

# *The* **INTREPID REPAIRER**

Issue 51  
Autumn 2008

## Inside

Spotlight on Rod Willmott  
NAMIR Trip to Decap Works Antwerp  
Cotton Mechanical Music Museum Trip  
Varnish Restoration for String Instruments



## Letter from the Editor

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It has not been the best summer, the weather has let us all down badly once again, not quite so bad as that experienced daughter and her family who live just north of Houston, Texas but they survived with just a few trees blown down.

Business is still not brisk but we are surviving, repairs and set ups keep me going and the web site together with a few eBay sales keep Caroline on the straight and narrow.

I've done a couple of festivals this summer, the first at the end of August is the Pembrokeshire Fiddle Festival held at the Stackpole Centre, a National Trust estate that we use every year for this, it is in a wonderful spot on the coast of west Wales, about 40 fiddle enthusiasts go, together with guitarists, banjo and mandolin players of all standards get together, we have instructors and master classes, Dave Swarbrick, fiddle player from Steeleye Span, and Pete Cooper from Cecil Sharpe House in London were amongst them. Pete Cooper has promised to write an article for a future IR, this will be excellent. At this festival I run some 'looking after your instruments' classes, people really enjoy this, I am sure you can imagine the state of some instruments, not the players and often how simply real improvements can be made in a very short time, I've made many friends and this is good for business as well. I also do a similar thing for a local Bluegrass festival and have been asked to do some more for next year.

In my bow and instrument repair business I use many bits and pieces that are salvaged from other sources, one thing I use frequently is old Ivory piano key tops to reface bow tips, I'm sure many of us do similar things, now I met a man who made me think, and has caused a certain worry regarding this, he works for a government body (CITES) that is concerned with protecting endangered species of animals and plants, I'm sure we all support these ideas fully but when I told him of some of my uses for pieces that would be over 100 years old, he said that it was illegal to reuse these, punishable by a substantial fine and or prison. The reason being that it is not possible to differentiate between re worked and 'new' material. I will not air my views here, but I would appreciate comments from members, there is no need to sign these comments but I suspect that this is a serious matter.

I am hoping for an article for a future edition of the IR from this chap,. This obviously applies to ivory and tortoiseshell, some shells, but as well to African

Blackwood and Pernambuco. Scary! Still we could organize a committee prison visit roster for paid up members!

I have been asked by some new student members how to get experience in a workshop environment, if any members have time and space and could take a student for maybe only a few days then it would be good, a way to pass our skills on. This is something that we have talked about briefly at committee level, but I feel it is something that we should take further. There is one young man who lives in the Bristol area who is keen to take his woodwind repairing skills further, if you can help then please contact the Editor or David Hinton.

Still not enough in the letters to the editor section, hints and tips, views, ideas to make NAMIR or your magazine better will all be welcome. Also people are not sending in adverts of the service they offer or the items that they have for sale, this is FREE for members, does not cost you anything and you don't have to pay--- ever. Please use this service as it makes the magazine much more interesting.

Honorary membership has been given to some of the ladies who work tirelessly behind the scenes to keep NAMIR working. Details are over the page in the members list but behind every good man is a better woman. ( my wife told me to say that!) So to Judy Hinton, who has taken on the role of membership secretary as well as being our roving reporter, the magazine would be lost without her descriptive reports and excellent photographs from the NAMIR trips and meetings. Diana Lawson our treasurer, Pat Morse, who caters for our meetings and makes us all so welcome. Barbara Harrison who oversees the distribution of the Intrepid Repairer and Caroline Carpenter who puts the magazine together and writes occasional articles for us. Many thanks from us all for your support.

*John*

For further information on  
joining NAMIR see details on the NAMIR web site  
**[www.namir.org.uk](http://www.namir.org.uk)**

or contact:  
**Judy Hinton**  
10 Byron Road,  
Harpden, Herts. AL5 4AB  
Telephone 01582 762657

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# Members Page

## Change of Membership Secretary

Owing to pressure of work, Richard Smith (Bristol) resigned in August as Membership Secretary.

For the time being this role is being carried out by Judy and David Hinton. It is considered that with the amount of work involved, in the future the job of membership secretary should be split and carried out by two people.

Richard Smith continues as a committee member and I would like to thank him for his work on behalf of NAMIR.

Gale Lawson, Chairman.

## Hints and Tips

Many thanks to Dave Ballard Brass repairer. For the following tip.

When polishing brass your hands can get really black and difficult to wash.

Rubbing in olive oil before you start can make them easy to wash with ordinary soap and water.

This would also apply when working with black woods where the dust does get ingrained in your skin

## Sales and Wanted

A space to list any items for sale or items or parts of items wanted.

## For sale

Musical instrument repair business.  
Please write in confidence to the Editor for more information.

## NAMIR ON THE WEB

**Check out the NAMIR web site for details of forthcoming trips events and activities within the association.**

**There is also a directory of members listed there.**

**Please check your details are up to date.  
Especially your current email addresses.**

**[www.namir.org.uk](http://www.namir.org.uk)**

## Welcome to New Members

Terrence Cole, Professional from Pretoria, South Africa.

Jonathan Eastmond, Student from Isleworth, Middlesex.

