

Issue 5, Summer 2016

MECHANICAL MUSIC WORLD



Find out about this musical marotte
in another issue packed full of interest

An Association of Musical Box Collectors Publication

From the Editors' Desk

Another fascinating mixture of articles from our diverse and talented membership – thank you to all of you who have actually put pen to paper and it is our hope that even more of you will be encouraged to in the near future!

One of the interesting results of new reference books on our hobby is the amount of contributing snippets which surface after publication! The Disc Musical Box book, for example, had no sooner been published than previously unrecorded models and numbers began popping up all over the place.

Paul Bellamy actually wanted to stimulate interest and more research into the Swiss musical box industry, and right on cue, after the publication of the Music Box Makers of Switzerland, we stumbled across a new/old source which adds a little to Paul's research. No doubt more information will surface as more historical sources become available, as a result of digitisation etc, and appear on line.

For the handy person we have an article on building your own marotte – guaranteed to keep you busy for hours during the long winter evenings and then with favoured children for hours playing with the puppet. Will you have one ready for Christmas?

For the gramophone enthusiast Edward Murray-Harvey has recorded his early experiences with the EMG – we love his reminiscences and recollections of a time when life was more leisurely and the world a little kinder.

An AMBC visit to Paul Bellamy's collection sparked an article on his two barrel pianos, their restoration and their operation. Despite the ravages of time an amazing number of these instruments have survived and it is interesting to learn something of their history.

Again, thank you to all our contributors and to you the readers. We hope you will enjoy this offering.

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AMBC Meeting, 24th April

The meeting took place at the home of Paul Bellamy. One enthusiastic member got up at 5am, travelled by train across three counties and then, having been picked up by another member by car, arrived in time for a pre-meeting coffee. After an opening address by Chairman Ted Brown, Paul explained the *raison d'être* behind his collection by stating that he never really had one except to find the widest range of instruments, including toys, novelties and automata that he could fit into a typically modest modern UK house on the borders of his village, without upsetting his wife.

Of course, the house soon overflowed. The local farmer sold him a piece of land so Paul was able to extend his garden considerably. Some twenty years later and about twenty years ago, courtesy of a local second-hand timber and breaker's yard, a small bungalow-sized museum/playroom was built in the garden and the house became more of a home again than a museum. But not for long, the museum filled, items started to fill the house once more and the playroom was extended. But that too is now full. Such is the manic passion that can grip a person with the collecting bug.

The members split into two groups, one staying with Paul in the conservatory, the other going to the museum with Ted. Paul gave a most interesting talk based on his very large collection of English musical ceramics. Many of these are rare and expensive, but the more common examples are very attractive, easily obtained and modestly priced so would form a good starting point for a musical box collection.

Ted was spoilt for choice in the museum. He demonstrated some cylinder boxes, disc boxes, table pianos, a table coin-operated cylinder musical box and numerous manivelles. There were even two juke boxes, a late valve-operated Rockola and a modern CD version that simulated a Wurlitzer. As Paul remarked, he draws no barriers in the progress of musical entertainment. What we see today can be considered an extension of the past. It allows him to demonstrate the comparison between the old, the new and how technology has transformed the method of producing music. Thus Paul's interest is as much historical as musical. He cannot resist a broken musical instrument that nobody else wants to buy and it inevitably lines up in a queue for eventual restoration. Two of these items were Hicks pianos (see the article in this Issue). One was an 8-air model serial 68 and the other a 10-air version serial 296. The afternoon was brought to a resounding conclusion as Paul treated us to a small recital on these two instruments.

See page 10 for more about Hicks.

Projects & Wants

AMBC Tune sheet library project:

Members from all societies are asked to donate better quality colour photographs (say, 350-400 pixels in print quality) taken face-on to avoid distortion and with the tune sheet dimensions. Additional information such as serial number, gamme number, maker, etc., is welcome, as is a cross-reference to the Bulleid tune sheet numbering system. Please do not be put off if any of the tune sheets are damaged although the best possible condition is preferred.

The project is a long-term one because HAV Bulleid produced 400 tune sheets (and plaques) in his lifetime. If members have copies that were not published in his book 'Musical Box Tune Sheets' and its three supplements, these will also be welcome. They may be sent to the Editors or any of the officers - see page 1.

The Constitution of the Association of Musical Box Collectors known as AMBC

Article 1. Aims and objectives:

- 1.1. To promote interest within the body of membership of AMBC for the mutual enjoyment, entertainment and research relevant to musical boxes and all other associated forms of programmed musical instruments generally known by the term 'mechanical music'.
- 1.2. To establish formal links and working relationship with other Societies who wish to be associated with AMBC.
- 1.3. To provide social opportunity for meetings of musical and non-musical entertainment, of historical or social interest. Meetings may adopt the established format of the private Chanctonbury Ring meetings hosted by Mr. E. Brown.
- 1.4. To publish research, articles, books and pamphlets for members on all forms of musical instrument including musical and non-musical automata, covered by the term 'mechanical music', and in order to promote public interest.

For new members! Please note the AMBC Constitution: Article 2, Membership.

- 2.1. Application for membership will be by means of an AMBC membership form.
- 2.2. Acceptance of membership will be at the discretion of the AMBC Committee.
- 2.3. Applicants must accept the terms of the AMBC Constitution and abide by Committee rulings in the application of those terms.

Association of Musical Box Collectors (AMBC)

Annual General Meeting, 4th June 2016

The Old School, Bucks Green, Horsham, West Sussex.

Summary report:

Chairman:

Ted Brown opened the meeting with a message of warm welcome, 'Parish Notices' and details for the day's organ grind. The AGM business formally commenced at 11.10.

Apologies for absence: Nick Lyles, Ken and Pauline Dickens, Anna & Ingvar Svenson and David & Lesley Evans.

The chairman thanked members for their support during the previous year. He reported that the quarterly publication, "Mechanical Music World", and the website, had been well received, and that both would evolve and improve. He also announced that our first AMBC publication, "An Introduction to Mechanical Music" was about to be published. Its main aim was to inform the general public, in fulfilment of our mission statement to promote interest in all aspects of our chosen hobby. Hopefully it will also contain items of interest to members.

Ted summarised the year's activity as highly successful with members from the UK, USA, Europe, and Japan. He thanked the Editors for their work in producing a series of very fine journals (the Periodicals) each of which had a wide range of topics. These ranged from historical to modern 'mechanical' musical instruments. He stressed that membership of AMBC was for enjoyment, friendship and entertainment and that it was not just a society of collectors. Articles were welcomed from members and, if anyone were uncertain about technical or historical accuracy, the committee team would provide advice and guidance so that members could share their experience with others.

He commended all of his committee team and helpers for their time, generosity and expertise, not just for the Periodical but also for articles and administrative support.

Treasurer:

Paul Bellamy explained that the Committee had assessed its financial situation at the end of February 2016, the end of its first membership year. Membership income had provided the funds for 4 first-class Periodicals supported in part by advertising revenue. The cost of postage had increased for the UK, the USA and Europe. Loans for establishing the website had been reimbursed.

Paul circulated two PayPal statements to show that all moneys had been transferred to the Barclays account as at the 1st June 2016. He then circulated the Barclays bank statement to show the amount of cash at the bank at the date of the AGM. He explained that the cash balance comprised donations, membership subscriptions and sales from raffles, etc. Members who had donated did not want the sums identified. He also explained that the cash balance was sufficient to pay for the next year's periodicals, a forthcoming CD, a new booklet about mechanical musical instruments and a small reserve for future research. Paul asked for comments. Members expressed their amazement that the fine series of periodicals could be produced with such a low membership fee. Paul said that committee members did not claim expenses and that all money received from members was used for the benefit of the membership in producing the Periodical. He then asked for the accounts to be approved and the response was unanimous.

He asked that Committee be given the right to raise the subscriptions up to a cap of £5 per member in order to cover the cost of postage. Thus all members would pay the same amount for the Periodical and basic membership subscription but post & packing would be extra according to the country of residence. The proposal was accepted unanimously.

Meetings:

The Events Secretary reminded members that AMBC would be giving talks and demonstrations of barrel organs etc. at Amberley Museum and Heritage Centre on Saturday 16th July, with all welcome, whether

Mechanical Music World

bringing an instrument or not. Final details of the weekend visit to Suffolk in September were distributed. There are a few vacancies if anyone else would like to go.

Website:

The website team continued to update and improve its presentation.

The Chairman thanked the committee for their reports. He asked for votes to be taken by show of hands on the following:

Annual General Meeting minutes, 6th June 2015: Approved without change or comment.

Constitution:

The draft Constitution had met Association needs and members were asked to vote for it to be accepted without change. Agreed unanimously.

Appointment of Committee:

Members were asked to approve the existing Committee membership for another term of Office. Approved unanimously.

Signatories to the accounts:

Members were asked to accept the three existing signatories to the Barclays account. Agreed unanimously. (Ted Brown, Juliet Fynes, Paul Bellamy). The Treasurer reminded members that the Constitution requires signatures to be approved by members at an AGM and that no signatory can be added or removed without the approval of the member concerned and that of the membership at an AGM.

