

THE CUE COLLECTOR

by *Andy Hunter*

Thurston's cues

Thurston's produced a standard ash shafted cue with a plain ebony butt and a big round badge which was made from bone. Hand spliced models are valued at £100-150, with the machine splice version bringing £50-60. They also produced a range of named player cues, which will be the subject of a future article.



produced by this company which had a round plastic badge, with a modern shape, made around the 1930's.

Fitzpatrick & Longley (Sheffield)

Founded in 1843, this company made several different cues, although I have not seen any carrying the name of a player. Their cues were either hand or "butterfly" spliced with a large round badge. Hand spliced versions can be expected to bring £150-170 with a butterfly spliced example being worth about £50.

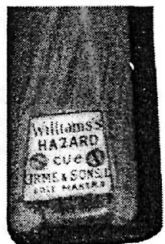
Orme & Sons

Probably the best known of all the provincial manufacturer's, Orme's produced some of the most ornate tables and scoreboards ever made, in addition to a wide variety of cues.

The example illustrated has "Orme & Sons, Manchester" impressed with gold lettering into the butt with the "Prince of Wales" crest above it. Value £200-250.



The Orme & Son "Match Cue" has a badge which is the same shape as the "Williams Hazard" illustrated, a plain ebony butt with a large green veneer in it and an ebony splice on top. This would have either two or four screws. Value £100-150.



The Williams Hazard has a burr and ebony butt and was named after professional player Albert Williams who joined Orme's as a coach in 1905 where he stayed for five years. He challenged for the professional championship only once, being easily defeated by Mel Inman in 1909. Soon after this he settled in Australia, paying only occasional visits to England. The Williams cue is valued at around £250.

Amongst the Orme range were some cues with very unusual butts. These would be hand spliced with part of the butt turned away and either leather, cork, or sometimes cloth, wrapped around it. These cues are difficult to find in good condition and would be valued up to £200.

As with most of the major manufacturer's, Orme's made a lot of club cues. These were machine spliced with a plain ebony butt and an ash or maple shaft and the company name stamped into the wood. These cues are not really collectable or particularly valuable and a good example could be expected to bring £50. Orme's also produced a plain ash cue, which although having little commercial value, can be made into a good playing cue by hand splicing a new butt. Only of use for its shaft, this cue would be worth about £20.

H. Nelmes & Co. (Glasgow)

This company produced the "Wellington Champion" cue. Whilst I am unsure of the dates it was produced, the traditional "billiard" shape and an ivory badge suggests that it is quite early. The example which I have seen had an ash shaft with an hand spliced ebony butt and a rectangular badge held in place by four screws. A good playing cue, its value would be £220-250. I have also seen a later cue



J. H. Bailey (London)

Established c.1880 this company is best known for producing the "The Model Champion Cue". The earliest example I have seen has a square badge, with an indentation at the butt end known as a "thumb print". This model had an ash shaft with a plain ebony butt. The badge had "Model Champion Cue" written at the top with a diamond below, in which the letters "MCC" were written. I have also seen a cue carrying the same badge which had two snakewood and two ebony splices at the butt. Alternative badges just had MCC in a diamond.

Other cues made by this company carried one of these badges and had the following features at the butt :

- 1) Four ebony splices with four shorter bird's-eye maple below.
- 2) As above, but with longer ebony splices and the lower splices being a combination of ebony and bird's-eye maple.
- 3) Six spliced ebony with a white veneer,

These cues were still being made in the 1920's but earlier cues can be spotted by the use of ivory for the badge. The value of all these cues can be expected to be around £150, with the snakewood versions bringing slightly more at £200.

MacMahons

I do not know the maker of the cue which carries the name "MacMahons". It has a cigar-shaped butt (tapering to be thinner at the end than at the shoulder). The example I have seen was ash, with four ebony splices and four lower maple splices. It had a long rectangular badge made from ivory, with four screws. Value £200-250.

Most of the cues featured in this article were produced over a long period of time. Early models can best be distinguished by the type of material used for the badge. Prior to 1900 it can be expected that ivory was almost exclusively used, after this animal bone became increasingly common, and in the 1920's plastic began to appear.

Very early cues all had their badges placed by hand. For square badges, this involved sawing the butt and filing to shape. This would usually result in tell-tale marks which can often be seen with close examination. Sometimes it is possible to see the saw marks at the top of the badge where it has been cut down into the cue and there may also be file marks at the top and a slight flat around the edges where it has been filed flush. However, constant use of a cue can—with time—cause these marks to fade and become indistinct, so the absence of such features should not be taken as evidence of a machine placed badge. Most of the bigger manufacturer's started using machines to insert badges in the 1920's and 30's, but smaller companies still persisted with tradition, and there are still some cues being made today where the badges will be put in by hand.