

for Sewing Machine Collectors

Issue 6 1986
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Come On, Make Our Day

The Ironbridge AGM on May 11 (see overleaf) is the first for our society since the split from the joint SM and Typewriter group. The committee is very anxious that it should be a success and appeal to all members to bring machines to put on a good display and also to submit duplicates and other unwanted models for the auction sale.

The business meeting itself should not take long and members will then have a unique opportunity to examine some machines that they have only read about and also to quiz society experts and generally pick the brains of fellow enthusiasts and long-time collectors.

To cut down on travelling costs it may be possible for members to share transport. Anyone with spare space in their vehicle or wishing to hitch a ride should contact me at early as possible and we will see what we can do.

We have yet to discover just which manufacturers used Ironbridge area castings for their machines but Martin Gregory has already found that Willcox and Gibbs wheels and wheel supports were made locally.

VIELFACH GESCHÜTZT 3¼" Base 2½x1⅛

It's the Big One

AS OUR STOP-PRESS note revealed, the venue for the May 11 AGM will be at the Ironbridge Gorge Museum.

It will be difficult to find a more fitting site for the meeting as the Gorge has been described as the birthplace of the Industrial Revolution. In 1709 Abraham Darby first smelted iron ore with coke on a commercial basis to produce cast iron -- the basis of most sewing machines.

Our title picture shows the iron bridge itself, the first to be built, back in 1779, which is the focal point for a series of local museums, including a Museum of Iron where our AGM will take place.

The meeting proper begins at 12-00 noon, but those with machines for the auction should arrive at 11-30. Committee members are asked to arrive at 11-00am -- one hour after the museum's official opening time.

Follow signposts to the Museum of Iron and on entering the narrow gate to the carpark, park by the building on the right, the Long Warehouse. Ignore the public entrance via a winding ramp at the rear and, instead, use the twin glass doors in the centre of the building.

The good news is that we will be using the large, bright lecture room which has plenty of space for our needs and the museum authorities are also providing projection equipment and laying on tea-making facilities (though there are no other refreshments within this building). The bad news is that the room we are to use is not on the ground floor and I feel that treadle machines should be avoided by those who do not wish to act like removal men.

All members are asked to bring machines for display and also for the following competitions.

1. Machine I would most like to take home (previous entries in this class are banned).
2. The biggest disaster. Entries for this class can include virtually any machine which has suffered either the ravages of time or the misguided restoration of a previous owner.
3. There will also be GF's "feelie" competition with a machine hidden in a plastic bag with members invited to guess its manufacturer.

Thanks to the generosity of Pfaff, we're able to give a special glass wall plaque to every member entering a machine in the auction. The auction went well last year and we are hoping for a good collection of middle-to-high-class machines for this meeting.

Auction rules are similar to before. There will be no buyer's premium but sellers will contribute to club funds on the following scale: machines sold up to £20, a £1 fee; up to £50, a £2 fee; up to £75, a £3 fee; over £75 a £5 fee.

The business meeting proper will elect officers for the forthcoming year and nominations can now be made.

The day's programme will look something like this:

1. 12-00 noon ..... assembly
2. 12-30 ..... business meeting
3. 1-30 ..... auction
4. 2-15 ..... judging awards
5. 2-30 ..... slideshow

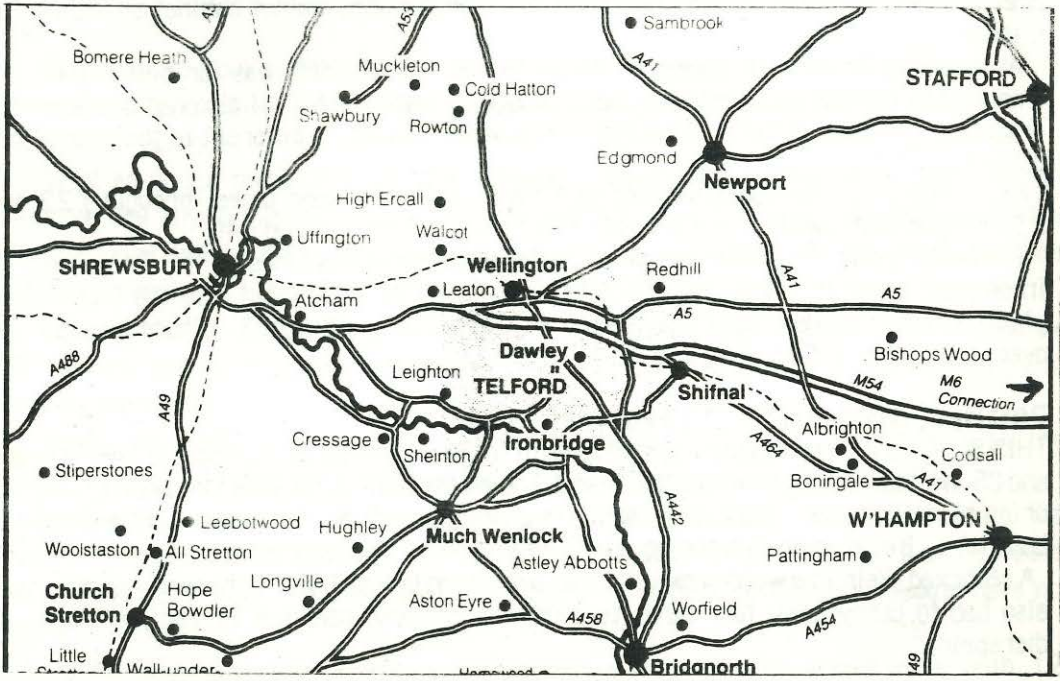
All the above times are very approximate, but we hope to give members sufficient time at the end of the day to visit the attractions of the Gorge's museums. Particularly interesting is the Blists Hill site with its 50 acres of gas-lit streets, shops, offices, etc giving a picture of a living community of the 1890s. Museum authorities suggest that a tour here would take just over two hours.

The entire Coalbrookdale complex houses six main museum sites and with the attractions closing at 6pm it will not be possible for members to visit all of them. For anyone wishing to make a weekend trip we have available a list of local hotels and guest houses with prices ranging from £6.50 to £39.50 per night.

If the local tourist board do their stuff you should also find enclosed a list of the museums and other attractions in the area.

There will be no charge for members and their guests visiting the AGM, but a charge will be levied by the authorities for those who wish to visit the actual museum sites.

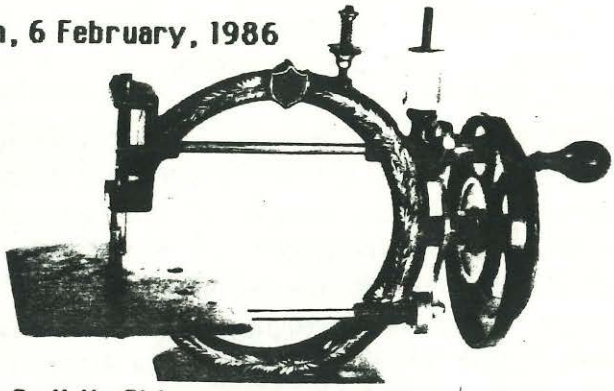
Ironbridge is near Telford in Shropshire and is easily reached by the M54 off the M6 and is about a two-and-a-half-hour drive from London. MS



Auction Reports

Christie's, South Kensington, 6 February, 1986

CHRISTIE'S HAD a nice little find in this better-than-average sale, though the machine's description in the catalogue was more impressive than its rather plain C7 appearance.



Bartlett: Picture courtesy G R Cooper.

The small mid - 1860s chain-stitch model made by Goodspeed and Wyman for the Barlett Co was covered in patent dates, including Joseph W Bartlett's own of Jan 31 and Oct 10, 1865 painted within the shield in the top centre of the near-circular frame.

The 1846 to 1860 dates stamped in the stitchplate related to those of Howe, Wheeler & Wilson, Grover & Baker and Singer patents via the SM Combination

Bartlett apparently sold several hundred machines before having to buy a licence and pay royalties, and these earlier models were undated. I can't help feeling that had the earlier machine turned up in Christie's it would probably have brought £120 less than the £170 realised.

But the highest price in the sale, at £420, went to a c8/9 Wheeler & Wilson 7 with pretty flower decorations and fine-condition, though plain, walnut cabinet enclosing the treadle.

A particularly-nice Princess of Wales, whose C8 condition was far better than the 'partial gilt transfer' suggested in the catalogue, brought £160. It also had gold-painted acorns on the base to match those cast in the wheel, which is different to the usual PoW pattern.

An ordinary German lockstitch and an Atlas B, both with cast bases, brought £22 and £30 respectively, whilst a well-used c7 Willcox and Gibbs fetched £40.

The booby prize should have gone to the lot with three machines in it. There was an incomplete boxed Moldacot that was not only missing its shuttle but also the front name plate; a rather nondescript C6 Jones and a C7 Wheeler & Wilson 8. Those brought the over-high price of £95 plus 15% VAT

MS

Phillips, Blenheim St, 12 February, 1986

THIS SALE was an anti-climax compared with the previous one, with a couple of grotty C4 and C5 Willcox and Gibbs which didn't sell. The nicest item in the £75 Moldacot lot was an original receipt dated 1887, showing the machine cost 10/6, the handle 4/6, and the tin box 1/-. But at sometime during its 99-year life the shuttle went missing.

A c8 boxed Weir in a wooden carying case was a good buy at £65. Only snag was that you also had to carry away four other turn-of-the century machines in various stages of disrepair.

