

# The Phonographic Record

*Journal of the Vintage Phonograph Society of New Zealand (Inc.)*

A society formed for the preservation of recorded sound

Volume 56, Issue 1, January/June 2021

PAUL



JOHN



RINGO



GEORGE



I hope a Beatles record label pictured on the front of "The Phonographic Record" won't cause too much of a shock but it illustrates a question in the minds of some collectors. Does a society like ours stick to the same implied cut-off date of ca.1930 that the founding members assumed (it was never specified in print) or do we continually move the date forward? Bear in mind that a Beatles 45 pressed in 1965 on a rare New Zealand label is now 56 years old, as much of an "antique" as wax cylinders were when some of us started collecting. Opinions welcome!

# THE PHONOGRAPHIC RECORD

Volume 56, Issue 1, January/June 2021

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## For your information

### Welcome to Our New Patrons

It is with great pleasure that we announce that Tony Airs and Lyndsey Drummond have agreed to be Patrons of the Society. Both have made very significant contributions over many years.

Tony joined in the early days and remembers winning the first raffle! From his workshop came a steady stream of beautifully made replica parts which are today incorporated in machines all over the world. These days Tony lives at Coalgate in inland Canterbury where he enjoys listening to his Edison Amberola 1A, Edison Triumph A and other fine machines plus tending to his stable of special cars including a 1911 FN and the 1922 “duck’s back” Alvis which he has owned for over sixty years. Tony has also spent many years building up a comprehensive and very impressive collection of medals, photos, souvenirs and other memorabilia from the Christchurch International Exhibition of 1906-07. This collection is on display in the historic Terrace Station homestead at Hororata, near Tony’s home.

When Lyndsey Drummond took on the role of Secretary she had no background in collecting or association with old gramophones. Over the years she and Bill developed many friendships among members, here and overseas, and even bought an Edison cylinder machine or two. Since Bill’s passing Lyndsey has moved to the Kauri Lodge retirement complex.

Gavin East  
Editor

## **The Avonia Joy Time Record Album** **By Adam Miller**

The Avonia was a Christchurch (Pepplers Ltd) built gramophone, first appearing in 1922, and selling well through to 1926. In January 1927 the company entered voluntary liquidation. Illustrated is an unusual locally produced record album. Unusual in that it has pockets for just 3 5½" records, but mainly that it shows a kiwi on the cover. The inner and back covers are plain.

The illustrated gramophone is a faithful representation of their portable model, retailing for £10, reducing to £6 in 1926, by when their gramophones could be had on hire-purchase for 5/- down and 2/6d per week.



The imprint at the base reads "Turner, Print". Turners Ltd were a Christchurch firm of photographers, stationers and printers formed in 1918 by the Rev. Nicolas Turner at 625 Colombo St, and only selling out of the family in 1995.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> <http://canterburyphotography.blogspot.com/2014/03/turner-nicholas.html>



When found, the album held three 5½" Pigmy Gramophone records, all being Nursery Rhymes. These were produced by Crystalate Ltd from 1924 to 1925, which fits the timeframe for the album, although there is no way now of knowing if they were the original contents.



Otago Daily Times December 26th 1925 advert for Avonia Gramophones, illustrating their picnic model.

**"and-don't forget  
the 'Avonia'"**

Every "Avonia" is built by expert craftsmen whose ideal is to make the "Avonia" perfect in tone—perfect in mechanism—perfect to the last hidden detail.

A picnic basket—an Avonia Portable—and the right company—there's the ideal combination for a Summer's day.

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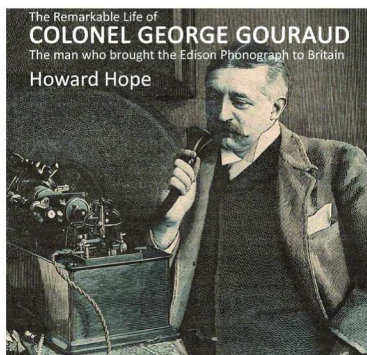
H. Radcliffe, Thistle Street, Oamaru; Grant & Clark, John Street, Balclutha; Geo. Beaman, Grey, N. W. Scott, Arcade Buildings, Wainmote; Avonia Sales Co., Beetham Buildings, Esk Street, Invercargill; or The Avonia Distributing Co., Ltd., 477 Queen Street, Christchurch.

