Scottish Vernacular Discography, 1888-1960

INTRODUCTION

The American inventor Thomas Alva Edison (1847-1931) was the first man to record and reproduce sound when, in late 1877, he is reputed to have spoken the nursery rhyme "Mary had a little lamb" into a horn that was attached to a device that cut vertical grooves into a cylindrical sheet of tinfoil, which was then played back on a device he called a phonograph. He patented his device on 19th February 1878 but, remarkably, this startling new invention had already been commented on in the London Times of 17th January of the same year by the English engineer, Henry Edmunds, under whose instruction a replica was built by a Post Office workman. This was demonstrated at the Royal Institution on 1st February 1878.

Edison saw the primary purpose of his new machine as an aid to business, to be used as a storage device for dictation and a helpmeet for typists. However, by June 1878 he had given a little more thought to the phonograph's potential and listed ten ways in which it could be of value. These were:

1) Letter writing and all kinds of dictation without the aid of a stenographer
2) Phonographic books that will speak to blind people without effort on their part
3) The teaching of elocution
4) Reproduction of music
5) The 'Family Record' – a registry of sayings, reminiscences etc; by members of the family in their own voices and of the last words of a dying person
6) Music-boxes and toys
7) Clocks that would announce in articulate speech the time for going home, to meals, etc.
8) The preservation of languages by exact reproduction of the manner of pronouncing.
9) Educational purposes; such as preserving the explanations made by a teacher, so that the pupil can refer to them at moment, and spelling or other lessons placed upon the phonograph for convenience in committing to memory.
10) Connection with the telephone, so as to make that instrument an auxiliary in the transmission of permanent and invaluable records, instead of being the recipient of momentary and fleeting communications.

In the course of the past one hundred and thirty years all these uses have come to pass in one form or another, although it is with items four and eight that this discography is principally concerned.

Initially, phonographs were leased out to customers for use as dictation machines but very quickly showmen realised that the novelty of hearing sound could attract a paying audience. By the early 1880s customers were paying a small sum of money to hear a phonograph recital and large profits were being made. What was listened to was of secondary importance. Instruments and voices that recorded well on the primitive equipment were what mattered, so banjos, clarinets and fifes were preferred to violins and pianos. Baritone voices recorded better than tenors or basses and sopranos better than contraltos. This practice soon crossed the Atlantic where the charges were commonly ½d to sit on a bench and listen, or 1d. if one sat on a chair.

Once it was possible to buy a cheap phonograph for home use regular issues of new material were being made every month. This repertoire consisted, in the main, of well-known parlour ballads, extracts from popular operas and marches, together with a few well known hymns, all of which were aimed at the English speaking population of the United States. When the first phonograph cylinders went on sale in Britain the situation was, more or less, duplicated. However, the situation changed when customers demanded greater choice and when minorities demanded their own music and song.

The nascent British industry responded with bagpipes and Burns ballads for the Scots, Welsh language songs for the Welsh, uileann pipes and patriotic songs for the Irish, and Yiddish and Hebrew songs for the Jewish immigrants. No other minority in Britain was of sufficient size or had sufficient disposable income to merit

special treatment. This was a start and, encouraged by their sales, repertoire aimed at these minorities continued to expand.

In the earliest days of the phonograph cylinder there was no way of automatically making copies so the artist had to keep making live recordings of the piece into a battery of recording phonographs coupled to a single horn with rubber tubes. Some artists (Harry Bluff for example) would work a steady eight-hour day making recordings according to demand. Most of these very early cylinders are anonymous, in fact there is nothing on the cylinder itself to indicate the company who made it, the artist's name or the tune title – it must be played in order to hear the opening announcement.

