

FOLK SESSION January 2015 – Howard Arms, Brampton

In honour of impending Burns' Night, we had a Scottish theme when we met on 20th January in The Howard Arms. It was a pleasure to welcome Doug, joining us for the first time, and to see (and hear!) Maddy, Eileen and Ray, all back after a long time away.

Not surprisingly, we had several Burns items. Eileen read *My luvie is like a red, red rose*; Chris sang *Gae fetch tae me a pint o' wine*; Doug, accompanying himself on guitar, gave us *Ae fond kiss*; Katy's contribution was *Rantin' Rovin' Robin*. Bruce, down from Newcastleton, played *Ye Banks and Braes o' Bonny Doon* as a guitar instrumental.

Bruce and Mike Leighton were our instrumentalists. Mike on Uilleann pipes played *I am asleep, don't wake me* and *Miss Rowan Davis*. Bruce, in addition to *Ye Banks and Braes*, played Scottish dance tunes: *The Bluebell Polka*, *Dancing in Kyle* and *The Jacqueline Waltz*.

We all joined in some excellent chorus songs: *The Bonny Ship, the Diamond* (Phil); *Come by the Hills* (Anne); *I feel so near* (Steve); *These are my mountains* (Alan Jefferson); *Jock Stewart* (Chris). We also ranged through Scottish history and geography. Maddy made us shiver with *Isobel*, about the Countess of Buchan who crowned Robert the Bruce; Mary recalled the Jacobite risings in *Charlie is my darling*. Phil brought us into the industrial 20th Century with *The Shipyard Apprentice*. Anne and Mary took us to the Shetland islands in (respectively) *The Islands* and *Mootie*, while Ruth celebrated Glasgow in *Kelvingrove*.

And finally, Ray took us to other parts of the world entirely, going to Cornwall in *Cousin Jack* and to Paul Simon's *America*.

We meet next on **Tuesday 17th February from 8.30 onwards in The Howard Arms, Brampton**. The theme will be 'family' - anything that mentions parents/children/siblings/spouses/uncles/cousins etc. **ALL WELCOME**.

FOLK SESSION – Howard Arms, Brampton

We met to make music (and some poetry) in The Howard Arms on 17th February, with the theme of 'family'. It was a pleasure to welcome John from Haydon Bridge, Catherine and Melanie for the first time, and to have Sam and Alan Clarke back among us.

Eliza started us off with a ballad of family pride and violence, *Mill o' Tifty's Annie*. John contributed *The Croppy Boy*, in which the hero is betrayed by his cousin and denied by his father; Alan Jefferson's *What a crazy world we're living in* criticised neglectful parenting. Bruce's a guitar instrumental, *The Growling Old Man and the Grumbling Old Woman*, was light relief in comparison!

Catherine, accompanying herself on ukulele, sang the charming *Teatime*, about the pleasure of being a family united around the table, and Mary's *Black Pearl* celebrated father-daughter affection. Anne's *Day's End* rejoiced in returning to home and children at night. Mike Leighton on uilleann pipes praised *The Choice Wife* and contemplated the bittersweet experience of a family emigrating to *The Green Fields of Canada*. Frank Lee on diatonic accordion looked forward to the start of family life in *Jack getting a wife*.

We spanned the generations from infancy to old age and death. Sam's *Carrying the flame* was written in honour of his grandson; Melanie sang *Yankele*, a Yiddish lullaby, while Katy complained of the tribulations of *Breastfeeding Baby in the Park*. At the other end of life, Phil celebrated (Granny's) *Old Arm Chair*; Alan Clarke played *When the Saints go marching in* as a guitar instrumental because it was played at his father's funeral. Ruth encompassed both childhood and death in Frances Horovitz's poem *Letter to my son*, written when the author knew she was dying of cancer. We heard of aunts (*Aunt Rhodie*- Bruce guitar); a mother, wife and mother-in-law (*Brian o'Lynn*- Dave) and a troop of unexpected half-siblings (*Dad's Funeral* – Phil).

Mary extended family to the whole human race in *The Family of Man*. Corrie went still further and took in the animal kingdom with *The Family of Sheep on the Hill*, played on Northumbrian pipes.