Membership Subscription:

The basic membership fee for all members is the same but an element is added for P&P of the Periodical. The basic fee will remain unchanged but a small increase will be advised for the membership year commencing March 1st 2017. The amount will vary dependant on the member's location (UK, Europe, USA and the rest of the world, etc.)

There was no other business and the meeting closed at 12.00.

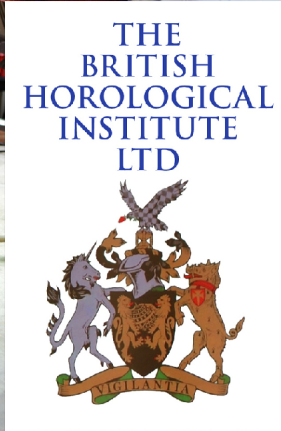
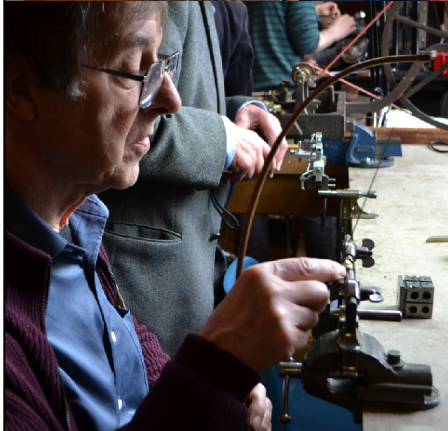
It's About Time - BHI Open Day

On April 9th the South London Branch of the British Horological Institute held their first Open Day in the Soper Hall, Caterham. At AMBC we were delighted with the invitation to exhibit.

The two halls were packed with a variety of stands; workshop demonstrations; beautiful clocks made by members, including all the stages of making a bracket clock, from bits of bare wood and metal, to the finished article; before and after examples of painted dial restoration; a display of antique tools; turret clocks, lantern clocks and much more besides. There were organisations offering short courses and career qualifications in horology, and a supplier of tools and parts to the trade.

As a first such event the organisers had no idea how many would be likely to attend. It turned out to be a massive success. From the moment the doors opened to the public, to the very end, the rooms were so crowded it was hard to get around and see everything. The visitors took a very keen interest, including in our display and we had a number of enquiries about membership. Those of our members who supported this event agreed that it was a really interesting day out and well worth our participation.

The picture shows Ted Brown and Anna Svenson manning the AMBC display, amongst many other fine exhibition pieces.



Making a Marotte

By Ted Brown

The word "marotte" comes from 17th Century French, meaning an obsession or foolish idea. It was adopted to mean the stick, or mock sceptre of office, carried by a jester, with a head wearing a motley coloured cap with bells in imitation of the jester's own outfit. These looked very much like Mr Punch, as in the illustration of the reproduction marotte on the front cover.

Marottes first appeared in France in the late Victorian period, essentially being a sophisticated version of the cheap (and silent) doll-on-a-stick called a poupard. The marotte is basically a doll's head with a musical movement beneath it, concealed by a large collar or dress. A



Fig 1. Showing the movement in the ball.

few were made that were not simply heads but fully-dressed figures with torsos and limbs. The most elaborate consisted of a complete figure with bisque head and composition body, standing on a draped pedestal in which the movement was located. Today they are quite scarce and seldom come on to the market, and if they do, they are too expensive to give to children to play with (for example, Fig 3 right hand side. The two centre ones were made by an AMBC member).

I decided to have a go at making one and thought it might be useful to record how it went. Firstly, obtain a musical movement that is wound by a handle. It must be able to be wound in either direction without damaging the comb. Sketch out your design using a classy

porcelain doll head on a ball body or use a ball as a head. If you have a hard plastic ball in the Christmas decorations box (Hobby's supply them in plain white for about £1 + p & p, see advert at the back of this journal), that is about 3-4 inches or 8-10 cms, in diameter. This can be sawn round the seam with a junior hacksaw to give two halves. For a more authentic approach you can use a tennis sized ball. Wrap it in kitchen film, and cover it in papier mâché or glued strips of news paper.

If at this stage you decide that this would be the head rather than the body, this would be the time to perhaps fashion the facial features with the papier mâché. When it is 1/8" (4mm) or so thick and dry, give it several coats of varnish to strengthen it and let it harden. Cut it into 2 halves and separate from the kitchen film. Make a cross piece of wood thick enough and wide enough to fix the movement on and cut a small semi-circle in both halves where the handle will come through. If your movement has a long handle you will only need to remove the knob off the end, if it is a short dogleg shape it may be best to straighten it or cut it and put a

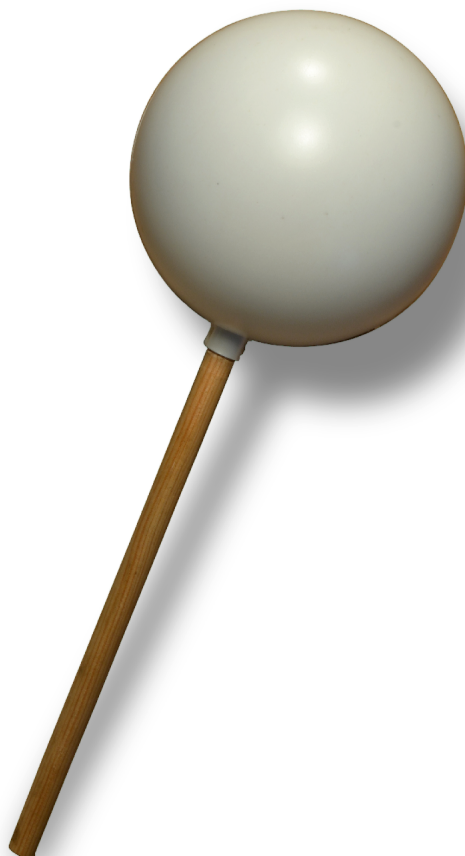


Fig 2. Halves of ball cemented together.

sleeved extension on it. Fit the wood cross piece with its movement in place and with "Blu tac" or double sided sticky tape, find the best position for the wood and movement to work whilst in line with the hole at the bottom of the ball half (Fig 1).

Using a thin length of bamboo cane or something similar as a temporary handle, give it a spin, remembering it will work more evenly when dressed. When you are satisfied that it will work when assembled, you can secure the cross piece into the ball with epoxy resin and screw the movement in position. Purists can use any form of fixing! I did not want mine to come apart when it was finished. Next you need to find a handle. If it is old, so much the

better. A visit to a car boot sale, second hand shops etc., will help if you think openly. An old broken fan or fire screen handle, a turned chair back spindle or a broken gavel handle can all do the job. Then fit it before putting the halves together and fix them with strips of cotton fabric or paper, so that you can get inside when it finally goes wrong (Fig 2).

For a quality finish, a porcelain doll head is perfect but if it is going in a toy box, a face painted on the ball is sufficient with perhaps a woollen wig and hat. The original dress of the marotte was usually based on a jester's costume, with a variety of bells, beads or small weights sewn on to the points of the skirt, which would



Fig 3 An antique marotte (right) and some recently made examples.

spread out when the manivelle was spun, assisting the evenness of the music. To assist in fixing anything to the ball, a length of ladies nylon stocking can be stitched over the ball. If using a porcelain head this can be fixed when the two halves are put together. Have a think before you start. Make a plan and collect the parts together, but do not promise it to the grand children until you have finished it in case you want to keep it yourself!

If you need any further information or assistance, do contact the Editors, who can pass on your questions.



Fig 4 (Rt). The results.

L'EPÉE/NICOLE

Tony Waddell



Fig 2. The finished box.

In 'Mechanical Music World', Issue 4, Spring 2016, 'The Wondering Minstrel' describes a L'Epée/Nicole cylinder box, SN:7858 and I thought readers might like to know a little about my experience with this box.

I saw the box advertised on Ebay in America in December 2012 and successfully bid for it. It was advertised as an 'Early Antique 1840s Nicole Swiss Cylinder Music Box!' In my inexperience, because it had a low serial number, I thought I was on to a winner!

After consultation with Terry Longhurst I soon realised my mistake in that it was not a Nicole or Swiss, that it was French and that I had paid too much for it. In addition, I had to pay £123 in customs charges!

However, the original tune-sheet was intact, detailing four operatic airs and was pinned on the inside back of the box rather than the lid where it would have been vulnerable to prying fingers. Originally a glass lid would also have kept it safe. The teeth and tips and cylinder pins were all near perfect and required no

work.

Downside, a few dampers needed replacing, the cylinder was dirty with verdigris and the plain wood case was covered in a horrible 'scumble'.

I enlisted the safe hands of Chris Fynes for help in my first attempt to dismantle and clean a cylinder musical box, although he ended up doing most of the work. He showed me how to make a jig to hold the cylinder and to then clean it with Brasso etc. (Fig 1). He then replaced a few dampers and set the box up for me. Finally I stripped the scumble back to bare wood, stained, sealed and polished it and added the missing glass inner cover.

I photographed (Fig 2) and recorded details of the box for Arthur Cunliffe and the Register. It has 102 teeth, plays the four airs and was made in about 1850.

