FOLK SESSION – back in the Howard Arms, Brampton

Our first session of 2020 observed a Scottish theme, in honour of impending Burns' Night. It was a pleasure to welcome newcomers Alan Bryans and Suze, visiting us from Newcastle, and Mick who likes us so much that he came all the way from Lincoln again.

We covered a fair bit of Scottish geography, from Maxwelton in Dumfriesshire (Annie Laurie – Phil) to B****y Orkney (Adrian – tsk!). Alan Jefferson set off to the Coolins of Skye via The Road to the Isles; Steve was homesick for The Valley of Strathmore (Angus) and Christine for The Dark Island (Benbecula); Eileen on concertina ventured to the Banks and Braes o' Bonnie Doon (Ayrshire) and Sally invited us to join her on a very long hike in the Uist Tramping Song. Sam met Nancy Whisky in Glasgow and came away a poorer, wiser man.

Songs by Burns himself featured several times in the evening, ranging from his anti-slavery protest *The Slave's Lament* (Gerda) through the tender love-songs *Ca'* the Yowes (Maddy) and *Ae fond kiss* (Christine) to the saucy *Coming through the Rye* (Ruth) and the outright boast *Wantonness* (Katy).

Mary had leg-pulling fun with the Scottish theme in the poem *The Haggis Season* and Anne teased us with a series of non-Scottish songs that nonetheless mention Scotland, starting with Flanders and Swann's *Song of Patriotic Prejudice*. Some of the connections became – ahem – tenuous! Alan Bryans told us with a straight face that the eponymous hero of *The Hedgehog* 'was definitely a Scottish hedgehog' (hmmm). Suze entertained us with an ingenious song about *Anticrastination* (the opposite of procrastination). And Mick, accompanying himself on Q-chord, frankly stated that the touching and sorrowful *On the bus to St Clouds* had no Scottish connections.

We next meet on **Tuesday**, **18**th **February at 8pm in the Howard Arms**, **Brampton**. The theme for February will be 'love'

And for anyone who likes to prepare well in advance, the theme for March, in honour of St David and St Patrick, will be Welsh and Irish;

And for April, in honour of St George, it will be English.

ALL WELCOME!

FOLK SESSION – Howard Arms, Brampton

Thank you to all those who braved the raw cold of February to meet up in the Howard Arms to celebrate the theme of 'love', in honour of Valentine's Day. A warm welcome to Sheila and Ali, joining us for the first time, and to Denis, back with us after too many years.

Eileen on concertina and Adrian on melodeon were our instrumentalists, and both managed to find tunes with extraordinarily apt names – *Cupid's Waltz* (Eileen) and the morris tune *Valentine* (Adrian).

We spanned five centuries from the 16th Century love-song *Since first I saw your face* (Ruth) to Sam's 21st Century electronic romance *iLove*. We also spanned a wide variety of moods. Grateful, tender and devoted love found expression in *When you say nothing at all* (Steve) and *My shining star* (Sheila and Ali). *Anne of Hethersgill* (Denis) was happily courted and married; *Ned of the Hill* (Gerda) won his love against the odds. Phil told the story of *Sebaston*, a sailor from the Armada shipwrecked on Orkney in 1588 who was rescued by, and married, a local girl. Gerda's couple romanced by moonlight (*Moondance*), whereas Mary's *Cum to your tea* more prosaically featured a girl persuading her boyfriend to meet her parents. Sam's *Dutchman* and Christine's *Daisy Days* saw love remaining constant through old age, dementia and death.

Where there is folk song, there will be bawdry! Sally's *The Yorkshire Couple* was a sly comedy worthy of Chaucer; Adrian's *Nutting Girl* and Denis's *Three Maidens a-milking did go* were both rich in – shall we say? – rustic metaphor.

Sad love stories make good songs, and we had plenty of those. Phil's *Raglan Road* and Mary's *Oh Waly, waly* complained of faithless love; The heroine of *The Border Widow's lament* (Alan) was torn from her love by violent death. *Mormand Braes* (Katy) expressed resilience in the face of desertion and Ali's *You don't love me any more* brought very, very dark humour to the subject.

