

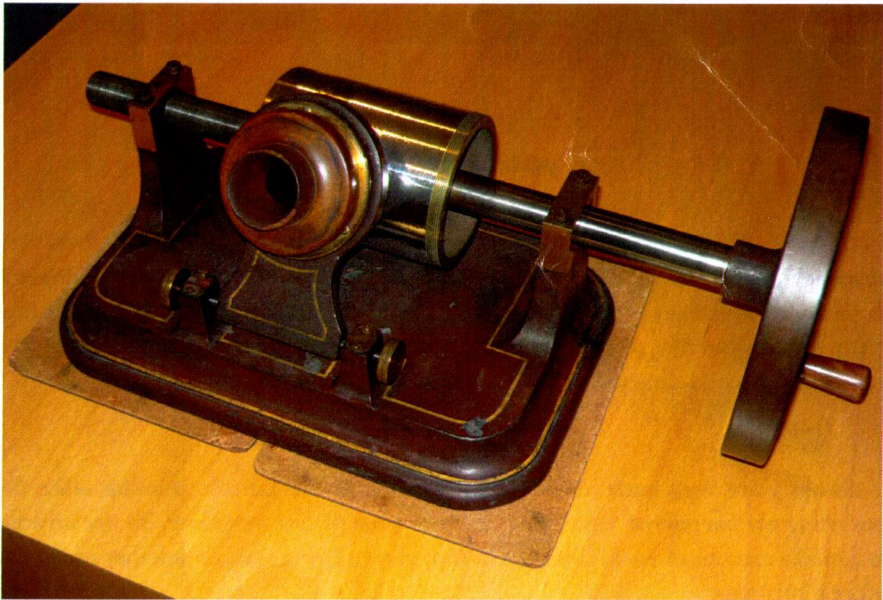


The Phonographic Record

Journal of the Vintage Phonograph Society of New Zealand (Inc.)
A society formed for the preservation of recorded sound

Volume 51, Issue 2.

February/April 2016



Pictured at a recent Christchurch meeting is what may be the only surviving tinfoil phonograph in New Zealand, looking better than it has for decades after some very careful restoration. More inside this issue!

THE PHONOGRAPHIC RECORD

Volume 51, Issue 2

February/April 2016

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For your information

I hope you find the information on the tinfoil phonograph interesting. It has been very satisfying for me, having known this machine from the start of my collecting life, to see it stay in a local collection, cherished and researched under David Peterson's ownership. It is quite possible that more information will come to light in early newspapers but now seemed a good time to share what David and I have gleaned so far.

As always I am very grateful indeed to Bethany at the Lincoln printing office for converting my barrage of emails into another issue of our magazine. To my surprise we actually ran out of room this time so that gives a flying start for another magazine before Christmas.

Gavin East
Editor

New Zealand's oldest phonograph finds its voice again

By Gavin East

From the time the Society was founded in 1965 and indeed long before then, the distinction of oldest known phonograph in New Zealand has been attached to the tinfoil machine now in the collection of David Peterson after fifty or so years in the care of the late Walter Norris. Walter bought it in the 1960's from Claude Woledge, the retired Edison agent and first Patron of the Society. As I understand it Mr Woledge found the machine in Christchurch, possibly in the 1920's, and rescued it just as it was about to be dumped. I was told that the machine's wooden box had to be pulled off a rubbish fire and there is scorching to bear this out. Mr Woledge also owned an original Edison talking doll, long since sold overseas, and Walter remembered seeing both these Edison "relics" displayed in the window of the little gramophone repair shop Mr Woledge owned in High Street in Christchurch in the 1940's.

This tinfoil phonograph has no markings apart from the number 21 stamped into its flywheel but its very heavy cast iron construction, design and original maroon paint are characteristic of the machines made in England by the London Stereoscopic and Photographic Company. Whenever Walter brought it to a display we labelled it as "ca. 1879" which seemed a safe guess. In Walter's time, and probably Mr Woledge's, the machine was never able to be demonstrated since the stylus was believed to be missing. Walter treasured the ancient machine but it spent most of its time shut up in its rough and paint-spattered box on the floor of the old house at Swannanoa.

Since becoming the machine's owner in 2015 David Peterson has carefully examined the machine and its box to determine what could be learnt about its history and what could be done to bring it up to the best possible condition without compromising its originality. What follows is a prime example of how the internet can facilitate a restoration project by providing both historical information and links to collectors with kindred interests.