We next meet in **The Howard Arms, Brampton, on 17th March from 8.30pm onwards**. As it will be St Patrick's Day, the theme will be Irish song, music etc. **ALL WELCOME!**

FOLK SESSION – Howard Arms, Brampton

When the folk session falls on 17th March – St Patrick’s Day – then an Irish theme follows naturally in tunes, songs and the occasional poem. We were pleased to welcome newcomer Norman, singing among us for the first time.

Our instrumentalists were Bruce on guitar, playing *Danny Boy* and the slow air *Molly St George*, Mike Leighton on Uilleann pipes playing *When the Cock Crows it is Day* and Dave on English small pipes with *Buy Broom Besoms* and *The Apprentice Lads of Alnwick* (okay, possibly not Irish, those last two!)

We joined lustily in a good many well-known chorus songs: *Black Velvet Band* (Alan Jefferson); *Jug of Punch* and *I’ll tell my Ma* (Mary); *Fields of Athenrye* (Chris); *Mountain Dew* (Norman); *Rare Old Times* (Phil). Also some less widely-known ones such as *As I roved out* (Eliza) and *Farewell to Carlingford* (Katy).

Ian sobered us with the stark and tragic song *Soldier*, and reminded us of other conflicts in Ireland’s past with *Arthur McBride*.

‘In proper names themselves is half the poetry of all national poems’, as Chesterton said, and what could be more poetical than wistful songs like *Carrickfergus* (Sam), *Slieve Galleon Braes* (Eliza) and *The Curragh of Kildare* (Phil); or songs of homesickness such as *Galway Bay* (Chris) and *The Reason I left Mullingar* (Steve)? Place-names were also an important feature in *The Rollicking Boys around Tanderagee* (Mike) and Anne’s own song *Postcard from Dublin* – rollicking girls in this case (so which of you *did* ‘kidnap a barman’, Anne?)

We next meet in **The Howard Arms, Brampton on Tuesday 21st April from 8.30pm**. As St George’s Day will be very near, the theme will be ‘English’ – tunes, songs etc. ALL WELCOME!

FOLK SESSION – Howard Arms, Brampton

If we missed some of our regular attenders this month, we were amply compensated by the large number of visitors who contributed to the music and enjoyment on 21st April: a warm welcome to newcomers Ed, Joel, Nigel, Paul and Scott, to Charlie and to Anne Dolphin and Bill who made the journey from the North-East to be with us.

The theme (in honour of St George's Day) was 'England/all things English'. Ruth and Scott both poked affectionate fun at the national stereotype, Ruth in *L'Anglais avec son sang-froid*, translated dubiously as *The Englishman with his usual bloody cold*, and Scott with Flanders and Swan's *Song of Patriotic Prejudice*.

We heard a couple of pieces of spoof English history, in Bill and Anne Dolphin's *Mediaeval Madrigal* and Anne Gibson's monologue *The Battle of Hastings*, and dipped into genuine history in *The Border Widow's Lament* (Alan Jefferson), *The Water is Wide* (Paul with vocals and guitar, Nigel on whistle) and *Bryd one Brere* ('Bird on Briar' in 13th Century English – Miriam). We also touched on legends and tradition in *Bee Boys* (Eliza) and *Loaves and Fishes* (Steve). Bill regretted the passing of the noble tradition of the English pub in the parody *Early one Evening*.

We covered the country in song from north to south and east to west. Eliza bade *Adieu to old England* and Phil praised *The Hard Cheese of Old England*. Getting regional, we visited Blackburn in *Always There* (Steve); London in *The Ballad of Bethnal Green* (Ruth); Cumbria in *Keswick Driver* (Nigel) and Gloucestershire in *The Cotswold Shepherd* (Katy). Anne Dolphin urged peace and harmony between England and her northern neighbour in *Both sides of the Tweed*.

Our instrumentalists for the evening were Joel and Ed on violin and fiddle respectively, and Charlie on violin. Joel and Ed specialised in Cumbrian tunes: *Bootmill Hornpipe* and *Appletree Hornpipe*; *Brocklebank Jig* and *Burnbank Jig*. Charlie gave us the polka *New York Girls* and played us out with *Portsmouth*.

