



# 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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"WE WISH YOU A MERRY CHRISTMAS"

As this is our December Issue we would like to take the words of the old song and wish all members a very happy Christmas and hope that 1968 may be a very successful collecting year.

**THE LIBRARY:** We hope to have this underway in the new year. In the meantime we have to report the following acquisitions "Fifty Years of Song" by Peter Dawson, "Joan Sutherland" by Russell Braddon, "Kathleen Ferrier - A Memoir" edited by Neville Cardus and "The Fabulous Phonograph" by Roland Gelatt. We have on order from England Joe Batten's Book - "The Story of Sound Recording". Elsewhere in this issue, reference is made to a special afternoon organised by Mr. and Mrs. George Foster to benefit the Library Fund. With the proceeds it is intended to buy a book on Musical Boxes.

**MONTHLY MEETINGS:** We have had requests from out-of-town members for a brief report on the monthly meetings and Christchurch doings. One of the "locals" has agreed to do this and we hope to make it a regular feature. A report appears this month under the heading, "That was the Month that was".

**HORNS:** Our President, Bill Dini has been hard at work organising and helping with the making of the 14" witches hat horns with tin funnel and the brass bell which the Society will shortly have on sale. We have seen one of the completed horns and it is a beautiful job. Price etc. at a later date.

**AND WHAT IS SANTA BRINGING YOU?** If he needs any ideas, we have noticed two rather interesting books in the shops. They are "Melba" by John Hetherington (N.Z. Price \$6.60) and Stanley Holloway's Autobiography, "Wiv a Little Bit o' Luck" (N.Z. Price \$3.70).

**WANTED TO BUY:** Record Catalogues prior to 1933. H.M.V. and Columbia - particularly 1930 H.M.V. A.M. Otley, 108A Rossall Street, Christchurch, New Zealand. 'Phone 555-339.

PHONOGRAPH HORNS W.T. Norris.

A horn is of great fascination and importance to all phonograph collectors and it is interesting to note that the collector's piece is usually the machine with the external horn. This leads back to the point previously made that in early years all Edison supplied with his Gem Phonograph was a very simple small horn. This proved reasonably efficient but soon proved not large enough as the proud owner required more volume - so a bigger horn was produced and so on. Finally came the ultimate in that, when the phonograph was used out-of-doors, to enable all to hear even larger horns were produced; the largest one seen in New Zealand was six feet long and two feet across the flare.



Mr. Woledge used one this size for playing cylinders on his Columbia BC. in 1910 when he was asked to entertain the crowds at the Brewers' Picnic at the Rangiora Showgrounds. He tells us that a band was also employed to entertain the public but by 10 o'clock in the morning they were not in a fit state to play owing to a little over indulgence in the sponsor's products. From that hour onwards the phonograph took over.

We felt our readers would be interested to see what unfortunately is a rather poor photograph of an even larger horn set up by a dealer by the name of Wilson. This model was so large and heavy (weighing 420 lbs.) that a special carriage was made to transport it. This horn is 21 feet long and 10 feet across the flare and in the picture is attached to an Edison Standard Phonograph. The date would be the early 1900's.

#### MORE ABOUT THE EDISON NEEDLE-CUT RECORDS

To play the needle-cut record described in the previous issue of The Phonographic Record, Edison produced several machines including a radiogram. One writer states that the electrically recorded disc, and the radiogram were all the work of Edison's son Theodore and that the old man himself was against such new ideas in his old age; thus his son worked in secret regarding manufacture of a prototype. Whether this is true we do not know, but it could be an explanation for the fact that the last of the cylinders and Diamond Discs did not have it stated on them that they were made by the electrical process.

In all his years of phonograph manufacture, Edison, up until this point had not produced a portable phonograph. We described one portable model made by Mr. Woledge in New Zealand (Volume 1, Issue 3, Page 4); but this was never manufactured in the United States or in England. In this issue, we illustrate this very neat and efficient little machine. But towards the end of Edison's manufacturing days, he produced a little leather portable, not unlike the small Columbia Portable.

