

The case of the *Saint-Senoch* cello

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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 [GBC&F] violin dealership in Paris between 1816 and 1923. The ledgers 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 in the *Grand Livre* (the details are often rather 'thin').

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 Francais 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 Francais (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. The 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 every descriptive text in the Business Records can be read at www.themessiahviolin.uk.

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

In the Spring of '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 [...]. [Arriving at the lady's house] we 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 [...].¹

Laurie states that the St. Petersburg widow 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 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. [...] They had, with a few exceptions, been bought many years before [...].

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.

Indeed, 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 showed Laurie to the music room, commenting that 'he could tell me more about [the instruments] than the lady could.' It was also the major-domo who agreed with Laurie a total price for all the instruments – 'we speedily came to an agreement, which does not take long when both buyer and seller are actuated by motives of fair dealing' – and it was the major-domo who accompanied Laurie to the bank 'in order to have my English drafts cashed and get the matter settled.' 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. Having bought the instruments and returned with them to London, Laurie's narrative concludes:

[...] my collection was soon put in order and ready for sale; one of the Strad cellos 1708 being bought by the late Mr [John Tiplady] Carrodus [for his son, John Frederick].²

In a letter which Laurie subsequently sent to *The Strad* he describes the 'late husband' in St. Petersburg as a 'deceased amateur'.³ Such a description does not fit with the oft-cited Nikolai Ferdinandovich Kittel, a luthier who lived and worked in St. Petersburg. Kittel was born in 1805 or 1806 and 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 St. Petersburg workshop until it closed in 1873, three years before David Laurie arrived in the city.⁴ Since Carolina Kittel died in 1865 the St. Petersburg widow from whom Laurie bought some string instruments in 1876 was not the erstwhile Mrs Kittel.

The clarity of this biographical information undermines some recent commentaries:

¹ Chapter XIII, *A Purchase in St. Petersburg*.

² It is difficult to see how a cello dated 1708 can be described as 'of the early period'.

³ *The Strad*, issue of January 1896, p. 276.

⁴ 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.

Kittel, who worked as a violin and bow maker for the court of St. Petersburg, kept the [*Saint-Senoch*] cello to the end of his life. [...] 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.⁵

After Mr. N. F. Kittel's death, the [*Saint-Senoch*] cello came into the hands of the Scottish violin collector and dealer David Laurie, who took it to London in 1876.⁶

Both of Jost Thöne's historians state that Laurie sold the future *Saint-Senoch* cello to the Hills of London in 1877:

He [Laurie] sold it just a year later to the Hill brothers in London.⁷

One year later Laurie sold the cello to the renowned dealers William Ebsworth Hill & Sons of London [...].⁸

Laurie's *Prices of Italian Instruments, extracted from his sales account* shows only one sale of a Stradivari cello between June 1876 and October 1880: on 30 September 1877 he sold a 1713 Stradivari cello for £437; the purchaser is not identified.⁹

Edouard-Marie Haincque 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 Gand visited Madame de Saint-Senoch and inspected the four instruments which comprised her late husband's Stradivari quartet and which were to be auctioned; these details are presented in the GBC&F *Grand Livre* for 1886:

Visité et remonté le [violon] Stradivarius 1704

Visité et remonté le [violon] Stradivarius 1736 [1737? see p.5 of this account]

Visité et remonté l'alto Stradivarius [1728]

Visité et remonté la Basse Stradivarius [1696].

With the auction scheduled for May 1886 Charles Gand took the opportunity to write a description of the cello in his *Catalogue descriptif*:

(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.

⁵ Jost Thöne (ed.), *Antonius Stradiuarius*, Vol. VI, p. 60.

⁶ Alessandra Barabaschi writing in Jost Thöne & Jan Röhrmann (eds.) *Antonius Stradiuarius*, Vol. II, p. 28. In Jost Thöne's publication the *1698 St. Senoch, Murray* cello appears in Vol. II, pp. 28-39. The historical commentary provided therein (on p. 28) mostly relates to the *St. Senoch, Murray* cello but the accompanying photographs are of the 1698 *Schiff, Hagen* cello. The correct photos of the *Saint-Senoch [Murray]* cello are in Vol. VI, pp. 61-71, alongside a slightly different historical commentary for the instrument.

⁷ *Ibid.*, Vol. VI, p. 60.

⁸ *Ibid.*, Vol. II, p. 28.

⁹ *Reminiscences*, p. [172]. The price of £437 is curious since nearly all of the 26 sales which are listed in the *Reminiscences* are priced in simple multiples of UK Pounds, e.g. 400, 500, 800, 200, 650, 320, 480, 315, 435, 250, etc. At the time of this sale (1877) the exchange rate between the English and French currencies was that 1 UK Pound would buy 25 French Francs. Thus a payment of 11,000 French Francs would convert to 440 UK Pounds (with, perhaps, 3 UK Pounds lost to bank charges). It thus seems very likely that the purchaser of the 1713 cello was either French, or, at the least, bought the cello from Laurie while the latter had it with him in Paris.

