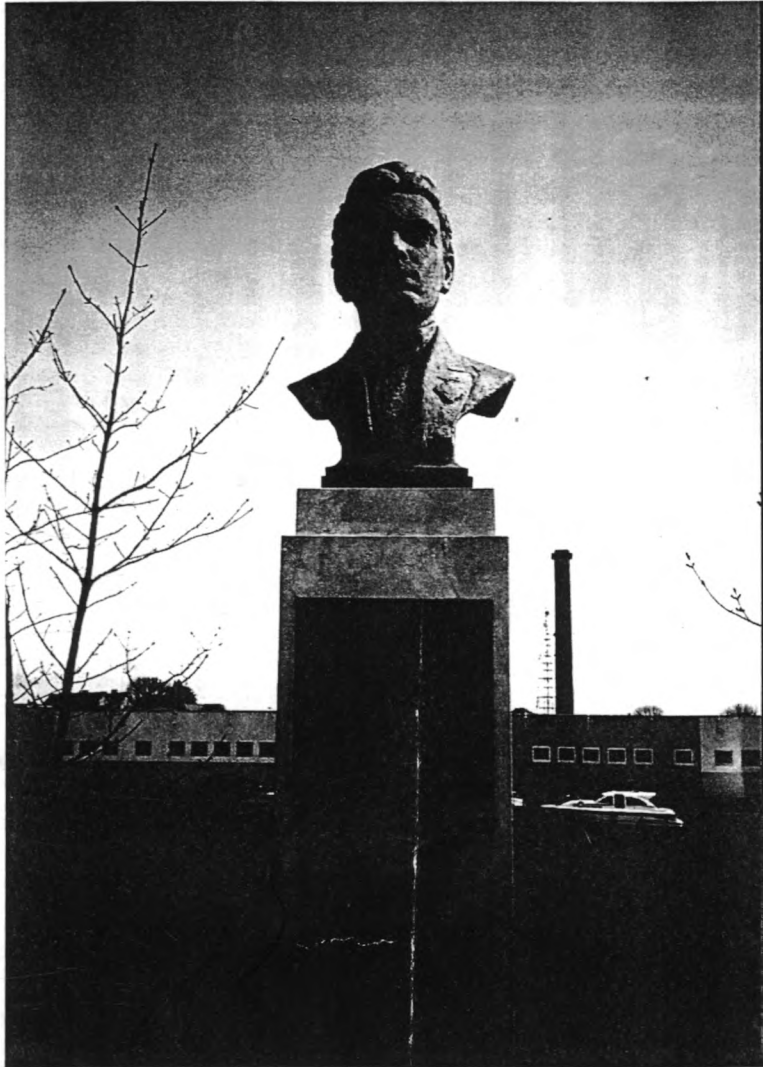


THE G&T GAZETTE VOL.3
NO.2



SPECIAL ISSUE
JOHN McCORMACK

SCRATCHY RECORD GROUP

established 1958

MEMBERSHIP DIRECTORY - July 1997

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COVER ILLUSTRATIONS

Front cover: From our observations, the town of Athlone seems somewhat backward in cashing in on the fame of their most famous son. Apart from this bronze likeness of McCormack which is situated on the Quayside not far from the public library, there is little to delay the passing tourist and McCormack fanatic. Back cover: His birthplace is denoted by a gaily coloured frontage for a Chinese Restaurant which bears a sign stating 'Count John's - The Bawn' displayed between Chinese hieroglyphics proclaiming chop suey and other eastern delicacies. *photos by Bill Main*

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OBITUARY

STAN NORTHCOTE-BADE b. Wellington, February 10, 1906; ed Wellington College, Victoria University College; m 1941 Jean Elsie Nichol dec. 1992 (2d, 1s); d Henderson Auckland, May 22, 1997.

While Stan Northcote-Bade did not have a record collection of any significance, or for that matter gramophones or phonographs of any special distinction, he was able to entertain us on several occasions with his reminiscences and knowledge of New Zealand's colonial history, bringing to life figures of the Victorian and Edwardian entertainment world who cut a swath with our ancestors affections. For instance, I distinctly remember his liking for an entertainer called G.H.Snazelle, whose whistling and impromptu remarks evidently laid them in the aisles here in New Zealand. Every time a play this recording from my collection I think of Stan.

