

FOLK SESSION – Howard Arms, Brampton

Thank you to everyone who turned out at the Howard Arms on the 17th to cheer up a dreich January evening with music, poetry and song.

The theme – to fit the month – was ‘new beginnings’, so words like ‘new’, ‘morning’ and ‘first’ cropped up quite a lot. Geoff started us off with *Early one morning* as an instrumental on steel guitar, closely followed by Ruth with *You are the new day* and Alan with *New world in the morning*. Mary recited the *New alphabet* and Phil recalled his adventures *When first I went a-waggoning*.

Love and marriage proved popular new beginnings, from *Jack getting a wife* (Frank on diatonic accordion) and *Mhairi's Wedding* (Alan) to *The Bleacher Lassie o' Kelvinha'* (Phil) in which the couple not only marry but set up a pub together – two new beginnings. Terry's *Found and Loved Again* was a moving song about those who have been hurt in love trying again. Steph sang *Sally Gardens* ‘because Yeats' life was a history of pursuing new loves’!

We heard about babies (definitely a new beginning) in *Up the Noran Water* (Phil) and *The Death of Queen Jane* (Katy), not to mention the birth of a foal in Terry's *Small Victory*. Frank took us one step further back, so to speak, with his instrumental *Four bare legs together*.

Among several interesting and creative takes on the theme were Steve's *Isle of Hope* was Ellis Island, the start of a new life for millions of immigrants who moved to the USA; Ruth's poem, *The Fight of the Year*, described the transition from winter to spring; Geoff's instrumental, *Making Strides*, which he had composed himself while recovering from major surgery. Mary got us singing a round, *What a goodly thing*, about the human race living in peace together – which would certainly be a new beginning.

We next meet on **21st February at 8.30pm** in **The Howard Arms, Brampton**. The theme (well, it is still quite close to Valentine's Day) will be ‘love and marriage’. **ALL WELCOME!**

FOLK SESSION – Howard Arms, Brampton

We met in The Howard Arms on 21st February with 'love and marriage' as our theme, with Dave on small pipes and Geoff on steel guitar as our instrumentalists for the evening. It was a pleasure to have Maddy back among us again.

Star-crossed love, lost love and inconstant love have always been popular themes, and so Charlie Chomse remembered a lost love whom he met at *Carrwbrough*; Maddy complained that *Nothing works*; Geoff recalled a *Careless Lover* and Eliza a faithless one in *A Blacksmith courted me*. Cruel parents succeed in separating young love in *The Broom of the Cowdenknowes* (Phil) and are triumphantly defeated in the poem *Lochinvar* (Alan Jefferson). Ruth suggested, not wholly seriously, *Let's call the whole thing off*.

On a darker and sadder note, death separates the lovers in *The Bonny Light Horseman* (Eliza) and *Banks of Loch Lomond* (Alan), while slavery tears the husband away from his wife and child in *Shallow Brown* (Charlie).

Not all love songs are sad: Phil was decidedly tongue-in-cheek in his praises of a girl with not a lot to recommend her (*Star of the Bar*), while Sam's *iLove* brought us an entertaining look at the problems of virtual romance. Even the happy ending of *Kate Dalrymple* (Katy) does not take itself too seriously. And let's not forget that large and happy body of risqué folk music, represented by Sam's *Size of the Ship*; Eliza's *Dainty Davy* and even Dave's tune *Buy Broom Besoms* (depends which set of lyrics you know!)

There are also the songs of successful courtship and faithful love – *Bonnet and shawl* (Dave); *Shining star* (Maddy); *Music o' the loom* (Phil). Ruth read U A Fanthorpe's poem *Atlas*, a pleasingly prosaic tribute to 'a kind of love called maintenance'. Still more enduring is the love that survives dementia, and Sam's song *The Dutchman* described this experience poignantly.

The folk session meets next month on **21st March at 8.30pm in The Howard Arms, Brampton**. As it will be the first day of spring, the theme will be – no surprises! – 'Spring'! **ALL WELCOME!**

FOLK SESSION – Howard Arms, Brampton

Thank you to all who came along and celebrated the beginning of spring in music, song and poetry and in defiance of the elements on 21st March. A warm welcome to Adrian, Sally and Janet, joining us for the first time.

