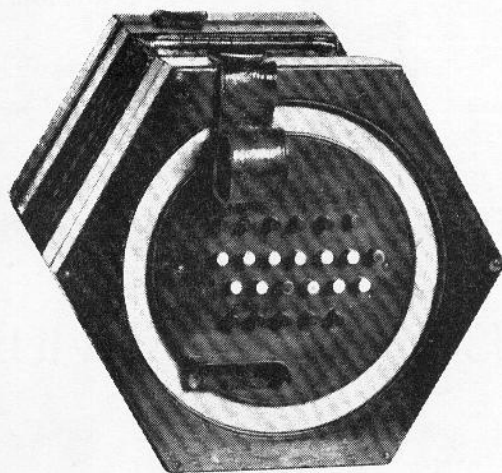


# FREE REED

The Concertina Newsletter



No. 14

August, 1973.

# THE CONCERTINA NEWSLETTER

*The specialist magazine for concertina and free-reed instrument enthusiasts.*

Available free,  
or on subscription,  
and supported by  
readers' donations

Edited by: Neil Wayne  
Duffield  
Derby  
England.

The editor welcomes articles, letters, and musical contributions from subscribers, on any subject relating to the history, repair, revival and use of free-reed instruments of all types.

Subscribers become due on November 1st each year, and new subscribers are entitled to all back issues from the previous November. Both subscription to the Newsletter, and any back issues, remain free to all who are not able to afford to contribute financially and readers may subscribe by periodic donations if they prefer.

The Newsletter library has an extensive collection of early concertina music, tutors, tune-books, concertina catalogues, early photographs, and an extensive collection of folk music and musicological magazines from all over the world. Any subscriber can borrow from the library, and can buy concertina, melodeon and instrumental folk records, tune-books, concertina spares, and "Concertina Consciousness" T-shirts and shoulder bags at good discounts. A full concertina repair and overhaul service is available.

*Subscription rates from 1st November 1972 – 1973:-*

Great Britain £1.50    Europe £2.00    Elsewhere: Surface \$7.00    Air-Mail \$12.00

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## TOPIC

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# THE CONCERTINA NEWSLETTER

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## EDITORIAL

A quick one this time, sandwiched between a week at Sidmouth Festival, a week at Whitby Festival, and a week at the Fleadh Ceol in Listowel, Ireland. Again my apologies for the delays to the Newsletter, but regularity is slowly being achieved.

### A mini-convention in Yorkshire

Steve Wood is organising a get-together for all interested subscribers in Keighley, Yorkshire, on Saturday, September 1st; it looks like being a good day and evening, so for programmes and further details, write to Steve at 26b, Cavendish Street, Keighley, Yorkshire.

### The Seventh Concertina Convention

Arrangements are now well under way for another full scale meeting in The Brewery Arts Centre, Kendal, Westmorland, on Saturday, November 10th. Application forms will go out with issue 15, but since attendance may have to be limited, feel free to write in now and book your place!

### Charity Concert a great success

The Folk concert recently held in Alfreton, Derbyshire, and featuring Muckram Wakes, Swan Arcade, Alistair Anderson, and The Dolphin Morris men, raised £160 for the Social Services Fund for a minibus for handicapped and elderly folk in the area!

## Newsletter Records

On the 12th of this month, I spent a memorable day in Livingstone Studios, London, recording the wonderful duet concertina playing of Tommy Williams for what promises to be the first of a series of records of Masters of British concertina music. Though no release date can yet be set for Tommy's record, we hope to have tapes available for subscribers as soon as possible.

Many thanks to Nic Kinsey and Lea Nicholson for making it all possible.

## Concertina Spares

There's been such a demand for spares that all the sample boards and price lists are out on loan at the moment. Could subscribers please return them as soon as possible?

## The Liverpool Concertina Club

On the 4th July, 1973, a meeting was held in the Crescent Hotel, Netherfield Road, Liverpool to inaugurate a fortnightly club for concertina enthusiasts of all ages and interests. The next meetings are on August 29th, September 12th and 26th. etc. The Crescent is only 10 minutes from the city centre, and the organiser, Bob Dawson, of 19 Bankburn Road, Tuebrook, Liverpool 13. will be pleased to hear from anyone who can come along. By means of collections and small subs, the club hopes to invite noted concertina players along as guests, both from the

folk scene and from the many more senior players in the area.

### Two of our Fellow Magazines

are advertising in this issue, America's splendid SING OUT!, and Britain's own FOLK REVIEW Both are well worth your support.

NEIL WAYNE

### NEWSLETTER SERVICES

The new T-shirt designs, featuring the Lachenal and Wheatstone concertina labels, have proved quite popular at Festivals and Workshops, and we've had some more printed, and some Wheatstone and Lachenal shoulder bags too. Due to the great demand, a Jeffries Anglo T-shirt is now being designed, and orders now being taken. Last year, we were able to get a few toddlers and young kids' sizes for our T-shirt designs, and we've just got some more, really cute little shirts from size 22" to 30". Concertina Consciousness design only.

### Advertising

It appears that by comparison with other magazines of similar circulation, our rates are

really cheap, so if any of you would like to place a professional card or larger display advert in the Newsletter, please get in touch — type-setting and photos are charged no extra. Folk Clubs too, are welcome to send in details of their forthcoming events for a "club diary" section, similar to Bradford's excellent Topic Folk club's advert in issue 13.

