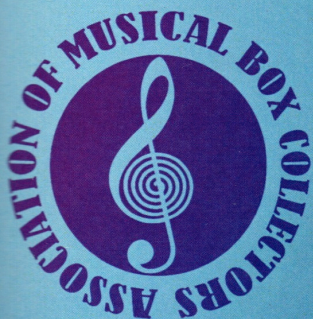


Issue 34, Autumn 2023

# MECHANICAL MUSIC WORLD



18th Century Silver Swan  
- see article on page 22

An Association of Musical Box Collectors Publication

## From the Editors' Desk

Well, the summer has apparently been and gone - and now that Harvest Festival and the November 5th fireworks will have been and gone too, Christmas will be next. This year has flown by. Once the clocks change it's all down hill, as somebody said.

One positive for the longer evenings is the time it gives us to enjoy our 'favourite things', by which we are thinking of the mechanical musical variety. We had a collector of antique radios from New Zealand visiting us this week and enjoyed sharing with him the musical boxes. He was amazed that 'all this music comes from those little metal strips?' It is fun to share the boxes with other people, isn't it?

Talking of sharing, it sounds as if a great time was had by all at Eastbourne - quite like the old days. We congratulate Laurence Fisher on a most successful event and opportunity to catch up with old friends. So glad to know that he intends to host a similar auction next year.

We are indebted to Paul Baker for sharing "Old London Amusements" - a delightful reminiscence. We are still wondering how today's audiences would sit through a circus performance lasting four hours - even if they had paid threepence for it!

David Soulsby has visited Barnard Castle and has presented us with a wonderful article on the Silver Swan. We have been intrigued with this magical

piece for many years - ever since one of our clock-maker friends travelled up there to service it. He was very enthusiastic on his return about the amazing workmanship and sheer quality of the automaton.

Hallelujah - we have letters to the Editors! Something we always appreciate and are glad to receive.

Congratulations are in order for Paul Bellamy's recent award from our American fellow collectors of the Musical Box Society International in the form of the Q David Bowers award for Outstanding Literary Contributions to the Field of Automatic Music. He has actually written four books - The Nicole Factor, The Music Makers of Switzerland, The Cylinder Musical Box Collector's and Restorer's Handbook and, most recently, The Cylinder Musical Box Tune Sheets, Makers, Agents & Dates, together with numerous research articles which add invaluable extra detail to the known history of the Swiss musical box industry in the nineteenth Century.

As usual a huge thank you to our contributors for this issue:

Paul Baker, Paul Bellamy, Roger Booty, Laurence Fisher, Steve Greatrex and David Soulsby.

Thank you all!

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## Chairman's Message



**The Chairman, Deputy Chairman, secretaries, webmaster and all the committee wish you all a blessed and merry Christmas and a safe and happy New Year. May we all have a peaceful 2024!**



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### Publication Dates for "Mechanical Music World"

Winter issue 28<sup>th</sup> January; Spring issue 28<sup>th</sup> April; Summer issue 28<sup>th</sup> July; Autumn issue 28<sup>th</sup> 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 MEETINGS

There will be another Chancton-bury Ring meeting at Ted Brown's in Spring 2024.

Watch this space for further details.

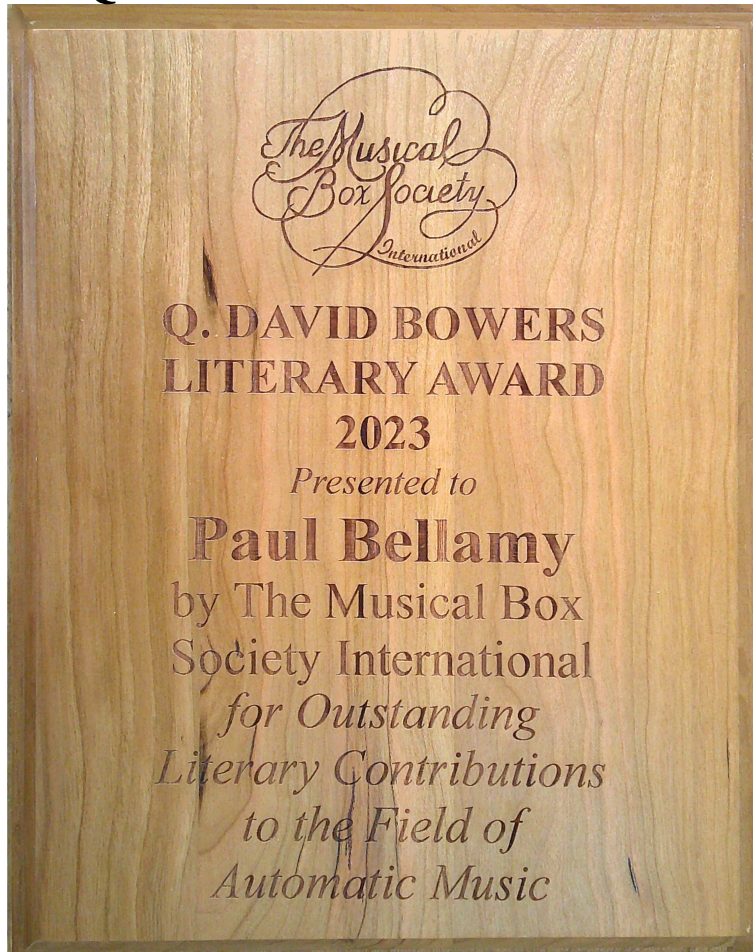
## Q. David Bowers Award

It has been a great pleasure and privilege to be awarded a third Q. David Bowers Award 'for outstanding literary contributions to the field of Automatic music.'

Quentin David Bowers is a well known numismatologist and a recognised author on the subject. He is a member of the Musical Box Society International and author of major works on the subject of musical boxes. MBSI established The Bowers Award to recognise and encourage others to put pen-to-paper. To do so can be quite a daunting task and needs the co-operation of others who are expert in the subject.

My mentor many years ago was the late H. A. V. (Anthony) Bulleid, a Bowers award winner himself who actively encouraged me to edit a book called *The Nicole Factor in Mechanical Music* for a UK member's society. Ted Brown, the chairman of that society's Publications Committee, proposed me for the task under the guidance of Anthony. The purpose was to summarise the life of the remarkable Nicole Family. Although there were two expert contributors the work of editing became one of authorship and research into all relevant works and articles on the subject.

I had an engineering and managerial background in the UK electricity supply industry, during which time I wrote technical manuals and helped to produce a 12 volume work called *Modern Power Station Practice*. However, I was a newcomer to the study of musical boxes. Without Anthony's guid-



ance and critical approach to research in his area of expertise the *Nicole Factor* would not have been written. The society did not have enough money to publish the book but Ted managed to obtain money from a bequest and a donation.

The trouble with writing an article or book is that it is so easy to repeat inaccurate information; spelling mistakes are a perpetual hazard and the *Nicole Factor* had a classic one courtesy of Spellcheck. There was a reference to Chopin in one part that correctly identi-

fied his place of birth as Vienna. Unfortunately, in another chapter, Spellcheck offered some alternative spellings and an inadvertent finger transferred his place of birth to Venice. Authors rarely make good proof readers and even proof readers' eyes get tired. Dates are another proofing hazard; it is so easy to switch numbers around and, unless the proof reader knows more than the author, 1894 can so easily leap forward almost a hundred years to 1984. George Orwell would have been pleased at that one.

