

THE BRISTOL TRUMPETS MADE BY JOHN HARRIS c 1700-1720

COLIN BLOCH



The Bristol trumpets were examined in March 2019 by Colin Bloch, having been made available by courtesy of Rachel Griffiths of the Lord Mayor's office.

The trumpets are mounted in a closed glass cabinet along with other civic artefacts. They have no cases, banners or mouthpieces, and are in apparently excellent condition, free of any dents or damage. They are not used and it is not known when they were last used, but quite probably not within living memory. They may never have had much use at all and are in near mint condition.

Inscription

Each trumpet is boldly embossed on the garland JOHN HARRIS LONDINI FECIT. The ornamentation of and around the garland is slightly different but similar in overall design. These may have been identical basic trumpets to which silver ornamentation (pommel, garlands, ferrules) were applied at a different time. There are no hallmarks. A later engraving 'Chamber of Bristol' appear on each bell just above the garland, suggested by Bristol City Council to have been added in 1800. Chamber of Bristol is probably a predecessor to the Bristol Chamber of Commerce.

Material

The appearance of the trumpets is of tarnished silver. Some elements are undoubtedly of pure silver, such as the bell garlands, jointing ferrules, and the pommels (typically heavy as for English trumpets of this era). The tubing closest to the bell is held in place on each trumpet not by twisted wire, but by U-bolts with hexagonal nuts bolted through the bell rim which appear to be original.

As to the material of contemporary trumpets, Don Smithers¹ comments: "*...silver was chosen by royal dignitaries for a show of splendour and opulence, but the baser 'bastard' trumpets ... sound better and were preferred by solo players.*" A reasonable conclusion is that these were intended mostly as functional and perhaps military trumpets, of robust construction using 'bastard' brass, but with a pure silver ornamentation to the garlands, ferrules and pommels.

Measurements

Weights: 857g and 865g. Length: 1016mm coiled, 2200mm tube length.

¹ Smithers, Don L *The Music and History of the Baroque Trumpet before 1721* J M Dent and Sons, London 1973

Pitch and playing

The trumpets were both tested. They have a remarkably modern sound, perhaps ascribed to their weight and heft, and sound akin to a modern B-flat trumpet. They do not have the light and woody sound associated with contemporary accurate reproductions². The weight difference of 13g is very slight given that they are not a matched pair. The pitch is midway between modern D and E-flat, probably D in its day at A=415.

Mouthpipe and receiver

The mouthpiece receiver has an external sleeve. A modern Vincent Bach trumpet mouthpiece when inserted only just gained purchase within the leadpipe but without relying on contact with the outer sleeve. The step internally is about 8mm down and it is assumed that the original mouthpiece would have had a wider shank that would have been held by the external sleeve, which has a diameter of about 12mm.

John Harris

John Harris is referred to in the literature as a noted English instrument maker, not as a silversmith. There is no reference to hallmarked work by him. Edward Tarr³ refers to “*a pair of instruments each by Bull’s successor, John Harris (fl^d. 1700-1720) ... are also preserved.*” but this is not a reference to these two trumpets. William Bull was a well-documented trumpeter in the King’s Musick and active between 1676 and 1707 as a player and maker.

Don Smithers⁵ comments: “*It is questioned whether Bull’s successor was the early eighteenth-century brass-instrument-maker John Harris*”.

There is also a record of “*One natural trumpet converted to a slide trumpet is that by John Harris (ca. 1715) at the Bate Collection in Oxford.*”⁶

It is reasonable to conclude that John Harris was active in London as an eminent maker of trumpets from about 1700 to 1720, perhaps the successor or follower of William Bull.

² The author’s frame of reference is a natural trumpet by Frank Tomes 1936 - 2011 of London, being a faithful copy of the J L Ehe III Nuremburg trumpet of 1746.

³ Tarr, Edward *The Trumpet* Batsford, London 1988

⁴ floruit = flourished, i.e. when working.

⁵ Smithers op. cit.