My most special occasion with him was during the production of his book on New Zealand Colonial Furniture. Stan wanted me to take several photographs of special pieces for this project. When we had to travel to Taupo to obtain some special shots for this publication, I was relieved to know he wanted me use my car. With poor eyesight, his driving was fraught with problems. Although I don't think he attended the first convention we held in Wellington, he subsequently became a member and was at our last convention in 1968, where some in our group will remember him teamed up with David Graves. This pair sporting large moustaches and side whiskers led many to think they were father and son! For that and many other endearments, the Scratchy Record Group has every reason to remember with great affection Stan Northcote-Bade's involvement and interest in our activities.

LETTER TO THE EDITOR

Sir

I write to comment on the "Reflections" in the latest issue of the Journal.

Flattering as it is to be quoted in the pages of a paper so learned I must correct what I perceive as a philosophical misapprehension.

The remarks attributed to this writer refer to my statement that if the Main collection were to be thinned to the point at which only recordings of the highest order were to be retained, the result would be only a handful of records.

However in my recollection of the discussion, the issue was rather one of personal development or subjectivity. Considering that listening taste and intellect alter with the years and consequent accumulation of knowledge and experience, the collection could indeed be progressively reduced in numbers as the perceived "dross" was discarded.

The process is the removal at intervals of a set percentage of the recordings. The principle is that of Occam's Razor - otherwise known as Achilles and the Tortoise, or the Principle of Parsimony. The ultimate result of this honing of the aesthetic senses is the reduction of the records until only one is left.

Thus raising an interesting point: can a collection comprise one item only, or even less? Or would that be a

reducto ad absurdum?

Some years ago there was an international society devoted to the collectint of one particular brand of glass paperweight. It is interesting to speculate on the minimum number of items needed to qualify the accumulation as a "collection" when it is considered that the number of paperweights in the collections of members of the society was considerably greater than the total number that had been produced by the factor .

Perhaps the recall of the author is less pliable than it was. With the passage of the years it is axiomatic that one's experience increases: but possibly the detail is dimmed. The late Marlene Dietrich was lit to perfection and ethereal beauty in a screen acting role. Twenty years later she was again lit by the same lighting cameraman but was displeased with the results. She remonstrated with the cameraman who explained that, while he had done his best, his lenses were now twentyyears older.

With gratitude for the production of yet another superb issue of The G & T Gazette

I remain Yr. most Humble & Obedt. Svt.,

Michael Woolf

**A JOHN McCORMACK RECORD EVENING
PRESENTED BY
DES WILSON AND BILL MAIN**

As the instigators of this programme, we feel it our duty to explain some of the reasons why this particular singer has been selected and promoted over many other recording artists who might lay claim to this distinction.

When it became evident that we were a few programmes short of filling our 1997 calendar, Bill approached Des to see if he would support the idea of arranging an evening specially devoted exclusively to the talents of John McCormack. This idea was prompted between us because over the years that we have both been staging meetings, we both seemed predilected to including a song or two from this Irish tenor's repertoire.

Another reason for inflicting this upon the scratchy record group was the fact that it appeared appropriate that after nearly thirty years of activity we should endeavour to expand our range of our programmes by experimentally mounting at least one specialist evening in our annual calendar of events. We thought that provided there are individuals who feel up to this challenge, this specialist spot should give a new dimension to the normal polyglot programmes which have always dominated proceedings in our organisation.

Acknowledging that a high brow approach to such a specialist evening would not attract members out on a cold and wintry evening, we began to formulate a programme that should hold something for everyone. We were naturally conscious of our obligation to keep it light and bright and not beat you all into a corner with our combined knowledge. Neither should we dwell extensively on the excellence of McCormacks enunciation, phrasing, and feeling for the music. This we feel comes forward without us having to emphasise the point. But other artists who were associated with McCormack were diligently sought, to add colour to the evenings programme. Some of these may prove 'odd ball' to purists, but they should give some variety and spice to the evenings presentation.

Especially important to us was to play records we could associate

with the time McCormack toured New Zealand in 1911 and again in 1912/3. In this venture, we were greatly aided by Adrienne Simpson who provided us with a sheaf of newspaper cuttings that dealt the McCormack's two tours of New Zealand. We are greatly indebted to her for this generous action - see accompanying story.

While these and other prejudices helped us select about 20 items from a repertoire of nearly 800 titles, our greatest disappointment was the fact that despite a pretty extensive search through some of our countries major photographic archives, we were unable to trace a photograph of McCormack in New Zealand.

