

BRAMPTON FOLK SESSION

As the Howard Arms was temporarily closed for refurbishment, we met in St Martin's Cottage on 16th January – many thanks to Sally and Adrian Jones, who negotiated the use of the alternative venue for us! Owing to snow/illness/regulars being away, we were lower on numbers than usual, but we still had a cheerful evening of songs, tunes and recitation on the theme of 'dates'.

Some dates were very precise indeed: Phil took us to shenanigans at the *Blaydon Races* on 9th June 1862, and Sally Jones lamented the sinking of the *Ellan Vannin* on 3rd December 1909. Others were content with a year or a day of the month. Thus, *Barrett's Privateers* (Gerda) put to sea on their disastrous voyage in 1778 while Richard's wickedly funny parody *Morecambe – the Last Resort* 'celebrated' a boarding-house holiday in 1959. On a sombre note, *The Springhill Mining Disaster* (Sally Jones) killed 75 miners in 1958.

Sally Hardaker on flute and whistle found an impressive array of tunes with 'date' titles: *The 29th of May* (a Playford tune now used for the hymn *All Things Bright and Beautiful*); *The First of April* and *The First of October*. Gerda set off to meet her love at *Brig Fair* on 5th August; Adrian introduced two sea battles, one on 24th March involving *The Turkish Man of War* and one that brought about *The Death of Nelson* on 21st October. The sinking of the Titanic was commemorated twice, once with a specific mention of the date, 14th April, (*God Moves on the Water* – Sally Jones) and once without: (*Titanic, Fare Thee Well* – Gerda). Phil's own song, *The Ballad of Clifford Lawther*, starts on 1st January in a bus station in Hexham and ends in the bloodbath of Jarama Valley (February 1937).

Some songs brought in dates by implication: Richard's ballad, *Edom of Gordon*, mentions Martinmas (11th November, if anyone is interested!), as does Phil's *Jolly Waggoners*. Adrian, on melodeon, played us the tune *The Valentine*. Mick, visiting us from Lincoln, sang *The Bigger Picture*, 'which has a fiftieth birthday in it' and Sally Hardaker on whistle had a similar idea when she played *Happy Birthday!*

Let us not forget alternative interpretations of 'date': it can mean 'tryst/rendezvous'. Mick used it in that sense when he regretted 'never having made that date' (*Dandelion Clocks and Tumbleweed*), while Katy warned of the perils of courting by night in *Kissing in the Dark*.

We next meet, **back in The Howard Arms, on 20th February at 8pm.** The theme – a nice, straightforward one this time! – will be 'love', in honour of St Valentine's Day. Requested or unrequested, tragic ending or happy, licit or illicit – up to you! **ALL WELCOME!**

FOLK SESSION – Howard Arms, Brampton

It was Valentine's Day last week, so it was appropriate to have a session with the theme of 'Love', a topic that is as popular in folk music as in every other genre.

Not all the songs were about romance. Adrian proclaimed *Old Ale, Thou Art My Darling*; Jane's *Sad the Climbing* expressed love of place (Eigg); Chris loved and grieved for a shipwrecked boat, the *Jeannie C*; Alan's *Teach Your Children Well* is about love between parents and children; the *Quiet Joys of Brotherhood* where 'love is lord of all' (Jane) praises the natural world and laments our disconnection from it.

But moving on to romantic love, let's start with the not-too-serious treatments. Phil's *Star of the Bar* was 'coarse, heartless and not that bonny' and he recommended song and drink as a better option! *The Nutting Girl*, as Adrian pointed out, featured plenty of lust rather than love, and Sally's *Johnny be Fair* told a tale of a girl whose father has – ahem - sowed his wild oats altogether too effectively. John's hero (*Awake, Awake*) calls to the girl under her window at daybreak, but flees ignominiously when her father shows up. Chris's music hall song about a young man jilted for a *Calico Printer's Clerk* was bouncy and cheerful, and Gerda's *Miss Otis Regrets* is a dark comedy about a *crime passionnel*.

