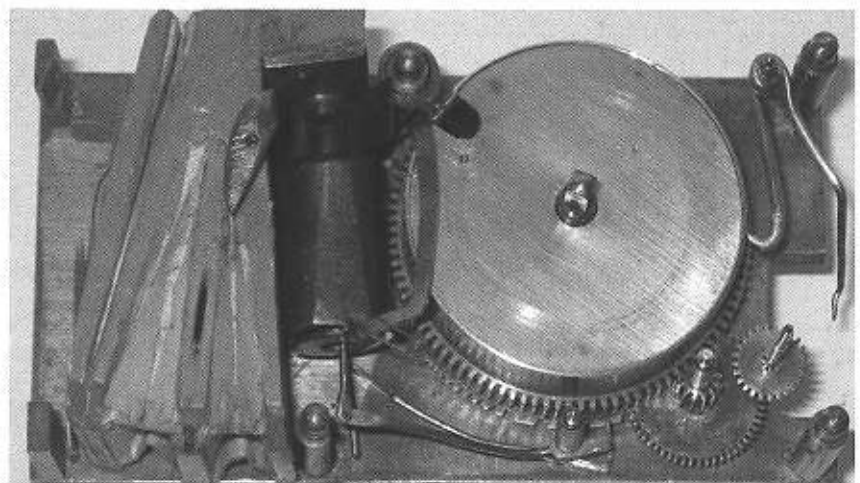


Fig 5c. The bird rotation cam follower lever (centre). It is connected to the base of the bird by a link (not shown).

Box type	Barrel	2nd arbor pinion	2nd Wheel	Drive pinion	Drive wheel	Endless pitch	Endless diameter	Turns of fly for one turn of barrel and cams
Bontems Type 1	98	10	56	7	25	1.0mm		1960
Bontems Type 2								
Bontems Type 3		8?	56					
Bontems Type 4	98	10	46	10	18	1.0mm		812
Flajoulot (Mayson)	104	10	44	10	20	0.9mm		915
Griesbaum(Mayson)	104	10	50	10	20	1.0mm	1.9mm	1040
Griesbaum	100	10	48	8	20	1.0 mm	1.1mm	1200
Rochat?	98	8	56	10	20	0.7mm		1372

Table 1, showing the train counts for various types.

Summary of the key differences between the four types of Bontems movements

Type	Rotation	Bird lift	Song Cams	Barrel teeth	Bird rotation cam	Trackers	Tracker positions	Fly	Turns of fly/song
Type 1	Rear lever	Short lever operating in slot inside frame	At base	Bottom	Bottom	Mounted on same arbor	Air – RHS Whistle – RHS	V. Thin spokes	1960
Type 2	Rear lever	Short lever operating in slot inside frame	At base	Top	? Top	Mounted on same arbor	Air – RHS Whistle – RHS	Thin spokes	
Type 3	Rear lever	Short lever in hole in link outside frame	At base	Top	? Top	Two close arbors	Air – RHS Whistle – RHS	Thin bent spokes	
Type 4	Rack	Long steel lever	At base	Top	Top	Two close arbors	Air – RHS Whistle – RHS	Wide spokes	
Griesbaum	Rack	Long steel lever	At base	Top	Top	Two arbors	Air – RHS Whistle – RHS	Wide spokes	

Type 2 = Mayson pl64, Type 3 = Bailly p340 upper photograph, Type 4 = Mayson p134-136.

Table 2. Summary of the principal differences.

two consequences. The longer tracker arm allows an easier operation of the whistle damper since the tracker arm is in all positions more normal to the axis of whistle, with a reduced tendency for the damper to be pulled off axis. Secondly, the crests of the

cam will make the whistle damper move outwards leading to a low pitch note. For this reason the Griesbaum cams are entirely different from those of Bontems. Another German maker, Eshle, also followed the same design. Perhaps the German makers

bought their song cams from one source since they had to be entirely different in design.

It is useful to compare the details of the trackers with all other makers to help throw some light on the

Trackers from various tabatière movements

Type	Air valve	Whistle	Lever ratio -Whistle	Lever ratio -Air valve
Bontems Type 1	RHS *	RHS *	4.6	4.25
Bontems Type 2	RHS	RHS *	-	-
Bontems Type 3	RHS	RHS	5.4	4.8
Bontems Type 4	RHS	RHS	4.8	2.4
Griesbaum early	RHS	LHS	5.1	3.3
Griesbaum late	RHS	LHS	5.2	3.1
Reuge	RHS	LHS	5.0	3.2
Griesbaum twin bird	RHS	LHS	5	2
Eshle	RHS	LHS	3.5	-
Double bird (Rochat?)	RHS	RHS	4.8	2.7
Reuge 20th c (in cage)	RHS	RHS	-	-
Flajoulot	RHS	RHS	5	2.5

* Rotate on same arbor

Table 3. Various layouts.

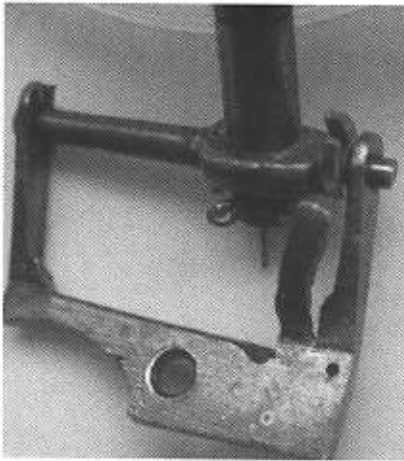


Fig 6. The rotation hook at the base of the bird. Type 4.

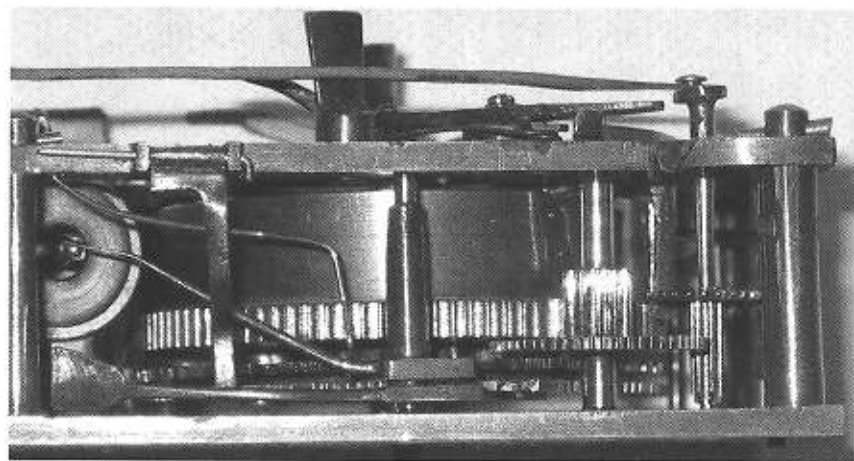


Fig 7. Coaxial tube bearings (centre) for the two song cam followers. Type 4.

reasons for the differences in design. My findings are summarised in the following table. This includes measurements of the ratios of the tracker levers, defined as - the length of the operating arm divided by the length of the tracker nose. It must be stressed that for a number of these makers the measurements were taken from photographs and are therefore not exact values but, since they are presented as ratios, they should be reasonably reliable.

The air valve lever ratios are all very similar apart from Bontems Types 1 and 3, in which it is much higher. The consequence of a high value is that a small movement on the cam tracker nose is translated into

a larger movement at the air valve. This can lead to poorer precision on the valve opening and closing. Reducing this ratio makes for a clearer song. This ratio was altered to a much lower value in Type 4; another indication that Bontems refined his early designs.

In the design of the going barrel tabatière movement it is likely that Bontems will have introduced improvements to other parts of the mechanism not discussed here. For example, it is known that Bontems used two types of wing hinges, one being hinged from the shell and a later type with the hinge on the centre frame. If readers have other information which can further elucidate these early developments it

would be advantageous if they would make them known.

