

## **Llandrindod Wells & District U3A Lecture Meeting November 2019**

### **Music before the Microchip - Hugh Parry**

#### **Report by Clive Barrett**

Chairman Roger Malvern in welcoming members again said there was an excellent number attending. He mentioned about next month's Christmas lunch. Roger mentioned that at the end of October the Mid Wales U3A Quiz had been held here at the Metropole Hotel. The local U3A had fielded three teams, but although they didn't win (Crickhowell U3A finished in first and second places) it was significant that there were only four points between the top and bottom places.

He then introduced the speaker for the morning Hugh Parry whose subject was entitled "Music before the Microchip". The speaker started by saying he was not an expert on music or the machines, but that it was his personal interest and pleasure, and his aim was to entertain members. I thought Hugh was funny and humorous at times, whilst still concentrating on music with true oriental themes, or at the very least a tinge, with his talk spanning the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. His talk would be a trip around the world starting in the Sudan, and he explained the background to the music he played. Hugh commenced with the Edison phonograph machine( 1907) and on this machine military bands were played. The speaker continued with a tune which was probably quite well known to the more senior citizens namely, "The Sheik of Araby" describing himself as the self styled "Sheik of Shelack"---- it being his own theme tune, played on a Portable Cowie standard phonograph. Followed by "Bedouin Love Song" by singer David Brazell on a 1914 Edison advanced celuloid. Still in the Sudan, he played "Caravan" written and first recorded by Duke Ellington in 1936. Then at 11—00am as announced earlier by the Chairman, who afterwards said the "We will remember them" statement, Llandrindod U3A stopped their meeting for two minutes silence for Armistice Day.

Speaker Hugh resumed with "Come to the Casbah", with Zici Elder, played on a 1958 Dansette which brought back some happy memories to a number of members. "In a Persian Market, written in 1920 by Albert Ketelbey on an HMV tablegram machine(1929). He continued to mention other machines including the Gilbert Portable (French hornless) together with cylinders, other modes of playing or needles were used, plus the songs and singers during the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Peter Dawson( baritone) sang "Temple Bells", number one of four Indian Love Songs, and Nellie Melba who sang solo and also dueted with the above fellow Australian singer. Overall he played some better known songs, together with several lesser known numbers. He began the conclusion of his musical history of the world by playing tunes with a China connection, "Silk Road to China" written by Fritz Cryselle, and "China Boogie" with Bert Weedon and the Sidney Torch Orchestra(1956 ) ( the speaker questioning what Chairman would have thought). He then played "Hong Kong Blues" by Hoagy Carmichael (1944). The speaker then declared he was coming to the end of his "odyssey" with a trip to Japan and two records from that country, the final one being a Japanese singer performing a Japanese song, with Western style overtones.

I thought that it was an interesting and entertaining lecture, although I understand some of the audience would have liked Hugh to have explained more about the music and the machines, rather than include the whole playing time of the individual records. However it was impressive how during the morning lecture Hugh and his wife and assistant Margaret got the old machines to

work smoothly. Chairman Roger Malvern thanked the couple for such an interesting talk, adding that it brought back memories for him of the 1940's, when his parents had a wind up gramophone in the front room. Questions were then put to the speaker including the complimentary one of “Would it be possible for him to return in the future and continue his talk”, also about the use of wooden needles and flat discs. For the next Llandrindod Wells & District U3A meeting on December 9 at the Metropole Hotel at 10—30am, there will be no actual speaker, but the morning will consist of a “Special Christmas Programmme” together with the group's Christmas Lunch.