So, here are my repeated thanks to all those who spent the time and trouble on the three books that I have written for AMBC. I thank all those MBSI members who contributed and supported the work for my last two works as well as those who kept a technical and grammatical eye on the subject before the inevitable Print Button was pressed, our editors David and Lesley Evans. All three books were again funded by donations and by sales from one were set towards the cost of the next.

## MECHANICAL MUSIC AUCTION EASTBOURNE 28<sup>TH</sup> OCTOBER 2023 PRICES REALISED

LOT	HAMMER	LOT	HAMMER	LOT	HAMMER	LOT	HAMMER	LOT	HAMMER
1	130	32	Pass	63	30	94	Pass	125	280
2	10	33	Pass	64	Pass	95	40	126	190
3	6	34	55	65	80	96	65	127	1600
4	10	35	10	66	80	97	70	128	600
5	12	36	Pass	67	55	98	Pass	129	600
6	25	37	30	68	Pass	99	70	130	650
7	Pass	38	12	69	10	100	75	131	550
8	55	39	30	70	Pass	101	110	132	280
9	Pass	40	20	71	10	102	160	133	180
10	Pass	41	8	72	10	103	750	134	90
11	Pass	42	28	73	14	104	Pass	135	20
12	Pass	43	32	74	20	105	2600	136	20
13	220	44	10	75	30	106	1750	137	20
14	Pass	45	10	76	40	107	30	138	60
15	Pass	46	10	77	30	108	170	139	5
16	560	47	32	78	8	109	160	140	5
17	720	48	16	79	26	110	22	141	20
18	Pass	49	25	80	600	111	370	142	10
19	22000	50	Pass	81	640	112	480	143	90
20	1600	51	160	82	200	113	Pass	144	550
21	900	52	Pass	83	260	114	Pass	145	80
22	Pass	53	65	84	190	115	60	146	110
23	75	54	Pass	85	170	116	300	147	90
24	90	55	Pass	86	120	117	380	148	180
25	170	56	75	87	60	118	190	149	480
26	420	57	70	88	80	119	Pass	150	420
27	320	58	70	89	55	120	500	151	Pass
28	Pass	59	Pass	90	30	121	340	152	500
29	Pass	60	40	91	6	122	310	153	5
30	Pass	61	85	92	Pass	123	160	154	1000
31	220	62	360	93	60	124	Pass	155	Pass
								156	50
								157	10
								158	Pass

SALE TOTAL £49,619

SOLD BY VALUE 99%

SOLD BY LOT 79%

Number of buyers: 46

Number of vendors: 27

## OLD LONDON AMUSEMENTS

by A. E. Dobbs

*Paul Baker provided this extract from 'Gramophone and Talking Machine News' published on September 1924, together with his explanatory footnotes. Here, A. E. Dobbs looks back to his bygone age of the 1880s & 1890s.*

*Written just a few years after WW1, Dobbs expresses social views and attitudes of the times.*

In viewing the present-day entertainment for youth (gramophone, wireless, kinematograph), how simple were the amusements that prevailed between the '80's and '90's for the then rising generation. Reproduction of sound had been accomplished but had not become a world-wide industry for the pleasures of all. Speaking from personal recollection, the home amusements comprised a Lilliputian theatre and a tin magic lantern smelling horribly of paraffin. Oft-times at these lantern displays, the performance came to an abrupt end owing to the lamp overheating and setting the apparatus ablaze. As regards music, we had perhaps a musical box or portable organette (with perforated music discs) worked by hand, each member of the family taking it in turn to play.

Out of doors the programme was more varied in character, as there were quite a numerous collection of itinerant performers on the streets of London. For a while, London was patronised by travelling Deutscher bands, some members of which bore a striking resemblance to Gambrinius, the tun-bellied King of Beer. There was a general feeling amongst the public that the members were sent over here for espionage purposes. Most assuredly they were not musicians. The din they created cannot be described. I have on several occasions seen one of these combinations abandon their performance owing to the howling opposition set up by the local canine population. The battle was often waged with fury on both sides, but generally the 'friend of man' secured the victory. The event might be recorded in a Breitmann<sup>1</sup> stanza:

*The Sherman bandts playt hearty  
Yet the Ingleesh dogs sot dere  
And broke oop all der barty  
tsdonnerkreutschockschwerenoth!  
Thus brudder Hans ditt svear*

In fact, the canine ensemble had a similar effect on the musicians as the Limberger cheese had on Hans Breitmann's band: 'It knockt de music doomb.'

*Revenous a nos moutons.* \* Some of the piano-organs in my younger days had moveable figures which played a bell accompaniment. Have the padroni or hirers out of street organs gone out of business? The denizens of Little Italy appear to have almost abandoned this instrument, seeking wealth as cheap restauranteurs. The wives of these 'organ grinders' were a very happy class and made picturesque figures in their gay attire. The husbands of these women were quite the opposite in their appearance and ways. In many instances, dirty and unkempt, they brought to mind visions of the Camorra or Mafia terrorists. Generally the Italian women did all the hard work.

To my then idea the monkeys that accompanied these instruments worked far harder than the men folk. More often than not there was a fine chubby baby snugly tucked up in a weather-proof cradle attached to the tool box. The rattle of the barrel, the music and the traffic passing over the London cobble stones never seemed to disturb their slumbers. Josh Billings<sup>2</sup> has a travesty on an English couplet in which he says:

*"Music hath charms to soothe the savage,  
to break the rock and kill the cabbage"*

Would he have classed the offsprings of our alien friends as cabbages?

The street N\*\*\*\*\* minstrels were a centre of attraction to the little ones. The banjo, tambourine, bones, tin whistle and harmonium comprised a full band. The children occupied the orchestra stalls (the kerbstones!). "Oh, dem golden slippers, oh" and "Sister Mary walks like that" (with walking effects and a tin whistle obbligato accompaniment) were favourite numbers.

Then we had horse-drawn merry-go-rounds. Punch-and-Judy shows, street acrobats, sword swallowers, Jack-in-the-Greens on 1st May, performing bears and the one-man band. Once a year a conjuror visited the local schools and showed us mysterious sleight of hand tricks. The *tour de*

force was the hat trick. Having scrambled and cooked an egg in a top hat, the 'professor' reversed the head covering. A touch from his magic wand and *hey presto*, on the hat being removed, in place of the egg was a dinkie little white rabbit.

I must not omit to mention the 'penny gaff' or side shows which were usually held in unoccupied shops. Freaks and other wonderful attractions were on exhibition at these places. The fee for admittance was a penny, and one had the opportunity of seeing the fattest lady in the world, the sleeping beauty, or the wild man from Borneo. At the circus, a four-hour entertainment could be obtained for threepence (boxes a shilling), Joey and Columbine predominated with their equestrian performances.

I must now close my reminiscences, hoping that they will bring back pleasant memories of many happy days, 'when we were boys.'

Notes:

1. *The Hans Breitmann ballads* by Charles Godfrey Leland.

2. Josh Billings (1818-1885) was the pen-name of a famous American humorist and lecturer, Henry Wheeler Shaw, who was still remembered well into the 20th century.

3. A Jack-in-the Green was formerly a widespread English folk custom associated with the celebration of May Day. A conical wicker or wooden framework decorated with foliage was worn by a person as part of a procession, often accompanied by music.

\* French vernacular meaning: Let us get back to our subject. Here, Dodds imagines he is in conversation with his audience, the reader.



The 'Jack-in-the-Green' procession characters included Jack (above), M'Lady & M'Lord (bottom left), chimney sweeps (below left), milkmaids (below) and Bunters (originally women who picked up rags from the street - bottom right). The whole performance was intended to be a parody of London life.

Illustrations from lantern slides circa 1840.



