

MECHANICAL MUSIC WORLD



A Silver Snuff Box celebrates its bicentenary

An Association of Musical Box Collectors Publication

From the Editors' Desk

My first impression when this journal landed on the desk for proof reading was what an amazingly diverse issue it is! Juliet Fynes has continued her research into 'modern' collectibles with Tomy toys. Her previous articles on Fisher Price and Mattel have been well received and this one will be no exception I am sure. The articles are complementary to our new book on Collecting Affordable Musical Novelties, researched by Juliet and beautifully illustrated by Chris. Do you have your copy yet? We do and thoroughly recommend it.

David and I grew up in Worthing, a seaside town in Sussex, and we were familiar with the 'end of the pier' Penny-in-the-slot machines in our youth. The article on the Rye Heritage Centre collection took us straight back to the smell of seaweed, the sound of the gulls overhead, together with the chink of pennies falling into slots (240 to the Pound then!). A visit to Rye when we are next in England is definitely on the cards and we are indebted to David Soulsby for his detailed write-up and knowledgeable asides.

Musical snuff boxes are well represented in this issue – Chris Fynes illustrates two very interest-

ing examples and includes a wealth of information.

We have included a very short review of the Magic Lantern Society of US & Canada's Convention in Victoria BC because we wanted to recognise that, by inviting members of other collector societies – in this case, musical boxes – the event was enriched by the cross-fertilisation of experience, enthusiasm and knowledge. It was followed by a small group of AMBC members visiting the Tyvand Collection. The Association of course has for several years fostered connections with the British Horological Institute, another field of collecting where collaboration is proving mutually beneficial.

As an Association, we are indebted to Richard Kerridge, one of our Founder Members, who is standing down as a committee member and financial advisor. A huge thank you to Richard for all that he has achieved on AMBC's behalf and for his continuing unofficial participation in our future activities.

Thank you to all our contributors in this issue.

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AGM and Chairman's Report

Well, here we are at yet another AGM of AMBC. Our website and word-of-mouth continue to attract new members, both overseas and British. Sadly during the last year we have lost some of our most loyal members and we need to enrol more members from the south east to build on the nucleus of "regulars" at the Chanctonbury Ring. I will continue trying to get our Surrey, Hampshire and Kent members to come to see what we get up to at these meetings.

In September the British Horological Society will be visiting and I would like to arrange a workshop on disassembling a musical box, then demonstrating some repair and restoration techniques. I would like some of our members to attend to make the workshop worthwhile.

If you have friends who you think might like to join us, let me know, they just need an interest in mechanical music. In return for just £12 per year they get four magazines and can attend four meetings, including lunch plus tea/coffee and biscuits. Can't be bad!

You have probably worked out that I have a passion for mechanical music. This is partly because I can't play a note, but you can't hold a passion if you can't hear the instruments play and see how they work. Holding meetings gives us a chance, as a group, to share our enjoyment of the sounds of different instruments and gain an understanding their intricacies.

Treasurer's AGM report.

The following is a summary.

The membership year runs from 1st March to end of February the following year. In line with the AMBC constitution, members had sight of bank statement printouts.

AMBC is the only UK registered international society covering the entire range of mechanical music not registered as a business. It was established as an unincorporated members Association.

Cash at bank at the end of the financial year, February 28th 2018, had increased slightly on the previous year.

Membership had also increased, requiring a step increase in the number of copies of the periodical *Mechanical Music World*.

At the last 2017 AGM Committee were granted but did not exercise the right to increase the subscription for the year 2018-2019. Although Committee have absorbed increased costs they asked for the right, if found to be necessary, to advise an increase in subscription for the membership year 2019-2020 capped at 10%. The proposal was accepted unanimously.

Thus, single membership subscription, which includes

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Feel free to contact any of us.

Publication Dates for "Mechanical Music World"

Winter issue 28th January; Spring issue 28th April; Summer issue 28th July; Autumn issue 28th October

We need articles and advertisements (unless repeats) to reach the Editors at least one month in advance of these dates. Please allow more time for involved articles with many illustrations.

AMBC Meeting Dates

Please contact the host to ensure a place is reserved and for needs to be catered for. Include any guests you may be thinking of bringing. Also please advise if a booking has to be cancelled so that places can be offered to others.

Sunday 11th August

Meeting at The Old School

Saturday 24th November

Christmas Meeting



Picture 1: Anna Svenson with Balchin organ

postage and packing for four full colour periodicals, remains the same for one or two people at one address, UK £12 (single), £14 (double); Europe £20 (single) £22 (double); USA/Canada, rest of the world £25 (single), £27 (double). The preferred method of payment is by PayPal to ambcmembership@gmail.org.uk.

In response to questions the committee confirmed that they and their helpers were fully paid up members who worked for free and at no cost to AMBC. Mid-term accounts included generous donations that had been expended to produce the second booklet in the series 'An Introduction to Mechanical Music' entitled 'Collecting Affordable Musical Novelties' plus a fine musical CD of member Joe Berman's disc and cylinder musical boxes. (All £5 plus P&P).

Other productions since the formation of AMBC include The Music Makers of Switzerland (still available at £70 plus P&P) and the CD 'Making a Musical Box' by Don Busby (£5 + P&P).

AGM and June Organ Grind

AGMs are notoriously tedious, though a necessary

formality for members' clubs, but we managed to get through the business quite quickly. Members present were pleased that the committee had produced four interesting magazines, another little book and a CD during the year, whilst maintaining the modest membership subscription.

With the business meeting out of the way we repaired to the garden for a picnic lunch. After a slightly threatening start to the day it was a lovely sunny afternoon for the annual organ grind. The shade of the gazebos was particularly welcome to those energetically turning the handles.

Unfortunately, due to unexpected illness and sudden bereavement, the larger instruments were absent this year. Several members had brought smaller instruments which they took turns to demonstrate. Anna Svenson played a variety of tunes on her 20-note Hofbauer-style Jim Balchin pressure-operated organ (picture 1). From his large collection Ted chose a Varetto 27-key reed barrel organ (picture 2). Garth Haughton, a keen member but new to collecting, proudly showed his 20-note Celestina American organette (picture 3). He had bought it quite recently and restored it himself, with a little help from Ted, and it was much admired. Finally, Paul Bellamy demonstrated his rather rare and unusual miniature 8-air



