



The Phonographic Record

The Journal of The Vintage Phonograph Society of New Zealand

A Society formed for the preservation of Recorded Sound

Volume 6, Issue 6

Page 49

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EDITORS: Walter T. Norris
and Pamela G. Rogers

EDITORIAL & SECRETARIAL ADDRESS:

73 Flockton Street,
Christchurch 1,
NEW ZEALAND.

THE ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

The fifth Annual General Meeting of the Society will be held on Monday, 27th September, 1971.

ELECTION OF OFFICERS: Nominations in writing for the positions of Patron, President, Vice-President, Secretary, Treasurer, three members of the Executive and Honorary Auditor must be in the hands of the Secretary not later than 12th September, 1971. Each nomination must be signed by the person nominating and the person seconding the nomination; each person concerned must be a financial member and the person nominated must signify in writing his or her willingness to serve in such a position.

WAIT FOR IT! We have been in the happy position this issue of having too many words and too little space. Several articles and letters have been held over till the next issue.

THE ANTIQUE PHONOGRAPH AND RECORD SOCIETY OF CANADA: We have been asked by Dr. P.A. Charlebois, Scarborough General Hospital, Scarborough, Ontario, Canada to announce that he is Chairman of the above group and he welcomes enquiries from interested Canadians and Americans.

WANTED: Flower horn and crane for Edison Fireside, model H reproducer, Amberola 30 or similar phonograph.

AVAILABLE TO SWAP: Table model Diamond Disc machine, Ericsson skeleton type desk telephone, also Amberol cylinders and Diamond Discs; I.W. Clarke, 21 Queens Drive, Wellington 3, New Zealand.

WANTED: His Master's Voice Needle Tins with the words 'His Master's Voice' in any language other than English; also Parlophone tins and any other unusual tins. Pam Rogers, 73 Flockton Street, Christchurch 1, New Zealand.

WANTED: Old musical instruments, any condition, Tony Hosking, 63 Wilson Street, Timaru, New Zealand.

GEORGE BASTOW: In our last issue we printed an article by G.B.E. about a recording of 'The Galloping Major'. We are grateful to Mr. M. Druce of Australia for sending us the photograph reproduced on our illustrations page and showing the cover of the sheet music for the song.

INTRODUCING FRED FERRYMEAD

On the illustrations page of each issue, you will meet Fred Ferrymead. He's an ordinary sort of chap who has his ups and downs just like the rest of us. He is interested in the fund raising we are doing for our clubrooms and you will see from his expression just how well things are going. We have a target of \$1,000 by the end of 1971 which means \$84 a month. If we haven't made the grade Fred looks rather depressed; if we just scrape home Fred looks relieved and if we have achieved a total well above our target, he leaps in the air in delight. Our six months' target

was \$500, we made it - but only just!

SOMETHING NEW - A CHRISTMAS CARD ESPECIALLY FOR YOU!

In this issue you will see the design of a Christmas card produced by the Society especially for collectors. A black and white illustration does little to convey its charm. With the festive season in mind, we have had it printed in deep red on a grained paper, white as the Christmas you in the north experience and we in the Southern Hemisphere only dream about! Inside we have an appropriate 'vintage' rhyme and the whole thing makes a delightful greeting and a gentle reminder of your hobby to your friends and relations. These cards (each complete with white envelope) are available now and orders will be fulfilled strictly in order of receipt. Each card (approximately 5½" x 4¾") and its envelope costs 10 cents N.Z. Would New Zealand collectors please add 5 cents packing and postage for 10 cards, 12 cents for up to 30 cards and 18 cents for up to 50 cards. Overseas members, 15 cents for 10 cards, 35 cents for up to 50 cards. We suggest you AIRMAIL your order NOW (with remittance) so that we can post the cards to you by surface mail. You should then have time to send them by surface mail anywhere in the world and still have them arrive in time for Christmas.

1971 PHONOGRAPH & RECORD COLLECTORS CONVENTION

by Gavin East.

Well - time to look back on another Convention, this one held in Christchurch from June 5-7, 1971.

