

FOLK SESSION JANUARY 20014 – Howard Arms, Brampton

Well, we thought January would be a quiet month and retreated to the ‘wee room underneath the stairs’, but we had such an excellent attendance that it resembled a musical game of sardines, especially when we had to lean sideways to allow the guitarists freedom of movement! It was a particular pleasure to see Anne Dolphin, Bill and Chris visiting us from the north-east, and to welcome Maureen for her public debut.

The theme was ‘inclement weather’, with plenty of snow, rain, wind and fog. Snow featured in *The Massacre of Glencoe* (Alan Jefferson); *Black against the snow* (Miriam); *The Snows they Melt the Soonest* (Mike L on whistle); *Snowy Monday Jig* (Anne on Northumbrian pipes, accompanied by Bill on bodhran). Bill managed to work in cold winds, frost and snow with *Go to Sea no More*. Steve, on the other hand, celebrated the *Hills of Isle au Haut* because they’ve (allegedly) ‘got no ice or snow’, and Ruth defied storms and icicles because *I’ve got my love to keep me warm*.

Wind seemed to be a particularly destructive element. Chris led us in a rousing version of *Adieu, Sweet Lovely Nancy* and Phil recalled the 1889 gale that destroyed a fishing fleet in *Threescore and ten*. On dry land, Sam’s *Oklahoma Home* was ‘blown away’. Mike R’s *Dust in the Wind* was a sombre ‘memento mori’. Alan Clark complained of *Stormy Monday*.

Rain, in contrast, was either melancholy (*Blue Eyes Crying in the Rain* – Andy) or even comic (*Betty’s Wet Weekend* – Sam; the monologue *Three Ha’pence a Foot* – Bill). Mary recalled *The Foggy Foggy Dew* and found a mention of mist in the poem *The Haggis Season*, which linked neatly with Burns’ *Address to a Haggis*, recited by Maureen in honour of the proximity of Burns’ Night. A few people bucked the trend and sang about hot inclement weather: Andy with the ‘hellish heat’ of a nuclear strike in *Wednesday Morning, 3am*, Phil with ‘Africa’s burning strand’ in *Rose of Allendale* and Katy with the ‘droughts and floods and fires’ of the Australian bush in *Now I’m Easy*.

Finally, Anne, Bill and Chris, on pipes, bodhran and guitar, saw us *Off to California* ‘to get away from the bad weather’!

The next session takes place on Tuesday, 18th February in The Howard Arms, Brampton from 8.30pm onwards. The theme will be ‘families’. ALL WELCOME!

FOLK SESSION FEBRUARY 2014 – Howard Arms, Brampton

Visitors from far and near, returning old friends, along with the regulars, all had another great night in the cosy atmosphere of the Howard's back room. With forty-one songs and tunes, from fourteen performers, it's very difficult to describe the events of the evening in such a short space, however, I'll do my best. It was great to see John again from Whitley Bay, Martin from Gilsland, and Katie, all the way from Accrington. Besides the performers we had a good number of "listeners" too, who I notice joined in quite a few of the choruses.

The theme was "Families". Mike kicked us off with "*In Praise of John McGee*" followed by Sam with "*Poldhu Cove*", one of three songs he performed inspired by his own family. Keeping to the theme, the other Mike gave us "*The Prodigal Son*". John's "*Mountains of Mourne*" had us all harmonising to the refrain. Annette's "*Death of Queen Jane*" was followed by Maddy's lovely rendering of "*The Jute Mill Song*". We had a couple of songs relating to the parting of mother and son. Steve's rendering of Eric Bogle's "*Before the Whistle Blows*", and later "*Gentle Annie*", to which Katie immediately responded with "*Awkward Annie*".

We had a couple of tunes from Mike on his uilleann pipes including "*Fead an Iolair*", (The Eagle's Whistle) which he introduced with a description of how this related to the evening's theme.

Martin remembered the "family" of musicians who gigged around West Cumbria in an old Ford Thames in his self penned "*Rocking for Sixty Years*". Newcomer Geoff was also reminiscent of a similar era with "*Wonderful Land*". Ruth hid the family from the rent collector in the coal cellar. Although usually sombre family affairs, Phil managed to include two light hearted funeral's, "*Dad's Funeral*" with its unexpected guests, and "*Granny's Armchair*". Mary's "*Where do you Go from Here*" illustrated the hardships of a working man to earn enough to keep his family in the way they would like to be accustomed.