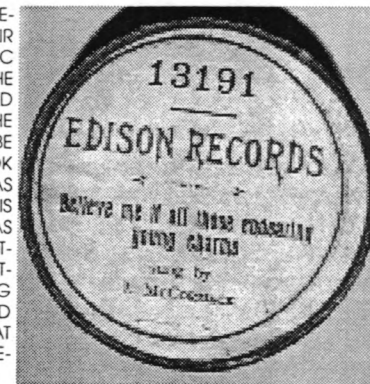
To some extent, it was thought that this major omission might have been filled with Bill & Jill's on the spot research at his birth place in Ireland. Unfortunately, the town of Athlone is not open for tourists in April with the local information office, which also houses a small McCormack archive, closed until the first week of May.

As consolation, the Mains were directed by the city librarian to a bronze statue on the quay side and his birthplace (both of which are illustrated in this publication).

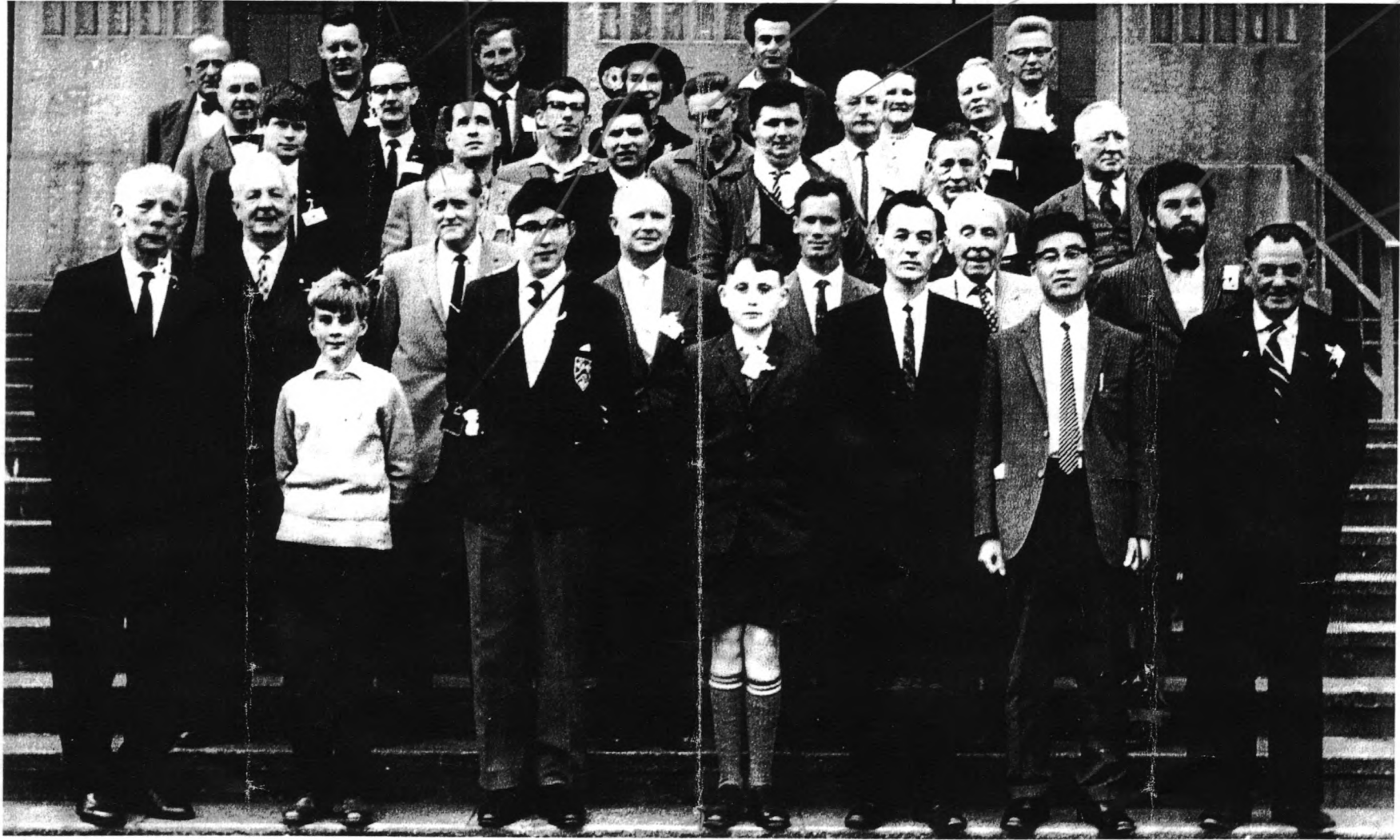
We hope you enjoy this experiment and it will encourage others to attempt a similar evening when their turn comes round. Only time will tell.

