

# **Concertina Workshop**



*English Concertina by Marcus*

**Tutor for the  
English Concertina**

**By Alistair Anderson**

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## Forward

More than two years ago, I was asked to put together a record and booklet to help the growing number of concertina players interested in folk music. There are many reasons why it has taken me so long to do it, the main one being that I was not entirely convinced that it would be useful. So perhaps I should start by suggesting why this tutor ought not to exist.

Traditional music is a living thing, that grows in its own way. For anyone to dictate how to play it would stagnate that growth. Perhaps if I'd been concerned with the fiddle, the task may have been a little easier. I could have compared the styles of different regions and of different individuals within specific regions. But there is little evidence to suggest that the English concertina was ever used in folk music to a sufficient extent for what we know as a tradition to build up. Therefore, I can do little but discuss the way I do things, with the risk that people may follow one line of development instead of moving forward on a broad front.

In a living tradition a young musician is surrounded by the styles and tunes of the existing traditions. He draws from these surroundings the features that appeal to him and distils them with his own musical personality to produce his own individual style. Everybody has a slightly different musical background and no two people feel the same way about a given tune so everyone develops slightly different styles.

You can see from this that a tutor designed to teach you only to play like me would be counterproductive.

This development of style is a two-way process. The individual develops his own style by drawing bits from many others and adding a bit of himself but his style, if it's acceptable, then becomes part of the body of the tradition and influences those around him. A living tradition is a mixture of what existed before, and what can acceptably be added anew.

For example, in Northumberland, there is a definite tradition of Northumbrian piping. Take two prominent players, Tom Clough and Billy Pigg; they had distinct styles, but there were similarities in that they both grew out of what went before, and both left their mark on the styles of their day and of those that came after them. Tom Clough's influence can be seen in Billy's playing, although he did not play 'like' Tom; similarly, pipers throughout Northumberland bear the stamp of both Billy and Tom in their playing. In short, they all depend to varying extents on what has been accepted in previous years and what each can contribute today.

This process of give and take, of innumerable links between musicians all with individual styles yet contributing to a growing living body of music is such a natural one and so rewarding for the musicians involved, that as long as it has sufficient momentum the tradition can continue. This momentum is directly related to the number of active musicians. That is where tutors like this may be of some help.

There has been a break in traditional music in most parts of the country. Many of us had no contact with it until we were made aware of folk music by folk clubs. If such breaks are to be repaired, if the tradition is to be given momentum again, then the first requirement is a large number of musicians with some awareness of the roots of the music. Perhaps then, by showing how I play and how I feel about the music around me, I may suggest how others might develop some roots and go on to give momentum to the tradition again.

This tutor is intended as a series of starting points — a set of guidelines which, combined with an acquaintance with traditional music, may help you to build your own roots and style. The first essential in finding out how traditional music ticks is to listen to it! Listen to as many traditional musicians as you possibly can, on records, on radio, at concerts and festivals, but above all in person. They will not all be of the same standard, but you can learn from them all. Try to meet as many of them as possible, spend time with them, and get to know them as friends, for you can't divorce personality and music. Then you will come to realise how much enjoyment can be drawn from this music, and how much love and care the traditional musicians take over it. Then when you read this tutor and listen to the record, think to yourself 'that's all right for that Anderson character up there in Northumberland, but do I really want to play it like that?'. Approached in that way, this tutor can be of use, but remember it will be most useful when you disagree with it....

How does the English concertina fit into a growing tradition? One has to realise that any instrument considered as traditional was an innovation once. A dance collector at the turn of the century asked an old man watching a Morris side what he thought of the dancing. He was told, 'These young lads dance fine enough, I suppose, but you can't dance well to those new fangled fiddles — the pipe and tabor's the thing'. When a new instrument arrives into a strong tradition the musicians who take it up start by copying the styles of the other instruments currently in that tradition. Soon, of course, the structure of the instrument itself starts suggesting things to the musician, and so he develops a style dependent on the music surrounding him, the physical structure of the instrument, and his own feelings about the music. When a number of players in an area take up the new instrument there will be cross-fertilisation of ideas between them, and although they will all develop their own individual manner, a recognisable style will evolve for the instrument.

For a tradition of English concertina playing to develop, players must find roots from which to grow and they must develop along a variety of lines. There must be enough such players for a constant interchange of ideas to take place, and I hope to get as many ideas from you as you may get from me. That is why I agreed to produce this tutor. On my own I'll be forgotten, but within a tradition my contribution will merge imperceptibly with yours into an on-going, living whole.

## FIRST STEPS

As you can see from diagram 1 inside the back cover the scale is split between both hands. This arrangement may seem strange at first, as most instruments call for different roles for the right and left hands. The knack is, of course, synchronising the two hands, but you will be surprised how natural this feels after a while.

### Holding

Pick up the concertina and put your thumbs through the straps provided. Put your little finger on the finger 'rest' (not the best description — I find my little finger takes quite a bit of the weight of the instrument at times). The thumb straps can be adjusted to suit your thumb. Some players like to have these quite tight: I have mine fairly loose, but this is as much due to the fact that they were like that when I first had the instrument as to any feeling that it improves playing!

The little finger may rest anywhere on the finger rest. The little finger of my left hand tends to stay towards the front of the rest in the curve provided for it, but my right one tends to teeter on the back corner. This results in a hard pad of skin on the little finger of the right hand and a smashed nail on the left. Anyway, the criterion is that it should be comfortable and allow the fingers to be as relaxed as possible.

### The Bellows

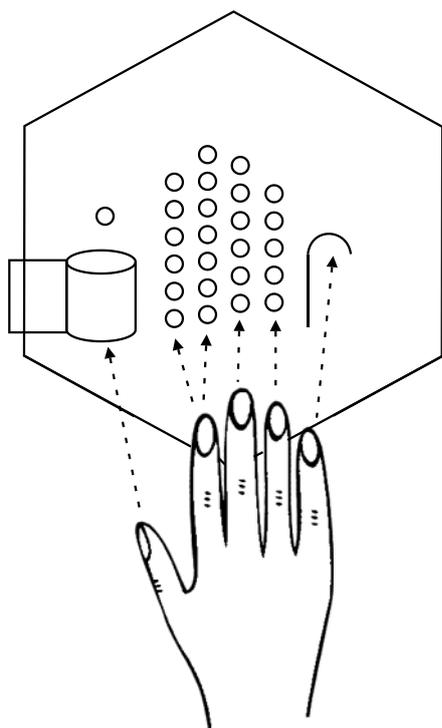
To make a note sound, you have to put pressure on the bellows, so as to force air through the reeds. You need a steady pressure; start with the bellows a little way open then, while playing the notes, extend the bellows steadily until they are nearly fully open. Just before you run out of air change direction and steadily close the bellows until nearly shut, then open them again.

When you are playing, you will probably find that you tend to work from about a quarter closed to three quarters open, so don't stretch the bellows to the limit, and always have plenty of air in reserve.

If you find it difficult to hold the concertina, you can rest one end on your knee until you get used to the weight of it.

### Fingering

With the thumb and little finger taken care of, we have three fingers on each hand to cover the four rows of notes. As you see from diagram 2 below, the first finger covers two rows: the top row of accidentals (sharps and flats) and the first row of natural notes. The second finger has the other row of natural notes and the third finger has the bottom row of accidentals.



In the text refer to the first, second and third fingers on the right hand as R1 R2 R3 and on the left hand as L1 L2 L3.

On the cover diagram (No. 1) the lines of the musical staff have been drawn across the finger board, and you can see that to make the note written  you play the second button up in the

second row on the left hand side called G (it's got to be called something!). You will notice that the notes on the left hand side fall on the lines and those on the right fall in the spaces.

The initial task then is to let your fingers learn where the notes are and what sound they make. At first you will be very tempted to look at your fingers. This does nothing but set you back a step.

When I started, I found the best way was to pick up the instrument and then, feeling with my fingers, count up from the bottom till I got my fingers in a position from which I could start a tune. Having once established that position I worked from there. I'm not sure if this is the best way of doing it, but you may find it a helpful starting point. For instance, if I were to play something which used these notes:



I would probably pick up the instrument and work my fingers up till they rested over the keyboard like this

L3	L2	L1	R1	R2	R3
B <sub>b</sub>	B	G	A	C	F <sup>#</sup> or C <sup>#</sup>



and then take that as my starting point. It doesn't much matter where the third finger of either hand is, as they won't be needed immediately. The important thing is that you know where they are so that you know the position of your hand on the keyboard.

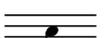
From this starting position, where each finger covers a known note and thus each hand is located in terms of three fixed points, we can move up the scale quite easily like this:

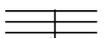
L1 plays G  , L1 releases G but remains over it

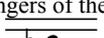
R1 plays A  , R1 releases A but remains over it

L2 plays B  , L2 releases B but remains over it

R2 plays C  . (Now comes the first time you actually move a finger)

While R2 is playing C  ,

L1 moves up from its position covering G  to

rest above D  (only the first finger moves; the other two fingers of the left hand stay in place over B  and B<sub>b</sub>  ,

(to give two points of reference).



Now that your hands know one section of the keyboard, we can start a bit further up or down, and learn a new area. We could start at G , which we know quite well, and work

down to D .

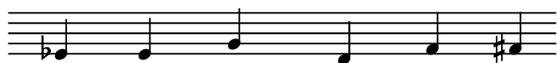
As we started on the note G let's continue in the key of G, one of the commonest keys you'll play in (we will go into the meaning of keys later — just accept it at the moment!).

We will play G F# E D



- You could either start with a completely new starting position:

L3 L2 L1 R1 R2 R3  
Eb E G D F F#



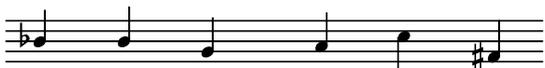
and then simply play

R1 L2 R3 L1 R3 L2 R1 L2 R3 L1



or start with the same position as before

L3 L2 L1 R1 R2 R3



and move something like this:

L1 plays G . L1 releases G but remains over it.

R3 plays F# .

Meanwhile L2 and L3 move down to cover E  and

E<sub>b</sub> , using

L1 on G  as a reference point.

R3 releases F# but remains over it.

L2 plays E , while

R1 and R2 move down to cover D  and

F , using R3 on F#  as

reference point. There is no need for R2 to move down to F as we are not going to play it now, but it probably will — fingers have minds of their own!

L2 releases E.

R1 plays D .

You can now try mixing the two bits together:

L1 R1 L2 R2 L1 R1 L1 R2 L2 R1 L1 R3 L2 R1 L2 R3 L1



or any doodle that comes to mind



and so on.

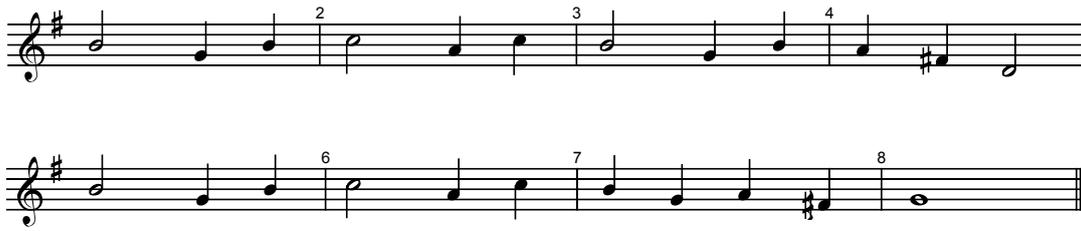
Now we have just enough notes to start playing some tunes.

For instance, from a starting position of:

L3 L2 L1 R1 R2 R3  
B<sub>b</sub> B G A C F#



We can now try the first part of the Keel Row



This is very simple; the only move is R1 down from A 

L1 plays D . L1 releases D but rests over it.