Richard Hamer, Professional from Hengoed, South Wales.

Andrew Holt, Associate from Melton Mowbray, Leicestershire.

Martin Kimble, Professional from Newbury, Berkshire.

David Kyle, Professional from Ulverston, Cumbria.

Stewart Langrick, Student from Sheffield.

Mark Newman-Wren, Associate from Shaftesbury, Dorset.

Tobye Le Vaillant, Professional from London.

Emma Wakerley, Student from Newark, Nottinghamshire.

Bob Young, Professional from Telford, Shropshire.

Congratulations to David Chamberlain, from Romsey, Hants, and Nicholas Burroughs from Lytham St Annes, Lancashire, both of whom have upgraded to **Professional Membership**.

**Honorary Associate Membership of NAMIR** has been given to four ladies who work tirelessly to hold our organization together.

Diana Lawson who is our treasurer, Brenda Harrison who sends out the IR and Pat Morse whose catering skills keep the committee fed and provide our excellent buffet lunches at Moulsford.

Caroline Carpenter who compiles the IR, And of course last but not least Judy Hinton, acting membership secretary, who is an honorary associate member.

Our thanks to these ladies without whom our job would not be possible.

### NAMIR clothing.

A range of T shirts sweatshirts and fleeces embroidered in colour with the NAMIR logo.

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Diana models the NAMIR ladies polo shirt.

Gale models the NAMIR sweatshirt

### NAMIR News.

Regular NAMIR News emails are now being sent out early each month. If you are not receiving these, please send a message to; [judyhinton@ntlworld.com](mailto:judyhinton@ntlworld.com) and you will be included in the next emailing.

Please also keep me informed of any change of contact details for the data base and professional members, please let me know of any changes required on the NAMIR web site.

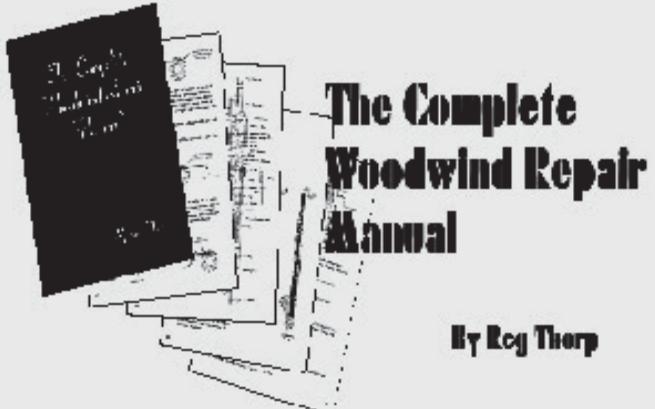
*Judy Hinton - Acting Membership Secretary.*

Many thanks for the wonderful variety of articles contributed by NAMIR members and friends. If this has inspired you to put pen to paper please send all contributions for future editions of The Intrepid Repairer to the compiler / editor John Carpenter. Contact details are on the back cover. Any format accepted. Microsoft word documents are welcome by email or on disc. If using a Mac please save in rtf format.

Photographs will usually be reproduced in greyscale. Scanned images are best when saved at 300dpi, in jpg format. If none of the above possible we can scan photos and type the handwritten word.

Adverts welcome, free of charge to members.

This quarters cover picture is of an unknown organist playing a Christie Organ I believe from a cinema in Merthyr Tydfil. The picture is pinned on the wall of my workshop and if anyone should recognise this gent please let me know.



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# Reminder of the NAMIR AGM Sunday November 30<sup>th</sup> 2008

The NAMIR AGM will take place on Sunday November 30<sup>th</sup> at Windcraft, Reform Road, Maidenhead, Berkshire SL6 8BT.

The Committee is delighted that David Dawkes has agreed to be our host and to give us the opportunity to look at the stock available in his shop and to buy items on the day.

In addition to this, there will be some old stock items that are not normally for sale. If you have an interest in a specific item, please let David know so that he can look it out for you.

The day will start with coffee at 10.30am and the cost is £10 per person including lunch. Please make your cheque out to NAMIR and send it to Gale Lawson at the address below.

## 11.00 AGM Agenda

Minutes of the Last Meeting

Matters Arising

Chair's Report

Treasurer's and Secretary's Report

Election of Committee

Any Other Business

12.30 Lunch

2.00 Talk/Tour of the workshops by David Dawkes and his staff.

3.30 End of Meeting.

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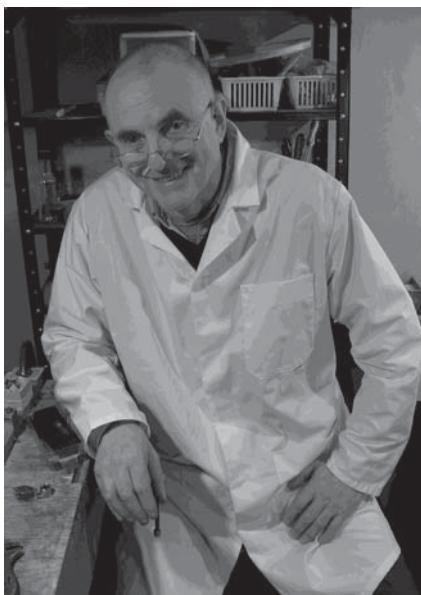
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Photography by Paul Lambert





*Rod in his workshop*

On a free day in Worcester, between looking after Grandchildren days, we called in to see Rod Willmott who has established a luthier's business there.