In the final analysis if what you hear this evening makes you play your McCormack recordings more and listen to them afresh, then we will have been well rewarded for our combined efforts.

WHEN BILL MAIN AND DES WILSON BEGAN TO PUT THIS EVENINGS PROGRAMME TOGETHER, THEY LOOKED OVER THEIR RESPECTIVE COLLECTIONS FOR ITEMS THAT WERE AUTHENTIC AND RARE. WHEN IT WAS NOTED THAT BILL HAD ONE OF THE TWO MINUTE CYLINDERS WHICH MCCORMACK RECORDED IN LONDON DURING HIS FIRST RECORDING SESSION ON THE 12TH OF SEPTEMBER 1904, IT WAS AGREED THAT IT MUST BE PLACED ON THE PROGRAMME. WHEN DES BEGAN TO LOOK FOR A CD EQUIVALENT IN HIS COLLECTION TO SEE IF IT WAS LESS WORN THAN BILL'S COPY, IT WAS DISCOVERED THAT THIS WAS NOT KNOWN TO EXIST IN ANY FORM. IN FACT IT WAS OPENLY SOUGHT AFTER BY MCCORMACK AFICIONADOS. LETTERS DIRECTED TO THOSE WHO WANTED NEWS OF ITS EXISTENCE THIS VERSION OF 'BELIEVE ME IF ALL THOSE ENDEARING YOUNG CHARMS' SEVERAL YEARS AGO, HAVE SO FAR FAILED TO ELICIT A RESPONSE. IT MUST THEREFORE BE ASSUMED THAT IT HAS SUBSEQUENTLY BEEN FOUND AND NO LONGER REMAINS ONE OF THE TOP MCCORMACK RECORDINGS.



Answer the question below and win a free cup of coffee at the NZCP.



Over Labour Weekend 1965, the third New Zealand convention of Phonograph and Record Collectors was held at the Dominion Museum in Wellington. To the organisers surprise over 30 collectors and their supporters attended this meeting which was organised by Charlie Lindsay (the Museum's taxidermist and curator of colonial history), Fred Spencer (plumber of Lorne Street), Michael Woolf (broadcaster) and Bill Main (teacher). THE QUESTION IS CAN YOU IDENTIFY THE FIVE INDIVIDUALS WHO ARE STILL ASSOCIATED WITH THE SCRATCHY RECORD GROUP. The Record, Gramophone and Phonograph conventions grew out of an association between 'Charlie' Lindsay (the taxidermist at the Dominion Museum) and Bill Main in the late 1950s. The first convention was held in 1963 with a programme that weighed heavily towards machines and drew heavily on those who were involved with the Scratchy Record Group to organise a programme and advertise the gathering nationally. The convention was repeated at yearly intervals in Wellington until until South Island delegates requested that a convention should be staged in Christchurch. This was agreed and in 1967, the inaugural meeting was held over Queen's Birthday Weekend at the Canterbury Manufacturer's Association. Wellington again played host in 1969, with Christchurch taking the now biannual slot in 1971. About this time Christchurch formed itself into the NZ Vintage Phonograph Society and the Wellington participants meekly adopted this title for its last gathering in 1974. Since then, the Christchurch organisation has carried on catering for interests in this side of collecting with little or any involvement on the part of those in Wellington who originally began this event in 1963.