To D . You may want to bring R2 down with it

R1 plays E , meanwhile

to F  and that wouldn't matter, but if you didn't

L2 and L3 move up to cover F  and F# 

move it, although the drop down to D  for R1 might feel rather a stretch at first, R2 would be in place for

R1 releases E.

L3 plays F# , meanwhile

the C  later on.

R2 moves up from C  to cover G 

To play the second half of the tune we need to go higher than we've managed so far, so let's for a moment go back to our previous high spot:

L3 releases F# and

R2 plays G 

L3	L2	L1	R1	R2	R3
B <sub>b</sub>	B	D	E	C	C#

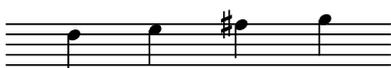
You now have an octave (eight notes) and a bit, from G 



up to G  and down to D 

Again, to stay in the key of G we need an F#  so let's go up from D to G:

Your fingers will really begin to feel at home soon, so I'll leave you to gradually increase your knowledge of where the notes are, working gradually from an area you know to one you don't. You will soon find your fingers can move up and down the scales faster than you can read my ramblings.



And so on with the Keel Row



The move up to top G  might prove a little difficult, especially the second time, when you have just been

and R1 up to E , which means jumping right over A 

down to low D . For, even if you keep R2 on

I would therefore advise the following:

R1 plays low D . Keep R3 over

C , you still have to move R2 up to G 

F#  and, taking your life in your hands,

jump R2 up to cover G  and R1 up to cover

E  while the left hand plays B 

and D 

If this seems risky and you are tempted to look, while the left hand plays B and D feel your way up in the following fashion:

When you play low D, your right hand looks like this:

R1	R2	R3
D 	C 	F# 

Move R1 up to cover A , using

C  and F#  as references. Move

R2 up to cover G , using A 

and F#  as references. Then move R1 to

E  and you are ready to go.

Doodle around with the notes you've got, and play any bits of tunes that fall easily to your fingers; and then I think it's time we had a look at what all this MUSIC is about!

**MUSICAL NOTATION, or HOW TO READ “THE DOTS”**

As I’ve already used several bits of musical notation, it’s time we had a look at what it means.

First, forget any ideas you may have that there’s a great mystery about musical notation: there isn’t. It’s a perfectly simple series of symbols, far more logical than written language, with its complex combinations of symbols for different sounds and a thousand exceptions to every rule which most of us master at an early age (Note from Liz Anderson, Grammatical Adviser: I hope he doesn’t include himself in there!)

Essentially, musical notation has only three variables:

1. notes go up or down
2. notes are long or short
3. notes group together in various rhythmic phrases.

Notes are represented by dots on a series of lines called a staff. These are the same lines that are drawn across the diagram of the concertina-ends on the back cover. Have a look at it again.

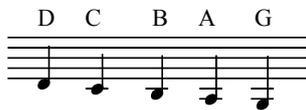
The notes we have learnt to play so far fit neatly onto this staff.



D is under the bottom line, E on the next line, F between the next, C on the next and so on, with the dots either on or between the lines, till we get to the top. If we want to indicate higher notes, we have to draw another little line then continue the process of one note on the line, one between, as far as needed:



Similarly extra lines can be drawn below the staff



You can see by looking at the diagram on the back cover, that a dot on the bottom line represents the sound given when you press the second button up, in the third row, left-hand side. You don’t even have to know what it’s called, as long as you know that that dot on the staff means that button on the concertina. Then you can read music!

**Naturals and Accidentals (Sharps and Flats)**

The dots on the staff represent the natural notes of the scale, i.e. the central two rows of buttons.

The sharps and flats on the outside rows are indicated by a combination of a note on the staff and a symbol like this # for sharp and like this ♭ for flat.



If a note is to be played sharp all through a piece, then it is marked at the beginning of the music thus .

This means that all Fs are to be played as F sharp throughout. If a note is played sharp most of the time but is occasionally played natural, then where this arises the sign ♮ is used.

When notes are made sharp or flat during the piece, the symbol is placed beside the actual note and the note stays sharp or flat till the end of the bar. Then the note reverts to whatever it was before.

Thus the position of the note on staff taking into account any sharp or flat signs, tells us which button to press.

**Length of Notes**

Notes are long or short, and we tell which they are from the way the dots look.

- Is a very long note and you don’t often see it in traditional music. It is called a semibreve.
- is half the length of a semibreve and is called a minim.
- is half the length of a minim and is called crotchet. (I suppose statistically speaking this is about the average length of note.)
- is half the length of a crotchet and is called a quaver. The tail on the end of a quaver can be joined with those of other quavers in little groups e.g.:

These are rather fast notes: the sort of thing that form the backbone of jigs and reels.

- is half as long as a quaver and is called semiquaver. It is really quite fast. Again, the tails can be joined, e.g.

There are notes of other durations, but they needn’t worry us here.

Thus we have a system of continual halving of notes, so that each note is worth two smaller ones e.g.

$$2 \text{ crotchets} = 1 \text{ minim}$$

$$2 \text{ quavers} = 1 \text{ crotchet}$$

Incidentally, it doesn’t matter where vertical strokes go, up or down — this has more to do with making the sequence of notes easy to read quickly. is exactly the same

as

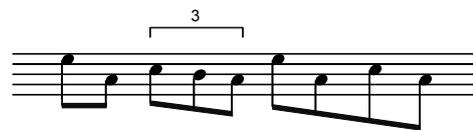
The length of a note can also be changed by putting a dot after it which makes it half as long again.

Thus is a crotchet and a half, or one crotchet and one quaver

is a quaver and a half, or one quaver and one semiquaver

**Triplets**

A group of three notes with a number ‘3’ written above them is called a triplet and is played in the time of two of the notes, thus in a bar like this



the triplet takes the same time as the two quavers.

## Time signature

The time signature is written at the beginning of the piece and tells us how the notes are to be grouped into bars. The top number tells us how many notes in the bar, and the bottom one indicates what sort of notes they are. If the number below is 8 then we are thinking of quavers, as a quaver is 1/8th of a semibreve; if the number below is 4 then we are dealing with crotchets as a crotchet is 1/4th of a semibreve, and so on.

Here are examples of some of the more common time signatures:

$\frac{2}{4}$  two crotchets in a bar

$\frac{3}{2}$  three minims in a bar (once very common, now sadly rare)

$\frac{4}{4}$  four crotchets in a bar and also called Common Time and written as **C**

$\frac{3}{4}$  three crotchets in a bar. Best known as 'waltz time' but once used for more aggressive tunes!

$\frac{6}{8}$  six quavers in a bar

$\frac{9}{8}$  nine quavers in a bar usually split into groups of three.

Of course this does not mean that every bar in  $\frac{4}{4}$  has four crotchets as such, only that the total value of notes in each bar equals four crotchets.

If you have difficulty working out exactly where each note should fall, try playing through a piece very slowly, counting the value of the notes. For example, Jamie Allen is a tune in Common Time, i.e. 4 crotchets to the bar (**C**). Here I have marked the beats of each bar with a little arrow above the music:

**Jamie Allen**

Count one for each crotchet, two for a minim, and of course you must get two quavers in for a count of one. It often helps to count 'and' for the quaver that falls between the count. In bar number three the minim is counted 'one, two'. The two quavers must fit in the space of what would have been the fourth crotchet. To help counting, you can quickly count '4 and'. In bar number seven, the dotted crotchet is one and a half crotchets, so count '3,4 and' with the 'and' coming on the quaver. Reels are written in common time. Most of the notes are quavers, so allow 2 quavers for a count of one. e.g.

## Flannel Jacket

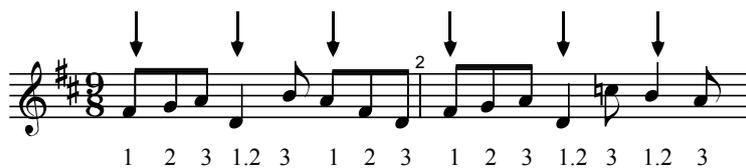
If necessary you could count 'and' for all the quavers not on a count. In bar three, a triplet counts as two quavers, i.e. one crotchet, so count it as one.

$\frac{6}{8}$  time, which is used for jigs, has six quavers in a bar split into two groups of three. There are two main beats on the first quaver of each group of three. You can count it like this:

**The One Horned Sheep**

$\frac{9}{8}$  time, used for slip jigs, has nine quavers split into three groups of three in each bar. It has three main beats to the bar, and you can count it like this:

**Kick the World Before You**



$\frac{3}{4}$  time has three quavers to the bar and three main beats, and you can count it like this:

**Come O'er the Stream, Charlie**



So now we know which buttons to press, how long to press them for, and how to work out how they are played relative to the beat.

Those are the fundamentals of musical notation. The rest is really little more than punctuation and grammar. Here are some expressions you will often come across (there is some further explanation of musical notation in the Appendix):

A sign like this  $\text{||}$  means repeat the section that precedes it. -

Signs like these



mean: first time play bar 1, then repeat the section, and at the end play bar 2 instead of bar 1.

Tie

A sign like this



ties two notes together. It simply means that the note is held for the length of the two notes instead of playing both of them separately.

Grace notes

These are written smaller than the main notes of the melody:



and are played at the discretion of the performer. They are very important in traditional music, but don't try putting in too many too soon!

We've got a rough idea of the fundamentals of musical notation, and our fingers know where the notes are, at least from D up to G. So it's time we did some real work. Take a look at some of the tunes from the record that you will find from page

I suggest you start with something like *Derwentwater's Farewell* (page 13) then perhaps *The Aith Rant* (page 20): that's a good one, as the first bar and a half are on three notes. Just for the moment don't pay too much attention to comments on style, etc. Let your fingers find the tunes and get some confidence. Later, you can come back and read the next section on style, ready to start off again. At this early stage you need as much practice as possible with easy tunes, so try anything that you know and that comes easily to the fingers. Christmas carols are very good.

Other tunes on the record that you will probably find useful as early starters are: *Turnpike Side*; *Jamie Allen*; *Dancing Tailor*; *Framm upon Him Jenny Linn*; *One Horned Sheep*; *Herd on the Hill*.

## SOME GENERAL THOUGHTS ON STYLE AND TECHNIQUE

I can't emphasise enough that style is a personal thing, and that for me to be writing this is presumptuous at best, and downright harmful at worst. However, there are some things which often hold back the inexperienced player, and a bit of advice about them is useful in any style of playing.

Firstly LISTEN. Listen to as much music as you can, on as many different instruments as possible. Listen to the way the tunes are made to flow or drive at the will of the player. Listen to the different styles of individuals and to the same tunes on different instruments, and listen to your own playing. As far as I'm concerned, music is two parts listening and one part playing.

### Elements of Technique

One of the biggest stumbling blocks I've met, both as a learner and a teacher, is playing notes separately one from another. When the notes are played highly separated, this is known as staccato playing. But even in passages where staccato is not required, if you are not able to separate the notes when you want to, the whole thing will lack life and tend to sound sloppy. I've known people to improve more in two days than two years by observing this point and starting to think about the way their fingers hit the buttons and, what is more, the way they come off the buttons.

I developed this separation in my playing because I wanted to play Northumbrian small-pipe tunes which tend to be staccato. Perhaps one way you can develop this ability is to play a tune you know well in an exaggeratedly staccato style — really concentrating on the way your fingers hit the buttons and, what is equally important, the way they leave the buttons. Make any note that needs emphasis particularly staccato, and really think how your finger will have to accelerate down towards the button. Punch it and then fly back as if it were red hot.

Having worked at this for a while, try the opposite: make all the notes run into one another (called legato).