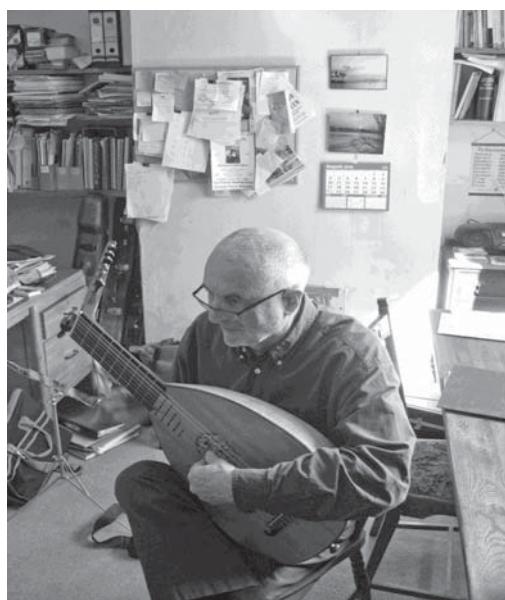
He showed us his instruments, guitars and lutes, and took us upstairs to his workshop where he makes and repairs violins and guitars.

As soon as I picked up my pen to make notes, Rod recognised me as a fellow left-hander! He plays the guitar and lute left-handed and has become a specialist in converting fretted and unfretted string instruments for left-handed players.

Rod is a relatively new member of NAMIR, but has been making and repairing string instruments for many years. He remembers playing and singing folk music while still at school and converting a £6 guitar to a left handed instrument in his youth. This was a rough instrument with the back falling off but he altered the nut and saddle and reversed the strings so that he could play it as a left-hander.

After starting a science course at university, Rod decided that he would rather be a musician and was accepted at the Guildhall School of Music and

Drama. However, when he arrived and went to his first guitar lesson, his teacher refused to teach a left handed guitarist! This was quite a blow to his plans and Rod had to leave the Guildhall



*Rod plays the lute left handed.*

and have private lessons. He continued with his folk singing and was taught the guitar by Hector Quine. Strange to say in due course, left handed Rod was appointed to Trinity College of Music as Hector's assistant!

Soon after this, Rod began to play the lute and started his career as a lute and guitar player for the National Theatre. He played music for Shakespeare's plays and Restoration plays, appearing on stage and arranging the music for the productions. This work took him on tour with famous actors such as Sir Michael Redgrave, and he also appeared on television presenting "Song and Story", "Play School" and had his own late night show, "The Last Programme".

After nearly 25 years in the theatre, Rod re-married and had a young family. He decided that the time had come to work from home and in the early eighties he went to Merton College for two years to learn musical instrument repair. He knew that he wanted to specialise in string instruments and Phil Chambers taught him the basic skills course there as part of the City & Guilds Advanced Certificate. Rod still plays the guitars that he made whilst a student. Eddie Park and Lewis Amos were at Merton at this time and Trevor Head was taking the brass repair course.

Rod began work for the Borough of Haringey Education Authority and stayed with them for a year. However, he found that property was very expensive there and in 1986 he came to Worcester where he

played and performed in Shakespeare's "Twelfth Night". Previously in 1976, as well as composing, arranging and playing music for this production, he had acted four of the parts himself. Rod liked the city of Worcester and started to look around for a suitable place to set up as a repairer and player, and to



*Rod with the lute made especially for him as a left handed player*

find a home for his family. He bought a house and started work by playing on Friday and Saturday nights at the Fownes Hotel, previously a glove factory, earning £25 for the two nights!!

Gradually he became better known in the area, both as a player and as a repairer of orchestral string instruments. As he became better known, friends and colleagues brought him guitars for repair as well and now he describes himself as an acoustic string instrument repairer.

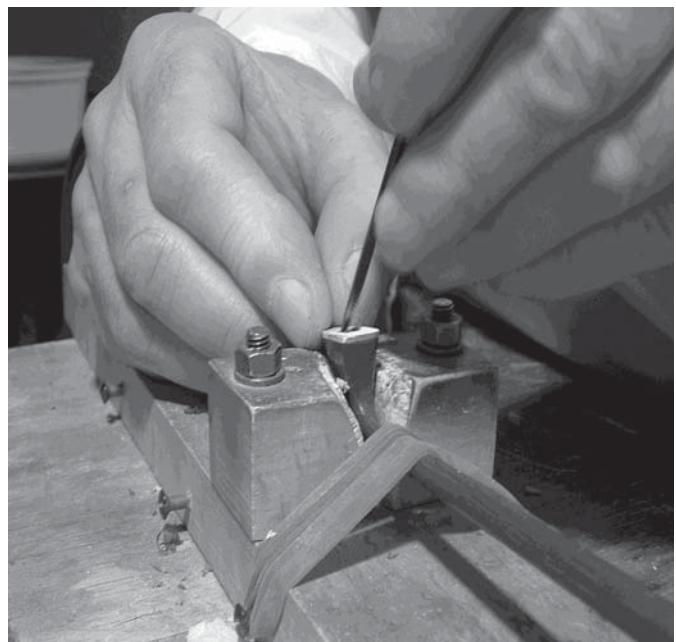
Rod's wife, May, is also a guitar player and they used to play together as a duo. She is now a busy peripatetic teacher and Rod is currently making her an experimental guitar.

