



The Phonographic Record

Journal of the Vintage Phonograph Society of New Zealand

A Society formed for the preservation of Recorded Sound

Volume 45, Issue 2.

February/April 2010



BRUNSWICK PANATROPE P11 PHOTOS BY STEVE RATTLE



P13 A PAIR OF PANATROPE



THE PHONOGRAPHIC RECORD

VOLUME 45, ISSUE 2

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FOR YOUR INFORMATION

We hope that members have enjoyed their Christmas break, and are looking forward to a year of interesting "Finds".

I have been fortunate to find in my "Collection" some early copies of the "Model Engineer" which were printed in 1903 to 1909. We will include some extracts from some of these, in this issue of the magazine.

We are always grateful to receive material from members for future copies of our magazine.

Walter Norris
Editor

ILLUSTRATIONS

Front cover

BRUNSWICK PANATROPE MACHINES

With the kind help of Steve Rattle of Rosebud, Victoria, Australia, we have a full page of photographs he sent us of two Brunswick Panatropes which he owns (see his letter).

AMBEROLA CABINET

A very attractive cylinder record cabinet, that Gavin East has purchased. See his article. Photos taken by David Peterson

BEETHOVEN MODEL EDISONIC

This model is hard to find in New Zealand. David Peterson has found one which he is restoring. So many of these large machines were made into cocktail cabinets.

GERMAN TELEPHONE STAMP

This is an enlarged copy of a German postage stamp.

RECORD LABEL ORA NELLE

A record which was for sale in Nauck's catalogue

SONORA PORTABLE

An unusual leather covered Sonora portable.

AN INTERESTING COLLECTION

A photo of part of Larry Schlick's collection

DONLEY'S SWAP MEET

Two photos taken by Larry Schlick of a very large cylinder set of drawers with a cylinder and horn in the top.

HARDING COLLECTION

Two pictures sent to us of Keith Harding's collection, England

INDIAN MACHINE

We have a number of these in New Zealand. They will be recognised by the horn being soldered together at the horn elbow.

FULTON FINCH

We included two pictures of Fulton Finch's collection in the last issue. This photo was taken of the owner on my last visit. He has a vast collection and is well worth a visit. Viewing is by appointment only at West Road, Milton. This is south of Dunedin. The phone number is (03) 417 8442.

REPORTS OF MEETINGS

By Wilf Boon

May Meeting

The society held its May 25th meeting at David Peterson's lovely home in Upper Riccarton, with an average attendance of 10 members present. With the evening temperatures now starting to get quite cool it was obvious that David's under-floor heating was now in use and providing a lovely warm feeling for everyone to enjoy.

Roger Brown opened the meeting at 8.15pm with the apologies, minutes from the previous meeting, and business from the minutes.

Gavin East informed everyone of the recent visit to Alan Brehaut's home in

Timaru. It was obviously a very pleasant trip for those six members able to attend. Gavin has exchanged emails with Dr John Campbell re the Lord Rutherford film project and providing the film goes ahead, there was the possibility that John would appreciate the loan of the Society's Dulcephone and perhaps another machine. Contact with Roger Brown would be arranged.

To keep up with our supply of parts, Gavin said he would get in touch with John Sleep (England) to find out if he knows of a wholesale supplier of steel needles of good quality now that Barry Williamson has retired.

Just a matter of interest - the cost of mail here in NZ - A Fireside horn sent to the North Island from Christchurch cost \$31.50.

Gavin has also been in touch with David John of Palmerston North, Bruce Leask, and a local enthusiast Mr Eden, and was fortunate enough to acquire another very nice sought after record duster in excellent condition. A 1920's "Okeh" with a very colourful artist portrait of Aileen Stanley printed on it. This had been purchased on eBay.

Finally Joffre Marshall showed the water heating unit he has made for his next model steam engine.

The meeting closed at 10.00pm.

June Meeting

The meeting held at the Hardy Street, New Brighton History Museum really was another one of those very memorable evenings which thanks to Robert Sleeman, was an idea he had envisaged while visiting the museum previously. Further enquiries made by Roger Brown to Mrs Lynne Hillier, president of the history museum led to a kind invitation offered to the society to hold its June meeting there on the 22nd. The New Brighton museum is one of those very valuable assets of the community which only came about by the tireless voluntary effort of Mrs Hillier and one or two others like her. It was also her continued effort with other local volunteers that enabled the New Brighton Pier to be rebuilt, a landmark that has been part of Christchurch since the late 19th century.

The meeting, attended by nine members, started with viewing the Museum's extremely interesting exhibition of early photographs, newspaper history, collectibles, and memorabilia of the early days of New Brighton.

The meeting started at 8.15pm.

After listening to the minutes of the previous meeting, read by Roger Brown

(chair) it seems we are still in need of a wholesale supplier of steel needles, now that Barry Williamson has retired. Unfortunately enquiries to John Sleep (UK) still leave us without a supplier but hopefully Barry Williamson may be of some help in these matters.

It was suggested that Roger Brown could make enquiries and find out if it is a possibility to arrange a meeting for the society at Des Lines' vintage aircraft private museum located near Swannanoa or perhaps a weekend visit whichever would be more suitable.

The meeting closed at 8.35pm after which members enjoyed a talk and slides by Lynne Hillier followed by supper served by volunteer Quentin, then further viewing of photos and artifacts relating to the history of New Brighton. An added interest was a Columbia motor mounted on a veneered base brought in by Robert Sleeman to view. We think it was possibly an A.J. or A.K. about 1903?

