

Hello, my name is Joss Winn and I'm a lecturer at the University of Lincoln, UK, where I work in the School of Education. Since 2018, I've been doing research on how guitar makers learn and teach their craft. I was asked to give a talk at the Holy Grail Guitar Show in Berlin, May 2020, but because of the Coronavirus, the HGGG went online, hence why I've created these annotated slides.

- A bit about me and why I do research on guitar-making
- The focus of my research
- The first decade of classical guitar-making in the UK (1948-1957)
- The role of amateurs and autodidacts
- My survey of classical guitar makers in the UK and recent EGB survey
- Guitar-making at Newark College
- Links to further information and my contact details

 @joss Winn

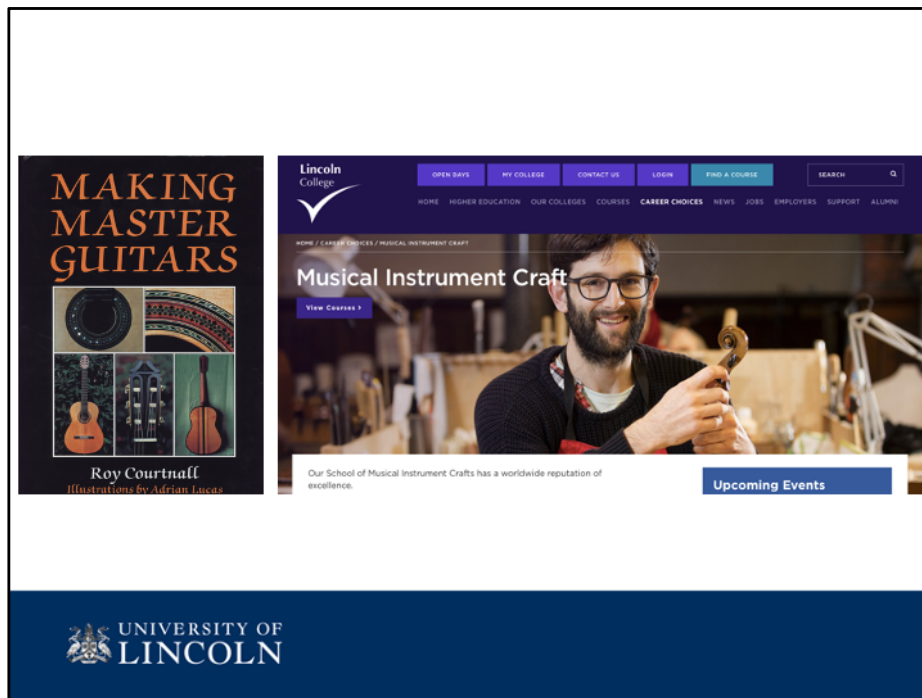
 joss Winn



This is what I cover in my slides.

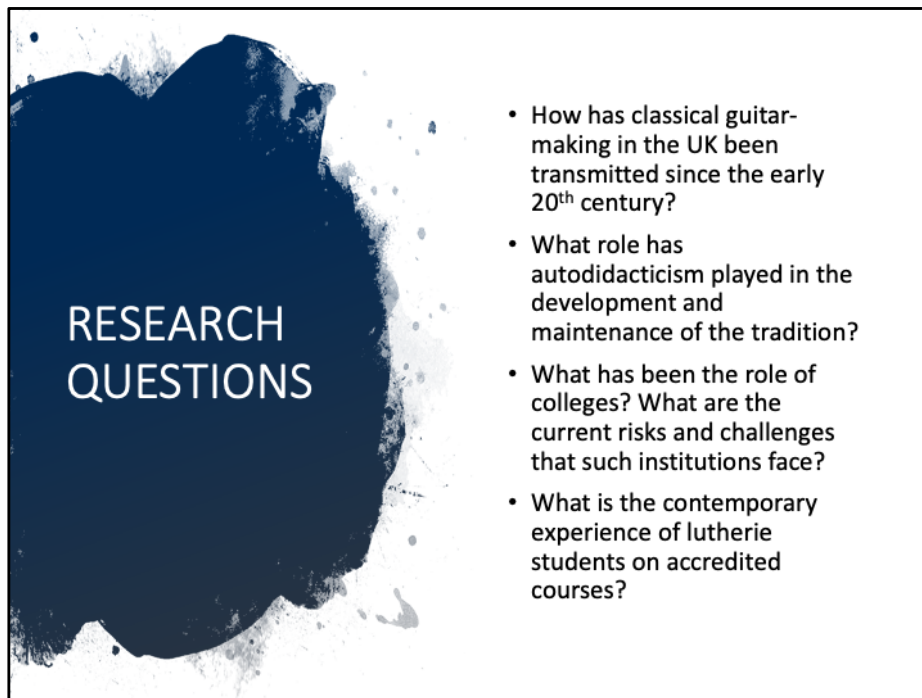


Between July 2017 and February 2018, I visited Roy Courtnall each week to learn to make a guitar. It took about 180 hours over 26 days. It got me thinking about how guitar-making is taught and learned.