Love and sorrow go hand-in-hand, as was made clear in so many songs. The ballad *Matty Groves* (Ros) features adultery, jealousy and murder; *William Taylor's* sweetheart (Chris) shoots him for his faithlessness, but (more fortunate than *Miss Otis!*) she is rewarded by being made commander of a ship. *The Earl of March's Daughter* (Phil) dies of love and grief; *She Moved Through the Fair* (Steve) eerily laments the death of the betrothed girl. *We Didn't Know* (Alan) regrets losing the beloved through shyness and inaction. The suffering caused by inconstancy was a theme that found its way into Gary's *Go Your Way, My Love*, Sally's *Waltzing's for Dreamers*, and Phil's *Peggy Gordon*. Ros's *Rocks in the Ocean* more subtly indicated how coldness can alienate love; while Gary's *Poor Man's Labour*, more sombre still, starts with love and marriage and ends in hatred. *The Collier Laddie's Wife* (Liz), is barely any happier, with a life of unremitting and unrecognised toil.

But it wasn't all tragedy! Gerda sang the lovely declaration *The Dimming of the Day*; John expressed Dylan's longing for his true love, *Tomorrow is a Long Time* and Liz gave us Burns' famous love lyric *My Love is Like a Red, Red Rose*. *Harvest Moon* (Alan) vows 'I'm still in love with you'. The hero of *Willy's Lady* (Gary) goes to great lengths to save his wife from his witch-mother. Jane's heroine in *Canadee-i-o* dons sailor's clothing to follow her love to sea – though she does, slightly unexpectedly, then marry the ship's captain instead! Sailors in *Blue Water* (Gerda) and *Adieu, Sweet Lovely Nancy* (Chris) both promise to return to their sweethearts on land, and the girl in *Logie o' Buchan* (Katy) is constant to her poor lover and rejects a rich suitor. Steve's own song, *Will You Let Me Be the One?* offers love and protection, while Adrian on melodeon invited us to *Haste to the Wedding* and Sally got us singing along to *The Lewis Bridal Song*.

We next meet up on **19th March at 8pm in The Howard Arms, Brampton**. The theme will be 'Colours'.
ALL WELCOME!

FOLK SESSION – Howard Arms, Brampton

Owing to a combination of health and holidays, we were lower than usual in numbers when we met on 19th March, but we all dug deep into our musical repertoires and sang and told stories through the whole evening.

The theme was 'Colours', a good, wide-ranging sort of subject for a folk evening. In some contributions, the colour was evident in the name: Ros sang Donovan's song simply entitled *Colours*, which mentioned yellow (hair), blue (sky) and green (corn). Gerda warned off an importunate swain with a *Silver Dagger*; Chris took us sailing on *The Golden Vanity*; Liz told of the dangers awaiting the *Blackleg Miner*; Steve yearned to be home and no longer on board *The Grey Funnel Line*; Phil asserted that although *Red is the Rose*, his love was fairer still; and Katy longed for springtime, the *Yellow on the Broom* and the freedom of the roads. Liz commemorated *The Golden Locks of Anna* (one of Burns' lights o' love) and Ros tested our memories with the ancient counting song *Green Grow the Rushes-oh*.

Then there are titles that sound like colours but aren't really: a surname in *Shallow Brown* (Gerda); a placename or description in *Fiddler's Green* (Phil), *Scarlet Town* (Gerda) and *Polwarth on the Green*; not forgetting a musical genre as in *Big Knicker Blues* (Phil).

There were plenty of colours tucked into the text of a song or story. Chris had fun with colour detail in his story of *How Horses Came into the World* – green fields, blue sky, white clouds, and the animals themselves, roan, brown and black 'with tossing heads'. *Gentle Annie* (Steve) is a 'little black-eyed girl'. The maiden in *Flowers in the Valley* (Ros) is courted by three knights wearing, respectively, red, green and yellow. Mysterious but appetising references to a golden crust and black coffee recur in *Sinkin' Soon* (Gerda). Steve grieves for 'the glen of the golden and the green' (*Valley of Strathmore*); Phoebe (the sun) has 'red rosy cheeks' in *Thousands or More* (Chris) and Phil's extraordinary insect interlocutor has pupils of 'purple or magenta' (*The Reel in the Flickering Light*).

We did unusually well for ballads, also with fleeting references to colour – *Barbary Allen* (Chris) takes place at a time of 'green buds'; *Geordie* (also Chris) is to be hanged in chains of gold; *The Devil's Nine Questions* (Liz) asks 'what is whiter than milk?'

We next meet in **The Howard Arms, Brampton on 16th April at 8pm**. The theme will be 'Crime and Punishment', so time to practise all those songs about Jacobite risings, highway robbery and poaching! **ALL WELCOME!**

FOLK SESSION – Howard Arms, Brampton

The Brampton folk session met on 16th April in the Howard Arms. A warm welcome to Eric, joining us for the first time.

