

Transcript of interview conducted 17th October 2017

Interviewees: STAN GOODALL (SG)  
Interviewer: CLAIRE COOKE (CC)  
Salisbury , England

Transcription: CLAIRE COOKE

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**[0:00:00] CC: This is 17th of October 2017 I am Claire Cooke for Heritage Lead for Kingston RPM and I'm here in Salisbury with Stan Goodall and we're going to be talking a bit about Decca Records and his involvement with them. Hi Stan how are you?**

SG: Very well indeed Claire. Lovely to meet you welcome to Salisbury. I hear we pronounced that differently, don't we?

**CC: Yes we do. So my first question is can you tell me about yourself and your connection to Decca Records?**

SG: Yep um I was employed there for many years. Started in 1949 and retired in 1994. During that time I went through most of the departments and finally ended up in the classical department for the last 25 years. Things are a lot different now than they were and in those days where it was all just beginning to touch the the beginning of stereo sound etc and cassettes and it was good 44 years. I think the early part of when I used to handle the the waxes - which they used to record the the long-playing records on - Guy Fletcher was an engineer and Ron Mason who used to do the cutting and then they were given to me and I used to put a concentric eccentric on the wax and this enabled the auto- changer of the reproductive reproductive system the record player to stop and then the pickup used to return back to the its original position at the start. These waxes were then transferred to Malden and they were in plywood boxes, I seem to remember, with cotton wool lots of cotton wool inside lots of padding because the wax had to be kept at a certain temperature otherwise it would break and all that work which the cutting engineer had done would be lost it would have to be done again. So that was one of my duties. Another duty was looking after the tape store. I then went into the into the cutting rooms as such and cut 78 records. I remember cutting an enormous amount of 78 records for Kenya - a KWA series and they used to play these records on wind-up gramophones in The Bush or in the jungle or wherever they they lived in those particular days. Once again these acetates - which was the natural progression from cutting on wax to cutting on acetate - I think the discs were called Presto Presto Discs and then we had another another disc which turned out to be cheaper and better but all these were then sent to Malden to be processed. And the output was enormous and enormous amount of seventy-eights and LPS. I then went out to started cutting 45s, after that, 45 RPMS with another engineer called Trevor Fletcher - that was Guy Fletcher's brother. Lots of family links in Decca actually. And I remember him teaching me how to cut 45s which again was sent down to Malden so you could see the output of long-playing 78, 45s from the West Hampstead Studios was enormous enormous amount of work that Malden had to undertake and I suppose Malden also took in lot of work from outside, I'm not quite sure about that one. And then after 45 78 45s I started to cut Mono LPs and I started cutting mono LPS with an engineer called Ron Mason who taught me how to do that. I remember he had rather big fingers but he was very delicate when used to put the cutting needle down cut the record he taught me how to cut Mono LPs. And because I was young and enthusiastic the new system the new sound system come on the block was stereo sound, in the old days it was double F double R which was full frequency recorded sound from fifty to fifteen thousand cycles and then when stereo came out it was double F double S full frequency stereophonic sound which used to emblazon the Decca label. I was approached by Arthur Haddy who was our boss and Cyril Windibank who was a development engineer and also a past recording engineer - used to record a lot of Mono recordings - and and I was asked if I would take on the responsibility of cutting Stereo records. So I said yes because it was very exciting and new technology and a new system. The only thing was because of the design of the cutter - which was a Neumann cutter - we had to cut everything at half speed so it was a

laborious task and I never really cut any Stereo at full speed in my entire career. Anybody who has any of the old recordings we always had dash numbers what we recorded if I remember A was Guy Fletcher, B was Ron Mason, C was Trevor Fletcher, D was Jack Law and I was E so you can see the cutting engineers there how and I think Cyril Windibank was F something like that. I know that Harry Fisher was .... oh no Peter Atwood was K Ted Burke it I think was K but .... if you look at the inside of a vinyl LP an old Decca vinyl LP I don't know if there's any Mono vinyl LPs around these days but if there is and there's an E on it then I cut it and if you come across a Stereo vinyl LP and it's got an E on it and I cut that and it's got an A it was Guy if it's gotta B it was I don't think Guy or and I think Guy, Trevor or Ron ever cut any Stereo I think it was only Jack Lore and I who started it off so that's story of in the cutting rooms. I then went from the cutting rooms into the studios into number one studio and I used to operate tape machines while I was cutting because in those days you had the freedom of the studio you could go wherever you wanted and sit in on anything you wanted to as long as it didn't interfere with what they were doing and and I suddenly decided I I had this flair for wanting to push on and do something different all the time - Decca was just the place to do it. So I went into studios and I became a tape jockey - setting up tape machines pressing the buttons start recording meeting lots of people 'til eventually I did my own recordings - pop recordings - not very many because by then I've been to Kingsway Hall where we had our main London studio outside location and I rather liked the scene of getting out and creating and so I ended up on the outside team on the location side of Decca where we used to take all our equipment to whichever location our artists were recording at. And eventually when I became fully fledged engineer in the latter years in the last [0:09:42] a 10-15 years I work with Pavarotti and Solti and Kiri lots of conductors. Used to work a lot with Chailly, a lot with Ashkenazy so we had our own kind of in-house set of artists and there were maybe half a dozen engineers and half a dozen assistant engineers and half a dozen producers.