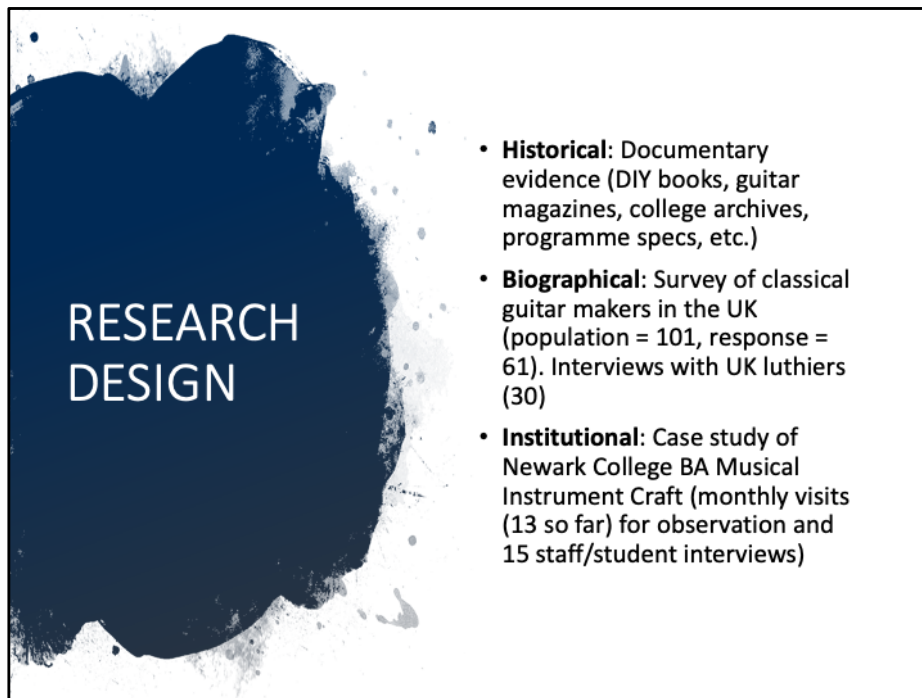


Roy is the author of *Making Master Guitars* (1994), which is the most popular book in the UK on classical guitar making. It is valued for its detailed step-by-step approach and for the inclusion of several plans and biographical information of famous makers. Roy had access to those instruments in the late 1980s because a local dealer, Ray Ursell, was actively buying and selling worldwide and would call Roy when he had an interesting instrument. Shortly after the book was published, Roy was asked by Newark College to set up a guitar making course alongside the existing violin, piano and woodwind courses. The course was based on the methods in the book. It began as a classical guitar making course, and today includes steel string acoustic guitars, too. The current tutors, James Lister and Adrian Lucas, were both taught by Roy. James was first a

student at London Guildhall University and then a student at Newark. Adrian was a night school student of Roy's in the 1990s.



These were my initial research questions and still shape the work I am doing. Essentially, I'm focusing on history, biography and institutions.



**RESEARCH
DESIGN**

- **Historical:** Documentary evidence (DIY books, guitar magazines, college archives, programme specs, etc.)
- **Biographical:** Survey of classical guitar makers in the UK (population = 101, response = 61). Interviews with UK luthiers (30)
- **Institutional:** Case study of Newark College BA Musical Instrument Craft (monthly visits (13 so far) for observation and 15 staff/student interviews)

I have written an article on the history of classical guitar makers in the UK which will be published later this year. You can see I've surveyed and interviewed a lot of guitar-makers in the UK and have written a report of the survey, which I hope to publish soon. I have also been visiting Newark College regularly since 2018 and have almost completed the case study. From this point on, I have to transcribe the interviews, analyse the data and publish everything over the next two or three years.



These are some key figures in my article about the history of classical guitar making in Britain:

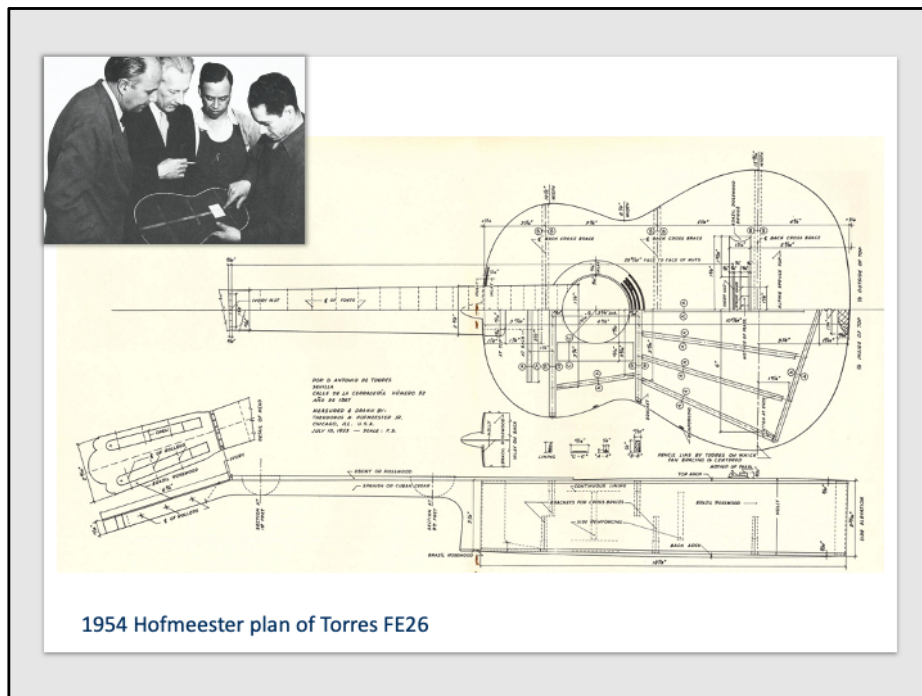
Albert Percy Sharpe (1906-1968). Director of Clifford Essex Co., editor of BMG magazine and author of *Make Your Own Spanish Guitar* (1957), in which he documented the work of his employee, the luthier, Marco Roccia.

Wilfrid M. Appleby (1892-1987) was a controversial campaigner for the “real guitar”; founder of the International Classic Guitar Association and editor of its ‘official organ’, *Guitar News*. He helped stimulate classical guitar-making in Britain through his writing and support of amateur makers of “the legitimate instrument.”