We next meet on **Tuesday, 19th May in The Howard Arms, Brampton from 8.30pm**. The theme will be 'Northern England' (defined by the proposer as 'north of the M62', roughly Manchester to Yorkshire). **ALL WELCOME!**

FOLK SESSION – Howard Arms, Brampton

We met for a lively evening's music in the Howard Arms on 19th May, and were delighted to welcome newcomers Derek on violin from Dumfries, Sue and Richard passing through on their way back to Chepstow and mother-and-daughter duo Liz and Faye. The theme was 'northern England', which led to some ingenious equivocation about what constitutes 'northern English'.

Derek, for example, played the exquisite Scottish tune *Neil Gow's lament for his second wife*, but argued that as he himself hails from Sunderland, *anything* he plays has a northern English link. Sue sang *Poor Ditching Boy* because 'it mentions winter and it's always winter in the north' (Ouch! We know it's been the coldest May for years, but that was rubbing it in!) and Richard sang *The Lincolnshire Poacher* because the north of Lincolnshire is northern...

Many of the contributions had a clear link to a particular place: the monologue *Yorkshire Pudding* (Ruth); *The Finsthwaite Princess* (Anne); *Bewcastle* (Maddy); *Leaving of Liverpool* (Alan Jefferson); *Greatest Little River* – i.e. the River Wear (Alan Clark). Some of the references were more indirect: Alan Jefferson's *King Dunmail* commemorates the last independent king of Cumbria; Sam and Alan's entertaining *Silver Lining* is a tribute to the Lancashire-born George Formby. Steve Hubball's *Roll on the Day* is about a Yorkshire miner dying of pneumoconiosis, whereas Katy's *Celebrated working man* shows a more cheerful side to a miner's life.

Not all the material was related to the theme. Faye gave us a powerful rendering of *The trees they do grow high* and Liz sang the haunting *Crow on the Cradle*. Charlie, on violin, played *Winster Gallop* and *Jamie Allen*.

We next meet in the **Howard Arms, Brampton** on **Tuesday 16th June from 8.30pm onwards**. The theme will be 'places where people live' – any reference to house, home, palace, hut, cottage, castle, windmill...anyone know a song about tents? **ALL WELCOME!**

And the theme for July (just so you can be prepared) will be 'myths and legends'.

FOLK SESSION – Howard Arms, Brampton

We met in the Howard Arms on 16th June and were delighted to welcome visitors Kath and Jack from Cockermouth; Allan Watson; Russell passing through on his way back to Aberdeen and Bernard on holiday from Sussex. Our instrumentalists for the evening were Di on flute and violin, Les on guitar, Mike Leighton on Uilleann pipes and Chris on concertina.

The theme was ‘places where people live’, and we ranged from the grandest dwellings to the humblest. The heroine of Kath’s *Gypsy Wedding* was elevated to living in a palace; *Magdalene McGillivray* (Steve) leaves her husband’s mansion; the eponymous hero of *Lord Derwentwater’s Farewell* (Phil) bids adieu to ‘Dilston Hall/ My father’s ancient seat’. Les and Di on guitar and flute played *Roxburgh Castle*. At the other end of the scale, Ruth compared the ugliness of living in ‘a single fleabox room’ with the freedom of the road in *Yellow on the Broom*. Mary grieved over the loss of home and community involved in being moved to a *Room up in the sky* (ie a multi-storey block of flats). Jack ingeniously found a song containing a council house, a tent, eviction and moonlight flits (*Moving Day*).

We also had references to a *Mexican House* (Sam); a farm (*Treat me daughter decent* – Chris and Mike); a bothy (*Follow the ploo* – Katy), the trucking system that kept workers bonded to a place (*Sixteen tons* – Allan Watson) and various place-names (‘because people live in places’), such as *Blarney Pilgrim* (Mike on pipes and Chris on concertina). Bernard introduced us to the house at whose door death knocked in vain in the darkly comic story *Tomorrow never comes*.