**CC: Can I just ask why you got the job at Decca Records in the first place?**

SG: Well, therein lies the story. I left school when I was 15 and I suppose it was a situation where as education wasn't really considered in my family everybody just left school and went to work.

**CC: You mentioned you were born in Paddington?**

SG: Yeah I was born in 1934

**CC: Yep**

SG: In in Lancefield Street in Paddington and then we moved to Herries Street - it's amazing with all these names Lord Bravington, you remember and Herries and and Beethoven the composer and there was a Mozart Street as well and and I went to the local school which was across the road. What happened was one just left school and went out to work to support the family ... was unfortunate because my mother died shortly before I went to work so I was quite young and she was very like she was only 44 and I went to the they sent me to these some sort of Labor Exchange at Maida Vale and the chap said: 'What would you like to do?' and I said: 'I don't know really' so he said: 'Well there's a job going at Decca West Hampstead,' he said. 'Would you like to try that?' I said: 'Yeah, sounds good sounds fine.' and that was it so it was it was lucky, I was so lucky. Some somebody somebody up there must have liked me I think quite obviously. That's that's that's how it came. I met Mr Haddy - who was our boss - everybody called him Mr Haddy. His name was Arthur Haddy. He was absolutely brilliant man. Let everybody find their own level. If you wanted to stay in the cutting rooms and you stay in the cutting rooms. If you wanted to go in and do this you wanted to go and see what the recording department's doing, if you wanted to go to Head Office meet people you could go and do it he didn't mind as long as you did your job. So I was working in these various departments I was free as a bird to do exactly what I wanted it was it's just something which doesn't happen these days and probably never happened again. That's how I got the job. Two pounds two shillings a week in 1949 28th December 1949 that's how I got the job.

**CC: So well you've just kinda spoke a little bit there about the fact that you could go to different**

**departments and was quite an encouraging environment in some ways but the next question is: What was it like to work there? And if you have got a typical day? That you can recall?**

SG: Typical day... when I was ... I used to have one of the jobs was shaving waxes these waxes that used to come up from Malden I think and there was about 17 and a half, 17 inches in diameter to put them on a on a on this lathe which was open and put a cutting tool and a sapphire tool which used to polish it ....that was when I first started. It's very difficult ... when I ended when I was in the in when I was a senior recording engineer, a typical day might be given a responsibility say it's a recording at Kingsway Hall ... Ashkenazy ... Chopin so right well we've got that we know what we're doing we know where the dates are what equipment where we need all going down to the Location Department organizing the equipment see who was free to drive the truck.... how many people did we need to unload the truck ... making sure that logistics - I suppose in a way - you know one ... this is the sort of going word for it today ....is they're getting the logistics right and then making sure that whenever the truck had to leave it would leave on time it would meet me at a certain time and we would set the studio. This would happen within in the space perhaps of a week so at the end of that week we'd be ready and waiting for Ashkenazy to come in and sit down and play. And that could be anywhere that could be Ham Common it could be certainly at Kingsway Hall it might be anywhere in London. Could be in Lausanne where we used to record Ashkenazy we used to take the truck across to Lausanne and Saint Charles Hall I think we used to record that set it up. Andrew Cornall - we used to do the the producing - set it up and get the sound - sound was very difficult to get in those days - Ashkenazy liked recording there it was near home - he didn't have to go far. We used to love recording in Switzerland it was a beautiful place. So again you know organizing the the logistics. In the early days, the department used to be responsible for producing 150 CDs a year - enormous amount of CDs - but over the years the level of production saturation point as far as CDs was concerned became completely saturated and towards the closing stages when I left I was only doing about 10 10 CDs a year. So it was it was time for me to move on, as such

**[0:16:16] CC: And when you were doing these outside recordings what sort of time period was that?**

SG: An opera would be different an opera might take anything up to a month certainly a couple of weeks one was on location for a couple of weeks. When we did Aida in in Milan that that would take quite a long time I went out there initially - we had this location which had no floor so I had to organize a floor, had to organize lots of other things lots of other facilities and then Jimmy Locke would come out finalize situations..... Any .... It could last up to a month I recorded Pavarotti in New York at Carnegie Hall that lasted a month and I was backwards and forwards to New York.