July Meeting

Location - home of Gavin East, 4A Lyttelton Street, Lincoln

Date - July 27th 2009

Attended by - Roger Brown, Wilf Boon, Gavin East, Joffre Marshall, Walter & Hilda Norris, David Peterson, Bob Searle, Robert Sleeman

Apologies - Four

The only matters arising from the previous minutes were the change of venue for the meeting, and Gavin East informing us that he has not yet written to Barry Williamson enquiring the supply of steel needles. A donation of \$50.00 has been given to the New Brighton and Districts Historical Society, and the payment made for 60 cygnet cranes.

In Correspondence - a new issue of 'For the Record' was circulated for members to browse through. It was now confirmed Des Lines, after being contacted by Roger Brown said he was more than happy to let us arrange a visit to view his wonderful aircraft museum at Swannanoa. It was agreed that arrangements be made by Roger for perhaps a Saturday afternoon sometime either in October or November.

In Parts - With the supply of 60 cygnet cranes now in stock, we are pleased to inform members that Tony Airs is now working on cygnet suspension adjusters, with Fireside/Red Gem cranes to follow.

General Business - Gavin East showed some record dusters and early gramophone postcards, which could be added to Walter's colour photos received from Larry Schlick for the next magazine. Robert Sleeman showed a very original "Binophone child's" external horn gramophone he had acquired recently. Also to

view was the phonograph I have built up based on an Amberola 30 mechanism with the inclusion of a Red Gem eight petal, green coloured horn, and supported in a Standard type oak case, It was quite a lengthy project, being some years in the making and only coming to completion with the help of David and Gavin who were able to acquire a complete Amberola 30 carriage from America. Joffre Marshall had brought along a meticulous reconstruction of a rare Meccano model saw bench, which he had recently completed, and this prompted Gavin East to find and produce a very early Meccano steam engine which he had inherited from his father many years ago. Gavin also showed a 19 5/8 inch Polyphon disc with local advertising added in red, plus an autograph album which included the huge signature of Dame Clara Butt. Gavin showed a pink two inch Lambert cylinder and four albums of Tiny Tots children's 78s. The cylinder and the discs belong to the Society so it was agreed that they should be displayed with the Society's collection at the Oxford Museum.

To close the evening 9.45pm supper was served with the added sound of a diamond disc playing "Fidgets" by Murray Kellner's Dinner Music Ensemble.

August Meeting

It was very pleasing to see a good attendance of 11 members for the August (winter) meeting of the society held at the home of our very generous hosts Bill & Lyndsey Drummond. Our regular member Robert Sleeman was unable to attend, but emails to Gavin & David indicate that he and Averyl were enjoying a wonderful holiday in Europe and England. I'm sure on their return we will be well informed of what's available for anything phonographic in those parts of the world.

For our Editor's report - Walter showed four plates he has prepared, which consisted largely of interesting colour photos. After viewing it was agreed that these plates should be printed in colour in the next magazine, something to look forward to.

Recently in the mail we received a letter from English member David Williams, who would like to advertise the thorn needles he manufactures.

It is probably of interest to some of our long time members that Joffre Marshall noted the death of Auckland collector Pat Newman who way back in 1967, attended our Christchurch Convention.

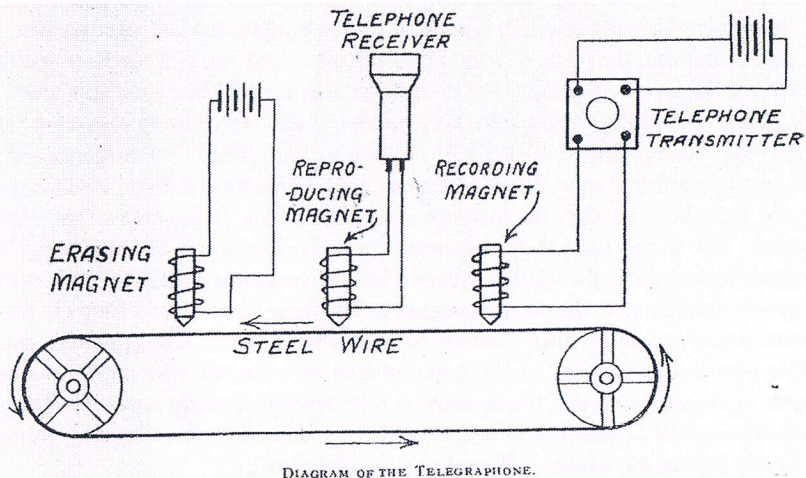
On the internet amongst various items for sale was in particular the Madame Hendren cylinder-playing talking doll which David Peterson has been very pleased to add to his collection.

Finally the meeting closed 9.15pm followed by a very enjoyable supper.

THE LATEST IN ENGINEERING

From The Model Engineer and Electrician March 2, 1905

The Telegraphone - This most ingenious and wonderful invention of a Danish engineer (by name Valdemar Poulsen) was exhibited in an early form at the last Paris Exhibition, and has been variously called the microphonograph, the telephonograph and microtelephone. From an account which appears in the Journal of the Franklin Institute of The United States of America for January of this year, it appears that the invention has made considerable progress towards being a practicable and commercial piece of apparatus.



