

FOLK SESSION – Howard Arms, Brampton

We were missing some regular attenders due to seasonal ill-health, when we met on 20th January but were delighted to welcome Paddy, returning after a long absence. Our theme was the thoroughly ‘folkie’ one of ‘Rogues, Vagabonds and Thieves’.

To start with the rogues at the top of the pyramid: corrupt politicians ranged from Gary’s 18th Century *Parcel of Rogues* through Sally’s gallery of 20th Century incompetents (*You Knew We Were Coming*) to Geoff’s comment on contemporary events, *Confounds the Science*. Adrian satirised dishonest entrepreneurs in *The Man Who Waters the Workers’ Beer*.

Slightly surprisingly, we had only one example each of those archetypal folk rogues, the highwayman, the smuggler and the poacher: Ron and Linda sang *Too Close to the Wind* and *The Whitby Smugglers’ Song*, while Katy gave us the ballad *Johnnie of Braidslee*. Rather more popular were colonial outlaws. America gave us *Pancho and Lefty* (Gary) and the unfortunate hero of *Slip Jigs and Reels* (Phil), while Sally took us to Australia for the exploits of the *Wild Colonial Boy*. Maritime villainy featured as piracy in Geoff’s *Captain Kydd* and as privateering in Anne’s *Polly on the Shore*. Alan (creative as always) mentioned the tiniest act of roguery possible, when the little boy in *Sunday in Savannah* is warned not to go fishing on the Sabbath.

We had lots of contributions about roguery in love – or, less delicately, sexual shenanigans. Gerda complained of faithless lovers in *Miss Otis Regrets* and *Queen of Hearts*; John on harmonica played tunes with warning titles like *The Randy Wives of Greenlaw*; *Big Market Lasses*; *The Unfortunate Rake* and *The Drunken Landlady*, while Sally took us through the convoluted sexual affairs of an entire village in her song *Johnny Be Fair*. Paddy and Phil both described how a sailor’s encounter with ‘flash girls’ is followed by being cheated and ends in a brawl (*Ratcliffe Highway* and *Jack Tar on Shore* respectively). Alan’s *Rocky Raccoon* features a shoot-out between rivals in love, while a rash marriage in *Lawless* (Paddy) leads to tragedy all round.

Charles approached the ‘vagabond’ part of the theme very directly with Stevenson’s *The Vagabond* and with *The Wraggle-Taggle Gypsies*. Phil’s *Jolly Beggar* is both a vagabond and a rogue (and, by his own statement, a thief). Anne pointed out that ‘vagabond’ originally meant an itinerant workman, as *Sullivan’s John* goes off to mend pots and pans with the tinkers.

Some singers called our attention to the penalties for theft: transportation in Ron and Linda's *Fields of Athenrye*; gaol in Adrian's *Sweet Swansea*; and his lament *I Wish There Were No Prisons*; gaol again in John G's song *The Old Triangle*, and his tune *Jack Broke the Prison Door*.

We next meet on **17th February at 8pm in The Howard Arms, Brampton**. Our theme will be 'Love' (so close to Valentine's Day, what else could it be?) **ALL WELCOME!**

And for those who like to prepare in advance, we have decided on themes for March – 'Trades and Professions' – and for April – 'Rivers, Lakes and Seas'.