Design Review

VOLUME 4 NUMBER 1  ONE SHILLING & SIXPENCE

IN YOUR KITCHEN — A HOUSE AT LOWER HUTT
AESTHETICS & MORALS — DESIGN IN GREEK ART
SKETCH BOOK NOTES — GRAMOPHONE NOTES

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Design Review is published bi-monthly (under the auspices of the Architectural Centre Inc., Wellington) by E. Mervyn Taylor and printed at the Pelorus Press Ltd, Auckland. Blocks by Thomson Photo Engravers Ltd, Wellington.

Letters to the Editor and contributions should be addressed to The Editor, Design Review, 71 Hatton Street Ext., Wellington W.3, accompanied by a stamped addressed envelope. If written under a pen-name, the writer must enclose his name and address.

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I came across a good example of some of our absurd local by-laws the other day in a County just outside Wellington City. This by-law, in the interests of health, lays down that no person may place his septic tank closer than thirty feet to his house. But there is no provision as to how far it must be from his neighbour's house. My friend kept his tank the required thirty feet from his own house, but he was allowed to have it five feet from the house next door.

The building of flats has been almost totally suspended for at least six years. This is forcing our cities out into lower densities with all the consequent evils of higher development costs, travelling time and general inconvenience. As few permits are given for new commercial and industrial premises, residential buildings near the centres of the larger cities are gradually being taken over by business firms. These firms have to reconvert at great expense, in some cases at a cost equal to that of a new building. This is an economic waste for it forces business to use unsuitable accommodation, creates poor working conditions and deprives large numbers of people of housing. A boarding house converted to a factory can put fifty people in the street. It might be better for all if more permits were granted for essential business needs, provided the conversion of residential buildings was controlled.

This trend is of course to be expected in a growing city. But for a healthy growth, new high-density housing should be continually replacing premises taken over for business. The only new housing today, however, is single units on the outskirts. This is the main reason for the decline in the population of Wellington City by 3,700 in six years. The Wellington City Council and the Auckland City Council realize these problems but are not prepared to act to remedy them. The reason put forward in Wellington is that the cost of flats at £4000 a unit is prohibitive. But has any one ever investigated real single unit housing costs? They would probably find that if the costs of new subdivilational roading, sewerage, water and electricity supply, loss of good farm land, local body administration, transport and less of time in travelling were all taken into account, the cost of the average single house in Tawa Flat, Upper Hutt or Tamaki was well over £4000. It now costs £400 at least a chain for roading alone. The building of tall flats in open settings would save road, service and transport costs.

The recent annual conference of the New Zealand Branch of the Town Planning Institute was a success. There is only a small body of qualified town planners in New Zealand and it was encouraging that so large a proportion of them should come together and provide a stimulating three days in discussions and meetings. The main topic of discussion centered around attempts by the respective institutes of surveyors, engineers and architects to invade and swamp the legitimate planning profession. But I trust that the Town Planning Institute will be able to maintain its integrity. I think it will. Nevertheless the professional town planner still has a long way to go before he finds his rightful place among the other professions.

We have had a letter from Howard Wadman, who writes enthusiastically of the South Bank Exhibition of the Festival of Britain. 'It is truly superb,' he tells us. 'The wit, charm and beauty that have been poured into those few acres take the breath away.' Two concerts in the Festival Hall left him with the impression that it is the finest piece of twentieth century architecture in Britain and perhaps in Western Europe. 'To sit on one of the terraces and sip a drink while the sun sinks behind the Houses of Parliament, and all the Thames for a mile lights up is something new for London. It is civilized pleasure of an intense kind. It is,' he tells us, 'the most glorious splurge of colour and gaiety that Britain has seen for at least forty years.'