MS

Ten-Times Better

WORKING, NO DOUBT, on the theory that if one needle works well then 10 will work so much better, R Tansley, the intrepid Victorian inventor, came out with his Robin Hood machine (now there's another man's name to add to the list) in 1872.

He proudly stated that his 10-needle, 10-bobbin machine was a double-thread lock stitch and that any needles could be inserted or left out to suit the particular job being done. He claimed that the prototype could make 2000 stiches in just one minute and more stitches in two minutes than any woman could make in a day.

Tansley announced his machine to the waiting world through the pages of the English Mechanic, asked if there were any similar models on the market, and sat back waiting for the orders to flood in.

Only, it didn't happen quite like that.

Hiding behind the initials GWKL, a subscriber, wrote to the magazine to inquire whether Mr Tansley had actually used the machine as well as having invented and made it. The question was also posed as to what good on earth it can be to have a SM with 10, or even two, needles set close together in a row.

I quote from GWKL. "It is self evident that the work must pass through the machine either at right angles to the row of needles or in line with said row. In the former case you will have 10 closely- packed lines -- to what purpose? -- and in the second alternative you will have but one line of sewing but done 10 times over; and a pretty mess it would be.

"The only way out of the puzzle that I can see, is to suppose that the feeder has a monsterous long stitch motion and makes the work jump through for the length of 10 stitches at each go.

"What an artful dodge! and not very pleasant, though, for the operator; and I cannot suppose that any woman would be induced to use such an alarming apparatus even by the temptation of making 2000 stitches a minute or, in two minutes more than could be made by hand in one day. (They were certainly heavy on scarcasam in 1872).

"I give up. Surely no fellah can understand it. The House calls vehemently on R Tansley to 'Explain, explain'. He has judiciously omitted to show any trace of the stitching and feeding machinery.

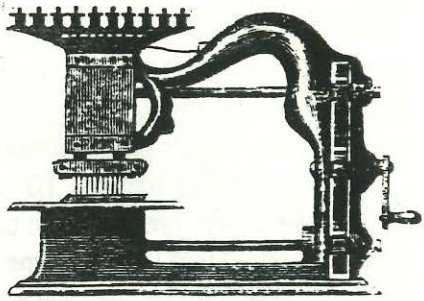
"Surely the whole thing is a 'goak' to which the inventor seeks to add piquancy by the naive inquiry as to whether there is an other such machine at work."

Tansley did not rush to his own defence but found a champion in HJS, who took the inventor's critic to task stating that GWKL obviously knew nothing about SMs or he would have realised that such a machine would be used for quilt making although it would have no use in the home.

HJS even offered to help Tansley and show him a machine that would work with 12

needles "any distance apart" if the Robin Hood's creator chose to contact him through the pages of the English Mechanic.

We have searched diligently but can find no trace of such a request in the subsequent months and can only assume that Tansley, so disheartened by GWKL's reaction, gave up on the SM and went on to perfect something else. GF



Too Down-Market?

SOTHEBY'S, one of the top three London auction houses, is giving the cold shoulder to sewing machines.

Reason is an up-market policy which translates into their not wanting anything in a sale which is likely to raise less than £200. This means that the occasional, very special machine will get past the front desk and into the saleroom to be sold in a auction devoted to, and dominated by, scientific instruments.

The lesser machines which previously appeared in the low-profile "fast sales" (now replaced with "decorative sales") will be relegated to provincial salerooms in Chester and Billingshurst.

Even then, Sotheby's are unlikely to look kindly on machines expected to reach less than £100.

"It's simply company policy," explained spokesman Hillary Kay. "But we still expect to get some fine machines."

At Christie's, director Christopher Proudfoot said that his company will still welcome sewing machines as before. "We do get a little fed up with the endless row of Willcox and Gibbs machines but believe that we have proved that they help bring in the really valuable items.

Phillips, too, have no plans to change their system. "We're not elitist", insisted specialist Hugo Marsh. "We've a wide-ranging policy here and will welcome all machines, within reason."

Editor's note: I'm sorry to see that Sotheby's has made this decision, but relieved that the other two big houses can see the potential in fostering the sewing machine market. Of late Sothebys have not had their share of the good machines but if, as seems likely, prices continue to rocket, it may not be long before they reconsider the decision.

Hillary tells me that any queries over catalogue subscriptions should be addressed to the Subscription Department at New Bond Street, London W1. MS

Burton Bonanza

THERE WERE no new faces at the latest collectors' meeting at the Burton-on-Trent home of Bernard and Sheila Williams. But we saw some amazing machines, including several that no-one had heard of, never mind seen before.

Richard and Hillary Stephenson, who are expecting their first baby in the summer, brought their latest find -- a Dr Livingstone. His name and bust together with the name W J Schlesinger were stamped on a pressed-brass plaque attached to the needle head of the machine.

It looked like a previously-unknown Royal model -- perhaps a little elongated, but certainly owing more to the Birmingham company than anyone else. Close inspection by CH and GF revealed the truth. It appears the machine isn't a Royal but a pirate manufacturer's idea of a Royal.

The casting is nowhere near the usual Royal standard and the repeated No.27 on many of the machined parts suggests a short run of perhaps 50 or 100 machines. Without the benefits of heavy-duty precision-jigged machinery the parts would have been hand-machined and individually fitted -- thus the numbers to allow parts to be identified.

What really gives the game away is the machine frame behind the drive wheel. After the frame was stove-enamelled and fitted with the machined parts it was obviously found that there was insufficient clearance behind the wheel. Our pirate's simple solution to this was to put the machine up on a mill and remove the odd 1/8 inch. What's more, he didn't send it back for repainting but wiped an oily rag over the bright metal and hoped for the best. I can't see Royal trying that.

It was a lovely machine in c8/9 -- the maker obviously finding a better method of attaching the paint than Royal ever managed. If any member has any advertising or information relating to a Dr Livingstone machine we'd like to hear more.

Harrogate Pfaff mechanic, John Horton, brought a rocking-arm lock-stitch model which had obviously seen better days as the rather large stitch-plate was broken in two, and the feed mechanism was missing, but no one recognised it.

It was a simple matter to look up the October 5, 1875 patent date in the abridged patents when I got home. Not only did I find the specification under the name of a W Hillman, but a drawing of the identical model which is reproduced here. Another unknown model pigionholed.

Carol Head brought some material for the magazine, including advertisements of machines that don't seem to have survived. While we were looking through them, Leonard Hemmings wandered up and asked if anyone had heard of the Birmingham-based Two-Reel Lock-Stitch SM Company Limited, as he'd just bought such a model in a local auction. Carol was able to show him a two-page advertisement, with her note "Do any of our members own such an (1896) machine"?

(Editor's Note: This machine figures in two illustrations in member Frank Godfrey's book An International History of the SM -- available from Frank at a discounted price of £17.50 plus postage. The illustration shows a novel form of belt drive and it will be interesting to see whether the Hemming's version has the same feature.)

As it looks like a turn-of-the-century Singer, Leonard and Vera didn't think it was interesting enough to bring to the meeting. In fact they were lucky to notice it in a local auction, as it was buried among a large batch of ordinary-looking Singers and it was only the unusual Two-Reel Lock-Stitch name that made them look further. However, as the advert-isement shows, it operates on a two-bobbin system a la Grover and Baker, and we've persuaded them to bring it to Ironbridge in May so we can check it out.

But they did bring another new acquisition, a Raymond, whose machine-head, looking like a narrower Vesta-ish Singer, sat on a Household-like circular cloth plate, the whole being set into a separate matching-shaped base.

Bernard brought out his Household to check any similarities and indeed both the thread-tensioning system and bobbin winder mechanism were the same.

What made it very different was its transverse shuttle operation. GF soon had the cast-iron base off the machine to reveal a vertical counter-balanced shaft driven by a bevel gear from the wheel which operated a connecting rod to the shuttle.

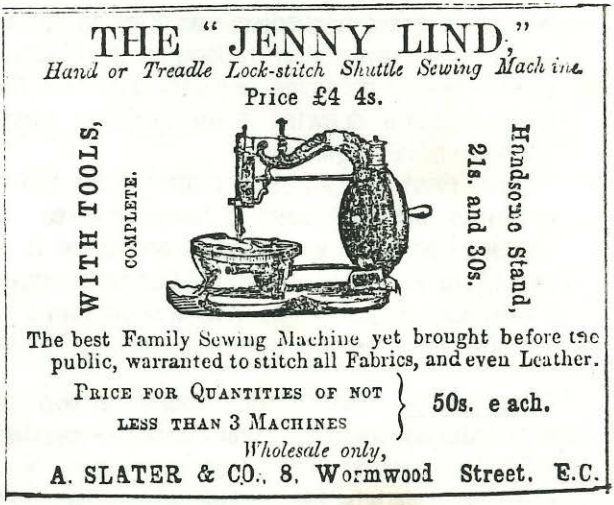
Another machine we were able to compare against models in Bernard's vast collection was Hillary and Richard's hand-operated American Buttonhole which had an H-section-frame, plain flat wheel and different feet to Bernard's oval-section machine and open wheel. They also brought an excellent-condition Improved Home Shuttle with 1850 to 1865 patent dates. It included a G W Bacon & Co name on the stitch-plate, with a 127 Strand, London address. This was the company that also sold the American Beckwith in England.

My own contribution was a model called a Jenny Lind. Not, I hasten to add, a No.1 Singer (which, despite pre-release advertisements, never actually carried the Swedish Nightingale's name) but an 1870 machine. This was accurately dated by way of the registration-diamond painted on the machine head as 10 March 1870, metal class 1, and patented Jan 11, 1870 under the name of W Campion (who may or may not have been the inventor, as patents are often filed through an agent). Of the two other Jenny Lind



Left: An 1850s daguerrreotype photograph of Jenny Lind - courtesy Sotheby's.

