



THE GALPIN SOCIETY

FOR THE STUDY OF MUSICAL INSTRUMENTS

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Henry Distin label, barrel no.3, George Hicks piano, n.d. (see p.5)

Photo: Tim Israel. With the kind permission of The Musical Museum, Brentford

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THE GALPIN SOCIETY

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The *Galpin Society Newsletter* is edited by Lance Whitehead and copy-edited by Maggie Kilbey. Opinions expressed by authors in this newsletter are not specifically endorsed by The Galpin Society.

Increase in subscriptions for the 2023 journal onwards

As you may have noticed if you have visited the website recently, rising costs mean that to balance the books we will have to increase the subscription, not for the 2022 journal, which will appear in March/April, but for the 2023 issue, to appear in the Spring of 2023. The current rates, **to be paid by 1 March 2022 at the latest if you want to be sure of your copy of the 2022 Journal (vol. 75)**, are:

Individual, UK: £30, outside UK: £36
Institution, UK: £40, outside UK: £46
Student/under 25, UK: £15, outside UK: £18
Joint members, UK: £32, outside UK: £38

For the 2023 Journal (vol. 76), for which we will send out reminders from April, but which in fact you can already pre-pay for at: <https://www.galpinsociety.org/subscriptions.htm>, the rates will be:

Individual, UK: £34, outside UK: £42
Institution, UK: £44, outside UK: £54
Student/under 25, UK: £17, outside UK: £21
Joint members, UK: £36, outside UK: £44

In fact we still have back issues of recent Journals (and at last count, at least one copy of every back issue except 1962 – a vintage year perhaps?). Just contact me at the new address: [admin\[at\]galpinsociety.org](mailto:admin[at]galpinsociety.org) to discuss completing your set. It's very easy to pay nowadays, by Paypal.

Chris Goodwin

EDITORIAL

Welcome to the February Newsletter, which contains some important information on subscription rates (see p.2) and the Galpin Conference (see p.4) , as well as two very interesting articles: one by Bernhard Fischer on the Andreas Berr lute in the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston; and one by Nick Nourse, entitled 'The Documentary Evidence of Bristol's Portable Street Barrel Piano Makers'. I am always looking for material for the Newsletter, so please feel free to send me contributions for the Summer issue.

We hope that the 75th *Galpin Society Journal* will be published next month, and I am delighted by the wide variety of topics. Although unintentional, most papers fall into two broad themes: collectors and collecting; and instruments from cultures around the world. Two papers of note to the Galpin Society are: 'The Galpin Society Permanent Collection' by Arnold Myers; and 'Francis William Galpin and the Recorder' by Douglas MacMillan. It is encouraging that as many as five papers discuss instruments from diverse musical traditions. These include: Henry Johnson's 'Chee Kung Tong and Diasporic Sound in New Zealand: The Wellington Chinese Masonic Society's Collection of Musical Instruments'; Margaret Kartomi's 'The Ancestral *Gamolan* Xylophone and its Recent Transformation in Indonesia's Lampung Province, Sumatra: 1980s–2000s'; Stewart Carter's 'The Side-blown *Abeng*: Symbol of Resistance and Power for the Maroons of Jamaica'; Amadeu Corbera's 'The Social History of Glass Trumpets in Mallorca'; and 'Mechanised Shawms: The Case of the Chinese *Suona*' by Núria Bonet. While many of the papers concern the preservation of musical heritage, the use of certain materials, notably ivory, and wood from endangered tree species is directly relevant to the preservation of our world's wildlife and habitats. Brian Applegate's article 'Quantifying the Important Physical Properties of Traditional and Alternative Wood Species for Guitar Bridges' looks at how guitar makers, in particular, may seek out more environmentally friendly woods without compromising the acoustical characteristics of their instruments. Another paper focusing on wood is an important paper by Stewart Pollens, 'Dendrochronology and Violins: Some Caveats'. Two further contributions are 'George Bernard Shaw and Early Music' by Stewart Pollens, and Edward Wright's 'William and Adam Leversidge, Virginal Makers: An Update from the Archives'. I would like to thank all the authors for their contributions to our anniversary volume.

I have received correspondence from over 20 authors intimating their intention of submitting an article for possible inclusion in the 2023 *GSJ*. As always, the deadline for receipt of articles is 1 June for consideration for the following year's journal and, at the submission stage, any images should be at a low resolution and included in the Word document itself rather than as additional attachments. This makes the peer review process much easier for me and the readers. The latest version of the author guidelines is available on the Galpin website. It is not a prerequisite that authors are members of the Society, although we are always looking for new members.

Lance Whitehead



The Society's 2022 Conference and AGM

EDINBURGH

23–25 June 2022

<http://www.euchmi.ed.ac.uk/gxtp.html>

The Galpin Society's biennial conference will be held in Edinburgh on Thursday June 23, Friday June 24 and Saturday June 25.

The meeting will be hosted by the University of Edinburgh and will be centred on St Cecilia's Hall Concert Room and Music Museum.

