

The Phonographic Record

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

A society formed for the preservation of recorded sound

Volume 59, Issue 2, July/December 2024



*Best wishes for
Christmas
and New Year*

THE PHONOGRAPHIC RECORD

Volume 59, Issue 2, July/December 2024

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For your information

With the 2024 AGM we entered the Society's sixtieth year, an achievement I doubt that any of us anticipated on 9 September 1965 when we met in Pam Rogers' living room at 73 Flockton Street, Christchurch. As I was aged twelve and spent the founding meeting sitting quietly at the back, I cannot claim any great contribution to the birth of the Society but I do remember some things about that meeting and treasure the memories of the early years.

Thanks as always to the contributors who have made this issue possible and to Bethany Bond for the technical preparation. I make no apologies for devoting space to organettes as they represent one facet of the recorded sound we seek to preserve.

Gavin East
Editor



78RPM RECORD SHIPPING BOXES

by Adam Miller

Having obtained two of these boxes as part of acquiring some of the late Bill Main's collection early in 2024, and already having a couple of others, the idea for an article was planted. Records were shipped from the pressing plants out to the various record shops in smallish flat square-sided boxes, made of a thick greyish card. These consisted of a plain base, about 3" high, with a fitted lid which was usually printed on the top and all four sides with some combinations of the record company's name, logo, and label names.

The lids and bases are all folded from a single piece of card, with the corners being held by heavy staples.



HMV 12" top and side.



Zonophone 12" top and side.

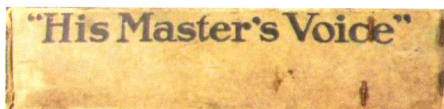
The 12" HMV box above has the "Greatest Artists – Finest Recording!" on opposing sides of the lid, although the other side to the one illustrated above has the wording all in one line. The other two sides have the "His Master's Voice" text, as illustrated on the nextpage for the 10" HMV box.

The Zonophone Records box lid has the same text on all four sides. One sighted on the Web for 10" Zonophones has the same image on the top, but two sides of the lid have "Zonophone" and "Records" in separate outlined boxes and the other sides have "Zonophone Records" and "Supreme Value" similarly boxed. The card used there is also tinted red.

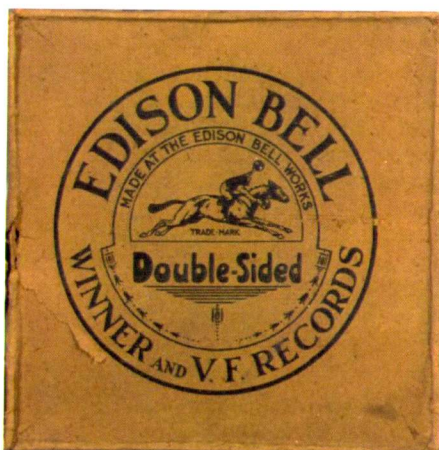
The 12" boxes measure 13" square by 3 - 3/4" high, and appear to have held 20 discs, assuming the usual paper sleeves and record thickness. The 10" boxes measure 10 1/2" square by the same height, so presumably held the same number of records.

Only the 12" HMV box has space set aside for a destination address, meaning the boxes themselves would normally be shipped in bulk as part of a larger consignment and, I assume, would also be returned when emptied for re-use.

As well as the four branded boxes illustrated here, I also have a plain box for shipping 12" discs.



HMV 10" top and side

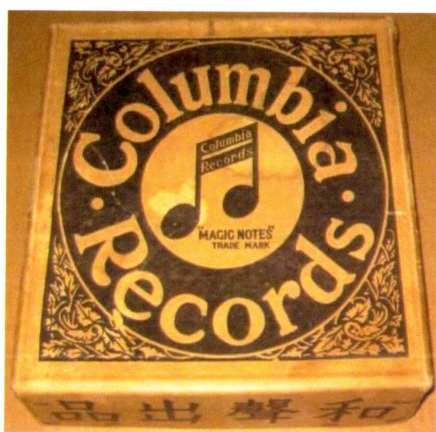


Edison Bell 10" top and sides.

The 10" HMV box above has the same text on all four sides of the lid. The Edison Bell box lid has the "WINNERS" text on opposite sides, same for the "VELVET FACE". It is also in a red - brown shade of the cardboard.