Rod plays guitar and lute in a group with two violins, one doubling on the viola. The group plays for weddings and other functions, sometimes with a singer. He has recently done more singing himself and performed at a lute and poetry evening.

Rod showed us his two modern lutes, one of which was made for him by Thomas Goff and is the only left handed instrument made by this famous luthier who also made lutes for Julian Bream. The other lute has been around the world with him and was specially made by the National Theatre Prop Maker, Peter Owen. Peter now makes furniture but this lute was beautifully made and has a very big tone which is useful when playing along with other instruments. Rod sets up all the orchestral string instruments and does a large number of jazz bases. He re-hairs all types and sizes of bows and showed me his stock of specialised woods; maple for making steel stringed guitars and the more traditional



*An instrument on the bench ready for repair.*



*Preparing to rehair a bow*

rosewood for the backs and ribs of classical guitars.

He is currently experimenting with Englemann Spruce from America for the new guitars that he is making for his wife and himself.

Rod understands the difficulties faced by the left-handed musician and can advise parents on the conversion of right handed instruments for left-handed players.

His son Ben plays the violin left-handed and is now an accomplished keyboard player, composer and song writer.

He has his own funk group called 'Chunk-a-funk'.



*Rod with his guitar*

Rod has two web sites, one for performing and another for repairs. Contact Rod at: [rod@rodwillmott.com](mailto:rod@rodwillmott.com)

Details of performances and examples of Rod's playing can be heard on: [www.rodwillmott.com](http://www.rodwillmott.com) Repairs web site: [www.luthier.rodwillmott.com](http://www.luthier.rodwillmott.com)

The website for left-handed products, information and advice. This includes guitars and tutors for left-handed players: [www.anythingleft-handed.com](http://www.anythingleft-handed.com)

A great deal of time is taken up in the workshops of string instrument repairers with instruments that have had a hard life, I have many friends who have not even put a new string on their violin in twenty or more years, let alone cleaning off the sweat and rosin dust that accumulates during playing, often their instruments are worth a thousand or so and I ask them how often they get their cars serviced in comparison, they do sometimes get the message.

People will come in with an old violin that has been stored for a lot of years and they either need to sell it or get it restored and re commissioned to get it back to a playable condition.

The first thing is obvious, place the instrument on the bench, always use a piece of soft material to prevent any further scratching, I find a piece of foam carpet underlay cut large enough to lay a cello on is a good cheap base and I can throw it away and replace when it gets soiled. Now a close inspection and photographs if you need to keep a record. Begin by doing any necessary sticking and repairs, I will try to cover this in future articles, strip off all fittings, pegs, strings, chin rest and so on, keep these in a box, either to reuse or pass on to someone else.

How much cleaning will depend on the type, quality and value of the instrument, I don't like to see old instruments that look too new, a website I looked at recently showed how to "restore" an old violin, taking the varnish back and then French polish it. French polish is for furniture, not violins in any circumstance. I have been offered violins that this has happened to, their value is always much diminished. Rosin dust and sweat build up and combine slightly with the varnish and so in some



A poor soul virtually stripped of varnish and in need of work

cases it can't be totally removed, the process is similar to picture restoration, very gently using a clean lint free cloth with some solution.

The best advice is to keep the instrument clean, rub a little natural oil on, not linseed as it is sticky, some use olive oil but this too is a bit sticky and smells a bit odd. My favourite is sweet almond oil that can be purchased in 500 ml bottles from larger Boots and aromatherapy supply shops, this is clean, fine oil that smells lovely and dries off to make the varnish feel like silk, the violin cleaner (JOHN CARPENTERS SWEET EDWARDIAN CLEANER) contains this amongst other secret ingredients. Old stagers will say that spit is the best cleaner, it contains enzymes and is slightly acid, but nowadays not the way a professional would do it. There are many proprietary cleaners available but I honestly find that mine is the best.

Start off under the chin rest position in case there is a reaction, oil and spirit varnishes have different properties and those that so great care must be taken, damp the cloth with well shaken liquid and take small circular strokes. There are two distinct types of cleaner, those that contain an abrasive, like T cut, and these that are a solvent type that gently dissolves the dirt and does not affect the varnish itself.

Carefully try some warm water with a little Fairy in, don't get it wet, as some old Mittenwald instruments do have a ground that is water based and this will come off surprisingly easily.

I wouldn't recommend using methylated spirit at all, unless diluted and weakened with other ingredients, as this will strip many varnishes, great care and gradual, experience is the thing when dealing with any item.

A simple basic cleaner can be made as follows--

1 part	Methylated spirit
1 part	Olive oil
1 part	Household Ammonia
1 part	Distilled water
1 part	White Vinegar
1 part	T cut

You can experiment with mixtures like this, vary the amounts to suit the job, shake it well and take care. Mixtures like this are OK for the first go but you will need finer and better ones for most jobs.

