

**Harpsichords and Spinets shown at
the
International Inventions Exhibition
1885
Royal Albert Hall**



By David Hackett

**From a Presentation made at the Friends of Square Pianos
Spinnet Day, April 8th 2017**

The 1885 International Inventions Exhibition was a major affair, occupying a large site to the south of the newly-constructed Royal Albert Hall, bounded on the north by what is now Kensington Road, on the west by Queen's Gate, on the East by Exhibition Road, and on the south by the newly-constructed Natural History Museum. Included in the area we now have the Royal College of Music and Imperial College.

The scope was wide-ranging, and amongst the many exhibits were the electric motor – the generator had already been invented, and somebody wondered what would happen if a reverse electric current was applied. The entire exhibition was illuminated by electric lighting. Also shown was a Sussex Trug. The Loan Collection of Musical Instruments was a very small part of the show, but nevertheless it was probably the best collection of early keyboard instruments ever displayed – we are unlikely ever to see anything like it again. This list of sixty-five harpsichords and spinets has been compiled from the Catalogue of the Exhibition, with later research to establish where possible the identity of the instruments, their subsequent history, and their current whereabouts. A number of early pianos and clavichords were shown as well, but there is usually insufficient information to enable individual identification.

The principal source of information is the catalogue of the exhibition, prepared by A. J. Hipkins, and printed and published by William Clowes and Sons, 1885. The British Library hold a copy.

It has been possible to find images of many of the items from the websites of the institutions where the instruments now live, and others from private individuals, but these are protected by copyright, and I cannot publish them. However, two that I can publish are N° 5, the 1704 Blunt (heading picture) and N° 18, the 1735 Hitchcock (below).



These two beautiful spinets shared a gallery in 1885, and it is my privilege now for them to be re-united in my care.

Please note that the sections below in **bold** and standard type are reproduced verbatim. The page numbers given refer to the exhibition catalogue. . Notes arising from more recent research are in *italics*.

1 – CLAVECIN by A Ruckers, Antwerp, 1636. Lacquer case. Restored by Pascal Taskin, Paris, 1782.

The Clavecin (French) Clavicembalo (Italian) Harpsichord (English) is wing-shaped, and has two or three strings to each note, while the Spinnet. Trapeze-shaped and Virginal, oblong, have each only one. It appeared first in the 16th century, and the oldest known is a Roman Clavicembalo in South Kensington Museum, dated 1521.

Entered by the Museo Civico, Turin. (Page 5).

Listed in 'Makers of the Harpsichord and Clavichord' by Donald Boalch, 2nd edition, Oxford, 1974. Boalch 2 N° 104. This is actually a French harpsichord, reported to have been 'rebuilt' by Pascal Taskin in 1782. The soundboard consists of pieces probably taken from Flemish virginals. Last recorded with Marchesa (sic) da Cadaval, Colares, Portugal. (O'Brien).

2 - DOUBLE HARPSICHORD by Josephus Kirckman 1798. Venetian Swell. London.

The harpsichord stops are to produce changes in the quantity and quality of tone. They were introduced from the Netherlands into England, and were carried out to the farthest extent in this country. In this fine harpsichord there are six stops – to the left, above the keyboard, the harp, lute, and octave; to the right, the first and second unisons. The lower stop on the left, the machine stop, effects a combination practicable with the left hand pedal. The harp or buff stop is a mute; the lute plucks the strings nearer the bridge producing an oboe quality of tone. The two unisons and Octave explain themselves. The second unison and the octave are available on the lower keyboard only.

Entered by Messrs Kirkman & Son (Page 12).

Could be Boalch 2 N° 94 or 93 (the two known 1798 Kirckmans) but both are stated to have a 'lid swell' rather than a 'Venetian swell'.

3 - SPINET by Charles Haward About 1660.

See Pepy's [sic] 'Diary' and Grove's 'Dictionary' concerning Haward, and the latter work (article SPINET) for a reference to the lettering above the keys of this instrument.

