

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 3.

June/August 2016



Many of the most colourful and appealing record dusters from the 1920's are from Australian gramophone shops and appear to have been designed and made in Australia rather than supplied by the Philadelphia Badge Co. The deep blue on this one helps its impact as a good piece of commercial design.

THE PHONOGRAPHIC RECORD

Volume 51, Issue 3

June/August 2016

Joint editors 1965-1972: Pam Rogers and Walter Norris

Editor 1972-2012: Walter Norris

Magazine team 2012- :

Honorary Editor in Chief 2012-2014: Walter Norris

Editor 2012- : Gavin East,

gavexcat88@gmail.com

Photographer 2012- : David Peterson

Email: nzphonosociety@hotmail.com

Secretary: Mrs S McGuigan

P.O. Box 19839

Woolston

Christchurch 8241

NEW ZEALAND

For your information

Thanks to all the members who have let me know they enjoyed reading about the tinfoil machine featured in the previous issue. An Australian member is the proud owner of a London Stereoscopic model like “our” one and it may well be that this variant of the tinfoil was more widely sold in British Empire countries than any other. David Peterson and I found it very satisfying to be able to put together some information with a bit of historical research.

With my retirement from Lincoln University I have a new email address as above, **gavexcat88@gmail.com**. So much for speeding up production of the magazine in retirement as this issue is so late. Once again, thanks to those who have contributed and I hope you enjoy reading it.

We now have a website! Thanks to the computer skills of James Sleeman we are under way with something which we have discussed for some time. Have a look at **www.phonograph.org.nz** and see progress so far. James is scanning the magazines, from two years ago right back to the first issue of 1965, and the plan is to make them searchable in much the same way as the newspapers on the National Library of New Zealand's Papers Past database. We have discussed what other things to have on the site but it is all in the construction stage so suggestions will be welcome

Gavin East

Editor

PUT A SOCK IN IT

By Mike Tucker 2016 ©

Most young people would not have any idea as to where the saying “Put a sock in it” emanated from. I guess even a lot of older persons would also have difficulty working it out. However, it would come as no surprise to gramophiles that it came from our hobby.

Acoustic gramophones and phonographs initially came with horns and then the cabinet versions came with cloth covered grilles. It was only with the advent of the electric machines that an easily adjusted volume control came into use. Some control could be exercised by the type of needle used, with sound reducing from the extra loud, down through loud, medium and soft, with some improvement at a later period with fibre, cactus etc. needles.

For the acoustic machines, if the volume was too high, the refrain was “Put a sock in it” – in other words, thrust a rolled-up pair of socks down the throat of the horn. Very effective, but not very adjustable.

As usual in those days, there was an immediate move to Patent inventions which allowed control of the volume – some very effective and some not so.

Being an avid collector, I naturally picked up odd items over the years, and among these are a number of acoustic volume controls.

The earliest of these is a very nicely boxed control for a Trade Mark model (Illustrations 1 and 2). This is a delightful item, but not terribly efficient as the method used was to adjust a felt covered plate to press against the diaphragm. This would have resulted in a muffled sound and would have been extremely difficult to adjust for any level of satisfaction.

Another method used on cylinder phonographs is shown at Illustration 3. This is a much more viable approach as the control was simply placed on the reproducer and the horn attached to the top of the control. Sound variation was obtained by moving a sliding lever to adjust the size of the sound outlet. There were numerous variants for this type of volume control.

Edison used a variety of different models of volume controls on the early Business Machines and three are shown at Illustration 4. All used the same concept of restricting the sound outlet by turning a knob, but provided a nozzle for a hearing tube rather than a horn outlet.

Edison also used a volume control on his Diamond Disc Machines (usually as an added extra) which replicates the “Put a Sock in it” concept. A fitting is attached to the front of the motor deck and this houses a lever attached to a cable. The cable is attached to another fitting mounted on the horn and the end of the cable has a large felt ball attached. By sliding the lever, the ball is moved in or out of the throat of the horn, providing a fairly effective volume control (Illustration 5).

