**Commissioning a violin – a client perspective**

For many players the main barrier to commissioning a violin is the worry about reaching the end of the process and not liking the instrument. However, from the outset, Ian was very reassuring about this, and made it absolutely clear that I was not under any obligation at all to buy the finished instrument, and that I should keep an open mind whilst trying it out. I had also wondered whether a maker of such fine violins would be prepared to work for an amateur such as myself, but on this score I need not have worried either. Ian was happy to work with me to produce a violin suited exactly to my requirements.

I had imagined that after some initial discussions the client would go away and wait in silent expectation for a call some months later to say the instrument was finished. How wrong I was - it was a journey so much more exciting than that! When we first met, Ian showed me some pieces of wood, and I was able to choose which piece I wanted for the back. How wonderful to choose the wood for one’s own violin! Every few days some “work in progress” photos would appear in my email, and on the website. These beautifully composed shots showed not only the state of progress of the instrument but also the tools, diagrams and photos that Ian was using. They have made a fascinating album. In addition, there were regular phone calls updating me on progress and asking for my views on certain aspects of the violin – when I wasn’t sure, or felt that I did not have enough expertise to make an informed decision, Ian was always prepared to advise and help.

When the time came to try out the new violin I was filled with excitement and apprehension in equal measure. Again, Ian pointed out that I was under no obligation, and he very sensitively allowed me to try it out in the privacy of a separate room. In my case I realised after about 5 minutes that this violin was definitely the instrument for me, and I am now having a really wonderful time playing it in and getting to know it. However, if it had not felt right I know that I could have told Ian honestly, and that there would have been no hard feelings.

Commissioning a violin from Ian has definitely been the most interesting and exciting purchase I have ever made, and I would have no hesitation in recommending the process to anyone who may be thinking of investing in a new instrument.

 Joanne de Groot March 2011