

The Anglo Concertina Music of  
**William Kimber**

Dan M. Worrall



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With a Foreword by  
Roger Digby



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# Foreword

IT is an established fact that the chance meeting of William Kimber and Cecil Sharp on the last Boxing Day of the 19th Century was the origin of the movement which developed the awareness of, and response to, the folk music of England in the century that followed. What receives less consideration is the effect that this had on the life of an Oxfordshire Morris man. William Kimber found himself in concert halls and lecture rooms receiving a celebrity that extended to a meeting with King Edward VII. It is a mark of the strength of his personality that he appears to have been quite comfortable in this role. It is a mark of his musicianship that it withstood the detailed scrutiny that this exposure brought him.

This fame had at least two other results that could never have been expected by a traditional musician: when his concertina broke he soon received as a gift a replacement that was of the very highest quality, and he was invited to record in a professional studio.

Throughout his life he enjoyed a special place in both the English Folk Dance and Song Society and the Morris Ring, two organisations that had developed as a direct result of his meeting with Sharp. After his death, Kimber's reputation and importance were maintained by the continued availability of his recordings and also by the constant reminiscences of Kenneth Loveless,

himself a luminary of both the EFDSS and the Morris Ring until his death in 1995. In 1999 the EFDSS released an extended CD of Kimber's music.

Now, at the beginning of the 21st century, Dan Worrall has produced this collection of transcriptions which presents in conventional musical notation the exact notes that William Kimber played. This enables a precise understanding of the chords which are the distinctive and innovative feature of Kimber's music. In addition, there is a further notation which defines the concertina keys and the bellows direction which Kimber employed on his 30 key Jeffries Anglo concertina. The Anglo player can reproduce Kimber's exact playing or just reflect on a rhythmic style which is not always based on the obvious change of bellows direction.

So it is that at the beginning of the 21st century William Kimber returns to the centre stage. It is the first time that the music of a traditional musician has undergone such a detailed analysis. It is not the first time that the music of William Kimber has emerged triumphantly from such careful attention.

Roger Digby  
*February 2005*

# Introduction

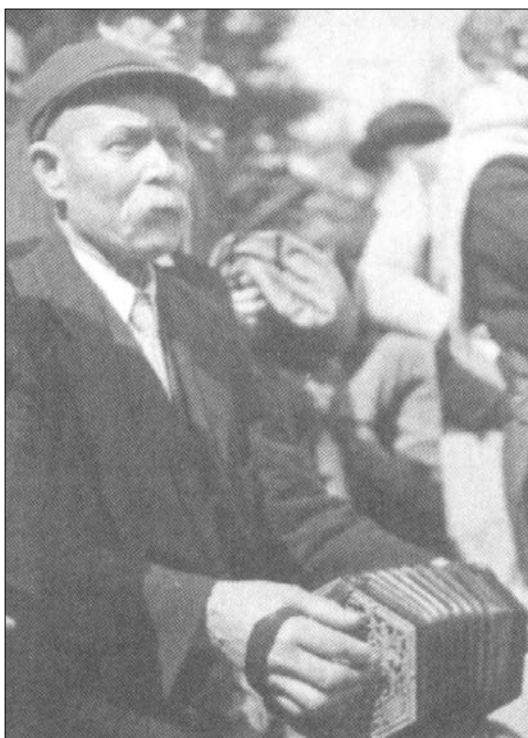
**W**ILLIAM Kimber (1872–1961) is best remembered for the role he played with Cecil Sharp in popularizing and helping to preserve a Morris dance tradition that was on the verge of extinction in the early twentieth century. In addition, he was a superb musician, and along with his father played a seminal role in the late nineteenth century in developing and applying a style of fully harmonic playing on the Anglo concertina to music for Morris dancing, which hitherto had been played in a mainly melodic style on fiddles and pipe and tabor. Although much less widespread globally today than Irish playing techniques on the Anglo concertina, the harmonic accompaniment style that he applied to the Morris (melody on the right hand, chords on the left) is nonetheless widespread and core to Morris devotees who play the Anglo concertina. Many if not most Anglo concertina players who learned to play in the harmonic style during the ‘concertina revival’ of the past few decades were strongly influenced by listening to Kimber’s recordings.

Although thousands of Anglo-German concertinas were imported to or produced in England in the late nineteenth century, there is very little documentation of how they were played. Concertina tutors such as the one written by George Jones in London in 1876 offer a few clues, but the picture is much less clear for players in the rural countryside. Of all Anglo concertinists in England who began playing in the nineteenth century, only William Kimber was recorded (Scan Tester, the only other such pre-revival English player to have been extensively recorded, came slightly later). Kimber’s style may or may not be representative of those early Anglo concertina players. He played for a rural Morris tradition that was in serious decline, where the number of all musicians on all instruments was small. In the late nineteenth century, only two other concertina players besides Kimber and his father

(William Kimber, Senior) are known to have played for Morris in the southern Midlands.<sup>1</sup>

Today, a growing number of Anglo players use the harmonic style not only in Morris dances, but in English country dances and, in the USA, contra dances. Although several excellent tutors have been written for the Irish style of playing the Anglo concertina, there has been very little at all written for the harmonic style, and learners in remote areas are left to puzzle it out on their own. The transcriptions included herein are intended to address part of this gap.

However, Kimber’s playing is in some ways atypical of that of most Morris players today, which leads to



*William Kimber at the Bedford Morris Ring meeting of 1950. From the Morris Ring Archives, W. Fisher Cassie, photographer*

other reasons to study and preserve some of his style. Kimber’s playing style and much of his repertoire came directly and conservatively from his father, and thus takes us to the very first wave of traditional music played on this then-new instrument. Several observers have remarked that his chording, though masterfully executed, differs from chord progressions of the standard western musical tradition.<sup>2</sup> The transcriptions show that Kimber played only on the bottom two rows of the Anglo; he learned on his father’s two-row instrument and never adapted to the third row. Much of his unusual chording stems from this limitation. Other unusual chord choices relate to the fact that his father and he developed an accompaniment style for a Morris music tradition that had

previously been played only on melody instruments; they seem to have had few preconceived notions from other quarters on how such chords should sound, other than perhaps from their local parish church. Another marked difference to modern Anglo players is the relative lack of an ‘oom-pah’ bass line in his music. That type of accompaniment came to modern Anglo players from melodeon players, and the advent of significant numbers of melodeon players in Morris music was after the Kimbers arranged the Morris

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tunes that are transcribed in this publication. During the time in which Kimber learned these tunes from his father, no melodeon players were active in Morris sides in Oxfordshire, and only two were playing in Gloucestershire to the west.<sup>3</sup>

It is widely known that Kimber's father admonished him to keep from changing the Morris tunes taught to him, saying, 'These are the right notes, William; you play these and don't you play any others.'<sup>4</sup> This has led to the belief that his music was somehow rigid and unchanging, and thus not characteristic of the typical folk process. Kimber's playing of those early-learned tunes during recording sessions that spanned several decades shows that he conservatively held the melody line essentially without change. However, his left-hand chording accompaniment was constantly and subtly inventive, and he rarely played a phrase the same way twice in the many repetitions within a single playing

of a tune. Moreover, with time he grew his repertoire to contain other types and styles of dance music, even mimicking the sound of a calliope for a ballroom waltz. To Kimber, rigidity appeared to apply only to the melodies and overall style of the Morris tunes learned from his father.

The transcriptions in this book were inspired by my fascination with Kimber's playing. What attracted me was the music itself—not just the infectiously jerky rhythm, but also the 'long-ago' way the tunes sounded, like nothing I had ever heard. It is vigorous and yet at times plaintive; it seems to hold echoes of other times in a more rural world. Well-known tunes heard elsewhere that might sound a bit too major-key-happy-and-gay tend to have an extra depth in Kimber's hands ... which impart fragments of surprising minor chords, and a take-no-prisoners, brisk and straightforward pace that is uncompromising in its musical purpose.

<sup>1</sup> Keith Chandler, *Ribbons, Bells and Squeaking Fiddles: The Social History of Morris Dancing in the English South Midlands, 1660–1900* (Enfield Lock: Hisarlik Press, Publications of the Folklore Society, Tradition 1, 1993), 180.

<sup>2</sup> Dave Townsend and Andy Turner, 'The Musicianship of William Kimber; Stylistic Characteristics of William Kimber's Anglo-Concertina Playing,' in Derek Schofield, *Absolutely Classic: The Music of William Kimber* (London:

English Folk Dance and Song Society, 1999), 52. Schofield, *Absolutely Classic: The Music of William Kimber* is a 62-page booklet packaged with EFDSS, *Absolutely Classic: The Music of William Kimber*, EFDSS CD 03, 1999.

<sup>3</sup> Chandler, *Ribbons, Bells and Squeaking Fiddles*, 180.

<sup>4</sup> T. W. Chaundy, 'William Kimber, A Portrait,' *Journal of the EFDSS* 8 (1959), 209.



*William Kimber in full Morris regalia, prior to 1909. On the table beside him is his two-row Anglo-German concertina. From Sharp's Morris book*

# Acknowledgements

SINCERE thanks are expressed to all the people who have helped in the preparation of this book. This volume grew out of a long series of email exchanges with Roger Digby, who I met through [www.concertina.net](http://www.concertina.net). Roger provided encouragement and guidance at all steps of this project, from initially suggesting publication through the editing of the final manuscript. His help was essential. Roger is a member of the International Concertina Association, a member of the advisory board of the *Papers of the International Concertina Association*, and a founding member of the group Flowers and Frolics.

Dr Randall Merris, of Washington, DC has published extensively on the history of the concertina, and he also helped to edit the final draft. In addition he provided digital copies of several illustrations from early concertina tutors that reside in the British Archive. Through Randy's help I met Robert Gaskins, a San Francisco concertina aficionado who provided sage advice on the publication and formatting process. Robin Harrison, a Morris dancer and Anglo player from Brantford Ontario, is a kindred Kimber fan who graciously volunteered to sight read all the transcriptions, and through this process he helped me repair many glitches. Through the efforts of all the above friends the manuscript was extensively improved; any remaining errors belong solely to me.

Malcolm Taylor and the staff of the Vaughan Williams Memorial Library have been very helpful in providing resources on Kimber and his music, as well as in helping to bring the manuscript for this publication to the attention of the English Folk Dance and Song

Society. I also thank Hazel Miller, Chief Officer of the EFDSS, and Nigel Lynn, a publishing consultant to the EFDSS, for their able and friendly assistance in getting the manuscript to press.

Thanks are expressed to the Vaughan Williams Memorial Library, the Morris Ring, Randall Merris, and the Oxfordshire Photographic Archive for permission to use the photographs included in this work. Many of the photographs from these sources were collected and compiled in booklet by Derek Schofield that accompanies the EFDSS CD *Absolutely Classic: The Music of William Kimber*.

Those of us who enjoy listening to recordings of old-time traditional music owe a great debt to several collectors who were instrumental in recording and preserving William Kimber's music. Field recordings were made by Christopher Chaundy and T.W. Chaundy, as well as Peter Kennedy, Douglas Kennedy, and Maud Karpeles, mostly in the 1950s. Studio recordings were made by HMV in the 1930s and 1940s.

I had the great privilege of seeing the Headington Quarry Morris Men on Whit Monday 2005, and of meeting William Kimber's granddaughter, Julie Kimber-Nickelson. Julie brought her grandfather's concertina and allowed me to have a good look at it (see back cover). I am indebted to Julie and to the Quarry Bagman, Will Partridge, for their kindness during that visit.

Finally, I wish to thank my wife, Mary Ryan Worrall, for her cheerful encouragement and support of my amateur music activities for the past several decades.



*William Kimber, c. 1912. From the Vaughan Williams Memorial Library*

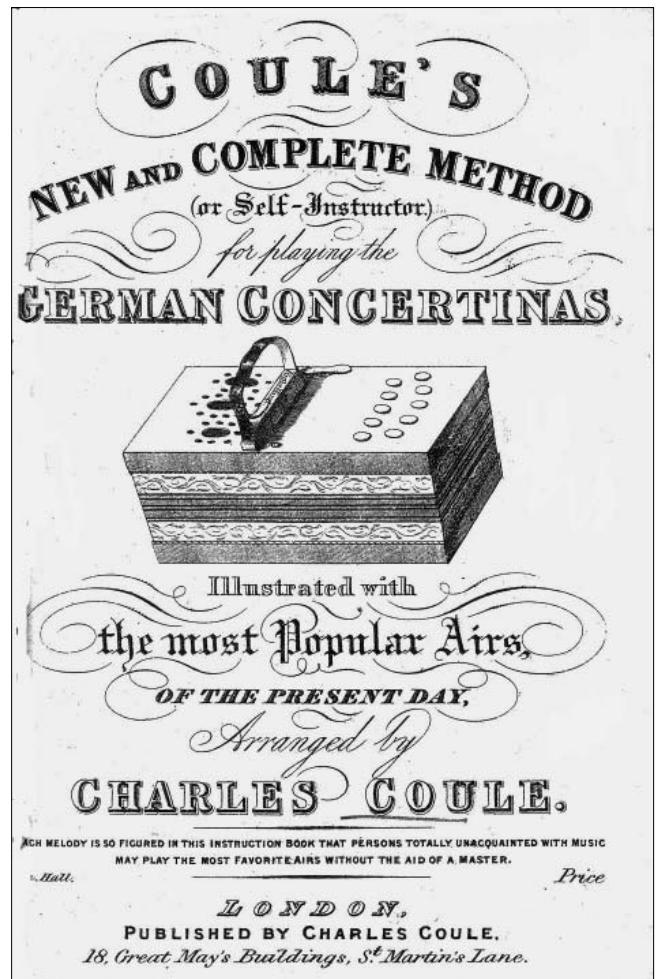
# The Anglo Concertina

## Early History

**A**LTHOUGH Sir Charles Wheatstone invented the English system concertina in England in 1829, the fingering system of the Anglo concertina descends from the development of the mouth organ in Germany around 1825, and from the accordion, patented in Vienna in 1829.<sup>1</sup> Each of these was a single-action instrument, that is, a different note was sounded on the press than the draw. On the early accordion, as on today's single-row button accordions, melody notes were played on a line of buttons on the right side of the instrument, and bass notes and chords on the left. Carl Friedrich Uhlig of Chemnitz, Germany (1798–1874) was an accomplished player of this early button accordion. He was not satisfied with the accordion keyboard layout, and 'chopped the right hand keyboard in half'. The two halves were fitted into two ends of a rectangular box, divided by a bellows. His first 'Konzertina' of 1834 had a single row of 5 buttons on each side, in the key of C, identical to the middle row of today's Anglo concertina. Not long afterwards, a second five-button row was added to each side, in the key of G, and the button configuration of the second row of a modern thirty-button Anglo concertina emerged.<sup>2</sup>

By the mid nineteenth century, these simple two-row instruments were being mass-produced and sent all over Europe. Polish and Czech miners working in Germany helped spread them to eastern Europe. In England, Ireland and the United States, the rectangular two-row instruments of Carl Uhlig and other German makers were imported by the mid-1840s, and became known as 'German' concertinas. By 1840, Uhlig extended his keyboard to as many as 39 buttons in three rows, and models with even more buttons followed. These became known as 'Chemnitzer' concertinas, which was derived from Chemnitz, the town of Uhlig's birth. Central and eastern European emigrants brought these instruments to the US Midwest, where some are still used today in polka bands.<sup>3</sup> The square-end shape of Chemnitzer concertinas today reflects Uhlig's original design.