Right: A Jan 1871 Ironmonger magazine advertisement courtesy Museum of Rural Life, Reading.



THE "JENNY LIND,"

Hand or Treadle Lock-stitch Shuttle Sewing Machine.

Price £4 4s.

WITH TOOLS, COMPLETE.

Handsome Stand, 21s. and 30s.

The best Family Sewing Machine yet brought before the public, warranted to stitch all Fabrics, and even Leather.

PRICE FOR QUANTITIES OF NOT LESS THAN 3 MACHINES } 50s. each.

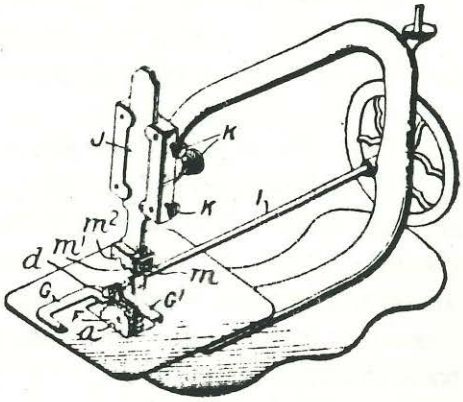
Wholesale only,

A. SLATER & CO., 8, Wormwood Street, E.C.

machines I've seen, one, a re-painted version, is in Holland and the other was missing much of its mechanism.

My other machine was American. a miniature cast-iron treadle, called a Gem, beautifully-painted with flower decorations and which is only about seven-inches high.

Bernard's wife sheila is one of the most unflappable people I know. As well as making copious quantities of sandwiches and tea, entertaining her son, daughter-in-law and very young grandson on a visit from London, discussing plans for a double wedding with her two daughters, she also helped Bernard carry numerous machines down from their usual home in the loft, including several of the Royal derivatives detailed in our last supplement.



Haberling running-stitch machine

Bernard particularly wanted to continue the discussion on whether Harris actually manufactured machines or just bought them in, but his visitors were much more interested in examining novel machines they hadn't seen before -- and soon tackled the north-face- of-the-Eiger step ladders to the loft to view more of them.

We managed this in two shifts. In addition to a world-class collection of typewriters, there are rows and rows of SMs on shelves round the walls -- four different Thomas's, two Arm and Platforms, four Greshams, two different Hopkinsons and several versions of the New England and Weir.

There's also a Guelf from Canada, and an immaculate, rare, black-painted Beckwith, complete with its clamp and ring; a pub-table Brittannia, a Wilson with a front-facing wheel, a monopod Wanzer, and a rare Elliptic. Common turn-of-the-century German machines rub shoulders with three different Grover and Bakers, several Howes, a Hurtu, and about 40 tin, cast-iron and nickel-plated toys and miniatures.

Latest acquisitions include, of course, the La Populaire mentioned in News 5, and another French machine, an un-named miniature rocking-arm model set into an exquisite tripod treadle. There was also a cast-iron Nuremburg Lady in a red-painted dress

Another unusual machine that took ages to arrive was a running-stitch model called a Haberling. It was bought from a man on the Scottish borders who didn't own a telephone or a camera, and all negotiations were carried out by post. I was able to help here by providing patent details from December 1878, so at least Bernard had an idea of what the machine was supposed to look like. Graham Forsdyke and Richard Stephenson had great fun trying to work out how it was supposed to stitch.

Other welcome guests were Jack and Anita Malloney from Manchester who brought some Singer postcards for us to look at, and modern dealers Allan Sheen and Brian Tilston from Cheshire. Of course, old friends Diana and Peter Herbert made their customery appearance from Bristol, and a couple of members also brought non-collecting friends as well.

Copy Cats

PLAGIARISM TAKES many forms, but in the sewing-machine business of the 1860s it was the art of letting someone else do all the designing, development work, and advertising and then, when the product is rated a winner, boldly stepping in and copying it.

If you've ever wondered why so many names of makers appear in advertisements and yet their machines never seem to turn up, here's the answer -- the machines never really existed. They were blatent copies of well-known brands sold at cut prices.

Nor was this an undercover operation. Not only did the "makers" advertise their "Singer-types", these factories were openly supplied by companies riding a bandwagon of supplying counterfeit parts -- not just some parts -- all of them.

Take, for example, the firm of Gibson Bros who operated out of Hebden Bridge, Manchester, in 1866. They offered to provide, to what they called "makers of Wheeler and Wilson sewing machines" a complete sets of iron castings.

This complete set comprised stand,crank and pulleys with the machine parts ready planed and bored to save too much hard work. All this, with a hook thrown in, came to just £2. And that included post and packing.

With Wheeler and Wilson selling its cheapest model at four times that price, it must certainly have hit its business.

And the Gibson operation was no fly-by-night hype. It was still in business a decade later when, in an advertisement squeezed between copy extolling the virtues of Captain Doty's Patent Petroleum Light and another proclaiming the assets of Hodkinson and Clarke's Revolving Shutters for Mansions, we find that now the operation has been enlarged to cover the more-popular Singer-Family machine. On offer was a complete set of castings and all necessary fittings, including the smallest screw, for £2-2s -- there was no inflation then.

And don't make the mistake of believing that Messrs Gibson was simply putting together a DIY kit for the home mechanic. He was after big game and offered quantity discounts for a dozen of more sets. He'd even put it together for you if that was too much trouble. All the customer had to do was put a name on it.

Nor was the enterprising Mr Gibson the only one in on the racket. J Wood, who had his offices in Finsbury Place, London EC, also favoured the Wheeler and Wilson for his look-alikes. He sold a complete kit of parts, ready to put together -- just like a Mecano set. Unlike Gibson, Wood sold to the trade only.

Others advertised kits for Howe machines. I guess if the machine was popular enough someone was ready to copy it. This may explain those strange advertisements where a J Bloggs proudly stated that he was a manufacturer of Wheeler & Wilson and other machines.

So next time you find an old SM that looks almost, but not quite, like it should, could be it was cast by Gibson, machined by Wood, assembled by Bloggs junior when he got home from school and painted by his mother as a rest from her embroidery. GF

Telling It How It Is

BACK IN GOOD Queen Victoria's time, when England was the wealthiest and most-powerful nation in the world, there was held a series of exhibitions to provide spectacular showcases for home-based trade and industry.

Victoria's consort Albert, fired with enthusiasm after seeing the Paris Exposition of 1849, decided to put the French effort to shame. The result was the 1851 Crystal Palace Exhibition.

Where Albert scored a first was in not limiting the show to British goods. First he planned to open it up to the Colonies and then, after deciding to invite the French to show them what an exhibition should be like, he went all the way and declared it would be to show "the works of all nations".

Such was the success of the enterprise it was decided to repeat it 11 years later, with the Great Exhibition of 1862.

At the Crystal Palace in '51 there were but two or three crude SMs exhibited, but by 1862 nearly 50 different models were offered by 20 exhibitors. And these manufacturers had to be fairly confident of their products for the shows were competitions with medals awarded to the best entrants and "honourable mentions" given to those who didn't quite make it.

What's more these medals were awarded by a team of experts before the show opened to the public allowing winning exhibitors to show their success. Bad news for those that didn't rate at least a mention.

Even after the show the judgements were not complete for there was published The Record of the Great Exhibition 1862 in the Practical Mechanics Journal, which pulled no punches on what it thought of the entrants and, in some cases, its views on the judges' decisions.

Man chosen to review the SM exhibits was one E P Alexander who was allowed some eight and a half pages for his summary.

He started off blandly enough by dealing with the then short history of the SM, awarding the palm to America for the invention and subsequent rapid development of this "latest and grandest achievement of mechanical science".

At the time of his writing, EPA estimated that 20,000 machines were in use in Great Britain and Ireland "employing as many women to work them at wages from eight to 12 shillings per week".

He didn't deal with all the machines exhibited, dismissing several as "worthless specimens". Even those that made it into print were not given the kid-glove treatment.

The remote colony of Prince Edward's Island sent a machine made by Messrs Duchemin and Hildreth of Charlottown. Quite a splendid effort you might think, but EPA dismisses it

as a species of Grover and Baker "containing nothing worthy of special remark". What's more he decided the workmanship was "by no means of a high class".

From even further afield came the J A Kay machine from Melbourne, Australia -- a very imperfect and badly-constructed machine. Our scribe adds that he would have ignored it altogether except for the fact that the judges had given it an honourable mention.

EPA was impressed with the products of Singer, Wheeler and Wilson and Willcox and Gibbs and felt that the last should have had a medal rather than simply a mention.

One of the few small-time American producers to make the effort was D Celles -- and he probably wished he hadn't bothered for EPA declared his machine to be two years old and "not of any great practical utility".

Belgium, Prussia and Austria fared even worse. Le Roy of Brussells had an "indifferent machine and others, copies of American designs and about the worst specimens of workmanship it has ever been our lot to examine".

Bocke of Berlin produced a series of "barefaced copies without even good work to recommend them" and the Viennese manufacturer Warchalowski had machines of a "ricketty nature".

A certain amount of intrigue surrounded the three machines shown by a Mr Schroder of the Grand Duchy of Hesse. One of the models had a placard attached to it to the effect that it had won a medal. Our dauntless investigator checked it out and found that Mr S had indeed got himself a medal -- but in a separate class for school apparatus.

If EPA was hard on the entrants, he was just as ready to condemn the judges: "We must record our unqualified disapprobation in the manner in which the duties of the jury had been performed .... the few really well-meritted awards are rendered worthless by their association with the larger proportion given without being earned".

