

APRIL

Despite discovering a problem with the violin he's currently making, **STANLEY POTTS** is happy to find that Toby has his uses after all

05 TUESDAY

I see the BVMA are desperately looking for committee members again. What's wrong with the violin makers in this country? You'd think they could put in a little bit of time and effort to support their national association. I'd do something myself, but unfortunately their meetings always seem to clash with my darts tournament at the Spotted Dog.

Peter K__ was back again today! He's having trouble getting his double-stops in tune and thought the E string might be a touch low. I put a thicker piece of parchment on the bridge, but then he said it was too high so I had to change it back again. Tried lowering the nut, but that didn't help either. Perhaps he should just try moving his fingers.

14 THURSDAY

Jack called in at the end of the day... good to see him again. I checked over his viola, though he assured me there weren't any problems – he really just came in for a chat. I introduced Toby, and Jack said to him: 'I hope he hasn't been tormenting you with endless Gilbert and Sullivan' (I noticed Toby didn't reply). Offered Jack a Glenmorangie and thought I should ask Toby if he wanted one too, but apparently he's not a whisky drinker (good!).

As Toby was leaving, I suggested that he could perhaps bring in a CD of his own next week.

15 FRIDAY

Well!... today a lady brought in a newly commissioned viola – she's not happy with the balance across the strings, there's a bad wolf on the C, etc etc. I asked her why she didn't go back to the maker, and she told me he's in the US. She actually bought the viola over the internet – and paid twice as much as I would charge for one of mine!!

I really don't see why I should spend my valuable time trying to fix up the work of some obscure maker on the other side of the world... just to improve his reputation and increase his sales. He's not even British. I tapped the soundpost around a bit and shortened the tail gut, but it didn't help much. Also mentioned in passing the price of my own violas. She asked if she could try one. I told her I didn't have anything quite ready to play at this stage.

After she left, I had a look at my latest violin... shocked to find mould growing on the ribs! I scraped it off and moved it to the shelf behind my chair where there's more air circulation. Must try and find some time to get on with it.

20 WEDNESDAY

Toby turned up with a CD of an Irish fiddler called Martin Hayes – quite pleasant really. I said he could bring in another CD next week.

While we were having our morning tea, he enquired about the framed photo on the wall above my bench. When I told him it

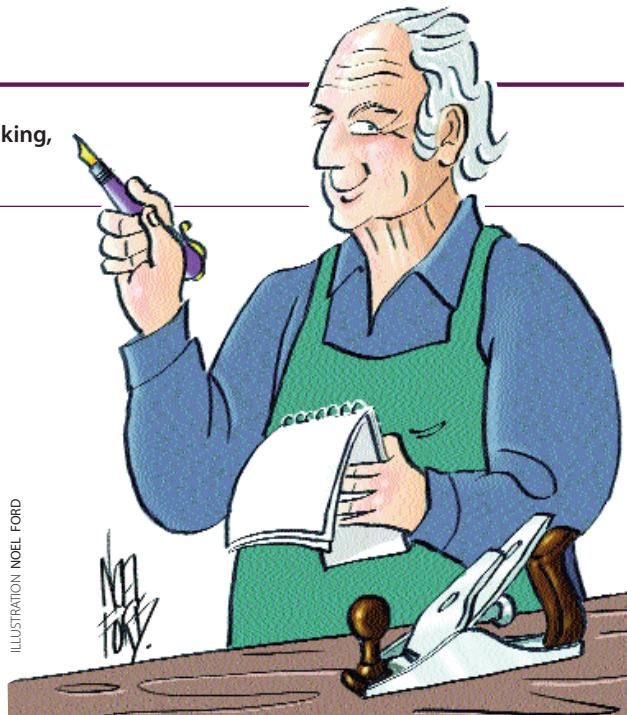


ILLUSTRATION NOEL FORD

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was George Pyne, he amazed me by asking: 'Was he a violin maker?' I got down Henley and read him Pyne's entry, with particular emphasis on the part that says: 'To ask him to copy an old Italian violin, give it a worn appearance and other tricks of the trade, including the insertion of fictitious labels, was anathema to him, an act of unpatriotic suicide of British prestige, honour and ability.' I suggested to Toby that he would be well advised to memorise that passage.

Albert L__ came in for some advice. He's decided to give up his search for an affordable old violin and is now thinking about buying a modern instrument (hallelujah!). I told him I could probably get mine finished in a month or two, and started to name some of the other outstanding English makers... but he stopped me and said: 'No, no – it would have to be a modern ITALIAN... can you recommend any good makers over there?' I couldn't help him at all, but Toby rattled off a long list of names.

21 THURSDAY

I saw Peter K__ heading towards the shop this afternoon and suddenly had an inspired thought. Just as he was walking in the door, I jumped up and told him that unfortunately I was due at an important meeting... but my able assistant, Toby, would look after him. I walked down to the Spotted Dog and passed a very pleasant hour with *The Times* and a couple of pints of Fuller's London Pride. Having an assistant might not be such a bad idea after all.

To find out more about Stanley Potts and his world, visit stanleypotts.co.uk