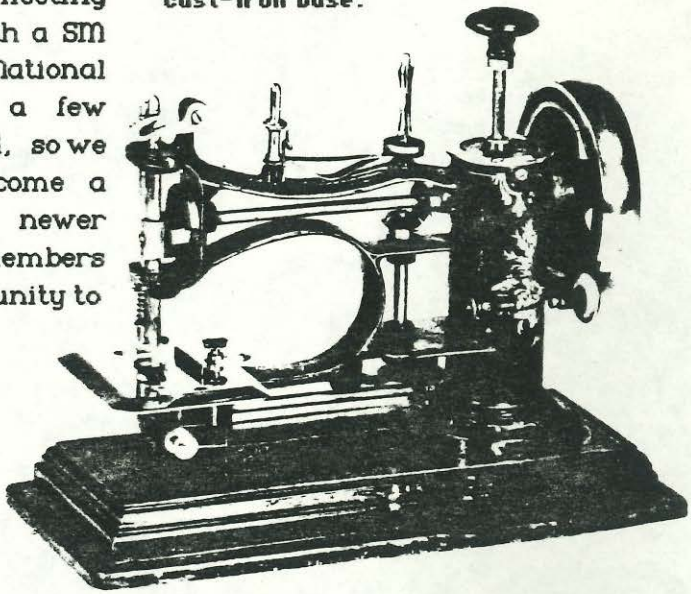
Alternate Stitches

The MS La Populaire with its cast-iron base.



BY HAPPY CHANCE our Birmingham meeting co-incided with with a SM Trade Fair at the National Exhibition Centre a few miles down the road, so we were able to welcome a number of our newer modern-dealer members who took the opportunity to visit us on the same day.

Allan Sheen, whose main business is repairing SMs, hails from Winsford in Cheshire. He's been collecting for 25 years, and gives talks to various Women's Institutes about the changing face of SM mechanisation. He brought a colleague, Brian Tilston, to the meeting and although he hasn't joined us yet, he is still interested in old machines. He told me that in the north mothers are now buying their young daughters old hand machines in order to teach them to sew. They prefer them to the faster, more complicated, electronic ones -- and they're also cheaper.

John Horton from Wakefield left his boss and fellow member Jack Hampton back on the Pfaff stand at the NEC (someone has to hold the fort) but he brought another two friends with him. Not only did Roy Bamber from Manchester join on the spot, he's also written an amusing article about his day for this magazine. Rumours about half nelsons and pile drivers shouldn't be believed. Jack Hampton, in his role as Joint Managing Director of Pfaff, has kindly offered us some SM-related goodies for the AGM.

A local member Steve Nutt who operates in the heart of Britain's Olympic-contending city, brought his son Tony to the meeting. Tony is the third generation to work in the family SM firm and likes to think that when he has a son of his own he will do the same.

And, of course, we were more than pleased to see Ken Waite and Mike Kneeshaw again, who between them so successfully trail-blazed our first north of Birmingham collectors' meeting in October.

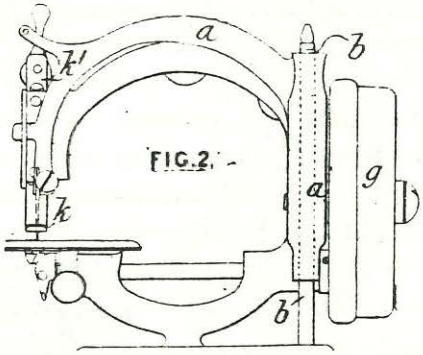
A very welcome first-time visitor was Jim Andrew, Keeper (Technology) at the Birmingham Museum of Science and Industry. I rang Jim as a result of a note on Martin Gregory's questionnaire which said that some research into Birmingham-manufactured machines had been done by the Museum. Not only did Jim offer to share his research with the Society (see Carol's Royal SM Co supplement) he also said he'd like to come to the meeting.

He tells an interesting story of how, when taking one of his curatorial exams, he was given a Moldacot and asked to tell the examiners something about it.

Not having examined one in detail before, he eventually described it in engineering/museum terms including the fact that it was a chain-stitch machine. 'Not so,' said the panel, with the benefit of the instructions in front of them.'It's a lock stitch.' Jim examined it again but was adament that no machine so small could operate with a shuttle and there the matter was left.

Back at his home base Jim had the chance to examine a Moldacot and eventually found the shuttle. He imediately telephoned a friend who had been on the examining board and confessed to having been wrong. 'Don't say another word.' came the reply.'You convinced us all it's a chain stitch.'

Jim's SM research goes back some seven years and was prepared in conjunction with Brian Jewell's earlier book. Jewell's updated volume was circulated among the members, and is reviewed elsewhere in the magazine. Pat and Colin Mason, who have been collecting only a short time and were attending their first collectors' meeting, had already bought a copy, and their thoughts on the book are included with those of Graham Forsdyke and Bernard Williams.



The Birmingham-made Andrews machine.

Vera Hemming's dining-room table was commandeered to display visitors' machines, including Bernard's French Avrial, recently bought from the Phillips' auction and my own version , with its additional cast base, bought in a Paris flea market some years ago. The trade collectors were fascinated

with the unusual treadle mechanism and there was a queue of people waiting to try it out. As the Avrial is such an important machine in collecting terms, we've featured it separately.

Two more rare models were a Winter's patent from 1868, and a machine reminiscent of a miniature Willcox and Gibbs. Jim Andrew was particularly interested in this one as the stitch plate included the name of a Birmingham maker not on his list -- and it was Andrews. Ken Waite told us that a similar Winter machine with it's all-over gold-leaf effect, could be seen at the Armley Mills Museum in Leeds.

The Winter, resembling an early Thomas -- such as the one in the London Science Museum -- was added to the MS collection a couple of years ago but this was the first chance members had had to view it.

Its main feature is a pair of compensating levers by which wear on the machine may be taken up . The MS machine has much of its gold leaf still in tact but the scroll extension to the casting--like an early Grover -- to hold the bobbin has been broken.

The Andrews is a nicely engineered machine but built to rather a crude concept with a single rocking arm. Patented in 1874, no other example has come to our notice. Surprisingly, its original box is covered with leatherette material not popular until the 1930s.

