

Early English Harpsichord Building

A REASSESSMENT

by Thomas McGeary

This inaugural issue of *The Harpsichord Magazine* is a fitting place for a reassessment of the early history of English harpsichord building. Since the pioneering work of Raymond Russell¹ and Frank Hubbard² several hitherto unknown instruments have come to light and closer examination of several known instruments has revealed important new facts which must force us to re-think the course of English harpsichord building in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries.

But more than just a reinterpretation of a more complete set of instruments must be involved. Two errors of methodology must be corrected—the attempt to delineate a 'national school' and the attempt to trace an evolutionary development leading to that national school.³ What we take to be national schools are often anomalies. By Flemish we usually mean the Ruckers family; for English, Kirckman and Schudi; upon closer examination (especially of internal features such as barring) Italian instruments fall into several regional traditions; and no consistent German school really can be made out. Our modern adulation for Ruckers instruments and their French successors has made us overlook the fact that this Flemish-type instrument never completely triumphed and dominated building in Europe as it has in the twentieth century. While the Ruckers were supposedly dominating European building, the more modest varieties of Italian instruments continued to be built into the eighteenth century; long, thin-cased instruments were built in northern Germany and Sweden; and a variety of non-Ruckers-like instruments were built in England.

To attempt to interpret an early instrument as characteristic of a particular school will blind one to the obvious fact that early builders were constantly absorbing and being influenced by various styles and traditions of building.

The few instruments of the sixteenth century which have survived are surprisingly well developed and show considerable diversity. Such diversity and development suggest that these instruments represent divergent developments from common ancestors. It need not surprise us then, that at this early point in the history of the harpsichord distinctions of national schools (which are appropriate to only a few groups of seventeenth- and eighteenth-century instruments) do not apply. The attempt to fit these early

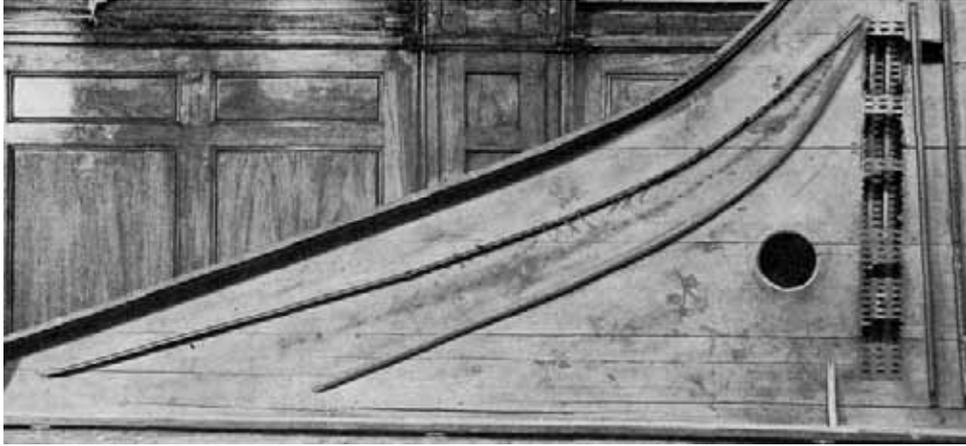
instruments onto the Procrustean bed of Russell's national schools can only impair our understanding of both the instruments and the history of the harpsichord.

Turning now to harpsichord building in sixteenth- and seventeenth-century England the same *caveat* applies. True, in the last three-quarters of the eighteenth century a large number of fully-developed and fairly uniform harpsichords were produced by former apprentices of Hermann Tabel. But there is no reason to believe that the instruments built in the previous 150 years represent an evolution towards that form. We must not try to assess these early instruments in terms of the eighteenth century, but rather we must examine them to see their origins and points of similarity with contemporary instruments from other parts of Europe. In this survey we will concentrate on the surviving instruments, since the documentary evidence has been presented and discussed in the work of Russell and to a more thorough extent in that of Hubbard.

The earliest surviving harpsichord built in England is by the Fleming Lodewijk Theeuwes in 1579 and now in the possession of the Victoria and Albert Museum, London. In 1558 Theeuwes was admitted to the Guild of St. Luke in Antwerp and ten years later he is recorded living in London. Since this instrument was built in the same year that Hans Ruckers was admitted to the guild, Theeuwes brought to England a north-European style which had developed prior to Ruckers.⁴

The Theeuwes harpsichord is part of a claviorganum and rests on top of an organ case. The length of the harpsichord is 84", width 35", and the case is 9" deep. The case is of oak covered with embossed leather and the bentside is 9/16" thick. Little remains of the instrument; jacks, keys, strings, and portions of the nuts and bridges were lost. The instrument did have a 49 note compass which the arrangement of the balance pins shows was chromatic C to c".

The three rows of jacks were guided by mortises punched in leather registers. The single, immovable upper guide contained mortises for all three rows and was glued to the soundboard. The lower guides were leather covered wooden strips and were moved by handstops projecting through the front. Slots in the side of the jack mortises to allow clearance for the tongues show that the



Harpsichord by Lodewijk Theeuwes, London 1579
(Victoria and Albert Museum, Crown Copyright)

near row of jacks faced right and the far row faced left.

