

MECHANICAL MUSIC WORLD ISSUE 19 WINTER 2019/20

AMBC Meeting November 2019

“Ted began the morning with a treat of modern-day musical novelties. Most were Christmas themed, according to our tradition. No pre-Christmas meeting is complete without the battling Santa’s, which never fail to amuse this adult audience, the military band and other seasonal novelties. The late Daphne Ladell had wide-ranging interests and it was a pleasure to remember



how she always managed to produce a new Christmas novelty each year to entertain us.

There were just a few more serious items. One an exceptionally fine 11 inch disc playing Lochmann movement. It had been an orphan for some unknown reason and its case was missing. However, it has been refitted in another old case completely unrelated to that of a musical box. The movement has two combs, tuned to almost the same scale but slightly different pitch so that two notes played together give a sublime harmonic effect. The musical performance is exceptional. Re-

homing an instrument is an important and overlooked factor in musical box preservation. Next was a David Lecoultre movement that had previously been demonstrated in an unrestored condition. One of the airs had suffered a run so the cylinder had been completely re-pinned expertly by Max Plummer who also re-stepped the snail, replaced a tooth tip, renewed some dampers and reset the comb.”

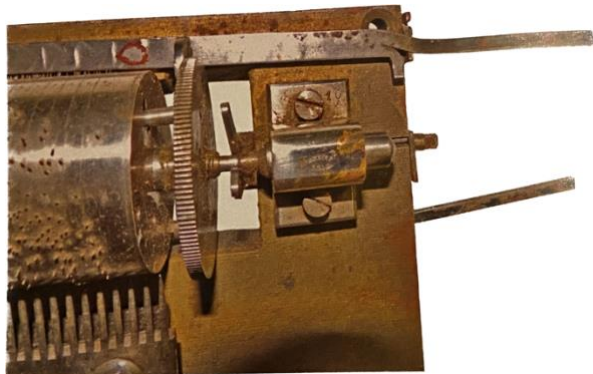
The morning passed and it was time for lunch in the canteen, followed by a lantern slide show. The Master of Ceremonies, Paul Bellamy in top-hat and cloak, introduced the display team of Chris, Juliet, Ted Brown and Paul Baker, in Old Time Music Hall style:

Chris Fynes demonstrated a whole series of hand coloured slides:-



Auguste L'Épée Company's New Experiment in Changeable Cylinders by David Evans

In Mechanical Music World Issue 15 we included details about the history of the L'Épée family and musical box manufacture in France. This article now considers another item from the firm.



Extract: “On 8th December 1886 James Yate Johnson of 47 Lincoln's Inn Fields in the County of Middlesex, a Gentleman (and most probably a lawyer, though some might say a lawyer and most probably a Gentleman) applied on behalf of Auguste L'Épée of Sainte Suzanne, (Doubs), a manufacturer of musical boxes and Louis Emile Jérôme Thibouville of 68 and 70 rue Réamur, Paris, both in the Republic of France, for a patent on a new way of making a cylinder box with interchangeable cylinders. The

invention refers to an improved arrangement of interchangeable cylinders in which the disadvantages attending the use of such cylinders as ordinarily arranged are obviated.”

The 50th Anniversary of the Rudesheim Kabinett

We have featured an article about this famous Rudesheim museum, known as Siegfrieds Mechanisches Musik Kabinett, in a previous issue. This time our visit was for very special occasion, the 50th anniversary of the museum. Although the anniversary weekend was on the 2nd and 3rd November, there was bright sunshine for some of the time and the weather unseasonably mild. Rudesheim is a lovely mediaeval town on the banks of the Rhein. The Kabinett is housed in an old building called the Bromserhof, which was originally a Noble Court that dates back to 1542. The museum is a must-see place and a venue on the regular Rhine boat and coach excursions, so has visitors from all over the world. There are over 350 exhibits ranging from the 1700s to the 1900s, including a fine example of a Hupfeld Phonolist Violina. As members may know, Siegfried manufactured several of the violin playing tops for original Phonolist pianos. The museum was the brainchild of Siegfried Wendel, who had a passion for collecting, saving and restoring old mechanical items. He was noted for his cloak and hat. He was an exceptional person and had an exceptional personality and dress code to match.

He started to collect clocks and then discovered self-playing musical instruments at a time when many were disregarded and sold as scrap. His first encounter was when a young couple paid him a visit carrying a Polyphon on the back seat of a Volkswagen. He gave up on the clocks and started to build a massive collection of automatic musical instruments. As the collection grew, he realised the need for a place to house them. He opened his first museum at Hocheim near his home town of Gustavsburg. As the collection grew, he relocated in 1974 at Rudesheim but not at the Bromershof". The article continues, describing 16 items that the Group found the most fascinating.



The Dulcitone

The Dulcitone plays on a series of tuning forks hit by felt-covered hammers. It was patented in the 1860's. Below are the original *hints on playing the Dulcitone*. The Dulcitone keys and touch are like those of a good piano. and nearly all music written for the piano can be effectively played on the Dulcitone. Like every other musical instrument, the Dulcitone requires a small amount of study if



the best results are to be obtained, therefore a little application greatly increases the pleasure to be derived from this charming instrument. Strike the notes exactly as in playing a piano (as sharply as desired) — do not simply press down the notes as when playing an organ. Use the pedal freely. The pedal mechanism acts in the same manner as the sustaining or loud pedal of the piano, but is much more effective, because the notes sing or sustain much longer. The tone improves with use.

Bear with me... by Juliet Fynes

“Bear with me all you collectors of serious musical boxes, whilst I make another foray into the realms of trivia. Though to bear collectors their passion is as serious as ours. The price of one of the rarer, and possible threadbare, examples might buy you a decent cylinder box.

Who doesn't love a teddy bear? The first and most cherished toy of generations of small children.

The story of how the teddy got his name is well known. In 1902 on a bear hunt, President Theodore (Teddy) Roosevelt declined to shoot a tethered bear. This incident was the subject of a political cartoon, which was seen by an enterprising American toy maker. He made some toy bears, sending one to the President, asking permission to call them Teddy's bears. The idea "went viral", in today's parlance, and in no time toy manufacturers in the USA and Europe were turning them out in their thousands to satisfy an apparently insatiable demand that continues to this day.

On the face of it a dangerous wild animal seems an unlikely candidate for a cuddly comforting childhood friend. They were humanised, so they looked more like dolls with friendly faces and usually had articulated limbs so they could be made to sit. The earliest examples had more pointed bearlike faces and longer arms than more modern examples. They were initially made of mohair stuffed with wood shavings or kapok and with boot-button or glass eyes.

Over the years they have been manufactured in many different materials, shapes and sizes, including spin-offs from children's stories, such as Rupert, Pooh and Paddington. From the earliest time some bears have been fitted with growlers that work when the bear is tilted. Inserting a musical movement came somewhat later”

A Big Little Musical Box by Paul BellamyPaul describes in vivid detail the history of how he became addicted to musical box collection and his encounter with a big little musical box in the Portobello market.

