

WALTER SYDNEY BARRELL

Mr. Walter Sydney Barrell, for many years Director of the E.M.I. Studios in London, died at Worthington on January 18th, 1961, at the age of 70. Born in Suffolk, Mr. Barrell was educated at the Queen Elizabeth Grammar School at Ashbourne in Derbyshire, and at the London Technical Training College. He joined the United Wireless Company of America in 1909, and from 1911 to 1915 was on the operating staff of the Marconi International Marine Communication Company. In 1925 his association with the record industry began: he joined the Columbia Graphophone Company Limited in London, and was soon appointed Chief Engineer. In addition to his responsibilities for the design of recording equipment, Mr. Barrell was compelled by repertoire requirements to undertake many celebrity recordings abroad, including the Bayreuth Festival, La Scala Opera in Milan, the Concertgebouw in Amsterdam and others. He also collaborated with the late A. D. Blumlein in the design and production of the Columbia Electrical recording system. During this time he reorganized the Columbia Company's expanding recording activities in the United Kingdom and its many overseas centers. In 1931, when Electric and Musical Industries Ltd. was formed, Mr. Barrell became Chief Engineer at their new Abbey Road Studios. The studios were re-equipped under his direction. About this time D. Blumlein designed the first stereophonic recording system and under Mr. Barrell's direction a number of remarkable 78 r.p.m. stereo discs were made. From the outbreak of the war until 1946 recording activities at E.M.I. were much curtailed but, in addition to valuable work for the Admiralty, Mr Barrell had time to initiate successful experiments in extending the frequency range of records. In 1946 Mr. Barrell became Director of EMI Studios Limited. Under his control many developments took place including tape and microgroove recording. He travelled extensively at this period and made a host of friends in the United States and Europa. In 1952 he became President of the British Sound Recording Association. He retired from the direction E.M.I. Studios in 1955 and became Technical Liaison Officer for the company's world wide recording activities, and in this capacity his experience and advice were invaluable to his colleagues in the industry. In 1956 Mr. Barrell was elected an Honorary Member of the Audio Engineering Society of America, a rare distinction as it was the first time the honor had been conferred on one other than an American citizen. He was presented with the citation in New York at a ceremony which demonstrated the high regard in which he was held. His retirement, at the age of 67, from the company's service was regretted by all who knew him. His hospitality at his house at Jordans was well known and he was happy in his move to Worthing. He leaves a devoted widow and family, to whom we offer our deep sympathy.
(Excerpted from The Gramophone (p. 270)).