*Ex Wilmotte 5,000^f, Ex Kittel 7,000.*¹⁰

*M^z Damien 11,000^f*¹¹

*1908: Bonjour contre un violon de J^h del Gesù, évalué roxxz.*¹²

(1886) Monsieur de St. Senoch, Paris

Antonio Stradivari cello, 27 *pouces* [730.8mm], 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 Wilmotte, 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].

NOTES

1. 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 Wilmotte; on that date the cello was in the Gand workshop undergoing a 200-franc repair. The cello's label-date is not identified but the uniqueness of the entry suggests that the 1696 instrument which is described in Gand's *Catalogue descriptif* in 1886 is the same instrument. Perhaps Wilmotte sold his repaired cello to Nikolai Ferdinandovich Kittel in a private transaction between October 1865 and April 1868 (when Kittel died).
2. If the 1696 *Saint-Senoch* cello seen by Gand in 1886 (prior to the auction) was recognised by him as that which he had repaired for Wilmotte in 1865 this would explain why Gand adds Wilmotte's name at the end of his descriptive text. How Gand learned that the cello subsequently passed from Wilmotte to N F Kittel is unknown.
3. Some recent narratives have indicated that it was J-B Vuillaume who sold the future *Saint-Senoch* cello to a Russian officer or nobleman. An alternative route might be that it was Kittel who, having returned to St. Petersburg with Wilmotte's cello, sold it to such an individual. Perhaps this 'amateur' died around 1873 thus leaving his instrument collection in the hands of his widow and it was she who contacted David Laurie in 1876.

Thus the sequential ownership of the 1696 cello may have been:

Wilmotte (1865) – Kittel (before 1868) – St. Petersburg amateur – his widow (1876) – David Laurie (1876) – Saint-Senoch (1885) – auction (1886).

4. The name 'Kittel' appears only once in the GBC&F *Répertoire* ledgers which cover the period 1845-1884; *M^z Kittel, luthier à S^t Petersburg* appears in the *Grand Livre* for 2 June 1870 but the only purchase is a packing case(!) costing 20 francs; since N F Kittel had died two years earlier this purchase clearly relates to his son, also named Nikolai.

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.

¹⁰ Gand's *Catalogue descriptif* text (p. 119) 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.

Dammien d'Aytré for 10,200 francs. 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.¹³

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 GBC&F *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 was an error; the 1737 *Chant du Cygne* violin was subsequently sold to the violinist Joseph White for 20,000 francs.¹⁴ The viola, subsequently known as the *Gibson*, was sold at auction in April 1890.

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}* [commissionaires?, brokers?], 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 [Ruffini?] 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 was what C&F undertook to pay Dammien d'Aytré should they be able to sell his cello (there was probably a 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 C&F cello – was paid in November 1906; the second – 5,000 francs – was paid by C&F in April 1908, two months after they had sold the 1696 cello (see below). It is disconcerting that between 1886 and 1906 the value of the *Saint-Senoch/Dammien* cello had apparently increased by just 300 francs. 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 during the previous 20 years? Might the cello have suffered so much damage while in M. Dammien's possession that its value, in effect, had fallen? Did C&F have to spend months repairing and restoring the instrument at their own expense?

¹³ Present author's translation.

¹⁴ 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.

In 1908 Caressa & Français valued the 1696 *ex S^t Senoch* cello at 25,000 francs, as is shown by the *Grand Livre* for the period 1905-1912 which records the following exchange:

1908 Février 13

D^r [Samuel] 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 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 and was obtained by Dammien d’Aytré at the May 1886 auction. The near-identical specifications of the cello’s body length – 730.8mm and 730mm – only reinforce the certainty.

The historical route by which Samuel Bonjour came to buy the *Saint-Senoch* cello in 1908 begins with his uncle, Abel Bonjour, evidently a very wealthy music-lover about whom almost nothing is known apart from the GBC&F ledger-recordings of his purchases and sales of instruments (which seem to suffer quite a lot of damage – see below). It is assumed that Abel Bonjour was born around 1810; he died at the end of 1886.

