

# RECOLLECTIONS

Recently, Frank Butler sent Concertina Magazine one of the most fascinating items that we have seen. It is a copy of the text in which his grandfather, George Jones, the noted Concertina maker, records his recollections of the development of the Concertina trade during the last century. An edited and abbreviated version of this memoir appeared in the I.C.A. Newsletter in 1955. A full, and unexpurgated re-issue of it is to be given in the Magazine (continuing in the next issue.) In additional comments which Frank enclosed, he noted that Mr. Jones was educated at a School for Dissenters, and would have been considered well educated at the time. Only his spelling has been corrected. His sentence construction is sometimes confused, making it difficult to know who worked for whom. Nevertheless, of special value is the list of employees of Wheatstones and other makers, which may solve some little known identities. Other comments are included in relevant places in the text. The "RECOLLECTIONS" text was written in 1913; Mr. Jones died in 1918.

RECOLLECTIONS OF THE ENGLISH CONCERTINA, FROM 1844,  
by George Jones, born February 29th 1832.

In 1844 I commenced working for Mr. Austin who made the pans complete for Wheatstone, the inventor, all done by hand, outdoor. Mr. Dowset made tops, bellows, frames, and cases - outdoor. Mr. Card - bellows; Mr. Jackson - metal work; Mr. Rock Chidley and Mr. Dove were finishers, Mr. Saunders and Mr. Scates tuners. Every part was then made by hand, no press tools were then in use.

[ FEB: By "outdoor" Mr. Jones means "out-work", a system by which the man worked at home, providing his own tools and being paid piece work. ]

About 1847 Mr. Nickholds and his two sons were engaged to make tools to produce the metal work, they being machinists, but there was a difficulty in obtaining note screws. Messrs. Lachenal, Hervy and Shaller came over from Switzerland and started screw making. They first supplied screws to Defrieze, Gas Meter Makers, and was introduced to Wheatstones. Mr. Lachenal being a clever tool maker soon displaced Nickholds and Sons, who started to make concertinas in Clerkenwell. The second son being a musical man soon became a tuner.

Mr. Scates left Wheatstone and started to make at 40 Frith Street, Soho. Mr. Austin then went into the shop to do the woodwork, and I with him but working with Mr. Scates at note fixing, reducing and voicing. My father thinking the trade would not be any good refused to apprentice me to Scates. I therefore had to leave.

Parish was shop boy at that time. Being a sharp boy Scates set him in my place, and he served his time to Scates and became a first-class tuner. Mr. Austin then left Scates started for himself. My father and him being great firends it was arranged that I should be fixed to Austin I having a knowledge somewhat of note work was of great use to him and it was also a good chance for me to learn every branch which I did, to my great advantage. Through the treatment of my step-mother I had to leave home, and my wages were not sufficient to keep me.

I had played the French accordion from very early age and learnt to do repairs to it. I found no difficulty in getting repairs from shops to do at home in my lodgings, after my days work was done. Then having a good voice took engagements at Music Halls and came out as a vocal and instrumental artist. The German Concertina came out, and I purchased one and soon was able to master it and I claim to be the first to introduce it to the public.

I must now leave my work in order to give an account of the progress of others who commenced business for themselves.

Mr. Scates sold his business to Mr. George Case, the Professor. His shop was in Bond Street. Not being a practical man failed, sold his interest and business to Messrs Boosey and Co. who manufactured Concertinas under the management of Mr. Giles, tuner, with the assistance of Bankham, Card, Potter, Parish, and others. Mr. Rock Chidley started in Oxford Street, also made harmoniums. Mr. Dove started in Poland Street but made no headway and arranged with Keith Prowse who purchased the tools etc. and who produced good instruments by the employment of Bankham, Card, Potter and Parrish. There have been several others started to make, but no one of the original school. Nickhold family all passed away some many years ago.

This brings me to the firm of Lachenal and Co. When Mr. Lachenal had completed the vast machinery there was no one but him and his staff who understood the working of the tools therefore he really was the maker, and being able to produce the instrument at much lower prices offered to make and supply the firms if they undertook to take a certain quantity, which they agreed to but in time failed and broke the agreement. Now nothing remained but for Lachenal to start and make to supply the Wholesale Trade which he did and soon captured it, also a good export trade by making an instrument at a price within the reach of most people. By this means the instrument became popular. Mr. Lachenal was not a musical man, was a far seeing man, a clever machinist, and I believe a good man.

[ "RECOLLECTIONS" will continue in the next issue of Concertina Magazine, when Mr. Jones describes aspects of his own start in the Concertina trade and his subsequent career.]

