

JANUARY FOLK SESSION – St Martin’s Cottage, Brampton

We had such a good turn-out that it felt rather like a musical game of Sardines when we met in St Martin’s Cottage on 15th December. A warm welcome to Gwen, June and Peter from Penrith, joining us for the first time, and to Cathy, visiting us to play duets with Gerda.

The theme was ‘people’s names’, which made it easier for our patient instrumentalists who sometimes have to be pretty creative to find a link to the theme. Frank on diatonic accordion played *March of Clare’s Dragoons*; *Donald McLeod’s Reel* and *Bobbing Joan*. Peter on Puerto Rican cuatro used *Jenny Lynd* to ‘bookend’ a song, and Steve played *Sally Gardens* as an instrumental before singing the song.

If Phil managed to find the song with the largest number of names (*Like me and you*), Ruth probably found the longest single name (*Godfrey Gordon Gustavus Gore*.) For sheer exuberant silliness Adrian must deserve a special mention for *Susannah’s a funicle man*, complete with grunts and whistles, and for inventiveness, *Angus’s Scottish Cheating Song* told us about a man suspicious of his girlfriend’s phone calls to Kirk Aldy and Bo Ness.

In many of the songs the names featured prominently in the titles: Gerda on concertina and Cathy on banjo sang the ‘happy blues’ *Old Joe Clarke* and *Darling Cory*. Christine went for straightforward Country and Western in *Jolene*. Gwen, June and Peter had great fun with the 1930s song *Egyptian Ella*. Alan went for very traditional in the ballad *Tam Lyn*, as did Eliza with *John Anderson, my jo*. Sally sang about a namesake in *Sally free and easy*. Mary’s parody of *John Peel* took us to the modern Lake District of traffic congestion and four-wheel-drives. Steve’s *Magdalene McGillivray* told a sad and historically factual story, whereas Katy’s *Ever since the day my dog ate Auntie Bella* told a story that was – fortunately – neither serious nor true!

The names were tucked away in the verses in some of the songs. *Tecumseh Valley* (Christine) charted the tragic downfall of Caroline; Adrian’s *Song of Western Men* thundered out defiance of King James and defence of Trelawny, and June, Peter and Gwen got us all singing along to *Biker Hill* (mentions Geordie Johnson).

We next meet on Tuesday 19th February at 8.30pm - **PLEASE NOTE, BACK IN THE HOWARD ARMS.** The theme will be ‘clothing’ – Galway shawls, yellow handkerchiefs, you name it. ALL WELCOME!

FEBUARY FOLK SESSION – Howard Arms, Brampton

Seasonal illness took its toll, and we were missing some of our 'regulars' on the evening of 19th February, but we still enjoyed a lively evening of music and song, the theme being 'clothing'.

As we all know, a folk session *isn't* a competition, but Ruth must carry off the honours for naming the largest number of items of clothing in the *National Anthem of the Ancient Britons* (hats, spats, braces, boots, pants, vests, shirts, coats, armour, pyjamas, and of course WOAD!) To Mary goes the prize for the tallest tale: *The Martians have landed in Wigan* (disguising themselves in flat caps and clogs).

Old and ragged clothes were well-represented: old boots in *Jordan is a hard road* (Maddy); rags and feathers in *Suzanne* (Alan); old leather britches worn by *George Fox* (Adrian); worn-out shoes and rags in *Streets of London* (Mary); the grandfather's coat in *Slip Jigs and Reels* (Phil). Sam's immensely touching song *The Dutchman* wraps the hero up in cap, coat, muffler. Finery got a look in too: *Leezie Lindsay* (Sally) kilts up her gown of green satin; Ruth's heroine *Wears Red Feathers and a Huli-huli Skirt*; Jamie promises Jeanie a 'braw new goon' in *Huntingtower* (Phil)

There were lots of traditional items of dress, the sort you expect to find in folk song: a *Galway Shawl* (Sam); a plaid shawl (*When I was single* – Sally); a Paisley shawl (*Music of the Loom* – Phil); a cambric shirt (*Scarborough Fair* – Christine); *Bonnets of Blue* (Adrian on melodeon); *Navy Boots* (Maddy;) a soldier's uniform in *Travelling Soldier* (Christine). A soldier's uniform also featured in enjoyably risqué manner in *Anne's Keyhole in the Door*. Less traditional were a mask and sneakers (Angus – *If I had a boat*); *Big Knicker Blues* (Phil); a surplice (*Tally-ho the hounds* – Katy); and a garter on *The Hippopotamus* (Mary)!

