

FOLK SESSION - Howard Arms, Brampton

Although there is still 'Covid anxiety' around, the theme of 'topography' gathered a slightly larger group of performers on the 18th of January in the Howard Arms.

Some of us seemed to be competing to find the largest possible number of geographical features in one song: Gerda cited a mountain ledge, an island, rock pool, salt marsh and sand in *Dig In*; Sam mentioned highway, valley, redwood forest; Gulf Stream waters and deserts in *This land is your land*; Anne stayed local with *King Dunmail's* mountainside, mere, moor, field and plain and Phil came up with mountains, hills, crags, moorland peaks and stony ridges in *The Joy of Living*.

Various songs and one reading covered specific places. Sally sang of Arisaig and Craigmore in *The Isle of Eigg*, and Adrian followed with *The Mingulay Boat Song*; Polly found her love on *Blueberry Hill*; David read to us about the early life of the great civil engineer Thomas Telford who was born in poverty in Westerkirk, Eskdale, near Langholm. Phil (competing again?) covered most of England in *Brough Hill Fair*, gathering us in from the Chilterns, the Cheviots, the Yorkshire Moors; the Sussex Downs, the Pennines and the Norfolk Broads. Some contributors preferred to name one single, thumping great unmistakable feature, such as *The Mountains of Mourne* (Sally); *The Water of Tyne* (Polly); Cape Horn (*The Rounding of the Horn*- Katy) and *South Australia* (Adrian on melodeon).

Water features were almost as popular during the session as they were in an 18th Century nobleman's grounds: Wastwater and Windermere in *Anne's Witch of the Westmorlands*; Beaufort Sea and the Davis Straits in *Northwest Passage* (Phil); the Hudson Dam in Gerda's lyrics to *Ashokan Farewell*; sea, river and valley in *Darling Home Town* (Sam).

We next meet on 15th February in the Howard Arms, Brampton, from 8pm onwards. The theme (should be a counter-irritant for those who dislike red satin hearts and Valentine's Day!) is 'unhappy/unrequited love'. ALL WELCOME!

FOLK SESSION - Howard Arms, Brampton

Despite the threat of the impending storm Dudley, we were seventeen, plus one dog, in the upstairs lounge of The Howard this third Tuesday in February. It being the day *after* Valentine's Day, the theme was based on the negative effects of love: unrequited; lost; cheated; etc.

We welcomed Chris and Mike Leighton from across the water after a six year absence! Sally and Richard Hardaker who we know from Zoom sessions; Paul, a new arrival in the area; Chris Jones from Wall; Hillary (Aitch), all the way up from East Anglia; Martina and Giles (with four legged Crispin). This crew all joined in with the usual suspects.

On his Uilleann Pipes (unusually with a B-flat chanter), Mike described the broken love affair between a family and their country in the Irish emigration song "Green Fields of Canada". On the same theme, Chris sang "Isle of Hope, Isle of Tears", the story of Ellis Island, the gateway to America for many dispossessed peoples. Loss of loved ones featured in Aitch's "God Moves on the Water", including the poignant farewell to a Titanic sailor's wife as she leaves in the lifeboat without him. Enforced separation as a result of war. "I'll Go and Enlist for a Sailor" was the title of one of Frank's tunes on his melodeon, followed by Chris Jones' "High Germany". We all sang along with Polly about a jilted sailor in "Sally Free and Easy".

Sam was "Drinking to Forget", while Gerda was lamenting a missed lunch date with Miss Otis (unavailable because she was on the scaffold for shooting her false lover). Phil related his short, unhappy, relationship with "Peggy Gordon". "Ann O' Heathersgill" bewitched our ballad singer, Richard, but she preferred Jock the Carel, so dumped him. Paul took us to Shoreditch, lost his love to a Portuguese sailor, turned him inside-out and pushed him down a man-hole, not bad for a man of the cloth! David described the misfortune that afflicted a pair of love birds (goslings actually), who though separated in life, were together at Christmas (albeit in an oven).