Once you can move from one note to another in the way you want, you can start to vary the volume to bring one phrase or note out in front of the rest, or to let the melody flow gently down from a loud passage to a quieter one. You can sometimes play delicate little staccato runs contrasting with strong legato phrases, and at other times make crisp notes explode out of mellow flowing phrases. Try for a while to play tunes at various volumes. Try particularly to play as quietly as possible; it is very good practice and the neighbours love it!

If you can combine control over staccato and legato phrases with a good control of volume, you will soon be able to bring your music to life, provided you listen to what you are playing and think about how you want to play it. For instance, do you want to emphasise the main beats with a loud note or would a staccato one be better? Is one beat more important than another? How best can you bring this out? These are the sort of questions to think about. The answers will come with experience, and so, do plenty of playing, plenty of listening and plenty of dancing. Nothing can teach you more about the drive of the music than actually moving your whole body to it. Of course, this is particularly important with the specialist dances such as Morris and Sword.

### Decorations

There are many examples on the record, but here are a few of the more common types:

A crotchet may be decorated like this: play the note, the note above it then the note again, so that



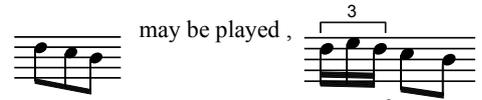
Similarly with the note below:



Often the crotchet is changed to a triplet, finishing on the note,



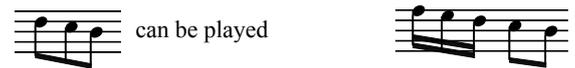
Quavers can be treated in the same way; especially the first in a group, so that



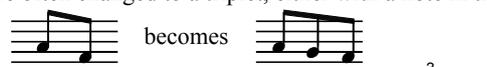
Or, less frequently,



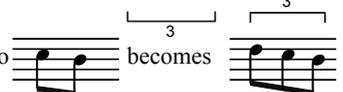
Also,



Two quavers are often changed to a triplet, either with a note in the middle so that



or with a note added before, so



Single grace notes are often used to lead in to important notes:



Once you have confidence in your playing there are a few more points you may like to look at again. Although they really only make musical sense in the context of a tune, I'll have to deal with individual notes.

As I have said, one of the major contributors to the quality of the final sound of a piece is the way in which you pass from one note to the next. In addition to the choice between legato and staccato, there are different ways of playing these two extremes, and also different 'shapes' of notes you can produce. I find it very hard to describe this, but perhaps a diagram would help. Thus, a note may start quietly and build up

or swell in the middle 

or build up and then cut off abruptly 

It may be cut off from the preceding note, start a little louder and then build up to flow over the top into the next note.

The possibilities are endless, but this is the sort of thing you should think about, both in your playing and your listening. For example, when playing a phrase where you really want one note to leap out, just as you finish the note before the crux, try to relax just a fraction so there is no actual pressure on the bellows, then apply pressure just at the exact moment that your finger strikes the button. Or, reduce pressure and smooth on to the note at low volume, then really pull back and let it soar out, cut it at its height and reduce pressure so as to drop gently into the next note.



This all sounds more like flying instructions than anything else, but I hope it gives you food for thought.

Really feel every note, every phrase, every tune; get right inside and think how you want to bring it to life, contrasting one phrase with another; get involved; care about what you are doing, don't worry when you fall short. Ninety-nine times out of a hundred you won't do what you want to, but when it happens and everything comes together to say what you want to say, you feel great!

## THE TUNES

### Derwentwater's Farewell

The tune was old long before the song words were put to it, and it was known under various names. I recently came across it in Oswald's Pocket Companion (1745) entitled Chevy Chase, though I've never heard it associated with that ballad before.

Since it is a 'slow air' there is obviously considerable room for personal interpretation. Listen for example to Cohn Ross playing it on *Lads of Northumbria* and accompanying Louis Killen singing it on *Along the Coaly Tyne*.

Try to control the bellows so that you can play it gently. There is plenty of room for dynamic variation if you can get the soft parts soft enough.

### Derwentwater's Farewell

Musical notation for Derwentwater's Farewell, showing four staves of music in 3/4 time with a key signature of one sharp (F#). The notes are numbered 2 through 17.

### Jamie Allen

There shouldn't be too much difficulty with fingering here. The interesting points are the octave jumps from

G  to G  in bars nos. 6 and 11, and from A  to  A in bar no. 13.

However, part of the beauty of the English fingering system is that octaves are on opposite ends of the instrument, so octave jumps are often quite easy. In this case you have plenty of time while playing low G with L1 to move R2 up to top G. In fact it can start to move that way as soon as it has played

the C  half way through bar 5. Similarly in bars 12 and 13, L1 has plenty of time to get from D  to top A .

If you find it difficult to hit the top G or A, try doing what I suggested on page 5, i.e. using a third finger as a reference point: if R3 covers C# then R2 should know that G will be just up a bit from where R3 is. The top A is a little harder, as the third finger has to be used to play the F#, but you will still find it useful as a reference point.

### Jamie Allen

Musical notation for Jamie Allen's version of Derwentwater's Farewell, showing four staves of music in 3/4 time with a key signature of one sharp (F#). The notes are numbered 2 through 18.

Footnote: Many of the tunes consist of 2 repeated parts, usually referred to as the A music and the B music. In a standard jig or reel the A music (first part) is played twice, then the B music (second part) is played twice. You have then played 'once through the tune', and depending on the required length of the selection it may well be played right through again with repeats.

When discussing particular bars on the record, I count the number of bars written down and indicate 1st, 2nd, 3rd and 4th time through, so 'bar 4 second time through' is in fact the 12th bar of music on the record.

Once you can play all the notes, try to listen to the tune to get some idea of the emphasis. I like to play the repeated notes well separated. I take my finger right off the button and tap it down to get the notes out crisply. This is especially effective with the top Gs and As.

Bar number 11 is often played like this



The second time through you may like to add some bass notes; this fills out the tune a bit and is good fun, but only try it after you are confident you can play the tune with a nice lift. I would always advise getting a good command of the melody first, not that it's difficult to add the other notes to make chords, but I think playing chords too early can make for 'stodgy' playing.

**Jamie Allen**



**The Herd on the Hill**

This is a very good tune on which to practise jumps of a fifth. That is, jumping to a note immediately above or below the note you have just played, It is also well suited to practising staccato playing (where the notes are well separated from one another).

Tom Clough, who wrote this tune, played the Northumbrian small-pipes and his description was that the notes should come out of the pipes like 'peas out of a pod'.

**The Herd on the Hill — Tom Clough**



I am often asked if there is an easier way to make a jump of a fifth, in this case from D down to G



. Of course, you could 'cross-finger' it, i.e. bring L2 across underneath L1, but to my mind it is only occasionally worth it,

because you may find your fingers out of position, and thus the next phrase, which should be easy, may end up harder than the move you're trying to avoid. I prefer to make a virtue of necessity: you have to jump down a note, therefore there must be a gap between the two notes, so make it a really well-emphasised gap. Make both notes, especially the D, crisp and sharp. With notes like these, my fingers tend to hang well back from the keyboard then accelerate down towards the button, tap it smartly then spring back off again, well clear and ready to tap down onto the button below. Try practising jumps of a fifth: just tap out D G D G D G D G. It will improve your general playing.

Notice that in bar number 5, I often tend to play the C to A  the same way as I have been playing the D to G although this

is not a jump of that kind. The 'B music' also gives ample opportunity for crisp playing. Really think about getting those fingers back off the notes.

## The One Horned Sheep

This is a well known jig, but a grand one. Ideal for anything that needs plenty of drive (we used to dance Rapper to it, and it certainly moves you

along.) Try to increase the pressure on the bellows at exactly the same instant that you hit the top G . Make it leap out at the dancers. Try the same technique with the E  in bar number 3, but whereas the top G is cut to leave a gap,

between top and low G , the E can be slid into its following G with a surge .

### The One Horned Sheep



If you have difficulty with the repeated notes I'm afraid you'll just have to practise. It's really worth it!

The B music, though not as spectacular as the A, can drive along especially if you emphasise the repeated G B D figure with slightly more drive on the first note of each set of three quavers and particularly on the first quaver of each bar. You really can let loose second time round, on the lead back into the A music.

### Turnpike Side

Quite a simple little jig from the Cocks Manuscript in the Black Gate Museum in Newcastle. It's good for increasing confidence in your knowledge of the keyboard. It has some nice jumps in the A music, and a fifth jump from D to top A in the B music. Keep it 'stotty' especially in the first half.

*Editor's note: Verb to stott = bounce explosively, peculiar to Northumberland as in 'stottn drunk', or 'Stotty cyek' a bread-based delicacy of the region and anything but 'stotty'!*

### Turnpike Side



The third time through in bar number eight I slip in a grace note to lead into the G. Also in bar number nine I drop down to E. This is quite simply a mistake, but definitely one of my better ones.



The B music lends itself to the addition of a few bass notes, but make sure you can play the chords just as crisply as an individual note. Although most of the time you will probably want the chords flowing along underneath the melody, if you can't punch them out when you need to, the whole thing will sound 'puddingy' (you won't find that one in a glossary of Italian musical terms, either!)

### Turnpike Side

B music

### The Sunbeam

In common with a number of Scottish jigs, this tune has more emphasis on the second beat than the other two jigs in this selection, so think carefully how you want to bring out the A  in bar number two, the F  # in bar number three, the B  in bar number five, etc.

### The Sunbeam

As you will notice I play a simplified version the first time through, simply missing out the semi quaver Gs, so that bars numbered four and five, for example, are played like this:

Try it this way first, then add the rest as you gain confidence. Keep this one nice and light; it's a lovely tune.

## The Dancing Tailor

Don't worry about the grace notes at first. Try to play it lightly, especially the run down in bars numbered fifteen and sixteen. Sometimes let

the E , C  and A  pop lightly out, then later let them flow in with the downward tumbling run.

## The Dancing Tailor



In bar number fourteen I often dwell on the first—note, so perhaps it should be written:



Bar number seventeen — try to cut the low A to get a clean jump up the octave. When you feel confident, try flicking in the grace notes in bar number seven. If you can't get both in easily, just use the E as a lead into the D.

## O'Carolan's Fancy

I like to play this one quite crisp, especially the A  in bar number four, which I really like to pop out. I usually play the first notes of most

bars 'well cut', but in contrast in bar number twelve I like to swell into the first G . Think carefully how you want to play bars numbered fourteen and fifteen. It is a lovely little progression.

## O'Carolan's Fancy



# The Blarney Pilgrim

A solid driving jig. Really hit those Ds in bar 1 and the A in bar 2. In the second part, soar up to that top G, then perhaps relax a little ready to attack the crotchets in bars 17 and 18.

## The Blarney Pilgrim

Bars 2 and 3 (the same as 6, 7 and 18,19; 22, 23) are played in a number of different ways, e.g.:

Similarly bars 12 and 13 can vary considerably. While holding the bottom G, introduce a D to lead up to the top G:

Or with a chord effect

Bar 13 itself can be decorated in different ways, e.g.

## The Barrington Hornpipe

Hornpipes are usually written with every other note dotted. This is in fact an approximation to the bouncy rhythm of the hornpipe. The notes are not given quite the values:  $1\frac{1}{2}$ ,  $\frac{1}{2}$ ,  $1\frac{1}{2}$ ,  $\frac{1}{2}$  as they are written, and this is further complicated here by the first note of each set of four tending to be played staccato. Also in bar number five the C# is shortened and the D lengthened.

Although it is not actually printed like that, many people play it that way. In bar number eleven, remember that the addition of # sign to the C sharpens it only to the end of the bar. In Bar number twelve it is again C natural. In Bars numbered five and fourteen we need to go back to C natural before the end of the bar, so the C #is cancelled with a ♮ sign.