Picture 2: Ted Brown and Varetto reed barrel organ



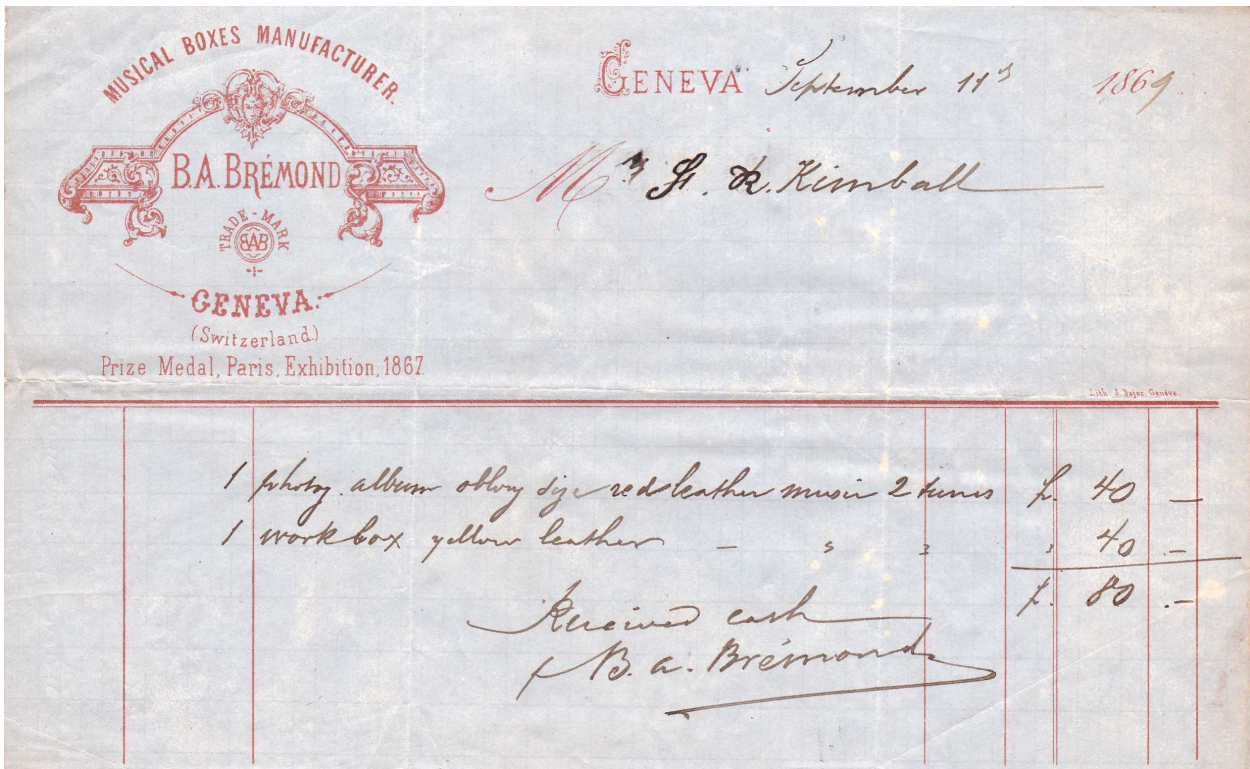
Picture 3: Garth Haughton's Celestina

barrel piano, by an unknown maker (picture 4). It is similar to the Spanish Faventia type instrument but Paul's has 3 bells and is quite loud, thus suitable for street use. The meeting went on into the late afternoon with an enjoyable mix of music and conversation, lubricated with hot and cold drinks supplied by our hostess, Kay.



Picture 4 (right): Paul Bellamy's street piano

(Below) An interesting receipt from B A Bremond for a photograph album and a workbox. (Editors' Coll.)



AMBC Meeting 29th April 2018

The main theme of the meeting was small chamber barrel organs. Ted demonstrated what he believes to be one of the earliest models (Picture 1), with 12 notes, dating from around the 1750s, which still has its original tune sheet listing the 8 airs. We also saw a later 14-note, Keith Prowse example from his collection (Picture 2), which dates from about 1830.

Anna Svenson brought along 5 organs from her collection (Pictures 3 and 4). The Brodrip and Wilkinson (Picture 5), dating from between 1798 and 1808, was particularly unusual and attractive. The front of the case is decorated with a bird in a cage instead of the usual organ pipes in lancet window openings. We hope to print an article about her organ collection in our Christmas edition.



Picture 1: Unnamed barrel organ from 1750s.

Ted also demonstrated a 1765 Langshaw of Lancaster organ with 5 interchangeable barrels carrying a total of 50 tunes, all listed in the lid.

Paul Baker showed us a receipt for the purchase of a barrel organ from 1835 (Picture 6), supplied by 'Robson & Son, Organ Builders to his Majesty'. It seems to be a £100 cash deposit for a £200 purchase.

We then went on to cylinder boxes via Roland



Picture 2: 14-note organ labelled Keith, Prowse



Picture 3: Anna Svenson with collection of barrel organs

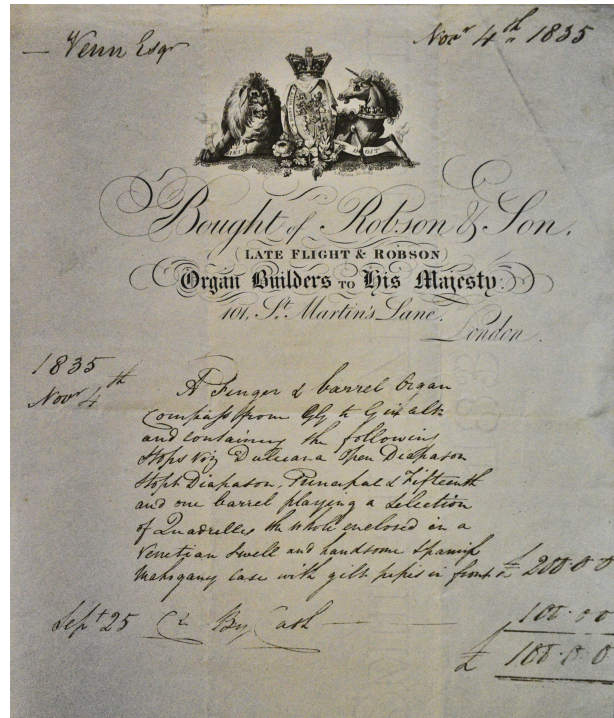


Picture 4: Anna demonstrates an organ

Fisher's 6-air organ box (Picture 7), made by Samuel Troll of Geneva, with a 17-note reed organ in the middle section of the comb. It was fortunate to still have its original tune sheet (Picture 8). It is inscribed with the serial number 5116 and the heading 'Flûte'. The six tunes are clearly visible and the design of the tune sheet dates it to circa 1875.



Picture 5: An attractive Brodrick & Wilkinson organ from circa 1800.



Picture 6: A rare receipt from Robson & Son for a finger and barrel organ.

Little and large were shown by the next member. The 'large' example was a superb musical box by Paillard Vaucher Fils (P.V.F.), with four interchangeable cylinders each playing 6 airs. The movement and its sumptuously veneered case are



Picture 7: Roland Fisher's fine Samuel Troll organ musical box.