There are more kinds of love than Eros, and we heard about those too: Maddy sang of divine love in *Blessed quietness* and recited a poem about her 'first love' – the banjo! Adrian declared *his* first love in *Good Ale, thou art my darling*. Sheila and Alan sang about love of place in, respectively, *The Quiet Lands of Erin* and *North Country Maid*. *Gentle Annie* (Steve) was written by Tommy Makem for his mother.

We next meet on **Tuesday**, **17**th **March at 8pm in The Howard Arms**, **Brampton**. The theme (in honour of St David's Day and St Patrick's Day) will be 'Wales and Ireland' **ALL WELCOME**!

FOLK SESSION – Howard Arms, Brampton

Anyone visiting the Howard Arms for music on 17th March for music had an embarrassment of choice: downstairs a local group, the Brampton Reivers, were playing sets for St Patrick's Day, and upstairs the folk session met with a dual Welsh/Irish theme, honouring both St David's Day (1st March) and St Patrick's Day.

The Welsh theme was not so well-represented as the Irish, but we still covered Welsh history and old wars in the rousing *Men of Harlech* (Adrian); the importance of mining in *Duw, it's hard* (Phil); the national passion for rugby in a Max Boyce song *The Scottish Trip*, and one song in the Welsh language – *Sospan Fach*.

The Irish theme produced excellent chorus songs such as I'll tell me ma; Jug of Punch (Anne); Molly Malone (Sally); Fields of Athenry (Phil); Spanish Lady (Katy). Several songs had Dublin as their setting, from Rare Ould Times and the elegiac Raglan Road (Phil) to Anne's autobiographical Postcard from Dublin – (okay, Anne, which of you did 'kidnap a barman'?) Belfast featured in Black Velvet Band, but we went further afield to Connacht and Munster (South Wind); the 'silver Shannon' (The Old Man of the Sea); The Mountains of Mourne; Galway Bay (a ribald parody sung by Sally) and Greenore (Farewell to Carlingford).

Then there were the songs that might be Irish, or that move across borders but that we counted as Irish for the purposes of the evening: *Where ravens feed; Love is pleasing; The Wild Rover.* Most definitely Irish was Colm Gallagher's exquisitely surreal *The Reel in the Flickering Light*.

Adrian on melodeon provided our instrumental music for the evening, with *The Rising of the Moon* and *Haste to the Wedding*. He also cleverly found a Welsh connection in the Border morris tune *White Ladies Aston* – the border in this case being the border with Wales.

In the present circumstances we can't be sure what will happen about April's session. Provisionally, the Howard Arms will host us on Tuesday, 21st April, and the theme (St George's Day) will be 'English music and song'. However, everyone on the mailing list will be kept informed if changes become necessary, and anyone not on the mailing list can contact me – my number is on our website.

Folk music is a hardy genre that has survived wars, famines and pestilence over the centuries, so when lockdown keeps us physically apart, we triumph over adversity and take to Zoom. Thank you to everyone who mastered the technology and joined us on 21st April for a session, the theme being 'England', in honour of impending St George's Day.

English geography was well-represented, especially the north — *Settle-Carlisle Railway* (Alan; *Rawtenstall Annual Fair* (Adrian); *The White Dog of Yockenthwaite* (Phil); *Whitby Harbour* (Sally). Eileen on concertina played *Lindisfarne*, then joining with Denis on mouth organ, *Bardon Mill*. We visited Shropshire in *Captain Webb* (Adrian); and Derbyshire in *The Brisk Young Widow* (Katy), then on to Sussex with Mick in *The Boy from Rye* and to Dorset with Gerda (*Linden Lea*). Phil worked in a musical tour of the whole country with Leon Rosselson's *View from the one-night stands*.

We also enjoyed songs and tunes with deep roots in English tradition. Mary sang *Barbara Allen* and Steve gave us *The Blue Cockade*. Eileen (concertina) and Denis (now on recorder) played *Sheep-shearing*. Jan made her debut with us in a humorous look at a different kind of English tradition: *My mother and puddings (a slice of nostalgia)*.

Alan and Phil both sang about sailing for England, sorrowfully in *The last farewell* and cheerfully in *Spanish Ladies*. Ruth took up the theme of nostalgia for England with Robert Browning's *Home thoughts from abroad*. *Where are they now* (Rick Kemp and Maddy) expressed sadness and nostalgia for lost ideals.