I appear to have committed a blunder in the last Design Review in my reference to the architect of the proposed Students' Union Building at Victoria College. I stated that an unqualified architect had been appointed. In the first place the particular architect had in mind had not apparently been officially appointed, and in the second place I have been taken to task because I complained that he was unqualified. My interpretation of the word 'qualified' seems to be the point in question. The Oxford backs me up by its definition of qualification as 'quality fitting a person for a post'. Qualified in the other sense means possession of a recognised diploma or registration. If I had meant the latter I would have used the word 'registered'. No offence meant to the select number of unregistered architects who are in my opinion also 'qualified'.

Experience has already taught me that popular taste in curtains is predominantly floral. I have learned a further lesson. Popular taste in carpets is floral also. Although there is a wide variety in flowers, from masses of rose buds to clumps of hydrangeas, it is almost impossible to find any choice in plain carpet. So with flowers on the floor, flowers round the windows, flowers all over the chairs and on the wallpaper, and bunches of grapes hanging from a fibrous plaster ceiling, we really are bringing the outdoors in.
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IN YOUR KITCHEN
M. B. Patience

The preparation and consumption of food is one of the principal activities carried on in a home. The preparation involves generally but one person, and that person the most hard-worked member of the family; the consumption brings the whole family together, generally once each day, in what is in this age of hurry and bustle perhaps the only opportunity left for family intercourse. From the house-wifely point of view, any form of arrangement facilitating the preparation of food would be welcome; on the point of family relationships any means whereby the home environment may benefit such relationships is surely to be desired.

Consider your kitchen for a moment. Does the business of food preparation mean countless steps from one part of your kitchen to another, requiring of you each day the stamina of a distance runner? Or does its arrangement save your feet? Are the heights of working tops and most-used cupboards placed so as to prevent an aching back at the sink, and eliminate the necessity to use a stool to get to upper shelves? The two sketches—that of 'Heights' and 'Reaching'—illustrate dimensions in general use, and show that the extent of live, storage is from the lower units up to a maximum height of seven feet. Above this point reaching is difficult and requires a stool.

In a kitchen there are three main operations which occur in sequence. These are: I—Storage, II—Preparation, and III—Cooking and Serving, and are illustrated in diagram form. It will be obvious that any through traffic in the kitchen should be carefully routed away from the main working areas, or 'bumps' into people holding pans of boiling water or fat are certain to occur, not to speak of the constant irritation to the
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distraught housewife saddled perhaps with unexpected guests at a time when children are charging about. The U-shaped layout is best for this purpose, as the diagram shows. The operation sequence diagram is illustrated perhaps more clearly in the plan showing 'Activities'.

At this point I would ask you to remember the old family kitchen of your childhood; or if this is assuming too many years on your shoulders the old family kitchen of your parents' childhood, as in the sketch 1908. Although such an arrangement of living room and scullery undoubtedly caused colossal wear and tear on the spirits and physique of the Edwardian housewife, the family social centre was certainly where the food was cooked and eaten. Subsequent developments have tended to transform the kitchen into a smaller and smaller space, with ever-increasing cupboard space, but gradually becoming completely separated from the eating place. Due to today's problems of lack of space through regulations and cost, and lack of help through shortage of domestic assistance, the suggestions contained in the sketch 1948 and in the two perspective views would seem to be forced on us. In a sense we are back where we started in 1908—but, it is hoped, more efficiently so, and yet with much the same comfort.

In this kitchen bench tops would be covered with lino or one of the various kinds of plastic sheeting. The windows suggested are the louvre type as have
been advertised in Design Review. Flooring could be cork tile, lino or rubber—and walls enamelled. As a relief to such bright glazed surfaces and to introduce natural finishes, waxed woodwork is suggested on some cupboards and wall surfaces. Sliding doors do not curtail the comparatively small area forced on us by building costs, and can reduce the intolerably large number of doors, hinges and catches in the modern house. Crockery of good design ought to be looked at, so the open shelves at the servery allow easy access and display. Two-way drawers alongside the servery contain cutlery and cloths.

Cooking smells are extracted by the small exhaust fan set in the fixed glass at back of cooker.