Several people approached the subject from the perspective of yearning for home, family and friends: thus Chris sang *Song for Ireland*, Les and Di longed for *The Mountains of Mourne* and Russell gave us *Rolling home to Caledonia*, while Alan Jefferson hankered after *My Ain Folk* and Sam remembered old-fashioned hospitality in *Sit thee doon*.

We meet next in on **Tuesday 21st July from 8.30pm onwards in The Howard Arms, Brampton**. The theme is ‘myth and legend’. **ALL WELCOME!**

And just as advance notice: the August theme will be ‘Wit and humour’

FOLK SESSION – Howard Arms, Brampton

The Howard Arms hosted the monthly Brampton folk session on 21st July with a theme of ‘myth and legend’. A particular welcome to Martin, joining us for the first time.

Our instrumentalists that evening were Frank Lee on diatonic accordion, Corrie on Northumbrian pipes and violin, and Martin on mandolin. Frank commemorated *Captain Bover*, a Newcastle figure who has become an unpopular local legend; Martin gave us *The Fairy Dance*; Corrie played *Smash the windows* and *Lannegan’s Ball* on violin; she and Frank joined forces to play *Up the Raa* on pipes and accordion.

Fairies proved popular, albeit sinister: we heard *Tam Lyn* as both ballad (Alan Jefferson) and instrumental (Martin); the chilling *Changeling Child* (Miriam) and *The Elf Knight* (Anne). Dawn contributed the hauntingly sad *Alice White*. Phil had a good line in legendary animals, such as *The White Dog of Yockenthwaite* and *The Lambton Worm*. Steve preferred sacred legend in *The Song of Bernadette* and *Bread and Fishes*. Ghosts cropped up in all degrees of seriousness and light-heartedness, from *Loch Lomond* (Alan Jefferson) to *Widcombe Fair* (Ruth). There were also witches (*Long Meg and her daughters* – Anne); a mermaid (*The Man at the Nore* – Katy) and Cupid (*The Seeds of Love* – Miriam).

We next meet on **Tuesday 18th August from 8.30pm onwards in The Howard Arms, Brampton**. Our theme will be ‘funny songs/poems/stories’. It’s harder for instrumentalists to find ‘funny’ tunes, so they can settle for ‘cheerful’ – or as Frank suggested, ‘tunes with funny names’.

FOLK SESSION – Howard Arms, Brampton

The Brampton folk session was hilarious and frequently ribald when it met in the Howard Arms on 18th August, as you might expect when the theme was ‘humour’. We were pleased to welcome visitors in the persons of Martin and Alison from Preston and Jos from the Netherlands.

Alan Clark had the hardest job, finding comic instrumental music, but he succeeded by playing *I’m looking through the knot-hole in my grandad’s wooden leg* on guitar – though he did follow it later with the tragic *She moved through the fair* ‘because we’re having too much fun’!

There were quite a few cheerful, sing-along chorus songs: Alison and Martin led us in *What shall we do with the drunken sailor*; Phil gave us *Keep your feet still, Geordie Hinny*; Anne taught us *The keyhole in the door*.

Parody proved popular, starting with Mary’s *English Country Garden* containing ‘anaconda centipedes, kamikaze bumblebees...’ Anne followed on with Flanders and Swan’s version of *The months of the year* and Phil with *Shelves of Herring*. Steve sang *The last thing on my mind* with a new final verse that gave a normally serious song an entirely new twist!

The theme of comedy favours narrative, and we heard all sorts of unlikely tales: *The Lancashire Toreador* from Alan Jefferson; *Ik gong d’a lest op out* (in North Brabant dialect) from Jos; *Dead Dog Cider* from Katy. We also ranged from the cheerfully absurd in *Waltzing with Bears* (Phil) to the bitter satire of Hardy’s poem *The ruined maid* (Ruth).

We had a larger-than-usual proportion of original material. Sam entertained us with his rueful takes on contemporary problems: call centres (*Never press nine*) and internet dating (*iLove*). Mary read us a poem about her adventure trapped in a car unable to move (*SOS*); Steve sang his own song *I loved her from the bottom of my heart*, assuring us that the *double entendres* were entirely in our own minds...

