

THE INTERNATIONAL CONCERTINA ASSOCIATION

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NEWSLETTER

May 1981

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Hon. R.N.R.

Secretary: S. F. Green, 141 Howarth Road, London SE2 OUW.

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Notices

The next meeting will be held on Saturday 30th May at the Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, Holborn, London WC1 from 3.00pm to 5.00pm. There will be a committee meeting as usual at 2.00pm.

News

It is my sad duty to report the death of Mr. Harry Crabb of the firm of H. Crabb & Sons on the morning of 25th April. I understand a wreath was (or will be) provided on behalf of I.C.A. members. I am sure we all have a deep sense of loss. which we share with Neville, Geoffrey and the rest of the Crabb family, and we all send them our sincere condolences to them.

When I think about Mr. Crabb, I think of the man who patiently taught me (and, no doubt, many, many others) the rudiments of playing the concertina. I also wonder how many of you reading this have a concertina which has not passed through his hands once, if not many times. Very few, I think. Then, there is also his involvement in the I.C.A. As a relatively recent member, I cannot tell of all he has done, but while I have been on the committee, he has been a regular attender of meetings, giving plenty of practical good advice, and his good humour and quiet enthusiasm have always been a fixture. I would like to enlarge on Mr. Crabb's life and support of concertinas, but I must plead ignorance. Perhaps someone with greater knowledge can more fully assess his contribution. In the meantime, we will all miss Harry Crabb very much.

I have also heard that Arthur Clements of Northampton has been ill, and have received a letter from him telling me of a short holiday (and convalescence?) he had in Worthing. He took the opportunity of calling on Alf Edwards, and tells me that Alf was quite well at the time.

Finally, the Battersea class has closed again because of insufficient numbers. If there is to be a further resurrection, your support is needed.

Dedication of the Wheatstone Memorial Plaque

Sir Charles Wheatstone at one time lived at 19 Park Crescent, Regents Park, London, and the Greater London Council recently installed a plaque commemorating the great scientist close to the site of the original dwelling.

Mr. John Entract of the I.C.A., who had been a prime mover both in pressing for the installation of the plaque, and the organisation of the dedication service, came up from Brighton (where he lives appropriately in Park Crescent) and also wore Victorian dress to add verisimilitude to the occasion.

The service was conducted by the President of the I.C.A., the Rev. C.J.K. Loveless, who said that preceding the act of dedication, there would be short addresses by distinguished guests with special knowledge of Sir Charles. But first Mr. Entract wished to express thanks to these guests and others who had contributed to the gathering. These included the Chairman of the Greater London Council's Committee for Historical Monuments, the Medical Research Council which had offered accommodation should the weather be inclement, the Metropolitan Police for providing parking and police supervision, as well as the guests who were to speak.

Father Loveless then commented that although there were opinions in some quarters that apparatus similar to the Wheatstone bridge had been evolved simultaneously elsewhere, there was no doubt that Sir Charles

alone had invented the English concertina, and thereby given pleasure to countless people. But Father Loveless deplored the ill-informed notices in the popular press, of which he gave examples. 'English' concertinas were, however, still being made in London by the firm of H. Crabb and Son, and he was delighted to welcome Neville Crabb who had come to the meeting to pay his respects to the inventor.

Professor W. Price, now retired, who was the first to take the Wheatstone Chair of Physics at Kings College, said that Wheatstone had been the first Professor of Experimental Physics at Kings College, where he soon demoted himself to investigation into the speed of electric currents, an extension of his work on the velocity of sound. This fortunate association of science and music led to the development of signalling devices, and it is fair to call Wheatstone the Father of Telecommunications.

Dr. B. Bowers, of the Science Museum, whose biography of Wheatstone published by H.M.S.O. is the definitive work, said that making apparatus was Wheatstone's forte. In telegraphing, he designed apparatus for faster transmission, but did not neglect the need for a simple A.B.C. system. He constantly studied and applied the theoretical basis of his work. Although unhappy as a lecturer, he could, in private life, expound freely and at length.

