

Usmacs news

No. Eight

for sewing machine collectors

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Collectors Meeting - Sunday November 16

A LATE BUT promising start for our first collector's meeting since the AGM. It will be held at the home of our busy Research Editor, Carol Head, near Salisbury. Usual Starting time 2pm to around 5pm.

Carol has a small, but exciting, collection -- including the Alberta and Excelsior treadles, both by Whight and Mann. However, it's her extensive knowledge of sewing-machine history that makes this date a must in your diary.

Her telephone number for directions to 3 Windwhistle Way, Alderbury Park, Alderbury, Salisbury, Wiltshire is 0722 710988. Give her a few day's notice if you can. CH

Continental Debut

THE FIRST sewing-machine-collectors' meeting to be held outside of Britain is being organised by West-German member Otto Landgraf on the Saturday and Sunday of October 4 and 5 about 85 miles from Frankfurt.

Unfortunately, we received information of the event long after the last ISMACS News was posted so were unable to let you have details. Graham Forsdyke and I hope to make the trip and will report fully in the next issue. MS

Subscriptions Still Due

OUR THANKS to the vast majority of our members who so quickly paid their subscriptions. However, there are still a number of you who have yet to make the effort.

To those we must say that, as the magazines are getting increasingly expensive to produce and post, this is the last magazine we are able to send until the subscription is renewed. MS

Mobile Adverts

THE GO-WITHS OF SM collecting are interesting me more and more -- could be something to do the dearth of good machines -- and I was excited the other day to discover an early photograph of a dozen bathing huts on a beach. Point is that each of the huts was emblazoned with an advertisement for the Jones company.

For our younger readers, beach huts were just that -- huts --but

on wheels. Idea was that the lady could change from her street garb into a non-too-revealing neck-to-knee bathing costume within the privacy of the hut and then be wheeled down to the water to make a decorous entry into the sea. She would thus avoid a) having to walk on bare feet on the shingle and b) the lascivious glances of the local masher.

An enterprising J Wolfe, for it was he who owned the huts as witnessed by his name above the Jones sign, had obviously done a wholesale deal for the advertising rights.

The picture also shows a small sailing skiff about to set off on its trip around the lighthouse with passengers boarding via a portable wheeled jetty. What the picture does not give, unfortunately, is any clue to the date, although a guess of around 1900 would not be far out.

Nor is there much to help pinpoint the location. The picture is pasted on a page torn from one of those scrapbooks much loved by the late Victorians as records of holiday jaunts. On the reverse side of the page is a picture of a lake near Glasgow, so it is possible that the beach scene is also of Scottish origin.

All in all, I must admit that this snapshot has given me as much pleasure as the acquisition of another sewing machine. GF

High Court Ruling

IN 1861 THE HOWE Sewing Machine Company established an English company to manufacture and sell its machines. Previously its agent had been Luke McKernan who, in September 1861, set up his own shop in London to sell sewing machines.

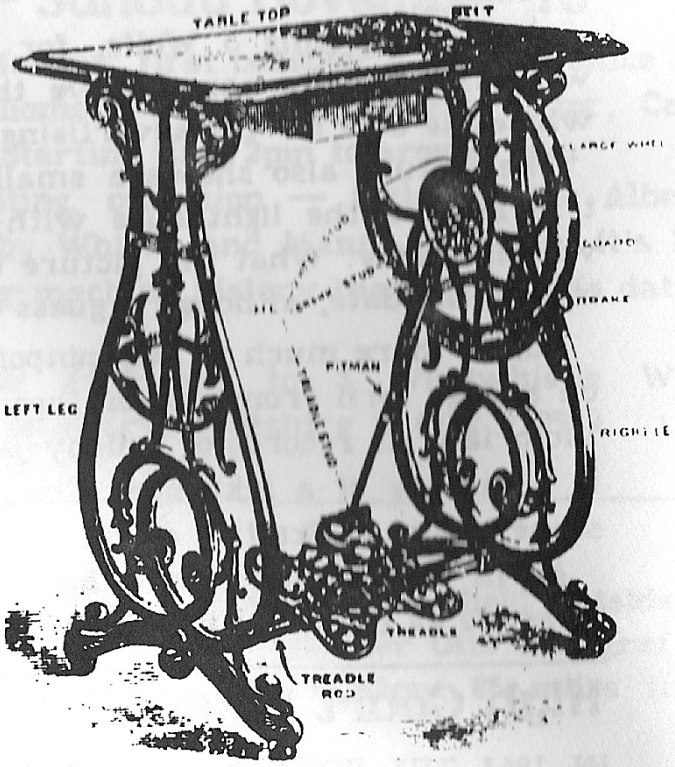
He put in the window a sign with the words: "Luke McKernan late agent for the Howe sewing machine" in very large letters with the exception of the word "late" which was in very small letters and so placed as not to be seen by a casual observer.

Granting an injunction to the Howe Sewing Machine Company the Master of the Rolls observed that the word "late" was in such small characters and placed in such a position that he should have been unable to find it in the photograph of the shop unless he had been told where to look for it.

A month later McKernan was again up before the Master of the Rolls for failing to comply with the injunction and change his sign.

Martin Gregory

Restoritis is Catching



I WOULD NOT have given it a second glance had I not needed a replacement footplate for my own Willcox and Gibbs treadle....

There it stood on viewing day at the auction, pushed into a dark corner, the machine head giltless and almost bald, the woodwork nearly devoid of varnish, and little orange rust blobs decorating the ironwork -- but my eye was drawn to its intact footplate with the idea of effecting a swap with my broken one.

Needless to say, no-one but myself was sufficiently discerning to have any interest in the poor old relic, so I cheerfully paid the £10 reserve and, with help, heaved it over the tailgate of my car. It looked even worse in the cruel light of my front porch. It had a drop-leaf on the left and three warped drawers on the right but -- hey presto -- a reel of cotton and a tentative bit of footwork resulted in the usual row of perfect W&G stitches.

I had planned to discard all but the footplate (perhaps keeping th two uprights to make into a side table) but the perfection of thos stitches from such a bad old heap convinced me that a helping hand was needed to try to restore it to some selblance of its former glory.

I dismantled the whole thing and stripped off what little varnish remained on the woodwork, removing the whole drawer section for a glue-and-clamp job (six years at woodwork evening classes taught me a thing or two). Liquid wax and several buffings worked wonders. The old steel wool and 3-in-1 brought up the bronzed ironwork, and I replaced the C2 machione with a much better one of my own, of near vintage.

It is still not in pristine condition, but then, I wouldn't want it t be. Those grooves in the table may have been made by a recalcitrant

young miss in calico dress, stabbing at it with scissors; and the ink stain by a little boy in a sailor suit struggling to learn his letters. Whatever, they're all part of its history.

Aside from the fact that my husband has been forced to move over to accommodate yet another treadle, I am so delighted with the result of my labours that I cannot bring myself to rob it of its sound footplate -- though I would not have given it a second glance had I not needed a replacement footplate for my own W&G treadle ..... well that's where I came in.