Adrian captured the reality of early spring in Cumbria with *Clittering Clattering*, which describes ‘rain or fine’ and ‘drizzle on the window’. Phil, more optimistically, anticipated *The Road to Drumleble* ‘when springtime comes round to the Laggan’, and Terry asserted that *You can never hold back spring*. Some songs looked forward to the spring for fulfilment: marriage in the spring in Steve’s *Blue Cockade* and Phil’s (happy ending) version of *Johnny Todd*; the pleasure the travelling people take in the spring in Alan’s *Freeborn Man* and Katy’s *Yellow on the Broom*.

Charlie Chomse was very specific indeed with his date (9th March 1761) in his song *Hexham Riot*, about violent opposition to conscription. Lent, Easter and Pentecost all got a mention (*Lent Carol* – Ruth; *Pace-Egging song* – Anne; *Dancing at Whitsun* – Eliza). Other people evoked the season indirectly by references to lambs in *Searching for lambs* (Eliza) and *The Broom of the Cowdenknowes* (Steve), and to flowers – *Bluebells*, about the brief life of Lady Jane Grey (Anne); *Where Primroses Grow* (Ruth); *Cornflower Blue* (Steph) ... and of course Wordsworth’s *Daffodils* (Alan). Mary stole in *Wild Mountain Thyme* (on the grounds that if ‘the summertime is coming’ then it must still be spring).

Janet referred back to *last month’s* theme with *Love hurts*; Sally sang us Cyril Tawney’s *Monday morning*, saying frankly that it was nothing to do with the theme! And thank you to Dave on English small pipes for *Linkumdoddy* and *Albert’s Hornpipe*, our only instrumental music of that evening,

We next meet on **Tuesday 18th April at 8.30pm in The Howard Arms, Brampton**. The theme will be ‘Clothes’ (hats, shoes, plaids...) **ALL WELCOME!**

FOLK SESSION – Howard Arms, Brampton

Whether it was due to a congenial theme ('clothing'), the lighter nights, or just plain luck, the folk session was packed when we met in the Howard Arms on 18th April. It was a pleasure to see old friends Stewart, Bill from Wylam and John from Whitley Bay back among us after a long absence.

We had a good array of instrumental music. Frank Lee started the evening with *Button up your overcoat* on melodeon, Les and Di on guitar and fiddle announced *I'll get married in my old clothes*, Charlie Carr on fiddle found several clothing-related tunes: *The Lad with the Plaidie*, *Golden Slippers* and *Mason's Apron*. Dave on English small pipes played *Bonnie wee winking thing*.

Between us we managed to introduce a wide variety of garments: the soldier's tin hat in *And the band played Waltzing Matilda* (Steve); the neckerchief in *Tie a yellow handkerchief* (Maddy); two mufflers and a coat in the parody *My grandfather's ferret* (Bill); the shirt in *All for me grog* (Charlie Chomse); the blue jacket in *My Johnny was a shoemaker* (Eliza); the shirt and moleskin trousers (*Blackleg miner* – Sally); the kilt (*Donald, whaur's yer troosers?* – Alan Jefferson); boots and shoes in *The Blackin'* (Stewart) and *The Lyke-Wake Dirge* (Katy). Adrian comprehensively rejected everything from armour to spats in favour of woad in *The National Anthem of the Ancient Britons*, while Mary's gullible heroine clothed the soldier equally comprehensively from head to foot (*Soldier, soldier, won't you marry me?*) John referred to the ball dresses of 'the fine ladies in London' (*Mountains of Mourne*). At the other end of the social scale, Alan Jefferson and Charlie Chomse described the rags of the marginalised in (respectively) *Streets of London* and *To the begging I will go*.

Perhaps it wasn't surprising that some of the contributions were a shade risqué: Ruth's protagonist discarded pyjamas and nighties to sleep with *Nothing on at all*; Phil's Uncle Jasper in his wellies went *Prancing with Ewes*; Anne admired through *The keyhole in the door* as a soldier removed his uniform. Terry complained that modern football is *All fur coat and no knickers*, but hastened to assure us that he meant it metaphorically. Janet sang of the misadventures of *The Handsome Cabin Boy* as 'a cautionary tale on the dangers of cross-dressing'!

We next meet on **Tuesday 16th May at 8.30pm in The Howard Arms, Brampton**. The theme will be 'dwelling places' – from palace to caravan... anyone know any songs about house boats? **ALL WELCOME!**

FOLK SESSION – Howard Arms, Brampton

The folk session met in the Howard Arms on 16th May to make music, sing and recite on the theme of 'dwelling places'.