Our theme was 'Crime and Punishment', so the body count mounted steadily through the evening. We had plenty of murders and executions: infanticide reared its head in the *Weila Wail* (Anne) and in Chris's story of the wicked giant who ate children (and was transformed into *The First Midge*, thus still eating human beings to this day!) Eric, showing the proper devious approach, suggested that *As Tears Go By* fitted the theme because it *may* be about murdered children.

Women were victims rather frequently: *Tom Dooley* (Ros) is to be executed for the murder of Laura Foster; *Little Sadie's* killer is sentenced to 41 years in gaol (Eric); *Bonnie Susie Cleland* (Phil) was 'burned in Dundee' for loving an Englishman. One moral to be taken away from the evening's entertainment was 'Never shoot a talking bird, it may be your shape-shifting sweetheart', be it the raven in *Crazy Man Michael* (Ros) or the quail in *Bela Calha* (Katy). On the other hand, *William Taylor's* fiancée took terminal revenge for being jilted (Chris) and Eric's *Fire on the Mountain* mentions the 'men shot down' in the gold rush.

Not all crimes involved murder: Adrian on melodeon played *Smash the Windows*; *Long Meg and her Daughters* (Anne) are turned to stone for witchcraft; Liz celebrated the exploits of the *Lincolnshire Poacher*; Chris worked deception, 'murder of ducks' and theft into his story of *Nanabush and the Roast Duck Dinner*; Anne warned against *Disobedience* (by parents!) in AA Milne's poem. Liz's highwayman bids us *Adieu, Adieu* as he faces execution; whereas Adrian's highway robber (*Whisky in the Jar*) is sanguine about escaping custody. Chris and Adrian each gave us a different version of *Three Jolly Rogues of Lynn*, all of whom stole from their customers and came to unpleasant ends.

'Punishments' included transportation – to Australia in Phil's *Black and Bitter Night* and Liz's *Jim Jones*, and to Virginia in Anne's *Gone to America*. Adrian lamented *I Wish There Were No Prisons*; Phil grumbled humorously about being *Back in Durham Gaol* and Ros's protagonist languishes in Birmingham Gaol (*Down in the Valley*). More serious was the fate of the innocent man sentenced to *Twenty-One Years on Dartmoor* (Liz). Most sombre of all was Ros's song about the *Peat-Bog Soldiers*, written for the victims of the first concentration camp in Germany.

We next meet on **Tuesday, 21st May at 8pm in The Howard Arms, Brampton**. The theme will be 'Farming' (so: anything referring to farm animals; harvest; ploughboys; sowing; mowing; crops etc. With plenty of wiggle-room for being devious if anyone wishes!) **ALL WELCOME!**

FOLK SESSION – Howard Arms, Brampton

After a couple of quiet months, it was great to have a packed room when we met in The Howard Arms on 21st May. We were delighted to welcome several new faces (and voices) – Penny, Eva, Lester and Stu. It was also a pleasure to see occasional visitors Martin, Geoff and Kath again.

Our theme was ‘Farming’, a good, substantial sort of a folk music theme, with plenty of possibilities for chorus-singing. To begin with the cheerful stuff - Chris started us off with the satisfactions of being a *Farmer’s Boy*; John followed on with the joys of *Country Life*; Ros sang in praise of *Jolly Fellows that Follow the Plough* and Martin, in the *Malpas Wassail*, drank the health of the farm and everyone involved in its work. We heard about harvest celebrations from Adrian (*Peas, Beans, Oats and the Barley*); shearing celebrations from Ros (*From the Old Half-Moon to the Rising Sun*) and the merits of *The Ripe and Bearded Barley* from Sally. Lester (showing the proper creative spirit) sang about *Old Parkin Raine the Fiddler* ‘because his music cheered up farming life in Teesdale’.

Farm animals enjoyed their moment of fame: *The Beck and Tarn Boys*, in Penny’s own song, are sheepdogs. Sheep themselves were popular, whether it was Phil inviting us to go *Prancing with Yowes* or Katy’s ‘tall tale’ of *The Wonderful Derby Ram*. A cow featured in Bill’s comic update of *Jack and the Beanstalk*, while Geoff’s *Jealous Cow* complained bitterly about AI (no, *not* Artificial Intelligence!) Kath, on the other hand, anticipated contentment among the *Chickens in the Garden*.