Now, does anyone have an odd W&G footplate going for a song? Though, please, not still attached to a sad-looking old treadle. Rita Heath

Restoration Tips

STILL THE MOST frequent question posed to the committee is "what do I do about restoration"?

Because of the large influx of new members since the subject was last raised in this journal there's no need to excuse bringing up the following points again.

When collectors buy a sewing machine it becomes their property -- to do with as they wish and it is presumptious of anyone else to tell them how to treat it. However, money spent on old machines is really an investment (and what a good investment they have been!) and one day it's possible that there will be a need or a wish to sell up.

That's when just how machines have been treated will tell.

Almost without exception any machine which has been repainted has had its value reduced. It is better to keep a machine with poor paintwork than to attempt to improve it

Never attempt to touch up decoration

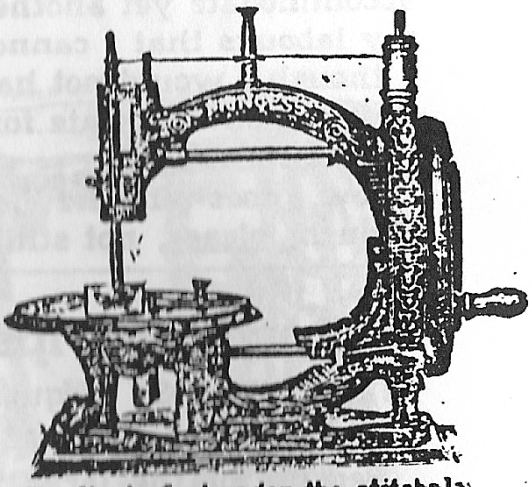
Do remove rust and polish bright metal parts. Rust left in place on unpolished metal will continue to eat away at the steel.

Before re-nickel-plating any part, satisfy yourself that it was plated in the first place. Many manufacturers sent out bright metal or blackened bright-metal parts with an oil quenched or passivation process GF

** Carol Head's useful little guide "Old Sewing Machines" has, by popular demand, been re-printed by Shire Publications of Aylesbury, Bucks. At only £1.25 plus postage, it's a must for every collector's shelf. Available from most museums, the author and Maggie Snell. MS

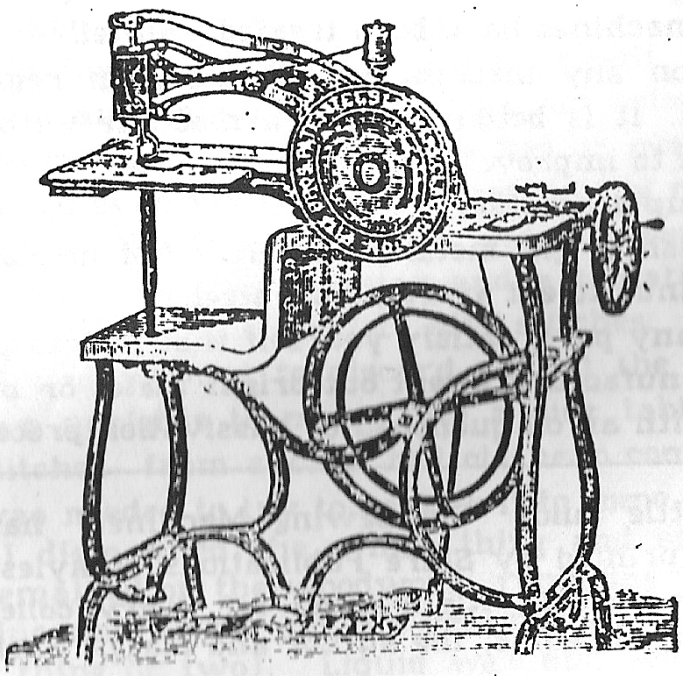
Early Start for Yorkshire Pitt Brothers

THE PITT BROTHERS claimed to have been manufacturing machines since 1853 at the Alma Foundry, Liversedge, Yorkshire and received an Honourable Mention at the Paris Universal Exhibition in 1867.

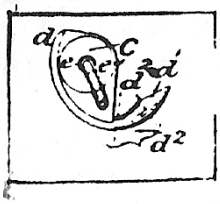


The lion's foot under the stitchplate this Princess bears a remarkable similarity to Whight & Mann's Prima Donna.

The machines made by this company included the usual family lockstitch model, a "medium" machine for light and heavy work, a "durable" hand machine and a circular-feed machine for boot manufacturers. They also made a writingdesk cover for the family machine.



Above: The Circular Feed Industrial machine.



Right (inset): detail from No. 2813 patent described here.

The circular-feed machine was "designed and invented" by the Pitt Brothers. It had the ingenious arrangement for changing the direction of the feed whilst machining, in order to stitch a straight, transverse, angular or circular seam. Evidently it was particularly suitable for sewing elastic in old boots, stitching round goloshes and down the fronts and backs of boots.

The carpet, rug and blanket beading machine was widely used in the North of England and particularly by John Crossley, Sons & Co Ltd, who were contractors for the manufacture of army clothing.

The Pitt brothers took out nine different patents between 1877 and

1883 (* see footnote). Particularly interesting was the July 1878 No. 2813 patent which showed a shuttle with a beak, a shank and a bobbin case. The beak opened the loop of the needle thread to allow the bobbin to pass through. The shank allowed the needle thread to move upwards with the needle as it left the work and this then reduced the friction on the thread. Patent 442 in February 1879 was for a buttonhole sewing attachment.

* Patents: 2271 (1877); 2813, 4809, 5193 (1878); 442, 3079 (1879); 3141 (1880); 5062 (1882); 1331 (1883). CH

Ghosts

MEMBERS Roanne and Richard Clayton are currently researching the history of the Britannia Company of Colchester and, surprisingly, the factory, though deserted, still exists, making it one of the earliest extant SM manufactory in the world.

Whilst not wishing to pre-empt the Clayton's work (which, they say, is proving difficult as most of the records were destroyed during a great fire around the turn of the century, but which we will publish when complete) anyone in the Colchester area who would like a look at the plant before it is demolished would be well advised to do so soon.

There are two ways of seeing the factory. It can be viewed from the rear of the old Colchester Abbey ruins and from easily-found side streets.

However, and I'm certainly not suggesting this as I'm sure there are a few trespass laws involved, there is another way of getting a much better look at the old building.