The prospect of a traditional in-person conference has engendered strong international interest in the Edinburgh Conference on Musical Instruments; no doubt the postponement from 2021 has added to the organological research ripe for presentation. So, we will have a full programme of papers on a varied array of musical instrument topics, including a good number on the Conference theme, Domestic Music Making and its Instruments. The Conference, organised with the University of Edinburgh, will be enriched with concerts, instrument demonstrations and a banquet. The programme and booking details will be placed on the Conference website in the coming weeks.

On the Saturday afternoon (25 June) the Society's Annual General Meeting will be held. This will include reports on activities and discussion of future directions. The meeting will incorporate elections to the Committee in which all paid-up members can participate.

Accommodation can be booked along with Conference booking. Please put the dates in your diary and think about travel arrangements. For further information on the Conference or the AGM, please contact Arnold Myers:

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The Documentary Evidence of Bristol's Portable Street Barrel Piano Makers

My colleague, Tim Israel, headed the (many) notes he has recently completed on Bristol's nineteenth-century portable street barrel piano makers thus: 'In the past there has been some uncertainty about the family relationships, and other details of the Bristol Barrel Piano makers.' I would have to agree. For instance, a reliable account for the name of Henry Distin, who joined Bristol's street barrel piano makers in the 1840s, but who has often been confused with the brass playing Distin family, has been needed for some time. The tendency of families to name sons after their father's father, and to frequently move home, can also be a source of frustration and uncertainty. Our notes, made from multiple documented sources — census returns, the registers for births, baptisms, marriages and deaths, street directories, etc. — and this article, seek to remove some of the confusion without repeating too many facts already published on these matters.

Foremost amongst Britain's nineteenth-century makers of the barrel pianos is the name of Hicks. The Hicks family were for many years attributed with inventing the portable street barrel piano that now commonly bears their name. Today, opinion remains divided as to the instrument's country of origin, with England and Italy being the primary contenders.¹ What is clear is that the first British-made portable street barrel pianos can be traced to Bristol and to the Hicks and Taylor families. This study begins with the Hicks family.

Head of the Hicks family was Peter Hicks (1745–1802) from Tytherington, Gloucestershire. Peter Hicks has always been described as a cabinet maker, although I have previously speculated

that Peter Hicks might be responsible for the clavichord in the Victoria and Albert Museum attributed to an unknown keyboard maker bearing his name. Francis Knights, in *Clavichord International*, has been unable to make further progress on the instrument's maker.² Bristol's 1781 and 1784 *Poll Records* for St Augustine confirm Peter Hicks as a cabinet maker at these points; in the latter his name is spelled 'Hickes'. In 1782 he married Jerusha Townsend (bap. 1757), also of Tytherington, and together they produced five children including John and Joseph, both of whom have long been known as musical instrument makers. That would be the end of the entry for Peter Hicks were it not for a newspaper report in March 1839 of the death of one Sarah Hickes, age 83 and 'widow of Mr Peter Hickes, organ-builder, of this city.'³ (See Figure 1.) Church documents record the name as 'Hicks'. The 1839 newspaper places Sarah Hickes/Hicks in Brandon Street, off Limekiln Lane, Bristol, and the street in which Peter Hicks and family lived in 1791.⁴ Although it has not been possible to prove that Sarah Hickes was married to Peter Hicks the cabinet maker — we believe Jerusha Hicks died around 1792 and that Peter remarried Sarah Webb (1756–), also from Tytherington, on 16 November 1794 — the coincidences seem too great to ignore. No records have been found that show how or when Peter Hicks might have added organ building to his cabinet making career, but he would not be unique in combining the two activities. Within this study and within Bristol, other cabinet makers will be seen to have switched to organ building (and piano making), and the same pairing of trades has been seen in Whitehead and Nex's examination

¹ Antonio Latanza, *Il piano a cilindro* (Rome, Italy: Aracne, 2009), p.98. See also Nicholas Nourse, 'Musical Migrations: the origins of the portable street barrel piano', *The Galpin Society Journal*, LXVII (2014), p.50.

² Francis Knights, 'The Peter Hicks Clavichord in the Victoria and Albert Museum', *Clavichord International*, XXV/1 (May 2021), pp.7–8; and Nourse (2014), p.50.

³ *Bristol Mercury* [hereafter *BM*], 9 March 1839; and *Bristol Times and Mirror*, 9 March 1839.

⁴ *Church of England Baptisms*, St Augustine the Less, Bristol, 24 November 1791.

of the Sun Fire Office insurance records in London in the eighteenth century.⁵ Moreover, Richard Seede, ‘Organ-builder, and Piano-forte maker’ was in College Street, parallel to Limekiln Lane, from 1785 to 1817,⁶ and he provided the apprenticeship to John Barrett (1771–), ‘Organ-builder, tuner, &c.’ and ‘Harpsichord & Piano Forte Tuner’, also of

Limekiln Lane from about 1795 to 1805.⁷ Either could have been Hicks’s tutor, or an employer sub-contracting out work. In total, the facts and coincidences point to the cabinet-making Peter Hicks also being an organ builder in his later years and was therefore the first member of the Hicks family to make musical instruments.