So, sound recordings of Scottish speech and music have now been around for over one hundred and ten years but until now there had been no reference work available that would provide information about them. This work has tried to bring together all the information that can be culled from a variety of sources. Incidentally, the earliest Scottish title that can be tracked down appeared on an American Edison cylinder list dated 28th May 1889 when the cornettist John Mittauer played "Within a mile of Edinboro Town". In Britain the Scots music hall artist Charles Coburn recorded his great hits "Two Lovely Black Eyes" and "The Man Who Broke The Bank At Monte Carlo" as early as 1893. He was almost certainly the first major star of the music hall to record.

German born (but later a USA citizen) Emil Berliner (1851-1929) patented the first disc records in 1888 and placed the first disc records on the American market in 1893. In 1898 he opened a branch in London as a base from which to exploit the European market; this company was the forerunner of The Gramophone Company, makers of HMV records. These early seven inch diameter, single sided records put their first Scottish records on the market the same year but their monopoly didn't last long. Within a few years disc records were already starting to oust the cylinder even though that format still had a number of years to run. The first "Scottish" Berliner was a recording by Will E. Bates of the ubiquitous "Bluebells of Scotland" made in August 1898, whilst the first bagpipe records were made in September of the same year.

There is something about hearing a sound recording that is over one hundred years old made by someone who was even older that must strike a chord with everyone. It directly connects us with our past, it provides an immediate link with our cultural history and it also makes an appeal to the romantic side of our nature as we think about these performers who are now long dead. Were these early singers and instrumentalists excited to be involved with the new medium? Did they tell their family and friends all about the experience? Did they consider, when making these recordings, that the people of the future would still be listening to and preserving these fragile artefacts? One likes to think that they were thrilled and felt that making these recordings was more than just another job of work and wage earning occasion.

With a few notable exceptions all the recordings listed here were made by commercial concerns to be sold at a profit. That is not to say that artistic considerations never entered the equation, but profit was the main motivator. Recording companies were always looking for new markets but at the same time they were responding to current trends and fashions.

It is probably fair to say that Scottish music, like Welsh, was a niche market, albeit a large one. Sales of explicitly Scots material were never likely to be large, hence the rarity of so much of the earliest material. Recordings of some of Burns songs could transcend national boundaries and, of course, Harry Lauder could be relied on to be a best seller all over the British Isles (not to mention USA, Canada and Australia).

So within the large niche market of Scotland what minor markets did the recording companies try to reach? Two seem obvious, bagpipes and Gaelic language, and these were catered for almost from the very start of commercial recording in Britain.

A third, country dance music, was, in the first instance, provided by military and brass bands and string orchestras composed, in the main, of 'session' musicians who were hired on the basis that they could read a score and play it without a great deal of rehearsal. This meant, of course, that most of them had no knowledge and little sympathy with what they were called upon to play. Even the orchestras that recorded

music especially for the Scottish Country Dance Society consisted of ‘session’ musicians, the thought of using a genuine Scots country dance band never seems to have entered the record company’s head. Some genuine recordings of country dance music were, however, provided by various Scottish melodeon players, who enjoyed a great vogue prior to the First World War.

Most Scots ballads were sung by trained singers, many of them English, and this resulted in some very stilted efforts to capture the true sound of spoken Scots. However, as time went by more and more native Scots were employed, some like Tom Kinniburgh recorded most of the standard Scots ballads for almost all the record companies.

Led by Beltona Records the use of artists from non-professional backgrounds began to increase in the mid 1920s and this resulted in the first bothy ballads being recorded as well as the first true country dance bands. Dialect sketches and monologues, accordions, penny whistles, dulcimers, recitations, Border ballads and much more were recorded in the period covered by this book.

In the early days, recordings, whether on cylinder or disc, were expensive and only available to the relatively wealthy. Prices varied from 2/6 (12½p) to 21 shillings (105 p), very large sums in relation to the low wages of the time, which were frequently less than £1.00 per week. However, increased competition soon brought down prices of popular material and by the mid 1900s recordings could be bought for as little as 1/- (5p). In the inter-war (1918-39) it would be possible to buy a record for as little as 6d. (2½p).