⁶ Webb, John *The English Slide Trumpet Historical Brass Society Journal*

Comment

The Historical Brass Instrument Society was consulted and Dr Arnold Myers commented⁷: *“The pair of Harris trumpets in Bristol is well-known; other Harris trumpets survive but not, as far as I know, a pair. The Bristol pair cost £21 17s 9d in 1715.”*

The National Archives’ website confirms that in 1710 £21 17s 9d would be equivalent today to £2,296.62 and would have purchased 4 horses, or 5 cows, or 243 days of a skilled tradesman.



Part of the John Harris engraving, which appears to be impressed rather than engraved.



The pommels differ slightly



The garlands are slightly different, with one having a pie-crust edge

⁷ Email 8.3.2019

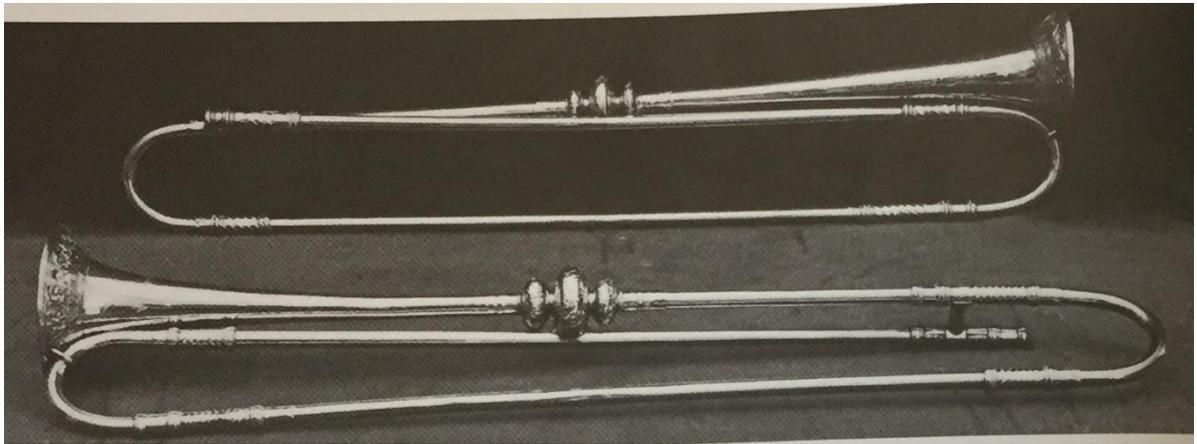
Information provided by Bristol City Council

43 The City Trumpets, by John Harris, London, 1715 (no hallmarks). Silver; length 101.6 cm.

ottom

In 1715 the threat of a Jacobite uprising was so serious that a group of Bristol gentlemen, with the consent of the Earl of Berkeley, then Lord Lieutenant, formed themselves into two troops of horse and began to make preparations against an attack on the city. The troops each had a trumpeter and in order to encourage them the Council decided to provide them with two banners, two trumpets, two standards and two new coats, at the city's expense. It was also ordered that they 'be added to the City Musick' with salaries, thus bringing the complement of official musicians up to six. However, these were not the first trumpets to be provided by the city, as in 1672 a pair of trumpets was bought for use at the reception of the Judges of Assize.

Although not hallmarked, the bell of each is engraved in Latin with the name of the maker, John Harris of London. The decoration is of embossed garlands within a pie-crust edge, the differences in details suggesting that they were not made as a pair but drawn from stock. The inscription on the throat, 'Chamber of Bristol', was added in 1800. The trumpets are fine English examples of the early eighteenth century but since they are no longer melodic they have been replaced by replicas.



The Galpin Society

The following is a paper published in

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Vol. 18 (Mar., 1965), pp. 14-22.

It deals in detail with the Bristol Harris trumpets, and others.

JOSEPH WHEELER

Further Notes on the Classic Trumpet

THIS paper is intended to continue the work begun by Eric Halfpenny in *GSJ* XIII, XV and XVI. As well as describing several instruments in detail on the lines that were adopted in those articles, I have attempted to clear away some misconceptions about the trumpet, if possible without adding further ones of my own, and indicating some future workpoints.