With his Union Jack unfurled our jingoist gets into second gear stating that the British exhibits were unfairly left out in the cold. "Compare the British machines (one honourable mention between them) with the favoured foreign rivals -- all of which have been honoured -- and the glaring injustice comes out in bolder relief."

A little more investigative journalism from EPA reveals some interesting background. The judging panel for SMs consisted of seven members, four foreign and three English -- the president also being a foreigner. Two of the English trio went sick on the day, the judging leaving 4 to 1 odds against a home win. "We have also heard complaints on all sides of careless and hurried judging -- some machines entirely passed over."

EPA -- God bless him, I do like a man who shoots from the hip -- sums up thus: "We can arrive at no other conclusion than that the existance of either carelessness, ignorance or prejudice only can account for the extra-ordinary decisions of the jury of SMs in the International Exhibition of 1862."

Now that's telling them!

GF

Arthur Clegg & Co



Clegg patented this Willcox & Gibbs look-alike in 1870 replacing the looper with a hook and spool for lock-stitching.

Arthur Clegg, one of the small manufacturers of the 1860s who didn't quite make the big time, was born in London in 1840. In 1853 he became an apprentice mechanic at a marine-engine works in the Isle of Dogs. When he had completed his apprenticeship he worked for a year or so as a "journeman", and then as a mechanic at the Wheeler & Wilson Mfg Co at the Regent Streeet headquarters.

Two years later he went into partnership with Mr Blacklock at Finsbury Pavement EC.

The firm rented out SMs, including Wheeler & Wilson's, charging four or five shillings per week. It was a very profitable business.

Clegg invented and patented a SM in 1867 which resembled a Wheeler & Wilson No.1 and was designed for the mantle, short and umbrella trades.

Blacklock retired and Clegg continued to manufacture SMs at the rate of 1,000 per year, charging £6. 10s for machine and stand. He then opened a factory in Fore Street, EC.

Competition became very keen and the business did not flourish. The Clegg machine ceased to be manufactured in 1890, the company having made about 8,000 machines which were mostly used in factories.

Clegg then confined himself to cycle and SM repairs. He died in November, 1896, aged 56. CH



Fortress Leicester

SITTING AS I AM almost within the shadow of Fortress Wapping where, at the moment of writing, Rupert Murdoch is battling the unions in an effort to print and distribute his newspapers, it should have come as no surprise to hear that new technology was just as

strenuously resisted in the 1850s as it is today.

When sewing machines were first introduced into the rag and boot trades in England there was a widely-spread prejudice on the part of the general public against goods procuced by the new-fangled methods. Somehow the story had got around that machine-made clothes and footwear were inferior.

This led to many machine-made artices being labelled and sold as "hand made" and also restricted the use of the sewing machine to the lower end of the market so that, in fact, the advantages of improved workmanship and better-finished goods were enjoyed by the poorer classes.

The very first area to enjoy the new technology in the footwear business was Leicester, closely followed by Kendal, Leeds and Norwich. The bosses of the main boot-and-shoe-producing areas located in Northampton and Stafford eventually saw the writing on the wall and decided, depite the risk of offending their vast workforce, to introduce the new machines lest they lose their grip on the market

Alarm and disquiet quickly spread among the workers who called a mass open-air meeting. Here a large number of employees heard from the leaders of the unrest that many would be thrown out of work and most of the others would be unemployed when the public turned to the hand-made manufacturers.

Other meetings followed and the mood of the workers so worried most manufacturers that all but two or three in Northampton cancelled their orders for machines.

The agitation went on for several months with meetings being held in towns and villages all over Notts. Representatives of the workers were sent to Stafford to ensure that the workforce there was equally millitant.

In April 1858 the matter came to a head with the formation of the Mutual Protection Society for the purpose of "preventing the introduction of machinery into the trade and to protect, raise and equalise wages as far as possible". Most Northamptonshire workers joined up and formed branches throughout the country.

Faced with ruin, the manufacturers in Northampton and Stafford got together in February 1859 and issued a formal notice stating that, as machines were being used extensively in other areas, trade would suffer unless some were brought into the local factories. The compromise was that machines would be used only to make the "uppers". Furthermore, in an attempt to beat any strike plan, they anounced that, in the event of a walkout, no Northampton workers would be employed at Stafford.

Reaction to this notice was a strike call but the result was a dismal failure.
Only 15 workers walked out, leaving the Northampton area in search of jobs elsewhere. However, according to a report of the Social Science Association Committee on Trade Societies published in 1860, they had little luck and on returning home to try to take up their old positions they found them already filled by new workers.

It was claimed at the time that the strikers' case was considerably weakened by the fact

that, although they refused to work boot-sewing machines, they were quite happy for their wives, sisters and children to do so in the rag trade.

Within months machinery had virtually taken over the whole of the boot and shoe trade but, interestingly, some of the larger companies did lose quite a bit of their business. Many of the former hand sewers quickly saw the advantages of the machines and left to set up their own small companies, often using the home as a factory and the family as the workforce.

In 1851, before the machine age, there were 1375 shoemakers in Leicester. Ten years later there were 2315 which rose to a staggering 5103 within the next decade,

It was believed at the time that had Northampton taken to the machine earlier, it could have dominated the footwear trade as Lancashire did with cotton, rather than let the industry spread all over the country. GF

No Toy, This Baby

MORE FUEL is added to the "is it a toy" saga by CH who has turned up this advertisement of a Frieda minature sewing machine.

As you can see, the machine is prominently shown as a fully-working, portable model which can easily be used by children.

I have never come across the Frieda but do own two other versions of this 7-in wide, 5-in high machine, one called the Flora and the other, Dr Houg's Baby.

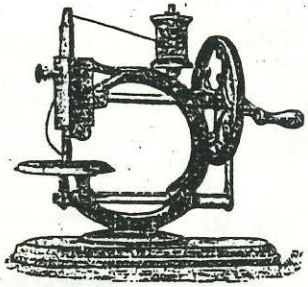
Although the casting of the frame is similar, the Flora has a disc wheel with a built-in cam for the con rod to the lower shaft, whilst the Baby has a spoked wheel with the arc-shaped, slotted con rod running on the handle shaft.

The only other basic difference between the two machines is the tensioning device which on the Flora is mounted on the top of a needle-guide plate a la Weir, whilst on the Baby it is on the needle-head cover as the Frieda.

In fact, the Frieda appears identical to the Baby, although Dr Houg provided a pretty black and gold screen-printed box whilst the Frieda was advertised with a wooden version. MS

THE "FRIEDA" 10s. 6d. SEWING MACHINE

Works just as well as any larger sized sewing machine



of its kind, but is ever so much cheaper and costs only

Top People's Store

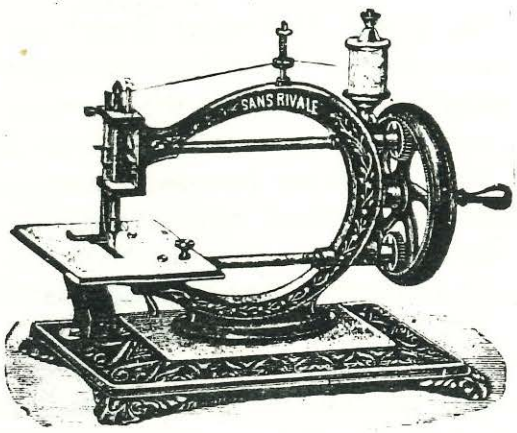
FOR SOME TIME I've had an un-named oval-framed machine which in all other respects resembled a slightly wider Ghul & Harbeck Original Express, including what little gold paintwork remained.

Thanks to an illustration in an 1895 Harrods' catalogue the mystery has been solved. The model described as an 'Express; large-size chain-stitch' was revealed as a Sans Rivale. (My minimal French makes this 'Without Rival'). It cost 16-0d plus 6-6d for a polished case. The more commonly - available 'Express chain-stitch machine with accessories' was also offered for the same money.

Other machines offered in the same catalogue included two Willcox and Gibbs, one with the early deep base and glass-tensioner system for £1-12-0d. What was then the latest model -- now the most common -- with the removable cotton holder cost £2-12-6d. Polished boxes were offered for 7-6d and stands and tables for £1-2-6d. Neither machines were marked Willcox & Gibbs, but carried a pretty gold-filigree design across the arm.

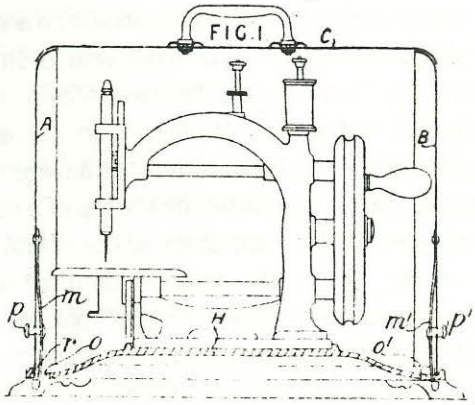
Bradbury's Wellington hand machine, however, was sold through Harrods under its own name for £2. Boxes and treadles were sold as extras, 7-0d for a stained box and 16-6d for a polished walnut box for the hand models, and £1-5-0d for a stand and table.