Moving again to gramophone volume control, we find that initially cabinet manufacturers utilized a pair of doors in front of the grille and these provided a very basic means of volume control (Illustration 6). Later it was common for manufacturers to add louvre shutters to the front of the machine, giving a fancier look to the machine when not in use and with the louvres closed, but also acting as a volume control depending on the angles of the louvres (Illustration 7)

Finally, and designed, among other things, as a labour saving device (saving you from getting out of the lounge chair to adjust the volume) we have the Aeolian-Vocalion which had a 5 foot cable (which could be retracted into the fitting on the machine when not in use) which allowed the adjustment of a shutter at the base of the horn to control volume (Illustration 8).

I am sure there are many other acoustic volume controls, and these provide an interesting aside to our hobby.



Illustration 1

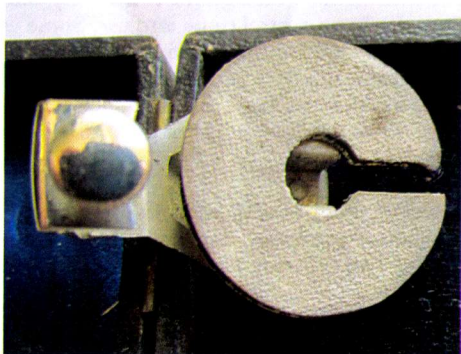


Illustration 2

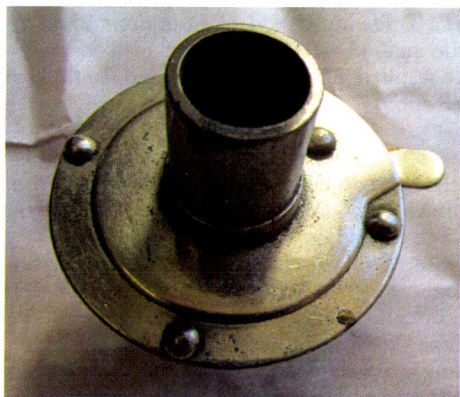


Illustration 3



Illustration 4



Illustration 5



Illustration 7



Illustration 6

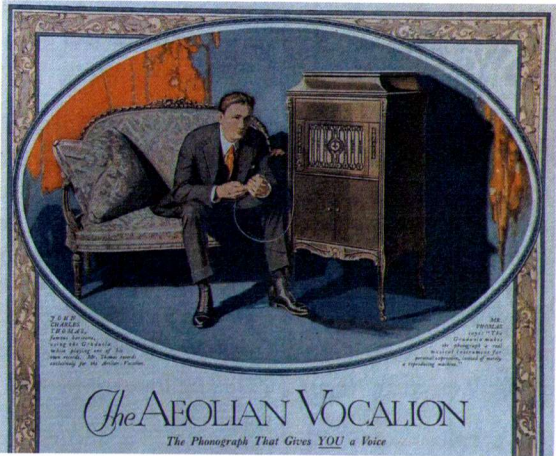


Illustration 8

December 2016.

The Editor
The Phonographic Record
P.O.Box 19-839
Woolston
Christchurch.
8241

Perhaps a story for our Phonographic Record.

I was pleased to receive a phone call recently from Stephen Burdon a society member living close by in Havelock Nth who had read the article on the Ariston organette I had written about in the November 2015 edition of the Record, he said he would like to see it and other gramophones that I had, we arranged a time for that evening and he and his wife Susie arrived where we spent the next hour talking about mutual friends, gramophones, cameras and what about swapping this for that.

Stephen told me of his collection of gramophones, cameras, clocks and the "piece de Resistance" a large theatre projector possibly from one of the local cinemas that have closed in Napier over the years given to Stephen by George Ellison of Napier, the wiring and sound system was modified by Ken Zambra.