HMV (Electrical Recording)
Size unknown
forum.antiquephono.org



Columbia Japan 10"
Empty box sold in 2013 for US\$90!
popsike.com

RESTORING VICTORIAN ORGANETTES

Text and Photos by Jim Harper, Foxton, New Zealand

Since earliest times people wanted to hear music, but the problem in the past was that it needed to be listened to in real time – that is, while being performed. The historical challenge therefore was to how record music and play it back at a later time?

As technology advanced various solutions were found – music boxes, carillons etc. The key breakthrough was of course the invention and development of the phonograph which could record and reproduce analogue sound

But in the late 19th century – before the phonograph was suitably commercially developed – organettes were a popular way of playing music in a household. An organette is basically a small reed organ that reproduces sound digitally because it is activated through reading a binary on/off command programmed on some medium – typically a cardboard or metal disc or a paper roll or cardboard card. When a hole passes over a tracker of some sort, a mechanical linkage or an air activated control then makes the mechanism play the relevant note.

A few million organettes were produced from the late 1870s until the early 20th century ...and later these were discarded or abandoned in similarly huge numbers following the introduction of better alternative music sources ...like phonographs and later, radios.

Back then the public paid serious money for organettes. According to the NZ Reserve Bank's Inflation Calculator one pound in 1890 equals \$243 today. So, Aristons advertised for sale in the 1890 Pahiatua Star newspaper advertisements for 2 pounds 10 in 1890 would represent around \$600 today. Also, the tune card discs costing 2 shillings would now equate to about \$25 each. Also it may be noted that the Ariston was one of the cheaper organettes on the market.

In 2023 following my Trademe purchase of his Edison Blue Amberol cylinder (22541 New Zealand March), David Peterson told me he had several interesting unrestored organettes that did not work. That was a challenge I decided to meet - so I restored four of them. Each has interesting features and is described below.

ARIOSIA

Made by the Phoenix company in Leipzig around 1900, these German organettes play from 18 note annular zinc discs and like most German organettes, work on air pressure. The system operates with direct mechanical linkages, so there is a lot of tension on the steel keys that are held down under pressure to "read" the metal discs. Correct adjustment of the keys and linkages to internal pallets is critical. The extremes of incorrect pallet adjustment range from silence to a howling chorus of random notes. The major issues with this Ariosa were in repairing the mechanical linkages, making some new parts, calibrating pallets, replacing defective leather and repairing all air leaks. With the case removed, the internal mechanism reminds me of an old typewriter. Lots of bent wires and levers are involved which, while looking flimsy, work surprisingly well when correctly adjusted. Subsequently David obtained a selection of the rare zinc discs for the instrument, all of which are in good condition – not oxidised or with holes stripped through. An operating danger with organettes having metal keys to read the media is that a key locked in the up position can strip through that line of holes. Like a can opener.



Ariosa organette mechanism



Restored Ariosa organette



ARISTON

The Ariston is another German organette and has 24 notes played by a cardboard disc. These were made by the Paul Ehrlich company in Leipzig from around 1886 to 1900. (Leipzig was a major centre for producing all kinds of mechanical musical instruments). The Ariston was one of the most popular models made in those years. Being competitively priced and having an extensive catalogue of music – about 4000 tunes, the Ariston soon became a leading seller.

Over 200,000 are estimated to have been made. However, since the instrument is overall a sealed unit, the Ariston is not “restorer friendly”. Sections cannot be easily tested independently. The various compartments must remain isolated and airtight and be trialled together. A show-stopping issue with David’s instrument was that four of the reeds had been broken (ie, not fallen) off. To explain a likely reason for this, a speck of grit or a fragment of paper in an organ reed can totally silence it. Accordingly anyone tweaking a reed to clear it might easily break off the tongue. Fortunately with advice from a leading Canadian restorer – Ingmar Krause – plus some “donor reeds” from Robert Sleeman who possessed Ariston parts – and also one reed that I made, this Ariston was restored.