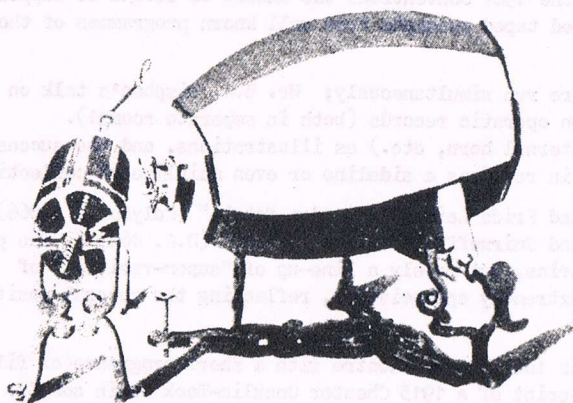
Saturday morning saw the gradual assembly at the Canterbury Museum Lecture Theatre of those attending. A small but comprehensive display of unusual machines was set up on or near the stage front, a recent discovery being the German 'Ultraphon' disc machine with its two linked wooden tone arms and cylindrical 'vintage Dalek' cabinet. It is remarkable that such a machine should have been made (as states a plate on it) "for use in New Zealand only."

The Berliner hand-wound and Tinfoil machines were displayed, as were numerous exotic non-Edison cylinder machines which came down (and unfortunately went back) with a well known Nelson collector.

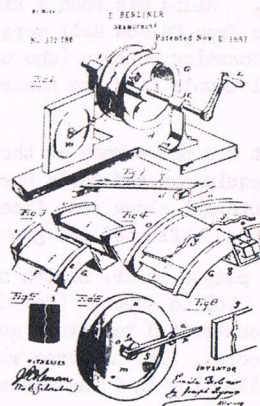
The Convention was officially opened by Walter Norris on behalf of the Christchurch collectors. Those attending, especially from outside Christchurch were welcomed, after which we repaired to the "supper room" for what was to be a feature of the weekend, the morning/afternoon tea supplied by Mrs. Bruce.

Mr. Gordon Garraway, a Christchurch antique dealer provided the first and one of the "star" programmes, introducing us to some techniques of woodwork restoration, his information being set out on a printed sheet distributed to those present. Thorough preparation was naturally stressed as essential to a good finish and the enthusiasm inspired by Mr. Garraway will no doubt see many phonograph/gramophone cases looking their venerable best in the near future.

After the lunch adjournment, an interesting discussion on the machines displayed was held, Wally Gollidge of Nelson illustrating the progression of some of the cylinder graphophones through the years, and the obvious copies made by some companies, e.g. the Pathe machine so like an Edison black "Gem". The Ultraphon was demonstrated, its two reproducers actually co-ordinating occasionally, and Alan Robb's small barrel organ treated us to "Rosamunde", a tune better known as the much later "Beer Barrel Polka." The television cameras were whirring at this time but unfortunately the only sound given was a brief and intangible fragment - not a Mapleson cylinder but Harry Thornton's "My Old Shako" on a Pathe "Diamond" record (edge-start hillandale) played on a Pathe overhorn disc machine. A 5" black celluloid "Lambert" cylinder played on a "Paragon" Graphophone gave good results through a largish horn, while Charles Daab's xylophone solo on Blue Amberol of "Caprice Viennois" was tried on a Woleged portable, an even rarer Amberola VIII and a stalwart wood cygnet "Fireside" all with diamond reproducers; needless to say the latter machine carried the day. The top deck and rotor of Mr. Gollidge's recently discovered Edison Class "M" electric phonograph, sold by the North



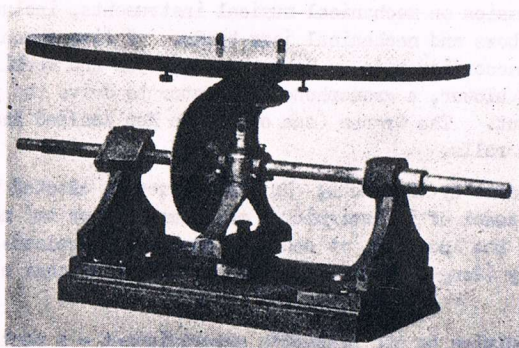
ABOVE:- SCOTT'S PHONAUTOGRAPH



ABOVE RIGHT:- BERLINER'S GRAMOPHONE
PATENTED NOVEMBER 1887

BELOW:- TURNTABLE OF BERLINER'S FIRST
DISC RECORDER 1887

BELOW RIGHT:- EMILE BERLINER AS A
YOUNG MAN.