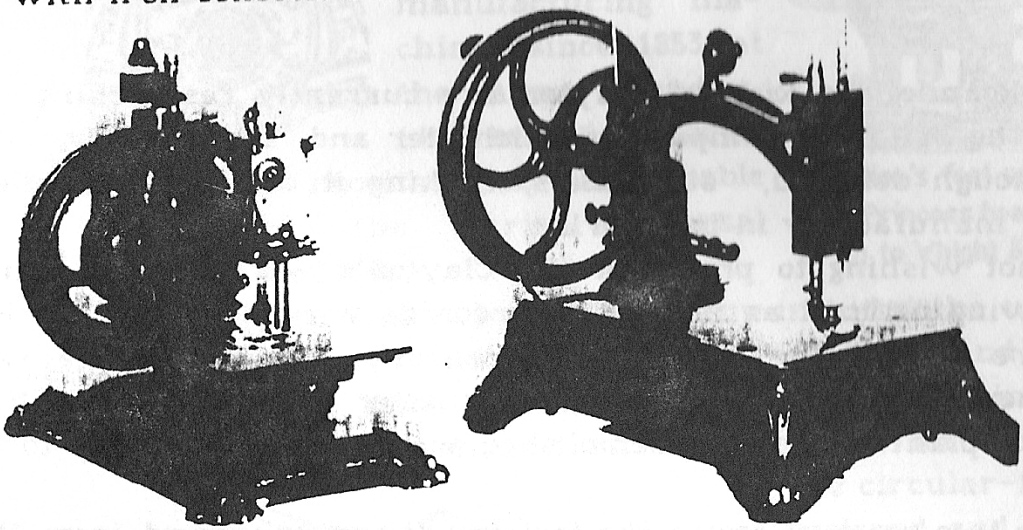
Were one to be sleep-walking and, therefore, not in full control of one's faculties and to wander along to the far end of the platform of the rarely-used branch line of Tendring Hundred Railway, near St Botolph's Station, past the sign which warns of proceeding further, and climb down the embankment, our solambulist would find himself in a small thicket with a clearly-defined path leading off to the left.

Following this track, obviously left by exploring schoolboys, one would come to a wire fence surrounding the factory. Co-incidentally the fence has a hole through which it would be possible to duck and then explore the entire vast site of the empty Britannia Works. GF

Auction News

Christie's, South Kensington - 24 July 1986

SEWING MACHINES were somewhat overshadowed in this sale as we had first to wade through one man's lifetime collection of tailors' irons -- 116 lots comprising several-hundred items. The room was filled with iron collectors from around the country and overseas, including America and Canada -- though, as usua' most of the lots were bought by the same half dozen people and everyone else just watched.



Left: Todd; Right: Original Victoria. Picture courtesy Christie's

The most desirable SM in the sale was a Todd's Champion of England, with American SM Co stamped on the stitchplate. The paint was reasonable, as was the gold on the arm, base and wheel. But the whole machine had that kind of rough, non-shiny, surface that is capable of being cleaned but never seems to look nice. The instruction book was complete though torn.

In better conditon this rare machine should have brought more thar £260. As it was, I considered the price expensive.

Another interesting machine, bringing £130, was an Original Victoria lockstitch model supplied by Smith & Co of Edgeware Road, London The transfers were in good condition, though the "Original Victoria" emblem across the arm was rubbed and faint.

Collectors and dealers alike are catching on to the fact that Willcox and Gibbs and turn-of-the-century Continental imports, in rough condition, are bad news.

A pair of W&G without any gold brought £15; a single C4 version £18, whilst a better C8 with box and instructions rose to £40. Another lot

comprising a C5 Davis Atlas and a C4 Jones (both lacking stitchplates) took £18.

More realistic prices were £48 for a C8 Little Wanzer stamped Johnston, Aberdeen; £65 for a C8 Moldacot missing its bobbin and the picture from the top of its tin. And someone must have fallen in love with a boxed Weir because it reached a staggering, considering its middling 7 condition, £90. Maybe one of the iron collectors bought it!

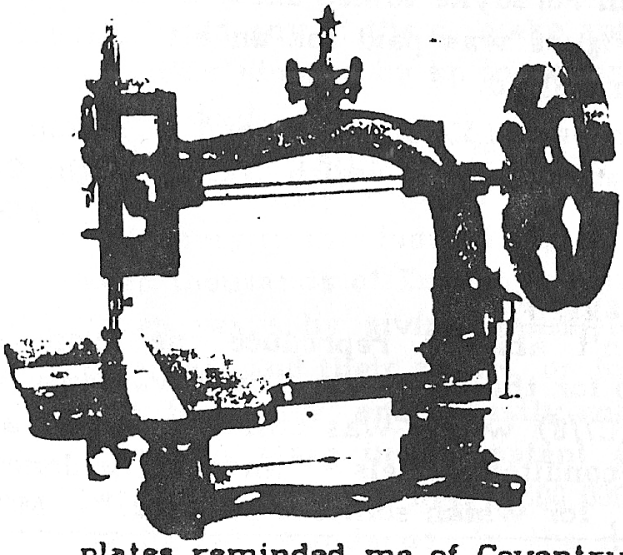
An ordinary Wheeler & Wilson treadle with a walnut cover fetched £80, and a late hollow-tin, brightly-transferred child's model was £12.

Until this sale Christie's South Kensington have held out against the 10% buyer's premium, but the mighty have now succumbed. Be aware that from August 1 all London salerooms carry the extra tax. MS

Phillips, New Bond St - 25 June 1986

IF THE NEW BUCKEYE that appeared in this sale had looked anything like the model pictured in the Smithsonian book (reproduced on this page) the price would have risen much higher than £25.

Although the black paintwork had seen better days and there was only a faint trace of its gold name remaining, the 1870s model was interesting in the respect that it uses two threads and a shuttle to form a lockstitch. According to Grace Cooper, W G Wilson manufactured the machine under Johnson's extended patent of April 18, 1867.

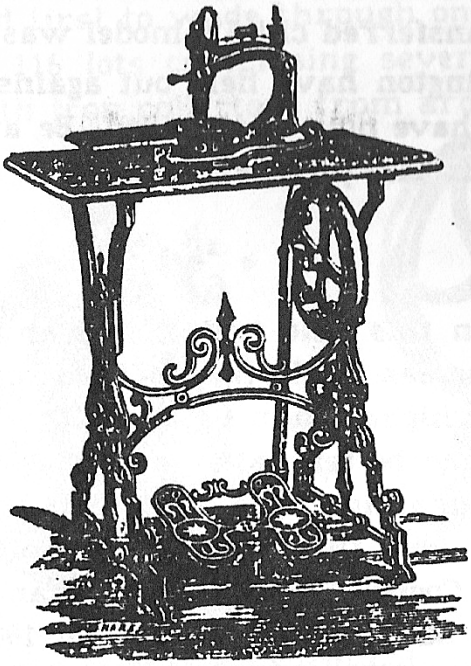


Another treadle version of the Yorkshire-based Taylor Company's Patent Sewing Machine this time managed to escape Christie's clutches

At the viewing I wasn't at all happy at the machine's provenance. It looked wrong. A rough fiddle-bed-shaped hole had been cut out of the table top and the machine, which was mounted on a similarly-shaped piece of wood, was slotted into the hole.

The openwork treadle was prettily cast, but the star designs on the foot plates reminded me of Coventry Sewing Machine. The machine itself, though complete, was no great shakes -- about condition 6. But, as

I've said before in these pages, that's about par for the course. Anyway, I marked it in my catalogue as a possible hybrid, and moved on to view other things.