The following description is partly abstracted from the account given in the journal mentioned. Imagine a wire of high quality steel, such as that from which piano strings are made, wound over pulleys, or in any convenient way, so that it is stretched in front of the pole of an electro-magnet, the magnet coil being connected in the circuit of a telephone transmitter, which is complete with its microphone and battery, so that the magnet takes the place of the telephone receiver at the other end of the line. On speaking into the transmitter, currents of electricity will be set up in the coils of the electro-magnet, and its pole will produce what may be termed a spot of permanent magnetism in that part of the stretched steel wire which is exactly under the pole. If now the wire is moved along in front of the pole, a series of magnetic spots will be produced so long as speech is transmitted by the telephone transmitter, and these spots will be of varying magnetic intensity corresponding to the variations of the current in the coils of the electro-

magnet, as set up by the vibrations of the voice in the transmitter diaphragm, the action being very similar to that of a phonograph recorder, except that a magnetic, instead of a mechanical, record is produced. If now this magnetised steel wire is passed in front of the pole of a similar electro-magnet, the coils of which are connected to a telephone receiver, the spots of magnetism will set up electric currents in the magnet coils of precisely similar intensity and variation as the currents which produced the magnetism in the first magnet; this will act upon the telephone receiver, and reproduce the words previously spoken into the transmitter. The arrangement produces exactly the effects of the recorder and sound producer in the phonograph, the magnetized wire being the equivalent of the wax cylinder. It will be seen that here is an arrangement by which telephonic speech can be recorded and reproduced; but there is a further property of this remarkable apparatus, and that is, if the magnetized steel wire is passed in front of the pole of an ordinary electro-magnet which is excited from a battery of some independent source of current, the spots of magnetism are all wiped out, and the wire is able to receive a fresh record, or series of records, so that it could be an endless wire revolving over pulleys and continually receiving and transmitting messages which were magnetically wiped off the wire as soon as transmitted. The arrangement of the apparatus may take a variety of forms; steel cylinders and discs, also steel bands, have been used by the inventor instead of a wire. In the case of the discs, they are able to receive a different record on each side, so that each side may be utilized. In one form the wire is wrapped helically round a cylinder, and is only $1/100$ th in. in diameter; the electro-magnet poles being pointed, and they are made with a time capacity of thirty minutes to two or three hours. A desk pattern machine would weigh about 15 lbs. A useful feature is that the wire can be run backwards or forwards, so that the message can be wholly or partly repeated at the discretion of the operator; and in a recording instrument the erasing magnet permits any part of the whole of the message to be erased.

Some particulars of the apparatus are to be found in the Journal of the Institution of Electrical Engineers of London (No. 147 of Vol. XXX), in the report of a meeting held in November, 1900, when the apparatus was described and shown in operation.

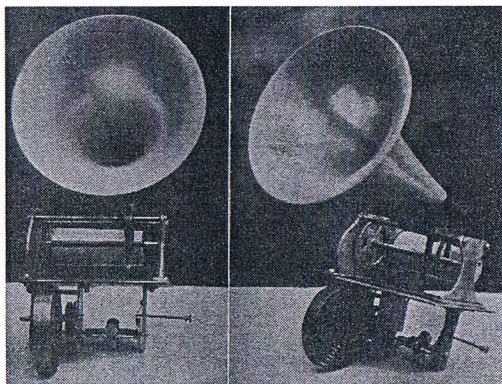
The makers of the machine appear to be the Danish Telephonograph Company of Copenhagen. The speed of the wire may be taken as about 18 ins. per second; with steel cylinders pitch of the traversing screw is stated to be about $1/80$ th in. There may be any number of reproducing magnets, and in the Journal of the Institution of Electrical Engineers referred to there is an interesting suggestion by Mr. J. Gavey, Chief Engineer to the Post Office, which points out, by the help of the sketch, the possibility of impressing the same message upon a number of wires, and then by the placing of all the reproducing magnets in series with a single receiver a cumulative effect might be produced, so that a feeble record would be made to produce a loud tone.

A HOME-MADE PHONOGRAPH

By G.S. Barry

From The Model Engineer and Electrician March 2, 1905

Not having seen any descriptions of home-made phonographs in the pages of THE MODEL ENGINEER, I submit drawings of one, the original of which a friend of mine has made, and which reproduces as well as any of its size.



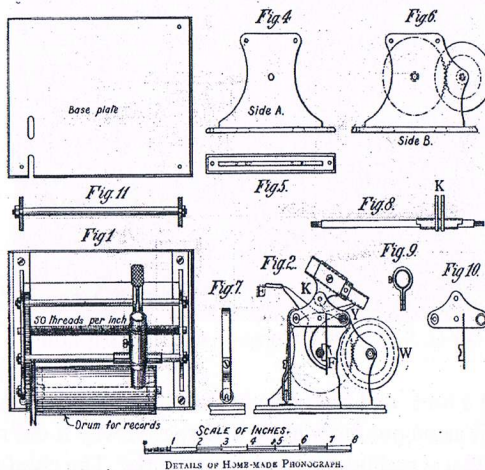
Mr G. S. I Barry's Home-made Phonograph

I have heard it many a time, and have also heard it reproduce a song which it had recorded itself, and it came out fairly clear. The reason why it did not come out more distinctly was that it had been turned up quite flat. The chief parts of the frame can be obtained in any engineer's shop. The base is a plate of iron 7 ins. by 5 ins. by $\frac{1}{8}$ in. thick, with holes to fasten sides and to pass belt or cord down to motor or clockwork below, clockwork being by far the handiest. The position of holes for fastening the clockwork to the base must be fixed by style of clockwork used, therefore I have left these out, but I have drawn the clockwork for a base of 7 ins. by 5 ins. with governor, which I have seen, and know will take two records with one winding, which I will describe later.