### New records

In addition to the new records announced last issue: "Open the door and let us in" —

Pete and Chris Coe

"Northumberland Forever" —

High Level Ranters

"English Garland" — Topic Budget sampler

"A map of Derbyshire" — Muckram Wakes.

we've imported a limited number of each of the three Chieftains records from Dublin. These highly praised albums, by one of the most respected Irish traditional groups, feature, flute, uilleann pipes, tin whistle, bodhran, fiddle, and the excellent Anglo concertina of Michael Tubridy, and they're available to subscribers at only £1.95 a considerable saving over the British shop price of 45p.

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## NEWSLETTER FINANCE

The rate at which readers here have been subscribing has now started to fall off quite rapidly, as we begin to approach the start of a new subscription year. It is to be hoped that the new subscribers continue to come in at a good rate, for the income from this, and from the concertina workshops and mail order service during the summer, should keep us just about solvent and able to continue publishing monthly.

All subscriptions fall due again in November 1973, but both subscription to the Newsletter, and all back issues, are still available free to those who are not yet able to afford to contribute financially. Readers are welcome to help out with periodic donations, if they prefer, and stamps, envelopes and paper are always useful, as I still get 200 letters a week!

Many thanks for donations, subscriptions and support from the following readers :

R. J. Trickey  
Anne Foster  
David Williams  
Bernard Cromarty  
Jean Bradbury  
Terry Cartmell  
Harry Hatton  
M.B. Keat  
Don Shimmin  
C.A. Brown  
R. Hill  
Liverpool Concertina Club  
Ruth Weiss (USA)  
J.R.T. Carson  
George Howard  
Kate Fincham  
Ian and Lorna Drynan  
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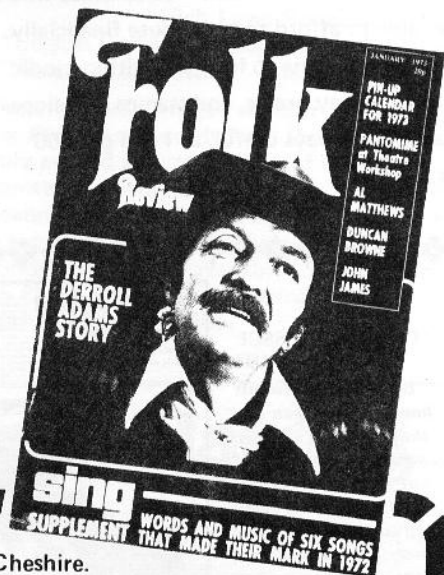
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## READERS' LETTERS

David O. Smith, of Torquay, writes . . .

"One big problem I have down here is the in-availability of folk music or, indeed, anything to do with the folk scene. I know it is quite possible to buy by post but, especially when particular tunes are being chased, this process is somewhat comparable to buying a pig in a poke! Have you any idea where I can find the following following tunes :

The Gentle Maiden,  
The Lark in The Clear Air;  
The Trumpet Hornpipe?

I am particularly keen to get hold of the first two as I have been driving myself, my family and the neighbours round the twist for the past few weeks by trying to learn them by ear off Billy Pigg's L.P."

"We'll be publishing the last two tunes in the Newsletter shortly — but can anyone help with the music to "The Gentle Maiden"?"

NEIL WAYNE

Richard Nyquist of 2021 Santa Cruz Avenue,  
Menlo Park, California 94025, writes. . .

"I am most interested in new or used concertina records by Alf Edwards or even taped copies. I would very much appreciate any information or help you can provide."

John Maher, editor of BRISTOL FOLK NEWS,  
writes . . . . .

"Are the Jeffries T-shirts out yet? I've seen some very fine 'Wheatstones' around on various people. Also, one set of records that has some (very simple, but superb) Anglo playing on them are the Chieftains records on Claddagh CC2, 7 and 10. The player is Michael Tubridy. The records, which I play non-stop, are I think the best folk records in circulation at present of a modern group".

"I've just ordered a dozen of each of the three Chieftains records from Claddagh in Dublin. They will be available at £1.95, rather than the usual £2.45 shop price, to subscribers only"

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## WHEATSTONE AND STROH'S PATENT

*by Julian Pilling*

John Matthias Augustus Stroh was born in Frankfurt am Maine in 1828. As a boy he was apprenticed to a clock and watchmaker and showed such great proficiency for accurate mechanism and construction that at his final examination he was presented with the test piece of his construction, a concession that had never before been made to a competitor.

In 1851 Stroh came to England to visit the Great Exhibition in Hyde Park and decided to stay in this country, a few years afterwards becoming a naturalised citizen. Within two or three years of his arrival in this country Stroh was introduced to Professor Wheatstone and began then an association that lasted until Sir Charles' death in 1875. Throughout this period, owing to the mechanical and inventive genius of Stroh, Wheatstone produced an immense number of appliances connected with telegraphy and acoustics, the two most important being the A.B.C. telegraph and the 'Wheatstone System'.

In 1871 Stroh received a provisional patent for an invention which had for its object the improvement of musical instruments in which reeds are employed. The main feature of this was the arrangement and combination of parts whereby a single reed was rendered capable of producing the notes of one, two or more octaves and of producing a glide from one note to another, of a similar character to that which may be produced on a violin. The improvement thus described in the patent may, it reads, 'be mounted on a separate frame and be provided with bellows to form a distinct instrument, or ... may be combined with other keyed instruments such as harmoniums, pianos, or organs, whilst by slight modifications these improvements may be adapted to wind instruments blown by the mouth of the performer.'