Mr. Woledge says this machine was a "winner" if only time had not been against it. For the Edison Company the sun was setting and in Christchurch only one sample is known to have been sold. It is possible that these also could have been the work of Theodore. (We shall print an illustration of this unusual machine in a future issue.) Mr. Woledge thinks that all parts except the motor were made by the Edison Company. Edison, it appears never made any attachment to play needle cut discs on his Diamond Disc Machines; these were made by other manufacturers such as Orotone and Kent. The Edison needlecut reproducer illustrated was found fitted to a Kent tone arm.

Many will ask what type of reproducer was used on the radiogram? This was an ordinary electric magnetic pick-up using a standard needle for lateral-cut discs and a special needle which we shall describe later, for the hill-and-dale Diamond Discs.

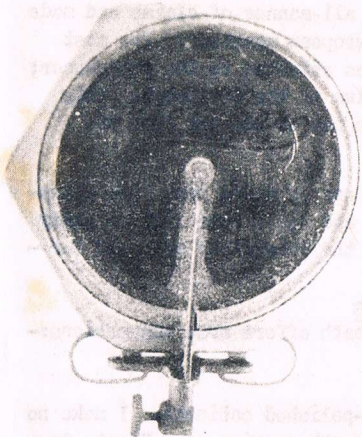
#### MORE ABOUT REPRODUCERS

The "hole" story (continued) by W.T. Norris.

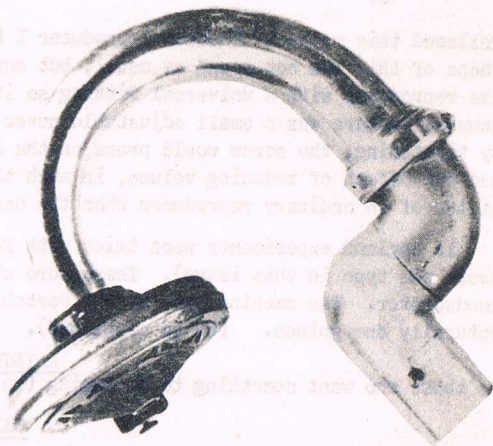
In our last issue, under this heading, we described some of the ideas of manufacturers; all claimed they were unique. Most of this was sales talk, but nevertheless, collectors find all sorts of odd reproducers which though much publicised, appeared no better than the ordinary or usual type. I would like to refer back regarding the effect of reducing the size of the outlet hole, to a repair article (Volume 1, Issue 6, Page 5) in which Bill Dini described how to repair an Amberola 30 reproducer. He demonstrated this repair to us and pointed out that reproduction after the repair, was better than with the normal reproducer.

Returning to the subject of reproducers, we have an illustration of a Fletcher reproducer. Little is known about the maker, except apparently he lived in Chicago, U.S.A. The reproducer has six small holes near the edge instead of the hole in the centre for the sound outlet. Although it is said that these performed well I feel they can not have been very much better or other manufacturers would have

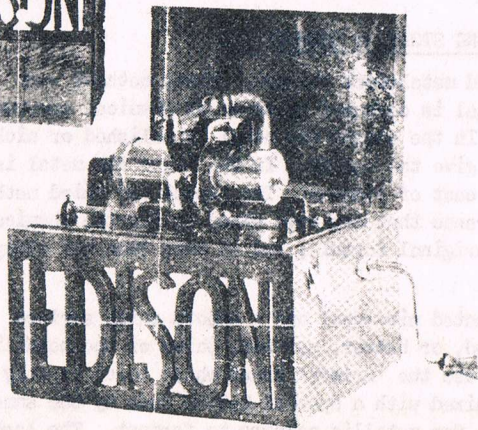




LEFT:- THE FLETCHER  
REPRODUCER

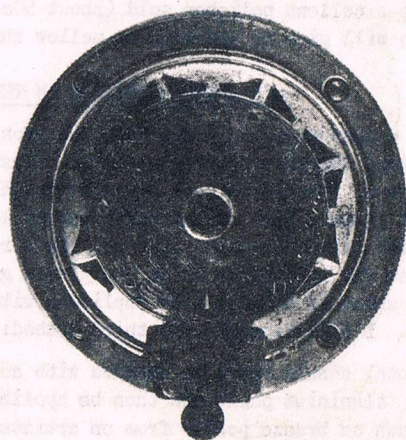


RIGHT:- THE ECHO-FON  
REPRODUCER



TWO VIEWS OF "THE WOLEDGE PORTABLE"