There was then the brief introduction of Dr. Wheatstone, who came specially from the West of England, with greetings from the direct descendant F.C. Wheatstone, now 86, blind and too frail to travel.

Father Loveless commenced the service with a reading from Ecclesiasticus "Let us now praise famous men - their name liveth for evermore". Then came the prayer of dedication and the blessing.

All was not quite over. Vena McDougall and John Hutcherson, worthy performers in the tradition of classical playing of the English concertina, gave us Benedictus, by Geoffrey Poole, and very sweet and apt it sounded in the chill spring air.

The few passers-by who had joined the little crowd drifted away, but the scientists and musicians stood around, chatting awhile.

The April Meeting

This was held on Saturday 25th April in the Artists Room at the Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, London. The members attending were somewhat subdued at the news of Harry Crabbs death, in spite of the fact that there were some faces there which were making their first appearance for quite some time.

The playing was opened by Mr. Robson, who demonstrated the bandoneon he had built himself, and fitted with a keyboard system identical with that used by a 30-key Anglo. He played Villikins and His Dinah, Early One Horning, and Drink to Me Only. For those of you interested in his new instrument, Mr. Robson has sent me a short article about it which I hope to publish in the near future.

Mr. Blakeman followed with the Rakes of Mallow, and The Rose Tree.

He was followed by 'concerted' music. In fact, there were only three people playing, and they played the Minuet and Trio (appropriately) from the Surprise Symphony by Haydn, arranged by Woodhouse.

The first of our 'strangers' played next - Tom Jukes, and entertained us with the Black and White Rag.

Further concerted music consisted of A Morning Song by Woodhouse.

The second stranger continued. He was Mr. Russell, who had been brought along by Mr. Mills. Mr. Russell played a medley which included Mountains of Mourne, As Long As He Needs Me, An English Country Garden and There'll Always Be An England.

The consort had now grown a little, and played A Folk Dance Rondo by Doe.

The next soloist was Charlie Jeffrey, whose pieces were The Phantom Brigade and Avola.

Charlie was then joined by Tom Jukes, and they played Russian Rag.

The next concerted piece was A Memory by Schumann, in memory of

Harry Crabb. This was followed by On Wings of Song by Mendelssohn, arranged by Woodhouse.

Iris Bishop had arrived by this time, and contributed a Lullaby and Blue Moon (accompanied by Charlie and Tom).

Here concerted music followed with Fiesta.

Vena McDougall had also arrived with Mac, but she performed on her own Raff's Cavatina.

The next concerted piece was a Petite Waltz.

Eric Russell gave us a second turn, with Amazing Grace and He Wipes the Tear From Every Eye.

Tom and Charlie gave us another duet performance with Temptation Rag.

The meeting closed with a busking session led by Iris Bishop, and involving at various times and in various combinations Charlie Jeffrey, Tom Jukes, Eric Russell and John Hutcherson. The music was Tammy, Love Is The Sweetest Thing, and A Nightingale Sang in Berkley Square.

Annual General Meeting (Part Three)

The item of the Agenda is still 'Matters Arising'. If you remember last month's episode, we are, appropriately, discussing the Wheatstone plaque:

There are two alternatives for the erection of the plaque:

- (a) that the G.L.C. would go ahead and erect the plaque and inform the national press, without any accompanying ceremony.
- (b) that we organise an unveiling ourselves and invite a special guest to be Master of Ceremonies.

Mr. Entract said that he had written to Sir Peter Parker, Chairman of British Rail, inviting him to attend the function. He had also written to the Science Museum (Sir Charles was an inventor of some repute) and Kings College, London where he was Professor of Philosophy.

The cost of catering, etc. would be in the region of £250. It is possible that the above-mentioned might agree to pay the major part of the expenses. The Science Museum have already stated that due to the present economic climate, it was unlikely that they would be able to donate any money. At present, there has been no reply from Kings College.

