

The

# CHESS COLLECTOR

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## Editor's Comment

From all the reports I've received it appears that the CCI 6th Western hemisphere meeting held in Princeton, New Jersey, USA was a resounding success. Congratulations to all involved in the organization. A report and pictures from the event will no doubt be published in the next CCI-USA newsletter.

Another successful chess auction was held at Bonhams in London and a full report is inside this publication along with comments from other auctions.

In this issue we are launching a new feature on the back page called "Chess on the Web". This will give updates on our own magazine website along with other chess related sites and information.

### Have Your Say :

The magazine and it's new associated website try to reflect members wishes, views and opinions. Remember I can only publish what members send in to me.

Is there a chess subject that you would like to see covered in the magazine but you don't have the time to research? Just e-mail me with the details and we will see what we can do:

E-mail me at: jimjoannou@btconnect.com

Jim Joannou.  
Editor

## Front Cover

A bone and ivory "bust" chess set, Geislingen, 18th century, sold at Bonhams auction in London April 2009. (Lot 140) One side with stained red bases, the other side left natural all in their original pink and green octagonal card box. Sold for £2000 against a £2000—£3000 estimate.

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## Members Comments

Most comments I received this time were regarding the new magazine website:

"...It brings the CCI into the 21st Century..."

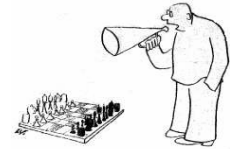
"Jim, It all looks good..."

"Great idea..."

## Help for CCI Member

Recently a CCI member from the USA contacted the magazine, initially to place an advert. He had a Chinese Disc set which had a few broken pieces and was looking for replacements. Through our contacts we found a UK member who had some spares and passed on his contact details. We missed out on a potential advert but gained a happy CCI member / magazine reader now with a complete set.

# YOUR MOVE !



## MEMBERS PAGE

### A Favorite Purchase

Guy Lyons



This miniature boxwood/ebonised set was very much an accidental purchase. The delightful little pieces were shown to me by the chess collector / dealer and friend, Savi Sorosi, at the spring 2005 Bloomsbury sale, in London. Savi explained to me that he "purchased" the chessmen for free, as the original seller did not take them as a serious saleable item. There were significant damages to both sides, plus on the Ebonised side, a Queen, a Bishop, a Knight, and a Pawn were missing.

However the more I looked and looked, the more I wanted this set and I asked Savi Sorosi for a price. He appeared to hesitate so I took a punt and said £120.00 (which was hardly a kings ransom as we had done business before) He leaned across to the UK chess restorer Alan Dewey and asked for a restoration price. Alan was distracted as he was losing a game to the UK dealer Tim Millard, so he muttered a figure of £60.00, which I thought was cheap.

So when Savi Sorosi looked at me and said £80.00 to you .....I bit his hand off!

With the £80.00 paid I was a very happy bunny and a couple of CCI shrinks/men in white coats took Savi Sorosi away for a brain scan! I think I am the only collector to ever purchase a set at such a fantastic price from a dealer!

Now 4 years later I still have the set and Savi Sorosi is not in the lunatic asylum!

At that time I had only heard of Alan Dewey, but felt most happy to give him a chance as he stuck to the utterly stupid price quoted for the work. He did very well and the lovely job was very much appreciated by myself. Amazingly at the next sale he bought me a decent breakfast, and apologised for putting me in the debtors prison, as he had to reduce his ridiculous prices. Apparently the top CCI membership were going to have him executed at the Tower of London for overcharging.

Sanity returned and Alan was spared the axe. Since those past days I have had two offers from dealers to purchase this chess set, and the declared restoration work has not deterred them from wishing to buy. This tells me, as a collector, that quality restoration work is to be expected on old antique sets, as are complete replacement pieces. Many collectors I know don't worry if the work is done well, but do like to know if any work has been done.

The little board also has a history, as it housed a set of no interest to myself, and the seller at London's Aquarius antique centre declined my offer to buy the board as a single item. Later that morning we exchanged bank notes as we chewed Pork Sausages and drank tea.

Meeting and knowing other collectors / dealers and CCI members has it's benefits!

## A few thoughts on Lucas van Leyden and the Courier Chess

Gianfelice Ferlito

I read with great interest Rick Knowlton's article about Courier Chess and I decided to translate it into Italian for our national web site ([www.cci-italia.it](http://www.cci-italia.it)). Except for two trivial mistakes (Cadeaux in place of Cazaux and Lucan in place of Lucas) the article was very well written. During my translation I came across Rick's statement that Lucas van Leyden - the author of the painting in which a game of Courier is so well depicted - created this work at the tender age of 14. This statement astounded me and I started to make some investigations on the painting and on the painter. I discovered that the painting is named differently '*The Chess Players*' or '*The Chess Game*' or '*The Game of Chess*' by many art or chess scholars. I presume that the painting has no original title but everybody clearly understands that the theme of the painting is about a game of chess. This could explain the various titles given to it by art historians.

