

The Galpin Society

For the Study of Musical Instruments



Newsletter 46

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Arnold Dolmetsch harp no.10

Article on page 6 by Simon Chadwick

<http://clarsach.scot/author/simonchadwick>

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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:

Rocco Carbonara, CERNUSCO SUL NAVIGLIO, Italy

Elizabeth Ford, BATTLEFIELD, UK

Stephen Haynes, NEWARK, UK

Marcus Held, SÃO PAULO, Brazil

EDITORIAL

For a quite an exceptionally long time now the Society has had the great good fortune of having a group of very loyal and dedicated officers. Many similar organisations find themselves struggling to recruit anyone prepared to devote the necessary time to roles vital to the smooth running of their Societies. Having said that, the Galpin Society's Committee has found itself involved in a certain amount of reorganisation of late. Maggie Kilbey, under the title of Administrator, has been looking after all the secretarial, accounting and subscription tasks since Pauline Holden's death in 2001, together with being the website manager. She has also been joint editor with me of this Newsletter. In recent years she has continued in these roles despite at the same time studying for a DPhil. She has understandably now decided that the time is right to pass over the general secretarial and minute taking functions which now have been taken on by Diana Wells. Diana maintains her role as the Society's Archivist. Additionally, readers of the last two Newsletters will have noticed that I relinquished my role as joint editor with Maggie to Andrew Lamb who is now taking sole charge of the Newsletter. Andrew is kindly temporarily continuing as Advertising Manager for the Journal but we are now searching for someone to take over this role. Very fortunately the other two officers on the Committee, Lance Whitehead and Michael Fleming continue between them to produce our quite extraordinarily impressive Journal. This may be an opportunity to thank all these people for what they have done for the Society, let alone the contributions of all the various Committee members who have helped us all over the years.

I am sad to have to report that it became necessary to cancel the proposed trip to Barcelona due to insufficient numbers signing up. It is hard to know the reason for this, perhaps too short a notice was given, bearing in mind how quickly everyone's diaries fill up these days. Maybe I just failed to sufficiently sell the delights that Barcelona and its musical instrument museum have to offer. Those members who have visited the Museu de la Musica speak very highly of it.

It has been decided to give the venture another try in October next year. I intend to give more details of the programme and the precise dates in the next Newsletter. This is not the only collection of musical instruments in the area which we would hope to visit. There are at least four others, one just into France. Hopefully it will be possible to devise a comprehensive programme and still leave time to dance the Sadana Coblá outside the Cathedral to the music of the assembled tenoras and tiples (see Anthony Baines's article in *GSSJ* Vol. V, 1952, 'Shawms of the Sadana Coblas').

I regret to have to report the deaths of two longstanding members of the Society. Dr. Donald Gill (1919-2016) was a medical doctor eventually specialising in dermatology but known to us for his extensive knowledge and interest in plucked stringed instruments. John Hanchet (1941-2016) is known to most of us a leading maker of historic woodwind instruments, primarily shawms but also crumhorns, recorders, rackets and bassoons. He founded the historic woodwind making course at what was then known as the London College of Furniture.

Graham Wells

The Anthony Baines Prize



This year, the Anthony Baines prize was awarded to musical instrument maker, restorer and conservator Christopher Nobbs. The award was made in recognition of his outstanding contributions to the field of keyboard organology over a period of almost 50 years. He has produced superb musical instruments inspired by historic models and working methods as well as original studies elucidating many aspects of keyboard manufacture and aesthetics. As the National Trust's Musical Instruments Adviser, he continues to bring information about important collections into the public domain. His generosity and unfailing good humour in sharing his knowledge and ideas is legendary among students, friends, colleagues, collectors, musicians and scholars throughout the world. *(extract from the full citation)*

TERENCE PAMPLIN AWARD FOR ORGANOLOGY AND MUSICOLOGY 2017

THE AWARD

The Terence Pamplin Award is made every other year to encourage excellence in research in organology (the science and history of the development and construction of all acoustic musical instruments and their use) and musicology as it links to acoustic music instrument technology. It consists of a cheque and certificate confirming the award. In 2017 the award will be worth £1200. The award is organised and administered by the Worshipful Company of Musicians through their Charitable Fund.

AIMS

Within Western music there are many aspects of classical and folk music traditions that remain un-researched. More widely, ethnic musical traditions are under threat of extinction in many parts of the world. The award is designed to encourage research into early organology and playing techniques of acoustic instruments within the main stream of Western musical tradition and oral traditions in world ethno-organology at any period of history, and record them before they are lost to scholarship for ever. The geographical scope of the award is global. The research project can include making, playing or recording musical instruments. The award specifically excludes electronic or computerised digital instruments and electrical amplification.