Picture 8: The tune sheet for the Samuel Troll organ box.

shown in Picture 9. The serial number is 16091 with the gamme number 666 dating it to ca 1885. A double-sided lever is provided to wind-up its powerful double spring motors. To change the cylinders, two levers, one either side, are pushed back and the cylinder lifted out by holding its extended side handles. The new cylinder is inserted using the reverse procedure. The music is beautifully arranged and sounds very melodious with its heavy pinning. It includes operatic tunes from Donizetti, Balfe, Verdi, Tannhauser and lighter pieces from Gilbert and Sullivan. There are waltzes and polkas and other popular tunes such as “The Carnival of Venice”, “Men of Harlech”, “Last Rose of Summer”, “Home Sweet Home” and



Picture 9: Impressive P.V.F interchangeable box



Picture 10: Ducommun Girod 2-air movement in green tin case “Grandfathers Clock”.

The ‘little’ example was a lovely green painted tin box (Picture 10) containing a Ducommun Girod movement, with a print of the bath house at Ems on the lid. It played a section of the overture from Fra Diavolo. Fra Diavolo, or The Inn of Terracina, is an opéra comique in three acts by the French composer Daniel Auber. It is loosely based on the life of the Neapolitan guerrilla leader Michele Pezza, active in southern Italy in the period 1800-1806, who went under the name of Fra Diavolo (“Brother Devil”). The opera was first performed in Paris on 28 January 1830. It was Auber's greatest success, one of the most popular works of the 19th century.

Chris Fynes was requested to demonstrate a musical mangle that was featured in our previous magazine, who or what it was originally made for being a bit of a conundrum.

He also played two cylinder mandoline boxes. One was made by Alexandre Soualle (Picture 11, top), a rare four airs French musical box with the serial number 4968 stamped on the left-hand bridge, ca 1860. It has a serpentine shaped rosewood case with domed lid, with ormolu mounts on edging, feet and lock. The original tune sheet is inscribed with the numbers 2408 and 590 and has the printed heading: “A. S. V. Mandoline Musiques de Paris, Fabrique au château de Villetaneuse près St Denis (Seine)”. The tunes are :

1 La Traviata. Valse. Verdi



Picture 11 Upper: Alexandre Soualle 4-Air Mandoline box No. 4968

Lower: Langdorff No. 13747

2 Il Trovatore. Misere. Verdi

3 Moises. Priere. Rossini

4 Il Trovatore. Stride la vampa.

It is lever wound, with a 33 cm brass cylinder playing on 183 teeth with mandoline groups up to eight. Apart from L'Epée (in Montbeliard), Alexandre Soualle was the only important musical box maker in France, from 1855 to 1861, when he went bankrupt. His boxes are usually of very good quality.

The second mandoline box was made by Langdorff (Picture 11, lower half), serial number 13747. The Gamme number 189/63 dates the box to 1863. It too has a 33 cm cylinder and plays on 186 teeth with mandoline groups up to ten. Its four airs include:

1 Per me ora fatale. Trovatore. Verdi

2 De miei bollenti. La Traviata. Verdi

Tunes 3 and 4 (although not identified), are almost certainly also by Verdi.

Finally, he played an early three-air tortoiseshell musical snuffbox, stamped "F. LECOULTRE" on the comb with the serial number 137 stamped on the bedplate. François-Louis Lecoultre, who was the likely maker, was credited with being the first to use a one-piece comb.

We returned to organs as Norman Dicker entertained us (Picture 12), with "Yankee Doodle"



Picture 12: Norman Dicker and fine Molinari street organ.

and "Tipperary" from the choice of seven tunes on his Molinari 27-note barrel pipe organ from 1914.

The afternoon was brought to a close by Ted playing a spirited rendition of Königer Karl Marsch (King Charles March) on his Tanzbär roll-playing piano accordion (Picture 13).



Picture 13: Ted in full flow with Tanzbär accordion.

The Second BHI South London Branch Open Day

AMBC presence once again!

Following the success of the first Open Day of the South London Branch of the British Horological Institute in 2016, we were delighted to once again be asked to exhibit. With a better idea of what to expect the organisers had added an additional room where we were placed in such exalted company as Birmingham University, The Worshipful Company of Clockmakers and West Dean College. However, the visitor numbers also expanded, so once again the whole place was packed with enthusiasts. The conversations all around created quite a hubbub meaning our smaller boxes didn't stand a chance. However, Ted had a secret weapon, an Ariston Organette, placed near the door. This could be heard across the hallway and into the main room, which drew the curious like a magnet. Our new banner could be seen above the crowds and we attracted a lot of interest, enquiries about membership and book sales.

Chris was particularly attracted to the live demonstrations and pleased to discover the exact purpose of some old watchmakers' tools he acquired a while ago. Out of the many photos taken he has selected craftsmen at work, and their tools and machines, to feature here.

1 Engraving Machine for producing many different patterns, a bit like a spirograph. Variations are achieved by adjusting the cams on the right. (*This is a Holtzapfel-type ornamental turning lathe - Ed*)

2 One of the many patterns being engraved on the machine in picture 1.

3 Tooth Cutting Machine. The number of teeth required on a wheel is selected by setting the arm on the disc to the appropriate circle of holes. Each tooth is then cut one at a time by rotating the disc from one hole to another. The teeth are cut into the brass disc at the top.

4 A modern hand-made Tooth Cutting Machine.

5 Close-up of a wheel being cut on the Tooth Cutting Machine in picture 3.

6 An early form of small hand-turned lathe (*'The Turns' - Ed*) still used occasionally today. The workpiece is turned by means of a bow whose string is wrapped around a small pulley and then pulled up and down.

7 A small automatic lathe in operation.

8 A larger hand-cranked lathe.

9 Depthing Tool. Two wheels for a watch are placed between two pairs of pivots and the distance between adjusted to achieve good meshing. The outer pivot points are then used as a compass to mark the correct distance of the holes on the watch plates.

10 A Fusee Clock Movement. A fusee is a cone shaped pulley with a helical groove around it, wound with a cord or chain which is attached to the spring barrel to equalise the power as the spring runs down. (*Unfortunately you can't see it - hidden behind a clock pillar! It is not meant to be conical. A lot of science and experiment went into the making of fusees in the 18th & 19th Centuries, some even being made as one-offs to match a specific spring characteristic - Ed*)

11 Engraving by hand.

Mechanical Music World

Reserved for BHI montage

Visit to the Tyvand Collection

by The Editors

When it was first suggested that the 2018 Magic Lantern Society of US & Canada hold its first ever Convention in Canada, Victoria BC, on Vancouver Island, was an obvious choice. The city has recently been voted amongst the top ten best places to visit on the planet. Plans began and it was agreed that the Lantern Society would extend an invitation to the MBSI Northwest Chapter and to AMBC members to join in the fun. Merging the Northwest Chapter quarterly meeting with the Convention allowed meeting up with old friends and making new ones as well. After all, we are all collectors, and have much in common! It turned out really well and a great time was had by all.