First there was the question of age and history. We assumed that the machine must have been exhibited for money in Christchurch before being "retired" and sold. There are early newspaper advertisements glued to the inside of the box and there does

An improved phonograph received by the last mail steamer was on exhibition yesterday afternoon and last night, by the proprietors, Mrs. E. Kurzon and Mr. A. Chapman. Except as regards elaboration and elegance, it is only in a degree different from that which we have already described. It rests on an iron stand, and a fly-wheel is attached which regulates the motion. The new instrument has also an adjusting rest to prevent injury to the tinfoil, and to regulate to a greater degree of fineness the modulations of the voice. A noticeable feature is that, in repeating the sound, no tube is used in this instrument. The cylinder is much larger than that of the first exhibited, and the adjustments of the needle and drum are much more elaborate, but, so far as tone and correctness, it does not improve on the older instrument. The fact that two such instruments should be on exhibition at one time in one city is a singular feature, and the elegance and finish of the improvements will, no doubt, be an interesting feature in future exhibition. Yesterday evening, Mr. Grieg, of the Thames, the composer of the song "Our own New Zealand Home," interviewed the phonograph, and sang the above song. Mr. Chapman obligingly presented him with the tin-foil record, after the air had been repeated. It is intended to replace this tin-foil on the cylinder and reproduce the air sung in Auckland to the Thames audience when Mr. Chapman visits that district. It will be a difficult task to replace the tin-foil on the cylinder in exactly the same position it formerly occupied, but Mr. Chapman is confident he can do it. It is satisfactory to find that the enterprise of the proprietors is meeting with fitting recognition. Yesterday and last night there were large crowds in attendance, and all were surprised at the results they witnessed.

In his search for the word "phonograph" in digitised New Zealand newspapers from the 1880's, David Peterson found this excerpt from the New Zealand Herald, published in Auckland on 15 January 1880. The description of the machine matches David's example but it doesn't seem clear to me whether the reference to two machines on exhibition means two identical machines of the improved type or one improved machine plus an earlier model still on show. If it means two identical improved machines, they must surely have been those which were displayed side by side at the 1967 convention in Christchurch before one disappeared from view. It would be interesting to know if the attempt to remove a recorded sheet of tinfoil, put it back on the machine and play it was successful!

not seem any reason to doubt that the box was made for the machine. However the newspaper clippings are not dated, nor could we tell from looking at them which paper(s) they came from.

Though a date of around 1879 seems reasonable for a tinfoil machine's exhibition in New Zealand, there was the possibility that the machine might have been imported in the 1880's. The clippings promote "Edison's improved phonograph" which seemed a bit puzzling as this suggested that an "unimproved" machine may have previously been exhibited in New Zealand.

I have often acknowledged the huge help to research provided by Papers Past, the digitised newspaper database created by the National Library of New Zealand. Papers Past really came to the party this time! One of the clippings in the tinfoil machine's box mentioned that the machine would be on exhibition in a shop next to the Theatre Royal. Christchurch? Maybe but of course that was a theatre name found all over the country. By combining several of the keywords in the clipping we struck gold with the very piece which we now know to have been printed in the Auckland Star on 22 April 1880. It was exciting to see proof, or at least a very strong indication, that David's machine had been in New Zealand since 1880 and quite possibly 1879 if it was toured around the country.

More research by David on any reference to "phonograph" in digitised New Zealand newspapers of the 1880's produced the intriguing article also reproduced in this issue. What is especially interesting is the reference to two rival exhibitors since at this point I must mention the mysterious second New Zealand machine. At the phonograph collectors' convention held in Christchurch in 1967, the late Wally Gollledge from Nelson amazed us by bringing a tinfoil machine identical to the one by then owned by Walter Norris. Walter's daughter Sandra remembers that the two machines even had consecutive numbers stamped into their flywheels. There are photos of Wally apparently making a recording on "his" machine but I don't recall if it was in fact complete and working. Unfortunately this machine was only on loan to Wally, was returned to its owner and to the best of my knowledge has not been seen since – though I have heard of someone who claims to know where it is. So the Christchurch machine is still New Zealand's oldest known phonograph unless the now-unknown one resurfaces and shares the title!



The top photo shows the tinfoil machine in its box as preserved by Walter Norris from ca. 1966 until his death in 2014. Wouldn't we like to find something like this on opening a scruffy old wooden box? In the lower view we see the number stamped into the flywheel. Somewhere in New Zealand there may still be an identical machine numbered 20 or 22.