We finished the night in what's becoming the traditional fashion with all the instruments joining in with Sam's "*Blown Away*".

The next session takes place on Tuesday, 18th March in The Howard Arms, Brampton from 8.30pm onwards. The theme will be 'Homes and Gardens'. ALL WELCOME!

FOLK SESSION MARCH 2014– Howard Arms, Brampton

'Home and Garden' was the theme of the folk session on 18th March, when we packed ourselves into the breakfast room at the Howard Arms, with fifteen people contributing and several more hovering on the fringes to listen. We were delighted to welcome Ian from Haltwhistle and to Terry and Steph, harmonising from Gilsland.

'Gardens' proved very fruitful – no pun intended - Sam kicked off with *Where have all the flowers gone?*; Ian waxed autobiographical with stories of shenanigans in his *Hedge Song*; Ruth raised our respect for ground elder in the poem *Pulling out weeds*. Terry and Steph sang in praise of *People who have gardens* and Mike Round described the highly metaphorical *Garden of Love*.

Individual plants featured in Phil's *Red is the Rose*, in Steve's *Gentle Annie* (cabbages) and in Miriam's *Mrs Bond* (sage and onions). Mike showed the true creative spirit in *Morning Glory* – the song had nothing to do with plants but 'convolvulus is also known as Morning Glory'! Mary entertained us with the less appealing aspects of gardening ('anaconda centipedes, kamikaze bumblebees' – oh yes, been there, done that!) in the parody of *English Country Garden*.

Alan Clarke sang of leaving home in *I gotta move*, with skilled bluesy guitar accompaniment, whereas Alan Jefferson sang of being *Homeward Bound*, as did Phil in the disquieting and moving WW1 song *Home, Lads, Home*. Homes come in all shapes and sizes, so Anne's was a castle (*Raggle Taggle Gypsies*); Maddy's a cabin (*Hard Times, come again no more*); Katy's a high-rise flat (*Skyscraper Wean*); Terry's a retirement home (*Sailor's Rest*). Sam covered the whole them comprehensively in *Sit thee down*, which managed to mention house, garden and greenhouse!

We next meet on **Tuesday, 15th April in The Howard Arms, Brampton from 8.30pm onward**. The theme will be **sailors/ships/shipwrecks. ALL WELCOME!**

FOLK SESSION – Howard Arms, Brampton

Nineteen people came along to contribute songs, tunes and poems, and several more turned up to listen, when the Brampton folk session met on 15th April with the theme of ‘Sailors, ships and shipwrecks’. It was a pleasure to welcome several new faces: Chris; Geoff; Steve Bowles; Ian and Maureen.

We had an unusual wealth of instrumental music: the hornpipes *Jack Tar* and *Johnny Todd* from Frank Lee on diatonic accordion; *Out on the Ocean* from Megan on whistle; *Creole Belle* and *Maple Leaf Rag* from Geoff on steel guitar. Les and Di on guitar and fiddle played two Shetland airs, *Da Merry Boys of Greenland* and *Da Galley Watch*; Mike Leighton on Uilleann pipes and Chris on concertina joined forces in two reels, *Blackberry Blossom* and *Merry Blacksmith*.

The ship-and-sailor theme is hugely rich in tragedy, yearning, adventure, and ribald comedy, and we had samples of them all. *The Holy Ground* (Mary), *Adieu, Sweet Lovely Nancy* (Miriam), *The Grey Funnel Line* (Chris), *The leaving of Liverpool* (Alan Jefferson) and even the shanty *The Capstan Bar* (Katy) all express regret in different ways for the girls left behind and reflect on the dangers, hardships and tedium of life on ship. Steve Bowles described the hard work and hazards of a fisherman’s life in *Shoals of Herring*, while Steve Hubball mourned the decline of the fishing trade in *The Final Trawl*. Phil sang *Threescore and ten*, about the storm that destroyed the fishing fleet off the east coast in 1889, and Sam read his poem *Solway Harvester*, about the fishing boat of that name that went down with all hands off the Isle of Man in the year 2000. Ruth, showing the proper inventive spirit, got us all to sing the hymn *Nearer, my God, to Thee*, because it was the tune that the band played on board the Titanic as she sank.