We next meet on **Tuesday 19th March at 8.30pm in The Howard Arms, Brampton**. The theme will be 'weather'. **ALL WELCOME!**

FOLK SESSION – Howard Arms, Brampton

We filled the smart new function room and overflowed onto the new, squashy sofas when we met on 19th March to make music to the theme of ‘weather’. Welcome to Bridget and Harry, visiting us from Newcastle, and welcome back to Eileen.

Instrumentalists always have the hardest job working in a reference to the theme, so congratulations to Gerda and Eileen on concertina for finding a devious connection in *My lodging is on the cold, cold ground* and *Log Cabin*, and to Frank on diatonic accordion for the 17th Century tune *Cold and Raw* (describes March quite well) and *Button up your overcoat (when the wind blows free)*.

Extremes of weather are – well, hardly celebrated – commemorated perhaps. Harry and Bridget sang *Driftwood*, about the floods in Morpeth; *Long Meg and her daughters* (Anne) raised a storm; the farmer’s home in *Blowed Away* (Alan Clark and Sam) disappeared in the Oklahoma dustbowl; Phil lamented the *Three Score and Ten* fishermen who were killed in the ‘approaching gale’ and ‘icy blast’ off Grimsby in 1889. We had ‘driving snow’ in Adrian’s *Rolling Home; Stormy Monday* from Alan; Australian drought in Katy’s *Past Caring* and frostbite in Harry’s dark and stern poem *How I fell*.

We wouldn’t be British if we didn’t joke about the rain: Sally’s *New January Man* was soaked from one year’s end to the next; Mary’s poem *Long to rain over us* found a different way of saying ‘it rained’ in nearly every line; *Betty’s Wet Weekend* (Sam) was about the Queen’s Jubilee regatta... and the rain that fell on it. Christine invited us to hear the *Rhythm of the falling rain*.

Other meteorological phenomena included cloud (*Hey you! Get off my cloud* – Angus; *Grey October Clouds* – Steve); snow (*Black Eye Friday*- Charlie); fog (*Whispers in the fog* -Anne); and wind (*The Helm Wind* – Ruth).

And yes, we *did* find references to good weather! It was ‘hot and fair’ for *Brig Fair* (Gerda); ‘the morn was fair’ in *The Rose of Allendale* (Phil); *Hope, the Hermit* (Ruth) foretold the ‘fairest day’. There was a ‘bright sun’ in *Bread and Fishes* (Mary) and Sally enjoyed ‘the coolness of the rain’ as well as the ‘morning sun’ in *Where ravens feed*.

We next meet on Tuesday, 16th April in The Howard Arms, Brampton at 8.30pm. The theme will be ‘travelling’ – on foot, on horseback, on wheels, in boats, in the air...not to mention all those songs that begin ‘As I was going to...’ ALL WELCOME!

FOLK SESSION – Howard Arms, Brampton

The folk session packed out the function room of the Howard Arms when we met on 16th April with the theme of 'travelling'. A warm welcome to visitors Mick from Lincolnshire; Rachael from Newcastle and John from Whitley Bay.

There were songs about the pleasures of travelling – Christine's *Travelling Light*, Sally's *Tramps and Hawkers* – but Sam warned us about the rootlessness of a roving life in *Can't help but wonder (where I'm bound)*. We heard about departures (Gerda's *Mendocino*), arrivals (Anne's own song *Day's End*) and *Sweet journeys* (Rachael on fiddle).