I

TWO SILVER TRUMPETS BY JOHN HARRIS
(Plate I, Nos. 1 and 2)

These are now in the regalia of the Corporation of Bristol, and are still in use on ceremonial occasions. From the Abstract of Accounts &c. in Appendix II, it will be seen that their purchase was authorized by the Common Council in 1715, payment being recorded in the Audit Books for July 7, 1716. The voucher bears the signature of Seth Partidge, but no address other than 'London'; as yet, we have been unable to trace him further.

There is a marked family resemblance between these instruments and those by William Bull which were described in *GSJ* XV and XVI. Around each bell is inscribed in block capitals: IOHN HARRIS LONDINI FECIT, the throats being engraved 'Chamber of Bristol', but in neither case is a hallmark visible. Decoration is also generally like that of Bull, but differences of detail both here and in dimensions show that they were not made as a pair, No. 1 being apparently the earlier. A corollary is that they were drawn from stock and not made to order.

A careful restoration in rigid form has reproduced the original loose construction in that the bell lashing has been replaced by a silver staple kept in place by two threaded nuts inside the bell mouth: the mouthpipe and bell garnishes are spaced and held rigid by a short tubular stay which is located slightly wrong, as the two tubes should come together. In both, the ball is open-grooved and the mouthpipe is not fixed to it. No. 1 has a liner in the bell throat, presumably in order to strengthen the tubing, which has been much worn by cleaning; cracks

are now appearing round the edges of this. No. 2 has a liner a little way down the mouthpipe, so that neither of the mouthpieces I had with me, a modern Vincent Bach and an 1840 Pace, would fit properly, but only one with a cornet fitting. The mouthpieces mentioned in Partridge's invoice have not survived, and if they were at all like those by Bull, this is not surprising. The large bowls and throats and the broad flat rims would have been disconcerting to players unwilling to adapt themselves to other than nineteenth- or twentieth-century patterns, and when the instruments were used the players would have substituted their own accustomed mouthpieces. The originals were probably sold for their metal content or simply mislaid. No doubt this gives the explanation of the liner in No. 2, for many late-nineteenth-century mouthpieces were made with a cornet fitting, and trumpeters of the time were also cornettists. In such a case, cornet shanks could also serve as trumpet shanks, and only too often the barbarous practice was adopted of transferring shank and mouthpiece complete; that Bristol No. 2 has suffered—and presumably still suffers—the indignity of being sounded with a cornet mouthpiece seems only too probable.

The Bristol trumpets are in D, identical with the pitch of the two silver Bulls. The London Museum Bull instrument is rather sharper, evidently having been shortened at the mouthpiece end at the time of its rigid-form restoration so that its owner, Harper senior, could use it orchestraly at mid-nineteenth-century pitch. All these trumpets have in common the awe-inspiring tone quality that immediately makes aurally obvious the reason for the regal associations of the instrument.

Bell garlands bear a floral leaf decoration with picrust edge, again similar to that of Bull. The upper edge of the garland of No. 1 has a dentellated ornament, while No. 2's is straight-edged. The dentellated ornament of No. 1, which is unusual, also appears on the Harris trumpet in the Baines collection, to which further reference is made below, at the end of Section 2: this instrument is of brass with silver mounts. No. 1 has a small cartouche, No. 2 a larger, and both are blank. It follows that the blank cartouche of the Ashmolean Bull trumpet is not evidence that that instrument had been left in an unfinished state. The ball of No. 2 is slightly the larger, and in both, the collars of the ball terminate in cut-out acanthus shapes, the short cylindrical sections on either side of the ball being decorated in No. 1 with a series of rings, in No. 2 with longitudinal flutings. Garnishes are long and short but not of consistent sizes: see Appendix I. Long garnishes have a raised secondary ring a short distance from the socket end, separated by a short plain cylindrical section. The other ends have

a plain ring and cut-out acanthus as on the ball collars. Flutings are helical, but while each set is self-consistent, No. 2's are opposite to No. 1's. These details are quite different from those of Bull, but are so exactly reproduced in a very carefully painted picture of a trumpeter of the time of George II, attributed (doubtfully) to Michael Dahl,¹ as to justify the belief that an actual instrument by Harris is shown. It is in any case a fine English silver trumpet of the Harris period.

