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 Braidislee.* 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'.

FOLK SESSION – Howard Arms, Brampton

Our theme, when we met on 17th February, shortly after Valentine's Day, was of course 'Love'. A warm welcome to Bob and Marion, joining us for the first time, and congratulations to Linda on her first solo song!

This being folk, naturally we had lots of songs about lost love, faithless lovers and all-round gloom! *Peggy Gordon* (Phil) slighted her young man's love; the lonely girl calls out *Horo Johnny* to her inconstant lover (Jane); Paddy sketched a destructive love triangle in *Famous Blue Raincoat.* Outright tragedy pursued the young man drowned in *Annan Water* (Phil) as he rides to visit his true love; while the lover in *She Moved Through the Fair* (Sally) is haunted by his 'dead love'. Adrian squeezed a reference to unrequited love into his melodeon tune, *Jenny Lind*, 'because Hans Christian Andersen fell in love with the Swedish Nightingale'. In more general terms, Linda lamented the brevity of *Plaisir d'Amour* and Sally warned us that *Waltzing's for Dreamers (and Losers in Love).*

Folk song is aware of the dangers of loving unwisely: Ron's protagonist had to leave for America after ruining his life (*Love is Teasing*); we know that *Mack the Knife* (Charles) will be betrayed by his lights o' love, while Chris warned us of the dangers of *Flash Company.* We also heard of elopements – will they turn out well or ill? – in Gerda's *Ned of the Hill* and *Katie Cruel*; Sally's *I Know Where I'm Going* and John G's tune *The Runaway Bride.*

Then there are the poignancy of uncertainty and the bittersweetness of memory. Will the *Lady of Bendigo* (Ron) respond to the lover's plea? Will the sailor bidding *Farewell, Sweet, Lovely Nancy* (Chris) return safely to shore? The young man who showed a 'bonny young lassie' *The Road to Dundee* (Geoff P) is unlikely ever to see her again; the same is true of the man remembering *The Girl from the North Country* (Jane).

But love does not have to lead to disaster, even in folk music! John G on mouth organ exhorted us to *Cherish the Ladies*, then celebrated *The Pearl Wedding* and *The Bride's Favourite.* Bob uttered *My Thanks to You* for a shared life of memories and experiences; *The Sailor's Wife* (Katy) is giddy with delight at her husband's safe return; and Alan, tongue-in-cheek as always, sang *Cheapskate Birthday Blues (aka Three Little Words)* which he composed for his wife! The girl who loves *The Little Carpenter* (Gerda) refuses other proposals and remains faithful. *Sweet Anne of Hethersgill* (Geoff) loves, is courted and marries – as straightforward as anyone could wish - whereas John L's courtship gets off to a bumpy start but eventually succeeds (*Come, Write Me Down*).

Charles boasted that *Nobody Else Is Loved So Well by Isabel* and John L was delighted that *My Lady's a Wild-Flying Dove* and is 'mine, mine, mine'. The dancers in Alan's *Harvest Moon* are 'still in love'; Jane sees *La Vie en Rose* in her lover's arms; and Paddy sang *The Confidence Reel*, about falling in love later in life. On a lighter note, Adrian's rollicking music hall parody of *Rule Britannia* takes us from catastrophe (snatched by the press-gang) to happy ending - *Married to a Mermaid.*

And finally, let us pay tribute to the loves that are not romantic: a boat (*The Jeannie C* – Chris); alcohol (*Good Ale, Thou Art My Darling* – Adrian); and a brother (*Neil Gow's Lament for His Dead Brother* – John G).

We next meet on **17th March in The Howard Arms, Brampton at 8pm**, with the theme **'Trades and Professions'**. **ALL WELCOME!**

FOLK SESSION – Howard Arms, Brampton

The Brampton folk session met on 17th March with the theme of 'Trades and Professions'. A warm 'welcome back' to Charlie Chomse, returning after far too long an absence.