The sides are made of $\frac{1}{8}$ in. flat iron, a base piece being riveted on, and filed flush so as to rest even on base; two holes are to be drilled for fastening to base. Then get two rods of $\frac{1}{4}$ diameter and fit a 3-16ths nut on each end, as per fig. 11. The next thing is to get a leading screw, which will cost about 2s. 9d., including a nut for screw, which has to be soldered to spring F in drawing. The record spindle is next made, being filed and turned to 3-16ths at end, and a thread put on for a nut. A small $\frac{1}{8}$ hole is drilled in the other end to take a small taper pin. If this end is filed or turned up to 3-16ths, and screwed for a 3-16ths thin nut, it will do just as well with a washer behind nut.

The drum is the next - in fact, it would be better to make it before the spindle. Take a piece of zinc the width of drum, and find exact circumference of inside of a

record; this can be got by finding diameter of bore of record and multiplying by 3'1416; having got this, mark it off on the flat zinc, then bend the zinc round an iron mandrel, or if this cannot be obtained, a hard-wood mandrel turned up to a little less than the zinc is wanted, with a wood mallet, not a hammer; bring ends together, and then cut a small strip of zinc about $\frac{1}{2}$ in. wide, and curve it slightly on mandrel, and place underneath, as shown in the sketch. Solder the joint inside and outside, so as to fill crevasse, which should butt up at one end and open about $\frac{1}{8}$ in. at the other, the space being filled with solder and filed smooth, so as to give the necessary taper. Two ends have to be fitted and soldered or brazed in with a bearing at centre.



The drum (Fig. 1) revolves on the spindle, the spindle does not revolve, and therefore should be screwed up tight to frame. Two spur wheels, ratio of 2 to 1, are now required. These can be got from any clockmaker or dealer, one to fit to leading screw, and the smaller one to drum for records.

The pitch of these should be as small as possible, so as to run noiselessly. To make the machine run noiselessly should be the chief aim at first. The frame being completed, the carriage should be taken in hand, and made, as shown in drawing, of $\frac{1}{8}$ in. iron (see Fig. 10). These sides may be made curved in or straight.

In making the lever, it would be advisable to set it out full size on a plate of iron or paper, so as to get it accurate the first time.

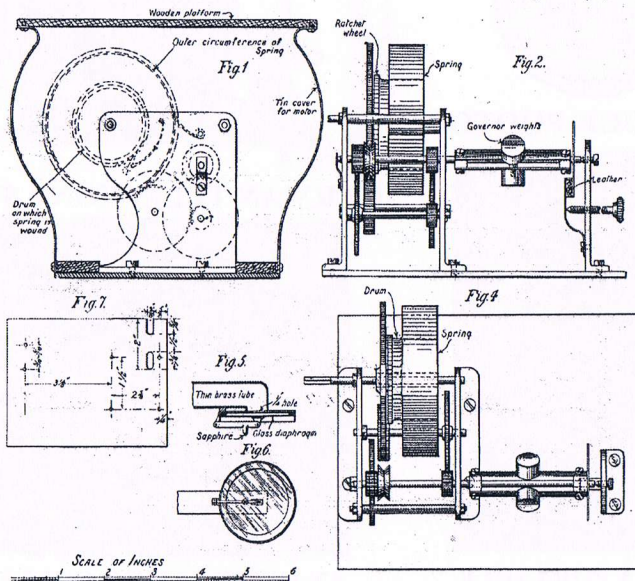
Take care to pivot the lever so that it works free and does not get tight; also see that there is a clear space between lever and record-holder. (Fig. 2) while working, so as not to cause any unnecessary strain in recorder. I mean by this that the lever is to rest against the spring F and lift nut first before touching record holder. The small cast steel wheel at front is to take the weight of slide and transfer it on a surface which has less friction. The bush in back slide must not be made too long on either side for record, or it will prevent the machine finishing the record.

If there is any part I have omitted to explain, I will, on enquiry, do as soon as possible.

Clockwork - The Clockwork motor for phonograph is one which will drive over two records, and can easily be fixed without injury from spring, that is if care is taken. The spring is $\frac{3}{4}$ wide, and has plenty of room for expansion. The spring shaft should be a good $\frac{1}{8}$ in. diameter, though 3-16ths is preferable, and it should have only one tooth wheel and spring on it. The sides of spring-box or bearings are made of $\frac{1}{8}$ in. steel or iron, bent to form feet for it, and screwed to base of phonograph, with $\frac{1}{8}$ in. screw thread put in base, as shown in top left-hand corner of drawing. The spring I have shown at left-hand side could be left out as its only purpose is to reduce friction of collar against side, and keep the shaft up against centre.

Where governor spindle passes through the upright, a large hole should be made so that it will not have three bearings. The wheels can be procured from an old clock, and the centres brought in to suit, always bearing in mind that the shafts must be far from spring as possible.

The governor is of the ordinary description used on phonograph motors, and so will not need describing. The brass collars were filed out of round brass and wrought iron weights turned. The springs were made from old clock spring, whilst the screws used were chiefly $\frac{1}{8}$ in. Whitworth, but other sizes could be brought in if centres are kept same. The reproducer (Figs. 5 and 6) is shown on this drawing, which is $1\frac{1}{2}$ ins. diameter, and top part made to fit the brass tub on other drawing.



DETAILS OF CLOCKWORK MOTOR FOR PHONOGRAPH.



