

Midlands Group Meeting November 18<sup>th</sup>

Most of the regular Midlands members gathered at Bill Dean Myatt's house in Walsall for the last of our 50th Anniversary year presentations. The programme was particularly good because Richard Parkes brought along his wonderful Edison Amberola 50 and treated us to a "Blue Amberol Concert".

The first cylinder was a banjo solo version of "The Poet and Peasant Overture", recorded in 1925 and played by the master of the banjo Eddie Peabody. As Richard told us, Peabody, who was born in 1902, had a career that spanned five decades. The second record was a vocal duet version of "Tramp Tramp Tramp" by Byron G Harlan and Frank Stanley. Dating from c.1913 it was one of a special series issued to accompany the four minute conversion kits for the earlier two minute machines.

Richard's presentation continued and included cylinders by Peter Dawson, Billy Williams, Billy Merson, George Formby (Senior) and Stanley Kirkby. Nottingham born Billy Merson was heard performing "Don't Sing in Ragtime" a light hearted commentary on the popularity of ragtime. George Formby (Senior) had us all laughing at "When Father Said He'd Pay The Rent", while Stanley Kirkby evoked memories of summer holidays with "Glorious Devon".

The final part of his presentation included some jazz and hot dance music. Richard started this final part with an item from the 28100 (et seq) series of classical and operatic works – "Ave Maria" sung by the soprano Maria Rappold accompanied by Albert Spalding on violin. In complete contrast the next cylinder was a 1912 recording of "By the Light of the Silvery Moon" by the Lancashire born contralto Ada Jones who was a prolific Edison recording artiste.

Richard circulated some interesting information regarding the artistes featured together with their photographs and explained the (non-electrical) system for dubbing Diamond Discs on to Blue Amberol cylinders after the company ceased direct cylinder recording together with the patents for diamond reproducer. .

Some jazz and ragtime recordings followed with another 1912 recording, this one being "Hungarian Rag" by the New York Military Band followed by "Junk Man Rag" a banjo solo by Fred Van Epps. Written by C. Luckyth (Luckey) Roberts it was recorded in 1914. Richard moved on with a couple of jazz items. The first, a 1920 cylinder - "Peggy" a one-step by Lopez and Hamilton's Kings Of Harmony Orchestra, a five piece dixieland group. The 1925 recording of "Brown Eyes Why Are You Blue" by the Golden Gate Dance Orchestra (aka The California Ramblers) was effectively a long playing cylinder with a playing time of nearly five minutes.

Richard wound up this splendid presentation with "Till the Boys Come Home" performed by Frederick J Wheeler commemorating the Armistice Remembrance services of the previous week. This was the original title of the Ivor Novello composition "Keep the Home Fires Burning".

Our thanks to Richard for his detailed preparation work and also to Bill Dean Myatt for his hospitality and light refreshments.

























