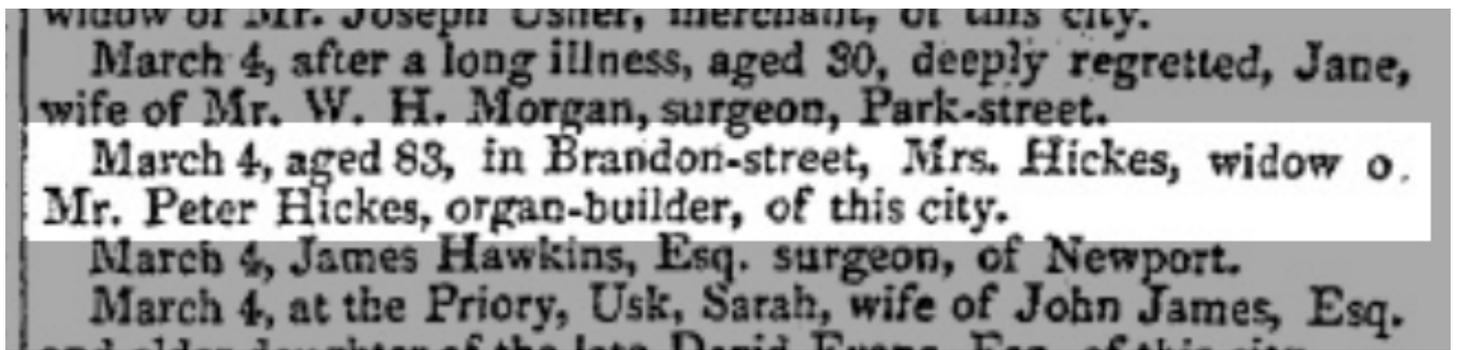


Figure 1. ‘Births, Deaths, Marriages and Obituaries’ *Bristol Mercury*, 9 March 1839. British Library Newspapers, link.gale.com/apps/doc/Y3206659373/BNCN?u=univbri&sid=bookmark-BNCN&xid=7ba39b99, accessed 20 January 2022.

Peter and Jerusha Hicks had two sons, Joseph and John, both of whom are recorded as musical instrument makers in two official documents from 1812: *The Poll Register* for the parish of St Michael; and the *Register Book of Burgesses*.⁸ The 12 October entry in the latter reads: ‘Joseph Hicks Musical Instrument Maker is admitted into the liberty of this City for that he is the Son of Peter Hicks Cabinet maker dec[eased] [...]’ An identical entry is recorded for John (1789–), hereafter referred to as John (snr.). Neither brother is recorded as being apprenticed to a cabinet maker, organ builder, or to any other trade and their training in musical instrument making is most likely to have come from within the family, from Peter Hicks, organ builder.

John Hicks (snr.) was born in February 1789 and baptised on 27 December the same year. These details and the records from 1812 aside, nothing further is known about him. The fact that his brother was initiated into the local Freemasons (Royal York Lodge of Union) on 25 May 1815, and John was not, may suggest that John had by then either moved away, or had died.

Far more is known about Joseph (1787–1844), hereafter Joseph (snr.), who married Maria Williams in 1811. Together they produced eight children, four of whom — Maria, George, Joseph, and John — were later associated with the family business of making portable barrel

⁵ Lance Whitehead and Jenny Nex, ‘The Insurance of Musical London and the Sun Fire Office 1710–1779’, Supplementary Material <http://www.galpainsociety.org/supplementary%20material.htm>, accessed 12 November 2021. See for example: Robert Addison (1767); William Broadhurst (1767); and Thomas Dodds (1777).

⁶ *Matthews’s Bristol Directory*, also *Mathews’s Bristol Directory* and *Matthews’s New Bristol Directory*, multiple editions. Hereafter, *Matthews’s*.

⁷ *Matthews’s*; and *Country Apprentices 1710–1808*, Bristol, *Findmypast*.

⁸ *The Bristol Poll Book* [1812] (Bristol: J Mills, 1818), pp.48–49; and *Register Book of Burgesses* [1812], p.187.

pianos.⁹ Joseph (snr.) is recorded in successive editions of *Matthews's Bristol Directory* from 1816 to 1829 as 'Hicks, Joseph, musical instrument maker or organ builder, 11 Griffin Lane.'¹⁰ During this period, he produced parlour barrel organs, one of which was dated by auctioneers to around 1821 and carries an engraved brass plate: 'Joseph Hicks, Organ Builder, Bristol.'¹¹ An almost identical instrument in private hands has a label on the barrel, confirmed as 1821.¹² Although these instruments were parlour organs, and would have been commissioned and expensive items, there is a belief in the trade that the Hicks family also produced portable street barrel organs.¹³ Evidence for this is limited, but in Henry Mayhew's *London Labour and the London Poor* an Italian street musician refers to Britain's early nineteenth-century street barrel organs as 'the old-fashioned one made in Bristol, with gold organ-pipe[s] in front.'¹⁴ An instrument of this type can (just) be seen in Samuel Colman's 1824 painting of the Bristol's annual St James's Fair.¹⁵ The Hicks family's move into street barrel piano making would therefore seem a reasonable business move.

