

FOLK SESSION – Howard Arms, Brampton

Sub-zero temperatures and icy roads meant that our numbers were down when we met on 17th January, but those of us who came out in the cold and dark certainly gave it our all, with gusto! A warm welcome to Susan and David, visiting us from Peatling Magna (Leicestershire).

The theme was ‘food and drink’. Unexpectedly, there were more ‘food’ items than ‘drink’ items – though plenty of songs managed to work in a mention of both. Chris, with the parody *Early One Evening*, contrasted the crusty bread, butter, and bitter beer of the traditional pub with the ‘soya sausage substitute’ and ‘super-sparkle ready-brew’ of its modern successor. *Johnny O’ Braidislee* (Richard) had bread and brown ale at home, but preferred to risk his life in the forest for venison. The hero of Chris’s Russian story *Ivan and the Mice* offered ‘soup, black bread and vodka’ at his inn. And as for *Old Sammy Shuttleworth* (Sally Hardaker) ...his ‘right good do’ included such Lancashire delicacies as cow heel stew and pigs’ feet, ale and...metal polish.

Susan and David had not realised there would be a theme, but improvised gallantly, with a mention of the ship’s cook in *A Salty Dog* and the killing of a sheep for mutton in *The Sheep Stealer*. Richard praised feasting at the end of a day’s hunting at *The Beagle Inn*, whereas Chris enjoyed a homely celebration with a ‘bottle and friend’ (*Thousands or More*).

Some contributions were very specific about food items: Gerda asked *Do you Love an Apple?* Richard and Sally harmonised over a ‘fine fry of herring’ (*Three Jolly Fishermen*), and Phil lamented the passing of *The Oggie Man*. Sally found the most topical food reference with her tune on whistle, *The Marmalade Polka* (as she pointed out, we are in marmalade season). Phil made us laugh with his adventures among the *Shelves of Herring* and praised *The Hard Cheese of Old England*.

And so to drink...Gerda described seduction aided by whisky at the back of *Rare’s Hill* and painted a picture of those who go *Down where the Drunkards Roll*. She also described the social plight of a woman who finds that *I can’t go there (any more)* due to speaking out of turn when drinking. Richard praised the merits of *Friezland Ale* and Katy suggested that we *Fathom the Bowl*.

After all that, it’s not surprising that Sally on whistle finished off with *The Temperance Reel!*

We next meet **on 21st February in The Howard Arms, Brampton, at 8pm**. The theme will be ‘Animals’.
ALL WELCOME!

FOLK SESSION – Howard Arms, Brampton

We foregathered in the Howard Arms on 21st February to sing and play and recite on the theme of 'animals'. It was a pleasure to welcome visitors Melanie from Cheltenham and Tom from Abergavenny, and to say 'hello' to Bill, Liz and Hazel whom we have not seen for some time.

Adrian got us off to a rollicking start with a sow, seven piglets and sound effects in *Susannah's a Funicle Man*. In folk music, we would expect farm animals to feature, and sure enough, Phil went *Prancing with Yowes* and Liz invited us to *Gang to the Kye*. Pit ponies disappear down *The Coal Town Road* (Hazel); feral Australian horses gather *Where the Brumbies come to Water* (Liz); Shire horses are requisitioned for war in *Home, Lads, Home* (Hazel). John started us off with a bull (*Martin said to his Man*) then took us through an array of goose, hog, dog, sheep ... and let us not forget the role of the supposedly man-eating cow in Chris's macabre story, *The Piper's Boots!*

Other (more-or-less) domestic animals appeared in Melanie's Haiku cycle in honour of her cat, Wispa; in Tom's song in praise of his *Long-Legged Lurcher Dog*; in the lurid events surrounding *My Grandfather's Ferret* (Bill). If bears kept for bear-baiting count as domestic (hmm) then *The Congleton Bear* (Adrian) must come into this category!

And then there are the wild animals, descending in size from *Bishop Bell's Brontosaurus* (Phil); the alligator in *The Lakes of Pontchartrain* (also Phil), through *The Fox* (John); *Hares on the Mountain*, (Tom); the frog who went a-courting (Tom), the hog-nosed snake in Jane's *Copper Line* and so down to *The Dormouse and the Doctor* (Melanie). Even invertebrates got a look in! Beetles and crickets featured in *My Laggan Love* (Jane), and *The Wee Kircudbright Centipede* (Katy) had her own story with a piece of moral advice at the end.

Nor were the seas and the air neglected. Jane took us *Listing in the Gales* among 'dolphins, seals and whales'; Steve ranged from tragic environmental protest in *The Last Leviathan* to the hardships of 19th Century whalers as he bade *Farewell to Tarwathie*. Chris got us singing the splendid chorus, 'One for the rook, one for the crow' in *The Guist Ploughman*; Bill praised the 'falcon on the wing' (*The Peregrine*) and Jane described *Waiting for the Lark*.