In Paul Bellamy's new book 'The Music Makers of Switzerland' on page 35, under 'Nicole



Fig 1. Chris Fynes polishing the cylinder.

and L'Epée - a mystery' he lists eight serial numbers of the 'hybrid' on the Register, of which this one (7858) is the earliest so far recorded. (*It is illustrated as Fig 2.6.1B in the book – Ed*)

This box may have cost me too much and, at first glance, appeared to be nothing special but at the end of the day it has attracted a little attention and has added to our knowledge and understanding of Swiss and French cylinder musical boxes. This box can be seen and played



Fig 3. The tune sheet, unusually mounted on the inside back of the case.

on the YouTube link - <https://youtu.be/kSoeun1m-4>

Programme

1. La Juive (The Jewess) by Fromantel Halévy, first performed at the Paris Opera in February 1835.
2. La Chalet by Adolphe Adam, first performance at the Paris Opera Comique in September 1834.
3. Beatrice Di Tenda by Bellini, first performance in Venice in 1833.
4. Lucie (Lucia) di Lamermoor by Donizetti, first performed at the Teatro san Carlo, Naples, in September 1835.

The closeness of the performance dates might suggest that the box is a little earlier than 1850 – Ed.

The Hicks Barrel Pianos

by Bill Mayle

The Hicks barrel pianos, like all other barrel pianos, were first developed in the early 19th century as an attempt to mechanically automate piano music. Most were destined for street and commercial use although there were also domestic versions. The exact origins of the street piano may never be known. All types of barrel pianos use a simple pinned wooden barrel. The barrel has steel pins hammered into the wood in accordance with the musical programme, similar in principle to the pinning of a cylinder musical box.

Paul Bellamy's two instruments were hand cranked, the handle rotating a robust brass worm screw that engaged with a wooden gear mounted on the barrel. Like the musical box, the barrel can be moved axially in steps to adjacent tunes. But this has to be done manually. To do this, the barrel axle carries a series of circular grooves and extends beyond the case. A vertical gate engages with any of the selected grooves for a particular air by lifting the gate and manually sliding the extension shaft and hence barrel. The gate is then lowered to engage the groove and held down by a circular brass plate. When rotated, the plate is cut away to allow the gate to be lifted. A simple internal link between plate and the piano key-frame moves the key-frame away from the barrel so that it can be moved freely along its axis.

The key-frame, which carries the piano hammers, is a piece of slotted wood surrounded by an iron frame. The frame has stub axles at each end that engage with the case so that the whole assembly can be pivoted away from or towards the strings. A setscrew at one end of the case allows the frame to be set longitudinally in exact alignment with hammers opposite the piano strings. Each hammer has a pivoted wooden base that fits into the slotted key-frame. The pivot wire runs the entire length of the key-frame. The wooden hammer-base carries a steel rod with the hammer at the top. They are similar in shape and covered in felt like their piano counterparts but the treble ones often have the option of felt-covered or wooden strikers, all part of the head. Thus, by rotating the head, either the felt or wooden face is presented to the strings. The foot of each hammer has a steel 'tail pin'. All the hammers are set just clear of the strings. As the



Fig. 1. This may be the oldest Joseph Hicks barrel piano ever recorded, serial number 68. Despite its great age, the quality of the hand-sawn veneers shows how the original patina and colour can be retained by the careful removal of old wax and polish using modern chemical strippers designed for the purpose. Of course, the new coating of French polish applied in the 'old fashioned way' bears no relationship to the original but show how it can bring to life the original patina.

Note the tune change assembly. When the top brass button is turned it sets the internal key-frame clear of the pinned barrel and the brass gate can be lifted clear of a slot in the barrel shaft. The barrel is then pushed or pulled to another slot (i.e. tune position), The gate is then lowered and the brass button turned back to lock the gate and re-engage the key-frame with the barrel - exactly the same procedure as used in late 18th and early 19th century barrel organs.

The wooden knob above and left of the tune-change assembly operates the 'loud/soft' damper rail.

barrel rotates, a barrel pin engages with the tail pin to pivot the hammer away from the strings under the action of a light, brass coiled spring (sometimes a steel spring). On release, the hammer strikes the strings and then bounces back clear to allow the strings to vibrate freely.

The Italians were noted for their love of the barrel piano. These came in a huge array of types and sizes. Some were for domestic but others for commercial use such as in cafes, restaurants and for street entertainment. It is not surprising that, rather than importing these Italian instruments, some of monstrous proportions, many of the Italian settlers set up workshops to make them. One of these workshops was by Joseph Hicks.

The Hicks pianos have a very distinctive style. Joseph Hicks was a Bristolian, a citizen of the great city port of Bristol. However, there seems to be little doubt that his instruments were of Italian origin. Many Italian immigrants arrived at ports like Bristol and London. Some settled there and others moved to other parts of the UK. They earned a living by introducing aspects of their rich culture.

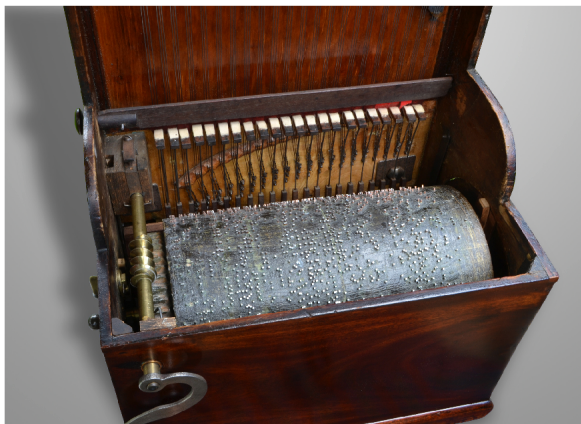


Fig. 2. Note the heavy-duty bolts and square washers to the left and right at the bottom of the piano frame. These bolts pass right through the casing to hold the wooden 'harp' that takes all the string tension. The top of the frame is similarly reinforced.

The left hand barrel support is a replacement. Note the new triangular corner brackets and the winding handle anti-rotation gear and pawl just inside the case.

The barrel is original but heavily restored with modern pins. There is sufficient left of the original notation to edit the musical errors and then to make a replacement barrel.

The simple damper rail is a strip of felt that lies between hammers and strings.



Fig. 3. This is all that remains of the original Joseph Hicks signature, almost certain to be by his hand and written with a quill pen. Damp has caused the ink to spread.

Many stayed as immigrants. In fact the extreme miserable living conditions in Italy at that time caused many to emigrate to other parts of Europe and even to cross the Atlantic to the great New World of the United States.

Joseph Hicks and his son Peter were noted cabinet-makers. Joseph adapted his business to the manufacture of small barrel pianos about 1805. Where he got the knowledge from is speculative but his design must have been influenced directly or indirectly by typical Italian barrel pianos. It is said that he was the first to invent or to adapt these small barrel pianos for street use.

By 1816 the firm was well established as a leading supplier of, apparently, both pianos and organs. This is not surprising because another Bristol maker of similar sized barrel organs was Taylor (but more about this in a later Issue of the Periodical). The Hicks pattern of street piano became so popular that other firms copied the design. One of them was the prominent German manufacturer Welte at Vohrenbach in the Black Forest.

The way the family developed the business is unclear. For example, it is written that his son Peter became a citizen of Bristol on 12th October 1812, a statement that is somewhat puzzling. Joseph continued to about 1850 and then moved to London. An instrument dated 1846 had a Pentonville, London address. A nephew of Joseph, George Hicks, emigrated to the USA, probably about 1820, and set up a branch in New York where he started a business for the manufacture of barrel pianos and organs. Again, Joseph must have had intimate trading knowledge of events in the USA in order to estab-



Fig 4. The casework is original but restored as for the other Hicks piano. The pleating is exactly the same colour and weave as the original silk but of modern synthetic fibre.

The badge is early 20th Century. It is there to remind one that injured and retired soldiers often used these instruments. They often had to beg for survival when abandoned by their country.

lish a business there but then Bristol was all about Empire and trade including the USA. This was some years before the American civil war where Britain tended to supply ships and other military support to the Confederates!

There was also a John Hicks. In about 1850 this name appeared in association with an instrument identical to the Joseph Hicks models. No doubt John was a family member but the relationship is uncertain. It is not certain when Joseph died but his apprentice Henry Distin continued the business. During both the Hicks and Distin years the instruments were of wooden construction. The substantial frames were made of poplar. Wood technology was well advanced and so woods could be selected for specific purposes. Poplar is

extremely good in taking compression force and thus ideal to carry the extreme tension load of a set of tuned steel piano strings.

The strings were metal as were other parts such as pins, pivots, links, etc. The instruments were made in two sizes, with barrels pinned for both 8 and 10 airs. They were both about the same weight (18kg, 40lbs) and size. The dimensions are as follows:

Height 37ins (94cms), depth 13½ins (34cms), width 15ins (38cms) for the 8-air version and 16½ins (42cms) for the 10-air model. The barrels are a nominal 7ins (18cm) diameter, 11¾ins (30cms) long for the 8-air model and 13ins (33cms) for the 10-air one.

Both models had the same tuning scale and 22 notes, each comprising three strings. The scale is chromatic: CGBCDEFF*GABCDEFF*GABCDE and thus spans just over three octaves.