In 1830, Joseph (snr.) is recorded in both St Thomas Street and Trenchard Street, then in 1832 at 3 Augustine's Place, all the while listed as an 'organ builder.'¹⁶ But from 1832 to 1838 he described himself as 'piano-forte maker, and tuner' of 16 Lower Park Row, and from 1842 to his death in 1844 as 'manufacturer of portable piano-fortes, and barrel organs' at 17 Lower

Maudlin Street.¹⁷ The 1842–44 entries are the first explicit records of the Hicks family producing portable street barrel pianos.

Matthews's Bristol Directory, like any other street directory of the time, listed a person or business from information supplied by the subject, either in response to a canvasser calling at the door, or by returning a slip of paper left at the house. As an historical source, therefore, they cannot be taken as unquestioningly reliable; see, for example, the two addresses above for 1830. One explanation for this is that the records refer to separate home and business addresses, and this will remain one of the many uncertainties we were hoping to redress. What we do know is that until 1842, all the above addresses were in St Augustine's parish, to the west and north-west of the Draw Bridge (often taken to be the centre of the old city). The move to Lower Maudlin Street, although not far geographically, may be significant in that it placed Joseph (snr.) in the parish of St James, and the part of the city that was home to Bristol's immigrant Italian community. Aside from the claims by the Italians to have invented the portable street barrel piano, throughout the nineteenth century the player of the instrument was commonly an itinerant Italian street musician.

Before concluding the principal entry on Joseph (snr.), it is recorded that he took an apprentice. Like Joseph (snr.)'s father, Peter, the apprentice's father was a cabinet maker: '[14

⁹ Much of the family tree data in this paper has been researched on the genealogical websites *Ancestry* <https://www.ancestry.co.uk> and *Findmypast* <https://www.findmypast.co.uk>. Footnotes to these sources are lengthy and hard to read; for clarity, the sources hereafter are noted in the main text.

¹⁰ *Matthews's*.

¹¹ Lot 539, Clevedon Salerooms, 26 November 2009 <http://www.clevedon-salerooms.com/lot2.aspx>, accessed 28 November 2009.

¹² Mechanical Music Digest <https://www.mmdigest.com/Gallery/Pictures/smithcPipes.html>, accessed 8 June 2021.

¹³ Personal communication with Richard Dean, of Dean Organs, Whitchurch, 21 August 2021.

¹⁴ Henry Mayhew, *London Labour and the London Poor*, Vol. III (London: Griffin, Bohn, and Company, 1861), p.174.

¹⁵ Samuel Colman, 'St James's Fair' (1824), painting (oil on canvas), Bristol Museum and Art Gallery K353 <http://museums.bristol.gov.uk/details.php?irn=116178>

¹⁶ *Pigot's Directory of Gloucestershire* (1830); and *Matthews's*.

¹⁷ *Matthews's*.

January 1826] Stephen Lewis son of Stephen Lewis of the City of Bristol Cabinet Maker [illegible] to Joseph Hicks of the same City Musical Instrument Maker and Maria his wife. Friends to find app[arel] & washing.’¹⁸ The last sentence tells us that Lewis had to provide his own clothes and do his own washing and is a reminder that the apprentice not only worked with the master but lived with him and his family.

Stephen Lewis (c1808–) resurfaces in 1839 as an ‘organ builder’ living in The Dings, then on the eastern edge of the city.¹⁹ A year later, a Stephen Lewis, ‘cabinet maker’, is recorded as the father of William Lewis, ‘piano forte maker’ of Broadmead.²⁰ No other record of William Lewis can be found, and the dates may suggest that either he was a brother of Stephen (b.1808), or his son and marrying young. In the 1841 census, the Hicks apprentice Stephen is listed as a ‘Music Ins M’ in Beaufort Place, St Pauls, Bristol, to the east of St James’s parish. Ten year later he is shown as a ‘Musical Instrument Maker’, now living with his family at 15 St John Street, Clerkenwell, London. The primary resident of the Clerkenwell address was Daniel Imhof, ‘Organ Builder master employing 6 men.’ Imhof reappears shortly in this article in association with Joseph senior’s son, John Hicks (jnr.). Lewis continued in business as an organ builder at least until 1861, then at 8 Diana Place, St Pancras; another son, Frederick, is also shown at that time as following him in the business.

Joseph (snr.) is also said to have provided an apprenticeship to William Freeman Arkell (1789–1826), but no records have been found to support this.²¹ All we can say is that Arkell is recorded as being an organ builder in Limekiln Lane in 1826, the same street as Peter Hicks and John Barrett.²² In addition, Joseph Grant (c1788–1854), another cabinet maker, is rumoured to have worked with or for the Hicks family. Again, this is unconfirmed, but he is clearly associated with the city’s other portable barrel piano makers, the Taylor family, details of whom and of which will follow in the second part of this article.²³

In May 1837, Joseph Hicks (snr.) sold his ‘stock-in-trade’ at auction from 16 Griffin Lane under the heading of a cessation of business.²⁴ The move may have been precipitated by the death of his wife on 18 April 1837. He promptly remarried and the newspapers recorded the union of Joseph Hicks, ‘organ builder’, and Mrs Crow (sometimes Crowe) in July 1837.²⁵ It did not last and by 4 October she had left him and returned to her old address.²⁶ The short-lived marriage may also explain why Joseph senior’s business is shown in *Matthews’s* entries as continuing until his death in 1844, and why a business partnership between Joseph senior and Joseph junior was apparently active until 7 December 1843 when another newspaper entry announced that it had been formally dissolved.²⁷

¹⁸ *Apprentice Book, 1820–1830* [Bristol], p.276.