Let us start with the traditional folk-music-type trades: soldiers *Marching through Rochester* with Sally, and commemorated musically on melodeon by Adrian (*Duncan McGillivray*, who led the Ontario Pipe Band) and on harmonica by John G (*Colonel Fraser*); sailors catching *Tiny Fish for Japan* (Gerda) and keelmen *Carrying Coal* down the Tyne (Charlie). Weavers were well-represented – Phil celebrated the hand-weavers who made the *Music of the Loom*; Gerda described the hardships of factory weaving in *Poverty Knock*; and Richard recalled the amorous adventures of a weaver in the *Foggy, Foggy Dew.* Mining tragedies featured in Sally's *Ballad of Springhill* and Alan's *Rap 'Er To Bank.* Alan celebrated *Jolly Ploughboys*; Ron rejoiced in *The Song of the Plough* and, still in rural mode, described the satisfactions of hedging (*The Hedger's Lay*).

The toils and tribulations of labourers were described humorously in *The Sick Note* (John G) and with grim realism in *MacAlpine's Fusiliers* (Geoff P), while *Billycock Hat* (Charlie) outlined the hard work and limited pleasures of a navvy's life.

Equally traditional, but less often represented in song, are the trades of joiner (*If I Were a Carpenter* – Richard); factory hand (*William Brown* – Paddy); fairground showman (*Rawtenstall Annual Fair* – Adrian) and fishwife (*Caller Herrin'* – Katy).

Some of our contributors were ingenious, not to say downright creative. Who would have expected two songs about sewermen? And yet Phil told us *I'm Glad I'm Working Down Below* and Adrian sang the Sydney Carter song *Down Below.* Charles went for the creative touch with a mathematician (*Lobachevsky*) and *I Am the Very Model of a Folk Musicologist*. Other out-on-a-limb contributions included Paddy's *To Be a Pharmacist*; Anne's sad tale of *Joyce the Librarian*; and Geoff P's song about the Yorkshire painter *Peter Brook.* Anne found a cautionary tale about a policeman (*Speeding*) and John G a tune about *The New Policeman.*

Bob recalled that the date coincides with St Patrick's Day, and went for an Irish theme, with *When Irish Eyes Are Smiling* and *After All These Years.*

We next meet on **Tuesday, 21st April at 8pm in The Howard Arms, Brampton**. Our theme will be 'Rivers, Lakes and Seas' (named ones! Think 'Galway Bay' or 'Loch Lomond'). **ALL WELCOME!**

FOLK SESSION – Howard Arms, Brampton

We circled the globe in song and tune, story and rhyme, when we met on 21st April, following a theme of 'Rivers, Lakes and Seas'. To start with our instrumentalists: John G on harmonica took us to *Lough Gowna* and *The Shores of the Logan*, and celebrated the *Braw Lads o' Gala Water*; while Adrian on melodeon gave us the Morris tune, *The Banks of the Dee.*

We had some metaphorical seas: John L told us that 'the heart is like an ocean, mysterious and dark' (Dylan's *One More Cup of Coffee*) and Richard compared life to sailing on uncharted waters (Tom Paxton's *Outward Bound*). Ron suggested that *If Wishes Were Fishes* 'we would all cast nets in the sea'. Chris, with his story *Howler Monkey*, took us via the South Atlantic and up the Amazon in order to make a mischievous comparison with politics.

Some bodies of water remained generalised or implicit, or were even fictional! The hero of *Cindy, Oh Cindy* (Bob) sails the seas but cannot not forget his sweetheart; Linda makes her *Journeys Home* 'over seas'. The 'Lowland Sea' on which the *Golden Vanity* sailed (Chris) is not clearly defined in any atlas; and while the Atlantic is clearly meant in Sally's song *God Moves On the Water*, it is not actually mentioned. The underground waters that flooded the Diglake Colliery in 1895 (*Diglake Fields* – John G) never had a name. Charles stated frankly that the 'cool Shalimar' in which Flanders and Swann's *Hippopotamus Song* takes place is not, in fact, a river!

Moving on to named rivers, seas etc, we ranged the world, visiting the Nile (Jane's *Queen of Egypt*); Table Bay (*All In Search of You* – Phil); the Mississippi (*Old Man River* – Charles); the Magellan Straits (*Rounding the Horn* – Katy) and the Czech River Morava (*Okolo* – Jane). Chris and Richard both took us to the *Northwest Passage* – Chris in Stan Rogers' song of that name, and Richard in *Lady Franklin's Lament.* Between them, they also managed to squeeze in references to Baffin Bay, the Beaufort Sea, the Davis Strait and the Fraser River (but *it's not a competition,* chaps!) Geoff warned us, with grim humour, against ending up in *Botany Bay*, whereas in Ron and Linda's song (*The Fields of Athenry*) the same destination is a tragedy for the convicted man and his family.