I read that this painting is of very small dimensions (27x35 cm) and it is painted on an oak panel. Since 1874 it is housed at Staatliche Museen, Gemaeldegalerie coll., Berlin but it was originally in the Baron Werther Coll. in Vienna and the Suermondt Coll. (Hans and Siegfried Wichmann, 292). I also discovered that there is no date on the painting itself. Dr. Stefan Kemperdick, Curator of Early Netherlandish and Early German Paintings at Gemaeldegalerie, Berlin, confirmed this to me by e-mail. According to Dr. Kemperdick the painting was dated to ca. 1508 by Max J. Friedlaender (*Die altniederlaendische Malerei*, Vol X, Berlin 1934, p.87, No. 140) because it looked a little bit earlier than "*Susanna*" in Bremen which is dated 1509. I received confirmation from Dr. Elise Smith, Professor of Art History at Millasaps College, Missouri, Dr. Smith stated that the date of ca. 1508 is appropriate because of "*close parallels with his engravings and drawings from that period*" (1) But the former Chief Curator of Early Netherlandish Paintings at the

Rijksmuseum, Professor Dr. J. P. Filedt Kok, on my request e-mailed me that "*The Chess Players*" "*is Lucas's earliest datable painting, ca. 1508; it is related in style to the prints of that date, but may be one or two years later.*" (i.d. ca. 1509/1510).

H. J. R. Murray wrote in his '*A History of Chess*' that "a painting in Koenigliches Museum, Berlin said to have been painted in 1520 by Lucas van Leyden shows a game of Courier in progress." (p.484). but Murray did not reveal his source of information on that year.

I then discovered that the greater part of the early information about Lucas van Leyden, who was a Northern Netherlandish engraver and painter, was given by the Dutch painter and writer Karel van Mander in his '*The Book of Painters*' (*Schilderboeck*) which was printed in 1604. It is in '*Schilderboeck*' that the date of birth of Lucas van Leyden was mentioned for the first time. Since then the date of 1494 has been taken for granted due to the fact that van Mander had written his book only 71 years after Lucas' s death (8 August 1533). He should have been sure of the date! But it may well be that van Mander simply accepted and put in his book the date of Lucas' birth circulating at that time without a proper check. Perhaps in accepting 1494 as Luca's birth, it was one way for van Mander to enhance to the utmost the ability of a precocious young Dutch painter, thus giving a greater honor to Holland.

Today the majority of modern art critics and Curators of important Museums think the birth date of 1494 is the most likely(1) and Prof. Dr. L. J. P. Filedt Kok fully agrees *with the date of 1494, which is given by Van Mander, since archival data and other records confirm his data and description of Lucas as a child prodigy.*(2)

I found that some other sources of information suggest instead 1489/94. (3-6) If the

A few thoughts on Lucas van Leyden and the Courier Chess

*Continued*



Lucas Van Leyden. The Card Players, 1517 / 1520. Wilton House, UK



Lucas Van Leyden. The Chess Players, 1508 / 1510. Staatliche Museen, Berlin.

date of 1494 is correct, then Lucas painted 'The Chess Players' when he was 14/16 years old, but if the date of 1489 is accepted, then Lucas was 19/21 years old. It is an interesting fact that Lucas van Leyden painted 'The Card Players', housed today at Wilton House, Salisbury, Wiltshire, UK, around 1517/20. Has this date influenced Murray in attributing 'The Chess Players' to the same year? Nobody knows, but it could have. During my translation I corresponded with Rick Knowlton informing him about my researches on the birth date of Lucas van Leyden and on the date of the painting. My second remark on Rick's article is the fact that the Courier game is presented in the painting and in the new modern version with a chequered board with a white square placed to the player's right hand. I mentioned to Rick that Murray wrote that the Courier chess board had a black square at the right corner and that, according to Murray, this peculiarity was omitted by Selenus who described the Courier game(392). Murray stated also that the village of Stroebeck possessed a chess board, one side for normal chess (8x8 squares) and one for the game of Courier (12x8 Squares); such a board was bearing an inscription recording the fact that it was given as a present by Frederick William I of Prussia in 1651 (393). Also William Lewis, an English

chess teacher, reported in 1831 to have visited Stroebeck and to have seen that particular chess board. Now days everyone can check the verity of Murray/Lewis statements about the square at right corner of the board by visiting the web site of the Ken Whyld Association ([www.kwabc.org](http://www.kwabc.org)). In this site there is a photo of the famous Courier chess board still existing in Stroebeck, a chess village which has been named 'Cultural village of Europe 2006' for the attachment to the game of chess during many centuries.

