

The case of the *Saint-Senoch* cello

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2021

Tangential information concerning M. Abel Bonjour was deleted in 2022;
new material was added in June 2023.

Preface

Documentary sources of information about string instruments and their owners during the 19th and early-20th centuries in France are threefold:

1. The Musée de la musique, in Paris, has placed online more than 40 free-to-access digital files, the files containing images of each and every page from the business ledgers which were used by the personnel at the Gand/Bernardel/Caressa & Français violin dealership in Paris between 1816 and 1923. The ledgers – identified as ‘E.981.8.xx’ – are paired together:

- a) a Directory (*Répertoire*) showing customers’ names in alphabetical order, each name usually being followed by an address; adjacent to the address are numbers which refer to pages in
- b) a parallel General Ledger (*Grand Livre*), which usually covers the same chronological period as the Directory; the details of commercial transactions are entered into the *Grand Livre*.

2. The *Catalogue descriptif des Instruments de Stradivarius et J. Guarnerius* which was compiled by Charles-Nicolas-Eugène Gand in the latter part of the 19th century. This *Catalogue* contains succinct descriptions of instruments, with the name of the then-current owner, and, in some cases, one or two identifications of previous and subsequent owners; a few prices are specified. The *Catalogue* is essentially a semi-private *aide-memoire* (its contents were surely shared with Gand’s subsequent business partner, Gustave Bernardel).

3. After the death of Charles Gand in 1892 Gustave Bernardel continued to trade as the sole proprietor of the Paris dealership. During the last years of the 19th century someone working at the firm – perhaps Gustave Bernardel himself – copied the entire 127-page text of Gand’s *Catalogue descriptif* into a large notebook. New descriptions of instruments were written up on further pages of the notebook, together with details of owners and prices; there are entries dated 1893, 1894, 1895, 1896, and 1897, together with other entries which are undated. After Gustave Bernardel retired in 1901 the firm was bought by Albert Caressa and Henri Français but the Gand/Bernardel notebook continued to be used to record descriptions of instruments and details of sales. These post-Gand entries include more than 140 further descriptions of Stradivari and Guarneri instruments (a handful of the descriptions are duplicates or elaborations of earlier entries). Henri Français retired in 1920 whereupon Albert Caressa became the sole proprietor; Albert retired in 1938 after which the firm was in the hands of Henri’s son, Emile Français (1894-1984).

The Gand/Bernardel/Caressa & Français descriptive notebook is today archived as part of the Jacques Français Rare Violins Inc. Photographic Archive and Business Records, held at the Archives Center, National Museum of American History, Smithsonian Institution, Washington DC, USA; the notebook is within Box 55, Folder 2. When Jacques Français (1924-2004) – Emile’s son – emigrated to the USA

in 1948 in order to establish his own violin business he took the notebook with him, for reference purposes. Jacques' notebook is hereafter cited as **Gand/JF55.2**.

Also contained within the same Smithsonian Institution archive is a second handwritten notebook (Box 55, Folder 4) which replicates all of the Gand/JF55.2 descriptions. This second notebook is identified by the following inscription on the first page:

Emile Français, 5 Rue de Copenhague, Paris 8^{ème}

The inscription indicates that this second notebook was retained in Paris. It is surely the case that when Emile Français ceased trading, in 1981, all the firm's documents and materials were sent to Jacques in New York (which would explain how it is that Emile's notebook is now archived at the Smithsonian Institution). Emile's notebook is hereafter cited as **Gand/EF55.4**; it contains some additional texts and annotations which supplement those found in Gand/JF55.2.

The present author's transcription and translation of the Francais business records can be read at www.themessiahviolin.uk.

In the June 2023 issue of *The Strad* Gennady Filimonov presented an article – 'On the trail of a Russian Nobleman' – in which (p.42) he writes:

In researching the life of bow maker Nikolai [Ferdinandovich] Kittel [1805/6-1868] I discovered that he bought the 1698 'St Senoch' cello from collector Charles Willemotte between 1865 and 1868.

Filimonov's 'discovery' can be evaluated in light of the present writer's 2021 text for his *Saint-Senoch* research article, an article which has been freely available on the www.themessiahviolin.uk website:

"Within the GBC&F ledgers there is just one *Grand Livre* entry, dated 18 October 1865, which identifies a solitary Stradivari cello belonging to Charles Willemotte. [...] Perhaps Willemotte sold his repaired cello to Nikolai Ferdinandovich Kittel in a private transaction between October 1865 and April 1868 (when Kittel died)."