By the 1850s, when German concertinas began arriving in England in significant numbers, the Wheatstone English system concertina was already in widespread use, though mostly restricted to those who were prosperous enough to afford them. The cheaper German instruments became popular amongst the working class and rural folk. Their endearing characteristics included ease of play for those who could not read musical notation, a much cheaper price



*Title page from Coule's concertina tutor of 1852, showing an early German concertina. From Randall Merris; the original tutor is in the British Archive*

relative to the English system, and the lift given the music by frequent changes in bellows direction.

By the 1850s, a number of printed tutors for the two row, rectangular 'German concertina' became available in London.<sup>4</sup> English concertina manufacturers soon appreciated the popularity of this system and set out to improve upon the cheap German imports. They wedded Uhlig's basic two-row keyboard design with the hexagonal box architecture of the English concertina, and replaced the banks of accordion-style reeds in the imports with individual reed-pans of the type in the Wheatstone English system concertinas. The result became known as the two-row 'Anglo-German' concertina,<sup>5</sup> although the terms 'German' and 'Anglo-German' continued to be used interchangeably for several decades. George Jones began building Anglo-German instruments by 1851,<sup>6</sup> and the Lachenal firm

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*Title page from Coleman's tutor (1854), showing an early Anglo-German instrument with hexagonal design. From Randall Merris; the original tutor is in the British Archive*

built them as early as 1863.<sup>7</sup> By at least 1854, tutors showing pictures of the improved hexagonal-shaped design of Anglo-German concertinas were published.<sup>8</sup> Although the two-row twenty-button model seems to have been the most common in the 1850s, other varieties included two instruments of 10, 20, 22, and 28 buttons.

Several English concertina manufacturers attempted to further improve upon the two-row keyboard design, in order to make it more chromatic. The most enduring design has been that of George Jones (1832–1919). Jones had worked as a subcontractor for Wheatstone's since 1844, building parts for English system concertinas and, as a sideline, performing on the German concertina and flutina in the music halls of London. He related that, 'As soon as the German Concertina came on the market, (I) purchased one, and was soon able to play it. I claim to be the first one to perform on it publicly.'<sup>9</sup> He built a two-row, twenty-key Anglo-German concertina around 1851, a twenty-six key model three years later, and a three-row, thirty-key instrument somewhat later. Jones wrote and published an 1876 tutor for the thirty-key model for which he later was granted a patent. This instrument—designated as the 'Anglo-chromatic concertina' in his 1884 patent—had three rows of five keys on each side (plus a right-side air-valve key), which exemplifies the layout of the modern thirty-key model, which now is often simply called an Anglo concertina. In its typical 'C/G' layout, the middle and lower rows are configured in the key of C and key of G, respectively, and the top row is devoted to accidental notes (sharps and flats) and a few additional natural notes.

For much of his life, William Kimber Junior played a three-row Jeffries Anglo-chromatic concertina that was presented to him by an audience in Steinway Hall in 1909, following the breakdown of his two-row instrument

during an earlier performance.<sup>10</sup> A photograph in the preceding section shows him with his earlier two-row instrument. He continued to play in a style restricted to notes of the earlier two-row instrument (see discussion below and transcripts later in this volume), very rarely using the top row of his Jeffries concertina.

### Keyboard and tablature

The accompanying figures show the keyboard of the Anglo concertina, as well as an explanation of the tablature system used in this book. Following the system of some early tutors,<sup>11</sup> the buttons are numbered 1 through 5 on the middle (C) row of each hand, and the buttons on the bottom (G) row are numbered 6 through 10. The buttons on the top row, largely sharps and flats, are numbered 1a through 5a on each side. Kimber's playing was usually limited to the bottom two rows, so buttons labeled 1a through 5a are rarely included in the transcriptions. Each button is used to play two separate notes—a note when the bellows are compressed and a different note when the bellows are expanded. These are commonly referred to as notes on the press (P) and on the draw (D), respectively.

The tablature in this book differs from Anglo concertina tablature in some tutors for Irish traditional music, wherein the buttons are numbered 1–10 in both the C and G rows, with 1–5 on the left side and 6–10 on the right side of each row. Kimber's style, as described below, is to play the melody on the right hand, and the accompaniment on the left. Accordingly, the music notation is divided into an upper and lower staff, and the buttons are numbered separately for each staff (hand). The numbers above the notes in the musical notation refer to the button numbers on the instrument's keyboard. In most instances, there is complete separation between the melody and chorded accompaniment, hence the separation into two separate staves is useful.

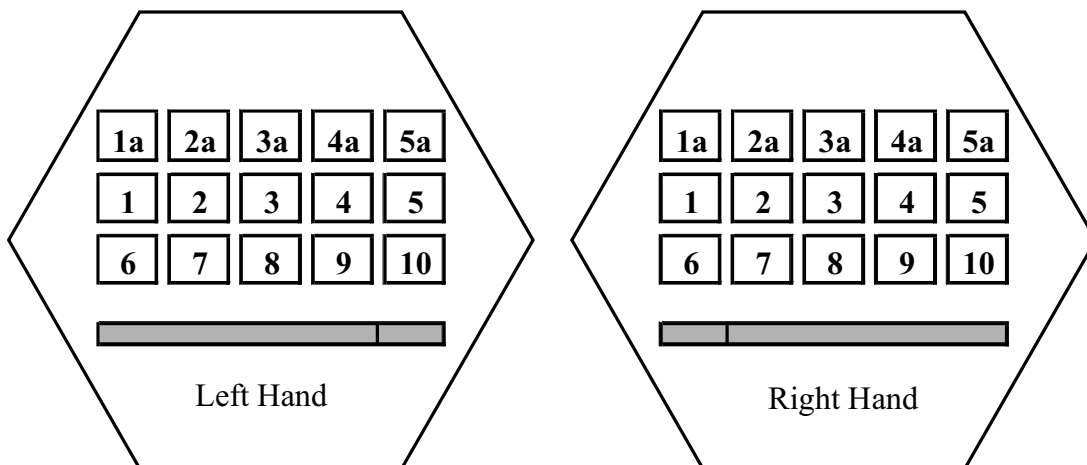
### Traditional styles of Anglo concertina playing

The Anglo concertina keyboard's simplicity belies the rich diversity of styles in which it can be played. There are at least four basic styles in which the instrument is played in traditional music today. The best way to illustrate these styles is to examine the way in which the basic scales in the home keys of the instrument (usually C and G) are played.

#### Playing along the row

The simplest and still the most prevalent method involves playing the scale of C or G in a linear fashion along a single row. This method is closest to the early design philosophy of the two row instrument. As Bertram Levy has pointed out, the keyboard is designed

# Concertina Keyboard



Right Hand

Left Hand

D P D P D P D P D P D P D P D P  
1 1 2 2 3 3 4 4 5 5 6 6 7 7 8 8 9 9 10 10

P D P D P D P D P D P D P D P D  
1 1 2 2 3 3 4 4 5 5 6 6 7 7 8 8 9 9 10 10

# Explanation of Tablature

Left Hand

Right Hand

P = Press  
D = Draw

P P P P D P D D D  
2 2 2 2 2 2 2 2 2  
1 1 1 1 1 1 1 1 1

2 4 2 4 1 2 1

3:2

3:2



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repertoires of several Irish concertinists, such as Chris Dronney and the late Elizabeth Crotty.

### Cross-row playing

Many current Irish Anglo players use what may, for want of a better term, may be called a 'cross-row' style. In the mid-nineteenth century, George Jones designed the third row not only to add semitones, but also to supply certain extra notes in the keys of C and G that would not otherwise be playable in both bellows directions. In his Anglo-chromatic concertina tutor of 1876 he pointed out that, 'On examining the scale of the Chromatic Anglo Concertina ... it will be found that many notes of the scale can be produced either by drawing or pressing the bellows. Advantage should be taken of this (when possible) in order to play a succession of notes in a smooth manner; it also avoids the frequent action of the bellows.'<sup>15</sup> The scale of G played in this manner is shown in Example 3; the scale crosses all three rows to produce the G scale entirely on the press or the draw. This style of completely fluid cross-row playing is of course only completely possible with a three-row concertina.

The goal of cross-row playing amongst modern players is not necessarily to make the instrument sound legato, but to reduce the frequency of changes in bellows direction during playing, enabling more rapid playing of the instrument. Several other more specialized variants of cross-row scales have also been devised to emphasize the use of the strongest fingers, minimizing use of the weaker pinkie (for example, one cross row scale utilizes only the index finger of each hand to play the G scale, using only the four buttons L5, R1, L10, and R6). Most players use both along-the-row and cross-row playing interchangeably, to suit the character of each phrase. Reasons for its growing popularity seem to be the desire to add more complex ornamentation and greater speed to suit an increasingly concert-oriented setting. Noel Hill has been a trend setter for this style, along with players such as Niall Vallely and Micheal O'Raghallaigh. Simon Wells has drafted a tutor for this style.<sup>16</sup> Cross-row playing in the Irish style has not commonly been adopted by those who play for Morris and country dances in England, where dance tunes are

typically played at a more relaxed tempo with sparser ornamentation and more frequent chording, as Roger Digby has pointed out.<sup>17</sup>

### Harmonic playing

A fourth style is closely related to octave playing, and is the type most closely attributed today to Anglo playing in England, and in particular to the playing of William Kimber. Whereas the octave style entails playing the C scale in parallel on two separate hands, the harmonic style reserves the scale, or better put, the melody, for the right hand, while the left hand plays the chording accompaniment. A few typical chords for the key of C are shown for the left hand in Example 4. The G scale, playable along the row (Example 5), is also mostly playable on the right hand, as shown in Example 6. The melodies for all of Kimber's tunes are played almost entirely on the right hand, with the few exceptions being for lower notes in the key of G, which as shown must cross over to the left hand.

The origin of this style of playing goes back to the playing of George Jones and his contemporaries in the first wave of 'German' and 'Anglo-German' concertina playing. In his tutor of 1876, Jones includes two accompanied tunes that are arranged in this style (*Men of Harlech* and *Just Before the Battle, Mother*). It is very likely that he began to play in this manner during the days of his music hall performances, which began in the 1840s. The 1852 Coule's tutor includes one tune, *Krakoviak Polka*, that shows the beginnings of this style, although all other tunes in this tutor are transcribed in a more simple along-the-row style. Of course, the idea of playing in a harmonic style fits naturally with the Anglo, because the notes on the C row naturally play a C chord on the press. Given the flood of German concertinas into England during the middle eighteenth century, it is probable that others besides Jones attempted to play with chord accompaniment. The timing of the introduction of the harmonic style of concertina playing into rural traditional music is less clear due to lack of evidence. Given that William Kimber Senior was playing Anglo concertina in the 1870s, the fundamental elements of this style may have arrived in the Oxford countryside

### Example 3: G Cross-row Scale

Right Hand

Left Hand

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by then, at least in the Kimber household. It is possible that they independently developed the style in isolation, much as Scan Tester's older brother developed an octave style in isolation, or perhaps they heard others like Jones playing in this manner; we may never know. Suffice it to say that William Kimber and his father were trend-setters in applying this style to traditional Morris dance music.

There is no comprehensive tutor available for this style of playing, although Bertram Levy treats it briefly in his 1985 tutor,<sup>18</sup> and John Kirkpatrick described basic

elements of this style in a series of articles for the now-defunct Concertina Newsletter in the early 1970's.<sup>19</sup> Many players involved in the concertina revival of the 1970s and 1980s attribute their early learning to their listening to Kimber recordings. Some of the recorded players of this generation who play within the broad confines of this style include John Watcham, John Kirkpatrick, Andy Turner, Tom and Jody Kruskal, John Roberts, and Roger Digby. Several of these musicians also occasionally play in an octave style.