Kay Appleby, wife of Wilfrid, and Treasurer and Business Editor of the International Classic Guitar Association. The history of classical guitar making in Britain was, and still is, an overwhelmingly male occupation but in the 100th issue of *Guitar News* (1968) Wilfrid Appleby acknowledged that “in all matters concerning the Association, in fact, they work as a team... It is, of course, a ‘labour of love’, and involves many hours of hard concentrated work, especially for the Business Editor, who deals with the accounts, card index and the very considerable correspondence.”

Terry Usher (1909-1969) was one of the most significant contributors to the development of modern classical guitar-making in England. As well as a player, composer and teacher, he was a prolific writer in BMG from the mid-1930s and wrote technical articles about classical guitar construction in the late 1940s. He also wrote the first English-language, scholarly, organological article on the classical guitar for The Galpin Society Journal in 1956. His day job was Public Relations Officer for Manchester City Council.

J.K. Sutcliffe was a writer for Guitar News and throughout the 1950s he wrote articles on the construction of the classical guitar. Before there was any set of instructions (in English) on building a guitar, he provided technical information for “the very patient and careful amateur.”



Theodorus M. Hofmeister (centre) (1897-1955) was an Architect and President of the Classical Guitar Society in Chicago. He made an important contribution to the early history of classical guitar making by creating the first technical drawing of a Torres guitar (FE26) for Guitar Review magazine in 1954. Today, FE26 is thought to be a fake but nevertheless, the drawing provided a useful level of detail for subsequent makers to build from. Although published in the USA, Guitar Review had readers and contributors in the U.K. and the Hofmeister drawing laid the groundwork for subsequent DIY texts on classical guitar making in Britain. By the way, Hofmeister is sometimes spelled Hofmeister, even in the same article. Also, the drawing was by Hofmeister Jnr. not to be mistaken with his father, a musician who travelled from Holland to Chicago in 1910 and died the same year as his son.



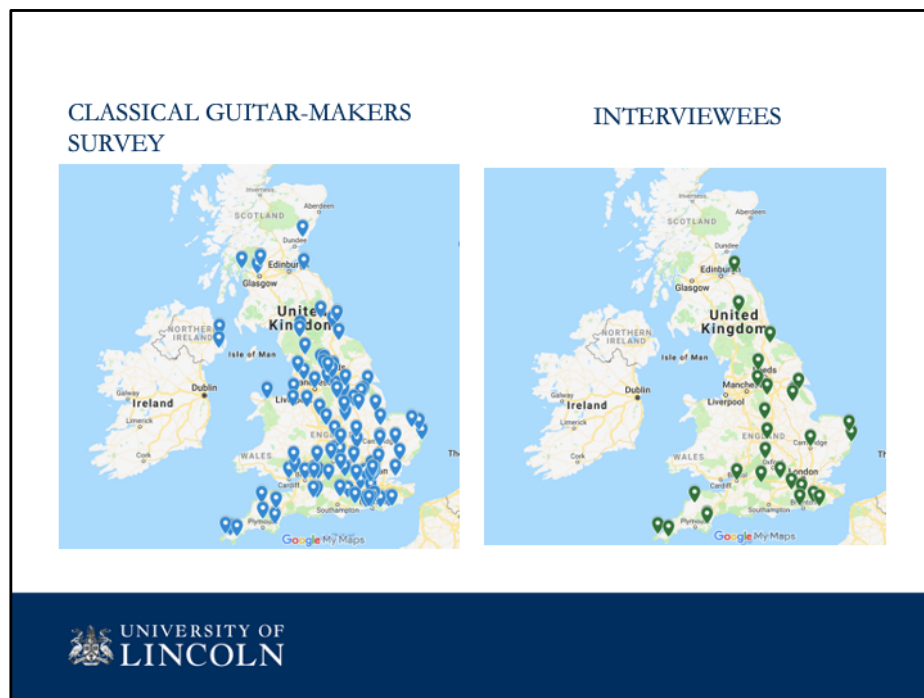
These are the first people to provide instructions on how to make a classical guitar in English.

He may be holding a violin but Clifford A. Hoing (1903-1989) was responsible for the first step-by-step instructions for making a classical guitar. Wilfrid Appleby (see previous posts) “gave him what information we could find on the subject”, encouraging Hoing to provide “full instructions” for “anyone with a fair knowledge of woodwork to make a good example of the classic guitar.” He did so over five issues of Woodworker magazine (1955), alongside articles on making fishing floats and furniture. The post-war “DIY craze” occurred at the same time as the 1950s “guitar boom” and Hoing’s articles in Woodworker are a product of that time. He became “one of the most respected” British makers of violins and violas but should also be remembered for being the first person to codify the craft of classical guitar making.

Eric V. Ridge was a committee member of the ICGA and an amateur violin maker. He used the Hofmeester plan to help him make his first guitar, which he documented in The Birth of a Guitar (1956-7), published as a series of instructions in Guitar News. Alongside Hoing’s and Sharpe’s DIY texts, Ridge contributed a more personal narrative, reassuring the reader “that at no time during the making of the instrument

was anything done without due consideration and forethought.” It would be nearly a decade before their instructions were surpassed by Irving Sloane’s book on classical guitar construction (1966) and a further six years (1972) when the first college course in fretted instrument making opened at the London College of Furniture.

Here is A.P. Sharpe (left) in the workshop with Marco Roccia (1902-1987). Roccia was one of the first luthiers in Britain to experiment with making a ‘concert’ guitar, which he developed between 1948-1951. Terry Usher reviewed Marco Roccia’s concert guitar in 1951 as “the first true concert guitar to be produced in this country.”