Other models supplied by Harrods included Singer - style Frister and Rossman hand machines with 'elegant'



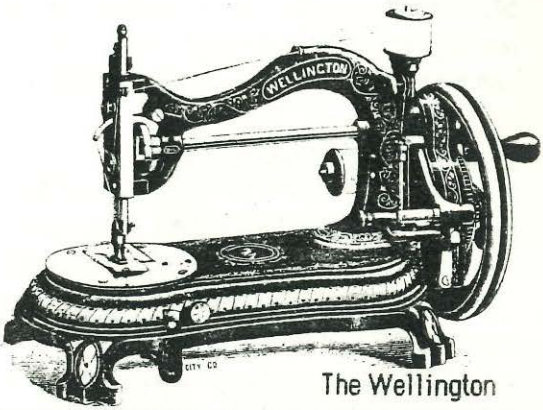
Above: One of Harrods' less-expensive machines, the Sans Rivale.
Below: Ghul and Harbeck patented the tin cover, shown here with the Original Express, in 1881.

2366. Engel, F. H. F., [*Guhl & Harbeck*]. May 30.



Sewing-machine covers are each formed of a sheet-iron saddle-shaped middle piece C, and two sheet-iron end plates A, B flanged, as shown, and connected by soldering. The cover is furnished at its lower edge with a strengthening-bead, which fits within a rim *r* formed on the plate H. The cover is fastened to the plate H by spring hooks *m*, *m*^{1}, which catch into openings *o*, *o*^{1}. These spring catches are released by pressing inwards the buttons *p*, *p*^{1}. For treadle machines, sheet-metal plates having openings *o*, *o*^{1} for the catches *m*, *m*^{1}, are fixed to the table.

inlaid walnut cover and attachments for £2-16-6d, a choice of hand-with-treadle models, some with drawers, up to £4-16-6d. What they called a 'Stores Special', looking very similar but with a different box cover, sold at £2-10-0d with an extra £1 for the again-different but not dissimilar treadle.



The Wellington

It follows, then, that not all machines were originally with boxes and it was possible to supply a treadle separately to fit onto the hand model. Also machines sold through shops or mail-order companies often lost their manufacturer's label or became a badge-engineered 'special' to suit the seller's purpose.

Several versions of a 'vertical-feed' flatbed machine were offered from £3-12-0d for a hand model, increasing in price as treadles and drawers were added to £9-12-0d for an ornate-cabinet version with dropleaf, drawers and cupboard in American walnut.

An interesting comparison is that the American Davis SM Co were displaying 'vertical-feed' models at the 1876 Centenial Exhibition from $60 for the simplest treadle version to $90 for the multi-drawer effort. I don't know what the exchange rates were in those days but it seems prices had dropped dramatically in 20 years.

*** Ghul and Harbeck's Original Express model seems to have had a long manufacturing run. I found the patent drawing for the tin cover (see page 23) in the May 30 1881 abridgement. It was still going strong in the Harrods catalogue of 1895. No wonder there are so many of them around, despite the fact they rarely survive in good condition.

MS

We get Letters

From Frank Godfrey, Surrey:

I'm not a collector of machines but nevertheless, I am interested and am pleased to join the Society.

I've just completed another book, not on SMs this time but on London's Thames Bridges.

Although my book 'An International History of the SM' had only 1,000 copies published, some of them have turned up in the most unlikely places and additional information has been forthcoming, which I will be happy to pass on.

From B & S W, London:

The magazine is first rate but we must confess that when we read some of the articles we

blush and turn Little Betty's face to the wall. We do have one or two little face savers ourselves, but definitely not in the class of La Populaire.

An alternative to ISMACS would be ISMA -- International SM Association.

From Derek Tucker, Essex:

It would appear from the enquiry list that I do not have much to Singer about -- ugh. Evidently, I've been collecting either some very rare and hitherto-unheard-of types, or they are so modern that I have not noticed through my blinkers.

There are some 30 or so machines in my collection with the Herculean Singer 29K on its own treadle, a Bradbury's Family, a Wanzer B and a very tiny Singer made in America yet complete in its own French box. There is a heap of pretty ones like Champion of England but minus Todd -- I suppose they fell out by then. A Vesta and many ordinary machines with names ending a share space with a good crop of Singers in various guises.

I think I'm wiser somewhat for having joined the Society -- I can see the magazine developing into a glossy.

From MC, Manchester:

Could we please have a glossary of SM terms. This could be of interest to new collectors and even some of the older ones.

Editor's Note: Would any member like to volunteer to produce a glossary of terms?

From Tony Hales, Denmark

Further to why people collect: my criteria is, it doesn't matter what it looks like but it has to sew a seam as good, if not better, than the day it left the factory. Also it must not cost more than £5.

You see I collect "throw-outs" -- that is, SMs that under the GF scale would be minus five. As one scrap merchant described one of my most prized pieces: "it ain't turned in the last 50 years, mate, we use it to hold the coal shed door shut in windy weather".

The joy I get out of old SMs, stationery engines, etc is pitting my wits and mechanical skill against age, rust and misshandling.

I enjoy very much reading your magazine, especially the background articles.

*** Graham Forsdyke, Editor for three years of Shuttle & Ribbon, the magazine of the joint SM and Typewriter Society, and for the past year of Typewriter Times, is getting more interested in SMs. He has provided a lot of material for this issue, and his is the GF signature you will see scattered liberally throughout the magazine. MS

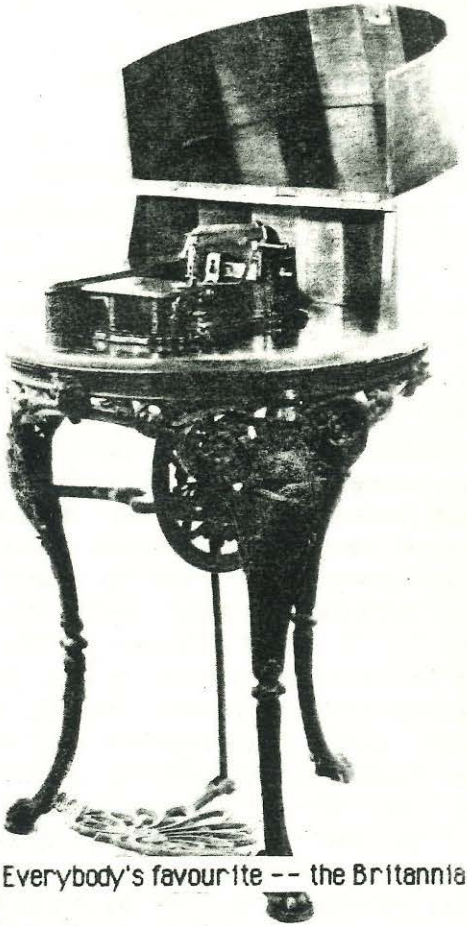
Favourites

I'M NO STATISTICIAN, but the replies to the readership questionaire made fascinating reading. With a membership made up from experienced and novice collectors, from modern dealers and museums and auction houses, it's not surprising that there was a great variation in what enthusiasts considered the most-desirable machines.

Those rating almost universally on top of the desirability table were the Anchor, Beckwith table model, Alberta, Britannia three-legged and Davenport, the Cupid and Foliage and Nuremburg Lady figurals and any Starley machine.

The above were to be expected, but such machines as the Judkins, Monitor and Moldacot also scored maximums.

Generally, the Grover and Baker machines did less well than would have been expected, except for the portable which, although the least attractive, scored highest



Everybody's favourite -- the Britannia

Understandably the more common machines did not generally rate too highly in the desirability stakes. However, novice collectors still considered such models as Weir and Wheeler & Wilson 7 high on their lists.

With the commendable attitude of a historian, Martin Gregory decided to split his desirability chart and give marks for decoration and rarity on the one hand, and a further score for the importance to the history of the SM on the other.

This way such machines as the Willcox & Gibbs, Wheeler & Wilson, Raymond, New England and Grover & Baker scored maximum marks for their historical importance, whereas such rare machines as Cookson, Dorman, So-all and Hurtu rated only 2 for importance and the pretty Tabitha only just entered the lists with 1.

Whilst scarcely acknowledging the impact to the industry of Smith & Starley, Anchor and Alberta machines, Gregory gives them all full marks for desirability. GF

In at the Beginning /Part 3/ Continued from SMCS News No. 4

One of the points to bring about the success of the sales mentioned was that I altered the foot on the vibrating presser to overcome the difficulty experienced in the machines with a vibrating presser foot as shipped by the factory, the foot being shaped in such a manner that if there was any dampness or oil on the goods, the presser foot on the vibrator would slip and break the needles and was not at all practical.

As the success of the alterations named was so complete, I concluded to alter the only other machine then in use in a carriage shop in New Haven using a stationary presser foot, nor were they able to sew any other thread than silk, it was practically abandoned. I fitted this machine with an improved vibrating presser and presser foot and sold them the needles to enable them to sew other threads than silk. They were very much pleased, and it caused them to use their influence to assist me in further sales. This, of course, brought an increase of business to the New Haven office.

On one of my visits to New York, I had a talk with Mr Singer and was telling him what success this Leavitt machine had in New Haven and all the New England states. I told him that they liked the set of the stitch so much better and accounted for it by the machine having the transverse shuttle. Singer said that it was all poppycock, and that there was nothing in that at all, so I went back to New Haven and altered an old No 1 machine to find out whether Singer or I was wrong.

I put two bevel gears into the old No.1 machine and a drop feed, a temporary arrangement, and found it gave us exactly the same stitch that was got with the Nichols & Leavitt, so some time after that, while in New York, I met Tom Jones, who was in the experimenting room and told him I had made a rough experiment and found that we did get the bird's-eye stitch with this old No.1 machine that I had altered to a transverse shuttle. Mr Jones requested me to make this statement to Mr Singer, but I told Mr Jones it would not be safe for me to make any suggestions to Singer, that my former experience forbid it.