### Example 4: Right Hand C Scale with Typical Left Hand Chords

P	D	P	D	P	D	P	P
1	2	2	3	6	7	7	4
							1

Right Hand

P	D	P	D	P	D	P	P
5	3	4	5	9	9	10	5
4	2	3	4	8	8	9	4
3	1					3	

Left Hand

### Example 5: G Row G Scale

D	P
6	6

Right Hand

P	D	P	D	P	D
8	8	9	9	10	10

Left Hand

### Example 6: (Mostly) Right Hand G Scale

D	P	D	P	D	P
1	1	2	2	6	6

Right Hand

P	D
5	5

Left Hand

<sup>1</sup> Neil Wayne, 'The Wheatstone Concertina,' *Galpin Society Journal* 44 (1991), 117–149.

<sup>2</sup> Daniel Melander, 'History of the Chemnitzer Concertina' in 'Concertina Café,' online at [http://concertina.home.mchsi.com/concertina/conertina\\_cafe.htm](http://concertina.home.mchsi.com/concertina/conertina_cafe.htm) (sic); and Ken Yagelski, 'A Concertina Timeline,' online at <http://www.concertinamusic.com/sbox/timeline.html>.

<sup>3</sup> Melander, 'History of the Chemnitzer Concertina.'

<sup>4</sup> Randall C. Merris, 'Instruction Manuals for the English, Anglo, and Duet Concertina: An Annotated Bibliography,' *The Free Reed Journal*, 4 (2002), 85–134; online at <http://www.maccann-duet.com/merris/bibliography/index.htm>. Merris's work shows that the popularity of German concertina can be informally gauged from a count of the concertina tutors published in England and Scotland in the early period. Carlo

Minasi, *Instruction Book for the Use of Learners of the German Concertina, of Twenty Keys and Ten Keys* (London: Kleyser & Tritschler, 1846) is the earliest known German concertina tutor published in the British Isles. In contrast, at least eighteen tutors for the instrument were published in England or Scotland in the 1852–1860 period.

<sup>5</sup> Theodore Kloba, 'Squeezebox 101,' online at <http://www.geocities.com/heytud/sb101>.

<sup>6</sup> George Jones, 'The Concertina Trade in Victorian Times: An Echo from the Past—Recollections from the English Concertina Trade by George Jones [with commentary by Frank E. Butler and Neil Wayne],' *Free Reed: The Concertina Newsletter* 16 (November 1973), 14–20. The original version appeared as 'Recollections of the English Concertina Trade from 1844 by George Jones, born February 29<sup>th</sup> 1832,' *International Concertina Association Newsletter* (September

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1955). The Butler and Wayne version is available as 'The Concertina Trade in Victorian Times,' online at <http://www.d-and-d.com/tinas/contributions.html>. Stephen Chambers, 'Some Notes on Lachenal Concertina Production and Serial Numbers,' *Papers of the International Concertina Association* 1 (2004), 7–8.

<sup>7</sup> Stephen Chambers, 'Some Notes on Lachenal Concertina Production and Serial Numbers,' *Papers of the International Concertina Association* 1 (2004), 7–8.

<sup>8</sup> Merris, 'Instruction Manuals,' various entries. An early tutor showing a picture of the improved hexagonal Anglo-German instrument design on its cover was that of Albert W. Coleman, *Coleman's New Instruction for the German Concertina* (London: William Coleman, 1854); see Merris, entry A102 of the online version.

<sup>9</sup> Butler and Wayne, eds., 'The Concertina Trade in Victorian Times.'

<sup>10</sup> Schofield, *Absolutely Classic*, 16.

<sup>11</sup> For example, the tablature in *The Art of Playing Concertina Without a Master* (Glasgow: Cameron & Ferguson, 1863); and Paul DeVille, *The Concertina and How to Play It* (New York: Carl P. Fischer, 1905). The majority of the tunes in DeVille's book were lifted from two Anglo concertina tutors by Elias Howe Jr.: *Howe's Eclectic School for the Concertina* (Boston: E. Howe, 1879) and *Howe's Western German Concertina School* (Boston: E. Howe, 1879); see Randall C. Merris, 'Back

*to the Future: DeVille's 'The Concertina and How to Play It' and Other Tutors,*' online at <http://www.maccann-duet.com/merris/bibliography/index.htm>.

<sup>12</sup> Bertram Levy, *The Anglo Concertina Demystified: 11 Lessons for the 30 Button Anglo Concertina* (Voorheesville, N.Y: Front Hall Enterprises, Inc., 1985), 3; book and two audio tapes.

<sup>13</sup> Frank Edgley, *The Anglo Concertina: Handbook of Tunes and Methods for Irish Traditional Music* (Windsor, Ontario: Frank Edgley, 2002); book and CD.

<sup>14</sup> Reg Hall, 'I Never Played to Many Posh Dances': *Scan Tester, Sussex Musician*: (Rochford: Essex: Musical Traditions, 1990), 96.

<sup>15</sup> George Jones, *The Chromatic Anglo-German Concertina Tutor* (London: G. Jones, 1876; reprinted by *Concertina & Squeezebox*, 1989), 15.

<sup>16</sup> Simon Wells, *A Supplementary Anglo Concertina Tutor*, online at <http://www.users.tpg.com.au/cghent/tutor.doc> (available as a free download).

<sup>17</sup> Roger Digby, 'English Country Music—A Personal View,' online at <http://www.concertina.net>.

<sup>18</sup> Bertram Levy, *The Anglo Concertina Demystified*, 19–22.

<sup>19</sup> John Kirkpatrick, 'How to Play the Anglo, Part 3,' *Free Reed: The Concertina Newsletter* 15 (1973); online at [http://www.johnkirkpatrick.co.uk/pf/pf\\_wr\\_Anglo3.htm](http://www.johnkirkpatrick.co.uk/pf/pf_wr_Anglo3.htm) (available as a free download).



*William Kimber, c. 1920s. From the Vaughan Williams Memorial Library*

# William Kimber

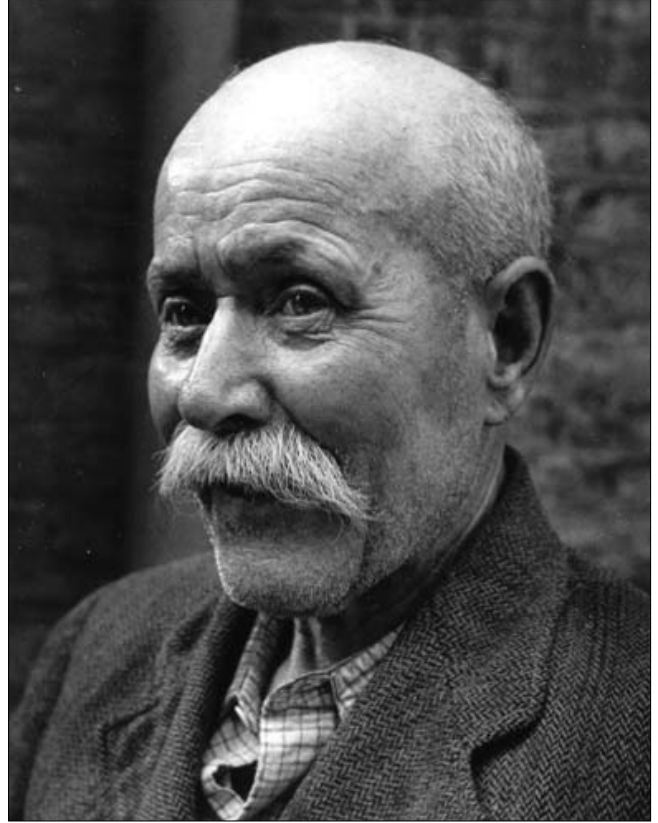
## Background

SEVERAL excellent biographies have been written about William Kimber, the most recent and comprehensive being that by Derek Schofield in the booklet accompanying the 1999 EFDSS CD of Kimber's music.<sup>1</sup> For this reason, I have not attempted to repeat his life story. Instead, this section focuses on those elements of his life that shaped his approach to music in general, and to the Anglo concertina in particular.

William Kimber was born at Headington Quarry near Oxford in 1872. His father, also named William Kimber (1849–1931), was employed in the building trade. It was from his father that young William learned his first music. William Senior played concertina, fiddle and penny whistle and was active in the Headington Morris side from the age of eighteen. He also played in the Headington Quarry drum and fife band. He played Morris tunes to young William in the cradle, and taught him to dance when William Junior was a schoolboy, according to Cecil Sharp.<sup>2</sup> William Junior's training on the Anglo started at an early age, with his father as tutor.

Not only was his father a Morris dancer, but his grandfather and great-grandfather as well, which takes active Morris dancing in the Kimber family at least as far back as the early nineteenth century.<sup>3</sup> The family musical environment was very active and strongly conservative. Kimber claimed to have learned most of his Morris tunes directly from his father, and one would presume that much of his playing style came from his father as well.

Kimber is best known for his role in the revival of Morris Dancing, wherein he was the foremost dancer and concertina player of his time. However, he was active on many other musical fronts as well. He was a member of the mummings and a handbell ringer, and he belonged to a concertina club which met at a local public house.<sup>4</sup> Moreover, he was an active musician for English country dancing. Most of his 'studio-grade' recordings are of Morris tunes, probably because of the emphasis placed on the Morris revival during his life. However, he recorded nearly as many English country dance tunes, most of them as field recordings made when he was well into his eighties. These recordings, though readily available, have not been widely distributed.<sup>5</sup> On some recordings, Kimber speaks enthusiastically about his experiences with country dances, and describes



*A portrait of William Kimber in 1949 by John Gay. From the Vaughan Williams Memorial Library*

some of the dance steps in detail. It is clear that his Morris activities with Cecil Sharp, for which he is most remembered, were only one facet of his rich musical and social life.

## The Kimbers and developments in Morris dance music

The Anglo-German concertina was used in Morris dancing as early as the 1870s.<sup>6</sup> In Headington Quarry, William Kimber Senior played both the concertina and fiddle, and danced for the side from 1868 through 1887.<sup>7</sup> It seems likely that he played a two-row Anglo-German concertina design, as the instrument played by his son was of this type. The earliest published photograph of William Kimber Junior with a concertina, circa 1909, is to be found in Sharp's *Morris Book* of 1911.<sup>8</sup> The instrument is a hexagonal Anglo-German concertina with two rows. This two row instrument shaped and defined his playing style, as will be discussed below.

Morris dance music in the Midlands of England during William Kimber Senior's lifetime was in transition from being played primarily on the pipe and

## The Anglo Concertina Music of William Kimber

tabor to being played on the fiddle.<sup>9</sup> Although large numbers of Anglo concertinas were sold in England in the mid to late nineteenth century, it appears that very few were used in Morris sides of that era. According to Keith Chandler, there are only four concertina players known to have played for these sides during that period. Two of the four were the Kimbers, who played for the Headington Quarry side. Nearby Wheatley had two musicians, one on concertina and the other on pipe and tabor, and Winchcombe used both a concertina and a melodeon by the 1880s. Melodeon players were even rarer in Morris sides at that time; only two such players have been documented in the southern Midlands by the century's end (Winchcombe in Gloucestershire, and Abingdon in south eastern Oxfordshire).<sup>10</sup> Unlike the enormous impact melodeon playing has had on Morris dance music in the twentieth century, its impact in the late nineteenth century seems to have been slight, at least in the Kimbers' musical environment.

Until the arrival of these free reed instruments, Morris dance music was played without chording accompaniment, unless the occasional sounding of double stops on the fiddle could be called accompaniment. Because there may only have been one or two other concertina players during the late nineteenth century in this region, it is reasonable to think that the Kimbers themselves were responsible for bringing the harmonic playing style on the Anglo, and chorded accompaniment in general, to the Morris repertoire. Both Kimbers were clearly gregarious in their music, being members of many organizations

besides the Morris. Even if they had never heard this chorded style from another concertina player, they would have been exposed to harmony and chords from handbell choirs and church music in their local parish. Whether they first heard a chorded style from another Anglo player or developed it independently, the leap to applying those chords to traditional Morris tunes may not have been a large one, and would have been facilitated by the innate, chord-friendly design of the Anglo. Honing the chorded accompaniment of these tunes to the high degree displayed in Kimber's recordings indicates the dedication which he and his father brought to perfecting this new-found art.

In nineteenth century Morris Dance music, the role of the musician was, above all else, to provide appropriate rhythm for the dance. As Chandler observed about fiddle playing of that time, 'Players ... conformed to a widespread rural style in which rhythm was accentuated, often at the expense of tonal purity ... The characteristics exhibited—the use of the short bow ... the simultaneous drawing of the bow across the string below that being fingered to produce a partial chord, pacing and rhythmic accentuation—are completely at odds with the classical playing style.'<sup>11</sup> The use of chording accompaniment in Kimber's music is primarily rhythmic. The chords are played in a staccato way to accentuate the beat, and are not played in a languorous and artful style. The comparison below between Sharp's parlour room-style accompaniment and Kimber's rhythmic beat, illustrated in Example 11, is especially instructive in this regard. It is arguable that the chords were introduced, as much as anything



*Headington Quarry Morris Dancers, 1876. William Kimber Senior is seated to the right of the fiddle player. From the Oxfordshire Photographic Archives*

## William Kimber

else, to accentuate the beat for the dance. An added benefit is the added volume, a not insignificant factor when playing in an open street against a backdrop of the bells on the dancers' feet. Octave playing would also provide extra volume, but chorded accompaniment has the additional benefit of adding the extra volume at the precise time needed, in unison with the dancers' steps.

As can be seen from the transcriptions included in this volume, William Kimber played entirely on two rows, even though he was recorded playing a three-row instrument. As earlier mentioned, the first concertinas arriving in the rural countryside in any appreciable numbers were two row Anglos, and they were adapted by rural folk in preference to the English system concertina. When in 1909 he acquired a three-row Jeffries Anglo, he had been playing for over twenty years. There was apparently little inducement to relearn his repertoire in a three-row style.