Other things worth trying are benzene, petrol, acetone, and of course abrasive mechanical methods such as T cut, rottenstone powder, but probably not on any worthwhile instrument.

Really stubborn areas might just need some 0000 steel wool, but only on the thick dirt, you must stop before it touches the varnish. A toothbrush in the corners and a soft brush will all be useful. Allow 2 hours or so to clean an averagely soiled instrument, much longer for a good instrument, but watch if it is a customers, as workshop time must be carefully monitored, we must nowadays allow between £20 and £50 per hour depending on our overheads.

Many people do work much too cheaply and this is not good for any trade. Everyone gets what they pay for and I try to make my customers realize that long after the initial cost has been forgotten then our quality work will still last. When cleaning is complete then you can see how much touching up is necessary. A fine polish is necessary finally but a light oil is my favoured way, some books do recommend a light buffing with shellac but this is a highly skilled operation that can change the appearance of an old instrument, I use this as a last resort after careful consideration.

## Touching up Varnish.

Now the instrument is thoroughly clean then look carefully now to locate any blemishes, every thing but the smallest amount of damage must be repaired by letting in the correct wood matching the grain and so on. If there are any small amounts of varnish that are loose don't remove or discard these but glue them on again in their original place, only use boil up animal glue, this really is the only glue to use in violin family instrument repair, I don't think that it can be improved upon, I have a small hot plate, a small stainless steel saucepan and a ceramic pot that once held pate. I mix



The glue melting pot and stove



Touching up the varnish with a soft brush and cloth at the ready

a small quantity of the glue pearls, let them soak for several hours, heat, then this is ready for any gluing, keep it covered when not hot, it can be used a few times then discard and mix fresh.

Small damaged areas will need to be filled, two part cellulose fillers can be used in some circumstances on cheaper instruments, but I don't really like this, it is difficult to get a good colour match, water based wood filler also has a place, this comes ready mixed and in different colours, also can be fairly easily removed by damping if you are not happy, as with all things, be self critical, if it doesn't look perfect

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## Varnish care and Restoration, Bowed Instruments. *Continued*

then do it again, we need to be more critical than our customers.

The best filler is one you can make yourself, back to the gluepot, mix with wood dust of the correct type, Spruce for the top and maple for the rest, and colour it with water based wood stain, I like Vandyke brown stain, its easy to mix and you can adjust the colour. Do the filling and allow to harden fully before shaping and smoothing grain lines can be replicated very skilfully with a marker pen, this needs experimentation and care.

Now the varnish, you must get all your repairs done so that they are not detectable first, look and feel!

You will need to get touch up varnish for violins of varying colours. J. Thibouville-Lamy (020 8551 1282) are old established and a helpful and excellent firm for all your violin repairing needs.

The varnish coat is the most important as this is what we actually see. In theory all colours can be made from the three primary colours, Red, Yellow and Blue, but better to keep a selection of small bottles of ready mixed colour so that these can be mixed to get the best colour, you will need about 8 various colours I would say.

Some times the bare wood will need a little colour, vandyke again but always keep it much lighter than the finished varnish colour. Use the best brushes you can afford, several of different sizes, small ones are more use and look after them, surgical spirit is necessary to clean up and to thin the varnish if need, only if using spirit varnish, many hand made

violins have an oil based varnish which does need a different technique. Now with an almost dry brush start with a light colour and gradually build up the thickness and colour with many coats, letting them dry hard in between, a slow process. Sand in between coats using 1000 grit wet and dry well lubricated with soapy water, build up until colour and thickness match then another light sanding and then finish with a couple of coats of clear varnish, then polishing and a final clean of the instrument.

Be careful with your pricing of this work as it is a slow method and the simplest job will take many hours. This is a basic instruction to get you going but experience is the best teacher, try out on a cheap violin bought in a sale room (Gardiner Houlgate) 01225 811777 near Bath hold 4 specialist sales a year and many bargains are to be had, a good way to learn and sell the result at a profit.



Varnish restored and ready to set up.

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## NAMIR visit to the Decap works Antwerp July 1<sup>st</sup> 2008 Report by Judy Hinton.

A group of a dozen NAMIR members travelled to Antwerp on Eurostar to see the works where the famous Decap Mechanical Organs have been made since 1902.

We were welcomed by Roger Mostmans who is the third generation of the family who runs the firm. Roger explained that the firm of Decap has been in his family since his great-grandfather started making organs on the same site 106 years ago.

The building was developed and enlarged in 1980 and an open quadrangle was covered over to make more space for the instruments. The Decap organs are well known throughout the world for playing dance tunes but they will also play classical music and give a typically Belgian sound.

