

MECHANICAL MUSIC WORLD Issue 31 Spring 2023

Chairman's Report

Ted Brown announced with great regret the sad news that Chris Fynes, a founding member and major supporter of AMBC has died after a long illness. He designed our Journal covers a collage of these were published in the last issue. He hoped that there will be an article in a future journal concerning Chris's professional career as a graphic artist for the British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC). As an expert photographer and Photoshop editor he also took photographs of self-playing musical instruments, many of which have yet to be published.

Chris, his wife Juliet and their son Justin were responsible for setting up our website. That task has been taken over by Bernard Novell. He asked members to access it in the same way as before. More details are provided in this issue. Ted finished with a plea for more members to consider writing an article for our journal. Help is always available from the Committee.

Tuning Up on Musical Box Tune Sheets by Paul Bellamy

Paul reminds us that as soon as a book about a particular subject is published the inevitable happens, it provokes more information. That was the case with the late HAV (Anthony) Bulleid's tune sheet book. No sooner than published, more examples were brought to his attention. Ted Brown edited the book for Anthony but was soon faced with producing a supplement. Then there were more tune sheets and another supplement, then another and another.

It became time to consolidate the work into a single book and continue Bulleid's research into tune sheets as well as other aspects of musical boxes. The late Don Busby not only dedicated hundreds of hours producing dating charts but also in digitally improving tune sheet images. Many of Anthony's tune sheet examples were missing from his archive and those that were retained were rarely in good condition. Many were in colour but, when he was alive, colour printing was costly so most were actually reproduced in black and white. However, since his death, the task was to achieve as many fresh examples as possible. Don willingly spent many hours digitally repairing the available tune sheet examples, recolouring them where possible. A limited print run of the Cylinder Musical Box, Tune Sheets, Makers, Agents, and Dates was produced. The book has 28 chapters, each dedicated to a particular family firm of makers and agents and they all have a dating chart, 18 of which are based on Bulleid's original research. The extra 10 were either an attempt to complete work he had started or to produce charts from other sources of information. The size of the book was chosen to match that of the AMBC Journal, Mechanical Music World. Supplementary information is coming in frequently and will be published in the Journal from time to time. The first supplement covers Chapter 30 of the book- see page 11 of this issue.

AMBC Meeting Sunday 16th October 2022

In October we had our second post-covid lockdown meeting at the Old School. As the weather was warm it encouraged many members to travel considerable distances to enjoy the experience. Not only did they come in their numbers they also brought some incredible self playing instruments to play and discuss. So many, that it would take more than this Issue to describe them. Suffice it to say that much discussion was provoked, including 'Name That Tune' and 'Who Made My Musical Box?'

One member brought two very early key-wind movements. They were typical of their type in plain fruitwood cases. One was an 8-air movement with an 80-toothed comb, and low serial number 6108. The other was a 6-air movement with a 76-toothed comb, serial number even lower at 5032. There were no clues as to the makers so both could have been by the same one.



The musical programme for the 8-air movement provided some dating clues: The Siege de Rochelle by Irish composer Balfe, 1835; Bellini opera Norma, 1831; the opera Muette de Portici, by Danielle Aubert, 1828. The latest was 1835, so the movement may have been made by François, Charles Lecoultre but that remains uncertain.

Roger Booty brought along a magnificent American Peerless organette. He explained that it was imported from America and played small punched-paper rolls. The rolls would have been quite expensive to buy and were not suitable for playing repeat tunes in the same way that musical boxes could. The English maker Maxwell overcame this limitation by modifying the instrument to play endless bands of punched paper. Whereas it was designed for the insertion of spools of music with its free end attached to the fixed driving spool, the modification required a removable driving spool and an aperture cut into the side of the case. With the endless band looped over the removable spool the instrument had to be placed on the end of a table with its free end through the slot. A heavy steel spool was then placed in the loop of the free end so that tension was placed on the whole band. The instrument could then be wound continuously as the band tracked its way across the key frame as many times as needed for a dance or a hymn.



Bernard Novell had several items to display, some of them 'works in progress'. Even the smallest instrument was very interesting. A rather large case for a much smaller 28-note movement, maker unknown.



Another of his musical boxes was a composition cased 4-air snuffbox, complete with its tune sheet, so quite a rare item.



The meeting continued to examine, play and comment on a wide range of other musical boxes.

The New AMBC Website <https://www.ambc.org.uk>

Since the last issue of Mechanical Music World, member Bernard Novell offered to take over the role of Webmaster from Juliet Fynes. Juliet, with the aid of husband Chris and the assistance of their son Justin, set up the site just after the foundation day of AMBC. Chris produced much of the artwork, Justin was our technical expert. Together, the Fynes family did a fantastic job. The committee agreed that now was the time to rebuild the site using a new editing platform and to move the domain to a different provider. Both moves have considerable annual savings for the Association.

The new site, using the same domain www.ambc.org.uk, was launched on 1st December 2022. Go to our website domain or just search for: Association of Musical Box Collectors. It opens with the **Welcome Page** from where you will find simplified payment details and a membership form.