With Covid-19 raging, it's not surprising that one or two contributions touched on the subject. Maddy sang the stark *Bessie Bell and Mary Gray* (who died of the plague). Christine preferred an ebullient approach with Pam Ayres' comic poem on lockdown.

Our next meeting will be on 19th May at 8pm, and the theme will be 'flowers/nature' (the latter if you run out of ideas for flowers!) Where??? Well, it doesn't seem all that likely that lockdown will have ended, so probably by Zoom again. However, I'll keep everyone on the mailing list updated, and if anyone *isn't* on the mailing list but wants to know, please ring me.

In defiance of pestilence and lockdown, folk music by Zoom continues undaunted, this time gathering in musicians from the north-east, Lincoln and the Pyrenees - a warm welcome to all newcomers.

The theme was 'flowers' – with an option of 'nature' if the floral theme proved too limiting. There were generalised flowers in *Where have all the flowers gone?* (Elaine), *Flower seeds* (Mick) and Jan's entertaining rendering of Joyce Grenfell's nursery sketch *Flowers*. Patsy and Robert's Hungarian folk song *Cavaszi Szel* addresses the beloved as 'my flower' (at least, they assured us it did!)

Roses were popular: we journeyed with the *Rose of Allendale* (Ged), and grieved with the fallen soldiers of the *Rose of York* (Sally Jones), praised the heroine of *Bonny Irish Lass* by comparing her to the rose (Phil) and 'gathered rosebuds while we may' in *To the Virgins, to make much of time* (Katy). Adrian sneaked roses into his instrumental on melodeon, the *Jenny Lind Polka*, on the grounds that there is a rose of that name. Primroses got an honourable mention in *The Primrose Polka* (Sally Hardaker on flute) and *Sweet Nightingale* (Ruth), as did *Bluebells* (Anne's song about Lady Jane Grey) and broom (*Low down in the broom* – Gerda).

All credit to those who worked round to flowers in devious ways: Alan Jefferson sang *San Francisco* because of its connection to the Flower Power generation, and Chris found a reference to *lavender* gloves in *Calico Printer's Clerk*. Full marks for ingenuity!

On a more general topic of nature, Bill 'thought big' with *The sun and the moon tumbled down from the sky*. Thank you to Charlie for 'welcoming in the summer' with the ancient *Hal an Tow*, and to Penny for her contemporary praise of *Liddle's Wood*. Sally Hardaker on flute played *The Blackthorn Stick* and Steve invoked parsley, sage, rosemary and thyme (*Scarborough Fair*). Mary teased us with the parody of *English Country Garden*: nettles, burdock, and even 'anaconda centipedes'. And for punning contemporaneousness, how about Anne's parody *Where has all the flour gone?*

We next meet – virtually, as pubs will still be shut – on 16th June at 8pm. The theme will be 'Journeys/Travelling' (because we'll all have cabin fever by then!) I'll update everyone on the mailing list nearer the time. If you are *not* on the mailing list but would like to join in, please ring me (number on the website).

Still flying the flag for live music in adversity, the Brampton folk session met via Zoom on 21st July with the theme of summer and holidays – just a touch of wishful thinking there.

To start with 'holidays': we had day trips on the *Blackpool Belle* with Mary and to Bangor with Anne (*The Day we went to Bangor*), and went hillwalking with Phil on a *Cloudberry Day*. Mick's *Summer People*, on the other hand, described the descent of tourists on a small town from the jaundiced point of view of the town's inhabitants. Jan's comic poem *Packing* described one of the non-delights of the holiday season. And full marks to David for sheer brass neck in arguing that *Van Diemen's Land* was the first ever holiday destination!

Holidays notoriously include times of lost love: Patsy and Bob sang Dylan's *Sara* (because it starts with children playing on the beach), while the presence of *The Boy from Rye* (Mick) in a seaside town over the summer awakens the local girls to adolescent awareness.