Some people tackled the theme from the perspective of modes of transport, so we heard about trains in *Paddy works on the Railway* (Alan); *Blackpool Belle* (Mary) and *Leaving Nancy* (Steve); ships in *The Steamboat* and *The Big Ship* (Gerda and Eileen on concertina) and *The Grey Funnel Line* (John); and finally air in *Leaving on a jet plane* (Steve).

Other people concentrated on routes and ways of getting there. Phil took the *Northwest Passage*; Mick went by the *Back Roads*; Frank on diatonic accordion took us *Over the water to Charlie*; Rachael on fiddle took us via the *Swing Bridge* and *Beverley Bypass*. Anne sang of the misadventures that befell a maid *As I was going to Aylesbury* while Adrian's heroine was more fortunate *On the road to Towsey Fair*. Charlie Chomse took Sir John all the way to Palestine and back in *Lambton Worm*; Stew's own song *True love is never blind* made the furthest journey that evening, 'one more time around the sun', while Angus simply exhorted us to *Get yourselves to Danny's*. Miriam and Katy sang about metaphysical journeys to Heaven and Hell in, respectively, *The Cruel Mother* and *I'll fly away*.

We meet next on 21st May at 8.30pm in the Howard Arms, Brampton. The theme is 'schooldays' – songs inspired by Maths, French, English, Latin, Physics (???), History, Geography, Biology, Gym...songs you learned in singing lessons or in the playground...time to get creative!

FOLK SESSION – Howard Arms, Brampton

The theme of ‘schooldays’ was a challenging one, when we met on 21st May, but the Brampton folk session always rises to a challenge! Welcome to newcomers Ian from Moffat and Mick from Newcastle, and welcome back to Cath and Geoff.

The most cunning connection to the theme was certainly Sally’s - she recited *Susan Simpson* because it had been the name of a girl in her class! Ian came close to her in ingenuity when he sang *Blue Suede Shoes* (because all the girls in his year were mad about Elvis)

School evoked some pretty mixed reactions: *Flowers are red* (Angus) and *Among the Gorse* (Gerda) described the stunting and controlling effects of formal education; on the other hand, Ian’s *The L&N don’t stop here any more* recommended school as a way to escape life down the pit. Phil’s autobiographical *Schooldays* recalled a none-too-happy time at school, whereas Steve sang *Stand by me* to honour the teachers who had believed in him. Geoff’s *Three-day millionaire* and Mick’s *Schooldays over* looked forward to the thrilling and unnerving moment of leaving school for the privileges and labour of adult life.

The music of schoolroom and playground was well-represented. Frank on diatonic accordion played *About the bush, Willy; Linden Lea* and *Bonny fisher lad*; Ruth got us all singing along to *The big ship sails*; Anne to the macabre *Weila Waile*; Mick to the singing game *I’ll tell me Ma*. Cath recited the poem *A Calendar*, about children’s toys and games changing with the seasons.

Of course, the aim of school is learning, and just to prove that we *did* all learn something, we heard about: Maths (*Standard deviation* – Sam); Chemistry (*The Elements*- Alan Jefferson); History (*Ye Jacobites by name* – Christine); basic skills (*Socialist ABC* – Phil); environmental science (*Leviathan*- Steve); Latin (*Tempus adest floridum*- Katy) and domestic science (*The Wonderful Soup Stone* – Sam).

We next meet on **Tuesday 18th June at 8.30pm in The Howard Arms, Brampton**. The theme will be ‘landscapes’ (hills, valleys, coasts, cliffs, lakes, moors....) **ALL WELCOME!**

FOLK SESSION – Howard Arms, Brampton

We had such a record attendance on 18th June that it will be difficult to do justice to all the fun that was had – but here goes! A warm welcome to visitors from Kent, Chris and Alan Davis, and to Harry, Bridget and Gerry. Welcome back to Les and Di; Charlie Chomse and Corrie.

