

Edward Creese Jr interviewing David Phillips. (No date or place.)

His father Edward J Creese was a good friend to the Phillips and Mick Ginn. He was the one that persuaded Ginn in late 1929 to restart making handmade gramophones as EXPERT.

E.J. Creese' arm was injured in WW1. From the very early days, he worked on and off at EMG and Expert helping assemble and deliver the gramophones "Oh no, he was skilled, one hand you know. He used to assemble these sound boxes marvellously". He also made, doped and packaged fibre needles.

(Please contact me to make corrections.)

Edward Creese Jr:

What I'm really keen to do, was hear you know, something about when you really started out. We were talking about just that....

David Phillips:

Oh yes, it should be alright, well the start, it started in Brighton, when my parents had a house in Vernon Garden. And uh, we had quite a big garden there.

Yeah. Well, to go back even further than that, I was very interested in making gramophones out of cigar boxes when I was very young by sticking a needle in the corner of a cigar box and mounting the thing up on some kind of arm. We used to play a tune.

It actually used to play then?

Oh, ruinous to records of course but, that was something I'll explain but in any case, the way the real business started, we decided to design a machine and the first machine was actually made with long bits of wood, with a penknife.

Who was that? You say, We

We, that was Ginn, E.M. Ginn and myself.

Was he living with you?

He was my older brother-in-law. Yes, we were all living in the same house.

Oh. But uh, this would be when? what before the War.

This would be 1922.

But you already knew my father by then, surely didn't you?

Oh, Ben and Lew.

Ben and Lew because I got a picture of them, but uh, during the war, I think or something, or just after the war..

I may have known him earlier, not, I can't say

It must have been earlier than that because, um, my father was injured, you know and this picture I've got shows, I think it's probably Ben and Lew. Yeah. My father on a car in that garage. That must have been a bit earlier. You, that must have been during war I suppose, would you think so?

Oh, yes. I must have known your father before that. Mm-hmm. Because Oh, oh yes. He knew me when I was still at school. Oh, you see, we lived at Dulwich before we went to Vernon Gardens.

But the gramophone business started later, in the garage, as you know about that one anyway.

Oh yes, I know about the garage. But you just decided what about 1922 ... You were fiddling about in the garage..

...but I'd been apprenticed to farm. Yeah. Apprentice to farming before that. Yeah. For a couple of years. First in Oxfordshire, and then about a year near Lewis???. Yeah. And the, at least the farmer in Oxfordshire, told me, he said, "David, the only farm you'll ever have will be in a flower pot, and that'll be full of weeds..." , he was right, but I did like farming, really, but, uh, decided to try gramophones instead. And we really made this machine with tools like pen knives and so on, and old bits of mahogany. And, uh, when we played..

...that was you and Mike, right?

You and Mike. It seemed so good. We decided to, uh, to have, have something decent made. Yes. It was so good, we made the horn, made the lot except a sound box which I think Henry Seymour made for us, one of the early experimenters and pioneers of gramophones. Unfortunately, they hardly mentioned him today but he was one of the real pioneers following on Edison. Seymour, who, uh, made a very nice machine of his own, marketed it.

He lived in Camden Town, Camden Road I think it was. And uh, he made a very nice machine called the Seymour Superphone, was a lovely ebonite horn, beautifully polished, lovely thing. It was for its day....and uh, he told us quite a lot about making gramophones and he said he would make a sound box for us and put one of his tonearms on it.

How did you get into touch with him then? Did you, know him or, or what?

Well, that, that's a tricky one to remember. Uh, I do remember going to his house. Yeah. And it was a marvellous place to go over to because he had designs for....,

He must be living in Brighton.

No, he was living in London at the time. So I probably met Seymour before we moved to Brighton. He was the one that probably fired enthusiasm in making gramophones. I remember going to his house and he got a wonderful drawing, he used to be all, do beautiful, uh, you know, scale drawings of a Death Ray Machine... whether it worked. I don't, no, I don't think he got that far. But it was a beautiful drawing and he showed us these lovely gramophones he used to sell, and another thing Seymour did, he used to get records, say recorded by, in those days it was the Gramophone Company or Columbia. He used to, he'd have a copying machine, which was very, very clever to copy 78's. And he marketed records with a different label on them with fake artists and he was doing very well until they caught up on him because of course it was infringing the copyright Act and they stopped him. But he made some very good records but they were copies.... but you know a very, very clever man was Henry Seymour... And he did a lot of experiments on Soundboxes... But in any case, this machine, uh, the second one we had made by a cabinet maker (Mr Bradle), I'll never forget it, he delivered it to us unpolished and we decided to polish it ourselves. A machine made of mahogany.. by the time we finished it was red, we'd never seen anything so red for a cabinet. But we set this thing up, we put an advert in.. one of the.. in the Brighton Herald I think it was and we had showers of people come along to hear this thing and, uh, we took orders right and left. One of them was the Mayor of Brighton, I forget his name.

This is still what be about 1922.