The following year the same invention was accorded a full patent under the names of Sir Charles Wheatstone and John Matthias Augustus Stroh and the patent describes the arrangement fully. (1872, No.39.) A measure of

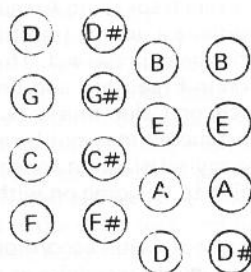
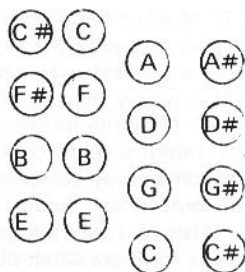
the number of patents being sought is that this is dated January 4th and is No.39! According to the 'Proceedings of the Institution of Electrical Engineers' the instrument constructed by Stroh on this principal was 'so delicate in its action that the various notes produced were musically pure and extended over three octaves.'

The principle of the instrument was that the single reed was lengthened or shortened in its sounding length by two double rollers, behind which was another pair of rollers to steady the action and inhibit unwanted vibrations. These rollers were activated by buttons on the side of the instrument when it was constructed in the same form as Wheatstone's 'Symphonium', or by piano keys when adapted to the harmonium, and to each note was a stop which had screws to adjust the tuning. When the keys were pressed quickly normal playing resulted, but when pressed slowly a glide to the next note was effected.

I would refer readers who may be interested in this instrument to the patent specifications as the system of levers is quite complicated. Perhaps it was this complication that prevented the instrument from being developed commercially as it would require a man with Stroh's constructive genius to construct each instrument, and perhaps too, the action of the rollers on the reed would mean a relatively short life for the reed and replacing the reed and retuning would be a skilled job in itself. It is interesting that the instrument was invented as it shows something of the style of Victorian music that the glide should be considered a feature most desired.

What happened to the original instrument that Stroh constructed and demonstrated is not known. It certainly should feature in Neil's concertina museum. To make a replica of the instrument would, I feel, be a fine project for a University engineering department! I give below the arrangement of the keys for the mouth blown instrument that was built on the lines of Wheatstone's Symphonium.





*The fingering system of Wheatstone and Stroh's "GLIDING REED SYMPHONIUM", patented 1872.*

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## BASICS OF CAJUN ACCORDION

by David S. Smith.

Amongst the French-speaking Arcadian ("Cajun") people of Louisiana a unique tradition of accordion playing has been preserved. This deserves full recognition in *Free Reed* and I'm preparing a detailed article on Cajun music, but due to several circumstances I may not be able to complete it to my satisfaction for some time. So here's something to be going on with.

The vast majority of Cajun accordion recordings feature what we would recognise as a four-stop single-row diatonic melodeon in the key of C, in octave tuning. There are ten treble buttons and two bass buttons only. There seems to be one favourite model which is often pictured on LP sleeves, this being very similar in design to the melodeon shown on p.13 of *Free Reed* No.13. Unfortunately, tremolo tuning, which is so good for morris, sword and general British work, just does not produce the real Cajun sound.

About a half of all pieces are played "straight" in the key of C. Nothing of special importance here.

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Also very common is to play the C accordion in the key of G. Most of the pieces with a marked blues feeling are played in this way. It's the same method as worked out by blues harmonica players and known by them as playing "crossed" or "cross-key". Note the following points. The sixth (E) and minor seventh (F) degrees of the scale of G become easily accessible in two places on the treble button row — ideal for playing bluesy riffs. Also, "straight" sounding tunes which need the sixth are often played this way. Notes A and B in the middle of the row are both pulls and give the second and major third degrees of the scale of G. Special effects can be got by playing a fast grace note or a trill in such a way as to hint at the minor third lying between. This is the same trick as used by blues pianists in order to sound as if they're "playing between the keys". The bass buttons give tonic and subdominant harmonies, as opposed to the usual tonic and dominant harmonies. The subdominant is an important harmony in many Cajun tunes.

All this adds up to a very distinctive sound. An odd sensation when first playing this style is that more pulls than pushes are usually needed, so the air button has to be used while pushing, which is the reverse of normal.

A much rarer method is to play the C instrument in the key of D. Both minor third (F) and seventh (C) become available and a good blues atmosphere can be obtained. A famous piece played in this way is Nathan Abshire's "Pine Grove Blues", also known as "Ma Negresse". He plays the accordion bass quite normally and the discord with the backing group gives a weird effect.

Any melodeon players who hasn't heard any real Cajun music is missing out. Try listening to players such as Joseph Falcon, Amadie Breaux, Nathan Abshire, Lawrence Walker, Iry le June, Austin Pitre and you can't go wrong. The Cajun bands generate a fantastic beat while the accordion blasts away or belts out a fast two-step on top of it. This combined with uninhibited vocals in mostly incomprehensible French dialect gives you the Cajun sound. Nothing like it!

## THE AEOLIAD

I

Come Polyhymnia, and with fire divine  
Inflame the bard t'intone the soaring line  
To hymn that hero's praises, who of old  
Made music from a quivering blade of gold.  
What subtle songs within the ore lay hid  
Burst forth to life as Wheatstone's genius bid.  
From orient's fastness, lo, a spark there came  
Which through his cunning force became a flame.  
Now, sensing wonders were about to be,  
Hephaestos came himself to oversee,  
While mighty Dis from out his storehouse black  
Brought metals that the project naught might  
lack.

