



PHOTOS: MARK HICKMAN

Luthier  
**Mark Hickman**  
 Location  
**Isle of Wight, UK**

**MY WORKSHOP IS IN MY GARDEN** – I built it myself. I originally worked from a room in the house but as trade gradually increased I needed more space. When I was building it, the sorting office in the village was being knocked down and I managed to salvage one of the old Victorian post office seats that swivels out from under the desk. It just happened to fit exactly beneath my right-hand workbench.

On the workbench in the foreground is a mandolin that I made for my

son's 21st birthday. Behind it is a viola I made recently, a copy of a Gasparo da Salò. The violin at the back is a John Harris instrument that came to me in a very unfortunate condition. It got completely sodden on a journey from South Africa to Germany, and came to pieces. When it arrived in my workshop it was like a kit: all the parts were separate and I had to put it back together. It's not a fantastic violin, but I like it because it was made by someone just like me, a hundred years ago. Harris even repaired it himself – there's a label inside with the details.

On the right of the picture are some nice tools that I use for scroll carving. I bought them as a collection at a local auction years ago. All my chisels are really old ones with boxwood handles. There's something special about using an old tool – they give me a tangible link to the past that I find very reassuring. I also make some of my tools, such as purfling cutters, knives and little planes. You can't necessarily always

buy what you need for a specific task, and when I need to dream up a method of making something I usually take the dog for a walk while I think about it.

The map on the slanted ceiling on the right is of Cremona at the time of Amati. Next to it are some pictures of a viol under construction and beneath is a photo of an Irish music session – I play guitar in a traditional Irish band. I don't usually listen to music as I work but I'm addicted to BBC Radio 4: it keeps me company during the long hours that I'm alone in here.

The cello case in the corner on the right is one of the old Hills 'coffin' cases. It's screwed to the wall so I can use it as a safe place to put a cello if I'm in the middle of working on it.

Those cases are very nicely made and solid but they are a bit undersized, so quite a few cellos don't actually fit in them.

'THE VIOLIN ARRIVED LIKE A KIT: ALL THE PARTS WERE SEPARATE AND I HAD TO PUT IT BACK TOGETHER'

There are a few boat blocks hanging from hooks on the wooden beam. I have a boat that I bought as a wreck and restored gradually over six years. The process is quite similar to that of restoring an instrument. I like to keep a few reminders of the boat in here because, in the depths of winter, I can look at them and remember the lovely quiet times in summer, anchored off a beach somewhere.

INTERVIEW BY CATHERINE PAYNE

**NEXT MONTH** MAGNUS NEDREGÅRD, OSLO, NORWAY