The evening wouldn't have been complete without the false love of a blacksmith, "A Blacksmith Courted Me", Sally Hardaker. Meanwhile, our other Sally sang "The False Bride". Adrian followed with "The Calico Printer's Clerk", who ran away with the hapless narrator's love, Dorothy Drew.

We next meet on the 15th March in the Howard Arms, Brampton, from 8pm onwards. The theme is 'March'. Interpret that as you will – the month, the tune, or even the geographical border. ALL WELCOME!

FOLK SESSION - Howard Arms, Brampton

There were just eight folk gathered in the function room of the Howard Arms on the third Tuesday in March. Holidays in Cornwall, illness, and possibly an enhanced concern about a Covid resurgence kept some away. Nevertheless, the quality of the performances made up for it. Welcome to Ian who has just moved to the area, and Richard and Sally coming north again to be with us. We even had a couple of listeners in, escapes from the bar downstairs. The theme was "March", which proved quite tricky, although full benefit was taken of the available interpretations: the month itself; the act of military locomotion; and not forgetting the old term for the disputed national boundary of the "Debatable Lands".

An example from the Western Marches, was the border ballad, "Hughie Graeme", brilliantly sung by Richard. It tells of a horse theft undertaken as recompense for the seduction of Hughie's wife by the Bishop of Carlisle. As would be expected in these ballads, it doesn't end happily for Hughie. Phil sang the Lionel McLelland song "The Earl of March's Daughter", in keeping with the genre, not a happy ending either.

Christine sang of "Travelling Soldiers", probably very apt in the current European crisis. Gerda sang of a young lass who wanted to march away to the "Battle of the Nile" with her boyfriend. Mary read a letter about "Life in the Australian Army". The tune "March of St Timothy" played by Sally on her flute, originates from a church of that name in Detroit. Sally also, on a recorder this time, had us playing along to "Farewell to the Creeks".

The month of March hosts St Patrick's Day, and so it's reasonable to include any Irish song within the theme! Ian did just this with Mick Hanley's beautiful love song "Without the Fanfare". Sam followed this philosophy too with "The Green and Red of Mayo". Sally's flute gave us the haunting "Women of Ireland", and later "The March of the King of Laois", (in this case, ticking both boxes, an Irish connection AND a martial perambulation).

Back in March 19XX, Sam had a bad experience in a furniture warehouse in Gateshead that inspired his signature song "Lost in Ikea". After enquiring that there were no Greenpeace members present who might be upset, Phil headed out to Greenland on March the eighteenth day in search of the whale-fish. Ian would like to be able to "Play My Guitar like Tommy What's-his-Name". Gerda finished our session with "Hard Times Ain't Gonna Rule My Mind", an appropriate theme to muse on as we wend our various ways homeward.

We meet again on the 19th April in the Howard Arms, Brampton, from 8pm onwards. The theme is 'Food and Drink'. ALL WELCOME!

FOLK SESSION – Howard Arms, Brampton

We foregathered in the Howard Arms on 19th April. It was a great pleasure to see Ruth, Kath and Geoff after a long absence, and to welcome Gary for the first time. Welcome also to the people who joined us to listen to the session (we are most flattered...)

The theme was 'food and drink'. Let us start the day with Anne's poem *The Perfect Breakfast*, with its awful warning about 'being bright at breakfast time', then move on to lunch in Ruth's tragicomedy *Fishballs and Bread*, the Cornish pasty of *The Oggie Man* (Sally) and the dry-stone waller's 'good cheese to his bread' (*Tailor of the Dales* – Phil). Gary's take on wage-slavery, *Gold Watch Blues*, worked in a reference to tea breaks, as did Geoff's poem *When I was 126*, with its mention of custard creams and Rich Tea biscuits.

Phil took us shopping at *Stanley Market* for all sorts of meats, which doubtless turned up at the banquet when *John Willy's Ferret* (Anne) caused chaos at a civic function. Like the banquet, we had a fish course: *Caller Herring* (Katy); *Tiny Fish for Japan* (Gerda); and a meat course: the buck and roast goose of the *Hal an Tow* (Adrian); the roast duck dinner that Nanabush *didn't* get in Chris Jones' story and 'beef in the larder and ducks on the pond' in *Mrs Bond* (Miriam).