Roger first showed us a very elegant 105 Key organ built in 1975 that was in for repair. It had been rented out for many years and was the last of its kind built by the family. It has working cymbals and side drums on the front and at the back he demonstrated



105 key organ 1975

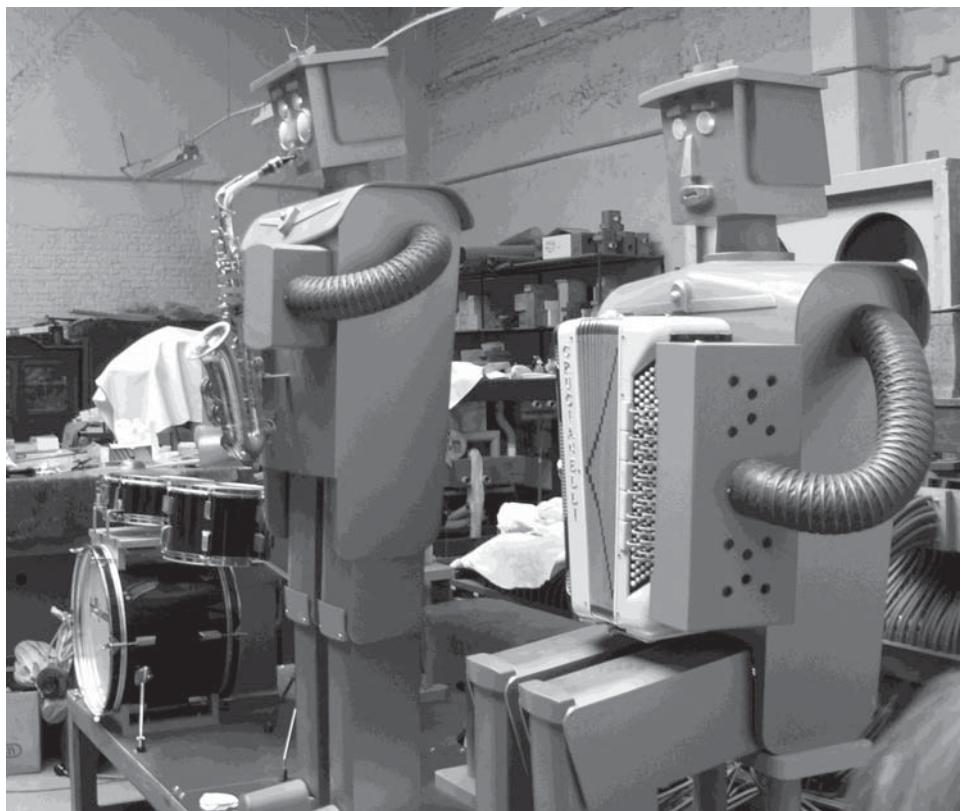
how it works pneumatically with air from a pump working solenoid valves. These instruments play from a "book" which is made of folded card with punched holes which let metal levers rise up and these allow air into the organ pipes.

The next organ was an old friend to those of us who visited the St Albans Organ Theatre for the AGM back in 2005. Here, the largest of the St Albans instruments was in for repair. This 122 key Decap was built in 1939 and is now fully renovated and ready to return to England. As Roger demonstrated to us, this instrument is now in splendid voice. At least 250 hours of work have been put into the renovation of this organ and we were shown large quantities of old organ parts such as rusty springs, lead tubing and 'tea bags' or puffers which had all been replaced. These puffers work the



The St Albans 122 Organ 1939

## NAMIR visit to the Decap works Antwerp July 1<sup>st</sup> 2008 continued



*The robots playing saxophone and accordion*

valves supplying each pipe with air and at the back of the organ there is an enormous wheel with a belt which drives the blower delivering air to the instrument. The size and weight of this organ made us wonder how it had been brought all the way to Antwerp, but of course it came in several large sections on the back of a transporter. Soon, Roger will travel to England with the organ to supervise its installation back in St Albans. It will then be reunited with its 'front' and will be complete once more.



*Roger plays the baby 19 key organ by turning the*

We were very interested in the tuning of the instruments and Roger demonstrated how he uses a book that gives each note in turn and showed us the tuning stems on every pipe that slide up and down to adjust the pitch. Every pipe has to be tuned and he estimated that he had spent 25 hours tuning the St Albans instrument. Moving the organ does not seem to upset the tuning but humidity is not good for it. The ideal temperature for tuning is 18°C but should it reach 30°C there will be problems. In some of the organs the instruments on the case such as drums, accordions and xylophones are also being played so the tuning has to be accurate for these as well.

Next Roger showed us an organ that was a set of three wonderful robots. The design of these was originally by Roger himself and made in the early sixties for mobile travellers in France. Now he is recreating a set of the robots to go into a museum. These were very appealing as they had heads, bodies, arms and legs. One robot plays a set of drums, another an accordion and the centre robot plays the saxophone. All have tapping feet in time to the music, flashing eyes, head movements and puffing cheeks! The saxophone player rises from his seat to play his solo from time to time.

Throughout the tour there were work benches with tools and signs of work in progress. In spite of this



*Roger (centre) discusses the card books*

## NAMIR visit to the Decap works Antwerp July 1<sup>st</sup> 2008 continued



*The recently built Decap retro organ 92 keys*

fairly compact and to go on a trailer for taking around the country to shows.

A snip at €35,000 and finally a “baby” that had been made to be played with a crank and was small enough to go on a small trolley.