Built-in furniture in the dining portion comprises bookshelves, settee, radio and miscellaneous storage. Double glazed doors opening on to a terrace allow advantage to be taken of those rare days when outdoor meals are possible. The whole question of outdoor living is to be the subject of a future article in Design Review.
1 The living room opens onto lawn court. Photograph shows depth of penetration of mid-winter sunshine.

A HOUSE AT LOWER HUTT

Architect: W. Toomath

The house is placed at rear of section to avoid obstruction of winter sunshine and outlook by houses on each side. Layout of house and section designed as a whole to make the most of all the land: from inside, one is aware of the diagonal length of the section bounded by the two walled garden courts onto which the living room opens. House floor level is a continuation of the garden (as a result of concrete floor slats which has proved that, properly constructed, a concrete floor is warmer, more comfortable and much quieter than the usual timber floor). General planning of house and division of section into private walled courts indicate that something much more livable than the usual suburban layout is possible within the limitations of the standard 50-foot section.

The house itself is planned around the living habits of a married couple reaching the time for retirement: it achieves
the easy-going atmosphere of a holiday house, and proves incidentally the practicality of the so-called open planning for the normal family house. To counter the cramping effect of today’s minimum floor areas, severely limited by economics, the rooms of the house are merged into one another wherever practicable.

Kitchen-laundry, dining and sitting area, sewing space, main bedroom and dressing area are all one continuous room, with the various activities related in their natural everyday sequence. The kitchen is divided from the sitting area, and the bedroom divided from the living area by two head-high cabinets allowing the full extent of the ceiling area to be seen. The only partition walls that go to the ceiling are around the central bathroom block, and the row of cupboards down the centre of the house. As a result of this manner of planning, an air of great spaciousness and the luxury of a 43-foot internal dimension are achieved in a house of little over 1000 square feet floor area. Long wasted passages are avoided, and circulation within the house has proved most convenient in practice. The passage between the main bedroom and the den/guest bedroom doubles as the wash space, with the hand-basin built in front of the obscure glass side wall of the shower.

Everywhere there is the beauty of the grain and colour of natural woods: exterior boarding of vertical heart rimu flooring, ceiling of Finnish birch plywood, and built-in furniture of waxed heart rimu and birch.

Lighting is largely indirect from the top of the dividing cabinets, and heating is by means of an oil-burning space heater placed centrally in the house and arranged to heat on both sides of the main longitudinal partition.
4 From the street the house lies behind the enclosed garden court.

5 The kitchen is separated from the living room by a head-high china cabinet.

The numbering of the photographs corresponds with the numbers on the plan.

PHOTOGRAPHS BY BARRY WOODS
Four photographs of the Nelson Provincial Chambers. 1. The similarity between this wing and the flanking wings of Aston Hall is remarkable. 2. The central block is sensitively proportioned, and although modest in scale is not dwarfed by the wings which it joins. 3 and 4 show window and wall details. These are quiet, not fussy, and give just enough enrichment to soften and enliven the austere forms of the general mass.
Aesthetics and Morals

Architects, like most other people, are hard to pin down when it comes to questions of aesthetics. But put a particular, a concrete, proposition before them and judgements are pronounced, prejudices aired and opinions collide. A building that pleases one, another condemns out of hand. The clash of disagreement briefly lights up the theories from which opposing opinions spring. These opposing theories (however inarticulate) no doubt account for the diversity of design we see in buildings today; perhaps they also help to explain why we find so many utterly different solutions to similar architectural problems. So it is with architects' judgements about buildings of the past. Where one praises, another heartily condemns.

In this way, these photographs of the Nelson Provincial Buildings came up for discussion not long ago.

It was interesting to notice the almost instant division of the group into three attitudes: the approving, which expressed itself in words like `lively', `charming', `elegant'; the disapproving, which said `incongruous', `fake', `dishonest'; and the tolerant, which called the building `an engaging period piece'. Agreement was reached on one point only: the architect who designed the buildings had, it was said, realized his intentions; the proportions, the relations between one plane, one mass and another and so on, were very happily brought off.