¹⁹ *Church of England Baptisms*, St Philip and Jacob, 7 February 1836.

²⁰ *Church of England Marriages and Banns*, St John the Baptist, 2 July 1840.

²¹ Richard Dean, 10 August 2021.

²² *Church of England Baptisms*, 10 September 1826, St Augustine-the-Less, Bristol.

²³ Richard Dean, 13 June 2021.

²⁴ *BM*, 6 May 1837.

²⁵ *BM*, 15 July 1837.

²⁶ *BM*, 14 October 1837.

²⁷ *BM*, 6 January 1844.

Moving on to the children, George Hicks (1818–63) was the second child and first-born son of Joseph (snr.) and Maria. George, ‘organ builder’, married Harriet Baker at St Andrew’s in Clifton (Bristol) in 1838 and is recorded in that part of the city in 1838 and 1839.²⁸ In 1840 the couple had moved to Pennywell Road, to the east of the city centre.²⁹ Clifton, as it is today, was a fashionable and well-to-do area of Bristol in 1840; Pennywell Road was not — and is still not. George and wife moved again, and between 1841 and 1844 George is shown as ‘a piano-forte maker and organ builder’ at 14 Charles Street, and within the Italian enclave of St James.³⁰ After the death of his father in 1844, George and Harriet moved to London, to 13 Penton Street, Pentonville, then to 17 Chapel Street, Caledonian Road, Islington in 1845, a street renamed as Bryan Street where the family were living in 1847.³¹ Islington, along with Clerkenwell was, like St James’s parish in Bristol, London’s Little Italy in the nineteenth century.

In 1847 George and Harriet Hicks emigrated to America, and on 21 October 1847 they arrived in New York aboard the *Margaret Evans*.³² Within a year George was listed as an ‘organ builder’ at 101 Jay Street, Brooklyn, New York.³³ Contrary to the trend of living close to or within the local Italian communities, New York’s Little Italy is

and was centred on Lower Manhattan, with the East River separating it from Brooklyn. Yet George remained in Brooklyn: in 1850–51 he was a ‘cylinder piano maker’ of ‘15 Degraw n court’; Ord-Hume states he was at Chatham Square, corner of East Broadway, later 4½ East Broadway in 1856, confirmed by the *New York 1859 City Directory*.³⁴ George died in 1863, and despite producing nine children, none are believed to have followed him in the family business.³⁵

Joseph Hicks, second son and twin of Mary, was born in 1822. Hereafter he is referred to as Joseph (jnr.), and he first appears in Bristol’s records as a ‘piano-forte maker’ at 17 Montague Street, St James’s parish, between 1839 and 1841.³⁶ On 22 February 1845 he married Sophia Caruthers, and from 1845 to 1847 he was at the same Montague Street address but now listed as a ‘manufacturer of portable pianos-fortes, and barrel organs.’³⁷ It is worth noting that the clear reference to making portable pianos only occurred after his father had died and may imply that Joseph Hicks senior had been the principal producer of that instrument in the family. Around 1846 or 1847 and until 1849, Joseph (jnr.) and family moved to London, to his brother George’s old address at 13 Penton Street.³⁸ They then moved to Kirby Street, Hatton Garden, still

²⁸ *Church of England Marriages and Banns*, 23 April 1838, Clifton, Gloucestershire, 23 April 1838: and *Civil Registration Birth Index*, Q3, 1838, Clifton, Gloucestershire.

²⁹ *Church of England Baptisms*, 5 April 1840, Holy Trinity, St Philip, Bristol.

³⁰ Matthews’s.

³¹ *Post Office London Directory* (1845); and Lot 590, Skinner [auctioneers], 28 October 2007 <https://www.skinnerinc.com/auctions/2383/lots/590>, accessed 8 June 2021; and *Church of England Baptisms*, 11 July 1847, All Saints, Islington, London.

³² *Arriving Passenger and Immigration Lists, 1820-1850* [21 October 1847], New York.

³³ *Brooklyn City Spooner Directory* (1848).

³⁴ *Hearnes’ Brooklyn City Directory for 1850–1851*, p.175; Arthur W. J. G. Ord-Hume, *Automatic Organs: A Guide to Orchestrons, Barrel Organs, Fairground, Dancehall & Street Organs Including Organettes* (Atglen, PA: Schiffer, 2007), p.444; and *New York 1859 City Directory*, p.370.

³⁵ *Wills and Probate Records*, New York, 11 March 1863.

³⁶ Matthews’s.

³⁷ Matthews’s.