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# Important new book about the man who played a vital part in the early history of the phonograph



After four years of research- including two and a half of writing- I am pleased to announce that my biography of Colonel George Gouraud has now been published.

Gouraud is a name well known to early recorded sound historians, but little was known about his life beyond the simple facts that he was a hero in the American Civil War, became Edison's agent and introduced the Phonograph to Great Britain.

The author set out to discover his broader life, with a lot of newly-researched material.

In it- amongst other things- you will learn how:

He was rescued from his orphaning by the staff of a newspaper.

He carried one of the most iconic despatches of the American Civil War.

He played the very first phonograph in Britain to Winston Churchill at his school.

He was not an American citizen when he died.

English. Softback. 21cms(8 inches)square. Two hundred pages including fifty of illustrations.

Price in the UK. £16.99: (12.99 plus £4.00 post + packing) Also includes the 64p **PayPal** fee.

To Europe: £20.50 inclusive of postage, packing and the **PayPal** fee.

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Again, the price is reduced to £16.35 posted, but a stamp will be needed to send it!

## **MAVtech to the Rescue**

### **by Jim Harper**

MAVtech, the Museum of Audio Visual Technology at Foxton in New Zealand's North Island, has a team of dedicated and talented volunteers including Jim Harper who has sent this article from the museum. Even in this day and age a lovely "long case" banner Home can narrowly escape being dumped! -- Ed.

"In June, a nearby community museum received a surprise visit from an elderly gentleman who brought in this 1903 Home phonograph. He explained that it was owned once by his father, had not worked for many years and that a relative had taken it apart. He stated that it was going to the tip (his next stop) if not wanted by the museum, and he said the museum could dump it if they did not want it. The next day, Jim Harper, Manager of the Museum of Audio Visual Technology (MAVtech) in Foxton received an email asking if MAVtech would have any use for it. Since one of Jim's personal interests is in old mechanical musical item and precision machinery he immediately said YES for MAVtech.

Even if truly wrecked, a few parts could prove useful and so he collected it plus some cylinders the following day. Inspection showed the biggest problem - the Mainspring was missing. Amazingly, the Model C reproducer was in great condition - just minus its connecting wire, also the lifting lever was missing. First the case needed a makeover and the original shellac reconstituted very well. No modern finishes were needed. Also the Banner sign brightened up with careful cleaning using cotton buds. Jim sawed and filed a lifting lever out of 1.9mm Chromed steel - from a broken can opener!

With no borer or disintegration of the case, remarkably little rust and the screw drive in near perfect condition... it is surprising the phonograph could have survived storage for so long - considering it was regarded as a piece of junk. There was dirt on the base which suggests it may have been stored in a very dry spot under a house. So next stages in the restoration project will be to fit a new mainspring (already ordered) and then to obtain a crane and horn...and the Museum would welcome any assistance to obtain these items.

Jim comments "The Home Phonograph has the potential to be a useful educational exhibit at MAVtech Museum as the shaver would allow cylinders to be prepared for recording, and a cutting reproducer would enable students to make recordings on wax cylinders and play them back. A very practical way of showing how analogue sound was made". So, MAVtech is pleased that this old phonograph was diverted from its journey to the tip at almost the last moment

... and will now have a new life at the Museum.

**Contact information: Jim Harper, Manager, MAVtech;**  
**email: [jebharper@xtra.co.nz](mailto:jebharper@xtra.co.nz)**

MAVtech's Edison Home Model A before and after restoration





## **Meeting Reports January to June 2021**

### **by Gavin East**

On Monday 25 January 2021 we kicked off the year's meetings with the customary gathering at my place in Lincoln. 2020 had ended well for us with a buffet pre-Christmas meal at the Garden Restaurant. The best news to start 2021 was that Lyndsey Drummond and Tony Airs had accepted our invitation to become Patrons.