William Kimber's vigorously rhythmic playing style and his keen sense of appropriate chording on the Anglo

underpins a mastery of the instrument that, according to the Revd Kenneth Loveless, was quite unmatched in Kimber's lifetime.<sup>12</sup> Most of the transcriptions included in this volume are from recordings made in his prime (in 1935, 1946 and 1948) when he had been playing from fifty to sixty years. The last-recorded tune used that is used in these transcriptions was made live outside a pub in Headington Quarry in 1957, when he was playing for the Quarry Morris side. By that time he had played for about 70 years, and was 85 years of age. It is highly unusual for anyone to play over such a long span of time; in the Anglo world, Scan Tester is the only other obvious example. In addition to playing for a very long period of time, he played a lot throughout. He lived in a world where, much more than today, the focus was on local music and dance for providing entertainment. He is very likely to have played for more dance events during many of those years than most amateur players today. His tempo is brisk and the music unerringly rhythmic; this is the work of a master musician with a long lifetime of rich experience.

<sup>1</sup> Schofield, *Absolutely Classic*.

<sup>2</sup> Cecil Sharp, *The Morris Book*, Part 1, 35 (London: Novello, 1907–1913; Part 1 with H C. Macllwaine, 1907; Part 2 with H C. Macllwaine, 1909; Part 3 with H C. Macllwaine, 1910; Part 4, 1911; Part 5 with G. S. K. Buttersworth, 1913).

<sup>3</sup> Chandler, *Ribbons, Bells and Squeaking Fiddles*, 151.

<sup>4</sup> Chandler, *Ribbons, Bells and Squeaking Fiddles*, 17.

<sup>5</sup> *William Kimber: Bean Setting*, Folktrax CD FTX 382 (also listed as FTX 326); and *William Kimber: Morris Musician*, Folktrax 083-C90 (cassette). Also see *Early Days: William Kimber Talking*, Folktrax CD 383. Both CDs and the cassette are available at <http://www.folktrax.freeserve.co.uk>

<sup>6</sup> Chandler, *Ribbons, Bells and Squeaking Fiddles*, 180. Also see the liner notes by Neil Wayne in John Kirkpatrick, 'Plain Capers,' Free Reed LP FRR010, 1992.

<sup>7</sup> Chandler, *Ribbons, Bells and Squeaking Fiddles*, Chapter 9.

<sup>8</sup> Sharp, *The Morris Book*, Part 1, facing p. 28.

<sup>9</sup> Chandler, *Ribbons, Bells and Squeaking Fiddles*, Chapter 9.

<sup>10</sup> For a listing of active Morris musicians in the South Midlands during that period, see Chandler, *Ribbons, Bells and Squeaking Fiddle*, Chapter 9.

<sup>11</sup> Chandler, *Ribbons, Bells and Squeaking Fiddles*, 179–80.

<sup>12</sup> The Revd Kenneth Loveless, *William Kimber. Journal of the EFDSS* (1961), 5.



# Musical Style

**T**HERE is much that we can learn about Kimber by closely observing elements of his playing style. Several elements are clearly different from modern practice, and add a certain charm and old-time rural feel to his playing. This section examines these stylistic elements in some detail, and compares them with more modern technique. Kimber himself likely would have little use for such analysis, as he did not read music. The following section is written for those who, like myself, approach this music with a lesser amount of intuitive skill or long experience, and who want to know a bit more about why his music is so unique and instantly recognizable.

Three main stylistic elements separate Kimber's playing style from that of most modern players:

- 1 Harmony. His chords often sound quite unusual, and do not always follow standard western chord progressions.
- 2 Accompaniment structure. Kimber employs triads

and chord fragments that follow the melody line, as opposed to the use of regular 'oom-pah' bass-and-chord accompaniment that is nearly ubiquitous amongst modern players.

- 3 Rhythm: Kimber emphasizes a very brisk tempo with a punctual beat that is accented on the first note, which contrasts with many modern Morris and English country dance musicians who 'play late'.

Each of these stylistic differences can be related to (1) the innate characteristics of the two-row instrument that his father and he used, (2) to the needs of the dances for which he played, and (3) to the local characteristics and style of the musical environment in which he and his father developed their Anglo arrangements.

## Harmony

Kimber's chord selections are often quite surprising and unusual. His overall harmonic style is like nothing you would hear in a polished folk group, or even from most

### Example 7:

Common chords, key of C

Left hand, two-row concertina

Shown in each measure are:

- 1 All chord notes
- 2 Available notes on Press
- 3 As typically played
- 4 Available notes on Draw
- 5 As typically played

	P	P	D	D		P	P	D	D		P	P	D	D
	58	5	10	10		10	10	3	3		10	10	3	3
	4	4	9	9		9	9	2	2		9	9	2	2
	3	3	1			85	8	1	1		85	8	1	1
	2					7					7			
	1					6					6			
						2								

	P	P	D	D		P	P	D	D		P	P	D	D
	3	9	9			7	5	5			4	4	10	10
	1	85	8			4	4				3	3	9	9
		4				3	3				1		8	8
		6											4	4
													3	3
													6	6

## The Anglo Concertina Music of William Kimber

### Example 8:

#### Common chords, key of G

#### Left hand, two-row concertina

#### Shown in each measure are:

- 1 All chord notes
- 2 Available notes on Press
- 3 As typically played
- 4 Available notes on Draw
- 5 As typically played

	P	P	D	D		P		D	D
	10	10	3	3		10		58	8
	9	9	2	2		7		7	7
	85	8	1	1				3	7
<b>G</b>	7							6	
	6								
	2								

	P	P	D	D		P		D	D
	58	5	10	10		4	4	10	10
	4	4	9	9		3	3	9	9
	3	3	1			1		8	8
<b>C</b>	2							4	
	1							3	
								6	

	P	P	D	D		P		D	D
	9	9	2	2		9	9	2	2
	8	8	1	1		8	8	1	1
	4					4		6	
<b>Am</b>									

	P	P	D	D		P		D	D
	9	9	2	2		9	9	2	2
	8	8	1	1		8	8	1	1
	4					4		6	
<b>Em</b>									

other accomplished Anglo players. To understand why that is so, we must first look at the instrument itself, which for William Kimber was the two-row Anglo.

Finding appropriate chords on the left hand of a two-row Anglo ranges from quite easy to difficult or, at times, impossible. Five common chords for the key of C are shown in Example 7. For each chord, the leftmost column shows all the potential notes of the chord over the basic range of the left hand. Unlike the English-system concertina or a piano, not all of these notes are available on the two-row instrument (whereas more options of course are available to the three-row player). The chords in the second column are all the notes that are available on the press on a two-row instrument; the third column shows which of those notes typically were played by Kimber (varying by the particular tune, of course). Columns four and five similarly treat the notes on the draw. Although all five chords are available in some form, some chords are unavailable on the press, or are available only as broken or fragmentary chords rather than triads; the situation is similar for the draw. Example 8 contains a similar presentation of common chords for the key of G. The examples clearly show the restrictions that arise in playing an accompanied style on the two-row Anglo.

These restrictions are only partly responsible for some surprising chord choices in Kimber's playing.

Example 9 shows the melody and accompaniment for the A part of *Haste to the Wedding*, a very common jig that Kimber played in the key of G major. His left hand accompaniment contains a few full triads (a chord of three notes that accompanies the melody note on the right hand), but more commonly consists of pairs of notes spaced at an interval of a major or minor third, played along with the melody note on the right hand to make an incomplete chord. Kimber used these fragmentary third interval pairs in much of his music, reserving the use of full chords for particular emphasis at the beginning and end of phrases. In some cases, these pairs represent all the notes available within a particular chord (for example, the drawn D chord in the third measure), but more often Kimber simply preferred the pairs.

Traditional music groups the world over play *Haste to the Wedding*, and a typical chord structure is shown in the first row of boxes in between the two staves. This arrangement, taken from a New England contra dance chord book, represents a common though not particularly inventive chord structure consisting of a combination of the chords G, D7, and C (the C chord is played in the B part of this tune, which is not shown in the illustration). These commonly played chords for the key of G belong to the standard 'three-chord trick' which is familiar to most guitarists; these are the chords that

## Musical Style

### Example 9: Chord structure, *Haste to the Wedding*, A Part

D D P D D P D PD PP P D PD D PD P D P D  
 2 1 1 2 2 7 7 6 7 6 2 2 2 2 1 1 2 2 2 7 7 8

Right Hand

'Standard' chords

G	G	G	D7		G	G	D7	D7
---	---	---	----	--	---	---	----	----

Kimber's chords

G	G	Am	G	Em	D	G	C	Am
---	---	----	---	----	---	---	---	----

Analysis

K	K	M+3	M+3		3+5	K	M-3	M+3
---	---	-----	-----	--	-----	---	-----	-----

Left Hand

1 3 3 9 10 10 10 9 8 8 3 2 4 4 9 10  
 2 2 8 9 9 9 8 7 7 2 3 3 8 9  
 1 1

Legend:

K Chord is in the tune's key

M+3 Melody note, dropped one octave, plus a note a third interval above

M-3 Ditto, but second note is a third below

P DP P P D PD PP P P D PD P D PP P P  
 7 8 8 8 7 7 6 7 7 6 2 2 2 2 8 8 7 6 6 6

G	G	D7	G	G	D7	G	G		
G	G	Am	G	C	D	G	Am	G	G
K	K	M-3	K	M+3	M+3	K	M+3	K	K

7 9 9 8 8 7 4 8 8 10 10 10 8  
 8 8 7 7 3 7 7 9 9 9 9 7 6

start on the key note (G), the fourth interval (C), and the fifth interval (D7). The utility of these three simple chords to be combined in various chord progressions to add harmony was first described by the French composer Jean Phillippe Rameu in the 18th century. These three chords provide acceptable harmonies to every note on the scale, and chord progressions based on them are heavily used in all forms of modern western popular music, including liturgical music, traditional song accompaniment, rock, and blues. Our modern ears are strongly attuned to these simple progressions; when we do not hear them, we perceive that something is out of the ordinary.<sup>1</sup>

Kimber's chords are shown in the second row of boxes of Example 9, and are comprised of both the left and right hand parts. Note the much different chord choices, as well as the introduction of several minor chords. This arrangement gives the tune a more plaintive

sound, and is out of alignment with the standard 'three-chord trick'.

One may well ask why Kimber placed those particular chords in the tune. It is unlikely that he was dredging up different sounds from the depths of some long-forgotten folklore, given that he and his father were among the very first to apply chords to a Morris dance music tradition that previously had been played in a purely melodic fashion, without chorded accompaniment. It is equally unlikely that he got his 'chord theory' from his association with Cecil Sharp, given that Sharp's chording (in his folio of Morris tunes set for the pianoforte, done with Herbert MacIlwaine<sup>2</sup>) is not nearly as 'dark', and is more in keeping with 'standard' chord progressions. The reason seems to be much simpler, and appears to relate to Kimber's basic approach to accompaniment on the two-row Anglo. The third row of boxes on Example 9 shows his approach. He used full chords when playing

## The Anglo Concertina Music of William Kimber

in the home key of the tune and the instrument (the G chords), and then usually filled in the rest with third interval pairs. These pairs were made on the left hand by playing a note an octave down from the melody (as in octave style playing), and then adding a third interval above or below. Sometimes this makes a major chord, and sometimes it makes a minor. This basic harmony simply follows the melody around on the keyboard. The effect thus created is unusual, and as Dave Townsend and Andy Turner pointed out in their assessment of Kimber, 'The charm and quaintness of the effect on our ears, accustomed to the usual sequences of western harmony, may not have been apparent to Kimber or his immediate audience.'<sup>3</sup>

Kimber's style of harmonic accompaniment is not closely similar to the playing of most Anglo players who have recorded since Kimber's time, and who have not chosen to follow Kimber in eschewing the third row. Most current Anglo players who play in the harmonic style use all three rows, and in some cases they play instruments with even more buttons (sometimes 40 or more), allowing them to accompany almost any melody note with a full and 'appropriate' chord. Many have come to the Anglo from other popular instruments such

as the accordion, guitar, or piano, and they bring their training in standard chord progressions with them. The result is that very few sound particularly like Kimber, who did not play by those rules. The Kimbers' approach (here including his father) arose organically from their rural isolation, their lack of formal musical training, and their adoption of a relatively new instrument. They brought few preconceived notions of how chords for any of these heretofore unaccompanied Morris tunes should sound, and crafted their accompaniment within the limitations of the two-row concertina. Kimber's music thus gives a fresh and independent take on musical accompaniment, and stands in strong contrast to the frequent rigidity of standard musical fashion.

### Accompaniment structure and rhythm

#### Contrasts with modern playing styles

Another feature of Kimber's playing that is different from that of many more modern Anglo players is the particular way he places chords into the tune. Kimber played his left hand third interval pairs in a staccato-like way, and placed them into the tune in a way that followed the melody around, emphasizing the beat over the off-beat. Example 10, which contains the A part of

### Example 10: Accompaniment Style Comparison, *Constant Billy*, A Part

#### As played by William Kimber

Right Hand

Left Hand

#### As played by Bertram Levy †

Right Hand

Left Hand

#### As played by John Kirkpatrick ‡

Right Hand

Left Hand

† from tutor *The Anglo Concertina Demystified*, 1985

‡ as played on the LP *Plain Capers*, Free Reed Records FRR 010, 1992

## Musical Style

*Constant Billy*, provides a good example of his technique which is useful for a comparison with the techniques of two more modern players, Bertram Levy<sup>4</sup> and John Kirkpatrick<sup>5</sup>, on the same tune. Levy and Kirkpatrick are the only two Anglo players to have written tutors that emphasize accompaniment in the harmonic ‘melody right, accompaniment left’ style.<sup>6</sup> Both of these players use an oom-pah style of accompaniment in this tune, where a bass note occurs on the beat, and a triad on the off beat.<sup>7</sup> This style of play is nearly universal today among Anglo players who play in the harmonic style, but is strikingly absent in most of Kimber’s music.