³⁸ *Church of England Baptisms*, 14 July 1847, St Mary, Islington; and *Kelly’s Directory*, 1849 and 1850.

within London's Little Italy, where Joseph (jnr.) died in 1851.³⁹

John Hicks (1828– after 1871) was the third and last brother to follow their father into musical instrument making. Hereafter he is referred to as John (jnr.). Little is recorded about John (jnr.)'s barrel organ and piano making, and no instruments are known to exist that would indicate that he worked at the trade in Bristol. John (jnr.) was not inclined to settle, and he moved first to London around 1847 or 1848, to Wood Street, Clerkenwell.⁴⁰ In 1848 he married Jane Miles, and three years later the census shows them at 16 Vineyard Walk, also within Clerkenwell. Around 1852–53 he and his wife were in New York, where their first child was born.⁴¹ Back in Clerkenwell, they lived successively at: 24 Coburg Street (1854–57); 2 St John Street (1858–60); 6 Chapel Street, Pentonville (1860–66); 9 Bedford Street, Bedford Row, as 'Hicks John & Co' (1866–67); and 3 Clerkenwell Green (1870–71).⁴² The '& Co' was a brief organ-building partnership between John Hicks and the aforementioned Daniel Imhof that was formally announced as dissolved in the *Daily News* on 1 December 1866. Imhof, as Imhof & Mukle, remained at the Bedford Street address into 1868,⁴³ and this partnership went on to manufacture high quality mechanical musical instruments into the twentieth century. Of John (jnr.)'s multiple addresses, a barrel piano in the Museum of Applied Arts & Sciences, Sydney, Australia, is labelled: 'John Hicks, 6 Chapel Street, Pentonville, London N'.⁴⁴

In the 1871 census, John Hicks, 'organ builder', and family are recorded at 18 New Canal Street, Birmingham, and the centre of another immigrant Italian community. No confirmed records of this John Hicks survive post-1871, but one of his children is recorded at school back in Clerkenwell in 1875, and it is possible that the John and Jane Hicks who both died in Holborn in 1877 refers to this family.⁴⁵

Finally, of the Bristol Hicks family, there is Maria (1814–90), the first-born child of Joseph senior. The younger Maria's association with the family's musical instrument making businesses is by way of marriage, and on 12 December 1836 she married Henry Distin (c1815–76), a cabinet maker from Bristol.⁴⁶ The name Distin has long been associated with the Hicks style of portable street barrel piano, but he has incorrectly been confused with Henry Distin (1819–1903) of the then famous Distin family brass quartet and quintet.

There are suggestions that the Bristol Henry Distin may have been apprenticed to Joseph Hicks senior, but no evidence has been found to support this. He described himself as a cabinet maker from 1838 to 1844, and as a musical instrument maker from 1847, after the death of Joseph (snr.).⁴⁷ The census returns for 1841 through to 1871 show the Distins lived in Church Lane, Bristol (numbers 20, 2 and 18). Unlike the Hicks family, Distin lived in Temple parish, south of the River Avon and about half a mile from the Italian quarter of St James.

³⁹ *Church of England Deaths and Burials*, 30 December 1851, St Andrew, Holborn.

⁴⁰ *Church of England Marriages and Banns*, 16 December 1848, St Mark, Myddelton Square, Islington.

⁴¹ The 1861 census return shows Ellen Hicks, daughter, age 9, was born New York c1852.

⁴² *Post Office London Directory*, multiple editions.

⁴³ *Kelly's Directory* [London] (1868).

⁴⁴ Barrel piano by John Hicks London [H7380], Museum of Applied Arts & Sciences, Sydney <https://collection.maas.museum/search?q=H7380&view=list>, accessed 2 February 2022.

⁴⁵ Jane: *Civil Registration Deaths Index*, Holborn 1877, Jan–Mar; and John: *ibid*, Apr–May.

⁴⁶ *Church of England Marriages and Banns*, 12 December 1843, St John the Baptist, Bristol.

⁴⁷ *Matthews's*.

Nevertheless, Langwill and Boston find him in the Bristol Poll books for 1845 and 1852 as a 'Barrel piano-forte Mkr',⁴⁸ with the 1851 census recording him as 'Barrel Organ and Piano Maker' and in 1861 as 'Barrel Piano Maker.' By 1871 Henry had changed to describing himself in the directories as a piano tuner,⁴⁹ and in the census more generally as a 'Musical Instrument Maker.' His death certificate, however, in 1876 records him as a 'barrel piano forte maker',

although the assumption is that this refers to his former trade.

Several instruments survive which bear a Henry Distin's maker's label. Of these, at least one, an instrument at The Musical Museum at Brentford, only carries Distin's name on the barrels, and the instrument is signed in pencil on the soundboard 'G Hicks maker Bristol' (see Figures 2 and p.1 of this Newsletter).



Figure 2. George Hick's maker's mark (n.d.), portable street barrel piano housing Henry Distin-labelled barrels (see p.1 of this Newsletter) [Photo: Tim Israel]. With the kind permission of The Musical Museum, Brentford.

Signing the soundboard in pencil is a common feature of Hicks portable barrel pianos, and some also include a serial number. The marks are, however, inconsistent and none are dated.⁵⁰ The barrel labels read 'Henry Distin | (From the late Joseph Hicks) | Barrel Piano Forte Maker', and the Church Lane address. There are two views as to the interpretation of the bracketed phrase. One theory is that the instruments are old Hicks stock re-labelled as Distin. The second suggests the phrase was used to acknowledge that Distin was following in the business run by his late father-in-law. That is the clear meaning

of two directory entries by the Bristol organ builder William Vowles in 1859. One entry reads: 'Vowles, Wm, organ builder (late Monday), 69 Castle St'; and the second: 'Organ Manufactory | 69, Castle-street, Bristol. | Established by the late John Smith, sen. | W G VOWLES, In succeeding to the business of his late father-in-law, Mr Joseph Monday, Organ Builder, Tuner, etc.'⁵¹

The Distin-Hicks association concludes Part 1 of our research; Part 2 will examine John Baylis and the Taylor family of Bristol.