We next meet on 21st March 2023 at 8pm in The Howard Arms, Brampton, with the theme 'Musical Instruments and Dance'. For once, a theme that favours instrumentalists! Anything that is entitled 'waltz', 'jig', 'reel' or 'hornpipe' is automatically 'in'! **ALL WELCOME!**

FOLK SESSION – Howard Arms, Brampton

We had fun with the theme of ‘musical instruments and dance’ at the Howard Arms on 21st March. It was a pleasure to see old friends Les and Di, visiting from Norfolk, and Mick, visiting from Lincolnshire with his ‘autoharp on steroids’ (Mick’s own description of his QChord!)

We had the pleasure of an unusually large number of instrumental items. Of course, anyone who played a dance tune on a musical instrument could be said to have ticked both boxes! Thus Eileen, on concertina, played us the waltzes *Young Jane*, *Drink Your Tea*, *Love* and *Cupid’s Waltz*. Morris tunes were also well-represented, with Adrian playing us two regional versions of *Young Collins* and the Shaker tune *Simple Joys* (which is also used for Morris-dancing). John, also on melodeon, played the Morris tune *Not for Joe*. Les and Di, on guitar and fiddle, branched out into a polka (*Listowel*); a set dance (*The Princess Royal*); a hornpipe (*An Comhra Donn*) and ragtime (*Blackberry Rag*).

It’s not surprising that instruments associated with folk music were well-represented in song: the Jacobite *Silver Whistle* (Jane); the drums and pipes that played when *Willie McBride* was buried (Bill); the banjo in *Maginot Waltz* (Les and Di) and the fiddle in *We Sing Alleluia* (John). As for the bodhran, there was no getting away from it, whether in Sally’s wickedly funny *That Perfect Folk-Club in the Sky*; Bill’s *Bodhran Song*, about a goat whose ambition is to grow up to be one; or Phil’s ribald parody, *Matty Groves and the Famous Folkie’s Wife*. Several contributions featured less ‘folky’ musical instruments, for example a juke box in Mick’s *Railway Hotel*; saxophones in Sally’s *Waltzing’s for Dreamers*; cornets and trombones (*Salvation Band* – Adrian); the ‘dusty old horn’ in Gerda’s *Hard Times Ain’t Gonna Rule My Mind* and the French horns in John’s *Rout of the Blues*, right down to the questionably musical *Old Triangle* in Mountjoy Prison (Liz).

We heard songs about specific types of dance: Phil took us *Waltzing with Bears* and Liz recalled how *The Band Played Waltzing Matilda*. Gerda’s fiddler played a jig and a reel (*Every Man’s a Fool*) and Mally Lee ‘danced a stately minuet’ (Katy). Gary’s song *Ghost Dancing* recalled the massacre at Wounded Knee. But we also heard more general allusions to dance: Jane asked *Dance me to the End of Love* and Mick pleaded *I want to see you dance again*. Gary urged us to ‘let the gypsy dance’ (*Gypsy*), while Sally remembered the dancing dolls in *Whiskey on a Sunday*.

We next meet on **18th April at 8pm in The Howard Arms, Brampton**. The theme will be ‘Trades’.

For anyone who likes to prepare well in advance, the theme for May will be ‘Myth, Legend and Magic’.

ALL WELCOME!

FOLK SESSION – Howard Arms

Numbers were lower than usual at the folk session on 18th April (was everyone away on a post-Easter holiday?) but those who were present turned up trumps. We all dug deep into our musical repertoire and kept the songs and tunes going all evening. A warm welcome to Martin, visiting us from Hounslow.

The theme was 'Trades', which led to a joyful variety of material. Several singers managed to quote an impressive array of callings per song: the mother in *Me Lad is Ower Bonny* (Phil) suggests poet, engine driver, farmer, fiddler etc as alternatives to 'working down the mine' for her baby son; Gerda's exquisite song *Voices* ranges from those who herd sheep, till the soil, build and mine, to teachers, astronomers and cartographers; Martin's *Working Chap* is an elegy for tailors, trawlermen, colliers, steelworkers etc who have lost their jobs to economic change; Sally's songs featured an array of unexpected jobs – fireman, office worker and judge in *Little Tim McGuire* and soldiers, policemen and politicians in *What did you learn in School Today?*

Traditional music is bound to mention traditional trades. Mining was well-represented: *The Old Miner* (Jane) wondered who would replace him once he was gone; *The Ballad of Springhill* (Sally) commemorated the 75 men who were killed in the 1958 Nova Scotia disaster and Martin told the tale of the miner now disabled by 'dust' in *Ee Aye, Aa Cud Hew*. Martin and Sally both recalled the long history of bitter industrial conflict in, respectively, *Whose Side Are You On?* (Kentucky in the 1930s) and *Blackleg Miner* (Northumberland in the 1840s).

