

# FEBRUARY

Having been annoyed by a chin rest ditherer and a book on Guarneri 'del Gesù', **STANLEY POTTS** is cheered by the perfect customer – a great excuse for a decent Milroy's order

## 08 TUESDAY

Another one of those chin rest ditherers in today – wandered in just before lunch and was here till 2pm.

He must have tried out every chin rest in the shop... and then he went round again. Eventually settled on a plastic Guarneri model. He grumbled about the price of course, and as he was leaving said to me: 'You know, I could have got this much cheaper on the internet' (I wish he had!! – I've got two weeks' worth of work here that needs to be done by Friday).

I just got back to the bench when that old school friend of Rose's turned up to show me the violin she's been mentioning... it belonged to her late father and she wants a full restoration job. I pointed out that the cost of the repairs would be more than the violin was worth, but she didn't care. It has great sentimental value and she wants it preserved and working, whatever the cost.

## 09 WEDNESDAY

I've just been looking through the big book that Jack loaned me, all about that so-called genius 'del Gesù'. It's full of the usual waffle... 'flamboyant soundholes unashamedly asymmetrical', 'vitality unfettered by the expectations of craftsmanship' etc etc – it's amazing how many different ways there are of saying the same thing: ROUGH. Good photographs, though... shame about the instruments.

Still, I suppose Guarneri must have been some sort of genius to work out how well his instruments would turn out 300 years later... after they had been rethickened, renecked, rebarred and otherwise reworked. I'm sure I would be famous too if I could find a patron like Paganini (and, of course, if I were given half a chance to get on with my own making!).

## 23 WEDNESDAY

Phoned Rose's school friend to tell her the violin was finished and she came in straight away. She desperately wanted to hear it played, so I launched into my standard party piece – 'Méditation' from *Thaïs*. The poor woman broke down completely... I had to help her to a chair and give her a whisky (blend) before she recovered. How was I to know that 'Méditation' was the lullaby that her father used to play to her at night when she was a young girl?

## 24 THURSDAY

Great day!... had a chap in looking at violins. I showed him the usual cheapies but he was really after something better, so I got out the few decent fiddles that I keep locked away. As soon as he saw the Chanot it was love at first sight – I knew he would buy it even before he'd played a note (but I still gave him my best bow to use). He eventually made up his mind and then paid me in full (£8,500... didn't even try and haggle over the price!). The perfect customer – I threw in a good case for him as well.

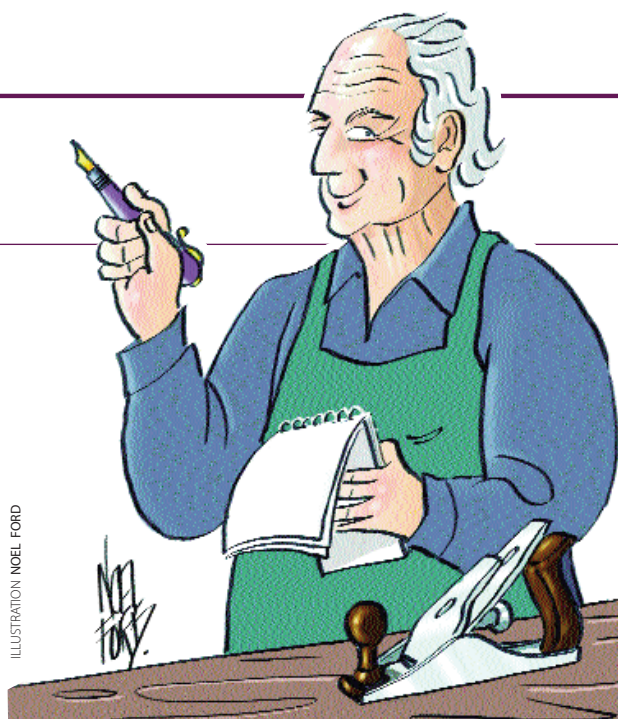


ILLUSTRATION NOEL FORD

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As soon as he left I called Milroy's and ordered an 18-year-old Highland Park and the 10-year-old Talisker (Rose can use the rest of the Islay Mist 'Deluxe Blend' for her Scotch and dry).

## 25 FRIDAY

Mrs Hurley brought in her eldest daughter, Beth, this afternoon – she'd bumped her violin and was worried the bridge might have moved. I made readjustments and then asked her to try it out... was amazed when she launched into the Mozart Rondo and played it beautifully! She's really very talented – the Russian bow hold is working perfectly for her (in fact, she could probably give Peter K\_ a few pointers). I thought the violin could be sounding better so I changed the strings and moved the soundpost a touch closer to the bridge. We ended up spending over an hour adjusting the set-up and I got to hear the Rondo six times! Didn't charge them.

It was almost closing time when they left so I opened the bottom drawer. I was just relaxing on my second glass when Toby, that young Newark lad, turned up and asked again about work. I had to admit that I could do with some help and suggested that perhaps he might like to come in for a couple of days a week. He jumped at the chance, of course (well, who wouldn't want an opportunity to learn from someone with my knowledge and experience). As he was leaving he noticed Jack's book and said excitedly: 'The Guarneri book! My favourite maker... an absolute genius!' Oh well... at least he could handle my chin rest sales.

To find out more about Stanley Potts and his world, visit [stanleypotts.co.uk](http://stanleypotts.co.uk)