

**Catalogue no. 2005.786**

**Upright Piano, John Broadwood and Sons, London, 1850.**

Gift of Dr Lena Potter



### **References**

Clinkscale vol.2 1999, p.60, EP 232. (but date given as c.1840, owner as Cipriano [sic] Potter, and legs described as 'reeded') (Martha Novak Clinkscale: *Makers of the Piano 1820 – 1860* Oxford 1999)

### **Inscriptions**

Nameboard *John Broadwood & Sons / Manufacturers to her Majesty / Great Pulteney Street, Golden Square / London* ; stamp, RH end of wrestplank, 10072; by lowest wrestpin in ink, EG; Paper label loose inside the piano inscribed *Dr Potter*

### **Dimensions**

Height 1150; width 1215; depth, front to back 634(excluding keyboard 285); height of keyboard from floor 661; height of legs 545; sound-box 98 deep

### **Keyboard**

Natural covers of ivory, sharps of ebony, and moulded fronts of holly. Compass FF – g<sup>4</sup>; width of keyboard 1025; standard measure 489; length of natural heads 46; length of sharps 85; height of sharps above naturals 11.5; width of sharps, top surface 11, at base 11.5; depth of touch 8.

### **Action**

So-called 'Sticker' action; see commentary. Hammer to string, bass 51, treble, 56; front of key to balance pin 226; front of key to hopper 404; hammer, hinge to head 88; hammer head breadth, bass 27, treble 7.4.

Over dampers from FF to a<sup>#1</sup> of woollen cloth, three layers, two white, one red ; from b to c<sup>#3</sup> , narrow leather pads.

### **Pedals**

Two: left *Una corda* shift, right Dampers.

## String lengths and strike points

Note	Length	Strike point from nut
FF	893	126
C	859	115
F	841	107
c	811	102
f	791	92
c <sup>1</sup>	571	63
f <sup>1</sup>	422	47
c <sup>2</sup>	288	31
f <sup>2</sup>	212	22
c <sup>3</sup>	143	11
f <sup>3</sup>	107	8
c <sup>4</sup>	74	5
f <sup>4</sup>	50	3
g <sup>4</sup>	48	2

All bichord. FF to c# close covered; d to g<sup>4</sup> plain steel.

Gauge numbers in ink on wrestplank, and diameters of original strings d 20 (1.19) ; e 19 (1.05) ; f# 18 (1.01) ; g# 17 (0.95) ; d<sup>1</sup> 16 (0.88); d<sup>2</sup> 15 (0.86) ; d<sup>3</sup> 14 (0.79).

Overall diameters of covered strings (core diameters range from 0.90 to 1.20.)

FF	3.18
#	3.06
GG	3.02
#	2.94
AA	2.90
#	2.73
BB	2.63
C	2.66
#	2.55
D	2.44
#	2.25
E	2.20
F	1.97
#	1.88
G	1.70
#	1.68
A	1.58
#	1.51
B	1.46
c	1.45
#	1.54

[Curious irregularity of pinning on bridge and nut for notes D, D#, E, F, F#. See photos]

The plain strings are without eyes and each bichord pair shares one hitch pin - the type of stringing first proposed in James Stewart's patent of 1827.

### **Soundboard and structure**

The grain direction of the soundboard is transverse, parallel to the floor. There are nine vertical soundboard ribs, and under the bridge a continuous glued and screwed strip or 'counter-bridge'. Bridge double pinned throughout. The strings hitched at the bottom of the case have an iron hitch-plate. There are seven vertical posts between the wrestplank and the bottom of the frame.

### **Decoration**

Solid mahogany on a framing of coniferous wood. Fabric front of pleated red silk above keyboard. Two hexagonal legs with turned collars and socket castors. Folding music desk on inside of keyboard cover.

### **Provenance**

Archive information on Cottage Upright Piano, no. 10,072.

Provided by Dr Alastair Laurence, director, John Broadwood & Sons, Ltd.

Pianoforte Makers, Finchcocks, Goudhurst, Kent, TN17 1HH

Obtained from the Broadwood Company Records,

Surrey History Centre, Woking, Surrey

Reference 2185/JB/42

'Cottage upright model number 10,072 was completed at the firm's Horseferry Road workshops, Westminster, on the 2<sup>nd</sup> day of February in the year 1850. Some weeks after its completion, it was hired out 'on approval', on the 24<sup>th</sup> May 1850, to 'Mr C. Potter' (viz: Cipriani Potter, principal of the Royal Academy of Music between 1832 and 1859). It is clear that Mr Potter was interested in purchasing the instrument, but wanted to try it out in his home first before making a final decision.