Previous Award Winners have used the award to provide an additional aspect to their research by making an instrument to test the methodology of an earlier well known instrument maker; travel to measure and photograph instruments and/or analysis of original archive material/documents; acoustical analysis; application of research techniques.

Further information about the Award, rules for the competition and application form can be obtained from the Musicians' Company. Email. clerk@wcom.org.uk and following the link on the company website. The closing date for the competition is 1 July 2017



The Museu de la Música de Barcelona houses collections from around the world, as well as biographical documents, from ancient civilization, to new technology up to the 21st century. The Museum collection comprises 2000 instruments, 500 of which are on display, including one of the best guitar collections in the world (see Editorial above).

Dolmetsch Harps

I have been interested in Arnold Dolmetsch's work on harps for some time now. Many years ago, the late Gráinne Yeats passed me a photocopy of his "translations" from the 17th century Welsh "Robert ap Huw" manuscript, along with an audio tape copy of Mabel Dolmetsch's 78rpm recordings of some of this repertory, both originally published in 1937. I think these recordings and sheet music of the early Welsh harp music were very influential on pioneers of the Celtic harp revival from the mid 20th century. However I have not found it easy to track down solid reliable information.

In 2013 I acquired a couple of 1937 lacquer test discs of Mabel playing early Irish harp music. Again this led me to try and find out more information about the instruments and the research behind them but again progress was slow. It seems that in the early 30s Arnold was getting old, and tried to tidy up loose ends by having a go at as many neglected corners of old music as he could. He turned to the Robert ap Huw manuscript, which had puzzled scholars for a long time, and came up with a "solution" to its "mysteries". He made the first of his little "bardic harps" in about 1932, styled loosely after the extant medieval Gaelic harps preserved in the National Museum in Edinburgh, and in Trinity College, Dublin. Naturally he could not play them himself, the harp being an utterly feminine instrument in early 20th century England, so Mabel taught herself to play them using fingernail techniques. Together they went on concert tours, presenting the music to excited audiences in Wales and elsewhere.

Arnold made two different types of harp, though he was not careful to distinguish between them; both models would be referred to as "clarsach", "medieval harp", "small harp", "bardic harp", "harp of antique form", or "Irish harp".

One type had gut strings, and the other type had wire strings, both at low tension. Both had the same general form, a slenderer and more gracile version of the "Queen Mary" and "Brian Boru" harps, though one technical difference in the construction is the method of attaching strings – his gut string instruments have the strings pegged through holes in the soundboard in the conventional manner, whereas the wire string instruments have the strings unusually threaded under little brass bridges and looped over hitch-pins inserted in the front of the soundboard, not running through the soundboard at all.

Old photos of Mabel playing these harps show instruments with fine carved decoration on the forepillar and soundbox, based on the medieval originals. Two such instruments are preserved at the Horniman Museum, though I have not yet had a chance to inspect these.

One of the key figures in this story was the Scottish harpist Heloise Russell-Fergusson. She had "the first clarsach" made by Arnold in 1932 – though a letter preserved amongst her papers in Glasgow reveals some skulduggery, with Arnold suggesting to her that she should return the harp to him so he could exchange it for a different one. He says he would obliterate the inscription and inscribe the replacement. "I would still be the first" he writes, because he had made them together as a batch!

The Dolmetsch workshop continued to offer these harps for sale through into the 1970s – they are illustrated in print advertisements for the company's instruments.

Last year I was given one of these harps, stamped on the base with “Arnold Dolmetsch 10”. It is of the same familiar form as all the others, and has brass wire strings hitched to the front of the soundboard, showing that it was built for wire strings. However, it is very plain, with no decoration at all, and not even the profiling of the forepillar. The soundboard is very thin spruce, with four deep braces running across the interior, and the strings are extraordinarily thin for an early Irish harp – both of which give it an interestingly clear voice which is however utterly unlike a replica of one of the historical Gaelic harps.



Unknown 1

I am wondering now how it would be possible to date my example. The number 10 suggests it is fairly early in the sequence, but I don't know of any information on the way the stamp and the numbering of Dolmetsch's instruments works. The letter to Heloise suggests that it may not have been very clear even at the time!

Any information or suggestions would be most welcome!

More info and references can be found on my website at

<http://www.earlygaelicharp.info/dolmetsch>

A demonstration of the repaired and restrung harp is at

<https://youtu.be/x9sCCFaTbo0>

Simon Chadwick



Unknown 2



Bärenreiter recorders wanted for measurement and evaluation

I wonder whether any Society members might have in their possession examples from two eras of vintage Bärenreiter recorders, similar to the images below? If so, I'd like to borrow them for a brief period in order to measure and evaluate the design. Alternatively, I would consider purchasing if this option was available. All shipping, insurance and other costs gladly paid.