Over supper we discussed swapping various items, I said that I had been chasing a cameraphone and had always wanted one, Stephen replied that he had one and could possibly swap that for a Decca gram and small projector that I had, we arranged a meeting for the next evening at Stephen's house and I arrived full of expectation...I was not disappointed, I was blown away with his collection of musical grams, radios, music boxes, watches, clocks and goodness knows what else he had stored under beds and in cupboards, it was an eye-opener to me, Stephen then took me to the garage where the movie projector was set up, we sat for the next forty five minutes watching old films some made by the National Film Unit.

Back inside we made a deal on what we had agreed on, shook hands and I arrived home with my cameraphone, it had been a pleasant evening, Susie had shown me the medals she had won at the Para Olympics and her collection of pens, erasers and other things she collected, my wife and I are part of a group of eight friends who like to live a little [read lot] in the past, I remarked to Stephen that I would like my friends to see his collection and to watch some of the early film that he had, he was elated so we agreed that if our friends came and he showed some of his old films then we would put on afternoon tea for him and Susie at one of our houses...deal done now to arrange a time in the New Year, we are all looking forward to that.

Jim Crook
Clive
4102



This Vogue picture 78, ca. 1946, is an example of a label which is common in the USA but almost unknown in this part of the world. We don't see many picture 78's here but the attractive French Saturn discs turn up once in a while.

Leon's daughter Philippa Levy managed the disposal of the collection at Melody Farm and through the New Zealand "grapevine" was soon able to find good homes for the more significant items. From the few conversations I had with Leon I gathered that his pride and joy was his upright Steck pedal/electric Duo-Art reproducing piano. I was very pleased to be able to buy this from the estate with about 450 Duo-Art rolls. The piano will need full restoration but is complete, original and has been well cared for, making it ideal for restoration. The same goes for Leon's upright Franklin Ampico reproducing piano, now owned by David Peterson and awaiting restoration. Robert Sleeman joined David and me on a visit to Melody Farm to finalise the purchases, pack up the rolls etc. and we could see how much Leon must have loved being among his collection and entertaining visitors. As often in these situations, there was a sadness at seeing a collection soon after its creator's death but the dispersal was being managed well.



Two views of Leon's collection at Melody Farm as it was in 2016



Leon Clements with his music collection in 2009.

Leon Clements 1927-2016

by Gavin East

Former member Leon Clements died in June 2016 aged 89. A farmer at Pukerua Bay near Wellington, he named his property Melody Farm to reflect the large collection of mechanical musical machines which was the passionate interest of his later years. Player pianos were his main interest and he built up a fine collection of instruments and rolls. An extrovert personality, Leon loved showing his collection to visitors.

Some years ago Leon sold a large part of his collection to the Porirua City Council, in whose area he lived, for a sum variously reported but believed to be at least \$350,000.00. Whatever plans the Council had seem to have stalled and the collection is understood to be in storage. Leon either retained a part of the collection or resumed collecting, or both, since his estate included ten or so player pianos, a couple of pushup piano players, various phonographs and gramophones plus radios. All were well housed in an extension to the Pukerua Bay house.

BASIN STREET BLUES

SPENCER WILLIAMS



CLYDE MCCOY
AND HIS
Orchestra

Vogue ★
THE
PICTURE RECORD

A TOM SAFFADY PRODUCT REG. U. S. PAT. OFF.

NOT TO BE USED FOR RADIO BROADCASTING. PHOTODUPLICATIONS PROHIBITED.
© 1937 SAGWAY INDUSTRIES, DETROIT 13, MICHIGAN R707

My two year term as President having ended, David Peterson agreed to accept nomination so with this change included the positions for 2016/17 were confirmed as:

Patron: Joffre Marshall

Secretary: Shirley McGuigan

President: David Peterson

Vice-President: Robert Sleeman

Treasurer: Gavin East

Committee: Wilf Boon, Roger Brown, Peter Harris, Bob Wright plus Gavin East as immediate past President

