

FOLK SESSION – LOW ROW

We had an excellent turn-out of performers at the folk evening in The Railway Inn, Low Row, on 15th July. By popular vote at the previous session we had decided to have an American theme.

We had the pleasure of seeing Cliff back with us, and he opened the evening with 'The Eyrie Canal', gave us an instrumental medley including *Freight Train*, *Camptown Races* and *Swanee River*, and sang *Bringing in the Sheaves* by special request.

It was interesting to see what a variety of songs and tunes were introduced under the American heading. Among the well-known songs there was a wide range of mood and topic: militantly *Marching through Georgia* with Frank Balme, accompanying himself on bodhran; Ruth was nostalgic for *My Old Kentucky Home*, Mary for her *Home on the Range* and Hilary for *Shenandoah*; Steve belted out the longshore shanty *The Hogseye Man*; Katy pleaded *Hard Times, come again no more*; Wendy complained about the fickleness of *The Maid of Amsterdam*. All excellent chorus songs, in which everyone joined with a will.

Denis and Eileen, on recorder and concertina, played *Log Cabin* and *Turkey in the Straw* together. Eileen played *Red River Valley* while Denis, Frank and Cliff joined in; Denis played *O' Carolan's Farewell*.

A number of singers had dug deep and produced some less well-known American songs. Eric sang about an escape from *The Sioux Indians*; Frank the gory *Wreck of the Old 97* (about a train crash); Ruth the Shaker song *How can I keep from singing?*

We were very pleased to welcome two new singers, Charlie and Vi. Charlie played guitar and sang *Jamie Foyers*, a modern variant on the brave young hero leaving his sweetheart and dying in the wars (Spanish Civil War, in this case) and Vi gave us the rare pleasure of hearing a ballad, *Mary Hamilton*, sung beautifully and with great feeling.

Our next folk evening is in The Railway Inn on Tuesday 19th August from 8.30pm onwards. The theme will be 'Partings and Reunions'.

ALL WELCOME!

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August is always a chancy month for folk music meetings, with holidays taking their toll of both regular and occasional attenders, and this month's folk session on 19th August was, alas, no exception. (The fact that it was an evening of deluge, with flood warnings on some of the roads, may not have helped either). We had only three regular performers: Frank Balme, Ruth, and Katy. Luckily for both volume and ambiance, we were joined four visitors from the north-east: Hilary, Andrea, Ian and Peter, who joined in heartily with the singing and prompted the songs that they would like to hear. With their help, we kept the music going for the whole evening.

The theme of the evening was 'Partings and Reunions'. Quite a lot of the songs involved soldiers and sailors. Frank, playing bodhran, was in very seafaring mode: he led us off with *The Banks of Newfoundland*, followed at intervals by *Bound for the Rio Grande*, *Bobby Shaftoe* and *Leaving of Liverpool*. Katy inclined to the military with *The Bonnie Wee Lassie's Answer*, *Bowermadden* and *The Highland Division's Farewell to Sicily*. Ruth expanded the theme with songs of lost love (*My Bonnie lies over the Ocean*, *Waters of Tyne*) and of leaving or missing home (*The Oak and the Ash*, *Farewell Manchester*).

In compliment to our visitors, we had a stab at various north-eastern songs, such as *The Lambton Worm*, *Keep your Feet still*, *Geordie Hinny* and *Dolly*.

Ruth, with an eye on the weather, told us the story of *Why the flood came* and recited *Summer of 2004* (which was evidently just as wet as Summer of 2008).

Next month's folk evening will be at The Railway Inn, Low Row, starting at 8.30pm, on Tuesday 16th September. There is no theme – bring whatever tunes, songs etc you feel like sharing. ALL WELCOME!

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The folk session at The Railway Inn met on 16th September with an ‘open’ theme – ie any song, tune, poem or story as long as it is loosely ‘in the traditional idiom’- so, not surprisingly, we ranged widely in mood and topics. We had the pleasure of seeing Alison back among us with her guitar, and Frank Balme with his bodhran. We also had one of the widest age ranges of performers we have yet had, from 12 years old to 89!

We heard songs in praise of the landscape and our right to enjoy it, in *For the Strength of the Hills* (Ruth); *The Manchester Rambler* (Frank); *But it's Mine* (Ruth again). Alison gave us the all-join-in sea shanty *John Kanaka-naka*, while Frank sang the seafaring ballad *The Banks of Newfoundland*. Katy commemorated border warfare in the stirring *Lock the Door, Lariston*, which Alison capped with the haunting *Border Widow's Lament*.

Of course there were love songs: the beloved snatched by the press gang (*All things are quite silent*); unrequited love (*Come away death*, sung by our youngest performer, Miriam); faithful affection (*Believe me, if all these endearing young charms*, by our oldest singer, Matt); betrayal and desertion (*A Blacksmith courted me*).

We also had some quite unusual songs that defy easy pigeonholing– *Rusting A4*, a tongue-in-cheek lament for a steam train, and *The Great Selkie of Sule Skerry*, an Orkney ballad.

Our next gathering is on 21st October at the Railway Inn, Low Row, from 8.30 onwards. We took a vote on the theme, and decided on harvest/farming/country life as suitable for the season. There was also a minority vote (the 12-year-old vote!) clamouring for ‘ghosts’, so if anyone wishes to sing *The Unquiet Grave* or *The Wife of Usher's Well* instead of *The Barley Mow*, he/she is welcome to do so!

ALL WELCOME!