Knowledge of some of his machine's history made David all the more keen to study it in detail and decide what if any work it needed. Cleaning the paintwork and cylinder made an immediate improvement. On close examination it was found that the steel stylus was not missing but rather completely worn down. At this point the global network of collectors played its part. David had been in contact over another project with Mark Caruana-Dingli in Canada. Mark suggested that David talk to Darren Wallace who was able to study a complete example of a tinfoil machine the same as David's. After careful thought it was decided that the best approach would be to make a new stylus bar and stylus rather than try to remove the stump of the original stylus and replace it. David was very impressed with what arrived in the mail from Canada.

The next step, not surprisingly, was to see if the machine could be made to work. One problem here was going to be the "tinfoil" since the lead foil used originally was thick enough to receive the indentations of the stylus and was nothing like ordinary kitchen foil of today. Another challenge David found was that the setting of the stylus is absolutely critical, both vertically and laterally, i.e. in the centre of the machined groove in the cylinder. After a lot of adjustment David was able to show the machine at a recent meeting, shout some words (polite but NOT "Mary had a little lamb"!) into the wooden mouthpiece (helped by a short horn for the occasion) and share our delight at hearing this ancient device reproduce the words faintly but clearly. What must it have been like for people who had never heard a piece of machinery reproduce the human voice?

David is setting up his collection in its own building at "Oak Grove", his and Louise's lovely home in Ohoka near Christchurch. There will probably be a glass case for the tinfoil machine and its box. It may not be the machine which instantly grabs the visitors' attention but it will take pride of place nevertheless as a venerable survivor from the dawn of the phonograph.

Phonograph.

THE PACIFIC PHONOGRAPH COMPANY, holding a license for the States of California, Nevada and Arizona, are now ready to receive orders for the lease of Phonographs and Phonograph-Graphophones.

The company will receive its proportionate share of instruments as rapidly as they can be delivered from the factory, but in consequence of the large territory to be supplied, the number will probably be limited for the next six months, and they will be supplied to subscribers in the order of their applications.

The instruments are perfect recorders of the human voice in conversation or song, and of instrumental music of every possible character and kind. It speaks for itself as against all adverse criticism, and the credulous and sceptical alike bewildered at the wonderful power of its work.

It is simple in its mechanism and can be maintained by the most obtuse novice with a few plain instructions.

It is a rapid and faultless stenographer. As a letter-writer it is fluent as speech, and transmits the exact tone of the voice, or any musical instrument.

Every record once made can be reproduced an indefinite number of times.

The Phonograph and Phonograph-Graphophone will be exhibited to those who desire to become patrons, at the office, 325 Pine street.

Having thus far but one of each instrument, we cannot at this time make our exhibitions more general.

This cutting from the inside lid of the tinfoil machine's box was the first David and I studied and it proved something of a red herring. The reference to the Graphophone must date it to the late 1880's and the wax cylinder period so did this mean that the machine was several years later than we had assumed? From the other evidence it seems that this cutting has no connection to the machine in the box so its presence is a