N F Kittel – by all accounts – was a violin dealer who lived in St. Petersburg and is said to have had a close relationship, as a *luthier*, with the Tsar's court. Kittel married Carolina Louisa Tournau in 1841; a son, also named Nikolai, was born in 1843; Carolina died in 1865. After the death of Kittel senior in April 1868 Kittel junior maintained his father's workshop for just five more years until it closed in 1873.¹

The documentary evidence indicates that –

- 1) in October 1865 Charles Willemotte's cello was being repaired by Charles Gand;
- 2) in 1868 N F Kittel (Kittel senior) dies;
- 3) in 1886 Charles Gand identifies 'Kittel' as the person to whom Willemotte sold his cello, for 7,000 francs, on an unknown earlier date (see p.5 of this account);
- 4) in May 1870 a 1696 Stradivari cello – *ex Willemot* – is sold by Gand to Nikolai Alexandrovich Haller (see overleaf) for 10,000 francs. In his aforementioned article Gennady Filimonov identifies N A Haller (1823-1875) as his 'Russian nobleman'.

¹ Biographical information was generously supplied by Andy Lim, editor (with Klaus Grünke, Josef P Gabriel, and Yung Chin) of *The Bows of Nikolai Kittel*, Darling Publications, Cologne, 2011.

Whether it was Kittel senior, or his son (aged 25 in 1868), who bought Willemotte's cello is unknown. *Perhaps* Nikolai Kittel junior was sent by his father from St. Petersburg to search Paris and the surrounding area for quality instruments to buy and bring back so they could be sold to members of the St. Petersburg elite. *Perhaps* Kittel junior, once in Paris, learned (from Gand?) that Willemotte might be willing to sell his 1696 cello, therefore travelled to Antwerp and bought the cello for 7,000 francs, but then received the news that, back in St. Petersburg, his father had died. *Perhaps* Kittel junior decided that returning home with a bulging wallet would be a better strategy than transporting a cello back to an empty shop, and therefore deposited the 1696 *ex-Willemotte* cello with Gand for sale.

Gennady Filimonov continues (*The Strad*, June 2023):

His son [Kittel senior's son], Nikolai Nikolaevich, is listed in Charles François Gand's 1886 catalogue as having sold it [the 1696 'St. Senoch' cello] for 7,000 francs.² This was apparently the only important instrument on record that Kittel Sr or Jr ever owned or sold.

See below - § - for the continuation of this quotation.

NB: in his 1886 *Catalogue descriptif* entry C N E Gand simply writes, in red ink, 'Ex Kittel 7,000' (see p.5 of the present account); Gand's '7,000' indicates the purchase price paid by Kittel to Willemotte.

Gand's 1866-76 *Grand Livre* contains the following sale information attached to the name of *M^r Haller de S^t Petersbourg*:

*1870 Mai 21: Un Violoncelle de Stradivarius 1696
Beau bois[,] vernis jaune[,] fendu au fond
(Willemot)..... .. 10,000 francs³*

The sale price would have enabled Gand to pay, perhaps, 9,000 francs to Kittel junior, keeping the remaining 1,000 francs as recompense for his professional involvement in the transaction.⁴ It is assumed that N A Haller took the 1696 cello back to St. Petersburg.

§ The story seemed to connect with that told by the British collector David Laurie in his 1900 [1924] *Reminiscences of a Fiddle Dealer*, of how he obtained that cello [the 'St. Senoch'] along with the 'Bass of Spain'.⁵

In his *Reminiscences of a Fiddle Dealer*, David Laurie writes:

In the Spring of [18]76 I received a letter from a lady in St. Petersburg, saying that her late husband had left a collection of high priced string instruments [...].⁶ [She had] enclosed all the receipts shewing what had been paid for [the to-be-sold instruments]; she was evidently a first-rate businesswoman and very straightforward in her dealings. On looking over the receipts I found that

² Charles François Gand died in 1845; it was Charles-Nicolas-Eugène Gand who wrote the 1886 description of the *St. Senoch* cello in his *Catalogue descriptif des Instruments de Stradivarius et J. Guarnerius*, p.119.

³ E.981.8.14, p.159. Haller also bought, on the same day, a 1708 Stradivari violin – with a 'very broken' front plate – for 3,500 francs. Haller paid 13,500 francs (for both instruments), in cash, on the day of purchase.