Latona's son himself set swift aside  
His warlike parts and to the forging hied.  
How now to tell the hours of thought and toil  
That brought the tongue to quiver, spring to coil.  
And set the divuse range of sundry parts  
In order just by the inventors arts?  
Hour upon hour he laboured on his own  
With steel for strength and massy gold for tone,  
Until at length behold — his efforts crowned  
And music spreads its soothing strains around.  
But brief the spasms of the throbbing reed,  
To make the phrases soar he notes the need,  
And once more brings his artifice to bear  
While aeolus himself now takes a share.  
He now projects a reservoir of hide  
Of curious form and flexible beside,  
Manipulated by the player's hands,  
Which of itself inhales as it expands  
And then by gentle pressure charms the sound  
From out the reeds. They echo all around.  
In arching phrases o'er the awaiting earth  
Thus was the concertina brought to birth,  
Finished in rosewood and of form compact  
Made up in sweetness what in size it lacked.

II

Fame with her many tongues ran swift and wide  
And spread its name abroad on every side,  
Proud to perceive within that instrument  
Her image true, took it in compliment.  
'Twere wearisome to dwell at length, I fear  
On all the triumphs of its bright career,  
How Lachenal and Jeffries and the rest  
Employed their arts to see who made the best;  
How served the modulations of its voice  
To make the music of its masters' choice —  
To sentimental songster's lovesick lay

A Philomelian descant for to play,  
With melody to urge and rhythm keen  
The morris dancer's capers on the green.  
Lo, too, the comic actor on the halls  
Employs its notes to earn him curtain calls  
While mariners at sea allay their cares  
With sturdy chanties or nostalgic airs.  
'Tis played for melancholia's antidote  
And Terpsichorean revels to promote.  
But know it also has a martial voice  
Which makes the spirit leap and heart rejoice.  
And evangelic songsters march in time  
And sing their praises with its stirring chime.  
So thus the prosperous century expires  
With grand concerted concertina choirs.  
But now harsh Ares and Bellona eke  
Combine together and their vengeance wreak,  
Whose grim capricious forays o'er the earth  
Destroy our lives and all we have of worth.  
With peace devices new proliferate  
Eclipsing others that we knew of late  
Such are the agents which their toils combine  
To bring our music to a sad decline,  
Though still in pockets lurks the living light  
Which Tester and his like keep burning bright.  
So, hordes of Eris halt, wherefore rejoice?  
Your cause is lost. Pause now, give ear. The voice  
Which Wheatstone first employed peals forth  
once more

To glad th'attending spheres, the night is o'er  
One, conscious of the concertina's claim  
Likewise determined to restore its fame  
And link together all who share its thrall  
Sounds forth the signal. From beginnings small  
The project grows apace, so now he sends  
His printed missives to the nations' ends  
And Anderson, Kirkpatrick and the rest  
Come to the circle by his zeal impressed.  
Old instruments which long had lain ignored  
Are brought to light again, to play restored  
And many strive again the art to learn  
For now renascent, bright the flame does burn.  
So now the tale is told, the muse departs.  
A paradox, in parting she imparts,  
That fading fortune may not sink again.  
Since it is brought to war again by Wayne.

*I spent two happy afternoons on this piece of  
popycock. I hope it amuses Newsletter  
subscribers everywhere!*

*Stuart Lawrence, Lancashire.*

## **The Sixth Concertina Convention at Bishops Stortford – June 10th 1973**

The Triads Arts Centre and projected Regional Concert Hall in Bishops Stortford, was recently the venue for our sixth "Concertina Convention" one of our best yet, and certainly one of the most musically varied of our gatherings so far. Centred on one of the smaller halls in the converted maltheouses which compose Triad, the Convention took the usual form of an introductory talk on concertina history illustrated by a large display of old and unusual concertinas, followed by an hour or so of demonstration playing from some of the ninety or so subscribers and other interested folk who attended. A brief resume of the afternoon's performances is as follows :

TREVOR VALE, one of the few duet players on the folk scene, accompanied a couple of songs on his 81 keyed McCann duet, followed by COLIN CATER of Chelmsford, an Anglo player well known on the folk music scene, who after accompanying himself on a song, played three morris dance tunes, "William and Mary", "Black Joke", and "The Buffoon". By way of a complete contrast, Mr. FRANK BUTLER the noted London concertina teacher led an impromptu concertina orchestra made up of over twelve of his pupils from his two London classes in several concert pieces. The music was arranged for treble, baritone and bass-baritone parts by Mr. Butler, and the selections played by the group included "Bouree" by Handel, "The Cuckoo Waltz", and an arrangement of English Dance tunes.

After the orchestra, another soloist, the nationally known folksinger PETER WOOD, who accompanied two songs, "The Coast of Peru", and "Nottingham Ale", on a Wheatstone baritone-treble Aeola, using the extended bass of this instrument to great effect.

Regular visitors to every convention so far are JOHN and SARAH LEDBURY from Sheffield. Sarah uses the English concertina to accompany John's singing, and they performed "The Ploughshare" and "Robin Hood and the 15 Foresters".

We were glad to welcome to this convention Mr. & Mrs. HARRY CRABB and their son NEVILLE, who are the well known concertina makers from London. Mr. Crabb played for us, on one of his own Crane duets, of course, and demonstrated how the duet can both play a chordal accompaniment on the left hand, and a melody or solo line on the right. The Crabbs were much in demand later in the day, answering queries and giving advice on concertina matters.

