

The Galpin Society

For the Study of Musical Instruments



Newsletter 40
October 2014



Sax200 Exhibition Musical Instruments Museum, Brussels

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THE GALPIN SOCIETY

Registered Charity no. 306012

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The Galpin Society Newsletter is edited by Graham Wells and sub-edited by Maggie Kilbey.
Opinions expressed by authors in the Newsletter are not specifically endorsed by The Galpin Society.

We are pleased to welcome the following new members into The Galpin Society:

Mr John Baskerville, UPMINSTER
Miss Nuria Bonet, PLYMOUTH
Mr Michael Cameron, LONDON
Dr Michael J Pagliaro, NEW YORK
Mr Ben Papworth, YORK
Mr Julian Perkins, LONDON
Mr Christoph Riedo, SWITZERLAND
Mr Kai-Thomas Roth, SHEPTON MALLETT
Mr Oliver Sandig, LONDON
Miss Samantha Taylor-Hayward, NEWARK
Mr Anthony Walsh Turner, LONDON

[Cover: Sax200 Exhibition, Musical Instruments Museum, Brussels.
Photo: Bradley Strauchen-Scherer]

EDITORIAL

I have to start by apologizing to all readers for the extremely late appearance of this newsletter. Had it appeared on time I would have been reminding everyone of the impending Greenwich Early Music Festival and Exhibition. As it is I can now report that we had our usual stand there, met many members and recruited a few new ones.

I recommend making a note of the dates of the Society's next conference, to be held in Cambridge in conjunction with the Institute of Acoustics Musical Acoustics Group. The dates to record are Sunday 27 to Wednesday 30 September. I can assure you that Owen Woods, to whom the Society is much in debt for the work he has already done in organizing this conference, already has some exciting plans in hand. The call for papers and associated information will be available on our website in the New Year.

In the last newsletter I included a long report on the problems with ivory in the USA. Anyone wishing to update themselves on this sorry saga will find a very useful article in the recent issue of the newsletter of the American Musical Instrument Society which can be accessed through the following link amis.org/publications/newsletter.

I have to report that absolutely no-one contacted me with any suggestion as to the nature of the instrument being played by the gentleman on the right in the photograph on page 2 of the last newsletter. I am, perhaps, slightly more sympathetic to anyone not feeling up to struggling with Canon Galpin's appalling handwriting (pages 5 & 6 in the same newsletter).

In recent months we have lost two pillars of the early music scene, namely Frans Brüggen and Christopher Hogwood. Their obituaries will appear in the next *GSJ*. In the last day or so I have also heard of the death of a long-standing member of the Galpin Society, Jocelyn Morris, at the notable age of 97, who will doubtless be remembered by older members.

Congratulations are in order to the Musée de la Musique who are celebrating the 150th anniversary of their foundation. They were originally the Musée Instrumental du Conservatoire de Musique de Paris, and opened to the public on 17 November 1864. Their celebratory web page can be found at:

www.citedelamusique.fr/francais/evenements/150ans/150ans.aspx.

Graham Wells

Celebrating Sax in Brussels

3-5 July 2014



[Photos: Bradley Strauchen-Scherer]

The global impact of Adolphe Sax and his eponymous instruments was celebrated in July 2014 at *Adolphe Sax, His Influence and Legacy: A Bicentenary Conference*. This international symposium, part of the year-long series of Sax200 events being held at the Musical Instruments Museum in Brussels, featured a full programme of paper presentations, the superb Sax200 exhibition, concerts, and of course ample opportunities to savour Belgium's deservedly famous beers.

An international line-up of speakers presented twenty papers during the three-day conference. Stephen Cottrell and Trevor Herbert gave thought-provoking keynote addresses that illuminated how Sax's

instruments functioned as vehicles of musical and social change and became enduring cultural phenomena. Conference papers explored a broad range of topics, including the originality of Sax's work, instrument and key system design and innovation, acoustics, evaluation of Sax's output based on data gathered from surviving instruments and archival material, the reception of Sax and his instruments as revealed by contemporary press accounts, the use of the saxophone in sub-Saharan Africa, Sax's instruments at the Paris Opéra, and the role and provenance of Sax instruments in 19th-century museum collections. Proceedings of the conference are due to be published in 2015.