Within the GBC&F business ledgers the first mention of *Monsieur Bonjour, à Lyon* is found in the *Grand Livre* for 1854-1864:

1857 Août 28: *Un violon Joseph Guarnerius, fils d’André, N^o* [no stock number is given], 600 francs.

The next entries are found in the *Grand Livre* for 1866-1875:

1868 Avril 1: *Réparation du violoncelle Bergonzi, 30 francs*

Réparation du violon Bergonzi, 60 francs

1868 Juin 11: *Réparation d’un violoncelle Grancino, 100 francs*

1868 Décembre 19: *Réparation du violoncelle (Rugger) 70 francs*

Réparation du violoncelle Bergonzi, 5 francs

Further entries identify M. Bonjour’s address in Lyon as *27 rue Laval*:

1869 Février 3: *Réparation du Grancino, 15 francs*

Réparation complète du violoncelle Amati, 150 francs

1869 Avril 17: *Réparation complète d’un alto Bergonzi, 50 francs*

1869 Juin 15: *Réparation d’une basse Rugger, 180 francs.*

On 26 June 1869 M. Bonjour bought *un basse Montagnana* for 5,000 francs; this was repaired on 1 April 1870. On 14 March 1870 he bought *Un violon Amati, grand patron*, with a Tourte bow, for 2,000 francs. On 23 November 1871 he bought *Un violon Joseph Guarnerius, N^o 1083, 3,000 francs*. On 12 December 1871 violins by Steininger and Grancino were repaired, as was a Bergonzi cello.

Yet more purchases were then made by M. Bonjour:

1872 Janvier 30: *Un alto J^e B^e [Jean Baptiste] Guadagnini, N^o 86, 600 francs*

1872 Février 13: *Un violoncelle Stradivarius, g^d patron [large type], 1691, 12,000 francs*

1872 Août 10: *Réparation d’une basse Steininger, 25 francs*

1872 Novembre 16: *Réparation d’une basse Boquay, 120 francs*

1872 Novembre 28: [the purchase of] *un violon Jacobus Stainer, 800 francs.*

On 31 January 1873 Abel Bonjour bought *Un alto et un violoncelle Stradivarius, 20,000 francs*; he paid for both instruments on the day of purchase:

- the viola, dated 1696, was priced at 7,000 francs; subsequently it was returned and then re-sold, at 9,400 francs, on 16 July 1873, to *M^r G. H. M. Muntz à Birmingham* who used *M^r [Prosper] Sainton, Professeur* as the intermediary in the purchase. This viola had previously been part of the *Archinto* collection.
- The cello, dated 1689, was priced at 13,000 francs; it was also an *Archinto* instrument.

Further repairs to M. Bonjour's instruments were carried out in 1873 including the reduction in size of the 1691 cello:¹⁵

1873 Février 19:	Réparation d'un violoncelle Stradivarius, 80 francs
	Réparation d'un violon Steininger, 20 francs
1873 Juillet 18:	Récoupage et réparation du violoncelle Stradivarius 1691, 300 francs.

In 1885 Abel Bonjour allowed three of his cellos, with three Tourte cello bows, to be exhibited at the International Inventions Exhibition, held at the Albert Hall, London. The items were listed in the exhibition's Guide as:

Violoncello, Italian, by Antonius Stradiarius. Date 1691 [i.e. the *grand patron*, reduced-in-size cello]

Violoncello, Italian, by Franciscus Ruggerius. Date 1695.

Violoncello, Italian, by Antonius Stradiarius. Date 1689. Formerly one of the celebrated quartet of Stradiarius instruments in the collection of Count Archinto, of Milan.

Three *Violoncello bows*, French (one with gold and tortoise-shell mountings), by Tourte.

The Gand & Bernardel records of transactions with Abel Bonjour then continue in the *Grand Livre* for 1881-1887, starting on 4 March 1885. However, there are no purchases or deposits of instruments; instead, the ledger entries show M. Bonjour passing to G&B his railway-company bonds which the latter were authorised to sell in order to clear the former's outstanding debts. The precise date when M. Abel Bonjour died is uncertain but is likely to have been in the last two or three months of 1886.

M. Bonjour's instruments (and his large collection of bows) were auctioned at the Hôtel Drouot on 5 February 1887; all the arrangements were handled by Gand & Bernardel and these included collecting and transporting all the instruments, including pianos, from Bonjour's residence in the commune of Maisons Laffitte (15 miles north-west of Paris) and the *Installation d'une vitrine pour l'exposition des 9 violoncelles*. Some of these cellos can be identified from the auction report which was published in *le Ménestrel* (13 February 1887, p. 87); others are less certain. The text of the *le Ménestrel* report (present author's translation) was:

On the 5th of this month, courtesy of Messrs Gand & Bernardel, there was sold at Hotel Drouot a remarkable collection of instruments from the estate of a wealthy music-lover, Mr Abel Bonjour. This sale attracted a large audience of onlookers, both music-lovers and violin-makers, some having travelled from all over Europe in order to attend. The most important items were forcefully disputed. The highlight of the auction, a wonderful Stradivari cello dated 1689, was 'conquered', one might say, by Mr Jules Delsart, the excellent professor of the Conservatoire, for 19,000 francs. A second Stradivari cello [the re-cut 1691] received bids which climbed to the very respectable sum of 12,000 francs; it was acquired by Mr Hollmann. These two instruments had featured prominently at the International Exhibitions in London and in Paris (1878). A third cello, this being the work of Francesco Rugger, found a buyer at 3,200 francs; the cello was dated 'Cremona, 1650'; the bidding

¹⁵ Ernest Doring (*How many Strads?*, 1945, p. 81) reports a statement made in the catalogue for the 1937 Stradivari Bicentenary exhibition in Cremona that the cello's dimensions 'were reduced by Charles Rambaux, fine maker of Paris, in 1860'.

for an Amati cello stopped at 750 francs. Various other Italian cellos were ‘knocked down’ at prices between 510 and 615 francs. [...]