Nearer to home, Geoff recited the light-hearted poem Southey wrote for his children describing *The Cataract of Lodore.* Adrian threatened to cross the Tamar and Severn and march on London with 'twenty thousand Cornishmen' (*The Song of the Western Men*); Ron advised the *Sweet Thames* to *Flow Softly*; Phil's *Norland Wind* swept north across the Firth of Forth and the Tay; John L bade farewell to the Mersey in *The Leaving of Liverpool*; Sally warned *Here's the Tender Coming* and urged the sailor husband to hide until the press-gang moves on to Druridge Bay; the English Channel is either a routeway for Roman invasion (Adrian's *The National Anthem of the Ancient Britons*) or the homebound destination of sailors (Ron's *Spanish Ladies*).

We next meet on **Tuesday, 19th May, at 8pm in The Howard Arms, Brampton**. The theme will be 'placenames' – dry ones, this time! Cities, towns, villages, even streets. ALL WELCOME!

FOLK SESSION – Howard Arms, Brampton

We were sorry to miss several of our regular contributors, when we met on 19th May to make music and merriment over the subject of 'Placenames', but we were delighted to see Kath and Geoff B, returning to us like migrating summer swallows.

Last month's review reminded all partakers in the session that *it's not a competition, chaps*! which (surprise!) seems to have acted as a stimulus! So, to give (dis)credit where (dis)credit is due: Phil did the circuit of 23 named towns in *A View from One-Night Stands*; John L found references to 18 place-names in *Sweet Thames, Flow Softly*; *A Dalesman's Litany* (Sally) specified 14 places one wouldn't like to live; Richard wandered *All Over Mendip*, taking in a town, nine villages and a range of hills; and the *D-Day Dodgers* (Sally) listed six Italian battlefields as they fought their way from Salerno to Rome.

In size, the places named ranged from streets and hamlets to entire countries. To start at the smaller end: we heard about destitution on *Bleecker Street* (Gary); about shenanigans on *Barrack Street* (John G); about Bethnal Street where *Rosemary's Sister* was killed in the Blitz (Gary); and about the homing pigeon, *The King of Rome*, that found its way back to Brook Street in Derby (Jane). Songs and tunes were dedicated to hamlets - *Bewcastle* (John L); *Coshieville* (Phil); *Snod's Edge* and *Summerhill* (tunes by John G on harmonica); and a tiny Hebridean island (*Eriskay Love Lilt* – Linda). Very specific indeed was Richard's *Arlington* -a song set in America's famous military cemetery.

Moving up to villages and towns, Adrian gave us *The Rigs of Marlow* and *Star of Wheatley* on melodeon; Linda uttered her lament from *The Fields of Athenry*; a young man falls in love at Oranmore with a girl in a *Galway Shawl* (Jane) and we were warned away from Seghill (*Blackleg Miner* – John G). We visited Brampton in Geoff B's poem *Hiking* and the graveyard at Bellingham in Chris's *Legend of the Long Pack.* Gary sang in praise of *The Bridge at Knaresborough Town*, while Adrian commemorated the *Threescore and Ten* fishermen of Grimsby who died in the gale of 1889.

And so on to larger settlements still: Chris complained *I Can't Find Brummagem*; John L took us on an eerie journey from Macclesfield to meet *The Wizard of Alderley Edge*; Kath and Geoff B complained of hunger and poverty in Hartlepool (*Sea Coal*); Katy praised *The Wonderful Derby Ram*; Chris went dancing in Manchester (*The Calico Printer's Clerk*), whereas Adrian's *Manchester Rambler* longed to get away from the same city!

And finally, there was Abroad. Ron's *Cousin Jack* considered emigration to New Brunswick or Australia; Kath and Geoff B marched us *Over the Hills and Far Away* to 'Flanders, Portugal and Spain'; Sally recommended *Donkey Riding* in Quebec; Ron's soldier sailed from Portsmouth to *The Malvinas*; Jane told of tragedy on the Tallahatchie Bridge (*Ode to Billie Joe*); and Phil's *Ballad of Clifford Lawther* saw the hero leave Hexham to fight and die in the Valley of Jarama in the Spanish Civil War.