The argument began. `Surely it is
dishonest to imitate stone in wood. Everything about this building proclaims that it should have been put up in stone: the corners—the decorative details over the windows, the gables.'

'Yes. But when this man designed the building there was only wood to build with. After all, it was built in Nelson over ninety years ago.'

'In that case he should have made his design to suit the material he could get—wood.'

'I think it's asking rather much of a man to change the habits of a lifetime and expect him to create an entirely new design just because he is confronted with an entirely new material—I don't suppose wood had often been used for a building of this size in Europe. Besides, he had a tradition to back him up: nobody raised the question of honesty or dishonesty when the Brighton Pavilion was built, and everybody knows what a magnificent fraud that is. When a Renaissance architect wanted a façade to look as though it were made of enormous blocks of stone he had no hesitation in carving lines on the wall to fake the scale he wanted. It didn't occur to him to search his conscience and ask whether he was being honest.'

'Which merely goes to show that morals, architectural morals, at any rate, have improved.'

'No. I don't think it has anything to do with morals. Because almost at the same time as the Pavilion was designed, the Shaker sect in America was designing entirely different buildings (and furniture, too) of the finest and most austere kind. Their work was completely "contemporary", and wood was used as wood. The Shakers deliberately chose to use their materials "honestly"—in your sense of the word.'

Here another voice interposed: 'That, I think, is very much to the point. It is a matter of temperament. In all ages you find pure contemporary design side by side with the eclectic (like the Nelson Provincial Chambers). Which predominates, depends on the temperament of the architect and on the temper of the age. Some people lean to the purist form of architecture. They are the moralists; they are "exclusive"—the Shakers. Others incline towards eclecticism. Whatever pleases them is good.'

A member of the group who had not yet spoken cleared his throat: 'Your remarks, he said, are only partly true. Let me put a question: If you were asked today to plan a public building such as this' (he indicated the photographs) 'would any of you design it in a style of the past? Georgian, Regency, Gothic?' He looked round the table. Clearly, no one would. 'How would you set about it, then?' he asked.

There was a pause. Then one member, bolder than the rest, said: 'If a general phrase will answer a general question, and if you don't ask me to define terms, I would say this: I should try to design the building in as contemporary and (if I may use the word) refined a way as I could. Perhaps that statement is not much help. May I explain further, making it plain that I speak only for myself: When I look at buildings like the Nelson Provincial Chambers or the Brighton Pavilion (since that has already been mentioned), I get the keenest intellectual pleasure—the same kind of pleasure as one gets from looking at a stage setting really well done. Yet such buildings have for me an air of impermanence, of unreality. It doesn't matter whether they are built of brick, or stone, or papier maché. But when one sees a building like the Swiss Borough Council office, designed in our own day, or a building of long ago, like Gloucester Cathedral, built for its own day, it takes hold of the emotions as well as the mind. The pleasure it gives is altogether different in kind and quality. It has the force and the reality of a work of art; for, of course, it is a work of art and not a work of artfulness.'

A murmur of agreement went round the table. Even the moralist, for the moment at any rate, had nothing to add.

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An engraving by S. L. Paydon of the Nelson Provincial Government Building in 1851. By courtesy of the Turnbull Library.
DESIGN IN GREEK ART

G. R. Manton

During the last seventy-five years an increasing proportion of classical scholars have turned their attention to the study of archaeology and the sorting of the mass of material that has been recovered by excavation. On the basis of evidence both literary and archaeological they have succeeded in identifying with reasonable certainty schools, workshops and even individual artists, so that it is possible to see from a relatively small collection the main trends in the history of Greek art and to appreciate the problems which the Greek craftsmen faced and the extent of their achievement.

