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LAURIE SWINDELL, who conducts the session *For the Countrywoman* at 2YZ Napier on Tuesdays at 2.45 p.m., has a wide variety of interests. Until she took up radio, any time that she could spare from her three children was taken up with the amateur theatre. As well as taking part in eight productions and helping back stage with many more, Mrs. Swindell was a member of the Napier Repertory Society Executive for several years. An avid reader, she is continually on the search for entertaining material for the Countrywoman session.

★
THE following note on Reginald Moxon Armitage (Noel Gay), who was the composer of such popular successes as "The Lambeth Walk" and "Run, Rabbit, Run"—and who died in London earlier this year at the age of 55—was supplied by Dr. Vernon Griffiths, of Canterbury University College, who knew Armitage well when they were both students at Cambridge University.

"R. M. Armitage and I (writes Dr. Griffiths) were fellow-students in the time of Sir Charles Stanford, Charles Wood, and Cyril Rootham, both of us taking the degrees of B.A. and Mus. B.—and later M.A.—there. In preparing for the Mus. B. examinations (which we passed in 1922), we worked together, visiting each other's rooms for that pur-

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pose on alternate evenings. We were the organists and choirmasters of our respective Colleges: he at Christ's and I at Pembroke.

"Armitage at Cambridge was a fine organist and a skilled choir-trainer. At that time it seemed to me that his talents would find their natural outlet in a Cathedral appointment. He was a fine exponent of Bach and his College Choir was an efficient one in both sacred and secular. But he had discovered in himself a real talent for writing music of a popular kind. He used to play and sing some of it to me; and I remember that it was not only of a kind which would prove immediately attractive in the popular sense, but that it employed contrapuntal and harmonic resource not usually to be found in that type of composition. Just before he left Cambridge, I asked him what his plans were for the future; and he told me that all would depend on a forthcoming interview with one of the great London entrepreneurs in the field of light musical entertainment—he did tell me the name, but I have forgotten it. If this man offered him a full-time appointment to write music for his entertainments, then Armitage intended to make that his career. If not, his intention was to enter the family business and to keep his music for leisure hours.

"We did not meet again. No word reached me as to the result of that critical interview. For many years I imagined Armitage as a business man who was devoting his spare time to organ playing, choir training, composing and conducting. But, when I was in Britain in late 1952 and early 1953, I determined to get into touch with him again; and it was only then that I discovered that my old Cambridge friend, R. M. Armitage, was the 'Noel Gay' who had written 'Lambeth Walk' and much other successful popular music, who was now a music publisher, and who (in short) had realised that early ambition formed over thirty years ago. Circumstances over which neither of us had control prevented our meeting."

★
LES WILSON, also known as the Otago Rambler (whom Miss H.J.E., Motueka, asks about), was born in Dunedin, but according to our latest information now lives in Gisborne. As long as he can remember he has loved cow-

boy songs, and he started yodelling when he was only 12. About two years later he was singing at one of the many small town concerts in which he was heard in Otago when, critics say, he "stopped the show." After that he was given a six months' contract with 4ZB. The rush of fan mail, autograph hunters and what not which his popularity brought, was apparently too much for him—he declared that he just wanted to sing cowboy songs. After the war he left Dunedin in search of a greater feeling of freedom. His first recording was made about six years ago, when he again took up yodelling enthusiastically. He can be heard on at least six records. Two of these were made with his wife, Jean Calder.

★
THE story in *The Listener* recently about the Scottish border ballad "Lord Randal" is a reminder that this was one of the first songs recorded by Wilfred Thomas when he returned to vocal work not so long ago. Wilfred Thomas was a commentator and producer for the ABC when he visited New Zealand in 1948, though he had been



Spencer Digby photograph
WILFRED THOMAS

known as a singer before that. According to a message sent from London to the Australian *Radio Call* he returned to singing when a talent scout heard him



THE CLARION OCTET, a male voice group which began broadcasting for 3XC towards the end of last year. At present this group is presenting a series of programmes from 3XC's studio at 8.30 on Tuesday evenings. Left to right—Noel Hawkey, Ivan Rankin, Stanley Mills, Clarence Hopwood (conductor), Jim Cunningham, Colin Kilgour, Cecil Wright, Alison Bennett (pianist), Sid Chittock and Jim Winnington.

N.Z. LISTENER, JULY 2, 1954.