A few major companies have always dominated the market in the British Isles. Prior to 1914 the main brand names available in Britain were produced by the British owned Gramophone Company, the American owned Columbia Graphophone Co., French owned Pathé and the German owned Beka, Odeon, and Favorite brands.

The Gramophone Company owned HMV, Cinch and Zonophone, Columbia owned Regal and Phoenix, Odeon owned Jumbo whilst Pathé owned Diamond. However, there were numerous smaller independent companies many of them German owned. Many companies did ‘custom pressing’ for retailers and mail-order companies that wanted their own brand of record. These items were frequently issued under a pseudonym or even anonymously, they can only be traced back to source by reference to the master number. There are scores of record label brands from the pre-1914 period whose catalogues have defied a complete reconstruction.

The inter war period saw the birth of many new brand names, most of them short lived, but a few survived for many years. Among the more long lasting of the minor labels were Beltona, Imperial, Piccadilly, Rex and Sterno, The Decca Record Company was founded in 1929 at the height of the depression, but went on to flourish and is still a major player in the market. The 1930s saw the formation of EMI, which amalgamated the Columbia group with the Gramophone Company.

When the war finished in 1945, only HMV, Columbia, Parlophone, Decca, Beltona, Regal-Zonophone and Rex (which ceased in February 1948) had survived. A major shake up was inevitable, many pre-war artists were dropped whilst new talent was signed up and, for a few years, sales of Scottish material boomed, but by the middle of the 1950s the rise of teenage ’pop’ music was beginning to dominate the market for popular music. The major companies ceased to record Gaelic language material and many of the popular Scottish country dance bands disappeared from the company lists.

However, the situation was to alter radically in the early 1960s when the advent of cheaply pressed long-playing records led to a proliferation of small specialist labels that devoted themselves solely to Scottish music. Some labels only had one or two issues but others built up substantial catalogues that covered Scots repertoire of all types. The CD has now made record production into a cottage industry as almost anyone can produce their own CDs, however small the potential market may be. Many companies lasted only months rather than years and were often operated as a hobby by an enthusiast who, more often than not, never bothered to keep written records of what they were doing. To document everything that was recorded after the end of 1960 may well prove almost impossible.

Very few re-issues of pre-1960 material appeared on LP and most of these are documented in the discography but documentation of CDs present an almost insoluble problem. CDs that have re-issued older material have generally done so without any acknowledgement of the sources from which the material was drawn and because the same repertoire crops up again and again it is generally impossible to track down the original issue. Only Ronnie Cairns' new Beltona label has instituted a systematic re-issue programme of historic material that gives not only the source label but also other relevant discographical material.

The emphasis in this work is on commercial recordings, that is to say, gramophone records made to be sold across a shop counter, by mail order or by door-to-door salesmen. However, some artists made records that were pressed in very small quantities either as gifts to friends, 'demo-discs" or for sale at performances, these would not have been available through normal channels. Where any information is available it has been given, but this area is, by its nature, very under-researched. Some non-commercial records and cylinders have been listed because of their historic importance.

This work has tried to be inclusive rather than exclusive, thus some readers may well feel that the Scots connection is, in some cases, rather tenuous. One of the many problems that the compiler has had to face was how to treat the discography of an artist who recorded both Scots and non-Scots material. Broadly speaking, if the majority of an artist's recordings are Scots, then a complete discography is given. If, on the other hand, only a minority of the recordings are of Scots material, then only these are detailed. Some dance band, 'pop' and jazz recordings are listed if the artists are Scots and the recording location was in Scotland. Otherwise a mere reference to some artists has had to suffice.

The main problem faced by the researcher is that one cannot know what one doesn't know about. Many cylinders must exist that are unlisted, for example, no one has ever seen one with the Tredagh or Talbot brand names. Many Empress cylinders had no catalogue numbers and were virtually made to order, as were some very early ones made by Edison Bell.