There were three rows of strings as shown by the three rows of wrest pins grouped on the narrow wrestplank. The two nut-bridges partially rested on unsupported soundboard which runs continuously to the wrestplank. It is of note that the upper header is cut down at the treble end to free the soundboard.

Two of the strings passed over the near eight-foot nut while the third tunneled through the near nut at an angle and passed over the far nut at a lower level. This lower choir of strings was plucked by the centre row of jacks. Although only part of the original eight-foot bridge remains, it is apparent that the scaling came close to $c'' = 14''$. An obvious disposition of $2' \times 8'$, $1' \times 4'$ suggests itself and is made plausible by remains of four-foot hitchpin holes on the soundboard.

However, there are rather mysterious flat L-shaped brass pins placed between each pair of pins on the eight-foot bridge. These pins may have been intended to carry a third eight-foot choir on the bridge. Several eighteenth century Northern instruments have devices like this for a third set of eight-foot strings. These are provided for either by tunnelling, or raised blocks on the same bridges as the other eight-foot stops. The four-foot bridge would be redundant in this case; and a glance at the treble area of the soundboard shows that the area available for a four-foot bridge and hitchpin rail to be so little that it may not have been part of the original instrument. A $3' \times 8'$ disposition is not at all unusual. The idea of a basic disposition

of a variety of eight-foot choirs is found in a variety of sources. To cite a few early cases:

1. A harpsichord by Hans Müller, 1537 had a $2' \times 8'$ disposition with one of the eight-foot stops as a lute; an original arrangement also probably existed to provide for a buff stop or an arpicordo stop.
2. A harpsichord by Johann Mayer, 1619 has two normal eight-foot registers as well as a lute.
3. A clavictherium from the early seventeenth century has a $2' \times 8'$, $V \times 4'$ disposition; but the addition of a fourth row of jacks to provide a lute and the addition of a buff stop provide four eight-foot tone colours using spaced jack guides.
4. A treatise *Tratado de la Música*, 1634, by Bartolomeo Jobernardi claims the invention of a 'perfect harpsichord' with three eight-foot registers providing a total of seven possible tone colours.

Other instruments in Sweden, the early instruments of Weber in Dublin, the Faby in Paris, and Talbot Manuscript suggest a multiplicity of eight-foot tone, sometimes by additional bridges and sometimes by widely spaced jack guides. Weber used both methods.

The Theeuwes harpsichord is most like a pre-Ruckers northern-European instrument in general appearance. But several features like the narrow, pointed tail, continuous soundboard crossing the wrestplank, the perpendicular registers, and the hollow wrestplank are features also found in Venetian instruments and suggest that Theeuwes

was still drawing upon an earlier common source.

The next harpsichord of English make is dated 1622 and is housed at the Knole Estate, Sevenoaks, Kent. The inscription has been mistakenly deciphered and the instrument attributed to John Haward by Boalch and subsequent writers. A close examination shows that the inscription reads 'Johannes lasard fecit Londini MDCXXII. The ornamental capital letter cannot be an 'H' and the third letter though faint is certainly an 'S'. Archival research is currently underway at Knole and London to elucidate this hitherto unknown maker and the history of this instrument at Knole.

The 'Knole' instrument is 98" long, 33" wide, and 9½" deep. It had a single keyboard with a 53-note compass. The deeply incurved bentside is similar to Italian instruments though the case is deeper than is usual for such instruments. The full-length bottom boards of pine and the building

of the sides around the bottom are also Italian features, but the 1" bottom is much thinner than usually found on Italian instruments. There was only one transverse bottom brace in addition to the lower header; further bracing was accomplished by five sloping struts buttressing against the bentside liner. These were mortised into the liner and fitted into notches in the lower header, bottom, and the transverse brace. This buttress system is similar to bracing systems used in some large Florentine harpsichords.

The case is of thin oak of a uniform thickness, stiffened at the top and bottom and divided into panels on the sides by mouldings. The construction of thin-cased instruments with mouldings and lacking an outer case is found in early sixteenth century German instruments." Another feature common to the instruments is painted decorations and mottoes for which the wood served as background. Many instruments illustrated by Ripin