Testing the Ariston organette

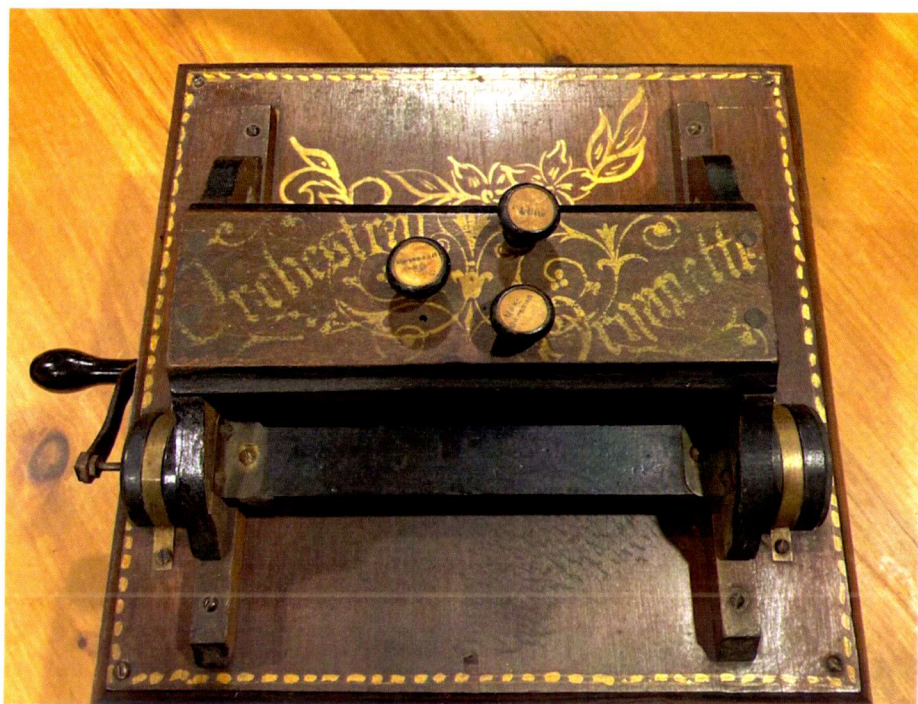


Replacing a reed in the Ariston organette

DRAPER'S ORCHESTRAL ORGANETTE

Draper's 14 Note organette was made in Blackburn, Lancashire under licence from McTammany in the USA. John McTammany was indeed a pioneer in the industry but he is also remembered for his wide ranging, and in various key respects inflated claims to have invented mechanical music.

The "Orchestral Organette" (makers typically liked grandiose titles) plays from perforated paper rolls and operates on a vacuum system. The paper acts as the direct valve – a passing hole allows air to be sucked in through the reed. These were made in various styles from around 1886 until the early 1900s. Draper reversed the usual location of reeds – more typically these are placed under the tracker bar – but here the reeds are positioned above it. This, and also the American "OrguINETTE" are designed to play continuous music. That is, a music strip is joined end to end in a loop so it passes underneath between the cabinet legs and goes around, and around, and around ...until cranking stops. This configuration enables the little organette to play continuously – for example, at a dance. And consequently the top of the organette instrument is designed to be easily detachable so that the paper loop can be loaded.





AMERICAN ORGUINETTE

This plays the standard 14 note scale and is otherwise similar to the Draper Organette. Overall the restoration challenge with all the organettes was to make missing or damaged parts, recover vacuum bellows with suitable rubber/linen bellows cloth and replace pallet and flap valve leather. Leather flap valves typically become hard and warped so will not seal. Pressure bellows are often hard sealed cardboard units but the weakest points are the folding edges and corners and sometimes the flap valves. I restored damaged hinged areas in most cases using strong but thin pouch leather. Hot hide glue remains my favourite dependable and reversible glue for all wood, paper and leather. Other restoration materials – like bellows cloth and organ leathers - are however becoming harder to source as suppliers discontinue low demand items and untested replacement materials, including synthetics, become substituted and promoted for use. The vacuum operated organettes are effectively 140 year old vacuum cleaners. The interiors of those organettes often contain remarkably large items of paper and other items plus heaps of dust. Disassembly of these bellows was an outdoor job and the opportunity to draw down my stock of unused Covid masks.



