

GRACE NOTES

INSIDE THIS ISSUE:

<i>The Mortier Story</i>	2
<i>In Brief</i>	2
<i>Nicole Frères musical box</i>	2
<i>Why is a scale important?</i>	3
<i>Radio organ restored</i>	3
<i>Jasper Sanfilippo</i>	3
<i>Eric V. Cockayne</i>	4



The restored main chest of the 72-key Decap is seen above. As well as re-leathering, all the threaded valve wires have been replaced. The melody and counter-melody sections are separated in the middle, resulting in each division having three registers, each of 16 playing notes.



CORONAVIRUS UPDATE

For some weeks now we have been following Government guidance in relation to the COVID-19 situation, implementing changes to our procedures in order to keep us and our customers safe, but still enabling work to continue. The latest guidance allows us to work away from the workshop at customer's premises, and permits customers to visit us, providing social distancing rules are strictly followed. We regret that our planned trip to the USA has had to be postponed. However, we are still fulfilling existing and accepting new orders for perforated music, and these will be dispatched as they are completed. Please note that whilst we can still take orders for books, CDs and Paper Organ Kits from our website, despatch will presently take place only once a week. Due to pressure on delivery services, delays in receiving items are inevitable, especially abroad. Some international destinations have seen increases in charges; wherever possible we will inform you in advance of these. Telephone enquiries can be made as normal, and all e-mails will be answered, but due to home working, there may be a delay in our reply, especially if additional information is required. We send our best wishes for your continuing good health in these difficult times.

RECENT NEWS

Since the last edition of *Grace Notes*, we are pleased to welcome several new subscribers and hope that you will find something of interest within these (virtual) pages. As always, please make your friends aware of our newsletter if they don't know about it already. It's easy to subscribe, using the button on the home page of our website, and is completely free. The purpose of *Grace Notes* is to inform readers of items that we have for sale; to keep you up-to-date on what we are working on, and to offer short articles which we hope you will find informative. From time to time we would also like to hear from you! Below are some brief details of recent or on-going projects.

72-key Gebr. Decap café organ



Café organs by Gebroeders Decap of Antwerp have always been popular: some years ago we were lucky enough to find one hidden away in a private residence in the USA. This instrument had been imported into the USA in the first half of the 1970s by dealers Haining & White, but so far it has not been possible to ascertain its former working location, which was almost certainly in a small café somewhere in Belgium. The organ was later offered for sale on our website, and a sale was agreed with a museum in the USA after a complete restoration. This is now well in hand, so we thought we would share a few pictures of this work in progress. To the left, the final varnishing of the façade is underway, after repainting in authentic colours. The air brush lining and shading has also been completed, as original. The entire façade is being fitted with new wiring and lighting to comply with modern safety standards. At the moment the organ is being re-assembled and the production of a new repertoire of music books is also in hand. Due to their

compact size, good looks and excellent musical performance, this type of organ is not easy to find these days. Another one came to our attention for sale recently - contact us quickly if you have an interest in it.

Jon Marshall is seen here on the right entertaining a small friend with his recently acquired 20-note Raffin street organ, in a photograph taken just prior to the introduction of the "social distancing" rule. Before this first appearance in Jon's ownership, we repaired and tuned the organ, which had not received any attention for several years, and supplied a new made-to-measure cart with traditional, wooden wheels with iron tyres, thereby greatly enhancing the overall appearance.



THE MORTIER STORY-NOW AVAILABLE!

As announced in the last edition of *Grace Notes*, the long awaited book *The Mortier Story* was presented to a large crowd of enthusiasts at the Kunkels Organ Museum in Haarlem, Netherlands, during a special ceremony on Saturday, October 20, 2019.

A coach bringing members of MechaMusica, the Belgian mechanical music society, swelled the number of visitors, as did a number of enthusiasts who travelled from the UK for the occasion. Special guests were Arthur Prinsen, Jef Ghysels and Roger Burville.

We reproduce with gratitude a photo (right) taken by our Dutch friend and subscriber Ries van Beek, showing the presentation of copies of the new book to the group which was involved in its realisation. From the left, these are: Björn Isebaert; Andrew Pilmer; Tom Meijer (the author); Jan-Kees de Ruijter; Maarten van der Vlugt; Jack Jacobs; Ruud Brienens and Hans Meijer, Chairman of the Kring van Draaiorgelvrienden (KDV), the Dutch society which published the book.