⁴ The name 'Kittel' appears only once in the GBC&F *Répertoire* ledgers which cover the period 1845-1884; *Mons. Kittel, luthier à S^t Petersbourg* appears in the *Grand Livre* for 2 June 1870 but the only purchase is a packing case costing 20 francs. The date identifies Kittel junior as the buyer.

⁵ In the *Reminiscences* chapter titled 'A Purchase in St. Petersburg' (pp. 84-108) Laurie make no mention of any cello label-dated 1698 or 1696 or 1690, or any cello which subsequently became known by the soubriquet 'St. Senoch'. Equally, Laurie never mentions any cello known as the 'Bass of Spain'.

⁶ Laurie does not name the St. Petersburg lady or her deceased husband; nonetheless, it has been proposed that the husband was the aforementioned N A Haller.

nearly all the instruments had been purchased either through J. B. Vuillaume or Grand *Frères*, Paris, and as they were duly guaranteed by these firms there could be little doubt of their authenticity.

The widow may have been ‘very straightforward in her dealings’ but she seems to have regarded her late husband’s string-instrument collection as little more than irritating clutter which needed to be got rid of, one way or another:

It was, of course, useless to ask the lady to send [the instruments] to me to examine, as, from the tone of her letter, it was quite evident it was not from necessity which made her desire to sell them, but simply that as there was no one who took any interest in them, they were only in the way and might as well be sold as not.

Having travelled to St Petersburg Laurie relates that when he called on the lady at the appointed day and time she was unable to see him ‘at such an early hour’, and it was her ‘major-domo’ who commented that ‘he could tell me more about [the instruments] than the lady could.’ The clear impression given by Laurie is that the widow had not the slightest interest in the sale and quite possibly regarded the whole commercial transaction as distasteful; perhaps her indisposition when Laurie visited was deliberate.

[Laurie and the major-domo] adjourned to the music room, where the collection was. This I found to consist of three Strad. cellos, several violins, and a tenor [viola]. The king of the collection was one of the cellos, which was of Strad’s best period 1712, the other two being of the early period. None of them could be called first-class in point of preservation, and owing to their mountings not being in order it was impossible to judge their tone [...].

Laurie bought the collection of instruments, and, despite many difficulties, brought them safely back to England; for full details please see the present writer’s article (at www.themessiahviolin.uk) titled ‘The *Bass of Spain* and the *Vaslin-Gallay*: two cellos of Cremona’.

Multiple photographs and a historical commentary for the *1698 Saint-Senoch* cello appear in Jost Thöne’s 2016 publication, *Antonius Stradiuarius*, Vol. VI, pp. 60-71. The commentary concludes with the information that the cello’s earlier appearance in Vol. II of the same publication (pp. 28-39 and there named as the *1698 St. Senoch, Murray*) was partially incorrect since the multiple photographs at that location are actually of the *1698 Schiff, Hagen* cello, not the *St. Senoch*. The historical commentary provided in Vol. II, p.28, is revised in Vol. VI, p.60 where the cello’s label-date is stated to be ‘somewhat indistinctly dated 1698. Indeed, the last digit has previously been read as a ‘0’ or ‘6’.

The historical commentary provided in Thöne, *Antonius Stradiuarius*, Vol. II, p.28, states:

The first information regarding the ‘St. Senoch’s’ owners appeared in 1860, when the famous French violin maker and dealer Jean-Baptiste Vuillaume (1798-1875) declared to have purchased it, along with the remaining instruments of a Stradivari quartet, from an Italian gentleman in Milan.⁷ Vuillaume proceeded to reduce the size of the cello⁸ before selling it to the famous Belgian amateur and collector Charles Willemotte of Antwerp, for the sum of 6,000 FF (£240), as recorded by the violin maker Charles-Eugène Gand.

Gand actually specifies 5,000 francs as the price paid by Willemotte; see overleaf.

C. E. Gand also reported the price of 7,000 FF (£280) paid by the following owner, a Russian bow maker of German origin, Nicolaus Ferder Kittel, who worked in St. Petersburg and served at the

⁷ Thöne’s historian does not identify the location of Vuillaume’s 1860 declaration.