There are two contradictory pieces of information about the board. History scholars are often confronted with scrappy, unreliable, flimsy evidences which leaves them often in a dilemma. The painting 'The chess Players' has proven that Lucas van Leyden has carefully depicted the chess pieces of a Courier game; but did he also paint the chess board so accurately? The board still extant in Stroebeck shows a different color at right corner. The question is really difficult to solve with the information we have at hand, unless we suppose that for the Courier board there was 'no fixed rule' in Europe. But is this historically correct? I think we need further investigation. Let's hope that the truth will emerge in the future.

## A few thoughts on Lucas van Leyden and the Courier Chess

*Continued*

Notes:

(1)Prof.Dr.Elise L. Smith,' *The paintings of Lucas van Leyden* ', Columbia & London, University of Missouri Press,1992 (p163/164)

(2)Prof.Dr.J.P Filedt Kok," *The dance around the Golden calf by Lucas van Leyden*",2007

(3)Museums:

-National Gallery of Art Washington, DC, search Cat.n.12, Rosenwald coll." *Mary Magdalene in the Garden of Love*"1943.3.5627 and "*The Pilgrims*"

Rosenwald Coll.1943.3.5669

- The National Museum of Western Art, Tokyo, search in the

(4)Catalogues of Exhibitions

-"*Meisterwerke der Druckgraphik*" by Martin Sonnabend, Stadel Museum,2006

- "*Lucas van Leyden:engravings in the State Pushkin*

*Museum of Fine Arts*" by Natalja Markova, Moscow 2002

-"*Die Druckgraphik Lucas van Leydens und seiner Zeitgenosse*", by Dr.M.Matile, 2000, Zurich

-"*Luca di Leida, Stampe della collezione Remondini*" by Livia Alberton Vinco da Sesso, 1984

-*Gravures de la Fondation Custodio,Coll.Frits Lugt*, 1983

(5)Articles

-E. Pelink, in *Oud Holland*, vol 64

(6)Encyclopedia Britannica

## Chess sets of the Phillipines. Part 2..

*Jim Joannou*

### Folklore and Tribal sets (Central & North Islands)

#### Introduction

In part 1 (Ref 1) we looked at the modern playing set design and also studied in detail the "Moro" style sets from the southern island of Mindanao.

We now turn our attention to the central and northern regions of the Philippines where we find a number of different chess designs. As previously mentioned, it is the culture, traditions, religions, and people of the Philippines that determine the reasons behind the different styles that we find in these islands.

The central and northern parts have a Catholic based religion, which is quite strong, however in outlying areas these religions have "absorbed a number of indigenous elements such as offerings to spirits" (2), and "pagan" influences. (3) "Idols" such as a rice god known as "Bulol" and a half man half bird figure known as Bal-Bal (2), are amongst 1500 (4) others that are worshiped and show through in their culture, architecture and artifacts, including their chess sets.

Chess was introduced to the Philippines in the 15<sup>th</sup> century (5 & 9) by Arab settlers and traders from the south, who settled on the islands and introduced Islamic beliefs. In 1564 the Spanish conquered the area and introduced Christianity and European influences and values.

In 1869 the Filipinos revolted against their Spanish aggressors and two years later sovereignty was transferred to the USA. The next 75 years were unsettled and eventually in 1941, during WWII, the Japanese invaded.

Chess sets of the Phillipines. Part 2.

*Continued*

The Philippines was liberated in 1944 and gained their independence in 1945. (5 & 9)

Folklore Influences

The Philippine national hero, Jose Rizal (1861-1896), is said to have inspired the Filipinos to revolt against their Spanish rulers through his nationalistic writings and supported a local propaganda movement. His two main novels, *Noli Me Tangere* (Touch Me Not) and *El Filibusterismo* (The Subversive), “awakened a nation from a long, deep slumber and highlighted the need for significant reforms and an end to Spanish abuses.” (6). The heroine in his novels was a girl called Maria Clara, who is now a local “folk hero” who has inspired a dance, a song and a form of national dress. (7) She is also the inspiration for a figural chess set which also depicts Maria’s lover, Crisostomo Ibarra, as the King. (Fig 1)

These sets originate from the Ivatan people of the Batanes islands, which is the northernmost region of the Philippines (8)



Fig 1. White side from a Maria Clara, folklore set. King (Crisostomo Ibarra), Queen (Maria Clara) and Catholic style Bishops.



Fig 2. Pieces from a Maria Clara set. Left to Right: Rook as “Nipa” hut, King, Queen (Maria Clara) and Knight depicted as a Water Buffalo.

and are made, as is usual, from local wood, normally Kamagong or Banti wood (Dark Brown) and Acacia (Light Brown). These sets have been wrongly called “royal” sets, but as previously mentioned (1), there has never been a monarchy in the Philippines and royalty has no place in their culture.



Fig 3. Male Rice God Statue. (Female statues are also known)

Chess sets of the Phillipines. Part 2.

*Continued*

Tribal / Idol sets from the North

The northern islands of the Philippines are mountainous and are the home of several warring tribes that have a history of pagan worship. This area is known for its rice paddies carved into the sides of the mountains and the local people protect this delicate environment by erecting statues of a rice god known as Bulol. (Fig 3)

These rice gods are depicted in a squatting position and locally made chess sets are also depicted in this way. Figs 4 & 5 show two different styles of Rice God sets.