The oom-pah style of playing on the Anglo has developed from the influence of melodeon playing. As John Kirkpatrick points out, ‘My own views on how to play chords have been largely determined by the fact that I came to the Anglo from the melodeon ... For dance music you need a strong rhythmic vamp, and again influenced by the melodeon, I think a low bass note followed by a high chord sounds best, to give an um-pa effect.’<sup>8</sup> On a melodeon, the left hand side of the instrument contains one or more pairs of buttons. Each pair contains a bass note, the ‘oom’, and a chord of three or more notes, the ‘pah’. Because of this left hand keyboard, an oom-pah accompaniment is hard-wired into the melodeon; the one goes with the other. Such is not the case with the Anglo, where buttons must be sounded individually; an oom-pah style is not a given. The general lack of an oom-pah character in the Kimber style most likely reflects the origins of Kimber and his father’s playing in an area where melodeons were (at

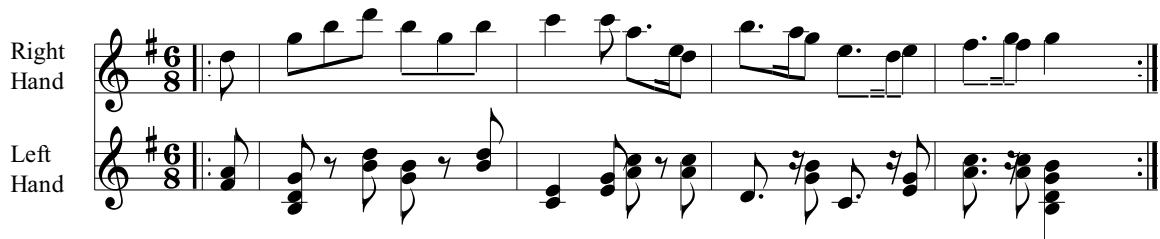
that time) absent, as was discussed in the preceding chapter. Although the melodeon arrived late in Morris Dance music, it has overtaken the concertina, fiddle, and pipe and tabor in most current Morris sides, and its effects on Anglo playing style are now strong and widespread.

The only two pre-revival Anglo concertina players on published recordings from England were Kimber and Scan Tester (1887–1972). Tester’s octave playing style also lacked an oom-pah accompaniment. As Roger Digby has pointed out that, we will never know how representative Kimber and Tester are of other early Anglo players,<sup>9</sup> but it seems reasonable to assume that any other early players would have sounded more like Tester and Kimber, or perhaps even like the early-recorded along-the-row Irish Anglo players such as William Mullaly, than like most Anglo players in England today, whose accompaniment style has this strong melodeon influence.

A closely related feature of much modern English dance music, including Morris music, is the style of ‘playing late’, which is described by Roger Digby as the ‘... technique of finishing off the important beats of the rhythm with a slight swelling, and this may have caused the beat to linger a fraction late. Morris musicians will recognize this as something which can help to get a dancer higher and longer into the air when dancing “slows”.’<sup>10</sup> This effect, though not easily shown in written notation, is evident in John Kirkpatrick’s version of *Constant Billy* and in the playing of most Anglo and melodeon Morris musicians today. For all its

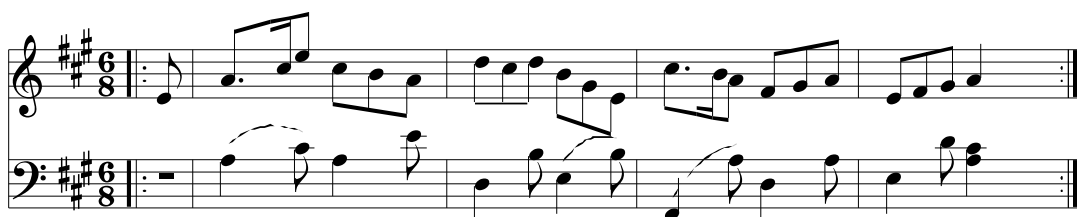
### Example 11: Accompaniment Style Comparison, *Constant Billy*, A Part

As played by William Kimber



The musical notation for Example 11, as played by William Kimber, consists of two staves. The top staff is labeled 'Right Hand' and the bottom staff is labeled 'Left Hand'. Both staves are in the key of D major (two sharps) and 6/8 time. The Right Hand part is a melody starting on D4, moving up stepwise to G4, then down to F4, E4, D4, C4, B3, A3, G3, F3, E3, D3. The Left Hand part is an accompaniment consisting of chords and single notes. It starts with a D4 chord, followed by a G4 chord, then a D4 chord, and so on, with a bass note on the beat and a triad on the off-beat.

As arranged by Cecil Sharp and Herbert MacIlwaine †



The musical notation for Example 11, as arranged by Cecil Sharp and Herbert MacIlwaine, consists of two staves. The top staff is labeled 'Right Hand' and the bottom staff is labeled 'Left Hand'. Both staves are in the key of D major (two sharps) and 6/8 time. The Right Hand part is a melody starting on D4, moving up stepwise to G4, then down to F4, E4, D4, C4, B3, A3, G3, F3, E3, D3. The Left Hand part is an accompaniment consisting of chords and single notes. It starts with a D4 chord, followed by a G4 chord, then a D4 chord, and so on, with a bass note on the beat and a triad on the off-beat.

† from Sharp and MacIlwaine, 1913, *Morris Dance folio*, Volume 1

## The Anglo Concertina Music of William Kimber

attractiveness, it does not feature in Kimber's playing. His rhythm is typically crisp, brisk and punctual, with the emphasis placed on the first beat of each measure. Whatever the origins of 'playing late', it seems to have developed either after Kimber's time or outside his region in England.

Also absent from most of Kimber's playing is a 'walking bass' line, in which the bass part of the oompah accompaniment varies to form a counter-melody. In the comparison of *Constant Billy* arrangements in Example 10, this is best typified by Levy's arrangement, but it is employed to great effect in much of Kirkpatrick's repertoire and that of other modern players such as Andy Turner and John Watcham. Although it is probably borrowed at least partly from melodeon styles, it is also commonly used as well by jazz and rock and roll musicians. Our musical environment today probably predisposes us to use such effects in a way in which the Kimbers were not.

### Effects of association with Sharp

One may well wonder how much of an effect Kimber's long association with Cecil Sharp may have had on his accompaniment style. After all, the Kimbers came from a rural tradition where chorded accompaniment was absent or at very least limited to double-stopping on a fiddle. Here the written evidence seems very clear that any effect was minor. In Example 11, Kimber's version of *Constant Billy* is compared with the version in Sharp's folio. Sharp had noted down Kimber's Morris tunes starting at their first meeting in 1899, but he noted down only the melody. In association with Herbert MacIlwaine, they set many of their collected Morris tunes to full pianoforte arrangements.<sup>11</sup> The comparison shows that the differences are dramatic. For all the vigour of Kimber's accompaniment, we have a languorous and not particularly rhythmic version from Sharp and MacIlwaine. Sharp's interest was in collecting melodies and dances, and it seems reasonable to assume that the accompaniment was left to MacIlwaine. The resulting arrangements reflect a contrast between classical musical training and the traditional music background of Kimber. Percy Grainger, who famously took two of Kimber's tunes from Sharp's collection and rearranged them for piano and orchestra in the early twentieth century, said that Sharp's arrangements 'have dances to them just as jolly as Sharpe's [sic] harmonic treatment is revolting'.<sup>12</sup> It is unlikely that Kimber learned the fundamentals of harmonic accompaniment from either Sharp or MacIlwaine.

### Rhythm and tempo

In the melody lines of Example 10, both Kimber and Kirkpatrick make full use of dotted notes to give *Constant Billy* more bounce and drive. In practice, this

is usually a triplet consisting of a lengthened (dotted) quaver followed by a shortened quaver and finally a normal quaver, as in the third measure of Kimber's arrangement. In *Constant Billy* and other tunes, Kimber sometimes alternates between simple, undotted triplets to dotted triplets, as in this example. The effect is to shake up the rhythm a bit. In other tunes, such as *Old Mother Oxford*, he places the shortened note before the lengthened one to create another interesting rhythmic effect.

It has often been noted that Kimber plays at a brisk pace relative to current Morris sides, although this may be a bit overstated. On the EFDSS CD<sup>13</sup>, the *Rigs o' Marlow* track (on which the current Headington Quarry side dances to the playing of their accordionist, John Graham), is slightly slower than Kimber's 1946 recording of the same tune (144 versus 152 beats per minute), but both are slower than the 176 BPM notated in the Sharp Morris Dance folio. Kimber's treatment of *Constant Billy* at 92 BPM is only slightly faster than the Longborough version played by John Kirkpatrick at 84 BPM; both are significantly slower than Sharp's version, at 116 BPM. If anything, Sharp tends to be the fast one in this group.

The differences in the treatment of *Constant Billy* (Example 10) and of course in the treatment of other tunes played on the Anglo in other playing styles highlights the ability of this deceptively simple little instrument to flow along with changing trends in music, allowing many different approaches to interpretation. Kimber's recordings brought his harmonic technique to the attention of English musicians during the concertina revival, and from there it has taken on a life of its own.

### Improvisation within a conservative approach

A fascinating quote attributed to Kimber's father is the admonition to his son that 'These are the notes that you play, William, and you don't play any others'. This admonition was later passed on by Kimber to his pupil, the Revd Kenneth Loveless. Loveless mentions that, 'He was a very hard taskmaster as a teacher—he had one or two pupils at various times, but he either gave them up, or they him, before they got very far!'<sup>14</sup> From portraits like this, there has grown an aura about Kimber that he was particularly unyielding to musical change, which seems at odds with most views of the traditional music transmission process. There is quite a body of evidence to the contrary, however.

First, it could be said that his father was a near-revolutionary musical figure, being among the very first to bring concertina playing to the Morris. Chandler notes that only two other Morris concertina players seem to have existed in pre-revival times. Moreover,

## Musical Style

the Kimbers seem to have performed a leading and role in bringing chorded accompaniment to the Morris, as discussed previously. The Kimbers were not alien to change.

The subject of change was the cause of one unsettling incident in Kimber's life, and it was Kimber himself who was accused of changing both Morris dance and music. Kimber had been observed teaching versions of Morris dances that were slightly different than those in Sharp's Morris book. The incident is well covered in Schofield's biography<sup>15</sup> and by Chandler, who notes that 'a group of collectors visited Headington Quarry to interview some of the older dancers, in order to pin down what they perceived as a more 'authentic' version of the dances.'<sup>16</sup> Kimber, upon being pressed on the matter, admitted the changes and said 'You have only to stick to the book. The book is IT ... If I am playing the tunes different to what they are in the book, then it is I that am wrong ... stick to Cecil Sharp's books. You will only keep "traditionally right" by doing so, and never mind what other people say.'<sup>17</sup> Clearly the popular desire by the collectors at the time was to demonstrate a solid and unchanging link to the past, no matter how impossible that now seems, which generated pressure for all concerned, especially Kimber.

It is therefore not surprising to find that changes in the melody lines of any Morris tune during repetition during a single recording are very rare in Kimber's playing, as the transcriptions included here show. There are a few notable but still slight melody changes in versions that were recorded years apart. The version of *Laudnum Bunches* on the EFDSS CD, a very lovely live recording with dancers outside a pub in Headington Quarry in 1957, is different in its B part from a version recorded in a studio in 1948. The change is only in the 'third time through' of the B part, but is repeated each time the third B part is played during multiple repetitions of the tune during that performance. It is to these lengths one must search to find significant changes in his treatment of melodies.

Clearly, the melody was held as a standard for which alteration was not to be taken lightly. William Kimber Senior only played occasionally for the Quarry side, and was increasingly used as the musician only as the side's fiddle player (and official musician) aged.<sup>18</sup> His admonition to his son to keep the tunes pure may have reflected his own wish not to let down the side as the torch was passed from a fiddle to a newfangled concertina. Chandler reports the widespread grousing among older Morris dancers of the middle nineteenth century as the fiddle overtook pipe and tabor in most Midlands teams, and the Kimbers would have been aware of this aversion to change as they brought in yet another new instrument into the tradition. The melody

line was treated conservatively.

However, William Kimber's treatment of accompaniment is an entirely different matter. Kimber rarely played any left-hand part of the music exactly the same way twice either in repetitions during a single playing, or between recordings made during different recording sessions. Example 12 shows four variations in the playing of two measures in the B part of *Country Gardens*, and there are more in that single playing. He alters his chording; he alters the placement of bass notes; he goes from third interval pairs to a simple octave playing style. This improvisational process is prevalent throughout his recorded music, and although extremely subtle to the listener (especially given the brisk tempo and very brief duration of each crisply played chord or chord fragment), it approaches the degree of frequent change in ornamentation in a traditionally played Irish tune.

Such improvisation is ubiquitous in all of his playing, giving us some insight into the Kimbers' approach to this music. Although the melody was seen as a part of a tradition being passed on to a new generation, the left-hand accompaniment was something of William Senior's, and/or of his son's, creation, and William Junior at least felt quite free to modify the left-hand accompaniment at will.

