



# The Phonographic Record

*The Journal of The Vintage Phonograph Society of New Zealand*

A Society formed for the preservation of Recorded Sound

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## A MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT.

On this occasion - the publication of the first issue of "The Phonographic Record" I wish to welcome all members to our newly-formed Society.

We have formed this Society in the hope that it will benefit all collectors who sincerely wish to help one another. Since our first meeting we have gone ahead by leaps and bounds and we hope by our February meeting to have fifty members. We hope on reading this our first epistle, it will encourage all members to write for us a small article for future publication and also to write to tell us your wants, the phonograph parts you require and what you have for exchange.

It is our intention to have parts made and we already have makers lined up, but, of course the bigger the order the lower the price, so if it is a horn, a horn crane, or a gear cover you require let us know. We shall also endeavour to put you on to the right person for the right job if you require machine repairs. If you are experimenting with parts or repairs on however small a scale please let us hear about it or about any other ideas which could help the Society.

I wish to thank all members for their solid support in the formation of the Society and look forward to that same support in the future.

I must not close this message without wishing you all the Compliments of the Season and many days happy hunting for phonographs and records.

Walter T. Norris.

## THE FIRST THREE MONTHS.

The Date:- September 9th, 1965. The Place:- 73 Flockton Street, Christchurch, New Zealand. The Decision:- To form the Vintage Phonograph Society of New Zealand. Yes, in brief that's the time and the big decision. It sounds "quick and easy" put like that but we had wondered whether this country was ready for such



a Society. We were not left long in doubt but we are sure that no one who attended that first enthusiastic meeting realised that before three more months had gone by we would have a membership of forty-three nor that we would have run a most successful public display, had an excellent window-display, been written up in the newspapers and appeared on television and radio. Such has been the response proving that the need for such a Society was there and that we can help each other in our collecting and be enthused by others' enthusiasm. You have endorsed this formation by your interest - it is now "our" Society - let us do something worth-while with it.

### AN INTRODUCTION TO OUR PATRON.

Those members who have had the pleasure of meeting Mr. C.E. Woledge will realise how fortunate the Society is that he has consented to be our Patron. Not only has he an amazing knowledge of the phonograph and the early days of the industry but he is willing to share such knowledge which has proved invaluable in the reconstruction of members' machines. He has also offered to make available to the editor of this magazine, any written material, the reprinting of which could prove invaluable.

Over a period of time Mr. Woledge owned five different phonograph shops in Christchurch; in 1920 he joined Phonographs Ltd. which company he managed for fifteen years. (Local members may still observe the concrete lettering EDISON HALL which still graces the building in Tuam Street.

His interest in phonographs began as a youth when he started experimenting and inventing machines with considerable success, the culmination of this work resulted in his designing the to-day, rather rare Edison portable phonograph very neatly designed and an excellent example of a smaller machine.

Mr. Woledge did not restrict his activities merely to the mechanical and musical side of the phonograph, as during his managership of Phonographs Ltd. he produced a monthly magazine chiefly for clients, and these contain a wealth of information and photographs which does much to intrigue and enthuse all collectors who see them. We have much to learn.

Nowhere in New Zealand is there a man more fitted to be our Patron. We are proud and happy to have him in that position and no doubt in the future as in the past we shall be turning to him again and again for the help that is so willingly given.



### THE BETTINI CYLINDER.

A few years ago, I obtained a Columbia Phonograph of a type designed to play three sizes of cylinder; a two inch, which is the standard size, a four inch and a five inch.

With the machine came a number of four inch cylinders and one five inch. Wanting more of the five size, I set about to see if I could procure some. I was fortunate in meeting a Dunedin person who informed me that he knew a Nelson man who had told him of a number of this size cylinder which were up that way and that the owner had no machine on which to play them. I later obtained the Nelson address which turned out to be the Top House Hotel.

On visiting Top House, I discovered that there was a number of these concert size cylinders and found that the owner, Mr. Clark, had bought these when he bought the hotel from the previous owner but had never seen a machine on which to play them.

After a yarn and a cup of tea, Mr. Clark decided to sell me the cylinders as they were of no use to him without the appropriate machine. At that time, I had no idea that, amongst them was a Bettini of such importance to collectors. It was not until months later that I learnt of the interest taken by collectors in both the cylinder and the artist, Marcella Sembrich who made for Bettini this hill and dale recording, the only one known to exist.

Madame Sembrich made many records for the Victor Company but these were all lateral cut and made at a later date.

W.T. Norris.

We would like to add a little to this very modest account by Walter Norris of his discovery of the now famous Bettini cylinder. Most members will be familiar with the continuation of the story - how the cylinder was taped, issued on a 7" 45 r.p.m. record and given a world-wide distribution. Both in Britain and in the United States, leading collectors of historical records have hailed the discovery of the cylinder and the re-recording. Aida Favia-Artsay in her review in the American magazine "Hobbies" begins "Once in a blue moon, events exciting beyond the ordinary occur in our already exhilarating hobby" as an introduction to a lengthy and enthusiastic review.



John Freestone in the British magazine "The Gramophone" concludes his equally enthusiastic review with the words "It (the re-recording) is a 'must' for every collector of historical vocal discs and cylinders, and adds another vital page to the history of sound recording". How many more such treasures are waiting to be uncovered in New Zealand remains a mystery and a challenge to all collectors.

# RECORD DUPLICATION No. 1

W.T. Norris.

Early cylinders were not pressed as records are today but were made by an individual process. This was how it was done:- for vocal records, up to four electrically driven recording machines were placed in a studio with the artist singing into all four machines at once. For bands, the number of machines for recording could be increased to twenty, these being arranged around the room in such a fashion so as to capture the sound in their recording horns. This meant that each cylinder bought in those days was, in fact, a master.

This method proved expensive and unreliable and to this was added the fact that the artist or the band had to be recalled or be on hand for each batch of records made.

These early cylinders were made of a soft white wax. Later copies of these were light or dark brown.

To be continued.

And so, as we end this first issue of "The Phonographic Record" we ask you to write to us at 73 Flockton Street, Christchurch 1 enclosing an article if you can and if not an idea of the type of article you would like to see in this, your magazine.