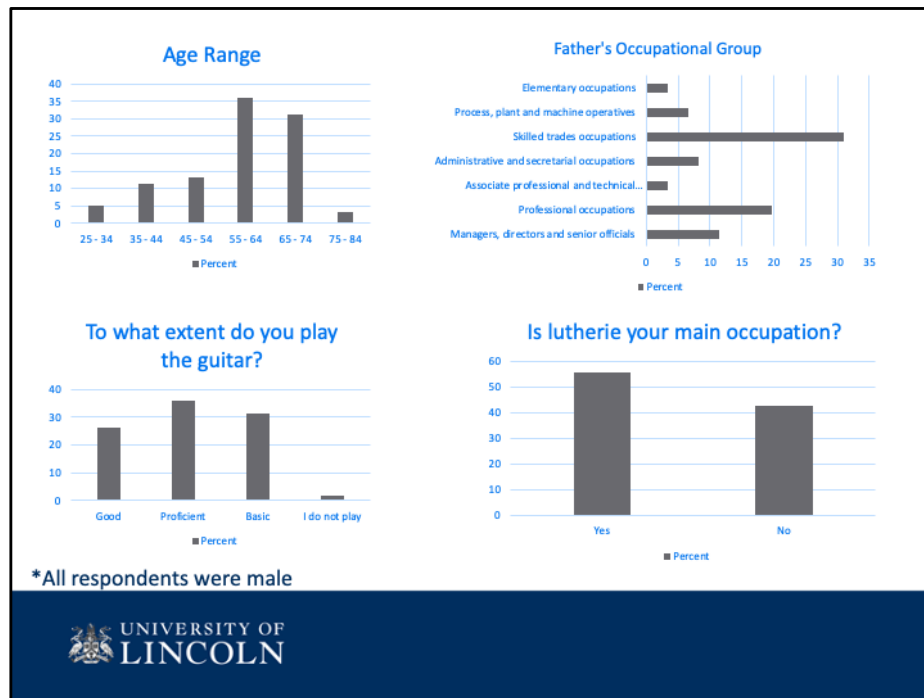
For my survey, I compiled a spreadsheet of all classical guitar makers in the UK, both dead and alive. There are currently 140, of which 104 are alive. My survey was sent to 102 and I found out about the additional two from survey respondents.

SURVEY OF CLASSICAL GUITAR-MAKERS (UK)

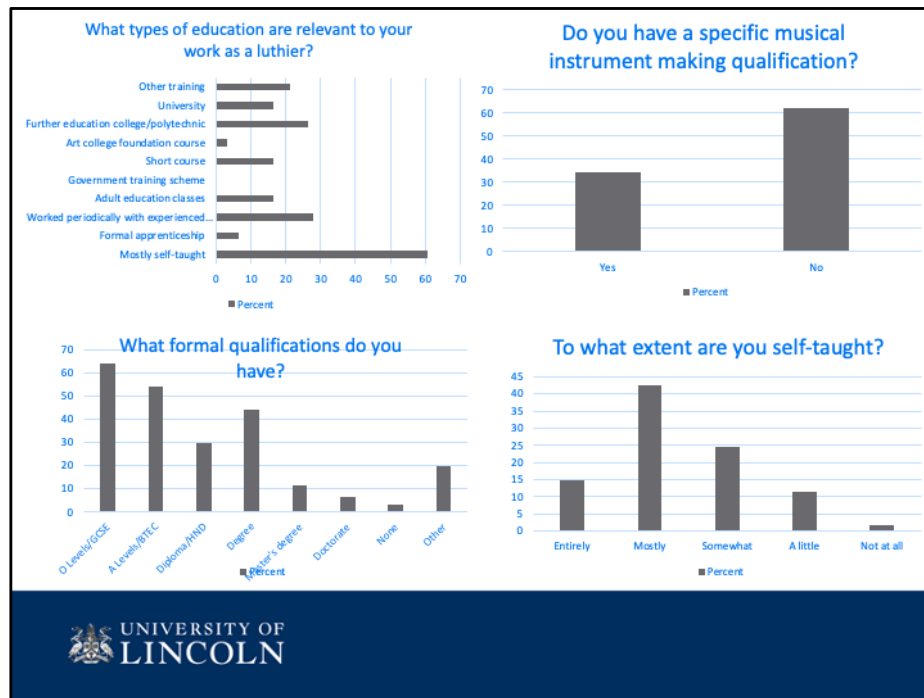
Population=102, respondents=61 (confidence level of 95%, margin of error 8%)



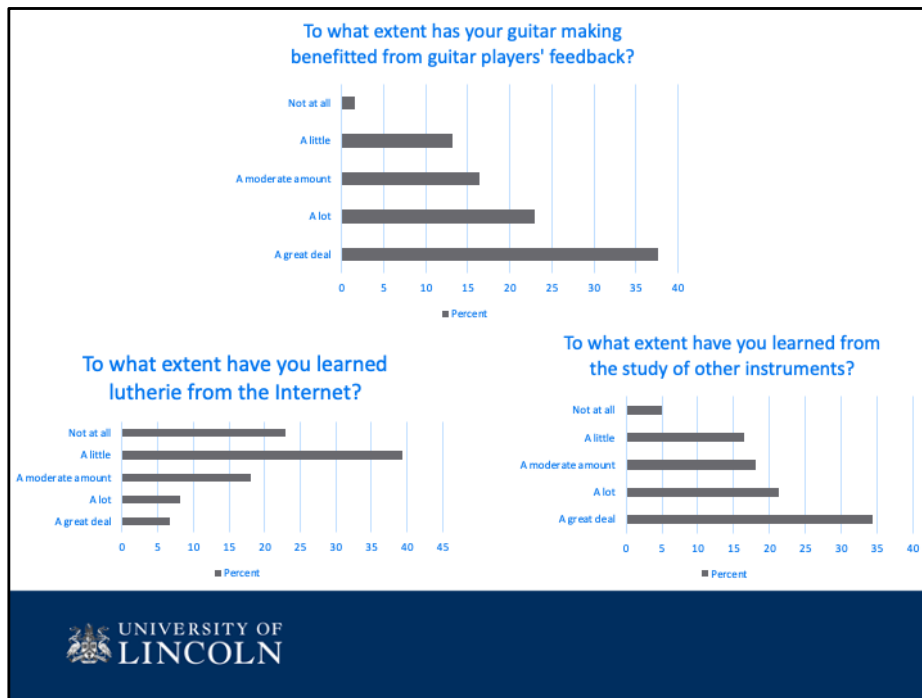
I asked 101 luthiers 27 questions. I have since learned of 4 more and there will be other amateur makers. With the population of 105, the sample of 61 respondents produces a margin of error of 8% with a confidence level of 95%