American Phonograph Company about 1891, were shown, as was a very late red "Gem" with large Model "N" reproducer. All in all a discussion with something unusual even for the veteran machine collectors.

Mr. Teddy Grundy (on tape) next occupied the bill with a talk on early days of broadcasting in Christchurch. Radio has been a kindred interest (up to a point!) to phonographs and records since Diamond Discs from Edison Hall were used for the programmes of the mid-20's. Miss Grace Green, another broadcasting veteran (who made a hit at the 1967 Convention) was unable to attend to supplement her colleague's talk, so Adair Otley supplied taped excerpts from well known programmes of the old days.

The last two programmes of the afternoon were run simultaneously; Mr. B.A. Bisphan's talk on early radio equipment and Gavin East's session on operatic records (both in separate rooms!). Mr. Bisphan brought along some fine examples (external horn, etc.) as illustrations, and the success of his discourse reflected the growing interest in radio as a sideline or even mainline of collecting.

Records played at Mr. East's session included Frida Leider's "O don fatale" (Polydor J 24066), Boninsegna's "Voi lo sapete" (Columbia A 5198) and Smirnoff's "Hai ben ragione" (D.A. 461). The programme was constructed to give a good range of arias, not merely a line-up of "super-rarities" of hackneyed pieces. The audience was small but extremely appreciative, reflecting the general position of record collecting in Christchurch.

Saturday evening was most enjoyably spent in the Lecture Theatre with a short programme of films supplied by Morris Jackson; these included a reprint of a 1915 Chester Conklin-Mack Swain comedy. An auction followed. Apart from the gramophones and records sold, several "torpedo" bottles attracted considerable interest. Earlier, everyone had been asked to guess the amount of money in the Society's donations tin (a "pillar-box" with Blue Amberol label) - the prize, an upright Columbia Grafonola, was won by John Stokes of Auckland, who generously redonated it to be auctioned.

Sunday saw no organised programme, but some of the more aquatically minded sludged through the Ferrymead mud to the Society's display (of the few people there that day, even fewer were eligible for payment of entrance fees!). Although the day was miserable visitors could see the obvious effort that has gone into the area to bring the trams etc. into operation.

Wally Gollidge opened Monday's programme (after morning tea which was breakfast for at least one Conventioneer with a farm to run) with a talk on his vast collection of cylinder boxes and the records in them, some wrapped in tissue paper and stored in rat proof boxes by their original owner. ("What's this one? Oh, only 'Morte d'Otello' by Leo Slezak! This one? Nothing much, only Sarah Bernhardt!" - both these being mint Edison 4 minute wax Amberols.) Mr. Gollidge's aim is to have one of every type of box ever made; if the collection we saw is any indication, he is nearly there.

Michael Woolf of Wellington followed with a session on mechanical musical instruments, including recordings of violins worked from endless rotating bows and mechanical jazz bands. A live demonstration was given of his "Organa", a mechanical piano accordion made by Hohners about 1928 and working on three power sources simultaneously - a foot treadle blower, a gramophone type motor to drive the paper roll and the action of drawing the bellows in and out. The Organa (one of two in New Zealand known to this writer) performs particularly well on waltz rolls.

Monday afternoon was to see a Music Hall programme by Alan Robb; Mr. Robb however, elected to speak instead on the Strasbourg clock, or rather a model of it (weighing a mere two tons or so) made about the 1840's which, complete with Procession of the Apostles, at one time toured New Zealand. The "Lyttelton Times", once Christchurch's leading daily (long defunct) has been the source of most of Mr. Robb's information on this elusive contraption.