Then Hugo Marsh, from Phillips' Collectors Department, showed me the instruction book. In it the Taylor was illustrated, on an identical stand, with a notation by the previous owner in large black capital letters "this is it", which, of course, it was. I still wasn't happy about the h·'e cut into the woodwork, though. But .t didn't seem to worry the eventual buyer who happily paid £380 plus premium--about £420.

Another simple treadle machine by Slater & Co brought £80, but it was only a badge-engineered Wheeler and Wilson -- maybe one of those made up from castings that Graham Forsdyke talked about in his Copy Cats item in News 6. This same figure was paid for an attractive C9 Original Express with the fitting metal lid.

A couple of Willcox & Gibbs brought £30 and £45, and a machine catalogued as anonymous in the catalogue, but which was a rough, C4 German import, fetched £28. MS

Phillips, New Bond Street --27 August 1986.

UNFORTUNATELY Phillips' weren't able to reproduce the crop of interesting models they turned up for the June sale. There was only a medium-conditon Little Wanzer (C7/8) which was still a good buy at £35, and a mixed lot of mediocre-conditon models -- an Atlas, a Jones and one marked American SM Co., for which someone paid £42. MS

Shiver Me Castings

JUST IN THE way that pirates on the high seas were regarded as almost folk heros of their day, so too were the back-street engineers of the sewing-machine industry who stole designs and forged look-alikes of the big manufacturers.

So great was the feeling against Thomas and Howe whose British

patents restricted making sewing machines in this country that those who chose to break the law were held in near public acclaim at the time. The influential Mechanics Magazine, for example, came to their defense in November 1860, just before the notorious patent came up for extension.

It stated that if the patent were to be renewed, some guarantee should be given to prevent Messrs Howe and Thomas "being made mere tools in the hand of American manufacturers for injuring or preventing the making of sewing machines in England".

The magazine, in a powerful editorial, insisted that if the renewal went ahead, some attention should be paid to the "several thousand poor mechanics in the UK carrying on their hole-in-the-corner trade.

"These men will not make an appearance before a Judical Committee (the body that was to decide on the patent extension); they know themselves to be pirates and will remain out of sight and unheard."

The editor had a few words of comfort for them, however. He reasoned that their very poverty was their protection from prosecution.

"While the trade in which they are engaged is protected by a patent for which they cannot or will not pay a royalty, they are denied all prospect of bettering their conditions .

"Should any of them make any money out of the business they can be either stopped by an injuction or their earnings swept away by a patent suit.

"We do not apologise for these men; they are pirates and many of them are guilty of forgery.

"It is up to the Judicial Committee to decide whether it is better to keep thousands of English mechanics in helpless poverty for another seven years by giving unlimitted power of prosecution to foreign patentees and their agents, or to impose such terms that Englishmen may fearlessly and honestly engage in manufacture".

By this stage in the patent game, Howe had already amassed a personal fortune of over £300,000 -- making him a multi-millionaire by today's standards. In the next issue we'll deal with what the Mechanics Magagazine's editor thought of the Judicial Committee's descision.

GR

In at the Beginning/Part 5 of James Bolton's Singer Story

The Chicago Office 1860 to 1886

In 1860, I thought I would take Greeley's advice, "Young Man, go west", so I went to New York and asked them how they were doing in Chicago. Mr Hopper was then chief clerk. "Why", he said, "we are doing nothing in Chicago". I replied I would like to get that office. "Well", said he, "you would not be fool enough to take that place in place of New Haven".

I said "I want to sell machines on commission. I do not want to se. any longer on salary; I am getting $15 a week. I will take the Chicago office, but I want it on the same terms that Mr Dean has St Louis and Skarden at Cincinnati". He said, "You will be sure to get the office, but Mr Clark is now at Cooperstown and will not be back for two weeks."

In about two weeks, I got a letter from Mr Clark wanting me to come to New York. He was quite willing that I should have the Chicago office, and everything was right until I asked him if I would get the same terms as Mr Dean at St Louis. "Oh, well" said Mr Clark "we have lost a great deal of money in Chicago, and we think now there is a chance to get some of it back." I said, "Mr Clark, if I go there and do a very large business, what will there be in it for me?" He said, "We will increase your salary from $15 to $20 per week and give you a further compensation at the end of each year, depending upon the amount of business. On the strength of this, I accepted the Chicago office, and went there shortly afterwards, in 1860.

At that time, I had further understanding with Mr Clark that was to be furnished with Letter A machines with the overhanging feed. With that understanding I commenced putting this feed on every Family machine that was sold, and the business was increasing and I had difficulty in filling my orders. I then wrote to Mr Clark saying that I had NOT received a machine with the overhanging feed and that it was considerable expense to the Chicago office to make over these machines, and supply new feed dogs and new throat plates, but I got no satisfaction as we received no machines with the overhanging feed.

So I went to New York and met Mr Hopper, who was then chief clerk. I told him that the Company was not trying to help me increase the business in Chicago, and that I had ordered machines and was

promised them, and that was one of the conditions on which I was sent to Chicago.

In the meantime, Mr Clark came in and Mr Hopper told Mr Clark that I was complaining. So Mr Clark took the matter up in his private office, and said, "Mr Bolton, I have ordered those machines, and on receipt of your letter, wrote to Mr Al Hughes, the foreman. Now we will go over there this morning and see why those alterations have not been made".

Mr Clark and I then went over to the factory on Mott Street and he called Mr Hughes, the foreman, and asked why these orders of his had not been carried out. He replied, "When Mr Singer left for Europe, he gave me orders to make no alterations or improvements without his knowledge or consent".

With that, Mr Clark got out of patience with him and told him, "When I give you an order, I want to see that it is complied with at once." So I went back to Chicago, thinking that I had a sure thing on that, but the machines failed to come, nothwithstanding his instructions to Mr Hughes.

In reply, Mr Clark wrote, saying: "You have no idea what trouble I have at the factory in having anything done, but I have made up my mind, on the first day of January, to discharge Mr Hughes and put George R McKinzie in his place". I was surprised at this appointment, as, at that time, Mr McKinzie was merely a packer in the shipping department.

When Mr McKinzie got in charge the machines came right on the way I wanted them, and when I got to New York Mr McKinzie said to me, "When you want anything, write to me and I will see that it is gotten right up for you; no use of your writing to the Company, write to me".

Bits & Pieces

** Our delightful front cover came from Winsford, Cheshire, dealer Allan Sheen. It was taken from a much larger advertisement informing potential sewing-machine buyers that the New Home "is the handsomest, most durable, and will do the widest work of any". It was made in Orange, Massachusetts, USA. MS

** Bernard Williams has responded to our request to collate a glossary. Still more information is needed, however, and we call on members to send in their views. MS



CONCERN OVER THE SAD plight of semstresses was prevelent in the mid-19th century. We saw it in the "Song of the Shirt" feature News 4 and again, though more cynically, in the Judkins article News 7.

DISTRESSED Needlewomen.—Under the
PATRONAGE OF
Her Majesty the QUEEN DOWAGER.
Her Royal Highness the Duchess of GLOUCESTER.
His Royal Highness the Duke of CAMBRIDGE.
President—Mr. Alderman FAREBROTHER.
Chairman of the Committee—LUKE JAMES HANSARD, Esq.