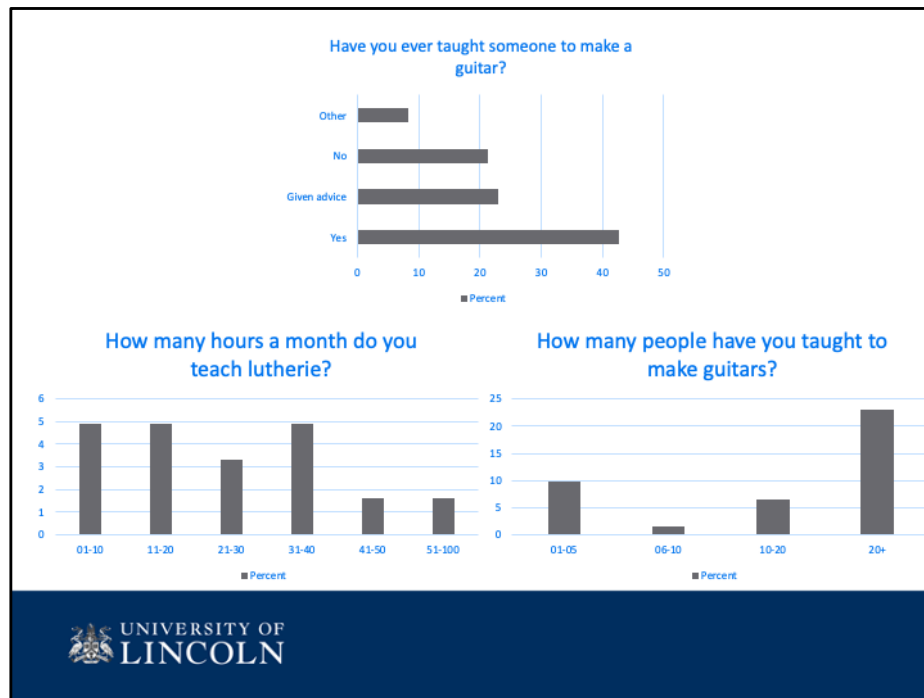
- 67.2% are aged between 55-74
- 50.8% fathers worked in skilled trades or professional occupations
- 62.3% consider themselves proficient or good players
- 55.7% consider it their main occupation



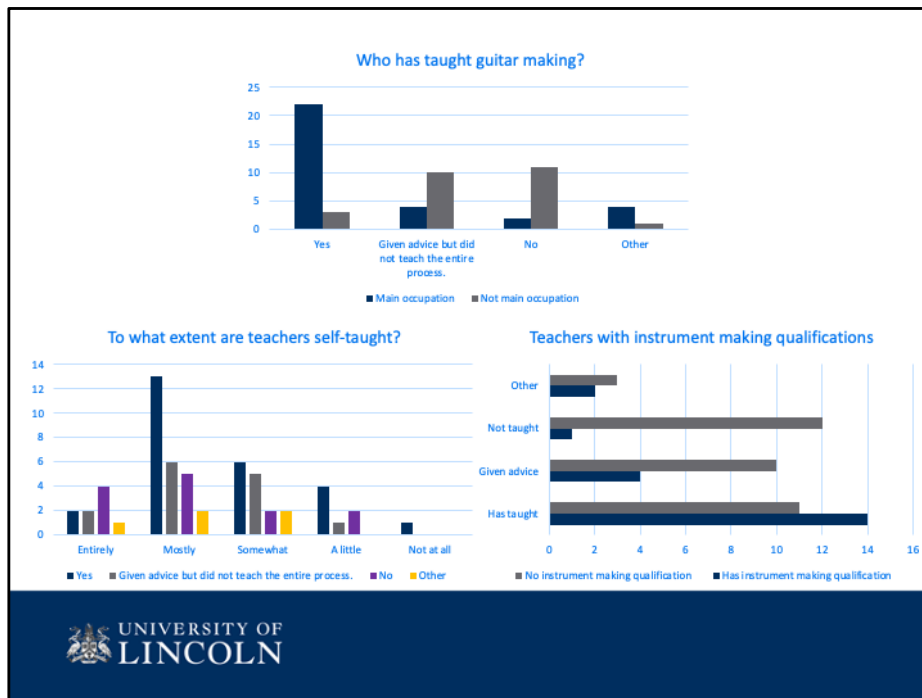
26.2% consider college to be relevant to their work as a luthier
 27.9% said that working periodically with an experienced maker has been relevant to their work as a luthier
 60.7% consider themselves mostly self-taught
 34.3% have a specific musical instrument making qualification



60.7% have benefitted a lot or a great deal from player feedback
 62.3% have learned a little or nothing at all about lutherie from the Internet
 55.7% have learned a lot or a great deal from the study of other instruments



42.6% have taught someone to make a guitar
 18% teach up to 40hrs/month (one week/month)
 29.6% have taught more than 10 people