## Report of AMBC Society Meeting

from Paul Bellamy

Ted Brown hosted the meeting on the 10<sup>th</sup> September at The Old School. It followed the well established format, starting with tea, coffee and biscuits and a chance to socialise. The meeting started at 11 am. Free lunch was provided, complete with musical entertainment on Ted's player piano in the old school canteen before the afternoon session commenced.

One of the pieces Ted played was a Chopin study performed by Irene Sharrer (b.1888, d.1971). It was a poignant experience for Paul Bellamy who, as a very young man, bought her Richard Lipp baby-grand piano upon which she had practised. She made her London debut at the age of 16 giving concerts until June 1958, where she appeared for the last time, playing Mozart's Sonata for Two Pianos with Myra Hess. They often performed four-handed compositions together. Her playing was described by a reviewer as 'virile, yet withal delicate and poetic, a lovely touch and poetic style combined with warmth of tone, but pervading all delicacy and refinement.' She was especially known for playing the works of Chopin.

The following is a further account of delightful music and self-playing musical instruments by members who brought along items to Play & Display.

### 1. A Cuendet cartel movement restored by Bernard Novell.

Fig. 1.1A shows Bernard demonstrating the musical box. Fig. 1.1B shows the case after restoration. It needed some work to reset loose veneers. Bernard explained it was achieved quite easily by warming up a piece of flat oak and then placing it under light pressure over the affected area. The warmth of the oak was sufficient to cause the glue under the loose veneers to re-bond. He then refurbished the case-work retaining its original patina. The cylinder needed re-pinning, work undertaken by restorer James Preddy, Fig. 1.1C.

The left and centre combs are tuned to produce the sublime harmonic affect, both being tuned to the same scale but with slightly different frequency for each pitch. When teeth of the same pitch on each



Fig 1.1A: Bernard Novell and his Cuendet



Fig 1.1B: The Cuendet case

comb are plucked together the combined frequencies 'interfere' with each other to give a slight vibrato effect. The left comb has 44 teeth and the centre comb has 43. Why? Probably because the first bass tooth of the left comb is the only one that is not used to produce the sublime effect. Slow vibration in pairs does not always produce the desired effect at the lower end of the scale's register.



Fig 1.1C: The restored movement

The right hand comb produces the piccolo effect. It has 43 teeth tuned to a higher but matching pitch to the treble end of the other two combs. Instead of detectable vibrato, when plucked at the same time as their counterparts on the other two combs, the higher frequency and shorter period of vibration produces a sort of ‘descant’ effect, riding above the melody.

Although the scale range for just 43 teeth will be small, probably about 4 octaves, the musical effect depends on the extraordinary skill of the unknown arranger, often overlooked.

Fig. 1.1D shows the delightful large tune sheet. They are sometimes a work of art in their own right. It is headed ‘Sublime Piccolo. The late HAV Bulleid illustrated two examples in his book ‘Musical Box Tune Sheets’ (Bulleid refs 125, 149). These were very finely executed lithographs but the lithographer’s name does not appear on the tune sheet, only the words: ‘MODÈL DÉPOSÉ’, meaning registered design. The pattern dates to the 1880s and Cuendet used the pattern for his entry in the 1896 Geneva Exhibition for a movement that had a reed organ and a singing bird mounted behind the cylinder.



Fig 1.1D: Cuendet tune sheet

Bulleid described tune sheets as the musical box’s ‘birth certificate’; they can be an aid to dating. Lithography, a word that combines the ancient Greek for ‘writing’ and ‘stone’ was a way of printing images by engraving a flat piece of stone. Early tune sheets were printed by this method and, because the stones wore out quickly, new stones were

engraved. Metal plates then replaced the stone. The process was invented in 1796 by the German author and actor Alois Senefelder, used mostly for printing musical scores and maps.

The Valuet family of Besançon, France, were probably leaders in this field of printing and produced tune sheets exclusively, it seems, for Paillard-Vaucher (PVF). Others quickly followed such as Magnenat & Fils (Lausanne), Picard-Lion (Geneva) and H. Bataille (Paris). The Cuendet tune sheet does not have the Valuet name but they were known to use several lithographers.

The QR code will enable the listener to learn more.



## 2. Two key-wind cylinder musical boxes

Another member brought along two musical boxes to demonstrate the maker Henriot. Instead of two Henriot’s one of them turned out to be a Nicole. Did that matter? Of course it did not. We now had the opportunity to listen and compare two very fine examples of great musical box makers.

Figs 2.1A shows the lid with boxwood stringing surrounding intricate swags of floral veneers encompassing a trumpet and stringed instrument plus. The veneers would originally have been brightly stained with organic pigments. These fade with time but, like fine tapestries that can suffer the same colour deterioration, remain fine works of art.

Fig 2.1B shows the Henriot movement. Bulleid was unable to produce a dating chart for Henriot even though the few that survived are distinguished by having the serial number stamped parallel to the left side of the bedplate with the Henriot name stamped adjacent to it but parallel to the top edge. It is thought that Henriot was more of an agent than a maker, buying in complete or part finished movements. It really does not matter because musical boxes with his name will be comparable to other



Fig 2.1A: The lid of the Henriot box

Geneva makers of the period. Bulleid wrote that his were: “...typical top-class made in Geneva movements with characteristic embossed tune sheets. They are all earlier than about 1850, key-wound with brass bedplates and plain cases.” This example had a serial number in the 15000s range, which equate with three other Geneva makers, Ducommun-Girod, François Lecoultre, Nicole Frères.

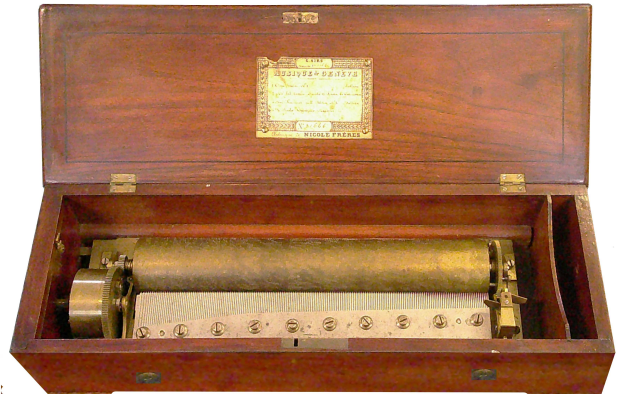


Fig 2.2B: The fine Nicole 4-air box

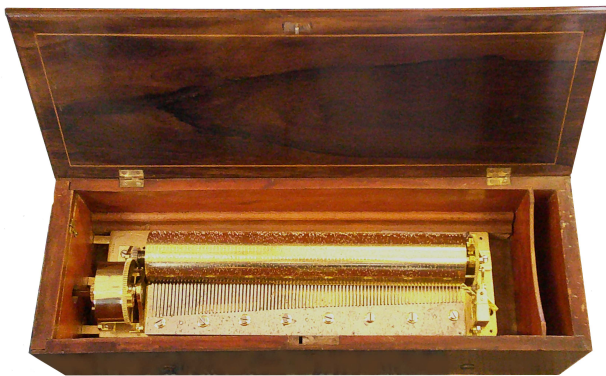


Fig 2.1B: Henriot movement

Fig. 2.2A is a Nicole movement in the 31000 series, circa 1852, with a 4-air movement with 187 teeth. The movement is in un-restored original condition, Fig 2.2B, and remains in very good playing order. It will be left that way. Far too many instruments are ‘restored’ to showcase condition. Often that is the only way to save a musical box for another generation but when in this state, surely it is best left in its ‘as-found’ condition for as long as possible. Fig. 2.2C shows the tune sheet that would have been printed using a hand-engraved stone.