OBJECTS.

1. The continuation of a register-office for registering efficient hands in order to afford the trade and others an opportunity of obtaining sempstresses when required, without expense to either party.
2. In case of necessity to become security for the materials placed in the hands of those employed through the recommendation of the Society, without requiring any deduction from their wages, thus relieving the sempstress from being subject to the oppression of the middle man.
3. To assist orphans, and other poor females, when not efficient at their business, by paying a small sum to complete the necessary instruction, and thus being duly qualified, enabling them to give satisfaction to their employers.
4. To increase the demand for labour during the period when there is a deficiency of work, by making up clothing for the destitute poor, which will be distributed in the various districts by the supporters of the Charity.
5. To induce the principals of union workhouses and institutions to co-operate with the views of the Society, by adopting standard prices as a fair and reasonable compensation for the labour performed.
6. To establish a Provident Fund, under the entire management of the Gentlemen's Committee.

Two ladies of the Committee will attend alternately at the office during the inclement season.

Subscriptions will be thankfully received by Mr. Alderman Farebrother, Lancaster-place, Strand; Luke J. Hansard, Esq., 7, Southampton-street, Bloomsbury; by the following bankers:—Messrs. Herries, Farquhar and Co.; Messrs. Coutts and Co.; Messrs. Smith, Payne, and Smith; Sir John Lubbock and Co.; Messrs. Ransom and Co.; Sir R. Carr Glyn, Halifax, and Co.; Messrs. Masterman, Peters, and Co.: by the following publishers:—Messrs. Nisbet and Co.; Mr. Hatchard; by Mr. Roper, Honorary Secretary, 3, Queen-square, Bloomsbury; and at the office, 37, Rathbone-place.

In the pre-sewing-machine January 30, 1847 edition of "The Lady's Newspaper" (the ornate, engraved mast-head of which is reproduced above) there appeared an advertisement for the Distressed Needlewomen's Society started under the patronage of Her Majesty the Queen Dowager and their Royal Highnesses the Duchess of Gloucester and the Duke of Cambridge.

The advert ran ..... "Most distressing cases of destitution are daily under the notice of visitors from this Society. The desirable object of giving warm clothing during the inclement season is a twofold

benefit -- that of clothing the poor by the same outlay that gives employment to the needlewoman. The prompt assistance of a British public is most earnestly solicited".

The object of the Society are reproduced above.

An accompanying feature entitled "The Unhappy Needleworkers" told of the type of woman the Society intended to assist. Interviewed at the Westminster Hospital "in a state of extreme debility, induced by want of proper food, and especially animal diet, bleeding profusely from the gums, tongue, and throat ...the consequence of deficient nourishment."

She told how for two years she had been making shirts and trousers for slop-sellers ... "and had for long periods, on one occasion for six months continuously, worked incessantly from six in the morning till nine and 10 O'clock at night, allowing one hour altogether for meals, for the sum of 6d *per diem*, finding her own cotton and needles, and that with the greatest industry and perseverance she could not earn more ..... to support herself and dependent mother and father.

"She obtained her work from a sort of 'go-between', who became responsible for the materials, and which agent obtained 1.1/2d or 2d profit upon every 3d she herself earned before the article reached the slopseller."

The article concluded "..... and thither we urge the happy and the fortunate to wend their way, on errands of 'godlike Charity!'. MS

The Best Sewing Machine

THE MALE CHAUVANISTS of the mid-19th Century didn't shrink from telling it how it was. When a reader of the Leisure Hour -- a weekly Family Journal of Instruction and Recreation wrote, in 1861, to the editor enquiring as to which of the new-fangled sewing machines was the best, this is the reply that was printed:

"The very best sewing machine a man can have is a wife. It is one that requires but a kind word to set it in motion, rarely gets out of repair, makes little noise, is seldom the cause of a dust and, once in motion, will go on uninterruptedly for hours without the slightest trimming, or the smallest personal supervision being necessary.

"It will make shirts, darn stockings, sew on buttons, mark pocket handkerchiefs, cut out pinafores (obviously a very important attribute,

this), and manufacture children's frocks out of any old thing you might give it; and this it will do behind your back as well as to your face. In fact you may leave the house and it will go on working just the same.

"If it does get out of order a little from being overworked, it mends itself by being left alone for a short time, after which it returns to its sewing with greater vigour than ever.

"Of course sewing machines vary a geat deal. Some are much quicker than others. It depends to a vast measure on the particular pattern you select. If you are fortunate in picking out the choicest pattern of a wife one, for instance, that sings whilst working, and seems to be never as happy as when the husband's linen is to hand, the sewing machine may be pronounced perfect of its kind; so much so that there is no makeshift in the world that can possibly replace it either for love or money.

"In short, no gentleman's establishment is complete without one of these in the house." GF

** When I first gave this piece to editor Maggie Snell she flatly refused to believe that it was authentic -- prefering to think that I had made the whole thing up. Only showing her the original convinced her. GF

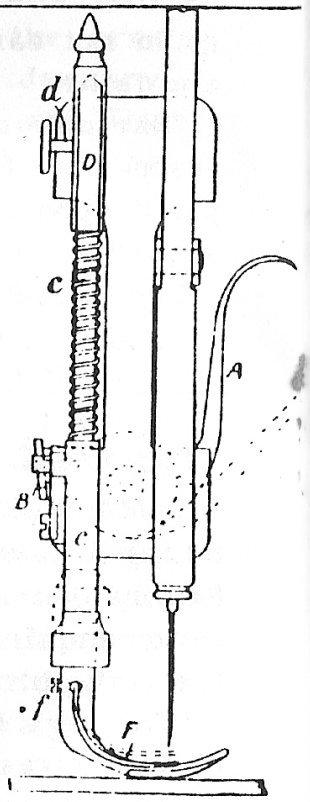
Presser Feet

THE LITTLE Wanzer, Original Express and the Improved Gresham all have presser feet that can be raised and turned through a right angle in order to move the foot completely away from the work.

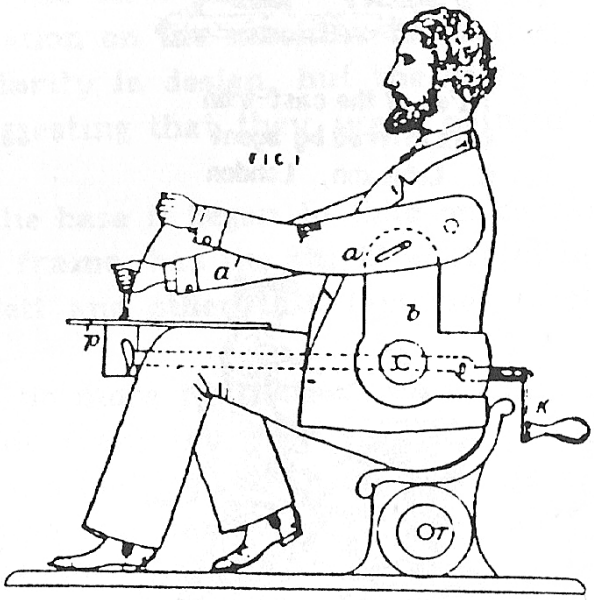
The idea was patented in August 1868 (No. 2473) by N Salamon, as shown in the accompanying illustration. Another name, B P Howe, is also included in the application, but we don't know if it is any relation to Elias.