So in six months after that, I got a letter from the company telling me that they sent out agents to sell machines, not to experiment, and they wanted to know why I altered a vibrating presser machine to a stationary presser, without their knowledge and consent. I wrote that I had not made any such change as that, that there was a company in Hartford who had sent their machines to New York that had a vibrating presser and they wanted it changed because they could not

do anything with the vibrating presser for reasons previously stated.

I told them that they were wrong, that the only machine that was altered was the Smith & Bowen machine, sent by them to New York from Hartford, and the company took off the vibrating presser and put on a stationary presser, that I had told Mr Brown of Smith & Bowen it was a mistake, that they should have kept the vibrating presser, and that if they would sendthe machine to New Haven, I would put on a vibrating presser, and guarantee that they would have no further trouble as formerly, so that they could not only do straight work, but all kinds of fancy stitching on saddles, which would save them considerable work, as all the saddles had to be stuffed by hand after being stitched, whereas they could sew these fancy figures with the aid of the vibrating presser in one operation.

As a consequence, I sold that house a half-dozen machines and they used all their influence in the town of Hartford to make sales for me; I had their entire confidence. So the company, when I wrote them this, wrote in reply that they had made a mistake, that it was -- why did I alter a wheel-feed machine to a drop-head machine? I told them that I had done nothing of the kind, except an old No.1 machine, on which I had put in a transverse shuttle, bevel gears and a drop feed, which was only temporary, simply for the purpose of finding out what caused one machine to make the bird's-eye stitch and the other the twisted stitch, and so that they could see what I had done, I sent them the machine by that day's express. In a year or two after that, Tom Jones turned out what was known as the 'Letter A transverse shuttle Family Sewing Machine', which was sold for a number of years.

(Sometime later the Wilson SM Company brought suit against the Singer Company for infringing some patents they had on a transverse shuttle machine. Mr Clark wrote me at Chicago, asking if I could give him any evidence that would help them in the case; Then I called their attention to the correspondence between them and me in regard to altering an old No.1 machine, which I had running with a transverse shuttle and four-motion feed, and told him that that machine was sent to New York and they would probably find it on the shelves in the factory.

They could find nothing of it and he wrote me again, asking if I could do anything further. I told him all I could remember was the machinist in New Haven who did the work for me, and whose name was Bigelow; I presumed that Mr Bradley, who was agent then at the New Haven office, could find this man, and he would probably give evidence that would be of some service. I learned afterwards that they found this man Bigelow, and he gave them the evidence they wanted.

This was a good opportunity for me to show Mr Clark where Tom Jones got his ideas from to make the Letter A machine with the bevel gears and drop feed.

So, with the improvements of the No.3 machine and applied to the No.2 machine for stitching harness work, we got up a very good trade in leather, and I presume that we sold more No.3 machines than all the rest of the other agencies combined. This was about 1858 or 1859.

The business was so good that I had to hire a machinist, and I found one in John F Elliot, who took hold of the business very satisfactorily, allowing me to travel and do more work at Hartford. I opened an office there and placed Mr Elliott in charge. This was all done without the knowledge of the company.

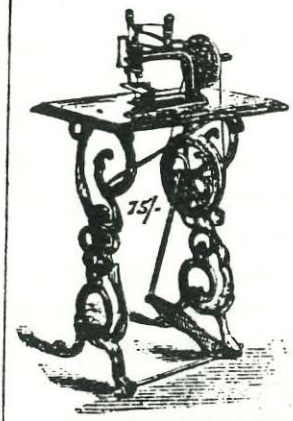
Mr Elliott, after having been there for a short time, got three sales away from a suburban agent who was dealing direct with New York. I heard of it and thought there would be trouble to pay, so went right to New York and saw Mr Milford, who was chief clerk, and told him I had opened an office in Hartford, that the office was doing very well, that there was a man by the name of Elliott, who could handle it very nicely, and that I cam down prepared to turn it over. Mr Milford said, 'Go right along, Bolton, you are doing so well we don't want to make any change.'

So, when we did so well at Hartford, I went to Springfield, Mass, and found there was no Singer agent there, so I appointed wholesale manufacturers of clothing, Tillie, Haines & Co, who sold a number of machines. It was impressive at this time that the New Haven office was doing a much larger business than the Boston office.

After Elliott went to Hartford, I had to find a man to take his place, and he recommended George B Woodruff, whom I employed. Mr Woodruff was there for some little time, and while he was with me, Mr Dean came on from New York with a letter of introduction to me from the company. He stated that the company told him that New Haven was the best place for him to get posted on leather work, so I introduced him to Mr Woodruff, and told him to take Mr Dean around and show him what had been done in the carriage and harness trade, and to give him any information that would be of benefit to him.

After he had gone around with Mr Woodruff, he was surprised to see the amount of trade that we had in the carriage and harness shops, and he wanted to know what I was paying Mr Woodruff. I told him I was paying him $12 a week. 'Why', he said, 'I would be willing to pay $25'. I said, 'If you will pay him $25 a week, you are very likely to get him if you make him that offer.' So he made an arrangement with Mr Woodruff to go to St Louis and paid him $25 a week. I was getting but $15 in New Haven as the agent.

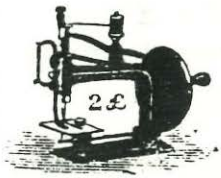
Where are They Now?



THE WORKING MAN'S SEWING MACHINE.

Honourable mention awarded at the

WEST LONDON INDUSTRIAL EXHIBITION.



One-twelfth full size.

For Families, Tailors, Dressmakers, Mantle-makers, Umbrella makers, Ladies' outfitters, Embroiderers, &c., &c. It is exceedingly simple, not liable to derangement, can be understood and worked by a child, and strangers to machinery can readily understand it from the illustrated instructions sent with it. Its work is quite elastic, stronger than that done by hand, and will not wash or wear out before the goods themselves. It uses silk, worsted, thread, or cotton, from one ordinary reel, using less to produce the same strength than any other class of machine. The only essential extras really requisite are, say one dozen mixed needles, 1s. 6d., and oil can, 6d. With its latest improvements it works on thick, thin, or glazed goods, without alteration, and on the receipt of a P.O.O. for amount, made payable at Pentonville-road, one will be sent to any address.

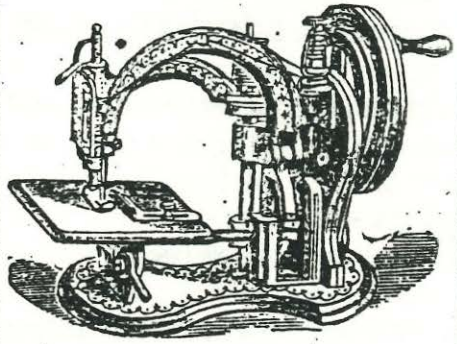
W. STAINTON, 26, LIVERPOOL-STREET, KING'S-CROSS, LONDON.

In addition to the above the attention of Shoemakers is called to the Duplex, or double action machine, for doing their ordinary work, as well as putting new elastics into old boots, &c.

UNITED STATES DOMESTIC

SEWING MACHINE.

Price 20s.



THE LARGEST AND CHEAPEST IN THE WORLD.

WORKS BY HAND OR TREADLE.

It has taken a long time and involved a heavy expense to bring this machine up to its present state of perfection, as anyone may see; the profit on each machine is very small, and the remuneration for the great outlay which has already been made, and for the cost of the machines, is looked for in the immense sales which are confidently predicted.

The above Machine is without question the **CHEAPEST EVER OFFERED FOR SALE**, and the Mechanism being **SO SIMPLE, THAT A CHILD CAN USE IT.**

N.B.—Buy no Machine till you have seen this prize; it will do the work of one costing 4 guineas. We give a **WRITTEN WARRANTY** with each Machine for **FIVE YEARS.**

It will be cheerfully shown at the

NATIONAL SEWING MACHINE CO.,

87, FETTER-LANE, FLEET-STREET, LONDON.

RESEARCH EDITOR Carol Head has been digging deep into her archives and come up with these advertisements for machines which do not seem to have survived until the present day.

If anyone has further information on any of these machines, let's here from you. In the meantime, watch out for more "Where are they now" in following issues.

THE LADIES' COMPANION.

The Speedwell Sewing Machine

(PATENT.)

PRICE

1/2



This Machine will Sew, Hem, Quilt, Buttonhole, and Sew Buttons on anything from the finest Calico to the thickest Cloth, a feat accomplished by no machine costing £20. It is so simple, that any child can work it. Sent in Box complete, with Two Needles, price 1s. 2d., Carriage paid 3d. extra; Two, Carriage paid, for 2s. 6d.

T. P. HILL & CO., 89, NEW OXFORD ST., LONDON, W.C.

P.O.O. PAYABLE 19, OXFORD STREET, SOHO.

Andrew on Andrews

WE HAVE RECEIVED the following research from Birmingham Science Museum's Keeper of Technology, Jim Andrew, who was enthralled to see an Andrews machine at our King's Norton regional meeting.

*****

FOLLOWING THE pleasant afternoon with the SM collectors, I have made a brief search for information on Andrews and his SMs. The only references found to date are in the Birmingham Trade Directories, which give the following details:

The first mention of William Andrews is in the directory of 1871 but in an 1870 edition there is a Henry Andrews -- SM furniture forger, 127 Lancaster Street

1871 Post Office Directory:- William Andrews, SM Maker, 126 Steelhouse Lane (sharing the premises with 10 other businesses)

1876 White's Directory:- William Andrews, SM Maker and Dealer, Bath Street.

1877 Hulley's Directory:- William Andrews, 145 Steelhouse Lane, manufacturer of the "Wheeler and Wilson", "Sanspariel" and other SMs. These machines are of first-class workmanship and finish. Wheeler and Wilson £5, Sanspariel, £1-17-6. Special to factors and merchants.