AMBEROLA CABINET BEETHOVEN MODEL EDISONIC



NAUCK PHOTO



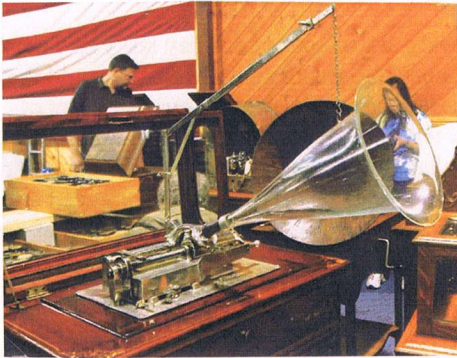
GERMAN TELEPHONE STAMP



SONORA PORTABLE



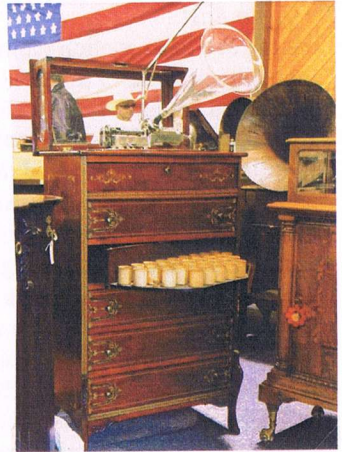
AN INTERESTING COLLECTION



DONLEY'S SWAP MEET



HARDING COLLECTION



CYLINDER CABINET



INDIAN MACHINE



FULTON FINCH

AN ELEGANT CYLINDER CABINET

By Gavin East

Looking at a local auction room's weekly advertisement one day last year I noted "gramophone stand". I assumed this must be a record cabinet or how would they know? I did not have time to view the auction but knew that Deric Blackler of Portobello Antiques would be able to tell me if the cabinet was anything special. On calling at his shop I found that he had indeed spotted the cabinet, bought it and was waiting to show it to me. As you can see from the photos, it is not at all an ordinary 78 cupboard but is a very graceful oak four-drawer cylinder cabinet with a recessed top and corner "wings" suggestive of a 1920s floor model gramophone. Each drawer holds sixteen Blue Amberols comfortably, or twenty if you don't mind pulling the drawer all the way out. Before I could dazzle Deric with my knowledge he said, "It must have been made for an Amberola". A very bright lad, our Deric, and I doubt if any other local antique dealer would have spotted that. The top recess had to be for an Amberola 30.

Of course I was greatly taken by the cabinet, bought it and set about finding a 30 to fit into it. I have taken on a number of projects beyond my ability but this one looked achievable. I had noticed a tidy Amberola 30 in another local auction the same week, found that it had not been sold and was able to buy it for a reasonable price. Steve Purcell, the dealer who owned the machine, lives in "Los Angeles" which is supposed to have been the first American Arts and Crafts style house in Christchurch. So I can say I was so keen on this project that I went all the way to Los Angeles for an Amberola 30!.

Ah but, I hear you say, Amberola 30 base measurements varied over the years so how could I be sure the machine would fit? Having measured a few 30s, I was taking a chance that an early to mid period specimen with the wide, curved base moulding would be somewhere about the right size. When I introduced the machine to the cabinet, I was absolutely delighted to find that it bedded in so snugly that I could almost hear the hiss of air escaping. There is not a skerrick of play, back to front or side to side. The combination of machine and cabinet is "just right" and particularly attractive.

So was this a stock item or a one-off? Did someone have it made because they liked cylinders but wanted the stylish curves of a gramophone? I think the cabinet was made in Christchurch by Pepplers, the cabinetmakers who produced Avonia gramophones using imported playing gear. I have seen a small Avonia with very similar corner "wings". My guess is that the cabinet was a one-off, as otherwise we would surely have seen another around Christchurch. But who knows, perhaps there is a larger one for an Amberola 50 "out there"?

Of course, when we think of Edison machines in Christchurch in the 1920s, the name that comes to mind is Claude Woledge, the manager of Edison Hall and in his last years our first Patron. Mr Woledge had stands made for Amberola 30s but not, as far as I know, record cabinets. To my admittedly biased mind, this cabinet is a much more appealing and practical base for an Amberola 30 than one of Mr Woledge's precarious pedestals.

A PAIR OF PANATROPES

Steve Rattle, Rosebud, Victoria

The Brunswick Panatrope has always fascinated me as being the first full electric gramophone. Owning and enjoying a HMV 163 re-entrant, I was curious to hear if they would sound as good, and to my ears they give the re-entrant a fine 'run for it's money'.

The Model P11 (1926) was found in Sydney back in 1994 as a completely (and I mean completely) gutted cabinet. Its fate was destined to become a cocktail cabinet. I took pity on it and started a ten year search for parts and slowly figured out what bits went where. The enjoyable part of assembling a 'jigsaw puzzle project' has to be in meeting fellow collectors who are generous in sharing their spares and knowledge. With nothing electrical to use at all, I put the feelers out and slowly accumulated the bits and knowledge required. The speaker proved to be the hardest item to locate and two purchased and received from the USA didn't measure up. By assembly time, I'm pleased to say that every electronic part was sourced from within Australia. The speaker grille is the most flamboyant part, thankfully intact, undamaged and a fascinating example of the manufacturer's art.

The Model P13 (1928) was located the very week I finally got the P11 completed. A local dealer decided to sell it as it did not have a radio! It is an original Melbourne import with 110/240 volt transformer attached and resided with the one family in suburban Prahran for 70 years.

I can't thank Lou Albert of Newcastle, Brian Lackie of Urunga, John Simpson of Brisbane, the late Ray Kelly, Ray Hosking, and Andrew Griffiths of Melbourne enough. Their invaluable collective assistance, repairs, parts supply and encouragement has enabled me to now enjoy two shining examples of 1920's technology.

MOMENTS *In History* **1889** Vaudeville and Silent Movie Actor **Charlie Chaplin** Is Born



One hundred and twenty years ago on April 16, 1889, Charles Spencer Chaplin, one of the most famous film stars of all time, was born in London.