ABOVE:- WITH RECORD CONTAINER



THE EDISON NEEDLE CUT  
REPRODUCER

TOP:- ON A KENT ARM



followed this method. Another reproducer I have come across is called an Echo-Fon; (illustrated), the shape of this was not round as usual, but square. The makers had again, all manner of claims and made the reproducer with a universal fitting so it would fit all H.M.V. and European machines. The most unusual feature was a small adjustable screw fitted to a bracket which was attached to the reproducer; by tightening, the screw would press on the arm which leads from the stylus to the diaphragm. This had the effect of reducing volume, in much the same way as if a finger is put on the arm from the stylus of an ordinary reproducer when the machine is being played.

In England experiments were tried with reproducers which had no tone arm or sound box. (We illustrate one type in this issue). These were cheap and easy to manufacture and had a cone like an early loudspeaker. The machine made by The Portable Gramophone Co. was called the Guiniphone and sold for - naturally one guinea. (to be continued).

#### MAINTENANCE AND REPAIR OF MACHINES

To those who want something to do during the Christmas holidays, James Heath offers some suggestions:-

#### CABINET CLEANING

The following is a very quick and cheap method of sprucing up french-polished cabinets. I make no claim for its originality but many people seem ignorant of it, so it is worth passing on. First, to make sure the surface is perfectly clean, mix  $\frac{1}{2}$ -1 tablespoon of vinegar in a pint of water; rub it on and wipe off immediately. Do a thorough job in the corners, it makes a surprising difference to the appearance. Remove and smooth over any scrape marks or paint spots with fine grade wire wool.

Now concoct this foul brew: Place enough yellow shellac flakes (usually about 2-4 tablespoons for the average box) in an old jar and add enough meths. to just dampen all the flakes and leave to dissolve. This can be accelerated by placing on a very low heat, but I warn you, it can get very unmanageable! Ready made French Polish can replace this mixture, but I don't think it is as good as the freshly made type. To this goo, which should be as thick as household oil, add equal parts each by bulk of linseed oil (or better, boiled oil) and vinegar. To try to put that more clearly, you should now have three times the volume of the original shellac mix. This must be shaken well, and again while you are using it to stop the ingredients separating. You pour a small amount onto a soft cloth, not fluffy, but flannalette is good, and keep rubbing until it is all absorbed by the wood. The more times this is repeated the better, but when you are tired of doing it, leave for a day, then apply one of the excellent polishes sold (about 50c. a bottle) by antique shops. Plenty of elbow-grease with these will give an old-looking mellow shine that is just right.

#### AND ANOTHER EPISODE IN THE CONTINUING STORY OF RESTORATION

Often a gramophone is found with the bronze finished metal-work damaged. Three methods were commonly used for this bronzing. In the first, the metal is coloured by means of chemical compounds or processes. This is used on several Edison models. In the second the metal is polished or nickel-plated and given a coat of semi-transparent lacquer to give the colour. In the third the metal is sprayed with silver or gold paint and again receives a coat of lacquer. The second and third methods are easiest for an amateur to do and give a good appearance that can even stand in for the chemical colouring which is difficult to duplicate without the original formula, and is even then not always practical. I will describe the third method:

The metal should first be cleaned with soap impregnated wire-wool and a smooth shiny surface produced. Aluminium paint can then be applied if needed, or better, get some paint or the metallic flakes known as bronze powder from an artists shop. I use the 'Priory' brand which comes in many colours, most of which are in powder form and must be mixed with a special Medium made by the same firm. This is because there is a tendency, once mixed, for metallic colours to ferment. The lacquer I have found best is ordinary glossy varnish type floor stain. This is a tough varnish containing a transparent colouring and it will give the right effect in only one coat. The most useful shades are dark oak and mahogany.