The countryside featured extensively. There was farming, of course, with Adrian on melodeon playing *Speed the Plough* and describing 'a brisk young farmer's' adventures with *The Nutting Girl*. *Bogie's Bonny Belle* (Jane) is seduced by her father's ploughman and John's *Shepherd of the Downs* enjoys his rather sudden romance. Some lesser-known rural trades included drystone walling (*Tailor of the Dales* – Phil); droving (*The Lads of the Fair* – Phil) and the cunning antics of *The Molecatcher* (John), while Gerda's *Navigator* builds railways across the landscape.

The sea gave us the *Bold Privateer* (Gerda); *The Wellerman* (John) and fishermen off *The Cold Coast of Iceland* (Martin). Skilled trades ranged from Gerda's *Little Carpenter* through bricklaying (*Why Paddy's not at work today* - Adrian), to weaving – very popular, with *Poverty Knock* (Gerda); *The Music of the Loom* (Phil) and *The Woollen and Linen Song* (Katy).

And let us not overlook the more out-of-the-way 'trades', such as Phil's tall tale of the plumber-turned-astronaut, *The First Man on the Moon was a Cumbrian*; *The Lollypop Man* (Adrian on melodeon); the jockey (*Skewball* – Martin) and the cheeky professional thief (*I wish there were no prisons* – Adrian).

We next meet on **Tuesday, 16th May at 8pm in The Howard Arms, Brampton**. The theme will be 'Myth, Legend and Magic'. (It's a tricky theme, so feel free to be creative). **ALL WELCOME!**

FOLK SESSION – Howard Arms, Brampton

We were faced with a challenging theme of ‘Myth, Legend and Magic’ when we met in the Howard Arms on 16th May, but, as always, we emerged triumphant! It was a pleasure to see some faces that have been absent for a while, and a warm welcome to Sam, visiting from Utrecht, and to those who dropped in just to listen.

To start with straightforward examples of ‘magic’, the ballad *Willie’s Lady* (Gary) told the story of a witch who lays a curse on her daughter-in-law, while Gerda’s *Hare Spell* casts the shape-shifting charm of the witch Isobel Goudie into song form. Chris warned us of the dangers of dealings with the fairies in his story *Betsy and the Hiring Fair*. On a lighter note, Mary cheered us up with *Puff, the Magic Dragon*, and gave the word ‘magic’ a comic twist in her recitation *The Magic of the English Language*. Gerda and Kath also extended the sense of ‘magic’ in, respectively, Gerda’s own song *One Glass Eye* (an eye that can see the heart) and *The Potter’s Wheel* (how our actions shape and destroy the world).

Magical creatures included a benevolent elf (*As I was Walking Home one Day* – Kath) and a malevolent one (*Lady Isabel and the Elf-Knight* – Gary); a mermaid (*A Song to the Siren* – Jane); a fortune-telling raven (*Crazy Man Michael* – Gary) and *The Great Selkie of Sule Skerrie* (Katy). Kath sang of women lured by the magical quality of music made by *The Raggle-Taggle Gypsies* and the *Whistling Gypsy Rover*. Ghosts, both animal and human, featured in Phil’s *The White Dog of Yockenthwaite* and Gerda’s *Eli the Barrow Boy*.

Icarus (Gerda) invoked the images of classical mythology, while Chris’s Nanabush story, *How Butterflies Taught Children to Walk*, was drawn from Canadian Indigenous storytelling. County Durham mythology seems to have taken itself less than seriously, to judge by the tongue-in-cheek ballad of the *Lambton Worm* (Phil).

‘Legend’ was open to some fairly wide interpretation. Jane’s Jacobite song, *It Was a’ for Our Rightful King*, was because ‘the Jacobite risings became the stuff of legend’. Sam’s contribution, the WW1 song, *There’s a long, long road a-winding*, arguably fell into a similar category. Geoff, displaying the true creative spirit, came up not only with *The Legend of Tom Dooley*, but with Maddy Prior’s song *Somewhere Along the Road* ‘because Maddy’s a legend’ and *Sea Coal* ‘because it’s a legend in Hartlepool’. Hmmm. Phil’s song about the sad fate of the *Hartlepool Monkey* refers to an indubitable local legend, while *Marching Inland* (Chris) mentions several naval heroes of legendary fame – Nelson, Columbus, Drake and Grenville – and Jane’s *If I Had a Boat*, celebrates television legends of the past such as Roy Rogers and Trigger.