We next meet in **The Howard Arms, Brampton** on **Tuesday 15th September from 8.30pm**. The theme will be ‘tools and implements’ – eg anything relating to brooms, hammers, anvils, ploughs, spanners, spinning wheels.... ALL WELCOME!

FOLK SESSION – Howard Arms, Brampton

We met in the Howard Arms on 15th September for a cheerful evening of song, poems and tunes, with the theme of 'tools and implements'.

Some of the tools and implements were what you would expect to find in a folk session: Anne invited us to *Dance around the Spinning Wheel*; the plough featured in *The Old Man and his Wife* (Miriam) and *Troubled Fields* (Sam); the miner's pick and drill were mentioned in, respectively, Phil's *Blackleg Miner* and Dave's *The Coal and Albert Berry*, while the blacksmith's hammer and anvil appeared in *Twankydillo* (Katy). Toiling with steam hammer and steam drill killed *John Henry* (Alan Clark). Maddy put needle and thread, frying pan, colander and rolling pin to uses for which they were never originally designed in *A Stitch in Time*!

Fishing nets and rods proved popular in *The Black Pearl* (Mary); *Poor Johnny* (Anne) and *Fishing* (Sam).

Many of the songs and poems showed considerable ingenuity: Sam argued that *Johnny's Old Guitar* was a tool, used in making music. Phil found a reference to a grater in *The Hard Cheese of Old England*; Ruth's poems *Cleaning the Shoes* mentioned shoe brushes; Maddy informed us of the unexpected uses of *Baler Twine*; Eliza sang about levers, sack-lifters; scaving-prongs and a steam-threshing machine in *'Chiners*; Mary informed us that due to a fault in their compass, *The Martians have landed in Wigan* and Alan Clark found all sorts of second meanings in nails, hammers and 5-amp fuses in *DIY Love*.

Thanks to Dave on the small pipes for playing *Waltz for Paul*, the only purely instrumental music of the evening.

The folk session next meets on **20th October 2015 from 8.30pm in The Howard Arms, Brampton**. The theme will be 'colonial songs'. **ALL WELCOME!**

FOLK SESSION – Howard Arms

We travelled the world on 20th October with the 'colonial' theme. Our numbers were a bit lower than usual, so many thanks to all those who turned up and dug deep into their reservoirs of song, music and poetry.

Frank Lee brought two diatonic accordions and provided us with instrumental music from Tasmania (*The Dear Irish Boy*); Louisiana (*La Grande Mamou*) and Quebec (*Polka Chinoise*) among others.

Many of the songs referred to places that have clear resonances within our collective historical awareness: Phil majored on Australia with *Now I'm Easy*; *Song of Artesian Waters* and the shanty *Bound for South Australia*. Down Under also featured in *Past Caring* (Dawn) and the songs of transportation *Adieu to Old England* (Eliza) and *Black Velvet Band* (Alan Jefferson). Maddy, Ruth and Anne took us to the USA with, respectively, *Factory Girl*, *Some Folk Like to Sigh* and *Gone to America*. Still in the New World, we went to Canada to mine *Cape Breton Silver* (Katy).

Maddy sang the Scottish song *Shining Star* and said mischievously that we could debate who colonised whom!

We ventured into more exotic locations with *She Wears Red Feathers* which mentions Mandalay and *Island in the Sun*, about Jamaica (both Ruth). Eliza ingeniously found a link to the theme with Kipling's *The Bee Boys* (because Kipling worked for the British Colonial Office in India), while Alan sang *The Last Farewell* – the song is by Roger Whittaker, who is Kenyan. In addition, we were reminded that Britain has been colonised as well as coloniser: by the Vikings (*The Islands* – Anne), the Romans and the Saxons (*The National Anthem of the Ancient Britons*).

We next meet on Tuesday **17th November 2015 in the Howard Arms, Brampton from 8.30pm** onwards. Our theme (in honour of Guy Fawkes Day) is 'Fire'. ALL WELCOME!