Roger explained that the structure of the instruments was made of beech wood and the pipes of alder. This is a locally grown wood that is very flexible. He also showed us his enormous stocks of card books which are punched with holes to enable the organ to play the music. Traditionally it was a time consuming task to arrange suitable music and then to transfer it onto the card so that it can be played. We saw the machines that were used for cutting the

Roger told us that at the present time only his father and himself were working there. They sometimes call on the services of an arranger to help cut the music books and a sculptor to make some of the original carvings for the ornate cases but much of the painting and repair of the cases is done by Roger and his father. Roger has an 18 year old son, now at university, who he hopes may decide to take on the family business in due course.

We then continued our tour and were shown several more instruments including the 92 Key Retro Organ that had been recently built and a 121Key instrument that was 45 years old and had been restored. It was wonderful to hear all these organs playing and to appreciate the amount of work and dedication that has gone into their building and repair.

Some of the organs are for sale, like the small 52 key instrument that is the last of a run of five or six, made to be



*The recently built Decap retro organ 92 keys*

## NAMIR visit to the Decap works Antwerp July 1<sup>st</sup> 2008 continued



*Roger and his father discuss a technical point*

card which had been carefully marked up and for gluing the card into 'book' form.

Today a computer programme will run the machine and two minutes of music can now be cut in an hour. It takes a day to cut a complete book and the firm repair and cut new books for all their own organs as



*The new 52 key Decap*

well as for the Mortier Organs that were also made in Antwerp until 1950.

Roger told us that he is planning to make part of the site into a museum or, with funding, plan a purpose built area in which to record and display this splendid tradition of Belgian Mechanical Organ manufacture.

After the trip around the factory, we were ready for some lunch and we all enjoyed enormous and typically delicious sandwiches and cans of beer. Many of our members bought CDs of the organs. Our thanks to Roger and his father for making us so welcome and giving us so much of their time.

Web site for more information;  
[www.decap-gebr-antwerp.com](http://www.decap-gebr-antwerp.com)

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On Sunday morning September 28<sup>th</sup> a group of 12 NAMIR members made their way to Suffolk as guests of David Ivory. We had been invited to the Cotton Mechanical Music Museum to hear David present the mechanical instruments on show there and to hear him play the Wurlitzer Cinema Organ.

We met up at a local pub for an excellent lunch before and then moved to the museum where a surprising number of local enthusiasts were also gathered for the performance. David began by showing us a room full of instruments large and small, which worked by cranking a handle. These included barrel organs, player organs and musical boxes of various sizes. Some of these required really energetic cranking and I was afraid that David might be exhausted before he got near the Wurlitzer!

However, he showed no sign of tiredness and we went on to hear the café organs that run on card books rather like the ones we saw in Antwerp. There was a small Decap organ there so it was a good feeling that we had been to its place of origin.



*A well earned tea break.*

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*Enjoying lunch with David Ivory*

David explained that the Wurlitzer was built in 1926 in America but spent much of its life at the Leicester Square Theatre in London. It has two manuals and was completely rebuilt and installed at Cotton in the early 1980's. David demonstrated that it can sound like a church organ but then showed us all the extra effects such as motor horns, cymbals, castanets, a real xylophone played pneumatically, birds, cuckoos and peals of bells. He played "In a clock store", telling the story of everything in the shop coming to life after midnight. This piece illustrates the use of the celeste and other mechanical music sounds. David also played selections from Mary Poppins, American favourites and a delightful



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*David models his NAMIR*

An amazing number of pipes and percussion instruments were crammed into a small space behind the stage and there was a little passage for the organist to creep into his seat before being raised by lift into the auditorium.

selection from Gilbert and Sullivan. But my favourite was the "Storm at Sea" which had us all feeling seasick. It was quite a relief to hear strains of "Eternal Father strong to save" to welcome us back to dry land!

Later, after David's well earned tea break, he showed members the inside workings of the organ.

We noticed at once that the roof rafters of the museum are decorated with hundreds of old gramophone records. These have given the local fire officers a few headaches! But the visitor will also enjoy looking at several rooms containing 'bygones'. These include sheet music, photographs old gramophones, and the largest collection of tea pots that I have ever seen.

Several of our members were wearing their new NAMIR sweatshirts and as a result members of the public were heard asking about the association. Thank you, David, for entertaining us and giving us such an enjoyable day.

David is the resident organist at Cotton and can be heard there on the last Sunday of the month during the season which runs from June to September each year.

More details can be found on his web site:

[www.davidivory.co.uk](http://www.davidivory.co.uk)



*David performs on the Wurlitzer*

# No More Slipping Pegs

*A Modern Solution to an Age Old Problem.*

You can imagine how many teaching hours have been lost due to the constant adjustment caused by ill-fitting and slipping pegs.

This is now a problem of the past thanks to a new product designed by Wittner Gmbh. Best known for their precision Metronomes, tuner tailpieces, string adjusters and hypo-allergenic chin rests, the innovative German company have developed pegs for violin and cello that retain the traditional hardwood appearance demanded by professional musicians yet offer a unique internal gearing system that makes them a revelation to use.

In basic terms, when fitted, the shaft of the peg does not move when positioned in the PegBox. That's where the clever gearing system works its magic.

The only parts of the peg that move are the button and the geared middle section of the shaft on which the string is wound as it is tensioned and tuned.

The pegs have an internal gearing ratio of 8.5:1 affording very precise tuning. The gear mechanism is also 'self inhibiting' meaning that it cannot slip back once tuned.