More duet playing followed, from the lively trio of HERBERT GREENE, BILLY HARTFORD and GEORGE CRATHORNE. They all play large McCann duets, and Herbert Greene has for many years been a professional concertina player, and an innovator of new duet systems including the "Concordeon" which he has patented. They gave us a most entertaining spot including "Sons of the Free" and "This was my Lovely Day". The afternoon playing session was brought to a close by ALISTAIR ANDERSON, who played some of his own favourite tunes on the English concertina including "The Dark Island", "Laird of Drumblair" the delightful hornpipe "The Flowing Tide" and by request "The Trumpet Hornpipe" (Captain Pugwash to most people).

We then split up into various sessions or workshops; Alistair Anderson and Frank Butler led a workshop on various aspects of English concertina playing, the duet concertina players gathered in the bar to exchange hints and playing experiences, and anglo and melodeon session started in one of the adjacent theatres, and those more interested in repairs and the older forerunners of modern concertinas took up their screwdrivers in the main room.

After an extended tea-time break, the evening session commenced around 7.30 taking the form of an informal concert featuring some of the better-known players and guests at the Convention. Musicianship of the highest quality was evident in the performance of Mr. JOHN HUTCHERSON, of the International Concertina Association. Playing a baritone-tenor English, Mr. Hutcherson performed "The Serenade from the Student Prince" and "Londonderry Air", both in his own arrangements. CLIFFORD

GODBOLD then accompanied a couple of songs on his Anglo, followed by STEVE WOOD one of our most enthusiastic subscribers, who played a selection of tunes on his new Crabb English. His performance somewhat showed the effect of his birthday celebrations, but amongst tunes we recognised were "Another Jig will do", "Rakes of Marlow", a selection of Morris tunes, and (how apt!) a drinking song. ROD and MICH who'd spent most of the day rehearsing an informal Convention band then played some morris tunes, "Best of Society", "Shepherds May", "Country Gardens", and "Lord of the Dance" on anglo, English and melodeon.

HARRY BEARD, one of the "Coventry contingent" who come to nearly every convention, then played "Lullaby of the Leaves", and "Bless This House" on his baritone English, a very moving sound indeed. Many young players in the Kent area have been introduced to the concertina by GLADYSTHORP of Rochester, and she and one of her pupils played us several tunes from the Northumbrian Pipers' Tune Book, including "Rothbury Hills".

The next gentleman to take the stage is rapidly becoming one of the folk-heroes of the Concertina revival - 80 year old Tommy Williams, the last workman of Lachenal and Co., and one of the finest ear-players of the duet concertina that England has known. Tommy gave us a great set of tunes, some of his own making, including "Rose Marie", "The Waltz with no name", "The Tommy Williams March", including several encores and a couple of jokes too!

The HERBERT GREEN TRIO then played again, and Herbert himself took a solo, "Chu Chin Chow", demonstrating the great range and versatility of the duet in experienced hands. HARRY BEARD and TOMMY WILLIAMS gave us a quick impromptu duet, playing "The Blue-Bell Polka", and the evening was brought to a splendid close by performances from two of the best of the new wave of English concertina players, LEA NICHOLSON and ALISTAIR ANDERSON. Lea played several tunes from his solo album "Horsemusic", including "Kopya" a Yugoslav dance tune in 7/4 time, while ALISTAIR demonstrated the range of his

repertoire with a ragtime guitar tune learnt from Stefan Grossman, Italian Classical Music by Fiocco, and those wonderful Northumbrian pipe tunes. Such was the audience response that Lea and Alistair took a joint encore, and sent us all home with music ringing in our ears.

It was super to see so many folk of widespread ages and interests coming together for a day of fellowship and music, so if you haven't been to a Convention yet, make a note of our next one which takes place on SATURDAY, NOVEMBER 10th at the Brewery Arts Centre, Kendal, Westmoreland.

## THE CONCERTINA IN IRISH TRADITIONAL MUSIC

*By Sean O'Dwyer of Dublin*

There was this Irish colleen happily married to this English gentleman. Her brother and two or three of his mates were daft on the Irish music and the monthly session at the newly-weds' home was an occasion which was dearly cherished by both parties to the marital contract.

Three years later the Englishman remarked to an acquaintance of his at work "Cor, I can't figure out these Paddies! They're nice chappies. I rather like them. But each time they call for a session they play the same tune right through the night. And, Blimey, at the end of it all they stand up and play the same tune all over again!"

One of you may well say "They must have been a poor lot of 'musicianers'!" or, another "When will these English people ever understand those bloody Irish!" The moral of the story lies in the very first sentence. Irish traditional music happily and freely adopted that fine English instrument invented by the talented Londoner, Sir Charles Wheatstone, and it is very likely true that the earliest gramophone recordings of Irish traditional were performed on the Concertina. W.J. Mullaly's two records come to mind. The first was a H.M.V., 78, dated c. 1927 on which he plays two reels 'The Green Groves of Erin' and 'The Ivy Leaf' (the most superb double-



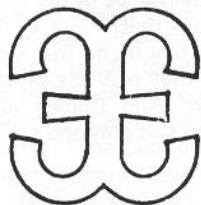
hand playing of the melody one could wish to hear), and the second was a REGAL, G8938, (106416) which some reader may be able to date more accurately than my estimation of late twenties — on which he plays two further reels 'the Races of Athlone' and 'Lady Carbury'. Bill Mullaly is said to have been a Co. Westmeath man who emigrated to the U.S. in the early twenties.