Abel Bonjour’s nephew, Samuel G Bonjour, was a doctor who lived at 23 *Place de St. Yves, Nantes*. Samuel’s familial relationship to Abel is identified in an annotation added to Charles Gand’s description of Abel Bonjour’s 1744 Guarneri violin:

*(année 1872) M^e 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*

In April 1879 Gand & Bernardel repaired a Vuillaume cello which belonged to Samuel Bonjour (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.

In 1903 *S Bonjour*, of *Nantes*, made the following purchase:

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

Samuel handed over 15,000 francs and returned *un violon de Stradivarius*, valued at 25,000 francs; no further details of this violin are provided. In November 1903 a new bridge was fitted to Samuel’s Guarneri violin and he bought a Tourte bow for 1,200 francs. 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.

On 2 June 1905 Caressa & Français repaired ‘the Stradivarius’ belonging to *D^r Bonjour*, of *Nantes*. On 22 June 1906 Samuel bought *une basse de Tonomi 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.

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 previously shown on p.6 of this account):

*1908 Février 13
D^e [Samuel] 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)*

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 Tonomi 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

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).

its value was 8,000 francs less than when exchanged one year earlier, in 1908. The last GBC&F entry against Bonjour's name is dated 18 May 1909.

A descriptive text, found in both Gand/JF55.2 and Gand/EF55.4 (p.177 in both) for the 1742 Domenico Montagnana cello owned in January 1909 by *Samuel Bonjour, Nantes*, implies that Samuel almost certainly died during the second half of 1909. The lengthy description of the Montagnana cello concludes (present author's translation):

Sold [to S Bonjour] for 50,000 francs [actually 45,000 francs] in January 1909 [see above]
[We] re-acquired a violin and a Stradivari cello for this sum [see above]
[The cello now] owned by Gérard Hekking who bought it following the death of Bonjour, 35,000 francs, 1910.
It is in Norway.

Factually, it was not Gérard Hekking who bought Samuel Bonjour's Montagnana cello but Gérard's cousin, André; it is very likely that André bought the cello privately from the Bonjour estate. Repairs to the cello are listed in the GBC&F business ledgers under the name *A. Hekking*, the repairs dated 6 November 1909, 23 February 1910, 8 April 1910, and 3 August 1910.

The *St. Senoch, Murray* cello is listed in the Cozio Archive of Tarisio.com (ID 41456), dated 1698 rather than 1696; the difference in label-date is seemingly accounted for by a difficult-to-read fourth numeral. The website's list of the cello's owners does not include Dr Samuel G 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 this claimed ownership of the 1696/98 *Saint-Senoch* cello by H S Murray in 1890. If H S Murray obtained a 1696/98 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.

¹⁸ Doring, *How Many Strads?*, p. 99.

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

In the GBC&F ledgers the name of *Harry Murray of Galeshiels, Ecosse* appears 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.

The name ‘Murray’ does not appear in the 1912-1920 *Répertoire* ledger (and therefore does not appear in the parallel *Grand Livre*), nor in the final *Grand Livre* which covers the period 1920-January 1923.

W Henley writes as follows about the *Saint-Senoch* cello:

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 entertainments, and perhaps Murray’s quartet of string instruments was featured (and played?) on those occasions. Information provided by Henley and by Doring indicates 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 author. It is assumed that, following Samuel Bonjour’s death in 1909, his *Saint-Senoch* cello was bought by an unknown person and taken to London; perhaps it was from George (II) Hart that the cello made its way to Galashiels and Henry Smith Murray.

Ernest Doring writes, intriguingly:

[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.

²⁰ Henley, *Antonio Stradivari, Master Luthier*, Amati Publishing (1961), p. 93.

²¹ Doring, *ibid.*, p. 324.

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

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

Charles Gand defines the colour of the 1696 *S^l Senoch* cello as 'golden yellow'; the colour of the 1698 *Saint-Seno* [Murray] cello, as photographed in Jost Thöne's *Antonius Stradiuarius* (Vol. VI, pp. 61-71), is defined in the historical commentary as 'orange-brown'.

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

²² Vol. VI, *Cello 1698, Saint-Seno*.