References

'Mechanical Singing-bird Tabatière' Geoffrey T. Mayson, Published Robert Hale, London ISBN 0-7090-6303-2
'Flights of Fancy - mechanical singing birds' by Sharon and Christian Bailly, ISBN 2 940019 28 2, Published 2001, Antiquorum Editions.

Acknowledgements

Thanks to John Harold, John Phillips and Alan Pratt for their helpful comments.

John Moorhouse MBHI October 2010

Postscript - The Bontems Family

Born on March 15th 1814, Blaise Bontems was the son of a gunsmith in Le Menil in the Vosges Mountains. It was during his apprenticeship to a local watchmaker that he first encountered a singing bird mechanism. Bontems himself describes how he was given 'an antique tabatière to repair'. This instrument played a single tune (Vive le Son by Gretry) but the young Bontems decided he could make it sing like a real bird. Although no records exist, it seems likely that the box he was given to repair was by either Rochat or Bruguier.

Again, according to his own story, Bontems went, after Sunday Vespers, to the local woods where he listened to the song of the nightingales, "noting their trills and roulades". The next day, his employer was amazed to hear the box singing a lifelike birdsong. Soon he was making and selling bird boxes and this would most probably have been the Type 1 mechanism to which John Moorhouse refers. By 1849 he had set up his own firm in the Rue Clery, Paris. Whether or not he had gone through the Type 2 development we cannot be sure, but by 1855 he proudly declared that he was "supplier to her Royal Highness the Queen of England".

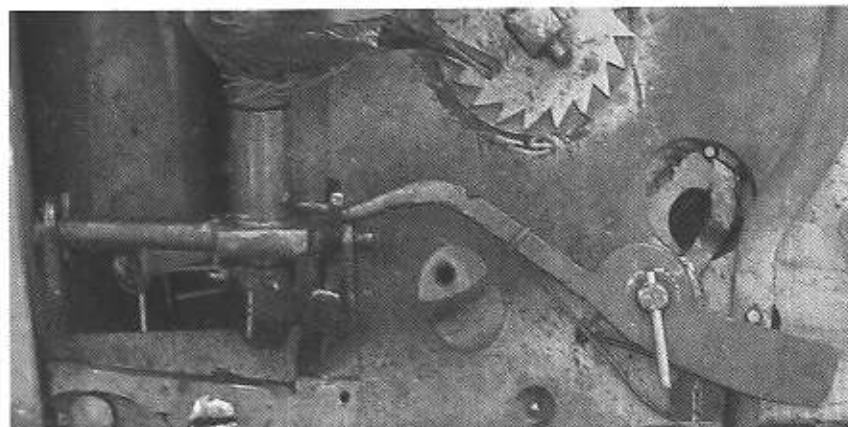


Fig 8. The bird erection lever and its pin at the base of the bird.

By this time it is highly likely that the Type 4 mechanism would have been perfected, for in 1867 he had a dominant position in the market, being the only exhibitor in this category at the Paris Exhibition of that year. Around that period his son Charles came into the business, taking it to the heights of its success in the last quarter of the 19th century. Blaise Bontems retired in 1881 and died in 1893. At this time the company employed twelve men and eight women, and produced about 400 pieces a year.

The 20th century brought about a slow decline in the Bontems fortunes as they competed with new technologies and the ravages of two world wars. Records show that in 1946 they sold just four singing bird boxes, and in

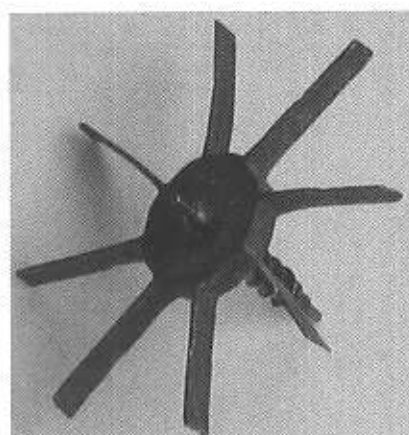


Fig 10. The early type of fly.

1966 the remaining tools from the company created by Blaise Bontems were sold to Reuge.

An anecdote from 1905 shows the stature of the Bontems name at that time. Called to the Hotel Georges V in Paris to show a bird box to an English tourist called Mr. King. Bontems thought it only right to warn him that a recent law had made it illegal to import rare bird feathers into Great Britain. "You won't be able to take it home with you", "Don't worry" replied the traveller with a smile "there won't be any problem"

The mysterious Mr. King, as Bontems was later to discover, was none other than the Duke of Windsor!

Alan Pratt

Source of Reference
"Flights of Fancy - mechanical singing birds" by Sharon and Christian Bailly, ISBN 2 940019 28 2

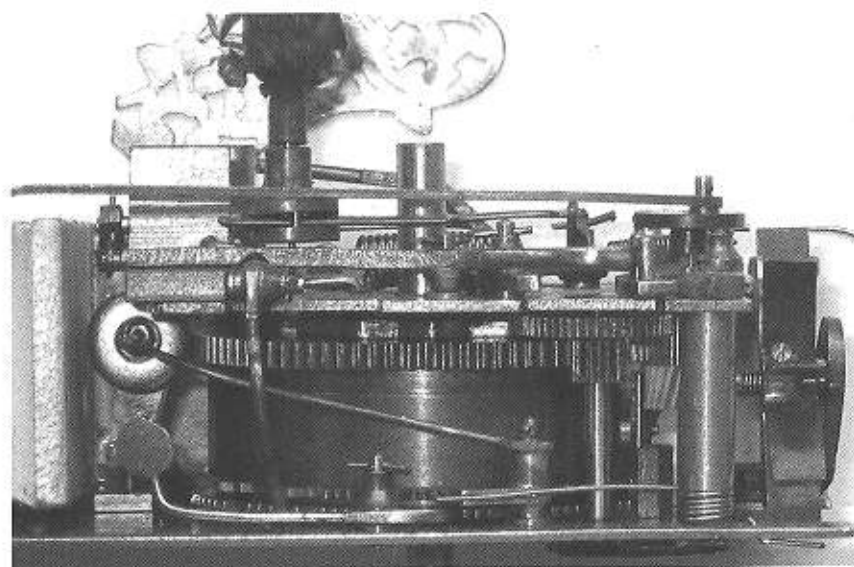


Fig 9. The location of the rotation cam above the barrel as adopted by Griesbaum.

George Dutreih, a musical box maker?