Bernard and Sheila Williams brought their C9 Agenoria with the patterned stitchplate showing the Franklin company patent, of Franklin Works, Birmingham. And we were able to give Steve Nutt information about his Wheeler and Wilson 7 head.

This meeting will be remembered as much for the people who turned up as the machines we saw. Peter and Diana Herbert travelled up from Bristol, despite the fact they were leaving for a week's holiday the following morning. Vera and Leonard were wonderful hosts.

Despite the imminence of the AGM members insisted of another regional meeting-- details elsewhere in thsi issue.

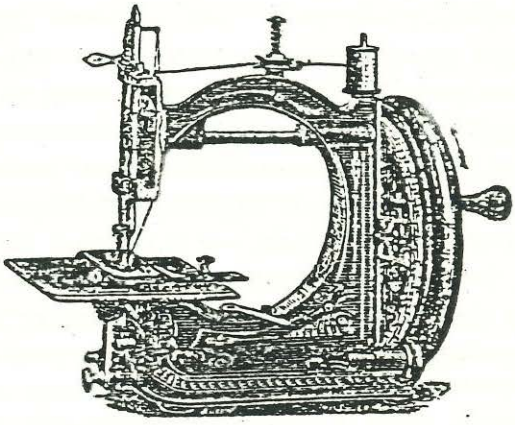
*** Thomas Pope of Paignton was clearly a man of many parts. His advertisement in 1870 proclaimed him to be a furnishing and general ironmonger, tin-plate worker, bell-hanger and gas fitter, shoeing-smith, furniture, carpet and iron-bedspread warehouse, hot-water apparatus and kitchen-stove manufacturer, oil merchant, agent for all the principal SM companies, house and estate agent, auctioneer and general agency offices.

Gresham and Craven

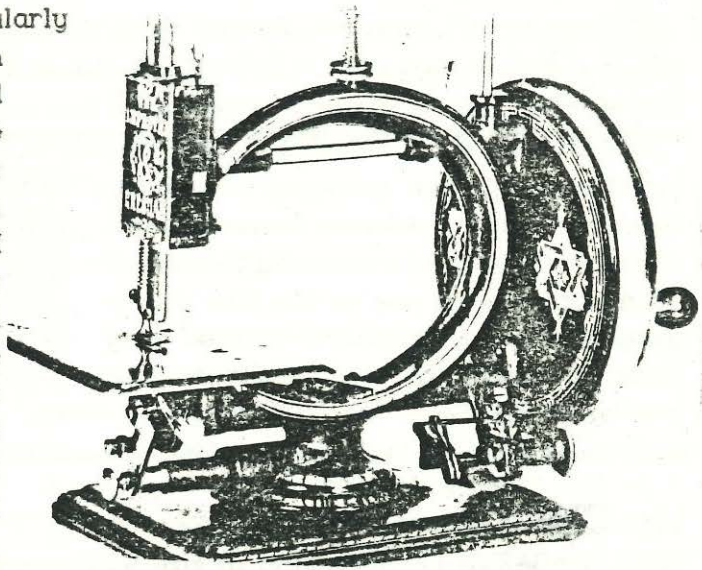
JAMES GRESHAM was born in 1837 in Nottingham and was educated at Newark Grammar School. He was obviously a man who took advantage of his adversities because having had a leg amputated at home when he was 15, he later invented an artificial leg and sold the rights for its manufacture for a considerable sum. He also became a friend of the famous painter W P Frith, RA, at the South Kensington School of Art.

Gresham joined, at an unknown date, the Atlas Works of Sharp Stewart who were 'locomotive manufacturers' leaving on 12 October 1865. On 26 October he became the manager of the Whitecapel Iron Works.

In 1867 he was granted Patent No. 636 for a lock-stitch shuttle SM with Ira Dimock.



Above: The H-section version.
Below: The 'Improved'.



The machine is not particularly unusual having a frame in the form of a reversed letter C, rather like the Little Wanzer or a Willcox and Gibbs. The frame, in cross-section, is like an H and early machines were called 'The Gresham'. A later model, with a frame oval in cross-section, was called 'The Improved Gresham' and was fitted with a rather ineffectual reverse placed to the right of the clothplate. There was also a 'Reversible Gresham' and an early model called 'The Newark', but otherwise identical to the Gresham.

In 1868 Gresham was in Manchester working as a consultant,

presumably on engineering matters, with machines made by Wren and Hopkins and, at some time, he became a partner with Mr Heron and Mr James Craven trading as Heron, Gresham and Craven at Ordsall Lane, Machester. The firm is listed, in 1875, as Gresham and Craven, Engineers, at Southall Street, Salford, Manchester.

Of Gresham's partners, Craven was granted Patent No. 113 in 1867 for a fringing machine but Dimock never appeared in any other SM patent. It would appear that SMs were made from 1867 to the late 1870s only.

However, Mr Gresham was clearly an inventive man, as in 1880 his firm was fully engaged making injectors and vacuum-brake equipment. In 1957 (Yes, 1957) they were still making vacuum brakes and in 1977 were part of the Westinghouse group based at Chippenham, still trading as Gresham and Craven, with the addition of Limited. BM

*** Editor's Note: Graham Forsdyke berated my confusion over BM's use of the H-section frame in the above article. He claims it doesn't take an Isambard Kingdom Brunel or a Thomas Telford to work it out. Not convinced I conducted a quick telephone poll amongst a few female members. Jennifer Gregory, Head of Science at Winchester School and Carol Head who teaches teenage boys and girls the gentle art of using the SM had no trouble working it out.

But if you're still confused GF says that if you cut a section from the frame, look at it end on, and have it resemble a capital H, then we can assume that the machine has an H-section frame. MS

*** France issued a series of stamps commemorating French inventors in 1955, of which the 10-franc value showed Thimonnier with one of his SMs plus a Singer Family machine. Does any member know of any other stamps showing the SM ? Martin Gregory.



Up Market

YOUR MAGAZINE is increasing in size with every issue. This -- with its Royal Supplement -- is the largest ever, including even those produced when we were amalgamated with the TW collectors.

This has been made possible not only because of our soaring membership but as a result of so many members contributing news, research work or even interesting chat to these pages.

In fact, because of the quantity of good material available for this issue something had to be held over. The recollections of James Bolton's 40 years at Singer drew the short straw and this will now be continued in the next issue.

