



The Phonographic Record

The Journal of The Vintage Phonograph Society of New Zealand

A Society formed for the preservation of Recorded Sound

Volume 7, Issue 2.

December, 1971.

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and Pamela G. Rogers

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THE SIXTH ANNUAL MEETING

The Sixth Annual Meeting of the Society was held on September 27th and was well attended. As the President's and the Treasurer's reports had already been circulated to those attending there was little further discussion on these matters. However, the attention of members was drawn to the sale of parts which amounted to nearly fifteen hundred dollars. In support of the fund raising efforts of members it was decided to transfer two hundred dollars to the building fund. As already reported in the last issue of this magazine, there was a unanimous decision to purchase the Ellesmere Methodist Church and move it to Ferrymead as display and clubrooms.

All of the positions on the Executive were filled either by the serving officer or by the one nomination received and the officers for the year are:-

Patron:- Mr. A.O. Alleyway, President - Mr. W. Flecknoe, Vice-President - Mr. J.L. Marshall,
Immediate Past President - Mr. W.T. Norris, Secretary - Miss P.G. Rogers, Treasurer - Mr. A.J. Robb,
B. Comm. A.C.A.,

Committee:- Messrs. I. Skilling, S. Skilling and W.S. Dini.

To those who have not seen the Society's Constitution Rules we would explain that one of these limits the term for any President to two consecutive years. This will explain the seemingly rapid turn over of those who occupy the President's chair. In this issue we welcome -

A NEW PRESIDENT

'I was born a stone's throw away from what is called Robin Hood's Chase, Nottingham, England, and it would seem as though I have been chasing things ever since! It is reputed to be the pathway along which the Sheriff of Nottingham chased Robin Hood and some of his members from the Archery Butts into Sherwood Forest. As the town grew and expanded, very attractive houses were built either side of this green grass and tree lined carriage way; however by some ancient by-law, no carriages are allowed to drive along it and iron bollards are placed at either end of the Chase which is a mile and a half long and meets Forest Road.

I was about nine years old when I first became acquainted with phonographs, having acquired my grandmother's 'Gem' model. It had no horn and there was only one cylinder with it. I made a cardboard horn and did I play that one cylinder which was a march by the Marine Band. The situation was

complicated by the fact that I had a younger brother and two sisters and at various times I would come home from school to play my beloved machine. After a time the cylinder was broken, then the horn and then the reproducer and this I did not know how to repair. Although I used to hide the machine it was always found but strangely enough it was 'Mr. Nobody' who had tampered with it. Finally the spring was broken and I do not remember what became of the machine. My distress and interest were absorbed by saving pennies until I had ten shillings which I paid to an old man for a pin type music box. I had long admired this box which played ten tunes and had a bell accompaniment - I still have this instrument.

Much later I had a Celestina given to me, but unfortunately I disposed of this at the time of coming to New Zealand. Due to packing and shipping difficulties, I decided to keep the music box and let the Celestina, along with a few other things I had acquired, go.

Since coming to New Zealand I decided to start collecting again and though my collection is not large it has been much admired. I must say that I have been helped tremendously by my membership of the Society.

By the time you receive this issue of the magazine we shall have held our last meeting for 1971. This we call our Christmas meeting and it is in this spirit as your President that I send to all our overseas and our New Zealand members, greetings and best wishes from myself and members of the Executive.'

We asked Bill to supply the above details; we would however like to mention the help he has already given to the Society and its members. Several have cause to thank him for his painting skill in the graining he has done on phonograph horns and grilles. Many citizens of Christchurch and the surrounding district have grown to appreciate the sharing of his knowledge of his collection with them at the various displays and demonstrations he and his wife have attended. Bill fully supports the Society's efforts to obtain clubrooms and we know that much of the success of the restoration of the church will be because of his willingness to give of both his time and talents.