The theme was 'landscape'. We had a generous helping of instrumental music, and of unusual accompanying instruments: Frank (diatonic accordion) and Corrie (Northumbrian small pipes) played *Green Bracken*; Les and Di on guitar and fiddle gave us the intriguingly-named *Mountain of the Women* and *Rothbury Hills*; Adrian on melodeon played the morris tune *Ladder Hill*. Chris (bass recorder) and Alan Davis (guitar) took us to *Liscannor Bay*, while Gerry, accompanying himself on mouth organ and guitar, invited us to *Come away with me* ('where the Missouri flows').

Harry read us his own poem *The hills are alive*, a stern memory of brushfires in the 'mined-out' landscape around Middlesbrough. Mountains and hills also cropped up in *College Valley Hounds* (Angus); *Tarry Woo'* (Anne); *Wild Mountainside* (Bridget, Harry and Gerry) and *Rocky Mountain High* (Alan Jefferson). We descended to level ground on *The Plains of Waterloo* (Charlie) and the military cemeteries of northern France in *Strangest of Lands* (Steve). Dipping further down, Christine took us into *Highland Glens* and Gerda, in a song of her own writing, showed us the Ashokan village in the Catskill Mountains, now drowned to make the Ashokan Reservoir.

Maddy (*This Land*) and Ruth (*But it's mine*) found songs featuring forests; Mary's song featured a lake – her irreverent parody *Windermere Sailor*. Several ingenious people managed to work in a whole range of landscape: sandy heath; grassy plain; mossy boulders (*Where ravens feed* – Sally); shores; peak; bay; bogland (*The Green and Red of Mayo* – Sam); pasture; moor; fields; drystone dykes (*The Tailor of the Dales* – Phil).

We next meet on **16th July in the Howard Arms, Brampton**. The theme will be 'health' – anything that contributes to making you healthy or unhealthy. Healthy exercise *versus* alcohol; brown bread *versus* gunshot wounds...and there are all those 18th Century songs about unfortunate rakes. Being creative is half the fun!

FOLK SESSION – Howard Arms, Brampton

Again, lots of enthusiasts at the folk session on the 16th July. We welcomed back the singing duo, Julie and Hillary from Whitley Bay, with their friend Janis, also Mick from Lincoln with his Q-Chord, and newcomer Stuart. Good to have new faces in the audience too, Anne and entourage from Great Corby, Ray and Margaret, Stuart's friend Ron and many others.

The theme this month was "health", and there were a lot of contributions although many were targeted at the lack of health, or the risks that affect it. Frank's "*Dear Tobacco*" being one example, although, to be fair, he had kicked the session off with the more positive, "*The Healer*". We don't issue points or, indeed award prizes, but if we did, Mary would score twenty-six with her "*ABC*" from Arthritis to Zest. Sally had us in tears over "*Van Gogh's Ear*" though there was no mention of Jacobites lending one to him after his dropped off and was trodden on. Ruth told us about *Polly Oliver's* military nursing skills; Eileen taught us that "*Relaxation*" was the way to good health.

Allan Jefferson described the privations and health hazards the navvies faced at Ribbleshead; Steve sang a song inspired by the song writer's father, a miner, dying of pneumoconiosis, "*Roll on the Day*". Also in coal mining territory, Angus talked about broken bones in "*Close the Coal House Door*". The depression of a poet's unfulfilled love was evident in Stuart's "*Raglan Road*".

The rather sombre note caused by the theme was reversed with Christine's "*Spoon Full of Sugar Helps the Medicine Go Down*", and likewise Phil at the last moment abandoned his proposed songs of death and gloom to question the mental health of his Uncle Walter, who couldn't help "*Dancing with Bears*". Mick tackled sleeplessness in "*Green Eyes*". Eyeballs, glass ones, were present in Janis' "*After the Ball Was Over*", together with numerous other prosthetics. Julie and Hillary touched on an unhealthy diet in "*There's a Guy Works Down the Chip Shop Swears He's Elvis*".

Frank finished us off the way he started by reminding us to "*Button Up Your Overcoat*".