On the 20<sup>th</sup> August 1850, Mr Potter decided to purchase the piano. He offered his Broadwood square piano (serial number 54023) in part exchange. In fact, Broadwood agreed to a 'swap': the older square was simply exchanged for the new cottage model; there was no financial transaction involved.

The next occasion on which the cottage upright occurs in the Broadwood archive is an entry in the porters' books dated the 20<sup>th</sup> July 1868, when the instrument was brought in to the firm's workshops for repair and the fitting of a new 'curtain'. Cipriani Potter's address at this date is given as Craven Hill, Bayswater, although the piano was collected from a 'Dr Potter' of 18, South Bank, Regents Park. (The 'curtain' was the name given at that date to the silk front panel above the keyboard).

The repairs were completed on the 29<sup>th</sup> August 1868, and the piano was delivered to yet another address: 'Dr Potter, 2 Hertford Street, Mayfair'. It seems likely that the certain 'Dr Potter' mentioned in the various entries was in fact Cipriani Potter's son, as he is named (as Dr Potter) in the following entry made many years later, in 1924:

*29th December 1924: Dr Potter, 31 Highbury Place, N. Bringing his upright PF no.10, 072 from Messrs Mawers Depository, 75 Burnaby Street, Chelsea, to examine. The same instrument left Broadwood's warehouse on the 19<sup>th</sup> June 1925; but*

unfortunately, for some unknown reason, no entry could be found giving details of the name and address of the piano's recipient at that date.'

### **Commentary**

The action in this instrument is a vertically compressed version of the 'sticker action' devised for much taller cabinet upright pianos in the second decade of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. These first upright pianos with strings starting at floor level used string lengths similar to a grand piano. By shortening the scale in the bass and using thicker covered strings these instruments were gradually reduced in height from around 2 metres to the dimensions of this modest cottage upright.

The sticker action was developed from Geib's square piano action (see Broadwood square piano 1801, Cat no. 2007.3456) adapted to a vertical configuration. The adjustable sprung hopper on the key-lever and the intermediate lever or 'under hammer' are almost identical, but attached to the upper surface of the intermediate lever is a vertical wooden 'sticker' which transmits the impulse to the hammer butt. Because the hammer shank now approaches the vertical when it strikes the string it needs the weight of the attached sticker to return it to rest, and the mass of the sticker also helps to prevent repercussions of the hammer without the use of a check. By the date of this piano some uprights were already being fitted with more complex and progressive actions, many deriving from Robert Wornum's patent of 1842, known as the 'tape check' action which closely resembles the mechanism of today's upright pianos. It is interesting that an eminent musician and celebrated pianist like Cipriani Potter would choose such a conservative type of instrument even if it was only for teaching and private performance.

Because the length of the stickers is greatly reduced in this truncated version of the action they had to be weighted and made of mahogany rather than a light coniferous wood, so that the return of the hammer is reliable and the 'checking' function is satisfactory. Dampers are hinged on a rail above the hammers and are actuated by wire extensions of the stickers. The damper pedal acts by pushing the entire action frame away from the strings.

Fig 1 shows William Southwell's patent specification of 1807, the earliest depiction of the sticker action for a tall cabinet piano. The resemblance to the components of a square piano's hopper and intermediate lever can be clearly seen in the lower part of the drawing. Southwell at this stage had not seen the benefit of hinging the sticker directly to the hammer, so had to incorporate a spring to ensure the return of the hammer, although he does seem to be indicating that the weight of the sticker will press the damper onto the strings.