The taper on the pegs is 1:30 for violin and 1:25 for cello so they will fit into the PegBox as easily as any traditional peg.

However, the 'non slip' function of the Wittner 'Fine Tune' peg is not the only benefit gained when fitted to your instrument.

As the peg shaft does not move when fitted there is no wear on the PegBox. Traditionally the constant turning of hardwood pegs in the softwood PegBox results in the need for costly ongoing maintenance.

All musicians that have had the misfortune of owning an instrument with a split peg box will know the difficulty that it can create, but had they been using the Wittner 'Fine Tune' peg, the problem would not have arisen.

Plus, as no inward pressure is necessary on the PegBox when tuning, a repaired split will not crack open again.

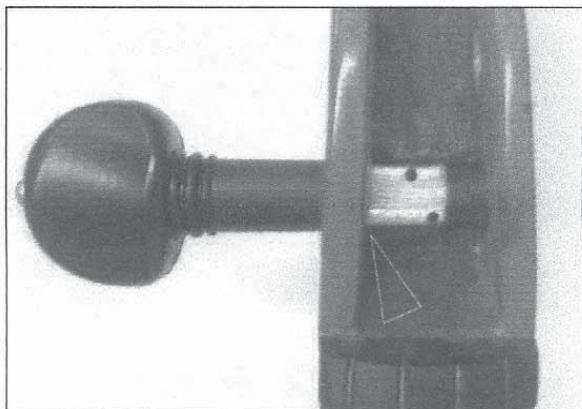
The Hidersine Piacenza student outfit range will offer both violins and cellos with the Wittner 'Fine Tune' pegs pre-fitted as will the Bridge range of electric and acoustic stringed instruments.

More details on the Wittner 'Fine Tune' pegs, Hidersine and Bridge Instruments and where they can be purchased can be found on the distributor's website: [www.bandm.co.uk](http://www.bandm.co.uk)

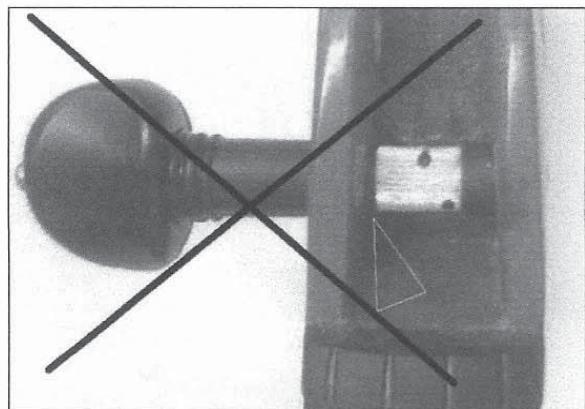


### Installation Instructions for the WITTNER Finetune Peg

Using a standard reamer (violin 1 : 30 / cello 1: 25) the peghole is finished so that the Finetune Peg is positioned as shown in the left picture.



Ideal position of the Finetune Peg. The knurled part should touch the pegbox wall or even reach 1mm inside the pegbox wall.



This position is not favourable because the string may rest on the non-moving part of the shaft causing excessive tension on the string.

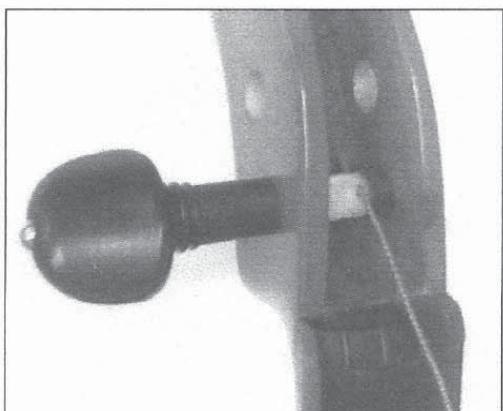
The end of the shaft can be shortened and finished as on any ordinary peg (cutting off with a saw, filing a head, sanding and polishing). The minimum length of the shaft's end must not be shorter than 4mm for violin and 7mm for cello.

**Push the Finetune Peg with slight pressure into the peghole.**

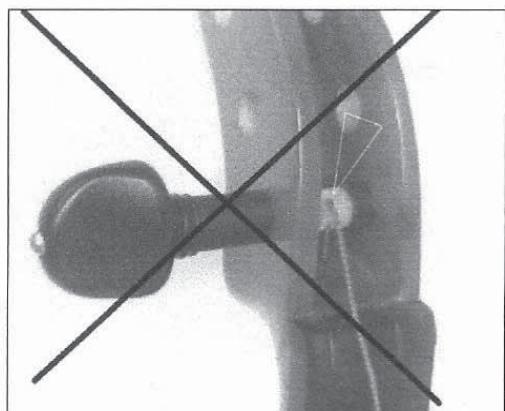
### Mounting the strings:

The knurled spool has two holes for the string. The one further away from the head may be used when many windings are needed or thick strings are being used.

The strings can be wound in two different ways:



This way the string is only slightly bent at the transition from the hole to the spool. There is less wear on the strings.



The string is bent at a sharp angle\* at the transition from the hole\* to the spool. That is why this way of winding the string is not recommended.

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