Quite a lot of people developed the theme along the lines of home and homesickness. Ruth longed for *The Old Folks at Home*, Phil's *Norland Wind* brought him news from Angus whereas Janet described the *Hickory Wind* that was 'calling her home' to South Carolina. Steve complained that it was a *Long way from Clare to here* and Sam rejoiced to be *Back home again*. Still greater was the rejoicing of Joyce Grenfell's nursery school teacher seeing her charges depart in the *Going Home Time* sketch, which Ruth recited in full.

We visited the USA with Sam and Alan Clark's rousing *Oklahoma home* that 'blowed away' and Australia with Peter's recitation of *Now I'm Easy*, contrasting the poor farm with the 'sewered suburban block'. Adrian, revealing his skill as an instrumentalist on melodeon, took us to *Portsmouth* ('because people live there'-well, you can't argue with that!)

Sally sang of cramped and impoverished living conditions in Harvey Andrew's *Unaccompanied*, while Alan commemorated *Oakey's strike evictions* and Mary grieved over the policies that moved people from old terraced housing to high-rise flats in *Room in the sky*. Janet on the other hand satirised suburbia in *Little Boxes*.

It's impressive how many dwelling places are mentioned in song: no home at all (*Tramps and Hawkers* – Sally); prison (*I wish there were no prisons* – Adrian); a bordello (*House of the Rising Sun* – Alan); a cabin (*Hard times, come again no more* – Katy); a lighthouse (*The Man at the Nore* – Adrian); an ancestral seat (*Lord Derwentwater's Farewell* – Phil); tents and caravans (*Thirty-foot trailer* – Phil); a castle and a mansion (*Gipsy Rover* – Mary). Not to mention the train in which *Thelma the Thrush* (Mary) built her nest!

We next meet on **Tuesday 20th June at 8.30pm in the Howard Arms**. The theme will be 'seaside' (including of course shipwrecks, homecoming vessels, departing sailors etc). **ALL WELCOME!**

FOLK SESSION – Howard Arms, Brampton

With hot sunny weather predominating, expectations were for a low turn-out on such a balmy June evening, nevertheless nine singers and musicians descended on the Howard Arms for the monthly third Thursday session. Later in the evening we were joined by a troop of visiting Spaniards who are walking the Hadrian's Wall Path. This led to the rare situation of an audience that outnumbered the performers.

The theme for the evening was "seaside". But an audience could have believed the theme "places" were a focus. Blackpool in Mary's "Blackpool Belle" and Ruth's *Albert and the Lion*; Sally's *Whitby Harbour*; Frank's *Trip to Skye* that involves passing through Kyle of Lochalsh, (alas no longer a place to queue for the ferry). Also, Mingulay, and then Liverpool, *Liverpool Judies*, and *The Leaving of*, Alan; Mary again with *Bowness Bay* (even though it's not strictly seaside – but that's a "mere" detail); Greenock in *Johnny Todd*, Peterhead in *Bonny Ship the Diamond*, together with Ghajn Tuffheija Bay in *Sammy's Bar*, Phil. Last but not least, *Cartagena* (Frank dug this up from his extensive repertoire in honour of our Spanish guests).

There was mention of Vin Garbutt's recent passing and Steve sang the Keith Hancock song *Absent Friends* in memory, while Frank, brilliantly emulating Vin's Teeside accent, told a good North-South divide story. Janet stuck to the theme throughout with *Sand and Foam*, *Sea of Heartbreak* and *La Mer*. The inconstancy of the Cornish pasty salesman by the dockyard wall was revealed by Sally.

We had some rousing choruses. Anne with *Fiddlers Green* and also *Spanish Ladies*, the latter for our guest audience. Without even a tenuous link to the theme she also took us along to a *Bog Down in the Valley*. Mary had the rafters ringing in *What Shall we do with a Drunken Sailor*. Ruth came out in her *Itsy Bitsy Teeny Weeny Yellow Polka Dot Bikini*, to the delight of the Spaniards who gustily joined in.

The folk session meets next month on **the 18th July at 8.30pm in The Howard Arms, Brampton**. The theme will be – "Time", with the possibility of extending this to "Seasons" if you are stumped for ideas. **ALL WELCOME!**

FOLK SESSION – Howard Arms, Brampton

The theme was 'time' and the ways of approaching it were varied and creative, when we met in The Howard Arms on 18th July. But to dispose of the inevitable pun straight away! – Anne sang *Scarborough Fair* ('parsley, sage rosemary and *thyme*') and Phil followed it up with *Bonny Bunch of Thyme*.