These alterations perhaps helped to keep his mind relaxed and flexible during the inevitable seemingly endless repetitions for the dance. John Kirkpatrick has often extolled the practice of playing any tune through many repetitions, so that one 'had the chance to get inside it properly ... Any form of constant repetition induces a different state of being, its good for you, and musically it means you find ornamentations and variations creeping in that you will never have after only two times through.'<sup>19</sup> Such an approach seems to epitomize Kimber's playing, albeit only with the left-hand accompaniment. Given that one or the other Kimber, with no formal musical training, adapted these tunes into a chorded style, it seems reasonable to assume they did it in the classic Anglo way of 'hunt and peck' until you find the right chord. Once accustomed to this technique, it would be easy to continue the same constantly inventive process indefinitely, allowing a dimension of freedom even within an otherwise very conservative musical culture.

Not that Kimber was always happy with extensive modifications by others. When he heard a radio broadcast of Percy Grainger's florid and inventive arrangement of *Country Gardens*, he was taken aback. Sharp had collected the tune from Kimber, and Grainger had taken it from Sharp. The radio announcer attributed the tune to the arranger, Grainger, with no mention of Kimber. When asked about it later, Kimber was emphatic: 'He didn't add anything. He murdered it.

## The Anglo Concertina Music of William Kimber

### Example 10: Accompaniment Variations in Two Measures from *Country Gardens*, B Part

Chord and fingering symbols for the first system:

Right Hand: D PD DP P D PD DP P D PD DP P D PD DP

Fingering: 8 8 8 7 7 6 8 8 8 7 7 6 8 8 8 7 7 6 8 8 8 7 7 6 8 8 8 7 7

Right Hand Fingering: 8 9 10 10 10 10 10 10 10 10 10 9 10 10 10 10

Left Hand Fingering: 8 9 9 9 9 9 9 9 9 9 9 8 9 9 8 9 9 9 9

Chord and fingering symbols for the second system:

Right Hand: D PD DP P D PD DP P D PD DP P D PD DP

Fingering: 8 8 8 7 7 6 8 8 8 7 7 6 8 8 8 7 7 6 8 8 8 7 7 6 8 8 8 7 7

Right Hand Fingering: 9 9 8 10 10 10 10 10 9 9 7 10 10 10 10 10

Left Hand Fingering: 8 8 8 9 8 9 9 9 9 8 8 8 9 8 8 8 8 8

You couldn't dance to it.<sup>20</sup> Grainger's version of *Country Gardens* was a worldwide hit in its day and even today is frequently heard. The extent of the alterations of harmony, melody, and rhythm, in Grainger's arrangement, which included several variations within this piece, clearly crossed the line in Kimber's view. His criticism of Grainger's arrangement, perhaps partly due to hurt feelings, mainly arose from the non-traditional treatment of a melody from his tradition and from the extensive reworking of Kimber's arrangement, which stood up very well on its own.

#### Changing repertoire later in life

Kimber played Anglo concertina for a very long time. His playing life, including his boyhood lessons from his father, spanned over seventy years, during which time his home environment changed from a rural village to a suburb of a medium-sized city. During this time his musical horizons changed from immersion in rural traditional and church music to awareness of all the music styles available in a modern world. His father's Morris melodies were carefully conserved, and his overall accompaniment style seems to have been set early. Many of his non-Morris tunes, however, were learned from other sources and much later in his life,

and his style of playing evolved in varying amounts with the acquisition of these new tunes. The most dramatically different tune is the *Mayblossom Waltz*, recorded at his home in 1951. This is a classic ballroom waltz in the ornate style of the turn of the nineteenth century. It is the sort of tune that can still be heard at a park carousel, on a street organ in a shopping district, or on a steam calliope on a riverboat, and it contrasts with most of Kimber's recorded repertoire. Though Kimber's accompaniment style on this tune includes a predominant use of exaggerated oom-pahs, they do not sound as if they were taken from a melodeon. Several dissonant lead notes seem to mimic a calliope. My guess is that he learned this one from a street organ or calliope, at a local fair or perhaps in Oxford or London. In addition, the tune contains an unusual B flat chord that requires playing some notes on the accidental, or upper, row. Of all the tunes transcribed for this volume, this is the only instance in which Kimber can be observed to use the accidental row, which dates his learning to play this tune to the post-1909 period, when he played a three-row instrument. Clearly, Kimber was not averse to learning new tunes and accompaniments, and felt completely free to shape the accompaniment style of the piece to suit the tune and the occasion.

## Musical Style

- <sup>1</sup> This subject is covered in a number of books on music theory. An excellent treatment by Olav Torvund is online at <http://www.torvund.net/guitar/progressions/04-Threechord.asp>
- <sup>2</sup> Cecil Sharp and Herbert MacIlwaine, *Morris and Sword Dance Tunes* (London: Novello and Co., Ltd., 1911).
- <sup>3</sup> Townsend and Turner, *The Musicianship of William Kimber*, 52.
- <sup>4</sup> Levy, *The Anglo Concertina Demystified*, 34.
- <sup>5</sup> This Longborough version is on John Kirkpatrick, *Plain Capers* (Side 2, Track 7).
- <sup>6</sup> Kirkpatrick, *How to Play the Anglo, Part 3*; also see Levy, *The Anglo Concertina Demystified*.
- <sup>7</sup> Levy and Kirkpatrick take advantage of the capabilities of a three-row instrument; for example, on the last passage *Constant Billy*, each uses a third-row note to obtain a legato effect with single-bellows direction.
- <sup>8</sup> John Kirkpatrick, *English Choice: 101 Traditional Dance Tunes*: (Cleckheaton, West Yorkshire: Mallinson Publications, 2003), 5.
- <sup>9</sup> Digby, *English Country Music*.
- <sup>10</sup> Digby, *English Country Music*.
- <sup>11</sup> Sharp and MacIlwaine, *Morris and Sword Dance Tunes*, 8.
- <sup>12</sup> Schofield, *Absolutely Classic*, 45.
- <sup>13</sup> EFDSS, *Absolutely Classic: The Music of William Kimber*.
- <sup>14</sup> See the liner notes by the Revd Kenneth Loveless, accompanying *The Art of William Kimber*: Topic Records 12T249 (LP), 1974.
- <sup>15</sup> Schofield, *Absolutely Classic*, 32.
- <sup>16</sup> Chandler, *Ribbons, Bells and Squeaking Fiddles*, 221.
- <sup>17</sup> Schofield, *Absolutely Classic*, 32.
- <sup>18</sup> See Sharp, *The Morris Book*, Vol. 1, 35.
- <sup>19</sup> Kirkpatrick, *English Choice*, 6.
- <sup>20</sup> Chaundy, *William Kimber, A Portrait*, 209.



*William Kimber and the Headington Quarry Morris Dancers, Oxford, 1949.  
From the Vaughan Williams Memorial Library*

# The Transcription Process

I TYPICALLY have transcribed the full ‘first time through’ for each A, B, or C part for each tune. I have skipped the initial ‘once to yourself’ of the A part in order to avoid the replication of small errors that appeared as Kimber warmed-up to his playing. For tunes that have significant differences in either melody or harmony between the repetitions, I have left both playings of repeated A and B parts notated. For other tunes I have pieced together a single version that best characterizes his playing of each part, and have compressed the presentation of the tune through the use of repeat signs. I did this not only to save paper and page turning, but to make the tune easier to learn. From my own playing experience, learning the basics of Kimber’s tune and accompaniment seems sufficient, and it seems pointless to try to precisely remember his many improvisations of the chording. After you become

proficient with the basic tune and accompaniment, Kimber’s subtle improvisations (or others of your own choosing) should come somewhat naturally to you.

Given that there are more notes played on the right hand (melody) than on the left hand (accompaniment), many rests are shown for the left hand in each score. For simplicity and ease of sight reading, the notes of the left hand accompaniment are usually shown with the same time duration as those played simultaneously on the right hand. Kimber typically played the accompaniment (left hand) in a very staccato fashion. Accordingly, there is little difference in actual duration between the left-hand notes shown as dotted eighths and those shown as undotted eighths; both are played crisply. Nearly all accompaniment notes should be played staccato, except at the beginnings or end of a phrase, or when the tune is slowed down for capers.

## Advice for Learners

THESE tunes are fairly demanding to learn. If learning them is your goal, it is highly recommended that you first acquire an intermediate level of proficiency on the Anglo concertina. If you are at a beginner’s level now, it would be a good idea to spend some time working with a suitable tutor before attempting these tunes (Bertram Levy’s tutor is recommended). It is beneficial as well to master the art of playing the C and G scales in octaves, as a precursor to playing in the harmonic style. Many of Kimber’s chords consist of third interval pairs on the left hand, played simultaneously with the right hand melody that is an octave higher.

I recommend that you start with several of the easiest and/or shortest tunes, which include *Rigs o’ Marlow*, *Hunting the Squirrel*, *Bean Setting* and *Shepherds’ Hey*. I find it easiest to learn these tunes on a phrase-by-phrase basis, mastering each phrase before moving to the next. Little is to be gained by learning the full right hand

melody first; it seems best to just jump in and learn the chording at the same time. The keys to learning these tunes include listening to Kimber’s recordings and practice, practice, practice!

If you have a playing partner who plays chords (guitar, melodeon, etc.), you will find that Kimber’s unusual chording may cause your colleague some difficulty, as he/she may tend to play the more standard chords of the ‘three-chord trick’, and moreover may have learned a rhythmically different oom-pah accompaniment style for these tunes.

Kimber’s style is different from the status quo in much of today’s Morris music, and one reason to learn and enjoy these arrangements is this unusual context. These tunes reflect a unique and one-off mid-nineteenth century rural style that comes more or less directly from the first generation of players on the Anglo concertina ... before melodeons and guitars had left a large impact.



# Explanatory Notes on the Tunes

## Bacca Pipes

Transcribed from a 1948 recording in London

Most recently released on EFDSS CD 03

Played AAABB, AABB, AA

This Morris dance in jig tempo is usually danced solo or with a partner. The dance centers around a set of crossed 'churchwarden' pipes—the long-stemmed clay pipes of centuries past ('Bacca' is short for tobacco). Sharp calls this a version of the ancient tune Greensleeves, and with some concentration you can hear the kinship with today's popular orchestral piece. The accompaniment consists mostly of left-hand third-interval pairs that weave between the C and G rows, bringing out bits of chords in F, Em, and C in a plaintive fashion.

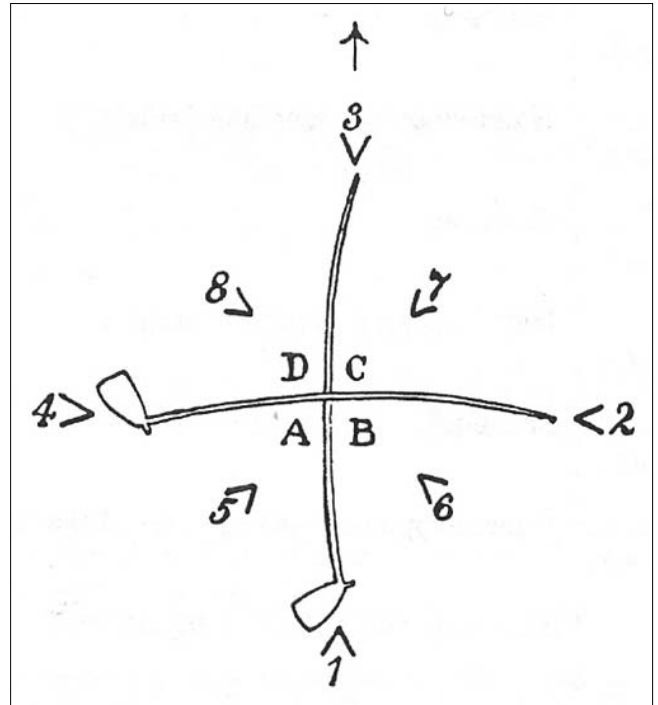


Illustration accompanying the description of the dance Bacca Pipes from Sharp's Morris book

... the best that I can remember as I enjoyed most was when we danced before King Edward and Queen Alexandra and the rest of the royal family at Chelsea Polytechnic Hospital. It was a grand day and it turned out a success with me and the students from the Polytechnic. It was a good affair; it turned out lovely.

But after it was over, we went to the marquee. I sit with Mr. Sharp and two more ladies, and on my right was the King and Queen Alexandra. After we'd had tea King Edward turned to me. He said, 'I've no doubt, Kimber', he said, 'that I've seen your father dance at Oxford when I was at Christ Church'. I said, 'I know you have, your majesty, because I've heard my father talk about it.'

Well then after that, Mr. Sharp gave a lecture at the Mansion House ... and there was a most brilliant sight, I can tell you. I remember dancing Jockey to the Fair and the Shepherds' Hey and the Bacca Pipes, and the applause over them Bacca Pipes I don't think I shall ever forget.

There was two gentlemen there who badly wanted these pipes for souvenirs. I said, 'Well, the pipes don't belong to me. There's Mr. Sharp, if he says you can have them, you can have them. I've done with them, I've danced over them, that's all I can do.'

But anyway, they bid one against another for these two clay pipes till they got to a pound each. One had one, and the other had the other, and they gave the two sovereigns to Mr. Sharp. But after it was over Mr. Sharp said to me, 'Well Kimber, I never danced the pipes. You danced the pipes; this money must be yours.' So I had the two sovereigns. I give me mate one as has danced with me, and I had the other myself. So that was the end of that one!

William Kimber, as recorded by Peter Kennedy in 1951 (Folktrax CD 383)



*The Headington Quarry Morris dancers performing Bean Setting, c. 1899. From Sharp's Morris book*

### Bean Setting

Transcribed from a 1946 recording in London

Most recently released on EFDSS CD 03

Played AAABB, AABB, AABB

*Bean Setting*, a Morris stick dance, was the first tune Kimber played for Cecil Sharp, while the Quarry side danced in the snow at the famous meeting at Sandfield Cottage in Headington Quarry on Boxing Day in 1899.