As will be seen, master numbers are missing for many records – in fact many records are known only from trade press advertisements. This missing information is of vital importance.

This then, is the first attempt to gather inside one publication the available information on all the British recordings of Scots material that can be found. Hopefully, it will be of use to a wide variety of people for a variety of reasons. The public library will be able to deal with the casual enquiry, the family historian will be able to refer to a relative's recordings, students of a particular genre will be able to track down changes in style and performance. Musicologists, historians of popular music, students of Burns, cultural historians and others will all find this work a source of valuable information.

2666 words. 27th. April 2009.

THE DISCOGRAPHY

It should be made clear from the very outset that I have neither heard nor seen the majority of the records listed in this discography. I can go further and say that many records are only known through advertisements in the trade press and despite my best efforts I have been unable to locate them in any record collection.

There is no history of Scottish discography, whereas with a musical genre like jazz there has been continuous research since 1935. Brian Rust, the father of modern discography, published the first edition of "Jazz Records" as long ago as 1961, the sixth edition was published in 2002. The introduction to this edition remarks that it would be impossible for this work to be as complete as it is were research to start today. Nearly forty years ago many of the giants of jazz were still alive, as would have been many pioneering Scots artists, and therefore would have been available to answer researcher's questions. That of course is no longer possible. Jazz researchers have also had many specialist magazines devoted to the subject most of which had regular discographical articles and forums where new information could be discussed and analysed Thus this work has had no established information network of enthusiasts, let alone any publications on which to build. It has had to be started from scratch and has involved a mass of primary research in archives, privately owned record collections, tracking down performers and their families and much more.

Subject to all these limitations every effort has been made to go back to the original company files whenever they still exist, which is infrequently. Only EMI have extensive written files on their recorded output and even there much is missing. Decca have very little, most of their archives seems to have been thrown away in the 1950s. Many companies that were once major producers of gramophone records have long since disappeared along with their recording ledgers. However, thanks to the efforts of a few dedicated discographers, catalogue re-constructions have been attempted without which this work would have been much less complete.

Extensive research in the files of Scottish newspapers has been carried out and this has produced biographical information about the artists, references to previously unknown recording sessions as well as more accurate dates for known sessions.

This work presents our current state of knowledge. Naturally, it is hoped that anyone who can add anything will contact the author.

The Artists

If known, it is always shown what type of voice a vocalist had, although some singers could appear under more than one category, for example baritones sometimes recorded as bass-baritones or basses.

Artists are listed alphabetically under the name by which they are best known, and then their work is listed chronologically. The artist's full name heads the section, so we find Jim Cameron under the heading James Young Cameron. However, many artists used a stage name, by which they are known to most people, and these artists will be listed under that stage name with their correct name (where known) enclosed in brackets on the next line. For example, comedian Tommy Lorne is revealed to have been christened, Hugh Gallagher Corcoran. In order that artists may be placed in some sort of historical context I have attempted to ascertain their dates and locations of birth and death. Information on this subject has proved very difficult to obtain, particularly with artists who were too young for their occupation to be shown on the 1901 Census returns. The use of stage names makes this element of the research even more difficult.

Many early record companies pressed records for clients who then issued them under their own brand name using a pseudonym to conceal the artists' true identity. A glance at the discography of the singer Tom Kinniburgh will show this aspect of the record industry in full flow – he used at least thirty pseudonyms. All these nom-des-disques have been cross-referenced but my research has shown quite clearly that aural identification is necessary to sort out the use of the same pseudonym by two different performers.

Some performers' names give the impression that they may have been adopted solely for use in the recording studio and, once again, aural identification is needed. A good example is Sandy Glen, did he really exist or was this name used to conceal the identity of another artist? Record companies were not above re-issuing their own records under a pseudonym, this practise served a double purpose: it saved the expense of another recording session and made it look as though they had more artists on their roster than they really had. Beltona records used this trick by re-issuing records by The Cameron Men under the name Honeyman's Fiddlers.