Paul's 8-air model is known to be very rare because its serial number is only 68. Also, it has Joseph's signature, probably in his own hand, written on the top of the wrest plank. The ink has migrated due to damp but is still just about discernable. Rarity does not necessarily mean valuable but it seems to be amongst the first or second year of production. The barrel is original and was not in playing condition. It had suffered from the dreaded woodworm, the wood-boring larva of the furniture beetle. This little insect had generations feasting on the Hicks as if it was of gourmet quality but was quite selective in its appetite. The beech wrest-plank had suffered the most damage, the poplar frame the least and the pine soundboard and casework even less. And the barrel? It was almost impossible to determine a pin socket from a woodworm hole. Repinning may have given the woodworm 'voice'. Paul had few choices: replace with new, conserve or get the thing to play with the least amount of repair? The last option was chosen. In doing so a few of the former occupants' exit holes could now carry a pin and that remains a task for a future owner to sort out.

Woodworm does not like the cold so the deep freezer is a cheap and effective way of killing any of the little varmints should they still be alive. One clue for live grubs is fine traces of sawdust. Otherwise, a preparatory brand of liquid killer

injected by syringe is effective. The liquid will penetrate deep into the wood and it is advisable to leave the item for days to thoroughly dry out. There is also a wide range of products that can consolidate rotten wood. Whether for wet rot or dry rot, the best are those that dry hard. Ignore the writing on the tin that says the product dries within hours but apply liberally and leave for a week or more.

Both dry rot and wet rot are fungal infestations. It is worth looking at the product specifications first because both types are hardeners irrespective of what caused damage to the wood. Thus the product may just be labelled 'wood hardener' – so read the instructions carefully. Having dried out the woodworm killer, apply liberally with a brush and use plenty of the fluid until the wood can soak up no more. It may help to drill some fine holes to promote penetration. Also, forget the several hours recommended for hardening and leave the wood to dry out for a week or more.

The key-frame was salvaged in this way but before the hardener was applied several 1mm copper-coated gas-welding rods were inserted along its length to reinforce the frame. A few were similarly driven vertically down the slotted parts as well. A small deep pilot hole is required to achieve this and the wire can then be used as a drill by grinding its end into a V-shaped spade.

The barrel was treated slightly differently by leaving in all the damaged pins. After a day or so, these were pulled out and replaced using square hardboard pins, the types that have pyramid-shaped heads (cut off first, of course). Fortunately, they were almost identical in width to the originals but were more rigid and could be hammered in deeper. Unlike cylinder musical box repining, most people will not have a lathe to grind the pinned cylinder concentric with its axis. A simple depth gauge can be made up of wooden frame to support the barrel stub axles with an adjustable wood or metal bar that can be set equidistant from the axis. As each pin is driven in, the barrel is rotated by hand until each pin clears the bar.

The most damaged part of the wrest plank was replaced with new beech wood and hot-glued in place. The top and bottom of the frame was reinforced front to back with coach bolts and custom-made steel plates to act as continuous washers. The

rest of the casework was restored using old-fashioned woodworking methods using hot glue to re-fix and patch the thick-cut rosewood veneers. Some veneer was robbed from the back of the case and used to patch cracks and missing bits. It was replaced with modern thin veneers that were sandwiched together first (with modern glues, not hot glue, which can soak through thin veneers) in order to achieve a similar thickness. The veneers can quickly be aged using a solution of potassium permanganate. The older ones amongst us may remember that a pot of these crystals always sat in the medicine cabinet. Dropped into water, it becomes a vivid violet and was used as an antiseptic gargle for sore throats. The permanganate is an oxidising agent and can add the equivalent of years of natural aging. When dry, it leaves a very light brownish shade to wood. The corner joints of the case were reinforced by gluing in small triangular pieces of hardwood stained to match the innards of the case.

Although the case was dirty and damaged it had an intrinsic patina that Paul wanted to preserve. There are modern chemical strippers that removed wax and polish without harming the wood. The whole of the case was painted with stripper and the glutinous residue scraped away with plastic scrapers. The remnants were washed with alcohol such as methylated spirit and wiped dry with paper towelling. In this way some of the residue acts as wood grain and crack filler leaving a smooth finish and retained patina. Weeks later, the case was re-polished with quality old-fashioned French polish. Some of the modern French polishes have a different alcohol base that may not interact well with the original materials. The result was quite stunning, producing a polished finish that brought out the full depth of colours.

A small anti-rotation ratchet wheel was made from steel and mounted on the crankshaft together with a small counterbalanced catch. The reason for this addition is more important than it seems but vital to avoid damage if the handle should be wound the wrong way (anti-clockwise). Originally, if this happened, the resistance between barrel bins and key-frame tail-pins was sufficient to cause the handle to unscrew. The ratchet now took the thrust instead and so the frame was not subject to any strain at all. The soundboard was split and suffered from woodworm. It was disassembled, clamped and

re-glued. The wrest pins are original, cleaned and re-blackened. The strings are new. Some original Hicks bass strings were copper-wound and thus one has to make a choice as to the thickness of a bass string. To save costs, Paul replaced his with standard piano wire.

Having cleaned and heat-blackened the wrest pins, and replaced the strings with modern piano wire (here one has to be careful because the original strings were more iron than steel), it was time to tune the instrument and to see if all the hard work was worth the effort. Thus the first tuning scale was set well below that of a modern piano, taking 'middle C' as the datum. As the days and weeks went by the instrument was re-tuned and left for a few days to see if it had detuned. This happens as the wooden frame takes the strain and slightly compresses. The old Poplar frame continued to serve just as well as it did nearly two hundred years ago. Those old artisans knew how to select woods for a specific 'engineering' purpose. Eventually, the pitch was raised and became stable, at which point a decision had to be made as to what the final pitch should be. This Hicks has held a tuning scale two tones below that of a modern piano and is so stable as to maintain that pitch for months.

When played, most of the pins seemed to be in the right place but a few may have been inserted into woodworm holes! It took some patience to decide if a woodworm had added to or detracted from the music, not easy when the airs are mostly jigs and reels. One of Hicks favourites is 'The Sailors' Hornpipe'. Whatever, this version of the hornpipe can be excused by saying the sailors were probably drunk on high-octane rum rations. One day, if time and patience permits, a replacement barrel with original scores may complete the restoration.

The 10-air Hicks was treated in a similar way although woodworm and other damage was less extensive. The moving parts of the instrument had suffered extreme wear. The worm drive shaft was worn to a thread leaving the wooden barrel gear teeth in surprisingly unworn condition. It seems that the wood acts as a carrier for abrasive dirt and remains relatively unworn whilst the brass gets abraded away. It was a simple matter to cut out the worn part of the worm and braze in a solid piece of brass. A standard lathe with its saddle set to

traverse according to the coarse pitch of the thread allowed the replacement section to be cut to the original worm profile. A few teeth had suffered woodworm damage. These were replaced by segments hand-profiled from beech wood and hot-glued into position.

Both the 8- and 10-air models were equipped for street use. Both had brass sockets mounted on the back. These were used to take a sturdy pole so that the instrument could stand peg-leg on the ground but otherwise supported by hand. The 10 – air version has additional leather shoulder straps and brass strap brackets. There were no signs of strap fittings on the 8-air instrument. The original barrel of the 10-air Hicks was so badly damaged that it played only one tune. Most of the pins for that tune were replaced with nails. It is thought to have been used as late as the 1950s but this cannot be confirmed. Traces of the original cloth were found and used to find a modern replacement. Surprisingly, a cloth of identical colour and weave was standard stock in a local store but made of synthetic threads, not silk. The 10-air barrel was set aside and conserved but a new barrel was made and pinned with typical UK musical hall airs and songs.

Paul suspected that both instruments were de-



Fig 5. The corners are reinforced with triangular wood strips and the left-hand barrel support is a replacement. Also there is a similar anti-rotation assembly (hidden from view).