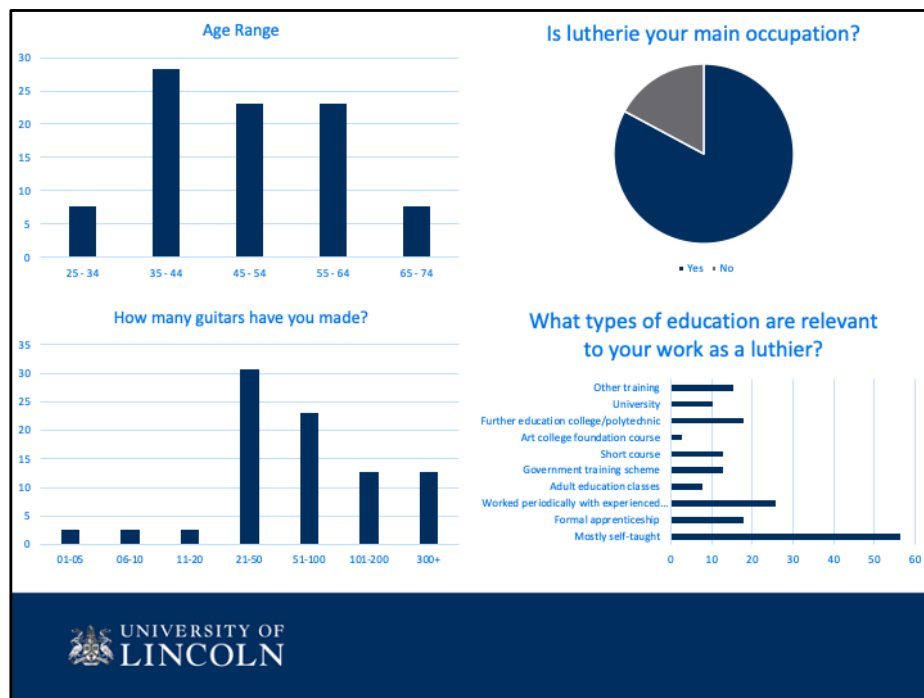


Full-time luthiers teach more than amateur luthiers (22 vs 3)
 Entirely/mostly self-taught luthiers teach more than luthiers who are somewhat/little/not self-taught (15 vs 11)
 Slightly more teachers have a musical instrument qualification than not (14 vs 11)
 'Self-taught' does not mean 'unqualified'. Luthiers may have a qualification but consider themselves mostly self-taught.

EGB SURVEY MARCH 2020



In March 2020, a slightly modified version of the UK Classical Guitar (UKCGM) survey was distributed via social media and an internal mailing list by the European Guitar Builders (EGB), in advance of their annual symposium which I had been invited to speak at. A relatively low response of 35 people completed the survey, less than 10% of the potential population who would have seen the announcement made by the EGB. Nevertheless, the participants were more heterogenous than those who completed the UKCGM survey and comparing the results of both surveys, can help to understand how representative classical guitar-makers in the UK are of guitar-makers in general.



The most significant difference is the age of participants. Those luthiers who completed the EGB survey are generally younger than those who completed the UK Classical Guitar survey. 59% of EGB participants are between the ages of 25 and 54 compared to 29.5% of UKCGM. 70.5% of UKCGM participants are between the ages of 55 and 84, whereas 30.8% of EGB survey participants are between 55 and 74 years. The largest grouping in the EGB survey (28.2%) was aged 35-44 compared to 11.5% of UKCGM of the same age range. The difference in the age of respondents is likely to have some effect on other responses as will be indicated.

Another difference is that about three quarters (74.4%) of EGB survey participants stated that lutherie is their main profession, compared to about 55.7% in the UKCGM survey. This may reflect the difficulty in making a career out of classical guitar making in the UK compared to making other types of guitar. As we have seen, over 50% of the UKCGM participants exclusively make nylon string guitars.

The earliest first guitar of EGB participants was in 1967 and the most recent first guitar was 2019. The highest grouping was in 2010, when 17.9% of participants made their first guitar, probably reflecting the greater inclusion of younger makers in this survey.

When asked how many guitars they have made, 53.9% have made between 21 and 100 instruments and 25.6% have made over 100, compared to 47.6% in the UKCGM survey. Again, this reflects the difference in age of participants in each survey, with the UKCGM survey having a greater percentage of older participants, some of whom had been making over a longer period of time. For example, 13 UKCGM makers over the age of 65, made their first guitar prior to 1981.

The relevant educational experience of EGB participants are in some ways similar to those of the UKCGM survey: the largest group (56.4%) are mostly self-taught and around a quarter (25.6%) had worked periodically with other makers, and 12.8% had done a short course. The differences between the two surveys are that only 3% of EGB participants had taken adult education classes and a greater number of EGB participants (17.9%) had undertaken a formal apprenticeship. The availability of formal educational opportunities will reflect national strategies for vocational education and training.

As for whether EGB participants hold a specific musical instrument qualification, it was evenly split with 50% saying they did and 50% did not. In the UKCGM survey, 34.4% said they did. Such qualifications were gained by EGB participants from places like Newark College (UK), London College of Furniture (UK), Merton College (UK), Bruand School of Guitar Making (Quebec, Canada), the National School of Lutherie (Quebec, Canada), Roberto Venn (USA) and the Centre for Musical instrument Building (Belgium).

For all other survey questions, the EGB results are very similar to those of the UKCGM survey.


<http://www.europeanguitarbuilders.com> “The EGB is an alliance formed by professional independent European luthiers. We are dedicated to support each other by sharing knowledge, resources, and experience in order to preserve and innovate the art and craft of guitar building in Europe as a vital part of our musical culture. The European Guitar Builders Association (EGB) was founded with the goal of organizing the independent luthiers as well as people related to the field of guitar building all across Europe.”