If you find bar number sixteen too hard, just play bar number twelve in its place. When you do come to try bar number sixteen, remember that the 4 semiquavers must only take up the space of 2 quavers and that the D and B immediately after them sound exactly the same as the D and B in bar number eleven.

In bar number five I often slip in a low D under the A  to lead into the next phrase, usually using R2 so that I can hold the A a fraction over the top of the D.

## The Cliff Hornpipe

Whereas in the Barrington Hornpipe it is the first note of each group of four that is played staccato, here the third note of each group tends to be pushed out, while the first note is altogether rounder.

## The Cliff Hornpipe

If you find the 'dropping triplet run' a bit hard, us a triple run like this:

It's a common enough phrase, found in the Harvest Home, and in fact in some versions of this tune. Occasionally I cross-finger the opening bars of the B music: R1 plays the E, R2 comes underneath to play A and R3 plays top G

### The Aith Rant

This is a very simple little jig. The first two bars are all on three notes. Make sure you play all those B's  distinctly.

#### Aith Rant



### Framm Upon Him

Another Shetland jig that should give you little difficulty except perhaps the repeated E's in bar number fourteen, but they will soon come with practice. Although these two are easy to play, always remember that the tunes with only a few notes are the hardest to really 'get inside'.

#### Framm Upon Him



## Da South End

I'm often asked if there are any exercises that would be suitable for the concertina, and I know of few except the standard musical instrument tutor exercises which I find rather humdrum. However, here we have a really first class tune that could have been written as an exercise for the English concertina, as it's full of repeated notes and jumps that don't fall easily to the fingers.

### Da South End — Willie Hunter

This is a really good tune that will repay the work you put into it both for its own sake and because if you can make headway with these fifth jumps you will find a whole new range of tunes open to you.

### Jenny Linn Polka

If all you learn from this track on the record is that music should be fun, then you'll have learnt a great deal.

### Jenny Linn Polka

There are hundreds of ways of making this polka lift, even in the first bar. You can either:

- punch all four notes out,
- run the F# and A together, increasing the pressure on the bellows and cutting off at a 'height', with your finger coming off while the bellows are still under pressure. Reduce pressure slightly, hit the C and pull up again into the B,
- run all four together, but really surge as you go into the G — or anything else that takes your fancy!

Second time through I put in a few little chords — this sort of thing:

In bar number ten, I often hold the G longer and swell in on it:



Third time through bar 4, I play like this, just for a bit of fun:



Enjoy adding your own little bits and playing it in your own style.

### The Flannel Jacket, The Scholar

Two good standard reels that are fairly well known, so they will give you something to join in on in 'sessions' at festivals, etc.

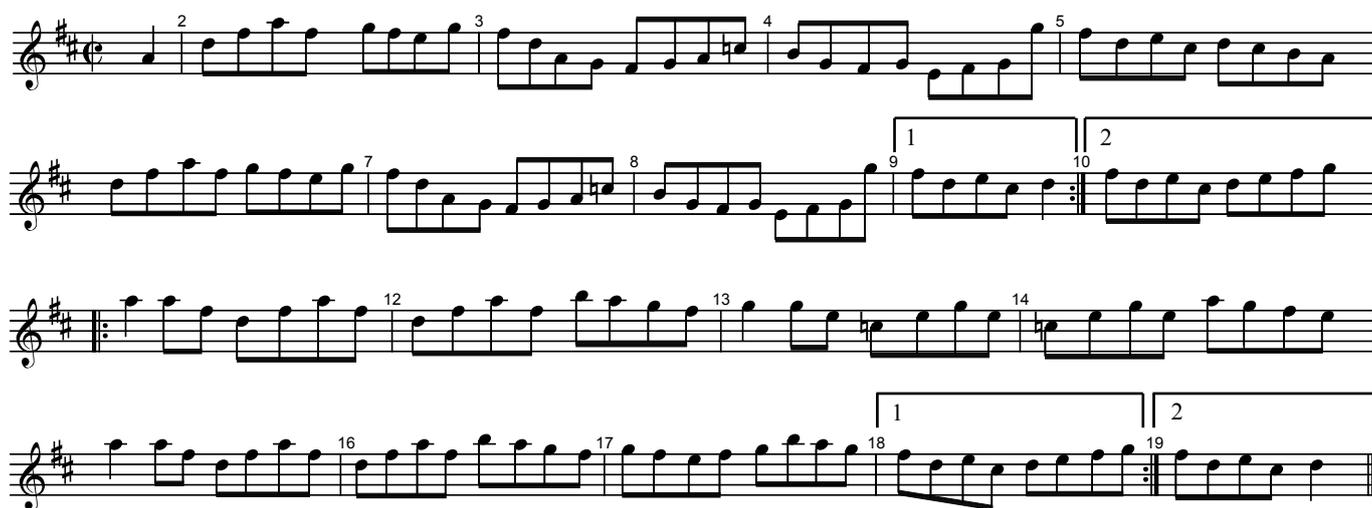
#### Flannel Jacket



The lead into the Scholar is added to the Flannel Jacket for this selection only, and is not part of the tune.



#### The Scholar



Second time through the B music I play a version 1 learnt from Dave Richardson.



For a truly amazing version of this tune, listen to Tommy Reck on The Drones and the Chanters, an LP of Irish Pipes on Claddagh (CC11).

**Joe Burke's Hornpipe**

I tend to cross-finger the drop down to low G in bar number two, bringing R2 across underneath R1.

**The Fairy Queen**

Try to get the triplets in bars numbered eleven and fourteen clear. I know they are not easy, but it's worth persevering. You will probably come across a lot of similar phrases in Irish reels, so you might as well get practice at hornpipe speed.

This is a really great tune. Listen to the phrases and let the melody flow.

# The Fateful Head

The beginning of this tune is almost syncopated, due to the repetition of the D, E, G phrase in different relationships to the beats:

Bar number eleven and the related bars numbered eight, fifteen, nineteen, and twenty five are often played:

and when so played, it is done with tremendous attack.

## The Randy Wives of Greenlaw

A good straight driving reel. Hit those Ds in bars numbered two, three and four with plenty of 'go'.

Musical notation for 'The Randy Wives of Greenlaw' in G major, 2/4 time. The first staff shows bars 1-5 with bar numbers 2, 3, 4, and 5. The second staff shows bars 6-10 with bar numbers 7, 8, 9, and 10. The third staff shows bars 11-14 with bar numbers 12, 13, and 14. The key signature has two sharps (F# and C#).

In bars numbered seven, nine and eleven I like to clip the repeated Ds fairly short, and the second time round I add a couple of lower notes, but still punch the chords out.

Musical notation showing a close-up of a bar with a repeated D note. The first D is short, and the second D is followed by two lower notes (C# and B) before the next D.

Punching chords like that on main notes is often very useful when playing for dancing, especially in a band. The sudden chord can give the sound 'oomph', where the held or merely slowly released chord can 'muddy' it.

### John McNeil's Reel

Probably half the requests for assistance I get from concertina players concern tunes such as Blanchiand Races and Drowsy Maggie, where there are leaps of a fifth that can't easily be jumped straight and therefore call for cross-fingering. Here is another out of the same mould — a really good tune. However, the jump down from E at the end of bar 2 to A in bar 3

Musical notation showing a single note jump from E4 to A3, a fifth interval.

tends to leave you standing. The answer is to bring L3 across underneath L2 to play the low A, leaving L2 free to play E. I do this all the way through the first half of the tune, as shown. In the second half, there is again a fifth jump down from E to A

Musical notation showing a single note jump from E4 to A3, with fingerings L3 and L2 indicated below the notes.

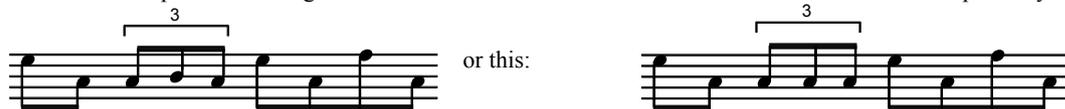
15 when I want a smoother sound. Then I bring R2 across under R1 to play the A. Of course, if you find it easier to cross-finger all such jumps in the second half, and if it gives you the sound you want, then do that.

### John McNeil's Reel

Musical notation for 'John McNeil's Reel' in G major, 2/4 time. The first staff shows bars 1-4 with fingerings L3, L1, L2, L2, L3, L1, L2. The second staff shows bars 5-8. The third staff shows bars 9-13 with a triplet of 3 notes. The fourth staff shows bars 14-17 with a triplet of 3 notes and the label R2. The fifth staff shows bars 18-21 with a triplet of 3 notes. The sixth staff shows bars 22-25 with a triplet of 3 notes. The key signature has two sharps (F# and C#).

In the first part, there is a repeated C E  figure falling between the main beats. It's worth thinking about that for a moment, for if you can give lift to these up beats you can change the whole flow of the tune.

In the second half of the tune there is another example of moulding the tune to the instrument. Bars numbered ten and fourteen would probably be played on the fiddle like this:



I change the triplets so they flow easier on the concertina:



It's a turn I use quite a lot (e.g. *The Doon* on LER 2074). There is an interesting section in B. Breathnach's *Folk Music and Dances of Ireland* (Dublin, 1971) and *Ceol Rince na h'Eireann*, Dublin 1963) on how different instruments approach such decorations.

This tune is often played as a 16 bar reel i.e. only once through the A music and only the last 8 bars of the B music. I have recently acquired a copy of the original tune, and in fact the B music has changed quite a bit over the years.

### The King's Favourite, The Topsy Sailor

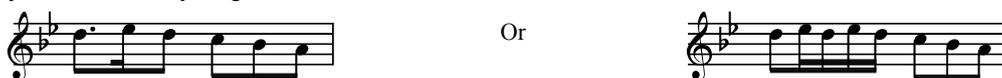
Two tunes in 'flat' keys, to show that all traditional music is not in G, D and A!

#### The King's Favourite

In bar number five bring R2 across to play the E natural then R1 is in place to play E flat.



Bar number 13 is played in various ways, e.g.



The second time through the tune we play a version that is a conglomerate of various versions we have heard — the sort of thing you pick up over the years without realising it, until you hear again the version you originally learnt!

#### The King's Favourite (second version)



In bar number two, bring R2 across to play A natural so R1 is in place to play A $\flat$ . A point of interest here is that if you are playing on an equal temperament instrument, A $\flat$   will be the same as G $\sharp$  

so you could play



in which case you could play C $\sharp$  with L1 and G natural with L2. I wouldn't really advise this, but it's the sort of thing you may find necessary later on, so it may be worth mentioning.

## The Topsy Sailor

I learnt this tune from Nic Jones, who had it from a button box player in one of the London 'Irish' pubs. I'm told that in Ireland it is usually played as a hornpipe or a set dance, but Nic learnt it as a reel so I play it that way.

I usually cross-finger bars 11 and 12. You can either bring R3 across underneath to play F leaving R2 free to play C or, play F with R2 as normal and bring R1 across above to play C.

R3 R2 R3	R2 R1 R2
R3 R2 R3	R2 R1 R2

There's plenty of room for personal variation in this one. For example, second time through, in bar 3, I tie the two Fs. No doubt if we had played this tune again it would have been different.

The grace note E, slipped in between the two Ds in bar 20, is worth noting, as I always find it makes this bar easier to play.

I recently came across an amazing version of this tune on a record of Irish Fiddle music by Tommy Potts on Claddagh CC13.

### Kick the World Before You, Come Upstairs With Me, The Malt Man Comes on Monday

These jigs are in 9/8 rhythm; that is, 9 quavers in a bar grouped into three sets of three. There are three beats to the bar, falling on the first quaver of each group of three.

9/8 is the rhythm still used in Ireland for the slip jig and it was once popular throughout these islands. The 'three sets of three' make it one of the most exciting rhythms, ranging from gentle flow to tremendous drive.