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There was a good turn-out on 21st October for the monthly folk session at the Railway Inn. Our instrumentalists that evening were Eileen on concertina, Denis on recorder, Alison on guitar and Frank on bodhran. We also had a several visitors who had come to listen and maybe join in a chorus or two – always welcome, and we hope they'll come back and join in some more.

We had agreed on a theme of harvest/farming/country life as suitable for October. Some of us gave it fairly straight treatment, while others were decidedly creative! (And some just sang or played whatever they felt like playing). Among the first category we had some old favourites with good choruses, such as *One Man went to mow* (Ruth); *To be a Farmer's Boy* (Frank), *Broom of the Cowdenknowes* (Hilary), *Oats and Beans and Barley Grow* (Alison). Steve sang *The Shearing's no for you* and Katy the broad Aberdeenshire *A Pair o' Nicky Tams*. Eileen played *Corn Rigs* and Denis *Harvest Home*.

We also heard more general songs of country life, or of longing for it: *Mountains of Mourne*; *Manchester Rambler*; *Danny Boy*; *Gossip Joan*. Embroidering a little on the central theme, Frank at his nonsensical best sang *Susannah's a Funicle Man*, involving a litter of pigs, complete with daft chorus and grunting noises. Alison announced that she would sing 'about vegetables', namely

*There lived a lady in the North
You could scarcely find her **marrow** (ouch).*

But she then had to sing something else because we giggled too much to be in the proper frame of mind for a tragic ballad.

And then Denis and Eileen played *Bonaparte Crossing the Rhine*, *Madame Bonaparte* and *The Downfall of Paris*. It was pointed out that that last tune was known in the south as *The Downfall of Pears*, which brought us back to farming...sort of!

Our next folk evening will be on 18th November, from 8.30pm, in The Railway Inn. The theme will be remembrance, war and peace. ALL WELCOME!

FOLK SESSION – LOW ROW

We met on 18th November with a theme of ‘War, Peace, Remembrance’. The music spanned five centuries of warfare and every mood from protest songs of the sixties to swaggering marching songs. We also heard a monologue, a poem and a story about the sinking of HMS Hood in the Second World War.

Denis on recorder and harmonica and Eileen on concertina kept the instrumental part of the evening going, with tunes such as *The Merry Blacksmith*, *La Russe*, *Soldier’s Joy* and *Log Cabin*. Eileen also sang – a first for her in public – *Last Night I had the Strangest Dream*. Alison, accompanying herself on guitar, focussed on the private romances and tragedies that follow the scarlet coat or the blue jacket – *All things are quite silent* (the press gang); *Logan’s Braes*; *Sweet Polly Oliver*. Frank, drumming in martial manner on the bodran, toured the British Isles with *Men of Harlech*, *Flower of Scotland* and *The Minstrel Boy*. Tom, who is normally very reticent about performing in public, joined in the vocals of *Men of Harlech* – we hope to hear more of him. Mary concentrated on anti-war songs such as the grim *The Sun is Burning* and Dylan’s satirical *God on our Side*. A new performer, Isabella, sang *D-Day Dodgers*. Katy took us from Flodden (*Flowers of the Forest*) via the Wars of the Spanish Succession (*British Grenadiers*) to the Crimean War (*Cardigan*).

Ruth cheered us up with the monologue *Sam, Sam, pick up thee musket* and that classic song of military duplicity *Soldier, Soldier, won’t you marry me?* Miriam sang the gory playground ditty *He jumped without a parachute from 40,000 feet* and, wandering from the theme, *When you believe* and *O Mistress Mine*.

We next meet on 16th December in The Railway Inn, Low Row, from 8.30pm. Brush up your carols and wassailing songs! All Welcome!

Please note: Thanks to Alison we now have a website – www.laverocks.co.uk/folkclub

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The folk session met in The Railway Inn on 16th December. Being December, we circled around the theme of carols, winter and wassails, but Steve (who started us off) likes mining songs and managed to work one into the evening! He sang *The Gresford Disaster* as a memorial to a pit tragedy that happened in December.

We also covered a wide variety of Christmas songs and carols, some bouncy and celebratory, such as *Deck the halls* and *The Season of Holly and Ivy*, some beautiful and serious, such as *This is the truth sent from above* (Alison) and *Two Thousand Years Ago* (Mary). We also found out what a variety of wassailing songs exist: Denis on harmonica and Eileen on concertina led us in the *Somerset Wassail*, Frank in the *Gloucestershire Wassail*, Hilary in *Here we come a-wassailing* and Steve in the *Gower Wassail* (and yes, each one has different words and a different tune!) Denis and Eileen (now on recorder and concertina) also played the old Christmas tunes *Quem Pastores* and *In Dulci Jubilo*.

Well-known carols give excellent opportunities for hearty singing along, of course, and at Pat's suggestion, we all joined in *Silent Night*, *Oh come, all ye faithful* and *Oh little town of Bethlehem*. Frank sang *While Shepherds watched* (to the tune of *On Ilkley Moor ba'at hat*), Alison *The Holly and the Ivy* and Ruth *Ding dong, merrily on high*.

We also had the great pleasure of seeing Geoff again, who brought his guitar and sang *Dark the Night (The Minstrel's song)*; *A new season's love* and *Fare thee well, cold winter*. We hope to see and hear more of him.

January's folk session meets on the Tuesday 20th from 8.30pm onwards in The Railway Inn. The theme for the evening will be mainly Scottish – well, Burns night is only a few days later. Come along to sing, play or recite.