We next meet on **Tuesday, 20th June at 8pm in the Howard Arms, Brampton**. The theme will be ‘**Birds**’ (‘whether feathered or not’, added a certain male who was present and shall remain nameless...) **ALL WELCOME!**

FOLK SESSION – Howard Arms, Brampton

We had a packed session when we met on 20th June, and were delighted to be joined by several newcomers and to have the pleasure of greeting old friends whom we have not seen for some months.

The theme was 'Birds'. Let us start with those who managed to pack the maximum number of species into one song or recitation: Adrian, with *Who killed Cock Robin?* managed to name nine different types of bird, plus 'all the birds of the air'. Mike Comerford also found nine different kinds of birds in Burns' *Westlin' Winds* (an impressive achievement as Mike only dropped in on the session by chance, with no opportunity to prepare!) Mary's recitation, *The Twelve Thank-You Notes of Christmas*, took us hilariously through the mounting exasperation of the lady-love as she takes delivery of calling birds, French hens, geese a-laying etc.

Songs referring to birds often use them for their emotional resonance: the pity of war; freedom; nostalgia or environmental concern. This was the case with Maddy's *Hey Nonny Violence*, which mentioned that 'birds are carolling' and Jane's *Over the Border* which comments that 'the bird flies over the border yet'. *Come by the Hills* (Steve) yearned for the beautiful land where 'birds fill the air', while *Whose Garden was This?* (Sally) grieves over a landscape where birds no longer fly. The Beatles' *Norwegian Wood* (John O'Rourke) made much dourer use of the bird motif ('this bird had flown').

Some species of bird are bound to be popular in folk song. I anticipated larks, and we got larks! They represent haunting sadness in *The Lark* (Gerda); the fragile balance of life in *The Lark across the Vapour Trail* (Phil) and soaring human hopes in *Rolling Home* (Cath and Geoff). They create a fitting background for lovers' encounters in *Pleasant and Delightful* (Cath and Geoff) and *To Milk in the Valley Below* (Katy). Blackbirds, wild geese and (unexpectedly!) hens were well-represented too: Gerda bade *Bye, Bye, Blackbird*; Liz was homesick for the Angus straths when she saw the flight of wild geese on the *Norland Wind*; Steve watched the migrant geese swept along with the *Grey October Clouds*. Ruth took us back to egg shortages in WW2 with *Hey Little Hen* but John Luffrum was less than enthusiastic about *Chicken on a Raft* for breakfast. Mike Copley's *Sober Thought* took the example of the 'modest, sober, bone-dry hen' as an argument for eschewing teetotalism!

And so to the types of bird that were not so often mentioned in song: John Luffrum informed us that *My Lady's a Wild-Flying Dove*; Jo recited *The Owl and the Pussycat*; Phil spotted golden plovers and a kestrel on his *Cloudberry Day* and Jane listened as *The Echo Mocks the Corncrake*. Taking us to the Sahara, Mary told us Flanders and Swann's satirical tale of *The Ostrich*, and Liz found the brolga (Australian crane) and darling jackass (kookaburra) on the *Irish Lords* farm in Australia.

We next meet in the **Howard Arms, Brampton, on 18th July at 8pm**. The theme will be 'Foreign Lands' (e.g. travelling to them, or returning from them, or living in them, or songs in foreign languages). **ALL WELCOME!**

For anyone who likes to prepare well in advance, the theme for August will be 'Mining' and the theme for September will be 'Weather'.

FOLK SESSION – Howard Arms, Brampton

Tuesday the 18th July '23 saw a gathering of like-minded folk in the upstairs room of The Howard Hotel, in Brampton, Cumbria, for an acoustic folk music session with the theme of "Abroad", meaning distant places, foreign lands, or anywhere other than home.

Welcome to David & Brenda, Richard & Linda, plus a couple of other visitors who provided a supportive audience to the nine performers, joining in with the rousing choruses, most particularly with the sea-shanties that, given the theme, were inevitable. Also Mack, who thankfully didn't join in the choruses, (he's a dog).

We don't do prizes for quantity, but if we did, it would go to Mary for including: Quebec, Miramichi, Fortune Bay, Fredericton, and Cape Horn, these all in the one song "*Riding on a Donkey*", (The Donkey in question being a steam-powered winch, not a live animal).

As a singer of English ballads, Richard Hardaker admitted this to be a difficult theme, but nevertheless took us to the USA (Columbia) "*When a Man's in Love*", and later with the rousing chorus song "*Roll Alabama Roll*". There were lots of other mentions of the USA including both, "*Mississippi is on my Mind*", and "*Talk to me of Mendocino*", from Gerda.

Canada was mentioned a lot. Sally's tune, "*My Cape Breton Home*"; Stan Rogers' "*Lock Keeper*" and "*White Squall*" from Phil. Chris' first-nation story from the area around Lake Superior "*Nanabush and the Butterflies*" relates how humans were first taught to stand up on two legs.