In Fig 5 the bishop is shown with a rice bowl (on his head), a theme that recurs in northern Philippine sets. The knights in these sets are depicted as water buffalo, which is a national symbol as described previously (1) and the Rook is styled as a typical Philippine “Nipa” house or hut. These bamboo-constructed dwellings have a thatched roof made from dried coconut leaves or “Nipa”. This style of rook has also been misdescribed by some people as rice stores!



Fig 4. Charming Rice God set, nicely carved.



Fig 5. Rice God set. Note the Bishops head with rice bowl



Fig 6. White side from an Ifugao tribal set made from Acacia wood.

In the Bagio region of the north, live the “Ifugao” tribe, who have a long history of warring with the neighboring “Bontoc” tribe and this is the theme for another style of chess set. (Fig 6).

These are well carved pieces made from Kamagong wood (A naturally dark hardwood found only in the Philippines, also known as Ironwood) and Acacia wood. Again the rooks in these sets are styled as the Nipa hut. As noted with the Rice god sets the bishop is holding a small rice bowl in his right hand. (Fig 7)



## Chess sets of the Phillipines. Part 2.

*Continued*



Fig 7. Bishops from Northern Filipino sets nearly always carry a rice bowl or rice storage jar.

This is symbolic of the church priest's work in giving rice or food to the poor. The white side pieces are armed with spears and the black side armed with broad bladed knives and shields. Another feature of these tribal sets is that the queen is usually depicted as carrying an "offering" of some kind, with one or both hands upturned. (Figs 6 & 8) Offerings made to various gods or idols are a common practice in the northern islands even today. The Filipiniana Research Center, University of the Philippines Vargas Museum in Quezon City, which is situated on the outskirts of the capital Manila, houses



Fig 8. Black side from an Ifugao tribal set from the collection of Marco Dorland. (Again note a rice bowl in the Bishops right hand, the knight as a water buffalo with rider, and the Nipa hut style rook)

local artifacts from 1880 up to the 1960's and has a fine example of an Ifugao set. (Fig 9). Made from local wood it is dated to the 1950's and is part of the Jorge B. Vargas collection.

The two sides are identical in design with the pawns depicted armed with clubs and the king armed with a staff and shield. The bishop carries the customary rice container and the Rooks are again Nipa huts.



Fig 9. Black side of Ifugao set in the Jorge Vargas Museum. Artist Unknown (Note: The Bishop carrying a Rice storage jar)

## Chess sets of the Phillipines. Part 2.

*Continued*



Fig 10. Jade Ifugao set mounted in a presentation case made for the tourist trade.

### Summary

The provinces of the Philippines produce artifacts and local cultural objects as a means of financial support and most of the chess sets shown are all made for the tourist industry. Some are very well carved and are worth collecting however the quality of most modern sets can be poor. There are other chess designs produced in addition to those above, for example, I noted an animal set carved

from softwood, which had lions, horses, water buffalo, cows and pigs as the pieces. Mackett-Beeson in his book (10) shows a different style of Philippine tribal set but he does not specify the region, although it is most likely another form of the Ifugao style. It is also possible to find small sets made from Jade, which are not locally made and probably imported, like the presentation set in Fig 10, which is again based on the Ifugao design.

In the Philippines you have to search for shops that sell chess sets and it is best to target the cultural shops, which sell the locally produced goods. There are very few antique shops in the Philippines and so older or antique sets are very difficult to find.

### References

- 1) The Chess Collector Vol XVII No.3
- 2) "Welcome to the Philippines". Ismay Publications Ltd. Hong Kong. Pg.53 & 55.
- 3) "In the Realm of the Rice God" International Herald Tribune newspaper. July 16, 1999.
- 4) <http://literalno4.tripod.com/ifugao/frame.html>
- 5) <http://philippinechesschronicles.blogspot.com/2006/11/after-five-centuries-philippines.html>
- 6) <http://opmanong.ssc.hawaii.edu/filipino/RevLinks.html>
- 7) <http://uk.youtube.com/watch?v=5eIeo661H0U>
- 8) [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ivatan\\_people](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ivatan_people)
- 9) <http://pinas.dlsu.edu.ph/history/history.html>
- 10) Chessmen. A.E.J.Mackett-Beeson. Octopus Book Ltd. Pg. 88

## Tagua Nut (Vegetable Ivory)

*Ing. Farid Diez Farhat, Ecuador*

A palm like tree which grows to a height of 20 to 30 feet in several tropical regions of South America produce a vegetable ivory nut or seed called a Tagua nut. (Pronounced: Ta qwa or Tah gwa). They range in size from a cherry to a grapefruit and average about the size of a walnut. It usually takes from 15 to 20 to make a pound in weight. Chemically they are pure cellulose and before the nut mature have a milky sweet liquid in the center. When ripe the nuts fall to the ground and are gathered and dried from four to eight weeks after which they become extremely hard. The nut is not toxic. Color varies from blue-white to amber with most nuts ivory-amber.