David Griffith, david@davidgriffith.co.uk.



The Christopher Monk Award

The Historic Brass Society have awarded Jeremy Montagu the Christopher Monk award for 2016. The award is presented for Jeremy's outstanding works as a writer and curator, having made significant and lasting contributions to the understanding of historic brass instruments and their music.



Galpin Society President, Jeremy Montagu, is presented with the Christopher Monk Award by Professor Arnold Myers on behalf of the Historic Brass Society at the Galpin Society Annual General Meeting, 2016, at the Royal Northern College of Music

Can you identify this instrument?



We have had an enquiry from Mr Derek Tearnes who saw this instrument in action at a Celtic festival in Brittany. Derek writes: *"Thanks for looking into this. If I'd realised it was quite so unusual I'd have spent more time trying to track down the player."*

To put this in context, this was at the festival interceltique de lorient - which is in Brittany. It's the largest celtic music festival.

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Festival_Interceltique_de_Lorient

I saw the group with this instrument twice, the first time they were playing in the national bagadou competition - first division. Most of the bagad groups had a bass wind instrument, but they were mostly conventional instruments such as contrabass clarinet and sax. One band had an instrument which was clearly a bass bombarde. So it seems there isn't any standard bass instrument used - so it's possible this is a one off - but it did look ancient.

I think the band is Bagad Sonerien bro dreger or possibly Cap Caval (based on the time I took the bottom photo in the competition)."

To my eyes it looks like some species of upright serpent but instead of using side holes the playing length is modified by some rack-and-pinion arrangement.

Any positive identifications will be rewarded by an "Honourable Mention" in the next newsletter.

Andy Lamb

The Frances Densmore Prize

The American Musical Instrument Society have awarded Lance Whitehead and Jenny Nex the Frances Densmore Prize for their article ‘The Insurance of Musical London and the Sun Fire Office 1710–1779’, *The Galpin Society Journal* LXVII (2014), pp.181–216.

Lance and Jenny are joint recipients of the prize, which is awarded annually for the most significant article-length publication in English; the other prize article was ‘The Musical Instrument as National Archive: A Case Study of the Kazakh Qyl-qobyz’,

Ethnomusicology 58/3 (2014) by Megan Rancier. Lance and Jenny, who took nearly ten years to trawl the 270 ledgers (or some 165,000 document pages) which cover the first 70 years of the Sun Fire Office are keen to point out that their transcriptions of the music-related policies are available through our website,

<<http://www.galpinsociety.org/supplementary%20material.htm>>. As well as policies relating to musical instrument makers, music publishers and musicians, the source includes the policies of concert promoters and theatre managers alongside dancing masters and bell hangers. Since the policies encompass some minority groups absent from more traditional sources – women, foreigners and tenants – the policies provide important new information on the activities of these sections of eighteenth-century society. While details of some of the later policies may now be traced through various archival search engines, there is still ample opportunity for further research in this area, particularly for the nineteenth century.

Frances Theresa Densmore (May 21, 1867 – June 5, 1957)

Frances Densmore was an American anthropologist and ethnographer born in Red Wing, Minnesota. Densmore is known for her studies of Native American music and culture. She began recording music officially for the Smithsonian Institution's Bureau of American Ethnology (BAE) in 1907. In her fifty-plus years of studying and preserving American Indian music, she collected thousands of recordings. Many of the recordings she made on behalf of the BAE now are held in the Library of Congress. While her original recordings often were on wax cylinders, many of them have been reproduced using other media and are included in other archives. The recordings may be accessed by researchers as well as tribal delegations.



Densmore with Blackfoot chief, Mountain Chief, during a 1916 phonograph recording session for the Bureau of American Ethnology (*Wikipedia Commons*)



Saint Cecilia's Hall, Edinburgh (*Wikipedia Commons*)

The Galpin Society and the American Musical Instrument Society CONFERENCE ON MUSICAL INSTRUMENTS

1-4 June 2017

The Galpin Society and American Musical Instrument Society Joint Meeting in Edinburgh 2017 will further the aims of both societies by encouraging research into musical instruments and sharing the findings with highly interested audiences. Network building is a valuable outcome of such gatherings, here on a higher level since members of two societies with similar aims will be able to meet more likeminded colleagues than is possible in the usual separate annual meetings of AMIS and biennial conferences of the Galpin Society. A strong feature of both societies is the interchange between amateur and professional organologists, musical instruments being a field in which valuable contributions of many kinds come from a diversity of approaches. The programme will include some exciting short concerts using instruments greatly varying in period and musical style, and visits to collections; it will also accommodate the annual business meetings of both societies. The meeting will be hosted by the University of Edinburgh and will be centred on the newly refurbished St Cecilia's Hall, location of the galleries of Musical Instrument Museums Edinburgh which will have brand new displays of a stunning collection. For details visit:

<http://www.stcecilias.ed.ac.uk/conference.html>

For further information, please email mimed@ed.ac.uk



MINIM-UK

The Royal College of Music is creating the largest virtual collection of historically significant musical instruments in the UK in a major partnership with the Royal Academy of Music, the Horniman Museum and University of Edinburgh thanks to an award from Higher Education Funding Council for England (HEFCE's) Catalyst Fund. A partnership with Google will ensure that content also reaches the wider public through the Google Cultural Institute, which is working with a variety of institutions around the world to make important cultural materials accessible to everyone and to digitally preserve it to educate and inspire future generations.

The general public will be able to explore 20,000 individual instruments held in more than 100 musical instrument collections in the UK. The user-friendly, media-rich online resource will enable anyone to hear instruments being played as well as see information about each one. It is estimated that MINIM-UK (Musical INstrument Interface for Museums and Collections) will be completed by October 2017.

MINIM-UK will also aggregate information to MIMO (Musical Instrument Museums Online, mimo-international.com), and to Europeana (www.europeana.eu), which collects and provides access to millions of digitised items from libraries, archives, audio-visual collections and museums across Europe, meaning the public collections of musical instruments in the UK will be accessible as never before.

The project, which has now been underway for nearly a year, encompasses extensive research into UK collections, the gathering of data about musical instruments, and the creation of new data for collections with little or no documentation.

The vast musical instrument heritage of the UK is preserved in collections ranging from National museums to remote country mansions. During the early stages of MINIM-UK we co-ordinated research into collections across the country - a vital step to ascertain where exactly we can gather information about musical instruments.

The last major directory of UK collections, *Musical Instrument Collections in the British Isles*, was published in 1990. The preparation of a new edition of *Grove Dictionary of Musical Instruments* also stimulated the development of the *Sigla for Musical Instrument Collections*, and the Museum Association lists music collections in its own registry. These and other sources have proved valuable to develop a new directory. Resources such as local authority websites, directories of military, ethnography, and social history collections, and listings of national heritage trusts have helped ensure a wide scope of institutions are researched. Additional thanks are due to the project Steering Group and to Prof Arnold

Myers for comments and corrections, and for important information about individual collections.

One of the fascinating and exciting aspects we have found is how music and the development of musical instruments permeates throughout a wide range of collections and collection types, such as social history, decorative arts, design, military history, ethnography, religion, and beyond. When the project started, previously published directories pointed to around 100 collections holding instruments in the UK. We know already that the actual figure is higher, at over 300.

A searchable directory of collections is available online, and will evolve as the project, and contact with individual institutions, develops. The directory will remain accessible throughout the life of the project, and will be integrated into the musical instruments interface for the MINIM-UK public launch.

For the development of the database itself, we have considered many aspects. For starters, how do we ensure relevant information is included?

We have included discrete fields of common descriptors for objects held in cultural institutions (object name, place of origin, maker), while others are particularly pertinent to musical instruments (nominal pitch, Hornbostel-Sachs classification). We have made use of the existing *Cataloguing Standards for Instrument Collections*, combined with a data structure already available thanks to the work of the MIMO project, which developed a branch of the Lightweight Information Describing Objects (LIDO) XML schema. LIDO was developed to describe museum objects across many types, and is now a common framework for digital sharing of object information. Additionally, the MIMO project developed a vocabulary of musical instrument classifications and names, which is being used as an authority for object designations.

Next, how do we acquire the right amount of information within the time limitations for cataloguing fieldwork?

For this purpose, the MINIM-UK standards are simplified into fourteen key fields of object information to be populated through field cataloguing. Two project Cataloguers have now been appointed to travel and work *in situ* until September 2017, and to support collections in adding records about musical instruments to the MINIM-UK interface. They will inspect and catalogue musical instruments, take appropriate photographs and, where possible, make audio and video recordings.

We hope that the sharing of knowledge and expertise from the project group will aid participating institutions in both understanding and distributing information about their instruments, and raise awareness about digital information management relevant to these objects. Most importantly, we hope that MINIM-UK will encourage interest in historical musical instruments and their place in the fabric of our culture, improve the visibility of the collections both nationally and internationally, and provide a timely and useful resource for those wanting to learn about and research musical instruments.

More information on the project is available at www.minim.ac.uk, which will be updated regularly with news and reports on the findings of our Cataloguers. Comments and enquiries about the project are welcomed, and can be directed to contact@minim.ac.uk.

Richard Martin