Entered by Mr William Dale (Page 16).

This instrument is listed in Boalch; B2 N° 10. The current whereabouts are not known.

4 - SPINET by Stephen Keene About 1700.

Entered by Sir George Grove (Page 16).

Listed in Boalch; B2 N° 5. Now in the Collection of the Royal College of Music.

5 - SPINET by Edward Blount [sic] 1664.

Has the autograph of Thomas Hitchcock, as maker, on a key and on the jacks. Double sharps in the bass. There is a similar autograph of this maker on a Blount spinet recently in the possession of Mr Taphouse, of Oxford, dated 1703.

Entered by Mr W. Vinnicombe. (Page 16).

After being in the possession of the Vinnicombe music business in the West Country, this spinet passed (possibly via a girls' school) to the Grant family in Northumberland c. 1930. In 2014, it was entered into an auction at Anderson and Garland. It was bought jointly by Albert Bil and the writer, who restored it. The reason for the 'date' of 1664 remains a mystery, but beyond all doubt it was made (at least in part) by Thomas Hitchcock in 1704. "Double sharps" of course refers to the broken octave arrangement, usual for the time.

6 - SPINET, probably by Keene

Entered by Mr Kendrick Pyne. (Page 24)

This could be the 1708 anonymous spinet, now in the Royal College of Music. This has sometimes been attributed (probably wrongly) to Stephen Keene.

7 – SPINET by Stephen Keene 'about 1700'.

Entered by Mr H J Dale. (Page 24).

This is probably the spinet listed in Boalch; B2 N°14. Illustrated in Hipkins 'Musical Instruments, Historic, Rare and Unique' 1888, p.51. Sold at Sotheby's Nove 1994 for £28.000. Present whereabouts unknown.

8 – VIRGINAL by Hans Ruckers 1628

Entered by M Victor Mahillon (Page 30)

No trace of this one.

9 - 'CLAVECIN' by Hieronymus Hass Hamburg 1734.

Entered by The Brussels Conservatoire (Page 32).

Boalch B2 N° 5. Ownership now given as the Brussels Museum.

10 - 'CLAVECIN Brisé' or Folding Spinet by Marius, Paris, 1709

Entered by The Brussels Conservatoire (Page 32).

This is almost certainly B2 N°2, now stated to be in the Brussels Museum. Although its appearance at the exhibition is not mentioned, it is stated to have been formerly in the Tolbeque Collection in Paris. In addition to his career as a professional cellist, Tolbeque built and constructed a number of historical instruments, and would often perform works on viola da gamba during his recitals. Many of his instruments were acquired for the collection of the Brussels Conservatoire (now the Musical Instrument Museum) in 1879.

11 - 'CLAVECIN' with double keyboard. Signed 'Tibaut à Tolose [sic] 1679

Entered by The Brussels Conservatoire (Page 32).

B2 N°1. Another one from the Tolbeque Collection, now in the Brussels Museum.

12 - VIRGINAL by Georgius Britsen, of Antwerp, 1686

Entered by The Brussels Conservatoire (Page 32).

Boalch 2 N°4. Listed as having been entered to the Exhibition. This is a 2½-voet ottavino, still in the Brussels Collection. 13 - SPINET by Thomas Barton 1730, London.

Entered by Mr William Dale. (Page 32).

Boalch 2 N°6. No trace since 1885.

14 - SPINETTA, Italian. Signed "Antoni Patavini Opus MDXXXXX"

The Italian Spinetta (French, Épinette, English, Spinnet), like the harpsichord or clavecin and virginal, is sounded by means of a mechanical plectrum (jack and point of quill). It was long supposed to have derived its name from the point "spina". It is now (1885) conjectured that it owes its name to the maker Spinetti (about 1500), who introduced the oblong or virginal form of the instrument. The lettering on the boxwood keys shows that the lowest key, apparently E, really sounded C, according to the "short octave" in the bass of old organs and spinets.