For dessert we had lots of fruit: *I gave my love a cherry* (Kath and Geoff); Ruth's reading from Brian Keenan's *An Evil Cradling* described vividly the colour and scent of a bowl of fruit in a cell in Lebanon. Gerda's song *Sinking Soon* provided an apple pie for dessert and followed it up with a 'wheel of cheese' for our cheese course.

Animals also got a look in. *Daddy Fox* feasted on the grey goose (Geoff and Kath); Chris, accompanying himself on Indian lap organ, sang *Lambing Storm*, involving pulling a sickly lamb through with a bottle of milk. And then there are animals that feed on us, as Miriam's *The Twa Corbies* describes.

And now for drink! Adrian on melodeon played *Pepper in the brandy*; Sally sang of importing gin, rum and tea through *Whitby Harbour*. We all joined in *The Parting Glass*, led by Kath and Geoff, and then needed to go home in the *Big Yellow Taxi* (Gary)!

We meet next month on 17th May at 8pm in the Howard Arms, Brampton, with the theme 'Clothing', to be developed as creatively as you like. ALL WELCOME!

FOLK SESSION – Howard Arms, Brampton

The Brampton folk session met on 17th May with the theme 'clothing'. It was a pleasure to see John from Whitley Bay joining us again after a long gap.

A sub-theme of 'footwear' seemed to develop early on (was there a Freudian significance in this?) *Betsy Bell and Mary Gray* (Gary) died of plague in their green shoes; Sam's *Quality Shoes* had steel toecaps; Gerda introduced sneakers, boots and 'regulation shoes' in her *Walking Song*; Anne's heroine wore golden slippers to *Dance around the spinning wheel*; Uncle Jasper, in Phil's parody *Prancing with ewes*, comes home with mud on his wellies; John envied St Peter's shoes (*Grey Funnel Line*), while the hero of the Stanley Holloway monologue, recited by Mary, suffers social opprobrium for wearing *Brahn Boots* to a funeral.

Uniform appeared on the 'manly form' of the officer whom Anne admired through the *Keyhole in the door*. Gary's heroine cursed the recruiting officer who induced her lover to wear the *Blue Cockade*, whereas in the ballads *Polly Oliver* (Ruth) and *William Taylor* (Chris) the girls put on men's apparel in order to join the army and follow their true loves. Mary's *Soldier Soldier* cunningly got himself kitted out from head to foot by his sweetheart.

We ranged through exotic to exquisite and from there to homely. Starting with the exotic, grass skirts featured when John suggested *Let's talk dirty in Hawaiian*, and huli-huli skirts in *She wears red feathers* (Ruth). Chris's ingenious shaggy dog story, *The King's Tailor*, ran through a smart suit, waistcoat, tie and button before coming to the punch-line. The *Laird of Cockpen* (Katy) wore wig, gold ring, sword, blue coat and waistcoat to go courting; Sam praised satins and silks but preferred *The Maid in the Calico Dress* and *Eli the barrow boy* (Gerda) wanted to dress his love in 'a fine robe of gold and silver' while he himself dressed in corduroy.

And let us not forget the underpinnings, so ably represented in Phil's *Big Knicker Blues*!

We next meet on **Tuesday, 21st June at 8pm in The Howard Arms** with the theme of 'water'. **ALL WELCOME!**

FOLK SESSION – Howard Arms, Brampton

An excellent turn-out did credit to the theme of ‘water’ when we met on 21st June in the Howard Arms. Welcome back to Eileen, Maddy and Sally Hardaker, whom we see all too seldom.

Our instrumentalists for the evening were Eileen on concertina, Sally Hardaker on flute and whistle, and Adrian on melodeon. Eileen showed the right (devious?) creative spirit when she played *Lord Inchiquin* ‘because there is a Lough Inchiquin’! The ‘body of water’ motif was a fruitful one: Eileen also played *Ye Banks and Braes O’ Bonny Doon* and took us *Over the sea to Skye*, while Adrian gave us *The Banks of the Dee*. Sally’s whistle took us sailing on *The Aran Boat* and her flute soothed us with *Midnight on the Water*.