More unusual foreign parts were included. Liz told us of Nombre Dios Bay, Panama, in "*Drakes Drum*". Mary, Africa in "*George the Giraffe*". Lanzarote figured in Phil's "*Rime of the Modern Frequent Flier*". Greenland was mentioned in Liz's "*Lady Franklin's Lament*". Australia (Mary) in "*Wild Colonial Boy*". "High Germany", (John), and finally Sally's "*Swedish Tune*". Sally also had us playing along with the Danish Tune, "*The Hamborg Sekstur*".

Ireland was considered sufficiently far distant to qualify as abroad. Sally's haunting "*Women of Ireland*"; John's "*Fields of Athenry*", and Gerda's "*Carrickfergus*", for example. Then there was Mary with the Shetland (Yell) song "*Rough Diamond*", although it must be noted that the diamond ring of the story did get washed across the Atlantic on the Gulf Stream from America so it probably fully qualifies compliance with the theme. Richard Hardaker sang "*The Holmfirth Carol*" which is about as home-based as it gets, but it does mention fighting the French and Spaniards.

There were a couple of unspecified foreign lands, one for example "*The story of the Lazy King*" from Chris is about the monarch of a far-off land who was rhinorrhoeically challenged. Another is Dylan's "*Girl from the North Country*", sung beautifully by John and with harmony lines by Jane. Dylan wrote this after meeting Martin Carthy so it could be about our own northern climes, but on the other hand it is about his girlfriend from Brooklyn and that puts it firmly in The Americas.

There was a challenge to comply with the theme by performing a song in a foreign language, and Jane duly obliged with "*Somos La Luz*".

Back to Canada for the finale of the evening as Liz sang us out with Ian Tyson's "*Four Strong Winds*".

We next meet in the **Howard Arms, Brampton, on 15th August at 8pm**. The theme will be 'Mining' (The extraction of useful minerals from the ground usually by tunnelling or open pit methods).

ALL WELCOME!

For anyone who likes to prepare well in advance, the theme for September will be 'Weather'.

FOLK SESSION – Howard Arms, Brampton

We made our way to the upstairs room of The Howard Hotel, in Brampton, Cumbria, on Tuesday the 15th August for our monthly acoustic folk music session with the theme of “Mining”. Songs and tunes about digging for mineral bounty from the earth.

We welcomed to the audience Paul and Nicola, who were visiting the area on holiday, as were Kate, Ben, and Roy (although Roy plucked up courage from the audience to give us a rendition of “*The Lambton Worm*”). Four more welcome newcomers were Graham and Camy, Ros, and Angela.

Besides a good range of voices, we had a good selection of instruments too. Four guitars, two fiddles, a banjo, a bouzouki, and a melodeon.

It was predictable that with a theme describing the risky business of mining, there would be a high body count, and that proved the case. Jane sang her own song “*The Miner’s Lament*” about the Wellington Pit Disaster in Whitehaven, where a hundred-and-fifty miners were trapped unscathed, and unrescuable, and sadly all eventually suffocated. “*The Trimdon Grange Explosion*” from John added another sixty-nine to the count. Ros sang “*Rap ‘er t’e Bank*”, where a fall of stones ends an old miner’s career. John’s miner suffered from a “*Blue Tattoo*”, the mark of a head injury from a number-nine coal. Fatalities in lead mining were far less frequent than in the coal trade, but Phil’s “*Ballad of Septimus Herdman*”, and the subsequent ghostly apparition of the deceased, decapitated miner is an example. The first song of the evening came from Jeff and he had us all singing along about the fatal drowning of a miner’s daughter, “*Clementine*”.

We had some great reels from Camy’s fiddle accompanied by Graham on bouzouki (and also from instruments around the room). Angela’s fiddle was on theme with “*The Miner’s Lullaby*”, (“*Coorie Doone*”). Then there were a couple of Morris tunes from Adrian’s melodeon.

The excitement of the prospect of working down the pit were exemplified in the thought of a young boy in “*Coal Hole Cavalry*” from Adrian, whilst Sally encouraged a new starter to get his pit-boots on in “*Schoolday’s Over*”, (a song originally written for The Big Hewer radio ballad). In Gerda’s “*Recruited Collier*” her lover, falls for the ploys of a recruiting sergeant who whisks him away as cannon fodder leaving her to burst into tears every time she picks up a lump of coal for the fire. Graham’s “*The Roving Journeyman*” didn’t specifically talk about the theme but as a jack-of-all-trades, almost certainly will have worked in a mine at some stage of his career.

Chris’ rendering of “*Byker Hill*” portrayed a lad that was happy to benefit from the fruits of the mining trade, but several songs related to sadness in the passing of the coal mining industry, a good example, the poignant poem “*Gone*” recited by Kath. Also “*The L&N Don’t Stop Here Anymore*”, with authentic banjo accompaniment from Liz, and Sally’s “*Pit Head’s Gone*”.