Entered by the Conservatoire Royal of Brussels (Page 33).

Now in the Brussels Museum.

15 – SPINET, Flemish

Painting inside the lid

Entered by the Conservatoire Royale of Brussels Conservatoire (Page 34)

16 - SPINET, Flemish

Attributed to Marius of Paris

Entered by the Conservatoire Royale of Brussels Conservatoire (Page 34)

17 - HARPSICHORD by Burkat Shudi and Johannes Broadwood 1773. Belonged to the Empress Maria Theresa.

In this fine harpsichord the Venetian Swell, invented by Shudi, and patented by him in 1769, is an important feature. Transferred subsequently to the organ, it has become an essential contrivance for effect in that instrument.

Entered by Mons. Victor Mahillon (Page 36).

Boalch 2 N° 26. One of Shudi's 5½-octave harpsichords, N° 691. Illustrated in James, p.132. Now in the Brussels Collection.

18 - SPINET by Thomas Hitchcock. Early 18th century. Formerly belonged to Sir Sterndale Bennett.

Entered by Mr Thomas Case.

Hitchcock Number 1460. Boalch 2 N°14. Entered for Sotheby's auction November 2004 but not sold. Now owned by Dr Albert Bil and David Hackett, and re-united with the Blunt spinet, 1704, N° 4 in the Exhibition.

19 - ORGAN HARPSICHORD or CLAVIORGANUM by Crang, 1745.

This instrument represents a not unfrequent combination in the 18th century. Shudi, harpsichord maker, and Snetzler, organ builder, made them together. An interesting reference to the Claviorganum may be found in Carl Engel's descriptive catalogue of the musical instruments in the South Kensington Museum A.D. 1874.

Entered by Messrs Kelly & Co. (Page 41).

Boalch 2 N°1. Now part of the Mirrey Collection, Edinburgh.

20 - DOUBLE SPINET by Hans Ruckers the Elder. About 1590, Antwerp.

This instrument shows one of the expedients used to gain brilliancy of effect by an octave string before Hans Ruckers himself introduced it into the clavecin. The left-hand spinet is the octave one, and may be withdrawn and used away from the rest of the instrument.

Entered by Messrs Chappell & Co (Page 41)

Boalch 2 N° 6. Now in the Collection of Yale University. We would now refer to this as a Mother & Child virginal

21 – CLAVECIN BRISÉ or Reise Spinnet by Marius

Said to have belonged to Frederick the Great.

Entered by Kunst und Gewerbe Museum, Berlin (Page 42)

Boalch 2 N°6. Confirms ownership by Frederick the Great. Now in the Musikinstrumentum Museum, Berlin

22 - VIRGINAL, English, by Jacobus White 1656.

Entered by Mr Temple Bourne (Page 42).

Boalch 2 N° 1. Now in the Museum of London.

23 - VIRGINAL, by Leversidge. 1666, London. Painted with views of St James's Park, &c.

Said to have belonged to Nell Gwynne. The Virginal (pair of Virginals), in Italian "Spinetta a tavola", French "clavecin rectangulaire", is properly an oblong spinet, made like an Italian wedding coffer or "casone". This make of instrument appears to have been adopted in England simultaneously with the "spinetta traversa" – the ordinary English spinet of Haward, Keene, and the Hitchcocks. There are no earlier specimens of English make to be found than those in this collection. The Great Fire of London is insufficient to account for their absence, as country mansions of the nobility exist of anterior date. With these instruments there is never a removable outer case.

Entered by Messrs Chappell & Co. (Page 42).

Boalch 2 N° 1. Now in the Collection of Yale University.

24 - SPINET, English, by C Haward. Second half 17th century.

Entered by the Rev. L.K.Hilton. (Page 42).

Boalch 2 No 8. Present whereabouts not known.

25 - CLAVECIN by Hans Ruckers the Younger, 1642. Decorated with paintings inside the top.