The ivory nut is close grain and very hard. The cellular structure and grain is similar to that of elephant ivory, but is more dense and resilient. It resembles the finest ivory in texture and color and is slightly softer than mammal ivory and usually contains a void in the center of the nut. There are several names for this vegetable ivory nut, but the most

common is the "Tagua Nut". Its similarity to elephant ivory has been known by craftsmen for years and is frequently passed as elephant ivory. Objects fashioned from it and can be very deceptive. It being so much like mammal ivory that pieces carved from it are sold at the same price as elephant ivory and in some carvings much more.

### HISTORY

For over two hundred years vegetable ivory has been used by ivory carvers in the making of netsuke, dice, dominoes, and chess pieces. Other uses found were cane and umbrella handles, pipes, mah-jongg tiles, sewing needle cases and the fine art of scrimshaw. Religious figurines were carved as were many toys. For close to eighty years the ivory nut was a commodity of global importance and factories on three continents used to manufacture articles of utility and luxury but the coming of synthetics killed the world ivory nut market.

The vegetable ivory nut has begun a come back because of the Ivory ban and the slaughter and near extinction of all mammal ivory, e.g., elephant, whales, walrus and other species



Dog Chess set made from Tagua nut.

### Editor's Note:

Tagua nut sets, and other artefacts can be obtained from the authors export company. More pictures and information can be obtained from the editor or from the members section of the magazine website.

## Killarney Chessmen

*Mick Deasey*

Two woods feature heavily in the history of Irish turning and carving, bog oak and common arbutus (strawberry tree wood). Arbutus is a very hard wood and can exhibit a range of hues from light pink, through cream to a deep reddish brown at the root. Bog oak as it's name suggests is a product of the genus *Quercus* being buried in peat bogs for thousands of years. Bog oak proved a lucrative material for the production of ornaments and high end carved items which could have polished finishes similar to Whitby jet or ebony, An example of a bog oak set of chessmen is shown in Keats' Chessmen for Collectors".



Arbutus on the other hand was more commonly used for chessmen, boards, tables and fancy goods and could be combined with yew, holly etc for these items and cabinet work. Both woods were abundant in the area of The Lakes of Killarney and proved to be the basis of a local manufacturing industry that flourished in Killarney for over 100 years.

There are reports of workers in wooden items in the very early years of the nineteenth century, presumably locally used

domestic items such as spoons and bowls. The first historical reference to worked bog oak would appear to come from the March 1st 1865 issue of *The Technologist* and relates to an earlier visit of George IV to Ireland. "When George IV visited Ireland in 1821, a person by the name of McGurk (a retired soldier) presented him with an elaborately carved walking stick of Irish bog oak, and received, what we believe to be, an ample remuneration. The work was much admired and McGurk obtained several orders from time to time. Subsequently a man by the name of Connell, who lived in Killarney, commenced to do somewhat more regular business in carving the oak found plentifully in the district, and selling his work to the visitors as souvenirs". From reading other sources this appears to be accurate except for the citing of Connell as the man who developed the commercial business. This is actually believed to be John Neate b.1796. Rather like the Calverts in London, Neate plied his trade in Killarney until 1838 when he died and his wife, Ellen and her three daughters took over the business. John Neate is reputed to have trained both Cornelius Goggin and Dennis Connell who became two of the most important turners/carvers and fancy goods traders specialising in Irish woods and they both later opened business establishments in Nassau Street, Dublin. Cornelius Goggin who married one of Neate's daughter describes himself in an 1840's *Tourist Advertiser* as "Manufacturer of Irish Bog Oak, Killarney Wood and Connemara marble ornaments" operating from 13 Nassau Street. Dennis Connell who runs the "Royal Irish Bog Oak Warehouse" from 26 Nassau Street also has premises in the Pantheon Bazaar, Oxford Street, London and describes himself as "Bog Oak Carver to HM the Queen".

## Killarney Chessmen

*Continued*



Mrs. Neate meanwhile continues the family business in Killarney and built a formidable reputation. In 1841 the Dublin Society reports that "There was an abundance of scientific instruments and a number of beautiful articles manufactured from arbutus wood by Mrs. Neate of Killarney". Two years later in "A Week at Killarney" by Mr. and Mrs. S.C. Hall, comes the following passage; "Of the arbutus wood a variety of toys are made at Killarney, for which there is considerable sale to visitors anxious to retain some palpable reminiscence of the beautiful place. There are 4 establishments in Killarney for the sales of these toys. The one we recommend, chiefly because we have reason to believe that a fair price is asked "at first" is that of Mrs. Neate, a widow who with her 3 daughters keeps a shop opposite the Kenmare Arms". The 4 establishments referred to were owned by John Crimmin, a man called O'Connor, the widow Neate and James Egan. Commercial considerations aside, the most important maker of arbutus in Killarney through this period is believed to be James Egan (or Eagan). In 1846 "A Summer Visit to Ireland" by Frederic West was published with the following passage; "In the evening a woman, by the name of Egan, presented herself with a quantity of curious specimens of fancy articles wrought in arbutus wood, that beautiful native of Killarney. Card-cases, work boxes etc, pins and crosses manufactured from the horns and hoofs of