### ANOTHER WOLEDGE PHONOGRAPH

Amongst our illustrations this issue, we show two views of a phonograph constructed by Mr. C.E. Wledge in approximately 1907. One of the features of this machine was a wooden tone arm, formed by cutting out a shape, splitting it and gouging out a tapered channel. The two hollowed sides were then glued back together. The machine was powered with a Standard motor and a Model C reproducer was used. This was joined with a universal joint fitting with a rubber connection to the horn. There was a lateral joint at the other end of the tone arm. The cabinet was oak with the usual commercial fittings. The performance with the two-minute wax cylinders was quite good.

### TALKING MACHINE MEMORIES by C.E. Wledge

### The Listening Horse.

About the beginning of the century, two hobbies in particular became very popular: those of photography and the playing of the phonograph and the gramophone. Photography at that time was relatively inexpensive and serviceable box cameras could be purchased for as little as 7/6 each. Camera Clubs were formed at many schools and competitions arranged and prizes awarded for the best photographs, both as regards novelty and quality. For this reason, amateur enthusiasts were on the lookout for unusual subjects and my father happened to own a horse which suited their purpose. Thus the horse, Ohio by name, was in continual demand over the week-ends to pose for budding photographers and hundreds of snaps were taken. Although not a champion, Ohio having never actually won a race but had a number of seconds and thirds to his credit, he was somewhat of a pet with intelligence above that of the average animal. He was handsome but had one bad point; his ears were usually drooped which greatly detracted from the beauty of his head. It was most difficult to secure a good photo of him looking his best with ears standing up.

We tried many ways to solve this ear problem; one was sometimes successful. My father would stand beside the horse with camera focussed on him and I would get behind with an empty kerosene tin and a hammer. At a given signal I would give the tin a bang, and at the same moment father would squeeze the bulb and take a snap. This method succeeded a few times; then it became necessary to discard the kerosene tin and substitute a wash basin or saucepan to get the ears to respond. Finally Ohio became tired of this game and treated our efforts with disdain.

One afternoon we were sitting on the lawn listening to the gramophone which was placed in the open doorway, when Ohio came along, walked round the lawn several times, then stopped right in front of the instrument with his ears standing up. We now considered that we had the solution to the ear problem and such proved the case. Vocal records however were not of much interest to the horse and he merely tolerated them with little or no ear response, but when something of a boisterous nature was played he rose to the occasion. Later a louder gramophone was purchased and friends would call and stay the evening listening to a programme of records. A grazing paddock was about fifty yards from the back door of the house with a brick path leading down to the paddock gates. Usually Ohio was free to roam where he pleased, but on one occasion he happened to be in the paddock with the gates closed. That evening a record concert was in progress when a distinct neigh accompanied by a stamping noise was heard. There was no doubt as to the cause of the racket, and on opening the door we found Ohio scraping his hoof on the brick path. He had heard the louder gramophone and had jumped the gate to join the party; he stood half in the doorway until the concert was finished. So whenever the instrument was played Ohio was keen to listen and would stand in front of it for hours with his nose almost in the horn. In addition he sometimes moved his head from side to side when some special sounds appealed to him. Thus he stayed to the end of a musical evening to be presented with a few carrots as the chief member of the audience.

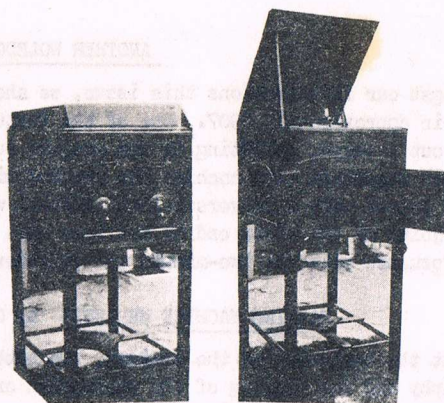
### THAT WAS THE MONTH, THAT WAS

At the October meeting the programme was supplied by the junior members who brought along some early machines and gave a short talk on each. Among them was a Pathe phonograph which Craig Goulden is restoring. Not as simple as it sounds because it involves making a reproducer! Needless to say this