The use of the prefix Mac or Mc seem to have been largely indiscriminate so I have followed the normal practice of placing them all together with the next letter denoting its place in the alphabetical sequence.

All of which goes to show that record labels are not necessarily sources of accurate information.

Accompaniments

The fullest details possible are given as to the accompaniment to vocal performances. Sometimes it has been possible to give the exact instrumentation or even the musician's names; in other cases I have no information whatsoever. The personal files of artists who recorded for EMI (HMV, Columbia, Parlophone) sometimes give full details of the backing band/orchestra but seldom give the names of individual musicians. Where the accompaniment to a singer is by piano only, his or her name is often given on the record label, or can be deduced with reasonable accuracy from neighbouring recordings.

Instrumentation

Aural identification of the instrumentation of the various bands has been attempted where the group is sufficiently small for this to be feasible. On occasions, pictures of a group give a reasonable idea of its make-up. The musicians who played in Scottish Country Dance bands are sometimes known and I have given what information I can, although with frequent changes of personnel one cannot be sure whether the same musicians are on successive recording session. Personal files at EMI give the instrumentation of many of the bands but rarely give the names of the individual musicians concerned.

Recording dates and locations

Exact recording dates for some labels are know from extant recording ledgers, but this is true only of HMV(and its predecessors, Berliner, G&T and Gramophone Company), some Parlophone and Columbia records from the 1920s until 1960 and most Decca records. Partial ledgers for one or two smaller companies, i.e. Imperial, are in the possession of discographers, but in most cases recording dates have had to be extrapolated from the evidence of advertisements, performers' memories or other external sources. The rather vague description, 'Recorded London' has to suffice for most sessions but sometimes the exact address where the recording session took place has been found and this is given in the belief that it may be of interest, particularly to local historians. Frustratingly in one or two cases recordings were taken at location outside London but no reports can be found in the local press to show the address at which these took place. For example in May 1909 the German Homophon Company held a session in Glasgow where they took recordings by Pamby Dick, Mackenzie Murdoch, The Govan Police Pipe band and others – but where?

Master//Matrix and other numbers

Master numbers are the foundation upon which a discography is built; they are the essential building blocks.

These numbers were allocated to the master record, generally in a chronological sequence, by the recording engineers either when the record was made or at the end of the recording session. They then became the one constant during that master record's life. No matter on what label the item was issued this number generally remained the same and visible, even if the record was re-issued under a pseudonym on a non-British label. The master number enables you to track most records back to their origins.

Incidentally, vinyl records also have master numbers that remain constant no matter what brand name is used on the label. These, of course, have little relevance to the dates on which the individual tracks were recorded.

It can be found in the wax surrounding the label, on the label or sometimes under the label. It may consist of a number only but often has an alphabetical prefix, it is generally followed by a number, letter or symbol that indicates the 'take' number, that is the attempt to make a recording good enough to issue. Sometimes the 'take' is shown separately from the master number and can be anywhere in the area surrounding the label.

Naturally, there are many variations on these themes. Beltona and Winner records made by the Edison Bell Winner Company use these symbols to indicate the take; 1 =⊕; 2 = Δ ; 3 = □ ; 4 = ÷ ; 5 = ∅. They can be found in microscopic print in a variety of positions in the wax surrounding the label. For one period in its history the Vocalion company and its associated labels designated 'takes' with a blank after the master number for a 1st. take, an X for a 2nd. take and XX for a 3rd. take. HMV used Roman numerals while Columbia acoustic records and early electrical recordings never showed a 'take' at all. In the early days of the Gramophone Company (G&T, HMV) every 'take' had its own master number. However, by and large the majority of companies used a simple number after the master number to designate the 'take'.

On occasions alternate takes were used on issued records and these may reveal differences in performance. Alternate takes can often be found on pseudonymous issues. Other numbers and symbols are often found and these generally have some significance and should be noted. Some of the more important examples of these are worthy of special mention.