Fig 2.2C: Original Nicole tune sheet

### 3. Musical pottery mugs and jugs of the 1930s.

Paul Bellamy brought along four examples of musical jugs. Figs. 3.1A & B show a 10-inch tall, treacle glazed water ewer with the body beautifully embossed with a young couple dancing ‘The Lambeth Walk’. Around the bottom rim are the words: ‘They Are All doing the “Lambeth Walk”. Oi!’ Of course, its Thorens movement plays the tune of that name.



Fig 2.2A: A Nicole Frères 4-air musical box



Fig 3.1A: The Lambeth Walk jug



*Fig 3.1B: The reverse of the Lambeth Walk jug*

Fig. 3.1B shows an organ with the Capuchin monkey on top and the cloth-capped organ grinder cranking the handle. The embossed background illustrates London Houses. Astride the handle sits another figure of the organ grinder. The maker of the jug is almost certain to be Grimswade, under their brand Royal Winton. The inner rim of the base has the words MADE IN ENGLAND. The first version of the song Lambeth Walk was composed in 1899 by Edward W. Rogers, a Music Hall singer. A later and entirely different version was written by Douglas Furber and L. Arthur Rose with music by Noel Gay for the 1937 musical *Me And My Girl*. Lambeth Walk is in the London borough of Lambeth, a poor 'working class' part of London at the time. The tune gave its name to a Cockney dance made popular in 1937 by Lupino Lane. A Cockney was a person born in the East End of London. They were noted for their rhyming slang (apple and pears - stairs; loaf of bread - head; mince pies - eyes). This colourful language was also used in truncated form such as 'trouble' (trouble & strife - wife) as well as by market traders to deceive an unwary customer.

The Lambeth Walk was a simple popular walking dance, performed in a jaunty strutting style. The managing director of the Locarno Dance Halls got one of his dancing instructors, Adele England, to elaborate the walk into a dance, which became a craze that swept far beyond London. Even King George VI and Queen Elizabeth attended a performance, joined in the words and finished with its characteristic Oi! The dance spread as far as America and the music was played by mainstream

orchestras such as Duke Ellington.

Figs. 3.2A, B, C & D illustrate another Royal Winton example, a mug 6-inches high. It is very similar on style to those made by Fieldings in its Crown Devon range. It illustrates an Irish scene of musicians (drummer and flautist) and couples dancing under a string of paper chains and a balloon. On the back is a more sober image of a two-wheeled Irish jaunting car. With the movement removed, the Royal Winton logo defines the maker. It also has exactly the same upper-case print MADE IN ENGLAND. Paul explained that his son-in-law was an Irishman and this will become another family heirloom for that branch of his family.



*Fig 3.2A: The Irish-themed Royal Winton jug*



*Fig 3.2B: The Irish Jaunting Car*

When purchased it did not have a movement. Paul had a spare Thorens movement but with an unsuitable tune. He stripped the cylinder and made a new one using thin brass sheet. Before the brass was rolled into a cylinder and the edges silver soldered,

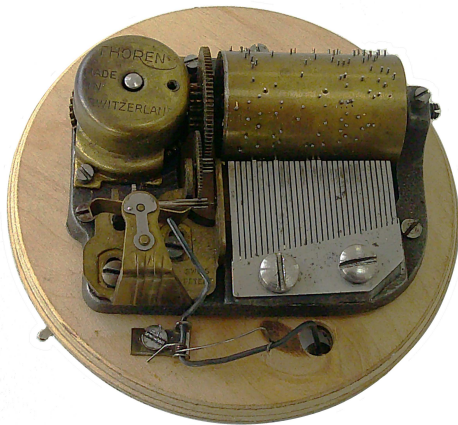


Fig 3.2C: The Thorens movement with its new cylinder

he scribed horizontal parallel lines to form a musical manuscript and vertical lines spaced to match tooth tips. He and his wife arranged the tune of Phil the Fluter's Ball, an Irish jig, on the piano and then pricked and drilled the notation onto the brass sheet. When made into a cylinder it was drilled and pinned in the usual way. Most of the comb teeth had to be re-tuned. It is easier to lower the pitch of treble teeth by adding a little solder to the underside. The tune, as composed on the piano, was scaled down to achieve this result. Teeth with lead weights were adjusted by adding or removing lead.



Fig 3.2D: Showing the manufacturer's mark

Figs 3.3A-C illustrates another embossed water jug of about the same date, mid 1930s, made by the Stoke on Trent pottery Fieldings. They made musical jugs under the banner Crown Devon. The name Devon has nothing to do with the English county of that name. When Fieldings almost became bankrupt the son of the owner named his works The Devon Pottery.

The jug celebrates Gracie Fields, a stage name for



Fig 3.3A: A Crown Devon water jug

Grace Stanfield. She was a 'Lancashire Lass' known by her adoring fans as 'Our Gracie'. A singer, dancer, actress, she retained her distinctive Lancashire accent even when singing. In 1937 she was said to be the highest paid Star in the world. In 1939 Our Gracie, recovering from Cancer, went to the Italian island of Capri to recuperate. She married an Italian but when WWII broke out she wanted to entertain the allied forces. Had the couple returned to the UK her husband would have been interned, so they went to North America.



Fig 3.3B: 'Our Gracie' portrayed on the jug

The Thorens movement plays her theme tune, Sally, used in her first film, Sally In Our Alley, made in 1931. The song repeats the name 'Sally' twice, the second on higher and slower. The movement does the same.

Figs 3.4A & B show another Lambeth Walk mug made by CarltonWare. It is transfer printed in colour, a method also used by Fieldings after WWII. (See also back cover - Ed)

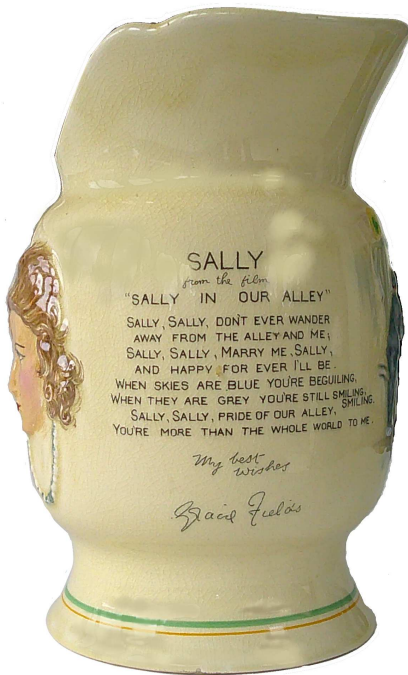


Fig 3.3C: The words of the popular song

Paul concluded by saying he was a 4<sup>th</sup> generation cockney whose forbears migrated to London like many others from all over the UK as London became the greatest commercial and industrial city in the world. They formed a tight-knit community of Irish, Welsh, Scots and every other mix of UK culture with their own Cockney language and culture. His maternal grandmother spoke another form of Cockney market slang, back-slang. Here, words were spoken backwards; 'Have a look at those' would become: 'Evah a kool ta esoth.'



Fig 3.4A: A CarltonWare 'Lambeth Walk' jug



Fig 3.4B: The reverse of the CartonWare jug

#### 4. A large Ariel organette.

Figs. 4.1A-D show Roger Booty playing and talking about his Ariel organette made about 1892 by Maxfield and Sons of London. It cost 12/6 (12 shillings & 6 pence), equivalent to nearly £100 today. Even so, it was good value for money because 'after sales' for the punched paper rolls created a healthy profit for each instrument sold. The legend on its lid declared it: 'By Royal Letters Patent, The Ariel, Double Voiced Automatic Organ'. How British and how quaint! These letters patent were granted solely by the monarch of the time (King or Queen) and were legal instruments. This musical instrument had every right to that title. Its twin reeds were in perfect tune and harmony.