II

TWO BRASS TRUMPETS BY JOHN SMITH OF WOLVERHAMPTON (Plate I, Nos. 3 and 4)

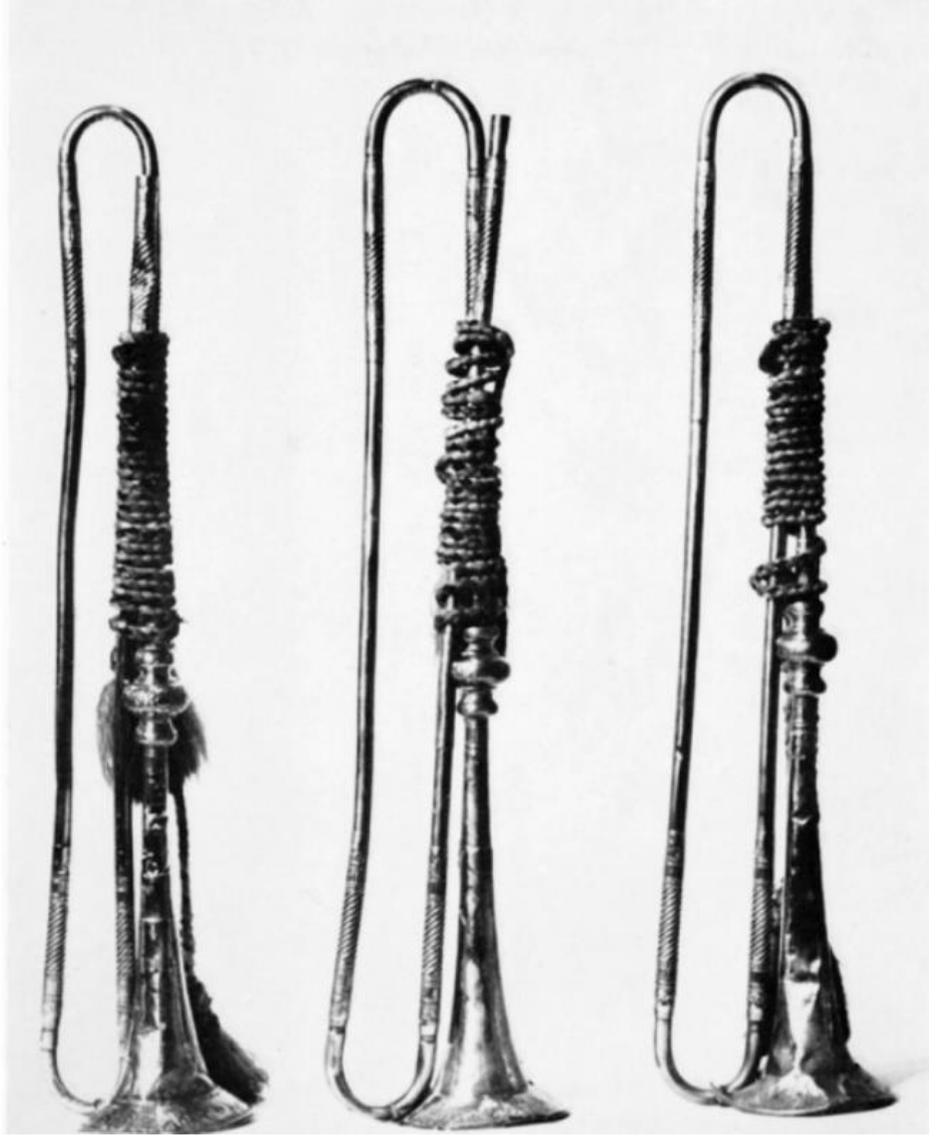
The purchase of these is recorded in the Audit Book for 1800 (see App. II), and they are now in the Bristol Museum. Few brass ceremonial trumpets of this early date remain in their original state, but in this case there has been no attempt at restoration other than the rough repair to No. 4, described below. The mouthpipes are loose at the ball and at the mouthpiece end, while the front bow has been wired (in lieu of lashing) to the bell through the customary two holes. The balls are open-grooved. There is some evidence of loose construction in that the joints which in such a case would need to be separable appear to be caulked and not soldered: the appearance of other joints which would not need to be parted in normal use is quite different.² Instrument No. 4 has been ill-used at some time and the bell pipe is broken right through, being now kept in place by a wooden peg inside the tubing: a rough repair of this and also a fixing of the mouthpipe into the ball groove, both with grey solder, has broken away in each case.