On a lighter note, Mike Leighton recounted the misfortunes that followed from a sailor’s encounter with a dockside doxy in *Rambling Sailor*, and Sam’s *Size of the Ship* included a lot of metaphor and was nothing to do with the sea!

Apart from the theme, we had some rousing contributions from Ian, with his hilarious *The Dyslexic Tautoist*, and Maureen, with *Caledonia*.

We next meet on **Tuesday 20th May in The Howard Arms, Brampton from 8.30pm onwards**. The theme will be ‘**Girls names**’. **ALL WELCOME!**

FOLK SESSION – Howard Arms, Brampton

The session on 17th June, with the theme ‘boys’ names’, saw the biggest turn-out since the folk session moved to Brampton three years ago. It was a delight to welcome several new faces – or perhaps ‘voices’ would be more appropriate! - Julie, Ray, Alex, Ruth and Mike Downham and Paul.

We had a pleasing variety of instrumental music: *Jack broke the prison door* and *Donald Blue* from Les and Di on guitar and fiddle; the morris tune *Constant Billy* from Frank Lee on diatonic accordion; *Lament for Eoin Ruadh* from Mike Leighton on Uilleann pipes; *John Henry* from Geoff on guitar.

As you might expect, quite a few of the songs involved names that crop up frequently in folk music: John and Jock (*Schooldays Over* – Mike Downham; *Johnny’s Old Guitar* - Sam; *Jock Stewart* - Chris); William (*My Boy Billy* – Ruth Downham; *Wee Weaver* – Maddy); James (*St James’ Infirmary Blues* – Alan Clarke). Steve Bowles sang *Danny Boy* and Katy, *The Mucking of Geordie’s Byre*.

We also had a Richard (*Richard Cory* – sung and played by Ray); a Terry (a modern ballad, sung by Alan Jefferson) and a Chick (*Chick Henderson’s March*, by Stew). We had a run of ‘Joes’ – two of them prompted by that minor sporting event that is taking place in Brazil, with Mary’s monologue *Goalkeeper Joe* and Ian Brown’s lament for the days when people played football for the love of the game, *Joe Ackroyd*. Steve Hubball’s *Calling Joe Hill* was a serious protest song about a political activist executed in the USA.

Ruth Kershaw introduced a decidedly exotic note with the old comic song *Abdul the Bulbul Amir*, and Phil’s *Socialist ABC* managed to work in Karl (Marx); Vladimir (Lenin) and Ludwig (Feuerbach).

Not all the material stuck to the theme: Alex played and sang *Take it*; Paul on mandolin sang *Good Company*, and Julie the 15th Century lullaby *Baloo, my Babe*.

We next meet on **Tuesday 15th July from 8.30pm onwards in The Howard Arms, Brampton**. The theme will be ‘Numbers’ -any tune or song or poem that mentions or involves a number. **ALL WELCOME!**

FOLK SESSION – Howard Arms, Brampton

The theme was 'numbers' and the room was packed when we met on 15th July to sing, play and recite in The Howard Arms. It was a great pleasure to welcome a large number of newcomers: Martin; Eliza, Bruce and David from Newcastleon; Lulu from Lanercost, and Ben who was passing through.

Our instrumental music for the evening was provided by Frank Lee, with the Swedish tune *The Six Thieves* on diatonic accordion; Paul, with his own composition *Unnamed No 1* on mandolin; Bruce on guitar with the Irish air *Easter Snow* (the connection with numbers being that it is his 'Number one favourite'!); Mike Round with *Take Five*, played as a guitar instrumental.