1878 Kelly's Directory:- Sole occupant of 145 Steelhouse Lane. Wheeler and Wilson £5-5-0, Sanspariel £1-10-0.

1880 Kelly's Directory:- William Andrews, SM manufacurer, 3 Steelhouse Lane. This could be a move or a street renumbering.)

1881 Hulley's:- as 1880 Kelly's plus: home 41 Glovers Road, Small Heath, 3 Steelhouse Lane shared with three other firms.

1886 Kelly's Directory:- William Andrews, Bicycle and Tricycle Manufacturer, 21 Victoria Road, Aston.

I have not found any later entries for William Andrews. Unfortunately he did not put any advertisements in the Directories which I have consulted. Jim Andrew

One of a Team

Frank Godfrey, author of An International History of the SM, has done some research on one of America's most successful SM pioneers. Here's his report:

WILLIAM EMERSON BAKER was one of two Boston tailors who became partners in a project to produce a SM which was successfully built and for which they were granted US Patent No. 7,931 on the 11th February 1851. The other partner was, of course, William O Grover and the machine was the Grover & Baker two-thread chainstitch.

Baker retired a multi-millionaire in 1867 and bought a tract of some 820 acres of land in Wellesley, Massachusetts, on the Needham Line. He called it "Ridge Hill Farms" and

proceeded to have built a garden amusement centre which was virtually a Disneyland of the 19th century.

He built a splendid hotel -- the Hotel Wellesley -- which was necessary to accomodate the visitors who came from all over America to view his fairyland of spacious gardens and grounds which he filled with all manor of quaint, historical and amusing objects.

Using the money that he had made out of SMs he continued to add new and different features to his gardens. For him it was a dream come true and to quote his own words, he said "These farms have now more the characteristics of an educational park; it curiously combines art with nature -- quaint history and comical amusements'.

During the 1870s and 80s he gave pleasure to thousands who visited his dream gardens -- or as they were known -- The Ridge Hill Farms. He died of a heart attack in 1888 at the age of 59. Practically the whole area fell into disuse after his death and the only building that was left standing was the house that he built as a home for himself and his family.

As late as 1963 this house was owned by a Mr Rufus Walker. All that was left of the hotel at that date was a hole in the ground which was once a cellar, and the whole area was overgrown with weeds and trees. Frank Godfrey

Many Thanks

OUR THANKS to West-German member Otto Landgraff who wrote about our Society for DNZ, a West-German magazine aimed at dealers in modern sewing machines. As a result we have received enquiries and some new members from a number of their readers on the Continent.

One of these is the French Sewing-Machine Dealers' Association of Paris, which basks under the glorious name of Chambre Syndicale Nationale des Negotiants en Machines a Coudre (which we have had to abbreviate to CSNdNeMaC for obvious reasons). Its secretary, Simon Dargois, has offered to write about us in its Bulletin, so we look forward to an influx of French enthusiasts.

The British-based Sewing Machine Times, also aimed at the Sewing-Machine trade, has been very good to us in the guise of publisher Walter Brent and Editor Shirley Barnett. It started with some fast talking by me at the Brighton "Needlecraft" Exhibition to convince Walter that there was interest among modern dealers in the history of their industry and ended with him signing up a new member for us from his stand.

They have since published several stories about our Society's activities and now Shirley rings me before publication to see if we have anything interesting for their next issue. Thanks to their help we have many new British members who would otherwise never have heard of us. MS

*** The illustration on the cover of SMCS News No. 5 is dated 1861, and is taken from "The History of Japan Through Art". CH

Mail Order Delights

BACK IN THE 1920s, before mass transportation really got under way, most of small-town America did its shopping by mail and the leaders in this field were certainly the company of Sears, Roebuck.

From vast warehouse complexes in Chicago and Memphis, the self-styled "World's Largest Store" offered everything from a horse-drum plough to "Charming tales for the little ladies". (Children of the opposite sex were catered for with "Exciting stories for real boys".

The 100-plus-page catalogue also, of course, featured SMs, but limited itself to two brands, one very up-market and another, perhaps, for the Mid-West farmer whose crops had not done so well.

The top-of-the-range machine was the Franklin Rotary Electric which was offered in a variety of guises. Cheapest form was the portable (turn every room into a sewing room) at $43.75 or, on easy terms, $48.75. the same head set into a hinged cabinet came out at $59.50 or, in a more-elaborate table, for $79.50.

Aimed at the less affluent, the Minesota ranged from $27 for a concealed-head treadle to $38.48 for the same head in a "cabinet of beauty".

For the Franklin electric models a special sewing light was listed as an extra at $2.45. Leather belting was 18 cents a length and needles for any make were 18 cents a dozen.

What's also interesting is that S.R. offered a good spares service, even having a supply of shuttles for the then-outdated Florence machines. But not a word is mentioned about Singer -- by far the most popular maker in America at the time. GF

Feedback

Gresham & Craven

*** Brian Matthews' article on Gresham & Craven gives the impression that only the Improved model has a reverse lever fitted. All the three machines in my collection have this device. In fact I've never seen a Gresham without one.

My earliest machine, serial no. 15157, H-section frame of course, has a brass shuttle carrier-housing and is the earliest Gresham I have seen. The second one is another H-section-frame model serial no. 26377. The remaining one is the oval-section model -- but still called The Gresham not the Improved Gresham -- serial No. 25493. This machine does not have the embossed cross-needle-bar head plate (there are no screw holes to take one).

I believe the Improved Gresham came later and had the brass head plate. What were the improvements, if any? Bernard Williams

Royal SM Conglomerate

*** Just a few lines to further complicate Agenoria research. At the moment of writing I

have three machines in front of me, each with considerably different decoration.

The first, and if we are to be guided by serial numbers the earliest, has the number 8338 and a registration mark that is no longer legible. According to the needle-head plate it was made by the Franklin SM Co, Birmingham, and carries the crosses axes and spears trademark of that company. The bobbin winder is let into the base casting at the front of the machine. The name Agenoria appears in gilt across the top of the machine.

The second, numbered 18190, has no reference to Franklin and the otherwise-identical endplate now claims manufacture to be by A Maxfield at Agenoria Works, Birmingham. It's stitch plate now claims the figure of Agenoria as a trademark, says the machine is by special appointment to HRH the Princess of Wales and further states that it was "made expressly for J Schoolbred & Co of Tottenham Court Road, London". Again the bobbin winder is an integral part of the machine. The registration mark is not clear and Maxfield's name now appears on the top casting.

Our third machine, No. 27702, has an identical nameplate and Maxfield's top casting, but the stitchplate only claims the royal appointment. However, there is no provision for a bobbin winder within the casting, the winder is simply screwed to the wooden base almost as an afterthought. The registration diamond shows the machine was registered in 1874.

The first two machines mentioned have high-quality walnut bases whilst the third has a cheaper oak version. GF

The Wage Game

EVER WONDERED just how much those slaves of the SM sweatshops really earned?

An interesting paper, grandly entitled The Sewing Machine; its Industrial and Social Results, published in 1877, gives us some idea.

In states that in 1852, before the coming of the machines, the average wage for an experienced female worker in a sewing factory was between 8 and 10s, with the exceptional, extremely-expert hand, able to command 12s.

Twenty-five years later (remember there was virtually no inflation then) a machininst could average between 14 and16s, with the top operators taking home up to 24s.

It was said that even women who were unable to get to grips with the new machines could earn 10s in preparing work for those who could master the new invention.

But the very top wages seemed to be reserved for those doing the finest of work -- the sewing of silk gas mantles. These machinists could demand up to 33s per week, comprising six days work of ten-and-a-half hours per day.

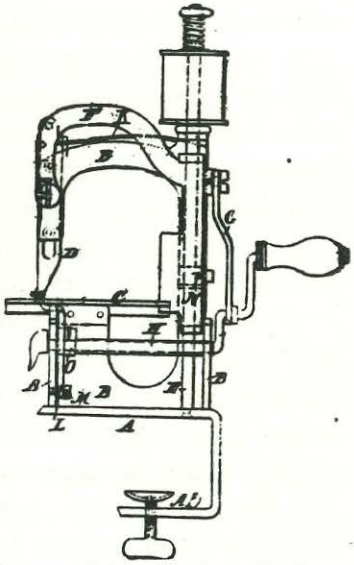
The same report also gave credit to the machine for reducing the amount of child labour in the rag trade. "Now only older children are employed, the starting age usually being 14." GF

Mini claims

WHAT WAS THE smallest SM made? That's a question that demands a lot more detail before we are going to be able to consider the answer.

For example, are we talking about toy machines or only those built for general use? Are we excluding running-stitch models and concentrating only on those that make a "real" SM stitch? And how do we rate "small"? Is this adjective to be considered in terms of height, length or even weight?

I'm sorry but the answer is quite beyond me. But dear old C T Judkins, bless his promoter's heart, had none of thse difficulties. He proudly announced his Weir/ Raymond look-alike as the "Smallest Machine In The World" in 1868.



One candidate for "smallest honours" -- the La Queen -- patented by S. A. Rosenthal, of Moldacot fame

What's more, it would appear that nothing larger would ever be needed, for his model would hem, fell, bind, tuck, quilt and embroider. It was simple to use, never got out of order, and was silent in action.

What's more, CT was happy to back up his claims. He was quite willing to send details of the machine, and even samples of work done on it, to anyone applying to his Ludgate Hill, London, address.