According to the patent application "The upper end of the presser-bar fits into a tube D which can be adjusted and fixed in any position by a set screw d for varying the pressure of the presser-foot spring C".

Do members know of any other machines using this idea? CH



One Day My Prince Will Come



THERE WAS some discussion during the slide show at the Telford AGM about the types of models used in the Nuremburg Princess toy-machine series patented by Max Sandt, a works manager of Bielefeld in the Kingdom of Prussia and German Empire, in May 1892.

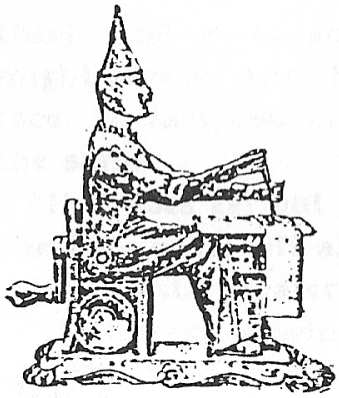
Now Carol Head has come up with patent information which describes sewing-machine frames being made in the forms of human beings or animals. In fact, the accompanying drawing showed the side view of the machine and figure of a seated man.

In the form shown in the patent application: "one arm (a) carries the needle and is operated by a bell-crank lever (b) and handle (K), the shaft of which operates a shuttle below a fixed work-plate *(p)*, the other arm (a1) is fixed and carries a presser-foot. Thread is supplied from a reel (r)."

(Editor's Note: My Nurenburg Princess operates with a chain stitch, though I haven't seen any different designs to see if they utilise a shuttle as described above.)

Carol located an advertisement showing the man offered for sale by a C Lohmann of 22 Jewin Street, London EC in 1894. Though by 1894 Lohmann, this time operating from a 36 Aldersgate St, London EC address, was advertising the "New Patent 'Princess' children's hand machine" which, he claimed, is the "best present for a girl" and "a perfect chain-stitch sewing machine in miniature, equally as strongly made, and producing as good sewing, as a full size machine." He also announced he had been appointed sole wholesale agent by Messrs Steinfeldt & Blasberg, Hanover.

I know of a clown in America; a French dealer told me he once saw

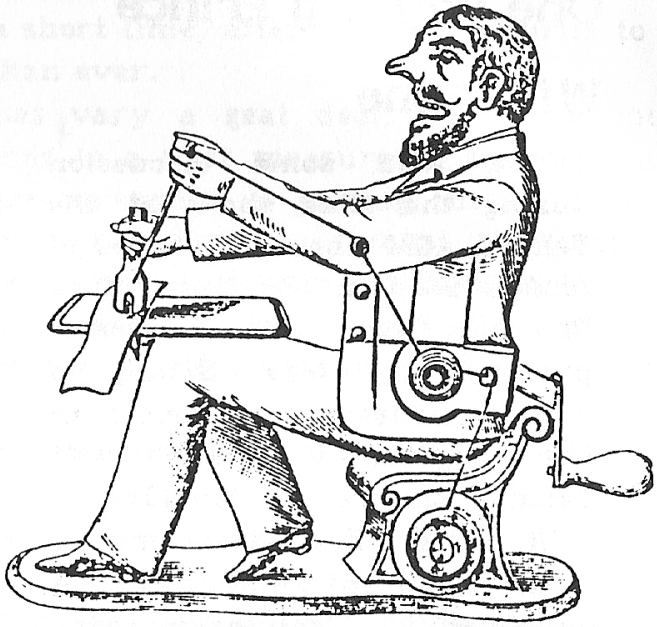


Three of the cast-iron toys offered by agent C. Lohmann, London



A Novel Toy Sewing Machine.

MR. C. LOHMANN, of 22, Jewin Street, E.C., has been appointed wholesale agent for a novel line of goods, viz. small toy machines of fancy design.



We show herewith one of the designs, but numerous others are in preparation. These machines are intended as presents for children, and they produce a really capital chain stitch.

a cat design; and the one we usually see is the cast-iron model of the Princess (sometimes called the Lady). But has anyone seen the male figure, the subject of the original No. 10,172 patent? CH and MS

Todd Thoughts

THE ADVENT OF the Todd's Champion of England at Christie's -- see auction reports this issue -- prompted me to drag MS's example out of store and wonder even more about its heritage.

All examples which have come to light -- four to my knowledge -- have had the name American Sewing Machine Company stamped on the shuttle cover. This company imported machines and acted as general agents for some British makes, operating from an address in Ludgate Hill, London, and I've always assumed that this particular machine was manufacturered in the Fen country (simply because

three of the four examples have turned up there) and sold in London through the American SM Co.

Now I doubt that.

When I unearthed MS's version, the first thing I noted was the considerable difference in the decoration on the machine from that on the cast-iron base. There is a similarity in design, but the gold-paint shades are completely different, suggesting that they were painted in two different factories.

With the machine removed from the base it began to take on certain American characteristics. The main frame has the shield at its middle point, a feature popular with Bartlett and other USA factories in the 1870s.

So the present theory -- and it's no more than that -- is that the American SM Co imported the heads from the States where it was possibly part of a treadle machine, and had its own bases cast up and decorated locally. Then all it had to do was name the machine with a suitable name that would appeal to Victorian England.

There was a Todd machine sold in America. It was made by the A.G. Mason Manufacturing Company in Massachucetts, one of the most prolific of all USA makers, his products ranging from the Florence to the Farmers' Bride.

I know that the foregoing is worth very little in the way of evidence. But it's interesting to note that Mason did produce a couple of machines with a near-full-circle shuttle action similar to that of the Champion of England

GF

Legal Aid

NOWADAYS WE ARE told that a large percentage of the cost of any item is tied to advertising and packaging. In the early years of the SM industry in America customers were obviously paying for big legal bills.

In the four years beginning 1858 no less than $20,000 was spent by manufacturer's fighting through the courts simply on patent law regarding cloth-feed mechanisms.

Multiply that figure for all the other mechanical gizmos on a sewing machine and it's a wonder that companies had any cash left for developing their products.

GF



NOVICE collectors often pose the question of exactly what they should be looking for. The best advice is always not to rush around buying everything in sight unless you have some idea of ra y values or someone who is experienced to advise you.

One Swiss collector who is not a member of the Society (I not the Englisher good for the magazine speaking) obviously decided to specialise early on in his collecting, and announced on his first visit to this country that he was only interested in small machines.

On the next visit he had narrowed his quide-lines further and had decided to become an expert on Weirs and was, therefore, only adding machines by that manufacturer to his collection in future. Fair enough; if you think about it that still leaves plenty of scope with the many different designs our James used to decorate his models.