Although the coal-trade was by far the most visited theme, there were a couple of lead mining songs, and even gold prospecting was mentioned, albeit unsuccessful, from Gerda.

Altogether a cracking evening, finished off with Gerda’s rendition of Barry and Robin Gibb’s song “*New York Mining Disaster 1941*”. We got through about fifty songs and tunes and I guess about 95% of them related to coal mining.

We next meet in the **Howard Arms, Brampton, on 19th September at 8pm**. The theme will be ‘Weather’ (Cold Fronts, Warm Fronts, plenty of opportunity for storms at sea, etc.).

ALL WELCOME!

FOLK SESSION – Howard Arms, Brampton

We gathered in the Howard Arms on 19th September to make music and merriment on that very British subject, 'Weather'. A warm welcome back to Anne, returning to us after many months, and to Kath and Geoff, visiting from Yorkshire.

Bad weather gets more attention than good weather, and it's particularly noticeable at sea. Sally Hardaker on flute issued a *Foul Weather Call*. A 'gale' and 'pouring, driving rain' sank *The Mary Ellen Carter* (Adrian); the Solway Harvester went to the bottom with all hands in 'hail', 'rain' and 'heavy weather' on 11th January 2000 (*Harvest of the Sea* – Phil); the *Fisherman's Wife* (Katy) dreads 'winter wind and gales'. In *Bold Riley* (John) the rain and 'northern winds' carry the sailor sweetheart to the Bay of Bengal, while in Adrian's very tall tale, *Rule Britannia*, a sailor swept overboard by an 'equinoctial gale', pops back up to announce his marriage to a mermaid!

Seasonal references were popular: Sally Jones and Chris both took us right through the year – seriously, in *January Man* (Sally) and parodically in Flanders and Swann's *The Seasons* (Chris). Steve's *Raglan Road* mentioned 'clouds over fields of may'; Sally and Richard Hardaker on recorder and whistle welcomed the *South Wind* that 'banishes winter weather'; Gerda's *Blackbird's Song* refers to the 'summer rain'; Geoff took us to the autumn with *Sweet Reconciliation* and Steve watched the *Grey October Clouds* sail by. Gerda sent shivers up our spines with a musical setting of Robert Frost's haunting *Stopping by Woods on a Snowy Evening*; Anne's own song *Day's End* is set on snowy fells and icy mountains; Jane's heroine had to lie alone on a 'frosty winter's night' (*The Trees they do Grow High*) and the protagonist of *Four Strong Winds* (Sally Jones) invites his sweetheart to join him 'before the snow falls'. Finally, Chris's story *Ivan and the Mice* took us into the even harsher winter of Russia.

'Weather' is also symbolic of emotional states. Jane complained about *Stormy Weather* since her man left; Phil managed to work the *Shipping Forecast* into a tale of romantic encounter (!); *Autumn Leaves* (Kath) grieves over the 'wind of forgetfulness' that has taken her love from her; *Cathy's Song* (John and Jane) exploits the pathetic fallacy in the 'drizzle of the rain' that mirrors the singer's mood; the lady whose heart 'melted away like snow' eloped with the *Raggle Taggle Gypsies* (Kath). Anne cheekily sang *Joyce the Librarian* 'because it's about a lady experiencing a storm of emotions'.

Geoff found us almost the only mention of *good* weather ('warm be the sun...soft be the winds' – *Irish Blessing*) in the entire evening! In contrast, we had lots of extreme, not to say calamitous, weather conditions. *Louisiana 1927* (Gerda) commemorated the worst floods the USA has ever experienced while *Matthew* (Kath) described the destruction wrought by a 'twister' on a Kansas farm. Richard's Marriot Edgar monologue, *Three Ha'pence a Foot*, gave a comical slant to that epitome of disasters, Noah's flood.

We next meet on **17th October** in the **Howard Arms** (Brampton, naturally) **at 8pm** with the theme **Sun, Moon and Stars** (or other celestial bodies if you are really stuck!) **ALL WELCOME!**

FOLK SESSION – Howard Arms, Brampton

We were sorry to miss several regulars when we met on 17th October, due to illness/other commitments, but we were delighted to welcome occasional visitors, Liz and Roz from Corbridge, and newcomers Bernadette and Graham from Gregson Lane, Lancashire, Ross and Debbie from Hallbankgate and Matthew all the way from Peru! We also really appreciated the fact that several people dropped in just to listen.