Sadly we had to acknowledge the deaths of two members, Graeme Atherton of Hamilton and Peter Bowler of Caboolture, Queensland. Mr Atherton's daughter Diane Hodges will continue his membership for which we are grateful. Mr Bowler was a man of considerable literary achievement as a Google search will show.

We have tried various avenues to secure a supply of leather driving belts but to no avail so for the time being at least we will have to give up the search. It seems strange that no leather goods manufacturer will look at a job like this so perhaps we just have not known who to ask.

As always the conversation ranged over many interesting topics and we were fascinated to hear that Bob and Nu Wright had recently revisited a West Coast gold dredge Bob last saw many years ago. On that earlier visit I am not sure that Bob could have imagined that this time he would use a drone to take a video with son Alan controlling the drone by phone from Germany.

My Ampico was powered up for a couple of rolls, "Sittin' in a corner", fox trot played by Adam Carroll and a selection from the musical "Maytime". With this second roll I had help from other collectors in two ways, first in obtaining it as it turned up on Trade Me as the only Ampico roll in a job lot. The collector who bought the lot very kindly sent me the roll which turned out to have lost its original leader information so I had to guess at the tempo. A question on Mechanical Music Digest soon supplied the answer. It is a common Ampico roll in the USA but so few Ampico pianos came to New Zealand that it could be the only copy of this roll in the country.

Roger Brown has written about our February 2021 meeting, a visit to Lou and Leslie McAllister near Cust in Canterbury. I will only add that what really made the afternoon was Lou's personality and quiet sense of humour. He told us that

he has never gone out specifically looking for something but has always relied on coming across an item for sale and deciding that he would be happy to add it to his collection. I think that this is how most gramophone collections grow, at least up to the stage where the collector feels a gap needs to be filled.

For the March 2021 meeting we went to Bob and Nu Wright's where the routine business was quickly disposed of and the conversation ranged far and wide. Bob showed us two beautifully made little brass microscopes from his collection. David Peterson had brought a cutting from a recent issue of "The Press", Christchurch's daily newspaper, reproducing the original account of the exhibition of the first wax cylinder Edison phonograph here in 1891. We noted that there was no mention of the tinfoil phonograph which must have been largely forgotten by the time the later machine arrived.

Wilf Boon gave us an interesting update on the preparation of the Dini Collection of phonographs etc. for the forthcoming opening of its new dedicated building at Ferrymead Historic Park. Wilf's friend Ron Gardiner has been working on the collection and we agreed with Wilf's suggestion that Ron might like to come to one of our meetings.

Peter Harris told us something of his latest road trip, a Riley car rally, and mentioned a new acquisition which had us rather puzzled, a coin-operated radio.

In April 2021 we met at Wilf Boon's home where Ron Gardiner joined us. As Ron described the machines in the Dini Collection he has been refurbishing, we were able to fill in some details and this led to reminiscing about Bill Dini who was a very prominent collector and member of our society in the 1960's and 70's.

Robert Sleeman had brought a carton of old sheet music from which several members chose items. David Peterson told us more about the machines he has recently sold to the Willow Bank private museum at Wakefield. As well as an Edison Standard he has supplied the museum with an Amberola 75 which will be a very practical demonstration machine.

I showed a triple compartment HMV needle tin, possibly quite early, and commented that these long multi-compartment tins are seldom seen and extremely hard to find in good condition. I also mentioned having enjoyed Anzac Day, 25 April, with our co-Patron Tony Airs as passenger in Tony's very original 1911

two-seater FN Type 1600 on a veteran and vintage car tour around several inland Canterbury war memorials.

Wilf Boon is building up a fine collection of TANZA 78's and cranked up one of his horn gramophones to play us no. 15, "Windy City" sung by Pixie Williams.