Our initial import was snapped up very quickly, many copies being purchased as Christmas gifts. Stock has since been replenished and



copies have again been sent out worldwide. The hard-bound, A4-sized publication contains 400 pages and several hundred photographs: the text is in both Dutch and English. Everyone we have spoken to has been very pleased with the book, which sets out the definitive history of the Mortier firm and its products. We echo their sentiments and congratulate those concerned in bringing this valuable project to fruition. Details of how to purchase copies of the book can be found on our website:

<https://www.acpilmer.com/the-mortier-story>

Payment is made easy using the PayPal facility, but is also possible by bank transfer or cheque. At £40.00 + packing, shipping and insurance, the book represents excellent value for money.

Buyers outside the UK:

Please contact us before making a payment via our website, stating your full postal address (no PO Boxes) and phone number so we can obtain a quote for shipment to your location. We will then inform you of the costs involved by means of a PayPal payment request.

IN BRIEF

Legislative Compliance

A. C. Pilmer Automatic Music Ltd. recently registered with the **Information Commissioner's Office** (ICO), the UK's independent authority set up to uphold information rights in the public interest. The Data Protection (Charges and Information) Regulations of 2018 re-

quires every organisation that processes personal information to register with the ICO.

Author **Ben Aaronovitch** has seen every book in his *Rivers of London* series become a *Sunday Times Top Ten* bestseller. He is published in 14 languages and has sold more than 2 million copies. The latest in the se-

ries, **False Value** was recently published by Gollancz (£18.99) and surprisingly features Ludovico Gavioli as well as Charles Babbage and Ada Lovelace, woven into a complex fantasy story with a theft at a showmen's yard at the Vale of Health, Hampstead, and a very special book of music. It is available from all bookshops now.

NICOLE FRÈRES MUSICAL BOX

From time to time, disc and cylinder musical boxes pass through our hands for repair. A recent visitor was a 12-air cylinder musical box of good quality, made by Nicole Frères in Geneva. Each revolution of the large-diameter cylinder plays two tunes. It was originally sold by Messrs. Imhof & Mukle, the well-known orchestrion builders, from their shop in Oxford Street, London. As well as being the 'to go'

place for the well-to-do when contemplating purchasing an orchestrion, their showroom also offered other merchandise, including musical boxes and sheet music and became a major outlet for Nicole Frères products. As demand later declined for mechanical musical instruments, Imhof & Mukle diversified into selling gramophones and records. The London branch was to outlive the orchestrion business by many years, eventually developing

into a widely respected hi-fi and record business, "Imhof's" which continued in business through to the 1970s. The photograph (left) shows Imhof & Mukle's varnish transfer on the underside of the Nicole musical box lid.



FEATURED ORGAN SCALE

WHY IS AN ORGAN SCALE SO IMPORTANT?

Continued from the last edition

Not only were large organs enjoying phenomenal success on fairgrounds, but they also proved to be a magnet for the lucrative dance hall business in Belgium. Gavioli's former lead as the major supplier there was eventually overtaken by Marengi, who supplied many huge instruments with very elaborate fronts, some of which utilized extended versions of smaller scales, making them completely chromatic. The advantage of complete musical scales over the old non-chromatic ones did not go un-noticed by the Mortier firm either. By this time, popular music, under American influence, was becoming harmonically more complicated which increasingly became a challenge for some of the old scales. It is therefore especially ironic that organ makers in the United States steadfastly clung to the old types of scale, with a very few exceptions. Previously, when the duration of a

piece of music for a barrel organ was limited by the circumference of the cylinder, it was possible to edit the piece so that sections which were not compatible with the scale were completely omitted. Makers in the USA developed very well designed and engineered roll playing systems before European organ firms did, but largely based the scales of their organs on those of the barrel organs they had been building previously. The new roll-playing organs could play tunes in their entirety, without the limitation of the duration of a revolution of the cylinder, but with scarcely no more notes at the arranger's disposal than before, the results often left much to be desired in comparison with European instruments. The instrumentation did not move on in the same way that it did in Europe either; brass piccolos, trumpets, trombones and clarinets prevailed right to the very end of production. It has been written elsewhere that the music arrangers at large firms such as Wurlitzer were paid "by the yard" for their work, so

that quantity was more important than quality, whereas the arrangers were amongst the most coveted staff members in European organ factories, their contribution to the success of their firm's instruments being fully recognised.