Things then got a little odd as the strictures on just what was collectable closed right in. Next it was Weirs again, but only in bo (very special boxes, not common ones).

Last month our specialist was over here again. He was seen at a London antique market loading a selection of 10 Singer look-alikes into the back of his car. Our reporter does not go into detail as to whether they were in boxes.

GF

The Merritt System

ALTHOUGH IT WOULD seem that Isaac Merritt Singer had little interest in the running of his company -- being happy to pick up the dividends and leave the day-to-day business to his partner, Edward Clark -- it's certain that his choice of an associate was a good one for the

company flourished like no other until the Japanese invasion of the 1970s.

A lot of the credit for its success must go to the salesmen employed. And by all accounts they were a pretty enterprising lot.

Partly due to a super-weak dollar at the time of the Civil War, Singer went into export early. And they went for the far-flung market as well as the more obvious. By 1861 the company's exports were greater than the home market

In Africa, where Singers were sold even before Stanley went looking for Livingstone, the salesman found some resistance to the product because the machines were not noisy enough. The tribes worked on the theory that the more noise the more production, so the astute representative spent his evenings loosening every non-vital screw on his products so that they really rattled in use.

Another rep, attempting to sell a batch of treadles, found that his primitive customers did not have the hand-and-foot co-ordination necessary to work them. He simply shipped them back home and supplied hand machines instead

Special machines were developed for Japan with longer-than-standard stitches -- so that Kimonos made with them could easily be taken apart for washing -- and the inhabitants were taught to work the models via a series of special radio programmes.

But it didn't always go the Singer way. Russia was seen as a great potential outlay and pioneer salesman George Neidlinger, who had worked his way up the ladder from being a factory water boy to chief overseas salesman, was given the job of opening up the Soviet market. He made a great start by supplying the Tsar with a quarter of a million uniforms for the Army, all made on Singer machines, and opened a giant Singer plant near Moscow. Singer shops soon stretched clear across Russia to Vladivostok.

All went well until the outbreak of the first World War when the Soviet government seized the entire Singer development, valued even then at an investment of $115,000,000.

But to my mind the greatest of all the Singer salesmen was an un-named, unsung, hero whose beat was downtown Indonesia. He suffered many broken bones in an accident and was confined to the local hospital. By the time he had recovered he'd sold eight machines to his doctors and nurses.

GF

The Collectors

Being the first of an occasional series spotlighting the machines owned by members.

WHILST SOME collectors scour the entire country and beyond in search of new machines, others restrict themselves to their local area and often assemble a collection that would be the envy of more-travelled enthusiasts.

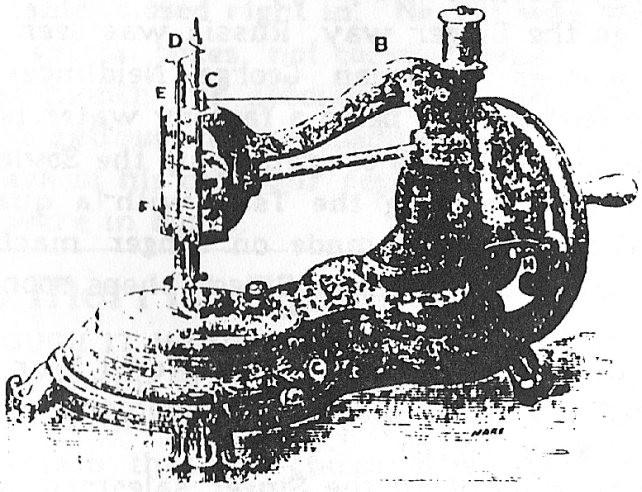
Ruth and Norman Attwell are a case in point. Most of their collecting has been done around the small Essex town of Witham where they live and this minute catchment area has produced at least 20 machines that would be the envy of many.

First, and perhaps the most interesting, is an Albion sold by J H Smith and Co. It was made by the Combination Sewing Machine Company, whose named derives from the fact that the model can produce four different types of stitch. More information on the Albion will appear in the next issue of ISMACS.

The second machine in the Attwell collection which caught my eye was a pretty little National on which I have no further information, although it was possibly a product of the Chicago-based National Sewing Machine Co which later merged with New Home.

Other noteworthy machines being cared for at Witham include a Milton -- one of the Britannia Co's Jones clones which is awaiting restoration -- and a pretty Thomas which incorporates a holly-leaf design in its casting.

MS



THE MILTON

IS THE SIMPLEST

SHUTTLE LOCK-STITCH

HAND MACHINE.

PRICE £4 4s.

Liberal terms to Agents and Shippers.

BRITANNIA COMPANY,

COLCHESTER.

Makers of Wheeler, Singer, and Wilcox systems.

Too Late

EDITOR Maggie Snell can often be found haunting the London auction rooms, picking up machines for foreign collectors or just generally being inquisitive about what is likely to appear.



But she missed out last month by not getting to Christie's often enough. The go-ahead West London company publish a give-away magazine called Rostrum which is left in the foyer for visitors to pick up.

In the last issue was a competition with a £25 voucher prize. All one had to do was guess what the strange device in the photograph was used for to be eligible for the money. The picture was of the Beckwith which Maggie had bought for a German collector and carried away only a couple of weeks before.,

Elated, she started to fill in the form only to see in the small print that the contest had closed just two days earlier. The winner was an M H Wilks of Anglesey but, just for fun, Maggie asked the Christie's Press Office what non-sewing-machine enthusiasts made of this strange object.

Guesses ranged between apple and potato peelers, yarn winders, can openers and fishing-line re-winders. But my prize for the most-imaginative guess would have gone to the person who suggested an instrument for tightening up wire fences.

Probably the next contest will feature an 18th century East Lithuanian shepherd's whistle holder and that might just stump everybody.

(Beckwith Picture courtesy Christie's) GF

Egg Race

QUITE THE MOST entertaining programme on television is the BBC2 offering, The Great Egg Race.

The programme has come along way from its original concept of a simple competition to see how far an egg could be carried on a device powered by a rubber band.

Presently, three teams of three ore given a task each week -- anything from a giant paper aeroplane to a d-i-y fork-lift truck --

and then given marks dependent upon their success. The winners of each week's heats go through to a final where the grand bodgers are awarded a trophy. A teaser glimpse of this award was shown last week and it seems to be a bicyle joined, via a series of links and gears, to two miniatute sewing machine treadles.

Heinz Wolfe, who conducts the programme, is quoted as saying that the biggest problem is thinking of problems to put to the teams.

Well, why not have them make a sewing machine? The teams are usually given a variety of materials to work with and I don't think that it would be impossible to fashion a crude type of chain-stitch machine with a Wilcox rocking arm, but with a simple friction-ty tensioner made out of Dexion.

On second thoughts, accurate timing and keeping the needle moving in a constant plane might be difficult. So don't worry; this won't be a competition for next year's agm. GF

Family Home

EVERY COLLECTOR is faced with the problem of what to do with those turn-of-the-century Singers and the like that one buys either in the first flush of collecting fever or because someone, knowing your interest in old machines, has picked up for you as a favour.