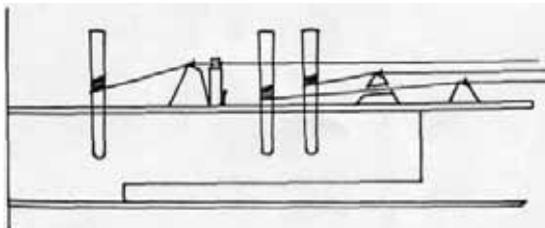


The 'Knole' harpsichord, 1622, formerly attributed to John Haward

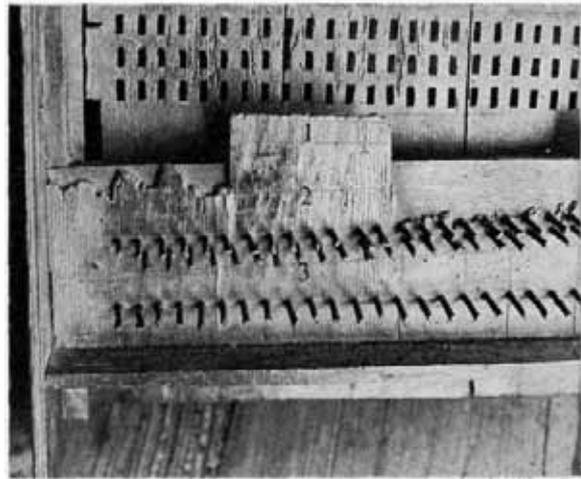
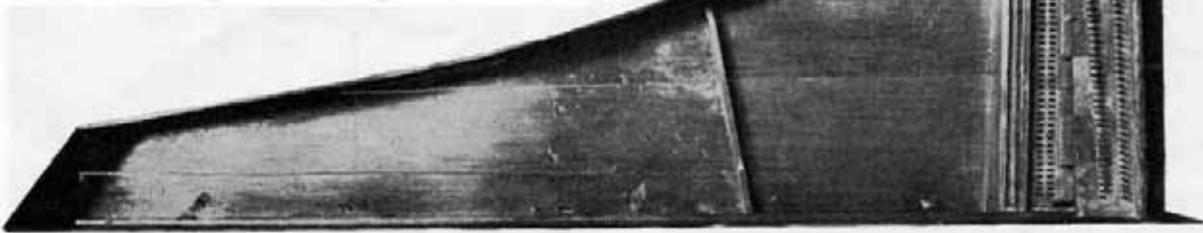
have mottoes painted inside the case surrounding the soundboard. On the 'Knole' instrument we also find mottoes painted in black on a yellow ground surrounding the soundboard. These can be deciphered to read 'LAVDATE DOMINVM IN CORDIS LAVDATE INSTRVMENTIS BENE SONANTIBVS E CAELO MVSICA'.

There is little remaining of this instrument aside from the case and stand. The soundboard, nuts, jacks, bridges, keyboard, etc., are missing. The layout of the treble, though, suggests a short scale close to 10". The jacks were guided at the bottom by mortises cut into soundboard wood extending from under the wrestplank to the lower header. The upper header rested unsupported upon this 'counter soundboard' and also supported the soundboard proper. At the top the jacks must have been guided by movable slides. The registers are placed slightly diagonally, being about an inch farther from the wrestplank in the bass than treble.

There are three rows of wrestpins remaining and lines scribed on the soundboard veneer of the wrestplank and corroborated by a set of 'working drawing lines' scribed on the bottom boards indicate the position of three bridges. A set of four pins remaining in front of the near bridge indicate the presence of a buff-stop batten. From this evidence the original disposition can be worked out which suggests three eight-foot choirs with one choir having a buff-stop.



The wrestpins are divided into two groups. A single row of pins near the keyboard served the first nut which also possessed the buff stop. Then follow two rows of wrestpins and the lines scribed for the remaining two nut-bridges. The lines for



Detail of bass end of wrestplank of 'Knole' harpsichord

these two nuts merge toward the treble—at this point the two nuts must have become one composite or tiered nut. The middle row of wrestpins is offset to the right such that the first pin of this row is behind the second pin of the far row. This middle row of pins must have served the far nut which was at the lowest level. The strings tunneled through the middle nut at an angle so that by the time the string reached the far nut it was properly lined up. We thus have three sets of strings on three nuts each at a different level; each choir would then have had a distinctive tone colour. A lute stop would have been effected by having the near row of jacks pluck the strings from the far nut. Three nuts on the wrestplank is not without precedent. The early eighteenth century clavictherium cited earlier had a wrestplank with three nuts serving two eight-foot and

Plan view of the 'Knole' harpsichord

one four-foot choir. Two-nut harpsichords of the period are well known.

The next question is to what pitches were these three choirs tuned. Previous writers have noted the disparity of string lengths due to the nut placements and suggested a transposition for the longest choir of an octave or fifth; the latter more likely due to the history of transposing devices on Flemish instruments of the same time. It should

be noted that there is no evidence of any tradition of different pitch levels or transposing instruments at all in England. More conclusively, though, bits of wire were found remaining on the wrestpins, and (assuming them to represent original or at least contemporary stringing) it is possible to reconstruct the string diameters used for the instrument.