the red deer. One small chess table particularly attracted me, it's pillar, most elegantly turned, was made of the black oak and well designed; the squares comprised a variety of tints according to the age and size of the tree, and whether the stem, branch or root was employed; this is very dark, prettily grained and takes a fine polish. The other wood is equally handsome but redder. The price of the table was 10 guineas. There are more manufacturers than one of this commodity, the sole trade of the town, and tables are sometimes made at the cost of 30 guineas, and sent carriage free to London. I promised my acquaintance to mention her husband, James Egan, to my English friends who will find marquetterie in this little town equal to any Florence or Belgium can produce. These poor people have no winter employment, and the sale of these fancy articles is, of course, precarious." Compare this passage with an extract from "A Little Tour in Ireland" by Samuel Reynolds and an Oxonian, John Leech some 7 years later; "Egan's bog oak and Arbutus warehouse well deserves a visit. Here you learn from a ledger at a brilliant galaxy of noble names, which makes a commoners eyes wink, how the right honourable the Earl of Cash bought an elaborate table for my lady's boudoir, and how the Rear Admiral Sir Bowline Buff made a purchase of a backgammon board.....".



## Killarney Chessmen

*Continued*



In 1853 Egan had two items for display in Dublin, both were tables. One was owned by the Earl of Eglinton and reputed, per the description, to have 157,000 pieces of inlay. This is clearly a significant “step up” from his wife touting his goods some years earlier but there are numbers of references to “arbutus-girls” with “black eyes and red headscarves” who beguiled the summer visitors into buying the arbutus ware as souvenirs. In a 1988 issue of *Country Life* the following passage is found; “Queen Victoria visited Killarney in 1861 and was presented with specimens of Killarney bog oak and arbutus work by James Egan”. I think it unlikely that Egan would have been granted this accord unless he were not the pre-eminent maker of these items in Killarney at the time. Again from reports in the mid 1850’s Egan was employing 12-16 full time workers in his business so it would have been a substantial size for a town the size of Killarney. Egan also exhibited at further Dublin exhibitions in 1862 and 1865. In Dublin the businesses of both Goggin and Connor were thriving. In the 1852

Thom’s Directory Goggin operated both a Killarney Wood and Kilkenny Wood Warehouse from his premises in 13 Nassau Street and Connell advertised himself as Jeweller and Bog Oak Carver. Connell had in fact exhibited at the Great Exhibition in London, one of his items being a “chessboard”. Both men appear to have continued in business until, like Egan, at least the mid to late 1860’s. Aside from the individuals mentioned the only other person who may have engaged in a trade including the making of games/boards etc is Thomas Chaplin of Kilkenny but little information is available. There are further



## Killarney Chessmen

*Continued*

references to arbutus manufacturing in subsequent years.

In 1911 a report concludes that arbutus work is the only manufacturing activity in Killarney and there are further references in 1919. Presumably it carried on for some time afterward. Goods were exhibited at Philadelphia in 1876, Boston in 1883 and St. Louis in 1904, the exhibitor in this instance being E.M Goggin of Dublin, presumably a son or relative of Cornelius.

As far as direct references to the manufacture of chess pieces themselves I have found two references neither of which identify a named maker. British Phaeonogamous Botany by William Baxter Vol VI, 1843, states; “ About Killarney, in Ireland, where this tree (Arbutus Unedo) is abundant, boxes, chess-men, etc are made from the wood and generally purchased by visitors as memorials of the place”

There is also a partial reference via a snippet view on google books in “Flowering Plants, Grasses, Sedges & Ferns of Great Britain” by Anne Pratt and Edward Step, believed to be first published in 1855. “No-one who has ever visited the Lakes of Killarney can have failed to observe.....or sets of chess-men, or bracelets made of the beautifully veined wood of.....” (presumably arbutus, so if anyone has a copy of this popular work, then please contact me)

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### Auction Review

Bobby Fischer’s Chess Library, Including notebooks prepared for the 1972 World Chess Championship, came up for auction at Bonhams, New York on 10th June 2009. See the members section of the magazine website for more details.