1922 he is the mayor of Brighton and, uh, not only that, Brighton Herold sent a one of their, uh, what do you call it? *Reporters*, reported a lot....and, uh, they gave us a marvellous write up in the Brighton Herold, Hove Herold (Brighton & Hove Chronicle). I wish we'd had a copy of that. Get a copy. But anyway, we, we made the first machine we delivered was for the Mayor of Brighton.

The, that was actually the first machine that you made. That was and Mike....

The first one we delivered was made for the Mayor of Brighton.

You probably did more of the making than Mike? Would that be true?

Yes., Yeah. But, he, he was the business head. Anyway, I'll never forget it happened to be this first machine that was finished. It looked like a tomato and I remember the mayor saying, It's an extraordinary colour. We, we got away with it. Another funny thing happened. We were playing this machine. We put a record on, I can remember the record. It was a record of L'Alouette , a thing called L'Alouette....It was played, played by FREDERIC LAMOND, and it was one, one of the nicest piano records of that date. We played this record, there was an old dear sitting there, when it was all over, she asked, put the piano record on again, which we did, and eventually she spoke up, said "Do you know" she said... Oh, sorry. No, we play, we played... something wrong here.... We played the piano record, then she asked us to put a violin record on, which we did. We put a violin record on and she actually spoke up, she said, "Do you know sir, I've just paid so many hundred pounds for a pianola and it will not play violin at all. She though, this machine, only this price will play both piano and violin.

Pianola was a great thing in those days.

Probably cost two or three hundred pounds.

Yeah, but they were the great sort of thing then.

But, it wouldn't play violin. She could say.

What happened after that then? I mean, up in Firth Street or We went to Hove (Lansdowne Crescent. Hove. Brighton). I remember Hove well.

Uh, I think it was then that my father took this house in Underhill Road, Dulwich. Moved to Dulwich.

Can I sort of interrupt that....

That me wrong, I think Dulwich came before that must have done

Did you actually make any more machines down at Brighton?

Oh yes. We, we'd several in this garage and the cabinets made out and put horns in them but...

What kind of horns were they?

They were small square horns done by guesswork in the interior cabinet. Not the outside horn at all. They came later.....anyway, uh,

Excuse me, for butting in like this, I mean gramophones were pretty common in those days...

Yes, they were all acoustic ones.

But why, why were you able to sell this so easily? I mean, what, was there anything different about this? Was it better quality or why?

Well, we thought, so. We thought this sounded better than most. I'm not going say this sounds as good as Seymour's Superphone with a big outside horn.

So, he, he had an outside horn, like the old HMV advertisements and things?

Well, I never considered the acoustic gramophones, where acoustic gramophones were concerned, the cabinet model sounded like as good as the horn ones. Even in the old tin horn ones. But as a cabinet machine, the table.. it might have been a pedestal, I forget, or I think we did both, pedestal & table machine. We sounded as good as most, uh, better than most, as good as well the best HMV at half the price. You see. That's why we were doing so well. They weren't much too, but they were much cheaper. They used to be quite a high price, HMV's in those days.

I'm not going to claim our cabinet making was as good as HMV cabinets. Cause in my opinion...

You actually made the cabinet?

Well, we did that first one.

But after that, somebody else..

Well, we got a cabinet maker in Brighton. But HMV cabinet work in the early days was really beautiful. *Yeah*, beautiful stuff. *Yeah*, so we never equalled the HMV cabinet, but we didn't beat that, the HMV sale. That's why we did so well at first. Anyway, we moved back to London.

My father, I think it was Clapham we went to, we went to live there. Anyway, we moved back to London and uh...sorry, I think it was Highgate. I think Clapham came before we moved to Brighton. I think it was Highgate. . Yes. I remember going to Hove where we had this upstairs office. I remember it was a board in town, in, in Hove, and we had this one room and we worked from there.

I can remember distinctly going to a party somewhere and probably Underhill Road. But when would that come in? Because I wasn't born until 1918, so that would've been probably sometime in the twenties, I would think. I couldn't have been more about five or six then.

It might have been Underhill Road before Highgate.

I, I would think myself, cause I can distinctly remember, do you know what sticks with my memory...

.. right, in 1922.

Should I tell you what sticks in my memory, bobbing for apples, you know, bowl of water. It might be, Yeah. You did that there at the park, you know, and there was something about it, and you had some apples also on some strings. That's right. Tried. Tried to eat. That's right. Apples I can remember distinctly well now I know that we moved to Beaconsfield. I must have been about eight or nine and went to Beaconsfield, so I, I could have been more than about six or seven I think then. Yeah. Well, that would place it around about 1924 if 1925, That would place that roughly?

Yes. Well we probably went to Underhill Road but wasn't there very long so..

Cause I can still distinctly remember that. That's right. I remember.

Uh, I remember your right. I remember the, do you remember the, the Mayo's being there, Sam? Yeah, that's right.

Mayo, the name. That name is familiar.

Yes. Uh, they were sons of Sam Mayo, the famous comedian.

Ah, yes. That name is very familiar and uh, that was Mayo's. I remember that.

Yes. Yes. That must have been, Cause I, we got very friendly with the Mayo's and I must have been getting off for 20 then. Yes, yes.

Well, that was placed, right? Wouldn't it? 19 or 20.