Judkins obviously set his criteria to his own standards -- if at all -- and was thus able to exclude quite a few competitors but, surely, he couldn't ignore the Weir. Next time MS digs her Judkins out of storage we'll have to take some measurements.

Going back to the original question and, if forced to make answer, I'd have to go for the just-over-two-inch, tin-plate German toy as the smallest of all and then elect the Madame Demorest or the Tabitha if toys were to be excluded. The Moldacot must score as the smallest shuttle machine . But then again, it all depends on what we mean by smallest ..... Anv offers?

GF

We made it. When the London Science Museum decided that its archives would not be complete without a subscription to SMCS News, our membership topped the 100 mark. Details of new members are on page 31.

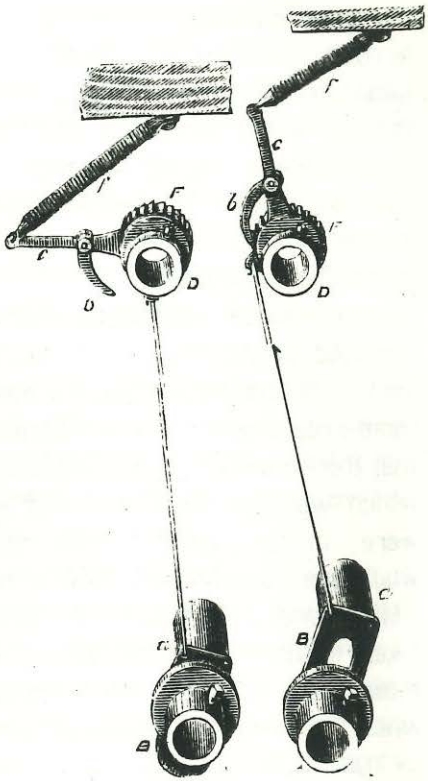
Easy Starting

BERNARD WILLIAMS, in his comments on the French La Polulaire machine and its ease of starting the treadle, wasn't the first to ponder on the problems of not only getting the fly-wheel moving in the correct direction, but of getting it revolving at all.

Experienced seamstresses among you will know that usually the difficulty was got around by the operator reaching under the table and giving the flywheel a pull and then keeping the motion going with the feet.

That's not a convienent way out and it could be messy and even finger trapping.

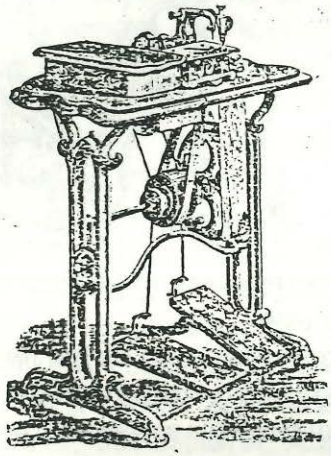
At least two men in the late 1860-70s produced devices to get round this difficulty.



Right: Complex and expensive auto-start system pioneered by Needham. Below: Complicated treadle from 1878 -- an advertisement from CH.

IMPORTANT INVENTION.

BOURDIN'S PATENT MAGIC TREADLE



Applicable to all Sewing Machines, and destined to supersede those modes of working Machines now in use. Its principle should be seen to be understood, but its effects are truly "Magical," for a Machine can be worked by its means with the least possible effort and *silently*. It overcomes all the objections, general and sanitary, to the ordinary crank treadle and renders the Hand Machines unnecessary. For terms, royalty and other information apply to the

SOLE AGENTS OF THE PATENTEE,

T. DENNIS, ROCK & CO.,

46, LEADENHALL ST., LONDON.

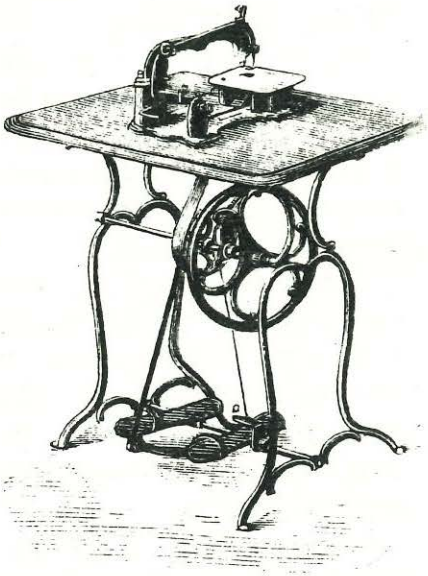
Where a Machine, with the Magic Treadle also, can be seen at any time between the hours of 11 and 4 o'clock.

T. DENNIS, ROCK & CO. will also be glad to receive Estimates from Manufacturers for supplying Machines with the Patent Treadle attached.

Crudest was that proposed by John Mabson in1868 and consisted simply of a spring-loaded rod which passed through the table. On the top of the rod was a knob which, when pressed down, caused the bottom of the rod to push against the flywheel thus starting it in motion. The spring then returned the rod to its ready position.

Much more complicated was the device invented by American O H Needham of New York. He said that, although it was claimed by some expert workers in the garment industry that they could tell by the angle of the treadle which way the machine would start, there were, in fact, several pedal positions that would start the flywheel in either direction.

His answer to this was a device permanently fixed to the treadle mechanism which, by means of a ratchet, would ensure that the wheel was started in the correct direction. GF

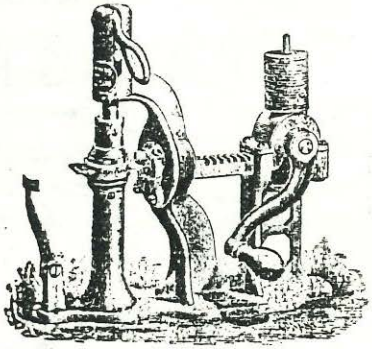


Needham's invention fitted to a Wheeler and Wilson. He claimed that his self-starting mechanism could be adapted to any make of sewing machine.

Labour Saving?

BEFORE THE DAYS of throw-away tights and synthetic-fibre socks $8 must have seemed a small price to pay to relieve you of the chore of darning.

Such was the promise of a September 1877 advertisement in the SM Journal for a "new and valuable household machine for darning stockings" by the Pope Manufacturing Company. Agents were offered a profit of $3 a machine.



Orin (also spelt Oren) Stanley Hosmer of Boston, Mass,was granted a patent in August, 1874 for a "simple and inexpensive implement by which the darning of stockings may be effected with a minimum of the time and labour now employed for the purpose".

The inventor claimed: "in darning with this machine I do not produce irregular, hard and unsightly lumps and ridges, which is the result of darning by hand; but, on the contrary, I produce a new textile fabric which is pliable, soft and fully equal in appearance, ease and desirability to the original material".

The machine that we have, which differs in some details from the patent specification has a series of (14) horizontal needles supported by a sliding carriage. The fabric to be mended is placed between a pair of circular brass clamps, 3cm diameter, with interdigitating grooves, so that when the fabric is clamped between them it is folded into ridges through which the needles pass.

The needles are threaded and on withdrawal draw 14 double threads across the hole to be mended. By rotating the fabric through 90 degrees a second series of threads is interwoven with the first. Any hole to be darned must be very small indeed. Sufficient rim of sound material for the needles to engage must rest on the clamp. The fabric must also be thin in order to be folded into the 14 grooves.

The patent application ends: "Although my present machine, as originally devised, was mainly intended for darning stockings, I am enabled to adapt it for a variety of useful purposes. For instance, I am enabled to weave lamp-mats, chair tidies and many ornamental and useful articles of a size equal to the area of the plunger." With an area that of a circle 3cms diameter, he was perhaps furnishing a dolls' house.

Improvements patented in April, 1875 included a mechanism for cutting the yarn, a tension device and a locking mechanism to prevent breaking the needles. The British patent (3941) granted in November 1874 includes some of the 1875 American claims.

Experiments with the machine suggest that a very careful choice of fabric, thread and hole, together with a lot of practice, would be necessary to substantiate the inventor's claims.

Jennifer Gregory

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JOHN REID, 86 Hampton St, Tetbury, Glos GL8 8LD

Advertisements

** **An imminent move** to a new home means that we will have to drastically reduce our sewing-machine collection. Anyone wishing a list of machines for sale should telephone 0962 61489. Martin & Jennifer Gregory.

** **Sewing Machines** bought and sold: also typewriters and gramophones, The Talking Machine, 30 Watford Way, Hendon, London NW4. Tel: 01 202 3473. Open every day.

** **Maggie Snell** collects, buys, sells and exchanges early sewing machines with the largest selection for sale anywhere. Send your 'wants list' or telephone on 01 488 0474.

** **Starting a collection**: Sewing machines for sale, also toy machines. Basement, 288 Westbourne Grove, Portobello Market. Saturdays only. Tel: 01 363 7494. 312 Carterhatch Lane, Enfield, Middlesex.

Subscriptions Due

WITH THIS MAGAZINE we reach the end of our first, hectic year, and we hope you all found it a successful and enjoyable one. You should all have received SIX magazines. If the odd one went astray in the post, please let me know and I'll replace it.

Subscriptions are now due for the new year beginning May 1. Although we maintain a healthy bank balance, we spend heavily on the magazine which is, as you probably realise, our biggest expense. We need a speedy inflow of funds to maintain its size and quality.

Fees remain the same, £8 UK (cash, cheque or postal order) and £10 overseas. Europeans can pay by sterling Eurocheque, but elsewhere please send cash, postal or bankers drafts in £10 sterling if at all possible. MS

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MEMBERS' private sales, wants and exchange advertisements are free, though all individual '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 (min. £1).

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