His parents were both well-known vaudeville stars. However, by the time he was ten, Chaplin and his elder brother Sydney were fending for themselves as their father had died and their mother was seriously ill.

Following in his parents' footsteps, Chaplin joined a juvenile vaudeville group – "The Eight Lancashire Lads" – known for its tap-dancing abilities.

Aged fourteen, he went on to play Billy the pageboy in a production of "Sherlock Holmes" where he supported notable actor William Gillette.

In 1910, Chaplin moved to America to work with The Fred Karno Repertoire Company and two years later, in 1912, he was offered a motion picture contract.

Chaplin signed to the Keystone Film Company where he worked with director Mack Sennett in 1913. Although his salary was around \$150 a week, soon producers were offering him substantially greater sums of money.

After his contract with Sennett and Keystone ended, Chaplin transferred to the Essanay Company in 1915 and was replaced at Keystone by his brother Sydney.

The following year, and now very much in demand, Chaplin was signed to the Mutual Film Corporation to make twelve two-reel comedies. The films he made included "The Floorwalker", "the Fireman", "the Vagabond", "the

Immigrant', "one A.M.", in which he was the only character apart from a cab driver in the opening scene, and "Easy Street", seen as the greatest production of its time. In 1917, when his contract with Mutual expired, Chaplin became an independent producer so that he could have more freedom and input when it came to making his own films.

He had his very own studios constructed at La Brea Avenue in Hollywood where he made a variety of films, but after the first, "A Dog's Life", Chaplin focused on using his fame and films for war propaganda during WWI. The film "The Bond" encouraged viewers to support the Liberty Bond drive whereby members of the public were asked to buy stocks for a return of value, plus interest, in order to help the war effort.

In April 1919, Chaplin joined with other notable performers Mary Pickford, Douglas Fairbanks and D.W. Griffith in order to found the film distribution company United Artists Corporation.

Before he embarked on his work with United Artists, Chaplin first had to honour a contract to market his work. Thus, in 1921, the six-reel film "The Kid", co-starring Jackie Coogan, was released.

From 1923 to 1952, Chaplin made eight feature-length films for United Artists. During his 1925 film "the Gold Rush", Chaplin hired Lillita MacMurray – a young actress he had worked with on "the Kid". MacMurray, who changed her name to Lita Grey, married Chaplin aged just sixteen. Although they would later divorce, the union brought the couple two sons, Charles Jr and Sydney.

In 1929 "The Circus" (1928) earned Chaplin his first Academy Award (the awards were not yet known as the Oscars) and although the film was well received critically, Chaplin felt it brought up painful memories as it was made during his divorce from Lita.

By the 1930s, the silent film genre that had made Chaplin so famous was being swiftly replaced by "talkies" which had accompanying soundtracks for the moving images.

While other silent era stars adapted well by using voice to enhance their roles, Chaplin was faced with a dilemma. Due to the world-wide fame roles such as the "Tramp" had gained, Chaplin giving his characters an English-speaking voice would have alienated non-English-speaking fans around the world.

Therefore, Chaplin bucked the trend for speech in films and the "Tramp" remained a silent character in the 1931 film, "City Lights", although Chaplin wrote the entire score for the movie himself.

Chaplin's most commercially successful film, 1940's "The Great Dictator", starred Chaplin in dual roles – as a Jewish barber and a fascist dictator. The character of Hynkel the dictator bore more than a passing resemblance to Adolf Hitler, from mannerisms and voice right down to his moustache.

Despite the actor earlier deciding to remain a silent film star, Chaplin's barber character makes an important humanitarian speech at the end of the film which is said to reiterate the actor's own political views.

In the early 1940's, Chaplin married Oona O'Neill with whom he had eight children, many of whom went on to become actors themselves. After continuing with film-making up until the 1966 film "A Countess from Hong Kong" (the only film he made in colour), Chaplin's health began to fail, in 1975, he was recognized with a knighthood, but sadly died two years later on Christmas Day, 1977.



FRANCIS & DAY'S

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CONTENTS.

Save a little one for me	4
Serves you right!	6
Little Billy's Wild Woodbines	8
Here we are again!	10
We're all waiting for a girl	13
Come into the garden, John!	16
Put a bit of powder on it, father!	19
We all sang "Too-ra-loo-ral-addie!"	22
When father papered the parlour	24
The Kangaroo Hop	26
John, go and put your trousers on!	28
I wish it were Sunday night to-night	30
When poor old father tried to kill the cock-a-doodle-do	33
Oh! Mister Macpherson	36
Why can't we have the sea in London?	38
My girl from London Town	41
Where does daddy go when he goes out?	44
Jean loves all the jockeys	46

TOGETHER WITH
A
CRITICAL
APPRECIATION
AND
BIOGRAPHICAL
SKETCH
BY

CHARLES
WILMOTT

The Man in the Velvet Suit

LONDON: FRANCIS DAY & HUNTER, 142, CHANCING CROSS ROAD, W.C.
NEW YORK: EDWARDS & FRANCIS DAY & HUNTER, 65-66 WEST 40th STREET.

BILLY WILLIAMS: The Artist

A Critical appreciation 1877-1915

By Charles Wilmott

Let who will make the people's laws: To make the people's songs my cause!"

I preface my critical study and appreciation of Billy Williams, the artist, with this paraphrase of a much-distorted quotation to give myself an opportunity of saying that if the knighthoods which have of recent years marked monarchical appreciation of the theatre, had also honoured the sister sphere of amusement, the music hall, and Mr. Williams had been awakened one morning to find his name conspicuous in the birthday list, no more fitting motto could have been chosen to decorate and adorn the head of notepaper and the panels of his automobile.