When the Convention finished, a group of AMBC members was invited to visit Annie and Dale Tyvand's collection in Washington State. We were all very keen to go over, especially to see Annie's amazing new stained glass panel for her bow-front Regina 15 5/8" self-changer box. A lady of many talents, Annie has actually made a new glass door panel for the instrument and has promised your editors an illustrated article on her work for publication in the near future. In the meantime, to whet your appetite, here is a picture of the completed door in situ. There are beautiful examples of Annie's handiwork with glass all over the house and garden. Yes, she really does make lovely three-dimensional glass leaves and flowers for the garden as well as two-dimensional pictures.

Dale, as Chairman of the Northwest Chapter of MBSI, welcomed us into their home and we spent several very happy hours playing their beautiful instruments and sharing a memorable dinner before we departed. A truly multi-national meeting of British, Canadian and American friends!

There will be more gems from the collection in a future issue.



A beautifully inlaid buffet style musical box in the Tyvand Collection



The 15 5/8" autochange Regina, with new door glass



The "Sublime Harmonie" movement of the buffet box.

A Bicentenary Silver Musical Snuffbox

by Chris Fynes

Made at the time of the Royal Pavilion and its associated Regency decadence, it would be interesting to know what tales this silver musical snuffbox could tell (see front cover and montage on Page 13). It might first have fitted the colourful waistcoat pocket of a 'dandy' or gentleman of means. And how many hands has it passed through since then, before eventually falling into mine?

Such miniature movements were found in a wide variety of cases to suit every pocket. Cases were made of tin, tortoiseshell, wood (mostly known as laurencekirk), mother of pearl, silver, gold and enamel. Some had painted or micro-mosaic lids and some were embellished with precious stones.

The lid of this particular box is framed with a band of engraved floral decoration surrounding an engine-turned panel inset with a vacant cartouche. The floral band is repeated on the base and also around the edge of the case.

Located in the gilt interior, both on the lid and centre divider, its hallmarks bear the maker's initials for Joseph Willmore, a prolific and renowned Birmingham silversmith. Born in 1773, he was the grandson of another renowned Birmingham silversmith, Thomas Willmore. Joseph followed in his grandfather's footsteps and began trading as a silversmith in 1806, when he registered his mark at the Birmingham Assay Office as a snuff-box maker. Many of his snuff boxes remain highly collectable today, and he is highly regarded especially for his boxes with repoussé or 'castle-top' lids. He later also registered at the London Assay Office in 1814-15, opening a showroom in Bouverie Street where he could sell his wares to wealthy city businessmen. Upon his grandfather Thomas's death in 1816, Joseph also took over his business, allowing him to expand the variety of silver wares he made and sold. He died in 1855, bringing an end to the Willmore tradition of silversmithing, though he had several good apprentices, including George Unite, who became a renowned silversmith in his own right.

The assay marks include the duty stamps for George III, the lion passant, the Birmingham anchor

and the date letter for 1818. On the front of the case is another lion mark, this time upside-down.

The musical movement is in good working order and the two tunes play well. The start/stop control button is made of silver and has a flower moulded in its centre. However, the tune-change button on the right appears to be missing which is a bit of a mystery. Fortunately, it still has a protruding bar that can be pushed from side to side. It is also situated in a much lower position than the button on the left. The reason for is that this bar is actually tapped into the end of the tune change lever so it can be unscrewed. It therefore follows that the square hole in the case has to be large enough to allow the bar and its shouldered stop to pass through. Originally the button must have been sawn off when someone tried to access the movement, not realising all they had to do was to unscrew the button first. Looking through a magnifier you can see the saw marks. Unfortunately, the button no longer exists. Perhaps a mould could be made from the other one.

Looking at the movement there are several typical early features. Although there is no identification as to the maker, there is a serial number stamped on the bedplate which reads 2688, quite high for a movement of this period. The comb which is reversed with its base teeth on the right, has sectional teeth in sets of three, except for the extreme treble which has four. The base teeth appear not to have tuning weights but a very slight thickening towards the end of the tip. There are no dampers and the indications are the movement was made to work without. The flat-topped spring barrel is missing its stop-work, seemingly of the more conventional male and female type. The start/stop lever has an unusual geometrical shape designed to avoid the gear wheels underneath. It also has an unusual drop pin attached to its base which is activated by a separate return spring mounted on the bedplate. Adjacent to the spring barrel, the cylinder is supported by its own separate bridge.

All in all, it is testament to the fine craftsmanship of the day that this box has not only survived but plays as well as it did 200 years ago.

Reserved for silver snuff box montage

Mechanical Music World

Reserved for Laurencekirk montage

Laurencekirk Musical Snuffbox

by Chris Fynes

Laurencekirk is a small village in the county of Aberdeenshire. It was noted for the manufacture of the Laurencekirk snuffbox that had a special type of concealed airtight hinge and wooden pin. The maker was Charles Stiven who was introduced to set up business there by Lord Gardenston. Stiven was credited with the invention in about 1783, but alternative sources credit James Sandy as the original inventor.

Despite its broken glass or more likely crystal, this lovely wooden musical snuffbox, also made around the same period of 1818, bears all the features of the highest quality.

When I bought this box at auction I assumed that the miniature on the lid was painted on ivory and that I would be able to restore the painting and replace the glass and all would be well. Unfortunately, I then discovered it was actually painted on the back of the glass itself. The break was probably caused by a warp in the lid brought on by being in an inappropriate environment, such as a dry centrally-heated atmosphere. Along the edges of the cracks you can see where the paint has pulled away which ought to have given it away. I had toyed with the idea of replacing the miniature but decided historical accuracy and preservation was more important. However, with the aid of photoshop the picture top-right in the montage shows how it might have looked originally.

By painting on the glass, the artist is not only able to produce smoother brushstrokes but his colours appear to be brighter and more saturated than if on a separate surface, perhaps more like an enamel. Of course, it requires more skill to paint this way, layering it all in reverse, having to paint the highlights and foreground first before finally ending with the background. Not only that, it cannot be easy to get the paint to bind to the very shiny surface of the glass. Fortunately, there is a piece of canvas stuck to the back which seems to hold it all together.

The skills do not end there. The wooden box, made of amboyna, is shaped with concave sides and trimmed around its top and bottom edges with a beading of tortoiseshell. The shaped interior is lined with a thin wafer of tortoiseshell emphasized with yellow paint on its reverse to bring out the pattern. A label on the inside of the lid appears to give away its original price of 'Fr 160'. What a bargain! Even the base of the box is made of the same burr. But it's the high level of craftsmanship that is amazing. How on earth did they make its concealed piano-type hinge with such close-fitting tolerances out of solid wood, with a perfectly lined-up centre hole going through its entire length? Running a finger along the shaped back when the box is closed, one would not even know it had a hinge.

The musical movement shares many of its features with the foregoing silver box. There is no identification as to the maker except for the number 563 stamped on the bedplate. The comb has sectional teeth in threes and is reversed with the base teeth on the right. It also has no dampers and no tuning weights other than a slight thickening towards the tips of the extreme base. The spring for the start/stop control is mounted on the bedplate which has an extended arm to limit the rotation of the governor fan at the end of a tune. The stop-work on the spring barrel is of the earlier type that has a curved spring around its circumference to stabilize its loose female counterpart. It also has a separate mount for the cylinder arbor adjacent to the spring barrel. The latitude of movement of the tune-change lever is limited by a slot in the base rather than by two adjustment screws, all rather similar to the silver box movement. A view of the bottom of the bedplate shows that the endless screw pivots against a tiny red garnet as opposed to the later plain steel plate.