New Zealand has one such collection in the Otago Museum. It is mainly associated with the name of the late Willi Fels. With fine discrimination he collected some two thousand Greek and Roman coins which he bequeathed to the Museum, and in his memory members of his family acquired for the Museum the collection of Greek vases and sculpture which had been built up in Cambridge during a lifetime of teaching and research by Professor A. B. Cook. The few objects which I have selected for publication here are not by any means the gems of the collection. Their choice has been governed rather by the exigencies of photography and their suitability for illustrating certain features of Greek art.

The first is a cup (fig. 1) belonging to the Geometric Period, which lasts roughly from the tenth to the eighth century B.C. It is the period following the last and greatest of the waves of migration from the north which had accompanied the gradual extinction of the Mycenaean civilisation. The geometric pottery of Greece is similar to pottery found throughout the Balkans and Central Europe, and represents the first contribution of the new invaders to Greek art. At first there is only one horizontal band of simple rectilinear patterns, the rest of the vase being covered in black. In time the number of bands increases and the main band is enlarged and divided into two or three rectangular panels. The decoration of these panels is now no longer confined to strictly geometric patterns. Animals and birds are introduced, strongly stylised in solid black silhouette. The space around them is crowded with zig-zags, swastikas and other geometrical figures. The reason for this horror vacui, or dread of an empty space, becomes clear if we think of the artist who made our cup as aiming not at depicting three horses (which would stand out better if there were clear space around them), but at covering the vase with decoration of which the horses form only a part. Towards the end of the Geometric Period the human figure is introduced, still heavily stylized, but now as part of a scene—a funeral scene, for example, or the representation of a sea-battle—which has its own narrative interest. At the same time the interest is concentrated on the main panel by a greater allowance of space and by the use of a lighter glaze for the subsidiary ornament.

By the end of the eighth century colonisation had begun, and with it an expansion of maritime trade which, in the two succeeding centuries was to develop communications throughout the Mediterranean to an extent unknown even at the zenith of Cretan power in the second millennium. The immediate effect on Greek art was a new inspiration from the east, both in subject and in technique. New animals appear on Greek vases—the lions, griffins and sphinxes which are familiar in the art of Syria, Palestine and Mesopotamia. Purely geometric decoration is replaced by palmettes, rosettes and a variety of floral motifs. Animal figures are no longer elongated and distorted to provide a merely formal decoration: The full mass of the body is presented with the anatomical detail picked out by means of incised lines. And instead of merely a black or at the most a black and a brown we now find a number of shades from light brown to black together with touches of white and purple-red.

Vases of this Orientalizing Period come from the cities and islands of the coast of Asia Minor as well as from the mainland of Greece, but for the seventh century and the first half of the sixth the outstanding centre of production is Corinth, the city which from its position on the main trade-route between East and West became a centre of commercial activity and exported its products as far afield as Etruria, the South-east corner of the Mediterranean and the newly-founded colonies in the Black Sea region. The vase we show (fig. 2) is a broad-bottomed oenochoe or wine-jug with a trefoil lip. It belongs to the Middle Corinthian Period, and can be dated to the first quarter of the sixth century. There is no doubt here that the artist is concentrating attention on the single frieze. The tongue design round the base is common both on broad-bottomed and narrow-bottomed vases of the period, and serves not only to lead the attention towards the frieze but to raise the centre of gravity and make the solidity of the shape. The radiating design on the shoulder, which is barely visible in the photograph, is almost entirely black, with alternate brush strokes of red and white on alternate leaves. The horizontal lines are also picked out in red and white as well as black. The frieze itself, which is placed as near as possible to the shoulder, is in three colours: the buff clay of the background (which also shows through in the incised lines), the black glaze, and the purple-red on the necks and under-sides of the animals, in alternate spaces between the ribs, and on alternate PETALS of the rosettes. The incised lines were
1. A cup belonging to the Geometric Period. Height, 12 centimetres.

2. A broad-bottomed oenochoe or wine-jug with a trefoil lip belonging to the Middle Corinthian Period. Height, 15 centimetres.