The survey and information sheet were both in the English-language, which is not the first language of the majority of the recipients. The potential population is difficult to determine. The EGB Facebook group has over 600 ‘followers’ but they are not all luthiers. The internal discussion list, comprised of EGB members has around 160 luthiers subscribed.

TEACHING AND LEARNING CLASSICAL GUITAR- MAKING AT COLLEGE


NEWARK COLLEGE

- Previously Newark and Sherwood College. Merged with Lincoln College in 2007.
- Lincoln College: 10,000+ students
- Newark campus: 850+ students
- BA Musical Instrument Craft: 93 students, 15 teaching staff, 4 technicians
- Guitar pathway: 12 students, 3 tutors, 1 technician
- Diploma replaced by BA degree in 2017 (Hull). Now in third year.

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My case study of Newark College involves visiting the guitar workshop for one day a week each month (during term-time, so about 8 times/year). I intend to follow students through their three-year degree. I've interviewed most students, and the staff who run, tutor and support the guitar-making element of the Musical Instrument Crafts degree. I have extensive field notes and photographs, too. Here is an outline of the curriculum and a few of the photographs.

MODULE	CREDITS	PATHWAY SPECIFIC / CORE
Historical and Contextual Studies	20	P
Anatomy and Design of Musical Instruments	20	P
Basic Techniques (Construction, tuning and repair)	40	P
Making Specialist Tools	20	C
Workshop Practice	20	P
MODULE	CREDITS	PATHWAY SPECIFIC / CORE
Applied Acoustics	20	C
Problem Solving	10	C
OPTIONAL MODULES:		
Guitar Making Techniques	20	P(c)
Basic Repair Techniques	20	P(c)
Advanced construction techniques (Classical)	20	P(c)
Advanced construction techniques (Steel String)	20	P(c)
Finishing Techniques	20	P(c)
Making Specialist Tools	10	C
MODULE	CREDITS	PATHWAY SPECIFIC / CORE
Business Practice	20	C
Advanced Craft Techniques	20	C
Professional Standards Test	20	C
Final Major Project Preparation	20	C
Final Major Project Realisation	40	C


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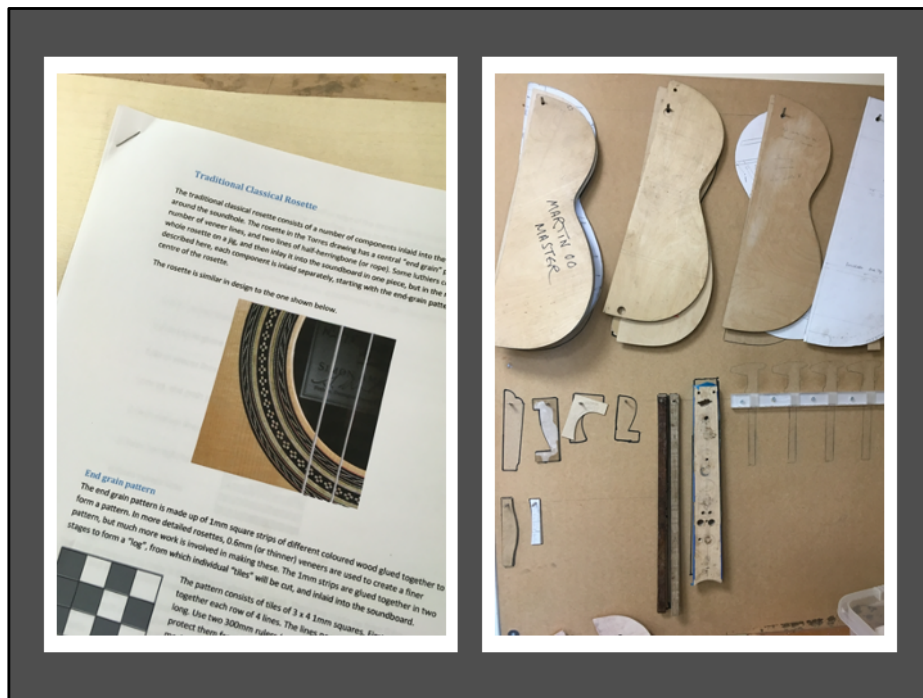
Here's a glimpse at the Newark guitar workshop in February 2020. Play the video.



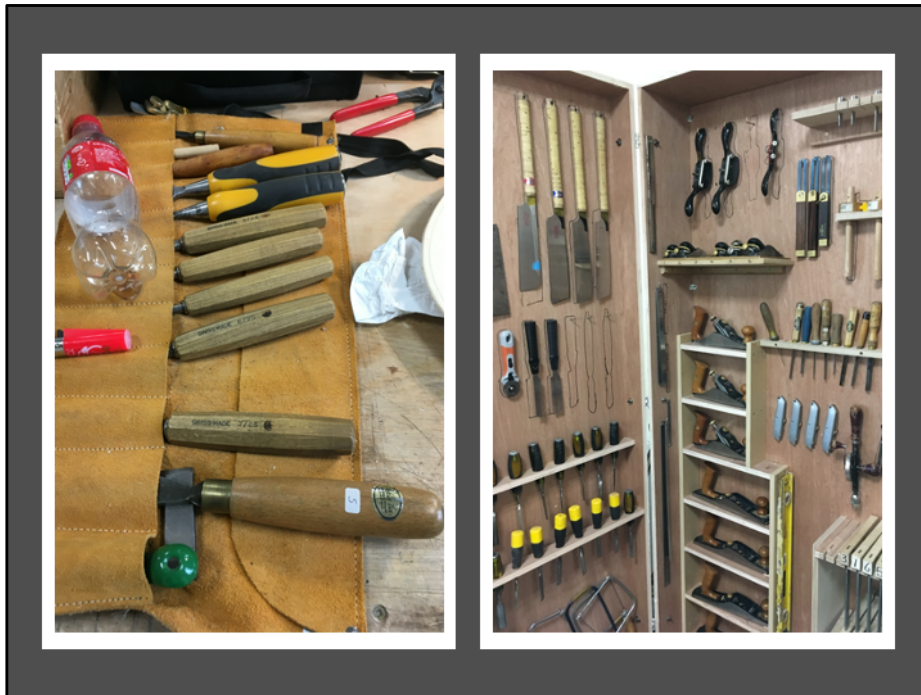
This photograph shows Manu (left) and Adrian (right) working together in a race to build a guitar. To save time, they are sharing the task of scraping the sides of a guitar smooth. The race between two teams is held early in the academic year to enculturate new students and promote peer learning. It is tiring but fun, too. New students can observe more experienced students and participate in the making of an entire instrument in just a few days, whereas it could take them a year to build a guitar of their own.