Mary entertained us with *My Grandfather's Clock* (with rousing chorus) while Phil, on a more serious note, advised us to *Watch the clock* and make the most of time and life.

There were quite a few songs and poems that referred to times of the day and night, seasons, months and dates. U A Fanthorpe's poem, *Half-past two* (recited by Ruth) was the most precise; Janet's times ranged from *Walking after midnight* to *Bonny at Morn*; Maddy *Bid you good night* and Anne worked her way through a lifetime in *Dawn of the Day*; Alan Jefferson's *Manchester Rambler* wooed his sweetheart 'from April till June'. Ruth told us that *Summer suns are glowing* (appropriately enough to the tune 'Ruth'). *Barrett's Privateers* (Katy) specified the year – 1778 – when the unfortunate narrator went to sea.

Some of the songs referred to periods of time: Stan Rodgers' *Well met again, lock-keeper* (sung by Angus) mentions a year, a day, an hour. Steve dovetailed *Sally Gardens* with Housman's *When I was one-and-twenty*.

From the passage of time to nostalgia and regret is a natural transition. Maddy's *Heart like a wheel*; Janet's *Once I had a sweetheart* and Steve's *Valley of Strathmore* all grieved for times past and lost love. *I wish I was in Glasgow* (Angus) reflected on the passage of time and loss, and *Freeborn Man* (Alan) noted the disappearance of a whole way of life. More accepting of time and mutability were *Turn, turn, turn* (Mary) reminding listeners that 'to everything there is a season', and Tennyson's *Crossing the Bar* (Maddy).

The next Brampton folk session takes place on **Tuesday 15th July at 8,30pm in The Howard Arms, Brampton**. The theme will be 'clothing'. **ALL WELCOME!**

FOLK SESSION – Howard Arms, Brampton

We had a packed session on 15th August, with a wealth of contributors and a friendly sprinkling of listeners. It was a particular pleasure to welcome Tony, visiting from Yorkshire with his accordion, and Ray who had not visited us for some time.

Our theme was 'clothing'. Phil sang *Big Knicker Blues* and Ruth read her autobiographical poem *Small Knickers* (subtitle: *How I was put off knitting*) but otherwise we were most restrained, considering what possibilities folk music offers! We sang about fine clothes and ragged clothes, work clothes and uniforms. *James James Morrison Morrison W George Dupree's* mother 'put on a golden gown' (Anne); Angus on banjo-ukulele mentioned fur and diamond rings in *Has anybody seen my girl?*; *Magdalene McGillivray* recalled 'the graceful swirl of long skirts' (Steve). Janet on the other hand remembered *The coat of many colours* sewn together from rags; the heroine's clothing in *Old Penny Whistle* was 'faded and plain' (Miriam), and Tony found references both to landladies in their silk gowns and to 'britches out at the knees' in *Silly Drunkard*.

Miners' work clothes featured in *Schooldays Over* (Sally) and *Blackleg Miner* (Maddy), and (by implication at least) in *Cousin Jack* (Ray) while Adrian reminded us of the functional 'old leather britches' of *George Fox*. As for uniforms, we had the *Lancashire Lads* dressed in scarlet (Dave); the green- and black-coated regiments in *Dolly* (Eliza), *The Green Plaid* (Katy) and perhaps, at a pinch, the woad-covered heroes of *The National Anthem of the Ancient Britons* (Mary).

A lot of people found splendid, rousing chorus songs with a 'clothes' theme. We demanded *Donald, whaur's yer troosers?* with Alan; yodelled *The Happy Wanderer* with Mary (the song mentions a hat); regretted a misspent youth in *Yellow Handkerchief* (Maddy) and sentimentalised over *The Galway Shawl* (Steve).

We next meet on **Tuesday, 19th September** in **The Howard Arms, Brampton, at 8.30pm**. The theme will be '**occupations**' (eg tinker, tailor, soldier sailor...)

And for anyone who likes to be really organised, the theme for October will be 'tools and utensils'. So you can start planning now...

FOLK SESSION – Howard Arms, Brampton

Thank you to everyone who turned out on 19th September to sing and play in spite of the chill caused by non-functioning radiators in the Howard Arms! A particular welcome to newcomer Christine, joining us from Haltwhistle.

The theme was ‘occupations’. Frank, on diatonic accordion, and Alan Clark on guitar were our instrumentalists for the evening and both found occupation-related tunes: *Bonny Pit Lad* (Frank) and Alan’s own tune *Specks in me eyes* (aka *The Blacksmith’s Ditty*).