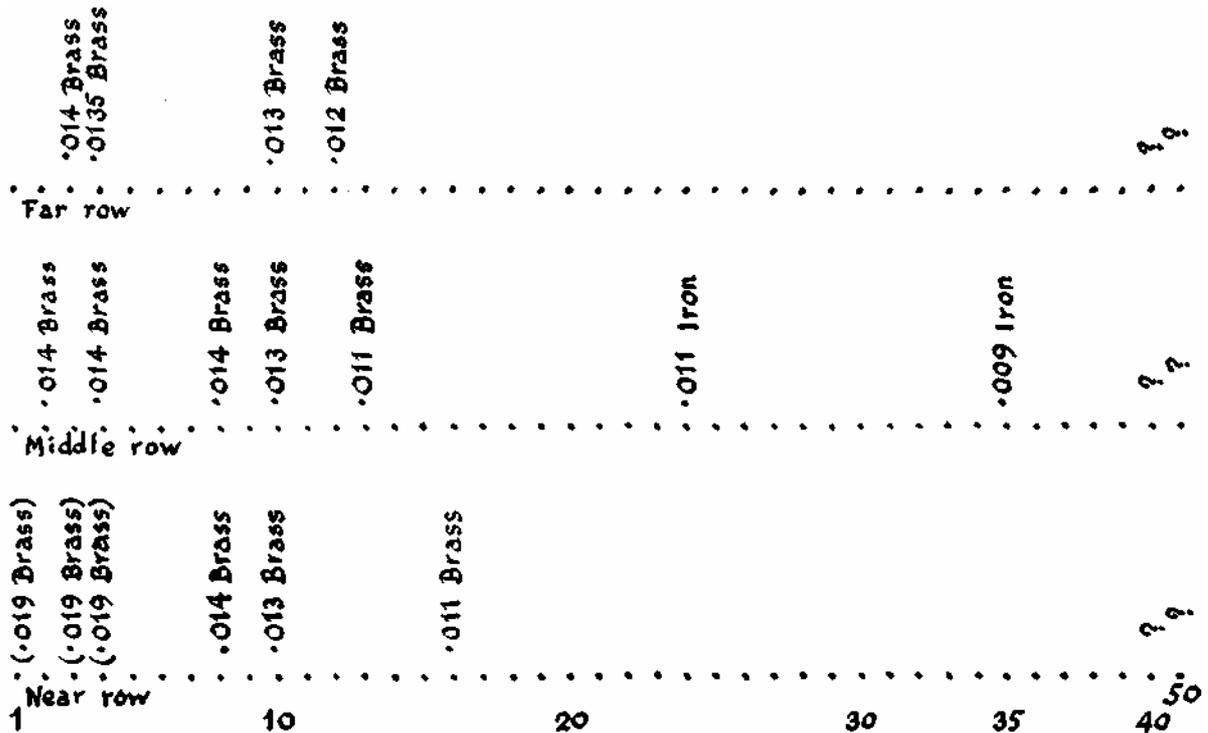
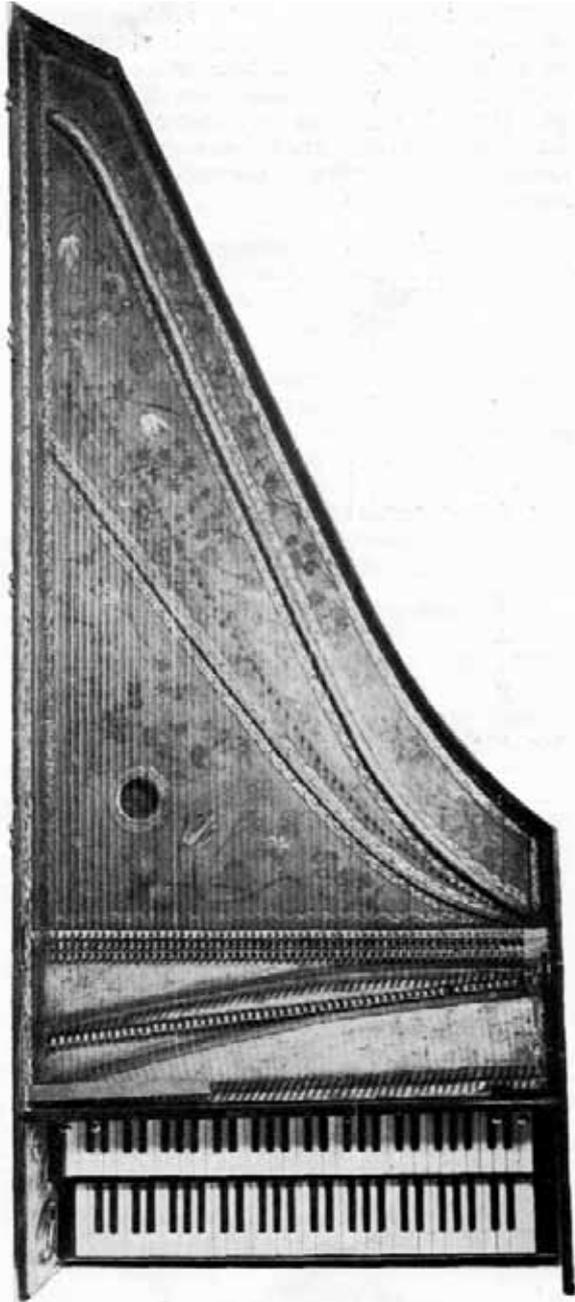


Table 1. String diameters from 'Knole' harpsichord Possible compass
BB—d''' (divided C sharp) or AA to d''' Using the tables from The
Galpin Society Journal Vol. XXIV we get:

	G ^g	C	(7) .013"	(6) .011"	(5) .010"	(4) .009"	(3) .0075"	(2) .0065"	(1) .0055"
Barton 1709									
Upright Weber		Brass	Iron						
Izzard (Knole)		Brass			Iron				
Talbot MS.	.020"	.016"	.010"						



Plan view, unsigned English, 1623

As can be seen the gauges represent a consistent stringing pattern and are virtually identical for all three choirs. (The heavy strings on the bottom pins of the near row represent such a great and sudden increase over strings just for notes lower that they are no doubt replacements. These low pitched strings of soft brass at the top level of

string courses were the ones most likely to break and need replacement.) The difference in the string lengths caused by the nut placement is just not great enough to allow for a transposition of a fifth or an octave without some compensating change in string thickness. Since the old strings are so uniform between choirs there is no way to account for a transposition. We have already cited precedents in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries for dispositions giving many eight-foot stops. The purpose for having three nuts each with an eight-foot choir is to provide a contrast in the tone colours for each eight-foot choir—caused both by difference in string length and plucking position. By having only one jack serve each string the number of possible combinations of one, two or three stops is increased. (The single eight- and four-foot choirs of the Ruckers was probably archaic when they were built, as were the transposing keys and small compass.)