For a short time it looked as if the answer could be at hand.

Almost every state in America has at least one (some run to six) give-away antique papers listing fairs, swap meets and auctions. These are mainly monthly publications, and to fill in the space between the advertisements, collectors and dealers are welcome to contribute pieces about odd-ball collectables.

One such paper, circulating in Southern California, gave over its centre spread to sewing machines with an article about their history and, inevitably for an American publication, details of the present worth of various models.

And that's where it gets interesting. For, after dealing with the entire history of the sewing machine in a few paragraphs we get to the nitty gritty. Seems that collector Carole Wilcox, who wrote the piece, values her 1890 Singer at over £100 and the ubiquitous Singer toys at only a liitle less.

The thought of spending a day at the boot fairs, filling a container with machines, selling them to Miss Wilcox and then retiring to a

Pacific island on the proceeds, is very appealing. I therefore wrote off and offered up to 500 of the machines at a knock-down price of only £75.

For some strange reason I haven't yet had a reply. GF

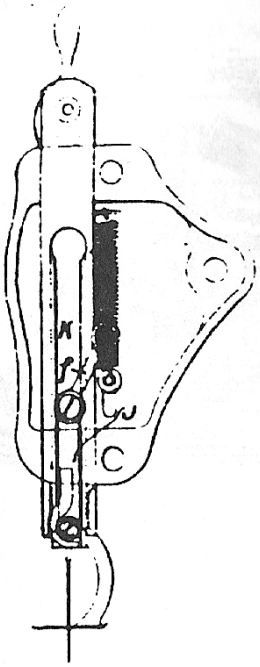
Hand Made

ALTHOUGH SOME Saville-Row tailors will still tell you that their very best suits are hand sewn, thus suggesting more care and workmanship, one of the first protagonists of the machine-made three-piece was, in fact, a top London tailor.

It was in 1852 that the then young Queen Victoria and her consort Albert visited the premises of Messrs Nicoll "the renown tailor of London".

He showed the royal couple a machine-made suit claiming that it was the equal of a machine-sewn version. Nicoll's claim was that "no result at all disadvantagous to the craft will follow the introduction of the machine". GF

Bradbury Again



IT'S ALL RATHER embarrassing. At around the time GF was writing the Bradbury supplement for ISMACS 8 he was spending his workshop time doing a sympathetic restoration to the odd-ball machine that was displayed at the AGM.

The then unknown model featured a six-inch-long needle driven by a lever from the extended head of the machine.

The embarrassment comes with finding a patent application dated Jan 21, 1874 which shows that the machine was patented by the prolific Mr Bradbury.

As those who remember the machine will notice, there are some slight differences in the patent application drawing shown and the machine on show at Ironbridge. But clearly the mystery sewer owed a lot to GFB even if he sold the patent for manufacture by someone else. MS

Help Wanted

I HAD A strange foreboding as I listened to GF, at the AGM, congratulating members on the amount of copy that they had produced for the magazine.

He was asking for trouble. Since then the flood of contributions has slowed to a trickle -- lots of promises and offers, of course, but very little solid written material.

I know that people have been on holiday, but this issue has not been so easy to put together because of a lack of choice.

So please make the effort. Tell us all about your latest finds etc. MS

We Get Letters

From D Cowan, 114 Seaside, Eastbourne, Sussex

Modern dealer Mr Cowan kindly sent me some samples from his stock of old sewing-machine needles. He says he can also get 16 x 1 early Jones hand straight shank; 13 x 1 and 12 x 1 fiddle-bed Singer needles for the 339 system. If any of your machines are missing a suitable needle, drop him a line. He may be able to help.

HAMBURG-COLLECTOR Rudiger Kummel sent us a letter with this delightful letter-head together with a photograph of colourful and attractive tins that many German SM-manufactures supplied filled with small tools.

Unfortunately his colour photograph would not reproduce clearly



here, but Rudiger would like to buy and/or exchange similar tins, preferably German, with our members.

From Art Chodrof, California, USA

The "News" is improving with age, just like good wine and old sewing machines. I would be very interested in hearing from anybody wishing to sell TOY sewing machines. There are not too many old or unusual ones out here in the wild west. Best Regards.

From Claire and Ian MacGillicuddy, Australia

Very many apologies for not being in touch earlier, but it has been a hectic year for us since leaving England.

We have now bought land and are living in a caravan on it. We plan to start building a house soon. Also on June 16th we had a son, Kieran Paul, which has also taken a lot of our time. We hope to be able to settle down to some sort of a routine, when we will be able to devote some time to our sewing-machine collecting.

To date we have visited antique shops, but have not found one decent machine, only the common turn-of-the-century ones, some at ridiculous prices. We have not yet found anybody else collecting machines, but they must be out there.

Please note our change of address and enclosed is our subscription. We look forward to the next magazine, and think they are greatly improved over the last year. Well done.

New Members

BRIAN TILSTON, 6 Fluin Lane, Frodsham, via Warrington, Cheshire

Mary Weaver, 509 Cherry Street, Grand Forks, ND58201. USA

Change of Address

Margaret & Paul Brearley, Ivy Cottage, Church End, Cawood, Selby, North Yorkshire, YO8 0SN

Martin & Jennifer Gregory, 20 Christchurch Road, Winchester, Hants SO23 9SS (0962 61489)

Ian and Claire MacGillicuddy, Lot 12, Cedar Ridge, Blaxland Ridge 2758, NSW, Australia

Gene Bishop, 2825 Flagmaker Drive, Falls Church, VA 22042, USA,

Committee

Sec/Treas: Maggie Snell, 48 Nightingale House, Thomas More Street, St Katharines-by-the-Tower, London E1 9UB. (01 488 0474)
Research Ed: Carol Head, 3 Windwhistle Way, Alderbury Park, Alderbury, Salisbury, Wilts (0722 710988)
Chairman: Brian Matthews, 8 The Vale, Oakley, Hants. (0256 781834)
Members: Bernard Williams, 80 Manor Rd, Burton-on-Trent, Staffs
Diana Herbert, 22 Willsbridge Hill, Willsbridge, Bristol, Avon

Advertisements

** **Wanted:** Please can anyone help? I need a bobbin and shuttle for a Princess of Wales. Mrs Rita Heath, Tel: 04252 5559.

** **Toy sewing machines wanted** by Art Chodroff, 2805 Motor Avenue, Los Angeles, California 90064 (213 838-2288).

** **Sewing Machine Tins wanted** for tools etc; preferably German, but tell me what you have for sale or exchange. Rudiger Kummel, Wietersheim 15, 2000 Hamburg 61, W Germany. (040/55 003 54).

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

** **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, Middx.

** **It's six months** since I added a new machine to my collection and I'd be happy to hear from anyone who has unusual models I can buy or exchange. I also buy and sell machines from the common to t rarest. Contact me with your wants list and duplicates. Maggie Snell Telephone: 01 488 0484.

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