They are clearly a matching pair, for, despite their battered condition, measurements (given in Appendix I) are identical; they carry full decorations exactly similar to those of the Shaw Harmonic Trumpet described in *GSJ* XIII. The large garland cartouches are engraved 'Chamber of Bristol 1800', and above the cartouches is engraved in italic script 'Jn. Smith Fecit Wolverhampton'. It seems reasonable to identify these with the item recorded in the Audit Book for August 14, 1800 (see Appendix II). The 'Wm. Gibbons' referred to here was a Bristol merchant and very probably the same person as the William Gibbons who, a few years earlier, was Lord Mayor of Bristol.

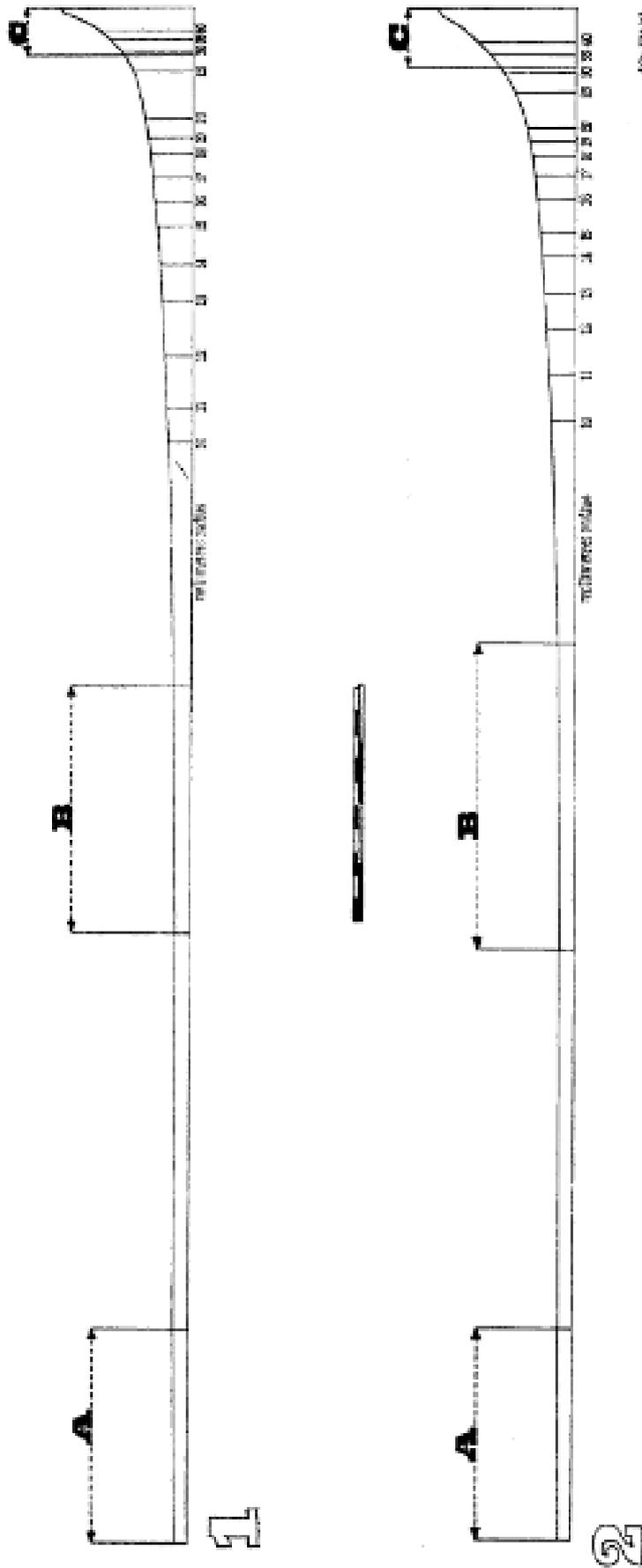
Instrument No. 3 is pitched in F. The trumpet by Rodenbostel in the Kneller Hall Collection is also at that pitch; the instrument by G. H. Rodenbostel in the Morley Pegge Collection, which has been converted into a slide-trumpet, seems to have been built originally at this pitch, while the Harris instrument in A. C. Baines's collection