Fig 4.1A: Roger Booty with his Ariel organette



Fig 4.2B: The Ariel with four stop knobs

There are 40 reeds and 4 stops: Flute, Vox Humana, Forte, Melodia. The forte stop actuates a swell flap. The Vox Humana (human voice) stop causes a spindle to contact a pulley driven by the crankshaft; the spindle fitted with a vane, rotates and causes fluctuations of air flow to the reeds.



Fig 4.1C: Side view of the Ariel

Fig. 4.1D shows the operating instructions, declaring MADE IN ENGLAND, SOLID WALNUT, including the need to grease the bearings with Vaseline. Fig. 4.1E is an embossed metal label for J. Pittuck, Manufacture, 85 Union Street, Stonehouse.



Fig 4.1D: The playing instructions

## 5. Serinettes

Anna Svenson demonstrated her 11 pipe serinette, Fig. 5.1A, a form of small hand cranked barrel organ. The name comes from the French word for canary because they were used to teach canaries to sing the tunes pinned onto the barrel. Of course, the tunes did not follow the normal convention of pitch and tune arrangement.



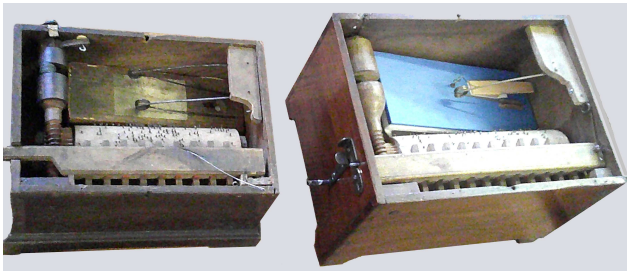
Fig 5.1A: Anna Svenson with Serinette

The serinettes were first made in France as long ago as the early 1700s. A major manufacturing centre was the town of Miracourt. The cases were usually made of walnut. Most have their pipes standing vertically at the rear of the case. This example had them lying horizontally under the case, which stood on short legs, Fig. 5.1B.



*Fig 5.1B: The horizontal pipes on Anna's Serinette*

The movement is shown on the right of Fig. 5.1C adjacent to a smaller 11 pipe example owned by Ted Brown. Fig. 5.1D shows Ted playing an upright serinette.



*Fig 5.1C: Two versions of Serinettes*



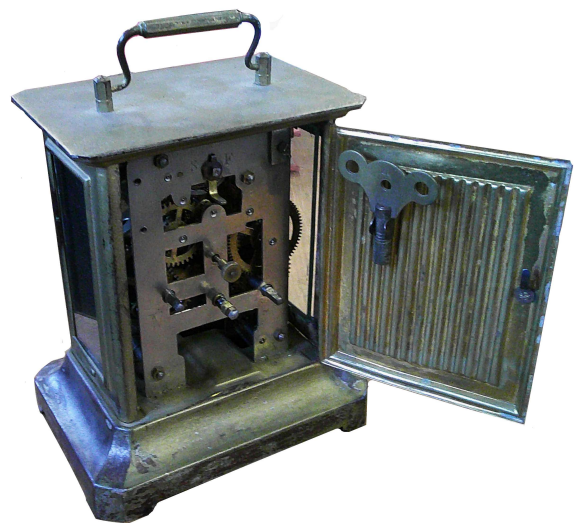
*Fig 5.1D: Ted Brown plays a conventional Serinette*

## 6. Musical novelties

No meeting at Ted and Kay Brown's Old School is complete without demonstrating novelties. Figs. 6.1A & B are for a musical alarm clock. Although the name of the maker is not on the clock the case is identical to those made by the German maker Junghans. The distinguishing feature for this example is the dial, with its Turkish features, making it quite a rare surviving example.



*Fig 6.1A: Turkish market musical alarm clock*



*Fig 6.1B: Interior of the musical alarm clock*

Figs. 6.2 A, B & C is for a musical door 'bell'. A battery operated electric motor drives a small cylinder musical movement. The comb is covered by a

microphone, which connects with a miniature electronic amplifier that drives a speaker. This idea of using a standard spring-powered small cylinder movement, adapted to motor drive with amplified sound, was also used for ice cream vans.

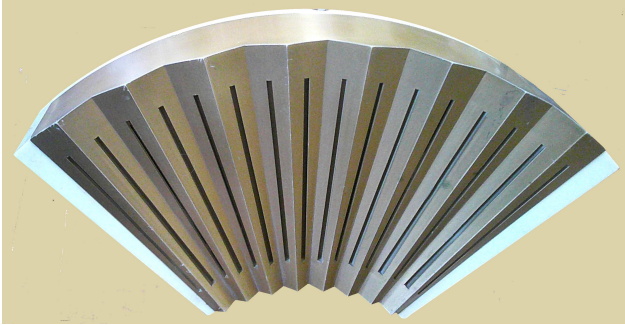


Fig 6.2A: Musical door bell



Fig 6.2B: Underside of musical door bell

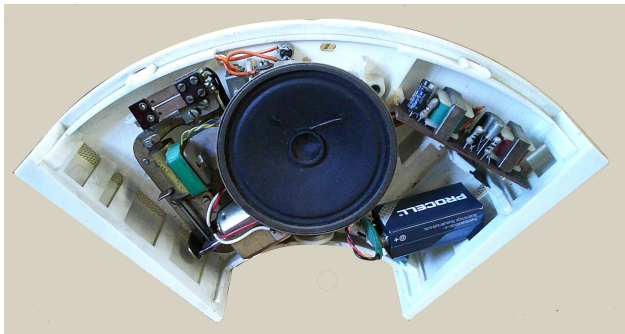


Fig 6.2C: Interior

Small movements of this type but retaining their spring motors were also adapted for dispensing drinks from conventional wine bottles.

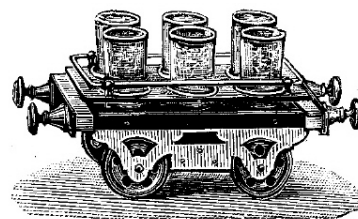
Many different types were made but this one was in mint condition with its original cardboard box. With wine bottle cork removed the device is plugged into the neck of the bottle. When tilted to pour a drink, a pendulum weight releases the movement's governor vane. One has to pour for quite a long time into a very large glass to hear the whole of the melody!



Fig 6.3A: Musical drinks pourer



Fig 6.3B: The device itself



No. 759. **Wagen mit Liqueurgläsern**, braun polirt.  
 Während das Musikwerk spielt, fährt der Wagen.  
 Brown polished. The carriage drives as long, as the music plays.  
 Brun poli. Pendant que la musique joue, la voiture marche.  
 El carro pulido moreno con vasitas anda mientras que toca la música.  
 Grösse — size — dimensions — tamaño: 24×11×11 cm.



## Mechanical Music Auction Report

Langham Hotel, Eastbourne, Saturday 28<sup>th</sup> October

We are deeply indebted to Laurence Fisher who organised and conducted the auction. The venue was superb with a selection of rooms that allowed the viewer to see and play, under controlled conditions of course, the huge range of instruments. Laurence set out to create anew the type of specialist auction that we once enjoyed in the 1990s. The items ranged from the smallest and least expensive to the fine, rare and virtuous, thereby satisfying every possible collector's and restorer's taste.