**CC: It must have been amazing to be in those big grand spaces.... when you started out did you ever think ...**

SG: No

**CC: You would be there?**

SG: No

**CC: Would be at Carnegie Hall?**

SG: No, no never. The other place we recorded in America was the the Opera House we recorded a gala concert with Pavarotti and Joan Sutherland and Marilyn Horne and the New York Philharmonic Orchestra. It's unbelievable.

**CC: Sounds amazing! So the next question is: does any particular day stand out? I guess that**

**would do but is there anything back in the Decca sort of back in UK I guess within Decca's offices or anything like that that stands out more ? [0:19:15]**

SG: There was one, and I'd recorded ..... yes I think that this this probably this probably stood out . I'd recorded ... I'd record on piano concertos with Murray Perahia I recorded two one to six I think Mike Mieles might have recorded one but three and four but on piano concerto three and four with Murray and the Concertgebouw Orchestra in in in Amsterdam. I knew that this was a winner and there were certain recordings that one makes that you know what if that's that's it. Not that kind of all of them were I suppose but one of the one of our employees a fella called Alan Reeve who was a development engineer I was sitting in my office and he came in and he said: 'Stan,' he said, 'I think that that recording of Beethoven 3 & 4 is the best that will ever be done. Congratulations.' And I was to be congratulated by one's friend and colleague who was a musician ... was a real boon I must say it was really quite, quite something. Really quite something and the second one which runs it pretty close was when I made the Four Seasons recording with Neville Marriner .There's a book on it actually. it's a famous story Alan Loveday was playing in one of the sections. And the London Electricity Board were outside drilling. And we'd already asked him you know nothing him that he got to this particular quiet put down his fiddle and he walks out and he said: 'Excuse me mate....!' because he is Australian, he said: 'Excuse me mate, do you like sex and travel?' And the bloke said: 'Yeah.' He said: 'Well ---off ' And they went . Now you can't beat that can you?

**CC: No you can't.**

SG: And he did and they left they actually left. So I went out and chatted to the Foreman and you know: 'Sorry about this.' And he said: 'No, if it's disturbing you,' He said: 'When will you be finished?' I said: 'In a couple of days.' 'All right we'll come back in a couple of days' And that was it. And that's the story on sex and travel. And that record went gold that was Neville Mariner's first first gold record so the reason I remember that was a couple of years ago he was given an award an outstanding achievement award by The Gramophone and he invited me along to Smith Square dinner which is very nice for him actually and the recording Murray Perahia won a Gramophone award.

**CC: So you mentioned early on your career that you sent a lot of the records, of the pressings to Malden, to the factory. During the time you were there there was the site in Hampstead, there was the site on the Albert Embankment and there was the site down in Malden.**

SG: Yeah

**CC: How did you – in your own head – kinda see them linking up?**

SG: When I was cutting I was very aware of Malden because I knew the manager there fella called Tommy Pryke, was a small gentleman but he was absolutely first-class he when he didn't know about the production of vinyl and and shellac was really not not interesting but he was a tremendous guy. So I knew Tommy very well and when I was cutting I had certainly worked with Tommy a great deal. As far as the embankment was concerned ,I wasn't involved with them except in my early days when I used to go backwards and forwards with various packages. It was only when I became an engineer sound engineer that I had to I didn't have to that I was in in touch with them as far as artists were concerned and movements were concerned and also with the accounting side because I think the account managers said that we were spending too much money probably were but that's life! My boss used to say Rolls-Royce expenses for a Rolls-Royce company which you know I think that was ... Decca were was really at the top of the tree when it came to sound. We had tremendous sound system excellent technique and some wonderful engineers Kenneth Wilkinson, Arthur Lilly both of my mentors, Arthur Bannister Jimmy Locke - who was my boss - Gordon Parry who recorded The Ring in in Vienna who gave me a lot of opportunities in Vienna. Jimmy Brown .... there was a host of talent there tremendous talent.

**CC: Ros Lee who is one of the other people I have interviewed for this particular project was**

**based at the Albert embankment, mentioned there was a van that used to travel across all three different sites on a daily basis...?**

SG: Yes, yes there was.