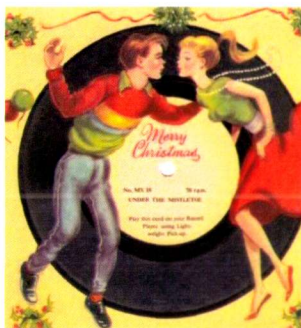


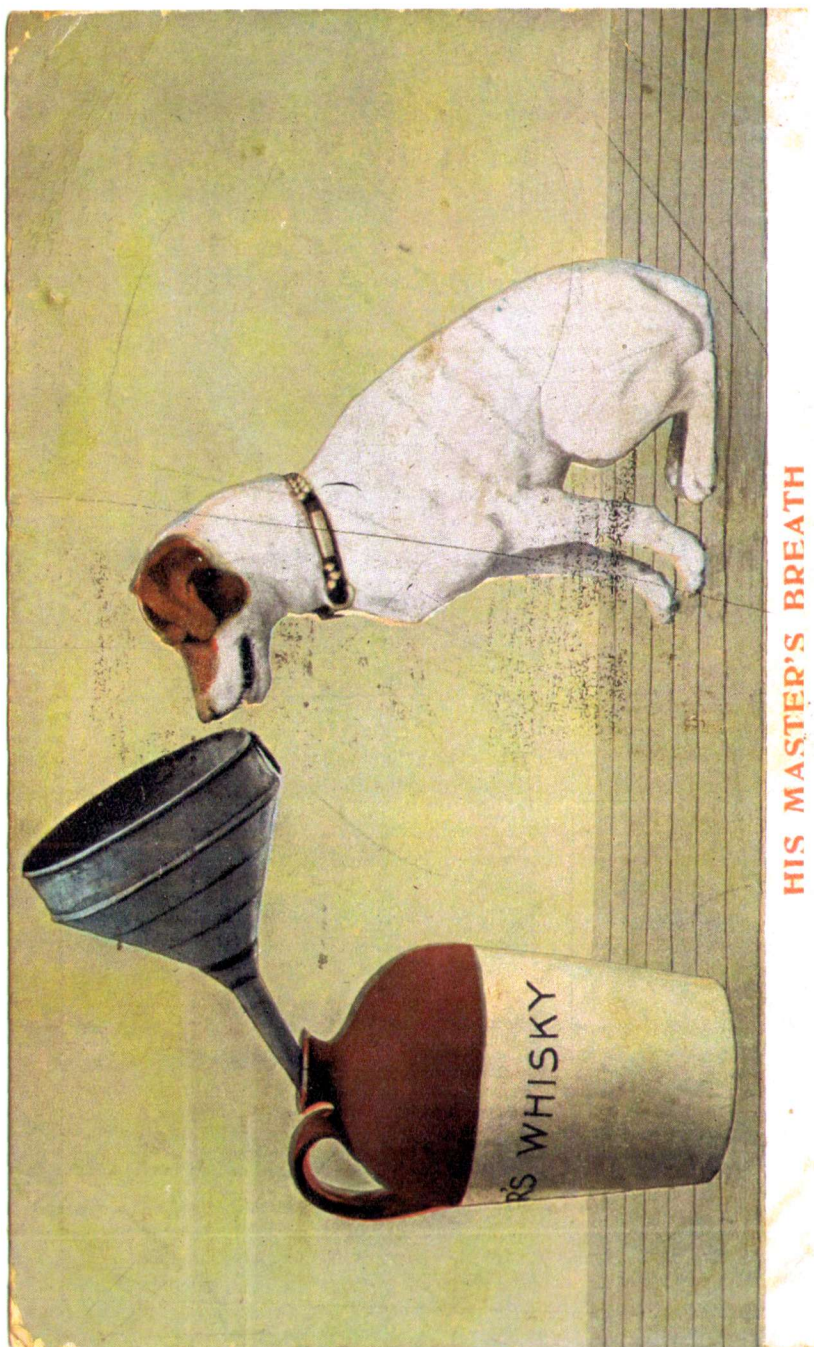


To conclude, in my early collecting years I was dismissive of organettes largely because I seldom heard any that were playing tolerably well, and the limited scales played seemed to mark them out as being almost toys. However, I eventually discovered that even the standard 14 note American Organette scale allows well orchestrated tunes to be played very convincingly.

One unexpected benefit from the project was the opportunity to copy many good tunes from David's large collection of 14 note music strips. The 140 year old originals were mostly too worn to play again but I copied many on to paper and card. One favourite find is "Ring the Bell, Watchman", an evangelical hymn that is reputedly still being sung in East Africa. But around 1891 worldly Australians reinvented the hymn as the famous bush ballad song "Click go the Shears".

So, once again these little organettes can play some of the Victorians' favourite tunes just as they heard that same music played well over a century ago.





HIS MASTER'S BREATH

Postcard image courtesy Adam Miller



This photo, from the Jones Collection in the Nelson Provincial Museum (Nelson, N.Z.), was taken by Frederick ("Pompy") Jones and appears to date from ca. 1906. As well as being a photographer and the creator of several "Pixie Town" automated displays, Jones was a showman who exhibited a range of phonographs, some of which he embellished with names of his own creation. The Columbia BC shown here as a "Machophone" has recently changed hands from one major New Zealand collection to another. Fortunately the "Machophone" name was painted on a separate panel with the original Columbia transfer preserved underneath.