..... AND HIS LADY

'Behind every successful man there is a woman' - we enjoy quoting even if we don't very often know who said it! But happy is the man whose wife shares his hobby - and of no one is this truer than Bill Flecknoe. We know it has been of great encouragement for Bill to be able to share his collecting triumphs and disappointments with Gladys. Members of the Society who have shared many fund raising excursions with the Flecknoes have reason to appreciate the always available cup of tea freely distributed to all those present. Gladys has also added considerably to our fund raising total both through her own efforts and in partnership with a friend - using baking and sewing talents for the Society's benefit.

We would like to wish Bill and Gladys Flecknoe a happy and successful term of office.

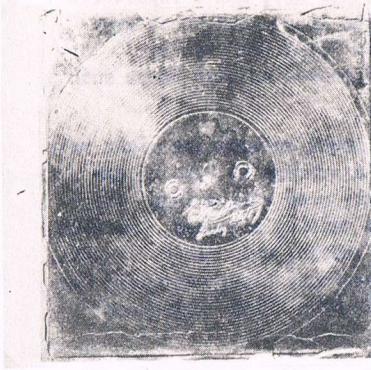
ROLL OUT THE BARREL-ORGAN

On a recent Friday, the streets of conservative Christchurch rang with the cheerful music of a barrel organ, a sound not heard in the centre of the city for many years. The 'organist' was our Treasurer and Publicity Officer, Alan Robb, who had been provoked into revealing that he held a street musician's licence, by a newspaper report that a Wellington student had applied for such a licence and a rather racy sub leader in the Christchurch Press:-

'TUNING UP'

'The Wellington student who wants to perform as a street musician to supplement his income has been dubbed a "busker", an old English name for an itinerant performer in public houses,

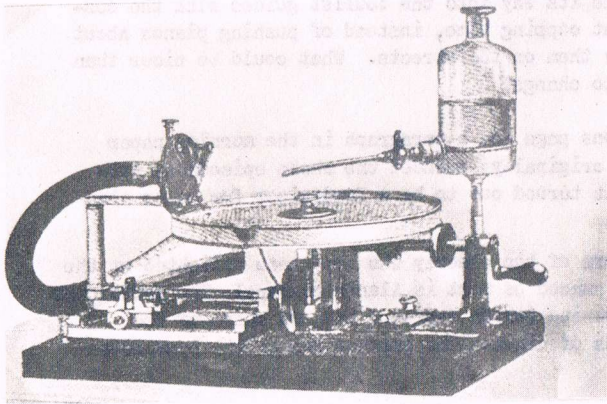
EMILE BERLINER
IN LATER YEARS



LEFT:-
BERLINER
GRAMOPHONE
DISC 1897



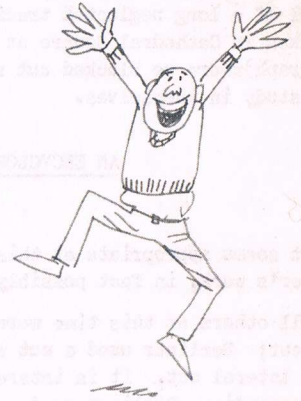
BELOW:-
BERLINER'S
RECORDING
MACHINE PAT^d
FEBRUARY 1895



Above:- GLADYS + BILL FLECKNOE



Right:- BILL FLECKNOE WITH HIS
EDISON 'TRIUMPH'



WHAT A YEAR!
OUR OWN ROOMS
PLUS \$856
HAPPY CHRISTMAS

and, even earlier, for a wandering actor. Armed with a clarinet, a bowler hat, and a repertoire which will no doubt include "Pennies from heaven", "Just walking in the Rain", and "What kind of fool am I?" he will entertain pedestrians in the central city; his "premiere" has been delayed while the Wellington City Council searches its archives to rediscover on what terms such performances can be authorised.

Street musicians have been rare since the Depression; but other local authorities might well shake the dust off their regulations. If the Wellington player turns a successful tune he deserves to have many imitators. Bus queues in Cathedral Square certainly need enlivening; the Transport Board could do worse than encourage entertainers to cheer up waiting patrons; bus rides would be more agreeable to the accompaniment of a few bars of "Shake, rattle, and roll". A real dance might be put back into the "Barnes dance" at some pedestrian crossings, always assuming the music could be heard above the traffic roar. Even motorists would gain if a Pied Piper were found to lure away the meter maids.