We next meet on **20th August at 8.30pm at The Howard Arms, Brampton**. The theme will be "Sport and Recreation". **ALL WELCOME!**

FOLK SESSION – Howard Arms, Brampton

Summer holidays, folk festivals and illness took their toll of several of our regular attenders, alas, but summer also brought us the bonus of visiting musicians: Mick from Lincolnshire; Celia from Warwickshire and Julia and Hilary from Whitley Bay. We met on 20th August in The Howard Arms to sing, play and recite on the theme of ‘Sport and Recreation’.

We had some interesting references to sport: Phil recited and sang a tall tale about the insect cup finals, *Earwig O*; Mary read a poem, *Cyril the Centipede*, an equally improbable story about footballing insects. Ruth took us to the *Camptown Races* while Gerda charted the history of The *Kilshannock Wager* – a horse race with a sudden and violent end. Blood sports were mentioned briefly in *Jock Stewart* (Ray) and at humorous length in *Bungalow Bill* (Angus). Steve combined the delights of fishing and sailing in *The Hills of Isle au Haut*.

The energetic pleasures of dancing and walking were well-represented. Celia on melodeon specialised in Morris tunes – *The Windmill*; *Black Joke*; *Millie’s Bequest*. Margaret, also on melodeon, played *New York Gals (can’t you dance the polka?)* Ray urged *Dance me to the end of love* and Ruth read *In praise of dancing* followed by *Lord of the Dance*. Phil celebrated hillwalking on a *Cloudberry Day* and Margaret in *The Manchester Rambler* defended the right to roam. The sociable pleasures of the fairground were praised in *Playing old games* (Mick) and *Truro Agricultural Show* (Katy).

On a more restful note, Julia and Hilary enjoyed *Lazing on a sunny afternoon* and Mary recommended *Messing about on the river*. Of course, alcohol had to have a mention, so Angus urged us to *Let your man out for a pint*. Which leads us to...

I can’t go there anymore (Gerda), which looked ruefully at the social embarrassment caused by recreation that has got out of hand. And finally, as even fun has its flip side, Mick’s *Nickel Dreams* told the story of the hard-worked actresses, singers etc who provide recreation for other people.

We next meet on **17th September at 8pm (PLEASE NOTE NEW, EARLIER START TIME)** in The Howard Arms, Brampton, with the theme ‘Work’. **ALL WELCOME!**

FOLK SESSION – Howard Arms, Brampton

As the holiday season comes to an end, the theme was, appropriately enough, ‘Work’, when we met in the Howard Arms on 17th September. A warm welcome to Hazel, joining us for the first time; to Pat and Ron visiting us from Middlesbrough; and to Richard and Sally Hardaker from Penrith.

The theme naturally lent itself to ‘trades’. Mill work was well-represented in *Poverty Knock* (Gerda); *Shift and spin* (Hazel) and Richard’s history of his great-uncle, *The Ballad of John Willie Still*. Phil took us further back to the days of the hand-loom with *Music of the loom*. Mining was covered in *Working Man* (Christine); *Coal Town Road* (Hazel) and *Roll on the day*, about a miner dying of ‘the dust’ (Steve). As this is folk music we’re talking about, it’s not surprising we had songs about *Grandpa was a carpenter* (Sam); *Three Jolly Fishermen* (Richard and Sally Hardaker); a tune about *Navy on the line* (Sally Hardaker on flute) and songs about migrant workers (*Harvest Gypsies* – Anne, and *Rambling Boy* – Pat and Ron).

More unexpected were Mary’s *Banker’s Ballad* (‘the only legal robber’); Angus’s *Barrett’s Privateers* (the legal robbers of the 18th Century, coincidentally!); the removal men in *Right, said Fred* (Alan); the sewer man (*I’m glad I’m working down below* - Phil). *Generations of Change* (Katy) followed the changing ways of earning a living, from ploughing to fishing to oil worker, in one man’s lifetime.