PROGRAMME
Monday 21st July 1997

John McCormack with orchestra conducted by Hubert Bath (?)
The Snowy Breasted Pearl (de Vere/Trad.)
Opal CD transfer CDS9847 Recorded in London 12th September 1904

John McCormack with orchestra conducted by Hubert Bath (?)
Believe Me If All Those Endearing Young Charms (Moore/Trad.)
Edison Cylinder 13191 Recorded London 12th September 1904

John McCormack with Mario Sammarco and orchestra conducted by Percy Pitt
Badoer questa notte "La Gioconda" (Ponchielli)
HMV !RX1013 Recorded in London 18th August 1911

John McCormack with orchestra
Ah! Moon Of My Delight "In a Persian Garden" (Lisa Lehmann)
HMV 02327 Recorded in New York 16th March 1911

John McCormack/Melba/Sammarco. Orchestra conducted by Landon Ronald
Final Trio "Faust" (Gounod)
HMV IRX1006 Recorded in London 11/12th December 1910

John McCormack with orchestra
Mother Machree (Ball)
Romophone CD transfer 82006-2 Recorded in New York 17th March 1911

John McCormack with piano accompaniment by Edwin Schneider
Mother Machree (Ball)
Pearl LP transfer GEMM243 Recorded in New York 12th October 1927

AN INTERVAL OF FIVE MINUTES

Rosina Buckman with piano accompaniment
Waita Poi (Alfred Hill)
HMV B4505 Recorded in London May 1913

John McCormack with orchestra
Che gelida manina "La Boheme" (Puccini)
Romophone CD transfer 82006-2 Recorded at Camden 1st February 1910
continued next page

PROGRAMME
Monday 21st July 1997

John McCormack with piano accompaniment by Spencer Clay
Molly Brannigan (arr. Stanford)
HMV IR 1001 Recorded at Camden 3rd January 1913

Alfred O'Shea with piano accompaniment (Probably Gil Dech)
Molly Brannigan (arr. Stanford)
Columbia 01597 Recorded at Homebush N.S.W. c.1928

John McCormack with orchestra conducted by Nathaniel Shilkret
Rose Marie (Friml)
HMV DA707 Recorded in New York 17th December 1924

John McCormack with orchestra conducted by Rosario Bourdon
When You and I Were Seventeen (Rostoff)
HMV DA 693 Recorded at Camden 23rd April 1925

AN INTERVAL OF FIVE MINUTES

John McCormack /Maggie Teyte with piano accompaniment by Gerald Moore
Still as the Night (Goetz)
Pearl CD transfer GEMM CDS 9188 Recorded at Abbey Rd. 25th Nov. 1941

John McCormack with Trinity Choir and orch. conducted by Rosario Bourdon
Adeste Fideles (Trad.)
Pearl LP transfer GEMM 245 Recorded at Camden 1st November 1926

Margaret Sheridan with piano accompaniment by Gerald Moore
The meeting of the Waters (Moore/Trad.)
ASV CD transfer CD AJA 5202 Recorded in London 23rd July 1928

John McCormack with piano accompaniment by Gerald Moore
Star of the County Down (Hughes Trad.)
HMV DA 1718 Recorded at Abbey Road 30th November 1939

John McCormack with piano accompaniment by Gerald Moore
Waiting for You (Phillips)
Pearl CD transfer GEMM CDS 9188 Recorded at Abbey Road 10th Sep. 1942
end of programme

McCormack in New Zealand

It is not known for sure who was responsible for enticing John McCormack to give two concerts in New Zealand at the conclusion of his season with the Melba opera Company in Australia. While it would be nice to think that Rosina Buckman had a hand in this decision, there is no evidence to support the idea that he agreed to this stop over on her recommendation. What is known is that she appeared with him as supporting artist in the two concerts that were staged in Wellington and Auckland under the direction of H.N.Southwell.

McCormack's biographer L.A.Strong adds a rueful touch to this episode in the tenors life by describing how he and Lilly misjudged the distance between Sydney and Wellington, thinking the map they had studied more or less placed the two cities the same distance apart as an overnight trip between Dublin and Liverpool.

Instead the ship *Moeraki* tossed and turned for three days during its Tasman crossing. At one stage their porthole caved in, flooding their cabin. Despite this inauspicious introduction to New Zealand, the McCormacks enjoyed their stay, prompting the following quotation. 'For sheer scenic beauty, I have never seen a country to beat New Zealand. I have travelled over both the North and South Islands... and for scenery New Zealand come out top. Add to this a charming, kindly, hospitable, broad-minded people, and I challenge the world on behalf of New Zealand - God bless her!'

WELLINGTON & AUCKLAND 1912

Both Concerts in the 1912 tour were sell outs with hundreds turned away at the door. The *Dominion*, assessing his voice after his concert in the Town Hall on Friday the 12th of January said, 'His predilection for simple ballads indicates that he has recognised where lies his strength'. One particular ballad that drew attention *Molly Bawn* which was encored several times. *A Lagan Love Song* - an Irish ballad that was written 600 years ago, was arranged by Spencer Clay, the pianist of

the company. The Governor Lord Islington and the Prime Minister Sir Joseph Ward were in attendance.