# RECOLLECTIONS : Part II

In this issue we continue with the RECOLLECTIONS, written by George Jones in 1913, a copy of which was sent to Concertina Magazine by Frank Butler, grandson of Mr Jones. Previously, an edited and abbreviated version of this memoir appeared in the I.C.A. Newsletter in 1955. The second part which is published in this issue however completes the full and unexpurgated re-issue of it.

As Frank noted for the first part, Mr Jones was educated at a School for Dissenters, and would have been considered well educated at the time. Only his spelling has been corrected. His sentence construction is sometimes confused, making it difficult to know who worked for whom. Again, some additional comment by Frank has been added to help the text.

Also, in this second part we have added some illustrations to accompany the text. These illustrations come from a catalogue issued towards the end of the last century by Mr Jones and show examples of his inventions and innovations.

## RECOLLECTIONS ....by George Jones.

(continued)

I now go on to my own start. As before, I was on the Music Hall stage, this I continued till I was 19 years of age. My time was up with Mr. Austin. The German Concertina having one semitone only, I made one with 22 keys for my own use, and later made one with 26 keys full chromatic scale which was after my greatest success, and without doubt greatly enhanced the sale of the English concertina. Being tired of the Music Hall business, I applied to Messrs Nickholds for work, who was pleased to accept my services. I was with them for about fifteen months. When Mr. Austin took premises in Commercial Road with a view to open them in the General Music trade, in addition to manufacturing concertinas. He sent for me and offered me a good position to manage the shop, to teach, and to supervise the workshop. In the works he himself the woodwork, in which he was an expert. Here he soon made money too fast and began to neglect the business, took to drink.

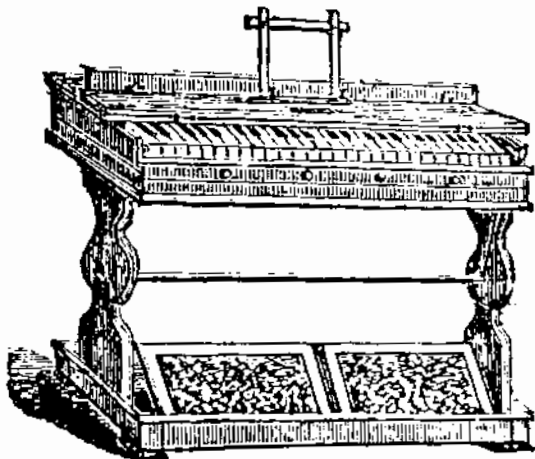
I now saw the thing would not last. I engaged Mr. Shaller a tool maker of whom I have spoken of to make the tools for the production of metal work and started to make at first the Anglo-German Concertina in which I was immediately successful. Sent the first one to Mr. Scates in Dublin, who gave me a large order. Also arranged with me to supply metal work,

and made arrangements with Bankham, Card and Parrish for production of the English complete. And now Mr. Austin was taken ill and soon passed away. There being no one to continue the business the trade fell into my hands.

In 1853 I commenced to make harmonium reeds. 1867 to make harmoniums. Made the first portable instrument for Mr. Turner, then of Cheapside, who I worked for for many years. Finding I could not keep up the demand for the portable, one was sent to France to a firm who improved on mine and had a very large sale. 1859 made the Celestial English and Anglo Concertina. 1870 produced the original Broad Steel Reeds. Also extended the size of the 48 keyed instrument to take them and which produced the most powerful instrument ever yet made.

### FOLDING HARMONIUM.

The lightest and most portable yet introduced. Compass, four octaves from F; wide scale of keys. In polished walnut case. Height, when open, 2ft. 8in.; length, 2ft. 3in.; width, 12in.; weighing thirty-two pounds. Expressly adapted for the profession and mission work.



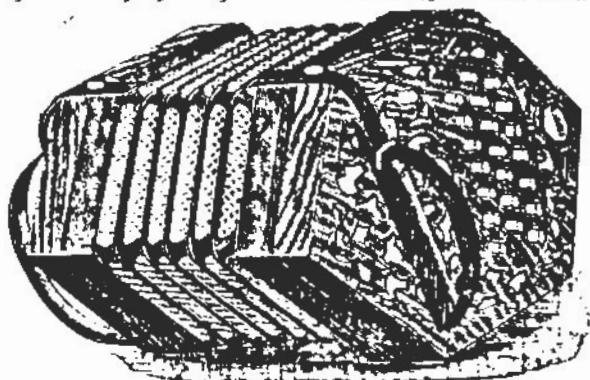
When closed: length, 2ft. 3in.; width, 12in.; depth, 10in. May be carried by a strap as easily as a portmanteau, without fear of damaging.