PLATE I *Trumpets of the Bristol Chamber.*
1 & 2. *Silver, by John Harris, London, 1715.*
3 & 4. *Brass, by John Smith, Wolverhampton, 1800.*



Brass, by William Shaw, 21 Red Lion Street, Holborn, London, c. 1800.
PLATE II Trumpets of Warwick Castle.



Bell Sections, Trumpets by John Harris, 1715 (Bristol Corporation)

A: Garnish. B: Ball. C: Garland.

Ratio of expansion from 10 mm. to 40 mm. are shown, viz. from 10 mm. to 20 mm. by increments of 1 mm.; thereafter by increments of 5 mm.

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appears to have been converted from a D or E \flat instrument, judging from the relative positions of the mouthpiece garnish and the back bow.

III

THREE TRUMPETS BY WILLIAM SHAW, IN WARWICK CASTLE

(Plate II)

These are listed as Nos. 5, 6 and 7 in Appendix II of Halfpenny's article on Shaw in *GSJ* XIII. Their decoration is virtually identical with that of the Harmonic Trumpet and the two Smith instruments described above. They appear to have been built with solid joints, but were still made to be lashed through the bell and around the upper rear garnishes. They are almost an identical trio, and are somewhat battered, so that one leaks too badly to be used, while another plays only with difficulty. The remaining instrument can be played properly and is in E \flat .

It is suggested tentatively that when English trumpets of the late eighteenth century and after are in D or E \flat , they were made specifically for ceremonial, those in F being intended primarily for orchestral use. The latter group includes all examples so far seen of nineteenth-century slide trumpets and conversions thereto of older instruments. This seems to be a suitable point at which to mention that I have strong doubts about a frequently-quoted passage in J. E. Altenburg's well-known treatise,³ in which he refers to a 'Kammertönig G, or English, trumpet, so-called because used by the English'. The passage concerned, which is quoted in full in Werner Menke's *History of the Trumpet of Bach and Händel*, and also in Pietzsch's book of orchestral studies, makes it clear that the instrument concerned is pitched a fourth above the instrument in 8-foot C, which according to Altenburg is the same as 'Kammertönig D'. Similarly, the 'French trumpet in F' described by him is in E \flat in terms of 8-foot C.

Expansion curves for the bells of Bristol instruments 1 and 2 are given herewith and should be compared with those in *GSJ* XV. Of the two, No. 2 has slightly the shorter and steeper expansion, but both compare quite closely with Bull No. 1 in the overall length of the expansion; the shape near the bell mouth is, however, nearer that of the modern fanfare instrument. I conclude that the significant factor in the quality of these instruments is in the proportion of the bell to the total length, rather than in its precise shape. Hence, also, the very marked differences in quality between different crookings, which entail the addition of several inches of cylindrical tubing at the mouthpiece end.