3. A neck amphora vase. Height, 30.5 centimetres.

4. A small oenochoe or wine-jug. Height, 15 centimetres.

5. A calyx krater or mixing bowl in the shape of the calyx of a flower. Height, 35.6 centimetres.

6. A white-ground funerary lekythos or oil-flask. Height, 38 centimetres.

made with a graving tool after the application of the black; red and white were then applied on top of the black.

By the middle of the sixth century Athens was a serious commercial rival to Corinth, and the Athenian potters and painters were driving the Corinthians from the markets. A characteristic of late Corinthian ware is that the pale buff of the clay background is overlaid with a red wash in an attempt to imitate the natural colour of the Attic clay, which, owing to the superior craftsmanship of Athenian potters and painters, has now become more fashionable. The second half of the sixth century marks the zenith of Attic black-figure ware, one of the supreme achievements of Greek art. The technique differed little from that of Corinthian—a design in black on the bare background of the clay with incised lines and applied colours. But the variety and grace of the shapes turned out by the Athenian potters, the originality of the painters both in design and in choice of subject, and the exquisite finish which resulted from generations of accumulated skill and keen rivalry between workshops, made Attic vases supreme both in the black-figure phase and in the long succeeding period of the red-figure style which lasted into the fourth century. A characteristic of Athenian ware is the lustrous black glaze, the secret of which has been re-discovered only within the last ten years. (Its prevalence on black-figure ware creates a serious problem for the photographer as it is almost impossible to eliminate shine without obscuring detail.)

We have in our collection no masterpieces of Attic black-figure, but the two vases I have selected will serve to illustrate the main characteristics of the style. The first is a neck-amphora (fig. 3), so called because the neck of the vase, instead of forming with the body a continuous curve, is set off from it. In vases of the amphora or two-handled type the handles naturally divide the surface into two halves, and in time the artist tended to devote his main attention to one side (the reverse), depicting there a recognisable scene from daily life or from mythology, and filling the reverse side with a group of figures often unrelated to the main scene. Thus on our vase we have on the obverse Hercules with a lyre mounting a platform. To the left is Athena and to the right Hermes. Different painters show a consistent attachment to different gods or heroes, but Athena, Hermes and Hercules are among the favourites. There are certain distinctive attributes by which they can be recognised. Athena, besides having the conventional winged helmet and breastplate girded with snakes and carries a spear. Hercules almost invariably wears or has just laid down beside him the familiar lionskin. Hermes, messenger of the gods, wears winged sandals and the traveller's cap and carries the caduceus, which is associated with his function as conductor of souls to the underworld. On the reverse of this vase is a warrior, armed with helmet, greaves, shield and two spears, between an old man (white hair and staff) and a woman. A comparison with many similar but more detailed scenes suggests that he is taking leave of his father and his wife as he sets out on a campaign. It is characteristic of these scenes of departure that although the departures might be more vividly portrayed by placing the warrior on one side of the picture and his relatives on the other, the warrior, as the most important person present, is given the central position.

The other black-figure vase, a small oenochoe or wine-jug (fig. 4), is somewhat later than the neck-amphora, and belongs to about the year 560. The use of a panel reserved in the colour of the clay, possibly under the influence of wall-painting or painting on clay plaques, is already found in the seventh century, in the earliest period of black-figure. Although the motive is clearly to present a picture rather than merely to decorate a vase, the best black-figure artists successfully conceal this motive by a skilful adaptation of the position and shape of the panel to the shape of the body of the vase. Here the panel has been covered with a thin white slip before the application of the black glaze. The effect of contrast is further enhanced by a sparing use of incised lines and the restriction of applied colour to a single band of red above the panel. The drawing has not the freedom
of the finest black-figure masters, but a reluctance to allow a galloping quadruped to lift its hind feet as well as its forefeet from the ground is common to most black-figure painters of horses and centaurs. At the same time our artist has added to the sense of movement as well as to the interest of the design a whole by making the branch at the centaur's feet point in the opposite direction to that of the branch held over his shoulder.

