

Report of West of England Group meeting at Westonzoyland, Som.; 9th June 2018.

Once more, we were welcomed to Roger and Nicki Mackey's home on the Somerset levels – and now also home to their cat, apparently house-trained to attend Percival Mackey records. Roger's theme was a novel and ambitious one, namely “Rascals, Rotters and Rogues”. We all know plenty of upbeat love-songs, but negative ones featuring bad people (especially those involving naughty ladies) are much rarer.

Discs were played on an E.M.G. Expert Minor gramophone (with electric motor and Meltrope 3 sound-box); cylinders on an impressive Edison Triumph with combination gearing, Diamond B reproducer and Cygnet horn.

We began with Phoenix 010 – *At the Devil's Ball* - a 1913 recording with a touch of ragtime about it. Other rascals were represented by *Dick Turpin* (a.k.a. Leslie Holmes) with Jack Payne's Band; *Texas Dan* – who robbed the rich and gave to the poor (good), but spoilt it all by shooting his lover (bad) by Carson Robison; and the somewhat similar *99 Years Blues* by Jimmy Rodgers on Zonophone.

The evils of strong drink are allegedly legendary; we heard a 1950 HMV of folk-singer Delia Murphy with *The Moonshiner*, also Flotsam & Jetsam with *Simon the Bootlegger* – mocking American prohibition with an amusing parody of “Simon the Cellarer”.

Peter Dawson made a good rogue in *The Bandolero* (Spanish bandit). This was on Blue Amberol 23084 (from an earlier wax Amberol). Also on B.A. was Mary Jordan as the dangerous Delilah, trying to lead Samson astray in Saint-Saens' opera.

Rotters were mostly men (“Rotteuses”, anyone?), but Mae West did (on Brunswick) a very suggestive *They call me Sister Honky-Tonk*, possibly from the soundtrack of the film “I'm no angel” - where poor, bemused Cary Grant was lured to his doom – not that it harmed his career, though.

Other rascals were *The Spaniard that blighted my life* - sung with feeling by Billy Merson, and *The man on the flying trapeze*, hilariously hated (and envied) by Eddie Cantor, on a (rare) Imperial Broadcast 4011.

Then we enjoyed Nicki's splendid tea, and resumed with members' records. First was the comical *No! No! A thousand times no!* - a Gothic melodrama with Bobbie Comber, who sang all three parts, accompanied by the versatile, enthusiastic New Mayfair Dance Orchestra – conducted, appropriately, by Percival Mackey. Another melodramatic novelty-item was *Fiddler Joe* sung by Leslie Holmes on Imperial.

Bandleaders who referred to rascals included the histrionic Harry Roy in *Nasty Man*, and the incisive Jack Jackson in *I always keep my girl out late*. She might well have been Elsie Carlisle, who unconvincingly asked *I wonder what is really on his mind?* - shades of Mae West, earlier. In contrast, Val Rosing (with Henry Hall's orchestra) primly warned children *Hush, hush, hush, here comes the Bogey Man*.

By now, it was time to disperse - we thank Roger and Nicki most heartily for this eclectic and innovative programme.

Paul Collenette