We next meet on **Tuesday, 16th June at 8pm in The Howard Arms, Brampton.** The theme – a tricky one – is 'boundaries'. Walls; hedges; dykes; fences; ditches; borders between countries or counties; 'Marcher' lords – be creative! **ALL WELCOME!**

FOLK SESSION – Howard Arms, Brampton

Ingenuity and variety were the order of the day when we met on 16th June to sing, recite and make music to the theme of 'Boundaries'. It was a pleasure to welcome Steve back again.

Situated as we are, in northern Cumbria, it's not surprising that Hadrian's Wall popped up a few times: in poetry - *Hadrian's Ridge,* recited by Chris; Auden's *Roman Wall Blues* and Norman Nicholson's *The Wall*, both recited by Geoff P; and in song - Phil's paean in honour of the prehistoric *Black Dyke*, which brought in not only Hadrian's Wall, but also Offa's Dyke and the Great Wall of China. Charles 'thought big' with a wall built in Hell (*Why We Build the Wall*). We had emotional, moral and psychological walls in Richard's love song *Four Walls* and in Ron's *Walls, Fences, Borders, Gates.* On a more tangible level, John G played us *The Walls of Liscarrol* on mouth organ; while Phil was grateful to go *Stottin' Doon the Waal* after a night at the pub; and praised *The Tailor of the Dales* whose drystone walls criss-cross the Yorkshire landscape.

Other physical boundaries included *Swinging on a* Gate, played by John G; the 'hedges and ditches' crossed by the *Leaboy's Lassie* (Gerda); revolutionary barricades (*Where Are the Barricades?* – Geoff P); and the door between the shy lover and his sweetheart (*I Followed Her Into the West* – Richard). Kath, getting creative, found boundaries in crags and mountains *Where Ravens Feed*, and Chris gloried in 'spring hitting the Great Divide' (*The Night Rider's Lament*). Rivers are clear physical boundaries, sometimes because they separate lovers, as when Gerda demanded *Bring Me a Boat*, or when Charles lamented that *The Water Is Wide*; sometimes because they form a national border, such as the Solway in Steve's own song *White Mare of Solway Firth*; and the Sark and Tweed in *Parcel of Rogues* (Katy); sometimes just because they cause us to pause *On the River Bank* (John G on mouth organ).

Borders, whether international or internal, proved a popular variation. John L's *Girl From the North Country* refers to the weather 'on the Border line'; and the father in Anne's *Sleep, My Babe* is 'riding the Borderside'; Ron praised *The Rolling Hills of the Borders*, whereas Jane grieved over the order that sent *The Flowers of the Forest* over the Border to be slaughtered at Flodden. John G's narrator in the northern United States is homesick for the *Dixie Line*; American border control was the unlikely subject of the excellent *Isle of Hope* (Steve); and Kath and Geoff B argued that *This Land Is Your Land* implied 'a boundary all around the country'! Geoff B also stretched the idea with *The Man That I Am*, which takes the protagonist across borders and over the Equator.

We heard about unspecified and metaphorical boundaries: Gerda's looked forward to *When I Get to the Border*; Richard was sad to be *Standing At the Border*; Jane sang *Maria's Gone* because 'Maria probably went across a border' (of some kind); John complained of 'the line that divides me somewhere in my mind' as he walked the *Boulevard of Broken Dreams.*

Finally, Anne sang us out with the boundary that we all have to face when *Crossing the Bar.*

We next meet on **21st July at 8pm in the Howard Arms, Brampton**, Our theme will be 'Weather'. **ALL WELCOME!**

FOLK SESSION – Howard Arms, Brampton

It was lovely to see the room so packed last night, 21st July, with the highest turnout we have seen since Covid - twenty singers and instrumentalists.

The theme was 'weather'. Many contributors used it as a symbol: Alan complained of *Stormy Monday* and the *Stormy Weather* occasioned by the absence of his love. Richard, in more cheerful mood, sang in praise of his wife, whose maiden name was *Rainbow*. Ron's song used the familiar metaphor, *Too Close to the Wind*, to describe the fate of the Northamptonshire highway robbers.