Please keep up the good work. We want to know what you think about the magazine, what machines you have found, even how you got involved with this crazy hobby. In fact, if it interests you it will interest the other members. Don't worry about journalistic style. Graham Forsdyke, who's helping me put the magazine together or I will knock your offering into shape if necessary. Write now.

Many of you will notice a certain mixing of typefaces and style within this issue. It's because we've gone all up-market and are now using a form of computer setting which will, when we master all its little querks, allow us to do more with the magazine.

All should be back to one style by the next issue. MS

Half Nelson

I DROVE DOWN the M6 to attend the SM Trade Show 'Stitches' at the National Exhibition Centre, Birmingham, on a wet Sunday morning. I had arranged to meet another dealer there and collect some items from him, but he had cried off at the last moment, saying his manageress would be there instead.

Since I had only seen her briefly, and that was some time ago, I expected there would be some difficulty in recognition. I only knew her first name and had said on the phone that I would be somewhere near the Pfaff stand at lunch time.

Almost as soon as I arrived I was buttonholed by two other dealers, complete with wives, all four of whom wanted to know why my wife wasn't with me. They each nodded knowingly when I said Lil had stayed home. For some reason beyond my ken they put some salacious interpretation on the fact that I was there alone. Since I'm well over 50 and decrepit with it, I could only be amused by their pointed questions and meaningful glances at each other.

At that moment an announcement boomed over the tannoy -- 'Will Roy Bamber go to the main foyer where Gloria is waiting for him' .... Those four faces were a picture I shall never forget and I wandered slowly toward the

foyer eagerly trailed by four delighted whisperers, trying to keep out of sight but keep me in view.

Gloria had to wait a little time whilst I led my trackers up and down a few aisles before making sure that they had a ringside view of our meeting. Gloria turned out to be a delicious-looking blonde, in her mid-thirties, and as we sailed off towards the car park to unload her car into mine, I could barely keep a straight face knowing exactly what those four were thinking.

Pity that they saw us return shortly after, with Gloria's mother in tow, who had been minding the goods in the car.

Shortly after this I was talking to John Horton on the Pfaff SM stand and was intrigued by his mention of the SMCS. I took up the invitation to attend the meeting that afternoon at Kings Norton and spent a very enjoyable time in the most congenial company.

Maggie released me from a half nelson just as soon as I agreed to join the club, only to be tagged by Graham who released his body slam after I had promised to write this.

Later our splendid host gave me explicit directions for the homeward journey, which I followed to the letter -- arriving safe and sound in Southampton. Perhaps I should have mentioned that I wanted to get to Manchester. Roy Bamber.

We Get Letters

From Norah Sims, Dundee.

Following up on your suggestion, I contacted the local BBC radio station. There was some interest shown and I gave a researcher some of our magazines and put her in touch with the Clydebank Museum.

They put a program together and this was broadcast on January 2nd. It dealt almost entirely with Singer and his factory, but our Society did not get a mention at all.

There is a possibility of a future programme dealing more directly with machines and the work of the Society.

The magazine is going from strength to strength. I look forward to every issue. I do hope you have a successful 1986.

* * * * *

From Pat and Colin Mason, Pershore.

I must write to say how much we enjoyed the regional meeting on January 19th.

It was a nice meeting all the people there and wonderful to see your French Avrial and that of Bernard Williams.

Although there's a photograph in the new Brian Jewell book, we would never have known about its pump action or unusual treadle had we not gone to the meeting.

* * * * *

From Roy Bamber, Manchester.

May I thank you all for a most enjoyable afternoon last Sunday. I neglected to learn the name of our most generous and pleasant hosts but have written to them anyway.

I have greatly enjoyed reading SMCS News. You may recall Graham Forsdyke asking us to write something for the magazine. He said it didn't matter how poor an effort is was, etc. I have taken him at his word and enclose some ramblings.

* * * * *

From Rita Hewitt, Leicester.

I am very sorry to hear the Matthews have given up collecting SMs and have actually sold most of their collection.

Brian and Vera were the first contact I had with any other collector back in 1974. Until then I had been struggling on my own trying to find information wherever I could, for at that time the only book was Grace Cooper's and that was nearly impossible to get hold of.

When I saw their photo in the Cambridge Evening News with a collection of old SMs I immediately contacted them. Since then I feel they have been a great help and inspiration to others and especially to this club.

I would like to express my personal thanks to them both and best wishes for the future.

* * * * *

From Carol Head, Salisbury.

Just a line to thank members who have contributed material towards my supplements, particularly BM for the Boudoir poem and BW for his help with the Harris information in this issue.

Committed

WITH MEMBERSHIP now over the 90 mark and threatening to break the 100 barrier before the AGM, the committee has been enlarged by the co-opting of members Diana Herbert and Bernard Williams.

The new committee members re-inforce secretary/treasurer Maggie Snell, research editor Carol Head and chairman Brian Matthews. MS.

Tarnished Jewell

BECAUSE OF THE importance to all our members of the announcement of a new book on SMs, we have decided to devote a considerable amount of this magazine to Antique Sewing Machines by Brian Jewell published by Costello, Tunbridge Wells. The main review is from Graham Forsdyke but, bearing in mind the points made above, Bernard Williams has also been given the chance to read the advance copy and air his views. And we also have the opinion of novice members.

*****

From Graham Forsdyke:

The press release that came with Antique Sewing Machines states that this volume is 'as near definitive a collectors' guide as is possible at present'. Sadly this is very far from the truth. The facts are that the book is a series of errors and assumptions -- all of which could have been easily checked and corrected by a little systematic research or, more simply, by asking any knowledgeable member of this Society to read the page proofs.

Strangely at least two members are credited with having helped the author. Both deny being asked for any information at all.

To give just two examples of these errors:

1. One photograph of a Princess of Wales correctly attributes its manufacture to Newton Wilson yet, just five pages later, is a shot of an identical machine but this time we are asked to believe that it was made by Maxfield.

2. The Yorkshire-made Taylor, of which there are at least a dozen examples in the hands of club members, is credited of being 'possibly of American origin'.

There are many such mistakes which will annoy the knowledgeable collector and confuse and mislead the novice.

Errors in Jewell's earlier volume were excusable, and often excused by myself, as he was a pioneer going, in the best Star Trek tradition, where no man has gone before. There's no excuse this time.