The finale to the Convention was a surprise addition to the weekend's entertainment - a member of the public brought in an Edison key-wind (short key) black "Gem" with 24" brass horn and table stand (this horn is similar to one illustrated on a black Gem in a 1901 catalogue and naturally gives better results than the usual small tin funnel) and a suitcase full of wax cylinders. The machine and records

were auctioned by the Society for the owner; the Gem (with 4 min. conversion and Model H reproducer, but still with its original Model B 2 min. in immaculate condition) was sold for sixty-five dollars, joining its brothers at the Antigua Boatsheds - spring and baseboard were missing, but these were easily available locally. The cylinders were divided into lots of a dozen, each containing a good variety (Edison 2 & 4 min., Edison-Bell, Clarion, Sterling, Columbia) and the reasonable price of one dollar seventy-five a dozen was set (wax cylinders are rarely obtainable today other than with a machine, and these were mostly in good playing condition); buyers were limited to one lot each. Some unusual cylinders were auctioned separately at the end - these included three 2" Pathes, one "The Shopwalker", a Dan Leno song sung by the ubiquitous Harry Bluff, five Excelsiors, a Rex (red lettering on the cylinder, by the Salvation Army Band) and a Britannia, these last two being so unusual that Mr. Gollidge didn't have them (that was soon remedied, however). The equipment realised eighty-four dollars all told - the Society's commission put the accounts for the Convention "in the black."

The 1971 Convention was officially closed by Walter Norris - I know it's an ancient cliché but it would be true to say that "an enjoyable time was had by all", even though some familiar faces and their owners were unable to attend. It has been suggested that the next Convention be held in Wellington in three years' time, followed by a centenary year "blow-out" in Christchurch in 1977, as a gathering every two years perhaps imposes too great a strain on those who cannot "down tools" without making sacrifices. This Convention was a thorough success and reflects credit on those who put so much work into organising it.

Gatherings such as these, more comprehensive of aspect than monthly Society meetings, unite enthusiasts (and not just Society members) throughout New Zealand with that indispensable personal touch, as well as attracting interest from people previously unknown to us.

So, pending discussion on the matter, roll on 1974!

AN ENCYCLOPAEDIA OF BERLINER DISC PHONOGRAPHS

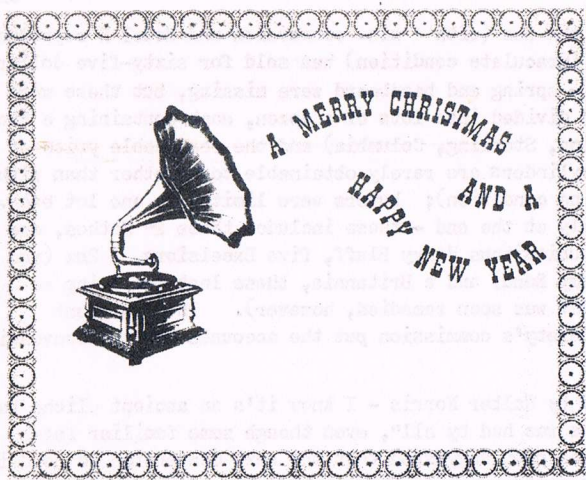
INTRODUCTION

The decision to start this series was the beginning of a fascinating research which has revealed much which we feel may be controversial. We set down the facts as we see them.

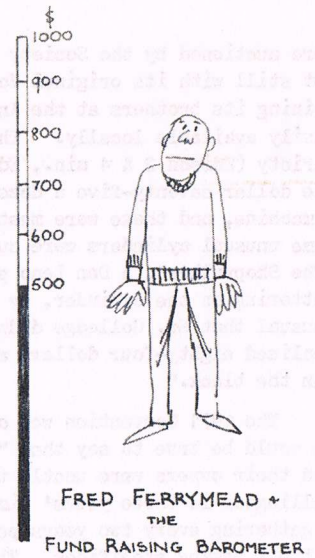
Such controversy first takes us back to the very origins of the phonograph and we look back for a moment to the early days of the talking machine and try to sort out a little of the history. The first problem we face is one that must exist in the origins of many things: do we accept the originator as the one who first conceived an idea or the one who completed a working model?