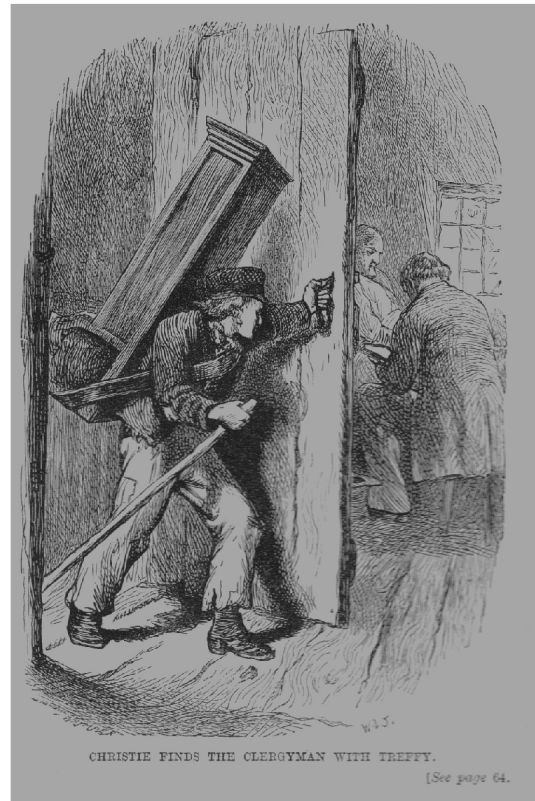
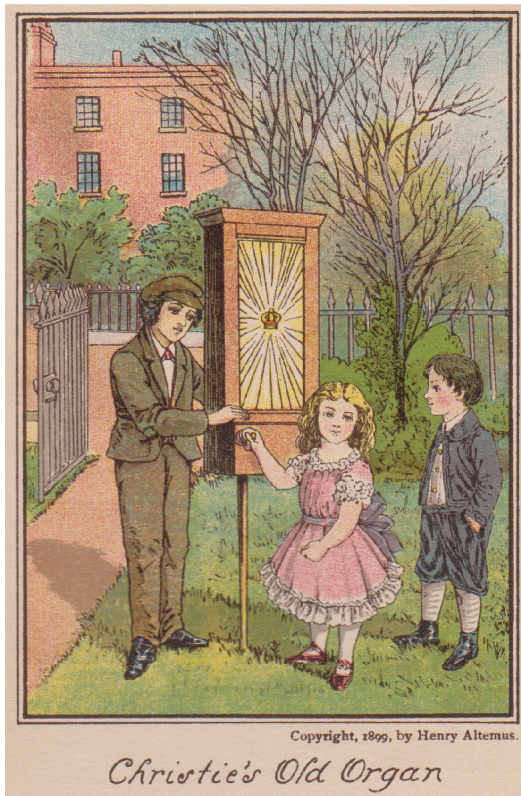
The barrel is new and has 10 'music hall' songs. The original barrel is in a state of conservation but can no longer be played.

signed for domestic use with the possible option of street use. The fine quality of veneers and finish was hardly appropriate for street use. The bun feet also were indicative of the instrument being made to stand on a table.

Hicks were only one of many barrel piano makers. Henry Distin played an important part in the development of the instrument. The Distin name was also

associated with military band instruments and many patents were registered in that name. As regards the Hicks pianos, Distin continued to produce the instruments in the same style. Later he transferred the whole business to Philadelphia, USA, where he lived to the age of 80 and died in 1898.

If anyone can add to this story, comments and pictures will be welcome for publication.



Two examples of the use of Hicks type barrel pianos, taken from two different editions of 'Christie's Old Organ' by Mrs O F Walton. (Editors' Collection)

EDITORIAL NOTE: "David Wallis Reeves, American composer and cornet player, was born Feb. 14, 1838, at Oswego, N. Y. His early musical advantages were few, but when fifteen years old he was apprenticed to Thomas Canham, a band instructor, with whom he diligently studied the violin and the cornet. At the age of nineteen he became leader of a circus band. Soon after he went to New York, joining Dodworth's Orchestra, and subsequently Rumsey and Newcomb's Minstrels. With the latter company he went to England, where he was presented with a fine cornet by Henry Distin."*

"In 1860 he became cornet soloist with the celebrated Rumsey and Newcomb Minstrels, in which capacity he accompanied that troupe to Europe in the spring of 1861, and travelled through England, Ireland, Prussia, and Saxony."**

Maybe this had some connection with Distin's move to America?

*From '**A Handbook of American Music and Musicians**', edited by F O Jones, published by C W Moulton & Co., Buffalo NY, 1887.

From 'A Biographical Cyclopedia of Representative Men of Rhode Island**', National Biographical Publishing Co, Providence RI, 1881.

MBSI President's Visit

Following a family holiday touring Italy, Judy Caletti, President of MBSI, continued on to England to visit a relative and an old school friend. After landing at Gatwick she took the opportunity to make the short detour to the Old School to see old friends and meet some new ones.

We had a very pleasant day, during the course of which she accepted, on behalf of Annie Tyvand, the special certificate won at the AMBC Christmas Open Day. This was for a competition to decide the "Naffest Musical Novelty". Annie's entry of a Musical Pickle (gherkin to us Brits) was unanimously voted the best (or should that be worst?) in a hard fought contest. The grandchildren would surely think their grandparents, supposedly serious music box enthusiasts, were on another planet to own such things. I say no more.....

Ted Brown (AMBC Chairman)



Ted Brown (L) and Paul Bellamy (R) with Judy Caletti, President of the Musical Box Society International, who received a presentation certificate from AMBC on behalf of Annie Tyvand. Even the policeman looks happy!

M. J. Paillard & Co., New York City

by David Evans

"The firm of Paillard & Co. is the oldest now existing which manufactures musical boxes. It was founded at Ste. Croix, Switzerland, in 1814, by the great-grandfather of the present members of the New York house. In 1849, of four brothers of the third generation, the two elder remained in Ste. Croix in charge of the factory (then a comparatively small concern), while the two younger came to New York and established themselves in business at No. 80 Nassau Street in 1850. One of the latter died soon after, and the surviving brother, M. J. Paillard, continued alone for a while. He then took a partner, when the firm name became Paillard & Martin, which it remained until 1861, Mr. Martin withdrawing at that time. M. J. Paillard again continued alone until 1865, when he retired from any active part in the business on account of his health. He returned to Switzerland, where he died in December, 1868. Previous to his departure in 1865, he took into partnership his nephew, A. E. Paillard, son of the senior member of the Ste. Croix house, and the firm name was changed to M. J. Paillard & Co., which is still retained. The present members are A. E. Paillard and Geo. A. Paillard, son of the late M. J. Paillard.

When Messrs. Paillard & Co. first began business the facilities for manufacturing were very crude and everything was made by hand, the work often being wrought by the workmen at their homes. Since that time much valuable machinery has been invented, but each instrument still requires a considerable amount of skilled manual labor of the highest order.

The firm employs 800 workmen in the factory at Ste. Croix, the machinery of which is run by steam. Every part of the instruments, from the rough castings up, is made in the building, which is done by no other firm, and which results in better and more uniform work.

With Messrs. Paillard & Co. have originated nearly all the improvements in music boxes, most of them being due to the inventive genius of the late Amédée Paillard of the Ste. Croix house. A stock ranging in value from \$100,000 to \$150,000 is constantly on hand at the New York house. There is a branch house in London under the firm name of A. Paillard & Co. The name of Paillard & Co. has a world-wide reputation and is inseparably connected with the history of music boxes."

This recently discovered information is taken from 'A Handbook of American Music and Musicians', edited by F O Jones, published by C W Moulton & Co., Buffalo, 1887.



Fig 1. Paillard advertisement from the 1880s.

Marius-Justin-Samuel Paillard (1827-1868) was the son of Samuel Paillard and the brother of Eugène Paillard¹. His wife's name was Mathilde and they had at least one son, George (? - 1890). Marius moved to New York at the age of 22 with his family about 1849 as stated above and commenced business as a musical box importer at 80 Nassau Street. Later the firm moved to 21 Maiden Lane to import watches. He later relinquished this business to concentrate exclusively on the importation of musical boxes. The firm, known as M J Paillard & Co from 1865, settled at 680 Broadway, New York some time after 1866. Jacot and Son, also musical box importers, were just down the road at 298 Broadway in 1893. After his return to Switzerland, Marius and his sister-in-law Caroline became partners in the Swiss parent company C Paillard & Cie. For more information see Sections 5.1.6 and 5.6 of *The Music Makers of Switzerland*. Bellamy illustrates a letter heading from the New York firm at

Plate 5.6.2 and notes the partners in the 1880s as A E Paillard and G A Paillard, the former Marius's nephew, Alfred-Ernest, latter being Marius and Mathilde's son George. A somewhat later invoice (Fig 6, see below) has surfaced in which the proprietor is simply A E Paillard, as George had died in 1890.

The **Centennial International Exhibition** of 1876, the first official World's Fair in the United States, was held in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, from May 10 to November 10, 1876, to celebrate the 100th anniversary of the signing of the Declaration of Independence in Philadelphia. Officially named the **International Exhibition of Arts, Manufactures and Products of the Soil and Mine**, it was held in Fairmount Park along the Schuylkill River on fairgrounds designed by Herman J. Schwarzmann. Nearly 10 million visitors attended the exhibition and thirty-seven countries participated in it. The Centennial Commission turned to architect Henry Pettit and engineer Joseph M. Wilson for design and construction of the Main Exhibition Building. A temporary structure, the Main Building was the largest building in the world by area, enclosing 21.5 acres (8.7 ha). It measured 464 ft in width and 1880 ft in length. It was

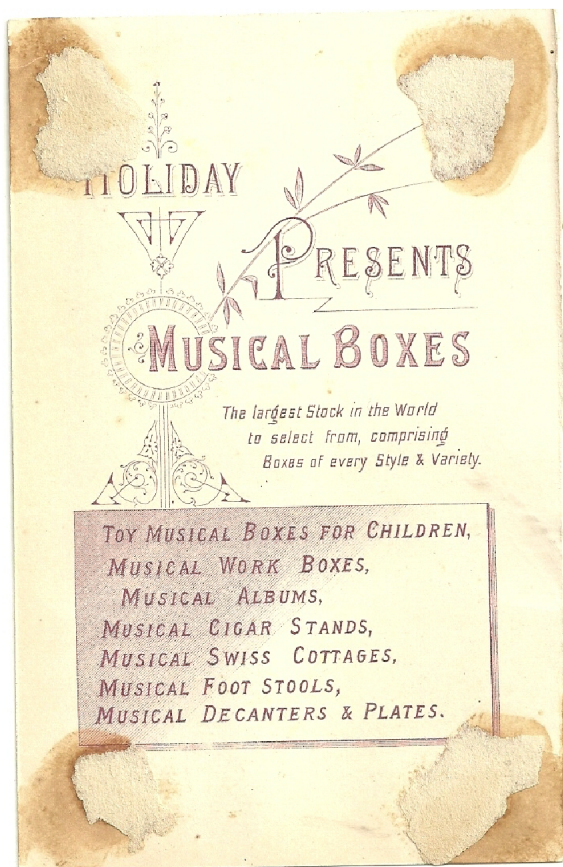


Fig 3. Advertisement from 1880s.

