



# 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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## CHARLES J. LINDSAY

We are very sorry to report the death at Wellington on February 15th of Mr. C.J. Lindsay. Mr. Lindsay was a member of the Dominion Museum staff, and had been instrumental in building up the Museum's very fine collection of vintage machines and records. Although he was not a member of the Society, he was interested in our aims and of course had a major part in the three Annual Phonograph Conventions. Wellington collectors in particular will miss his practical help, but his death will mean the loss of one of the most influential and enthusiastic figures from the vintage phonograph scene in New Zealand. A letter of sympathy from the Society has been sent to Mrs. Lindsay.

## FOR YOUR INFORMATION

TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN: Those members (and this includes all our Junior Members) who have completed and returned their questionnaire may skip this paragraph and continue reading below. Among the other members we know that there are some who are not collectors in the accepted sense but who have joined the Society because of their interest in its aims. These will probably not wish to return a questionnaire and we quite appreciate this, but there are many collector members who have not yet spared us ten minutes to complete the form. To them we would say that until we receive a considerable number of outstanding forms we are unable to analyse the information and go ahead with our investigations of getting parts made etc. Would YOU please return the questionnaire IMMEDIATELY as all members are being affected by the delay.

OUR PUBLICITY OFFICER: We would like, in this issue to acknowledge the work of our Publicity Officer Mr. J.S. Cowper. It was through the efforts of Mr. Cowper that the Society received publicity, from the newspapers and television, and an excellent window display. This firmly established the Society in the eyes of the public and has resulted in a widespread interest in our aims and activities.



OUR GRATEFUL THANKS: We would like to express our thanks to our member, Mr. A.O. Alleway who has presented to us a large supply of gramophone parts. This will prove invaluable to many members and the sorting and listing is underway.

BOOK REVIEW - A.J. ROBB.

"Talking Machines" John Cain. Methuen & Co. 78 pp. and index.

As every serious collector knows the two leading books on recording machines are "From Tinfoil to Stereo" by Read & Welch and "The Fabulous Phonograph" by Roland Gelatt (both out of print at present). John Cain's book, although not nearly as detailed as either of these two books is destined to take its place alongside them. It is one of a series of books written for young people but this does not mean that it is in any way lacking in interest. While it is not designed to be a reference book as "From Tinfoil to Stereo" is, its small size makes it very easy reading.

"Talking Machines" is not only a history of the development of the phonograph, but also an excellent introduction to the technical side of sound recording. Mr. Cain writes with a minimum of technical jargon which gives the layman a very clear understanding of sound and its properties. The development of the cylinder phonograph and its gradual defeat by the gramophone is dealt with lucidly. The rise of electrical recording is then traced and includes the development of tape recording, stereophonic recording and the manufacture of a gramophone record.

The book is well illustrated and is printed on good quality paper. For anyone just beginning to take an interest in talking machines or for those who require a concise and readable history of phonographs and gramophones I thoroughly recommend this book.

ORDER NOW: We offer copies of this book to our members at a substantial saving. Normal New Zealand price 18/9, SOCIETY PRICE 15/- for a limited number. All applications with 15/- for each copy must reach the Secretary by 12th March, 1966. The books should arrive about the end of June.

A request by a member for more information about the Edison Portable resulted in Mr. C.E. Woledge supplying us with the required information. He suggested that we print a shortened version but we found the story so interesting and feel it is



such an important part of the story of the Talking Machine in New Zealand that we have printed it in full.

### THE EDISON CYLINDER PORTABLE PHONOGRAPH

- C.E. WOLEDGE

The Edison Cylinder Portable was put on the New Zealand market in 1927 or 1928, its first point of release being Christchurch. About this time, the Portable Gramophone was enjoying great popularity owing to the fact that the portable radio which had come into being had several drawbacks. For instance it was very heavy and reception beyond a limited distance was not possible without a fairly high aerial. Then again the cost of and trouble with batteries was a detriment. The introduction of the so-called spillable battery was expected to improve matters but failed owing to its low capacity. So the portable radio was eventually discarded and concentration was directed to the Portable Needle Gramophone; with the introduction of electric recording, giving greater volume, a great improvement was brought about and previous portables were quite surpassed, the later models becoming the regular choice for outdoor use. It would be unusual to come across a fishing party without music being supplied by a gramophone as there was a general belief that music attracted fish.

However, speaking personally, the situation was not pleasing to me being an Edison enthusiast and such instruments not represented at the fishing outings which I occasionally attended. I considered that something should be done about it. At the time, Edison did not make a portable instrument and his smallest model known as the Amberola 30 was much too cumbersome for portable purposes. However its cabinet size was governed by the size of the horn and I considered, that, owing to the compact motor, if a smaller horn was substituted, a compact portable model could be constructed. Under these conditions, I made a model for myself using the Amberola motor and the Diamond Reproducer and installing a smaller horn. The result was quite successful, and I had many requests to purchase from those who had seen and heard it; in fact at picnics where I played it, so much interest was taken that I considered it worthwhile putting on the market. With this object, I wrote to the Edison Company enclosing a photograph of the machine and they requested me to send them a model. Their comments were quite flattering, but they did not show any interest in manufacturing the machine, but gave instead



a gentle reminder that goods not made in the Edison factory must not bear the Edison name. (This I managed to conveniently ignore). I asked them to supply six dozen Amberola motors with reproducers; they supplied three dozen of each only, stating that in the meantime the matter was under consideration. I had three dozen cabinets made at A.J. White's furniture factory and three dozen horns made at Calvert's the tinsmiths; the tone arms I made myself. At the beginning I sold the Portable without any record container and owing to this proving a detriment, I added a clip-on box to carry twelve records. The instruments were soon sold, about half of them being fitted with the record carrier.

Not having received any encouragement from the Edison Company, I laid aside the matter of the Portable and in the meantime Edison put out a needle-cut portable and a list of electrically recorded needle records. This was sufficient to show the trend of events and with the depression beginning to make itself felt and the closedown of the Edison Phonograph factory it was the definite finish of the Edison Portable.

Note: I am often asked what has become of the thirty-six Portables and my contribution towards an answer is as follows:- Before Edison Hall was built, our retail shop was in High Street, next to Wilkins Central Music Store. Adjoining us on the other side was Harrison's Watch and Clock Repair Workshop. Mr. Harrison told me that he was pestered with children coming in for old clock works. It was at the time of the introduction and boom of the "Meccano" and the juveniles were after clock work motors to run their working models. This trend also applies to talking machine motors and I have heard of many instances of their works being put to this use. I suggest that this was the fate of some of the Portables as about half a dozen only are accounted for.

Collectors will be interested in the following details which Mr. Wolledge has supplied from memory regarding the distribution of some of the machines:- Auckland 4, Wellington 4, Christchurch 12, Dunedin 3, Oamaru 1, Cheviot 1, Ashburton 1, Greymouth 2, Palmerston North or Masterton 1.

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