There were of course lots of songs about the traditional occupations. Mining was represented by *The Springhill Disaster* (Sally) and the poignant environmental protest song *Black Water* (Christine); weaving by *The Music of the Loom* (Phil); fishing by *The Manx Fishermen’s Evening Hymn* (Ruth). Frank assured us that his tune *La Regina di Piazza Angelio* was inspired by (ahem) the oldest profession, as is *The House of the Rising Sun* (Angus). Eliza managed to mention farmers, drovers, weavers, ploughmen, pedlars and soldiers in *The Trysting Fair at Falkirk*. The pros and cons of lorry driving featured in *Champion at keeping them rolling* (Phil) and *Eighteen wheels and a dozen red roses* (Christine).

On the other hand, people had been very ingenious in finding more unexpected occupations. Dave came up with the most specialist trade of them all in *The Old Figurehead Carver*. Christine’s song *Like an old-fashioned waltz* featured Hollywood stars (well yes, there’s no denying that it’s a job). Eliza argued that knighthood was an occupation (*False knight on the road*). Sam urged *Mothers, don’t let your babies grow up to be cowboys*. But why should glamorous jobs have all the best tunes? Mary found a song about *The Receptionist* and Sam sang the touching *Cookie and Lila*, about a romance between a cook and a barmaid.

The theme inspired some tall tales: Alan Jefferson and Mary told us about *The Lancashire Toreador* and *Ernie* (who ‘drove the fastest milk-cart in the west’), outdone, however, by the even taller tale from Phil that *The first man on the moon was a Cumbrian*.

We next meet in **The Howard Arms, Brampton, at 8.30pm on Tuesday 17th October**. The theme will be ‘tools and utensils’ (hammers; ploughs, brooms; spinning wheels...anyone know a song that features wooden spoons or knitting needles?) **ALL WELCOME!**

FOLK SESSION – Howard Arms, Brampton

The atmosphere at the folk session on 17th October was wonderfully cheerful and warm (in both senses - the heating was working this month). The theme was 'tools and utensils', and it was a pleasure to welcome Paul, visiting from Hamburg, and Stew, who was persuaded to pause in his glass-collecting and give us a song or two.

The theme was 'tools and utensils', ranging in size from *Windmills* (a morris tune played by Adrian on melodeon) and *Big Red Combine Harvester* (Sally) down to spark plugs and tin tacks in Christine's *Shed in the Garden*. Mining tools such as picks and shovels were well represented, implicitly or explicitly, in *The Big Hower* (Stew); *Jowl, jowl and listen lad/Rap it t'bank* (Phil); *Biker Hill* (Angus). So were domestic implements: brooms in Anne's *Lish Young Buy-a-Broom*; keys in the poem *Locking the Church Door* (Ruth); cans, pans, saucepans, pots, kettles and even a cauldron in, respectively, *Man is for the Woman made* (Ruth); *Sospan Fach* (Katy) and *Cutty Wren* (Eliza); while Christine's heroine was *Dashing away with the smoothing Iron*.

Agriculture and the sea did pretty well too. *I will go with my Father a-ploughing* (Eliza) features the 'cleaving [plough-]share' and scythe. *Old Fid* (Dave) had a rousing chorus involving marlinspikes and fids; *If Wishes were Fishes* (Angus) mentioned fishing nets; *Hamburger Veer Master* (Paul) is about four-masted ships.

Other ingenious references to tools and implements included the cromach (walking stick) in *The Road to the Isles* (Alan Jefferson); the watering can in *The Man that Waters the Workers' Beer* (Adrian). Phil's parody *The Road to Penrith*, laden with double meanings, included a fan belt, a gearstick, a handbrake, a spanner...and as for *Maids when you're young (never wed an Old Man)* as sung by Anne...yes, well, let's not go there. For sheer cheeky, tortuous cleverness, though, Alan Clark carried the day, with long and learned introductions full of technical jargon about the construction of chisels which ended by devious means and some puns in *A Nightingale sang in Berkeley Square* or *Wide-eyed and legless*.

The Brampton folk session next meets **on 21st November at 8.30pm in The Howard Arms**. The theme will be 'Fire'.

And for those who like to be well-prepared, the December theme will be 'earth'.

ALL WELCOME!

FOLK SESSION – Howard Arms, Brampton

'Fire' was a suitably warming theme on such a night of wind and rain as 21st November proved to be. Lots of people must have agreed, as we had an excellent turn-out and a cheerful evening. Welcome back to Bill Toy, joining us from the north-east after a long absence.