Arriving in Auckland by Sunday's express from Wellington, the *Auckland Weekly News* reported that the McCormack's were accompanied by Rosina Buckman and Alfred Kaufmann. The party departed by train to Rotorua on Monday for a few days, returning to Auckland in time for a reception by the Celtic Society on Wednesday evening.

His concert on Thursday the 19th January followed a similar pattern to Wellington's with a mixture of popular operatic titles and Irish ballads with numerous encores being requested throughout the programme. The audience of 3000 was enthralled. The *NZ Herald* reporter said that 'McCormack had no need to sing at the audience to secure the correct impression. Rather it did seem that as he stood with eyes half closed, that he was holding musical communion with himself, permitting meanwhile a glimpse into his musical thoughts'. This 'Brilliant Recital' (to use the artiles headline) was concluded with the Trio from *Faust*. The following day, the McCormacks departed for America on the *ss.Marama*.

Also joining the singers on this short tour were the violinists Grace Kennedy in Wellington and Ina Bosworth, Auckland.

FOUR MAIN CENTRES - 1913/14

During McCormack's second and final tour of New Zealand, he granted the *Christchurch Press* a personal interview. Their columnist 'Strad' obtained something of a 'scoop' for this part of the world with quotations, that give some idea of his current thoughts and aspirations.

After introduction which outlined his emergence on the operatic stage he was quoted as saying.. 'Yes, hitherto I have confined myself to Italian opera and to concert work. I love opera and its fascinations; dramatic art appeals to me more strongly than the lyrics of the concert stage, although I fully recognise how powerfully the concert singer

can affect the emotions and sway his audience single handed. Until now I have not appeared anywhere on the Continent, except in Italy, but at the flattering request of Lilli Lehmann I shall take part in the Mozart festival in Salzburg, in the coming September, where *Don Giovanni* will be staged. Recently, Madame Schumann-Heink, who is expected in New Zealand next year, in my opinion the greatest concert singer of her time, also invited me to prepare the part of *Lohengrin* for Bayreuth, which (with a sigh) means learning German'.*

He went on.. 'In my concerts I make a feature of old Irish songs; thanks to the labours of Herbert Hughes and Hamilton Hardy, a perfect treasury of beautiful songs of my native country has been unearthed, and is a source of delight to me and my audiences'.

McCormack's second tour of New Zealand began in Christchurch on Thursday the 25th of December 1913 to a less than full house. Noting the unfortunate timing of Christmas Day, the *Press* hoped that Christchurch would respond to his second concert more favourably on the 26th and noted that Miss May Huxley - as supporting soprano ably supported him in the evenings programme. It was reported elsewhere in the newspapers that May Huxley was trained by Madame Albani. The pianist accompanying this small party of musicians was Vincent O'Brien, who impressed with his overall musicianship and combined well with violinist Donald McBeath in a performance of the Rondo from Sonata in D by Beethoven.

McCormack's 2nd performance stirred so much interest that a third and final concert in Christchurch was given after the touring party had travelled to Dunedin to complete two concerts on the 29th and 30th of December

Under the headline 'Popular Tenor', the critic of the *Otago Witness*. in an edition dated the 7th of January 1914, spent most of his column castigating McCormack for the number of ballads included in the programme.