⁸ The DVD supplied with Thöne’s *Stradiuarius* volumes contains the measurements of the St. Senoch cello (as presented in Vol. VI): the essential measurements are: 340, 229, 431, and 732mm. The usual measurements of a Stradivari *forma B* cello are approx. 338, 225, 434, and 758mm, thus confirming the cello’s reduction in length.

Czar's court. After N F Kittel's death [1868] the cello came into the hands of the Scottish violin collector and dealer David Laurie [evidence?], who took it to London in 1876.

One year later Laurie sold the cello to the renowned dealers William Ebsworth Hill & Sons, of London, who sold it to an amateur but by 1885 had regained possession. It then fell to Alfred Hill, son of William Ebsworth, to pass the cello back to Laurie, who by this time was living in Paris [evidence?]. In 1885 the cello was acquired by the French senator Marquis de St. Senoch to complete his quartet of Stradivari instruments.

In Vol. VI (p.60) of Thöne's *Stradiuarius* publication the history of the 'St. Senoch' cello is revised: Vuillaume is now only 'thought to have purchased [the 'St. Senoch' cello] from a Milanese noble family in 1860.' The cello –

was soon purchased from Willemotte by Nikolai Ferdinandovich Kittel (1805-1868) for 7,000 francs. [...] [Kittel] kept the cello to the end of his life. In the subsequent years the instrument was alternately offered for sale by the violin dealers David Laurie and William E. Hill & Sons. In 1876 it was in the hands of the Scottish dealer Laurie who is thought to have purchased it directly from Kittel's heirs in St. Petersburg. He sold it just a year later to the Hill brothers in London⁹ who sold it on to an unnamed amateur. In 1885 the cello stood for sale in the Hills' shop once more and was sold in that year to the famous collector Edouard Hancque de Saint-Senoch (1826-1885).

The Hills seemingly charged Senator Senoch 17,500 francs (£700) for the cello (see the report from *Le Ménestrel*, below and overleaf).

Edouard-Marie Hancque de Saint-Senoch (1826-1885) was a legal advisor to the Court of Auditors in Paris, and a Chevalier de la Légion d'Honneur. Towards the end of his life he strove to complete ownership of a full quartet of Stradivari string instruments and in this ambition he was briefly successful before dying on 3 November 1885. Following his death Charles N E Gand visited Madame de Saint-Senoch and inspected the four instruments which comprised her late husband's Stradivari quartet and which were now to be auctioned; these details were entered into the Gand & Bernardel *Grand Livre* in May 1886:

Visité et remonté le [violon] Stradivarius 1704

Visité et remonté le [violon] Stradivarius 1736 [1737?; see p.6 of this account]

Visité et remonté l'alto Stradivarius [1728; see p.6 of this account]

Visité et remonté la Basse Stradivarius [1696 according to Gand; see below].

Gand also took the opportunity to write a description of the cello in his *Catalogue descriptif* (p. 119):

(année 1886) M^r de S^t Senoch, Paris

Violoncelle Stradivarius, 27 pouces, année 1696

Fond de 2 pièces, petites ondes droites, cassure à gauche du joint dans la partie du milieu à 1 pouce. Eclisses du bas côté de l'Ut ayant quelques cassures, hauteur des éclisses en haut 4p. 5l., en bas 4p. 6l.. Table de 2 pièces, cassure à l'âme et au bas de l'f gauche. Très-belle tête. Vernis jaune doré.

Ex Willemotte 5,000^f, Ex Kittel 7,000.¹⁰ [red ink annotation by Gand]

*[¹¹ M^r Damien 11,000^f
1908: Bonjour contre un violon de J^h del Gesù, évalué roxx.¹²*

⁹ Laurie's Sales Account extracts (*Reminiscences*, p. [172]) do not identify the sale of a 1698/96/90 Stradivari cello.

¹⁰ Gand's *Catalogue descriptif* text ends at this point.

¹¹ This two-line annotation appears in both Gand/JF55.2 and Gand/EF55.4.

¹² The letters of the word *harmonieux* represent price numerals: h = 1, a = 2 ... u = 9, x (and z) = 0; thus *roxzx* is 35,000 francs.

