

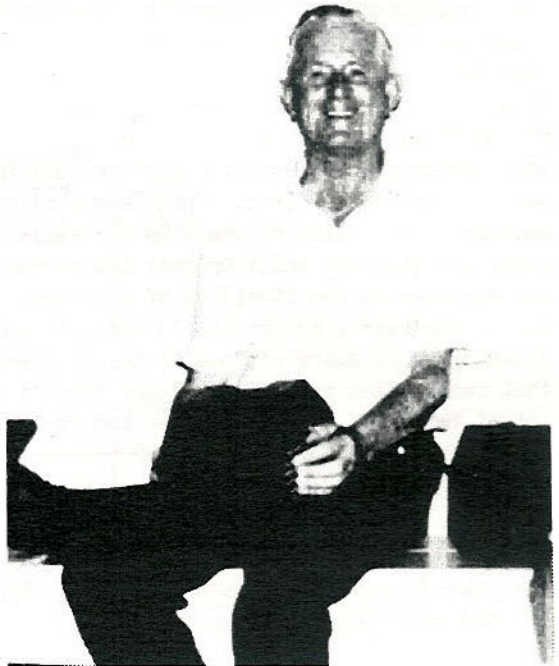
REUBEN SHAW

MacCANN DUET PLAYER

Your Editor first met Reuben Shaw in 1975 whilst on a lightning tour (annual holidays) of the U.K. to learn about the concertina in its home country. I was travelling with Rayford "Skippy" Goninon, a Bush Music Club member, who had spent some time previously in the U.K. and had taken concertina lessons from Alf Edwards. We spent two weeks on an E.D.F.S.S. course which included the concertina in its various options. Frank Butler was the teacher. By the finish of the course Skippy had learnt some of the finer points of folk styles for the concertina and I had come to realise that there was more to the McCann duet than I could handle.

A visit to the Mecca of concertinists, Neil Wayne's house and collection of instruments, yielded some welcome hospitality and the visit to Reuben Shaw's was arranged for us, with Reuben to pick us up from as near as the bus came to his house. Neil Wayne had told us little of Reuben and we didn't know what to expect when we met him. When we were taken back to Reubens house we were astonished by the beautiful and complicated music he played for us on his McCann duet concertina. I hadn't realised that such playing was possible on any concertina! The music continued all afternoon and afterwards Reuben ran us back to the bus, it must have

This recent photograph shows Reuben looking relaxed and happy with his McCann duet at the ready. Reuben doesn't show the 71 years that he owns up to; pumping that giant concertina probably keeps him fit!



been at this point that I decided to either give up on my duet or take it more seriously, I think I had a few changes of mind over the next few days. We were to see Reuben once more before we returned to Oz, that was at the International Concertina Association's Festival, where Reuben and his friend Mr. Wilfred Pearce won the cup for best duet (in this case two players, not the instrument type).

Next year I intend to visit England again, and hope I will be able to visit Reuben again and play "Silver Hill" for him on the duet. It is the tune he recommended for the beginner on the duet and is the first four part harmony piece I learnt. I have written to Reuben who was kind enough to send much information of interest to readers of the Magazine.

Newthorpe, U.K.

Dear Richard,

What a welcome surprise to receive your letter. I recall your visit and well remember driving you back to Heanor for the bus. I note your remarks in regard contributions to the Magazine. I think I can safely say that I can supply lots of information on well known players of the past.

Several years ago my late friend Wilfred Pierce had a visit from Richard Carlin of America, who was on a similar quest to yourself. He took some recordings of us playing and incorporated them into a long playing record, entitled "The English Concertina" on Folkways Records, #FW8845. The contents are - Richard Carlin with Harry Minting- Alf Edwards- The Four Fayre Sisters- Boris and Gregory Matusewitch- Harry Crabb who speaks on the family business- and our two selves. From what Richard recorded in my front room he selected the piece 'Cavalleria Rusticana' for the record.