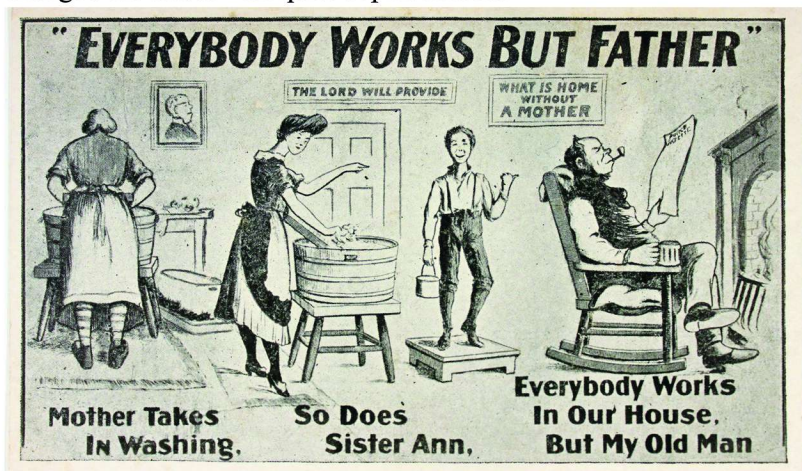
Kathleen Campbell hosted the May 2021 meeting at her home in Kaiapoi. The news of Bob Wright's death had come as a shock to us all and naturally we spent some time in fond memories before opening the meeting.

Shirley McGuigan has let us know that she will be retiring from the Secretary's position at this year's AGM. This will be a big change after Shirley's many years of service.

David Peterson was able to tell us that his Ampico reproducing piano has been delivered and installed following its first class restoration by Stephen Powell in Wellington.

Robert Sleeman showed us a Corgi scale model HMV delivery van.

Kathleen had prepared an interesting programme of Victorian and later magic lantern slides which we settled down to enjoy. For one comic set Kathleen had found on Youtube a clear recording of a rare US Columbia cylinder of Lew Dockstader singing "Everybody works but Father" which we heard while Kathleen changed the slides - all quite sophisticated!







Roger Brown took this photo of the group at Lou and Leslie McAllister's property at Cust in February 2021. Bob Wright is seated and standing are, from left, Robert Sleeman, Tony Airs, Andrew Marshall, Lou McAllister, David Peterson, Leslie McAllister, Gavin East, Nu Wright, Denis O'Rourke, Steve James, John Hastilow and Wilf Boon. Behind us is Lou's frequently flown de Havilland Chipmunk.

## **Rarities Within Rarities : Analysis of Serial Numbers of the Edison Opera, Concert and Related Models**

### **by Mike Tucker**

This is another article based on information collected on Edison serial numbers.

In this case, I have focused on a rare machine, one of which has rarities within a rarity.

Collectors are generally well aware of the sought after Edison Opera issued between 1911 and 1912. Less well known is the Concert Model, which was identical to the Opera and was issued from 1912 to 1913. Even less well known is the School Model, which was specially constructed for school use using the Opera mechanism and which was issued with an Opera identity plate.

The Opera and Concert Models were issued in Mahogany or Oak, with matching wooden horns. The School Model was issued in black painted metal with a metal paneled cygnet horn. All models had the special Opera type horn elbow.

My research has shown that approximately 3,750 Operas were produced, plus approximately 250 School models in the same numbering system. Oak machines were issued in the late model Triumph case rather than the elaborate Opera case (An Edison economic rationalization?) and only after about the first 900 Operas were issued in Mahogany.

As both the Model F Triumph (featuring the new oak case) and the Opera were released in November, 1911, and as no oak operas were issued below approximately number 900, it is clear that the oak case was designed for the Triumph, and not the Opera as has been suggested by some scribes. Edison always considered mahogany to be the timber of choice for his quality machines and

it is my belief that Edison was pressured to provide Oak cased Operas to complement the oak furniture which existed in many households at that time. Not knowing what demand would be, the logical economic approach was to use the Triumph case so that an expensive run of oak cabinets in the more elaborate style could be avoided.