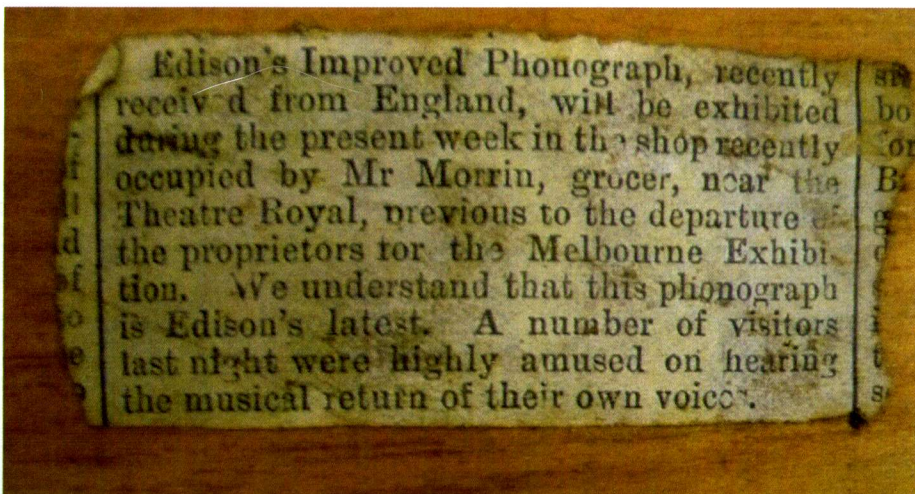
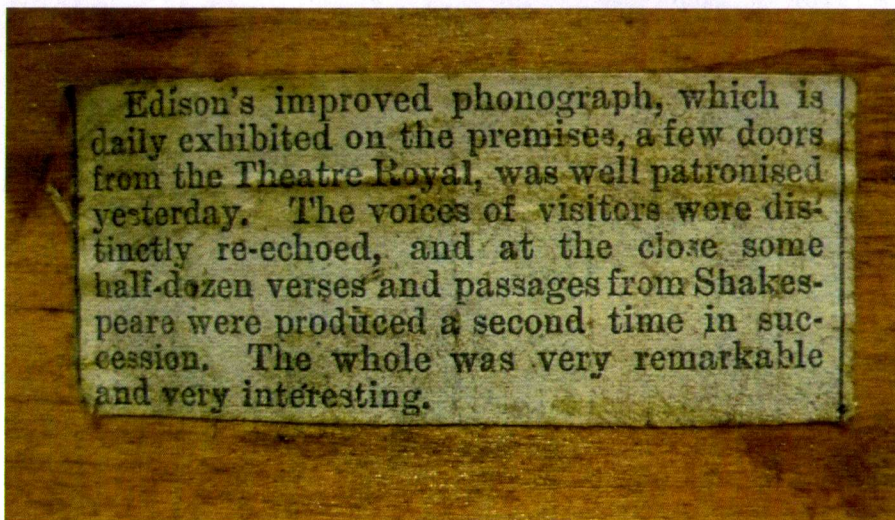
The latest in the phonograph line will be exhibited this evening a few doors from the theatre. The instrument attracted a number of persons last night, who were delighted on hearing the repetition of their voices, the following repeat being clearly and distinctly given. "Good evening to you, wonderful phonograph, pray give us something that will make us laugh." The room is large, visitors are accommodated with seats, and the new light casts a brilliancy over the scene.

NEXT THEATRE ROYAL,
EDISON'S
IMPROVED PHONOGRAPH
TO-MORROW (ST. GEORGE'S DAY).

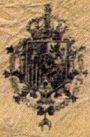
To suit Holiday-keepers the Exhibition will be Open all day. In the Evening it will be Illuminated with the New Argand Light.

ADMISSION : - One Shilling.

Here are two of the clippings stuck to the inside of the lid of the tinfoil machine's box.



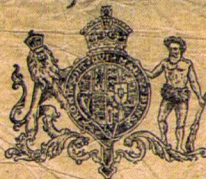
With its reference to "the shop recently occupied by Mr Morrin" the lower of these two clippings, both from the tinfoil's box lid, provided good distinctive keywords to search in combination on Papers Past and led to the 1880 newspaper as mentioned in the article.



T.M. The King and Queen of Spain.



H.M. the King of Italy.



By Appointment to
H.M. Queen Alexandra.



H.M. The Shah of Persia.

The Khedive of Egypt.

You know it by this.

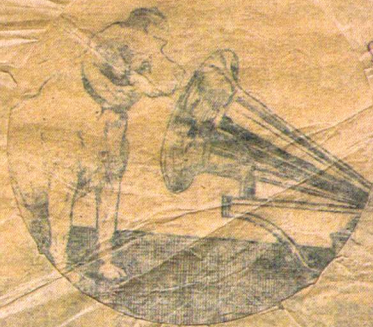


**LOOK FOR OUR PICTURE TRADE MARK,
"HIS MASTER'S VOICE,"
KNOWN THROUGHOUT THE WORLD AS
THE HALL MARK OF QUALITY.**

You know it by this.



Figured Circassian Wood, dull finish, old Brass fittings, Wooden Grills, Double Spring Motor, 12 in. Turntable, Gramophone Taper Arm, Exhibition Sound Box and Speed Indicator.



Figured Circassian Wood, dull finish, dull Silver fittings, Triple Spring Motor, 12 in. Turntable, Gramophone Taper Arm, Exhibition Sound Box and Speed Indicator.

**Use only Genuine Gramophone Needles, which
are sold in Metal Boxes bearing our Picture
Trade Mark "HIS MASTER'S VOICE," in
colours.**

THE GRAMOPHONE COMPANY, LIMITED.

Adam Miller of Wellington was interested to see the early record cover illustrated in a recent issue so looked into his collection and kindly sent this picture of a slightly later Gramophone Co. one, perhaps ca. 1912.