#### Kick the World Before You



An interesting thing about 9/8 jigs is that while the main beat of the bar is on the first, the way the other two beats are stressed can be central to the style of the tune, e.g. in *Show us the Way to Wallington (Northumberland for Ever 12TS186)* the third beat is often stressed. Here, the second beat is quite often given prominence through the crotchet Ds, so much so that in bar 7 I tend to continue to process and bring out the E that starts the second group of three quavers.

#### Come Upstairs with Me

Here the tune is more or less split into two bar phrases with the main stress on the first beat of bars 1 and 3, then on the second beat of bars 5, 7 and 9, and back to the first beat for bar 11.

#### Come Upstairs with Me



## The Malt Man Comes on Monday

For all that this tune was published a hundred years before the concertina was invented, it could have been written for the instrument. With great jumps of an octave and more, it brings out the best in the English concertina. There is much room for contrast between light and shade, between hard driving rhythms and delicate ‘turns’.

### The Malt Man Comes on Monday

In bar 22 I bring L2 across under L1 to play D . Similarly, in bar 24 L2 plays D and I bring R2 across under R1 to play E , though sometimes I prefer just to jump down: it depends on mood as much as anything!

L1 L2

L3 L1 L2 R2 R1 R2

I also cross-finger bar 26 using L3 to play low E  and R2 to play low D  :

L1 L2 L3 R3 R1 R2

However, I don't tend to cross-finger the jumps down from A to D  in bar 30, though obviously one could, by bringing L2 across to play the D.

Although not exceedingly difficult, this is certainly not one of the easier tunes on the record. So, many of you might not feel like tackling it for a while yet. However, I think it would be worth listening to carefully and critically at an early stage in your playing, as you can learn a great deal from listening. Listen to the guitar too while you're at it — there's some lovely stuff in there!

Sir Sydney Smith's March

In Bar number seven I bring L2 across under L1 to play G . In bar number fifteen I bring R3 across under R2 to play C . In bars numbered twenty seven, twenty nine and thirty one, I play  G with L2 as in bar numbered seven.

Over the years, this tune has often been played as a special piece, very much 'for listening to' rather than for dancing. Tom dough used to play it in duet with his father, and more recently Joe Hutton plays it with John Armstrong of Carrick on pipes and fiddle. Here, we're continuing this tradition, in a duet of concertina and guitar, and the second time through I add some bits of harmony. The fingering instructions below the staff are for the bottom bits. The fingering above the staff is for the main tune.

If nothing else, this might give you a few ideas from which to develop.

Sir Sydney Smith's March (with harmony)

It may seem a bit schizophrenic at first, but you soon get the hang of it. Anyone who has a tenor treble concertina

(one that goes down to C , an octave below Middle C )

will find this sort of thing quite suited to their instrument. You can even start a nice rocking bass line separate to the melody. As the instrument goes down to C you have all the notes of a guitar, which in fact goes down to E. So, theoretically you can play anything a guitarist can play. I've had some fun playing *Mississippi Blues* from Stefan Grossman's *Teach Yourself Blues* (XTRA 1113). After a while you get used to the fact that at one moment a finger is playing bass and the next it's playing melody — try it. It improves your knowledge of the instrument no end!

## THE SONGS

The question of personal taste in song accompaniment is so important that I don't really know where to start.

First of all, you should listen carefully to the song and remember that you are ACCOMPANYING. Then, for a start you can play the melody with the voice or, if you have a good sense of harmony, you can play a harmony line above or below the melody.

However, most young players who ask me about accompaniment want to know how to play chords, so I'll spend a little time on them.

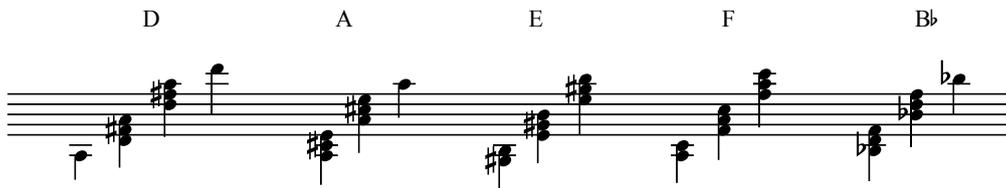
Working out chords on the concertina is as easy as on other instruments. Major chords consist of the key note, the third and the fifth. So to find the chord of G, start on bottom G and count up the scale. The third note is B and the fifth note is D. Play these notes together and you have a chord of G . As you will see they form a little triangle on the keyboard.

If you start from the next G  and do the same thing, you get another chord an octave above , which again forms a little triangle on the keyboard. You can continue this process up to the top (4 octaves on a 56 key instrument). But let's stop at the

first two with the addition of the top G  By the same process of counting up from the key note to the third and fifth you can make other chords.

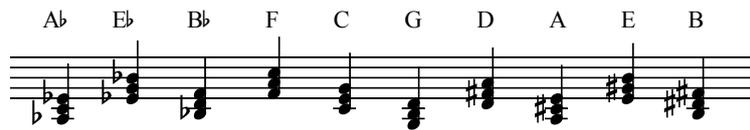
C has C  E  G  and in the next octave C  E  G , so a chord of C is: 

You can go on making chords



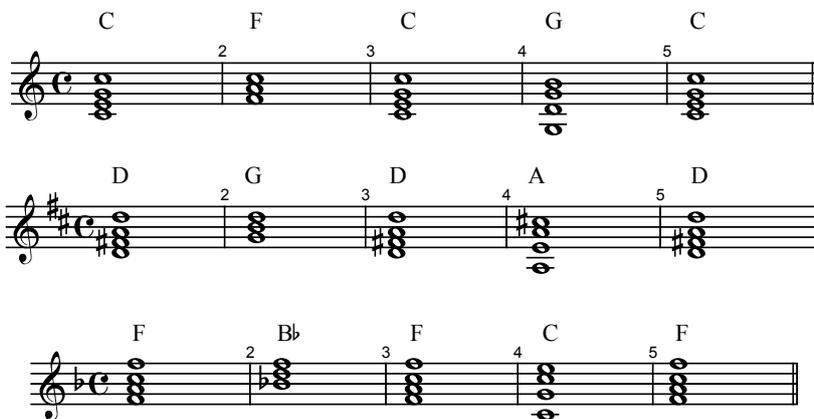
and you will find that they all tend to be made up of a series of little triangles (at least, till you get to some of the harder keys).

When you start to accompany, you will find that in a given key some chords are more likely to work than others. Thus in C the most likely chords are C, F and G. In G the most likely chords are G, C and D. In D, they are D, G and A. This is what guitarists used to call the 'three chord trick', and after a while you will notice a pattern emerging. If we write out the keys with C in the middle and go up in fifths to the right (which also happens to add one sharp to the key signature at every step.) and down in fifths to the left (which also happens to add one flat to the key signature every step) we arrive at this:



If you then want to accompany a song in a given key, the two chords most likely to fit are those on either side of the key chord. This is of course only rule of thumb — it takes no account of minors, sevenths etc. but it is a starting point. I have found that many people flounder around until they find a starting point, and having once got things roughly sorted out they can go on to the more complex efforts with no bother.

An old concertina tutor I once read had a section on practicing just these chord combinations like this:



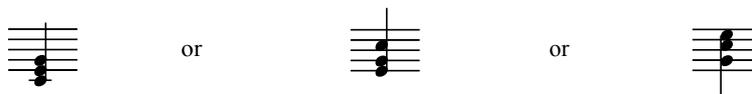
\*Footnote

The 'repeat' Sharp signs aren't necessary as the key signature tells you all you need to know. But they are often added in this way just to help, especially with the low notes.

As you see, not all the notes of each chord are used. The chord consists of the key note, the third and the fifth all the way up the instrument, as I have said, but we need not play them all. We can play any combination of them depending on the sound we want, just as a guitar player, having once made the chord shape with his left hand can either strum all six strings, or pick out one or two.

In the above, all the chords have as their lowest note the 'root' note of the chord. If you use the same notes but in a different order, with one of the other notes at the bottom, you get what is called an inversion. It is the same chord but it sounds different.

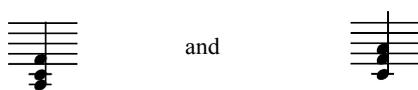
Thus the chord of C could be



the chord of F could be



and also



which are inversions of the chord that starts at F below the range of the treble concertina. Deciding which notes to pick out of the chords and which chords to choose is a matter of personal taste and harmony sense. In such an open-ended situation I wouldn't like to lay down any rules at all. Just before we go on to the two songs on the record, a word on minor and seventh chords. To make a minor chord, you start with a minor third (which is a semitone flat of a major third). You then add a fifth as in a major chord.

Thus A minor is A, C natural and E,



E minor is E, G natural and B



The seventh chord (much beloved of guitar players in the days when I used to strum along to *Blowin' in the Wind*) is made by counting from the key note up seven and then flattening this seventh note. The chord is composed of the third, fifth, and this flattened seventh.

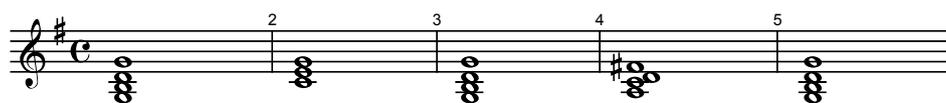
Thus G 7th is G, B, D and F natural



D 7th is D, F#, A and C natural



Again the old tutors would suggest practise with these 7th chords:



A                      D                      A                      E7<sup>th</sup>                      A



The two songs on the record hardly scrape the surface of accompaniment styles, but should give you some starting points.

### Brave Admiral Cole

The accompaniment is quite simple, just a few notes added to fill out the melody — this sort of thing:

The image shows four staves of musical notation for the accompaniment of 'Brave Admiral Cole'. The music is written in treble clef with a key signature of one sharp (F#) and a time signature of 4/4. The melody is simple, consisting of quarter and eighth notes. The accompaniment is a simple harmonic support, using chords and single notes. The notation includes measure numbers 2, 3, 4, 6, 7, 8, 10, 11, 13, 14, 15, and 16. The music ends with a double bar line.

### Brave Admiral Cole

Brave Admiral Cole he's gone to sea, oh, my boys, oh!  
Brave Admiral Cole he's gone to sea, oh!  
Brave Admiral Cole he's gone to sea,  
Along of our ship's company,  
On board the bold Benjamin, oh!

We sailed our course away for Spain, oh, my boys, oh!  
We sailed our course away for Spain, oh!  
We sailed our course away for Spain,  
Our silver and gold for to gain,  
On board the bold Benjamin, oh!

We sailed out five hundred men, oh, my boys, oh!  
We sailed out five hundred men, oh!  
We sailed out five hundred men,  
And brought back but sixty one.  
They were lost in bold Benjamin, oh!

And when we came to Blackwall, oh, my boys, oh!  
And when we came to Blackwall, oh!  
And when we came to Blackwall,  
Our captain so loudly did call:  
'Here comes the bold Benjamin, oh!'

Here's the mothers crying for their sons, oh, my boys, oh!  
Here's the mothers crying for their sons, oh!  
Here's the mothers crying for their sons,  
And the widows for their husbands  
That were lost in bold Benjamin, oh!

The Recruited Collier - In the first verse I just play the melody



O what's the matter wi' you my lass And where's your dashing Jimmy?



O, the soldier boys have ta'en him up And sent him far, far from me



Last payday he went off to town And them red-coated fellows



Enticed him in and made him drunk And he's better gone to the gallows.

In verse 2, I fill the tune out with some chords



The very sight of his cockade It sets us all a'crying



And me I nearly fainted twice I thought that I was dying



My father would have paid the smart And he ran for the golden guinea



But the sergeant swore he'd kissed the book And now they've got young Jimmy.