The Musical Instruments Museum and Sax200 exhibition were an inspiring setting for the conference. Sax200 immerses visitors in the multiple aspects of Sax's work and tumultuous life through extensive displays of instruments and archival material. The exhibition narrative not only provides a comprehensive view of Sax's diverse output, but also gives viewers a sense of the perspicacity and perseverance that marked Sax's career and ensured his legacy. Spacious displays and innovative mounts allow instruments to be seen from all angles and create the feeling of being swept up in a large band of Sax's instruments. An audio guide, which includes films, brings another dimension to the exhibition. Further information is included in an extensively illustrated English language catalogue published by the Musical Instruments Museum.

Exhibition curator Géry Dumoulin gave delegates a tour and deftly fielded detailed questions about the rare and, in some cases, rarely seen instruments that he has brought together for Sax200, which includes over 200 objects. The strong collection of Sax material held by Brussels has been augmented by loans from Paris, Basel, Edinburgh, Leipzig, London, Amsterdam, Vermillion, Ann Arbor and Bad Säckingen. Many of the instruments, such as surreal multiple-bell trombones, trumpets and cornets, will be familiar from book illustrations or previous visits to Brussels and Paris, but the opportunity to see all of these instruments gathered in one place for side-by-side contemplation is unique and one of the joys of the show. A number of instruments in private collections, such as several important early saxophones, were given their first public airing.

Two exceptional concerts rounded out the programme and brought to life instruments and themes explored in the paper sessions and exhibition. *Les Cuivres Romantiques*, directed by Jean-François Madeuf, performed the *Grand Nonetto*, op. 3 by Edmond Juvin on period saxhorns in the historic hall of the Brussels Conservatory. A performance by

Quatuor Arslys of the Premier Quator by Jean-Baptiste Singelée reminded listeners of Sax's intended repertoire for the instrument, while Joseph Jongen's *Quatuor en forme rhapsodique libre* engages with the changing persona of the saxophone during the 20th century.



Conference attendees were further fortified and immersed in the world of Sax by the bottles of Saxo, a heady beer brewed in Sax's hometown of Dinant, thoughtfully included in the delegates' pack. Cheers to the Sax family and the continued legacy of their ingenuity.

Sax200 remains on display until 11 January 2015.

Bradley Strauchen-Scherer

Have you seen this instrument?



Pictured here is a Buescher 'Saxonette', a soprano clarinet with a curved metal bell and barrel. This one is in C and has some variety of extended Boehm system. I have been interested in these instruments for years but there is very little information available. I would like to make an appeal to the society: if anyone knows anything about Saxonettes then please get in touch!

What I have been able to find out so far is that Saxonettes are generally marked Buescher, Supertone or Gretsch (the latter of which may well have invented it, according to a copy of *Music Trades* from 1923). They are mostly Albert system or variants thereof, and are mostly in C or Bb. The tuning ranges, some are marked High Pitch and some Low Pitch. Many were sold with both straight and curved barrels and bells. They were at one point popular with marching bands, but the concept never really caught on. I believe that this was one of the pre-depression fads which quickly faded, like so many other fascinating wind instruments.

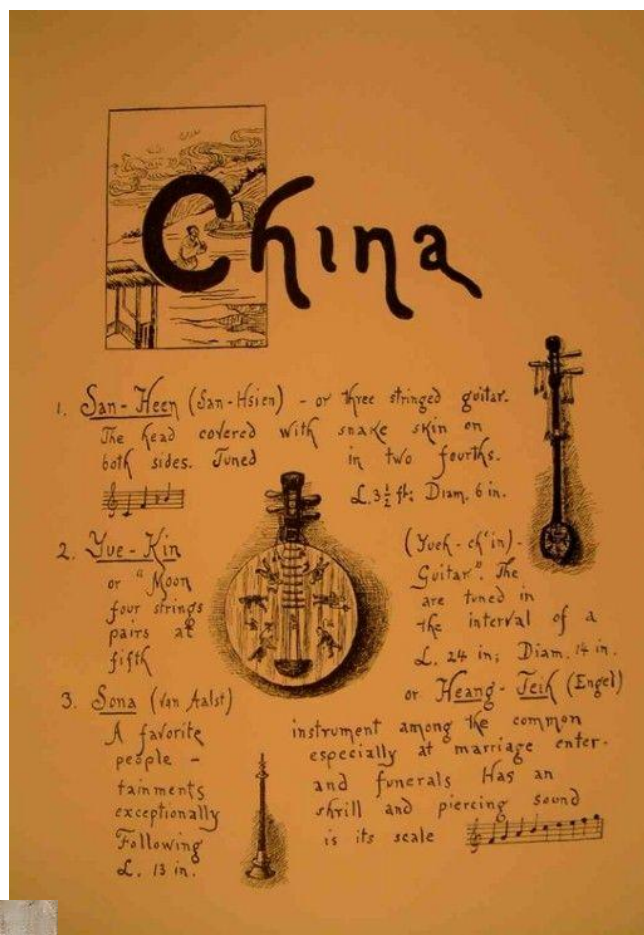
I have amassed a sizable number of photographs of Saxonettes, mostly from eBay, where one or two crop up each year. Members are welcome to browse it here: [Saxonettes](#)