**CC: Did you have a sense of the three sites linking up together or they do not want you to sort of the part of your your work sort of finished with the pressings going to New Malden, did you not really think about it?**

SG: Well if there was a problem with the pressing or if there was a problem why wouldn't , couldn't be processed when we started phase four recordings we used to pack my level on the disc so I mean the grooves would be really touching and and New Malden would work miracles processing these things, I don't know how they did it but certainly you know if there were any problems we were instantly told about it there was no as far as communication was concerned it was superb. When I was younger, of course, there I didn't have a lot to do with any of them it was it was basically within studios within West Hampstead. When we moved to Belsize Road in 1980 and from then on in then, of course, you would already gone over over to CD which was made in Amsterdam but then we then I had a lot more contact with Head Office as such but in in the beginning there was always a rotational and contact with the Albert Embankment because that's where all the producers were when the recordings were made then the producers would come over to West Hampstead Dick Rowe, Hugh Mendle, Frank Lee.... Sullivan .... there was a guy Peter Sullivan but they would all come over to us and we would meet them and so on and so forth so there was there was always even if one didn't actually visit the offices visit Malden or visit head Office there was always a contact there as such

**CC: You've mentioned a bit about Arthur Haddy, about his here's the way of encouraging you and being kind of really [0:27:53 ] great almost not exactly a mentor but at least happy having that kind of open attitude towards the way you could develop and work within the company. Got any things to say a bit more about the rest of the management such as Sir Edward Lewis?**

SG: I met Sir Edward Lewis once he gave me my gold watch. Wonderful man actually, charming man very friendly and that's the only time I met Sir Edward. He used to visit studios but he they were fleeting visits I think more than anything else to discuss policy. He used to he used to call, Haddy used to call Sir Edward Lewis: 'Skipper' I remember. Never referred to was Sir Edward or whatever . No I didn't really have a lot to do with Sir Edward, just met him that once I have a picture somewhere of it but that was the only time I actually met him.

**[0:28:49] CC: I guess I asked because, again, with Rosalind Lee's interview she said that he was a really heavy presence at the actual, at her site of the Albert embankment, in every day – he was a real strong presence there.**

SG: Yeah, absolutely

**CC: Which you don't always get with some organisations...**

SG: Yeah no no he was the one. He bought Decca he was a ... great sort of ... he's was a stockbroker I think actually and he bought Decca which used to be Crystallite and then when he bought Decca and they were producing records he said well we're a record company we're producing records we got nothing to play them on why don't we produce something to play them on hence came the de color and all those other things which I think was really fantastic lateral thinking. The Richard Branson of his day as such you know.

**CC: So what I mean you've mentioned this before some of the international connections but what impact do you Decca had across the UK as a company and internationally.**

SG: Oh we had I think they had an enormous influence as far as our sound was concerned ,there's no doubt about it. We were admired and lots of people tried to copy our microphone technique which was the Decca Tree which was started founded by an engineer called Roy Wallace who used 56s KM 56s on the tree to start with and then it ended up with Kenneth Wilkinson using 50s KM Neumann KM 50s on the tree. As I say lots of people tried to copy it but I don't think anybody really succeeded. Our sound was different what we used to try to do was match the the sound of the hall to the sound of what the artist was producing in other words we would very rarely or never go to halls that didn't suit our microphone technique. It was very important to get the right acoustic and Wilkie – Kenneth Wilkinison - senior engineer for many years just we used to walk into a hall and clap his hands and say: 'Well we'll record here,' or 'No this is no good.' Something like that so you know it was it was always that, it was always that standpoint that unlike today where you can do anything anywhere we always went for the natural sound that's really what Decca was all about a natural concert sound

**CC: How did you feel when the company was sold?**

SG: We were very concerned actually because it ...it ...it gave gave us a lot of insecurity then the A & R Department it was Ray Minshull, had this idea of getting the three tenors together Pavarotti, Domingo and the Spanish fella whose name I never ever remember which I will. And Jimmy Lock and John Pellow went to recorded that and the rest is history. It sold I think it sold six million, and made six million profit in the first year and then a million a year profit afterwards, and then we had another one ....and then when Philips realised the potential of Decca they invested a lot more money we had lot more machines we had newer equipment we were given a lot more freedom we were really given a most enormous amount of freedom. One of the stories is that, I was working I think I was working in Vienna at the time and they wanted an engineer in Boston to go and record with John Williams and I don't think any other engineer was available and they said: 'Oh Stan'll go!' So they'd found me: 'Would you go to Boston?' So I had to phone home ---- 'Hello, Doreen... I've got to go to Boston...(!)' And off I went to Boston and recorded Pops in Space which became a big hit. And John liked it so much that I worked there with him for the next three years, we made nine nine albums together ! I must have recorded about yeah it must've been about nine albums very very good actually. That's the story of Pops in Space.