If Christchurch is to retain its cultural reputation - and its name as the most English of cities - it cannot afford to let Wellington tootle its way into the tourist guides with the customs of "Merrie England". University students at capping time, instead of pushing pianos about or breaking them up, should be encouraged to play them on the streets. What could be nicer than the "Minute Waltz" while waiting for the lights to change?

The photograph reproduced on our illustrations page and a paragraph in the morning paper brought forth several invitations and while Alan originally intended the whole episode as publicity for our Society and Ferrymead generally, it turned out to be a fundraiser for us as Alan has donated all his profits to the building fund.

What has pleased us most has been the pleasure of the elderly who have been delighted at the revival of a long neglected tradition. What has amazed us most is Alan's courage! The photograph was taken in Cathedral Square at 7 o'clock one evening (which explains the odd shape of the photograph) where we blocked out some of the shades of night. The expressions of the bystanders are a study in themselves.

AN ENCYCLOPAEDIA OF BERLINER DISC PHONOGRAPHS

MAKING A RECORD

It seems appropriate at this point to pause and discuss one important part of Emile Berliner's work, in fact possibly the most important part - the disc.

All others at this time were working with the cylinder, using the vertical or 'hill and dale' cut; Berliner used a cut where the stylus moved sideways in the groove - this was known as the lateral cut. It is interesting to note that whereas Edison used a metal, tin in his first recording, Berliner used another metal, zinc in his early attempts. Copper also was used in later records. However, the metal disc was very different from the tin foil cylinder. It was first placed on the recording machine, covered with a thin film of fatty material, the sound head was then used to trace a groove in this material. The disc was then immersed in a bath of acid which ate into the zinc where the stylus had left a track. This process took about twenty minutes, and it was reputed to produce a record which was 'loud and clear' and for its day this was probably correct.

All this took place in 1887 to 1888, ten years after Edison's tin foil but Berliner had yet to prove to be one of Edison's largest competitors. His next step was to find a method where duplicates could be produced and in this he was by far the first to conceive a practical method. By means of his acid process he was, after many experiments, able to produce a reverse metal

plate (which is called a negative) and with the aid of this, was able to stamp out hard rubber records for commercial sale. Berliner pressed on with his disc, producing firstly those of five inch diameter. The ones seen in New Zealand are very thin and light and made of button material with an etched label. The later ones are seven inch and made of material more like the 78's of the early nineteen hundreds. Illustrations of three such varieties can be seen on page 14, Volume 2, Issue 2 of The Phonographic Record.

We would like to point out that from the start no Berliner disc needed a device to feed the play head across the record. They depended entirely on the depth of the groove in the record. The reason that the cylinder requires a feed is the lack of groove depth; this depth could not be increased because when the cylinder was moulded it shrank so that it could be removed from the mould.

On our illustrations page we show Emile Berliner's recording machine patented February 19, 1895. To the right of the machine is a vessel containing alcohol. This is connected by a tube and nozzle through which the alcohol is passed and as there is a stop cock in the middle of the tube, the flow of the liquid can be controlled. It appears that the alcohol kept the stylus from being clogged with dust and cuttings.

FERRYMEAD REPORT

In this issue you will see two photographs of the Ellesmere Methodist Church. One is a view of the front of the church and shows the stained glass window above the porch and the other windows with their coloured panes of glass. The other view is from the back showing the vestry or schoolroom. We thank Gavin East for taking these photos, a feat he must have accomplished under great difficulty as the hedge across the front of the grounds prevents any photographer from getting a complete view. Gavin spent a day with Gladys and Bill Flecknoe on the site, borer curing the building. At the end of October the Building Fund total was \$856 with the church fully paid, insured and a bond of \$25 deposited with the solicitor against the clearing of the church site after removal. We are in the process of selling tickets for another raffle, organising Christmas tree sales and various sales stalls.