Let me hasten to correct any error into which wielders of the lyric pen may fall, that I am, in this, awarding him, by suggestion, a merit to which he has no right or title. I am only applying the quotation in the sense that the artist, by informing the author's pen-and-ink creation with his own individuality, gives it life and vitality, and does, therefore, "make" the song.

Billy Williams is essentially and entirely a modern product. His methods are direct and need no analysis. There is nothing about him of the type which was once the staple comic commodity of the music halls, the idiotically garbed, hideously made-up article whose only claim to attention was that it was totally unlike anything ever seen outside a lunatic asylum, that it never once "held the mirror up to nature," and that it was, in the main, vulgar without being funny. He makes no pretence of, or attempt at, characterisation, but is content to be, both in his songs and their rendition, symbolical of the times and of life as it is, and as thousands of us live in to-day epitomizing its little gaieties and follies and those trivial happenings which are part and parcel of the daily round, and emphasizing them with just that touch of extravagance and farcicality which his environment demands and the convention of the stage justifies.

Watch Billy Williams's "turn" - to use the technical phrase - at one of the huge and luxuriously appointed suburban or provincial halls which popular taste and managerial enterprise have called into existence, and which with their cheap prices and wholesome entertainments have proved far more potential and practical factors in reducing intemperance than all the lectures ever delivered. Hear the hum from a thousand throats which the orchestral rendering of the opening bars of his first song evokes, unfamiliar at first, as the melody may be; hear the shout of welcome as the velvet-clad figure struts so jauntily on to the stage; note the evident delight of the listening multitude at the many funny perversions of domestic incidents with which his songs abound, and you will at once recognize and understand that appealing force which makes him so popular.

It is no question of an artist and his audience with footlights and an orchestra as a dividing line. He makes his hearers feel that he is one of themselves, describing - a little more pungently and pointedly, perhaps, than it is given to them to do - things with which they are, or can easily imagine themselves to be, familiar, each song having the added force of a chorus, whose happily turned phrases and flowing melody voice their whole temperament. His easy, unforced method, his naturalness, the infections laugh into which he so frequently breaks, punctuating the points in his song, and seeming to prove his own evident enjoyment of the tale he is telling, of which so much is conveyed by the lift of an eyelid; and his revelation at every turn of a marked individuality - that magnetic gift which is so easy to recognize and so hard to define - all play their part in achieving the effect at which he aims, and account for the position he occupies.

And here let me pay him a tribute which he fully deserves. No one admits more spontaneously and readily than himself how much he owes to his song-writers, nor how much of his success is due to their skill and ingenuity. C.W. Murphy, Harry Castling, Dan Lipton, Fred Murray, R.P. Weston. Fred HJ, Barnes and Fred Godfrey, to mention only a few of the authors and composers to whom he is indebted, have not only supplied him with the most fitting, but the best material.

And what if, with aid, he only aims at amusing his audiences? What if he does not disdain, with that end in view, the use of those elementals which can only be described as splenetic, and an effort to please the "superior person" which was bourgeois in the extreme, once airily dismissed as "the pathos of the pantry and the wit of the wash-tub"? These things touch the very heart of the people, and in their use not only give the music hall, with no pretensions to art, that greater drawing power which the theatre is so continually lamenting and envying but make such names as that of Billy Williams, in the gallery of those who add to the people's pleasures, popular and household words.

BILLY WILLIAMS: The Man

(A Biographical Sketch)

Billy Williams made his first appearance in the usual way, in Collins Street, Melbourne, in the year 1877, then, as now, discarding anything in the shape of a press agent.

He gave an early indication of the career he intended to adopt and the position he meant to occupy by selecting the star turn, i.e. ten p.m., for his debut, but furnished no evidence whatever, according to his father, of his possession of that musical baritone voice of which he soon became so proud.

The love of sport which was in later years to prove so expensive to him found early development, and after displaying for some time nothing but a tremendous capacity for getting into scrapes and growing out of a fearful quantity of suits of clothes and pairs of boots, he entered a racing stable at Canfield, and then became a boundary rider at a squatter's station. He has since then read a large number of novels (of a kind for whose especial benefit and propagation for free libraries apparently exist), tales supposed to be descriptive of experiences similar to his own, and only the laws of libel prevent me using here the uncensored terms he would like to apply to those anti-George Washington and peculiarly fictional works.

His next experience of the turf was as a golf instructor, an epoch the brevity of which was owing not so much to ignorance or want of facility in the language essential to the game as to the fact that his brothers, Dick and Rowley Banks, were by way of becoming professional champions of the Antipodes, and he could not think of attempting to obtain any share of such honours, or higher ones, at their expense. Quixotic, perhaps; but what would you? Might not the premiership of the Commonwealth have been his to-day but for his unconscious exercise of this same quixotic strain - and other causes? But we do know that the learning of a few songs determined his future career, and with these and his belief in himself - others gave it a different name - as his stock-in-trade he joined a small variety company in 1895, and travelled the back country, playing in comedy, tragedy, vaudeville, and barns or anything else big enough to hold paying audiences, which were principally composed of miners and rough-riders, whose disapproval of anything mean or villainous in the entertainment invariably made good for the gunpowder trade, in such towns as Broken Hill, famous for its silver mines, Willeania, and White City, the centres, respectively, of the wool and opal industries. He also played in Western Australia, encountering there much more in the way of fresh scenes than fresh water; sea-water having often to be condensed for drinking purposes. Coolgardie, now a thriving town of about the size of Leeds - but laying no claim to any such novelties in atmosphere as is furnished that city - had at the time when Billy Williams was winning his laurels - and very little else - but half-a-dozen houses within its borders, and the company depended entirely for support upon the rough-riders, miners, and ranchers from Boulder's City, Menzies, and Kinowna City, which were miles apart. The life, as may easily be imagined, had many discomforts, but one recompense, even as compared with his present gilt-edge existence as an artist - there was no barring clauses; and it finally gave him compensation for everything in bringing him to the notice of Messrs. Williamson and Musgrove, a managerial combination whose doings are inseparably bound up with the history of Australasian amuse-

ments.

