

NOVEMBER

Gossip from the orchestra pit and a new Milroy's delivery keep up STANLEY POTTS's spirits during another month in the violin workshop

08 MONDAY

Finally finished all the work for St Mark's. It really is ridiculous that someone with my vast experience (over 40 years in the business!) should still be wasting his time patching up cheap school-instruments.

Albert L__ called in to get some strings. Had to listen once more to the story of the Peter Guarneri that he had 35 years ago... best instrument he ever played, sold it to buy his house, wishes he'd never parted with it, etc etc. Poor chap – he's been searching for a suitable replacement ever since... I think he might need grief counselling. At least this time I didn't get that anecdote about Malcolm Sargent and the flatulent soprano.

He's going to an auction next week – there are a couple of interesting fiddles that he has his eye on.

10 WEDNESDAY

Heard a good story today from Fiona. She was rehearsing with the orchestra yesterday and one of the ballet dancers dropped a pair of kitchen tongs into the pit (it was some ridiculous modern ballet). They hit Peter K__ on the head and he had to be taken to hospital to get three stitches. The worst part is that the tongs bounced off his head onto his neighbour's Pedrazzini and cracked the top rib. Fiona said all the players were appalled at the damage to the instrument and were threatening to walk out.

Had another look at the Herman Z__ job. I suspect I underquoted... in fact I'm sure I did. That pegbox is going to be difficult to get together. I think I'll just put it away until things quieten down.

17 WEDNESDAY

Abundance of riches!! My Milroy's order arrived today – 12-year-old Bowmore and 15-year-old Glenfarclas.

Then Jack called in – haven't seen him for months. He's been on tour with the quartet – and he had a bottle of Lagavulin for me! No room for it in bottom drawer. It was nearly closing time so I locked up, opened the bottle and we caught up on all the gossip. Apparently the tour got rather rough towards the end. The two violins were starting to get a bit testy – the second kept pushing the pace so the first was struggling with all the fast passages. And the cellist was in the habit of buying smelly cheeses and salamis, which he stored in his cello case – the others ended up keeping as far away from him as possible (difficult for Jack as they were sharing a room).

Gave him all the news from here. He loved the Peter K__ story.

23 TUESDAY

Albert L__ brought in a fiddle that he had just bought at auction. It's labelled Gagliano and he seems to think he has a bargain – almost certainly a Voller, but I'm not going to be the one to tell him. Wants me to do a new set-up for it. He produced an old Hill bridge that used to be on his Guarneri and asked if I could

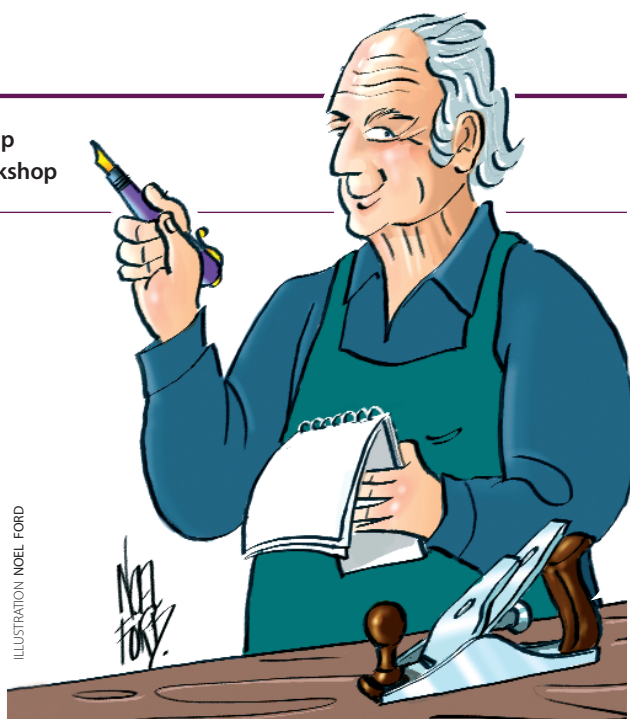


ILLUSTRATION NOEL FORD

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use that... when I pointed out that the feet didn't fit and it would give him a string height of 1/8" on the G, he reluctantly agreed that it might be best if I cut a new one.

Tried to tell me the Sargent story but I managed to divert him.

25 THURSDAY

Phone call from Mrs Hurley... it's a boy! Nice of her to let me know – will pop a tuning fork in the post tomorrow as a welcome present for the new arrival.

Peter K__ came in for his pernambuco tailpiece. He had a large piece of plaster on his forehead. Neither of us mentioned it. Violin sounded no different, but he was pleased with it. Took me ages to get rid of him. He kept talking about his job in the orchestra. Seems to think the conductor has it in for him.

No time at all for new making this month... but Bill is coming in tomorrow with the last fiddle I made. Be nice to see it again.

26 FRIDAY

Well!... turns out Bill only wanted me to check over the violin because he's going to sell it! Even asked me if I knew anybody who might be interested! No... I don't! He's found some 'wonderful' old French thing with an absolutely amazing E string! Presumably it also has three others that make some sort of acceptable noise!

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