

HINTS: HOLE IN THE HEDGE & COOLEY'S JIG

The Hole in the Hedge is played by fiddler Martin Hayes on one of his CDs, in C major. It sounds nice in C though C is an unusual key for trad tunes.

Cooley's Jig is maybe more often played in D, not in G, as given here. Actually, you can (after you've learnt it in G!) very easily play it in D, simply by changing all of the concertina notation from "C" to "G". In other words, use *exactly* the same fingering/buttons, but on the **G** row, and you'll be playing the tune in D.

These tunes are really simple to learn. You'll find them so easy that you should try to wean yourself right off the music/notation as soon as you can, which is an important thing in itself.

Start The Hole in the Hedge with your LH fourth finger (the one beside your little finger) on the C3 button; and use consecutive fingers to press the other buttons. Cooley's Jig starts with C6, for which you use your RH index finger.

As I say, they're easy. *But* they can carry important lessons and hints to improve your playing - see below. I'll use The Hole in the Hedge tune to illustrate.

There are repeated notes, such as the three E notes right at the beginning of The Hole in the Hedge, and in other places. You can play repeated notes in two ways: by sounding the note, then lifting your finger off the button in question (C4 in the case of E), and then pressing it back down again, etc. **O**r you can *keep your finger on the button* and make the bellows do the work for you: press in the bellows to 'sound' E, then halt the bellows with the finger still pressed down, then press in the bellows again, etc. Many really good concertina players use the second method, and it's worth getting the hang of and building in to your playing. I find I mix the two methods, but the 'make the bellows work for you' approach is really worthwhile.

After the second time round the first part of The Hole in the Hedge (you're about to start into playing the second part), the final notes of the first part are D and G (C3 and G5). The D is a crotchet (longer note). Try inserting an E (C4) between the D and the G, so that the sequence becomes three quavers: D E G. It sounds nicer. You can do this all over the place.

You can also fiddle about with having two buttons pressed together, at least for part of the time. For example, with the first note in The Hole.... (C), you can *keep* this pressed down while you play part of the second note (E), and it'll give you a kind of chord. Try this all over the place; don't be afraid to experiment.

These tunes (The Hole.... especially) are *really good* for learning 'bellows modulation'. Take the C (C6) - the first note in the second part of the tune as a prime example. You can just play this by shoving in the C6 button and pressing the bellows. But... now try it not just by pressing the bellows *but by varying the pressure on the bellows as you push*. You'll find the note quavers as you do this. That's the beginning of making the thing sound nice. Don't overdo it, but **do** learn this important lesson: the ways you vary the force on the bellows as you play makes a difference to the sound. Oddly enough, even bending the concertina so that the bellows bend also seems to make a difference to the sensitivity with which you play. This 'bellows modulation' is well worth learning and making second nature.

Finally, there really are all sorts of opportunities for adding in twiddly bits (kind of rolls), by - for example - playing several fast notes instead of one, by using consecutive fingers. Cooley's Jig is the best tune to try this: try using the index fingers of *both* hands to do triplets, where just one note (such as a B - C6) is specified, so that the B (C6) becomes a fast B A B (C6 C5 C6). And try using the index finger on your right hand *together with the next finger*, to do little rolls, where only one note is given in the music. Don't do this till you know the tune; but do then try it out a bit; you'll find those additional twiddles will become second nature to your playing and your style.

The above hints aren't in The Concertina Diaries. They should be. I'm learning how to write a useful tutor as I go along. The second edition will be better than the first.