With some of the material, the 'numbers' connection was clear from the first line. Thus, Steve Bowles started us off with the anti-war recitative *One, two, three, four, what are we fighting for?*; Phil followed on with *The Stoutest Man in the Forty-Two*; Eliza sang about *The Seven Wonders*; Ruth got us all singing lustily backwards from twelve in *Green Grow the rushes-oh*; Mike Leighton told us he was *Still rocking at 60*; Miriam recalled the aftermath of warfare in the haunting *Twa Corbies...and no prizes for guessing which number Mary had in mind when she recited Cyril the Centipede!*

In many of the songs, the numbers were incidental or tucked away among the verses, perhaps a date (*The Ballad of Martin Fontash*- Ian Brown); an age (*Joyce the Librarian*- Anne); part of a chorus (*I'll tell me Ma* – Alan Jefferson); a period of time (*Mothers, Daughters, Wives* – Chris). Or simple enumeration – two horses, six pretty maids in *The Outlandish Knight* (Lulu); four-and-twenty 'Hielanmen' in *Eppie Morrie* (Katy); twelve tubs versus one tub in *The Big Hewer and the Little Marra* (Terry). Steve Hubball found the biggest number, 17,000,000, (but it *wasn't* a competition!) in *Isle of Hope*, about the history of Ellis Island.

David gave us *The Cotton Lords of Preston*, arguing that it was appropriate to the numbers theme because 'it had a lot of verses', while Ben sang *You've got to hide your love away*.

The folk session next meets in **The Howard Arms on 19th August from 8.30pm** with the theme of 'Conflict' to mark the centenary of the outbreak of World War I. ALL WELCOME!

FOLK SESSION – Howard Arms, Brampton

Because this August marks the centenary of the outbreak of the First World War, the theme was ‘conflict’ when we met on 19th August in The Howard Arms. It gave us great pleasure to welcome newcomers Kevin, James, Liz and Jodie.

Whereas we are often short on purely instrumental music, on this occasion the session was enriched by *three* pipers, each playing a different type of pipes – Kevin on Northumbrian pipes, Mike Leighton on Uilleann pipes and James on Scottish small pipes – plus Bruce from Newcastleton playing skilful and delicate guitar instrumentals.

The ‘conflict’ theme covered a wide historical span, from 1,000 BC with *Goliath of Gath* (Mary) to the present day with *In the News* (Sam – on the Iraq war), via 14th Century border warfare (*Chevy Chase* on Northumbrian pipes by Kevin), 17th Century campaigns on the continent (*High Germanie* by Anne), 17th Century Scottish massacre (*Glencoe* – Alan Jefferson), the 18th Century *Young Trooper cut down in his Prime* (David) and the American Civil War (*Reunion Hill* – George).

But the main focus was on the first and second world wars. Chris remembered poignantly *Christmas 1915*; Steve Hubball sang of the Gallipoli campaign in Eric Bogle’s *The Band Played Waltzing Matilda*; Mike Leighton took us to *The Battle of the Somme* and *The Bloody Fields of Flanders*, played on the Uilleann pipes; Phil flew us home bravely on *A Wing and a Prayer*; Bruce treated us to a guitar medley of popular tunes from both wars, including *Lili Marlene* and *Tipperary*.

Not all conflict is military: Ruth and Katy sang about domestic conflict in, respectively, *A Stitch in Time* (Ruth) and *Johnny Sands*. We also heard about social conflict in *Nobody knows you when you’re down and out* (Alan Clark) and *You make your own luck* (Ian); inner conflict in *Crossroads* (Mike Round) and the battle of the sexes in the ballad *The Two Magicians* (Eliza).

Liz, Jodie and James had not had a chance to prepare ‘conflict’ material, and so cheered us up with (in Liz and Jodie’s case) *Country Roads* and in James’ case sets of tunes such as *Kate’s House* and *Elizabeth Kelly’s Delight*, played on Scottish small pipes.

We meet next on **Tuesday 16th September in The Howard Arms, Brampton from 8.30pm**. The theme – to counterbalance this month’s theme! – will be ‘cheerfulness/happiness’: cheerful tunes, cheerful sentiments, songs with happy endings...**ALL WELCOME!**

FOLK SESSION – Howard Arms, Brampton

The summer is clearly over, as we had a good turn-out but no longer resembled the cast of a Cecil B de Mille movie when we met in The Howard Arms on 16th September, celebrating cheerfulness/happiness in music. A particular welcome to newcomers Ed from Cockermouth and John visiting from Uttoxeter.