The tune is fairly straightforward. Note the use of octaves on the right hand when playing the note C; Kimber often did this for emphasis at the beginning or end of a phrase. There is one tricky and unusual bit at the end of the B part, where the melody drops down an octave and into the left hand. This drop keeps the tune out of the uncomfortably high reaches of the right hand. Because of the brisk tempo, when listening to the tune one hardly notices the octave drop.

### Blue-eyed Stranger

Transcribed from a 1946 recording in London

Most recently released on EFDSS CD 03

Played AAABB, AABB, AABB

*Blue-eyed Stranger* is used as a handkerchief dance at Headington Quarry. Sharp reported that it and its variants are widespread throughout the British Isles.

Like most of Kimber's tunes, it is in the key of C. In the A part, the melody dips briefly into the left hand. The tune starts with a bit of a squawk, made with a B grace

note that slides into and slightly overlaps the high C that forms the first beat, making for a slight dissonance. Kimber sprinkles such effects into several of his pieces, adding spice for the listener. In the accompaniment, note that he occasionally uses an oom-pah pair or two, but then returns to his more usual accompaniment style of third interval pairs. This gives a more variable style to the arrangement than a steady oom-pah beat.

### Constant Billy

Transcribed from a 1957 recording made by Christopher Chaundy in Oxford

Most recently released on EFDSS CD 03

Played AABABA, AABA

This old tune, published as early as 1718, serves as a Headington Quarry stick dance. It is one of the most widespread tunes amongst Cotswold teams.<sup>1</sup>

Kimber played only about one fourth of his repertoire of Morris tunes in the key of G, and this is one of them. It is described in some detail in the previous section on musical style.

*O Constant Billy,  
Shall I go with 'ee?  
O when shall I see  
My Billy again?*

Words to the Headington Quarry version, as collected by Cecil Sharp<sup>2</sup>

## Explanatory Notes on the Tunes

### Country Gardens

Transcribed from a 1948 recording in London

Most recently released on EFDSS CD 03

Played AAABB, AABB, AABB, AABB

This Morris handkerchief dance, collected by Sharp from Kimber's playing, is based on much earlier prototypes. However ancient, it must have sounded quite fresh to Percy Grainger, who took the tune from Sharp and arranged it for the piano or orchestra. When asked his opinion of Grainger's new work, Kimber commented that 'He didn't add anything. He murdered it. You couldn't dance to it.'<sup>3</sup> It is with some trepidation that a transcription of this tune, however carefully done, is included here!

*Old woman, if you please,  
Will you come along with me  
Into my fine country gardens?*

Words to the Headington Quarry version, as collected by Cecil Sharp

### Double Lead Through

Transcribed from a 1946 recording in London

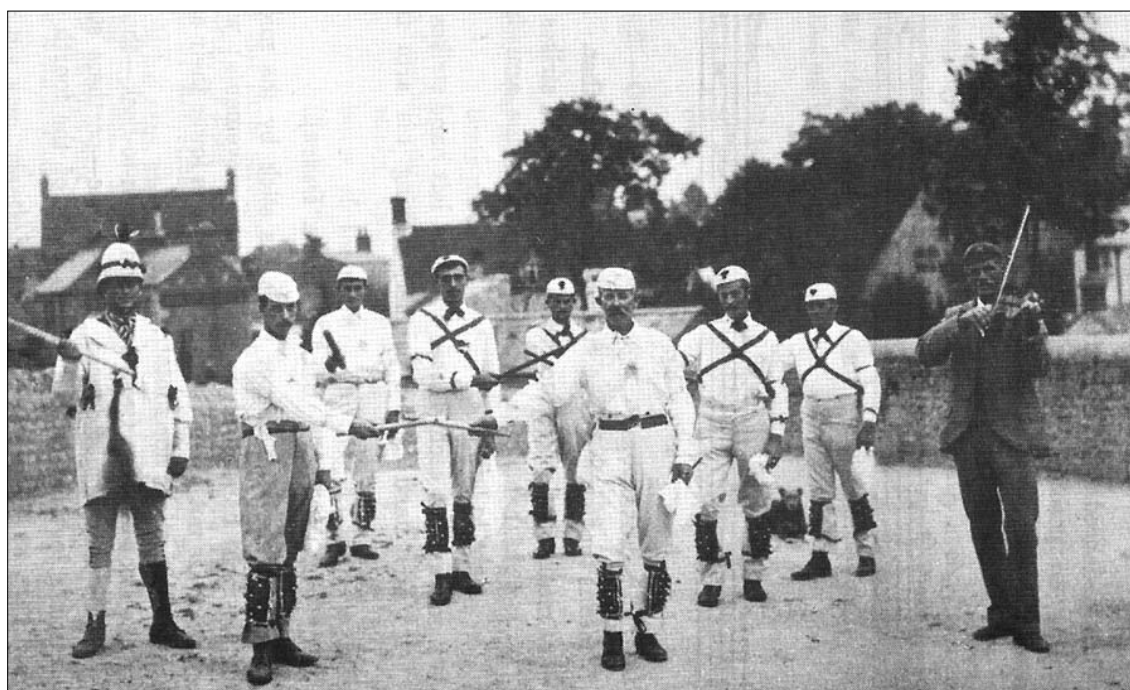
Most recently released on EFDSS CD 03

Played AABBC, AABBC, AABBC

This country dance tune contains some of Kimber's more complex chording. Like *Blue-eyed Stranger*, it starts with a rather squawky grace note, but then modulates fluidly between the keys of C and G.

Note the subtle difference in the melody of the third measure of the A part when played the second time through. Kimber does not maintain this throughout the piece; the other first A parts resemble the second. I left this in the transcription because it adds interest to the melody line, which may well have been Kimber's intention as well. A minor but perhaps interesting detail is the dissonance of the fourth note of the third measure of the A part, first time through, where Kimber plays buttons 2 and 2a at the same time on the draw, giving the tune a brief and rather whimsical touch at its start. Because he does not continue this into the rest of the tune, I think it an error caused by his accidentally pressing two adjacent keys. I omitted transcribing this phrase because I passed up transcribing the first A parts of each tune (commonly called a 'once to yourself'), as previously discussed. Beyond this first A part, however, one will find few obvious errors in his playing, and very few alterations of the melody line in any form from repetition to repetition.

The second playing of the end of the B part is different from that of the first B part. This difference serves as a lead-in to the much longer C part. This difference in phrasing is continued throughout the three repetitions of the tune.



*The Headington Quarry Morris dancers performing Constant Billy, c. 1899. From Sharp's Morris book*

## The Anglo Concertina Music of William Kimber

### Double Set Back

Transcribed from a 1946 recording in London

Most recently released on EFDSS CD 03

Played AAAABB,AABB,AABB,AA

Sharp collected this one from Headington Quarry, where it is a handkerchief dance. He notes the tune in his 1909 compendium of Morris Dances, where he shows it as a series of legato quavers. Kimber tends to dot these, and the transcriptions take that form, even though the notes are not as strongly dotted as in other tunes.

Note that on the A part, second measure, fifth note, you could play it Right D3a, Left D3,2 instead of Right P3, Left P6,7 as shown. It would be smoother. Because I could not determine exactly what Kimber was doing in this passage, I showed the fingering as corresponding to the bottom two rows. If he actually used 3a, it would be the only clear exception to the 'bottom two rows only' style in his Morris tunes.

This tune exemplifies his accompaniment style, consisting almost entirely of third-interval pairs on the left hand. I have left the repeated A and B parts in this transcription, in order to demonstrate some of his subtle variations in accompaniment.



Merryville, the house William Kimber built for himself in 1911 in St Anne's Road, Headington

### Getting Upstairs

Transcribed from a 1935 recording in London

Most recently released on EFDSS CD 03

Played AAABABA, AABABA, AABABA

This Headington Quarry handkerchief dance was collected by Sharp. It has had a global popularity for nearly two centuries. The Headington song lyrics were included on Ashley Hutchings LP *Son of Morris On*:

*Some likes coffee, some likes tea*

*Some likes a pretty girl, just like me*

*Such a getting upstairs and a playing on the fiddle*

*Such a getting upstairs I never did see.*

The song is also an American old-time fiddle tune and a children's song, and was collected by Cecil Sharp in Appalachia. It was also popular as a minstrel song:

*On a Suskyhanner raft I come down de bay,*

*And I danc'd, and I frolick'd, and fiddled all de way.*

*Sich a gitting up stairs and a playing on the fiddle*

*Sich a gitting up stairs I never did see*

*Trike he to and heel—cut de pigeon wing,*

*Scratch gravel, slap de foot—dats just de ting.*

*Sich a gitting up stairs, &c.*

These lyrics were collected from nineteenth century songsheets by the Bluegrass Messengers, who use the tune in a current bluegrass setting.

### Haste to the Wedding

Transcribed from a 1946 recording in London

Most recently released on EFDSS CD 03

Played AAABABA, AABABA, AABABA

This Headington Quarry handkerchief dance was collected by Sharp. It is another tune with global popularity for dancing, and settings are found in the Irish tradition as well in American square dance and contradance repertoires.

This is a somewhat demanding tune to learn, because of the constant chord changes and the need for an adept left hand, but is well worth the effort. Kimber's playing includes all three types of triplets: undotted, dotted, and reverse dotted. As most are dotted, the other two types serve to spice up the rhythm.



*William Kimber playing for the Oxford University Morris Men, 1954, Oxford. Picture by David Welti, in the Vaughan Williams Memorial Library*

### Hunting the Squirrel

Transcribed from a 1946 recording in London

Most recently released on EFDSS CD 03

Played AAABB, AABB, AABB, AA

This very simple and engaging tune for a Headington Quarry stick dance was collected by Sharp. The sparse chording in this arrangement supports the very simple melody line. Nonetheless, there is a fair amount of variation in the left-hand accompaniment.

The title is used in a variety of settings, several of which are collected by John Kirkpatrick in his *English Choice* tunebook.

### I Love the Gal With the Blue Frock On

Transcribed from a 1951 field recording in Kimber's home at Headington

Released on Folktrax CD 382

Played AABB, AABB

This is one of Kimber's country dance tunes. Although best known for his Morris dance music, William Kimber played for country dances as well. We are fortunate that Douglas and Peter Kennedy made some field recordings of Kimber playing these tunes at various times in the 1950s. Seven of these country dance tunes are transcribed herein, and yet more are included on the Folktrax 382 recording. This polka is a widespread tune, being found in County Clare, where Bernard O'Sullivan and Tommy McMahon call it *Babes in the Woods*, and further afield in the US. In the early nineteenth century, the tune found its way into American slave culture. Huddie Ledbetter (1885–1949) learned it from ex-slaves and recorded it as *Cornbread Rough*:

*Cornbread rough and cornbread tough,  
Aint't got no money got cornbread tough.  
Way down yonder in jaybird town,  
People don't work 'til the sun goes down.<sup>4</sup>*

The polka originated as a Czech folk dance that spread to the ballrooms of Europe in the middle nineteenth century before becoming established again as a rural folk dance, but with now wider distribution. Kimber shows that the Anglo is particularly well suited to its rhythm.

## The Anglo Concertina Music of William Kimber

### Jockie to the Fair

Transcribed from a 1948 recording in London

Most recently released on EFDSS CD 03

Played AABCBCBCB

This Morris Jig was collected by Sharp at Headington Quarry. This is an unusual and interesting tune because of several rhythmic irregularities and key modulations, and is a lot of fun to play. Note the key change to G during the A part. The slowed down capers of the C part allow a grand belting-out of full chords; note how Kimber artfully places some octave notes in amongst the chords for a break in the pattern. During the capers he inserts a pair of notes in the time of a triplet (in the sixth measure), which has the effect of holding back the rhythm, clearly in synchronicity with some unusual dance steps. The rhythm continues to be unusual in the eighth measure of the C part, after the capers, when an incomplete measure (3/8) is inserted as the pace increases markedly.

Kimber's left hand improvisation may seem at times to be mere ambling about a keyboard, where several third interval pairs might each be acceptable. However, this tune has one variation that shows this process to have been purposeful. In the next to the last measure of the A part, the melody drops to the left hand; on the second time through the A part, it stays on the right hand. The bellows direction is different for the two parts, which indicates that he consciously intended the change.

### Laudnum Bunches

Transcribed from a 1957 field recording made by Christopher Chaundy at Headington Quarry

Most recently released on EFDSS CD 03

Played AAABBB, AABBB, AACCC, AACCC

This Morris handkerchief dance was transcribed from a live recording that was made with the local Morris side dancing outside a pub in Headington Quarry. Kimber was age 85 at the time. You can hear him encouraging the dancers as he plays. It is a lovely recording, full of warmth.

This is an unusual tune in many respects, not the least of which is the title. The Headington side dances with 'bunched' handkerchiefs, held in the hand at all four corners. The title may have suggested 'bunches of poppies', from which laudanum was derived.<sup>5</sup> The rhythm moves from dotted triplets to inverted dotted triplets (where the second note is dotted, and the first note is shortened). The chording during the C part is very fine and fun to play.