Specific farm workers and types of work were recognised – the *Big, Red Combine Harvester* (Sally); the ploughman (*Speed the Plough* – Adrian on melodeon); the *Ditching Boy* (Lester); hopping in Kent (*Beeswing* – John); the cotton fields of the south in Stu’s *Evil-Hearted Woman* (okay, he made up the bit about the cotton fields to fit the theme, as did Penny when she announced that her song, *I’m Going Down South*, was about itinerant farm workers! We relish this kind of inventiveness!)

Farming is about hard labour as well as harvest homes: Kath’s song *Spring 1919* describes the farmers reclaiming farmland after the mud and carnage of the First World War. Bill in *The Guist Ploughman* points out both the rewards and the frustrations of farming life; the gentle lullaby *Bonny at Morn* (Liz) complains of ‘the sheep in the meadow and the kye in the corn’; Jane’s weary farmer is already up before sunrise, *Waiting for the Lark*; *Bewcastle* (John) highlights the struggle to make a harsh upland farm pay. Geoff’s macabre comic poem *Being a Farmer* lists the dangers of losing body parts to farm machinery! Still darker and sadder were the experiences of farming in America: slavery (*Lincoln Freed Me Today* - Eva); poor wages and exploitation on *Maggie’s Farm* (Jane); dustbowl and ruin (*The Auction Song* - Martin). And then there’s Australia – ‘drought and starving stock’ in *Now I’m Easy* (Phil); drought, dying stock; dead children and loneliness in *Past Caring* (Liz).

And so it isn’t surprising that some leave farming in desperation, whether to become a *Man of War* (Chris); or a navy (*Here Come the Navvies* – Bill); to face the dangers and corruption of city life (*Mabel Joy* – Eva) or (according to Stu’s interpretation!) to fall into the sea by accident and be *Drowned*.

We next meet on **18th June at 8pm in The Howard Arms, Brampton**. The theme will be ‘**Summer**’. **ALL WELCOME!**

FOLK SESSION – Howard Arms, Brampton

We had a lively evening of music and story on 18th June in the Howard Arms, with the seasonally suitable theme of 'Summer'. A warm welcome to Graeme and Bernadette, on a return visit from Lancashire, and congratulations to Gerda and Alan, playing duets to work around a broken arm.

To start with the specific mentions of 'summer' – Alan, of course, gave us Gershwin's *Summertime*; Chris 'welcomed in the summer' with the *Hal an Tow*; John found it *Pleasant and Delightful* ('on a midsummer's morn'); Gerda told us that 'the summertime is coming' (*Wild Mountain Thyme*); Liz went in search of *Oak and Ash and Thorn* ('all on a midsummer's morn') and Phil sang the tragedy of a *White Squall* on the Great Lakes in a 'sultry summer calm'. Sally managed a completely different approach with a *Christmas* song! – *Jingle Bells* in Australia, in a singlet and shorts, complete with BBQ and ute.

Summer seems to be a good time for transitory love affairs. Ros took us from April to September with *April, Come She Will*; Sally's love on the *Isle of Eigg* began in May and ended in the autumn; Jane felt the *Urge for Going* when autumn arrived; Steve's own song, *It's Been a Long Time*, on the other hand, celebrated getting over lost love with the coming of summer. There were other, more optimistic, songs about love and the summer: John's fair maid met her sweetheart on *Claudy Banks* 'on one summer's evening'; Alan wanted to dance with his love under a *Harvest Moon*; Liz was *Aye Waukin-O* in summer for her lover and *Penelope* (Ros) is waiting 'as long as the day in the summer time' for Odysseus's return.

Some songs worked in particular months, as with Anne's *Rosebud in June* and July in *Farewell Regality* (Chris). Others sneakily included summer by covering all the seasons – Adrian took us through the year in *Rolling Home*, as did Anne in *Tups*. There was also a distinct sub-theme of summer activities: *Scarborough Fair* (Steve) because fairs usually took place in the summer; *Cheeses of Cheshire* (Adrian) because Wakes Week falls in summer; *The Crown Green Bowler's Prayer* (Graeme and Bernadette) because crown green bowling is a summer game.