This being folk music, we had of course our share of disasters and tragedies. Sally Jones set the scene with the *Ellan Vannin*, shipwrecked in 1909 in the Irish Sea, followed by Gary with the *Yarmouth Castle* (burned and sank in 1965 off the Bahamas) and the *Edmund Fitzgerald* (sank in Lake Superior in 1975). Gerda, on the other hand, did manage to find a grimly humorous side to maritime disaster in *Sinking Soon!* The protagonist of Chris Jones’ *Man of War* longed to be a farmer again, and the bride in Maddy’s *All Things Are Quite Silent* grieved for her husband snatched by the press-gang. The song simply entitled *Water* (Katy) by Dutch songwriter Jan van de Velde, commemorated the 1800 people who died in Zeeland in the 1953 flood. Christine and Mary both raised the subject of pollution, Christine in the moving (and true) *Black Waters*, Mary more light-heartedly in the parody *Bo’ness Bay*.

But not all was gloom! Sam praised simple country living in his ever-so-slightly tongue-in-cheek *Give me clean water*. Adrian demonstrated the resilience of the British tar in the music-hall number *Married to a Mermaid*. Phil described technology as it relates to the beauties of upland nature, firstly in *Settle to Carlisle* (which worked in steam, rain and icicles), and then in the wistful *The Lark Across the Vapour Trail* (water in the form of vapour). Ruth cheered us up with the prospect of only having *One More River (and that’s the river of Jordan)* to cross. And water is also the occasion of enjoyment and fun: Gerda celebrated the *Fermoy Regatta*; Sam made us laugh with the apocryphal story of *The Silloth Submarine*; *The Minstrel* (Christine) was about a boat that was the singer’s first and only love.

But the last word was with Chris, who took us firmly *Marching Inland*, as far away from the sea as we could get!

We next meet on **19th July, in The Howard Arms, Brampton, at 8pm**. The theme will be ‘relatives’ – so brush up those songs about your Grandfather’s Clock, Granny’s Hieland Hame and the ballads about wicked uncles and jealous sisters. ALL WELCOME!

FOLK SESSION – Howard Arms, Brampton

In defiance of a record heatwave, we met in the Howard Arms on 19th July to make music and merriment on the theme of ‘relatives’.

To start with instrumental music, Sally Hardaker on recorder gave us *Uncle Bernard’s Polka*, *Uncle Jim’s Barn Dance*, and *Twin Sisters*, while Adrian on melodeon played *Father’s Polka* and *Haste to the Wedding* (because ‘a wedding is probably the biggest gathering of relatives’).

Although there was plenty of celebration of family, some songs were both dark and sad: a mother grieving over her son damaged by war (*My Son John* – Gary); successive generations struggling through conflicts from the Boer War to Vietnam (*Old Man’s Song* – Sally Jones); the threat to our children posed by nuclear war (*Crow on the Cradle* – Adrian); the bitter family splits that followed the 1984 miners’ strike (*These Coal Town Days* – Geoff); and perhaps darkest of all, *Among the Gorse* (Gerda).

Before you assume that the whole evening was suicidally depressing, we also sang along cheerfully to *Dance to thy Daddy* (Polly) and the tall tales of *My Grandfather’s Clock* (Geoff); *Granny’s Old Arm Chair* (Phil); and *Grandma’s Feather Bed* (Kathleen and Geoff). We enjoyed David’s true story of *The Three Aunties* (being introduced to his future in-laws) and the Stanley Holloway monologue *The Runcorn Ferry* (Richard) about the further adventures of the Ramsbottom family. Sam celebrated the link between the generations in *Old Land (the Road to Aberdeen)* and in his own song *The Flame*.