The 'Knole' instrument has a curious mixture of Italian and north-European features; to characterize it as either would be an injustice. The overall shape, scaling, slanting wrestplank, and thin case are Italian features; the use of oak, the thin upper and lower guides, the case decoration, and the variety of eight-foot stops are north-European and Spanish features. This suggests that even in the early seventeenth century there was still a multiplicity of building styles being practiced—styles which were still drawing upon older traditions—sixteenth century and earlier. A very similar instrument was built in Italy in 1760, nearly 140 years after the English one, not before.

The earliest complete and playing surviving instrument is also the earliest English double manual. It is the beautiful double manual dated 1623 from East Coker, now in the possession of Michael Thomas at the Harpsichord Centre. It has a tone at once deep but also with a positive presence and resonance, it is especially suitable for English music. The lute, perhaps a later addition, plucks right at the end of the string and is highly contrasted.

This instrument represents a building style contemporary to that of the 'Knole' harpsichord and a development parallel with that of the Ruckers family of the early pre-Ruckers Flemish tradition as exemplified by the Theeuwes. There is little reason to doubt the date or origin of the harpsichord. It was formerly housed in an estate in Somerset where it is said to have stood since the seventeenth century. The exterior of the case is painted black and the decorated patterns of tulips, peonies, parrots, and allegorical figures have been dated *circa* 1625." The date which is painted on the soundboard in gold leaf is consistent with the gilt floral meanders around the



Unsigned English, 1623

bridges and soundboard edge. This gilding has also been assessed to be early seventeenth century, and moreover is most likely the original decoration

since additions to the bridge made during an eighteenth century modernization were extended over the pattern. The inside of the lid is gold-leaf

decorated with patterns from Indian silk using the same motives.

The instrument is 85½" long, 35½" wide, and 10" deep. The two keyboards have an eighteenth century compass of FF to f" (no FF sharp). The registers, lute stop, stop ware, and stand date from an eighteenth century rebuilding. Since the case has not been widened, the original compass must have been comparably as wide.

There are two eight-foot and one four-foot choirs with the following disposition:

8' lute ←
 8' dogleg →
 8' dogleg →
 4' ←
 8" ←

One advantage of this arrangement of the lute and dogleg is that they both can be played simultaneously on the upper-manual giving a peculiarly bright tone colour. The string lengths are as follows:

f" 4¾"
 c" 6¼"
 c' 14"
 c' 28"
 c 44"
 C 60"
 FF 65¼"

This 1623 harpsichord exhibits many features in common with Flemish instruments of that time: thick case walls (bentside: 1½", cheek -fr"), gently incurved bentside, decoration under the lid, soundboard barring, and soundboard layout. It has heavier cross-sections for the bridge.

However, many features suggest that this instrument cannot be accounted for merely as an attempt to copy the Ruckers tradition (which was well underway by this time, and examples of which were being imported by England). Among these features at variance with the Ruckers family are the pine case, full-length bottom boards, sides overlapping the bottom, more massive bridges, a narrow and pointed tail, the wide compass, and the slightly slanted wrestplank, wider in the brass by an inch.

Several internal construction features deserve attention. First, instead of having the bottom braces nearly perpendicular to the spine, this 1623 instrument has five diagonal bottom braces going from the bentside to the spine. This system of oblique braces is found in many later English instruments and is also found in most instruments made in southern France. These oblique braces are possibly a development from the notion of Italian knees, where knees on opposing sides of the case were connected into one longer brace. Such an arrangement is seen at the tail end of some Italian

instruments where the knees to the spine and bentside are united.

The second feature of note is the 'shelf construction'. Butted against the small upper header and resting on the lower header and the first two oblique bottom braces is a horizontal shelf. To this shelf are attached two struts from the bentside; the remaining struts go—in proper Ruckers fashion—to the spine liner.

Another instrument which we would assign to the first half of the seventeenth century is the so-called 'Ham House' Ruckers, housed until recently at the Ham House, Richmond, and possessed by the Victoria and Albert Museum. For years this instrument, inscribed 'Ioannes Ruckers me fecit Antverpiae' and dated 1634, has escaped a close examination which would quickly have shown that it never saw a Flemish workshop. Such an examination also reveals that the 'Ham House' instrument is identical in virtually every construction detail to the 1623 instrument we have just described. The date may or may not be 1634; but the instrument is certainly of the same period as the 1623 harpsichord.

The 'Ham House' instrument is 86" long, 36" wide, and 10½" deep. There are two keyboards, two 8' choirs and one 4' choir, and the present compass is GG to e". The keyboards, jacks, registers, handstops, and disposition (with dog-legged upper-manual jacks) date from an eighteenth-century rebuilding. The external dimensions of the case have not been enlarged or altered. Extra soundboard bars and struts were added during an 1894 restoration by Arnold Dolmetsch; thence the original compass must have been comparably as wide, but the tone may have been altered.