The accompaniment in verse 3 is altogether lighter:



When Jimmy talks about the wars It's worse than death to hear him



I have to go and hide my face Because I cannot bear him



A brigadier or a grenadier He says they're bound to make him



But aye he laughs and cracks his jokes And bids me not forsake him.

The fourth verse uses a simple harmony line.



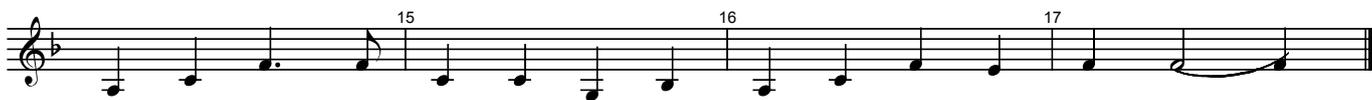
As I walked over the stubble fields Below it runs the seam



I thought of Jimmy hewing there But it was all a dream



He hewed the very coals we burn And when the fire I'm lighting



To think the coals was in his hands It sets my heart to beating

The fifth verse is similar to the second. I might add that this arrangement would be likely to change considerably from one performance to another, and as it was some time between actually recording the piece and writing down the music, I'm not absolutely sure that this is exactly what is on the record!



For four long years I followed him Now I must live without him



There's nothing left that I can do Than weep and think about him



So break my heart and then it's over So break my heart my dearie



And lay me in the cold grey ground For of single life I'm weary

## APPENDIX 1

### Pause

This sign  $\frown$  is the *pause*, and it prolongs a note past its normal length at the will of the performer.

### Rests

Just as we need to know how long notes are, so we need to know how long any 'silences' are. These are the rest signs:

$\zeta$  crotchet rest       $\gamma$  quaver rest       $\text{7}$  semiquaver rest

### Chords

One slight problem becomes apparent when we start thinking further about chords; that is, certain arrangements of notes that are simple to play on the concertina look rather frightening when written down. I might describe these as 'moving' chords, in which you hold one note, add another, hold the second note, but replace the first by a third note. That sort of thing is absolutely natural on the concertina, but not on other instruments, and the notation system doesn't really lend itself easily to expressing this in print. For instance, in the second time through Jamie Allen, at the bar numbered six, we have:



This means the first chord is played, then the G is held on and a top G is played with it; this is then released and played again, this time with a B added. This bar could also be written:



considering it as three separate 'voices', but at the beginning, where the 'top voice' is not sounding, it must be filled in with a rest so that you know when it should start to sound.

In *The Recruited Collier* verse 3 bar numbered six



the top A is held all the way through, the low A is sounded on the count of 2, and is held on into 3, when it is joined by C which holds on into 4, when the A is replaced by F.

It could also be written



And in bar number ten verse 2:



means the F and C are held all the way through. The A is held for the count of 1, 2 and 3 then is released and played again on the count 4. The Cs are obviously played on the count 1, 2 and 3. It could also be written:



Generally I tend to avoid having too many tied notes, as it gets confusing. But often it is the lesser of two evils. For instance, verse 3 bars 13 and 14:



would have to be written like this:



Though such expressions may look rather daunting whichever way they are written, they are so natural on the concertina that once you try them on the instrument you will see they are really quite straightforward, and are the sort of thing you will soon do without thinking. For instance, a musical friend of mine told me that although I had written the final chord in bar numbered five verse 2 as



in fact I was playing



I'll take his word for it!

Anyway don't get too worried when you see hundreds of tied notes; it is not as hard as it looks!

### Terms of expression

The multiplicity of terms of expression are really outside the range of this booklet. They can be picked up as you move around in other fields of music.

If you have a lot of difficulty in reading music, I would recommend Frank Butler's *Handbook and Tutor for Beginners on the English Concertina* (see Appendix 3).

### APPENDIX 2

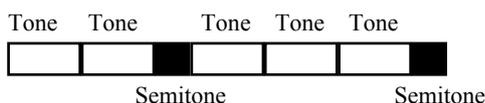
Right at the start of this booklet I said I would explain more about keys and the like, so here goes!

Musical systems depend on various jumps in pitch from one note to another. These leaps are referred to as intervals, and their quality and arrangement varies greatly from place to place and age to age. Suffice it to say that conventional Western music of recent time is based on the principle of the octave.

The octave is a repeating pattern of eight notes. The reason it repeats is fairly simple: if you double the frequency of any note you get the same note an octave higher (you can try that on a tape recorder

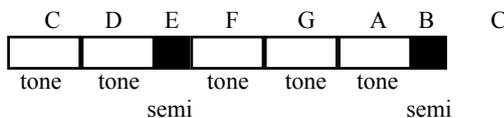
— record any note on slow speed and play back double the speed. The note sounds an octave higher). We divide the octave in 12 equal jumps called *semitones*. Western music is based on the eight note scales produced by arranging these 12 semitones into patterns which use some jumps of a semitone and some jumps of a tone (i.e. two semitones).

The most common pattern is:

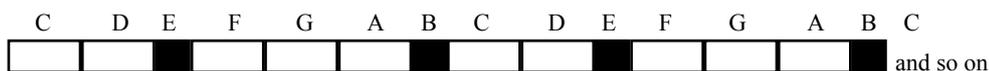


This is the pattern of sounds we are most accustomed to. It is called a major scale.

Starting at a note called C and going up in the above pattern, the notes produced are labelled with the first seven letters of the alphabet.



This is the scale of C Major. The pattern is repeated above and below



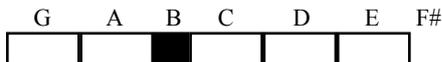
If we play a tune using this scale we are said to be playing in the key of C.

If we want to play a tune a bit higher up, we have to maintain the same pattern of jumps. For instance, let us start on G:

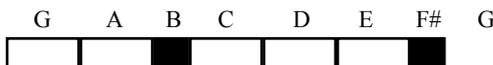
The first six notes are easy, as the semitone between B and C falls in the same place as the semitone between E and F in the C scale,



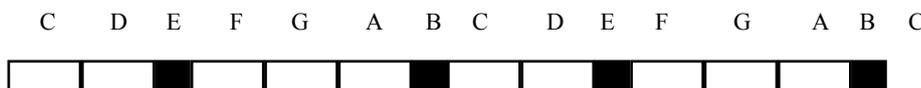
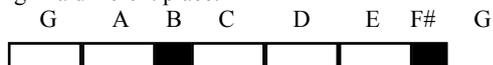
but the next jump up to F is only a semitone, and to maintain the pattern it must be a full tone, so we have to add a semitone, i.e. we make the note F one semitone sharp and call it F sharp or F#



To maintain the pattern, the next jump must be only a semitone, and of course the jump from F# to G is just that, for we have already moved one semitone up from F getting to F#.

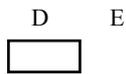


So now we have the same pattern of jumps, but starting in a different place.

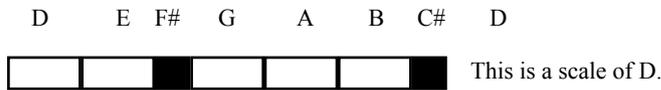
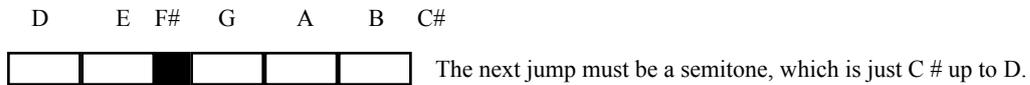
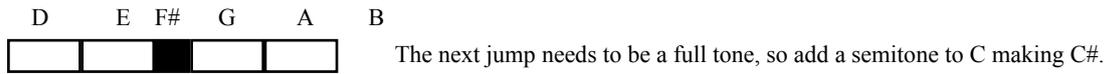


This pattern repeats above and below, and is called the scale of G. If we play a tune using this scale we are playing in the key of G.

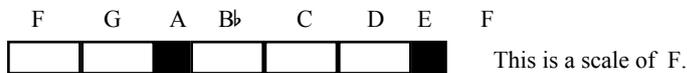
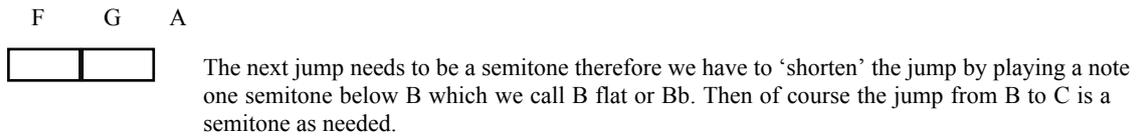
Similarly if we start on D:



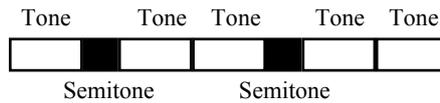
again the next jump must be a tone, therefore jump to F#.



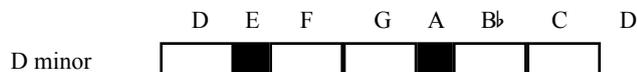
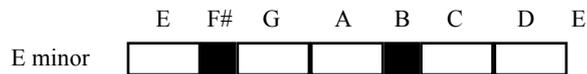
Similarly if we start at F:



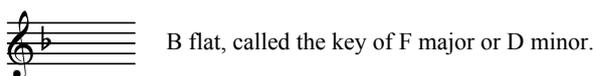
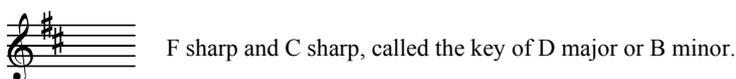
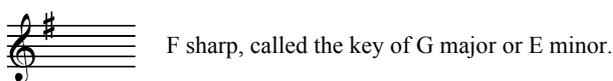
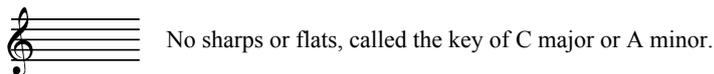
There are many other basic patterns in which the notes can be arranged. If you change the pattern you get a different sort of sound. For instance, the next best-known pattern is the minor scale:



this is quite a different sound from the major. Again, if we want to play higher up or lower down but maintain the same 'sound', we must use sharps and flats to preserve the pattern of jumps:



Thus, if we want to play a tune a bit higher up or lower down, i.e. change the key, we have to maintain a pattern of intervals, and we do this by the addition of sharps and flats. These sharps and flats are indicated at the beginning of the piece and are called the Key Signature. For example:



## APPENDIX 3

### Books

Here is a list of books which you may find useful. The prices given may alter before you read this.

**Northumbrian Pipers' Tune Book** (Northumbrian Piper's Society, 1970), price 40p. A fine little book with plenty of good tunes, most of them in the key of G for the pipes. There is plenty of practice in staccato playing to be found here.

**Allan's Irish Fiddler** (Mozart Allan, Glasgow), price 25p. Very good value with many of the standard Irish repertory.

**Kerr's Merry Melodies, Vols 1—4** (James Kerr, Glasgow, n.d.) Not much used in 'folky' circles, perhaps because of the microscopic print, but it certainly contains most of the well-loved tunes of both Ireland and Scotland. It is amazing how often you find a tune in there after spending hours of fruitless search elsewhere.

**O'Neill's Music of Ireland** (Dan Collins, 1375 Crosby Avenue, Bronx 61, N.Y., U.S.A., 'second printing' 1966). Still considered the Bible of Irish dance music. It contains 1850 tunes, and first appeared some seventy years ago.

**The Dance Music of Ireland** by Francis O'Neill (Walton, Dublin, 1965). First published in 1907. Contains 1001 tunes, most of which also appear in *O'Neill's Music of Ireland*.