On winding the box to play a tune, one is struck by the totally silent action of the ratchet. The two tunes, popular at the time but as yet unidentified, play perfectly sweetly as originally intended.

TOMY MUSICAL TOYS OF THE LATE 20th CENTURY

Juliet Fynes discovers more collectible musical toys

A Little Bit of History

Eiichiro Tomiyama began producing toys in Japan in 1924. His original designs were tin-based, some of which continued into the 1950s. As with other toy companies production ceased during the war years. He had established a research and development centre in 1935 to create new types of toys using new manufacturing techniques and materials. A shift to plastic offered an entirely new range of toy possibilities and 1953 saw the launch of the Tomy brand.

From simple tin models Tomy's toys achieved an increasing complexity of shapes and forms. The company became the leading Japanese toy manufacturer as Fisher-Price* had become in the United States.

Throughout the 1960s, Tomy continued to explore new technical possibilities and became one of the first to investigate uses of new electronic capabilities offered by the development of transistors. In the 1970s, Tomy increasingly became interested in electronics and the use of newly developing microchips and liquid-crystal displays.

Production remained in Japan for many years, ceasing in 1985. Its first international move came in 1970 with the establishment of a manufacturing base in Hong Kong, followed by Singapore. Three years later, the company entered the United States, the world's largest single toy market, establishing a sales subsidiary there. From the United States, the company turned to Europe, opening subsidiaries in the United Kingdom and France.

Tomy continued to expand its international network and in 1987 the company began manufacturing in Thailand as it offered cheaper production costs than Singapore. In 1992 they entered the newly liberalized Chinese market, opening a manufacturing and engineering facility.

The 1990s marked a new era for the company, which played a formative role in the development of cross-media and cross-marketing tie-ins, quickly gaining a number of prominent licenses, such as Pokemon, Teletubbies, Star Wars, Thomas the Tank Engine and Walt Disney Inc. It eventually became Japan's second largest toy manufacturer and the fifth largest toy company in the world.

The Toys

As Tomy began production at a similar time as Fisher-Price, and both became leading toy manufacturers in their respective countries, it is interesting to compare and contrast their designs, particularly the mechanical musical toys. These were intrinsic to the F-P range from the introduction of the first musical radio in 1959. Tomy began incorporating music, both mechanical and electronic, in the 1970s. The type of product was similar but whereas, particularly in the earlier years, F-P used wood, square edged shapes and a larger range of plastic colours, Tomy's were rounded, generally smaller and in bright primary colours. The later F-P toys, particularly after the takeover by Mattel in 1993, began to resemble Tomy in shape and colour. They also introduced electronic music.

It is often hard to date Tomy toys precisely, as unlike F-P, they did not routinely include comprehensive details of exact location of manufacture and date of copyright on the toys. The information usually only runs to the country of origin, from which an approximate date can be inferred.

An early, and atypical, Tomy musical toy was the Barbie grand piano and stool, made in the 1970s in Hong Kong, exclusively for the American Sears chain (picture 1). It came in pink and white. Mine is pink, bought complete with a one-legged Barbie that I haven't had the heart to replace! The wind-up musical movement is in the seat which incorporates a clasp that fits round the doll's waist and sways her from side to side as she "plays" the

Awaiting Image

piano. The same basic design was used for a, now rare, Barbie rocking chair in brown plastic.

Record, Cassette and CD and Video Players:

Like F-P, Tomy produced a wind-up record player (pictures 2) that was modelled on a disc musical box, with interchangeable plastic “records”. These records have little protrusions that engaged with star wheels. The F-P model was an altogether superior piece of kit. It came with five double-sided 5.75 inch discs that activated the 22-note star wheel built into the “pick-up head”. In the much smaller Tomy version the 9-note star wheel was built in under the deck. The pick-up head contained a roller that had to be placed on the record to activate the mechanism. It came supplied with four 3 inch single-sided “records”. The appearance was more babyish than the F-P version. The age group to which it seemed designed to appeal would probably have lacked the manual dexterity to operate it.

This toy was one of the “Bring Along a Song” series. Another, a cassette player (pictures 3), used basically the same mechanism but with the “record” encased in a cassette. These were double-sided and, with two supplied, also played four tunes. The player had “Play”, “Stop” and “Eject” controls imitating those on a real cassette player. These, and the record players, were made in Singapore in the 1980s. Subsequently, in the 1990s, the ostensibly more up-to-date CD player (picture 4) was made on the same principle. The single-sided CDs were placed on a turntable, with the star wheel underneath like the record player, but operated by the same three controls as the cassette player.

The “My First VCR Player” (picture 5) is something of a disappointment, an example of style over substance. There were two double-ended, double-sided “video cassettes” giving eight variations of picture, according to how they were slotted into the toy, but there was only one tune. On pressing the “Play” button the tune starts to play and the relevant picture cranks up into place behind the screen. It was alleged to be a moving picture, but the lenticular screen only simulates

movement if the toy is tilted backwards and forwards.

Other Tomy wind-up musical toys:

Tomy appears not to have made radios or TVs, both of which were very prominent over a lengthy period in the F-P range. They did however produce a clock in 1976 (picture 6). A crib toy in the form of a dog which sways from side to side as it drives a car to the tune of “This Old Man” was made in 1987. Other crib toys were wound by pull cords. These included Peek-a-Boo rabbits (picture 7) and teddy bears in a variety of colours, a sunflower and a cheeky furry teddy peeking out of a honey pot (picture 8). Later musical crib toys, including mobiles, were battery operated and incorporated lighting effects.

Manually operated toys:

The traditional musical Jack-in-the-Box, with a hand cranked mechanical movement, has been made by many other toy manufacturers with a variety of different pop-up figures. The only Tomy version I have seen took the form of a clown (picture 9). They did however make three unusual hand operated musical instruments, played by repeatedly depressing a key to advance the tune a note at a time. The Little Star Guitar (“Twinkle Twinkle Little Star”) (picture 10) was operated by a lever, the Little Tooter Trumpet (“Merrily We Roll Along”) (picture 11) by depressing any one of the three “valves” and the Little Player Piano (“This Old Man”) by any one of the three groups of piano keys. They date from the 1980s and were made in Malaysia.

Mechanical Organs:

Where Tomy were truly innovative, with mechanical musical toys of considerable complexity, was in the manufacture of toy organs. These were the Tuneyville range; Choo Choo and Pianos from the 1970s and the Pipewagon from the early 1990s, invented by Kenzo Akiyama.