(1886) Monsieur de St. Senoch, Paris

Antonio Stradivari cello, 27 *pouces* [730.8mm; see footnote 8, earlier], year 1696

The back plate is made from two pieces; small straight flames; there is a split to the left of the centre-joint, in the middle, 1 *pouce* [27mm] [from the joint]. The lower rib on the C-string side having some splits. The height of the ribs in the upper bout is 4 *pouces 5 lignes* [119.5mm], in the lower bout 4 *pouces 6 lignes* [121.8mm]. The front plate is made from two pieces; a split at the sound-post and at the bottom of the bass *f*-hole. Very beautiful head. The varnish is golden yellow. *ex* Willemotte, 5,000 francs; *ex* Kittel, 7,000 [francs].

Monsieur Damien, 11,000 francs

1908: Bonjour, against a Giuseppe Guarneri *del Gesù* violin valued at 35,000 [francs] [see pp.7-8].

It is curious that Gand identifies the prior involvement of Charles Willemotte and ‘Kittel’ in this cello’s history but makes no mention of Nikolai Aleksandrovich Haller to whom Gand sold the cello in May 1870 for 10,000 francs (see earlier, p.3).

The Saint-Senoch auction took place in Paris on 15 May 1886. According to the report in *le Ménestrel* (23 May 1886) the 1704 violin was bought by M. Bachelez for 7,000 francs; the 1736 violin (which is identified in *le Ménestrel* as the 1737 *Chant du Cygne* violin) was ‘bought back’ when the bidding stopped at 15,100 francs; the 1728 viola was also bought back, at 12,900 francs; the ‘superb cello of 1696’ was bought by ‘M. Dammien d’Aytré’ for 10,200 francs:

It was last Saturday that the sale took place, at the Hotel Drouot, of the superb Stradivarius quartet from the estate of M. Saint-Senoch. This auction attracted a considerable crowd, comprising not only music lovers but also the [merely] curious, and it was difficult to approach the table where the instruments were displayed. The bidding was vigorous and it was with quite some emotion that one heard, at each adjudication, the sharp crack of the auctioneer’s hammer on the table. The sale was arranged courtesy of Messrs Gand & Bernardel frères. [...] Finally, the superb cello of 1696, which had a reserve of 15,000 francs, attracted a buyer at 8,000 francs and was [eventually] sold to M. Dammien d’Aytré for 10,200 francs.¹³ It should be noted that the four instruments, despite their splendid condition, were sold for less than M. de Saint-Senoch had paid for them. [...] he paid 17,500 francs for the cello which was sold for 10,200 francs.¹⁴

Gand & Bernardel subsequently sent Madame de Saint-Senoch an invoice for their work in delivering the auction, charged at 3% of the sale income: 1,393 francs.

The *Grand Livre* for 1887 confirms the previous year’s ‘buy-backs’ through the details of the instruments now listed against the name of Madame de Saint-Senoch:

1887 Mars 10: 1 violon Stradivarius Antonio année 1737 en dépôt pour 17,500 francs

1887 Septembre 27: Avoir en dépôt un alto Antonius Stradivarius, à vendre, 13,000 francs

It thus seems that Charles Gand’s specification of ‘1736’ for the second Stradivari violin (see p.5) was an error; the 1737 *Chant du Cygne* violin was subsequently sold to the violinist Joseph White for 20,000 francs.¹⁵ The viola, subsequently known as the *Gibson*, was sold at auction in April 1890.

¹³ It is unclear whether the purchaser’s name – ‘Dammien d’Aytré’ – indicated a hierarchical status with respect to the La Rochelle suburb of Aytré.

¹⁴ Present author’s translation.

¹⁵ Gand’s 1870 description of the violin appears in his *Catalogue descriptif* on p.29. For a detailed investigation into the history and identity of the *Chant du Cygne* violin see the present author’s article ‘The Stradivari *Chant du Cygne* violin: a question of labelling’ in *The Galpin Society Journal*, March 2017.

With respect to M. Dammien d'Aytré the GBC&F *Répertoire* for the period 1892-1899 includes the following entry: *Dammien et C^{ie}, Comm^{res}* [commission agents?] *64 rue d'Hauteville, [Paris], 1028*. The page number 1028 links to the *Grand Livre* for 1892-99. At page 1028 is the following entry which records the purchase, in 1894, of multiple sets of cello strings (a purchase which suggests that *M. Dammien d'Aytré* and *Dammien et C^{ie}* may be related):

Dammien et C^{ie}
 1894 Mai 10: 36 la Nap. à 0.75 fr; 24 ré Nap. à 1 fr, pour basse, 51 francs
 24 sol à 0.75 fr; 24 ut à 1 fr, pour basse, 42 francs
 4 chevalets dégrossis à 5 fr; 6 colophanes à 1 fr, 26 francs
 36 Naples A-strings [...]; 24 Naples D-strings; for cello
 24 G-strings; 24 C-strings; for cello
 4 'blank'/un-cut bridges [for cello?]; 6 blocks of resin.