**Ceol Rince na h'Eireann** by Breandan Breathnach (oifig an tSola' thair, Dublin 1963), price 63p. Most of the titles are in Irish but there is an English index in the back, and the tunes are terrific.

**The Scottish Violinist** by J. Scott Skinner (Bayley and Ferguson, Glasgow). This contains many fine reels and marches. Look at the Cameron Highlanders: it is actually quite easy to play on the concertina but it sounds very impressive!

**Music from Ireland** by Dave Bulmer, Neil Sharpley (154 Bam-burgh Avenue, South Shields, Co. Durham). This collection of the current 'session favourites' is recently published. There is some rather strange notation, but the tunes are great.

**The High Level Ranters' Song and Tune Book** (Galliard, London, price 55p). Blowing my own trumpet I know, but I think it's a good book!

**The Concertina: A Handbook and Tutor for Beginners on the English Concertina** by Frank Butler (Free Reed Press, Derby, 1974) price £1.50. It takes those difficult early stages very carefully so you hardly realise you are moving forward till you arrive! Very good if you have difficulty learning to read music.

Free download available from [www.concertina.com](http://www.concertina.com)

**Free Reed, the Concertina Newsletter** edited by Neil Wayne Annual subscription. Keeps you informed about activities concerning players of free reed instruments, repair hints, features on players, past and present, and prints tunes suited to the concertina that you may have difficulty finding else where.

The following books are now sadly out of print, but you should find them in libraries or in the collections of fellow-musicians.

**Fiddler's Tune Book Vols 1 and 2.** (E.F.D.S.S., London n.d.) Two handy little books of material drawn from the standard repertory of country dance bands. The sort of thing beginners find invaluable.

**Da Merrie Dancers** (Shetland Folk Society Lerwick, 1970) Contains many fine Shetland tunes of the sort that are becoming increasingly popular throughout the country. I feel sure that if demand is sufficient they will reprint it.

**The Dance Music of Ireland** by Pat McNulty (Glasgow, 1965) This was one of my early introductions to Irish music. The notation is very clear and easy to read.

**The Northumbrian Minstrelsy** published by Bruce and Stokoe in 1882. This unique collection was republished by Folklore Associates of Philadelphia in 1964. It is now out of print again, but there is a good chance your local library will have a copy.

## APPENDIX 4

### Records

The following is a selection of records that you may find interesting. An increasing amount of recorded traditional music is becoming available, and this list is by no means exhaustive. There are plenty more, so get listening!

#### Topic

Ballads and Broad-sides, by Louis Kifien	12T 126
The Sound of the Cheviots, the Cheviot Ranters	12T 214
The Cheviot Hills, the Cheviot Ranters	12TS222
Paddy in the Smoke,	12T 176
The Breeze from Erin,	12T 184
The Minstrel from Clare, Willy Clancy	12T 175
English Country Music from East Anglia	12TS229
The Lark in the Clear Air, John Doonan, Paddy Moran,	
Paddy Neylan, Noel Pepper, John,	
Dave and Mike Wright	12TS230
Bonny North Tyne, Northumbrian Country Music	12TS239

Plus the many records that feature accompaniment on concertina by the great Alf Edwards.

#### Leader

Billy Pigg the Border Minstrel	LEA 4006
Flute for the Feis, John Doonan	LER 2043
Seamus Ennis, Master of Irish Music	LEA 2003
Martin Byrnes, Master of Irish Music	LEA 2004
Seamus Tansey, Master of Irish Music	LEA 2005
Aly Bain and Mike Whellans	LER 2022
Jump at the Sun, John Kirkpatrick	LER 2033
Music from the Coleman Country	LEA 2044
The Boys of the Lough	LER 2086
Shetland Fiddlers	LED 2052
Blue Ridge Mountain Field Trip	LEA 4012

#### Claddagh

The King of the Pipers, Leo Rowsome	CC1
The Chieftains 1, 2, 3,4	CC2,7,10,14
The Liffey Banks, Tommy Potts	CC13
The Star Above the Garter, Julia Clifford,	
Dennis Murphy	CC5
The Drones and the Clanters	CC11

#### Gael Linn

Tony MacMahon      Tony MacMahon	CEF 033
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#### Ace of Hearts

Irish Jigs and Reels, Michael Coleman	AH 56
Irish Dance Party, Michael Coleman	AH 95
The Musical Glory of Old Sligo, Michael Coleman,	
produced by I R C records in America	
but well worth trying to get hold of.	

#### Intrepid

The Heydey of Michael Coleman	
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#### Thule

Reflections from Shetland, Aly Bain	E.P. SNI 209
Shetland and the Fiddle, Willie Hunter	E.P. SNI 205

#### Tangent

Shetland Fiddle Music	TNGM 117
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#### Old Hall

The Hammered Dulcimer — an American	
import — a refreshing sound, good honest music,	
worth a listen	FHRO 1

Perhaps you may even be interested in some of the bits of plastic I've been associated with:

<b>Northumberland for Ever</b>	The High Level Ranters	Topic	12TS186
<b>Lads of Northumbria</b>	The High Level Ranters	Leader	LER 2007
<b>High Level</b>	The High Level Ranters		LER 2030
<b>A Mile to Ride</b>	The High Level Ranters		LER 2037
<b>Alistair Anderson Plays English Concertina</b>			LER 2074

If you have difficulty obtaining these records try the following

Free Reed Discount Record Service, 22A Town Street, Duffield, Derby

Collets Record Shop, 70 New Oxford Street, London W1

Dobells Record Shop, 77 Charing Cross Road, London WC2

Cecil Sharp House, 2 Regents Park Road, London NW1

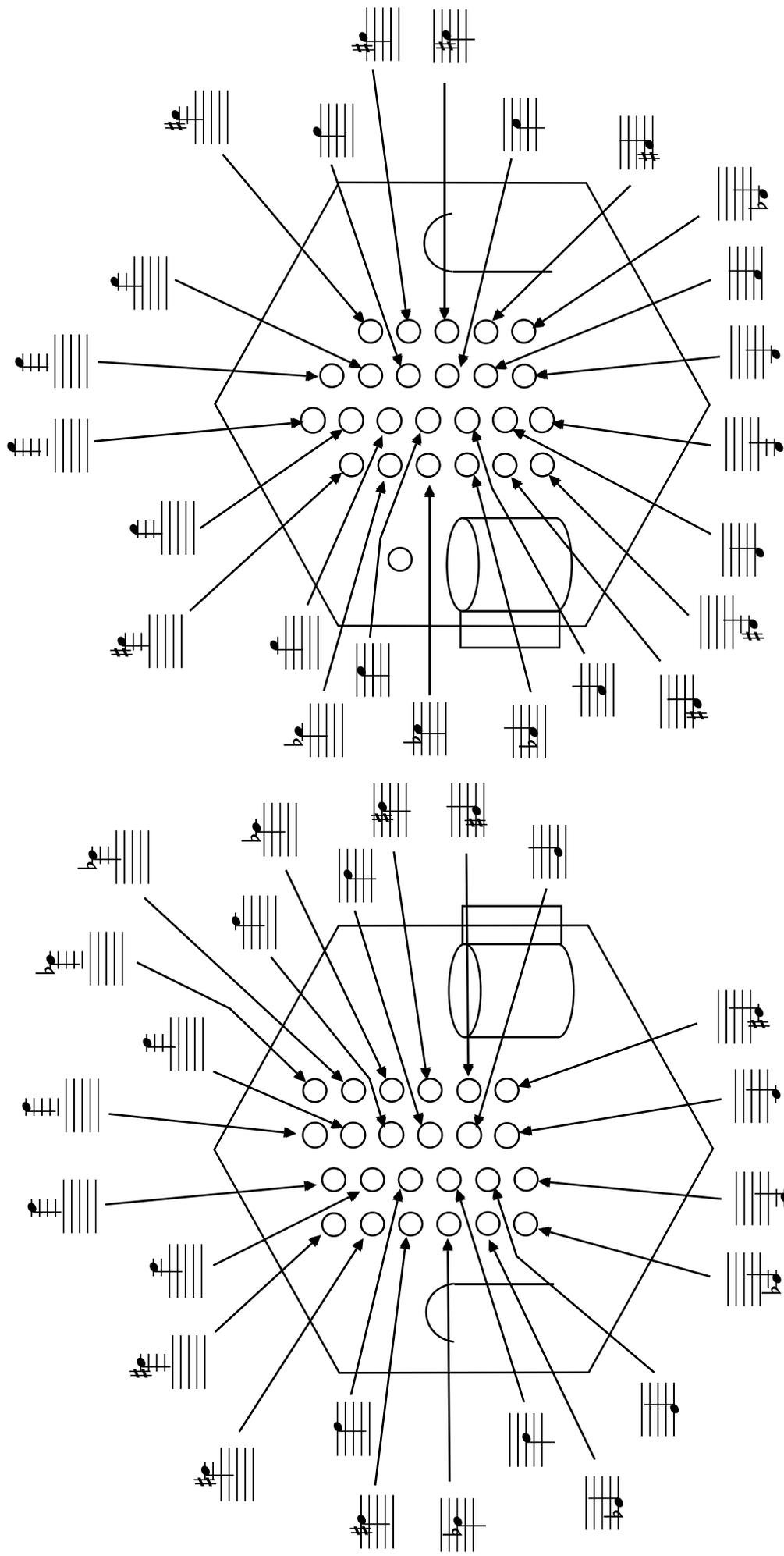
I hope you enjoy the record and find the booklet interesting. One thing is certain; there's very little chance that I'll ever embark on a project like this again — it has nearly killed me! I could never have completed it without the assistance of the many people who have helped me in this task, and to whom I shall be eternally grateful. I would especially like to thank:

A.L. Lloyd, the late Gerry Sharp and Tony Engle for keeping me at it; Dave Richardson, Tich Richardson, Geoff Harris and Graham Pirt — their music and their friendship is an integral part of this record; Pat Neilly, Hughie Hewitson, Nic Jones and all the others I've learnt the tunes from; Allan Humberstone, Liz and Stefan Sobell and A.L. Lloyd for access to manuscripts; John Treherne for helping with 'the dots'; the many musicians who have 'shaped' my music over the years, especially Colin Ross. John Doonan, Johnny Handle and the late Billy Pigg, whose joy in playing was my greatest inspiration — and 'Wor Lass', Liz Anderson for typing and correcting my atrocious spelling not to mention turning a blind eye on the mess in the back room while we pieced the whole thing together.