Decca Record used letters from the word BUCKINGHAM to indicate which pressing the record was, so B equalled the first pressing whilst M equalled the tenth, BB would be the eleventh, and so on. The same system was used by EMI, whose code word was GRAMOPHLTD.

Homophon (Homophone, Homochord, Homokord, Hibernia, Rexophone, Rondophone and others) have what is believed to be a coded recording date in the wax, the key to which seems to be this.

> A = January, B = February; C = March; D = April; E = May; F = June;
> G = July; H = August; J = September; K= October; L = November; M = December
> T = 1907; S = 1908; R = 1909; Q = 1910; P = 1911; O = 1912; N = 1913; M = 1914 and so on.

Thus, for example, code J24O, would translate as 24th. September 1912. What may be taken as a recording date seems to be the date on which the record was pressed.

Invicta/Guardsman seem to have briefly used a similar system but this has not yet been decoded with any certainty. Preliminary research appears to indicate that M = 1912 & N = 1913 with months beginning with January coded as M and December coded as Z. More detailed research is needed.

Master records made by Vocalion, Crystalate, Decca and Winner for exclusive issue on Beltona were prefixed with an 'M', indicating that they were being made on behalf of Murdoch Trading, owners of the trade name until 1941.

Many Favorite records gave the recording date and location on the label itself, whilst the suffix letter after the master number is not a take designation but an indicator of the record's diameter

Not every record showed a master number, they showed, instead, a 'control' number but like a genuine master number these generally remained constant no matter what brand name appeared on the record label. The main users of this system were those cheap labels produced by the Vocalion Company, i.e. Scala, Beltona, Coliseum, Meloto, etc. It is believed that this system was used to disguise the fact that these labels were actually using material, generally pseudonymously, which had originally appeared on Vocalion or Aco records.

What are known as ‘single face’ numbers appeared on the label or in the wax of many pre-1930 labels. These date from the early days of single-sided records where this was both a catalogue number and a coded guide to the type of performance. The main users of ‘single face’ numbers that defined the performance were the Gramophone Company (G&T, HMV), Favorite and Zonophone, If performances were re-issued as double-sided discs the ‘single face’ number was often retained even though a new catalogue number may have been allocated that covered both sides. HMV were probably the last company to use the single face number, which they retained until 1934. These are often confused with master numbers.

In the period after 1950 master numbers begin to lose their relevance as a means of establishing a chronological sequence. It is clear that many numbers were allocated just before the record was issued rather than at the time of recording. It is quite possible, therefore, to find that the recording date (as given in company files) often seems at variance with the numerical master sequence. Many recordings that were only scheduled for issue on Long Playing records were never allocated a master number in the first place.

The full complexities of the various systems used over the seventy year period covered by this work are impossible to explain in this short introduction. However, it should now be clear that any letters, numbers or symbols that can be found anywhere on a record may have relevance for the discographer.

Tune titles

I have tried to give tune titles exactly as they appear on the record label, spelling mistakes and all. Popular titles could appear in a variety of forms, as an example I could cite; Loch Lomond, The Banks of Loch Lomond, Bonnie Banks of Loch Lomond, On the bonnie Banks of Loch Lomond and so on. Spelling variations frequently occur with fiddle and pipe tunes as does the use of vernacular forms with song titles. So “Bridge of Ayr” also appears as “Brig o’ Ayr” and “Stop your tickling Jock” becomes “Stop yer ticklin’ Jock”. Different pressings of the same title may have variant spellings and, to complicate matters further, record company catalogues or publicity material could be different again. It does seem important to note these variations as they reveal how the record companies marketed their recordings to the public.

Some tunes suggest that they do have a specific composer but whoever he was has eluded me. Many records from the pre-1914 period used masters derived from German sources, by translating some titles, particularly marches, back into German it has proved possible to find the composer’s name.

