

Early Telephones of Wiltshire Make. Capt. B. H. Cunnington had an extremely interesting article in the *Wiltshire Gazette*, July 6th, 1933.

"In 1877 the late Alfred Cunnington (eldest son of the late Henry Cunnington of Devizes) constructed a set of telephones from sketches and descriptions published in *The Scientific American*. These were fitted up in the Old Town Hall, Devizes, between the ground floor and the cellars. The following year Mr. Cunnington worked on improved types of instruments, and early in 1879 he began the work of connecting the Old Town Hall with Southgate House, then the residence of his family. He did not live to see the completion of his work, as he died the end of April that year. His brothers carried on the construction, and thus, in the summer of that year, was installed in Devizes what in all probability was the first telephone put up for practical purposes in England. It is true there was a telephone in that popular home of science, the Polytechnic, in London, but it was used only for demonstration purposes. These very early telephones, which are here illustrated, were given by Alfred Cunnington to the late Mr. Charles Clarke. . . . In a letter written in March, 1905, he says—"Shortly after Mr. Cunnington had set up his first telephones he discarded these earlier instruments for others he made of an improved pattern, and those discarded—and in every probability the first that were ever used—were acquired by myself and are still in my possession. One, a double instrument for both ears, still has the original roughly-covered wires attached to it. These early instruments I had in use myself between my place of business in Devizes and the house of a friend only two doors away."

They were in use until the National Telephone Company obtained exclusive rights about 1883, and Capt. Cunnington describes how they were hastily dismantled under a threat of pains and penalties by that company. They were however used again during the war at Bournemouth as a means of communication between the Provost Marshal (Capt. Cunnington) and his clerks. They were exhibited at a scientific soiree in the Town Hall, Devizes, in 1879, and again about 1900 at Edison's exhibition of electrical appliances in London. They were given by Mr. Clarke to Capt. Cunnington who has now placed them on permanent loan in the Scientific Museum, South Kensington.