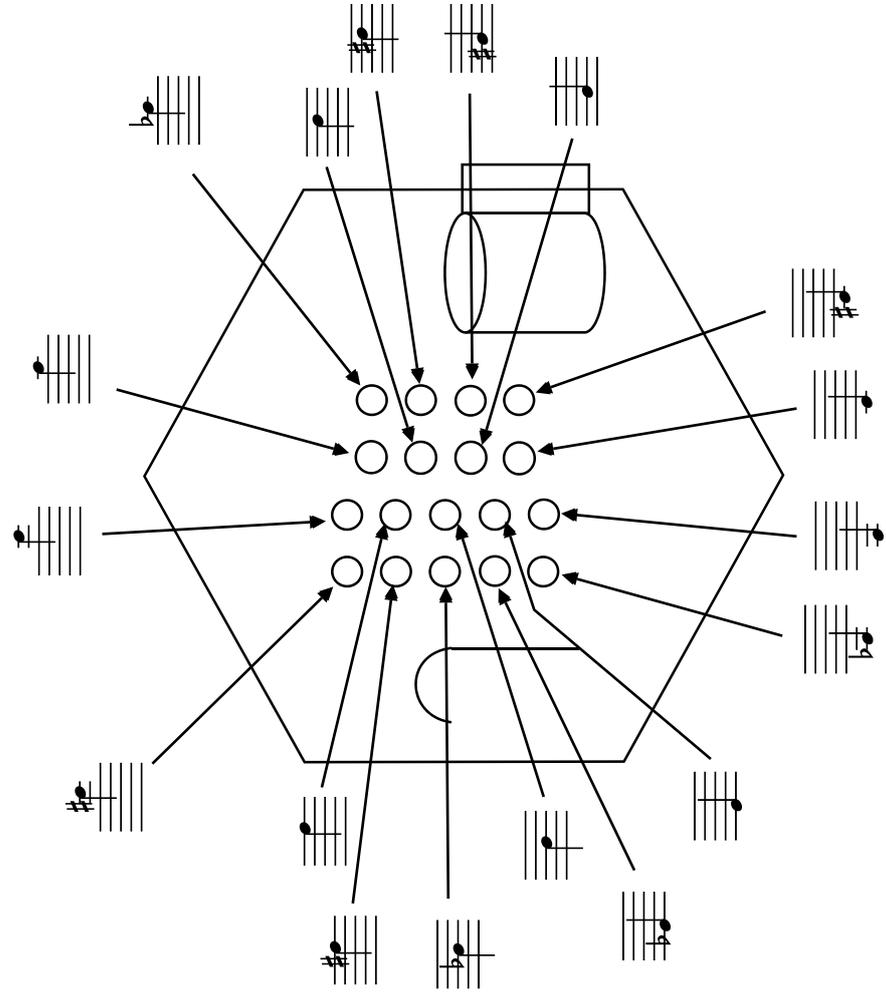
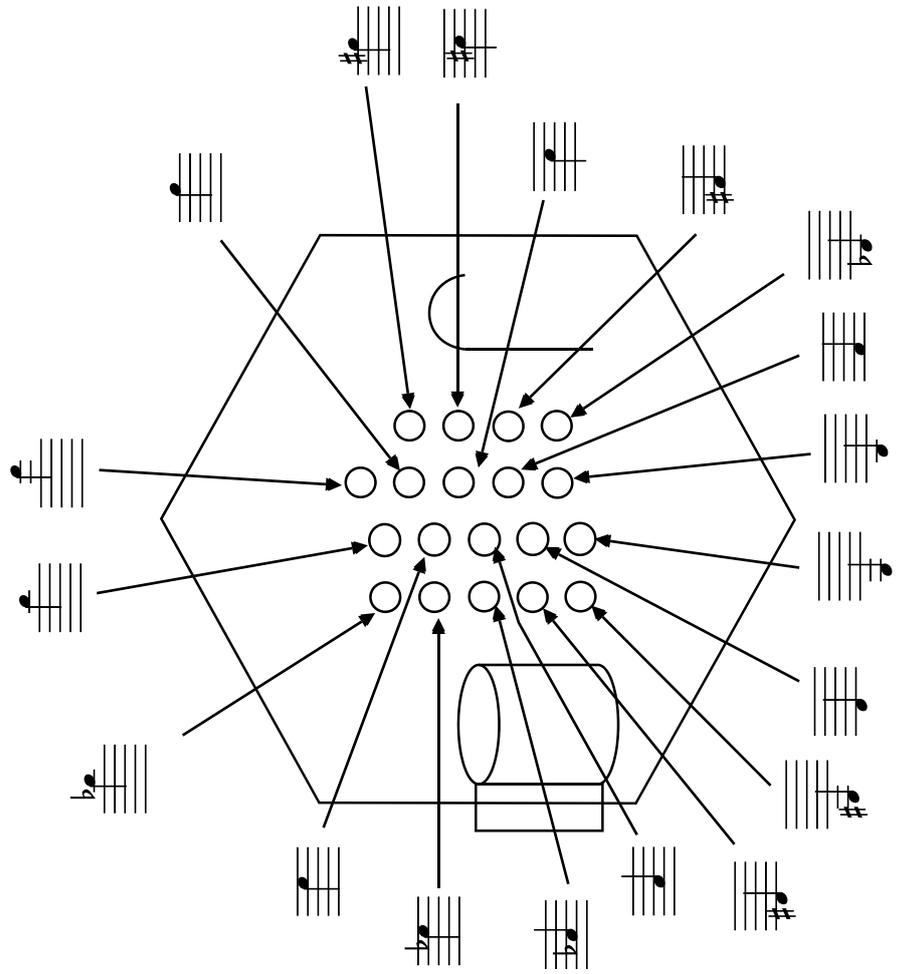
Alistair Anderson

Newcastle April 1974

# 48 Key English Concertina



# 37 Key English Concertina



## SIDE ONE

1. The Dancing Tailor/O'Carolan's Fancy/The Blarney Pilgrim
2. The Barrington Hornpipe/The Cliff Hornpipe
3. The Recruited Collier
4. Sir Sidney Smith's March
5. The Flannel Jacket/The Scholar
6. Joe Burke's Hornpipe/The Fairy Queen
7. Jenny Linn Polka

### THE DANCING TAILOR, O'CAROLAN'S FANCY, THE BLARNEY PILGRIM

Three good Irish jigs. Alistair Anderson got the first two from Pat Neilly of Grimsby. *O'Carolan's Fancy* is popularly associated with the last of the Irish harper-composers, Carolan (1670-1738), but there's no real evidence that the jig can be numbered among the compositions of that great blind wandering musician. The Chicago police chief, Francis O'Neill, picked up *The Blarney Pilgrim* from a Tipperary fiddler, Edward Cronin, some eighty years ago and he published it as No. 1099 in his monumental *Music of Ireland*.

### THE BARRINGTON HORNPIPE, THE CLIFF HORNPIPE

The first tune was made by Thomas Todd, a Northumbrian piper of the nineteenth century. He may have named it after the colourful gentlemen pick-pocket, Barrington, a crook of Irish origin, whose persuasive tongue and elusive habits enlivened the Newcastle scene for a while. *The Cliff* also called *The Ruby*, has been popular among folk musicians in various parts of Britain for at least a century and a half.

### THE RECRUITED COLLIER

A.L. Lloyd first recorded this from a collier in Workington, Cumberland, in 1951. The singer called it *Jimmy's Enlisted*. It dates at least from the early years of the Napoleonic Wars.

### SIR SIDNEY SMITH'S MARCH

A great favourite among Northumbrian smallpipes players. They often perform it in duet, two bagpipes, or pipes and fiddle. It goes nicely on concertina and guitar duet too.

### THE FLANNEL JACKET, THE SCHOLAR

These two reels are of the kind that is ever popular in the informal sessions that develop when musicians meet. The Flannel Jacket is sometimes called The Peeler's Jacket, and as such it appears as No. 463 in Francis O'Neill's *Dance Music of Ireland* (1001 Gems). The Scholar became widely known particularly after its appearance on a successful HMV 78 rpm record, played by the Austin Stack Ceilidh Band.

### JOE BURKE'S HORNPIPE, THE FAIRY QUEEN

Alistair Anderson learnt these two delightful flowing hornpipes from a record of the Liverpool Ceili Band.

### THE JENNY LINN POLKA

Really named after Jenny Lind, (1820-1887), 'the Swedish Nightingale', who settled in England as a young woman and became the favourite concert soprano of her time.

## SIDE TWO

1. The One Horned Sheep/Turnpike Side/The Sunbeam
2. Admiral Cole
3. Derwentwater's Farewell/Jimmy Allen/The Herd on the Hill
4. The King's Favourite/The Topsy Sailor
5. The Aith Rant/Framm upon Him/Da South End
6. The Fateful Head/The Randy Wives of Greenlaw/John McNeil's Reel
7. Kick The World Before You/Come Upstairs With Me/The Malt Man Comes on Monday

### THE ONE-HORNED SHEEP, THE TURNPIKE SIDE, THE SUNBEAM

Alistair Anderson says: 'I can't remember where I first heard "The One Horned Sheep", but I do remember dancing Rapper to it when I was young and fit.' The Turnpike Side he found in a manuscript tune book in the collection of the late W.A. Cocks of Ryton, Co. Durham, a pioneer member of the Northumbrian Pipers' Society. He got The Sunbeam from Vol 12 of James Oswald's *Caledonian Pocket Companion* (1759), a splendid treasury of old dance tunes.

### ADMIRAL COLE

Who was Admiral Cole? What sort of ship was the 'Benjamin'? When did the disaster happen? The ballad is full of mysteries. It first appeared on a broadside of c.1670. The admiral is not mentioned; instead, the song begins 'Captain Chilver's gone to sea'. A headnote on the broadside tells us that the ballad is a brief narrative of one of his Majesty's ships called the Benjamin, that was drove into harbour at Plymouth, and received no small harm by this tempest'. No ship called the 'Benjamin' can be found in the Navy lists of Charles II's time, nor do the Plymouth records of the time confirm any event of the kind described. Still, the song is a fine old example of a shipwreck ballad. If it's wrong in detail, it's right enough in generality.

### DERWENTWATER'S FAREWELL, JAMIE ALLEN, THE HERD ON THE HILL

James, Earl of Derwentwater, took part in the Jacobite Rebellion of 1715, and was beheaded on Tower Hill in the following year. A sympathiser composed a *Farewell* for him, and set it to a tune that was already a well-established favourite. The tune, widest-known as *I'll never love thee more*, seems to have been on the go at least since 1625, though its first appearance in print is in the sixth edition of Playford's *Dancing Master* (1679). It has lasted well among Northumbrian pipers. *Jamie Allen* is named after a terrible old reprobate piper, born 1734 in the wilds of Rothbury, died in the Durham house of Correction in 1810, trickster, horse-thief, deserter from Marlborough's army at Minden, onetime court musician to the Bey of Tunis, and a smallpipes virtuoso whose fame still resounds in the folk memory of the North-east (though some of the more formal pipers of his rime considered him too wild a player to be really considered in the front rank). *The Herd on the Hill* is a composition by Tom Cough of Newsham, Northumberland, who taught the great Billy Pigg.

### THE KING'S FAVOURITE, THE TIPSY SAILOR

*The King's Favourite*, also called *The King's Jig* goes back at least to 1670, when it was included in a collection called *Apollo's Banquet*, under the title of 'The Irish Shagg'. *The Topsy Sailor* was passed on to Alistair by Nic Jones, who had it from an Irish button accordion player in a London pub. It is sometimes played as a hornpipe.

### THE AITH RANT, FRAMM UPON HIM, DA SOUTH END

Three jigs from *Da Merrie Dancers*, a book of Shetland tunes published by the Shetland Folk Society (Lerwick, 1970). *Da South End* is a composition of the fine Lerwick fiddler, Willie Hunter. Alistair says: 'It's a grand one for concertina players.'

### THE FATEFUL HEAD, THE RANDY WIVES OF GREENLAW, JOHN MCNEIL'S REEL

The first tune is a Shetland reel. There's a song attached to it, concerning a shipwreck. Alistair Anderson had it from Hughie Hewitton, a Shetland fiddler living in Newcastle. *The Randy Wives of Greenlaw* comes from Köhler's *Violin Repository*, an Edinburgh periodical publication of the 1860s. Alistair says: 'I've heard several versions of the John McNeil reel. This one has changed quite a bit from the original.'

### KICK THE WORLD BEFORE YOU, COME UPSTAIRS WITH ME, THE MALT MAN COMES ON MONDAY

The first and third of these jigs come from Oswald's *Caledonian Pocket Companion*, the mid-eighteenth century tune-collection referred to above. Kick the World is in Vol 10, and The Malt Man, a version of Sellinger's Round ('a delight to play; one of those tunes with a bit of everything', says Alistair) is from Vol 9. Come Upstairs was collected in Chicago by Francis O'Neill from an old Co.Limerick fiddler, John Carey — 'a veritable treasure', says O'Neill, who printed the tune as No.1172 in his *Music of Ireland*.