IV

During a recent visit to Copenhagen, I examined the brass trumpets in Musikhistorisk Museet and the Carl Claudius musikhistoriske samling. I am indebted to Mr Glahn of the latter collection for the sight of Bd. 46 of the *Sonderdruck aus dem Mitteilug des Vereins für Geschichte der Stadt Nürnberg*⁴ which gives brief descriptions of extant instruments by early Nürnberg makers, including the Haas and Hainlein trumpets mentioned here, and is very detailed concerning decorations, etc.

The Haas trumpets are Nos. F87 and F105 of Musikhistorisk Museet⁵ and No. 529 of Claudius.⁶ F87 is certainly not in original condition, for about 190 mm. of the mouthpipe has been broken off and a (comparatively) new section has replaced it, there being no mouthpiece garnish as there is on the other two; the joint is a very rough piece of grey soldering. The metal stays are likewise a later addition. There is *one* lashing hole in the bell, but the front bow is now soldered to it. Reading from the mouthpiece, garnishes are short-long-short-long, and have a left-hand helix. F105 has similar garnishes, but they are all the same length, and longer than F87's long ones. Both instruments have banner rings on saddles inside the front and back bows. F87 leaks badly, but the two appear to be at the same pitch; lacking either absolute pitch or a tuning fork, I found them to be in a flat D in terms of instrument F42, assuming that to be in D with a C crook. Claudius No. 529 has, like the other two, been rebuilt in rigid form; its bell has been rotated 180 degrees, for the single lashing hole is now on the opposite side from the front bow. Again, tubular stays have been added. All three mouthpieces are very doubtful, being small, shallow, narrow-throated and completely different from those by Bull. I suspect that they date from the time of the rebuilding, and were made in accordance with the then usual ideas about what was necessary to play high notes.

Claudius No. 528 is 'macht Paul Hainlein in Nürnberg 1685'.⁷ In this, the front bow is wired to the bell, and there is a wooden spacer between upper yard and bell pipe; a)—(-shaped stay has been added at the mouthpiece end. The mouthpiece appears to be nineteenth-century.

Claudius No. 530, by 'Johann Joseph Schmied in Pfaffendorff 1710', has a wood spacer as in No. 528, while the soldering of the front bow to the bell is clearly a later piece of work. It is very plain, the bell reinforcement being a metal sheet some 45 mm. wide with a simple ornamental figure; garnishes, which are long (at mouthpiece)-short-long-short-long, bear no adornment other than some simple incised

rings. All the Claudius instruments have the banner rings, and I conclude that in Germany this was usual; the feature does not normally appear on coeval English trumpets.

Lastly, No. F42 of Musikhistorisk Museet is by George Eschenbach, Markneunkirchen, and is dated 1808. This is rather instructive, for although it appears to be solid-construction, there are no stays, there being a wood spacer and lashing, and the front bow fixed to the bell by a metal clip. Naturally, I was unable to 'dunk' the instrument in hot water to see whether it was, in fact, separable on the pattern of the silver Bulls. The apparently original whole-tone crook shows that this is in D and C, as it is far too big to be an F and E \flat , and no other whole-tone pairing seems likely. In view of this and the stated late date, I conclude that it is a military and not an orchestral instrument. The mouthpiece seems to be original; it has a deep cup and the grain is much less sharp than that of the nineteenth-century English specimens by Keat, Köhler, Pace and Butler in my possession, though not so different from some examples by Mahillon. It is very pleasant to play.

On the evidence of the preceding instruments, and, I hope, without any chauvinistic intent, it seems to me that Altenburg's often-quoted remark that Haas's instruments 'are still the best' a century after they were made, is unacceptable, for the brass specimens from Germany are much inferior in workmanship to the contemporary English ones by Bull and Dudley, and the later German ones I have seen likewise compare poorly with those by Shaw. As yet, I have seen no silver, or even silver-mounted, German instruments, but find it beyond belief that they could be considered superior to those described in previous volumes of this journal.