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⁴⁸ Canon Noel Boston and Lyndesay G. Langwill, *Church and Chamber Barrel-Organs: Their Origin, Makers, Music and Location. A Chapter in English Church Music* (Edinburgh: Lyndesay G. Langwill, 1970), p.50.

⁴⁹ *Matthews's*.

⁵⁰ Richard Dean, 10 August 2021.

⁵¹ *Bristol Post Office Directory & Gazetteer* (1859), pp.141 & 1039.

The Andreas Berr lute from 1699

In 2012, I visited the Museum of Fine Arts (MFA) in Boston (<https://www.mfa.org/>) and spotted a rather small baroque lute, supposedly made by Andreas Berr in Vienna in 1699 (Figure 1). For many years, the instrument was in the possession of the Astor family at Hever Castle, Kent. The lute was then sold at auction by Christie's, New York, on 13 May 1981, to Hugh Gough, who, in 1986, sold it to the MFA.



Figure 1. The Andreas Berr lute (Vienna, 1699) at the MFA, Boston, inv. no.1986.7.

Several years later, I returned to Boston, where Mr Bobby Giglio, Department Coordinator of Musical Instruments, showed me the instrument. According to information supplied by the museum, the lute (2 x 1, 11 x 2 courses) has the following basic dimensions: length 81cm, width 28.3cm, depth 13.5cm. The 13-course lute has a bass-rider (this is a later conversion from the original 11-course instrument), added during its active playing life. The back comprises 11 ribs of ivory, separated by strips of ebony, with a capping strip. There are also strips of ebony along the upper edges. Figures 2A and 2B show the front of the instrument during and after restoration.



Figure 2A (left).
A view inside the lute during restoration.



Figure 2B (right).
Front view of the lute on display.

The soundboard is of fine-grain spruce with a carved rose in a geometric pattern. Both the neck and fingerboard are of ebony. The pegbox is made of ebonized wood, veneered on the front and back with ebony; its back is decorated with an incised openwork panel of ivory carved in an acanthus leaf pattern. The later attached arm for the diapason strings and the bridge are made of ebonized wood. The tuning pegs are of ebony with decorative ivory buttons. The instrument currently has nine frets of gut and three (later) frets of wood set in to the table. Today, the instrument has 24 strings: two single chanterelles and nine pairs on the fingerboard, in addition to two pairs of diapasons. Inside the belly there is a printed label (Figure 3A) that reads: 'Andreas Berr / Lauten und Geigen: / macher in Wienn Anno 16 [handwritten: 99]/[handwritten: 3 ur gr (?)i...(?)] {could mean 'zugerichtet'/'finished'}]. On the underside of the soundboard near the neck joint there are also the incised letters 'L B' (Figure 3B).

Figure 3A. The 'Andreas Berr' label inside the lute.

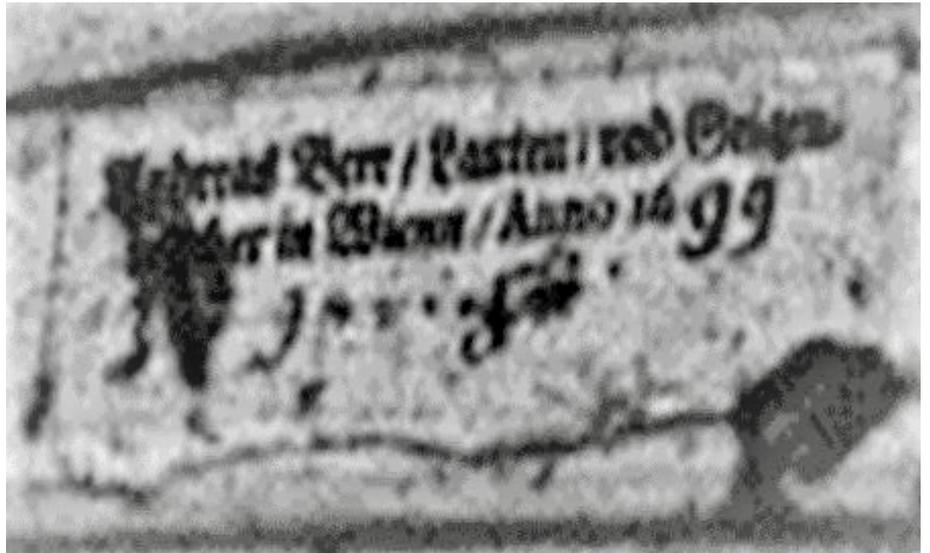


Figure 3B. The incised 'L B' mark inside the lute.

The internal construction of the lute (Figure 4) consists of seven lateral braces on the belly (two above the soundhole and one across the soundhole) and one short, angled brace near the lower end. Burn marks suggest that some of the ribs have been removed or repositioned. There is no fan bracing.



