A C Pilmer Automatic Music Ltd.

# Grace Notes

Issue Nine

Autumn 2020

INSIDE THIS ISSUE:



## Exciting New Sales Venue

**Some of you will already be familiar with Littleboy's Vintage Restorations, an enterprise run by David Littleboy, an avid collector and restorer of historic fairground rides. David's company was responsible for the restoration and supply of numerous fairground rides to the re-opened Dreamland amusement park at Margate, on the Kent coast. Their extensive premises, located in West Yorkshire, not very far away from our own, has now been transformed into a unique 12,800 sq. ft. showroom for all manner of fairground related items to be sold.**

*Continued on page two*


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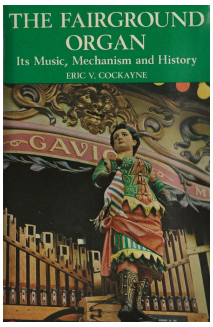
# Exciting New Sales Venue

*Continued from front page*

Organs are, of course, a vital element of the traditional fair, and to ensure as comprehensive an offering as possible, we were invited to team up with this exciting venture and supply a number of instruments for display. With a strong presence on social media, it is hoped that the organs will be presented before an even wider customer base. A new website at www.littleboys.co.uk brings these instruments to the attention of a much wider group of potential purchasers than before, and it will also feature videos of the items offered for sale. For the first time in the UK, a buyer can visit an organ showroom, where a number of instruments will always be on display, all having received attention by ourselves. As well as organs, full-sized fairground rides and vintage children's rides, coin machines and fairground art and artefacts can also be seen. With the exception of the larger items, everything can be purchased online. The first public Open Day was held on Saturday 29th August and was a great success, with buyers and enthusiasts travelling long distances to attend. A second public open day has been arranged for **Saturday, December 5th, 2020.** This has yet to be publicly announced and visitor numbers have to be limited, in line with Covid-19 directives. **We have arranged for *Grace Notes* subscribers to be given priority and the first chance to register interest in purchasing tickets (£5.00 each, to be donated to local NHS).** To do this, please visit https://littleboys.co.uk/events/ as soon as possible to avoid disappointment. With this bold initiative we hope to raise the standard for both buying and selling mechanical music. Visit the website or Facebook or Instagram at #LittleboysVintageRestoration as stock is continually changing. Viewing will normally be by prior appointment.

# In Brief




We are honoured that the first instalment of our article on Eric V. Cockayne and his book *The Fairground Organ - Its Music, Mechanism and History* was reproduced in the June 2020 Newsletter published by the St. Albans Musical Museum Society (SAMMS), after contact from the editor, David Dingwall. The subsequent articles in the series will also be carried in the Newsletter. Some readers may be unaware that the book was re-printed by SAMMS and copies are still available from them. The book (cover illustrated on the left) can be purchased by visitors to the museum, but present restrictions mean that the venue must remain closed until further notice. However, the book is available online from the society at just £14.95. Until the museum is allowed to re-open, this is the only way of obtaining a copy. Details will be found by visiting the museum's website at www.stalbansorgantheatre.org.uk . Purchasing a copy will not only reward you with interesting and informative reading, but will also help support SAMMS, a registered charity, and keep the St. Albans Musical Theatre open in the future.

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**Congratulations** to Mr. Moll in far-off New South Wales, Australia, who has recently purchased through us a brand new 20-note Deleika® street organ together with a matching cart, cover and quantity of music rolls. We were happy to help guide him through the various options available to ensure that he got exactly the right instrument for his requirements.