If you know anything about the Saxonette then please get in touch with me. I would love to hear from you.

Owen Woods
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Crosby Brown Collection Catalogues online

2014 marks the 125th anniversary of the gift of over 3600 musical instruments to the Metropolitan Museum of Art by the pioneering collector and scholar Mary Elizabeth Adams Brown. In commemoration of this milestone, the Met has digitized a complete run of Brown's catalogues and related publications, enabling readers to access this material from a single, authoritative source. Features include full searchable text, high resolution scans of all illustrations, tables and plates and the facility to download volumes for offline use on e-readers and laptops. All can be freely accessed online through the website of the Museum's library. A full description of the digitization project, links to the catalogues and short tutorials explaining how to get the most out of the features of the digital reader can be found on [Of Note](#), the blog of the Musical Instruments Department of the Metropolitan Museum of Art. Visit *Of Note* regularly for weekly blog posts and updates as the Met celebrates the 125th birthday of the Crosby Brown Collection.



Above: Page from *Musical Instruments and Their Homes*, with illustrations by William Adams Brown (Mary Elizabeth's son and fellow collector), published in 1888

Left: Mary Elizabeth Adams Brown, portrait by Anders Zorn, c.1900, MMA 60.85

[Images by permission of the MMA]

A Curious Pair of Flageolets



[Photos: Douglas MacMillan]

The Bate Collection is home to a curious pair of flageolets made by John Mason in the middle of the 18th century for Granville Sharp, an amateur musician and opponent of slavery. Sharp's life was eloquently described by Hélène la Rue in *GSN*17,¹ but it is interesting to reflect on comments made about Sharp's playing of these instruments in relation to the musical environment of the later 18th century before discussing the organological features of the flageolets.

Brian Crosby, in an article in the *Royal Musical Association Research Chronicle* in 2001, provides an account of the musical activities of the Sharp family.² I would like to extract a few passages which merit comment. Firstly, a number of quoted contemporary authors refer to Sharp's instruments as 'flutes' and I think it is important to note that the term 'flute' in 18th-century England – certainly in the earlier part of the century – usually implied the recorder, the transverse flute being known as the German flute. However, there were few recorders played in England in the latter part of the 18th century and, of particular relevance to the Sharp/Mason flageolets, very few flageolets. The flageolet lay largely dormant in England during the 18th century prior to its revival in the early 19th.³ I suspect that the various commentators (who included the encyclopaedic Charles Burney) were not sure as to the exact nature of Sharp's instruments. The composer William Shield (1748–1829) commented that '...and Mr

¹ Hélène la Rue, 'Granville Sharp: The Zealous Opposer and Musician. An Exhibition to Mark the Slavery Bill Bicentenary', *GSN* 17 (Feb 2007), pp.4-5

² Brian Crosby, 'Private Concerts on Land and Water: The Musical Activities of the Sharp Family, c.1750-c.1790, *Royal Musical Association Research Chronicle*, XXXIV, (2001), pp.1-111

³ Douglas MacMillan, 'The Flageolet in England 1800-1900: the Instrument, its Music and Social Context', *DMus* diss., Royal College of Music, 2013, pp.37-8