A number of items were about ‘work’ in the abstract: Sally Jones identified the paradox of our feelings on the subject in *I just can’t wait*, where the singer complains about his job for verse after verse, then dreads retirement. Ruth read the famous passage from Jerome K Jerome’s *Three Men in a Boat*, beginning ‘I like work. It fascinates me. I can sit and look at it for hours...’. Richard pinpointed the necessity of work, however uncongenial, in *The Dalesman’s Litany* and Sam traced a tragic story of unemployment, prostitution and suicide in *Tecumseh Valley*. Christine, on the other hand, identified the satisfaction of work undertaken as a hobby in *The Shed in the Garden*.

And finally... thank you to Pat and Ron for playing us out with *Keep on the sunny side of life*.

We next meet on **15th October in the Howard Arms, Brampton, at 8pm** (please continue to note new start time). The theme will be ‘numbers’. **ALL WELCOME!**

FOLK SESSION – Howard Arms, Brampton

Folk enthusiasts got together for the session in the function room of The Howard on the 15th October, where the theme was “numbers”. This gave plenty of scope for interpretation, ranging from dates, discourses on mathematics and chemistry, to simple numerical challenges.

Sam started us off with the enigmatic, multi-stranded song “Standard Deviation” by Danny Schmidt. This left a feeling of pensiveness to be shattered by Angus with 5,4,3,2,1 evoking nostalgic memories of Ready Steady Go on a black and white telly. The number two seemed to crop up a lot. Ruth had animals coming in two by two, Gerda sang about two sisters. Frank on his melodeon had us tapping our feet to “Hot Foot 2”. Meanwhile Terry sang of “Two Fishermen” lost in the Atlantic’s seethe and swell. Mary reverted to shoe sizes, nine, in the case of Darling Clementine (rather large I thought for such a delicate lady). Probably the most unusual numbers all night were Yan; Tyan, Tethera; Methera; Pimp; Sether; Lether; Hover; Dover; Dick. This was Ruth’s contribution, “Counting Sheep in Cumbria”, fortunately she stopped at ten so we were in no danger of falling asleep. Aircraft took off, with the unfortunate “Flight” 505 from Angus, and Steve’s “Leaving on a Jet Plane” (must have been a 707 when John Denver wrote that). We had two mining disasters, Sally’s “Springhill Nova Scotia” (300 tons), and Phil’s ([Donibristle, Mossmorran Disaster](#)). There were 3000 navvies in Alan’s Settle to Carlisle Railway.

As often mentioned before, we don’t offer prizes, but Gerda would otherwise have won it for having clocked one-billion in Phil Holme’s song “Morrow”. Probably most closely followed by thirty-million, the number of items in the hold of the “[Irish Rover](#)”, sung unaccompanied by Phil. At the other extreme, zero was sadly implied at the end of Steve’s “Last Leviathan”.

“Miss Twentyman’s Delight” from Frank, back on his trusty diatonic accordion. Angus told a joke which kept us occupied while Terry retuned to accompany Steph singing “The Circle Game” (sixteen springs and summers). Sally brought us back to earth with a current political hot potato in Harvey Andrews’ “You Knew We Were Coming”, with its repeated references to 60 years.

We next meet on **19th November at 8.00pm at The Howard Arms, Brampton**. The theme will be “Protest”. **ALL WELCOME!**

FOLK SESSION – Howard Arms, Brampton

We were less numerous than usual on 19th November, when we met in the Howard Arms to make merry and make music – a side-effect of the cold snap perhaps? – but we still had plenty of people to sing and play and recite. The theme was ‘protest’, something that folk song has always lent itself to.

A warm welcome to Malcolm from Aberdeen, who brought his flute. He and Adrian on melodeon were our instrumentalists for the evening. Adrian ingeniously found a tune, *Smash the Windows* – certainly a protesting sort of activity – and Malcolm played a strathspey which he claimed was called *Shoot Boris Johnson* (was that strictly true, Malcolm?) Malcolm also gave us jigs (*The Famous Baravan* and *Rory Gallagher*) and the Gaelic air *Callum Sgair*.

