ONE AMAZING LIFETIME'S AUCTION

Peter Hammond reports on an unusual sale.

The title of the Thimbleby & Shorland auction – *One Amazing Lifetime's Accumulation of Furniture and Artefacts of Every Description* – certainly caught the attention and fired the imagination. However, imagination wasn't required as the 600 plus lots forwarded from the executors of the late Anthony Andrews filled the sale room of the Reading-based auctioneers.

Potential buyers from collectors to dealers through to car boot sellers gathered for the anticipated live and on-line auction held on Saturday 9th June, with a smattering of telephone bids keeping auctioneer Chris Boreham busy for the duration of this eclectic sale.

Some of the lots may outwardly not hold interest to our readers; take Lot 7 for example a Mahogany Wellington chest, with 15 drawers over half being filled with a collection of clay pipes! A framed glass panel etched 'Private Bar' found favour, while the drinking association continued as seven beer engines with a quantity of beer mats likened themselves to someone's palate.

We can't itemise each lot, the auction catalogue did that; nor each group, although by the admission of semi-retired auctioneer John Holland, one item defied all identification *(see the box panel)*. A large quantity of horn gramophones created a lot of interest, a Selby horned table top gramophone seeing £380, an Edison standard phonograph taking £300, while the star lot from the 40 or so instruments was the version by the Gramophone & Typewriter Co. Ltd that quickly found £700.

Talking of musical reproduction instruments, then head and shoulders above all else was the William H Russell of Leicester upright penny in the slot Polyphone dating from the late 19th century with a selection of discs. As bidding slowed at the £7,000 mark, a hush came over the room; you could hear a pin drop at £9K, the winning £14,500 drawing applause.

Undoubted star of the sale, this William Russell Polyphone brought a hush to the room as it headed toward a winning £14,500.

A dozen or so Magic Lanterns, some with slides, focused on a smaller audience, these old entertainment projectors, however, still finding favour. Entertainment in the form of theatre and circus posters was included, either as standalone framed items or as part of a larger lot, a collectable Billy Smart's Circus colourful pendant being included with a quantity of flags.

In addition to a quantity of Victorian dolls prams and larger examples there were the toys, including several bagatelle boards, while Tri-ang and Cohen mobile cranes reached for the sky. A trio of tinplate toys comprising a model steam engine, lorry and fire engine found interest as did a boxed Hornby O gauge train set.

With bids from the phone, net and the room this Edison standard phonograph quickly found £300.

This Gramophone & Typewriter Co. horn gramophone sold at £700.

ONE AMAZING AUCTION – WHAT IS IT?

Does anyone know what this is?

Mid way through the One Amazing Lifetime's auction, semi-retired auctioneer John Holland approached us to ask what the item pictured here was used for. Due deliberation was given, while others put their ideas forward, but the combined minds could not raise a positive answer to the conundrum.

Built into a cast tray, the black rod in the foreground appears to be a felt or rubber covering for the rod slotted into the base which shows signs of rust and must therefore be of ferrous metal construction.

The larger non-ferrous roller in the centre of the object is attached to a handle and can be turned in either direction. It is connected by gearing to the aforementioned covered rod thus roller and rod move together in opposite directions. A series of non-ferrous tongues rub on the roller, but these can move independently up and down from the roller. Close inspection suggests that some of these tongues may be missing.

A compression spring attached around a knurled ended rod is affixed through the front of the item. This is attached to a flat ferrous bar inserted across the object which has a knurled knob fixing to the right in the picture.

Do any of our readers have the answer? We would be interested to know.

The Mahogany Wellington chest with eight drawers containing a collection of clay pipes, and seven with assorted magazines and papers.

Complete with a selection of paper roll music, this Improved Celestina Organette saw bidding quickly reach £220.

An example of an undated theatre poster included within a single lot that also had examples relating to the Lewisham Hippodrome and Royal Hippodrome, Dover.

Turning the clock back to 1908 at Eastbourne and 1929 for the Theatre Royal, Brighton with these framed posters which found £70.

A colourful quantity of flags came with this Billy Smart's Circus pendant.

With a selection of black and white slides, this cased Magic Lantern sold at £90.

One of several Stereoscopes complete with views on offer, in this instance with a slide entitled 'Sky Railroading in the White Mountains'!

Suitcases and tin trunks were interesting for their perceived social history.

The Tri-ang cranes, a simple toy that no doubt brought pleasure to many a child.

Victorian prams and pushchairs stood alongside a selection of dolls prams.

Any more fares please? A full rack of Rotherham Corporation Transport Dept bus tickets.

A decorative Chapel organ, but apparently not in fashion as it only saw £20.

Sold as part of a combined lot, this wall clock was made by Reading-based Bracher & Sydenham.

How many of us of a certain age recall the shot of Redex when fuelling the car?

Local biscuit manufacturer Huntley & Palmer featured on an advertising sign included in a lot of four which took £70, while bidding on a second set of five metal advertising signs saw a quick £120. A pub mirror advertising Henley on Thames brewer Brakspear's was to be found amongst a selection of half a dozen framed pictures.

Luggage, tin trunks and suitcases made up another section, but here it was the luggage labels that caught the eye on the assorted items. £45 to £50 per lot, but it was the social history tied up here: travel by the Royal Mail Steam Packet Co., with destinations as diverse as Limerick, Mount Everest, Munich and Cairo with a Southern Railway label to Waterloo.

Travel, well there was the rack of Rotherham Corporation Transport Dept bus tickets, ranging in price from 1d to 10d with destinations noted as Old Toll Bar, Horse & Jockey and Kiln Road Terminus. Road transport from earlier days found the 1761 framed poster advertising 'The London Bound Coach' or the print depicting a 1770 scene entailed; 'Passengers going to Bury Fair'.

We've not even mentioned the collection of manual typewriters, nor the two dozen Primus and camping stoves.

We could mention so many other items from this fascinating collection, as even on a third tour of the sale room, something new would emerge to engross the train of thought.

In compiling this report we offer our thanks to auctioneer Chris Boreham, who commented: "I couldn't be more delighted for the family. It was a terrific sale with huge interest from across the world although I'm pleased to say much was locally based. The sale was an interesting proposition from the outset, the property from where it came being quite literally full to the gunwales. People could not believe that it had all come from a modest chalet-bungalow!" ■