This fine instrument, like Lord Powerscroft's, shows that rich decoration often bestowed upon the famous Ruckers harpsichords, and not unfrequently a hundred years after the instrument had been made. New keyboards were introduced, and if there were room for additional strings, with wider range of compass. In Mr Leyland's, this last alteration does not appear to have taken place, and the original stops have been retained.

Entered by Mr F.R.Leyland (Page 47).

Boalch 2 N° 64. Compass GG/BB – d3, short octave. Sold at Sotheby's November 1969. As of 1995, owned by Hugh Gough (d. 1997), on loan to the Metropolitan Museum, New York, where it still is 'lent by Christabel Gough'.

26 - CLAVICEMBALO (HARPSICHORD) The instrument removed from the outer case.

Formerly the property of Queen Christina of Sweden, her crest being carved on each side of the keyboard. The outer case and stand in gesso duro, with two portraits of Queen Christina, are by Giovanni Lorenzo Bernini, who died in 1680. The Italian clavicembali and spinette were usually kept in more or less decorated outer cases, from which they were removable.

Entered by Lord de Lisle (Page 48).

Not traced.

27 – DOUBLE HARPSICHORD by Ring, Decorated.

A fine specimen of German make. Two unison and two octave registers, but one of the latter sympathetic (aliquot).

Entered by Herr Klinckerfuss.

Boalch 2 N° 1. Boalch III gives a full description; the above mention of 4' sympathetic strings is apparently a mistake. Private ownership, Germany.

28 - SPINET by Thomas Haxby 1764, York.

Entered by Mr W Dale (Page 50).

Boalch 2 N° 1. As of 1985, owned by David Drey, London.

29 - SPINET by Thomas Hitchcock, London.

Entered by Messrs John Broadwood & Sons. (Page 52).

Boalch 2 N° 11. Hitchcock number 1379. Collection of Dr Andreas Beurmann since 1988.

30 - SPINET by Joseph Baudin 1723, London. Belonged to Simon Fraser (Lord Lovat) and Dr Rimbault.

Entered by Mr T W Taphouse. (Page 53).

Boalch 2 N° 1. As at 1995, in the possession of a private owner, England.

31 - VIRGINAL by Thomas White “1651”

Entered by the Yorkshire Philosophical Society (Page 59).

Boalch 2 N° 4. Now at the Castle Museum, York. Not on display.

32 - DOUBLE HARPSICHORD by André (sic) Ruckers 1614 Antwerp

Painting inside the top attributed to Van der Meulen

Entered by Lieutenant-General H Hopkinson.

Boalch 2 N° 78. Belonged to Leonard Elmhurst, Dartington Hall. Last seen at Sotheby's, 2006, when sold for £104,160

33 – CLAVICEMBALO

Apparently Italian and partly re-made. Mother-of-pearl natural keys and ebony sharps, inlaid with ivory. Miniature paintings of musicians on ivory, elaborate rosace.

Entered by National Hungarian Museum, Buda Pesth.

Not traced.

34 - DOUBLE HARPSICHORD by Shudi No.94 1740

Entered by Her Majesty the Queen (Page 63).

Boalch 2 N° 2. Previously owned (from new?) by Frederick Prince of Wales, son of George II. Now at Kew Palace, the property of Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II.

35 - DOUBLE HARPSICHORD by Hans Ruckers 1612

From Windsor Castle. The 'large harpsichord' named in Handel's will may have been this instrument. The keyboards are new.

Entered by Her Majesty the Queen (Page 63).

Boalch 2 N° 16. This instrument is actually inscribed 'Ioannes Ruckers, not Hans, but its identity is beyond doubt. Still the property of Her Majesty (Queen Elizabeth II) now on loan to the National Trust at Fenton House.

36 - SPINETTA, VERTICALE, or Clavicytherium, Swabian, late 15th Century. Painted and showing a calvary inside, also a flamboyant window in the soundboard. The outer case is of a later date.

Entered by Count Giovanni Correr (Page 85).