In 1856, eleven years before the appearance of Edison's tinfoil machine, a French printer, Edouard - Leon Scott de Martinville, who was born in Paris in 1817 and was a descendant of one of the Scottish Jacobite families who followed James II to France and never returned, constructed a machine. This machine had a smoked glass cylinder on which a stylus, connected to a horn, produced a pattern when someone spoke into the horn. This pattern was similar to that found in the groove of a lateral cut disc. This was indeed a great discovery and Leon Scott, as he is generally known, called his machine the Phonautograph. Improvements were made to this machine by R. Koenig in 1863 and a picture of his model which was reputed to have a brass cylinder, appears in the book 'Talking Machines' by John Cain and a different model is shown in 'From Tinfoil to Stereo'.

The next to appear on the scene was another Frenchman, Charles Cros. He was a man of wide interests; he was a poet and an amateur inventor and to him it appears must go the credit for having conceived the first satisfactory talking machine. He wrote a descriptive paper in the middle of April 1877 and deposited it with the Academie Royale des Sciences on April 30th, 1877, having spent the intervening time trying to obtain the necessary finance to enable him to put his theories into practice. It was of course on Christmas Eve of that same year that Thomas Edison filed his appli-



POST EARLY - THIS CHRISTMAS
THE OUTSIDE OF THE SOCIETY'S CHRISTMAS CARD



EARLY SLOW SPEED DISCS



cation for his patent. Surely one of the happiest Christmas presents mankind has every received.

To each of these men, credit must be given. Certainly Edison is the name history remembers best, but the man who probably stands next to him is Emile Berliner; his system of recording won the day - even Edison was forced to produce a lateral cut disc in the end!

BERLINER THE MAN

In 1870 Emile Berliner came from Germany (just before the Franco-Prussian War) to the United States and became a clerk in a dry goods store in Washington. It took him three years to learn the new language and it was at the end of this period, in 1873, that he moved to New York. There he followed various occupations finally working for a drapery firm and becoming a commercial traveller on the Mississippi barges. At his work he was satisfactory if not brilliant - he was just not commercially minded, so he returned to New York where he worked in the laboratory of Dr. Fahlberg in 1875. The Doctor was an analyst of sugar and was the inventor of saccharin. Here, Berliner developed a love of research; he began to read and was particularly intrigued by a volume 'Synopsis of Physics and Meteorology' by Dr. Johann Mueller. Two chapters of this book, one on acoustics and one on electricity, he read and re-read until he knew them by heart. It was about this time that Berliner met his former Washington employer and was persuaded to return to work in the dry goods store. His interest in research was reflected by the setting up of a workroom at his lodgings. In 1876 Bell's phone was first demonstrated at the Philadelphia Centennial Hall, and this was an influence on Berliner who experimented until he discovered the principle of the microphone or loose contact transmitter. He lodged a caveat protecting his discovery and this aroused the interest of the Bell Telephone Company. Thomas A. Watson, Superintendent of the Company interviewed him and made a satisfactory offer for a share in the patent. This financial assistance enabled him eventually, in 1883 to set up on his own. He studied Scott's Phonograph and it appears he experimented with a cylinder - there is evidence that he took out patent for an experimental machine using a cylinder and at this time he also experimented with a smoked glass disc and repeated Scott's experiment. And so we had in these early days the accepted inventor of the disc machine working with cylinders and, if we study Edison's British Patent No. 1644 dated April 24, 1878 ('From Tinfoil to Stereo' page 28A) we see evidence of experiments with discs. Once again we find that things aren't always what they appear at first.

EARLY SLOW SPEED DISCS

by Charles Slater

The long playing microgroove record was first placed on the market by American Columbia in 1948. Although its introduction was a definite step forward many did not see it as such. Quite a number of record companies were slow in changing over to the new system due in part to a feeling that it had been tried before without much success. They were not to know of course that, for the first time in seventy odd years of existence, the gramophone was ready to break the five minute barrier.

It had been realised from earliest times that any record speed chosen would be a compromise between sound quality and playing time. The usual 12" record played for about four and a half minutes at 78 r.p.m. Any attempt to increase this time by recording at a slower speed would result in unacceptably restricted treble response toward the end of the record. This was due to the effective groove speed becoming less because of the decreased groove circumference.