Moving straight on to the monthly meeting, we discussed the membership statistics supplied by Shirley McGuigan. For many of us the total of 122, including ten in arrears and the three honorary members, was surprisingly low but we had to bear in mind that in recent years many members of long standing, in New Zealand and overseas, have died or retired. We discussed ways to make the monthly meetings more interesting and David Peterson promised to bring ideas to future meetings for discussion. David also thanked the Society for our wedding present to him and Louise, a contribution towards some verandah furniture for "Oak Grove", their new home. We were sorry to have received a letter from Christchurch member Derek Cockburn with the message that he felt it was time for him to retire from involvement in the Society. Derek and Marcia have been regulars at meetings for many years and have hosted us once a year so the least we could do was offer them honorary membership with the hope that we would not lose contact with them altogether.

Meeting Reports June to August 2016

By Gavin East

For the June 2016 meeting we paid another very enjoyable visit, arranged by Roger Brown, to the amazing collection of Ray and Nancy Drury at their property in Whincops Road near Prebbleton. As on previous visits we walked up and down the rows of gleaming veteran, vintage and classic cars, all restored and able to be started up and driven. The scale of the collection and the condition of the cars never fail to impress us. Since our last gathering at the Drurys', Ray has made some major additions to the mechanical music department with the purchase of several fine quality cylinder and disc musical boxes. Ray and Nancy have a particular interest in theatre organs and often have well-known organists such as Richard Hore give public concerts to benefit charities. Ray showed us the vintage Wurlitzer theatre organ he bought a few years ago from Michael Woolf in Wellington. A colossal amount of work was needed to assemble and restore it and it really was stunning to see the result with all the pipes and accessory instruments housed in their own room. Sadly Michael did not live long enough to see and hear the Wurlitzer in its glory.

Lyndsey and Bill Drummond kindly hosted the July 2016 meeting and as always we appreciated a warm living room in the depth of our winter. After some routine business it was time for a catch-up with what the more active collectors present had been doing. David Peterson showed an attractive small Polyphon disc musical box recently added to his collection. I spoke about the trip David, Robert Sleeman and I had made to Porirua near Wellington to view the remaining collection of the late Leon Clements. This is covered in more detail in the article about Leon.

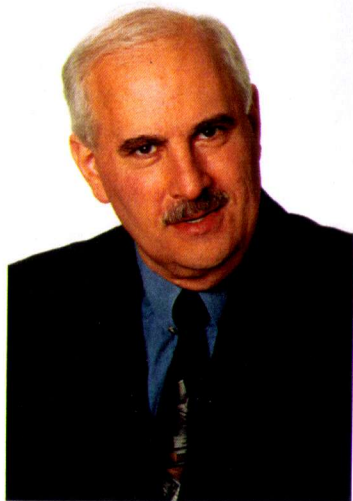
For the August 2016 meeting David Peterson invited us to his home in Cephas Close, Upper Riccarton, Christchurch. It was for most of us a farewell to the house since David and Louise would soon be marrying and settling into their beautiful property north of Christchurch at Ohoka. The highlight of the evening was a demonstration of David's original tinfoil phonograph as described in the previous issue of this magazine. Even with thin modern foil it was quite something to hear David's words reproduced clearly.

The 51st Annual General Meeting and September monthly meeting were held at Bob and Nu Wright's home in Aylesford Street in Christchurch. The turnout was on the low side but enough for a quorum. As chair (man? person? being?) I got off to a bad start by forgetting to bring the previous year's minutes but we carried on regardless.

Michael Woolf 1939-2016

by Gavin East

With the death of Michael Woolf in Wellington in June 2016 aged 77, after a long illness, New Zealand and the international mechanical music community have lost a truly larger than life personality and a man whose talents ranged across many fields. I cannot hope to do justice to Michael's achievements as an actor, broadcaster, editor, educator and magician (!) but I know he will be fondly remembered in all these spheres.