## Auction Reviews

*Jim Joannou*

### **Bonhams, Knightsbridge, UK.**

The latest Chess & Games auction at Bonhams, Knightsbridge, took place on 29<sup>th</sup> April 2009. The general feeling was that it was a successful sale, although there were fewer attendees’ on the day than on previous sales, and the attendance at the viewing sessions were also down. There were some mixed opinions, depending upon whom you talked to! Some said the market was buoyant, whilst another opinion was “Don’t put your money into antiques!” Some thought the bidding was strong whilst others thought that prices had dropped. When you analyse the results, approx 50% of lots sold below their estimate, (Good news for those like me on a restricted budget), with the numbers being about equal for those that sold on or over estimate. Only a small number of items failed to sell. This sale included items from the renowned collection of Martine Jeannin, and I can’t help wonder just how good the sale would have been without these quality lots!

There were approx 35 – 40 people in the saleroom and the majority of these were CCI members. As one might expect, they were mainly from the UK with Garreth Williams and Micheal Keats (son of Victor Keats) in attendance and bidding on selected lots, but there were also some overseas visitors from Norway, Holland and the USA.

Pictures from the day can be seen on the pictures page of the magazine website:

<http://chesscollectorsinternational.club.office.com>

and also on two pages of Alan Dewey’s pica casa site:

<http://picasaweb.google.co.uk/chessspy/AllTheUsualSuspects#>

<http://picasaweb.google.co.uk/chessspy/Bonhams26April2009#>

## Auction Reviews

*Continued*

The sale had some other games and miscellaneous chess items initially and then there were a number of chess boards on offer like Lot 61, an English satinwood and rosewood board dated 1830 which sold for £350 and Lot 68 (Pictured) a French board with an Egyptian theme, which sold under estimate at £200. (All prices quoted are hammer prices)



Lot 68. A decorative Mid 20th century French board with a glass top over black & silver squares.

Amongst the Jaques sets on offer was a limited edition Staunton 4.4 inch boxwood and ebony set dated to 1850, in a fitted case, which sold over estimate at £1800, but the star Jaques set was Lot 86



Lot 86. A Jaques Staunton ivory set. White king stamped "Jaques London" King 11cm.

(Pictured) an ivory Staunton set with a Carton Pierre box with a red label on the underside, which sold for £14,000 against a modest estimate of £2000-£3000. Lot 100, a lovely, small travelling set (Pictured) attracted a great deal of attention at the viewings and easily passed it's estimate of £120-£160 to eventually sell at £1100. If you were looking for a bargain then Lot 106, a 19thC "old English" pattern rosewood and boxwood set, was ideal, selling at just £20.



Lot 100. Late 19th century Staunton pattern travelling set with pegged ivory chessmen. King 2.5cm.

Lot 132, a Royal Doulton frog and mouse porcelain set (Limited Edition produced in 2003) sold just under estimate at £1700. Of the European sets, there were several 18<sup>th</sup> C "Geislingen" sets on sale, like Lot 140 (see Front cover) which sold for £2000 and Lot 151, which sold for £7500. Six Regence pattern boxwood sets, Lots 169, 170, 182, 187, 188 & 194 all sold under estimate, as did several German "Folk Art" sets and a German "Toy" set (Pictured).

The far eastern sets mainly sold on or around their listed estimates with a few noted exceptions. Lot 205 A collection of five lapis Lazuli chessmen sold for £1700 against a £500-£600 estimate and Lot 210,



## Auction Reviews

*Continued*

### **Bonhams Auction, New York. 1st June 2009**



Lot 177. A wooden “Toy” set Nuremberg, 19th century. King 8cm.

A beautiful gemstone set came up for sale recently, designed by Gemologist and Jewelry Designer Sylvia Quispe of Idar-Oberstein, Germany. It was listed as a Carved Ruby, Lapis and Opal Chess Set of Marine Life and it had an estimate of \$90,000—\$110,000. However it went unsold on the day.

an Indian Export ivory set from Jaipur which sold for £2000. A small Islamic set made from metal foil, Lot 217 (Pictured) sold over estimate at £800 as did Lot 221, a Chinese Export “Napoleonic figural” set in ivory, dated 1815, which sold for £6600.



Detailed colour pictures can be found on the magazine website.



Lot 217. An Islamic metal foil set. Presumed to be Northern India, late 19th century with a sandalwood and sedeli-work box.

#### **Chess Fair Extras**

Chess sets remaining from the chess fair at the 6th Western Hemisphere CCI meeting are currently on sale on the internet. See back page for details.

#### **Unknown collection sold**

The collection of a previously unknown German collector went up for sale at *Antiquariat A. Klittich-Pfankuch GmbH & Co.* auction house, Braunschweig, Germany on 20th June 2009. This sale consisted of 1174 lots of which 659 were chess related items. (Sets, Books, Magazines, and other chess ephemera). Some CCI members thought that the sets of offer were not of a very high quality and this was reflected in the low estimates. A number of the sets had replacement pieces which was not listed in the auction catalogue, however every item

There were a couple of items that caused some controversy / discussion among CCI members. These were Lots 84, listed as a Jaques club sized boxwood and rosewood board, late 19<sup>th</sup> C and Lot 110 listed as an unusual bone set, England C1800. The question is were they real or were they fakes? Pictures and further information on these controversial lots can be seen on our magazine website where members can decide for themselves and give your own opinion!