Several people picked up the challenge to find songs about *nice* weather! Charles praised the skies at *Home on the Range,* and Richard's Irish blessing, *May the Road Rise to Meet You*, wished favourable wind, sun and rain on his friend. Katy welcomed the *South Wind* carrying messages to friends in Connaught, while Linda pleaded *Blow the Wind Southerly*. 'Bright Phoebe' and 'bright noontide' were praised, respectively, in Chris's *Thousands or More* and Charles' *The Ash Grove. Another Rain Has Fallen* (Gary) pointed out that rain is a blessing for the ploughman and sower, though not for the reaper; and Kath welcomed the snow and mists of lonely places *Where Ravens Feed.* Adrian looked forward to the Morris dancer's paradise *When Your Bells Have Turned Green* and 'the sun always shines when you dance Shepherd's Hey'.

We also had a category of mixed weather. Phil took us from 'the morn was fair' to 'tempests' as he ventured forth with *The Rose of Allendale*; Gerda experienced 'sunny summer blink', 'caller air', and 'haar' on *Baltic Street*; John G suffered fog and *West Virginia Rain*; and Sally took us through all the possibilities of the British climate with *The January Man.*

Weather at sea arose several times: Phil covered the subject comprehensively and humorously in *The Shipping Forecast.* Paddy sang of *The Wreck of the Edmund Fitzgerald*; Chris described how a schooner driven in a squall narrowly escaped being wrecked on *The Rocks of Baccalieu*; Gerda's ship 'never saw the coming storm' (*I Was an Oak Tree*); whereas Ron and Linda (playing cahone) defiantly proclaimed themselves *Ready for the Storm.* John L's ship left *Boston Harbour* in 'the devil of a gale'; and Jane argued that *Johnny's Gone to Hilo* implied that he had drowned in a storm. *Bold Riley* (John L) sails away from his sweetheart in wind and rain, and Jane lamented leaving home for 'the rain and the rolling sea' on *The Grey Funnel Line.*

Grim weather on land included the tragicomic fate of *The Frozen Logger* (Geoff P); the 'cruel weather' in Hartlepool (*Sea Coal* – Geoff B); the snow, wind and rain that drives across *Bewcastle Fell* (Geoff P); the 'bitter snows' that hide the seed which becomes *The Rose* (Kath) and the 'sleet and snow' through which labourers trudge while *Rolling Home* (Geoff B). Sally grieved over unfaithful love as the rain softly fell in *The Oggie Man,* and Gary heard 'the drizzle of the rain' while missing home in *Cathy's Song,* while Anne suggested that she and her love *Steal Away* from the rain and the cold of city streets. Adrian robustly condemned the clouds, rain and everything else on *Bloody Orkney*! Paddy reminded us that catastrophic weather does not need to be wet or cold: his Canadian song *Fire* told the horrific story of a lightning strike followed by wildfire in a hot, dry summer. John G on mouth organ played *A Blast of Wind* and asked *Will You Come Out of the Wind?*

We next meet on **18th August at 8pm in The Howard Arms, Brampton**, The theme will be 'Fish/Sea Creatures'. **ALL WELCOME!**

FOLK SESSION – Howard Arms, Brampton

Did we say we were packed at last month's folk session, with 20 people? Last night (18th August) we had 24 contributors, the most since the Howard Arms opened its doors to us in 2011, plus some visitors who came to listen! A warm welcome to Gill and Polly, joining us from Hartlepool, and to Ben, and welcome back to Jo.

The theme was 'Fish/Sea Creatures' (perhaps we should mention that we had 'a whale of a time'?)

To start with the items that were definitely pushing their luck: Richard sneaked humpback whales improbably aboard the ark (*The Unicorn* by *Shel* Silverstein – oh groan! Richard). Kath and Geoff B sang *There's a Pla(i)ce for Us* (groan again) as a duet. We're not quite convinced, Paddy, that polar bears are sea creatures, though we enjoyed *Have You Got Any News of the Iceberg?* Polly's poem *Ottava Rhyme Concerto*, comparing the ocean to a musical composition, was ingenious rather than devious!

Is fish meant to be aphrodisiac? One would imagine so from *The Oyster Girl* (Charles) and *Fresh Fish* (Chris), both loaded with *double entendres*! Humorous, but perfectly respectable, were Anne's song about an angling competition, *Big Jim*; Phil's parody *Shelves of Herring*; and the dark comedy of Gary's *'Enery My Son.*

Fantastic sea creatures included a kelpie in Steve's own song, *The White Mare of Solway Firth*; a mermaid in Adrian's music-hall tall tale, *The Man at the Nore*; a talking fish in Chris's story *The Greedy Wife*; and a siren (by implication, at least) in Jo's *Sleepless Sailor.* Not fantastic, but certainly less common, were catfish and crocodiles (Alan's own song, *Biggest Little River*) and cuttlefish (Jo – *Wrecking Days*).

