

COLLECTOR'S CORNER

Cues

by *Andy Hunter*



In this issue I would like to feature the cues which bore the name of William Cook, either senior or junior. William Cook Senior became professional champion in 1870 at the age of just nineteen,



William Cook Senior

by defeating the elder John Roberts. He continued to hold the championship title, off and on, until 1884 and although he was always a popular character and had much success in his career, he died penniless in Brompton Consumption Hospital shortly after his 44th birthday in 1893.

He never intended that his son, William Cook Junior would take up billiards as a profession and the younger Cook worked for some time

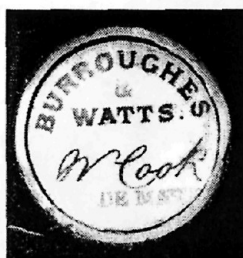
in a business house in the City of London. However, after his father's death, he decided to devote himself to the game and became known for his outstanding ability with nursery cannons.

There are six authenticated versions of cues carrying the Cook name. Three of these were manufactured by Burroughes & Watts as follows,

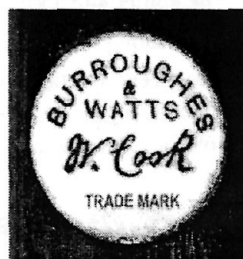
- 1) The earliest version had a round badge with the inscription in red, all contained within a black circle (£200-£300)
- 2) The next version was a two-piece cue and carried the same badge, but had another, slightly smaller one above it, inscribed "Patent Secret Jointed Cue". Early two-piece cues would join wood-to-wood with a long metal screw fixed into the top section. The grain could be expected to be well matched and they could therefore be difficult to spot when screwed together. Although known to exist, none of these cues have been sold recently so there is no reliable valuation. However, as they are rarer than the one-piece, their value can be expected to be higher. (£300+)

Some of these cues have a weight stamp, but the earliest do not. The earlier versions also had a semi-circle of leather fixed to the base of the butt, which would allow it to be used in the manner of a mace.

- 3) The third version has the same inscription in black except for the words "Trade Mark" which remain in red, and a different character style is used. (£150-£250)



Typical plate for versions 1 & 2



Typical plate for version 3

All three of the Burroughes & Watts cues have a plain or striped ebony butt, and the shaft was either Ash or Pear wood. Other versions of the cue, invariably with an Ash shaft, were subsequently produced by other manufacturers, as follows :

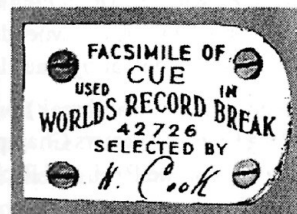
- 4) J. Ashcroft & Co. (Liverpool) employed William Cook junior as a tutor at the start of his professional career. They also retailed a facsimile cue of the one used by his father. This has a "pear-shaped" badge laid into an ebony butt. (£200-£300)
- 5) Cox & Ymen produced another version of this cue. The wood used for the butt was stained black to imitate ebony and over the years this has faded to a slightly grey colour. There is no badge on the cue, but it has "W. Cook" and "Patented" stamped on the lower part of the flat on the butt, with the maker's name reversed below it. (ie Ymen & Cox). (£150-£250)

All of the above reference William Cook Senior. There is just one cue relating to his son.

- 6) The final model in the "Cook Collection" is a William Cook junior facsimile cue detailing his record "cradle cannon" break of 42,746 which spanned several days and was concluded on 4th June 1909. The badge is square and set into a rosewood or mahogany butt. It actually credits Cook with 20 points less than the total officially recognised by the Billiard Association and is made from plastic rather than bone or ivory, which are the material used for the others. The cue is also distinguished by a turquoise/blue veneer front splice, with rosewood or mahogany on top. (£150-£200)



William Cook Junior



On The Method Of Applying The Leathern Point.

There are several methods by which the leathern point may be affixed to the cue, but the following is the most expeditious:—

Let the point of the cue be filed perfectly flat, and the leather be equally smooth, the latter somewhat exceeding in size, the surface to which it is to be applied. Then take a piece of shell-lac, and fuse it in a flame, taking care that no grease from a candle or lamp reach it, by which its adhesive quality would be destroyed, while in a state of fusion, apply a portion of it to the point of the cue, and hold it again in the flame (not so long as to ignite it, but merely to ensure its perfect liquefaction), then place the leather on it as quick as possible, and press it down close to obtain perfect contact. In about a minute, the cue, thus armed, is to be placed on a board with the point downwards, and the leather cut round with a sharp knife, or chisel, and finally trimmed with a file; after which, it will be ready for immediate use. By such a method, the leathern point will frequently be found to stand a considerable time—Edwin Kentfield 1839.