### Adoption

An interesting question is "Who brought the first Concertina to Ireland?" One suggestion is that it may have been brought to the country by British sailors through the River Shannon for the simple reason that Counties Clare, Limerick and Tipperary have been the homes of Concertina playing in Ireland. Or was it brought across the Irish Sea by some Clare emigrant in London in the late 1840s who may have lived or worked in the same street that the Wheatstone family had their factory? Who knows? And even if there are contradictions this is nothing remarkable in the history of an instrument which appears to have been born into contradiction — does it originate from the blown Chinese Sheng or the plucked African

Sansa? Was it patented in 1829 or 1844? Only one of several history books dealing with musical instruments suggests it was patented in 1829, viz., Groves Dictionary of Music and Musicians. One wonders if it was not the symphonium, the forerunner of the Concertina, which was patented on that date.

In many parts of Ireland today some traditional fans may never previously have seen this tiny instrument or its equally tiny case so when a player produces his Concertina from underneath his chair one hears such murmurs as "The sandwiches are coming!" or, "Another collection!". But instead of whetting the appetite or the wallet this lovely clear music satisfies the finer sense of traditional music, and a second round or more must straight away be had. Just as there are forty shades of green there have been, are and will be many outstanding players who because they are different people will display different touches or shades in their own personal expressions of traditional music while still remaining within the bounds of that brand known as Irish traditional as distinct from, for example, Scottish Traditional. Clare can presently boast



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of more than 40 active players although about 15 of these now reside outside its county bounds, London and Dublin being the chief beneficiaries. There are about 20 players in each of the counties Limerick, Tipperary, Kerry and Dublin. Cork, Galway and Wexford have nearer the half dozen. There are a few Irish-Americans (notably Charlie Mulvihill), a growing number of Irish-British, at least one in Co. Down and an unknown number in Co. Antrim. Information regarding the other counties is scant but it must be recorded that were it not for the Anglo Concertina both the Orange Parade and Green 'seisiún' would be much the poorer.

### RECORDS AND TAPES

We are still searching for old records and tapes of Concertina players Here follows a list of those known to us:

(1) **Mrs. Crotty's** (R.I.P.) music appears to have been preserved only by Ciaran MacMathuna at R.T.E. Her style was fluent, clear and gentle, and a delightful little effect which she used at the end of certain tunes which ended in high C was to reinforce it by introducing middle C with a shuffle of the bellows half way to give it a lift before the turn.



(2) **Chris Droney** is featured in at least two: his own outstanding L.P. and C.C.E.'s *Fleadh Cheoil na h-Éireann*, 1970, in which we hear one of his own lovely compositions 'Droney's Fancy'. C.C.E. also have two tapes of Chris at their library in 6, Harcourt Street, Dublin 2. Droney is the man who respects every note of a tune. Since 1956 he has won no fewer than ten All-Ireland *Fleadhanna Ceoil*.



(3) **John Kelly** gives a display of double-hand playing of the melody decorated with a sudden surprise of notes in harmony by the left hand in *Seoda Ceoil I*, a Gael Linn release. He masters 'The Old Concertina Reel' and 'The Flogging Reel'.



(4) **Tom McCarthy** a Clare man now resident in North-London stars in a C.C.E. release *Bonnie Kate* and his rendering of 'The Foxhunters' Reel' gives as much pleasure to Concertina enthusiasts as does Leo Rowsome's version of the same tune to admirers of the Uilleann Pipes. Tom is master of the single grace note and he has succeeded in transferring other pipe ornamentations to his Concertina playing and little wonder as his expertise on the Uilleanns is widely acclaimed.

(5) **William J. Mullaly**. His two most interesting records have already been referred to — the better of the two is the 1927 H.M.V. — I'd pay a high price to any reader who could supply me with a copy!

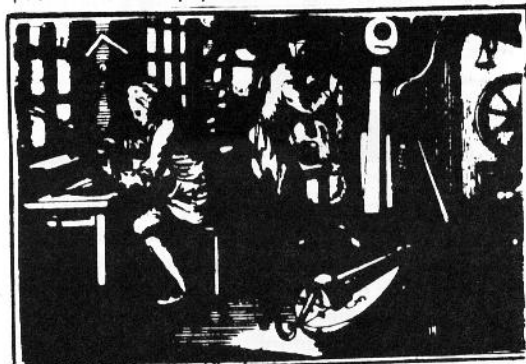
(6) **Michael Tubridy** is to be heard in all of The Chieftains' records. This renowned flute-cum-whistle-cum-concertina player masters the art of playing slow airs especially well.

Other outstanding players who unfortunately appear only on tape at C.C.E.'s office are:

Paddy Murphy, Packie Russell, Sonny Murray, Solus Lillis, Tommy McMahon, Paul Davis, Raymond Roland, Bernard Sullivan and Charley Mulvihill, R.T.E. has both Mrs. Crotty's and Sean Ryan's playing on tape.

### Competitions

Many great players never take part in Fleadh competitions. They feel they can contribute just as much by being free to start impromptu sessions around the town and this they realise is vital to the spirit and survival of Fleadhanna. The most notorious ailment during a competition is to get a fit of 'stopping'. When the father of the sufferer of the said ailment asked "And what happened to you at all?" The premeditated reply was "Twas like the time I



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Concertina Newsletter readers will be welcome to drop in when in Edinburgh.

climbed the ladder with the last pikeful of hay to cap the rick when I missed the rung and down I flopped!" Another had the good sense to take it out on the instrument which was flung aloft in desperation only to hear on splashdown "....., if I had you in my own hob, hmm... you wouldn't make that mistake!" One sees all types of concertinas too and it's not always the man with the brand new one who wins. As an older model was once being expertly played the comment was heard at the back of the hall "Who's your man?" "I don't know," was the retort, "But he has more sticking-plaster on that concertina than is up in the County Hospital, and handle it he can!"