A SUGGESTION

WEDDING FOR BIRTHDAY CHRISTMAS

You cannot imagine a more delightful and appropriate present than one of the new

Paillard Music Boxes.

It is a lasting and pleasing remembrance that all but speaks the giver's name.

200 styles, from 40 cents up.

The Piano Orchestrion, a new instrument, is a perfect home entertainer. Run by alcohol motor. No winding or turning of cranks. Also new style of Music Boxes, with interchangeable disks instead of cylinders. Popular and inexpensive.

Musical Novelties, such as Musical Water Pitchers, Decanters, Chairs, Albums, and others. Especially pleasing because of their Beauty, Usefulness, and Oddity. Call or send for descriptive Catalogue.

M. J. PAILLARD & CO.,
680 Broadway, New York.

Fig 2. M J Paillard's advertisement of 1893.

constructed using prefabricated parts, with a wood and iron frame resting on a substructure of 672 stone piers, the wrought iron roof trusses were supported by the columns of the superstructure. The building took eighteen months to complete and cost \$1,580,000. The building was surrounded by portals on all four sides, the east entrance of the building was used as an access way for carriages and the south entrance served as a primary entrance for street cars. The North side related the main building to the Art Gallery and the west side served as a passageway to the Machinery and Agricultural Halls.

It was here that M J Paillard & Co exhibited, showcasing C Paillard & Cie's products, the top of the line being a huge duplex full orchestra box (Fig 4). Analysing the picture for information about the instrument, it is apparent that it has a 10-beater drum, 8-beater castanet, 6 bells, three sublime harmonie combs (with 53, 53 and 54 teeth), a 34-key organ and two governors, one for the music train and the other controlling the four organ feeders. Each governor has differentially geared blades,

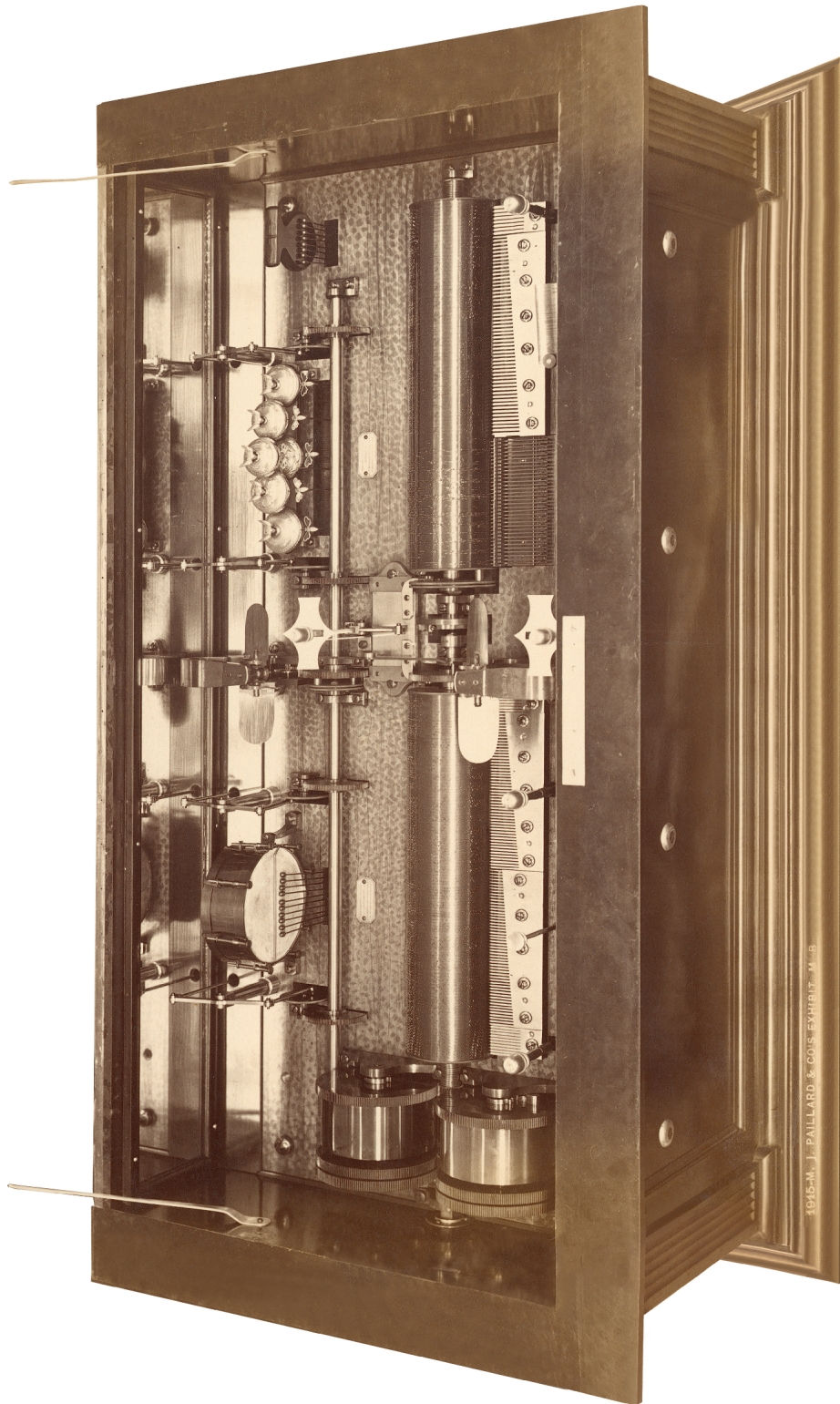


Fig 4. The C. Paillard & Co exhibit at the Centennial International Exhibition of 1876, Reproduced by kind permission of the Free Library of Philadelphia Print and Picture Collection.



Fig 5. Paillard advertisement from 1866.

so that turning one blade to adjust the governor speed automatically rotates the other blade so that they remain exactly in balance. It appears to have pairs of interchangeable cylinders of 8 airs each. Allowing that a 53-note 8-air comb is typically about 7 1/2" in length, it appears that the cylinders are each about 18" long, making the whole instrument approximately four feet wide.

M J Paillard & Co carried a wide range of items, such as musical pitchers, decanters, chairs, albums (Fig 2),

work boxes, Swiss cottages, foot stools and plates (Fig 3) and many others at prices ranging from \$5.50 to \$600 (Fig 5). From late 1896 they also carried the American-made Criterion disc musical box range manufactured by F G Otto & Sons² of Jersey City, New Jersey (fig 7). McElhone³ records that the Criterion was released in November 1896 and in the first five months Paillard's sold between eighty and one hundred machines per month. The Criterion was withdrawn from production during 1897 as a result of litigation from the Regina Music Box Company over alleged patent infringement. M J Paillard & Co continued to advertise the Criterion in 1898 and even into early 1899, so presumably were using up stock machines. Criterion were made in a range of disc sizes from 8 3/4" diameter to 20 1/2". The top of the range Model 20 'Grand' was an autochange machine holding fifteen discs. An example of Model 20 is in the MBSI Museum collection. A "large Duplex" machine was invoiced to a Mr J W Murtha by Paillard's in February 1898 (Fig 6) for the sum of \$160, together with "an extra fine cabinet for