Where no other tie-in was obvious, weather was a useful point of reference! Gerda hoped that 'the sun's gonna shine in my back door' (*Trouble in Mind*); Graeme and Bernadette proposed to meet *Under the Boardwalk* 'when the sun beats down'; Phil described hillwalking on a *Cloudberry Day*; Katy welcomed the *South Wind*. Jayne, on the other hand, maintained that the 'wind and weather' of the *Mingulay Boat Song* were a realistic description of British summers.

We next meet on **16th July at 8pm in The Howard Arms, Brampton**. The theme will be 'Courage/Bravery'. **ALL WELCOME!**

FOLK SESSON – Howard Arms, Brampton

We enjoyed a packed evening of song and instrumental music on 16th July in the Howard Arms, on the theme of 'courage/bravery'. A warm welcome to new contributors Zach and Max, and welcome back to John Jeffrey joining us from Whitley Bay.

Let us begin with the more recondite definitions of 'courage/bravery': Jane started the session with the old lament *My Husband's Got No Courage In Him!* Adrian sang *The Man that Waters the Workers' Beer* 'because there used to be a brewery called Courage'. Following a rather similar train of thought, Max reasoned that his song *Moonshiner* was appropriate because drink supplies 'Dutch courage', and Zach made a similar link in *Distance*, because the line 'Now I've got the courage to sing' refers to getting drunk with friends. The *Four Drunken Maidens'* feathered hats and mantles (Katy) were 'brave' in the archaic sense of 'making a fine show'.

Not surprisingly, there were a lot of references to war, danger, battle and fighting. John Jeffrey sang *The Grey Funnel Line* in honour of his own father, who, as a member of the (merchant) navy sailed on the Murmansk convoys in WW2. Also on a WW2 theme, Richard's haunting *Ghost Flyers on the Hills* was a tribute to the many flyers who crashed and were killed in training exercises in the Borders. Phil's *Rhaid I Mi Fynd* tells the heartbreaking story of a young Welshman who felt morally obliged to enlist in WW1 and was killed at Ypres, while Sally Jones' *Rose of York* traces a similar story of a regiment recruited from Sheffield and mown down on the Somme. Steve commemorated *All the Fine Young Men* who fell in both World Wars. Gerda's *Bold Privateer* parted from his sweetheart to face hazards and bloody engagements to fight for the King, and Richard's *Royal Oak* fought off no fewer than ten Turkish men o'war. Phil's *Lord Huntly* and Richard's *Bonny George Campbell* both set off, armed and ready for battle, but were ambushed and murdered on the way. John Jeffrey remembered both the valour and the eventual pauper's grave of *William Coffey*, one of the first recipients of the Victoria Cross.

Perhaps it's just as well, as a change from so much bloodshed, that our instrumentalists for the evening found some cheerful tunes! Sally Hardaker on recorder played *Grace Darling Gold* and *Rocket Brigade* (both about saving the lives of shipwrecked sailors); *Soldier's Joy* and *Scotland the Brave*. Adrian on melodeon gave us a rollicking medley – *British Grenadiers*, *Huntsman's Chorus* and *John Peel*.

Bravery manifests itself in other ways than in battle: Alan sang *Never Press Nine* in honour of the man who wrote it, singer/songwriter Sam, living courageously with MND. Sometimes, just living, working and assuming one's responsibilities requires courage, as reflected in *Old Man River* (Alan) and *Spencer the Rover* (Jane), especially when the work is inherently appallingly dangerous (*The Donibristle Mossmorran Mining Disaster* – Phil) or an unforeseen catastrophe makes it so (*Davy Lowston* – John Luffrum). Zach's *Love, Ire and Song* reflected the internal struggle between protest and resignation, while Gerda pointed out that *This Is Why We Fight* became very popular with Iranian women after the murder of Mahsa Amin by Iran's 'morality police'. Sally Jones' *God Moves on the Water* described the courage of the men who placed women and children in the lifeboats on the Titanic, knowing they themselves would die. Steve's own song, *Your Love Will See Me Through*, evoked faith, hope and courage in times of despair. But, on a lighter note, *Awake, Awake* (John Luffrum) complained bitterly about the *lack* of courage of a young man who flees as soon as his sweetheart's father arrives!

We next meet on **20th August at 8pm in The Howard Arms, Brampton**. The theme will be 'Countries'- any song, tune or poem that mentions a country by name, including countries/kingdoms/states that no longer exist, (e.g. Mercia.) **ALL WELCOME!**