Twelve years later the Caressa & Français *Grand Livre* for 1906 shows the following deposit made by *Dammien d'Aytré* (whose address is given in the parallel *Répertoire* as *18 rue du Sud, Versailles*):

1906 Avril 19: Une basse de Stradivarius, 1696, en dépôt, 10,500 francs.

This, surely, is the cello which M. Dammien d'Aytré bought at the Saint-Senoch auction. The sum of 10,500 francs is what C&F undertook to pay Dammien d'Aytré should they be able to sell his cello (there was almost certainly a two-year time limit placed on this endeavour). In return, C&F were free to obtain the highest possible price for the instrument and pocket the monetary difference.

M. Dammien d'Aytré received his contracted payment in two instalments: the first – comprising 4,000 francs and a new Caressa & Français cello – was paid in November 1906; the second – 5,000 francs – was paid by C&F in April 1908, exactly two years after the cello was deposited by Dammien. Was 10,500 francs all that M. Dammien wanted for the cello? Was M. Dammien unaware of the huge increase in price for Stradivari cellos at the start of the twentieth century? Might the cello have suffered so much damage while in M. Dammien's possession that its value had fallen? Did C&F have to spend months repairing and restoring the instrument at their own expense?

Some years earlier, in June 1903, Samuel (Gustave?) Bonjour (1859-?1909), a doctor who lived in Nantes at *23 Place de St. Yves*, bought from Caressa & Français a 1733 Guarneri violin, priced at 40,000 francs. Bonjour handed in a Stradivari violin in part-exchange (worth 25,000 francs) and paid 15,000 francs in cash. In February 1908 the following entry was penned in the *Grand Livre*:

1908 Février 13
 D^r Bonjour, Nantes
 Une basse de A. Stradivarius, année 1696, 73cms; (ex S^t Senoch), 25,000 francs.
 Un violon del Gesu, N^o 1769, repris, 25,000 francs
 (la facture donnée ne porte aucune somme, elle certifie seulement l'échange)
 ('the invoice given does not specify any sums of money; it certifies only the exchange').

There cannot be any doubt that this 1696 cello was that which was described by Charles Gand in 1886 (see p.5 of this account), was obtained by Dammien d'Aytré at the May 1886 auction, and was kept by him for 20 years, until April 1906. The near-identical specifications of the cello's body length – 730.8mm (see p.5: '27 pouces') and 730mm (above) – only reinforce the certainty. The 're-acquired' Guarneri violin was surely the 1733 instrument which Samuel Bonjour had bought in June 1903, but it is difficult to understand why the violin's value should have sunk from 40,000 to 25,000 francs in five years. Note that the C&F annotation at the end of Gand's description of the 'St. Senoch' cello (see earlier, p.5) identifies the value of the Guarneri violin as 35,000 francs rather than 25,000.

Samuel Bonjour – nephew to the cellist and instrument collector Abel Bonjour – is identified as such in an annotation added to Charles Gand’s description of Abel’s 1744 Guarneri violin:

*(année 1872) M^r Abel Bonjour, Paris
Violon Joseph Guarnerius, 13 pouces 1 ligne, année 1744
Fond d’une pièce, belles ondes descendant de gauche à droite, belles éclisses, table beau sapin, ayant trois cassures du côté du menton et quelques trous de vers dans le haut du même côté, très-belle tête. Beau vernis rouge brun doré.*

Ex Brochant de Villiers.¹⁶

18 Bonjour neveu.¹⁷

Further transactions with Samuel Bonjour are:

1. In April 1879 Gand & Bernardel repaired a Vuillaume cello which belonged to Samuel (60 francs); in May 1879 Samuel bought a Vuillaume violin (400 francs); between March 1880 and October 1881 he bought supplies of strings, horse-hair, and some inexpensive bows.

2. As already mentioned, in 1903 Samuel made the following purchase:

1903 Juin 6: Un violon de Joseph Guarnerius del Gesu, année 1733 (ex César), 40,000 francs.

3. In November 1903 a new bridge was fitted to Samuel’s Guarneri violin and he bought a Tourte bow for 1,200 francs.

4. In June 1904 Samuel bought another expensive cello:

1904 Juin 17: Une basse de D. Tecchler, année 1725, N^o 146, avec archet de Tourte [for violin], baguette ronde (A. Hekking), 15,000 francs.