**[0:35:00] CC: I suppose, I guess with Decca being in such an innovative position, such an influential position perhaps, it always was going to be some kind of silver lining into the cloud in some ways maybe? With what happened in 1980, because you were at the forefront of innovation?**

SG: Yeah, Philips let us develop our own Decca digital recording system and editing we went from strength to strength. It was it was no problem they they were really very good to us.

**[0:37:04]CC: So the final question – and this is a really big one - maybe a bit difficult to surmise in a recorded interview, but looking back what impact do you think Decca has had on your life?**

SG Decca was a family. Must try not to get too emotional here actually. My mother died and then my father died, father died when I came out after I finished my National Service so from the age of nineteen onwards I suppose my immediate family died they died within a few years and Decca became my family. So my education my ... my life my friends my destiny in life all revolved around Decca and I don't think I could have had a better grounding. I don't think I've had a better mentor quite honestly with with the amount of talent that was there with the amount of friendship support and understanding from everybody it was something which I shall be eternally grateful for so I don't think one would hear that from many people about their jobs so it .was ... it was ... it was certainly fortunate that I went to work for Decca very much

**CC: Ros had the same story, what a great experience it was for her. She was only there for four years. In the Marketing Department but she still said that it was a fantastic, fantastic place to work and that she gained a lot from being there.**

SG: Well it was it was a family like most families we had our ups and downs and when they were up they

were right at the top when they went down by God things were bad but it was it was the biggest education that I think that .... I'm a member of LinkedIn you know my daughter said: 'You've got to be on LinkedIn Dad you've got to be with it.' So I've joined LinkedIn and so I've got my stuff there I was doing and they keep asking me for my education so I said to people : 'What am I going to do?' I said, 'I can't....' She said: 'Dad why don't you put University of Life? Trying to graduate not yet finished.'

**CC: Good answer, really good answer!**

SG: I think I think perhaps , if the Gods are good to me in a few years time, I might be able to put that down!

**CC: Well, thank you very much for your time Stan. That's been really, really helpful for giving lots of insight into the project.**

SG: It's a pleasure, it's a pleasure.

**CC: Was there anything else that you'd thought of that you wanted to mention or that we haven't covered? Cos this is going to be a record that is going to be available to the public.**

SG: Decca sent me , Decca sent me these box sets. Even though I am retired, even though I am retired they sent me these box sets. Wonderful booklet, I mean look at the CDs in that.

SG: Now this one, I did a lot of Phase 4, Tony D'Arto and Arthur Lillie and only did one phase 4 recording which was with Miklos Rozsa, Ben Hur which is in here somewhere. And that won an award but I cut ....I cut most of these when I was cutting phase 4 recordings as such but my (( )) recorded that one but all of these .... this was a new sound. It was .... when we recorded we used to have left half left centre half right right that was our mic setup but Phase Four was left and right and it was a new idea and it was quite spectacular ... a lot of people didn't like it at all but um I was on the cutting rooms at the time and I cut some of the first four for recording as you see and I blew up cutters left right and centre! Was Tony D'Amato who's now passed away bless his cotton socks he was a enormous driving force as far as Phase Four was concerned. He used to bring these records in and say: 'Look at this Stanely! Look at the level on it! Get it! Yeah, can we get up to it? We've got to get up to it!' and of course I used to pile the level on and the bloody cutter used to blow up and Cyril Windibank would be tearing his hair out trying to rewind the coils ..... ! So they sent me those as well and this ... this... is this is really what Decca was all about, the Decca sound. So in here you see one of my artists .... so there's Sir Edward Lewis Morris, Maurice Rosengarten he was a big banker, he had a lot of money ... Sir Edward Lewis there, and there's Haddy, there's Roy Wallace who...

**CC: The Decca Tree**

SG: Yeah discovered the Tree. There's our producers Paul Myers, Chris Hazel, Ray Minshull, Head of A&R, Chris Pope , Andrew Cornell, and here I think here is [inaudible] can I find them, there's John Dunkley. There's the engineers, forgotten his name, Colin Moorfoot Simon Eden, myself, Jonathan Stokes, Neil Hutchinson. This is the Decca Digital system which they made up. So there we are that's that's the Decca sound....