# 72-key Decap Organ Progress

In the last edition we gave you news of a 72-key Gebr. Decap organ which we are restoring. Here are a few more pictures showing some of the work recently completed. Below is a detail of the lower half of the organ case at the front side, beneath the main wind chest. The organ has been completely re-tubed; at the top right are the connections to the saxophone pipes and in the upper foreground the manifold for the tubes leading out to the percussion can be seen. Both the saxophone pipes and the percussion are housed within the façade itself. In the lower centre is the jazz tremulant and to its left the register relay box. The cast iron wheel and the associated shaft which passes right across the picture are part of the original drive to the keyframe. In the page margin to the left can be seen the view from behind the organ case showing the 8 stopped basses and cello pipes in place. Suspended from the roof of the case is the accordion relay and regulator. The decorative work to the façade is now complete: the photograph below shows the carved antelope which is a feature of the lower centre of the organ front. The organ has been fitted with the latest type of inverter-controlled blower as part of a completely new electrical control system on 110V AC. Work is presently focused on the accordion and we hope to be able to bring you pictures of the finished instrument next time.

*In this view of the rear of the organ case, 8 stopped bass pipes can be seen to the left; 9 cellos to the right. Towards the camera, the tubes from the keyframe to the relay can be seen, and above, the connections to the accordion relay.*

## Featured Organ Scale

### Why is an organ scale so important?

*Continued from the last edition*

Even in the days of barrel organs, it was understood that a scale consisting of a simple continuous musical progression could be refined by creating several separate sections with different musical functions. In this way, the music could be significantly improved. Early fairground barrel organs by Gavioli had a limited number of bass notes, from 3 up to 6 on larger instruments, a separate accompaniment division of perhaps 8—10 notes, and a melody division formed by a clarinet mixture, from 16 to around 20 notes. A separate piccolo section of perhaps a further 16 notes continued upwards in musical pitch. Additionally, the bass notes could be augmented as required by brass trombones, again from 3 to 6 notes depending on the size of the organ. Brass trumpets were also an important part of the instrumentation, and these were available on their own separate keys, often around 20 in number. So it will be seen that such organs actually comprise of 6 separate divisions. (We are speaking here of the years before percussion instruments were introduced.)

This musical concept was adopted not only by other makers in France, but also in Berlin (firms such as Frati and Bacigalupo previously had direct contact to the Gavioli firm), as well as Ruth and the various Bruder firms in Waldkirch. In Belgium, Hooghuys built similar instruments, as did Wellershaus in Germany. As mentioned last time, this type of organ was also taken to the United States where its design was perpetuated many years after becoming obsolete in Europe.

Things quickly changed with the introduction of book-organs. German firms ceased building organs with piccolos, clarinets and brass clarinets, trumpets and trombones. Instead, the brass trumpets gave way to wooden trumpets on their own keys, and the melody division was usually formed by violin pipes, especially after Gavioli's patent on the *frein harmonique* had expired, allowing them to use this innovation without fear of recrimination. Brass trombones gave way to wooden ones, but certainly in Germany they were usually still controlled from their own holes in the music. It was usually in France that piccolos remained as a separate musical division.

The idea of a section of the organ with a contrasting tonality of lower pitch to the melody (saxophones in French organs, trumpets in German) was further expanded in France by having other ranks of pipes in this division that could be turned on and off automatically from the music. This gradually led to this part of the organ being referred to as the *counter-melody* (or *contre-chant* in French; *tegenzang* in Dutch). By contrast, very few German organs had anything more than trumpets in continuous play in this division.

The counter-melody division, the automatic registration to control it, its musical uses, and how the idea was yet further extended, will be examined in more detail in the next edition.

*To be continued*

***You can to use this QR code to quickly access our website to see new content.***

**STOP PRESS!**

*For some time we have advertised second-hand 46/48 keyed and keyless music for sale. Only a very few titles are still available now in the keyless format so we urge anyone with interest in obtaining some cheap music to contact us soon. We still have a quantity of keyed music available: amongst these are some books by the Berni Organ Co. of New York. Whilst on the subject of used music books, we also have a quantity on the Gavioli 65-key scale available.*

## One aspect of Pipe Restoration

After well over a century of use, fair organ pipework often requires more than just cleaning. Pipes near the front of an instrument are particularly vulnerable to damage. Damp storage conditions and exposure to rain alternating with full sunlight can cause the old glue to break down and joints to open up, resulting in poor speech or even a mute pipe. These problems need to be corrected if the pipe is to speak once again as intended.