Billy Williams secured his first real success as an artist simultaneously with his first appearance under this management in their pantomime, "the Forty Thieves." One might naturally have expected him to be very eloquent on this subject; but he frankly owns that the show is chiefly remarkable in his memory because the production gave birth to an incident which modern English music-hall audiences would find some difficulty in crediting.

Miss Pansy Montague, who afterwards became known to fame as La Milo, and created what may be best described as a "nudeparture," was engaged for the same pantomime, but indulged in wild hysterics and tearfully and indignantly refused to play the part for which she had been cast when told she would have to appear in tights! Now!

His pantomime season was followed by a tour under the same management, such parts as Arthur Hopkins in "In Town," and Bobby Rivers in "A Gaiety Girl," falling in his share. And then came the turning point in his career. London was calling him, and the year 1900 found him established in the city of cities, acting as assistant-manager at the Marylebone Music Hall, at that time the rendezvous of all the popular music-hall stars, where he, too, soon became a favourite, singing the type of comic songs then in vogue, though discarding the typical make-up of a suit of pyjamas. From this to the dress which we may now describe as his trade mark was a natural progression, and led to his being labeled, as it were, by that witty and genial Bohemian, Chance Newton, of the Referee, as "the man in the velvet suit" on his abandoning his managerial post and braving public criticism as an artist only.

His first song of any importance was entitled "I like little people," of which he made a distinct feature by introducing in it a number of dolls, and the success of this novelty led to a series of embarrassments which have their humorous side. Some of the provincial managers who had engaged him took his bill-matter literally, and it often happened that on his arrival in a new town to fulfil an engagement he found dressing rooms specially set aside for his little people.

His career since those days can be summarized as one long series of successes and increasing popularity, and, in addition to his enviable stage reputation, he is, I believe, admitted to be one of the most, if not the most, popular singers to-day in the talking-machine world, holding all sorts of records in this industry, one such achievement being the recording of six songs in fifty-eight minutes, the usual period being between two and three hours. And strange as it may seem, had it not been for his persistence in refusing to be ruled by the opinions of the experts in the matter of reproduction that infectious laugh and the running fire of comments through the symphonies of his songs which are so characteristic of him, and have proved such factors in his success, would never have been attempted on the records, as they were considered impossible of reproduction.

Luckily for the artist of today, the old follies which often degenerated into something deserving a stronger name are no longer considered essential to popularity. Stageland is now more a business than a Bohemia, and does not absorb so much of the time and temperament of its votaries as it once did. Ourdoor life and pursuits, have given a greater development to the natural man in them, and an acquaintance with Billy Williams at home or on the golf links would scarcely lead one to regard him as a "pro." That he is popular with his brother and sister artists is a fact of which he is naturally proud, but his greatest pride lies in the openly expressed ambition of his two little sons (one of whom is already proving the hereditary principle and becoming quite a little actor) "to be like daddy." And with this little peep into his domestic life let me close.

I am no advocate of giving to women that freedom of speech with which so many of the sex threaten us to-day, but I certainly regret that Mr. Williams's fear of the revelations it might lead to, or his overwhelming modesty, caused him peremptorily to forbid me obtaining for insertion here his wife's opinion of him. For her exercise of that freedom of speech would have either given a real and remarkable interest to my attempt to picture Billy Williams from the human point of view, or furnished my article with an eloquent peroration.

NZ TRAILBLAZER DIES

Eldred Stebbing, a pioneer of New Zealand's recording industry has died in his 89th year, in Auckland, during December 2009.

From his studio in the basement of the family home in Herne Bay in the 1950's, Eldred shaped the music industry with the late Howard Morrison auditions and takes. Other aspirants included Ray Columbus and the Invaders (1956), Max Merritt and the Meteors, the Underdogs and Human Instinct (1960's).

Th' Dudes and country musicians Patsy Riggir and Gray Bartlett soon followed.

The lad who sold ice creams during the intermission at the 'flicks' at the Avon, signed with Eldred's Zodiak label in 1962. His most famous disc was the Invaders' She's a Mod' and 'Til we Kissed', becoming international hits for Columbus.

Ray also said that Eldred was a true trailblazer on the NZ musical scene, irreplaceable really, and marvelous for the industry.

Apart from Eldred's recording skill, he was excellent on a business level. Stebbing was the first record company in NZ to advance royalties to the artists for things like promotion, marketing and travel. That was unheard of then. For the Stebbing label to be able to advance monies was amazing, because they did it way before any multinationals did.

The Stebbing Recording Centre expanded to the Jervois road site in 1970. It continues to operate today and it makes and packs CDs and DVDs.

Eldred Stebbing received a lifetime achievement award at the 2002 Music awards. In 2004 he was made a member of the NZ Order of Merit.

Derek Cockburn

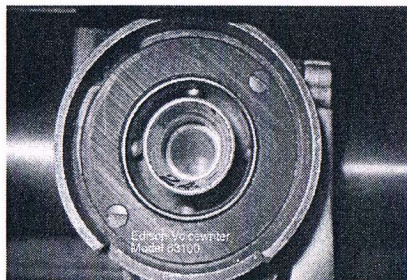


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