Gaelic songs and tunes seem even more prone to spelling variations than others. I have made no attempt to try to ascertain what the accepted form is now, what is on the label is what appears in the discography.

Composer & arranger credits

An absolute minefield, probably the area most prone to error. Where to start? Many tunes that are normally credited to “trad” turn out to have been composed by someone whose name is known. However, quite a number of compositions that we can be reasonably sure are “trad” has been claimed by someone, but what they may have done is to have made an arrangement that they have then copyrighted. Sometimes multiple claims are made for the same tune, sometimes different tunes share the same title. Examples can be found where the same title is claimed on one record to have been composed by, say “J. MacDonald & N. MacGregor” and on another by J. MacFarlane & N. MacGregor. Is this an error by the record company, or is it the same tune but with two different lyrics? Only listening to both records can solve the problem.

My main sources for composer credits have been the records themselves, followed by record company catalogues and monthly supplements and the internet. I have also derived many from artists’ personal files and recordings cards. Unfortunately, master cards are often almost illegible and I may have sometimes wrongly interpreted what is there.

If possible I have given the dates and locations of birth and death for the many arrangers whose names appear. However, in many cases I don’t even have the initials of their Christian names.

Issue numbers

The original label name and issue number is given first, followed by any other issues the item may have had in Britain or overseas. Details of vinyl issues are also given with an indication of whether the item is an LP (long playing) or an EP (extended play) disc. Most of gramophone records were 10" diameter but they could vary between 3" and 20", as far as possible these variations are shown in brackets after the catalogue number.

Many issues on HMV and Zonophone but also, to a lesser extent, on Parlophone and Regal, particularly in the
Period prior to 1927, were available in the countries of the Empire using the same catalogue number as the issues
made in Britain. As these items are listed in catalogues printed specifically for the country concerned (e.g. South
Africa; Australia and New Zealand) it seems reasonable to indicate this after the catalogue number. In the main
these issues were exported in the complete state, but it is known that pressings made in the country of sale could
also use the British catalogue number. In later years occasional issues could be exported to or pressed in the country of sale using their British catalogue number.

Playing speeds

The use of the catch-all term 78-rpm hides the multitude of different speeds that were in use prior to the standardisation that happened in the early 1930s when the Columbia Company ceased to issue records that revolved at 80-rpm. Speeds could vary from 64 revolutions per minute to 120, sometimes the speed was shown on the record label or in the catalogue. Sometimes a record company catalogue would show the musical key in which the record was to be played. More often than not it was up to the person playing the record to find the correct speed by trial and error.

No attempt to give the correct speed, if not 78-rpm, has been made.

Stamps on records

In the main these relate to the collection of copyright fees on behalf of the composers and publishers of the recorded material. They first appeared ca 1908 but had virtually disappeared by the late 1930s. The stamps were produced by the music publishing company and then sold to the record producing company. However, some of the major companies seem to have reported sales to the publishers and remitted a cheque in payment rather than using stamps. Presumably it was felt that HMV, Columbia, Parlophone and other major record producers could be trusted to produce reliable sales figures but the makers of minor, and more ephemeral, brands couldn't.

Compositions published prior to 1914 received a royalty of 2.5% of the recommended retail price, whilst those published after this date were rated at 5%. As retail prices dropped to as low as 6d. (2.5p) the rates were changed to 3.125% and 6.25%, with a minimum royalty of a farthing (.104p). Bear in mind the payment percentage had to be split between two sides of a record, thus payment of as little as l/8th of a penny or as high as 6d. per side can be found.

Producers of cheap records often recorded a copyrighted item on one side and a non-copyright item on the other. These were generally written for a fee by a staff musician and the rights assigned to a publishing company owned by the record producers.

The other type of stamp to be found on records dates from the introduction of a purchase tax on luxury goods introduced in October 1940. The stamp always had a capital letter T combined with another letter that indicated the rate of tax and the time period during which it applied.