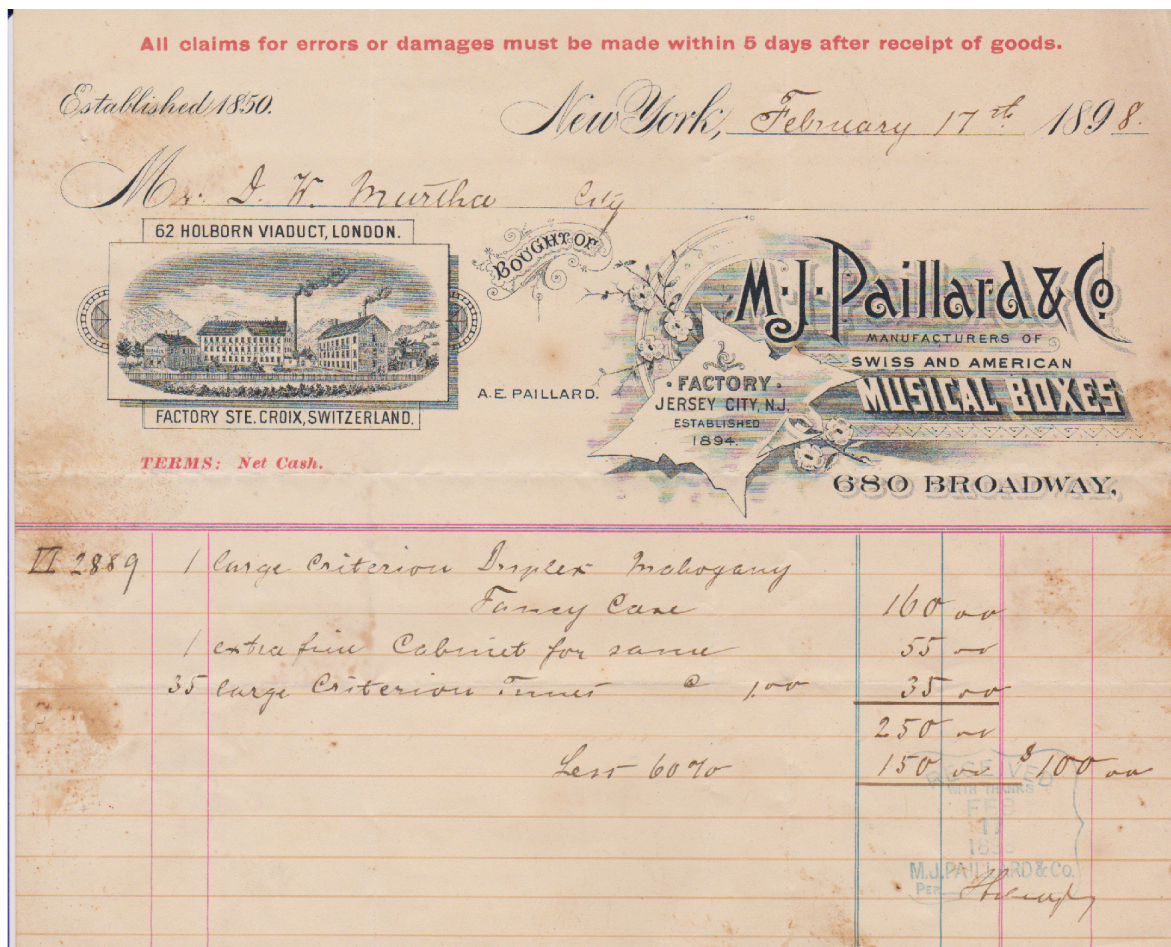


Fig 6. Paillard invoice from February 17th 1898.



Fig 7. Criterion advertisement from 1898.

same" (\$55) and 35 discs (\$35), though the only person of that name so far discovered was a Brooklyn police patrol man who retired on 2nd November 1897. Whether such a person would be in a position to afford such an instrument is open to conjecture. As the invoice concerned was part of an archive of paperwork from the estate of New York Senator Francis H Gates, it is possible to speculate that Mr Murtha may have worked for Gates after his

retirement, and perhaps arranged for the musical box to be delivered to him, or maybe it was a gift from the Senator to Murtha. Either way, the Senator looked after the paperwork. A Criterion flyer (Fig 8) was included as part of the deal and was also obtained from the Gates archive. Gates was President of the Madison-Onondaga Mutual Fire Insurance Company as well as holding directorships in several other companies and managing the family farm, so would have been in a position to purchase. McElhone⁴ lists a number of Criterion machines. The only one that matches the description above is Model 16, an upright 20 1/2" machine with double combs and two doors, priced at \$175.00. The extra fine cabinet was presumably a disc bin upon which it stood, and in which the spare discs could be stored.

1. *Bellamy, Paul; 'The Music Makers of Switzerland', AMBC 2015, Ch. 5, page 129*
2. *McElhone, Kevin A; 'The Disc Musical Box', MBSGB, 2012, Ch.2, page 23*
3. *Ibid*
4. *Ibid, page 109*



Fig 8. A Criterion flyer sheet from circa 1898.

A Visit to J H Heller of Bern in 1873

I thought subscribers might be interested to read this account of a visit to the shop of J. H. Heller in Bern, Switzerland, made by Julia Jellison, my American great-grandmother, in 1873. She was on a tour of Europe at the time, and wrote home to her family in Maine. The following is an extract of a letter written from Bern on 5 September 1873.

"We have been out this evening to what is certainly the most remarkable thing we have seen since we have been here -- the shop of Heller musical box manufacturer. But you must not suppose the boxes are common music boxes. There are plenty of those in the shops but it boasts greater treasures.

"Everything in the shop 'plays music'. You take up a tiny purse and while you open it, it starts off a fairy tune. A tobacco pouch performs in the same manner. A glass beer mug attracts your attention and while you lift it to your mouth off it goes in a waltz. A champagne bottle and a decanter are similarly accomplished. There are handsome carved wood bread plates and when in cutting the bread you press down on them, they play a tune. The clocks all round the walls in beautiful designs are also musical.

"I wanted to look at a beautiful vase in a wooden stand which plays eight tunes, and to do so sat down on a very handsome inlaid chair which immediately went to performing operatic selections and did not stop for some time. There was a handsome vase of flowers on one of which sat a bird who shakes his wings and turns his head and sings and whistles and chirps in a wonderfully natural manner. In short there is every imaginable article made in the highest degree of elegance but concealing somewhere the mechanism which you would never suspect.

"But the great feature which we went to see particularly was the orchestrion -- a great instrument, as large as an ordinary church organ which plays in exact imitation of an orchestra. It is most perfect and most wonderful. It played the Stabat Mater in a masterly manner and you could hardly have supposed it anything but an orchestra.

"But I could not begin to tell you all the things. We went to an upper room where the chairs, tables, sofas, etc., etc., were all inlaid with elegant wood and all musical. I never saw so many wonderful things.

*from Charlotte Wathey, Newcastle upon Tyne, UK.
Originally published on Mechanical Music Digest.*

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.

Saturday 10th September: Chanctonbury Ring meeting at the Old School, from 10.30am.

Lunch provided. Please let Ted know if you intend to come. Tel: 01403 823533

Friday 23rd to Monday 26th September: Self-drive weekend visit to Suffolk, based in Ipswich.

Saturday: Visits to "Sounds of the Past" (vintage radios etc), followed by Clock collection at Moyse's Hall Museum. Afternoon free.

Sunday: Visits to two private collections followed by the Mechanical Museum at Cotton.

Cost: Three nights £210 each (two nights £160 each) based on two sharing.

Included: Three (or two) night's dinner, bed and breakfast; Morning coffee Saturday and Sunday; Light lunch Sunday; all entry fees.

There are a few places remaining.

If you are interested please contact Juliet:
email: info@ambc.org.uk Tel: 017968 342353

The First Time I ever saw (and used) an EMG Gramophone

By Edward Murray-Harvey, a.k.a O Carioca.

During the decade or so of years following 1927, there were great developments in the new gramophones coming onto the market. By that time, electrical reproduction had arrived, and gramophones with loudspeakers were creeping into the makers' catalogues, although those instruments would be considered to be quite primitive by today's standards. (*Have you heard the Brunswick Panatrope of that period? – Ed*). To complement the latter, however, gramophones with scientifically-designed horns began to be made, using properly-worked-out mathematical principles.

In Britain, at the same time that HMV and Columbia, the main makers of mass-produced gramophones, were making gramophones with electrical loudspeakers, they and many others were also still making acoustic (non-electrical) gramophones. Serious efforts were made to fold up horns, scientifically-designed ones, to be crammed inside their products which were really pieces of furniture. But however good those gramophones with folded horns were, they were the result of a compromise.

Inevitably a reaction set in, and a firm called EMG Handmade Gramophones was founded to build instruments which sported horns, naked and unashamed. Very soon experts cottoned-on to the new EMGs, and they were considered to be the very best way of playing 78 rpm records. Many connoisseurs still think that way today. The initials are those of the founder of the firm, Mr E. M. Ginn. ("Ginn" is pronounced as in "begin" and not as in the drink.) Here are my recollections of the very first time I ever came across an EMG Gramophone.

I was sent to a boarding school near Oxford. In those days -- the early 1950s -- the roads were a lot quieter than they are today, and we pupils were allowed to cycle into Oxford on the

very occasional Wednesday or Saturday afternoon when we had a free hour or two. On the occasion that I want to tell you about, I had a reason for cycling into Oxford. I was obliged to go there because I had won a school prize. Please don't think I am boasting about winning that prize. It is all part of the story, and I dare say that had I not been awarded it, I might never have met that gramophone, and this story might never have been told.

At my school the prizes were books. Each prize winner, before the prize giving ceremony, had to go into Oxford and choose a book or books to the value of his prize. I cycled one afternoon the five miles or so into Oxford and propped my bicycle outside the building and went in. I chose and ordered my prize, which would later be fetched and paid-for by the school.

My errand completed, I came out ready to return to the school. I was just about to get back onto my cycle when I noticed the shop next door. That shop bore the interesting name DRAWDA HALL BOOKSHOP. It had a notice in the window saying that as well as second-hand books, there were gramophone records for sale. That was enough for a lifelong gramophone-enthusiast like me. Leaving my pushbike where it was I entered the Drawda Hall Bookshop.

