

## A Big Tree

Sequoiadendron Giganteum grows in the Californian Sierra, it is not the tallest tree in the world, but contains the greatest bulk. The first branches are often 100-150 ft above the ground & over 6ft in diameter. It is estimated that each tree contains 2500 tons of timber.

A lumberjack relating his experiences “said we were chopping at the base of a tree for a whole week when we heard echo sounds, so the foreman got on his horse and rode round the tree to the other side and lo and behold found another gang cutting on that side”.

### Diary

Aug 7<sup>th</sup> Hands-on

Sept 4<sup>th</sup> Richard Findley

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**Woody's  
World**

The Newsletter of



**3<sup>rd</sup> July 08**

**Tonight is Hands-on, Turning rings.**

### Last Month.

We were given a most interesting talk on the musical instrument the Lute by Michael Lowe a professional Lute maker.

After a brief introduction he played two short pieces of music from the period of 1506-07. The Lute had a long important history from the 13<sup>th</sup> to 18<sup>th</sup> century. Beginning early on with classical Arab music spreading later to Europe where it was played extensively as a solo instrument, also quartets, dance music & accompanying singers. Its heyday was the Elizabethan period.

There was a closeness between maker & composer, the latter often making their own instruments, hence many designs evolved. These can be seen in museums. In Warwick museum is an early 16<sup>th</sup> century Lute by Michael Hartung. Perhaps the most famous Lute maker was Laut Marlow who died in 1552.

### Building a Lute

The bulbous back is made by bending thin strips of wood over a mould. The mould is made up of panels of jetalong which is easy to carve. At the neck end a block of close grained pine is attached to the mould, in this vanes are carved and is cut square to take the finger board after all strips are glued in position.



**M  
ould**

The strips for the bulbous back can be Birds-eye maple, Sycamore, Maple, Rosewood & Yew. These strips must fit exactly along the lines of the mould, adjacent pieces must be shaped like those in barrel making, similarly using a long plane on its back. The finger board, usually of Maple with ebony veneered face is attached to the neck with a long screw, in olden days a nail was used.

The sound board is made up of two pieces of quarter sawn slow grown spruce from trees found high in the mountains away from the sun. In the middle a 'Rose', a hole of an intricate design cut with a scalpel. The size of the hole affects the resonance. The sound board thickness is in the region of only 1.6 mm. To the underside of the sound board support ribs are glued which affect musical response.

The peg board fitted at almost 90 degrees to the finger board is usually of harder wood than the pegs, the latter wearing out first and easier to replace, these can be Holly black stained, Plum or Rosewood.

### **Finishing**

Michael produced numerous ingredients in jars akin to an alchemist, naming a few:- Turkish madder, Logwood, Strasborg, turpentine, Cold pressed linseed oil, Oil of lavender, Rosin & so on.

Making own varnish is a tricky, pine resin, Strasborg turpentine at £100 per litre, cold washed linseed oil, cooked resin & dyes.

The sound boards are not varnished as this would affect sound qualities.

### **Changes to Lutes**

In the 15<sup>th</sup> century Lutes had 5 courses of strings ( a course 2 strings paired ) with a single string for base increasing to 9 courses in the 16<sup>th</sup> century each time extra strings added to the base. In the 17<sup>th</sup> century a second neck was added making some instruments 6ft long with additional strings of 11 courses. These gave very resonant instruments ( called chitarroni ) with powerful bases. In the photo opposite page Michael is shown playing one.



**Michael Lowe**

### **Thanks to David Tilley**

A great evening to see and hear work of a master craftsman & many thanks to David for bringing Michael along, having collected Michael from Oxford and taking him back afterwards

### **For Sale**

Delta thicknesser Model 22/565, 300x150mm. Brand new on its own stand . £150, contact Richard Moore here or on 02476 502577