

Two Unstuck Bagpipe Tenons

David Rachor asked if anyone had experience in releasing stuck tenons on woodwind instruments. (Comm 1927). My experience is limited to bagpipes where tenons are usually bound with hemp or a similar kind of thread.

The first time I encountered this problem was with a Highland bagpipe drone where the hemp had stuck firmly to the *outside* of the drone slide [i.e. the female part of the socket]. Thus there was a cylinder of hemp glued on its *outside surface*, but rotating freely on its *inside surface*. I found that leaving the drone for a few days in a room with a different temperature and humidity from my workshop (i.e. my bedroom) did eventually allow me to work this joint loose.

Another time that I encountered this problem was actually in the Metropolitan Museum in October 1996. I was in the bowels of the museum inspecting a set of Scottish Smallpipes. I was keen to see if there was a chanter reed still surviving in the bag but was frustrated that the hemp binding had fixed itself onto the inside of the stock. The chanter rotated freely, but refused to come out, even after a certain amount of judicious manipulation. Eventually a telephone call was made to another department and after many minutes a lab coated technician arrived carrying a container of a clear liquid.

He proceeded to dribble small quantities of this liquid into the stuck joint using a hypodermic syringe and eventually after more judicious manipulation we managed to remove the chanter.

I was so anxious to inspect the reed that I failed to inquire in much detail about this miracle liquid. I remember they told me that it was harmless and it was often used by conservators for various tasks. I do regret that I didn't get its name. Perhaps it was orange oil I do not recall it having any odour. I do not think it was volatile.

They had a full US gallon container of it, and we only used a few drops of the stuff. If they are always so sparing with it I would not be surprised if they still have some of it; unless it has since been placed on some conservators' 'illegal substances' list.

I celebrated the incident by composing a modest bagpipe tune entitled 'The Unstuck Chanter'. I can supply a copy of this tune to anyone else who is interested. However I make no claim that this tune holds any hidden powers to unstick stuck tenons!

Julian Goodacre, January 2011