"OHIO" AND THE GRAMOPHONE



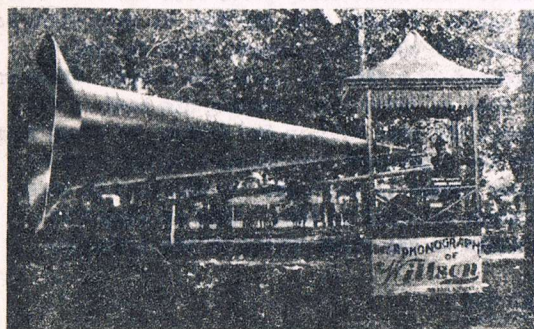
TWO VIEWS OF "ANOTHER WOLEDGE  
PHONOGRAPH"



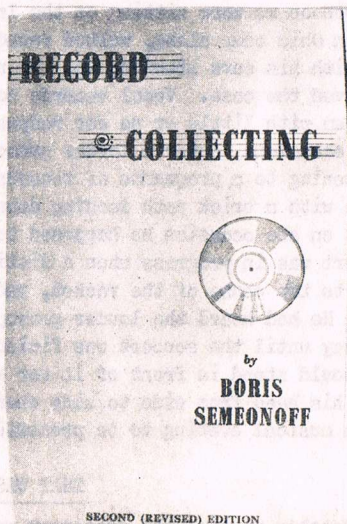
THE BREWERS' PICNIC



LEFT:-  
"THE GUINIPHONE."



THE WILSON HORN



THE COVER OF "RECORD COLLECTING."



provoked quite a bit of interest, as did the discussion on the motif for the Society's badge. Showing a commendable knowledge of psychology our President asked members what they did not want; that produced definite results, most preferring an Opera in spite of the fact that this would not show much detail when reduced to badge size. About four members present favoured a Berliner. Surely whatever is chosen should be identifiable to the layman without him having to squint at it.

On November 11th Mr. George Foster invited members to his home to see his collection of musical boxes, clocks, watches and typewriters. These aroused great interest - and envy I might add - and surprise at the extent of the collection. It was very well displayed, everything easily accessible and well lit.

Mrs. Foster showed the lady members around her beautiful garden and later gave us a generous afternoon tea. Our host asked that the money donated by visitors should be given to the library fund. Our thanks to Mr. and Mrs. Foster for giving us all a first class afternoon.

BOOK REVIEW "RECORD COLLECTING" by Boris Semeonoff. Publishers, The Oakwood Press.

When we buy a new book and find a few years later that it is well worn with use we realise the value it has been to us. And such it is with Boris Semeonoff's "Record Collecting". This is not a new book - it was originally published some years ago - but nowhere have we seen a book at a reasonable price, of so much value to the disc record collector. We are by no means so advanced in our collecting that we have outgrown this book; in fact we doubt whether any collector would discard it at any stage of his collecting for there is so much good sense per page that it can be read again and again. I hope by this we have not given the impression that the book is not suitable for the beginner - it should be "required reading" for anyone as he comes home triumphantly with his first finds.

The scope of the book is wide, there are chapters on acoustic and electric recordings, dating and identification, storage and indexing, singers, instrumentalists and collecting jazz records. For those on limited funds, a guide is given to the best records (which are certainly not always the rarest) of many artists and for collectors who have the patience and perseverance for the hunt, an indication of rarer and desirable records is given. Many of the records of the artists mentioned are fairly easily obtained so that the newer collector does not become downhearted - in fact we still get a thrill when we come across a recommended one. Dr. Semeonoff's style of writing is straightforward, entertaining, and informative. We cannot praise this book too highly - and what is more, it is still easily obtained from The Record Collector Shop, 61 Fore Street, Ipswich, England. Price 17/- sterling.

THE EDISON CYLINDER PHONOGRAPHS by C.E. Woledge

The question is often asked - "How many different models of cylinder phonographs did Edison make?" Such a question is difficult to answer and it is doubtful if Edison himself could have given a definite reply owing to the number of machines with unusual parts which have been found; it is possible he would not have remembered all his experiments and the number of models which he had discarded without actually putting them on the market because they were not up to his standard. However we have made a search and delved into many old catalogues from which I list my findings.

