

# The Haward Harpsichord at Knole

by Dennis Woolley

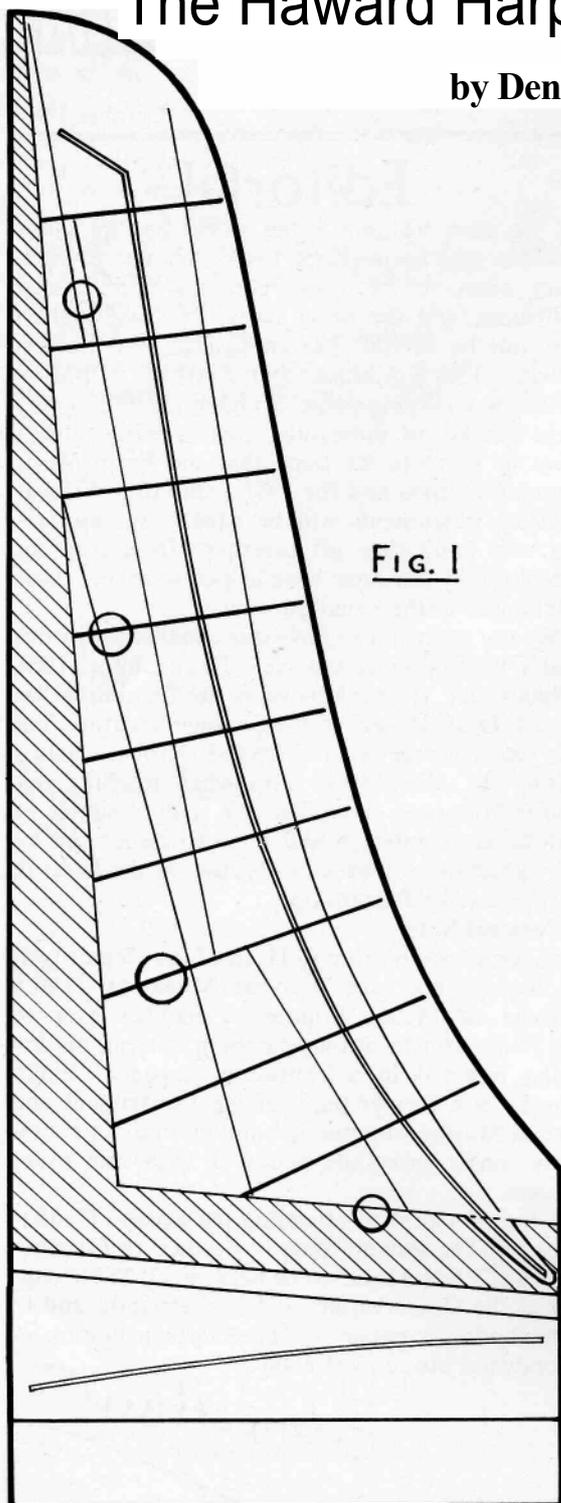


Fig. 1

The Italianate features of this instrument have been commented upon in several previous articles, notably by Frank Hubbard<sup>1</sup> and Thomas McGeary<sup>2</sup>, and, from the placing of the four roses (themselves showing Italian influences in their tracery and parchment infilling) it has been surmised that the soundboard barring would very likely be Italianate also.

Recently, whilst work was being done on the instrument<sup>3</sup>, the opportunity occurred to investigate this barring. It was not desirable to remove any of the bottom boards at that time, but by noting the position of a number of small dowels, visible at various places on the upper surface of the board in parallel alignments, and by probing through the rose traceries, it was possible to arrive quite accurately at the system of barring. The 3mm dowels indicated the position of the main bars, since they appear to have been used to locate them when they were being glued on the board. Thus the dowels provided an accurate guide both as to the number of bars and their placing.

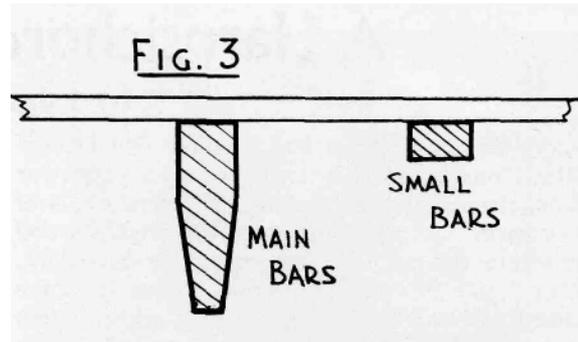
Probing with various lengths of U-shaped wire, looped so as to indicate on the top surface of the board the bar positions being encountered by the hidden end underneath, revealed an arrangement of small bars running parallel to the bridge. This probing also confirmed the positions of the main bars. There was confirmation too of the extent of the area of the masked-off portions of the board at the front edge behind the belly rail and along the spine, areas which had been detected on a previous occasion,) by tapping the soundboard. Together, the one inch thick planks, to which the soundboard was glued at those places, masked-off a considerable proportion of the total area, allowing only a

1. Three Centuries of Harpsichord Making.
2. Early English Harpsichord Building, English Harpsichord Magazine October 1973.
3. Work carried out in 1980 included the bushing of the wrest-pin holes, the provision of a row of jacks similar to those of 1683, replacing a modern set having brass weights and mortices in the tongues suitable for leather plectra, quilling with raven quills and restringing in copper alloy in place of the steel which had been used in recent times. There was a marked improvement in tone because of this change of material in the stringing. Pitch^A415.

minimum of free area around the treble end of the bridge. (These masked-off areas are shown shaded in Fig. 1.) Nine main bars, 24mm deep by 8mm tapering to 4mm, run across the board, passing under the bridge. There is, however, a clearance some 3cms long on each bar where it passes under the line of the bridge. The parallel barring is very light, being only 8mm by 5mm in section, with the 8mm face glued to the board. (These features are also shown in Fig. 1.)

Another matter which has received previous attention concerns the alterations which have been made to the wrestplank layout. It would appear that at some time the instrument possessed three ranks of jacks, one of which was assumed to have been a lute-stop passing through a slot in the wrestplank. The present oak wrestplank, being a replacement, shows no evidence to support this idea, but there is ample evidence however to indicate that an arrangement with jacks passing through the wrestplank did exist at one time, indeed at the time of the construction of the instrument in 1683. Lines scribed on the bottom board of the instrument and on the case sides below the wrestplank indicate the position and widths of the original gaps in it. These lines are shown in Fig. 2 by the chain-dotted superimposed upon the present gap and nut positions. In addition to this evidence there are indentations on the key levers consistent with a double row of jacks being stood on them in the position of the original front gap.

Further evidence is apparent in the mortices in the case sides which provided support for the ends of the jack rails in the original disposition. These are located at places in agreement with the indica-



tions on the bottom and on the keys. Those mortices for the rail nearer the front of the instrument have been covered by a thin veneer, while those for the rear rail have been modified to contain the present wider rail. They show very clearly that the front rail was a wide one appropriate to a double row of jacks and the rear one was narrow, suitable for only one row of jacks.

Thus it would seem that this instrument was constructed with a double row of jacks plucking close to the nut and a single row in the position now occupied by the further of the present two rows, a disposition unique in our experience. The nut is placed, for most of its length at a position closer to the bridge than would have been the case when the original disposition was in use. The resultant scaling in the extreme treble is now very short, corresponding to  $c''=9f''$ , though from  $c''$  downwards there is a just scaling for a further two octaves, equivalent to  $c''=10j''$ . Originally, the nut would have been located nearer the front of the instrument, producing a somewhat longer scaling in the treble.