At the November meeting of the Ferrymead Trust, the general plan of the whole area prepared by the postgraduate students of Lincoln Agricultural College was approved. This plan sites us in the pioneer village, probably across the road from the cottages and on a very attractive corner section. This site has to be approved by the Ferrymead Works Committee and once this is done, work will really start!

A LITTLE NONSENSE NOW AND THEN

by John Stokes

One has only to compare the listings in pre-war (er, W.W.2, that is!) catalogues to wonder just what happened to the 'Humorous' category. Off hand the only British funny 78 record I can recall, issued after the war, was Sid Fields Plays Golf. Yet during the thirties there was a profusion of humorous monologues, duets and sketches with and without musical accompaniment.

How those memories come crowding back - how popular those artists were - why their very lines passed into the language of the day. Who, having heard them will ever forget? Will Hay and his scholars... Harbottle's "Yesh" was on everyone's lips. Likewise Sandy Powell's "Can you hear me Moother?"; Flanagan and Allen's "Oi!" was a byword. In 1940 Cyril (Cuthbert Bostril) Fletcher's "Dreaming Oh My Darling Love of Thee" seemed a made-to-order phrase for the occasion. I once knew a person who could recite the entire "German Commissionaire Scene", word for word.

These funny men of bygone days have surely earned a place in the history of recorded sound just as much as have performers in other categories. Their very number makes it impossible to



'ROLL OUT THE BARREL ORGAN'

ALAN ROBB ENTERTAINS BUS PASSENGERS

CATHEDRAL SQUARE, CHRISTCHURCH

PHOTOGRAPH:- GREEN E. HAHN



THE ELLESMERE METHODIST CHURCH

LEFT:- From the rear showing the school room

RIGHT:- From the front showing the stained glass window over the porch.

enumerate them all but mention of a few of the better-known will surely evoke memories - Arthur Askey and Richard (Stinker) Murdoch, Harry Tate, John Tilley, Horace Kenny, Ronald Frankau, Stanley Holloway, George Formby, Norman Long and, not forgetting the fair sex, Elsie and Doris Waters.

The 1940 catalogues list no less than 125 names in this category and all but half a dozen or so were British. Such has been the continuing appeal, in this part of the world at least, that in the late fifties E.M.I. Ltd., Australia and New Zealand, issued four L.P. records featuring some of the best-known numbers of these entertainers. These records were:-

Laughter Unlimited Vol. 1. Columbia 33MSX7645

Laughter Unlimited Vol. 2. H.M.V. MCLP 7577

A LITTLE NONSENSE

Harry Tate's Motoring, etc. Columbia 33 MSX 7715

The Best of Sandy Powell Decca LKM 7520

Now perhaps someone can help me with a problem. About 1938 Clapham and Dwyer recorded a number entitled "Surrealist Alphabet" on one side of a Columbia 12", 78, No. DOX1598. I have never owned this record but the words have been going through my head like those in Mark Twain's "Punch Brothers; Punch" from time to time ever since. My problem is that I can't recall all of the alphabet; perhaps someone can complete it and give me the satisfaction of being able to say the whole thing right through. Quoting from memory, after thirty odd years, it went like this:-

A for 'orses	H for ?	O for the garden wall	V for la France
B for mutton	I for Eiffel Tower	P for ?	W for a bob
C for yourself	J for oranges	Q for billiards	X for breakfast
D for dumb	K for ?	R for mo' ('arf a mo)	Y for Gawd's sake
E for ?	L for leather	S for ?	Z for breezes
F for efferscence	M for sis	T for two	
G for police	N for ?	U for ?	

Some of these puns were rather obscure, like J for oranges; unless you knew there was a variety of orange known as Jaffa. However, each letter was explained as they went along so it was quite easy to follow really.

Following the article on stripping old finishes from wood in last issue, we continue with:-

PREPARATION OF SURFACES WHEN DRY

by Gordon Garraway.

