

Known history of John Broadwood Square Piano No. 47847

Thanks to Bernard Novell for this interesting story, of a piano rescued and given a new future. There is a splendid album of pictures on the link below:

<http://picasaweb.google.co.uk/Chilternwalker/SquarePiano#>



History

- | | |
|---------------------------------|---|
| 3rd April 1837 | Date of manufacture written on shaft of F key No1
Name F Langley (believed to be the Tuner) written on C key No 56 |
| 26 th April 1837 | Entry in Porters Log 28A illegible due to water damage. Presumably this was when this piano was hired out for the first time. |
| 26 th July 1837 | Entry in Porters Log 28B mainly illegible due to water damage
Taking 47847 on hire to 123 Gt
Possible name Masar |
| 21 st September 1837 | Entry in Porters Log 27
Taking No 47847 on hire to Mrs Ley, Carnagie House, Wrights Lane, Kensington for Mr H Boys |

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- 5th February 1838 Entry in Porters Log 27
Taking 47847 on hire to Mrs Smith 82 Pall Mall
- 20th August 1838 Entry in Porters Log 29
Taking 6 oct piano on hire to Mrs Instone, Park
Cott, North Hillingdon, just beyond the 13 mile
stone. Charge 21/~ Carriage ea way 15/~
- 25th February 1840 Entry in Porters Log 30
Instone A square Pianoforte No 47847 – Mrs Instone,
 Hillingdon
P222 The instrument on hire say sold for £MD (£30) &
 no charge for hire from 20th February 1839
 [That's £1,323 in 2008 money.](#)

[Price Code](#) [CU MBE R L A N D](#)
[1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 0](#)

There then follows a period of 168 years of no (currently known) history,
until

Recent History

- 22nd July 2008 Acquired free of charge by Bernard Novell of 8
Elvendon Road, Goring-on-Thames, Oxfordshire,
RG8 0DU from Paul ? at 8 Gravel Close, Benson,
Oxon following a posting on Freecycle.
- 12th December 2009 Collected by George Veness and taken to
The Stanhope Collection
Winchelsea Beach
Nr Rye
East Sussex

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Noticeable features:

Exterior

Case: Plain Mahogany, sides and front solid, rear veneered vertically on the inside top edge above the soundboard.

Baseboard: 71mm thick

Top: Solid Mahogany.

Name board: Curved end, Rosewood veneered with two pierced fretwork panels backed with red silk.

Nameplate:



Legs: Turned mahogany with brass castors x 4

Sustain Pedal: Turned mahogany

Interior

Keyboard: 6 octaves, FF to FF

Keys: Ivory naturals, Ebony incidentals, Sycamore keyfronts

Action type 3 – 1806-1835 (Note this piano was made in 1837 so either the action was stored after manufacture or the date of change is incorrect*)

Strings: Lowest seven over wound single string per note. Remaining strings all bichords. Many strings look original, some have been replaced.

Soundboard: Spruce

Steel hitchpin and brace, painted black

Wrestpins: Rectangular head, with hole for string

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Condition on initial inspection

The Piano had been stored in a garage for several (about ten) years.

One leg had a broken thread so it was propped against the wall. There were signs of some damp, with staining of the outer case and a lot of dust, dirt and spider webs.

All cloth tapes between strings and under keys in poor condition.

The action was 99% intact and in full working order – mechanically – though the dampers and hammers were out of alignment. One hammer was found to be detached and one showing signs of a failing hinge. All parts were present.

Some keys were a little 'sticky' and most (if not all) strings were out of tune.

The sustain pedal was present, but the thread was in very poor condition and the block was split.

One piece of the outer skirting was detached, but intact and undamaged.

There was one piece of loose mahogany, with four screw holes, one containing a rusty screw head, inside the piano. This was later identified to have been the cover strip for the larger of the two keyboard action sections. The small section cover strip was missing. A single, narrow length of mahogany had been used to span both action sections.