### Little Polly

Transcribed from a 1951 field recording in Kimber's home at Headington

Released on Folktrax CD 382

Played AABB, AABB

This is another country dance tune (polka). The tune can be found in an 1883 collection by George Watson of Norfolk, England.<sup>6</sup>

### The Mayblossom Waltz

Transcribed from a 1951 field recording in Kimber's home at Headington

Released on Folktrax CD 382

Played AABBCC, AABB

This tune is a classic turn-of-the-century ballroom waltz, and Kimber's arrangement sounds remarkably like the playing of a street organ or a park carousel, complete with a perfect oom-pah accompaniment that is uncharacteristic of the rest of his repertoire. It also contains the only fingering in these transcriptions that reaches to the top row, for a B flat chord. It is possible that he learned this tune later in life by listening to a calliope somewhere (or perhaps a 78 rpm recording), and used it at country dances. A search of the title on the internet yielded several turn-of-the-century waltzes entitled *Mayblossom*, but none that are matches. This is Kimber's only recorded waltz.

### Moonlight Schottische

Transcribed from a 1951 field recording in Kimber's home at Headington

Released on Folktrax CD 382

Played AABB, AABB

Another country dance tune, it is a schottische of uncertain origin although it has a turn-of-the-century ballroom feel. One of his most enjoyable tunes to play, Kimber clearly played it often for country dances. He said before recording it, 'This is a good dance, a good tune ... (it is a) plain schottische, four left, four right, eight round.'<sup>7</sup>

## Explanatory Notes on the Tunes

### Morris On

Transcribed from a 1956 field recording in Kimber's home at Headington, by Peter Kennedy

Released on Folktrax CD 382

Played AABB, AABB

This Morris processional tune was made famous by the 1972 recording of the same name by Ashley Hutchings and others.

### Old Mother Oxford

Transcribed from a 1948 recording in London

Most recently released on EFDSS CD 03

Played AABC, BC, BC, B

This Morris jig was collected by Sharp from the Headington Quarry side. Kimber's playing includes an unusually frequent use of grace notes, shown here as thirty second notes tied to double dotted sixteenths.

### Morris Reel (Soldier's Joy)

Transcribed from a 1948 recording in London

Most recently released on EFDSS CD 03

Played AABB, AABB, AABB, AABB, A

The Headington Quarry side danced a reel with handkerchiefs to the old fiddle tune of *Soldier's Joy*. This tune is uncharacteristic of Kimber, because he plays in octaves in the B part in place of his usual chording. This may compensate for the rapidity of those passages. The melody dips briefly into the left hand in several places in the B part.

### The Old Woman Tied Up in a Blanket

Transcribed from a 1956 field recording in Kimber's home in Headington

Most recently released on EFDSS CD 03

Played AABBCC

The tune is interesting for its rhythmic variations between dotted and normal triplets. The lyrics are derived from an old nursery rhyme, to which the Headington side dances a Morris jig.

*Oh there was an old woman tossed up in a blanket  
Ninety nine miles beyond the moon,  
It's under one arm she carries a basket  
Under the t'other she carries a broom.  
Old woman, old woman, old woman cried I,  
Oh wither, oh wither, oh wither so high,  
I'm going to sweep cobwebs beyond the skies  
And I shall be back with you by and by.*

From William Kimber's singing.<sup>8</sup>



William Kimber and Jinky Wells (fiddle player), Bampton, c. 1951. Bampton musician Bertie Clark is standing at the left. Picture from Reg Hall, in the Vaughan Williams Memorial Library

## The Anglo Concertina Music of William Kimber

### Over the Hills to Glory

Transcribed from a 1946 recording in London

Most recently released on EFDSS CD 03

Played AABB,AABB, AABB, AABB, AABB

This fine country dance tune is included in Sharp's Country Dance Book, Part 1.

### Rigs o' Marlow

Transcribed from a 1946 recording in London

Most recently released on EFDSS CD 03

Played AABB,AABB,AABB,AABB,AABB

This Morris stick dance was derived from an old Irish air, the *Rakes of Mallow*. The Headington side sang:

*When I go to Marlow Fair  
With the ribbons in my hair  
All the boys and girls declare  
Here comes the rigs of Marlow.<sup>9</sup>*

Kimber's playing of this tune is very upbeat and jaunty, with right-hand third-interval pairs added for emphasis. The B part is subtly unusual; the reverse-order dotted triplets are easily missed. A very enjoyable tune to play, and one of the easier to learn.



*William Kimber and William 'Jinky' Wells with the Bampton Morris dancers, in the procession opening the International Festival of Folk Dance, London, 1935. From the Vaughan Williams Memorial Library*

### Rodney

Transcribed from a 1946 recording in London

Most recently released on EFDSS CD 03

Played AAABB, AABB, AABB, AABB, AA

This is a Headington Morris stick dance collected by Sharp. The tune has a light and airy feel (at least, as close as a brash Anglo concertina can come to that feel), and is one of those tunes that seems to go on effortlessly and endlessly. Nonetheless, it is a short tune and easily learned.

### Shepherds' Hey

Transcribed from a 1948 recording in London

Most recently released on EFDSS CD 03

Played AAABB, AABB, AABB, AABB, AABB, AA

The Morris dance of this name was called a solo jig by Sharp, even though the tune is not in 6/8 time. The dance was widespread amongst Morris teams in the early part of the twentieth century. Its brevity makes it ideal for a first tune to learn in the Kimber style. Unfortunately, due to the popularity of the Percy Grainger orchestral version, the tune has become somewhat hackneyed and over exposed as a listening choice.

*I can whistle,  
And I can play,  
And I can dance  
The Shepherds' Hey.*

Words from the Ducklington version, from Sharp.<sup>10</sup>

### Trunkles

Transcribed from a 1946 recording in London

Most recently released on EFDSS CD 03

Played AAABBBCCC, AABBBCCC, AABBBCCC, AABBBCCC

This Morris handkerchief dance was collected by Sharp. It is an unusually long tune, with an unusual pattern of repetitions.

## Explanatory Notes on the Tunes

### The Twenty-ninth of May

Transcribed from a 1946 recording in London  
Most recently released on EFDSS CD 03  
Played AAABABA, AABABA, AABABA  
This is a handkerchief dance, collected by Sharp.

### Willow Tree

Transcribed from a 1956 recording in Kimber's home at Headington  
Most recently released on EFDSS CD 03  
Played ABAB  
This is a Morris handkerchief dance, with accompanying song:

*Oh once they said my cheeks were red,  
But now they're scarlet pale,  
When I like a silly girl,  
Believed his flattering tale.  
But he vowed that he'd never deceive me,  
And I like a silly believed 'e  
For the moon and stars so brightly shone,  
Over the willow tree.*

From Kimber's singing<sup>11</sup>

### The Wonder

Transcribed from a 1951 field recording in Kimber's home at Headington  
Released on Folktrax CD 382  
Played AABB, AABB, AA

This is a country dance tune, in hornpipe tempo. It was danced as a step dance called the *Lancashire Breakdown*, according to Kimber's description to Maud Karpeles on the Folktrax recording. The tune is thought to be from James Hill, a Newcastle fiddler of the middle nineteenth century. It appears in Graham Dixon's collection, *The Fiddle Music of James Hill*.<sup>12</sup> It has also been called *The Clog Hornpipe*.



*William Kimber, Stratford-upon-Avon, 1947. He is wearing his EFDSS Gold Medal, presented to him in 1922. Photograph by W. Fisher Cassie, Morris Ring Archive*

<sup>1</sup> See liner notes by Wayne, accompanying Kirkpartick, *Plain Capers*.

<sup>2</sup> Sharp, *The Morris Book*, Vol. 1, 38.

<sup>3</sup> Chaundy, *William Kimber, A Portrait*, 209.

<sup>4</sup> A. McCarthy, ed., 'Max Jones on Blues,' *The PL Yearbook of Jazz 1946*, 72–106.

<sup>5</sup> From liner notes to *Cry Havoc* (Cotswold Series of Recording, Vol. 1); available from The English Folk Dance Project, online at <http://www.englishfolkdance.org/havoc.shtml>

<sup>6</sup> See notes by John Adams, Director, Village Music Project, online at <http://www.village-music-project.org.uk/>

<sup>7</sup> *William Kimber: Anglo Concertina*, Track 35.

<sup>8</sup> *William Kimber: Anglo Concertina*, Track 23.

<sup>9</sup> Sharp, *The Morris Book*, Vol. 1, 37.

<sup>10</sup> Sharp, *The Morris Book*, Vol. 1, 39.

<sup>11</sup> EFDSS, *Absolutely Classic*, Track 13.

<sup>12</sup> Graham Dixon, *The Lads Like Beer: The Fiddle Music of James Hill*, (Northumberland: Random Publications, 1987).



# The Transcriptions



*William Kimber and William 'Jinky' Wells, Whit Monday  
1931 in Bampton. From the Vaughan Williams Memorial  
Library*

# Getting Upstairs

As played by William Kimber  
Transcribed by Dan Worrall

**A**

Right Hand

P D P P D P D P D P D D P P D P D P D D P P

8 8 7 6 2 6 6 6 7 7 8 8 8 7 7 6 2 6 6 6 7 6 6 8 8

5 5 9 10 8 10 8 9 9 10 10 9 10 8 10 8 8 8

9 7 9 7 8 8 9 9 9 7 9 7 7 7

6

Left Hand

**A** **B**

P P D P D P D P D D P P D P D P D D P DP P

7 6 2 6 6 6 7 7 8 8 8 7 7 6 2 6 6 6 7 6 6 7 8 8 6

9 9 8 9 8 9 10 9 10 10 6 10 8 10 8 9 9 8 10 10 5

8 8 7 8 7 8 9 9 9 9 9 7 9 7 8 8 7 7 6 9 9 4

7 6 8 7

Left Hand

**A**

P D P P P PD P D P D PD P P D P D P D P D D

7 8 8 7 4 7 7 6 6 6 7 8 8 7 6 2 6 6 6 7 7 8 8 8 7

9 9 10 9 5 9 9 8 10 10 9 9 6 10 8 10 8 9 10 9 10 10

8 8 7 8 4 8 8 7 9 9 9 7 9 7 8 9 9 9

3 7

Left Hand

# Getting Upstairs

**B**

P P D P	DP DDP	P	D P	P	P D P P	P	PD P	D	P	D	P D
7 6 2 6	6 6 7 6 6	7	8 8 6	6	7 8 8 7	4	7 7 6	6	6	7	8 8

6 9 3 9	3 9 9	8	10 5	9 9 10 9	5	9 9	8 10 10	9 9
8 8	8 8	7	9 4	8 8 9 8	4	8 8	7 9 9	7

**A**

P	P	D	P	D P D	P D P D D	P	P	D	P	D P D D P
7	6	2	6	6 6 7 7 8 8 8 7	7 6 2 6	6	6	7	6	6

6	10	8	10	8 9 10 9 10	10	6	10	3	10	8 9 9	9
9	7	9	9	7 8 9 9 9	9	9	9	9	9	7 8	8

# Shepherds' Hey

As played by William Kimber  
Transcribed by Dan Worrall

## A

	P	P	D P	P D	P	D	P	D P	P D	D	P	D P	P D	P	D
		7	8 8	7 8	8	8	7	8 8	7 7	2	7	8 8	7 8	7	8

Right Hand

10	9	10	10 10	10	9	10	10 9	9	2	10	10	10
	8		9		8			8		9	9	9
	7				7					8		
	6											

Left Hand

## B

P	D P	P	P	D	D D	P	P	D	P	D P	P D	P	D	P	D P
8	6 6		8	2	8	8 7 7	6	7	7	8 8	7 8	7	8	8	6 6

Right Hand

10	8	9	10	5	10	10	5	9	9	10	10	10	10	10	9	9
7	7	8	9	4	9	9	4	8	8	9	9	9		7	8	8
		7						3	7						7	7
		6														6

Left Hand

# Discography

Several recordings have been issued of Kimber's music, and those released later than 1950 are listed here. All of the tunes that have been transcribed in this volume are currently available on commercial recordings.

*William Kimber*: EFDSS LP 1001, 1963, English Folk Dance and Song Society, London. The LP contains recordings made by Peter Kennedy in 1956, including Morris and country dance tunes and voice recordings of Kimber describing these dances. It is no longer available, but all material on the LP is currently available on Folktrax (see below).

*The Art of William Kimber*: Topic LP 12T249, 1974, Topic Records, London. No longer available, this album contains most of the Morris tunes included in the transcriptions of this volume. The recordings were made from original HMV 78 rpm records of the 1930s and 1940s. Most of this material has been reissued by the EFDSS (see below).

*Absolutely Classic: The Music of William Kimber*: EFDSS CD 03, 1999, English Folk Dance and Song Society, London. This CD includes 22 of the 28 tunes transcribed in this volume, as well as an excellent biography of Kimber, archival photographs, and even some film footage. It

should be considered an essential recording for anyone seriously interested in learning Kimber's tunes.

*William Kimber (Anglo Concertina)*: Folktrax CD 382, Folktrax International, Gloucester, England ([www.folktrax.org](http://www.folktrax.org)). This recording consists of studio and field recordings of Kimber that were made in the 1940s and 1950s by Douglas and Peter Kennedy and by Maud Karpeles. It contains all of the tunes included in the transcriptions, as well as some voice recordings of Kimber. This CD contains 6 country dance tunes that are transcribed in this volume but are not included on the EFDSS CD, as well as several additional country dance tunes. It is another essential part of any Kimber collection.

*William Kimber talking*: Folktrax CD 382, Folktrax International, Gloucester, England ([www.folktrax.org](http://www.folktrax.org)). This CD consists of an interview of Kimber conducted by Maud Karpeles and recorded by Peter Kennedy in 1951. Containing no tunes, it includes Kimber's descriptions of his experiences with Morris and country dancing.

Other sources of Kimber recordings are field recordings (audio tapes) made by T.W. and Christopher Chaundy in the 1950s. Recently donated to the British Archives in London, they are not commercially available. Some of this material was included in EFDSS CD 03 (see above).