Phonograph cylinders

Cylinders could revolve at a whole variety of speeds and be of varying lengths and diameters, so much so that many brands could only be played on specific machines, generally made by the company that also made the cylinders. It has proved impossible to provide all this information.

Gaelfonn Records

Gaelfonn Records present a great problem as no company files exist. Their existence spans the period from 1957 onwards, but it is not known when they ceased production. Many important artists, particularly Gaelic singers, recorded for this label so it seems important to list everything that is known. Every artist seemed to have his/her own catalogue number series; it would therefore seem to be impossible to know when a complete catalogue reconstruction has been achieved. Publication of this discography will hopefully produce new information about previously unknown issues as well as some accurate information about issue and recording dates.

Columbia Records

The first records made by the Columbia Graphophone Company were issued as single sided items with the master number serving as an order number but in 1904 the first double sided records appeared but without an order number common to both sides. In October 1907 the first of the "D" series (viz. D-1) was issued, the last one, D-298, being issued in October 1909. There was a change in name in December 1908 when the record brand name was changed to Rena Double Face record, a designation that survived from catalogue number 1000 to number 1408, issued in September 1910. This brand name was, in its turn, superseded by Columbia-Rena, which brand name lasted from 1408 (October 1910) until 2584 (issued August 1915). Finally, in October 1915 they became Columbia records, which name lasted until the 1960s. Any record with a catalogue number below 2584 could have been issued or re-issued under any one of the three designations. More information is needed.

Pathé Records

The history of the French Pathé's activities in Britain is complex and convoluted but thanks to a new multi-volume work by Mike Langridge a great deal of light has now been thrown on the subject. Pathé had, to say the least, an idiosyncratic approach to the recording industry. Not only did they use the less popular vertical recording method but all their early disc recordings played from the centre outwards. Four different diameters of cylinders were sold – Standard, Intermediate, Grand Concert and Celeste and disc records appeared with diameters of 8½", 10", 11", 12", 14" and 20". Re-issues on other labels appeared with diameters of 10½" and 11½". All these different sizes were dubbed from a giant master cylinder. Any item could appear on cylinder as well as on a variety of disc sizes. Not surprisingly the Pathé company never made a profit on its British operation that lasted from 1902 until 1928/

A two volume work by Mike Langridge has just been published which is devoted to the reconstruction of the Pathé catalogue. This work contains
so much new information that I have had to radically revise many of the entries where the artist has recorded for Pathé.

You will note corrected recording dates, which means that sessions have to be moved to their correct chronological position. Groups of recordings have, in some cases, now been split in to separate sessions. New issue numbers have been found and the diameters of records have now been inserted, sometimes for the first time and sometimes as corrections of faulty data.

Winner Records

"The Winner Record" started life at catalogue number 2000 in February 1912 but at about issue number 3659, dating from ca June 1922, the name was changed to "Winner". In March 1926 (ca issue number 4336)

the name was again changed, this time to Edison Bell Winner. Any record with a number below 4336 could have been issued with any one of the three names.

Parlophone and Beltona Records

The Parlophone E-3000 series started off its life as a ‘general purpose label but from catalogue number E-3546 it became almost exclusively devoted to recordings for the Scottish market. Whilst some of the records have no obvious Scots connection it has been deemed sensible to list everything. The Beltona label followed the same path in that from catalogue number 1368 it devoted its catalogue to recordings of Scottish and, to a lesser extent, Irish repertoire. The labels sales were made, in the main, in Scotland so all their catalogue is listed.

Information needed

I need any information that you can provide, whether it is to correct a misspelling or a misplaced apostrophe or to give information about records that do not appear in the discography. If you contact me I can explain exactly what I need. Like all researchers I realise that this discography will provide a never ending task for those interested in making it a more complete and accurate work. Most intriguing is that we can’t know what we don’t know.