The cross-reference system is confusing and the production far from first class -- some photographs appearing to be little more than photocopies from other publications. This is surprising for in the case of the Saint replica, for example, a 'new' good-quality example could have easily been obtained from the Science Museum.

In all there are 85 black and

white illustrations and eight in colour. Surprisingly, the picture chosen for the dust jacket is an ordinary Ghul and Harbeck Express in less-than-good condition -- hardly an eye catcher.

Re-reading the above, I was appalled that I had written nothing to the book's credit. Well there are some plus points. If you can carve through the errors, the directory does contain over 800 makers. There is a list of museums -- by no means complete -- which have SMs.

Recommended price is a heady £17.95 which is certainly not on the cheap side for a 160-page production. And even here there is confusion. At the regional meeting last month there were two copies on display -- the review one at £17.95 and another bought from a Midlands bookseller for £13.95

This anomaly was explained by the publisher who said that the original price was to be £13.95 but just before distribution it was found that costs had been higher than anticipated and that £17.95 was the official price. 'The shopkeeper must have made a mistake', said the spokesman.

Criticism notwithstanding this book, being the only one in print dealing with world-wide-produced machines is therefore the best there is.

The saying: 'In the kingdom of the blind, the one-eyed man is king', comes to mind. Certainly this book, having no opposition, is king. I just wish this one-eyed man had put his glasses on.

Obviously this is a book I cannot unreservedly recommend, but seek it out and decide for yourself.

*****

From Pat and Colin Mason.

The first two chapters give a brief but interesting history and development of the SM and are, perhaps, a bit too brief, needing some expansion of the Great Britain section.

Chapter four, the Directory, forms the bulk of the book. From the point of view of the new collector the encouraging part is the large number of machines/manufacturers listed. This give some hope of actually finding a number of different machines without having to scour the country and Continent. There are a number of good photographs and illustrations (and one or two not so good) but more would be useful and add to the 'thumbing through' interest.

On further reading there is, unfortunately, quite a lack of information of many

machines/manufacturers. From this point of view the booklet by Carol Head is much more informative although limited in scope -- possibly a cross between the two would be ideal. Some sort of indication of numbers produced and/or scarcity value would be helpful to the new collector in particular.

Bearing in mind the lack of information generally available (try your local library and see if you can find anything) it is a very worthwhile starting point even at the price quoted, and lends itself to the collector, like us, who buys first and identifies after .....

* * * * *

From Bernard Williams:

I found this book disappointing. The quality, content and accuracy does not match the high price being asked.

The author is obviously not a serious collector nor has he done continuous research into the subject. This has resulted in many inaccuracies and constantly-repeated information which is sometimes contradictory and confusing. Illustration quality ranges from good to illegible, many of them being from Jewell's previous book or well known from other SM publications.

Despite its basic faults it is of some use to new collectors who are prepared to meet the outlay.

New Members

TORE NOHR, Ekornvn 5, 2500 Tynset, Norway (Tel: 64 8 1233) MD
JUDITH GRANT, 19 Cyprus Gardens, Finchley, London N3 (01 346 0466)
REMY CIOCCA, Cultarez E, CH 1095, Lutry, Switzerland. (021 39 16 82)
JOHN SAMUEL, The Fent Shop, 74 High St, Rochester, Kent (0634 43966) MD
GARY SCATES, 248 Kingston Rd, Staines, Mdx. (Staines 54151) MD
J C STERNFELD, Bachlaan 150, Donwerth, Holland.
ROY BAMBER, 239 Deansgate, Manchester 2. MD
GUNVAR GRINDHEIM, Britavn 12, N-5500 , Hagesund, Norway.
BOB DEVINE, 21 Carrick Gardens, Woodley, Nr Reading, Berks. MD

Officers

Sec/Treasurer: Maggie Snell, 48 Nightingale House, Thomas More St, St. Katharines-by-the-Tower, London E1 9UB. Tel: 01 488 0474.

Research Editor: Carol Head, 3 Windwhistle Way, Alderbury Park, Alderbury Salisbury, Wilts. Tel: 0722 710988.

Chairman: Brian Matthews, 8 The Vale, Oakley, Hants. Tel: 0256 781834.

Auction Report

PHILLIP'S, Blenheim Street, London - 17 December 1985

DON'T ASK ME to work out why Phillips' all-time high in August of £100 and £80 for Willcox & Gibbs (with an average of £53 each over the six machines) has done a complete turnaround with a price spread of £12 to £25 for similar 4 to 8 condition models (average £23 each over seven machines).

At least these were the hammer prices on the day. But when I checked the figures later it seems five of the Willcox's, including a clean C7 treadle still with its original gilding, were unsold as the prices did not reach the reserve.

I'd have been happy with £18 for a Wheeler and Wilson 9 hand machine (I couldn't unlock the cover at the viewing so can't report on the condition) but the seller wanted more and it was unsold. However, a treadle version brought £30.

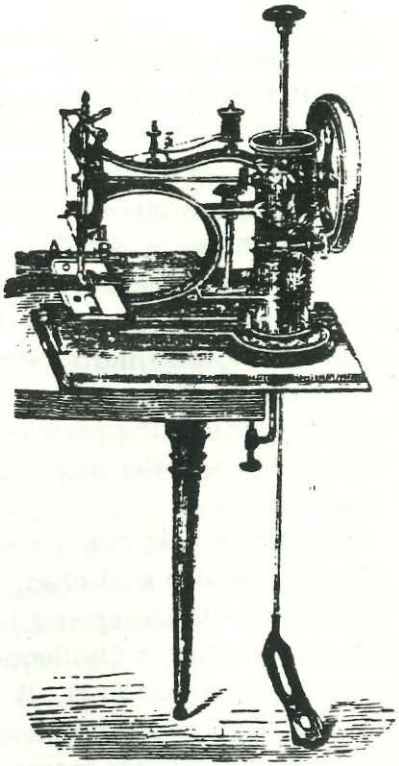
A Moldacot with rusty steel parts and missing the wooden handle but with its shuttle was still cheap at £30, and a quite nice-looking C8 Weir in the fitted box with the spring-loaded secret drawer bombed to only £18. A boxed, C8 Joseph Harris Challenge with a 12 Feb 1871 registration mark on the wooden base was £120. It was a much-better example than the one that brought £140 in Phillips' August sale.