Yes. So that must have been after we must have come around Underhill Road Dulwich.

Yes. Sounds like. And then onto, Highgate. Yes.

But, uh, I think the boys had the garage before then.

I think they must have done. Yes, they must. . My father never told me how, how he finally disposed of the garage and I didn't realize your father bought that. I never knew that. Yeah. It's quite new to me.

Yeah, they did. Ben and Lew then.

I've certainly got a photograph at home, as you say. Probably of Ben and Lew. I've got that one alright.

The airplane stayed there for some little time. Do you remember the airplane in the garage?

No. I can't remember that. I can't remember the garage itself at all.

Yeah, Actually, actually had that airplane that he flew to Blackpool in the garage.

I don't think I was, I remember seeing that. I don't think I would've been alive.

You see? I remember seeing that. So we must have known your dad, his farm. Yeah, yeah. Before the date. I'm saying Yes. I was only a school boy when I remember that.

What happened to airplane?

I dunno.

That was a mono-plane, wasn't it? Yes. Supposed to be the first mono-plane in England.

Yes, it was in that garage. It was in that garage. Well, Ben & Lew. Huh.

Ben and Lew would probably remember what happened that, but it'd be interesting to track it down. I suppose somebody probably threw it away, for Junk or something.

Yeah. . But anyway, we went to Holborn and, uh, ran from there and in the meantime....

You must have taken a shop or something in Holborn and then Yes, your father decided to back you..

It was a first floor, Yeah. Oh, It was a first floor. It was really supposed to be just an office. We used it as a workshop.

Your father backed it then, did he?

No. My, my father never really backed us financially No. We had to make our own way. Did he? Who decided? He used to pay, used to pay us a bit of pocket-money until I started. I mean, he wasn't like that.

You couldn't have been making much out of it. Didn't you?

No, I was making a small wage. That's what I was getting.

You were selling enough of those machines. Were you actually making enough for the time you moved to Hove?

Yes. I remember one week we turned out 17.

17? Yes. When you turned out 17.

That must have, must have been after the garage business because when the boys got out of the garage, Ben came to work with us for a while.

I know that that's the later date in the garage. We must have known your father, I think before we started up, gramophones, at least Ben and Lew.

I can't remember when my father's arm was injured, that would fix a date, some idea.

Well, he always used to hide that. You know, So funny. It's a little, little quirk I suppose. But when you ever had a photograph taken with that arm, he's always keep it back there. , you can't tell whether his arm is injured or not. Just a curious psychological trait.

But anyway, at Holburn, we got to know Percy Wilson. He was then technical editor of the I've heard of that. Of The GRAMOPHONE. Yeah., I don't think they called him technical editor, he was technical advisor. Now Percy Wilson in my opinion, did more for the modern gramophone, the electrical reproducer than any man really living. Cause he set the stage for what had been developed. He was the originator, well

he was the original one that discovered enormous errors in tracking of early gramophones and re-designed pick up arms and early tonearms to track properly. He, uh, didn't invent the logarithm horn, but he developed it to a stage that, uh, you know, the EMG and Expert gramophones were founded on his early experiments. If it hadn't been for Percy Wilson those machines, I don't think it would ever have come about.

How did you get to know him? Just from mutual interesting in gramophones or something like that.

Well, Percy Wilson was interested in the work we were doing and, uh, he liked the way we went about things.

He just heard about you, did he?

Well, he knew about us 'cause we advertised in The GRAMOPHONE. I think we were, we advertised in the first or second issue of THE GRAMOPHONE that went on for years and years, no stop.

And, Percy Wilson was also doing things for gramophones. He got in, he was always, always interested in all the advertisers, but he seemed to be particularly interested in us because he liked the way we went about thing and he helped us no end. I mean, he even design the horn part of some of the early cabinet machines

Were actually making the big horns by then or not. Uh, where did that start?

Well, those big horns were first. Uh, there was a first Wilson, which is a long straight horn designed to replace the horn on HMV gramophones. It was made to fit the body, take the old, put this great Papier-mâché horn and uh, our first horn machine, we made machines to take that horn.

And we sold any number of them and then we decide on bigger horns, ... not sticking out so far would be a nicer thing. And we redesigned, uh, horns founded on the Wilson idea of logarithm horn a shape with an S-bend in it. Now, those first machines, although, uh, I, I shouldn't harp on too much, this meant the, the original idea came from Ginn and myself, but to work the mathematics out, we were helped by a Mr. Davey who later on became manager of EMG.

You were saying though, that, uh, Percy Wilson thought up the idea of that horn, but then you just now said that you and Mike were coming out.

Yes. This is for the bigger horn. See, the original one,

You decided to improve the Percy Wilson Horn.

Oh, have a bigger hole than Percy Wilson, bigger one, whether improvement or not. Well that is debatable

But you two decided the Wilson Hole was straight less fade....

Why? Cause I to get bigger bucks, better bass, bigger horns, give better bucks,

That was the real idea behind it. And uh, then the horn with the big s-bend came out. But the mathematics were done by Davey.

21.26.....