MEETING REPORTS JULY-OCTOBER 2024

by Gavin East

July 2024 found us meeting at Kathleen Campbell's home in Kaiapoi near Christchurch. Before we were allowed to "play" with Kathleen's extensive collection of stereoscopes and postcard viewers we had to deal with the usual agenda of finance, correspondence etc., not that it takes very long these days. Some of us had attended the funeral of Richard McGuigan whose wife Shirley was our Secretary for many years. Until his health deteriorated, Richard enjoyed catching up with us at least once a year at the pre-Christmas meal.

David Peterson and I had visited Marcia Cockburn and her family to offer advice on dealing with the late Derek's record collection. We had not seen Marcia for some time so it was good to find her very well at the age of 95.

For August 2024 we skipped a "formal" meeting and enjoyed a film evening with Ian and Bev Fisher in their private cinema in Christchurch. As always, Ian had put together a varied and interesting programme and had lots to tell us about his collection of projectors and their links to picture theatres of the past.

September 2024 was Annual General Meeting time and this year we gathered at David and Louise Peterson's home in Ohoka. A good turnout was augmented by Ginny the spoodle. Edan Bowman's President's report led to the sort of discussion many societies are having these days, about whether to remain incorporated given the number of hoops which have to be jumped through to satisfy the relevant legislation. We agreed to remain an incorporated society for now but to look at the situation again in due course.

Some aspects of being an incorporated society, believe it or not, appear to be quite "simple", notably the financial statement required by the Companies Office. The guidelines on its website indicated that the necessary report on income and expenditure, assets and liabilities could be prepared without the need of a professional accountant. As we no longer need an auditor under the new constitution, I had thanked Trish Matunga for her help over many years and was able, with David Peterson's help, to present a statement which was approved at the AGM. So far so good but that left actually filing the thing online! Edan Bowman agreed to help with this part.

Under the original 1966 Constitution Edan Bowman would have had to step down after two years as President. As this was the first AGM under the new Constitution, with a limit of five consecutive one-year terms for President and three for other elected officers, we treated this election as starting year one under the new rules. Edan noted that other societies have unsuccessfully sought guidance from the Companies Office on this.

So the officers following the 2024 AGM are:

Patron: Tony Airs

President: Edan Bowman

Vice-President: Robert Sleeman

Secretary: Nu Wright

Treasurer: Gavin East

Committee: Wilf Boon, Roger Brown, Kathleen Campbell and Peter Harris plus David Peterson as immediate past President

Moving to the monthly meeting, we agreed to supply Edan with some packets of new steel needles for sale at Ferrymead. Roger Brown asked for a show of interest in a visit to the Autohaven Museum in Christchurch and will check on a possible time. A suggestion from Beth Lomas led to a discussion on ways to mark the Society's sixtieth anniversary in September 2025.

With the two meetings and more discussion than usual, we did not have time to walk down to the former stables and view David's collection but the Edison Opera in the living room entertained us with Blue Amberol 2025, "Gasoline Gus and his jitney bus", sung by Billy Murray, before we adjourned for supper.

Peter Harris hosted the October 2024 meeting at which David Peterson confirmed that the Plough Hotel in Rangiora had been booked for our end of year meal on 2 December.

Edan Bowman told us about some photographs recently sent to the Ferrymead Trust by the granddaughter of Bill and Gladys Flecknoe. Bill was President of our society in the early 1970's and was very involved with the purchase and move to Ferrymead of the church building which we used for several years.

As usual, Edan gave all of us the chance to talk about our collecting during the previous month. We admired the latest addition to Kathleen Campbell's stereoscope collection, a lovely walnut Roswell patent stereo graphoscope with its folding double and single lenses. David Peterson was not long back from a quick trip to Auckland which involved transferring a small campervan back to Christchurch, filled for the return trip with two phonographs and at least two large horns, carefully stowed so as to allow David to find space to sleep.



Advertisements

Organette Music rolls, Music Strips and Roller Organ Cobs For Sale

In an effort to sell remaining stocks of organette rolls, music strips and wooden cobs, Kevin McElhone has reduced prices ahead of his retirement. Kevin is based in the UK and ships worldwide.

You can contact Kevin by email: kevinmcelhone@live.co.uk and also view available stock at this website address: <http://www.melright.com/busker/adverts.htm#antique>

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