Athenian workshops continued to turn out black-figure vases until about 480 B.C., but by 525 B.C. a new technique had been invented. Briefly, it consisted in using black for the background and leaving the figures reserved in the colour of the clay. A black line was first drawn round the spaces to be reserved, details of the figures were then drawn in, and finally the background was filled in with black. The double thickness of the black around the figures can often be seen even in photographs. The best painters quickly adopted the new technique. Sometimes they combined both black-figure and red-figure in two pictures on the same vase, but the remainder of the history of Greek vase-painting is almost entirely the history of red-figure, until late in the fourth century relief ware became popular. Red-figure vases have been attributed to more than five hundred different artists. Their main interest is in the rendering of the human figure, which, with the discovery of the use of shading and perspective, becomes more realistic.

Our example of red-figure is a calyx-krater (fig. 5), a mixing bowl in the shape of the calyx of a flower. It was used for mixing wine with water and from it the mixture was served with a ladle into cups. The Greeks rarely drank wine neat. We show only the obverse, which represents the departure of Triptolemus in a winged chariot. Behind him stands Persephone holding a staff and a wine jug from which she pours the parting libation. Triptolemus holds a staff in his left hand, and in his right a bunch of wheat sheaves which he has received from Demeter...
Notes from a recent sketching trip by Merryn Taylor
TO THE EDITORS

Sirs, Surely the most important aspect of maintaining a comfortable temperature in the home is that of insulation. Your correspondent in the March/April issue provides us with an adequate choice of heating our houses, but little is said of the importance of actually retaining that heat once we have been rationed with it.

It is safe to say that in the average New Zealand home heat generated by electric current, coal, gas or oil is dissipated and lost all too quickly because no provision has been made for insulation in ceilings and walls. Although attention to this important fact has repeatedly been made by our leading scientific workers, the point is all too often lost in original design.

In winter the temperature of uninsulated ceilings and walls may be as much as eight to ten degrees below the temperature of the air in the room, giving the sensation of cold draughts due to radiation of heat from the body. In summer uninsulated ceilings and walls rapidly heat up and radiate unwanted heat in the room. Modern research has shown that the greatest comfort is obtained when the temperature of ceilings and walls is within one or two degrees of the air temperature in the room. This condition can only be obtained by the use of insulating materials.

Such insulation is available on the New Zealand market today, taking the form of Rock Wool Fibre either granulated (for insulation in walls) or in handy sized Batts for fitting between ceiling joints. The material I speak of has a low thermal conductivity at a mean temperature of 100 degrees F. of .3 BTUs/per hour/square foot/1° thickness/1 degree F., and should further information be required by your readers on insulating materials I shall be most happy to supply it.

K. E. F. Greenney

(We hope to publish an article by Mr.Greenney on insulation in the next issue.—Ed.)
GRAMOPHONE NOTES

John Gray

The collector of records (or at least of major works) is by now squarely on the horns of a dilemma. Long playing or short playing? The question is a vexing one because one important chain of companies (Decca - Brunswick - Capitol) have embraced L.P. and all that it implies, while another (HMV - Columbia - Parlophone) has so far chosen to remain aloof, despite persistent, and no doubt reliable, whispers about backroom experiments with the new medium. Meanwhile each combine is pouring out records of music not attempted by the other, and the 'short playing' releases by E.M.I. (the trade-group name of the HMV - Columbia organization) offer by now a real problem. Should one pass over some excellent 'normal' issues in the hope that they may eventually appear in L.P. form? A case in point is the recent appearance of two superlative Beethoven recordings - the fourth symphony, done by Furtwangler and the Vienna Philharmonic on HMV DB9524/8, and the first piano concerto, done by Gieseking with the Philharmonic orchestra under an anonymous but seemingly expert conductor on Columbia LX8732-5. Speaking personally, I should be content with these, even in four-minute sections, for I cannot believe that Decca's forthcoming version of the symphony (London Philharmonic under George Solti) or any version they may contemplate bringing out of the concert, would prove markedly superior to the performances under review, L.P. notwithstanding. I have never heard a recording yield up so much of what is in the score of this heavenly symphony. The performance by Furtwangler has not failed to draw the fire of English critics, whose notions of how Beethoven should be played have never agreed with those of the German conductor and doubtless never will, but all who are prepared not to be prejudiced by a most individual approach to the music will surely find very much to delight in. Likewise in the C major concerto Gieseking gives a sparkling performance which is backed up by the orchestra as ably as it has been recorded by Columbia's technicians.