Granville Sharp, who performed duets upon two flutes, to the delight and conviction of many who doubted, who had conceived such an accomplishment to have been impracticable', to which Crosby adds 'Unfortunately Shield does not enlarge upon the nature of the duets, whether the flageolets sounded in thirds or some other acceptable interval, or whether Granville had displayed even greater musical powers and his fingers greater dexterity'.⁴ Examination of the instruments reveals that they are of equal sounding length (unlike *flûtes d'accord*) so Sharp would have been able to play either on the two pipes in unison with the same fingering in each hand, or in harmony using different fingerings. In 1772 R J S Stevens (again quoted by Crosby) wrote '...Mr Granville Sharp play[ed] on two Flutes at the same time: they were small,⁵ and had ivory mouthpieces; but from the impossibility of playing two Flutes in tune, at one time, the performance of it, after the novelty of it was over, was rather disagreeable'.⁶ Charles Burney, writing in his *A General History of Music*, observed that 'We may set this against the double flute, the *tibiae pares et impares* of antiquity, which, however, though long lost, have been lately revived by the musical knowledge and ingenuity of Mr Sharp'.⁷ Burney is here commenting on ancient double pipes of identical or differing lengths rather than either *flûtes d'accord* (pipes of unequal length) or even Samuel Pepys' 'echo flageolets', which appear to have been of equal length.⁸ It was left to William

Bainbridge in the 19th century to develop the true double flageolet.⁹

The flageolets are shown (along with other instruments) in a portrait of the Sharp family by the well-known German artist Johann Joseph Zoffany dating from 1779-80. Granville holds the two instruments upright and, unlike so many iconographic 'representations' of instruments, these are undoubtedly a pair of flageolets.¹⁰

The instruments are made from boxwood with ivory mounts, three brass keys and ivory mouthpieces. They measure some 500mm (excluding the mouthpiece) and are stamped 'J.MASON.LONDON' (see below).¹¹



⁴ Crosby, *op.cit.*, p.33

⁵ see my comment below

⁶ Crosby, *op.cit.*, p.34

⁷ Charles Burney, *A General History of Music*, vol II, (New York 1957), p.999 (quoted in Crosby)

⁸ Robert Latham & William Matthews (eds), *The Diaries of Samuel Pepys: a new and complete Transcription*, vol.IX, (London 1970-1983), p.30. The entry for 20 January 1668 notes that Pepys had two flageolets made with different voicing so that he could play the melody on one and then echo it on the other

⁹ MacMillan, *op.cit.*, pp.120-121

¹⁰ The painting is currently located in the National Portrait Gallery, London, NPG L169

¹¹ *fl.* 1754-56

At 500mm, they are about the length of an alto recorder (but possess windcaps) and, as far as I could ascertain from the one playable flageolet, the lowest note is around f'. This is an unusual key for a flageolet, most instruments (of either the original French or 19th-century English variety) being considerably smaller. The thumb-hole is placed very high on the instrument, and, unless Sharp had extraordinarily long thumbs, he would have found 'pinching' the thumb-hole to sound the octave rather difficult. Unfortunately the one playable flageolet has no pads on the keys, but it seems likely that the lowest key may extend the range of the instrument down a tone and the second key would provide the semitone above the fourth-finger (lowest) note. This key would be actioned by the fourth finger. The closed key at the top of the pipe would increase the upward range of the instrument and I suspect it is possible to achieve a range of a seventh in the lower register.

So much for each flageolet: examination of the pair reveals that, far from being a classic double flageolet, the instruments are mirror images of one another. It is apparent from contemporary literature that they were played as a 'double' instrument and Sharp holds them up together in the Zoffany portrait. The only manner by which all four tone-holes and keys may be accessed is to play one flageolet in each hand. However these instruments (contrary to R J S Stevens' comments cited above) are not 'small': they are heavy and difficult to handle with one hand, especially as the player would have two slender mouthpieces which would hardly contribute to the stability of the instruments and, as I have indicated, the thumb-holes are in a very awkward position. It is necessary to use the fourth or fifth finger behind the instrument in order to provide support, but clearly this technique is not possible when playing the lower notes.¹² Although the sides of the windcaps have been somewhat amateurishly sanded to flatten the bulges (see above right),

it is not 'anatomically' possible that the instruments could have been played as congruent pipes.



This pair of 'mirror image' flageolets is, to my knowledge, unique: the only manner in which their peculiarities may be explained is to consider them as divergent but separate instruments which may be played with one hand on each instrument. To play in unison would pose few difficulties: to play in harmony would require a considerable technique, and large hands.