By Luuk Goldhoorn

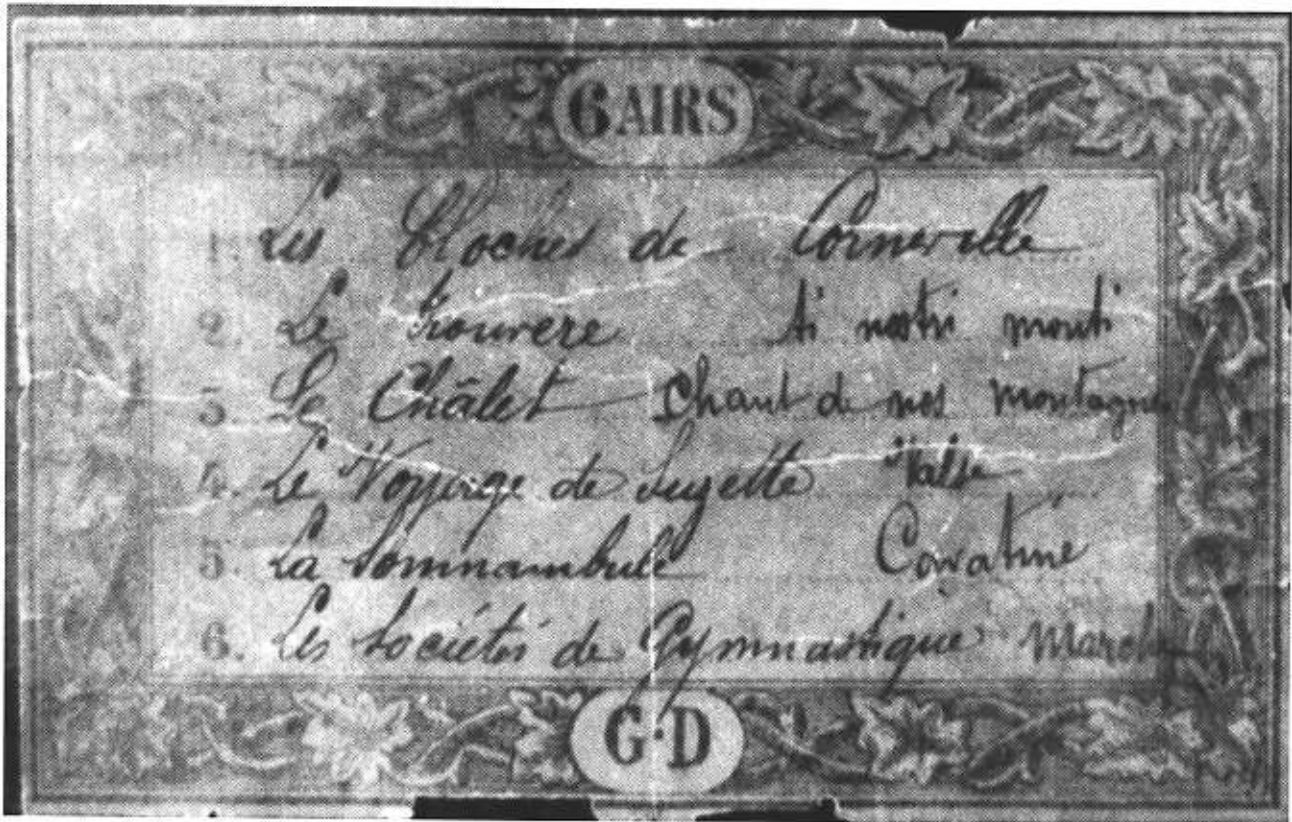


Fig 1. Tune card used by Dutreih, about 1890. It is from a musical picture (see image below).

Does the name Dutreih ring a bell with any of our readers? I fear probably not. But nevertheless Chapuis wrote in his book 'The History of the Musical Box' on p. 172.: In 1896, G. Dutreih is listed as a musical box maker in Paris. This is the man who did such a good job in writing the "History and Manufacturing" section on musical boxes in Roret's manual *L'Horloger*. His chapter in the manual indicates that Dutreih lived at 18, rue Charlot, Paris, but that his steam powered factory was located in the country.

Nicolas-Edme Roret (born 29 May 1797 Vendevre-sur-Barse – died 18 June 1860 Paris) was a French editor and publisher known for an important series of manuals and encyclopaedias, which appears at least from 1836 onwards.

There are a couple of Roret's manuals about horology, but only the edition of 1896 has a story about musical boxes.



Figure 2 Invoice dated 1892.

George Dutreih, (?-11-1857 to 6-7-1918) who was married to Jeanne, a daughter of Roret, describes first in 22 pages an interesting article called "Production du son" (i.e. *Production of Sound* – Ed) followed by 13 pages about the history and fabrication of musical boxes and he concludes with some lines about the care which musical boxes needed. As may be believed, the article doesn't bring any news for our now-a-days ears.

About Dutreih's musical box production hardly anything is known. A tune card with the initials G.D. (see figure 1) has come to light, but the matching box was not marked. But a letter dated 1892 (see figure 2) shows that Dutreih was not a manufacturer but a dealer/agent for the boxes made by Jules Cuendet, a renowned Swiss maker. In the left margin clearly is seen Cuendet's trade mark, an anchor with the letters J and C in capitals. Nevertheless in Piguet's book: 'Les Faiseurs du Musique' a connection between Cuendet and Paris is not found.

The design of the heretofore mentioned tune card was also used by Cuendet, which fact doesn't prove anything, but strengthens the connection between these two firms.

In later years Dutreih was in the production of wax cylinders, as is shown in figure 3

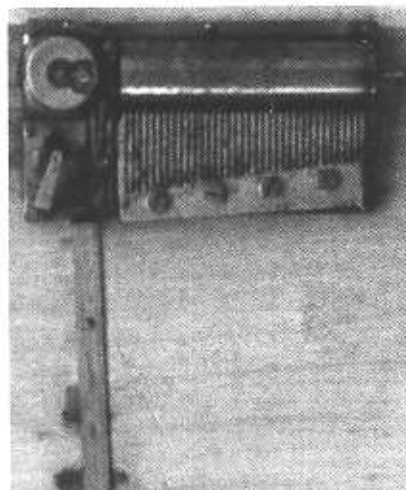
That he was a well-respected musical writer and critic is proved by the fact that he reported in 1905 for the World Exhibition in Brussels (figure 4).



Figure 3 Cylinders with Dutreih's name on them.



The musical picture with Dutreih's tune sheet, its movement (Right).



(Left) Figure 4 Report by Dutreih dated 1906. Above: Dutreih advert.

Making a Musical Box

by Don Busby

Hardening and Tempering Teeth

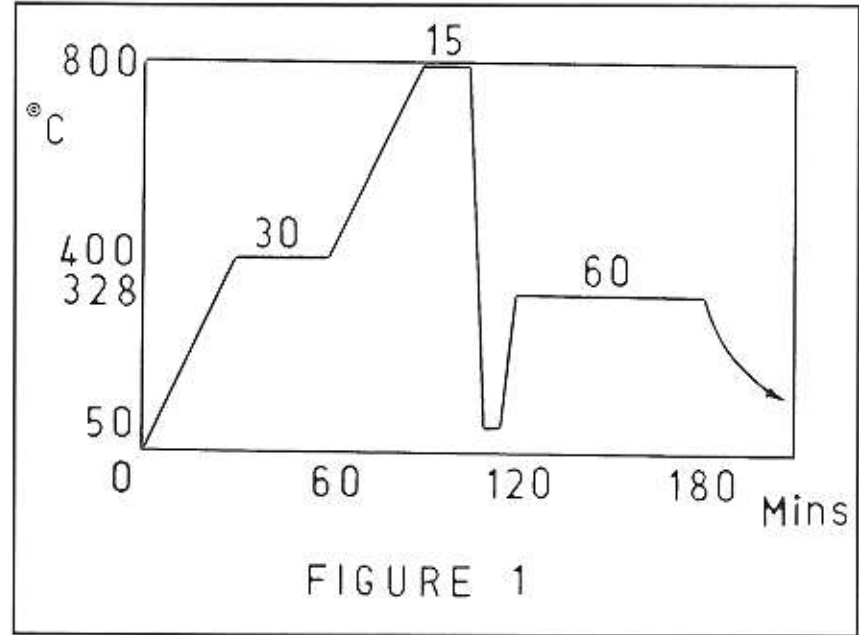
The stages of milling, cutting and drilling teeth for the musical box were completed with the formation of damper wire holes. The comb which was cut from Ground Flat Stock in its annealed form can now be converted to its final hardened and tempered state. This is done by heating the steel and quenching in oil to harden it, then tempering over a period at an intermediate heat to remove brittleness. To prevent teeth from being distorted during rapid temperature changes, comb segments were held in a special clamp throughout the process. This article describes the treatment carried out on each segment, after which tuning of teeth can be undertaken.