This is the most essential and important part of french polishing or even of painting. On large surfaces work with a medium grade sandpaper. Tear a square into four smaller squares and you will find this will go nicely around a cork block. Always sand with the grain, working from one side to the other as evenly as possible. When it seems as though the sandpaper has no life in it, don't throw it away. Worn sandpaper can be used again when you don't want to cut into the wood too much. Keep on grading your standard of sandpaper down until you are using a very fine one. Always look along the surface of the object you are sanding to watch for scratches; if these are not taken out they will show up under polish or paint; you can get a good even finish with fine steel wool.

Now the question arises as to what shade or what finish! Whether it is better to use an oil stain, a water stain or an already prepared modern stain. Water stains can be tricky; they can be put on with a cloth or with a brush, but in doing so you can overlap and the stain will overlap and soak quickly into the timber giving a patchy surface when finished. The proprietary stains are quite good but again great care is needed in their application. A point to remember is that you can buy, for example, a mahogany stain and on certain timbers it will turn out too red - always experiment first.

Oil stains which I favour greatly have a more even stain because oil is slower drying. You can tint oil stainers with powders or universal stainers. A general recipe is raw oil, pure gum turps and a drying agent - teribine. It is hard to define proportions as old and dry timber can take more raw oil than new wood. Rosewood, mahogany, cedar and veneered work can have too much raw oil. I normally use half raw oil, half gum turps, two or three teaspoons of teribine - and here again you must experiment with shades required - so much burnt umber, so much red oxide and yellow ochre etc. Don't make up large quantities; what is over bottle, cork, label and store away for future use. You can keep a pleasant golden shade on most timbers by not using a stain just a thin french polish applied by brush.

Now to start the process of polishing:- Firstly a wax finish for antique pieces, durable, mellow and easy to do. Apply a thin coat of french polish by brush, leave two or more hours, give a good steel woolling down, then apply another coat by brush, leaving this coat for about eight hours. Repeat the process and the steel wool evenly. After final steel woolling down, wax all over and rub up with a soft cloth.

Wax polish is made up of beeswax absorbed in mineral turpentine. Cut up the beeswax first and just cover with turpentine in an airtight jar. You may have to add slightly more turps to have a paste which is easy to apply.

To be continued.....

EDISON CYLINDER RECORDS

Explained by Bill Dini

I was asked by our secretary to reply to a letter from an Australian member who asked for details of two and four minute Edison cylinder records with particular reference to differences between 'bakelite' black records and Blue Amberol 'wax' records. You will forgive me if I sound elementary, but I quote extracts from the letter - I hope our Australian member does not mind.

There are three common varieties of Edison records (before which there was a 2 minute 'brown wax' record and a 'black wax' with no printing on the end.) These are firstly, the two minute 'black wax' which had the Thomas A. Edison signature on one end with the title, the artist and the serial number. This end of the record was tapered. Some had the type such as 'comic song' before the title; these records usually had a spoken announcement followed by the words, 'Edison record.' They were played with a largish ball sapphire stylus (or needle) on, usually, a model 'C' reproducer. Before starting on 4 minute records let me explain that there are no Edison Blue Amberol WAX cylinders. There are Amberol WAX cylinders which are Elack and Blue Amberol cylinders which are of course blue (and purple) in colour. These are not wax but hard celluloid with a plaster of paris core. The black 4 minute wax records have a square end on which again is the Edison signature, the title, the artist, '4-M' (for 4 minutes) and serial number. The grooves are noticeably finer than 2 minute (twice as many to the inch.) These records must only be played with a finer sapphire ball stylus on usually, a model 'H' reproducer. The Blue Amberol cylinders must not be played with a sapphire but are played with a diamond stylus reproducer which requires a later type of reproducer carriage (the reproducer being of larger diameter.) Blue Amberols (and Royal Purples) sometimes have square ends and sometimes tapered, again the Edison signature, title, artist, serial number but no '4-M'. Most 4 minute records (wax or celluloid) have no announcement. Diamond reproducers should not be used on wax records. Blue Amberols have grooves identical to those of the black 4 minute wax and the 4 minute wax were called 'Amberols' but not 'Blue Amberols', hence some confusion between the two.

I trust this short article may help other beginners who wonder why 'Blue Amberols' will not play on their early Edison machines.