The original Choo Choo (picture 12), made in Thailand and available in three different bright colourways, was a very American looking locomotive with a cow catcher and bulbous smoke stack. It came with four double sided 3.75 inch discs similar to those used in the musical box toys, but this was in fact an 8-note organ. It required batteries to turn the disc, provide the wind pressure for the eight organ pipes and also move the engine along. The disc is inserted in a slot in the cabin roof. A lever on the side switches it on, activating the movement of the train, and inserting a disc in a slot in the roof starts the music. The same mechanism was used in the late 1990s for a Thomas the Tank Engine Train (picture 13), also made in Thailand. Although much later this looks older as it is styled on the original illustrations from the Rev Awdry's books of 1946. The lever puts the train in motion and once the disc has been inserted the music is started by twisting the funnel. In the 1990s there was also an updated design called the Pipewagon, allegedly because interest in the Choo Chos was beginning to flag. It looks very different, designed as a van with the eight organ pipes on show above the roof in front of the slot for the disc. In addition, these pipes each have coloured floats which appear to dance to the music.

Akiyana also invented the Tuneyville Piano. These were manufactured in 1978 simultaneously in France and Singapore, in white with blue trimmings (picture 14), and in the USA in cream coloured plastic (picture 15). They were battery operated and supplied with four 3 inch double-sided discs to play pre-programmed tunes. The piano could also be played manually using the eight piano keys. Appearance aside, the biggest difference to the Choo Chos is that the eight notes were achieved with just two pipes. I cannot begin to understand how these Tuneyville Models work, but for the technically minded there is an excellent article by Ron Bopp which can be found on the internet. Entitled "The World's Smallest Mechanical Organ" it explains the mechanism of these toys in great detail.

* See articles on Fisher-Price in Issues 3 and 4 of "Mechanical Music World".

Right: Advertisement from the Sonora Phonograph Co. in 1919.

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Time to Spend a Penny

A visit to the Working Models and Coin-in-the-Slot machines at the Rye Heritage Centre

by David Soulsby



The Guillotine

Recently I paid a visit to the Rye Heritage Centre, to view their large collection of Penny-in-the-Slot machines. These are the machines I used to be crazy about as a kid while on my annual seaside holiday. They were at the end of the pier but have long since been replaced by arcades filled with video games and pinball machines fed by pound coins, rather than pennies. *The Old Penny Arcade* is on the first floor of the converted 19th century sail loft and contains over 30 working models designed and built by some of last century's best constructors. Before I could wallow in nostalgia I had to get a pocketful of old pennies at the inflated exchange rate of seven to the pound!

The first machine, which I remembered well, was

The Guillotine. After inserting my penny, I stood back and watched the grisly performance. The doors of the prison opened with a loud clank, a rather tinny sounding bell tolled, the last rites were read by a nodding priest and the executioner in a black mask operated the guillotine, tipping the prisoner's head into the waiting basket. Such gruesome enactments were common themes among a number of working models; with hanging (English Execution), electric chair (American Execution) and beheading by sword (Chinese Execution) among the favourites. Another machine that I spotted was *Our Firefighters* manufactured by Charles Ahrens who began making high quality working models in the 1920s, the one on display was from 1930. The three-story building appeared to go up in smoke, with the flames simulated by lights flashing on and off at the windows.



"Our Firefighters" by Ahrens

Apparently, there is a baby trapped inside. The noise of the fire brigade can be heard, but one of the fire fighters has already shot up the stationary ladder before the fire engine has driven out through the doors of the Fire station, conveniently located alongside the building. The rescuer slides back with the baby in his arms, as the fire engine reverses back into the station.

One of the most diverse ranges of working models emanated from the Bolland family. Frederick Bolland came from Peckham and established a successful business in dealing and operating amusement machines. His younger brother Arthur assisted Fred in purchasing old cabinets that had previously housed the once popular claw crane machines (I remember these too and the number of times I had grabbed hold of a toy or pack of miniature playing cards, only to see them slip out as the grab talons came together, and my "prize" disappear). After the war, merchandise to stock the grab machines was in short supply so they became useless and the cabinets



"The Drunkard's Dream" by Bolland

readily available. The Bollands bought them from companies such as *Automatic Amusement Co.* and *Jean's Panopticon and Waxworks*. They were already fitted with coin-in-the-slot mechanisms, and they cannibalised some of the 'innards' to manufacture the working models that they developed.

These machines in general had more amusing scenarios, although executions were still popular. Titles like *The Drunkard's Dream*, *The Burglar*, *The Miser*, *The Haunted Churchyard* were some of the 300 working models they built. I walked to the line of Bolland machines, peered in at the *Drunkard*, sitting in his beer cellar and inserted my penny. The well-oiled figure, in a rather smart suit, is surrounded by crates and barrels of beer. He lifts a bottle to his lips several times, as a rat runs across the floor. The door under the stairs swings out and a ghost appears. Several demonic figures pop out of three of the barrels, one at a time. Finally, the fourth barrel swivels, to reveal "BEER IS BEST" printed on the side has been replaced by "LEFT ALONE". Excellent! and worth another penny for a second look.

A very rare machine from 1950 by Peerless Enterprise was next. It represents a *Beauty Contest* with four different ladies coming into view as the stage rotates. The heads of the judges turn to inspect each one. The last one is bent over showing her underwear and the judge raises a sign indicating that

she's won first prize, 1000 Nicker!



"The Beauty Contest" by Peerless Enterprise

I visited three more Bolland machines. First *The Burglar* from 1952. The gentleman in bed is startled awake to see a burglar opening his safe to reveal bags of money, while the cabinet by the bed opens to show a large pair of handcuffs. Finally, the door opens and a policeman peers in. Then *The Miser* from 1952; an old man is seated at a large crate with money scattered everywhere. He begins counting it. The safe opens, it is also full of money. Suddenly a nurse appears at the window collecting for charity. He turns and his expression clearly indicates his annoyance and that she had better hop



"The Burglar" by Bolland

it! Then at the same window, the devil appears, carrying gold coins, for which the miser is happy to sell his soul. Then the safe re-opens and this time it is empty.

The last was more interactive than the other Bolland machines. The instructions at the front of the cabinet read: *Turn knob until the required question is in centre of aperture. Place 1d in slot and the Pharaoh will invoke the Ancient Egyptian God "Amon" to give you his answer.* A door opened, above the pharaoh seated on his throne, exposing a skeleton. The courtier brandished his staff, the left-hand sarcophagus swung open, and the mummy inside revealed the **Yes** or **No** answer.