The process of hardening and tempering Ground Flat Stock (GFS) involves raising it to a high temperature before quenching in oil, then re-heating it to an intermediate temperature, at which it is held for an extended period before cooling. Precise

parameters of temperature and time depend on what use will be made of the material, also on its mass and geometry. After reviewing literature on the subject, a temperature/time profile as shown at fig 1 was decided upon for musical box teeth. As the figure shows, the temperature of

the GFS will be raised to 400°C, held there for 30 minutes before raising it to 800°C. After 15 minutes at this high temperature it is quenched in oil to about 50°C and, now in its hardened state is placed in molten lead, melting point 328°C, and tempered for 60 minutes, finally allowing it to cool in air.

Ideally, the heating would be carried out in an electric or gas oven. Alternatively an industrial gas burner would serve the purpose. Since the author had none of these facilities the process was carried out at an open hearth, similar to that in a blacksmith's shop. The fire was fuelled by a mixture of coal nuggets and barbecue charcoal, in lieu of coke which was preferred but could not be sourced. An electric blower was necessary to achieve the required high temperatures. The facility, outside the back of the garage, can be seen in figs 2 and 3; details of its use will be given later. Because



Temperature/time profile for hardening and tempering.

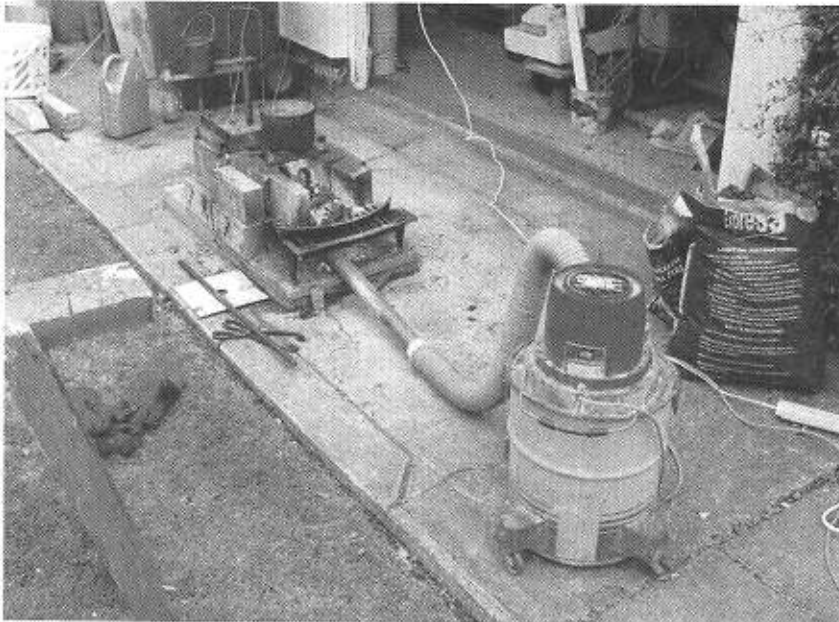


Fig 2. Firing facility.

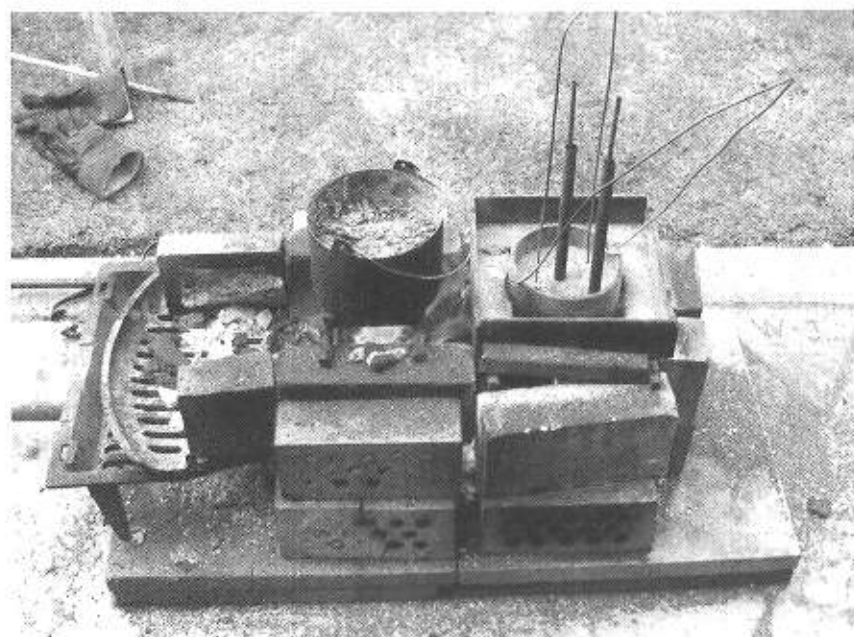


Fig 3. Firing facility.

the process takes several hours and of necessity is *al fresco*, fine days had to be awaited to carry out the work: including a few trial runs the treatment of the 6 comb segments took about a month to complete. Each firing consumed about 20 kg of the fuel mixture. A good gas burner might appear in the next Christmas gift wish-list, or a friendly blacksmith might be sought!

During the planning phase of this heat treatment programme a member of the Society said that it would be necessary to devise a clamp to hold comb segments during firing otherwise they could finish up like a bunch of bananas. Advice is always welcome and acted upon and in this case led to the device shown by figs 4/1-6. Referring first to figs 4/1 and 4/2, the components are made of materials as listed:

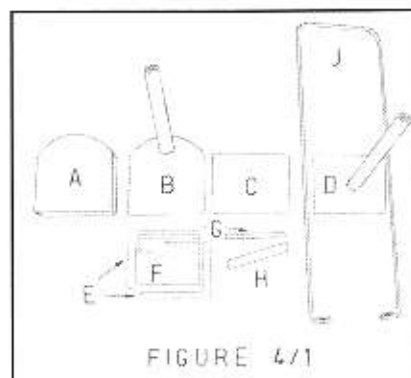
- A MS flat 15 thick
- B GFS 1 thick plus welded-on steel tube
- C GFS 2.4(3/32") thick
- D As B
- E As C
- F As C
- G GFS 1.8 thick
- H As G
- J 2.5 diameter steel wire

The functions of the various components are as follows:

- A, C and E rigidly clamp comb segment F*
- B and D are 'chimneys' to allow access for temperature probes to lower and upper surfaces of F, respectively
- G clamps down over tooth tips
- H clamps down over root slot, with milled ridges sitting between teeth to prevent sideways movement
- J is for handling the product whilst 'warm'

* Please note that different comb segments are shown in figs 4/2 and 4/3, to allow suitable pictures to be selected.

Figures 4/2-5 illustrate how component parts are assembled before firing, whilst fig 4/6 shows



Clamping jig.

the ravages which the operation causes. Surprisingly, screws were easily removed and could be used several times before replacement was necessary, mainly because the hexagonal drive recess became worn. The effectiveness of the clamping jig will be discussed towards the end of this paper when a modified way of holding the comb segment whilst firing will be proposed.

The sequence of operations can best be explained with reference to fig 3. Having lit the fire and reached a point where most 'coals' were glowing, the lead in a paint kettle was brought to a molten state before heat treatment of the comb started. The comb, enclosed in its clamping jig, was placed on a sand bed in a thick-walled steel pot and then covered by sand. The fine-grained silver sand had previously been made bone-dry on an electric hot-plate. For manipulation, the steel pot was fitted with a wire handle similar to that of the clamping jig. A 4mm dia. brass tube was placed in each steel chimney to provide clean access for a temperature probe to a level just below and just above the comb segment. Various mild steel platforms, surrounds and hearth pieces provided stable support to the hot work centres. Temperatures were taken using a Radio Spares K type, mineral insulated probe which covered a range -200°C to +1100°C. The probe was 300mm long with a diameter of 3mm. Read-out of probe temperature was on a hand-held digital thermometer RS51.