Our theme was 'sun, moon, stars and other celestial bodies'. Anne certainly 'thought big': she found 'galaxies' as well as the 'sun' in *Elsie Bell*; Phil's *Old Man of the Sea* saw not only the 'red sun', the 'silver moon' and 'shooting stars', but the 'Northern Lights' (some discussion about whether they count as a celestial body!) and the 'Southern Cross'. We had celestial bodies of a different kind in *Bright Morning Star* (Debbie and Ross) where 'some have gone to Heaven shouting'. On a less serious note, an angelic bowler appeared in Graham and Bernadette's tall tale *The Crown Green Bowler's Prayer*.

Songs in foreign languages featured more than usual. Jane managed to include the theme with a reference to 'luna' in *Somos Luz*, as did Katy in the French children's song *Au Clair de la Lune*. Matthew on guitar sang us the Peruvian folk song *Vienes e te vas* and the Mexican *Cancion del Mariachi*.

Roz took us from *The Old Half Moon to the Rising Sun* (a punning title playing on the time of shearing and pub names), Jane's baby sleeps through from moon to sun while *Waiting for the lark* and Liz's soldiers moved from 'stars in the morning' to the 'glorious sun' (*Only Remembered*). Anne's own song *Druid's Ring* refers to veneration of 'sun, moon and stars'.

Single celestial bodies, so to speak, included Roz's Australian *Sun Arise*, while Liz greeted the rising sun on the other side of the world in *Country Life* and Bernadette and Graham included a sneaky reference to the sun in their own song *The Proverbial Paradigm Shift*. The moon was celebrated in Phil's unlikely ballad *The First Man in the Moon was a Cumbrian*; in Liz's lullaby *Sleep, my Babe* and in the 18th Century *New May Moon* (Roz). We had a *Shining Star over Bethlehem* from Graham (on guitar) and Bernadette (on African slit drum) and a ship called the 'Morning Star' in *Final Trawl* (Phil).

We next meet on **Tuesday 21st November** at 8pm in the **Howard Arms**. The theme will be **Kings, queens and all things royal**, (including emperors...think of the Napoleonic wars; crown jewels ... think references to diamonds etc; monarchy in exile ... think Jacobite risings. And so on). Anne says 'Blame her if you have a problem with this theme, as she chose it!!!'

FOLK SESSION – Howard Arms, Brampton

Our November session saw a packed room and a lively evening of music, story, song and recital centring around the theme of 'kings, queens, and all things royal'. It was a pleasure to welcome back Mick with his Q-chord from Lincoln; Martin from London, and Gary, returned from his ramblings in Australia.

We had a good number of references to historical royalty (not all treated in a way that historians would appreciate!) Sally Hardaker on whistle played *Rose of Raby* (Cecily Neville, mother of Edward IV and Richard III); Anne recited *The Battle of Hastings* as interpreted by the immortal Mariott Edgar! James V featured as the villain of the ballad *Johnny Armstrong* (Richard) and James VII as the baddie in *The Song of the Western Men* (Adrian). Jane's own song *Queen of Egypt* remembered the doomed love affair between Cleopatra and Mark Anthony. Queen Victoria appeared tangentially in Richard's monologue *T'Ordnance at Burton*, where a farmer's bull spectacularly failed to honour the seal on the Queen's orders.

Generic or fictional kings and queens appeared in Chris's stories *Special Friends* and *How Jack became a Prince*; in Martin's ballad *Two Sisters* and John's ballad *Willie's Lady*. Gary described the queen of the fairies in the charming children's song *Queen Mab*, while Sally Hardaker on whistle played us *The King of the Fairies*. The blacksmith in *Twankytillo* (Katy) displays his loyalty to the monarchy and/or his enthusiasm for beer as he drinks a health to the king, the queen and the entire royal family. Debbie's king sent his army to *Santa Georgia* and the tragedy of Ross's *Annabel Lee* took place in a mysterious 'kingdom by the sea'. Sally found a 'mighty king' in *Do you hear what I hear?*

Men have 'taken the king's shilling' for centuries and it was reflected in the songs we heard. *The Rout of the Blues* (Sally) wished 'success to King George and his Blues'; John's sailors fought for the crown (*Adieu, Sweet Lovely Nancy*); the sweetheart of *The Blue Cockade* (Steve) went 'to serve the king'; *Lord Huntley* (Phil) left to fight for 'the king's own cause'.

Symbolic and hyperbolic royalty included the Queen of May (Jane's *Caledonia*) and the Queen of Hearts (Steve's *Raglan Road*) and the Queen of the Lakes (i.e. the biggest ship on the Canadian Great Lakes) – in this case the *Edmund Fitzgerald* (Gary). Adrian sang in praise of *Charlie Mops*, the man who must have been 'a sultan or a king' because he invented beer. Phil and Anne both gave textiles the highest possible praise by saying that they were ordered by a queen (*Music of the Loom*) or were fit 'cladding for a queen' (*Tarry Woo*).