Allusions to 'summer' ranged from the explicit to the creative. *Ay waukin' o* (Gerda) started with the proposition 'Summer's a pleasant time'; Ruth sang the hymn, *Summer suns are glowing* – to the tune 'Ruth', of course! We heard *Summertime* (Bob); *Summer's End* (Sam) and John Denver's *Summer* (Alan). *A song for the Myra* (Ged) mentions 'summer nights'; *The Barley Raking* (Katy) 'fell about the summer time'; *Country Life* (Bill) took us right through the seasons, summer included. More obliquely, Charlie celebrated the successes of the *Allen Valley Quoits League* 'because it's a fine summer game'; Steve sang *Grey October Clouds* 'because it was about the end of summer' and Sam reminded us in *Armstrong* that the first moon landing took place on 20th July 1969 (making all of us who could remember it feel very old).

Our next meeting will be on **18**th **August at 8pm**. We are assuming that it will probably still have to be 'virtual' but if the rules change, I'll notify everyone on the mailing list. **The theme will be 'families/relations'** because we're all so sick of not being able to see them! **All welcome** – if anyone fancies just joining us to listen, that's fine too.

FOLK SESSION – Howard Arms, Brampton (Virtually)

Continuing to maintain both social distancing and the noble tradition of live folk music, the Brampton session met by Zoom on 18^{th} August with the theme of 'families/relations'. A warm welcome to Sam and Eleanor Simmons, joining us for the first time from Malvern.

Instrumentalists always have a harder time finding tunes that tie into the theme, so congratulations to Sally Hardaker on flute for *Hens and Chickens* and *Brother Bernard*. Alan managed to find references to father, mother, bride, bridegroom and 'fair cousin' with *Young Lochinvar*, but Charlie claimed the highest relative count (and incidentally body count) in the shanty *Hanging Johnny* — mother, brothers and sisters, granny.

Which brings us to the point that dysfunctional families feature prominently in folk song: Anne's *I tell thee, Dick,* from the point of view of a small boy seriously unimpressed with his baby sister, was a very mild example. Adrian pointed out the inconveniences of having a mermaid for a mother (*The Eddystone Light*) and *Johnny be Fair* (Sally Jones) is a tangled comedy of illicit relationships in a small community. *Seven Nights Drunk* and *John Blunt* (Sam and Eleanor Simmons respectively) both offered a sardonic view of marriage. Ballads told the darkest stories: Gerda treated us to sibling murder (*Two sisters*) and Richard to incest followed by suicide (*The Bonny Hind*).

Sad, but not negative, was Joyce Grenfell's *Three Brothers* (Ruth). The same is true of Elaine's own song *A sense of me*, inspired by a man visiting his mother with dementia, and *Leaving Nancy* (Steve), Eric Bogle's song about parting from his mother when he emigrated to Australia. Ged listened to his grandfather's stories *By the glow of the kerosene light*; Mary's song *Brown photographs* involved listening to a grandmother's memories and Mick *In Constanza's Kitchen* celebrated Tuscan family life. *Generations of Change* (Katy) followed father, sons and grandsons in a changing world. At the other end of the age range, Sam's song *The Flame* welcomed his grandson into the world, and Phil embraced all children across the world as family in *Like me and you*.

We next meet – we are assuming by Zoom – on Tuesday 15th September at 8pm, with a theme of 'Harvest/Autumn'. All are welcome, including anyone who would just like to watch and listen.

Seven months on and we continue to keep the tradition of live music going via Zoom. We met up virtually on 15th September with the theme of 'Harvest/Autumn'. Welcome to newcomer Aitch, joining us from Cambridge for the first time.

Autumn as the hunting season was the setting for *Westlin' Winds* (Gerda) and *The Noble Fox Hunting* (Phil), while autumn as a preparation for winter is the background to *The Man in Green* (Ged). *Who knows where the time goes?* (Mick) starts with the birds leaving in autumn. Steve's *Grey October Clouds* alludes to the autumn of life. Highest marks for literary endeavour must go to Ruth who recited Thomas Hood's poem about her namesake *Ruth*, gleaning 'breast-high amid the corn'.

The varied aspects of the harvest home lent themselves to treatments both musical and poetical: hard work in *Ox-plough song* (Sam and Eleanor Simmons); celebration in *Harvest Bells* (Aitch) and *Harvest home* (Sally Hardaker on flute); plenty in *Drink, boys, drink* (Adrian); gratitude in *The Lord is good to me* (Mary). Sam Millington reminded us of the hardships and dangers faced by those who feed the world in *Harvest of the Sea* (about the wreck of the *Solway Harvester*) and *Trouble in the fields* (surviving on a farm in the 1930s). *John worked the land* (Bill Dodds) recalled the extreme hazards of farming in the Borders in the days of the reivers.