.... With development of the horn, there's also parallel to development of the sound box. And, uh, there again, Percy Wilson did a lot of early experiments with sound boxes and he taught us an awful lot. But, uh, the one man that never gets mentioned today, I think he was a Russian refugee, the name of Vartz. VIRTZ, who used to make superb sound boxes. But it was only after a good deal of experimenting that, uh, Percy Wilson in company with another person with Harry Wild ..., they used to get together and suggest this and that, that eventually, I forget it was Percy Wilson one day walked up with a marvellous sound box. Oh, it was Harry Wild. I forget which one it was, but one or the other walked up with a sound box to really beat them all. And after a while told us the secret of, of this sound box we incorporate it in ours.

No, no patent that type.

You see, anybody could do it, willingly. We seem to be the only one working in that category that would take on fiddling with sound boxes like that. Cause even in those days, the majority of sound boxes were mass produced. Just put, just put together a few screws and that was that.

But uh, these better sound box, needed what they call tuning, partly tightening up one screw while loosening the other about until you got the right sound and uh, the tuning of the sound box was done by ear. But wanted somebody who knew what they were listening to, to do it. So the mass producers wouldn't have anything to do with this style of manufacture.

You gave a much better sound.

Oh, it did? Oh, undoubtedly. Yeah. But uh, I did some experimenting on sound boxes myself, but I won't claim to have invented anything like the stuff like Pearl Wilson or Harry Wild.

Yeah. Yeah. I remember those early sound boxes you had, you know, in Frith Street from an earlier still than that ... in brass, it's difficult to describe now, but I could clearly remember that. Cause we have one at home.

I, I still get one or two to repair, you know? Yeah. *So still work. Alright.* People still using acoustic gramophones for acoustic record.

Uh, I suppose that's where my father came in. Was he? Cause I remember him messing out with those. Um Yes. Sound boxes. He was always tap tap tapping. That's right. And then he'd play a bit. And he had one of two favourite records I think that he used to like to play and I'm sure that, um, I think that Elgar violin concerto or the Elgar cello concerto he used to seem to be playing quite frequently anyway.

Well this tapping you see, getting used to playing a certain record, used to tune the soundbox. *Yes. I can remember....* It gave you an idea how good the sound box was, but your father used to help me an awful lot in making up sound boxes. Yes, because uh, we got so many orders all that I couldn't cope with myself, and the amount of repairs, sound box repairs was colossal really, people used to bend the diaphragm or crack recording if they had mica, but that was another development.

I think we were the, uh, probably the first ones to bring it to the notice in general of the superior quality of aluminium diaphragm over mica... *using all mica, all mica, laminated mica.* But, uh, a man with the name... a Mr. Burden (Harry Burden) *should bring all these early days in.* Yes. It's interesting. They never get mentioned. A man named Mr. Burden came to us one day, said, uh, I'm able to make these, would you like to try one? And it was an aluminium diaphragm, but we almost laughed at him...he said you try one and see and when we tried them, it was far superior to a mica ...a livelier sound, fuller. But from that day, Burden used to make these aluminium diaphragms.

26.18

Right. Just here, Just like that. What made him think of that then. I mean, why, why should he suddenly coming on you with an aluminium diaphragm.

Well, Uh, he'd been experimenting obviously, pressing rings into them to get the right tension. But he probably picked out us as being the best people to test the thing. *I see. He's just interested, presumably he knew, Yeah. Sound better or... Yes. Yes.* He knew. He knew good sound. He wanted our opinion. He was on the right line. He was an amateur then?. I see. But, uh, he made these things very well professionally, so eventually we employed him and he, and he made them on the premise, really showed us how to do it.

Where did my father sort of come into this? Well, when did you first decided to employ him or use him?

It's very, very difficult. He, he came in regular after we started Expert Gramophones.

When did that actually begin?

No, that was about 1929. You see this,

Uh, whose idea was that? Was that just Mike's or Mike or what?

To, to start, *start sort of under that label? EXPERT. What were you taking on before that?* Well, it, it's interesting to go back ..., Yeah. The original name when we started in 1922, *that would be in Brighton?* you would call it Magnaphone Company, which it's a name that sounds corny today. Yes. But in those days, you know a Jolly good name.

Yeah, but we ran for about a year after that name, we suddenly got a letter from some old boy who got a gramophone business in City Road saying that it was a carnival imitation of one of his registered names. He got a sound box register, under that name, the name of Magnophone, and we were using Magnaphone. He called that coloration and we got to stop, or else he would sue us.

So we had, Henry Seymour happened to know this man's name was Louis Young, and Henry Seymour happened to be a friend of Louis Young, very friendly with us. So we got on to Seymour and said to Seymour, Louis Young's kicking out about this, what do we do? He said, Oh, he won't sue you. He said, I'll, I'll go and have a word with him. So, Seymour had a word with Louis Young and he phoned us back to say that Louis Young is willing to drop action, providing we changed the name. So, uh, my brother said, Well, I know what we'll do, use my initials. Nobody can stop us doing that. But that's how EMG came into being, because his initial being Ellis, Michael Ginn. So we called it EMG Gramophones. But that was the start.