Surprisingly, we had neither kings of the jungle nor kings of the sea, but pigeons and wrens vied for the title of 'King of the Birds': Martin's homing pigeon was named the *King of Rome* by his proud owner; Chris's poem *The Wren* and Adrian's song, known as either *The Wren* or *The King* both claimed that honour for the smallest of British birds.

We had some excellent songs that didn't quite fit the theme: Mick on Q-chord played and sang the wistful *Bigger Picture* and *South Anne Street*. Matthew, still visiting from Peru, sang a Mexican song with the wonderful title, *The Treacherous Butterfly*. Finally, Martin sang us out with *Rolling Home* while we joined in the chorus and raised the roof.

We next meet on **Tuesday, 19th December at 8pm in The Howard Arms, Brampton**. The theme will be **Christmas/Winter/Solstice**. Or, for those who like to be different, 'Bah Humbug'. **ALL WELCOME!**

FOLK SESSION – Howard Arm, Brampton

A festive musical start to the season, the theme being ‘Christmas, winter, and the solstice’, brought a baker’s dozen of singers and musicians to the Brampton session on 19th December. Our instrumentalists for the evening were Sally Hardaker on recorder & flute, and Adrian on melodeon.

The ‘solstice’ theme came up once but in two separate performances: Phil sang *The Halsway Carol*, immediately followed by Sally Hardaker on recorder playing the tune. ‘Winter’ was well-represented. Gerda excelled in finding icy weather references: *First Frost*; ‘the old, cold embers of the year’ (*Winding Road*) and ‘storms in winter’ (*Who Knows Where the Time Goes?*) John’s *Ant and the Grasshopper* traced the destinies of the different insects when bitter winter succeeded summer. Gary sang us *A Song for a Winter’s Night* and took us through all four seasons of the year in *Pussy Willows and Cat Tails*. Richard cleverly worked in the *Night Visiting Song* ‘because such visits generally take place in the long winter nights’. *I’ll Tell Me Ma* (Anne) features snow ‘a-tumbling from the sky’ and rivers freeze in John’s *Girl from the North Country*. Sally, in a more positive frame of mind about winter weather, asked *Let it Snow*.

On a cheerful note, Adrian played a medley of carols and Christmas songs on melodeon (*Jingle Bells; Joy to the World; Sweet Bells; Good Christian Men, Rejoice; We Wish You a Merry Christmas*); Sally Hardaker on recorder played the *Bourrée de Dinde* (Turkey Bourrée!) and *Blue Ribbon*. Sally Jones pictured Christmas on the other side of the world with *Aussie Jingle Bells*. Comedy reigned in Richard’s wickedly funny *Up’ards* (Marriott Edgar’s parody of *Excelsior*) and continued with Phil’s catalogue of the disasters that happened in *The School Nativity Play*. Sally sang us the pathetic history of *Percy the Puny Poinsettia* (with a happy ending, we are pleased to relate) and Anne recited Les Barker’s even more pathetic query *Have You Got Any News of the Iceberg?* Alan did a north eastern ‘take’ on *Gannin’ Doon to Bethlehem* (to the tune, needless to say, of ‘Blaydon Races’).

Christmas was a mixed bag of joyful and dark, secular and sacred. Anne recited her own poem, *Vengeance*, about a murder carried out on Christmas Eve on Piel Island, followed by a haunting. Alan lamented that it would be a *Blue Christmas* without his beloved. A less serious complaint was Sally Hardaker’s grumble *There Are No Lights On Our Christmas Tree*. Adrian sang us the tall tale of a bus chasing a hare through the country roads of Nottinghamshire (*Christmas Hare*) for the driver’s dinner, while Katy focussed on more formal feasting in *The Boar’s Head Carol*. Phil charted Father Christmas’s transport problems in his parody *Flying in on the Wind in a Sleigh*.

Steve rather cornered the market in angels: metaphorical angels in his own songs *Somewhere There’s an Angel* and *I Thought I Saw an Angel*, as well as the literal ‘angels and archangels’ of *In the Bleak Midwinter*. Jane found some rather unusual carols: *The Seven Joys of Mary; Beautiful Star of Bethlehem* and *Joseph, Joseph* (the Nativity from Joseph’s perspective). Other folk carols included *Sweet Chiming Bells* (John); *This is the Truth Sent from Above* (Richard) and *Rolling Downwards* (Adrian).

We next meet on **16th January 2024 at 8pm IN ST MARTIN’S COTTAGE, Brampton!!! Please note temporary change of venue** – the Howard Arms is being refurbished in January. St Martin’s Cottage is between St Martin’s church and the Antique Centre. You’ll need to bring your own bottle as there isn’t a bar and we may pass the hat round to pay for the use of the venue. The theme will be ‘Dates’ – years, months, days, famous battles, coronations, shipwrecks etc. Or fruit. Or trysts. ALL WELCOME!