A boring event was rescued from obscurity with a single rare French model with an unusual plunging action called 'La Populaire'. It was in superb 9 condition and came with three different instruction books written, of course, in French. Included in the deal was a wooden foot pedal. This could be attached via a leather strap to a hook beneath the plunger mechanism to provide a simple foot-operated treadle system. It may sound a crazy idea, but a demonstration at the Birmingham meeting proved it could work amazingly well.

It was difficult to tell if the baseboard illustrated on the instruction books should have been attached to the Phillips' model. It could certainly be operated without it and a base would have prevented the machine sitting in the well-fitting pine box provided, though again this may or may not have been original. But these are details that hardly affected the £1100 price tag (£1226 with the 10% buyers' premium and expenses.)

Although it's occasionally a sometimes you win, sometimes you lose situation, we needn't get too upset about the vagueries in price of such easy-to-find machines as the Willcox & Gibbs, Wheeler & Wilson and Weirs. Overall, they tend to hold their own, and there are enough to go round. MS

Popular Populaire

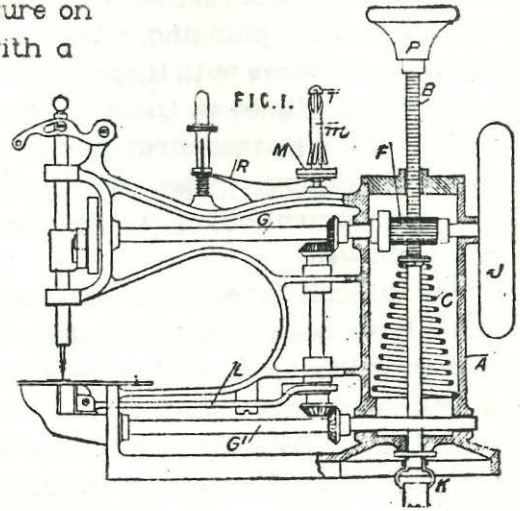


IT WAS GREAT to be able to compare my newly-acquired French La Populaire hand-cum-treadle with MS's similar model at the Birmingham regional meeting.

I was able to demonstrate that the seemingly crude treadle arrangement (simply a rocking wooden foot and a length of leather strap) was far from being the impractical, almost ridiculous contraption it seems, worked in a delightfully-smooth manner with advantages over more conventional treadles.

As we all know, a normal treadle has to be set in motion by moving the flywheel in the forward direction and a correct rythm developed to attain continuous sewing -- a feat said to be quite beyond some who have tried.

None of these complications apply to the French machine. The slightest pressure on the pedal brings the machine to life with a far smoother than normal action. Speed, control and stopping and starting at will are all easily controlled. Bernard Williams.



* * * * *

Fascinated, I had MS's example to pieces. The treadle belt is connected to the lower end of the pusher shaft which has a gear rack cut into it to engage a pinion on the cross shaft. The free-wheel effect on the upstroke is controlled by an ingenious three-roller-bearing clutch on the pinion.

The major difference between the two machines at Birmingham was that MS's version had a deep cast-iron base which, when fitted by means of one

bolt, allowed sufficient space beneath the plunger rod for it to be operated on a table by hand.

The manufacturers were easily into the health-scare hype, suggesting in their advertising that doctors recommend it as it was the only model that never induced tiredness or sickness.

This 'greatest progress since the invention of the SM' was priced at 90 francs.

There appears to be considerable confusion over the name of the machine, with Legat, Avrial and Populaire all being favoured. After sifting the evidence, I believe that the machine was made by a Paris company called Legat, using Avrial patents and with the model name of La Populaire.

Certainly the patent taken out in 1893 in London for the pusher mechanism and spool and bobbin holders was applied for in the name of Avrial. Just to throw another name into the hat, one R House had been granted a patent for a near-identical machine one year earlier.

I'm in contact with a French museum. If they are able to throw any light on the true name of the manufacturer, I'll report back in the next issue. GF

Annual General Meeting

STILL NO FIXED date or venue for the AGM -- we're trying to fix up a very special location but we'll make sure you get the news in plenty of time.

This year for our first AGM since splitting from the TW collectors we're going all out for an interesting meeting.

Apart from the AGM itself there will be an auction -- already some rare machines have been promised -- a slide show from the MS and Bernard Williams collections, a quiz, various competitions and, hopefully, a venue near to the hearts of SM enthusiasts.

Start sorting out auction entries now. Good machines make high prices at these events -- egged on by GF who's promised to do the gaval thumping -- so realise a little cash for the next machine to come along.

There's a special prize for the worst machine -- the real nasty that you almost threw out but kept just in case. Anything's eligible here -- except last year's winner -- a real basket-case, rescued from the bottom of a duck pond by Jack Maloney. MS

*** Although now out of print, copies of Carol Head's book Old Sewing Machines can still be had. Carol herself has a number, as has Maggie Snell. Price is 95 pence plus postage (UK 18p, Europe 35p, others 80p air, 35p surface). MS

Get Organised

WEST-GERMAN MEMBER Otto Landgraf has been doing the rounds of fellow collectors in his home country and has come up with an interesting list.

What Otto has done is divide SM collecting into various headings and sub-headings to categorise every possible branch of our hobby.

Here's how it looks on paper:

1	Sewing machines	2	SM fittings
1.1	Toys	2.1	Accessories
1.2	Domestic	2.2	Additions
1.3	Industrial	2.3	Extra parts
3	Needles	4	Nameplates
3.1	Hand needles	4.1	SM medalions
3.2	SM needles	4.2	Treadle nameplates
3.3	Threaders	4.3	Nameplates
3.4	Needle catalogues	4.4	Advertisement signs
3.5	Needle advertisements		
5	Graphics	6	Brochures
5.1	SM stamps	6.1	Instructions
5.2	Guarantees	6.2	Manuals
5.3	Leaflets	6.3	Spares lists
5.4	Advertisements	6.4	Price lists
5.5	Postcards	6.5	Brochures
5.6	Graphics	6.6	Special promotions

However, let it be said that Germans have got a flair for organistion. Otto uses this system for cataloguing his and others' collections and is anxious to know what other members think of the idea. GF

Song of the Shirt Two

THE SOCIAL WORKERS of the period saw the invention of the SM as an end to the drudgery of overworked women. They spoke loftily of the Song of the Shirt, the emancipation of working females and of Mr Howe's gift to womankind.