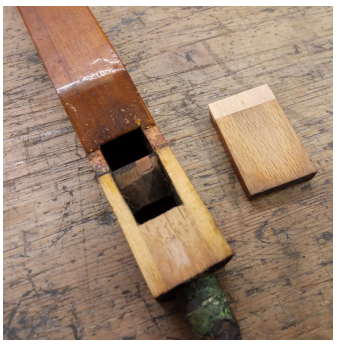
One problem less frequently encountered, fortunately, is damage to the languid and lower lip. In the photo below, a harmonic flute, part of a piccolo division, is seen with the cap already carefully removed. In their original position, they form a narrow slit through which wind passes and causes the pipe to speak. Here, both have been badly chipped, causing sluggish and indistinct speech.

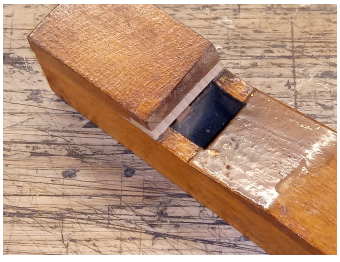
In this particular case the cap and languid were damaged when a blunt object larger than the opening had been pushed into it.

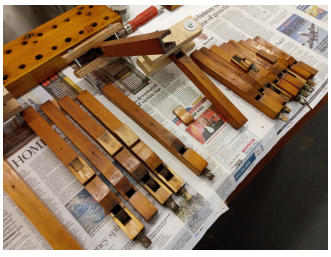
In the second photo, the damaged areas have been cut away to receive new wood. The steel rule gives an idea of scale. This work was carried out using hand tools usually associated with cabinet-making, including a 2mm wide chisel and a certain amount of patience!

In the third and fourth photos, the new pieces of matching timber have been laid in and shaped to match the original profile and then the cap glued back in place and the repair awaiting staining to match the surrounding wood.

Once back in the organ, the repair will be visible only on close inspection. The repairs are carried out with traditional hot glue as originally used by the organ's makers. Besides being compatible with the fabric of the organ, its reversible properties will make future repairs and restoration easier. The same is not true for more modern non-reversible adhesives. More on this subject in a future issue. RW







*Other pipes from the same rank in different stages of restoration.*

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*Eric Cockayne, suitably attired, in his rôle as compère at one of the concerts held at the museum. Photo courtesy of Stephen Cockayne.*

# "THE FAIRGROUND ORGAN" – FIFTY YEARS ON

## *A tribute to Eric Victor Cockayne and his work — part 2*

***In the first part we looked at how Eric Cockayne first became interested in fairground organs.***

Eric Cockayne's frustration at the difficulty in finding accurate information is shown in a letter he wrote to W. J. (Bill) Barlow in January 1967, stating that "*most organ owners seem to be completely ignorant of the most elementary facts about their instruments, and you are the only organ owner I can write to in the country with any guarantee of a sensible answer*."

Another early correspondent was Arthur Lomas of Whaley Bridge, Stockport, Cheshire, a professional technical author. It appeared that he too wished to write a book on the subject, but was also having great difficulty in gathering information. To this end, he had written to *The World's Fair* early in 1965, but had only received two replies., one being from Wilfred Irons, the Secretary of the F.O.P.S., and the other from Eric Cockayne. It can only be assumed that, with too little material available, Lomas soon abandoned his project.

*Eric Cockayne standing outside his home in St. Albans. Photo courtesy of Stephen Cockayne.*

Another regular correspondent was Alan Sefton, from Accrington, Lancashire. Alan had a Dutch wife and visited the Netherlands fairly frequently, giving him the opportunity to meet organ people there, with the added advantage that his wife took care of any language problems. Leonard Grymonprez told Eric Cockayne in a letter that he was collaborating with Mrs Sefton on some articles for the F.O.P.S. magazine *The Keyframe*, and hoped that with her help in translation, their quality would be improved. Stephen Cockayne recalls that Alan Sefton sent Eric tape recordings "*of his technical musings*" and that his "*lugubrious Lancashire accent became a familiar background noise in our house*."