My thanks are due to my wife Emma for her suggestion that the instruments could be played as double pipes, to Andy Lamb of the Bate Collection for taking the instruments out of their glass case on many occasions, and to Graham Wells for inciting my curiosity about these flageolets.

Douglas MacMillan

¹² This technique is well-recognised in playing the French flageolet

A Review in Verse

Readers may remember that in the *Punch* article by J B Boothroyd ‘No Shawms, No Crumhorns’ which we reprinted in *GSN* 38, mention was made by the author of a review in verse of Francis Galpin’s book *Old English Instruments of Music*. I am grateful to Maggie Kilbey for locating this review although like her, and indeed all the Society’s committee who read it, I have to agree that it is verging on doggerel. Nevertheless it was generally felt that it was worth recording it here if only for historical reasons. It is, perhaps fortuitously, anonymous.

‘The Revival of the Fittest (written after reading Mr Francis W Galpin’s *Old English Instruments of Music*)’, *Punch, or The London Charivari*, Vol. 159 (11 August 1920)

I am no skilful vocalist;
I can’t control my mezza gola;
I have but an indifferent fist
(Or foot) upon the pianola.

But there are instruments, I own,
That fire me with a fond ambition
To master for their name alone
Apart from their august tradition.

They are the Fipple-Flute, a word
Suggestive of seraphic screeches;
The Poliphant comes next, and third
The Humstrum – aren’t they perfect peaches?

About their tone I cannot say
Much that would carry clear conviction,
For, till I read of them to-day
I knew them not in fact or fiction.

As yet I am, alas! without
Instruction in the art of fippling
Though something may be found about
It in the works of LEAR or KIPLING.

And possibly I may unearth
In LECKY or in LAURENCE OLIPHANT
Some facts to remedy my dearth
Of knowledge bearing on the Poliphant.

But, now their picture I have seen
In GALPIN’S learned dissertation
So far as in me lies I mean
To bring about their restoration.

Yet since I cannot learn all three
And time is ever onward humming
My few remaining years shall be
Devoted wholly to humstrumming.

That, when my bones to rest are laid,
Upon my tomb it may be written:
“He was the very last who played
Upon the Humstrum in Great Britain.”

NOTICES

For an updated list of [Forthcoming events](#) please see our website.

The end of an era in Pond Street

After 38 years in Pond Street, the shop of Tony Bingham will close just before Christmas. He is downsizing the business but will continue to trade in old musical instruments from his house in Hampstead, where he will be available to see clients by appointment only. The telephone number +44 020 7794 1596 and email tony@oldmusicalinstruments.co.uk remain the same. As there will often not be anybody at the house an appointment is essential, preferably made by email.

RISM survey

The RISM (Répertoire International des Sources Musicales) Central Office is carrying out a survey about their online catalogue, which is available free of charge at www.rism.info

They would like to find out who their users are, what their expectations are, and how they use the catalogue. The survey is anonymous and responses will help them as to continue to develop their services and the online catalogue.

It will remain open until 18 January 2015. Any questions should be directed to: contact@rism.info

Hélène La Rue Scholarship in Music

St Cross College invites applications for this scholarship from students who will begin studying at the University of Oxford in the academic year 2015-2016 for a postgraduate research degree in Music. Preference may be given to a research topic related to the musical collections at the University, including those at the Ashmolean Museum, those at the Pitt Rivers Museum, the Bate Collection in the Faculty of Music and those held in any of the colleges.

The successful applicant may be based in the Faculty of Music or if working on other musical collections based in any relevant Faculty or Department including the Faculty of History and the School of Anthropology. Applicants must list St Cross College as their first choice college on their Graduate Admissions application in order to be eligible to apply for this scholarship.

The Hélène La Rue Scholarship is tenable for three years coterminous with college fee liability and has the value of the annual College fee (currently £2765 per annum for 2014-2015) and a small yearly stipend (£535 for 2014-15). The successful scholar will be guaranteed to have a room in College accommodation (at the standard rent) for the first year of their course. Applications should be received by the application deadline of **Friday 5 June 2015**.

The Scholarship is tenable at St Cross College only. Application forms can be downloaded from [St Cross College website](#). Written requests should be sent to the Academic Office Secretary, St Cross College, St Giles, Oxford OX1 3LZ.