For membership renewals, you only need to make a renewal payment but please also email Treasurer Paul Bellamy to advise which payment method and the amount. New members can download the form, complete the details, scan it and email to bellamypaul@btinternet.com.

Many pages that were incorporated in the 'old' website have been simplified or updated. These are: **Welcome** – now more user friendly with quick links to other pages.

Membership – this has been consolidated and a new universal Member Application form has replaced three old and confusing forms.

Publications – this page has been revamped to include all the information needed to be able to order AMBC publications. Back issues of Mechanical Music World can now also be ordered via this page.

New pages are:

Mechanical Music - Where you can find information on the various different genres.

Chanctonbury Ring – Will contain information on meeting dates and anything else related to the Ring.

Look, Listen & Learn we have the previous Gallery, Video and Audio pages, plus Restoration Diaries.

News we have:

1. Latest News, where we will post items about AMBC or other organisations that you may find of interest.

2. Mechanical Music World. This is where you will find the covers of all 30 journals. These images can link to a précis of each Journal's content.

3. Publications Lists AMBC books and CD's

4. Articles - Occasional articles submitted by members

Site Map - Found in the footer

And there are plans to add more pages and content as 2023 progresses.

Tunbridge Ware Musical Box - An 'up-cycled' music box. By Bernard Novell

Bernard describes how his previous efforts to up-cycle musical boxes for his family led him to another project for a close friend. The donor Tunbridge Ware box with marquetry bands to top and front and a central hexagonal inlay, measured 170 mm x 125 mm x 95 mm, just big enough to take a 4 tune 50 toothed Reuge movement that he had in stock. The box was in remarkable condition for a late 19th century item. It just lacked a small circular escutcheon. The original was probably made of wood or brass, but the substructure had been damaged when it was 'lost', probably dislodged when the key was removed from the lock, and therefore impossible to simply replace.

Bernard decided to make a hexagonal escutcheon from Mother of Pearl to the same dimensions as the wooden hexagon on the top. This gave him the ability to widen the hole and therefore be able to glue onto sound substructure. The interior and tray were originally lined with a dark blue and gold paper but now rather tatty. Remarkably, all the tray dividers were intact though two corner joints were loose. The lock and hinges, made of brass, were removed, cleaned and polished. The interior was stripped of its paper using warm water and allowed to dry. The supporting bars for the tray were removed and discarded. Four bead feet were fitted to the base. Two coats of Mylands black French polish were applied to the feet, as well as the edges of the case, its outside corners, its lid and its base. The inside of the case was treated in the same manner to a depth about one third down. A new inner liner with mitred corners was made from 4 mm thick beech, just slightly higher than the height of the movement. The movement and control were then fitted and a polycarbonate cover made to snugly fit right across above the movement without the need to use screws. The exterior of the entire box was given several coats of Mylands clear shellac polish, buffed to a shine and left to harden. Meanwhile, the tray was glued up and re-covered using an off-white and gold patterned bookbinder's paper which was also used to reline the lid. Finishing touches were a brass plaque and gold tassel for the key.



The term Tunbridge Ware is used for objects originally made by mid 19th century woodworkers in Tonbridge, Kent. By 1847 Tunbridge Ware was the only product of consequence established in Tonbridge town. It is often confused with Tunbridge Wells just 12 miles away. The Wells were famous for their spring waters and so a very good place to sell the Tonbridge-made wares, thus known as Tunbridge Ware.



The water driven automata at Hellbrunn Palace, Austria by David Soulsby



David travelled to Austria to visit the magnificent Hellbrunn palace and the so-called "Trick Fountains". Situated about five miles south of Salzburg, the name derives from the clear spring that supplies its water features. The palace dates from 1613 and was owned by the Prince-Archbishop of Salzburg, Markus Sittikus. It was only meant for use as a day residence in Summer, has no bedrooms, and was in effect an extravagant amusement park for his guests to visit.

He created a number of practical jokes to play on his visitors as well as delighting

them with various water driven automata in exotic grottos. The water automata are described in detail including the highlight of the park - the water powered mechanical theatre.

.... These and other spectacles of the Hellbrunn "Trick Fountains" certainly linger long in the memory. The running, splashing, gurgling of water everywhere and the magic of the automatons that this puts in motion seems to delight the thousands of tourists that flock here each year, just as much as it must have done. nearly 400 years ago....

A Smoking Automaton by Ted Brown

In Issue 8, spring 2017, we published an article about the late Lyn wright and his fascination with automata. Lyn made several models to demonstrate their mechanisms, made some of his own and restored others for other people. The article illustrated several of his demonstration models that showed how the simple mechanisms worked. He called each one Fred the Head and Ted now has custody of them, he still uses them to demonstrate the mechanisms and provide a source of entertainment. Those made by the great automata masters such as Jacquet Droz, Leopold, Lambert, Rouillet et Decamps, Henri Maillardet, Vichy, Lambert and Phalibois are out of most collectors' reach but if you go onto the Internet you will see what is available for home construction from kits of parts.

Most of the Fred the Head models, like the scarecrow Worzel Gummidge of children's TV fame, had several different heads. Quite wisely, none of Lyn's smoked or drank except for the one that Ted describes in great detail in this article- Fred the Smoker.