The legs, although matching, are all numbered 47512. It is not known whether legs were made in sets and numbered as a set, or whether the original legs were replaced.

Cleaning and restoration

During August and September 2008 the action was removed and thoroughly cleaned.

The keys were gently vacuumed for dust and the ivory and ebony parts wiped with a mild soap/water solution to remove dirt and grime.

The interior shows a small amount of damp having been present at some time, but this does not appear to have affected the shape of the frame or soundboard.

The exterior shows signs of some water damage, possibly from pot plants, though this has not been serious or prolonged. The case was thoroughly cleaned for dirt in readiness for application of a quality wax polish. First coat applied on 4th October, second on 12th October. A third coat of wax was applied to the case and first coat to the legs and pedal on 19th July 2009.

During cleaning it was noticed that the front hinged flap above the keyboard had been replaced at some time, possibly using the front from a

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similar piano. The outer grain is very similar to the rest of the piece, so this is not readily noticeable. However there is evidence of the original hinge positions and there is no lock fitted, although the lock pin in the lower sill has a hole through it suggesting that it was once lockable.

November 2008, local, Reading based Piano Tuner & Restorer, Steve Gavin, commissioned to:

Remove and replace all 'suspect' iron strings, made from the wrong type and gauge wire.

Replace moth eaten tapes & felts as far as possible.

Repair broken hammer hinges

Replace some hammer felts

Adjust the action and bring the strings into tune.

Steve worked on the different challenges over a six month period, with a final visit in early July 2009, to tune to A415 pitch.

November 2008, Square Piano Restorer, Lucy Coad, commissioned to:

Repair the threads on one leg and the sustain pedal and to provide a replacement block for the pedal.

Repaired leg, pedal and block collected from Lucy's workshop in April 2009.

Final work during June & July 2009

Having completed the majority of the work on the action, the piece of outer skirting was cleaned and re-attached. Unfortunately the use of a modern pva glue was necessary as it had been detached for some time and was twisted.

The legs were cleaned and the new thread adjusted for correct fit. One castor required realignment as two fixing screws had broken. They were all fitted and for the first time in several years the Piano was freestanding and mobile again.

The sustain pedal was fitted using a new block, though in order to position it correctly the block does not run in the same direction as the original. It is now also oversize for better long term stability.

Finally, a completely new cover strip for the keyboard front was made using solid mahogany, cut from some well seasoned, second hand timber, with a grain very similar to the original piece found inside the case. The

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original single moulding was precisely replicated to match the original using a wooden moulding plane. The strip was then stained and French polished to closely match the original colour. Because some of the original screws had broken off and still remain in the keyboard frame, rather than split the length of timber as would have originally been done, it was fitted in one length which enabled the fixings to miss the originals.



Research and bibliography

Surrey History Centre
130 Goldsworth Road
Woking
Surrey
GU21 6ND
United Kingdom
John Broadwood Archives
Number books and Porter's day books
<http://www.surreycc.gov.uk>

Further research

Broadwood Square Pianos by Michael Cole
<http://www.squarepianos.com/broadwood.htm>

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Lucy Coad Square Piano's

Lucy's website <http://www.squarepiano.co.uk/index.html>

Lucy has been very helpful with advice. She has repaired the broken threads on one leg and sustain pedal in her workshop near Bristol.

Edinburgh University Collection of Musical Instruments

<http://www.music.ed.ac.uk/euchmi/uck/uckd2698.html>

has a John Broadwood Square serial 48999 made in 1837. There is no illustration but from the description it is very similar to 47847 with plain turned legs. The curator has confirmed that it has plain turned legs but that it has a 50/50 split lid and once had a fretwork cover over the front half of the exposed interior (since lost).

The Future

George Veness, Curator of the Stanhope Collection at Winchelsea Beach, Nr Rye, East Sussex has taken this Piano into his collection, as a loan. It is George's intention to loan out instruments to students and other 'interested' parties doing research on antique instruments.



See <http://www.stanhopecollection.co.uk/index.html> for more information.