### Types

Well over 90% of Concertinas used in Ireland are Anglos or Anglo-Celts as some prefer to call them. The 'push-pull' box appears to be more suitable for the execution of the various rhythmic and melodic variations essential to Irish traditional music.

The less expensive German 2-row box is still played but most popular of all are the English-manufactured models, e.g., Wheatstone Jeffries, Crabb, Lachenal, etc.

### Blending

Which instruments does the Concertina blend with best? Of 20 experts interviewed 8 vouched for the Fiddle, 8 for the Flute, 2 for the Uilleann pipes and 2 were undecided as a partner instrument for duet. For the ideal trio 95% voted for Flute, Fiddle and Concertina, and there were more varied suggestions for band combinations, all the light instruments being to the fore.

### Influences

The old style of concertina playing in this country was that of double-hand playing of the melody, especially for polka dances. One wonders was it a style which evolved of necessity from the lack of amplification. Did the player have to resort to this 'trick' in order to make himself heard above the din of the dancers?

It is obvious that Tommy McCarthy has been influenced by pipe playing, John Kelly by his Fiddle playing, Packie Russell by both tin

whistle and Flute playing, and more and more of today's players are including ornamentations and techniques which had hitherto been the property of other instruments only. Some say there is a 'Concertina tune' i.e. it sounds 'better' when played on the Concertina, but today's Concertinists are not happy with the implied limitations of that point of view, and include in their repertoire 'Fiddle' tunes and 'Flute' tunes etc.

### Teaching Beginners

As it is the brand of music and not the type of instrument which is all-important the beginner ought to be soaked with quality Irish traditional music played on all the accepted instruments. Teach them by ear only, and they ought to be able to lilt (diddle) or whistle the tune before attempting to play it. The best visual aid (if required) for the intermediate player should be the 'press-and-draw' method, and tonic solfa — without time symbols, and it is 'safe' for the advanced artist to utilise staff notation in order to learn the skeleton of a tune. By this time he will have acquired the traditional instinct which is something much more than the most detailed staff notation could hope to impart.

Sean O'Dwyer © 1973.

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## THE EFDSS CONCERTINA

by Tony Wales.

Ten or so years ago, the folk music world contained few concertina players. Guitarists, even banjoists — but a concertina at a folk club would probably bring forth at least a few questions concerning the use, and even the name of the instrument. Now it is very different. Concertinas pop up in all manner of places, in bands, in groups and as solo instruments wherever folk is played or sung.

Those of us in the folk world who have watched this come about, may be tempted to think of the concertina as purely a folk instrument. But many of the older instruments now being used by folk musicians, may once have graced a Victorian parlour to be used for nothing more traditional than a Sunday evening family party. It must be equally true that many readers of this magazine use their instruments at the present time for music far removed from folk song and dance. Just as the writer knows little of these musicians, so in turn they may know little of folk music, or indeed of the English Folk Dance and Song Society. Hence this article. (If you are a folk concertina player, then please skip the bits you already know).

The English Folk Dance and Song Society (or EFDSS) is an amalgamation of two societies. The earlier was The Folk Song Society (note the title did not use the word **English**) founded in 1898; and the English Folk Dance Society, founded by Cecil Sharp in 1911. The two amalgamated in 1932, the Folk Song Society joining the Dance Society at Cecil Sharp House, which had been built two years previously.

The two societies were slightly uneasy bed-fellows at the start, the older more academic body being a little jealous of the numerical superiority of the dancers, and the latter having little time for anything other than their own chosen pursuit. Of course, this was not true of all the members, in fact Cecil Sharp's folk

dancers numbered many song enthusiasts within their ranks, but the fact remains that it took the passing of many years for the two sides of the Society to become even partly assimilated. One of the difficulties was that the dancers outnumbered the singers, so that the EFDSS became associated in people's minds with dancing on the vicarage lawn and everything that went with it. Not completely fair, but sufficiently near the mark to affect the public image of the Society for many years (and still lingering on, even today!).

With the 2nd World War, most EFDSS activities ceased, and Cecil Sharp House was badly damaged by an enemy bomb. After the war, the rebuilding of the House was undertaken, and the members attempted to bring the Society into line with the post-war world. Douglas Kennedy (Sharp's successor) then Director of the EFDSS, changed the direction of the Society towards more community participation in social dancing, and more involvement in song and music making.

Sometimes, even today, some of us experience moments of despair, wondering if song and dance will ever fully integrate in the way Cecil Sharp anticipated. But, compared with twenty, or even ten years ago, the whole scene has changed beyond recognition. Dancers may still hold more posts than singers on National and District Committees, but song is far from being in the background in other respects.

The EFDSS now has around six thousand Members, and about half that number again Associates (the latter pay a smaller subscription, and get less in return). During the past few years, Membership has been going up, whilst the number of Associates declines. There are about 500 affiliated clubs, both dance and song, with the song club numbers steadily increasing.

The national headquarters is still at Cecil Sharp House in London, where there are three halls, The Vaughan Williams Memorial Library, The Folk Shop and Folk Mail (the mail order side of The Folk Shop). There are also several Regional

Offices located at places such as Birmingham, Exeter and Leeds.

Apart from the groups and clubs, there are District Committees in most counties, and getting into the more rarified atmosphere we come to the Area Councils and the National Executive Committee, and its sub-committees (Library, Publications, Finance etc.).