Samuel paid 3,000 francs in cash and handed in *une basse de J. Guarnerius fils André*, valued at 12,000 francs.

5. On 2 June 1905 Caressa & Français repaired ‘the Stradivarius’ belonging to *D^r Bonjour*, of *Nantes*.

6. On 22 June 1906 Samuel bought *une basse de Tononi de Venise, N^o 182*, for 16,000 francs. He handed back the Tecchler cello and the Tourte violin bow, these two now being valued at 16,000 francs.

7. On 13 February 1908 Samuel bought *Un violon de Gosselin à Paris, année 1826, N^o 164, 1,200 francs*. **On the same day, and through an exchange, he also obtained the ex-St. Senoch Stradivari cello of 1696** (as shown on p.7 of this account).

On 23 January 1909 Samuel Bonjour bought a 1742 Domenico Montagnana cello, priced at 45,000 francs. Two days later he handed back a 1737 Stradivari violin valued at 28,000 francs. On 27 January he bought and paid for *Une basse de Carlo Tononi de Venise, N^o 90, 11,000 francs*. On 10 February Bonjour handed back an otherwise-unidentified Stradivari cello valued at 17,000 francs, thus clearing his debt re the Montagnana cello. It seems unlikely that this Stradivari cello was the *ex S^t Senoch* since its value was 8,000 francs less than when it was exchanged just one year earlier.

The last C&F entry against Samuel Bonjour’s name is dated 18 May 1909.

¹⁶ Gand’s text (*Catalogue descriptif*, p.51) ends at this point.

¹⁷ This annotation is found in Gand/JF55.2 and in Gand/EF55.4 (p.51 in both).

The *St. Senoch, Murray* cello is listed in the Cozio Archive of Tarisio.com (ID 41456), dated 1698. The website's list of the cello's owners does not include Dr Samuel Bonjour. Instead, it indicates that the cello passed from M. Dammien to 'Captain H S Murray' in 1890, this information probably derived from Ernest Doring:

The 'cello found its way to Scotland in the eighteen nineties to become one of a quartet of Stradivarii owned by the late Captain Murray.¹⁸

According to Doring, the 1698 cello was still in Murray's possession at the time of his death.

Jost Thöne's historian states:

[... the cello] found its way back to Scotland in 1890 in the hands of Captain H. S. Murray of Oaklea, Galashiels who, like Saint-Senoch, also completed a quartet of Stradivari instruments in purchasing the cello. Following Captain Murray's death, his heirs entrusted his entire collection to the New York dealership Rudolph Wurlitzer, commissioning them to sell it on for profit on the American market.¹⁹

The documentary evidence from the Caressa & Français *Grand Livre* for 13 February 1908 (see previous page) contradicts the claimed ownership of the 169[?] *Saint-Senoch* cello by H S Murray in 1890. If Murray obtained a Stradivari cello 'in the eighteen nineties' the instrument was not the *Saint-Senoch*.

Henry Smith Murray was born in 1858. His family's business, under the guidance of his father, John (d. 1892), was in the woollen trade, with extensive interests in the Australian sheep market. As a result, the firm of Sanderson & Murray became internationally famous and the family enormously wealthy. The family's residence was at the newly-designed and -built Scots-baronial house named 'Glenmayne' just outside the town of Galashiels on the banks of the river Tweed. At an unknown date towards the end of the century H S Murray took up the position of Major and Lieutenant-Colonel in the 1st Roxburgh and Selkirk Rifle Corps; he died at 'Glenmayne' on 10 March 1924.

In the Gand/Bernardel/C&F ledgers which cover the period 1881-1923 the name of *Harry Murray of Galeshiels, Ecosse* appears only once – in the *Répertoire* for the period 1905-1912. The parallel *Grand Livre* shows that on 6 May 1905 Murray bought from Caressa & Français (through the intermediary Hugo Becker) an Amati cello dated 1662, *ex-Wielhorsky*, for 32,200 francs. Becker (1863-1941, German cellist) received 6,000 francs for his involvement in this transaction.

