

# C1065 The House of Wheatstone 1750 - 1950 Mining?

based on an article by Henry Minty, last Manager of Wheatstones, written about 20 years ago

Early in this year the premises known as 15 Duncan Terrace became occupied by two associated firms of musical instrument manufacturers - Messrs C. Wheatstone & Co<sup>ltd</sup>? and Messrs. Rudall, Carte & Co<sup>ltd</sup>?. Both these firms were established in the eighteenth century, and have continued to manufacture their various instruments in separate factories until ~~now~~. Their amalgamation under the same roof in Jorlington where they will still join where still their craftsmen-made musical instruments will be sent to world wide clients.

The firm of Wheatstones commenced business in 1750 in the old Exeter change, their premises being about where the Lyceum Theatre Dance Hall now stands. When the Exeter change was pulled down in ~~1809~~ they migrated to 436 Strand near the <sup>SITE</sup> of the present Charing Cross Station. and in 1827 they removed to 20 Conduit Street Regent St. W. It was at 20 Conduit Street that Sir Charles Wheatstone worked on his great invention the electric telegraph. In this same building, which was then a manor house and stood in its own grounds in the Old Conduit Fields, Charles II entertained poor but naughty Nell Gwynne. At that time Wheatstones manufactured harp lutes, harp guitars and kindred instruments. One of the quaintest of which ~~was~~ was the Symphonium. This instrument was the forerunner of the concertina and was played by being blown into through an ivory <sup>OR PEARL</sup> oval-shaped mouthpiece at the back whilst in the front were keys very similar to those of the present concertina. These keys were of course pressed with the fingers as with a concertina. It was at Conduit Street that Sir Charles Wheatstone invented the English Concertina ~~and~~ which became so popular that very soon the firm had to concentrate solely on its manufacture.

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~~Although Messrs Wheatstone have~~  
~~changed their address three times since~~  
~~they left~~ after nearly 80 years at Conduit  
Street ~~here~~ this firm moved to West Street

CROSS  
just off Charing X Road where they enjoyed  
satisfying the ~~boom~~ boom <sup>boom</sup> in concertina playing  
which ~~during~~ the period up to 1939 was  
prevalent.

During the 1939/1945 war manufacture of  
all musical instruments was restricted and  
the player of a concertina has to be content with  
~~with~~ their old "tin" or try to purchase a  
second hand ~~in~~ model. The war years ~~also~~  
also robbed Wheatstones of some of their  
craftsmen and it was not until about 1949  
that the Wheatstone concertina was being made  
as before the war.

Two further moves of the factory took  
place since the war until ~~they~~ <sup>they</sup> became  
firmly established at 15 Duncan Terrace,  
just behind the ~~Angel~~ Angel Station.

The house, built about ~~the same time as~~  
1850 has not been ~~changed~~ <sup>changed</sup> in appearance  
external appearance but is <sup>now</sup> converted  
into offices and assembly work rooms.  
The manufacture of the 1500 parts that go  
to make a 48 key English concertina ~~at~~  
takes place in the factory at the back of the  
house.

To the younger generation the <sup>word</sup> "concertina" is  
applied to almost anything that a musical  
instrument and given to any article which  
is creased into folds. To the older generation  
the concertina is played and remembered as  
a handy music maker which is capable of  
being used by the non-musician as well as  
those who wish to study and play the finest  
music.

There are mainly four fingering systems  
used on the Wheatstone concertina today which  
experience has proved are suitable to meet all  
requirements. The English Concertina. .x. - .x.