The first Gavioli cardboard music scale (87-keys) had 8 bass notes, enabling a wide variety of music to be performed well. Limonaire Frères soon recognised this and produced a successful range of organs with 48-, 50-, 52- and 56-key scales closely related to the earlier 46-key Gavioli layout. The cost and size of the organ was maintained within reasonable parameters, but with extensive musical possibilities. In the street organ world, versions of this scale have endured right up to the present day and a large repertoire of music has been arranged for it. Carl Frei also used it as the basis for several larger instruments up to 72-keys.

To be continued

JASPER B. SANFILIPPO 1931-2020

The mechanical music world was saddened to learn of the death of Jasper B. Sanfilippo on January 28, 2020 at the age of 88. He passed peacefully at his home in Barrington Hills, Illinois, surrounded by members of his family. Since the 1980s, Jasper had assembled an impressive collection of automatic musical instruments, steam engines, amusement machines, phonographs and art glass, together with the largest theatre organ in the world. Along with his family, he took great pleasure in opening his home to host charity events that raised thousands of dollars for good causes as well as welcoming members of



several different collector's organisations. Jasper took over the family nut processing business, John B. Sanfilippo & Son Inc. in 1963 and further expanded it with great success until his retirement in 2006. We are sure all our readers will join with us in sending our sincere condolences to the Sanfilippo family, and in particular to Jasper's wife since 1956, Marian.

Jasper Sanfilippo stands proudly beside his rare Gavioli Piano-Quatuor which was restored some years ago by John Hovancak and Arthur Reblitz. We were pleased to restore the keyframe for this instrument and to supply a new repertoire of music books, as no originals survived.

DUTCH RADIO ORGAN RESTORED

In the 1930s, cinema organs were at the height of their success in this country, and as well as being featured during cinema performances, some organists became nationally-known through their regular BBC radio broadcasts. In 1931 the Dutch broadcaster AVRO wanted to emulate this success and engaged as house organist Pierre Palla, who had previously played in Amsterdam, and later worked as an advisor at J. D. Philipps, the orchestrion builders in Frankfurt. A new studio complex was

being planned in Hilversum for which Standaart, the Dutch organ building firm, was commissioned to build a new broadcasting organ. Unfortunately, the firm failed in 1935, having only partly constructed the organ. The John Compton Organ Co. Ltd. of London was requested to complete the organ, using what it could of the Standaart material, and the organ was completed in 1936. Pierre Palla played it until he retired in 1967. After many tribulations, a Trust was formed to care for the organ and a new home was found for the organ

in the Broadcast Music Centre; organ builders Pels & Van Leeuwen were engaged to completely restore it. This extensive work was completed towards the end of 2019 and the inaugural concerts have already taken place. In conjunction with well-known organist Kevin Grunill, we are pleased to report that in 2018 we supplied a complete Uniflex 4000 organ control system for this 4/19 instrument. Readers may recall that in a previous issue of *Grace Notes* we published details of the unique Uniflex organ control system.

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



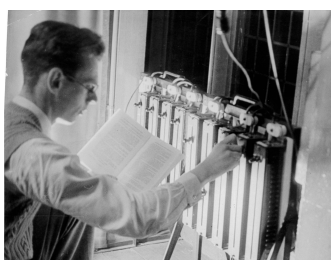
**A C Pilmer Automatic
Music Ltd.**

Correspondence Address:
Ridingwood Farm
Upper Common Lane
Clayton West
Huddersfield
West Yorkshire
HD8 9LN

Phone: + 44 (0) 1924 272743
Mobile phone: + 44 (0) 738 879843
E-mail: enquiries@acpilmer.com
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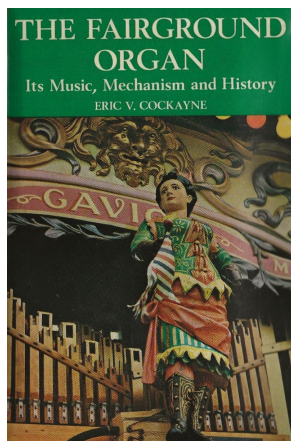
Photo courtesy of Stephen Cockayne.



“THE FAIRGROUND ORGAN” – FIFTY YEARS ON

A tribute to Eric Victor Cockayne and his work

For more than 20 years I have been gathering information about the Gavioli family, their products and businesses, in the hope that at some point there will be sufficient material to justify its publication. In the pursuit of this study, I have consulted many books and magazine articles in which uncorroborated statements have been put forward as fact, which further investigation has not been possible to verify. A number of such statements are contained in Eric Cockayne's ground-breaking book *The Fairground Organ - Its Music, Mechanism and History*, published in 1970. I was already aware that all of Eric Cockayne's research papers were still held by the St. Albans Musical Museum Society, so with the help of trustee Peter Craig, I was given permission to borrow these documents for analysis. My aim was to discover if the primary source of some of the statements made in the book could be found in the surviving notes and correspondence.