APPENDIX I
DIMENSIONS OF THE BRISTOL TRUMPETS
(All measurements are in mm.)

<i>Instrument No.</i>	1	2	3	4
	(Harris)		(Smith)	
<i>Lengths</i>				
Mouthpipe	577	568	549	549
Front bow	178	178	146	146
Lower yard	587	584	549	549
Back bow	181	194	152	152
Bell section	659	651	603	603
Garnishes: mouthpiece	70	75	125	125
front upper	47	43	125	125

<i>Instrument No.</i>	1	2	3	4
	(Harris)		(Smith)	
<i>Lengths</i>				
front lower	85	80	125	125
back lower	45	43	125	125
back upper	83	80	125	125
<i>Diameters</i>				
Cylindrical external	11.1	11.6	11.7	11.7
Bell	110	112	114	114
Ball	47	52	47	47
Internal diam. of mouthpipe	11.5	12.4	12	12
		choked to		
		9.2		

APPENDIX II

EXTRACTS FROM BRISTOL CHAMBER ACCOUNTS ETC. RELATING TO TRUMPETS AND TRUMPETERS

(Reproduced by kind permission of the Corporation of Bristol)

1672 July 6

Two trumpets at the charge of the city to be used at the reception of the Judges of Assize.

[Common Council Proceedings]

1673 May 13

Item paid Mr Richard Stubbs and Mr. Thomas Earle late sheriffs (by order) which they charge paid for two silver trumpets as per account. £30 . 0 . 0

1673 July 17

Item paid Mr George White junior (by order) £6 for 10 yards of cloth at 12/- per yard to make coats for the trumpeters. . . . £6 . 0 . 0

[Audit Books]

1715 January 11

'It is ordered that two banners two trumpets and two standards and two new coats for the two trumpeters belonging to the troops be provided at the city charge and that the said trumpeters be added to the city musick, with salaries, all which is referred to the care and management of Mr Mayor the Aldermen and Sheriffs.'

[Common Council Proceedings]

1716 July 7

Paid Seth Partidge for trumpets £21 . 17 . 6

[Audit Book]

London, June 1716

By Mr Brechers order send the account of trumpets which weighed

50 oz. 16	£21 . 11 . 9
2 mouth pieces	6 . 0
	<hr/>
	21 . 17 . 9
	<hr/>

[signed] Seth Partridge.

[Voucher]

1718 Dec. 2 trumpeters paid 16 . 8

1719 Dec. 2 trumpeters included with wait players, making
6 wait players £2 . 10 . 0

[Audit Books]

1800 August 14

By ordinaries paid Thomas Alexander Deeble for engraving on four
trumpets 'Chamber of Bristol' 6 . 0

By ordinaries paid Wm. Gibbons Esq. & Co. for two brass
trumpets £9 . 3 . 6

[Audit Book]

NOTES

¹ Reproduced in C. C. P. Lawson: *A History of the Uniforms of the British Army*, Vol. II, London, 1941.

² Eric Halfpenny reports that a brass natural trumpet by Nicholas Winkings, in the Shaw-Hellier Collection, apparently one of a pair exhibited at the Royal Military Exhibition in 1890, is in three pieces (i.e. mouthpipe and front bow; lower yard and back bow; and bell section), there being no trace of solder on the joints. It seems safe to conclude that this is definite evidence of loose construction being used for brass, as well as silver trumpets: anyone able to clean former solder from the brass would hardly have left the instrument in this condition, and therefore it is almost certainly in its original state.

³ J. E. Altenburg: *Versuch einer Anleitung . . . Trompeter und Paukerkunst*, Halle, 1795. (Reprint, Dresden, 1911.)

⁴ Willi Wörthmüller: *Die Nürnberger Trumpeten- und Posaunemacher . . .* in: Sonderdruck aus dem Mitteilug des Vereins für Geschichte der Stadt Nürnberg, 1955/56.

⁵ *loc. cit.*, p. 448.

⁶ *loc. cit.*, p. 431.

⁷ *loc. cit.*, p. 448.