Little did they know.

But in a case of out of the frying pan into the furnace, the Arthur Daley's of the 19th century were quick to latch onto this money spinner.

What the sociologists didn't realise was that if women could be exploited sewing by hand in shirt factories, they could just as easily be put upon in SM sweatshops. And the profits were greater for Mr Big.

Less than 30 years after SMs were introduced the Song of the Shirt was being sung again, this time to the accompaniment of creaking treadles and clicking belts.

Worthy protectors of the day were not slow to start campaigning as the following report, taken from the Chicago Evening Post of August 20 1891 shows:

'A couple of dozen inquisitive people made a descent upon the sweaters' dens in the Nineteenth Ward today. They were the grievance committee of the Trade and Labour Assembly, and were bent upon showing to City Attourney Kern, a health visitor and newspaper men the evils that existed. The entire party were under the guidance of a few representatives from the Cloakmakers' Union.

Many open and flagrent violations of the laws with regard to child labour and sanitation were observed. The Nineteenth Ward is unsavoury. Its alleys are foul and its inhabitants are poor. human life and labour is on a low scale there. Particularly is this the case in that quarter where the clothing subcontractors most do congretate..

Children of tender years are stuffed into noisome basements, dismal rooms and ill-ventilated apartments where a breath of pure air never penetrates and a ray of sunlight would startle the pale and drudging toilers.

The employers seem to know no other mode of life, and their weary and worn employees scarce realise that there is any other form of existence save that of patience and penury.

In one place a little girl confessed to having worked for three years for $1 a week. She was a frail child of 11, with wan face and sharpened lines that made her large and mournful eyes speak eloquently of her pitiable fate.

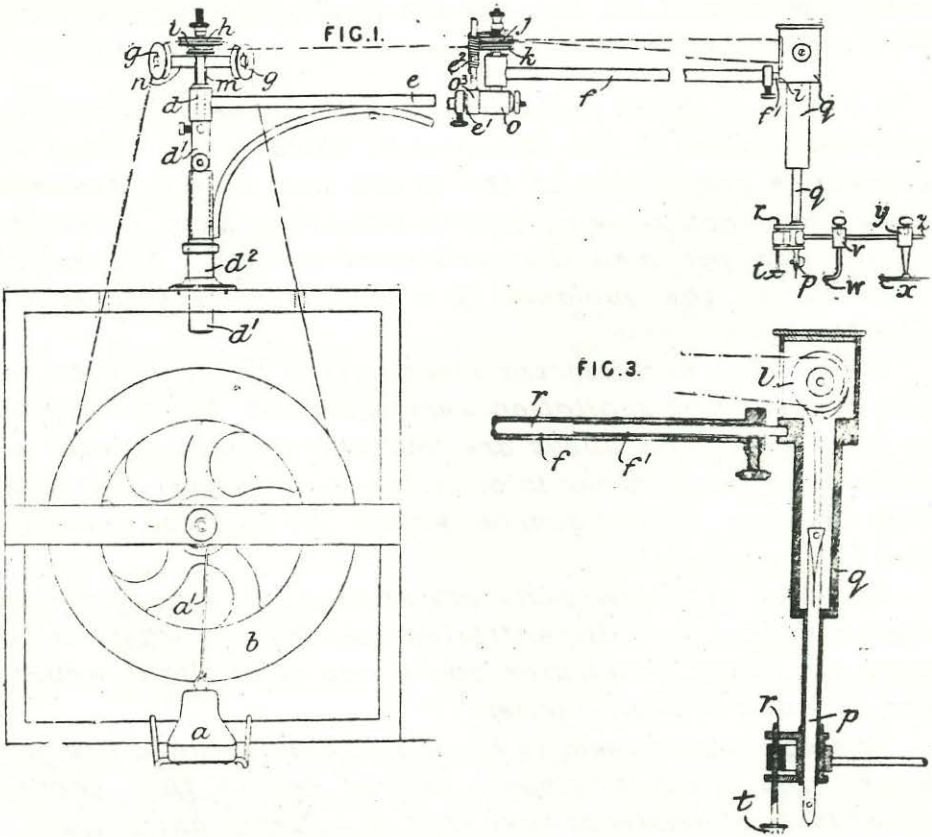
"I work 10 hours a day", she drearily said to one who spoke kindly to her. "And I work on Sundays too. I must do it or we'll have nothing to eat at home."

GF

The One that Got Away

LAST YEAR sometime I had a strange phone call from a noisy pub in the West Country asking me, between the pips, whether I wanted a treadle embroidery SM.

The description was vague and the price not cheap. I also had to agree to buy it without seeing it first. It was going to be a minor treasure or a



complete disaster. I gambled and got lumbered with a crudely-made floor-standing device that looked like a dentist drill but wouldn't have worked as one. It couldn't sew either as there was nowhere for the needle or bobbin of cotton to go.

A dealer who visits France often said he'd seen them before in France and that it was a tattooing machine.

It seems we were all wrong. Because I've just found an 1870 patent application No. 2930 showing a drawing of this very machine under the

name of R Boyd and F H Langsdorff. It seems the apparatus was intended to copy or multiply designs or patterns for embroidery.

' --- the tracer and its stabber are passed over the pattern, one or more pieces of paper etc being placed under or over the design. The perforated designs are placed over the fabric etc on which the pattern is to be produced, a fine powder formed of a gum dammar with aniline or other desired colour is thrown or dusted over, and a moderate heat applied. The pattern is thus produced permanently on the cloth etc.

'The gum should be ground to a very fine powder and passed through gauze, and well mixed with the colour. A mixture of gum dammar, Berlin blue and indigo may be used to obtain a blue colour.--- '

I can't get it back. A French-Canadian dealer convinced himself it was a dentist drill and it's now on the other side of the Atlantic. MS

Next Meeting -- March 23

Our next meeting was destined to be the BIG ONE in May incorporating the AGM, exhibition of machines, auction, competitions, etc. However, those members present at the Hemmings were disappointed. They thought it was too long to wait, and could we slip in another one in March.

Not one to dampen enthusiasm when he sees it, Bernard Williams -- who has just been co-opted onto the SM committee -- volunteered with his wife Sheila to host the extra meeting. We know Burton-on-Trent is still too far north for most of our Southern members, but it's a good one to make the trek for.