W Henley writes about the *Saint-Senoch* cello but his information is unreliable:

1696 ex Murray

Owned by Count de Saint-Senoch of Paris. Sold at Paris for £400, 1886. Acquired by Colonel H. S. Murray to complete his quartet of Strads – exhibited at Wembley. Two-piece back, and of the long pattern.²⁰

The exhibition to which Henley refers was the 1924 British Empire Exhibition, created within the pleasure grounds at Wembley Park and covering more than 200 acres. 'Palaces' of Engineering, Industry, Horticulture, and the Arts dominated the exhibition, alongside 'Pavilions' which housed displays from almost every country within the British Empire. Within the Palace of Arts was a recreation of a large drawing-room as might have been found in a wealthy upper-class English household *circa* 1750. It is possible that this room was used to provide visitors to the Exhibition with musical

¹⁸ Doring, *How Many Strads?*, p. 99.

¹⁹ Jost Thöne (ed.), *Antonius Stradiuarius*, Vol. VI, p. 60.

²⁰ Henley, *Antonio Stradivari, Master Luthier*, Amati Publishing (1961), p. 93. The *Senoch* body-length is 731mm.

entertainments, and perhaps Murray's quartet of string instruments was featured (and played?) on those occasions. Henley and Doring claim that Murray's quartet of Stradivari instruments comprised the 1712 *Darnley*, *Eldina Bligh* violin (which he acquired in 1915), the *Goetz (Hawaiian)* violin of 1695, the *Gibson* viola (*ex Saint-Senoch*) of 1728[?], and the *Saint-Senoch* cello (?bought from the Bonjour estate in 1910).

Five certificates for the *Saint-Senoch* cello are identified on the Tarisio.com website, the certificates written by Hart (London, 1910), Hill (London, 1928), Wurlitzer (Cincinnati, 1930), Hamma (Stuttgart, 1930), and by Étienne Vatelot (Paris, 1983); the texts of these certificates have not been seen by the present writer. It is assumed that, following Samuel Bonjour's death in 1909, his *Saint-Senoch* cello was bought by an unknown person and passed through George Hart's hands in London on its way to Galashiels and Henry Smith Murray.

Ernest Doring writes:

[The Murray quartet of Stradivari instruments] was offered by the trustees of his estate to Jay C. Freeman, while he was in London in 1926 in the interests of the Wurlitzer Collection. Although an agreement was reached, the instruments were then in the custody of one of the prominent dealers who, loath to part with them and desiring to prevent their leaving England, placed obstacles in the way of making delivery. Some time later, however, the quartet was forwarded to New York.²¹

The date of the Hill certificate – 1928 – suggests that it was they who tried to prevent the Murray instruments leaving the UK; their reasons for trying to thwart the export are unknown.

The three measurements of the *Saint-Senoch* cello, as specified by Charles Gand (see p.4 of this account), can be compared with those provided by Jost Thöne in his *Stradiuarius* publication's DVD:²²

	Gand	Thöne
Body length:	730.8mm	732.5mm
Rib height, upper bout:	119.5mm	121.8/121.5mm (bass side/treble side)
Rib height, lower bout:	121.8mm	125.0/125.0mm (bass side/treble side)

In his *Catalogue descriptif* Charles Gand defines the colour of the 1696 *S¹ Senoch* cello as 'golden yellow'; the colour of the 1698 *Saint-Senoch* cello, as photographed in Jost Thöne's *Antonius Stradiuarius* (Vol. VI, pp. 61-71), is defined in the historical commentary as 'orange-brown' and this colour is confirmed by the photographs.

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²¹ Doring, *ibid.*, p. 324.

²² Vol. VI, *Cello 1698, Saint-Senoch*.

Cygne violin (Journal of the Galpin Society, March 2017). Author of a transcription and translation of the complete sales-ledger archive of Jacques Francais (Smithsonian Institution, Washington DC); see website. Author of a detailed historical examination of the Stradivari quartet of decorated instruments exhibited at the Palacio Real in Madrid, Spain; see website. Author of *The case of the missing mould* ('The Strad', June 2018). Author of a detailed examination of issues which surround both the *Cannone* violin in Genoa and the *Canon* violin sold by David Laurie (website). Author (with Bas Terraz) of a study of the 29 letters sent by Pablo Sarasate to his adoptive mother in Paris; a digest of this study appeared in the June 2020 issue of *The Strad*.

Further investigative articles can be found at the author's website (www.themessiahviolin.uk); all are free-to-read.