"The Egyptian God" by Bolland

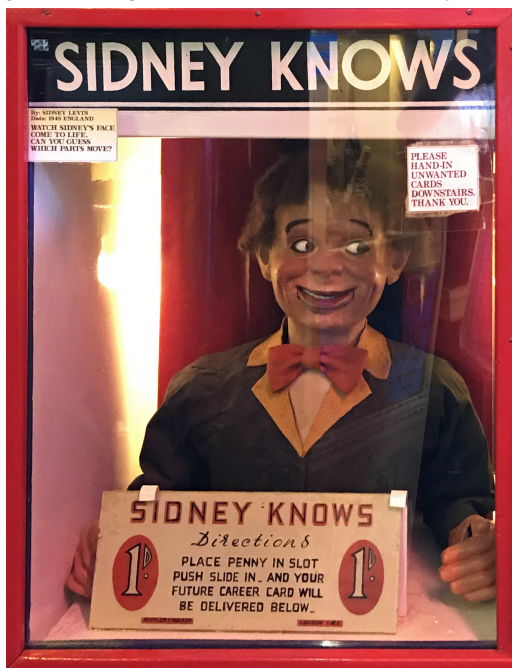
I continued my tour and came across some larger and more 'realistic' models. *Cry Baby* by Modern Enterprises from 1950 and *The Laughing Sailor*, a character synonymous with old style arcades. The noise of the crying baby and the chuckling sailor originally came from 78 RPM records but have been converted to an 8-track cassette. I invested a further penny to hear the crying baby, especially as a note on the glass of the cabinet indicated that in



"The Miser" by Bolland

order to save the wear on the cams and model, the time cycle had been reduced to 30 seconds. However even with this restriction the noise was incredibly annoying in the confined space. I decided to leave the sailor dumbstruck and moved on to the next cabinet which contained a very similar looking figure named Sidney, constructed in 1948 by Sidney Levin. I was informed that 'Sidney Knows' and invited to have my future career planned out for me by inserting a coin. I grabbed the piece of card containing Sidney's evaluation and headed towards the stairs, stopping to listen to another Ahrens machine, *The Bellringers*. The sound came from real bells being struck by a hammer located out of sight at the bottom of the cabinet. The picture at the back of the display depicts Hereford Cathedral.

Certainly Rye has an admirably stocked exhibition of vintage working models and is definitely worth a



"Sidney Knows" by Sidney Levin



"The Laughing Sailor" by Modern Enterprises

visit for those who remember these machines fondly. They are all well maintained with not a single "OUT OF ORDER" sign in sight.

I checked the contents of my pocket. Ah! one penny left: -



"The Bellringers" by Ahrens

Now what's this one tucked away over here?



THE ORGANINO

by Ted Brown



Reading through the German Society magazine and the last American MBSI magazine I noticed an article by the late Luuk Goldhoorn. It also contained a very useful addendum by Niko Weigman, which updated the article after Luuk's death, on an instrument called an Organino (picture 1). This is a metal musical box with eighteen tuned teeth and a wooden cylinder pinned with a single tune (picture 2). The teeth of the movement are steel mouth organ reeds. My Organino had a broken top tooth that was relatively easy to replace and tune using a mouth organ reed.

The Organino dates from the 1930s. Luuk states that the German manufacturers were Haro, shown as H.R. on the trademark of an outstretched arm holding a mouth organ (picture 3) with 881 "Mein Stolz" (translated as My Pride), with Made in Germany stamped on the side of the instrument. According to Niko Weigman the firm was run by Hans Rölz who had factories in Klingenthal, Germany and Graslitz (now Kraslice in the Czech



Picture 3: H.R. - Hans Rölz or Haro

Republic). They were predominantly makers of mouth organs and harmonicas.

An interesting story about mine was how I discovered the name of the tune. The picture on it shows two children looking at a tree with the little boy pointing up to the branches (picture 4). At first, I had no idea of the tune but a few years later, when I bought and played a little 1930s tabatière, I heard the tune again. Its title was Kuk Kuk, or Cuckoo Cuckoo. When I looked more closely at the picture on the Organino, sure enough, I could see a cuckoo in the branches of the tree (picture 5).

So my thanks go to the late Luuk Goldhoorn, Niko Weigman, MBSI and the German Society for inspiring me to put all this together. My thanks also to Chris Fynes for making these pictures clear enough to see.



Picture 2: Showing the wooden cylinder and reeds as teeth.



Picture 4: The decorative top and the elusive cuckoo!

German 27-Key 'Melodeon' Barrel Reed Organ

by David Evans

'Melodeon' – a small reed organ, in the form of a harmonium or accordion.

Another German instrument with a wooden barrel.

The barrel version of the Melodion was made and patented by Wilhelm Späthe of Gera from 1878 (German patent 2151). These barrel reed organs typically had 25 notes, but were available in sizes varying from 14 notes to 33. The Späthe catalogues available show that they were available in 1901 and still were in 1913. The patent referred to the simple tune-change lever system. They were essentially inexpensive, selling for DM 10.60 for the 14-note size in 1901 to 66 Marks for the 28-note version in 1913. The version shown here has 27 notes.

The barrels are interchangeable, with care, and the factory list stated "Extra barrels delivered in a few days". The paper label in the lid is the tune list for the barrel originally supplied. Barrel size 16 ½" x 3 ½" dia.

The tune list includes:

Frohsinn Marsch – also known as 'Hoch, König Johann!' - Carl Hauschild (1869). It became the Regimental March of the 107th Regiment of the German Army.

Walzer auf Indigo Sarap(?) – J Strauss II (1871)

Gingerbread Polka from 'Peter & Paul in Cockaigne' – Fr Lehar (1870 – 1948)

Extra Pros (?) Galopp – Lehar

Ailooska (?) Quadrille

Walzer auf Faust – Gounod (first published 1859)

An almost identical instrument appeared on eBay a few years ago, described as a 'barrel organette'. Strangely, its barrel bore a label, applied prior to pinning, stating



Looking down from above - bellows at the front



Lété Simon l'aîné

Fabrique et tient Magasin d'Instrumens de Musique en tous genres; tient aussi Cordes de Naples et autres, ainsi que tout ce qui concerne La Lutherie.

A Mirecourt, dép. des Voges.

Translated, this states

Simon Lété the elder

Makes and runs the store of musical instruments of all genres; also stocks strings from Naples and others, as well as everything related to the violin.

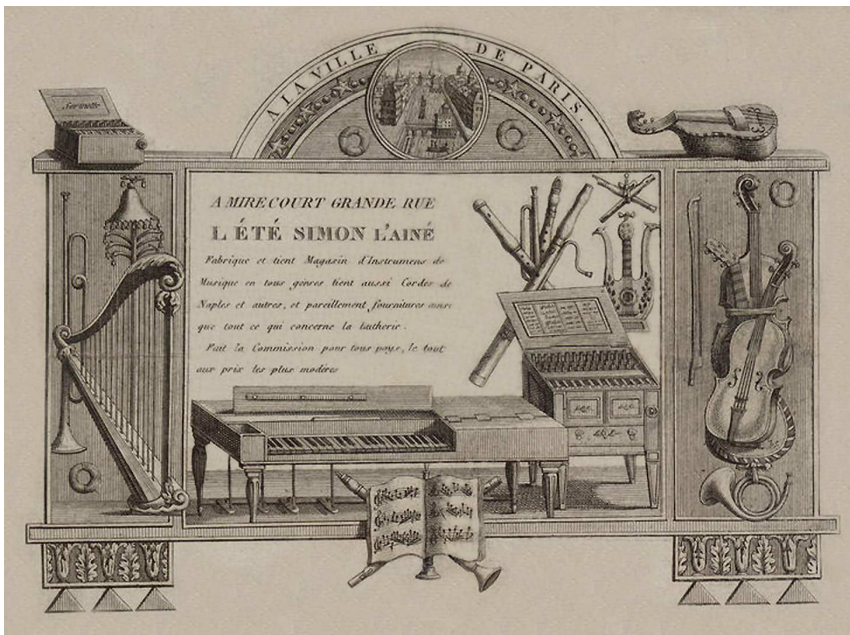
At Mirecourt, dep. of the Voges

The interesting part of all this is that Simon Lété Senior died in 1832!



