

Another Sunday afternoon meeting hosted by Bill Dean Myatt at his home in Walsall when Bill also presented a programme entitled Bill's Choice – Feeling Mellow. The theme of these recordings were songs which featured the effects of drink and/or drugs.

Bill commenced his programme with a 1931 Decca recording of the Cockney music hall star Gus Elen performing his comic song "Arf a Pint of Ale" which had originally featured in his repertoire some thirty years or so before.

In complete contrast was a recording of "Drunkards Special" dating from 1929 and sung by blues singer Coley Jones. It was recorded by Columbia's mobile unit in Dallas. The song is a re-working of the traditional eighteenth century Scottish humorous folk song "Our Goodman" which later crossed the sea to Ireland where it became known as "Seven Drunken Nights" and finally ending up in the USA as "Drunkards Special".

The Celtic connection was maintained with a Welsh location recording by William H Ellis performing, unaccompanied, the traditional Welsh folk song "Can y Cwcuallt" (trans:The Cuckolds Song). This was recorded in Porthmadog in 1964 by the Caernarfon based record company Sain Records.

We then moved into the realms of jazz with the popular song "If You're a Viper" recorded by Bob Howard and His Orchestra with its' references to smoking a "reefer five feet long". Recorded for Decca in February 1938 the version that Bill used was the Australian issue labelled as Bob Howard and His Boys. Apart from vocalist Bob Howard (r.n. Howard Joyner) the group included Teddy Bunn on guitar and the New Orleans born pianist Frank Froeba.

Very much in the tradition of American "Old Time" music was "If the River Was Whiskey" by Charlie Poole and the North Carolina Ramblers .A humorous re-working of the traditional "Hesitating (or Hesitation) Blues" it was recorded for Columbia in 1930. Bessie Jackson was a pseudonym for the blues singer Lucille Bogan whose 1930 Brunswick recording of "Sloppy Drunk Blues" we heard next. Many of Bogan's records had decidedly pornographic lyrics but this particular side was not one of them.

William "Jazz" Gillum was a noted blues harmonica player whose career was brought to an untimely end when he was murdered in the street in March 1 1966, Bill played us his 1938 Bluebird recording of "Reefer Head Woman" by his Jazz Boys, one of whom was the famous blues guitarist Big Bill Broonzy,

Totally different was the traditional English folk song "The Jovial Tradesman" (a.k.a. When Jones's Ale Was New) sung by sung by Ron and Bob Copper part of the Copper Family who are heartily commended by the English Folk Dance and Song Society, they have been performing English folk songs for over 100 years. This particular song can be traced back to the mid seventeenth century and there are several different versions.

Bill continued with the second of two issued versions of "Hong Kong Blues" by Hoagy Carmichael with it's references to the use of opium. This particular version was recorded for Decca with Hoagy Carmichael accompanied by a group that included Spike Jones (of City Slickers fame) on drums.

“Smoking Reefers” was the title of a Larry Adler Vocalion Swing Series recording made in London in 1936. Although Adler is normally associated with solo harmonica recordings, he did make a few recordings as a vocalist, of which this is one.

It appears that the real name of the country music group that recorded in the Gennett studios in 1928 as The Boys from Wildcat Hollow was the Monroe County Bottle Tippers. Bill played their solitary issued title “The Fiddling Bootleggers” which was issued on the Champion label.

Some real New Orleans jazz followed represented by the New Orleans Rhythm Kings “Golden Leaf Strut”. Recorded for the Okeh mobile recording unit in New Orleans in 1925, it was this session that produced the last records to feature the legendary New Orleans clarinetist Leon Roppollo before his committal to a mental hospital from a mental breakdown, possibly brought about by his excessive smoking of marijuana. The name of the tune is an American slang name for marijuana.

Bill came up with a couple of curios at this stage two Greek HMV recordings from 1934. The first translated as “The Sniffer (i.e The Dope Snorter)” performed by Markos Vamvakarism said to be a slaughter man by trade. The second translated as “The Camel Driver performed by Viorgios Batis.

The next item was something to my taste “Cocaine Habit Blues” by the Memphis Jug Band recorded by the Victor mobile recording unit in 1930 and issued in Victor’s race record series. The Memphis Jug Band were a black country/folk group similar to the white string bands of the day. They played for dances across the Southern USA and this disc is typical of their repertoire.

Bill’s penultimate item was another Victor location recording, this one dating from 1936, “Intoxicated Rat” was recorded in Charlotte, North Carolina by the Dixon Brothers and issued on the RCA budget label Bluebird. Howard and Dorsey Dixon were textile mill workers who became early performers of “protest songs” although this particular song did not appear to be of that nature.

The final recording that Bill featured that afternoon was one of Louis Armstrongs’ wonderful 1928 Okeh recordings. The title of the record being “Muggles” this word is the plural of muggle a 1920s alternative name for a “reefer” or a “joint”. This disc was labelled as being by Louis Armstrong and His Orchestra although in fact it was the later Hot Five group, which included Earl Hines on piano and Zutty Singleton on drums.

Our thanks to Bill for his hospitality and an enjoyable and well researched programme – the biscuits were super.



























