Laurence described it as an 'analogue auction'; there was nothing digital about it! There were no phone bids and no screens. There were, of course 'bids on the book' prompted by an on-line (digital of course) beautifully produced catalogue produced at his expense. Unfortunately, few saw the need to buy a copy. The catalogue was produced in superb detail, definitely a reference copy for any collector's library shelf. Contact Laurence if you want one.



Our favourite auctioneer - Laurence Fisher!

Despite the very depressed market, not just in terms of money but depressing for those who treasure these mechanical musical marvels but witness decreasing public interest, the 'items of virtue' sold well, continuing to hold good market value. On the bright side, there were bargains to be had for those who had the good sense and knowledge that a depressed market can also be the time to buy. In this way, they become custodians and conservators for another generation.

It was pleasing to see damaged movements, many beyond repair, bought for as little as £5 or £10. Thus, spring barrels, governors, gears, cases and other antique bits and pieces may become the organ transplants needed to save another piece of our mechanical musical heritage.

The consensus of those present was that Laurence should conduct another auction, Same Place, Same Time, Next Year.



A fine and large interchangeable double longue-marche Voix Celeste musical box-on-table, by Nicole Frères, Ser. No. 51489, circa 1886, with five cylinders. Sold £1600



A rare Visible Bells and timepiece musical box, by B. H. Abrahams - 'The Victoria', Ser. No.10691, circa 1898. Sold £550



*A 8 1/4-inch table disc musical box, Ser. No. 53983, in case cunningly constructed from nice period elements. Sold £90*



*A good 11-inch Regina table disc musical box, Style No. 19, Ser. No. 43375. Sold £480*



*An unusual double singing birds-in-cage, by Bontems, French, circa 1900, Ser. No. 796, French, circa 1900. Sold £900*



*A good example of an Italian silvered metal and enamel musical revolving cigar carousel, playing two airs from a two-per-turn cylinder movement. Sold £70*

*Mechanical Music World*



*An unusual Doll on Tortoise-back automaton, probably by Roullet & Decamps or Lambert, French, circa 1910. Unsold.*



*A very good growling Bulldog automaton, by Roullet & Decamps, French, circa 1910. Sold £560*



*A gilt brass musical cigarette lighter, with pivot flint striking mechanism actuating the cylinder movement. Sold £10*

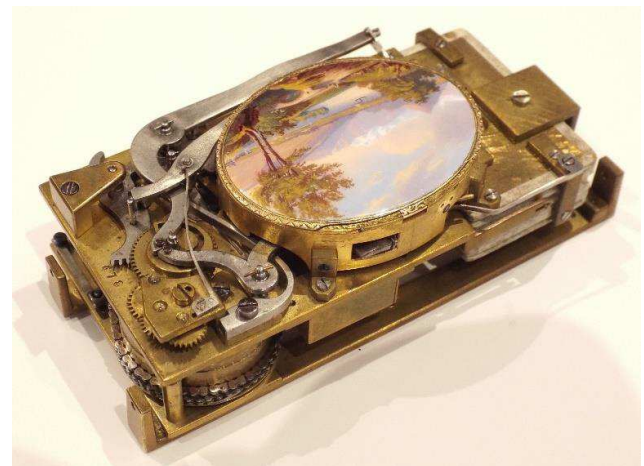
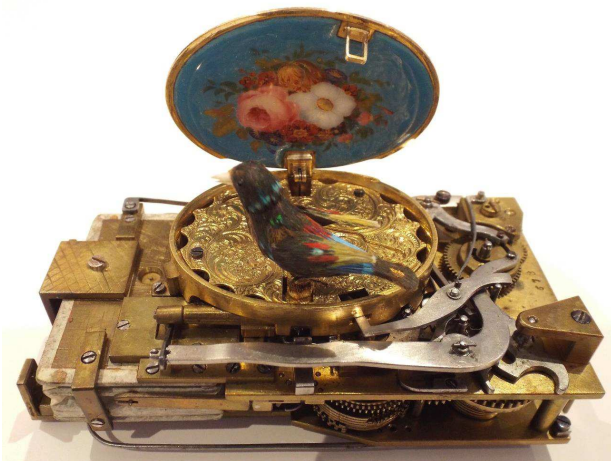
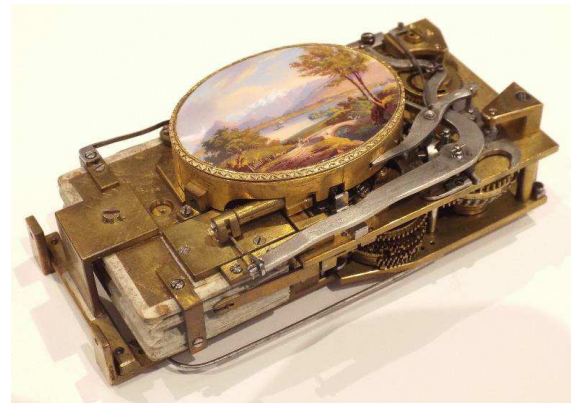


*A very rare seated knitting harridan automaton, by Adolf Muller, German, circa 1895. Unsold*



*A massive nodding Tiger-on-base automaton, by Roullet & Decamps, French, circa 1900. Sold £720*

*Mechanical Music World*



*A very fine and early F. Rochat tortoiseshell and pictorial enamel fusee singing bird box,  
Ser. No. 678, circa 1815. Sold £22,000*



*A wide variety of musical items was available for purchase,  
many finding new homes.  
We are grateful to Laurence Fisher and David Soulsby for the  
illustrations.*

## Auction Team Breker

Sale on November 4th 2023 at Köln, Germany

As many readers will know, this German auction house is one of the World's leading salerooms for technical antiques and collectibles of every description. Their latest sale in November includes many lots of mechanical music, though due to our publishing dates this review is too late for readers to make use of. Most of those interested will, no doubt, be keeping an eye on this house's offerings anyway.

Amongst the items on offer are Lot 273, a particularly fine example of a Polyphon Mikado 24 1/2" upright player:



A rare Orphenion disc player with a reward distributor is Lot 268:



In the gramophone group is something possibly unique - Lot 300 is an unbranded machine using a shell as a horn! Perhaps you can hear the sea as well as the record being played:



Another nautical item is Lot 288, a musical seascape glass dome automaton. Needing a bit of cosmetic restoration, it is an attractive piece:



Another rather unusual gramophone is the Pathé Actuelle, Lot 299. More popular in North America than Europe, it plays on an internal horn 'loudspeaker'. The saleroom describes it as playing Pathé records, but in actual fact the whole speaker/tonerarm assembly rotates through 90 degrees. If the sapphire stylus is then replaced with a steel needle, it can play conventional 78s. The brass rim of the 'speaker' assembly is marked 'Vertical' and 'Lateral', viewable at the top of the rim, depending upon which mode it is set to.



For those with an infinite amount of collection room space, the Discophone Goliath (Lot 302, left) juke box includes a top quality radio receiver as well as the ability to play 48 selections on 78 rpm gramophone records. Circa 1948 - 1956. It weighs about 400 Kg (880 Lbs)!

## The Magic of the Silver Swan

by David Soulsby

I had of course heard of the iconic Silver Swan automaton in the Bowes Museum located in the heart of northern England but had never been to see it. A special exhibition opening there, entitled “The Magic of the Silver Swan”, celebrating 250 years of its creation, enticed me into making the 600 miles round trip to pay a visit.