The Society's regular publications include two quarterly periodicals — **English Dance and Song** and **EFDSS News**, and a small news-sheet **Folk News** for club organisers, which appears bi-monthly. Annually, there is **The Folk Music Journal** and **The Folk Directory**. A member receives all these free of charge, except for **Folk News** (club organisers only) and the annual **Directory**, which is sold at half price to members.

Many other publications emanate from the Society's book department, mainly song and dance collections, but also some instrumental tutors and tune books. There are also a respectable number of records issued by the EFDSS, with this side of the work steadily increasing.

One of the most often asked questions concerning the Society is "Where does the money come from?". A grant from The Sports Council (Yes, I did say the Sports Council) and grants from Local Education Authorities, provide a large slice of the income; in fact with the proceeds of staff activities and The Folk Shop, this becomes about half of the total. The rest is covered by Members' subscriptions, donations and activities.

And so back to where we came in. Concertinas! Yes, they do feature quite frequently in EFDSS activities these days, as interest in instrumental music making increases. Once upon a time, tune books were almost dead stock as far as The Folk Shop was concerned. Now they are among the best sellers! So let's forget about the divisions between dancers and singers, and concentrate on playing instruments. After all, you can **sing** and **dance** to a concertina!



## THE ANGLO AND I

by Tony McCarthy

My father was, so I now judge after some consideration, one of the first folkies. That is, he played the mouth organ in a vamping style, collected Kennedy-Fraser records in Gaelic and liked Frank Crummit. That was before the '39 war.

In 1950, when I was eleven, we went on a very wet three week holiday to the south west of Ireland. He bought me a mouth-organ, on which I found I could play all the recorder tunes we learned at school. On the whole, I liked this better, apart from the fact that I once played it when incubating a cold, and found that whenever I took it up again, I gave myself flu. The music was plainly infectious.

When at Cambridge in the late fifties, I bought an Anglo (of a two-row type) and could do a passable **St. James Hospital** on it. Then a Lachenal from a second-hand shop in Streatham. I left that in Exeter in '64, and someone was going to bring it up to me. It hasn't yet arrived. Meanwhile, I bought one of the then £5 German beasts, and found it very satisfactory for accompanying CND marches, except when it rained, and most of the paper came unstuck. I now have a Jeffries, in old brass-band tuning (effectively F sharp and B) which makes it difficult for accompanying. It came from the Fulham Road in 1965 and cost a tenner. Its speciality is a bird-whistle.

When I first started playing around the clubs in 1961 – 2, nobody else was using the Anglo (except maybe in EFDSS circles which I had never entered). Alf Edwards I much admired, and Peggy Seeger was beginning some pretty arpeggios. There was a theory that the Anglo was not capable of playing Bach – which we knew as the "Larry Adler syndrome": my contention was that it did what it was best at very well. The push-pull, imitating the lungs, gave a natural definition to material played on it. I wrote a piece, the first half only of which was published before the magazine's demise, in *Folk Music*, vol. 1. number 9. In it I was aiming at a form of Anglo-tablature which never saw the light of day. I was wrong in suggesting that the Anglo was limited; but I still think its essential simplicity is one of its main attractions.

I was at the time particularly interested in using the Anglo for accompaniment of the more robust type of traditional material – **All For Me Grog**, the **Gentleman Soldier** and **The Mermaid** were among the tunes I regularly used.

During this time, Peter Kennedy recorded a number of the songs at Cecil Sharp House: I particularly liked the "Virgin Unspotted" version of Admiral Benbow. He may still have these tapes. I also accompanied Alex Campbell on two of his Saga records which achieved a fairly large sale. My own disc, of which we pressed 100 and sold 3, now sounds like a field recording; perhaps people might be interested in it as such. While running concerts for CND around the country, I played in some of the major halls; in clubs I also went to Brunel College and ran across one Neil Wayne, who appreciated the music.

My style remains that of a manual mouth organ. Despite attempts to diversify, I seem to be stuck with it. As a matter of fact, I still like it.

The Anglo, in its basic versions, still sells at under £10, and is very suitable for school use, mixing well with guitar in simple chording. I'd be sorry to find that sophistication and technique have eroded its suitability for accompaniment and melody in elementary folk-expression. When I ran **City Folk** for a year in '67 we were probably the first club in the South to encourage dancing as a regular feature of our evenings, and it worked pretty well, with the assistance of the Tappers, and many guests who worked for next to nothing.

I now play mostly for my son: I hope he will soon be learning the tunes I made for him as a baby. They were excellent in persuading him to jump around in his baby-bouncer. However, his taste at the moment (he is five) turns more to Wizzard and the outstanding folk-tune of the year, **Nice One Cyril**.

*"If anyone is to blame for the Concertina Newsletter, it is probably Tony McCarthy, who first interested me in the Concertina – back in 1965! For more information about his record and club bookings, ring him, daytime, on 01-261 3434."*

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(Workshop : Friday 4.00 p.m.)

Jacqui McShee

Carolanne Pegg

Mike Raven

Jon Raven

John Renbourne

Ryka

Dave Start

Swan Arcade

Jeremy Taylor

Webb's Wonders

Cyril Tawney

Coventry Mummers

Green Man Morris

CONCERTS, CEILIDHS, WORKSHOPS, SINGALONGS,  
LATE-NIGHTS, FILMS.

MUMMERS, MORRIS SIDES, STALLS, FOUR BARS.