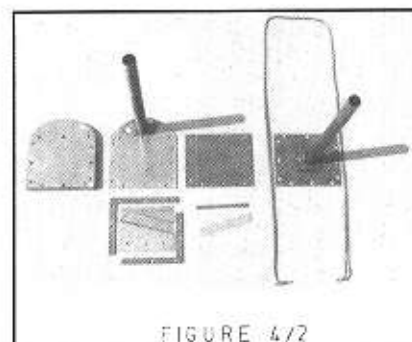


FIGURE 4/2

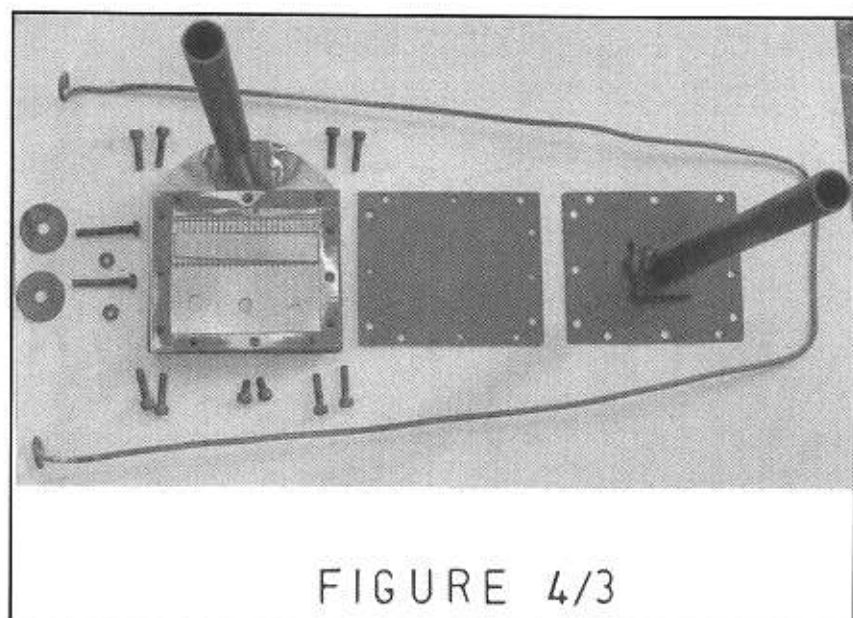


FIGURE 4/3

Once the lead was molten, the steel pot holding the sand-enclosed clamp and comb was placed into glowing embers and timing started. Temperature readings were taken every 10 minutes, sometimes every 5 for finer control. An industrial vacuum cleaner, blowing in reverse, was switched on and off to control the temperature/time gradient. After 15 minutes at 800°C the clamping jig was removed from the steel pot, sand shaken off, and the jig immersed in a bath of oil. Perceived advice was that any mineral oil would be suitable for this quenching bath, so cheap car engine oil was used. Unexpectedly, the volatile contents of this type of oil vaporised and ignited: this

caused no problem, lasting but a short time. Once fully cooled, oil and comb temperature now being about 100°C, the clamping jig was re-instated in its sand bed in the steel pot which was then placed in the molten lead, in which it floated, but was well immersed in the bath. After an hour tempering at 328°C the jig was removed and left to cool in air.

Temperature/time plots for one of the comb segments are given by fig 5 which shows temperature values below and above the comb segment: these differ slightly as expected, a point which is discussed later when a new method of clamping is proposed. It can be seen that raising of

temperature was slower than anticipated although this should not adversely affect results.

On opening the clamping jig when cool it was found that there was no distortion of comb teeth, also there was minor discoloration of the segment which was easily polished out. There was, however, a very slight bowing of the segment from bass to treble. This bowing was somewhat disconcerting, the 15 thick base plate was absolutely unaffected by the heating process. It was found that the bowing of the segment was removed on fastening it to the base plate of the full comb. On reflection, the distortion is probably due to internal stresses caused by the slight temperature differences between top and bottom of the piece.

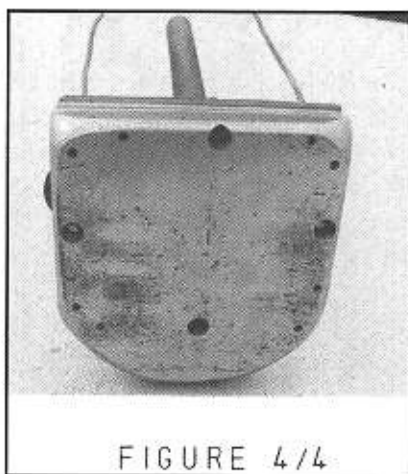


FIGURE 4/4

Antique Musical Box Repairs and Restoration

Comb Repairs

Jim Weir F.B.H.I.

Cylinder Repinning

22 Marywell Brae,

Releading and Tuning

Kirriemuir,

Organ Bridge Work

Angus DD8 4BJ

Dampering

Scotland

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Tel: 0115 7557 2647 (UK) 01144-1575-572647 (Overseas)

Email: combwork@aol.com

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.

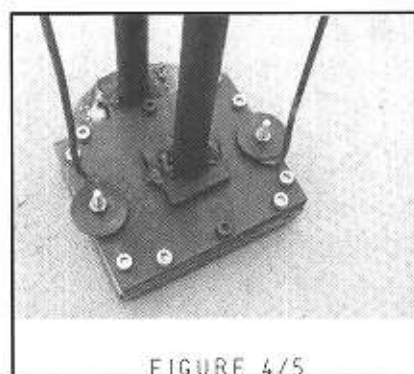


FIGURE 4/5

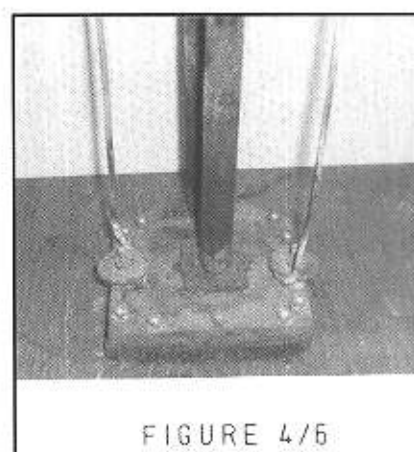


FIGURE 4/6

Finally, the distortion described above led to a new design for a clamping jig illustrated at fig 6, which also shows digital thermometer and temperature probe. Internally, this is similar to the jig already described, but this time the comb segment is held vertically, teeth at the bottom. Temperature probing holes give read-out capability level with teeth tips and at teeth roots. This proposed new jig has not yet been put to use, but provides for the concept that only the teeth need to be hardened and tempered: similar treatment of root metal is less important. Using this jig always in its vertical orientation means that top and bottom of the comb should be at equal temperatures at all times, both in the fire and in the quenching bath, minimising any chance of distortion.

Now that the comb segments have been heat treated, attention can turn to adding lead weights, damper wires and tuning the comb. These operations will be the topics of further articles.