Now in the collection of the Royal College of Music. Believed to be the earliest surviving stringed keyboard instrument.

37 - SPINET English by John Hitchcock No. 1630.

Entered by Mr W Dale (Page 110).

No recent trace of this one. Last seen illustrated in 'The Connoisseur' July – December 1939, p. 93.

38 - SPINET Known as Queen Elizabeth's Virginals. Italian, 16th Century.

Entered by the Rev. Nigel Gresley, and his brothers. (Page 111).

Sold by Nigel Gresley to the V&A Museum in 1887 for £125. Still in the V&A Collection; actual whereabouts unknown.

39 - CLAVECIN or HARPSICHORD by Hans Ruckers of Antwerp, Double Keyboard, dated 1612. Restored by Taskin, 1774. Painted with scenes of the period of Louis XIV by Van der Meulen. Said to have belonged to Marie Antoinette.

Entered by Viscount Powerscourt. (Page 111).

Boalch 2 N°17. Current wisdom is that this is a forgery, probably French in origin, possibly containing parts of a Flemish virginal, and made by Taskin in in 1774. Acquired by the Brussels Conservatoire in 1960, and presumably still in the Brussels Museum.

40 - HARPSICHORD by J & A Kirckman 1773

Entered by Mr Kendrick Pyne (Page 128).

Boalch 2 N°54. Current whereabouts unknown.

42 - HARPSICHORD by J & A Kirckman 1789

Entered by Mr Kendrick Pyne (Page 128).

Boalch 2 N° 83. Present whereabouts unknown.

43 - HARPSICHORD by F. Coston 18th century London

Entered by The Dowager Lady Heathcote (Page 128).

The only known Coston harpsichord. Listed with no number in Boalch 2. Now in the Russell Collection, Edinburgh.

44 - SPINET by Player exhibited 1872

Entered by Kirkman & Sons (Page 129).

See Boalch 2 N°4 "Possibly the spinet entered by Messrs Kirkman at the 1872 and 1885 Exhibitions in London". As at 1995, owned by Dr Fenyre.

45 - SPINET by Baker Harris 1763 London.

Entered by Mrs James Russell (Page 129).

Not traced.

46 - SPINET by Joseph Harris 1750 London.

Entered by Mr Kendrick Pyne (Page 129).

Boalch 2 N°1. According to B2 (1975) it was bought by H Boddington, and still owned by his descendants living near Aberdeen.

47 - SPINET by Longman & Broderip.

Entered by Mr Walter Parratt (Page 129).

Boalch 2 N° 21. Now in the Collection of the Royal College of Music, given by Walter Parratt's daughter in 1945.

48 - SPINET by Longman & Broderip.

Entered by Mr Kendrick Pyne (Page 129).

Boalch 2 N°7. Owned as at 1980 by Anthony Antolini, Palo Alto, California.

49 - HARPSICHORD by Thomas Hitchcock late 17th, or early 18th century. This is the only harpsichord known by this maker. There is one by John Hitchcock at Lyme Hall, Cheshire.

Entered by Mrs Luard Selby (Page 129).

Boalch 2 N° 6. Presented to the V&A in 1890 by Mrs Luard Selby. Still in the V&A Collection; actual whereabouts unknown.

50 - SPINET English.

Entered by Mr T W Holder. (Page 133)

Not traced - insufficient information

51 - SPINET by Thomas Barton 1719 London

Entered by Mr G Williamson. (Page 133).

Boalch 2 N° 2. Part of the Russell Collection until sold at Sotheby's in November 1990. Present whereabouts unknown.

52 - SPINET by J Kirckman 1755 London

Entered by Messrs Kirkman & Sons (Page 133).

Probably Boalch 2 N°107 - only one 1755Kirckman spinet is known. Now in the Ford Mansion, Morristown, New Jersey.

53 – HARPSICHORD, Italian, “Noccolò Berti fece”. Repaired, 1864.

Entered by Mr F Smallfeld. (Page 134).

