

**London; 19 September 2017**

It's a dangerous claim to make but this was possibly the first meeting devoted to organic needles that we have ever had. **Cutters and Pointers – a Fibrous Tale** was the title of Christopher Proudfoot's programme. Triangular bamboo needles were the topic in part 1. They first appeared in the USA in 1907 and would reach the UK market in 1912. The needles had to be cut diagonally to keep them sharp and by the early 1920s patented needle cutters had begun to proliferate. Thorn needles were the subject of part 2. Their round shank required a different method of sharpening and a range of devices, often incorporating a disc of emery board, evolved to re-point them. With the aid of illustrative slides and examples brought along for our inspection, Christopher discussed a range of these appealing little implements. EMG's products always seem to come out on top and their Davey Fibre Cutter and Davey Rollright Thorn Needle Sharpener were no exception.

At the conclusion of each half, we listened to a selection of records played on a handsome HMV model 461 with different needles to see how they compared. With fibre, some records which were not in particularly good condition (for example, an acoustic Winner of the Margate Municipal Orchestra) played pretty well while others soon faded or became fuzzy. At the other extreme, a Galli-Curci recording played with bamboo needle in an EMG soundbox was all that one could wish for. A violin solo on Dominion (notoriously bad wearers) played with a thorn was not bad, albeit a bit reedy. Some records are so badly worn that they are only playable with steel needles which, lest we forget, can be very loud. We ended this fascinating evening with one such, a relic from Christopher's youth: *They're Tough, Mighty Tough in the West*.

**London Reporter**