Harvest leads fairly naturally into the environment: Elaine sang her own *Salmon Song* about the ecology of the River Tweed, and Alan recited *God in His love has lent us this planet*.

Then there are the products of the harvest: Sally Jones praised *The ripe and bearded barley*; Richard, tongue-in-cheek, sang the ballad of *The Grassington Rhubarb*; Sally Hardaker played *Corn Rigs*; Aitch and Katy celebrated, respectively, *Nut-Brown Ale* and *Dead Dog Cider* and Sam and Eleanor took us *Hopping down in Kent* (alcohol seems to feature rather a lot!)

We next meet – virtually, we assume – on **20**th **October at 8pm. ALL WELCOME, including people who would just like to listen!** The theme will be 'Numbers' – anything that mentions a number, which includes dates of course.

We had a large and enthusiastic turn-out on 20th October for the Virtual Brampton session. A warm welcome to newcomers making their first appearance among us – Terry Hiscock; Mike and Sylvia Hall; Karen Pfeifer and Paul Walker.

The theme was 'numbers'. Phil in the *Irish Rover* clocked up 36,001,847 (including a date, plus the number of masts, cats, rats, bales, casks etc). Well done, Phil – but it *wasn't* a competition! At the other end of the scale, Paul and Karen brought us down to zero with *What if my pockets were empty?*)

Dates and ages were a popular way of approaching the theme: Terry's *Where are you now?* recalled poignantly his life in London in 1966; *It was a very good year* (Mick Trueman) looked back on amatory successes at the ages of 17, 21 and 35. Steve listed the grim facts of *The Blantyre Explosion* – the date, the number of deaths; the number of orphans and widows; in similarly sombre vein, *The Settle to Carlisle railway* (Alan) gave the date of construction and the number of workers who died building the line. Mike Hall's *The Jimmy Brown Saga* took us through the harsh life of a man born in 1896: growing up to poverty, two world wars and the great depression.

Several songs/tunes had numbers incorporated in the titles: *Thirty-foot trailer* (Aitch); *Four strong winds* (Sally Jones); *Seven Spanish Angels* (Sam); *Five wives of Acomb* (Katy). Richard and Sally Hardaker harmonised in *Three Jolly Fishermen*; Sally then followed up on whistle with *Ninety-three not out*. And let us not forget the poems: Wordsworth's *We are seven* (Ruth); the Stanley Holloway monologue *Three ha'pence a foot* (Mary); Pam Ayres *Will I have to be sexy at 60?* (Jan).

Other songs had the numbers neatly tucked away among the lyrics. Gerda's *Dowie Dens o' Yarrow* mentions the 'nine armèd men' who kill the heroine's lover; Anne's own song, *Blue bells*, grieves for the 'nine days' queen', Lady Jane Grey. Also in historical mode, Adrian's 'twenty thousand Cornishmen' demanded Trelawny's life in *Song of the Western Men*, and Charlie's *Kings and Queens of England* found lots of references to numbers in William III; James I; George III etc. *Geordie* (Patsy and Bob) stole 'sixteen of the king's royal deer'. Sylvia sang *The Kangding love song* (in Mandarin Chinese) which lists two reasons why the boy loves the girl. And last but not least, Elaine's poem by Henry Baker, *A mathematician's guide to surviving your first marathon*, was crammed full of fractions, calculations and figures.

We next meet – no doubt virtually – **on Tuesday 17**th **November at 8pm**, with the theme 'sea and ships'. **ALL WELCOME!**

There are advantages to being virtual – we'd never find a room big enough to contain the 30 singers and musicians who joined us on 17th November! A warm welcome to Dave Mason, joining us for the first time from Cincinnati.

The theme was 'the sea and ships'. Let's start with the oblique and ingenious approaches: Terry Hiscock's *Falling more slowly* was inspired by the shipping forecast; *Shipyard apprentice* (Phil) was based on the shipbuilding industry on the Clyde; Dave sang *Neverland* because it is 'a place associated with pirates'; Sylvia's *Ar Li Mountain Girl* linked to the theme because 'the girl is beautiful like water'. Jan, with her new ukulele skills, sang *Octopus's Garden* and Mary recited the sad fate of *Claude the Crab*.