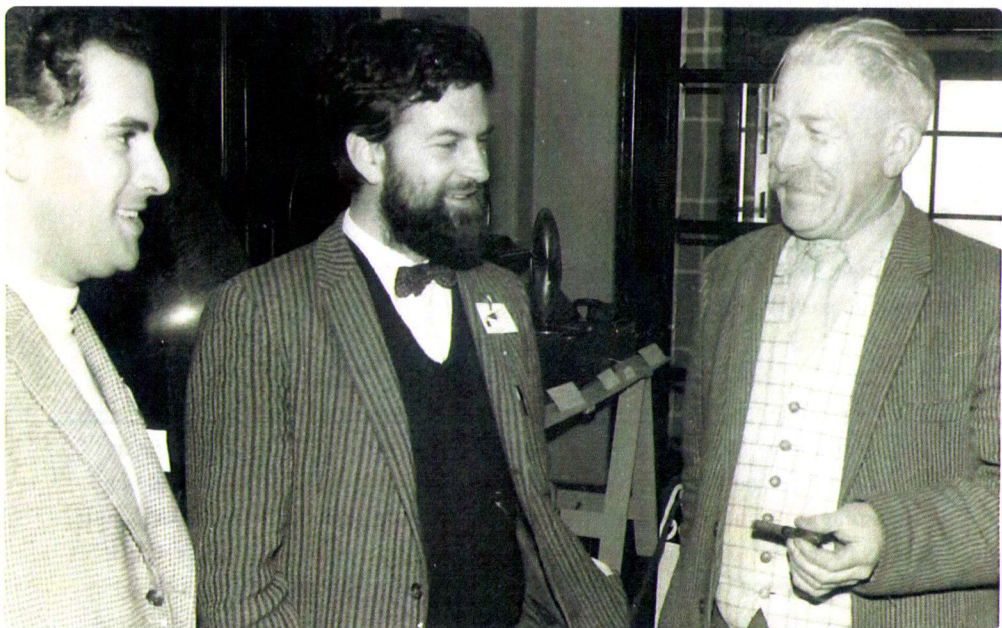


Born in England, Michael came to New Zealand in 1948 with his family. Even on the voyage out he was entertaining fellow passengers and this set the scene for a lifetime love of theatre and music hall. By the early 1960's Michael was already a popular Wellington radio announcer and Downstage Theatre member as well as a keen collector of phonographs, gramophones, records and musical boxes.

For many years Michael, Jill and their family lived in a tall Edwardian Wellington villa, modestly named by its original owner "Valhalla". A steady stream of additions to the collection had to be heaved and hauled up those steep wooden steps from the street to the front door. After seeing some overseas collections Michael imported examples of machines very seldom seen in this country, notably a Reginaphone, a Hexaphone and a Mills Violano Virtuoso. Jim Harper, now living at Foxton, was a huge help to Michael on many challenging restoration projects. With the phonographs, musical boxes and records, plus a fine collection of general Victoriana, "Valhalla" was a fascinating place to visit. Michael was excellent company - very witty, full of good stories well told but also a very good listener.

In later years the Woolfs lived near Wellington at Horokiwi on a property with glorious panoramic views and gale force winds to match. Michael's last years were overshadowed by health and other problems. He had to face the fact that many of his projects were not going to be achievable so new owners were found for several major items from his collection. The Decap orchestrion and the Wurlitzer theatre organ are now in the Drury collection near Christchurch and fully operational. Michael retained the Mills Violano and it was thanks to the time and skill of a very talented friend that he was able to hear this machine play not long before he died.