After making the 300-mile round trip to collect the papers from Peter, I began sorting through the boxes of letters and photographs, reading everything in them; a task which occupied several months of spare time. I soon began to appreciate the effort that Eric Cockayne had gone to in order to produce his book, which, to this day, remains the only technical book originally published in English about fairground organs. His style of writing is readable yet concise, the text being augmented by his exemplary detailed yet clear line drawings. Good photographs were not intended to merely fill up space, but were carefully chosen to augment points of detail in the text.

Regrettably, despite the many hours it took to peruse these documents, some typewritten, but many others in difficult-to-read handwriting, I did not find exactly what I had been searching for, but this initial disappointment was rewarded by the discovery of significant 'new' information which never found its way into the published pages of the book. During this process I realised that 2020 would be the fiftieth anniversary of the publication of this *magnum opus* of mechanical music literature and since it has not previously been done, I thought it would be an appropriate time to look back on the book, its author, and its legacy.

Alan Eric Victor Cockayne was born in London on December 27, 1916. As a teenager, he attended Kilburn Grammar School. He had planned to go on to university, but the illness and subsequent death of his father prevented this. He began working for the Metropolitan Water Board in 1935, his first job being to collect water rates door-to-door. During the Second World War he served in the Army Pay Corps. and eventually found himself in the Western Desert. He also worked in Cairo as a DJ for the Forces Radio.

After the war, he returned to the Water Board, and in his spare time worked as Stage Manager at a local north London theatre, where he met his future wife. Towards the end of the 1940s he married Freda, and the couple were later blessed with two sons, Stephen and Paul. In 1960 the family moved out of the capital to St. Albans, Eric then commuting daily to London to his work for the Water Board. He had become interested in puppetry and had started a group which gave occasional performances; together with Freda, he was also part of a local amateur theatre group (see *panel on left*). Things were to change drastically when, in the early 1960s, a family day out to a traction engine rally brought him into contact with fairground organs, which were to become his passion until the end of his life.

He wanted to know much more about what he had seen, but visits to his local library confirmed that little published information was available on the subject, so he began a self-imposed task to learn as much as he could about fairground organs. Nowadays, the number of on-line resources continues to grow, and it is now often possible for a researcher to consult documents in the comfort of his own home that years before would have taken weeks or even months to locate, access and receive, often at considerable cost. Such luxuries were not available to Eric Cockayne. Contacts had to be gained by writing letters to newspapers and magazines; scarce books had to be ordered via the inter-library service and could take weeks to arrive. At the time, organisations like the Fair Organ Preservation Society (F.O.P.S.) fulfilled an extremely valuable role in bringing like-minded people together.

At first, Eric Cockayne consulted the books which were most readily available to him, such as Frederick Fried's *A Pictorial History of the Carousel* from the USA; Romke de Waard's *Van speeldoos tot pierement* (at that time still only available in its original Dutch edition, for which Eric attended night school classes to learn enough Dutch to be able to understand it) and Dr. Alexander Buchner's *Mechanical Musical Instruments* in a translation from the original German edition. As his interest grew, he visited more local steam rallies to look at organs and speak with their owners. He subscribed to *The World's Fair*, the showmen's weekly newspaper, became a member of the F.O.P.S. and soon came to know Mr Hart at the nearby St. Albans Organ Museum.

He quickly found the information available to be wanting, and to learn more, began corresponding with others including W. J. Barlow of Cleobury Mortimer, the owner of a number of organs and someone who had been around them for a long time. An early task for Cockayne was to obtain correct versions of popular organ key-frame scales and to understand the instrumentation of the instruments that used them. Wide correspondence and analysis took place on this particular aspect of his studies, and initially there was much confusion. W. J. Barlow had several connections on the continent, including Marcel van Bortel the music arranger, who furnished some scale details. Somewhat later, George Flynn of Durham City contributed information relating to the 110-key and 112-keyless scales during his restoration of the ex-Crighton organ. Whilst on holiday, Eric even paid a visit to George's works in Durham to see the work for himself.

A. C. Pilmer

To be continued in Grace Notes Issue Nine.