

The first half of the meeting was entitled “**Unlettered and Unknown**” and provided a look at the more obscure corners of Gilbert and Sullivan. It proved to be an interesting session which was both informative and entertaining. Congratulations to presenter Peter Miller.

Peter started with an excerpt from a radio broadcast which had Marilyn Hill-Smith singing “Little Maid of Arcady” from the 1871 show *Thespis*. It is one of only three pieces to survive from the opera. We next heard “Sweethearts” which is one of a trio of non-operatic songs written by Gilbert & Sullivan. Performing the number were Mary Bevan and Ashley Riches. Elsie Griffin then sang “The hours creep on apace” from *H.M.S. Pinafore* and was followed by Derek Oldham and George Baker with Hush, hush not a word” from *Pirates of Penzance*. Both these tracks had Dr. Malcolm Sargent weaving the baton.

“Come, Margarita, Come” from *The Martyr of Antioch* was sung by Stephen Brown and recorded at the 7th International Gilbert & Sullivan Festival at Buxton in August 2000. Two more ladies followed. “Every hill and every measure” (*Iolanthe*) was rendered by Bertha Lewis who was followed by Muriel Dickson with “Mighty Maiden” from *Princess Ida*. Elsie Griffin made a return to the turntable as she and Derek Oldham offered “The Battle’s roar” from *Ruddigore* then we heard “When a wooer goes a-wooing” from *Yeoman with a well tried G&S* cast that included one of our group’s favourite singers, Peter Dawson as Sergeant Meryll. Somewhat appropriately the next singer was the late Thomas Round, a former member of our group, who charmed us with “Take a pair of sparkling eyes”. The music from *Utopia Limited* has had minimal coverage on record so it was interesting to hear part of a selection from the show performed by the Band of H.M. First Life Guards. Peter’s presentation then closed with the Roulette Song from *The Grand Duke* by John Ayldon and the D’Oyly Carte Chorus. Tea and biscuits were then taken in a joyous mood.

The members session after the break featured favourite records and machines. In the latter case these included a fine HMV 512 radiogram which, in a dilapidated state had cost the purchaser the princely sum of £5. After un-admitted, but no doubt quite high cost, the machine had been wonderfully restored and projected “Putting on the Ritz” by the *Clevelanders* in fine style to get the session off to a good start. We heard Anne Shelton with “Wedding of Lily Marlene” and John McCormack recalling the “Star of County Down”. Into the classical mode we had Caruso performing “Cujus Animam” and then heard Paul Robeson singing the fine song “A Perfect Day”. In a style switch which makes our sessions so entertaining we moved into the jazz field and heard how, back in the 1950s, teenage jazz fans used to argue about the hottest jazz record. One strong candidate was “Drop that sack” by *Lil’s Hot Shots* – which was actually the *Louis Armstrong Hot Five*. Listeners could appreciate how it had been one of the ‘hot’ challengers. A *Pixie Grippa* was then used to play *Chris Barber’s* “Chimes Blues” which gave an interesting aural experience.

Other machines on show were a *Columbia 102*, *HMV Model No.4 (1915)*, *HMV 103* and a *Decca 66* portable. Listening continued with *Josef Locke’s* “Macushla” and “Free from his fetters” sung by *Ernest Pike* who later gave us “Is Life a boon” from *Yeomen of the Guard*. 1950’s pop was represented by “It’s almost tomorrow” sung by the *Dream Weavers* and “Temptation” by *Red Ingle* with *Jo Stafford* featuring under the name of *Cinderella G. Stump*. *Mario Lanza* embraced us with “Because you’re mine” and *John McCormack* re-appeared with “Il mio tesoro intanto” which is an aria from *Don Giovanni*. Dance bands were well represented by *Jack Hylton* (“Anything goes”), *Tommy Dorsey* (“Stardust”) and *Jack Payne* with “Peanut Vendor”. Without doubt the most ridiculous recording, and also the best received by the audience, was “The Raspberry King” by *Jack Hodges* on a *Regal Zonophone* record. His unique style of singing had everyone chuckling. A really good day was then ended in fine fashion by the “Friendship Duet” from *Verdi’s Don Carlos*.