Concert Models continued in the same serial number series as the Opera and ranged from around the 4,000 mark to my highest known number of 4,604.

From the details I have collected, the statistical spread of the different Opera types is as follows:-

1. Concert – Oak	Approximately 215
2. School	Approximately 250
3. Concert – Mahogany	Approximately 385
4. Opera – Oak	Approximately 1,170
5. Opera – Mahogany	Approximately 2,580

From this information, it becomes apparent that the generic term “Opera” used for this rare and very desirable machine does not reflect the relative rarity or variations within the Type. The commonly visualised mahogany Opera is in reality the most common variation within the Type.

For those of you who are keen collectors, you need to collect five machines to truly cover the Opera Type, and for the serious collector, those five machines plus the Amberola B1 and Amberola III which also use the Opera mechanism. Being very fortunate, I have collected an Oak Concert machine, which, as I have indicated, I consider to be the rarest of all Opera Type machines and undoubtedly a “rarity within a rarity”.

I have also been able to collect a mahogany Opera, a School and an Amberola III. I am still looking for an Amberola B1. The Amberola A1 and B1 shared the same number series, with the A1 reaching approximately number 3600. One third of these are oak and I have one Circassian Walnut model listed.

For comparison purposes, my research indicates that there were approximately 1,300 Amberola B1 models made (highest number listed is 4919) and 72% of the numbers I have collected are for mahogany models. This means that only around 28% (approximately 360) were oak. The great pity is the number of these machines which have been “converted” to the less rare Opera.

The Amberola III appears to have had its own number series, and the highest number I have listed is 1,330. 66% of those on my list are Ma-



hogany. About half the machines I have listed above number 450 had a “IIIB” designation on the i.d. plate rather than the earlier “III”- Perhaps my informants have neglected to include the “B”, so the exact usage of this designation needs to be clarified. As my listings for both these console models are limited, these figures could vary somewhat.

Any additional numbers and information would be appreciated.

As console models tended to have a lower survival rate than horned models (from my personal observations), both these machines are rare and very desirable.

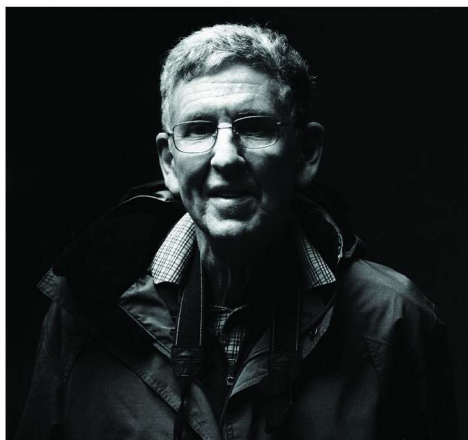
If you have any additional numbers and/or information,

Please contact Mike Tucker at 28 Meredith Ave, Hornsby Heights, 2077, Australia, or on e-Mail at **mtucker1939@gmail.com**.

### **Editor’s comment:**

In a previous issue of this magazine I commented that mahogany Operas and oak Concerts seem in my recollection to be the versions which turn up most often in Christchurch, New Zealand. Mike’s experience is very different with the oak Concert being much the rarest of the Opera/Concert variants. I can only conclude that, for a small market like Christchurch, a single shipment probably made all the difference.

**Obituary**  
**Robert “Bob” Wright**  
**28 January 1942 - 4 May 2021**  
**by Gavin East**



Christchurch meetings and the Society as a whole have lost a long time member and very good friend with the death of Bob Wright at the age of 79. Many of us attended Bob's memorial service at The Piano in Christchurch at which his wife Nuong and sons Alan and David gave a very full and moving account of a remarkable life. We heard of his early years and position as an electrical technician at Lincoln College followed by later work in the field of traffic and noise control. Anyone visiting the Wrights' unique house, designed by Bob, would sense immediately that it is the product of a highly original mind combining the practical with the aesthetic.