## Auction Reviews

*Continued*

sold on the day. Prices varied from just €10 up to €1900 with one item reaching €4000, which was a German geislingen set.

A highly carved Indian ivory set (Lot 515) dated to the early 20<sup>th</sup> C sold for €1300, while a Mid 19<sup>th</sup> C, German Bone set, Lot 531 (Pictured) sold for €180.



Lot 637, A modern “Ganine” style set, which was listed a Russian, sold for just €50 and an autographed postcard from 1958 (which included Bobby Fischer’s signature) went for €400 against a €180 estimate. (Pictured below)



## Advertisement

**Bonhams** 1793



**The Chess Sale**  
 Wednesday 28 October  
 Knightsbridge, London  
 An invitation to consign

The auction will include  
 Fine Chess Sets, Jaques  
 Staunton, Backgammon,  
 Mah Jong, Games Boards,  
 Chess Ephemera, Playing  
 Cards, Games Compendiums  
 and Antique Games.

**Catalogue**  
 +44 (0) 1666 502 200  
 subscriptions@bonhams.com

Illustrated:  
 A Staunton ivory chess set,  
 Jaques, 19th century.  
 Sold for £16,800 in 2009

The closing date for entries is  
 Tuesday 1 September.

**Enquiries**  
 Luke Honey MRICS  
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 luke.honey@bonhams.com

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## CCI DIARY

**Bonhams London Chess Auction**  
28th Oct 2009  
**Knightsbridge, London**

**Deadline for entries: 1st Sept. 2009**

Contact: Luke Honey  
luke.honey@bonhams.com

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**Italian—French CCI meeting**  
16th—18th Oct. 2009  
**Catania, Sicily**

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For further details contact Rodolfo Pozzi or  
see the Magazine Website.

~~~~~  
**The 14th CCI Biennial Convention.**

Wed 30th June—Sun 4th July 2010  
**Cambridge, UK**  
**\*\*Note these are revised dates\*\***

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Details to be announced  
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This Dutch, Horn set sold on e-Bay recently for \$295. The Knights have Glass eyes and all pieces were felted on their bases with red linen. King: 6.3cm (2.8")

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| Per line (12 words) | £3   | \$6   | €4   |

### DISCLAIMER

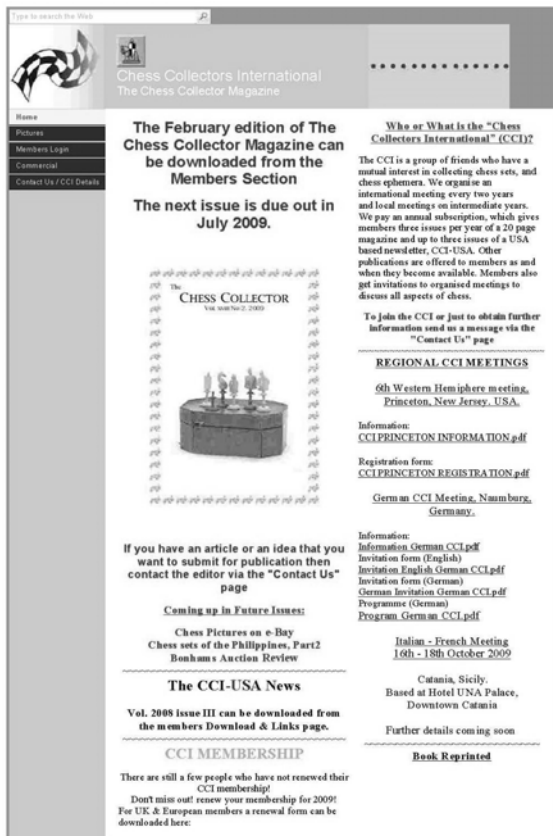
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# CHESS ON THE WEB

## The Chess Collector Magazine website

This new website, which was launched to CCI members in the last issue is now receiving an average of 45—50 hits per month. We have had several enquiries via the “Contact Us” option, which has led to two new members.

Recent additions to the website, which is updated approximately every 2 months, include: Real or Fake articles, Pictures from the Bonhams Auction and detailed pictures of other chess sets.



For those who have yet to see it, here is a Front Page from the Magazine website

<http://chesscollectorsinternational.club.officelive.com/default.aspx>

## New Chess Set Collection Website

American Collector Isreal Raphaeli has launched his chess collection on a special “collection” database style, website known as eOSEF. His site also contains unsold sets from the Chess fair at the 6th Western Hemisphere meeting in Princeton, USA and members can bid for these sets.

<http://www.eosef.com/chesscollector09/main/main.php>

Members can apply for their own space on this website, for a fee of course, so that they can upload pictures of their own collections.

## PICTURES FROM THE WEB