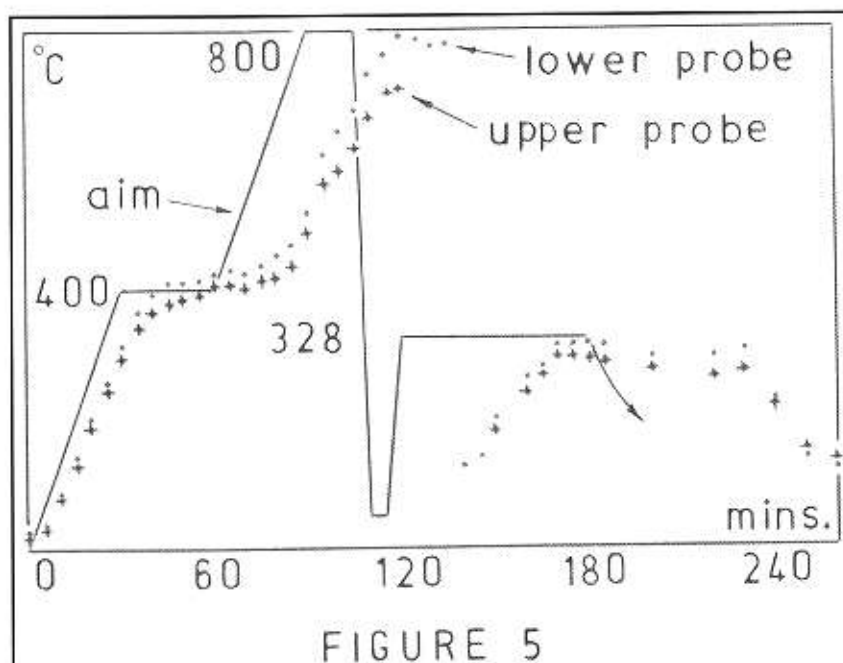
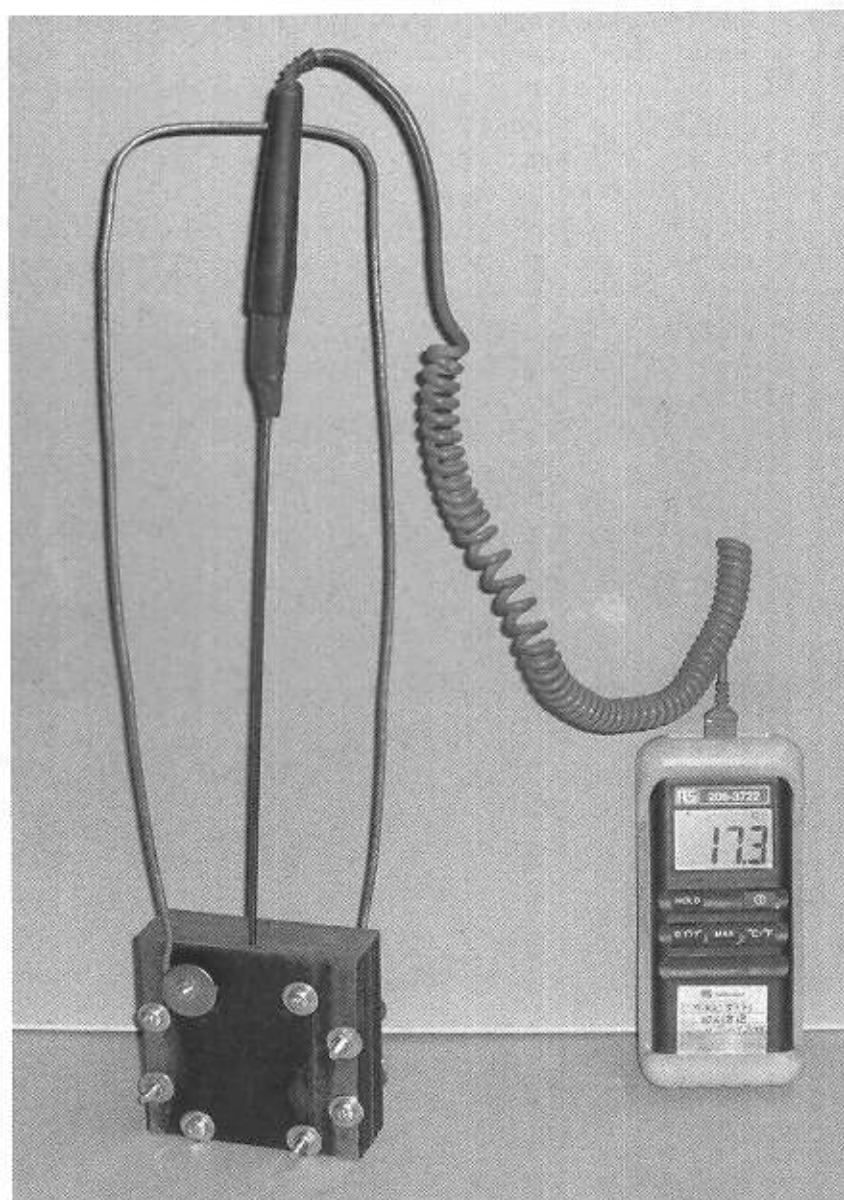


FIGURE 5

Fig 5. Temperature/time plot for an actual firing.



6. Improved clamping jig.

News from Other Societies

from John Farmer

Mechanical Music, Vol 56, No.4, July/August 2010

(See also www.mbsi.org)

Bob Stanoszek opens with details, and instructions, of his MIDI conversion of a 37 note Deagan Una-Fon. The Una-Fon is a keyboard operated reiterating Glockenspiel, with the solenoid operated strikers running at 5 beats per second. Bob explains how he rebuilt the Glock and adjusted the keyboard contacts so the instrument worked efficiently before the MIDI conversion. MIDI Boutique was the source of the electronic items, and Bob has included details of all the other parts, and their suppliers.

The Reginaphone Style 240 is the subject of Steve Boehck's comprehensive article. This instrument was one of the few dual-purpose musical box and gramophone devices produced in the early 1900's. Contemporary adverts suggest Regina, Mermod Freres (MIRA), Polyphon, Symphonion and Lochmann Original produced such devices, but the only known examples are from Regina and MIRA. The Regina machine was combined with a Columbia Grafonola, and a detailed, and illustrated, history of the marketing is provided but no technical details of how the machines worked.

The Museum Van Speelklok tot Pierement has renovated their workshops after the premises in which they were located were willed to the Museum by the sisters who had owned it. There is now a visitors centre so that visitors can see restoration work in progress. George Coades write-up on the museum also includes a photo tour of the new workshops. Robin Biggins writes about possibly the earliest example of a C. Brugier

Singing Bird box currently known. It has 4 cam sets in the sequence 1-2-3-4, whereas later machines had up to 7 orders. Robin appeals for details of any earlier examples. Luuk Goldhoorn has composed a short history of Fanny Wurlitzer's stay in Europe between 1902 and 1904 with the aid of 3 postcards he sent to his parents.

Finally, Frank Metzger uses The Hunt to start the search for information about the Automata maker Courvoisier & Comp., about whom little is written. The company is known to have made at least 40 exquisite mechanical bird cages, some with music and bird song, and equal to those of Droz, Brugier or Rochat. If you know of any examples, or have any information about Courvoisier, please contact Frank.

The Key Frame - Issue KF2-10

(See also www.fops.org)

By Nicholas Simons

Editor, David Smith, provides a well illustrated article on his recent trip to the USA where he visited a number of museums and organ workshops. Fred Dahlinger writes on the long history of the Bacigalupo family, the different countries of their domicile and the related organ building companies, ending with the death of Giovanni Bacigalupo in Berlin in 1978. A future issue will describe the life of Luigi Bacigalupo in the USA.

The recent AGM is reported, including the presentation of the Arthur Mills Rose Bowl to Jan van Dinteran of the KDV, the first time this award has gone overseas.

Excellent colour pictures complement the article on the Lincolnshire rally, including the

excellent Ruth of Paul Kirrage, recently brought into the UK.

Andy Hinds writes another of his entertaining articles on composers found on organ books, this time Julius Fucik well known for his 'Entry of the Gladiators'. Fucik (1872 - 1916) had a short life of only 44 years and was a successful band leader and composer but suffered somewhat from the political turmoil of the time. Other works still played on organs are Children of the Regiment and Florentine March.