Other 'standard' issues may be accorded brief mention before passing to the excitement of L.P. - Heifetz and the London Symphony under Sargent give a highly polished account of Elgar's concerto (DB9532-7). It all sounds rather urgent and in some ways seems to lack repose, but nobody who admires this magnificent music will wish to pass the set by. The late Dinu Lipatti made a faultless set of Bach's Partita No. 1 (LX8744-5) - a set which may well become a gramophone classic and potentially belongs in every serious gramophone collection. Another issue worth everybody's attention is that of the Brahms' Symphony No. 2 in D major as played by Fritz Busch and the Danish State Radio Orchestra (HMV CG792-5). By virtue (mark, not cramming) the work on to four discs in the plum label category, HMV have managed to produce a complete Brahms Symphony for twenty-four shillings - a far from negligible factor in these days of soaring costs. This recording will thus be more than ten shillings cheaper than the imminent L.P. version by Furtwangler. One is glad to note that the Danish set is excellent in every way, both as performance and recording.

The supply of long-playing discs can hardly be termed plentiful at the moment, but there are enough on hand to make a few generalisations. This I do with some diffidence, as technical experts are loud in their claims that no one has a right to criticise L.P. unless heard on the most super-equipment, which mine is not. However, I have in the past few months listened to some 50 L.P. discs on some half-dozen machines, many of them built to the most elaborate private specifications.

The only faults I have been able to notice are minor ones - a slight fuzziness in the upper orchestral strings in certain recordings, odd 'popples and crackles' throughout the length of some discs, and a consistent, but more annoying, 'swish' in the running of one or two
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stirring piano tone; more like the real thing than almost any recording I have heard. **Berlioz**: Three extracts from 'Romeo and Juliet', Royal Hunt and storm from 'Les Troyens a Carthage'. Pan's Conservatoire Orchestra, conductor Munch, LXT2512. Here we have a 'miscellaneous' record which offers, on the whole, an intelligent programme. The note on the cover makes it clear that the sequence of the 'Romeo' pieces is (1) Revertie and fete, (2) Love scene, (3) Queen Mab Scherzo. Is it unreasonable to complain that we cannot play them in that order without lifting the pickup halfway through a side? However, the disc is surely a 'must' for all lovers of the music of Berlioz.

**Bloch**: Sacred Service. London Philharmonic Choir and Orchestra conducted by the composer, LXT2516. A most successful recording of soloists, chorus and large orchestra. Nobody need be deterred by Bloch's reputation as a 'modern'—this music is suitably straightforward and melodious. For many of us it opens up an entirely new world of religious music. It might be pointed out that the 'Sacred Service' in the Jewish ritual has a significance comparable with that of the Mass in the Christian church, and that this Service of Bloch's, being scored for such large forces, approximates more to the style of 'concert' religious works such as Verdi's Requiem. This is one of the longest of long-playing discs—the equivalent '78' issue of the work covers six twelve-inch discs.

**Haydn**: Symphony No. 101 (Clock), Suisse Romande Orchestra, conductor Ernest Ansermet, LX5009 (ten-inch). This compact little record contains the symphony neatly on two sides, and there is no break in the middle of the slow movement, as unfortunately happens in one or two other cases. The performance is quite first class and the recording very pleasant indeed.

Reviews of other recent records must be held over in the meantime.
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