The sea provides us with food, and we remember it in music. John G played us *Jenny Picking Cockles* on mouth organ, and Kath sang *Cockles and Mussels.* Sally wished the bride 'plenty herring, plenty meal' at *Mhairi's Wedding*; Gill described *The Fishwives' Complaint* when the Newcastle fish market was moved from Sandhill; Jane remembered the Cornish 'jowster' *Dolly Pentreath*; and Katy hoped for 'muckle luck' to maintain the 'mackerel and the creel' (*The Boatie Rows*). Ben, however, protested *Fish Are My Friends*!

There were several songs about over-fishing and environmental degradation: *Tiny Fish for Japan* (Gerda); *Valley of the Tees* (Ron); *No More Fish, No Fishermen* (Linda). The sea is also a dangerous place to earn a living, as we heard from Jane (*Listing in the Gale*); from John L (the tragedy of *Davey Lowsten*); and from Sam Millington's *Harvest of the Sea*, sung by Phil, which commemorates the sinking of the Kirkcudbright dredger, the 'Solway Harvester'.

And we mustn't forget whales: whale hunting in Paddy's *Little Pot Stove* and John L's *Wellerman*; a lullaby for a whale in Linda's *Baby Beluga* and an *Ode to Big Blue* (Gary); and Jonah's whale in Gerda's *It Ain't Necessarily So*.

We next meet on **15th September at 8pm in The Howard Arms, Brampton**. The theme is 'Means of Communication' – letters, messengers, serenades, carrier pigeons, telephone, semaphore… Someone has pointed out that roads, railways and rivers are 'means of communication' within a country! **ALL WELCOME!**

FOLK SESSION – Howard Arms, Brampton

We were given a quirky theme for September's session, ('Means of Communication'), and tackled it in some original and ingenious ways. Welcome to Sandy from Kinross, joining us while visiting north Cumbria.

Written communication was well-represented, for example the newspaper announcement of the marriage of *The Calico Printer's Clerk* (Chris). Charles, reciting Auden's *Night Mail*, and Adrian, singing *Postman's Knock*, both praised the work of the Post Office; and the steamer *Ellan Vannin* (Geoff and Kath) was transporting the mail when it sank in 1909 with total loss of life. *Boots of Spanish Leather* (Jane and John L) included a letter from an inconstant lover; Adrian's *The Sick Note* described the misfortunes of a building site labourer; the sailor sweetheart writes a letter to *Pretty Nancy from Yarmouth* (John L); and the distraught parents, discovering their daughter's note, lament that *She's Leaving Home* (Geoff and Kath).

Most of us communicate primarily through speech, such as the 'young girl calling' in *The Fields of Athenry* (Linda) and Ron's soldier inviting his sweetheart, *Will Ye Go to Flanders?* Sandy gave us a conversation about *The Road and the Miles to Dundee*, while Sally's recruiting sergeant persuaded young men to enlist as he went *Marching Through Rochester.* Orders can be given verbally, so the soldier in Steve's *Blue Cockade* is instructed by his captain to march away, while the travellers in Sally's *Moving-On Song* are told to 'get along, move along' by the police, the farmer and the local people. Anne sang the tall tale of *The Talking Dog*, while Gerda warned us of the consequences *If Walls Could Talk.* Steve's 'dead love' spoke to him in a dream (*She Moved Through the Fair*). Also supernatural, but without the eerie atmosphere, was Chris's story of *How Butterflies Taught Children to Walk*, which involved a discussion between Nanabush and the Great Spirit.

Phil brought us into the 21st Century with a mobile phone in *The Rime of the Modern Frequent Flyer* and the whole gamut of Twitter, Facebook, Flickr, Instagram etc in the late Sam Millington's *iLove.* Landline telephones featured in John G's tune on harmonica, *The Telephonist*; and the father trying to contact his daughter in *Memphis, Tennessee* (Charles).

Some ingenious takes on the theme included an array of signs and signals. *Katy Cruel* (Gerda) 'dyed her petticoats red'; John G's *Thousands Are Sailing* communicated by handkerchief as they waved goodbye to Ireland; Ron and Linda's pirates instructed their fellows to *Hoist the Colours*; the *Horn of the Hunter* (Anne) rallied huntsmen and hounds; and the *Laird of Ochiltree* (Katy) announced his escape with two pistol shots.