Organ Grinders News - No. 73, Summer 2010

(See also www.boga.co.uk)

By Nicholas Simons

This issue starts with an invitation to join a Memorial Organ Grind for Ian 'Taffy' James at his local park in Cardiff. Taffy was a long-standing member of BOGA who used to entertain members as a clown and magician at society gatherings. A park bench, with a suitable plaque, has been purchased by BOGA and this will be unveiled at the organ grind.

The bulk of the issue is given over to a report of the AGM which passed without incident. Elsewhere, it is reported that well-known organ builder Rob Barker, who has for over 20 years worked for Alan Pell, is to go his own way as an independent craftsman and is open for restorations and new organ building.

Player Piano Group - Bulletin 195, June 2010

(See also www.PlayerPianoGroup.org.uk)

By Nicholas Simons

The new editor, Adam Ramet, starts by printing the thoughts of the outgoing editor, Julian Dyer, on his

17 years in the chair. Julian looks forward to receiving the journal, not knowing its contents, and to the new editor tapping into different seams of research. He mentions one area of his own research where some music rolls from Uruguay have recently arrived in the UK.

Max Lakeman describes a once in a lifetime opportunity of playing Horowitz's piano with a Welte vorsetzer itself playing rolls recorded by Horowitz. After much negotiation the event went ahead at Alkmaar's Steinway Centre and was recorded for future issue.

Adam Ramet pens two technical articles, the first describing test and demonstration rolls. The second investigates the ergonomic design of player piano controls. He concludes that Hupfeld provided the best arrangement whereas the most common Aeolian requires the left hand to go into contortions to control

the bass and treble themes. The worst by far is also the Aeolian, but specifically the Temponamic knob, which has a multitude of functions depending on what type of piano it was fitted to. No standardisation there! The issue concludes with reports from a number of house visits, which are the life blood of any successful society.

Non-English journals

Het Pierement – July 2010

(See also www.draaiorgel.org)

- The return of "De Cello"
- Gavioli 89/2
- Glorious Organs (24)
- Siegfried Translateur (1875 – 1944)

Musiques Mecaniques Vivantes – 3rd. Quarter, 2010

(See also www.aaimm.org)

- An unknown instrument, a prototype by Paul Ehrlich?

- How to tune an Organ
- Sylvanigra – Small cylinder movements made from pressed sheet
- Musical tiles and the Universal Exhibitions
- Station Musical Boxes in St. Croix
- 50th Anniversary of the Raffin Organ

Das Mechanische Musikinstrument (Gesellschaft für Selbstspielende Musikinstrumente), August 2010

(See also www.musica-mechanica.de)

- Augsburg instrument makers and an Augsburg Spinett in St. Petersburg
- Automobiles from Polyphon
- The Polyphon Pentaphon
- Emil Frolich, restorer of Jaquet Droz androids, 1906
- The "Forgotten" Walldkirch organ builders and music workers
- The various roles of Walldkirch workers

CD REVIEW- 'Sounds from the Past'

from Kevin McElhone

To be Released in September 2010 the first two CD audio recordings from The Victorian Music Room run by Ted and Kay Brown in Sussex, England.

Sounds from the Past No.1 is

entitled 'Strings' and No.2 'Reed Organs, Musical Boxes and More Piano Recordings'.

The recordings were professionally recorded and produced and have over 70 minutes of automatic self-

playing musical instruments on each disc.

On CD No.1 many of the instruments will be well-known and include a George Hicks Barrel Piano from the 1820's; a Faventia

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miniature street barrel piano from the 1960's with percussion; a Chiappa 48-note clockwork barrel piano; a Racca Piano Melodico of 73 notes, the largest model made playing cardboard book music with full expression; a Steck Duo-Art reproducing Player Piano and a Triola 25 note roll playing zither. This is particularly unusual as the roll only plays the 25 melody notes and the operator plucks the six chords containing a further 24 strings, with the left hand according to instructions written on the roll. This is an easy task, just like patting your head and rubbing your tummy at the same time, but you have to keep perfect time...

On CD No.2 we hear a Cabinetto 25 note paper roll organette; an Ariston organette, made in Germany, playing card discs on single pressure reeds; an Ariosa German organette playing metal doughnut rings with double steel reeds tuned celeste like an Accordion; a Celestina 20 note paper roll Organette; An Aeolian Orchestrelle 58 note roll playing reed organ, model "V" which cost more than a house when new; a Regina 15 1/2" double-comb table-top disc musical box; a Polyphon 15 1/2" Upright coin-in-the-slot model and a few more tunes from the Racca Piano and the Steck "Pianola" Piano.

This would make an ideal Birthday or Christmas present for any reader, or a family friend / visitor as now only are some of the most popular types of instrument heard, but also some of the rarer ones. There are a total of 47 tracks across the two recordings in this set which include Ave Maria (Schubert), O Sole Mio, Santa Lucia, Jigs and Hornpipes, Ask a Policeman, Daisy Bell, Goodnight Ladies, Serenata Napolitana, Ritual Fire Dance, Three piano pieces by Chopin, three by George Gershwin including the full version of Rhapsody in Blue; Paderewski playing his own composition Minuet, Lily of Laguna, Irish Jig,

Sounds of the Past
from
The Victorian Music Room



Mechanical Musical Instruments 1: The Strings

After the Ball, Vilja, William Tell Overture, Ave Maria (Gounod), Daybreak, American Fantasy, Tommies Patrol, Pathetique Sonata by Beethoven, Canon, Policeman's song, The Honeymoon March, Tritsch-Tratsch Polka, Hungarian Rhapsody No.2 and many others.

The Racca Piano is a favourite of mine, (after the Orchestrelle of course), and sounds just as it does in real life with one exception. At the Victorian Music Room there is a suspended wooden floor and the sound of the machine which re-iterates every note played can be felt very much vibrating through the floor. No matter how loud I turned my recordings I could not get the concrete floor in my house to vibrate! I did not notice any unwanted mechanical sounds on any of the tracks except the coin operation of those instruments.

I certainly hope there will be a lot more recordings to follow from this wonderful collection and to quote the sleeve "The recording has been produced to show some of the many varied sounds and arrangements obtained from self-playing instruments".

These recordings are available only from Ted Brown directly. Price is £8 each or £15 the pair. Postage and packing in UK and Europe is £2, or £2.50 elsewhere.

NEW MEMBERS

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

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

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

- 3069 Mrs. Jean Smith, Lancashire
- 3070 Robert Wingerd, U.S.A.
- 3074 John Richards, Staffordshire
- 3075 Nisan Cohen, Israel
- 3076 Peter Sables, Yorkshire
- 3077 Dr. Jeffrey Webb, Somerset
- 3078 Mark Hannam, West Midlands
- 3079 David Secrett, Norfolk
- 3080 Bruce White-Parsons, Australia
- 3081 Gary Burns, Lancashire
- 3082 James Preddy, Gloucestershire.

re-join

- 2021 Mr. Steve Greatrex, Devon

Letters to the Editor

From Arthur Cuncliffe:

Dear Editors

I believe nearly every member would wish to have a recording of the musical boxes they own and would not be averse to having a recording of a really "top notch" instrument of their dreams. In the good old days, there was the reel to reel type of recorder which recorded superbly especially in high speed mode. Reels of course were large with a very long length of tape.

The cassette tape recorder had the advantage of being much more compact with the sound quality not being all that far below the reel to reel machine. They too had faults and tapes could be damaged easily. Probably most older members have stopped there not even knowing they have probably missed buying at least two "super" systems that have already gone out of date and already "off" the market. I have no doubt that whatever is the latest way of recording sound will be obsolete in a year or so.

I for one would like to advance to a non tape system with digital recording. I guess recording to a DVD, CD, memory stick or similar device would produce excellent results but I know nothing about these devices. There must be something out there on the market that produces good results and is easy to use, but I don't know about it!

