PHILIPS RADIO ODDITY - Type nos. 453 base & 454 lamp

In 1923 Philips developed a “filament tester” for their receiving valves. This consisted of a circular brown bakelite base 15 cm in diameter. At the centre was a raised part 35 mm diameter, which had three valve pin holes. These were equivalent to the standard B4 valve base but without one filament pin. On the 1923 version of this tester, there were metal protrusions 7mm high, for the pins. These were nickel plated brass and the grid and anode pins, being live, made the two protrusions also live. The 1925 version of the device had the pins countersunk in the Bakelite, probably as a safety precaution.

Connection to mains voltage was with a two pin plug. There were two insulated wires for connection to the valves. The two devices I have has the wires terminating in Philips plugs. The device found on the German Ebay shows the wires terminating in a small square box (bakelite?) which is presumably a valve socket. The neon lamp for this appears to have a B4 base replacing the original. This was most likely an E27 Edison screw base.

The Dutch radio magazine “Radio Expres”, vol. 41, 9-10-1925 shows the full descriptive text. A brief English translation is shown below this.

The older valve is externally frosted and has no markings but the late one shows “Philips 220V” stamped on the side of the bulb. It is not known if these lamps were made for other mains voltages (110-120 or 240-250)

The older device is from the John Stokes collection, given to me by him many years ago. The newer one I found on the French ebay recently and at $120, which I consider a very fair price.

Both lamp and base are listed in the Philips “Type Number Book” as: 453: Controle-apparaat voor het beproven van ontvanglampen – Neon lamp 454 (English: control apparatus for testing of valves). And 454: Neonlamp met spiraalvormige electrodes. Toepassing: 453. (English: Neon lamp with spiral form electrodes. Used in: 453