Biography of Simon Lété

Born about 1768, died 1832. A violin maker at Mirecourt, France, who made instruments at very

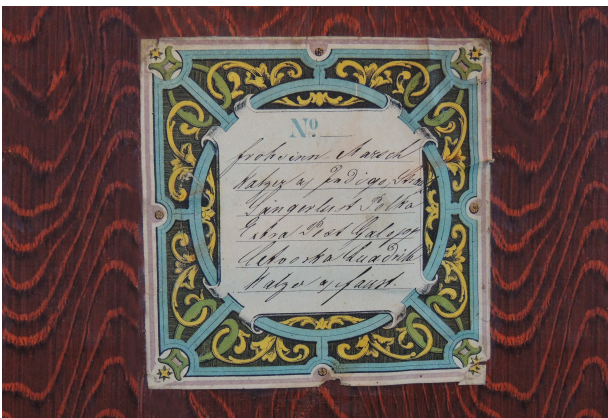


Simon Lété's trade card

cheap prices for the trade; in 1823 he was awarded a silver medal for a very satisfactory violin, which was priced 25 francs (£1). J. B. Vuillaume (a renowned violin maker) entered his workshop in 1821, and 1825-28 was in partnership with him. Simon married the daughter of Pique, the violin maker; his son, Nicolas Antoine, b. March 29, 1793, Mirecourt, became an organ builder.

As usual, we have more questions than answers! How did a trade label of a violin maker and retailer in France who died in 1832 get on to the barrel of a German instrument that was not made until 1878?

Answers please on a postcard to the Editors...



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To promote the enjoyment of mechanical music in all its forms.

To provide opportunities of social interaction to members through meetings and outings of musical and other historical interest.

To establish formal links and working relationships with other national and international organisations in the field of mechanical music.

To encourage research and publication of articles and books on the subject.

To reach out to the public and foster a wider interest in mechanical music.

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Awaiting Image

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Contact P. Bellamy or Ted Brown for P&P details: bellamypaul@btinternet.com or 01403823533.

A Passion for Barrel Pianos by Milly & Colin Williams. (See illustration)

This delightful and informative limited edition has over 60 illustrations and charts, most in colour. There are 12 sections dealing with aspects of casework, barrels, gearing, musical arrangement, marking and pinning.

The booklet is A4, ring-backed binding for easy use, with 40 pages of information between the covers.

UK price: £10 + P&P with comparable European and overseas costs to be negotiated.

Cylinder Musical Box Design & Repair by HAV Bulleid. This A5 234 page book, long out of print, is available brand new for the bargain price of £10 + P&P.

Cylinder Musical Box Technology by HAV Bulleid. This A5 290 page book, long out of print, is available brand new for the bargain price of £10 + P&P.

***Disc Musical Box Book** by K. McElhone. This exceptional A4 book comprises over 490 pages in full colour throughout. It is a compendium about all forms of

disc and related instruments. Although second hand, it is in mint condition for the bargain price of £50 + P&P.

***The Nicole Factor in Mechanical Music** by Paul Bellamy and contributing authors Cunliffe and Ison. This A4 book comprises over 250 pages with colour centrefold of 16 pages illustrating 118 pictures plus ample charts and pictures in B&W. There are a few unused mint-condition copies purchased by the principal author for personal gifts but now donated to AMBC. A bargain price of £35 + P&P.

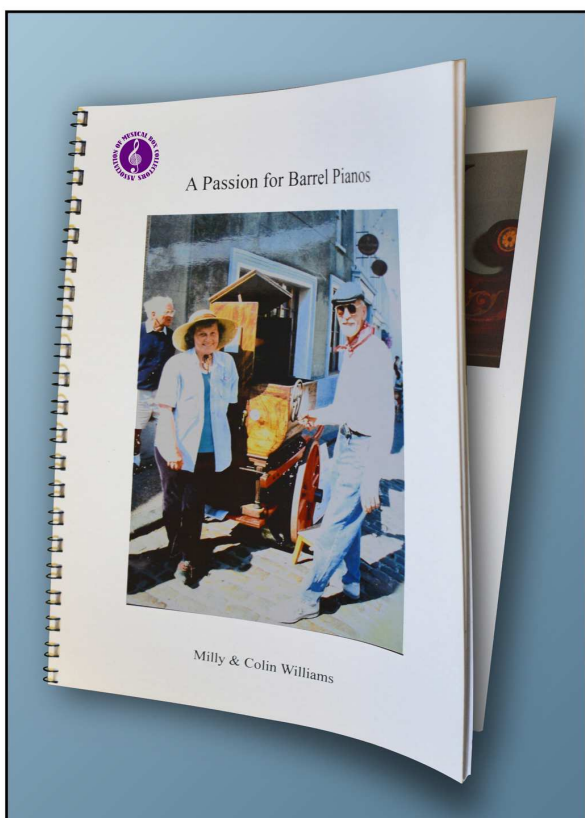
***Musical Box Tune Sheets** (The Tune Sheet Book) and three supplements, by HAV Bulleid. This A5 book and its supplements illustrate 400 tune sheets with dating charts for 15 makers. Contact E. Brown for details. They are in mint condition, purchased by Mr. Brown at the time he edited and compiled the book for Anthony Bulleid.

***The Organette Book** by K. McElhone. This 10 x 7-inch landscape edition has nearly 220 pages and hundreds of illustrations including a colour centrefold of 16 pages and 33 illustrations. Although second hand, it is in mint condition for the bargain price of £35 + P&P.

***Street musicians on Postcards** by Paul Bellamy. This 9 x 6½-inch book is in full colour throughout, comprising 108 pages. It is in the form of a 3-act play, each act in 4 scenes thus describing 12 categories of post card types. The intervals tell the history of postcards and the story of Christie's Old Organ. These are mint condition copies bought by the author originally for personal gifts but now donated to AMBC. A bargain price of £8 + P&P.

Data Storage Musical Instruments by Siegfried Wendel, Rudesheim 2002. In English, German and French. Wonderful book in as-new condition. £15.

The Curious History of Music Boxes by Roy Mosoriak, Chicago 1943. Clean condition. £10. Both + P & P. Contact the Editors.



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