My question is, does anyone know of equipment that is available which will record sound really well and is easy to use? There must be something on the market that is good value for money and is likely to stay in fashion for a time. Do let us all know if you have any information about such equipment by writing a letter to the editor. Alternatively, my e-mail address is at the front

of the journal and I would be very pleased to receive any assistance. Mark the subject matter of the e-mail as "recording mechanical music" or my nice service provider may put your reply into my "trash" box.

From: Bill Cooper, West Sussex

Dear Sir,

At our local auction recently were two small musical boxes, one in a wooden box with two airs, the other in a tin box with no lid and four airs. This latter is the first box that I have seen with the comb bolts upside down. Is this unusual?

See the photograph in the central colour section. Not only is the comb fixing unusual, so is the stop work arrangement on the barrel unit, and the fact that it plays four tunes. Anyone recognise this? - Ed.

From: Nicholas Newble

Dear Editors,

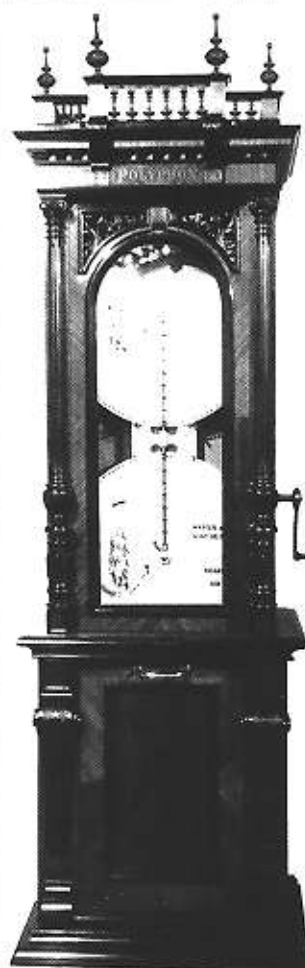
Having joined the society only this year, and having attended the AGM and Auction with my wife, I wholeheartedly agree with our President's sentiments regarding the Society Auction. It did seem very much as if some items had a rather ambitious reserve, and others had, with a few notable exceptions, how shall I put it, 'a look of neglect' about them, all of which meant few or no bidders. Having said that, even books and LPs/CDs attracted little interest, so perhaps everyone was feeling the economic pinch. What I also found however was that on a few items in which I had an interest and placed a bid, no-one else placed a bid, resulting in no raise in price and therefore the reserve not being met. One obvious suggestion therefore (as mentioned

by the Editor) would be to instruct the auctioneer to not only ask the vendor if they would accept a near-reserve offer, but also to ask the bidder (in cases of only one or two bidders) whether they would be prepared to pay 'xx amount' more for the item; if so, a sale results.

Having been amused by the interpretation of the serial number 20771 on a cylinder box as a supposed unknown maker called ZOTTI, I recall the old joke about the chap who went into a garage and asked for a 'seven hundred and ten'. After much head-scratching and perplexed looks from the assembled staff, he offered to write down what it was he wanted. '710' he wrote, in a circle, on some paper. Still flummoxed, the manager was then summoned - also confused, until he rotated the piece of paper. "Look" he said - 'OIL'. The chap wanted an oil cap.

To end this letter, my wife and I would like to pass on a big thanks for the welcoming kindness and friendliness shown by members of the Society to us this year, when we attended our first AGM, Teme Valley Winders meetings and the Lincolnshire Autumn Meet. We will certainly be recommending membership of this Society to anyone else we encounter who owns or has an interest in music boxes and mechanical music.

Some of the disadvantages of Society auctions are, of course, no advance beautifully-printed catalogues to drool over and research, no, or very little, advance notice of what will be offered, and from the point of view of the vendor, no International exposure, no telephone or Internet bidding and no advance publicity. Also no opportunity to pay by Credit Card. Many of the purchasers at the major auction houses are not Society members, a number of whom attend just for social reasons - Ed



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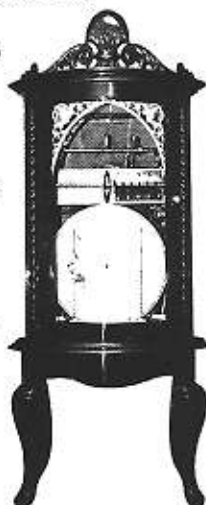
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Ariosa organette twin reed, model 3, tuned 'celeste' would be my first choice. Arthur Cunliffe email: adcunliffe@btinternet.com

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27th February; 27th April;

7th August; 7th November

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1st October 2010

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»Bicycliste Coquette« By Roulet et Decamps, c. 1900
With chain-drive pedals and road that rolls along as she rides, ht. 39 cm / 15 in. Extremely rare!



French Musical Automaton »Lady Magician«, c. 1900
By Roulet et Decamps, ht. 50 cm / 20 in.



Cylinder-Musical Box by »Lecoultré«

French Musical Automaton »Black Performer with Banjo«, c. 1885
By Leopold Lambert, Paris, ht. 58 cm / 22 in.



Automaton »Le Soldat au Clarin«, c. 1895
By Vichy, with exceptionally rare Lioret phonograph mechanism, ht. 47 cm / 18 1/2 in.



Flute Clock »Georg Prince Regent of England«, c. 1820s
With 5-aids of popular classical tunes!



French Musical Automaton »Bébé Cage«, c. 1890
By Lambert, with Jumeau head & original costume, ht. 50 cm / 21 in.



Fine All-Original »Polichinelle«, c. 1890
By Lambert, with Jumeau head, in original maker's box, ht. 44 cm / 17 in.



French Musical Automaton »Smoking Gentleman«, c. 1890
By Lambert, with Jumeau bisque head, ht. 57 cm / 22 1/2 in.



French Automaton »Smoking Soldier«, c. 1890
By Roulet et Decamps with rare Jumeau portrait head, ht. 57 cm / 22 1/2 in.



Musical Box »Viennese Bronze Cats on Rug«
With 2-tunes Swiss musical movement



Rare Smoking Automaton »Khedive«, c. 1880
By William Britain, England.



Large Automaton »Drumming Soldier«, c. 1900
Magnificent historical costume. Clockwork mechanism with moving head and arms. Height 81 cm/32 in. - Very good working condition!



Rare Musical Automaton »Sérénade«, c. 1890
By Roulet et Decamps, ht. 56 cm / 22 1/2 in. ...and barking dog!!



Piccolo Interchangeable Musical Box »Organocleyde«
With 6 cylinders. By Conrad Felsing, Berlin.



Large Italian Aeronautical Carousel with Wright Bros. and Blériot aircraft, Zeppelins and turning Balloons. With musical movement playing »Four Seasons«, c. 1910
Lg. 66 cm / 26 in. - Very rare!



»Window Tapper Clown«, c. 1930
Probably by Decamps. French advertising automaton with articulated side-glancing eyes, eyebrows and lower lip. Moves his head, raps on shop window. Electric motor (220 V). An imposing character! - Working perfectly!

Specialty Auction »Fine Mechanical Music«

20 November 2010

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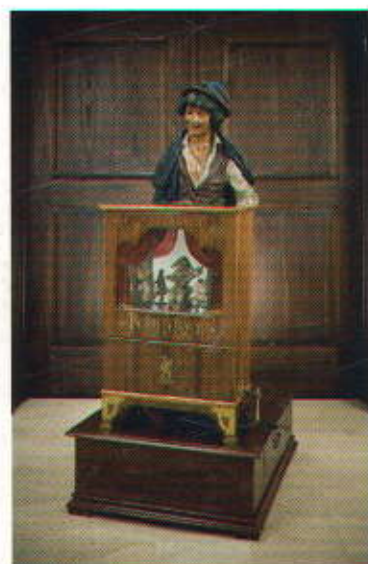
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Remaining 2010 Auctions

Wednesday 3 November
Knightsbridge, London

Tuesday 7 December
Knowle, UK

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