Anti-war protest was a popular subject, with *Universal Soldier* (Angus); *Turn back, oh man* (Ruth); *Blowing in the wind* (Steve) and *The Freedom Come-all-ye* (Gerda) targeting war in general, and *The Sun is Burning* (Mary) anticipating the horrific effects of a nuclear strike. Industrial protest featured extensively too, from not-too-serious *Part of the Union* (Adrian) to the deadly earnest of *Blackleg Miner* (Sally). Phil and Steve both commemorated the labour activist Joe Hill, on the anniversary of his execution, in *I dreamed I saw Joe Hill* and *Calling Joe Hill*. Anne took us back to the Luddite riots with *The Cropper Lads*.

There were protests, too, against a wider range of injustice and inequality. Alan Jefferson protested against the treatment of *The Cherokee Nation*; Gerda highlighted the difference between those who make the laws and those who live under them in *I once met a man*; Anne’s own song *A voice in the wilderness* lamented the cocklers who drowned in Morecambe Bay. *Leviathan* (Steve) and *The Islands* (Anne) were both about environmental outrages.

Not all protest was so serious! Angus complained about *Santa B****y Claus*; Katy’s *Skyscraper Wean* joked about an unexpected problem of high-rise living; Mary’s Stanley Holloway monologue *Brahm Boots* criticised a social solecism, and Phil pleaded *Keep your feet still, Geordie hinny*.

We next meet at **8pm on 17th December 2019 IN ST MARTIN’S COTTAGE, next to St Martin’s Church in Brampton. PLEASE NOTE TEMPORARY CHANGE OF VENUE!!!!** Due to accidental double-booking, we are using the cottage as we have once done before. It’s a cosy place to meet, **but please bring your own drink as only tea and coffee are available.** The theme will be ‘open’ – but Christmas songs/tunes/recitations are welcome too. ALL WELCOME!

FOLK SESSION – St Martin’s Cottage, Brampton, for a change.

We gathered snugly in St Martin’s cottage on 17th December for an evening of music and ‘crack’ and laughter. Our theme was ‘open’ – any song, tune, recitation etc that anyone liked – but we ended up with a definite seasonal slant.

Christmas doesn’t actually start until 25th December, as Ruth reminded us with *The Carol of the Advent*. Christine sang the classic carol *In the bleak midwinter*, while Anne and Katy added folk carols to the mix– *The Carnal and the Crane* and *Patapan*. Mary invited us to join her in *Here we come a-wassailing*. Getting a bit less traditional, Sally complained that *There are no lights on our Christmas tree* (a protest against television!) and Sam gave a heartfelt description of the loneliness of *Christmas in prison*. Phil’s *Flying in on the wind in a sleigh*, a parody of a World War 2 song, had us all singing along lustily as the reindeer faltered one by one. Angus, on banjolele, gave us Perry Como’s *White Christmas*, another excellent joining-in song. Ruth told us the true story of *The Senior Citizens’ Christmas Party* with rueful humour. This prompted...

When I’m Sixty-Four (Alan Jefferson) and *The Man in the Mirror* (Sam), both songs about growing old. At the other end of the age-range, Alan Clark in 1930s mood sang *Little Man, you’ve had a Busy Day*.

Nostalgia and sadness are part of the season too, and we had plenty of those in *Lights of Home* (Gerda); *Going Back* (Steph); *Blue Christmas* (Sam); *Lucy Cartwright* (Christine); *Irene, Goodnight* (Alan Clark) and *Crying from the back of my eyes* (Steve). Still darker was *Wings of Morphine* (Terry), about miners who took morphine with them down the mine ‘just in case’.

We had plenty of the cheerful and comic too: Alan Jefferson recited *King John and the Abbot of Canterbury*, a ballad with a clever twist and a happy ending. Anne admired a manly form through *The Keyhole in the Door* (tsk!) and who couldn’t laugh at Terry’s outrageous apology *I’m sorry I ate your Grandpa?*

Finally, Gerda played us out gently with *John o’ Dreams* and sent us homeward to our ‘blankets and our feather bed’.

We next meet on **Tuesday, 21st January at 8pm – back in the Howard Arms in Brampton**. The theme, in honour of Burns Night, is Scottish. **ALL WELCOME!**