Bernard has one of the finest SM collections in Britain if not Europe. What's more, it's on permanent display together with his vast numbers of typewriters in a specially-converted loft extention. Those who attend will have an unequalled opportunity to handle and compare rare as well as more familiar machines.

The address is: 80 Manor Road, Burton-on-Trent, Staffs, telephone 02836 5858.

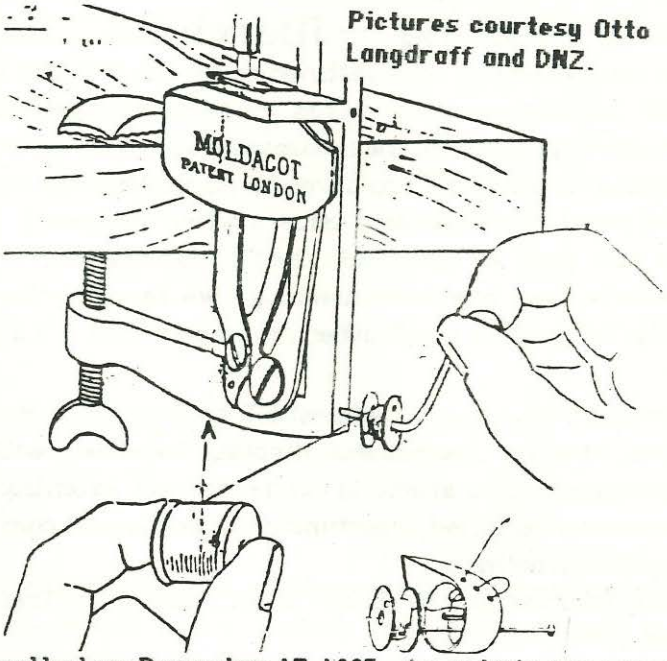
*** A big thank you to those members who returned their census report. I'm sorry but we do not yet have sufficient replies to report back. If you haven't done it yet, please get it filled in and send on to me in the envelope provided. Those who do not do so owe me an envelope and I shall ask for it next time we meet. MS

Moldacot matters

THE FRENCH Avrial had such a novel operating system that I checked to see whether there were other machines among the patent applications using push-up-and-down actions.

The most famous, of course, is the Moldacot. Even when a handle was introduced it was an optional extra at a higher price. So those machines we find with holes in the body but no handle may just have had mean or impoverished owners.

The only other push-action models we've found were not strictly SMs. In November 1897 patent agent H H Lake filed papers for J Eisenhert to protect a simple embroidery invention. One year earlier one O Imray patented a tufting machine with a superb collection of levers operating by pushing down the top.



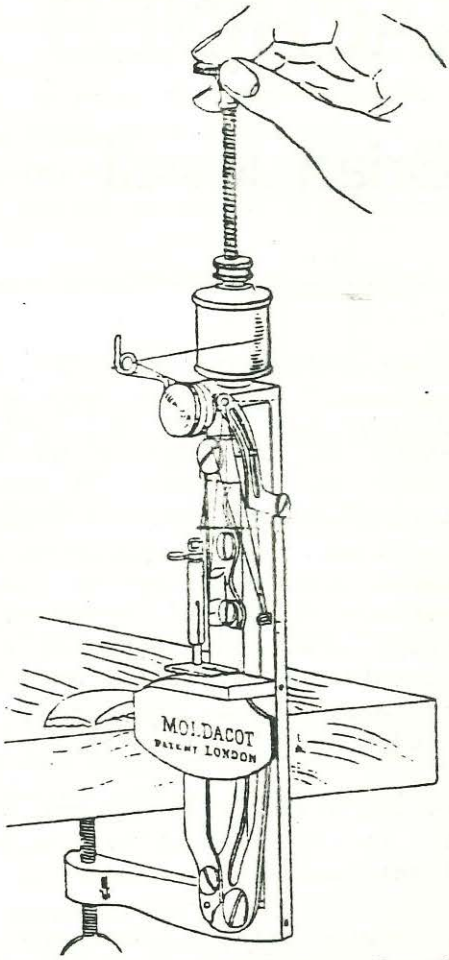
Pictures courtesy Otto Langdraff and DNZ.

THE COMPUTER industry's problem where new models are announced but are not ready for sale for months or even a year or two later is not a modern phenomenon. Something similar happened to the Moldacot in 1886. The first patent on this machine was taken out by S A Rosenthal on December 17, 1885. An article appeared in the English Mechanic and Mirror of Science on July 30, 1886. On August 1, 1886 the Journal of Domestic Appliances and SM Gazette wrote a favourable article about the 'Moldacot pocket SM'.

'Having seen an amount of work done by the machine, we must say it works so easily and rapidly that we are convinced its possible sale is enormous.' The public subscribed £75,000 for shares in the company and a

contract for 100,000 machines had just been taken out with a well-known engineering firm (not named). The second patent on the Moldacot machine was taken out by J Holroyd and the Moldacot Pocket SM Co on September 4, 1886.

A different tale appeared in the October 23, 1886 edition of the Sewing Machine News. It had been brought to their notice that an American SM paper had contained an article about the 'Moldacott' SM called 'A Gigantic Swindle'. An independent representative from the SM News was sent to the offices at Bloomfield House, London Wall, to investigate.



He commented: 'the shareholders will be pleased to hear that such luxuries as Turkey carpets, elegantly-finished mahogany secretaire desks and other expensive articles are at hand for the use of the large, the very large staff of clerks, assistants, office boys, managers, etc.'

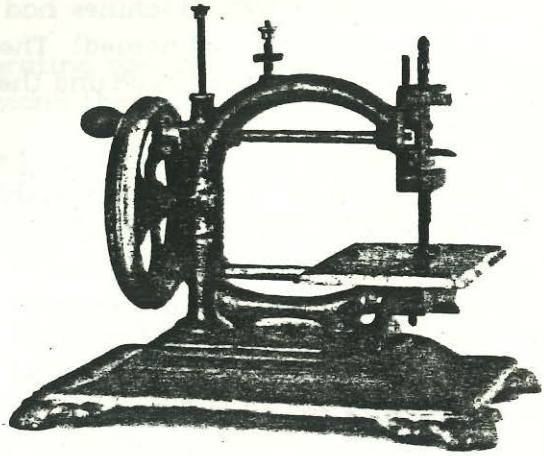
The secretary, Mr W Irving, showed the representative to a room where a young lady was at work on a machine -- 'an improved variety and different in many points to the original pattern which was somewhat deficient.' The rep. found the machine noisy (he wasn't allowed to use it -- no visitors were allowed to do so) but there were no machines available then for sale -- they were expected within a month or so. Yet the machine was being advertised in September 1886.

