

# Known history of John Broadwood Square Piano No. 47847



**Current state - polished – Keyboard cover strip missing**

## History

- 3rd April 1837                      Date of manufacture written on shaft of F key No1  
Name F Langley written on C key No 56
- 26<sup>th</sup> 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<sup>th</sup> July 1837                        Entry in Porters Log 28B mainly illegible due to  
water damage  
Taking 47847 on hire to .... 123 Gt ....  
Possible name Masar
- 21<sup>st</sup> September 1837              Entry in Porters Log 27  
Taking No 47847 on hire to Mrs Ley, Carnage  
House, Wrights Lane, Kensington for Mr H Boys
- 5<sup>th</sup> February 1838                  Entry in Porters Log 27  
Taking 47847 on hire to Mrs Smith 82 Pall Mall

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20<sup>th</sup> 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/~

25<sup>th</sup> 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 20<sup>th</sup> 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**

22<sup>nd</sup> 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.

### **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: *John Broadwood & Sons, Makers to their Majesty's and  
the Princesses. Great Pulteney Street, Golden Square, London*

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

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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: Sycamore

Steel hitchpin and brace, painted black

Wrestpins: Rectangular head, with hole for string

### **Research**

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>

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).

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## ***Condition on initial inspection***

The Piano had been stored in a garage for several years. This is where it was rescued from.



One leg had a broken thread.

There were signs of some damp, with staining of the outer case and a lot of dust, dirt and spider webs.

All tapes and felts 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 poor condition and the block was split.

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

There was one piece of loose mahogany, with four screw holes and one screw head, inside the piano, 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.



1. Name on 1<sup>st</sup> key



2. Before restoration



3. Makers reference number

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## ***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 was thoroughly cleaned for dirt in readiness for application of a quality wax polish. First coat applied on 4<sup>th</sup> October, second on 12<sup>th</sup> October.

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 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 due in early July 2009, to tune to A440 pitch.

Cost of work £400.00

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

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

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

Cost of repair £90.00



## Known history of John Broadwood Square Piano No. 47847

Sample data for a Broadwood square piano, No. 43350, dated internally 1833, is as follows. Notes FF to BB have single close-wound covered strings, copper on steel in graded diameters. Three notes C to D use plain red brass, 0.98 mm diameter, these notes being bichord. Notes D# to G# use 0.86 mm diameter yellow brass, A to f take steel wire 0.77 mm diameter, f# to a# take 0.72 mm, b<sup>1</sup> to c<sup>3</sup> take 0.67 mm, and the remaining seventeen notes take 0.61 mm diameter – all of these being bichords.

A similar instrument, No. 46357, probably made in 1835, has almost identical strings. All even covered strings appear to use 0.4mm close-wound copper covers; the steel core wires being 1.25 mm diameter for FF and FF#, and 1.01 mm for the remainder. These pianos have a separate bass bridge. Thus the sounding length of G# is 1082 mm, but the next note A, using steel wire, is longer, 1225 mm. Each string for G# is at 23kg tension, but those for A are at about 28kg. Both pianos retain the type 3 escapement action without back checks, but the incorporation of Broadwood's 'Patent Metallic Plate' produces a formidable increase in the total string tension – 3650kg, compared with 2500kg around the year 1820. (The sounding lengths of the strings are remarkably consistent over this period, except in the tenor area where the use of a divided bridge allows the lower strings to be lengthened, and therefore drawn to the higher tension mentioned above).

### 1835 - 1860

Brass strings were abandoned in the later 1830's with the introduction of the more robust six-and-a-half octave square pianos with a string plate that had a strut to the wrestplank. As before, all but the lowest sixteen notes are steel strung bichords, but with a further increase in tension. The treble notes of No 60983, c. 1852, use hard steel about 0.7 mm wire. Compared with the 1835 model there has been a 25% increase in the treble, and a 45% increase in the tenor. There being no brass strings, the lowest sixteen notes (CC to D#) all have monochord steel wires close spun with copper in graded sizes. The total tension is about 5000 Kg, assuming a pitch of about = 440.