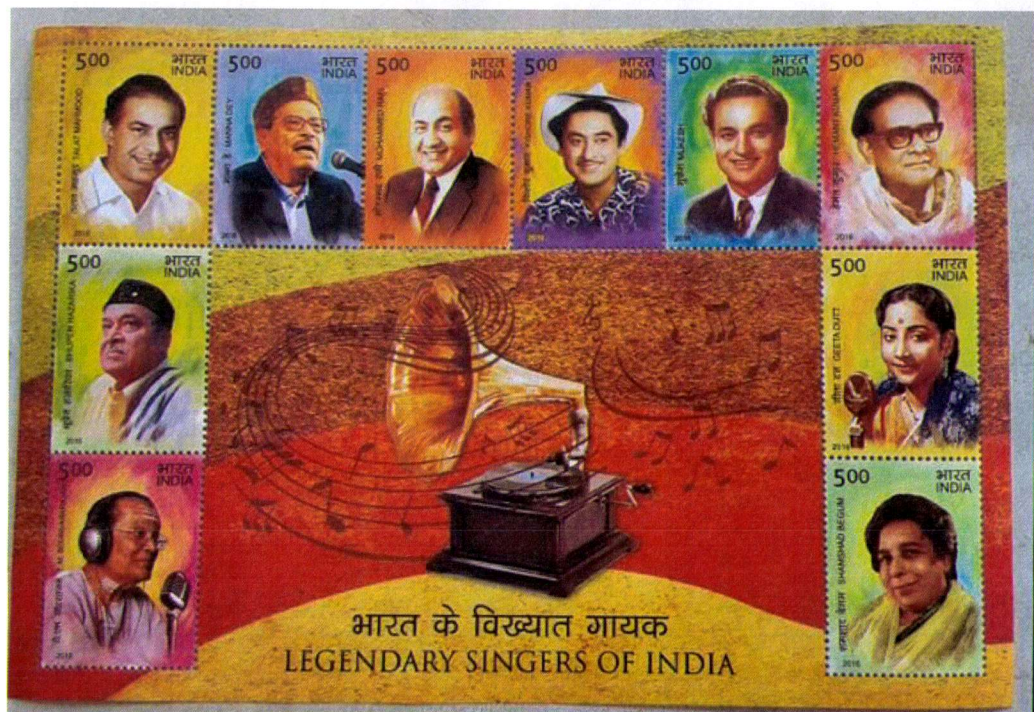
After Michael's death Jill was faced with a daunting task since many of the remaining items in the collection were of specialised appeal and had deteriorated since Michael had acquired them. Rod Cornelius helped place many items now in collections around the country and arranged a successful auction in Auckland for the smaller items. A Wellington removal company soon learned which truck to send to the Woolf property - small enough to negotiate the steep drive but large enough to carry a hoist to load the likes of an Aeolian Orchestrelle player organ and a Steinway red Welte reproducing piano!



From Walter Norris' albums comes this photo of three prominent Wellington collectors, probably taken at the 1965 convention in that city. At left is the late Michael Woolf, in the centre is Bill Main (happily still with us and enjoying meetings of the "scratchy record group") while the genial gent on the right is the late Stanley Northcote Bade, veteran Dodge owner and pioneering historian of New Zealand furniture.



Walter Norris kept this photo, taken at the 1965 convention in Wellington, because the machine intrigued him so much. Though it looks at a glance like an Edison Home it is actually a Chicago Talking Machine Company phonograph of ca. 1895, made using the top works of an electric Edison powered by a motor quite different to the Edison type. As far as I know it is the only example of one of these early “non Edison motor” machines ever found in New Zealand. I understand that it is now in a US collection.



Thanks to Ritesh Das, formerly of Christchurch and now back in India, for sending Robert Sleeman this photo of a recent Indian special issue stamp sheet. I suppose it was inevitable that the designer depicted a typical Indian “reproduction” gramophone!



Richard Rennie has sent this photo of the late Wally Golledge of Nelson with the "other" New Zealand tinfoil machine which Wally showed, and possibly demonstrated, at the 1967 Christchurch convention. If this machine ever comes to light, and has not been restored, we should recognise it from the damaged mouthpiece.

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 Mikiphone – or complete Mikiphone 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: gavexcat88@gmail.com

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.



This double-sided ten-inch disc from David Peterson's collection goes overboard with multilingual title information but what is its brand? It has that “made in Germany just before World War One” look we often see on discs with unusual labels. Was it sold wholesale for a retailer to overlay a label with the chosen title language?

More information please!