Now in 1929, uh, this man who we took money from, we did take money, accepted his money to help us run it, wanted to pick up production, and he came to be a good old bust-up? I'll tell you, you, you know, the outcome of that. We bust-up and there was a split came and we started again called it Expert Gramophones, which we thought was another name far removed from anybody else.

But it was really due to your father, if I remember rightly, that we did start again because, uh, Mike was very despondent over it. And, uh, your father said, Oh, you are good enough to start designing again. There's room for two of you. Which, which we did, there was room, although we were fighting our own, own made opposition. And of course we never really built up Expert Gramophones, what we did EMG, but it did all right.

Oh, yes, I remember Expert Gramophones very well indeed. I mean, you had some pretty tremendous customers in those days. You just mentioned T.E. Shaw/ Lawrence, Right? The Delius machine was an EMG. It was before you split up there.

Yes. The Lawrence one was an Expert one.

Who, when you say you split up there, I mean, who spit from who? You can tell me.

We split from EMG

Was Percy Wilson running EMG?

No, we were running it at the time. Yeah. But we had a manager; well the manager was left behind and a certain amount was paid out for Ginn's name. Of course the money that was really running the business was this Mr. West.

So he, he sort of took over EMG. Did he want his money back then that he just wanted his money back?

No. Well, he by agreement he took over and paid so much for the name, which actually helped us to start again. Yeah, but, uh, there's more to it. I'll tell that. Anyway, this man Davey took over control, but we started again. Uh, there was, you know, like a fashion???, a file???? or help, you know.

My father, was he actually working for EMG or Expert?

No, I didn't know. I forget what he was doing, whether he running the cork business then or not ...By backing I mean encouraged. Yes. *Yes. I can understand.* He, he really encouraged us to start again.

But was he, you were still friendly with him. You knew him. You meet regularly or you tell me.

He, he used to come up to Frith Street, occasionally have a chat and he just, *you just knew those friends presumably...*

But if I remember rightly, before he came to us, he had a little warehouse or something where he used to keep his, his cork mats and cork and so on....

That cork mat business, I believe was something to do with the British League or something like that. I've got no idea... that for Disabled servicemen, it's disabled ex-servicemen or something started him up in that, I think.

Oh yes. But anyway, he did have a little warehouse. Mm-hmm. But when, uh, he found out or we told him we got a little room to spare. I think he moved over to us in order to save money on this warehouse. You see, he could do without it. And at the same time, any little thing he could do for us in his spare moment, he could do it. And by Jove he was handy too, because even with his well hand, he knew how to use a screw drive. He was a mechanics.... Yes, yes.... And he knew how to listen.

He of course, he would've been a skilled mechanic. He knew a lot about cars. Learned a great deal from his father. Yeah. But, uh, of course he must...

Oh no, he was skilled, one hand you know. He used to assemble these sound boxes marvellously.

When did you sort of decide to sort of take him on full time? Well was your business growing?

Yes. Not only that, his cork business didn't do too well and, uh, he thought it was better to shut that down. Ah, if we could give him a go.

That was the start of the Spanish Civil War.

That was it. Yes, that's right.

The supplies of cork diminished rapidly. That's right. I knew some, that's right. I remember that now. But, it paid net to his cork mat business. I remember that very well. We couldn't get supplies properly in Spain where most of this cork was coming from.

So he came to us, fulltime for us, making fibre needles, sound boxes or whatever, a soldering machine.

It would be right then, I can remember, this must have been the machine I think, but I had a feeling that it was earlier that, I had a feeling that Beaconsfield where we lived, do you remember? But my father was experimenting with gramophones then, but because I can still remember him making this large squarish horn, he was bending it, steaming the plywood and bending it and nailing it very carefully to go the panels in something actually. And it was quite a largish sort of horn when he finished and it had a decided, um, what looked like, I suppose, a logarithmic curve to it, probably.

Was that the one fitted with a loudspeaker?

No, no. This was a horn, an actual horn he had got, but I think it was much later. That would've been much later probably when we were at Cheese??. That would've been much later. Loud, loud speaker thing in a big baffle, a big, but this plywood horn, I can distinctly remember that and I thought it was much earlier than that.

I've got some recollection of that, you know, being done for somebody or other.....

I think, he made that up to special order. *Could be*, I think we had a special order, got it fit into some fireplace or other.

Might have been.

'Cause he got, he got quite clever bending the stuff, you know. *It's interesting then.* Yeah, I think he made, slapped all these square loudspeakers made out of hardboard ...a kind of hardboard I can remember they used to make them from paper. Yeah, that's right.

I do remember vividly though, the appalling stink when he was cooking these fibre needles. He used to cook them in a brown kind of triage, Treat them. Yes. He called it treating them. I think he was trying to harden that. That's right. Hard. Whether, whether it was successful or not. Oh it made a whole load of difference. Did it? Oh, I can remember him doing it on the kitchen stove. It was, that must have been, I'm sure that was before sort of '36, before he was actually working full time for you . But I don't know, It could have been, that could have run at the same time as he was running the cork business. Yes. I think it might have been.

I think he used to...When we were really pushed. That's when he used to make some at home too.