Photo 1: Barnard Castle, County Durham

The museum is a magnificent French style building created in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century by Josephine and John Bowes at Barnard Castle, County Durham (Photo 1). The couple travelled extensively and purchased objects of beauty for their dream project. French-born Josephine had an eye for automata, and was responsible for acquiring the swan which she purchased for £200 after spotting it at the 1867 Paris International Exhibition. The museum building was started in 1862 with the first stone set by Josephine, and the expectation that the final stone would be placed by her husband. Sadly, they both died before the building was complete, but the museum of their collection of 15,000 unusual items was opened nonetheless in 1892.

The swan gets its graceful motion from three internal clockwork mechanisms which include a musical box playing eight separate jingles. The swan sits in a stream made of glass rods and surrounded by a bank of silver leaves (Photo.2). Seven small silver fish can be seen "swimming" in the stream (Photo 3). When the clockwork is wound and released the music box plays and the glass rods rotate giving the appearance of flowing water. The swan turns its head from side to side and also preens itself. After a few moments it notices the shoal of fish and bends down to catch and eat one. The fish is actually hidden inside of the swan's mouth, but it comes out to simulate a catch, and returns to imitate a swallow. The swan's head then returns to the upright position and the performance, which lasts about 40 seconds, is over.

The mechanical marvel is a life-size replica in solid silver, of a female mute swan. It has more than 700 components, excluding screws and fixings. It has 122 silver leaves, 113 silver neck rings and 141 glass rods. The neck features silver outer rings that hide 24 brass rings, providing sideways stability and upward flexibility. Inside the brass rings, there are flat brass links holding

a tapered spring, assisting in returning the neck to its upright position when not in use. The brass links hold roller-wheels with five chains, controlled by cams beneath the neck's base, enabling the neck's movement, the opening of the beak and the fish action inside. Additionally, the neck is counterbalanced with adjustable sliding weights.

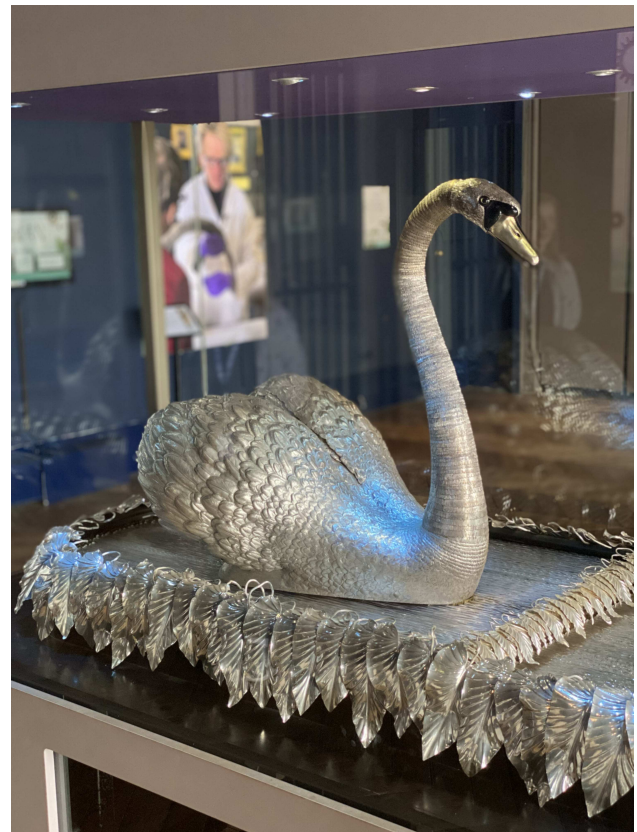


Photo 2: The Silver Swan



*Photo 3: The silver fish*

It started its life as an attraction in James Cox's famous museum of automata in London in 1774. It had been made in Cox's workshop in Shoe Lane, off Fleet Street in London. Although he employed many craftsmen, it is clear from contemporary records that John Joseph Merlin, a trained horologist, talented musician and inventor, was among the most senior. While one of Cox's silversmiths is assumed to have made the exquisitely feathered body, by far the most revolutionary part was made by Merlin. He created the clockwork powered internal workings that enable the swan's head and neck to move. (He is also famous for his design of the roller skate!).

In recent years to help preserve the mechanism, the swan was only operated once each day, at 2pm, each time to a capacity crowd. Because of the Pandemic the museum was closed during 2020 and 2021 so the daily display did not take place. When the exhibit was being prepared for reopening, the clockwork mechanism was found to have seized up and it had to be withdrawn from display for further complex conservation.

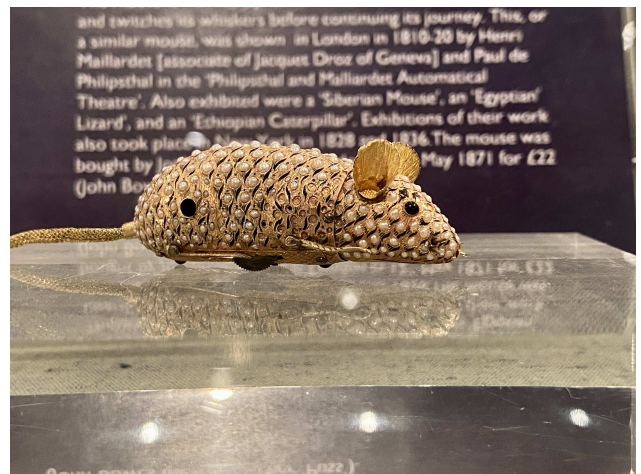
I made my way to the Central Picture gallery on the second floor of the museum where the swan held pride of place in a large glass case. I had been told in advance that I wouldn't be able to see it in operation as the complex repair was on-going, but there was a very interesting video right alongside. On display was a selection of the main movement and other internal parts that had been removed in a previous conservation in 2008. Also to be seen is the 18<sup>th</sup> Century brass 'bathtub' in which the swan was originally exhibited (Photo 4). The holes in the rim show where the silver leaves were attached. Holes have been cut out of one side for the winding



*Photo 4: The brass 'bathtub'*

mechanism and a coin-slot addition in the 1960s for visitors to watch their own private show; this was later removed.

Whilst the Silver Swan is the best known artefact at the museum, there are a number of others including mechanical toys, music boxes and watches with automaton movements. I proceeded into the next gallery to discover the gold Mechanical Mouse (Photo 5) which makes random movements when the clockwork is released. Again a video presentation shows it in operation.



*Photo 5: The gold mechanical mouse*

I went down to look at the extension of the Silver Swan exhibition on the Ground floor. It's described as "a celebration of automata, clockwork machines and how we can explore art through technology". As well as loan exhibits from other museums, the Cabaret Mechanical Theatre has contributed to the Bowes "Year of Movement" by providing an interactive display of automata from modern artists (Photo 6).

I left after several hours exploring the museum,



Photo 6: Display of modern automata

pleased that I had at last seen the silver swan *up close and personal*, determined to return later in the year when the conservators promised that I would find it in full working order.

Strangely, I couldn't get one thought out of my mind: why would a vegetarian creature be catching a fish? A chat with one of *those in the know* shed some light on the matter. Most of the pieces, such as the swan, were produced as objects of trade, and especially for export to Asia. What the new Chinese or Indian owners wanted from this advanced technology was not scientific accuracy, but an ability to astonish and delight. Obviously the poetry of the Bowes swan looking for, catching, and swallowing a fish would far surpass that of it merely having its head under the reeds. This is indeed the true magic of the silver swan. (Photo 7).