Perhaps surprisingly we only had two shanties: *Hob y deri dando* (Sam Simmons) and *Padstow Farewell* (Charlie). Plenty of songs had their roots in history, from *The Armada* (Katy), through the 18th Century patriotic *Hearts of Oak* (Ruth); the Napoleonic wars in *On board a 98* (Richard) and *The Death of Nelson* (Adrian); the press gang in *My Johnny was a shoemaker* (Patsy and Bob). Moving on to World War II, we sorrowed with Bill over *Some Boats*, about those who disappeared at sea, and laughed at Sam Millington's tall tale about *The Silloth Submarine*.

Leaving wives and sweethearts is an inevitable concomitant of a sailor's life, and was reflected in Chris's *Adieu, sweet lovely Nancy*, Gerda's *Bold Privateer* and Alan's *Leaving of Liverpool*. From there we move on to a shipboard love affair on the way to *Canadee-i-o* (Mick) and inconstancy (*I wish, I wish* – Anne) and the fleshpots that snare Jack Tar in *The Old Town by the Shore* – in this case Mombasa – by Mike.

Then there is the love-hate relationship that sailors have with the sea: the tragedies such as that of the *Ellen Vannin* (Sally Jones); the not-so-serious tale of incompetence and collision, *Reach for the gin* (Aitch); the places sailors hate to go (*Bay of Fundy* – Eleanor) and love to sail (*Hills of Isle au Haut* – Steve); and the boat songs such as Elaine's *Baidin Fheillimi* and Ged's *Rathlin Island*.

And finally, thank you to our only instrumentalist of the evening, Sally Hardaker, who gave us the *Trumpet Hornpipe* and *Out on the Ocean* on whistle.

We next meet – still virtually – on 15th December at 8pm. The theme will be 'birds and animals' – which can of course include reindeer, the ox and the ass, or the Carnal and the Crane if anyone would like to be seasonal.

Our theme when we met on 15th December was 'Birds and animals', with liberty to give it a seasonal slant. A warm welcome to Arthur from Norfolk, joining us for the first time.

Now, I don't know how many times we say 'it's not a competition', but somehow people do still like to compete. So let us start with those who aimed for the largest number of different animals in one song or poem: Aitch probably topped the list with 23 separate species in *Place in the choir*. Ruth did rather well too – ten kinds of bird, two kinds of insect and a fish in *Who killed Cock Robin?* Sally Hardaker's *Poacher's 12 days of Christmas* named varieties of game, some pretty inedible (stoned crows, *really*, Sally?) and Sam's song of lost love, *Me and the Elephant*, took us to see the rhino, zebra, kangaroo etc at the zoo.

Farm animals featured in Alan's *Treat my daughter kindly* and Sylvia's Mandarin Chinese song *The night of the grassland is beautiful.* Gerda grieved that *The Angels have taken my Racehorse away.* Elaine's own song, *Fergus the Zen Dog*, immortalised a friend's pet. Leaving dry land, we heard the lament of the *Leviathan* (Steve), the yearning of the sailor to be back among the seagulls and whales in Masefield's *Sea Song* (Bill), and Stan Roger's protest about pollution in the Great Lakes, *Tiny Fish for Japan* (Mike), while Terry watched seven swans on *Lonely Waters*. Wild animals - and birds and insects – prowled in Dave's *Alive*, fluttered in Mick's *Childhood Memories* and dug their burrows with *double entendre* in Richard's *The Moudiwark* [mole].

We managed some seasonal allusions, naturally: reindeer in Phil's parody Flying in on the wind in a sleigh; turkey in Mary's poem The Twelve Days of Turkey, the wild boar in The Boar's Head Carol (Adrian). A dove features in Arthur's Christmas Lullaby, a lamb in Sally Jones' Do you hear what I hear? and the camels of the Magi in Les Rois Mages (Katy). Reaching deep into tradition, Anne sang the ballad The Carnal and the Crane.

We next meet virtually at 8pm on Tuesday 19th January, by ZOOM. The theme will be 'music and dancing' – any song that refers to a musical instrument, or a dance, for example. This might make it a bit easier for instrumentalists for a change, as by definition anything they do involves an instrument! ALL WELCOME!