

Bernhard Sinn aka Seine The UK's Earliest Draisine Rider

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Thomas Stephens Davies (1795-1851), noted mathematician at the Royal Military Academy in Woolwich, England, gave a lecture "On the Velocipede" in May 1837,¹ the manuscript of which is kept at the Library of Trinity College, Cambridge. Looking back to the hey-day of the hobby-horse, he mentions a draisine rider at Bath where Davies had been a math teacher: **[Figure 1]**

"Soon after the publication of this [Drais's] pamphlet **[Figures 2a and 2b]**, a German gentleman, with whom I was acquainted, named Mr. Bernhard Seine, a native of the city of Mannheim, came to England, about twenty years ago, bringing with him the pamphlet, and he frequently rode about the streets of the city of Bath upon a velocipede made after the construction of the original invention. Mr. Seine did not hesitate to run on his velocipede at a violent rate down some of the steepest streets in that city over the pitching of the road, but I never heard of his meeting with any accident [...]. Every person of a mechanical turn was pleased with the ingenuity of the idea and surprised that it had never occurred to himself to invent such a contrivance."

Who was Bernhard Seine?

When writing my Drais biography,² I tried to shed some light on this early draisinist in the UK - but to no avail. The register of Mannheim's residents has survived bombing in World War II, but doesn't show any Seine. The white pages of Germany showed some farmers named Seine near Hannover, but these people had done no family genealogy and they didn't remember any ancestor living at Mannheim.

Subsequently, *The Bath Chronicle (TBC)* was searched online and reports were found that shed more light on the case. Henry Seine (1775-1832), born in



Figure 1. Mathematician Thomas Stephen Davies (1794-1851) lectured in 1837 (ref. 1).

Mannheim, but when an adult he lived in Bath, England, at 7 Lansdown Road where he worked as a musician and music teacher, and he gave concerts, e.g. for the benefit of astronomer Herschel after an accident. The search for Bernhard Seine finally produced a death notice in *TBC* of April 15, 1830:

"At Mannheim, Mr. John Bernhard Seine, brother to Mr. Seine, of this city."

This helped, since a Johann Bernhard Sinn was reported dead in Mannheim two weeks earlier, with a brother abroad! This should be our man. Of the two names used in these reports, we can only speculate: Did brother Heinrich Sinn change his name to Henry Seine at Bath

as a piano teacher of girls to avoid any association with "sin"?

A final proof was found in the Mannheim city archive (now Marchivum) among estate files for Bernhard Sinn: A letter from a befriended copper engraver named Peter Sintzenich residing at Tunbridge Wells (Kent, England), also ex. Mannheim, authorising Bernhard Sinn to receive a donation of 801 guilders from Sintzenich's patrimony at Mannheim. This is dated 1 November 1816 and initially directed to him at London, but sent on to 7 Lansdown(!) Road, Bath in England, which was the address of his brother Henry Seine. **[Figure 3]** Apparently Bernhard Sinn had traveled to the UK in 1816, but returned to Mannheim to collect the money, and then returned to Bath at the end of 1817. It seems that when reporting on Bernhard Sinn the local newspaper, *The Gazette TBC*, attributed to him the adopted family name of his resident brother Henry Seine, thus we have Bernhard Seine named in this report as being from Mannheim.

Johann Bernhard Sinn aka Seine (1778-1830) turns out to be a "Partikulier", meaning a man of private means, who owned a house at R1,18 in Mannheim. But when did he arrive at Bath and ride the draisine there? Drais's pamphlet appeared on November 14, 1817, so perhaps he visited his brother for Christmas 1817. Alas, the incomplete arrival lists of *TBC* do not have Bernhard Seine's name in them so we must speculate. It is possible that

he ordered the building of the draisine in January 1818. Then, it would have been finished after drying of the paint in February 1818, after which it would have got up to its tricks in Bath. This account appears to be sensible (at least until conflicting evidence comes up). A summary of this supposition:

Johann Bernhard Sinn (aka Seine) was the UK's earliest (first) draisine rider: This ride took place at Bath in February 1818 when Sinn was 40 years old.

Later years

TBC reports on April 15, 1819, without even hinting about Seine's involvement:

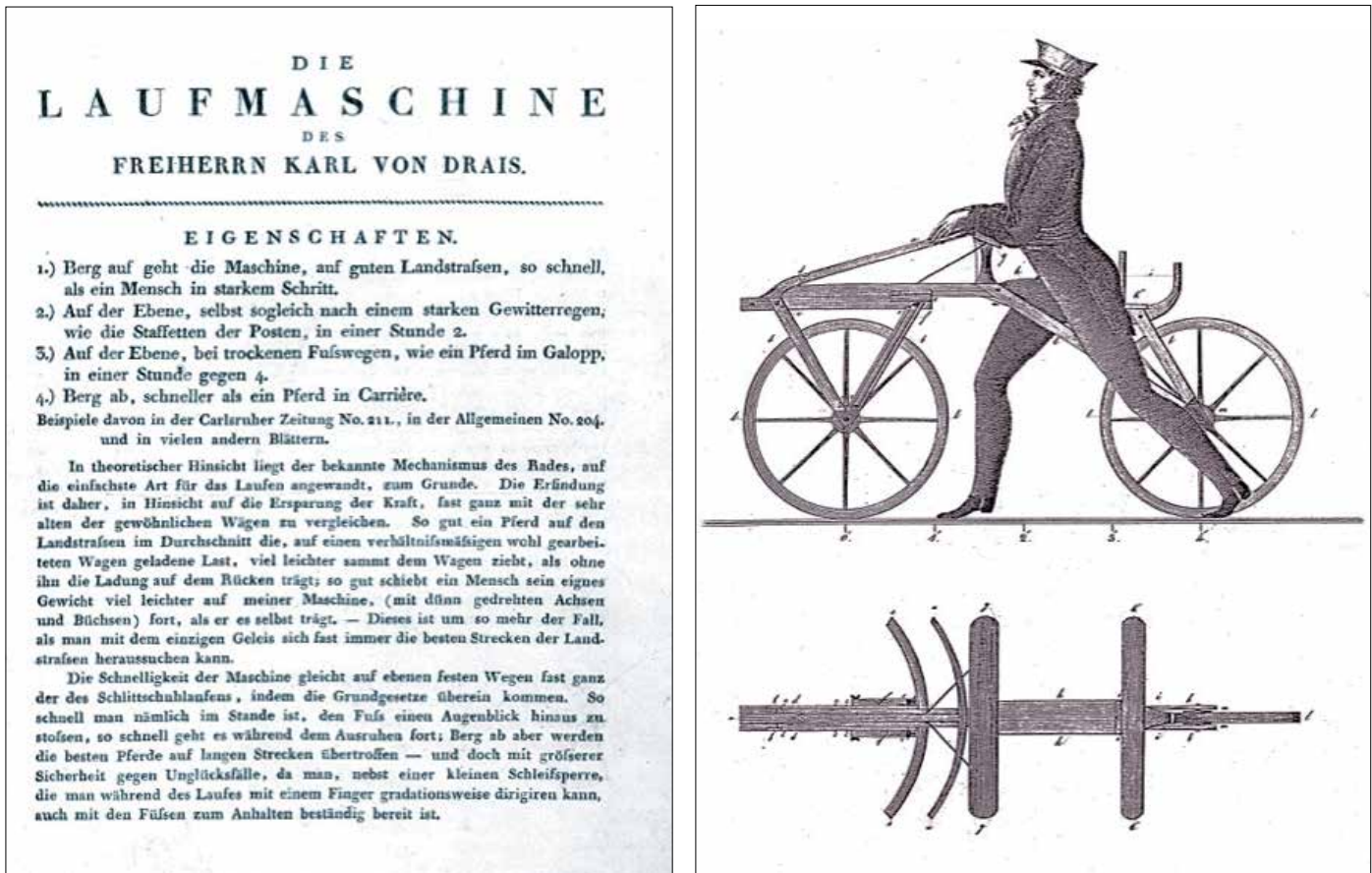


Figure 2a & 2b. Cover and plate of Karl Von Drais's 1817 pamphlet (ref. 2).

The new hobby-horse machines have been nick-named dandy-chargers.

This was during the heyday of Johnson's hobby-horses on which Davies reported later-on:

I am acquainted with individuals who went with their velocipedes from twenty to thirty miles a day on excursions into the country, and many young men were in their habit of riding sixty miles or more in the course of a week. It's easy to see how beneficial this exercise must

have been to the health of the riders, who were generally inhabitants of cities and often occupied during the day in sedentary pursuits connected with their business.

As late as 1822, TBC had a syndicated report on a race in August 29:

At the Hereford Races on Thursday, a race between three velocipedes, commonly called hobby-horses, created much mirth. They were ridden by three men, dressed in scarlet, yellow, and white jackets. When, after a display of much skill, and every exertion being used, the white won, the scarlet and yellow being both upset, and the riders each received a hearty thump, to the great diversion of all spectators.

Karl Drais at Bath in 1832

From extant notes on a paper sheet embossed with "Crown, Bath", we know that Karl Drais, then still a baron, came through Bath during his England journey in 1832. Presumably he visited musician Henry Seine at that time.

Drais left Mannheim according to the register on February 16 and came back through nearby Mainz on November 16. On the undated sheet, some-

body has written an English translation on top of the German text from Drais's pamphlet to teach some English to Drais. Possibly Drais arrived in the UK at Bristol and then travelled via Bath to London, where he is published in *Mechanics' Magazine* in June. Musician Henry Seine died on November 6, 1832, at Bath, sometime after Drais had already left the UK and two years after Partikulier Bernhard Sinn's death at Mannheim. ●

End Notes

1 Hadland, Tony and Hans-Erhard Lessing. *Bicycle Design-An Illustrated History* (the title to be italicized), Cambridge, Massachusetts, 2018, pp. 503-519.

2 Lessing, Hans-Erhard, *Automobilität-Karl Drais und die unglaublichen Angänge* (the title to be italicized), Leipzig, 2003.

3 Many thanks to Tony Hadland for finding this reference on the internet since the facsimiles found in libraries were totally garbled (unreadable) OCR files.

4 See End Note 3.

5 *Mannheimer Tageblätter* of March 28, 1830. I am indebted to Peter Koppenhöfer for his finds.

6 *Mannheimer Intelligenzblatt* of Nov. 14, 1817.

7 von Freydrorf, R. *Eine "Stenographiemaschine"*, *Süd-deutsche Monatshefte* *Monatshefte*, March 1908, p. 167.

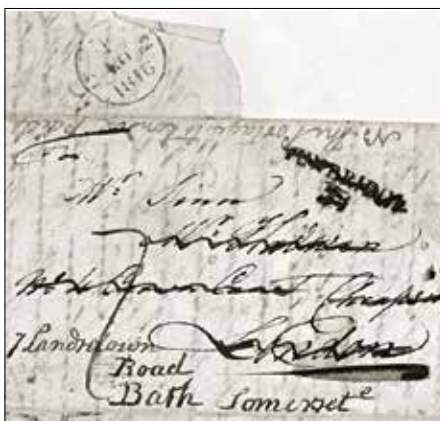


Figure 3. The proof: An important 1816 letter to Bernhard Sinn at London, redirected to his brother's address at Bath (image from the Marchivum in Mannheim, Germany).