There does seem to have been a long delay between the original patent being taken out, the article in the English Mechanic and the machine being vailable for sale. Did they succeed in time for Christmas 1886? CH

Advertisement

ANTIQUE SEWING MACHINES

Brian Jewell



The first part of ANTIQUE SEWING MACHINES is devoted to a brief history of the sewing machine up to the great expansion period between 1840 and 1885. It details the work of Howe, Singer and other inventors in the Combination plus those on the continent.

However the majority of the book is a fully cross-referenced Directory of Marques, Manufacturers and Makers listing over 500 marques and 450 people or companies involved in the development or manufacture of sewing machines. Associated machines - such as embroidery, boot and shoe, straw and felt hat stitchers - are included as well as details on unusual Singer models.

Covering a little known part of social and industrial history, this is an invaluable guide for all established and would-be collectors.

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Museum Pieces

MANY'S THE SMALL local museum that has one or two SMs tucked away amongst its other exhibits. The difficulty is knowing just what is where.

We plan, hopefully towards the end of the year, to issue a list of museums which feature SMs -- whole displays or just one item. But we need help. Please let me know of any museum in your area, or outside it, for that matter, that qualifies.

Here's a tip. Always ask whether they have any SMs in store. Most museums have far more goods than they can ever display. I visited one such institution recently where there were no fewer than seven Smith and Starley machines in a dusty store behind a makeshift partition.

I don't know how often the machines are even looked at but GF had to hammer (with the curator's permission) the bolt on the door to get it to slide open. MS

ISMACS

As more than 25% of our membership is worldwide, a suggestion has been put forward that we change the Society's name to ISMACS -- International Sewing Machine Collectors' Society -- the extra A is just to make it easier to pronounce.

The motion will be voted upon at the AGM scheduled for mid May. Any views you may have will be published in the next magazine -- the sixth and last in our first year of operation. MS

For a Song

THE EXCHANGE AND MART in 1869 was a hot-bed for SM sales activity. In those days exchange was to the fore and one lady offered a 'very handsome, large, real gold and oriental rose topaz broach with pendant for a Wheeler & Wilson lock-stitch machine.

Anopther wanted a Thomas or Singer in trade for a large magic lantern but the one that got it all wrong was, however, the lady who wanted any hand SM and was willing to exchange a pair of Cary's Globes, today worth possibly thousands.

Machines offered for sale included Weir, Willcox & Gibbs, Whight and Mann and Judkin.

Now if only I could go back in time for a week or two .....,

Advertisements

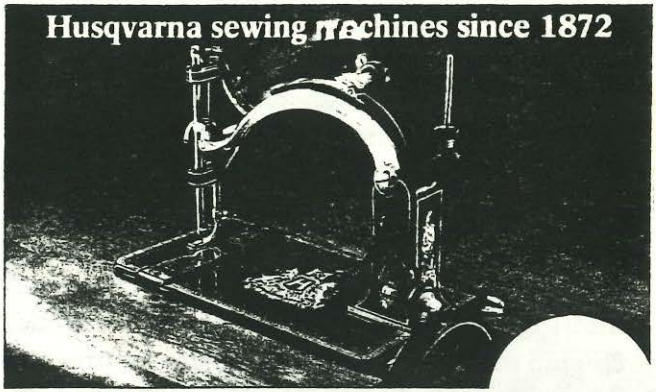
STARTING A COLLECTION Sewing machines for sale, also toy machines. Basement, 288 Westbourne Grove, Portobello Market. Saturdays only. Tel: 01 363 7494. 312 Carter- hatch Lane, Enfield, Middlesex.

SEWING MACHINES bought and sold; also typewriter and gramo- phones, etc. The Talking Machine 30 Watford Way, Hendon, London NW4. Telephone 01 202 3473. Open every day.

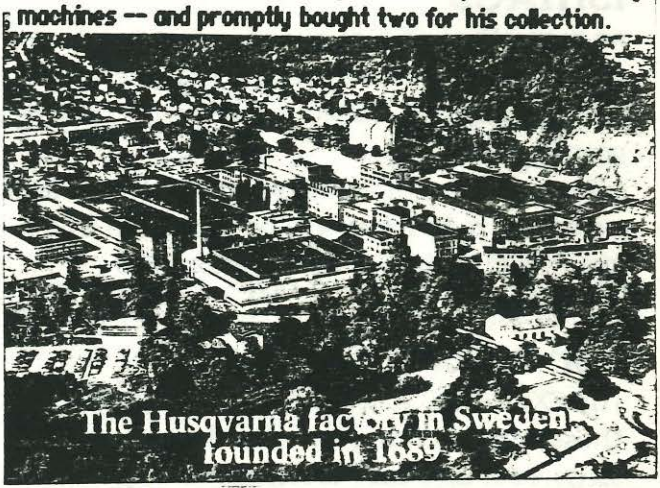
MAGGIE SNELL collects, buys, sells and exchanges early SMs. Large selection always available so send your 'wants list' or telephone her on 01 488 0474.

WANTED TOY SMs any age Please send photos

If I haven't got it I want it. Art Chodroff, 2805 Motor Avenue, Los Angeles, CA90064, USA.



Two advertising pictures from the Husquarna factory supplied by member Tore Nohr. One shows the company's first model from 1872 and the other the present factory which was founded in 1689. Tore, a Husqvarna dealer in Norway, recently visited England as a prize for selling machines -- and promptly bought two for his collection.



MEMBERS' private sales, wants and exchange advertisements are free, though all 'for sale' items must be priced. Collector/dealers and any member offering large quantities of machines will be asked to pay a modest fee of £1 per inch (minimum £1). Copyright of all articles submitted and used belongs to the SMCS unless previously assigned and the committee reserves the right to abridge, add to or alter in any other way any material submitted for publication.