A number of models which were on the American market were not offered for sale in either New Zealand or Australia. I list first, the external horn machines, many of which were produced in various models over a period of years:- Gen, Standard, Fireside, Home, Triumph, Idealia, Bijou, Concert, Balmoral, Conqueror, Alva, Excelsior, Windsor, Eclipse, Acme and the Opera first called the Concert.

In addition to the above, the following Coin Slot Models were available:-

Bijou                      Table Model Spring driven. B reproducer  
Price \$30 American

Excelsior                Table Model, Spring driven. C Reproducer  
Price \$50



|             |                                                                                  |
|-------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Imperial    | Floor cabinet Electric Battery driven. C Reprodncer and 24" horn                 |
| Price \$125 |                                                                                  |
| Regal       | Same as Imperial but driven electrically from mains supply                       |
| Price \$125 |                                                                                  |
| Climax      | Floor cabinet Spring driven - played large Concert records only. D Reprodncer    |
| Price \$125 |                                                                                  |
| Ajax        | Floor cabinet, played Concert records only. Storage Battery driven. D Reprodncer |
| Price \$150 |                                                                                  |

About 1911, Edison produced his first concealed horn phonograph, a large cabinet floor model - this he named the Amberola. The word was derived from the substance, amber which was renowned for its clarity. The instrument was classed as model A and played two and four minute wax cylinders. The Blue Amberol record was introduced a little later and an improved diamond stylus reproducer was supplied to play these new records. The next model, very similar, was classed model B, the chief difference being that the two minute gear was cut out and it would thus play only four-minute records.

Apparently Edison had been giving much consideration to the concealed horn phonographs and had intended them for export, because he produced an illustrated catalogue which listed eight models with the New Zealand prices. They were Model A (£60), Model B (£60), Model III (£40), Model IV (£30), Model V (£25), Model VI (£19), Model VIII (£14.10.0), and Model X (£10.10.0).

Unfortunately, not all these models came to New Zealand, some being sold only in America. The reason for this is obvious because in December 1914, the Edison factory was burned to the ground and almost totally destroyed. Even whilst the fire was still raging Edison himself was said to be drawing plans for a new factory. Temporary premises were erected and some of the machinery which was not too badly damaged was put in order. In a fortnight, work was restarted and Blue Amberols were being manufactured and supplied. However as all stock on hand had been destroyed in the fire, we are of the opinion that this was the reason for the non arrival of the new Amberolas. Small supplies of the Amberolas, 30, 50 and 75 came to New Zealand and news came that the new factory would soon be working to capacity. However war broke out soon after and little was seen of Edison goods until after it had ended.

#### THE BOOKS THAT SING

James Heath

Many collectors will have come across old single-sided children's records labelled 'The Harper-Columbia Book that Sings'. These records, which by the way are quite small, 5½ ins. across, appeared in albums of three known as the 'Bubble Books'. These books were apparently produced in both American and British versions, the first by Harper & Sons, and the second by Hodder and Stoughton, the albums then being tagged 'Hodder-Columbia', though curiously enough the records themselves were still 'Harper-Columbia' and made in the United States.

Twelve Bubble Books were available, all in roughly the same format; the three pockets for the records were printed with the words for the songs, and in some cases the actions for games to be played to the music. There were also simple stories in verse to link the tunes together, and this is where the title Bubble Book fits in. The little boy who is the central character in the books is presented in volume one with a magic pipe which can blow a bubble containing any nursery rhyme figure who then proceeds to 'Entertain with song'. A very ingenious way of linking such wildly disparate items. The illustrations are drawn by Rhoda Chase in what must even then (1917) have seemed an old-fashioned style, the sort of thing that used to adorn the better class of Mid Victorian child's book, appealing more to the parents taste. The records are of good quality and play well, even when worn. They seem to be made of harder plastic than usual, perhaps to stand their comparatively hard life better.