Photo 7: Swan beak

## Letters to the Editors

**From Laurence Fisher**, referring to his auction sale in Eastbourne:

Gatherings are always great fun - you never know who will be entering the room. No exception here - I was so happy to see so many people from near and far attend and enjoy mechanical music. On the whole, the sale was a success, bearing in mind it was a pop-up, pop-down occasion. There were 27 vendors, 52 registrants, 28 successful absentee bidders. The sale stats were 98% by value and 81% by lot. This will be changing further as a few unsolds are turned into solds this week. A realised price list will appear very shortly.

The support received was most generous and the consensus is this will be an annual event. So there will be another in October 2024. Thank you all very much for your support and kind words.

**From Roger Booty:**

Dear Editors,

The piece on Hicks pianos and Christies Old Organ in the last issue of Mechanical Music World bought to mind the following. In November 1971 I had cause to be in one of dealer Graham Webbs', in Portobello Road, London, lock up garages. It is surprising to recall having to climb over all manner of large instruments to get to see what I was interested in. In this clambering to the rear of the store I remember squeezing past an unusual barrel organ, unusual because of its shape, which resembled a large Hicks barrel piano. It was not in working order, but I believe it had Arthur Ord-Hume's business label pasted inside. Enquiries of Graham told me indeed it was an unusual instrument and Arthur had looked at it but with little apparent success in getting it to play. So, although the Christie's Old Organ pictures seemingly show a piano, organs did exist in the same shape but to a slightly larger overall size. Therefore Mrs. Walton's illustrator could have been correct in his picturing. I also recall seeing a photograph of this machine, or a similar one, but despite searches through magazines and books I have failed to locate it.

Yours sincerely,  
Roger Booty.

## Letters to the Editors

From Steve Greatrex:

I have a rather interesting but unidentified musical box in my collection and I am trying to identify who made it, when and where it was made and what the tune sheet should look like.

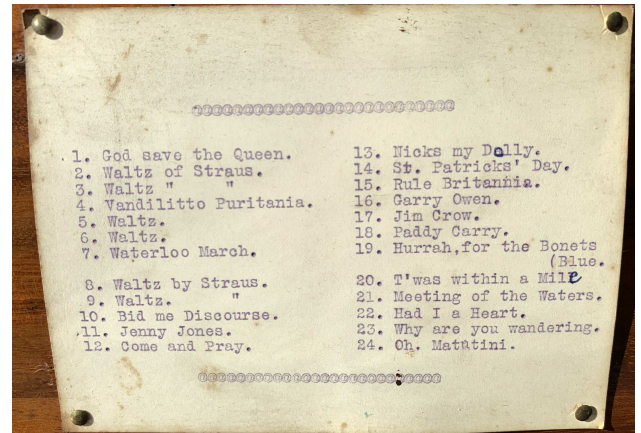
The key wind movement plays 24 Airs in a 3 per turn configuration. The fat cylinder is 13" x 4" and plays a 93 tooth, one piece comb. The movement is mounted on a solid brass bedplate and housed in a fruit wood case with an inlaid lid. The tune sheet is clearly not original.

The box has the serial number #12226 stamped on the bedplate but no other marks are visible. A box of identical configuration and bearing the serial number #12225 is listed on The Register, held by the MBSGB, but sadly no maker is attributed to it.

It has been suggested that watchmaker Hubert-Brollet could be responsible, maybe in association with Langdorf or Lecoultre.

Any help would be appreciated.

Steve Greatrex  
spg1@hotmail.co.uk



A tin cased musical snuffbox, the unsigned movement playing two tunes on a 73-note comb.

Morat, or Murten, is a German- and French-speaking medieval town on the southeast shore of Lake Murten, in western Switzerland. Its defensive walls offer views of the lake and the decorated arcades of the old town.

Editors' Collection



## For Sale

25 ¼" Symphonion Disc Musical Box with great provenance.

This fine quality music box spent its life at the top of the Grand Staircase, in the famous Tower Ballroom in Blackpool. It was removed in 1958. It still retains the repository stickers and sales invoice.

The movement plays on four combs, diagonally opposed and placed in pairs, which produces a sublime harmony sound. The huge spring motor has a top wind mechanism - the best design for a large disc musical box.

The case and movement have just been professionally restored and it plays exceptionally well. The case has exceptional book matched veneers, as can be seen in the photo.

A good collection of discs, including a few new reproduction ones accompany this machine. (Discs that have a number starting with 85## play on this model).

Steve Greatrex, Tel 07774 418 706,  
spg1@hotmail.co.uk

## Association of Musical Box Collectors

Aims and Objectives:

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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# Schweizer Freunde Mechanischer Musik

SAVE THE DATE

**April 27, 2024, 45<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of SFMM**

We will celebrate our 45th anniversary on the occasion of our general meeting on April 27, 2024, and invite the presidents and/or representatives of our affiliated clubs to this occasion.

Of course, we would also be pleased about the participation of our members from abroad.

Upon request, we will happily arrange overnight accommodations and/or visits to collections and museums. For further questions, please contact me directly! Peter Both, Steinmaurstrasse 15, 8173 Neerach, phone +41 79 253 40 38 e-mail: [peter.both@sfmm.ch](mailto:peter.both@sfmm.ch)

The general meeting will take place in Sumiswald at the well-known Gasthof Kreuz. We will, of course, visit the clock collection.



In the afternoon, we will visit the Zither Museum in Trachselwald.



We would be pleased about your visit and are convinced to be able to offer you an appealing program. Detailed program and registration will follow later.

Kind regards,

Swiss Friends of Mechanical Music

A handwritten signature in blue ink, which appears to read "Peter Both".

SFMM, Steinmaurstrasse 15, 8173 Neerach  
Präsident: Peter Both, Tel: +41 79 253 40 38, [peter.both@sfmm.ch](mailto:peter.both@sfmm.ch)  
[www.sfmm.ch](http://www.sfmm.ch)

**AMBC sale items**

The following items are for sale to AMBC members and those of its associated organisations. Surplus from sales will fund AMBC administration costs. The primary allocation will be towards research and further publication for the benefit of AMBC members and that of associated organisations.

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

**Cylinder Musical Box Design & Repair** by HAV Bulleid. £10 + P&P.

**Cylinder Musical Box Technology** by HAV Bulleid. £10 + P&P.

\***Disc Musical Box Book** by K. McElhone. £50 + P&P.

\***The Nicole Factor in Mechanical Music** by Paul Bellamy and contributing authors Cunliffe and Ison. £35 + P&P.

\***Musical Box Tune Sheets** (The Tune Sheet Book) and three supplements, by HAV Bulleid.

\***The Organette Book** by K. McElhone. £35 + P&P.

\***Street musicians on Postcards** by Paul Bellamy. £8 + P&P.

**For Sale**

**Polyphon** parts and spares including Original Pediment for 19 5/8" Polyphon, Motor Cover for 24 1/2" Polyphon, empty 19 5/8" Polyphon Case and many bedplate parts.

Steve Greatrex 07774 418 706

spg1@hotmail.co.uk

**Members' Sales & Wants**

**I have spares for Reuge**, Thorens, and Guiszez movements up to 31 notes. These include endlesses, combs, cylinders, stop/start levers, springs, spring barrels and even the knobs for the stop/start levers on mugs.

Call Ted Brown: on 01403 823533

**AMBC Books for Sale**

Collecting Affordable Musical Novelties £5

An Introduction to Mechanical Music £5

**AMBC CD - Berman's Music Boxes** £5

plus P & P

**Wanted**

I am looking for a nicely restored, 88 Note, Upright **Pianola**, preferably with an Aeolian 88 Note or Duo-Art action (Steinway, Weber or Steck). Steve Greatrex

07774 418 706

spg1@hotmail.co.uk

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