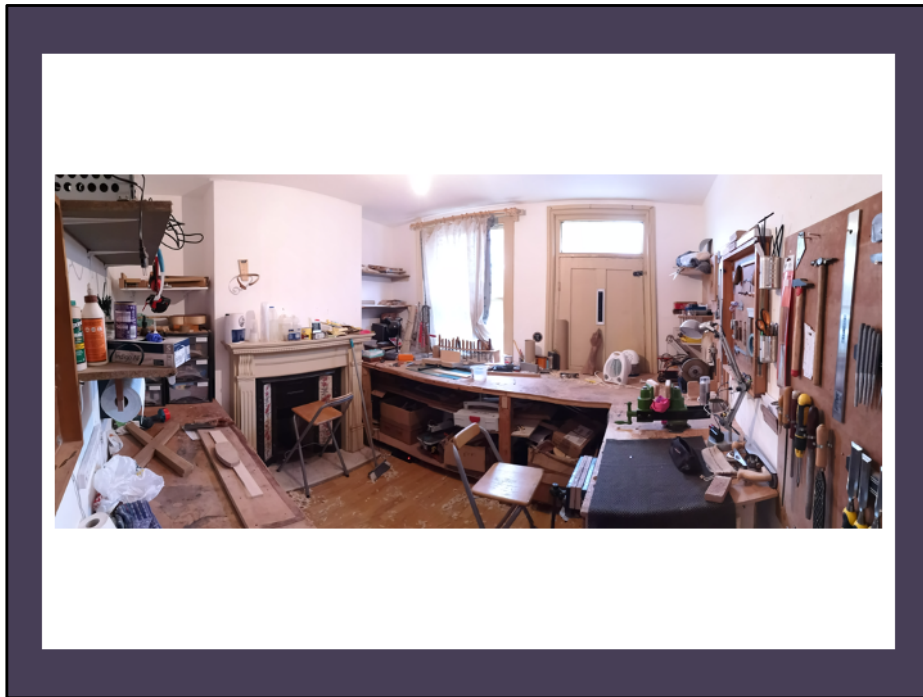
In the photo on the left, James Lister shows Pascal, a first-year student, how to carve the heel. The student records the demo on his phone. On the right, Adrian Lucas gives a demonstration of French polishing one of his own guitars. Group demonstrations such as this are infrequent. On a regular basis, tutors walk around the workshop, stopping to observe and talk to students about their work. In effect, students receive one-to-one tuition and also learn by observing and talking to each other.



Students are given a set of instructions written by the tutors for each step of the build process. They also have access to jigs, plans and templates.



Students bring their own tools. The college supplies tools but students say that they spend too long having to sharpen them. Tools are very personal objects. Good, sharp hand tools are highly sensitive, providing feedback to their user who gets a “feel” for the tools and the materials.



Two students share this workshop in the front room of their house. I was told that except for machinery, it is better equipped than the college workshop (I think this reflects the personal nature of workshop design rather than being a reflection on resources at Newark College). A number of properties in Newark are continually rented by students on the musical instrument making course and so workshops are passed on.



The construction of the soundboard is key to the sound of the guitar. Here, Manu, a second-year student (although with further experience of making violins), is flexing and tapping the braced wood to determine whether he has worked it enough to achieve the tone he is aiming for. This is not something that can be quickly learned and results from repeated individual experience. Books, video tutorials and measuring tools are available to guide and assist with this judgement but repeated experience is key.



Students take two tool making modules during their degree, making at least four tools, one of their own design. Here is tutor, Gavin Hartley, advising Adam (red) on the use of a milling machine. Many of these machines are decades old, some having a 'war finish'. They used to serve engineering courses that ran at Newark College but since these courses moved to Lincoln, the well-equipped workshop is used exclusively by instrument making students. Some tools are unique to lutherie and expensive to buy so being able to make their own tools will be of long-term benefit. Examples of tools that students have made, exhibited at the end of year show. The circle cutter and binding cutter (left) are beautifully made and could be sold commercially, as some luthiers do.



The end of year exhibition room, where students show their work to the public. Professional musicians (in this photo Amanda Cook) are invited to assess the instruments and give feedback to the students in front of peers, parents and the researcher. In the evening, a selection of instruments will be played at their graduation ceremony in a local Methodist hall.

- Joss' blog <https://josswinn.org/tag/lutherie/>
- Joss @ Instagram <https://www.instagram.com/josslwinn/>
- My experience with Roy Courtall
<https://makingmasterguitars.org.uk/journal-introduction/>
- Classical guitar-making bibliography
<https://josswinn.org/2018/05/25/making-classical-guitars-a-bibliography/>
- Classical guitar-maker map (UK) <http://bit.ly/cgluthiers>

If you make guitars, please complete the EGB Survey!
https://unioflincoln.eu.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV_0UMgckGi3K8v9hr

Please email me if you would like further information about any aspect of my research
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