Meeting Reports February to May 2016

By Gavin East

February is late summer in our part of the world so with daylight saving the evenings can still be light until 9.00 p.m. or later. This makes for a very pleasant drive up to Oxford for what has become another fixture on the Society's calendar, the February meeting hosted by Roger and Voila Brown. We met at the Oxford Museum with time to have a good look round what must surely be one of New Zealand's best country town museums – and not just because it houses the Society's collection! Since our previous visit Roger and the team had made the new wing even more impressive and it really gives a feeling of the timber milling, the railways, the farming and the other industries which flourished in the area in the late nineteenth century.

We were very pleased to welcome new members Jan McCormick and Barry Woodman. As well as the “old hands” it was also good to see Peter Harris, who joined the Society recently, and Tony Airs for whom the meeting was a nice short drive from his home at Coalgate.

The agenda to be discussed comprised the usual round of financial reports, correspondence etc. which we galloped through in twenty-five minutes. We could dispense with these formalities in an effort to make the meetings more interesting but then we might have to go back to the separate committee meetings of long ago to discharge our legal responsibilities so we are thinking this one over.

After the close of the meeting at 8.00 p.m. we drove up to Coopers Creek to the beautiful home of Roger and Voila. We had made sure to have enough time to have a good look at Roger's workshop which houses some very fine old motor cars including Roger's Ford V8's and Packards from the 1930's. The car which dominates the workshop, a huge and very rare 1931 Reo Royale Victoria coupe, is not Roger's but has been in his care for some time now after blowing the head gasket on its straight eight cylinder engine. Roger and Tony had just succeeded in getting the head off the engine after an exhausting struggle.

Back in the house after the tour of Roger's workshop we enjoyed a lovely supper from Voila's workshop! We admired the gramophones and musical boxes (not forgetting the kerosene lamps) before thanking our hosts and, most of us, heading back down to Christchurch. And “down” it is, even though the Canterbury Plains appear more or less level. Even in a modern car you have the sense that the engine is not working anywhere near as hard on the return trip as it was going up.

For the March 2016 meeting we once again appreciated the hospitality of Bob and Nu Wright in Aylesford Street, Christchurch. Most matters under discussion were routine though we appreciated the offer of a North Island member to help where possible with some of the gramophone repair enquiries we are getting from his part of the country. We will keep supplying steel needles even when we have no other sales list items remaining so at this meeting we approved a new order.

Wilf Boon had been enjoying reading "For the record" with its reports of meetings in Britain and had suggested to me that we could make our meetings more entertaining by following the British examples. I raised this at the meeting and a good discussion followed. David Peterson suggested that we could have meetings to which we each bring a favourite record on a particular theme.

Wilf was the host for the April meeting at his home in Bowenvale Avenue, Cashmere, Christchurch. Noting the excellent use being made of the Society's collection by the Oxford Museum, I suggested that we could help with finance if the Museum wants to upgrade or improve the phonograph and gramophone display. Members at the meeting agreed with this idea and Roger Brown said he would discuss it with the Oxford Museum management.

North Island member Jim Crook had sent Robert Sleeman a DVD of a German television programme about a collector who specialises in restoring Ariston cardboard disc organettes. The language difference was no bar to our enjoying the DVD during supper.

For the May 2016 monthly meeting we enjoyed a new venue, the comfortable home of Peter Harris in Linwood Avenue, Christchurch. After the business had been taken care of we were in for a treat as Peter has been a collector of many unusual items over many years. Quietly telling us that he hoped we might find some of his things interesting, he brought out one fascinating industrial artefact after another. From one box there emerged vintage egg beaters in varieties we had never imagined (including Archimedes screw and single-handed models), then it was the turn of Peter's coat hanger collection! Once again our eyes goggled at the weird and wonderful designs, some of them surely quite uneconomic to make originally. It was a thoroughly delightful evening which left us keen to pay another visit as we were sure we had had only a glimpse of Peter's collections.



Another view of some of the machines on display at Aeroview in Ashburton for our fiftieth anniversary function in December 2015. The Society's Dulcephone machine at front left is one of several of this model which have been seen in New Zealand, quite possibly from the same original shipment.

Souvenirs from Shropshire

by David Peterson

Earlier this year, my partner Louise and I went on a holiday over to England. We were based in her home town of Shrewsbury amongst the Shropshire Hills, and decided to make a day trip down to the lovely Cotswold town of Northleach in Gloucestershire for a visit to the Mechanical Music Museum.

The museum was established by the late Keith Harding, and still operates a specialised workshop, mainly doing musical box repair work. During our visit we were shown through the collection by an enthusiastic staff member who was eager to demonstrate and play a number of the machines for us. Ranging from early key wound musical boxes to large Symphonion disc boxes, all were in lovely condition and great working order.