Perhaps it would be appropriate to mention here the 1923 attempt made by the World Record Company to solve this problem. Their idea was to begin recording at a fairly low speed (about 30 r.p.m.) and gradually increase it as the pick-up travelled towards the centre to counter the decreased diameter. A fine theory maybe but full of practical difficulties. To replay such a record, a gramophone had to be fitted with a special governor attachment which would allow the turntable to automatically increase speed by the correct amount as the record played. Not every machine would have had the room or the reserve power to accept the modification. Fewer still steady enough rotation at the lower speeds to prevent flutter and wow effects being noticeable.

As the average effective speed was about 40 and seldom rose much above 50 r.p.m., sound quality was at all times inferior to the normal constant speed disc. Even then, in spite of some ridiculous advertising to the contrary, playing time was usually less than nine minutes per side. Add to this the relatively high cost and the limited catalogue it is little wonder the system never caught on. The discs were pressed by the Vocalion Company with a special "World" label, although later a few appeared using a Vocalion label almost identical to that used for their standard 78 type. An example of this is found on page 51.

The motion picture industry was the first to use the 33 $\frac{1}{3}$ speed to achieve longer playing time. These were the discs used to provide the 'sound track' of the early talkies and were introduced around 1925.

Each lasted the length of one reel of 35 m.m. film, in those days about 10 minutes, with the turntable mechanically coupled to the projector to ensure synchronisation. To counteract the low turntable speed the discs were made 16" in diameter so that as long as they were not recorded too close to the label, quality was not seriously prejudiced. They were lateral cut, centre start and pressed on the normal shellac composition. I discovered half of one under the stage of an old picture theatre. At least the label was intact, a photo of which is on page 51.

It may surprise some to learn that Warner Bros. were not the only company to use the sound on disc system, this particular example being from a Paramount film.

Note the numbered squares around the perimeter. These were to be marked off after each playing. After 40 playings the disc was meant to be discarded as by then it would have been excessively worn due to the heavy pick-ups used. This disc was evidently meant to accompany film of a symphony orchestra playing Schubert's "Unfinished". (Quite appropriate seeing I only have a semicircle of the disc intact). Date would be circa 1930 at which time the present optical sound on film was firmly established. Apparently the two systems existed side by side for a few years. The 33 $\frac{1}{3}$ format was later taken up by radio stations for recording serials etc. and was standard up to the late 1950's.

It is worth noting that many of the sound track discs were pressed by the Victor (later R.C.A.) Company. This company later tried to launch a 12" 33 $\frac{1}{3}$ r.p.m. record on the domestic market. Numerous factors prevented its success; the rapid wearing out of the plastic material on which they were pressed; lack of suitably priced turntable units and poor audio quality were just a few. In short the time was not ripe for introducing a longer playing record, so it went the way of the Edison L.P.'s, the World L.P. and similar ventures.

CHRISTCHURCH AND THE CONVENTION AN AUCKLANDER'S IMPRESSIONS

So many friendly and helpful people that I can't remember their names but I would like to mention one or two.

What a surprise to find Bill Dini's boatshed cum phonograph display on the banks of the Avon. Negotiating those slippery duckboards was quite an art; has anyone ended up in the river yet, Bill? By the way, if anybody wants to know the answer to the question of what to do when business interferes with pleasure, ask Bill.

Coffee with our indefatigable secretary and getting into a deep discussion with Michael Woolf on the subject of what motivates a collector.

A nice lunch with Bill and Mrs. Flecknoe and a visit to Ferrymead on a wet Sunday afternoon. Has anybody thought of hiring out gumboots? Oh that steam tram; what a beauty. Paid five cents to see 'our' display and was not disappointed. Keep up the good work, Mr. and Mrs. F.

Walter Norris's collection left me speechless. Whenever are you going to find time to work on it, Walter? Farmers never retire, you said so yourself. Finally, a special thank you to Alan Brehaut of Timaru who was a self appointed chauffeur all the weekend. Thanks everyone for a wonderful three days.
JOHN STOKES.