The following features are identical with those of the 1623 instrument: case of pine built around the bottom, case thicknesses, heavy bridges, wide compass, original 2' x 8', 1' x 4' disposition, soundboard layout, narrow and pointed tail, 'shelf construction', oblique bottom braces, moulding details, soundboard barring, slanted wrestplank, wider in the bass, cheek reinforcement, and reinforcement under the keyboard. It lacks the gold decorations and painting.

It is reported that the 'Ham House' instrument was sold in 1725 to the 4th Earl of Dysart, who thought he was obtaining a Flemish instrument of 1634.¹⁰ This presents no contradiction to our suggested dating of early seventeenth century, followed by a replacement of action parts sometime in the 18th century. In 1725 this instrument was fitted with new works and decorated to look like a typical Ruckers with characteristic marbled panels, printed papers, inscription, rose, and painted mottoes. This decoration (which ironically

had long been held up as a fine surviving example of original Ruckers decoration) is obviously fakery. Instead of the papers under the lid being of large or single pieces, the pattern is made up of bits and pieces pasted together with the many gaps filled in with painted imitation. We know that many authentic Ruckers instruments were enlarged in eighteenth century England and fitted with new actions; this faking of an early-English instrument was both simple and expedient.

The external features of these two instruments, the 1623 and the 'Ham House', are remarkably Flemish, and it would be too easy to speak of a well developed Ruckers-type Flemish tradition working in England, especially considering the obvious Ruckers imitation of the later school of English virginals makers. But there are too many features at odds in order to subsume these two important instruments under the Ruckers tradition. Rather these instruments must be seen as a development contemporary with Ruckers of an earlier pre-Ruckers northern European tradition.

An instrument which has always been included in surveys of English harpsichord building is the enigmatic 'Jesses Cassus',¹¹ in the possession of Mr. Robert Johnson, Solana Beach, California. The instrument is unsigned and undated except for the name of this probable rebuilder. Despite the absence of other evidence, the instrument has been considered of English make solely on the basis of decoration which is similar to that used by virginals makers.

The name board is divided into panels which include the typical black centre strip, wood mouldings, and gilt embossed paper. These gilt papers which were embossed with book-binder's blind stamps also run around the interior of the case above the soundboard. The soundboard has two finely carved roses which are also found on virginals. The painting on the lid and the side panels of the case is far more sophisticated than ever found on English virginals.

The 'Jesses Cassus' is 65" long, 31-J-" wide, and 11" deep. The instrument has a single keyboard with the present compass of AA to f". The naturals are of boxwood with arcaded fronts; the sharps have a marquetry pattern along the top. The case walls are very thin (about 1/2") and stiffened with mouldings which also divide the sides into panels similar to the 'Knole' instrument. The bentside and tail are oak, the bottom pine, and the remainder of the case lime. No use of lime has been recorded in any surviving English instrument to this writer's knowledge.

The original scaling or disposition of the instrument cannot be determined with any certainty since the instrument has been through several alterations. In addition to the present

bridge there are rows of pairs of holes in the soundboard suggesting the location of two previous bridges. One line of holes runs virtually parallel to the case at the perilously close distance of one to two inches. Such a disfunctional bridge placement certainly could not have been inten-



Plan view, 'Ham House', English, dated 1634
(Victoria and Albert Museum, Crown Copyright)

tional and it may be that either the case or soundboard has been cut down or is from another instrument. Another line of pairs of holes in the soundboard suggesting a bridge runs between the pair of roses where one might expect a 4' bridge to have gone—though the possibility of an actual 4' is out of the question.

Two rows of wrest pins suggest that the instrument never had more than two sets of strings. What was an original cut-through lute stop was at one time filled in with a strip of wood. The instrument presently has two registers in the gap, but the gap shows signs of having been enlarged. The wrestplank appears to be of the 'hollow' type with the pins grouped near the keyboard and the nut resting (at least partially towards the treble) on unsupported soundboard. The registers are not perpendicular to the case, but are about 2" farther from the keyboard at the bass than the treble.

Even considering the alterations the 'Jesses Cassus' has been through, it is apparent that it does not neatly fall into any 'national school' tradition. The short scaling, deeply-incurved bent-side, slanted registers, and thin case suggest Italian features, though the case is much too deep. On the other hand, the lute stop, thin case stiffened by mouldings and without an outer case, thin registers projecting through the sides, and the case materials suggest early northern European features.

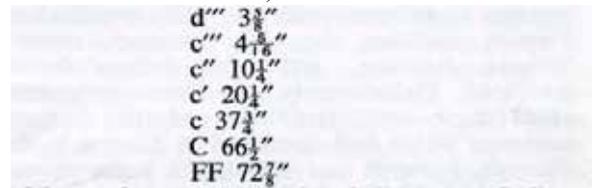
It is clear, though, that the 'Jesses Cassus' has been altered too often to provide any evidence to determine (a) if it is indeed English, or (b) to assess its role in the history of English harpsichord building.