During this period, Eric also penned several articles for *The Keyframe* under both his own name and the pseudonym *Albanian*. These included reports on the activities of pioneer local amateur organ builders such as Michael Bevis and the Porter brothers, as well as a range of technical subjects. Stephen Cockayne writes that in his quest to achieve this, his father "*haunted the archives of the Patent Office*" in London.

Closer to home, Eric discovered Charles Hart's organ museum in his home town of St. Albans. Stephen has written that "*He soon became a staunch supporter of the museum, and in time came to be specially respected for his hosting of the Sunday afternoon concerts, at which his style of presentation harked back to his work for Forces broadcasting during the war*". He also often went there in the evenings to help maintain and tune the instruments.

Eventually, Eric felt that he had gathered sufficient information to enable him to write a short book which was published by the Fair Organ Preservation Society in November 1967: *The Fair Organ – How It Works*. In it, the principal mechanisms and scales were described, and it was soon being used by amateur builders as a guide to constructing their own instruments, mainly on the 46/48 keyless scale. Some of the material was re-worked from previous articles in *The Keyframe*.

In the summer of 1967, Eric Cockayne began corresponding with Francis J. Buckley, an Associate Member of the Institution of Mechanical Engineers, living in retirement in Ewell, Surrey. Buckley's wife, Estelle, was a daughter of the famous showman John Collins, brother of the legendary Patrick, and in the 1920s he had spent some time on the fairs in the north-west with his in-laws where he developed a keen interest in organs and knew many prominent showmen. He had personally dealt with the Manchester firms of Wright & Holmes Bros. and Varetto Bros. regarding the maintenance of his family's instruments and the selection of new music for them, but he also knew Victor Chiappa, and, over the years, became acquainted with several others in the organ business, such as Oram & Lakin Ltd. and Fred Hands. On the fairs, Francis Buckley was always known as "Frank".

Buckley had another interesting connection to the organ world, as his late brother, Kevin, had been organist at the Wurlitzer in the Regal Theatre, Bournemouth. He had broadcast from there in 1930 and had also made records on the HMV label. Later, he played at the Picture House, Glasgow and made regular broadcasts from the Regal, Glasgow. When it was new, Kevin Buckley had opened the Wurlitzer organ at the Forum Cinema, Northenden, Manchester; this organ is now installed in the Town Hall, Burton-upon-Trent. In one of his many letters, Francis Buckley reveals that when he was young there were albums of music in the family home, and given Kevin's performing ability and Francis's knowledge of music, it must have been a place where an appreciation of music was nurtured. Clearly, Buckley's unique blend of an engineering background, professional involvement in the fairground and thorough musical knowledge made him a very useful contact.

Not long after making Buckley's acquaintance, Eric Cockayne visited him at his home on August 9, 1967. Afterwards he wrote up a summary of the points raised during their conversation, which was returned for further comment. Eric quickly sent a complimentary copy of *The Fair Organ – How it Works* to Buckley, and asked him to critique it.: as this correspondence only began *after* this first book was written, it contains no input from him. Francis Buckley did as he was asked and Eric was encouraged by him, and other readers, to expand the work into a more comprehensive volume. More correspondents replied to his appeals for information, no doubt realising that Eric was someone worth assisting in his efforts that would ultimately benefit many people. One of these was farmer and organ owner Dennis Chappell, from West Buckland, Somerset, who allowed Eric to view, sketch and photograph organ parts he was then working on. The opportunity to inspect dismantled organ components enabled Eric to produce his superbly clear line drawings which would set a standard for future authors.

**A. C. Pilmer**

*To be continued in Grace Notes Issue Ten.*