

Plymouth, 6th July

It was a welcome return to the home of John and Irene Hart for John's presentation **The Odd and the Curious**. Some members had travelled 100 miles to be there.

The records were played on John's recently acquired HMV 'Ionic' Monarch Senior, his HMV163 and his impressive RGD radio-gramophone.

We began with the Singing Dogs *Barking Dog Boogie* on Pye Nixa N15065. Apparently the barks were recorded individually and then re-arranged into what passed for a tune.

Other oddities included a 1908 HMV recording of the Westminster Chimes and Big Ben, played on the Monarch with such fidelity that it could have been recorded twenty years later.

A famous vocal curiosity was Ruby Helder, 'The Lady Tenor', who was the subject of an article by Graham Oakes in *FtR* 19. We heard her, appropriately, singing *Believe it is true* on HMV3996.

Next we heard HMV C2567, Chopin on a Neo-Bechstein grand piano. This was an early electronic instrument which also incorporated a radio and a record player. Despite selling for less than a conventional Bechstein grand, very few were made.

Continuing the piano theme, we saw a Pathé short featuring an en-semble of eight grand pianos recorded at the Carlton Cinema, Islington. *Impressions of London* on HMV B2398, complete with traffic noises, was a 1926 location recording using the Company's newly acquired mobile recording van.

After Irene's delicious tea, members' records were many and varied, including promotional records for Everyman's Football Pools, the Eugene Permanent Wave and the attractions of Weston-super-Mare pier.

Nelson Eddy sang *The Whale who wanted to sing at the Met* from the Disney film *Make mine Music*, and the Witley Court Music Box played *When day is done* on HMV JH41 in aid of the Pinchin Johnson & Associates Ltd Spitfire Fund. Spitfire Funds were introduced by the Department of Aircraft Production during World War Two with the slogan "I'll fly it if You'll buy it".

Rare labels included a 1928 children's record *The Fairy Tales of Funkheinzelmännchen* on Homocord Electro 4-2362.

Grateful thanks to John and Irene for a most interesting and enjoyable afternoon.

Roger Mackey