The instruments we have discussed so far have shown a wide variety of features which suggests that the builders were probably still continuing developments from an early common prototype—or group of prototypes—which had developed in northern Europe in the fourteenth to sixteenth centuries.

In 1668 Girolama Zenti of Viterbo and Florence was in London as instrument maker to Charles II. To what extent Zenti and his successor influenced native English harpsichord builders is still unclear, though with the appearance of the next two dated English harpsichords, the Charles Haward of 1683 and the Thomas Barton of 1709, English harpsichord building begins to assume a more uniform character, and to show many features in common with Italian harpsichords—though the style still remains very eclectic.

The Charles Haward instrument,¹² in the possession of Sir William Worsley, Hovingham Hall, Yorkshire, is a single-manual instrument with a compass FF to d^{'''} (no FF sharp). The keyboard is typical of the virginals makers. It has

white sharps and black naturals with embossed patterns on the keyfronts. The case has a double bentside and is 88" long, and 33 $\frac{1}{2}$ " wide. The case depth is 9 $\frac{1}{2}$ " and somewhat deeper than an Italian instrument. Other features in common with Italian instruments are the bridge cross-sections, the mitred bridge tail, the keylevers guided in the rear by a rack, the full-length bottom boards, and the sides overlapping the bottom. The soundboard barring is probably of one of the several Italian forms with several bars going across the soundboard and passing under the bridge; the position of the four roses in the soundboard almost certainly eliminates a Flemish style of barring. The short treble and the length of the instrument produce an Italian-like scaling: (Another instrument with short scaling is the heavy-cased single manual (oak-walnut) from BLAIRGOWRIE Castle).



Many features, though, belie any Italian similarity. Italian cases are usually of one material and one dimension. The Haward's spine is of 7/16" pine and the bentside of 5/16" walnut. The double bentside is a feature which occurs frequently in northern European instruments. The internal bracing, as suggested by rows of nails on the bottom, consists of at least five diagonal braces—a feature we found in several earlier instruments.

The instrument was rebuilt sometime in the eighteenth century from which time the present registers, jacks, wrestplank, handstops, nut, and 2' x 8' disposition date. Prior to this rebuilding the instrument possessed a lute stop which was cut through the (now replaced) wrestplank. Evidence for the lute stop is seen in the plugged mortises for the lute jack rail, a plugged mortise in the cheek for the projecting register, and remains of pads on the key levers. The lute stop and the variety of possible eight foot tone colours is, as we have noted, reminiscent of the early-north-European dispositions.

The external case decoration is virtually identical to that of the well known Hitchcock harpsichord in the Victoria and Albert Museum: plain wood finish, moulding details, strap hinges, vertical batten on the cheeks, hooks for the lid, etc.

An undated harpsichord by Smith which Michael Thomas found near Oxford has, like the Hitchcock and Tisseran, a cross-grained soundboard, a feature found in France and Italy and later in Flanders. The Hitchcock and the Slade have double bentsides a feature found in France

in the seventeenth century and in Northern Europe, especially Sweden.

We have surveyed so far, all the known surviving sixteenth and seventeenth century English harpsichords. We have considered neither virginals nor the numerous bentside spinets. The virginals are so patently imitations of Ruckers virginals with the keyboard moved to the left that they present no problem for our present account; the spinets display such a variety and mixture of internal construction details that they deserve a study of their own.

We have described each instrument in some detail to show that the combination of diverse construction details prohibits a simple stereotyping of the instruments or the builders. It is seen that English makers in the seventeenth century were producing instruments with a wide mixture of features in common with the early pre-Ruckers Flemish tradition, the early sixteenth century German tradition, and the various Italian traditions. Unfortunately, we know very little about these early traditions and the common ancestors which had developed in Europe in the fifteenth, sixteenth and seventeenth centuries and upon which English builders were drawing. This lack of information is probably due in some part to the concern of Russell and his followers for the ideal of the fully developed 'national school' of the seventeenth and eighteenth century.

One difficulty which now would face those who would like to trace an evolution toward the eighteenth century English harpsichord with its many late-Flemish features, is how to account for the apparent retrogression from the large doubles (the 1623 and 'Ham House' instruments) back to the smaller single manual instrument of Haward with its many post-Zenti Italian features. Harpsichord building in England just does not display the continuity or uniformity which would suggest an English school, nor the sequential adoption of Russell's foreign schools. Rather, English building in these early years has been characterized by a succession of a variety of types with combinations of diverse features drawing upon common ancestors from northern Europe, instead of an inexorable evolution towards the 18th century type of Kirckman and Shudi. Indeed some people regard the course as a regression.

The instruments of the early eighteenth century which have survived (the 1709 Barton, the Hitchcock double manual, an undated Slade, the Tisseran, *et al*) continue to show such an eclectic combination of features and can hardly be seen as precursors to the later English builders. The large double-manual instruments of Tabel and his apprentices must be seen as a genuine introduction into England of a new style of building. Tabel, in

fact, had immigrated to London by 1716 from Antwerp where he had learned his trade.