Travelling to Wellington, the little company gave two concerts at the Opera

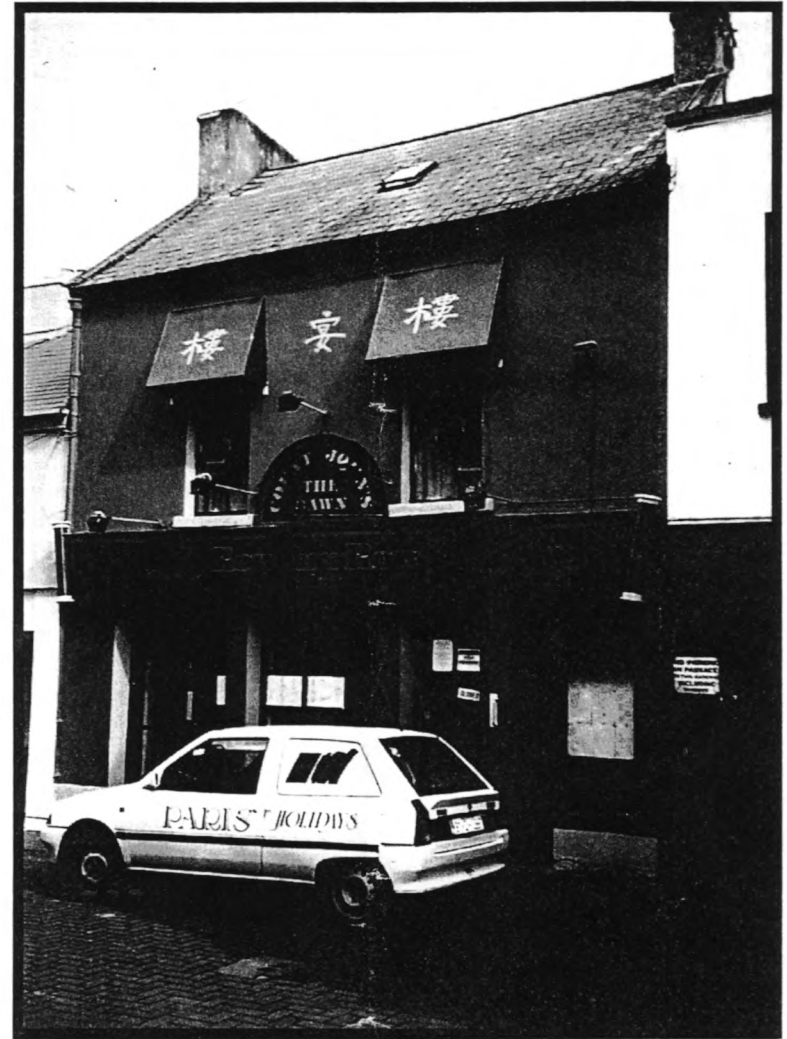
House on the 9th and 10th of January. Here McCormack added *Vesti la giubba* from Leoncavillo's *Pagliacci* and *Un'aura amorosa* from Mozart's, *Così Fan Tutte*. to his operatic numbers. An interesting sidelight to the programming was the fact that no duets were performed between McCormack and Huxley. In the 1912, tour of Wellington and Auckland, both Buckman and Kaufmann joined McCormack in duets and a trio.

Moving onto Auckland the company played to capacity houses in the town Hall on the 13th 14th of January. Brackets of song were often encored two or three times. In his second concert, McCormack added the recit, 'Deeper and Deeper Still' and aria 'Waft Her Angels', from Handel's *Jephtha*. The critic of the *NZ Herald* wrote '...here the singer was responsible for a searching interpretation of the famous oratorio excerpt. A fine dramatic sense was shown in the recit itself, while the phrasing and expression, and general technique in the ensuing beautiful aria displayed marked skill and executive polish. As the voice climbed into the higher registers in the recurring ascending semi-quaver sequences the tones welled into a full resonance, yet without any suspicion of forcing'.

Continuing he said '...his Celtic temperament enables him to portray the humorous or emotional side of the ballad or folk-song to particular advantage...his *Molly Bawn* was in a class by itself, as was the tenderly expressive *Mother Macree*. Another recall song, which vastly amused one and all, was *Molly Brannagan*, in which the main points were emphasised with uncommon insight'.

His third and final concert in Auckland on the 16th of January, also signalled the last that was given on this Australasian tour which allegedly took in over thirty performances on both sides of the Tasman. After several encores, he finished with a rousing rendition of *La Donna e Mobile* from Verdi's *Rigoletto*.

* As far as can be ascertained, Ernestine Schumann-Heink, never toured New Zealand
Bill Main



The town of Athlone, where this picture of McCormack's birth place was made, is situated at the southern portion of Lough Ree, a large waterway which feeds the River Shannon. Athlone is about an hour and a half's drive westward from Dublin. It is approached through undulating farmland and a road which is frequently held to ransom by Irish farmers on slow moving tractors. The centre of the business area is dominated by a drab grey edifice which serves the catholic community and is replicated in nearly every town or village in Ireland with boring intensity.

As if to make up for this environmental oversight, most Irish retailers and home owners go mad with a pot of paint. If the G&T Gazette could afford colour, then this illustration would prove a riot with emerald green and Vatican violet predominating, with just a dab of vermilion here and there.