Our instrumentalists for the evening were Mike Leighton on Uilleann pipes, Frank Lee on diatonic accordion, and Ed, playing guitar with superb skill and lightness of touch. The instrumental pieces were cheerful in a lot of different languages: *The Humours of Ballylochlan*; *I'm married, I won't be a nun*, both played by Mike, and *Sidh Beag*, *Sidh Mor* by Ed are Gaelic airs. Frank played us the German baroque tune *Many Happinesses make much Joy* and the Swedish *Potato Waltz*. Ed ventured into Hebrew with *Shibboleth Basadeh*, 'a cheerful tune in a minor key'.

Steve Bowles went still further afield when he got us singing *Si Si Si*, a song of welcome from the Congo, as a round.

Several songs were love stories with *happy* endings (for a change!) such as Anne's 'generic broken token song'; Miriam's *A Penny Whistle* and Phil's version of *Johnny Todd* in which the sweetheart is faithful and waits for her sailor. Sam, charmingly, sang *Naomi*, about a couple continuing to love as they grow old together. Steve Hubball told of the happiest of meetings in *Bread and Fishes*, while Ian Brown sang songs of blessing and well-wishing in *May you never* and *Warm be the Sun*.

Ruth and John recommended a resilient philosophy of life in, respectively, *Hope the Hermit* and *When it comes to my turn*. Some songs simply celebrated enjoyment – of youth, song and a train ride (*Blackpool Belle* – Mary); of work (*The Carter* – Katy); of the outdoor life (*Manchester Rambler* – Steve Bowles and *The Happy Wanderer* – Mary); of being homeward bound (*Farewell and Adieu, you fair Spanish Ladies* – Phil).

We next meet on **21st October from 8.30pm in The Howard Arms, Brampton**. Our theme (the clocks go back!) will be 'time' – passing of time; past times; youth and age; seasons; dates etc. **ALL WELCOME!**

FOLK SESSION – Howard Arms, Brampton

The theme was 'time' (because the clocks go back this month) when we met on 21st October in The Howard Arms. It was a pleasure to see again Les and Di who made the long trek from Alston to be with us.

Our instrumentalists this month were Les and Di on guitar and fiddle; Frank Lee on accordion, and Ian Brown on guitar. Les and Di found such time-related tunes as *Quarter to Eight*, *My Grandfather's Clock* and *Midnight on the Water*. Frank pointed out that all tunes are time-related, and proceeded to play us *The Hostess's Daughter* and *The Rambling Comber* 'in 5/4 time'. Ian showed himself equally ingenious when he played a medley of *ragtime* tunes.

The theme inspired more poems than usual. Anne reflected, in Harry Graham's words, on the 'crime of being bright at breakfast time'. Mary read from Roald Dahl's *Red Riding Hood* (because it mentions weeks). In contrast to the ferocious humour of these two, Ruth gave us U A Fanthorpe's gentler and more serious *Half-past two*.

Several songs reflected, more or less wistfully, on the passage of time: *Circle Game* (Steph) and *Turnaround* (Ruth) both charted children's rapid growth; Phil sang *Half-past Living* about using precious time to love, give and enjoy; Steve Bowles wondered *Who knows where the time goes?* and Steve Hubball looked back with longing on a vanished past in *The Valley of Strathmore*. Alan Jefferson, on the other hand, was upbeat about the fact that *The Times they are a-changing*.

We also had various references to specific seasons or times: *Grey October clouds* (Steve Hubball); *Hallowe'en* (Katy); summer and winter in *The Foggy, Foggy Dew* (Mary); while Terry, in *Raglan Road*, managed to mention 'the dawning of the day', 'autumn day', 'November', 'the secret time' and 'break of day', all in one song.

We next meet on Tuesday, 18th November in The Howard Arms, Brampton. Our theme will be 'songs/tunes/poems that begin with the letter S' (titles or first lines). Will there be a stampede to get in first to sing *Spencer the Rover* or even *Shenandoah*?