FOLK SESSION – Howard Arms, Brampton

Thank you to all those of you who braved the November downpour and turned up to the session on 17th November. The theme, which formed a pleasing contrast to the chilly exterior, was 'fire'.

Steve probably had the most oblique approach to the subject with *Calling Joe Hill* (who was executed by *firing* squad in 1915), followed closely by Alan Jefferson's *John Paul Jones* (because Jones tried to set fire to the fleet at Whitehaven but failed because, this being Cumbria, it was raining!) Frank Lee, who provided our instrumental music for the evening on diatonic accordion, linked the theme, entirely logically, to *Dear Tobacco* and the *Bacca Pipes Jig*.

Fire and flames appeared as metaphors for love in *I've got my love to keep me warm* (Ruth), and Lovelace's *To Althea from Prison* (Anne), and for illicit passion in *We'll sweep out the ashes* (Sam). They also featured in descriptions of scenery: 'The Sky's on fire' in *Carolina on my mind* (Ian); a 'ball of fire' in *Grey October Clouds* (Steve) and, rather alarmingly, 'raining fire in the sky' in *Rocky Mountain High* (Alan Jefferson).

Camp fires and firesides were symbols of security and homeliness in several items, such as Anne's own song *Day's End*; *The Peat Fire Flame* (Katy); *Sweet Baby James* and *Goodnight Irene* (both sung by Alan Clarke). Sam on the other hand subverted the image in the biting comic *Put another log on the fire*. The idea of fire as destroyer occurred in Phil's *The Old Dun Cow's on Fire* (relax, animal lovers, it's a pub!) and *Little Tim McGuire* (who loved to play with fire). Also in the song of the mining disaster, *The Blantyre Explosion* (Steve).

The next folk session takes place on **15th December from 8.30pm in The Howard Arms, Brampton.** The theme will be **Christmas/winter. ALL WELCOME!**

FOLK SESSION – Howard Arms, Brampton

We were snug in ‘the wee room, underneath the stair’ on 15th December, as we sang and made music and recited on the theme of ‘Christmas/winter’. It was a great pleasure to see (and hear) old friends Mike Round, Geoff, Terry and Steph.

Several people ‘tweaked’ an existing song to give it a seasonal twist: Alan Clark sang *The Memphis Carol* (aka ‘Gotta get out of Bethlehem’) and *The Tyneside Carol* (to the tune of ‘The Blaydon Races’). A song from the Second World War became, in Phil’s hands, a song about faltering reindeer (*Flying in on the wind in a sleigh*). Terry set his version of *Three Drunken Maidens* on New Year’s Eve.

Geoff on steel guitar played instrumental variations on *White Christmas*, and Mike Round on acoustic guitar played a fantasia on *The Coventry Carol*. Dave broke out the English small pipes with *Bobbing John* and, for variety, a selection from Handel’s *Water Music*.

We had a wide variety of recitations and readings. Alan Jefferson described the questionable delights of *Skiing Owdham Style*; Ruth read us a recipe from 1814 involving roasting 16 birds stuffed one inside another like Russian dolls; Dave made us all jump out of our skins with his eerie poem *A Winter’s Walk*; Phil told us the fate of *The Super and the Snowman*.

Sam made a clear connection to the theme with the touching *Christmas in prison* and *Blue Christmas*. Steve and Phil found references to snow and ice in *Hills of isle au Haut* and *Bonny Glen Shee* respectively, Eliza celebrated tradition with *The Gower Wassail Song*, whereas Mike brought us into the late 20th century with *Fairy Tale of New York*. Katy took us south and east with a Sinhalese carol, *Doi Doi*.

And of course we all joined in traditional carols. *The Rocking Carol* and *Silent Night*, sung by Steph; *While Shepherds Watched their Flocks* (Mary); *Good King Wenceslaus* (Alan Jefferson) and *Carol of the Advent* (Ruth).

We next meet on **19th January 2016** in **The Howard Arms, Brampton** from **8.30pm**. The theme will be ‘first’ – first love, first child, first job, first tune you ever played in public, any song mentioning the word ‘first’. Be creative! Be devious! **ALL WELCOME!**