And finally, to wrap up some original approaches…Jane lamented that music was offered *For Free* but did not move the passers-by; Gerda communed with nature (*Lay My Heart*) and Phil with the coalface (*Jowl, Jowl and Listen*); the *Bells of Tipperary* and *Shandon Bells* (John G on harmonica) send messages as bells do – warnings, celebrations and calls to prayer.

We next meet on **20th October at 8pm in The Howard Arms, Brampton**. The theme will be 'Food' (but not drink). **ALL WELCOME!**

FOLK SESSION – Howard Arms, Brampton

The autumn evenings are drawing in, the 20th was a dark and drizzly night, so thank you to the eighteen people who joined us to sing and make music to the theme of 'Food'.

Under the heading of raw materials (or 'food in its natural state'), we'll start with herbs: *Sweet Thyme* (with a mention of parsley and rosemary) by Ron; parsley, sage, rosemary and thyme at *Scarborough Fair* (Linda); *Martha the Watercress Girl* (Geoff and Kath); and *Wild Mountain Thyme* (Kath). Fish and meat were well-represented, (sorry, vegetarians!) – a 'fishy on a little dishy' in Chris's *Dance to Your Daddy*; the seven little pigs who were turned into bacon (*Susannah's a Funicle Man* – Adrian); the wild ducks trapped and roasted by Nanabush in Chris's story; and the grey goose caught and eaten by *Daddy Fox* (Kath and Geoff). Grain (surprisingly?) didn't get as many mentions, but Sally praised the *Ripe and Bearded Barley* and John G on mouth organ played the reel, *Field of Oats.* Ron's *Jolly Farmer* is almost entirely self-sufficient, from meat to fruit; while John L found not only *Peppers and Tomatoes* but beans, potatoes, cabbages and onions in Ralph McTell's haunting song. Other culinary odds and ends included symbolic honeycomb (*Sally Free and Easy* – Anne); and even more symbolic nuts (*The Nutting Girl* – John L).

Prepared foods in a wide variety whetted our appetites, with Charles' box of chocolates (*Everybody Knows*) and Phil's parody *Shelves of Herring.* Sally invited us to 'cakes in the oven and cheese on the shelf' (*When I Was Single*); and Adrian and Phil produced a fine array of *The Cheeses of Cheshire* and *The Hard Cheese of Old England*. Sweet flavourings were not forgotten, with *Coulter's Candy* (Linda) and *Emma's Liquorice Boats* (John G on mouth organ). Sometimes it became a little surreal, with the jelly-roll in Jane's *Some Old Salty* and the modern 'take' on *Aiken Drum* and his edible wardrobe (Charles). On a minatory note, *Some Little Bug* (Katy) warned of what happens when food is imperfectly prepared!

Hospitality and shared meals featured from the outset, when Richard told us *If I'd Known You Were Coming, I'd Have Baked a Cake*; Ron and Linda looked forward to partying on the bayou with *Jambalaya*; while Geoff, in more homely fashion, rejoiced in a week of family meals (*Today's Monday*). Anne's poem, on the other hand, described how *Being Bright At Breakfast Time* led to the professional downfall of a bishop! The timid lover in Richard's *I Followed Her Into the West* finds his beloved 'standing there with food for me', and the narrator of *Bread and Fishes* is invited to share the meal of the Holy Family. Steve's *Missing You Now* mentions 'going out for lunch' and Gerda's *Walking Boots Song* suggests stopping to eat when the walkers are hungry. Alan found himself 'living on hot dogs and meatballs' in the late Sam Millington's *Lost in IKEA.*

Gerda and John G both described the role of food in poverty and struggle, Gerda as a mother eking out inadequate supplies for a family of five in *The Old Cook Pot*; and John G reflecting with fury on the miserable provision of *Soup* for the unemployed. Jane's *Banquet* comments on the disparity of provision in society - some are well-fed, some have nothing.

We next meet on **Tuesday 17th November at 8pm in the Howard Arms, Brampton**. Our theme will be 'Parts of the Body' (rosy cheeks, broken hearts and taking people by the hand, *not* just what you are thinking!) **ALL WELCOME!**