There are, we must admit, features which appear often enough to suggest themselves as 'English' traits: composite construction using pine for full-length bottom boards and oak or walnut for bentsides, certain characteristic features of external decoration, use of oblique bottom braces, use of a slanted wrestplank, and a basic dispositional ideal of a variety of eight-foot stops. But all these features are found in instruments built in other countries and at other times. And since these features are found in instruments of such diverse concept as the instrument at 'Knole', the unsigned 1623, and the Charles Haward, these features are not limited to English building.

As a result of this study, several considerations now suggest themselves for further investigation. We need to know more about the origins of harpsichords in northern Europe from the fourteenth to the sixteenth centuries in order to trace how subsequent builders have drawn upon this ancestry. Since many English builders were immigrants (Theeuwes, Zenti, and Tabel, and certainly others unknown to us), a history of the trade and commercial patterns which would have carried instruments and builders to England would be useful. We know that England was subject to waves of influence from foreign musicians and to what extent the instruments brought by these performers influenced native English builders needs to be considered.

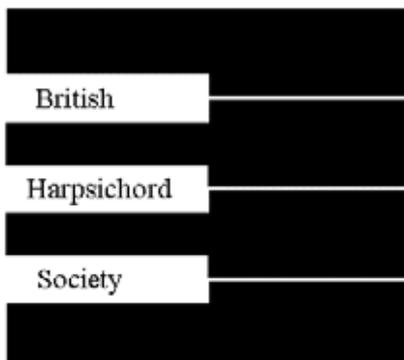
The results of these and similar investigations may prove of great importance towards furthering our understanding of English harpsichord building. Towards this end it is hoped this paper has made a modest contribution. I must thank The Harpsichord Centre, London for making this research possible. I must also express my appreciation to Lord Sackville, Knole, Seven-oaks, Kent, to Sir William Worsley, Hovingham Hall, Yorkshire, to Dr. Roger Mirrey, Redhill, Surrey, to Mr. Robert Johnson, Solana Beach, California, and to the Victoria and Albert Museum, London, who graciously allowed me to examine instruments in their possession. I have also to thank Mr. Michael Thomas, The Harpsichord Centre, London, who in addition to allowing me access to instruments in his collection, gave me much valuable information.

NOTES

1. *The Harpsichord and Clavichord* (London, 1959), p.p. 65-86.
2. *Three Centuries of Harpsichord Making* (Cambridge, Mass., 1965), p.p. 133-164; also his "Two Early English Harpsichords", *Galpin Society Journal*, III, p.p. 12-18.

3. The 'national school' approach was that followed by Russell; his estimation of its importance can be seen in his introduction to the catalogue for the Victoria and Albert Museum where it is "the author's conviction that the subject is one which can only be approached intelligibly in terms of the national schools which comprise this branch of instrument-making".
4. Our knowledge of this early-northern-European tradition is meagre. The instruments that probably belong to it are the virginal by Joes Karest, 1548, the Hans Müller harpsichord of 1537, and the instrument probably incorrectly attributed to Hans Ruckers, in the Deutsches Museum, München.
5. Michael Thomas doubts the possibility of the inscription "Haward". It is more likely to be "Iasard" or "Izzard". Izzard is mentioned in the Lord Chamberlain's records as "Iasard" alias "Shillingford".
6. See J. H. van der Meer "Beiträge zum Cembalobau im Deutschen Sprachgebiet bis 1700", *Anzeiger des germanischen National-museums* (Nürnberg).
7. Edwin M. Ripin, "On Joes Karest's Virginal and the Origins of the Flemish Tradition" in *Keyboard Instruments*, ed. Edwin M. Ripin (Edinburgh, 1971).
8. This solution to the disposition was suggested by Mr. Michael Thomas with whom I examined the instrument.
9. *Catalogue of Highly Important Musical Instruments Sold at Sotheby's*, 3rd June, 1971. Little decoration was visible before cleaning.
10. See a notice in *The Musical Times*, August 1973, where Mr. Thomas Walker repeats this information from programme notes provided by the Victoria and Albert Museum for a concert played upon this instrument.
11. Illustrated in Donald Boalch *Makers of the Harpsichord and Clavichord* (London 1956), plates XXI and XXII.
12. Illustrated in Russell, plate 61.

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The earliest complete harpsichords still preserved come from Italy, the oldest specimen being dated to 1521. (The Royal College of Music in London, has a clavicytherium, lacking its action, which may be older.)¹ Harpsichord building in England only achieved great distinction in the 18th century with the work of two immigrant makers, Jacob Kirckman (from Alsace) and Burkat Shudi (from Switzerland). The harpsichords by these builders have been described by the famous builder-scholar Frank Hubbard as "possibly the culmination of the harpsichord maker's art".^[9]² Sheridan Germann writes of them, "English harpsichords must be acknowledged as great furniture, sumptuous in textures of wood and brass and fine joinery, and built to last forever."^[10]

2. Early English Harpsichord Building, English. Harpsichord Magazine October 1973.

3. Work carried out in 1980 included the bushing of the wrest-pin holes, the provision of a row of jacks.³ The Haward Harpsichord at Knole by Dennis Woolley

The Italianate features of this instrument have been commented upon in several previous articles, notably by Frank Hubbard¹ and Thomas McGeary², and, from the placing of the four roses (themselves showing Italian influences in their tracery and parchment infilling) it has been surmised that the soundboard barring would very likely be Italianate also.