I don't think there can be any doubt that Bob's most important decision was to go to Vietnam as a volunteer with the Red Cross helping displaced mountain people. He met Nuong (Nu) and they subsequently returned to live in Christchurch where they raised their two sons.

Bob joined the Society in the late 1970's and, though never a collector on a large scale, enjoyed his Edison diamond disc machine, Amberola 30, HMV 157 and other machines as well as a large collection of classical music on LP. At meetings he and Nu took a keen interest in everything shown or discussed and could always be relied on to give good advice and add some humour. For the last sixteen years of his life Bob lived with Parkinson's disease which towards the end was seriously affecting his mobility and speech. With his determination and Nu's help as a physiotherapist he was still able to enjoy an active and varied life right up to the end.

## **Visit to the McAllisters' Museum - Cust**

### **by Roger Brown**

The February 2021 meeting of the Phonograph Society was a little different from the usual. We had an afternoon visit to Lou and Leslie McAllister's museum in Cust, North Canterbury.

On arrival we were met by Lou and Leslie who spoke to us about their farm and museum. Parked out in front of the Museum was Lou's de Havilland Chipmunk aeroplane, 1946 vintage. This was the plane which preceded the Tiger Moth. In the entrance to the museum is a nice old 1920's Conover pianola built by the Cable Company of Chicago. The pianola has been electrified for ease of playing. Lou flicked the switch and the music played.

This pianola was salvaged by our member Robert Sleeman and passed on to Lou for repairs and a new life. We listened to two 78 records on an old upright gramophone, one record was the Colonel Bogey march and the other the Harry Lime theme.

We then moved into the car collection and tractor/bulldozer display. Our next interest was a huge portable generator. This was a National 5 cylinder diesel engine, requiring a 5hp primary motor to start it. The eventual output is 70kva's at 750rpm. Yes, Lou started it up and our hands were over our ears as it roared into life. This machine of 1940 vintage was used as a standby at the Wigram air base.

As we moved on we viewed a lovely collection of American classic sports cars and Australian Fords and Holdens. The Edison Sheraton gold trimmed diamond disc machine was of strong interest as many favourites were played.

Leslie arrived with some of her delicious baking and tea and coffee for all. We sat and enjoyed our afternoon tea and were entertained by a mini Mustang flying in, with a mechanic who was bringing a new magneto for Lou's plane.

As we were about to leave Lou's son Andrew flew in, in his Alphonse Pioneer plane. What a great afternoon, thank you Lou and Leslie, I am sure we will all remember our visit to your amazing Museum.





Thanks to Steve James who found and photographed the stereoscopic card of which this is half.  
In the original caption the children think they must be near Heaven since they can hear the  
angels sing - high praise indeed for a Columbia B.

## **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](http://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](mailto:nelsent@picknol.com.au)

### **The Antique Phonograph Society:**

The California Antique Phonograph Society 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](http://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@blueyinder.co.uk](mailto:clpgsmembership@blueyinder.co.uk). For more information visit the CLPGS Web page at [www.clpgs.org.uk](http://www.clpgs.org.uk)

**Wanted to Buy:**

Dancing Rastus or similar figures to fit on old gramophone records.  
Please email: v.rbrown@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.

**Wanted to buy:**

Large cygnet crane with adjuster spring. The repo ones the society used to make would be fine. Chris Rogers 3 Windham St Vic Australia 3749 email c.m.rogers@bigpond.com.au



The private recordings made by Florence Foster Jenkins in the early 1940's have long enjoyed a unique status among collectors. If you don't know her name and missed the excellent 2016 film about her starring Meryl Streep and Hugh Grant, Google will help explain her fame.

In their original form her 78's were pressed in limited quantities for the singer to distribute. The one illustrated, which has just changed hands between New Zealand collectors, was found in the roof of a house in Auckland many years ago.