The President asked for comments from the floor. Mr. Hutcherson said he was not happy about it. If one of the sponsors should pull out, it would saddle the Association with a large bill it could not afford. Vena asked who would pay for the erection of the plaque. Mr. Entract replied that the G.L.C. would pay for it but the Association would have to pay for the unveiling equipment.

Mr. Robson asked what connection 19 Park Crescent had with Sir Charles Wheatstone. Mr. Entract replied that he had lived there for some years.

Mr. Frank Butler pointed out that the concertina was not the most important of Sir Charles' inventions. The gyroscope and the electric telegraph were two others. Mr. Butler suggested that bearing this in mind, it might be more appropriate that either British Rail, Kings College, London or the Science Museum make the necessary arrangements and then invite the I.C.A. Howard Rosenblum agreed and suggested that if a prime mover could not be found, we could fall back on the President's idea. (See last issue)

Frank Butler asked which department at B.R. had been approached. Mr. Entract replied that it was the Environmental Department. Mr. McDougall asked if it was possible to canvas members throughout the country for their opinion, rather than leaving the decision to the handful of people present at the A.G.M.

Howard Rosenblum said that this was not a good idea, as unfortunately the majority of the membership tended to be apathetic in corresponding with the Editor and Committee, nominations being an example.

In the absence of any one of the three bodies coming forth with definite promises of money, the President summed up and put two proposals

to the meeting:

- 1) A formal ceremony with the possibility of the Association being the main contributor.
- 2) An informal ceremony along the lines of the Presidents idea. By majority vote, the informal dedication ceremony idea was carried.

4) Assistant Secretary's Report

I first took on the job with a certain amount of trepidation, expecting to be inundated with work, but I was very surprised to find that very few people bothered to write to me. This consequently meant there were few letters to write, not that I'm complaining, as it takes me hours to compose a letter of even moderate length. The most regular work I have is writing the minutes for the monthly meetings. Taking all things into account though, I have found the job very interesting and I would like to thank all those people who have given their advice and encouragement over the past six months.

Vena McDougall asked that as Jim Harvey was unlikely to return as Secretary, would Mr. Green be prepared to stand for the position. Frank Butler agreed and said it was about time a younger man did the job, Mr. Green said he appreciated their confidence in him, but had to decline on the grounds of inexperience and seniority in the Association. Frank and Vena pointed out that as no one else had offered to take up the position of Assistant Secretary during Jim's illness, and no nomination had been sent in for the position, the question of seniority and experience did not apply. If Mr. Green agreed to be nominated, Frank would be happy to lend a hand and give the benefit of his experience in Association affairs.

The President stated that the issue must be resolved as an active Secretary was needed to run the every day business of the Association. He requested that Mr. Green accept his (the President's) nomination. Mr. Green finally accepted and was eventually elected Secretary.

The President kindly offered to write to Jim, informing him of the Association's decision. He asked for a vote of thanks for Jim's efforts over the years, and to wish him well for the future. Jim was also made an Honourary Life Member.

5) Treasurer's Report

Mr. Hutcherson stated that by glancing at the balance sheet, it could be seen that the Association was in a fairly healthy financial position. (Members were sent a copy of the balance sheet with the February Newsletter) This was mainly due to generous donations by members over the last year. It seemed unlikely that an increase in subscription would be necessary, despite the recent increase in postal charges. Mr. Hutcherson continued by saying:

"I feel now is the time, after 12 years as Treasurer, to announce that next year I must retire, to allow someone else to look after the finances of the Association. If there is anyone who feels they would be able to do the job, would he please make himself known before next year's A.G.M."

The President said he was sure that everyone present, and the Association as a whole, had appreciated the time and energy John had given over the years, and proposed a vote of thanks, which received warm applause from all present.

(To be continued)

Editorial Chunterings

I thought you might have got tired of reading A.G.M. minutes by this time, and I wanted my ha'porth. It's the usual message: more news and articles from YOU - OR - less Newsletter from me!

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