There were lots of snug and homely fires, such as *The Peat Fire Flame* (Anne), the 'cosy ingle' in *My Ain Folk* (Alan Jefferson) and the 'turf fire in a cabin' in *Galway Bay* (Sally). The hearth was a source of reverie in *Caledonia* (Terry), tender memories in Mary's poem *Brown Photographs* and domestic comfort in *The Old Arm Chair* (Phil).

But fire is a destroyer too. Sam's song about a farm burned down by lightning – simply entitled *Fire* – made the point. So did Steve's *Blantyre Explosion* (one of the worst mining disasters in British history) and Janet's haunting *The Sun is Burning*. On a more light-hearted note, Adrian sang about *When the Old Dun Cow caught fire* (no animals were maltreated in the making of this song...The Old Dun Cow is a *pub!*) and Sally found a comic song about arson – *Little Tim McGuire (who loved to play with fire)*.

Guns and cannons can be 'fired' as Alan Jefferson reminded us in *John Paul Jones*; Adrian in *The Death of Nelson* and Steve in *Blowing in the Wind*. Anne approached the warfare idea indirectly in *Will I see thee more?*

We had some clever metaphorical uses of love-as-fire. Ruth informed us *I've got my love to keep me warm*; the *Green Eyes* in Christine's song 'warm me like a fire in the night'; Terry and Steph sang a duet exquisitely interweaving *Autumn Leaves* and *Golden Leaves* to illustrate 'when the fire in a relationship ceases to burn'.

Quirkier approaches included Alan Clark warning us about the perils of *Cigarettes and Whisky and Wild, Wild Women*; Bill telling us the tragic story of *Reg the lonely glow-worm* who tried to court a cigarette butt, and Katy's song holding up *Tobacco* as a *memento mori*. Ruth recited *Tiger, Tiger, burning bright*. And *Pepper in the brandy*, Adrian's tune on melodeon, certainly sounded fiery!

We next meet at **8.30pm on Tuesday 19th December in The Howard Arms, Brampton**. The theme will be 'earth' (continuing the 'four elements'). ALL WELCOME!

FOLK SESSION – Howard Arms, Brampton

We had a lot of fun, and a large and enthusiastic turn-out on 19th December to sing, play and recite on the theme of 'earth'. A particular welcome to Charlie Chomse, back at the session after a gap of some months.

Quite a few people managed to weave 'earth' and 'Christmas' together. Adrian had us singing along to *Rolling Downwards*, in which 'the whole earth shall shout amen'; Ruth took us round the four points of the compass in *Hills of the north, rejoice* and Alan Clark's witty blues parody *Gotta get out of Bethlehem*, mentions gold 'which comes out of the earth'. Anne sang the ballad *The Carnal and the Crane* because it refers to a 'husbandman sowing his grain'. Sally recited Longfellow's poem *I heard the bells on Christmas Day*, with its 'peace on earth' motif.

Both Angus and Steve had a 'respect the planet' message in, respectively, *Only take what you need* and *Wild and wonderful* (about snow leopards). Janet, on the other hand, did a good line in songs with appropriate titles such as *Earth Angel* and *I wish I was a mole in the ground*.

Several songs celebrated fruits of the earth and those who till the earth: the narrator of *Tramps and hawkers* (Phil) has 'ploughed the bonny earth'; the hero of *Lark in the morning* (Christine) is a ploughboy; the *Man of the earth* (Terry) works his allotment following retirement, and Charlie's own song *The Copshie Farmer's Wife* is also earthy in other senses of the word! Christine rejoiced in *The old turf sod* and Katy gave thanks for forests (*Woodworker's Ballad*), while Sally grieved for *Percy the puny poinsettia*.

Mining songs were another way of developing the theme, from *Thomas Bewick's Langley Barony Mine* (Phil) through *Cousin Jack* (Steve) to the thundering anger of *Close the coal-house door* (Angus). Burial was also unexpectedly popular. *The Border Widow's Lament* (Alan Jefferson); *Nellie was a lady* (Miriam); *King Dunmail* (Anne and Alan Jefferson as a duet) all lay their protagonists in the earth, even though in Terry's black comedy, *They're moving father's grave*, the dead man doesn't get to stay there! Mary's mischievous poem *The Waif* had the heroine feigning death.

We next meet on **Tuesday, 16th January 2018 at 8.30pm in The Howard Arms, Brampton**. The theme (still working through 'the four elements') will be '**water**'. **ALL WELCOME!**