FOLK SESSION – Howard Arms, Brampton

Sweetly the sun had sunk in the west, softly the stars slid up the sky....in brief, the theme was 'the letter S'! We met in the Howard Arms on 18th November and managed to find two and a half hours' worth of songs, tunes and poems with titles or first lines beginning with that letter. Congratulations to Julie for making her singing debut among us.

Our instrumentalists were Geoff on guitar and Frank Lee on diatonic accordion. Frank played us *St George's Polka* and what were probably the two oldest tunes that evening, *Stingo* and *Sansonette*, English and French tunes respectively from the late 16th Century. Geoff, on the contrary, took us up to the mid-20th Century with guitar instrumentals of *Somewhere over the Rainbow* and *Stardust*.

Quite a lot of place-names beginning with S have inspired songs: *Scarborough Fair* (Terry); (*The Valley of*) *Strathmore* (Steve Hubball); *Stanton Drew in the county of Somerset* (Anne); *Skye Boat Song* (Alan Jefferson); *Salonika* (Katy); (*Bound for*) *South Australia* (Dave). There were also songs about love, like Steph's *Something in Red* and Ian's *So long, Marianne* – or not quite love songs, such as Phil's *Star o' the Bar*. Ruth achieved the highest level of alliteration with *Sipping Cider through a Straw*.

Julie opted for *The Carnival is Over* (first line: 'Say goodbye, my own true lover). Mary sang an entertaining parody of *English Country Garden* (first line: 'Somehow the flowers never seem to grow'); Eliza gave us *Band of Shearers* (first line: 'Summer brings the heather bell').

And let us not forget the poems! Mary recited the comic *Spider King*, while Ruth read Walter de la Mare's *Silver*.

We meet next month on **16th December in the Howard Arms, Brampton from 8.30pm onwards**. The theme is 'something seasonal' (sounding vaguely as if we were still under the influence of the letter S, but it meaning winter/Christmas). ALL WELCOME!

FOLK SESSION – Howard Arms, Brampton

December's third Tuesday Folk Session at the Howard Arm's was a lively affair with a majority adherence to the theme of "something seasonal", which I guess was intended as a compromise between the Bah-Humbug brigade (including yours truly) and the full blown Christmas Festivity crew.

Mike set the ball rolling on his Uilleann Pipes with "*The Wintry (sic) Green Hills of Canada*", while Chris rang out the "*Sweet Christmas Bells*". Charley, visiting us from Lochmaben, recited "*Christmas in Australia*" with fiddle interludes. He also gave a lovely improvised fiddle accompaniment to Steve Hubball's "*Hills of Isle au Haut*". Anne's "*January Man*" took us through the whole year and back again.

Especially for the occasion, Ian Brown spent the week, and it clearly paid off, learning Alan Hull's "*Winter Song*". Frank played us "*Gaudete*", and later with Corrie on her N'blind Pipes, "*The Bonnie Pit Laddie*" and "*Small Coals and Little Money*". Andy sang "*Auld Lang Syne*" to the traditional (and much sweeter) setting of the tune. The Newcastletonites were present in force, David reciting "*The Cremation of Sam McGee*", Eliza "*The Cherry Tree Ballad*", Bruce was a bit premature with "*Easter Snow*", but rectified this later with the more Christmassy "*Sleigh Ride*". Eliza reminded us all of the "Fourth Tuesday" session in the Grapes in Newcastleton.

Alan Cook, from Croglin entertained us with a story of strange bears. That reminds me, I mustn't forget to mention another visitor, Frosty, who gave a solo turn and, after this initial performance, was accompanied by Mary. Frosty was preceded by Ruth with "*Call of the Advent*".

Terry sang Mike Harding's "*Christmas 1914*" with Steph following on with "*Silent Night*". Terry later sang Jez Lowe's "*It's a Champion Life*". Katy sang her Sri Lanken carol "*Doi Doi*". Oh nearly forgot, on the excuse that Fairy Godmothers are associated with the season to be merry, I performed "*The Dundee Cat*".

Next month we will be here on the **20th January in the Howard Arms, Brampton from 8.30pm onwards**. Being close to Burns' Night, the theme is 'Scottish'. ALL Singers, instrumentalists, listeners WELCOME!