I have included some photos that could be of interest to you or to the Magazine readers. I also have a large library of arrangements for the duet by Henry Stanley of Birmingham. In the early days I travelled to his home once a month for lessons. It took from 8am to 9pm just for a two hour session, I kept it up for about a year. I had music written out for me which I had no hope of being able to play at the time, but knowing he was getting old I knew that a valuable source of knowledge would be lost. Every copy of his arrangements was written in the most beautiful script, little did I realise that upon his death most of his master copies would eventually come to me. Upon Stanley's death some years ago at age 90 or more, Wilfred attended his funeral (I was ill at the time) and so brought back most of the copies as Stanley's sister thought they would be in safe hands. Until Wilfred died he kept the music, valuing it so much that for our regular winter weekly practice he would copy it down seperately so as to avoid using the originals. Now



This photograph from Reuben Shaw was taken at an International Concertina Association meeting in London during the Festival of Britain year, 1951 (?), and well illustrates the strength of the Association at that time. The photograph includes many well known concertina players, a few of which are indicated in the legend below.

First seated is
Harry Minting

Standing (X) is John
Gibson, lifelong friend
of H. Stanley.

Last seated, in uniform,
Alf Edwards.

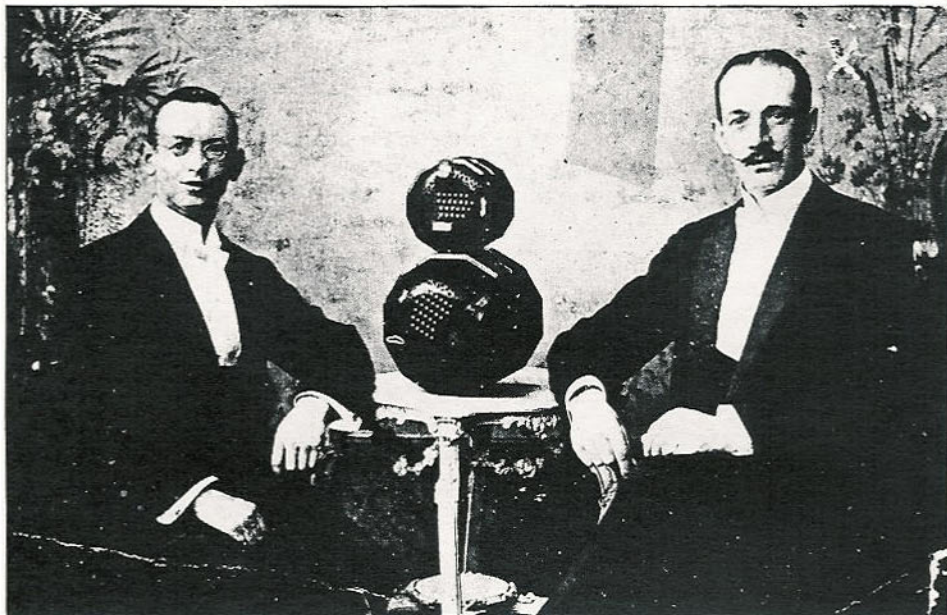
Last in row standing
at back, Harry Crabb.

First squatting is
Tommy Williams

Fourth squatting is
Jim Harvey, and next
is his son, Maurice

Last squatting,
Reuben Shaw.

all is in my possession; there are several hundred arrangements, Marches - Ballades - Entreactes - Overtures - Music from the Opera, in fact the whole range that was popular in Stanley's time. I have made a start listing them, 279 pieces up to now but still along way to go. I also have the music that Wilfred arranged for the tenor treble but written with bass clef, he could just look at any copy and take out all possible of it to suit him. I have a small amount by Stanley for English such as the arrangement of 'Darkies Holiday', 'End of a Perfect Day', 'Love's Old Sweet Song'.



"OVENS and SMITH". H. Stanley is on the right side.

Among other items of interest, I have a number of letters from a Mr. Travers of Somerset, some of them 8 pages long with lots of information on Alexander Prince and other old players. I also have several letters written by Prince to a pupil friend in South Africa. They were written in the early 1920's and would provide valuable material for your Magazine.