The gramophone and phonograph range included an E.M.G. gramophone, Edison Fireside with cygnet horn, and an HMV Monarch with a spear tip wooden horn. There was also a reproducing piano or two, and a barrel organ among other interesting things, but the collection was mainly focused on disc and cylinder musical boxes. The range on display was nothing less than impressive!

We enjoyed the visit, and then wandered down the High Street of Northleach to a lovely 17th century former coaching inn, now housing a great little pub called the Wheatsheaf Inn.

The website address for the mechanical music museum is
www.mechanicalmusic.co.uk

While I didn't go specifically in search of gramophones and phonographs that might be for sale, I did keep an eye out when wandering around antique and second hand stores in the Shropshire area, including towns such as Ludlow, and Bridgnorth. I didn't see anything much for sale apart from two or three more recently made horn gramophones from Asia. I did come across a nice collection of needle tins for sale in the Shrewsbury Antique Centre however, and some of the tins on offer are not often seen on our side of the world. So I was pleased to be able to bring home a nice selection as my souvenir!



Two photos taken by David Peterson earlier this year while he enjoyed a visit to the Mechanical Music Museum at Northleach in Gloucestershire in England.



David Peterson's colourful additions to his needle tin collection, brought back as a souvenir of his and Lou's recent stay in England.

Advertisements

Phonograph Society of New South Wales Inc:

From cylinder to CD, the Society is for those interested in all aspects of historical sound recording and reproduction at its monthly meetings in Sydney. One subscription for all: \$A30 pa Australia and overseas. Write to The Secretary, Phonographic Society of NSW (Inc), P.O. Box 215, Epping, NSW 1710, Australia, or visit our website www.phonographicsocietynsw.welcome.to

Phonograph Society of South Australia:

An organisation of enthusiasts interested in the collection and preservation of the artifacts of sound recording and reproduction and research into their evolution. The PSSA NEWSLETTER, containing interesting articles and news, is published quarterly. Relevant books and reprints are also sold. Annual dues (Australian currency); NZ, Asia and South Pacific \$28.00; Rest of the world \$32.00; Write to: the Secretary, PSSA, P.O. Box 235, Kent Town, S.A., 5071, Australia. Phone and Fax (=61-8+8337-7134) E-mail: nelsent@picknol.com.au

The Antique Phonograph Society:

The California Antique Phonography changed its name at the beginning of 2012. We are now **The Antique Phonograph Society**. Our mailing address remains P.O. Box 169 Victorville, CA 92393 USA. However, our website changed a few years ago to: www.antiquephono.org

Rates for members outside North America are \$40 USD (check) or \$42 USD (through the website/paypal)

The City of London Phonograph and Gramophone Society Limited (CLPGS):

To join us, contact the Membership Secretary: Tim Wood-Woolley, 28 Park Terrace, Westcliff on Sea, Essex, SS0 7PH, United Kingdom or e-mail clpgsmembership@blueyonder.co.uk. For more information visit the CLPGS Web page at www.clpgs.org.uk

Wanted to buy (or exchange for what you need):

Reproducer, arm and “horn” or amplifier for a Mikiophone – or complete Mikiophone in any condition. Bruce Leask, 20 Hind Place, Palmerston North 4410, New Zealand. Phone (06) 3550636.

Wanted to Buy:

Dancing Rastus or similar figures to fit on old gramophone records.

Please email: vrbrown@amuri.net
or phone 064 3 312 4477 (NZ)

Wanted to Buy or Exchange:

HMV No.4 soundbox, gold finish and early style with “His Master’s Voice” printed on front. Record dusters with New Zealand shop names.

Gavin East, 4A Lyttelton Steet, Lincoln 7608, New Zealand,
email: Gavin.East@lincoln.ac.nz

Wanted to Buy:

TANZA 78’s featuring vocals by John Hoskins. Please contact Wilf Boon via the Society’s email address, nzphonosociety@hotmail.com or phone (03) 332 2897

Wanted to Buy:

TANZA records Z90: Pixie Williams singing “Maoriland” and “Sailing Along on a Moonbeam”, with the Allan Shand Orchestra. Would be interested in other TANZA records, please send me numbers.

Contact Francis Young at hjyoung@xtra.co.nz or phone 07 549 2767.



Most of us are now so aware of the deadliness of cigarettes that a title like this gives quite a shock! Robert Sleeman came across this recently at a garage sale.