Who first thought of this idea of fibre needles, I mean where does that come from? Cause that was afterwards quite important, isn't it?

Yes. I, I couldn't say exactly who, because I know in the very early days, HMV used to sell fibre needles, not sure they came later. Yes. The prickly pear thorn that's what they were.

They came later. But this started earlier so, whoever invented the fibre needle is difficult to say, because very early HMV gramophones were made to take fibre needles.

Were they?... , I thought they weren't very, they weren't very successful, I thought. Steel needle?

No, no, not, not all the time. Steel came first. Cause then fibre needles came out for those people who wanted to preserve their records. But the HMV machines or the big producers, their machines wouldn't play fibre needles properly, although they sold them. But the fibre needles we used to make by hand were much tougher and rather larger than the old HMV.

I think I've seen those old fibre needles. They were thinner and round. I think they didn't have that hard edge where they actually made a bamboo. Yours were made of bamboo. But I still remember my father sawing those ring out a large piece of bamboo he used to saw with a hacksaw. About an inch inside. Well he used a chisel originally. I can remember that very well. He was always doing that at home. I remember that. And he was doing them up in packets, I suppose it must have been what 50 needles a packet about, he was doing them up in packets, but then he started this business of doping them right? Or treating...

Well the first people that used.... I think, then again, I think Percy Wilson was one of the first ones to experiment on dope for fibres, in the early days anybody who wanted to look after their records wouldn't put a steel needle on.

No. They, they worn records rapidly, didn't they? Yeah.

Now, to play fibres properly, they must have one of these special sound boxes like a Vartz or a Wild or one of ours. But later on then the thorn needles came out. But I'm doubtful the thorn needle was quite as good as fibre. I don't think so. I don't think they held up so well.

Cause the beauty of fibre needles I think you could cut a new point.

Well, it had sharpeners too. A Sharpener. You'd rub the point on a piece of revolving sandpaper.

More laborious than that little cutter you used for fibre needle. Those fibre needles gave very good sound.

They did eventually, they did it. If you tune the sound box to suit the fibre, they gave you an even better quality, I think than steel needles because they didn't produce the background scratch.

Oh yes. It's a much better sound. Yeah, because I remember as a boy listening to the 39th symphony on fibre needles. And even to this day, I remember it was very acceptable. Very, very good.

One of the stays with what I call these commercially produced sound boxes, the movement was so stiff that only play about half a record, you got to sharpen the point again. They kept breaking down. Now the better sound boxes, if they were balance nicely, you know? Paired to balance the machine, they sometimes play two or three sides before they broke.

Eventually you had an awful lot of customers them, didn't you? great many it seems to me. I remember in the window, I think it was Firth Street, there was a board where the letter are....

Yes, it might have been.... And that was at mistake, to publicize all these famous people.

But they had letters or something with the postmarks on or something from all over the world.

Unfortunately, all those letters got destroyed, you know. But, uh, we had a list of people we supplied like leading to bread?????. Yeah.

I can remember my father going all the way up to Compton McKenzie's house once. Yes. Presumably that was to either install a machine or selling ...

Well, it might have been Scotland.

It was Scotland, Beauty Firth. That's right. Yeah, that's right. A little Island. Something, like Ilene acres?. I think if you could find, You can do. Yes, do I've got a map. It was with a mountain view. That's right. I remember that. Oh, it was a lovely place I went up there too. What was the idea of that? To install a machine, but just to install one,...nuts Really?

Not in those days. No. We used to wait, make sure they sounded right. *I suppose you got paid for going all that way. He had a small cottage out there. We put the machines there. Who else did you have? Lord Berners. You've already mentioned Lawrence. T.E. Shaw or T.E. Lawrence rather the aircraft Shaw*

Delius. Frederick Delius, made a machine for the Duke of Gloucester. The Duke of Gloucester you mentioned. Who else, ...was a lot of other people? Oh Lord Moyne, only a few years back. Oh Lord Moyne, he was, um, he was ..., Guinness.(Walter Edward Guinness) Oh, was he? Wasn't he something like viceroy of Egypt? ... Might have been...I can't remember now, but, um, Guinness family really.

You sent a lot of aboard, didn't you, Maharaja of...? Oh yeah. Was it, or might have been. I forget a lot these days since, since I've been down, since I've been down here, these belong to the temporary Earl of Oxford?????

No No.....

I shouldn't mention all these names.

Well it doesn't matter,

Got to be careful which one in the

. Oh, this is nothing to do with anybody, this is, I mean, if you get to talk, Oh I wouldn't. If there's any doubt about anything I thought, I'd send it to you first.

I mean these people of this sort they don't like being mentioned do they?

But some people you mention if you sold them a machine

Lawrence

He's been long dead anyway. But uh, to say that you've sold a machine to some people don't use at this stage is such a long time ago anyway, and really speaking apart from the, I suppose the interest factor, I can't see that any great worry about that at all. Such a long time ago, there all old hat, old fashioned, out of date things now anyway, you know.

But I was just curious because I do remember that you had a very wide clientele. Were there any other composers?

Oh, one or two musicians.

What about Constant Lambert? But didn't he have one?