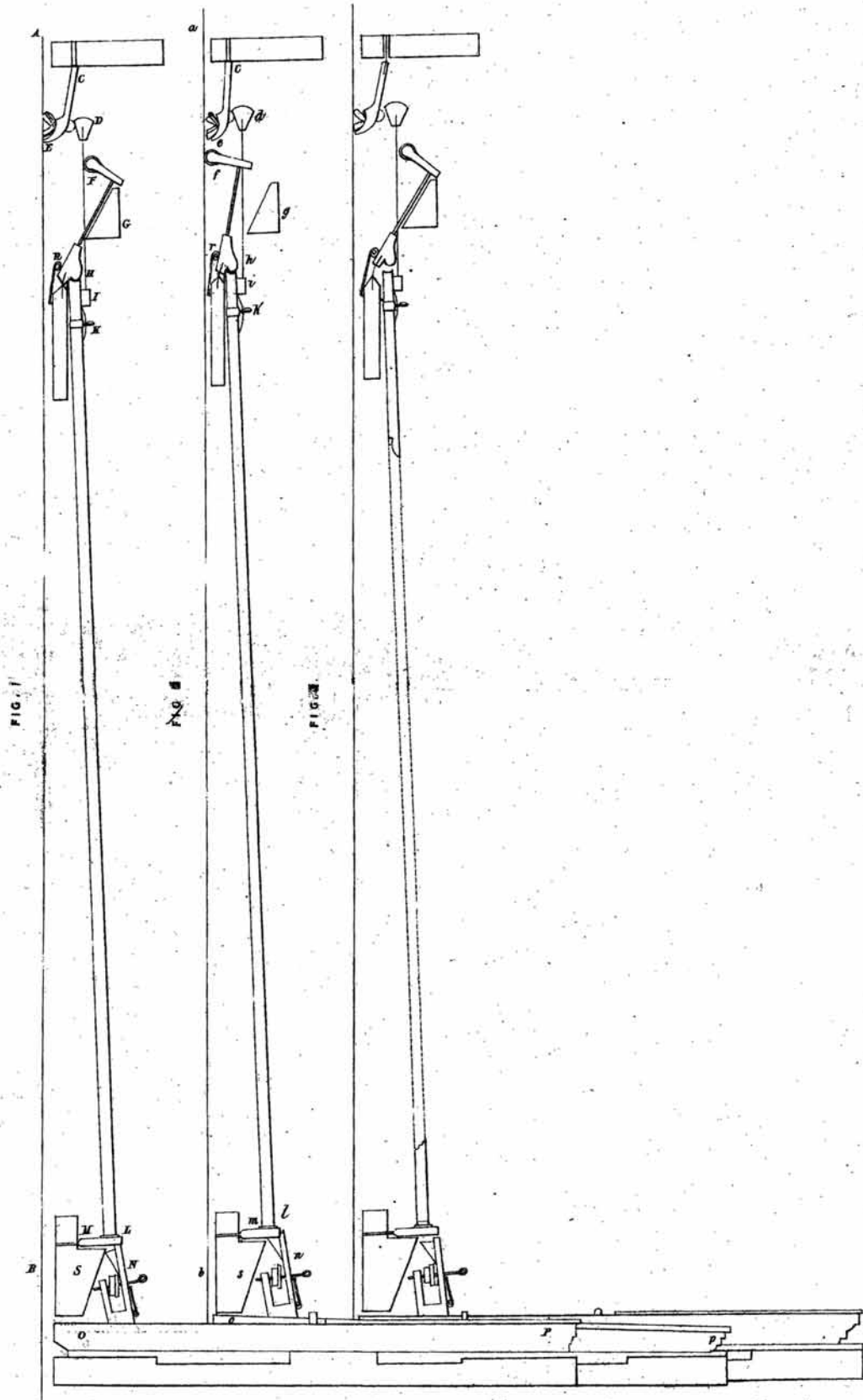


Figure 1 From William Southwell's patent of 1807



Inside of key cover



Serial number



Label in found in piano



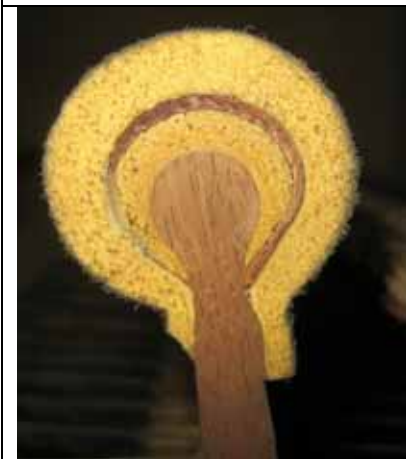
View of interior



Stepped pinning of nut and gauge numbers



Stepped pinning of bridge



Hammer, FF



Hammer, g<sup>4</sup>



Bass dampers



Treble dampers