A single manual harpsichord by Berti is recorded in Boalch 2, where it is suggested that this is the same instrument, then in the USA, at the time of Boalch 3 (1995) in Bantry, Co. Cork. The US/Irish instrument is recorded as having been repaired in 1764.

54 - SPINET by John Plenius, London 1765. Roger Plenius, probably the father of John Plenius, made the first pianoforte that was constructed in England.

Entered by Miss Rosamond Horsley (Page 134)

Boalch 2 N°1. Ownership not known - the 1885 catalogue is the only record. A spinet by the same maker dated 1768 was in the Methven Simpson Collection, Dundee (1995)

55 - HARPSICHORD by J Ruckers, 1637, Antwerp.

Entered by Mr J C Horsley, R.A. (Page 134)

Boalch 2 N°59. A grande ravalement of a chromatic bass octave 'English' single-manual harpsichord. Now in the Russell Collection, Edinburgh.

56 - HARPSICORD by J Kirckman 1752, London.

Entered by Messrs Kirkman & Son (Page 134)

Boalch 2 N°2. Now part of the Benton Fletcher Collection, Fenton House.

57 - HARPSICORD by “Jacobus et Abraham Kirckman” 1787, London.

Entered by Mr H J Dale (Page 134)

Boalch 2 N° 76. As at 1995, owned by Berrington Hall, on loan to the National Trust. (P)

58 - HARPSICORD by Burkat Shudi and Johannes Broadwood 1776 No 789.

Entered by Mr Kendrick Pyne (Page 134)

Boalch 2 N°33. Present whereabouts unknown.

**59 - HARPSICORD by Burkat Shudi and Johannes Broadwood Londini Fecerunt
No. 902 English, 1781.**

Entered by Mr C H Lloyd (Page 134)

Boalch 2 N° 39. Owners included Sir Hubert Parry, who gave it to Dr C H Lloyd of Gloucester (organist of Christchurch) then to Mr J M Taphouse. Loaned to the Bate Collection, Oxford, where it now resides. The suggestion in Boalch 2 that it was destroyed in a fire in 1970 is completely false.

**60 - HARPSICORD by Burkat Shudi and Johannes Broadwood Londini Fecerunt,
English, 1782 No. 919.**

Entered by Mr S S Stratton (Page 134)

Boalch 2 N° 40. Given by Mr Charles Hey Laycock to the V&A Museum in 1943. In the V&A Collection; actual whereabouts unknown.

**61 - HARPSICORD by Burkat Shudi and Johannes Broadwood Londini Fecerunt,
English, 1781 No. 899.**

Entered by Mr T W Taphouse (Page 134)

Boalch 2 N° 38. Various owners since 1885; as at 1995 in the Marlowe Segal Collection, Massachusetts.

62 - DOUBLE HARPSICHORD by Shudi 1760 London. With Venetian swell added about 1770 – 80. No. 407.

Entered by Mr H J Dale (Page 134).

Boalch 2 N°10. From Mr Dale to Broadwoods; c. 1976 it seems to have passed through the hands of Michael Thomas. As at 1995, owned by Anthony Sidey.

63 - DOUBLE HARPSICHORD by J and A Kirckman 1788 London.

Entered by Mr Arthur Wilson (Page 134).

Could be Boalch 2 N° 80 or 81. Number 80 is said to have been shown at the Exhibition, number 81 to have been owned by 'Mr Wilson'. Present location of both unknown.

64 - HARPSICHORD by Burkat Shudi 1771 London No. 639.

Entered by John Broadwood & Sons (Page 134)

Boalch 2 N° 22. Played by Hipkins et al. for 'historic performances'. Present ownership possibly Folk Museum, Nafels, Switzerland – in the Canton of Glarus, the birthplace of Shudi.

65 - HARPSICHORD by Longman & Broderip

Entered by Mr Kendrick Pyne (Page 134).

None of the known L&B harpsichords can be traced to the 1885 Exhibition.