

MECHANICAL MUSIC WORLD Issue 22 Autumn 2020

The Mystery of IPR by Paul Bellamy

Paul reminds us that in Mechanical Music World Issue 8, Jean-Marc Lebout reported the story of his musical box with the name ALDER stamped on its comb.

“The bedplate also had the letters IPR, rarely reported and of unknown origin. However, he reported details of other movements by other makers (or were they agents?) who had the same marks on their bedplates. Once more, this small but important observation has started to lift the veil about the possible meaning of the letters but so far, without revealing the identity.

*The Music Makers of Switzerland (page 234) recorded IPR as follows: "IPR. This inscription was stamped on the bedplate of David Lecoultre movement, pre-1840, turn **Plate 8.1.5.** 'I' and 'J' are effectively interchangeable but neither helps in attribution. Also seen on an unknown movement associated with Geneva agent Valogne, circa 1840.*

Jean-Marc found the same mark on other movements, as follows: Henriot serial 14667 IPR 331; Métert serial 1338 IPR, Bruguier serial 4193 IPR with a number not clear enough. Also seen in another collection on a Ducommun Girod serial 20306 IPR 306.

Bulleid did not produce dating charts for Henriot, Métert, Bruguier or Valogne but he did record examples of their tune sheets with serial numbers and estimated dates. The supposition is that IPR designates an un-known maker or supplier of bedplates, possibly even the supplier to makers of complete but unprogrammed assemblies.”

The Clement Clock



At Skinner's Auction on April 6th at their Marlborough, Massachusetts rooms one of the most spectacular lots was an English oak quarter-chiming, musical, triple calendar long case or hall clock, "The Clement Clock", made in London in the late 19th century. It was in an exceptionally spectacularly carved case with figures, busts, cupids, and floral ornamentation throughout; the four-train movement was of exceptional quality, playing seven tunes on twelve nested bells and a cylinder, quarter-hour chiming on a further eight bells, moon's phase, and triple calendar, the dial signed "Alfd Marsh at ye dial opposite ye Bank of England London" on a cartouche on the centre.

The article goes on to describes full details of the clock and its long history.

The Hidden Secret by Annie Tyvand

As an antique doll collector, Annie tells how she is always on the hunt for old German bisque headed dolls. A number of years ago while strolling through the Paris Saint-Ouen Flea Market, her eyes spotted something: “There lying half hidden on a table was this little head poking out. I knew instantly the head

was German made. Before I continue, I must confess my French is abysmal, therefore no haggling was exchanged over the price of the doll. Nor could I understand any of the information the woman might be trying to tell me. I gladly paid the requested amount and I happily wandered away with my new found treasure. I had always been taught to be respectful of old things and knowing the doll was older than me I was quite gentle in my examination of her, back in my hotel room.

I noticed that her clothing had been sewn and glued onto the body. Due to its age the silk dress was beginning to fray but her body still felt "solid". I didn't bother to inspect her further for fear of damaging the old fabric. However, I was ecstatic with my purchase as the bisque head was in fabulous shape! The mohair wig was in its original uncombed condition. The bisque face was perfect with brown, glass paperweight eyes and a small open mouth with tiny teeth showing. I carefully wrapped, bundled and packed my treasure for its safe trip back to the States. Upon arrival at my home the doll was carefully placed in my doll room where she stood so I could enjoy her, untouched for many years. As fate would have it years later, a nasty wind storm uprooted a large fir tree, threatening to cause major havoc within my doll room should the tree completely fall against the house. All the dolls were quickly evacuated to the dining room for safe keeping until the tree could be dealt with".....



Street Organ Postcards by Ted Brown

Ted's article gives interesting details of picture postcards, taken from his extensive collection.

Picture postcards were first accepted in Britain as legitimate postal items in 1894. They quickly became very popular as a way of sending greetings or a short message, until 1919 the postage rate was 1/2d. It was then increased to 1d. A further increase to 1 1/2d three years later was swiftly reversed following public protest. It remained at 1d until 1940. Manufacturers rose to the challenge of producing a huge variety of cards to suit all tastes and purposes; views, buildings, people, animals in photographs and drawings, sentimental, artistic and humorous. They provide great source material for social history buns. Dating can be easy if there is a clear post mark but from the beginning people liked to



collect them so many were never sent. The name of the printer, where included, can also establish the approximate date.....

Phoenix Box by Christopher Fynes

This early sectional comb musical movement was spotted on Ebay by Chris, but had unfortunately been in a house fire. It no longer had a case and what was left was badly burnt. He could not bear to see such an early example in such a tragic state. The photographs and text reveal how Chris turned a total wreck into a lovely 4-air box.



Batteries are included by David Soulsby

David describes the first Japanese battery operated tin toy that he purchased, a Cragstan model of a croupier playing craps. He continues the article by describing how the Japanese had for a number of years manufactured lots of well-designed and innovative clockwork and friction novelty playthings, but it was their battery-toys that made the biggest impression. They could run for longer than their spring driven counterparts, allowing the design of the most ingenious and complicated automata toys ever produced. With two D-cells inserted, the number of actions the toys could perform was remarkable. Walking, spinning, smoking, pouring, drinking, lighting up, as well as arm and limb movements and of course sound effects, were just some of them. Vinyl heads were also an additional feature which allowed faces to move, smile with moving lips, and eyes open and close. Japan became the leading toy maker for the next 20 years



Murder most Foul by Juliet Fynes

You might expect a little cut-throat competition in the musical box world, but not actual homicide. Yet this was the fate that befell a musical box dealer in Philadelphia in 1901. In fairness it was, not occasioned by a business dispute, but a good old fashioned "domestic". Juliet happened upon this story when she saw this interesting trade card on the Internet and decided to investigate further.....



Yesteryear – The Napoleon Hat by Paul Bellamy

An often overlooked musical clock is the 'Napoleon Hat' so called because this type of mantel clock is shaped like the hat Napoleon wore, typical of the time. Paul tells us that the shape of the clock first became popular in about the early 1900's. Many of them were made but



the quality varied enormously The one illustrated is extremely well made but the maker remains unknown.

Extract:- “The hat-shaped case is made of plywood veneered with oak or sometimes mahogany. Most movements were made in Germany but some were made in England. The example shown was certainly of a very good standard. There were several different designs defined by the number of keyholes in the dial. A basic timepiece does not sound the hours, and has only one keyhole. Striking clocks have two keyholes, and sound every hour and half hour on a coiled gong. Chiming clocks have three keyholes and sound every hour and quarter hour on metal rods. Fig. 3 shows the example to be a chiming clock. It has five very well tuned metal rods. Most of the Napoleon clocks played the Westminster chime, as does this example. More complex examples play the Whittington and St. Michael chimes and these require up to nine 9 rods. The musical arrangement is made by a set of 'star' wheels, ganged together so that each operates a felt-tipped striker. Unlike the star wheels of a disc musical box, which have teeth at equally spaced intervals, these star wheels simulate the pins of a cylinder musical box. Each star wheel has teeth spaced to play its tuned bar at the right time. Despite so many Napoleon clocks being made, they are quite affordable and the better quality ones hold good prices. The famous Westminster Chimes and the other tunes can add character to any collection and the story of Napoleon and his hat make an interesting story to boot! Nothing to do with a boot or even to a Wellington boot it just means something 'better!'“ ...