Yes.

Osbert Sitwell? Yes. I've been to Sitwell's place

Interesting. Uh, I think my father used to know Sacheverell Sitwell.

That's right. He did.

Uh, I, I don't know how well he knew him, but,

Well, we made a horn machine for Sacheverell Sitwell. Uh, but rather interesting. He used to send us a card, "Please will send someone to oil my gramophone"

We used to have to go all the way up to Towcester just to adjust this gramophone make sure it was well oiled. But I remember going.

BREAK.....

45:52

Choc-a-block of records beautifully filed. On the table a pile of new records already for playing.....corner of your eye there's a pile of broken records.....

You can visualize it, he put these records on, if he didn't like it went on the pile, if he like it, it was carefully filed.

Records in those days were very brittle they only played for about five minutes (Four and a half) or something like that, didn't there?

You'd need an awful lot of records, I suppose, for any of the major works really and remarkable how well they did play. When you, when did you finally abandon the horn type of machine them? It must have been just before the war I presume.

I think they went right up to the war.

Did they? Huh?

Yeah. The horn. Yeah. Because they were overlapping with the other, some people wouldn't have anything to do with the electric machine.

The electrical machines were coming in, though surly.

You know, Oh, there were, they started coming. *You mentioned just now the moving coil sound box.*

I remember, a machine coming from America. I forget the make of, it might have been Magna Box. I think they were in existence then. But anyway, I heard this thing, of course they had enormous bass. Well, as you know, Compton McKenzie was so keen on music and reproducing music at that. So interesting. The gramophone. So the story goes that, uh, he heard one of these new electrical machine and the sound impressed him to such a degree. It made him ill. I mean, it didn't make him ill because he would dislike the sound. *No, no.* The shock of it. *Excessive excitement that.* Made him go all the way back to Jethou on a stretcher.

To where?

Jethou, he had the Island of Jethou,, Channel Island.

Oh, he changed over then

That story might have been exaggerated, he came all the way back on a stretcher but apparently it did. It made him ill, the excitement of hearing this thing.

48.38

So, so that was obviously, they were obviously coming in just before the war anyway, but that was really what, that was just the beginning of the electronic era. Yeah. Sort of what, 1937-8? Was it?

While I think of it, there was an interesting story about McKenzie & Christopher Stone.

Oh! Christopher Stone was another person.

It's generally accepted that Christopher Stone was the first disc jockey...but to me that is not quite true. Compton McKenzie was the first disc jockey and after his first show, he had so many letters of appreciation, he didn't know how to deal with it, and at that time, Christopher Stone, who was Compton McKenzie's brother-in-law was looking for a job and Compton McKenzie said, "Here you are, you take over this radio business from me." He said, "There's a ready-made job for you." Christopher Stone took over from Compton McKenzie and made such a success of it. He's generally accepted that Christopher Stone was the first disc jockey.

He was a household name.

Oh, it was Compton McKenzie, he wrote a lot for the Gramophone too.....

He was joint editor of the Gramophone. He, but, uh, We used to call him BoDoDear Stone Oh yes, I know, because I remember that because he, he used to play mostly classical records. Yes. But, uh, he used to glean his information out of the HMV catalogue, used to talk about the records, the artist and that's where he got it from.

We used to think he musically, he hadn't got much music in him. Yeah. But he used to get it from HMV, in those days used to issue a lovely thick catalogue with the history of the artist with history of the music. You get it all out. *That's fair enough.* Anyway, he used to get it.

Talk about, oh, most people wouldn't know anyway.

But he used to do it so well. *He was very good.* He became a famous name. *Yes. He was a household name.*

..... my father

Except he was not the first dish jockey, but I think Compton McKenzie was the one who started it

It's very interesting.

Harping back to those early days that sort, I suppose the war finished you off. Did it? I mean, why did it pack up then?

I kept going on? I kept going during the war. Did best I could. Yeah. Well, because regarding myself, it was rather interesting. I joined the war service before the war came out and uh, they trained me as a district warden and uh, I became an instant officer. Well anyway, when the war started somehow or the other the authorities got to learn, I knew a bit about radio at that time. Yes. So I had a notice to attend, uh, some Air Force Depot who were hard up for radio technicians and they put certain questions in front of me. I answered and they put a circuit diagram. Will you explain the circuit diagram, which I did and so on... So eventually I had a letter from the town clerk who was really in those days, head of the warden service. The town clerk was in that particular area. And he said to me, he said, The RAF want to take you from us. He said to me, "Do you want to go?" "He would have let me go. He said, So I thought back at him. I said, he said to me, he said, Your training has cost us an awful lot you know. He said, "We don't want to lose you." He said, do you want to go to the RAF? I said, I leave that to you. I said, you are the ones who are heads, running this war. If you think I'll be more service to you, I'll stay. If you think I ought to go into the RAF, I will go. Yeah. I said, I'm not choosing one way or the other. Yeah. He said, Well, in that case, he said, We'll keep you.

So we'll be in the war service that's locally. Yes. I was able to do a little bit of carrying on to keep things together, which I did throughout the war.

What happened to Mike Ginn?