I received an order from the Messrs. Bros Webb for two 56 keyed with metal tops - a great success and played all over the provinces, continent, and parts of America, now in use. Later I made 40 key piccolo, which has been of great value to them.

[ FEB: The two instruments made for Bros. Webb were used by the Bros. Butler around 1930. By 1960 Mr. Crabb reported that it was impossible to retune them. ]

# PERFECT ANGLO-GERMAN CONCERTINA.

*By Her Majesty's Royal Letters Patent (June 4th, 1884).*



GEORGE JONES'S IMPROVED ANGLO-GERMAN CONCERTINA, with forty-two keys, so arranged that the scales and chords in every key, major and minor, can be played either by pressing or drawing the bellows without altering the position of the twenty keys as on the twenty key German or Anglo-German Instrument. A Book of Scales and Chords, with diagram, is supplied with each instrument, figured to correspond with the keys.

1. Rosewood, plain finished six-fold bellows, steel reeds, in mahogany case ... .. £5 15 0
2. Rosewood, superior finish, moulded tops, bushed holes, six-fold morocco bellows, tempered steel reeds, in mahogany case... 7 10 0
3. Rosewood, extra best finish, highly tempered steel reeds, six fold morocco bellows, richly ornamented, and all the latest improvements, in rosewood case ... .. 9 10 0

Nickel Silver Tops to either class, 15s. extra.

I was introduced to the Salvation Army and asked if I could make for them the Anglo in pitch to go with brass instruments. This I done and supplied them for fifteen years. Wrote and published the first Anglo Tutor, which commanded a great sale. Made 42 key Anglo to play in all keys, and patented it. Made chromatic melodeon, now known all over the world.

Each instrument is Stamped on the Right Hand Strap Rail with the



CLASS "A."

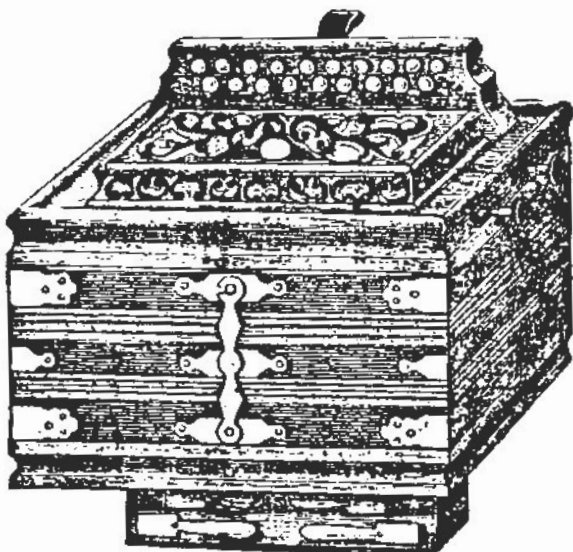
The bottom angle on the right hand side of each Instrument in this Class bears a Stamp indicating whether Steel or Metal Reeds.

## NEWLY INVENTED MELODEON,

With perfect chromatic scale (without altering the fingering of the instrument), so extensively in use. Supplies a want long felt by the admirers of this favourite instrument.

It has two rows of keys, with four bass keys at the bottom for accompaniment. The compass ranges from E below the stave to E above, embracing all the semitones, thereby enabling the performer to play in any key. It is well made, tuned to concert-pitch, and in every way superior to any thing of the kind ever produced. The power and purity of the tone is a marvel. It is convenient in size, being only 11in. long, 6½in. wide, and 10in. high. It has two sets of reeds to each row of keys, which are regulated by stops at the end, and has a double bellows.

The genuine instrument should have my name and address fixed on the top printed in gold.



- |   |     |     |     |         |
|---|-----|-----|-----|---------|
| 1. Polished elbonized case, metal notes | ... | ... | ... | £1 10 0 |
| 2. Ditto, ditto, steel notes            | ... | ... | ... | 2 2 0   |

Strong wood boxes for above, with lock and key, 3/6.

My last effort was an improvement on the portable harmonium 1895. Owing to the many hinges being required for folding them there was a great leakage of wind. I therefore inserted a flexible tube each side to convey the wind from the feeders direct to the reservoir.

I have had fifteen apprentices most of which has done well, served me faithfully and now I am resting in my 81st year after a happy and prosperous life only waiting for the last call to eternal rest.

George Jones.

P.S. I may mention that I have had the pleasure of teaching the Bros. Webb and many other popular artists.