Anyway, all that is by the way. It was not a large shop. The main business of the establishment was the selling of second-hand books, with records as a sideline. But at the back of the shop was an EMG Gramophone! What a magnificent beast! It had a swan-necked horn, the mouth of which must have been all of thirty inches across. It had an electric motor to drive the turntable and a supply of bamboo needles with a needle-cutter. The gramophone was there for customers to try records on before they bought them. Nobody was using it at that moment.

I gazed at the EMG in awe. Even by the 1950s the thing was a bit of an antique, and of course

it had always been a collector's-piece. I had never seen such a thing! But I tried not to appear too awestricken as I turned to look through the records for sale on a nearby shelf. As an impecunious schoolboy I had little or no money in my pocket. Nevertheless I simply just had to pick out a record and try it on that wonderful gramophone. So I chose a record and took it over to the EMG.

Nobody present, customers or staff, paid the slightest bit of attention to my thirteen-year-old self. It was just assumed that I knew how to cut myself a needle and set the turntable in motion. After all, wasn't this Oxford, the place where everybody knew, or was expected to know, everything? Fortunately, probably more by luck than by anything else, all went well and I didn't disgrace myself. The gramophone exceeded all my expectations - it sounded really superb.

"Wouldn't it be wonderful", I said to my young self, "if one day I could myself own a gramophone like that!" But the prospect seemed remote. Nevertheless, many years later, I do now own an EMG Gramophone. It is not a large one, but it just suits my living-room.

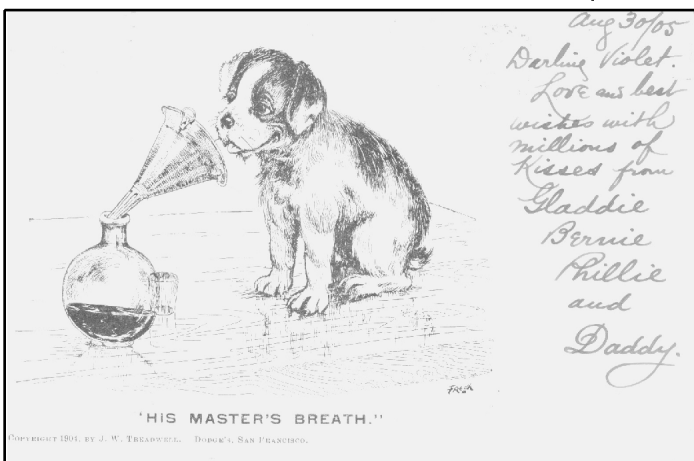
My EMG, which is a Model VIII, has a standard Wilson Panharmonic Horn made of papier mâché. It has an ivorine tag on it giving the address as 267 High Holborn, which was the home of the EMG firm before they moved

to their well-known Grape Street address.

Naturally I didn't - I couldn't - buy the record on that occasion as I had no money. But on one of my subsequent visits to the Drawda Hall Bookshop I did buy a record. I seem to remember that it cost me one and sixpence. A ten-inch HMV record of Wagner's famous Prelude to Act III of "Lohengrin", with The Ride of the Valkyries on the other side. Both played by a group called the La Scala Symphony Orchestra, conducted by Maestro Carlo Salaino in Milan. Catalogue Number B 311. I still have that very record today in my collection of 78 rpm records. I have never been much of a Wagner enthusiast myself, but those two items are great favourites of mine, especially the "Lohengrin" Prelude. And many years later I was able to make an arrangement of that very busy piece for twenty-note street-organ.

I wonder if the Drawda Hall Bookshop is still there in Broad Street. I doubt it. But if it is there, I don't suppose it still has an EMG horn gramophone for the use of customers to operate it for trying-out 78 rpm records.

(EMGs were certainly the choice of the connoisseur in those days. We have a Mk Xb example that was used by 'The Gramophone' magazine's record review department until the end of the 78 era in the 1950s - Ed)



Postcard copyright 1904 by J W Treadwell of San Francisco. Mailed from San Francisco to Melbourne, Australia in August 1905.

CHAIRMAN'S REPORT

Well, we have made it to our second AGM. Around a third of our membership, all from the UK, attended. It was a good but short meeting followed by an Organ Grind in the grounds of the Old School.

By the time you read this we will have had visits from Bob Yates, a previous President of MBSI of America, and Judy Caletti, their current President. And the organ and musical box day at Amberley Museum and Heritage Centre in Sussex will have just taken place. We will have displayed and demonstrated examples of many forms of mechanical music. Your committee are pursuing various avenues to increase our membership. Paul Bellamy's book is selling well and you will see an advertisement for the new booklet we have just produced, that we hope will promote all forms of mechanical music.

In this edition there is an article on making a marotte (a spinning musical doll) which we hope will launch a series of "What to do, and How to do it" articles. Please give us your ideas about anything you would like to see in the magazine. It is your Association.

Remember, all that is needed from members is to have a love of the sound of musical boxes, pianos or organs etc. You do not need to own one in order to join. Any potential members may attend two meetings before committing to membership. At the Chancetonbury Ring all boxes may be photographed and recorded, with permission. We will always give advice on value, history, tune identification and restoration when asked.

Ted Brown



Keith Hilson, Ted Brown and Richard Kerridge

Ted Brown, Chairman of the AMBC, is pictured with the Hicks Barrel Piano and the Varetto Barrel reed organ owned by Richard Kerridge and Keith Hilson, which he has recently repaired.

The end "toilet seat" door of the Hicks barrel piano had split in half – an old break which had been repaired before – and this was re-glued and strengthened across the break by the addition of veneer with the grain running in the opposite direction to the grain on the actual door. The soundboard also had a crack in it which Ted repaired by inserting and gluing thin veneer in to the crack. The keyframe was also re-set.

The Varetto had a broken reed, which Ted also replaced and tuned as necessary.

Richard and Keith are extremely grateful to Ted as both instruments are now playing superbly, as demonstrated at the recent open organ day, and they express their thanks through the pages of the "Mechanical Music World", the magazine of the AMBC.

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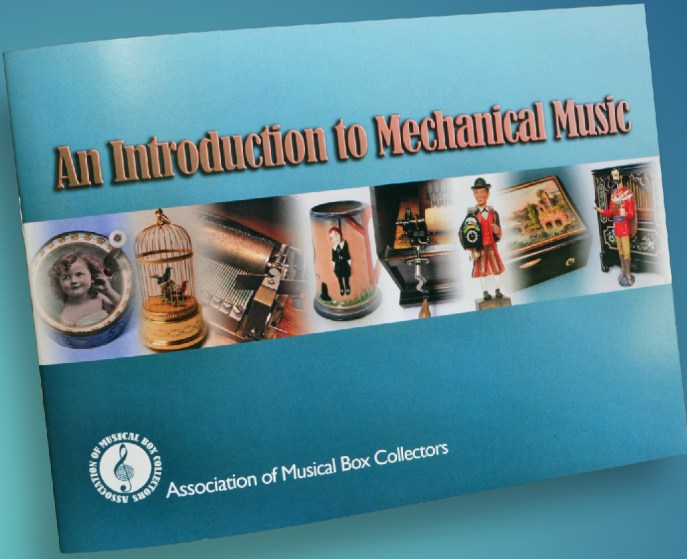
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Brilliant Varnish for Wood

A German paper recommends the following varnish as giving most brilliant surfaces and of a durable polish. Further, it browns wood and brings out the veneration. Gum-lac is dissolved in twice its volume of water and the mixture gently warmed until has acquired the consistency of jelly. Two parts of this varnish are mixed with one part of olive oil. A light coat is laid on the wood to be polished and is then briskly rubbed with a pad to make the varnish penetrate into the pores. It is allowed to dry and the operation repeated three or four times. After some hours the surface is rubbed well with Tripoli powder on a rag soaked in olive oil. The operation is finished by polishing with a wash-leather.

From Amateur Work Magazine, 1892

Artificial Ivory

Danger! – Artificial imitations of ivory and bone can be dangerous. We pointed out a short time ago that wearers of this composition in the form of buttons etc., carry about with them, more or less, an explosive – in fact, an equivalent to nitro-glycerine, owing to its inflammable nature; and an instance has been known of a gentleman's collar of this substance catching fire whilst being worn, owing to the careless handling of a lighted taper. There has come under our notice a pianoforte with the keyboard destroyed, which was caused by a light falling upon it. As this composition is used largely for covering the keys of medium-priced pianos, organs etc., we call attention to its danger, and warn our readers against laying lighted cigars, matches or naked lights of any description in close proximity to anything made of this composition. It is easily distinguishable from ivory or bone by scraping with a sharp knife, or wiping over with a piece of rag damp with methylated spirits, when it will, if not genuine, emit a strong smell of camphor.

From Amateur Work Magazine, 1892

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.

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 A5 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 A5 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 principle 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 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.

The Editors have a large quantity of **Hupfeld 73-note player piano rolls**. Is anyone in need of any? If so please contact us - see Officers list on Page 1.



A Passion for Barrel Pianos



Milly & Colin Williams

*In future editions of
Mechanical Music World
we shall be pleased to accept
advertisements from members,
both display (contact Ted
Brown for details) and
classified (contact the
Editors). Let us know if we
can help.*