Well, Mike Ginn, he uh,

I mean presumably you, you were shut down.

He loved the services during the first world war. He was an army, became an army major. In the second World War. He joined the Navy at least they called him up. He was on the reserve. He wouldn't, he wouldn't give up being a military man. He was on the reserves and they called him up and he went into the Navy, I forget what rank, I know he was an officer, but I don't think he became a captain. Cause he's a big boy in the Navy, he was a captain in the army. That's right. But I don't think they offered him a captaincy in the Navy because the captain in the Navy.

Oh, so a colonel, Captain? Colonel. Colonel. Oh, he's, he's a very big boy. Yeah, that's right. He's in charge of a ship.

That's right.

Well he wasn't, but they really took him on uh, I think he went into intelligence, into the intelligence service, but did a sideline of training, uh, riflemen, teaching them how to use a rifle. Cause he was a???

Oh yeah. Probably. He liked his shooting? I remember that, wonderful rifles. I went out with him one day when I was quite, quite young. I must have been a school boy, I think up to Tring and he was shooting rabbits with a .22 rifle, and a telescopic sight and that sort of thing. And in those days there were thousands of rabbits there. It was, I remember we got up really early one morning and it must have been about six o'clock in the morning we lay on the bank of a field. Yes. These thousands of rabbits he used to pick. That's right. Yes. He was very good indeed. He was shooting then right, left and centre. Yes. I always remember that. I remember that very well.

But anyway, that was his sideline in the Navy too, teaching, I think it was teaching officers how to use a rifle. So he was away throughout the whole of the war, but I managed to do a little bit of business. Not a lot.

You were doing it from your home. Were you were still living in You shut down the shop in Firth Street. Did you have to shut it down soon after war began?

Yes. Yes, because when Ginn went away, so I run on my own and I had to do something for the war effort.

What happened to my father then? I suppose you sort of laid him off or something.

Yes. Well then I don't know,

He got into cheese around there, but he got fed up... right and left. His health began to suffer. He was getting no sleep like so many people in those days. He was too conscientious, I think, and he was getting no sleep. Yeah. And eventually his health was getting very bad and that was when he decided he, he would come up to the quieter parts of Oxfordshire. And after some peregrinations around Banbury, they settled down at Banbury itself there. And that's where I sort of came back after the war, Banbury. That's how we left London.

I forget if he made fibre needles after he went to Banbury. He, I've got some feeling he did.

Well..... He was probably making them still, I think at.....

Is that, Is that on it?

56:54

So not long after, we split up we started Expert Gramophones. A very well-known school in Highgate. Head of the, well, I can't probably remember which one was, it was a famous school in Highgate, bought an EMG machine. *Yeah*. They hadn't had it long, so we were told when, the tone went, all muffled, they complained to EMG about it. EMG came along and collected it, examined it, said they couldn't find anything wrong with it and returned it. Well, they got fed up with this, came to us, so, well, we have a look at it for, Well, we went along. At least I did. I went along, listened to this thing, and I said, Yes. I don't think it's, it sounds as good as ours by a long way.

So would you like me to bring along one of ours and compare, which I did. That once said, well, how much will you allow us for this old EMG? It wasn't that old, a couple years against a new Expert. Well, I exchanged it for very small amount, just a few pounds after for the EMG, deliver the Export and took the EMG back into our workshop.

I thought I would get to the bottom of this, surely this thing didn't sound as bad as this when it was made. When I examined it, I took the horn off and the conduit. When I turned the conduit upside down, about a dozen table tennis balls came out of it. They, they got the thing, they got the thing set up in where the children had... *Yeah*, I think it was about four table balls

Yeah. Yeah, they'd probably been throwing them down there.

So when we got, when we cleared the balls out, I think it sounded first class, so it was almost, almost a painful for exchange. Got it for just a few pounds, *Extraordinary*, normal new machine.

But the thing that surprised me that they sent it back to EMG, I mean if you use this to do it, they sent it back to EMG and EMG returned it and they could find nothing wrong with it.

That's another funny little...A titled lady, I forget which one it was one of our regular clients, she brought one of these HMV portables, you know the sound box portable, She said to go along.

Well, we put a record on and it was, it was certainly muffled, it was obvious it was something stuffed down the horn. *Yeah*. I put my hand inside out came a pair of gloves. But she's absolutely astonished. She said, Good heavens. That's where they were. I've been looking for days for those gloves.Great story.

.....

.....

I was just curious about I've been curious Oh Mike Ginn, who I used to like him, what I saw of him, 'Course I didn't see as much of him as like you did, if you did on the, but, uh, was he very musically inclined?

I wouldn't say so

No. You, it seems to me, he always seemed to me that you, you were the backbone actors. He always seemed to me, I don't know. I mean obviously one can't exist without the other, but it did seem to me he...

He was the one with the books. He, he was a very good sound ??? accountant, Yes. He, he could, uh, he could sell very well. Sometimes...he used to sell in such a way it used to embarrass me. I just couldn't do it but he sold the stuff

I always had the feeling that you were, sort of the musical side, he was the business side. Right?. But you were the musical side.

He used to leave it to me read the designs.