The House of Wheatstone 1850 - 1950

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. Ltd.
and Messrs. Rudall, Carte & Co. Ltd. Both these firms
were established in the eighteenth century,
and have continued to manufacture their various
instruments in separate locations until
their amalgamation under the same roof in
Wimbledon. From where they still
their craftsmen-made musical instruments will
be sent to world-wide clients.

The firm of Wheatstone commenced business
in 1850 under the name of Charles Wheatstone. 
Their premises being about where the Thames Theatre Dance 
Hall now stands. When the theatre closed in 1880 they relocated to
25 Strand near the site of the present 
Charing Cross Station. And in 1897 they 
removed to 20 Conduit Street Regent Jr. W. 
W. later at 20 Conduit Street bart Sir 
Charles Wheatstone worked on his great 
invention the Electric Telegraph. In this 
same building, which was then a minor 
house and stood on its own grounds in the 
old Conduit Fields, Charles II entertained 
full court and was entertained by the 
Great Gyratory of the time Wheatstone 
manufactured harp 
lutes, harp quivers and 
thousand 
instruments. One of the quintessential of which 
adorned the Wessex Harp was the Symphorion. 
This 
instrument was the forerunner of the 
Carmelina and was played by being 
blown into through an oval shaped mouthpiece at the neck whilst in the front 
were kept very similar to those of the 
present Carmelina. These keys were of 
course pressed with the fingers as with a 
Carmelina. It was at Conduit Street that 
Sir Charles Wheatstone invented the 
English Carmelina which became so 
popular that very soon the firm had to 
complete solely on its manufacture.
Carnie pressed with the subject as with a canceletina. It was at Candour Street that Sir Charles Wheatstone invented the English canceletina, which became so popular that very soon the firm had to cease trade solely as its manufacturer. Although his business address has changed their address three times since that time after nearly 80 years at Candour Street here his firm moved to West Street.
Just off Charing Cross Road where they enjoyed satisfying in the booths for 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 production of concertinas had to be cut back with their old "time" or try to purchase a second-hand model. The war years also robbed Wheelwright's of some of their craftsmen and it was not until about 1949 that the Wheelwright concertina was being made as before the war.

Two further waves of the factory took place since the war until they become firmly established at 15 Duncan Terrace, just behind the Hampstead Colney Station. The house, originally erected before 1850, has not been changed in appearance, external appearance but is now converted into offices and assembly workrooms. The manufacture of the 1500 parts that go to make a 48 key English concertina takes place in the factory at the back of the house.

To the younger generation the "concertina" is applied to almost anything than 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 fine music.

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

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