Figure 4. The inner construction of the lute.

During my visit, I took some additional measurements from the instrument. The body is typical of a so-called 'Bolognese type' lute. The length for the courses 1 to 11 is 65cm, and the length of the two added bass courses is 70cm. The bridge holding all 24 strings is approximately 17cm wide and just 6.5cm from the lower end of the soundboard. The distance between the widest dimension of the soundboard is 28.4cm, at approximately 13cm from the lower edge of the table. The holes in the bridge are too narrow to allow the use of strings of more than 1.5mm diameter. As a result, for display purposes the museum uses thinner copper-wound gut strings for the basses. In addition, the surface of the soundboard shows clear wear marks, possibly indicating the position of the little finger (Figure 5). One egg-shape wear mark is between the bridge and the rose, and a much stronger mark is directly behind the bridge at the position of the 1st string.



Figure 5. Finger marks on the soundboard, indicated by the white ellipses.

The absence of any other label or mark strongly suggests that the label inside unambiguously states the maker of this instrument. Andreas Berr was born in Freygencht Hohenschwangau, near Füssen, Germany, in 1656. He married Anna Margaretha, widow of the lute maker Hans Klinger in 1680, and obtained Viennese citizenship in 1681 where he worked until his death in 1722. Interestingly, Berr is referred to by Ernst Gottlieb Baron in 1727 as a Viennese lute maker of some renown, esteemed by individuals such as Jan Antonín Losy (Figure 6).¹

In Wien ist Herr
 Andreas Bähr und Herr Matheus Fux, bey-
 derseits berühmte Lauten- & Macher bekannt.
 Was den erstern anlanget, so arbeitete er
 breitspänicht und sind seine Instrumente von
 dem hochberühmten Graffen Logi ungemein
 æstimirt worden.

Figure 6. Ernst Gottlieb Baron's reference to Andreas Berr.

¹ Ernst Gottlieb Baron, *Untersuchung des Instruments der Lauten* (Nürnberg: Johann Friederich Rüdiger, 1727), p.99. English translation of the text: 'In Vienna, Herr Andreas Bähr and Herr Matheus Fux, both famous lute makers, are well known. The former built with wide staves and his instruments enjoyed uncommon esteem with the famous Count Losy.'

According to various sources, Losy² must have met Andreas Berr in Vienna, and it is said that as he lay dying, Losy asked for his ‘small’ Berr lute to be brought to him. The composer Gottfried Heinrich Stölzel (1690–1749) frequently visited Losy in Prague, and commented admiringly on his lute playing:

Sie spielten, als ein Herr die Laute so gut, als einer immermehr thun kann, der Profetzion davon macht, auf eine nette, vollstimmige, mehrentheils gebrochene, französische Art, fertig und gelehrt, indem Sie die Gründe der Setzkunst inne hatten. Dieses geschah gemeiniglich Vormittage etliche Stunden in Ihrem Bette, als worin Sie sitzend eine kleine Laute schlugen, welches ich oft anzuhören die Gnade hatte. Kam Ihnen ein Einfall, der besonders nach Ihrem Geschmack war, so schrieben Sie solchen so gleich auf; liessen ihn aber auch hernach in ein dazu bestimmtes Behältnis verschliessen.³

Losy, one of Prague’s most famous sons, clearly did much to popularise the instrument in the Habsburg territories in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. He was probably the most significant lutenist-composer in Bohemia at the height of the lute’s popularity there. His compositions for the baroque lute are extraordinary and are played by many lute players today. After 1700, according to Thomas Janowka, ‘Lute playing had become so widespread in Prague that one could cover the roofs of the palaces with lutes.’⁴

During or shortly before the auction at Hever Castle, measurements of the instrument were taken by the lute maker Michael Lowe (Wootton-by-Woodstock). These drawings are currently being used by Stephen Murphy, luthier in Mollans sur Ouvèze, France, to build a replica of the Berr lute in its original state as an 11-course instrument. The manufacturing process will be closely documented, and the results will be shared in 2022.



Figure 7. Bobby Giglio, MFA, presenting the Berr Lute.

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Bernhard Fischer

² Jan Antonín Losy, Count of Losinthal (German: Johann Anton Losy von Losinthal); also known as Comte d’Logy (Losi or Lozi), 1650–1721, was a Bohemian aristocrat, lute player and composer mainly in Prague.

³ Gottfried Heinrich Stölzel, ‘Biographical recollections on the Duke von Logi’, in Johann Mattheson ed., *Grundlage einer Ehren-Pforte* (Hamburg, 1740), pp.171–72. English translation of the text: ‘He played the lute as well as one who makes a profession of it, in a nice, full-voiced mostly broken French style, complete and learned, since he had mastered the fundamentals of composition. This commonly happened in the mornings for some hours in his bed, where he sat playing a small lute, which I often had the honour to hear. If he had an idea that particularly appealed to him, he wrote it down immediately and locked it up afterwards in a box especially kept for this purpose.’

⁴ Tomáš Baltazar Janovka, *Clavis ad thesaurum magnae artis musicae* (Prague, 1701), p.238.