Some songs centred on relatives-by-marriage: the heroine of *Eighteen Years Old* (Gerda) demands that her mother find her a husband; the hero of *Little Bridget Flynn* (Kathleen) intends to marry the girl he likes in spite of his parents’ plans for his future; the father in Richard’s song simply asks *Treat me daughter decent*; the narrator of *Robin Tamson’s Pet* (Katy) ends up with a father-in-law and stepfather in the same person.

And then there are the more – ahem – irregular forms of family life. Hordes of unexpected half-siblings turning up to *Dad’s Funeral* (Phil); the extremely tangled parentage revealed in *Johnny be Fair* (Sally Jones); the unfortunate maidservant and her baby in *The Bedmaking* (Gary). Knowing folk music, it’s surprising we didn’t have more along these lines!

We next meet on **Tuesday 16th August at 8pm in the Howard Arms, Brampton**. The theme will be ‘metal’ (gold, silver, lead, iron, steel, brass...or maybe things made out of metal? People who work with metal?) **ALL WELCOME!**

FOLK SESSION – Howard Arms, Brampton

On Tuesday 16th August we saw a packed room when we met for the Brampton folk session. A warm welcome to new faces Jane, John and Mark, and ‘welcome back’ to Hazel and Ali whom we have not seen for some years.

The theme was ‘metal’. Let us start with the more unusual ones: Phil pulled out all the stops to find ‘beryllium’ and ‘uranium’ in his tall tale *The First Man on the Moon was a Cumbrian*. John showed the right devious approach when he sang *Thousands or More* on the grounds that it was a *Copper* family song (!) and Jane’s was still more circuitous: the leaves of thyme (*Let no man steal your thyme*) contain copper chlorophyll. Anne found a mention of brass in *I’ll have a collier for my sweetheart* and Ali sang *The Nickel Song*. Chris warned us of the importance of iron as protection against the fairies in his story about the farm servant abducted by the Good Folk.

Tin was represented by Adrian in *The National Anthem of the Ancient Britons* and by Richard in the Stanley Holloway monologue *The Recumbent Posture*. Steel popped up in *The Wreck of the Edmund Fitzgerald* (Gary); *Dirty Old Town* (Mary); and was central to the life and death of the ‘steel-driving man’ *John Henry* (Sam). Lead was quite popular: *Thomas Bewick’s Langley Barony Mine* (Phil) found lead in Northumberland, while the child workers in the lead mine earn *Fourpence a Day* (Richard). Adrian parodied Piaf’s *Les Trois Cloches* with the story of the lead-stealing *Jimmy Brown*.

Lots of contributions included metal by implication, such as the rusty plough in *The Star of the County Down* (Hazel); the forges and furnaces of *A Dalesman’s Litany* (Sally Jones); *Bonny James Campbell’s sword* (Ali), and *A Blacksmith Courted Me* (Anne).

Not surprisingly, there was a preponderance of silver and gold, whether as hard coin, symbolism or colours. Kathleen’s heroine leaves ‘her golden show’ for *The Raggle-Taggle Gypsies*; the little boy in *The Kye have come hame* (Katy) has ‘gold ringlets’; Geoff lamented that he was beginning to find *Silver in the Stubble*; Gerda bade *Farewell to the Gold* and warned off a young man with the threat of a *Silver Dagger*. Nature’s colours glowed in *Land of the Silver Birch* (Mary) and Sally Jones’ *Come by the Hills* which mentions gold bracken. Sam managed a double hit with a Shel Silverstein song *Queen of the Silver Dollar!* The hero of *Sovay* (Hazel) delivers his silver to a highwayman but refuses to hand over his gold ring.

Our instrumentalists for the evening were Mark on whistle and Sally Hardaker on recorder and flute. Mark led the other instrumentalists in the Cornish tune (*T*)*innisheer*. He also found a ‘metal’ theme in *The Pig Track* (pig iron). Sally found gold (*Golden Slippers*); silver (*Silver Spear*) and copper (*The Old Copper Plate*).

We next meet on 20th September at 8pm in The Howard Arms, Brampton. The theme will be ‘land’ (in contradistinction from the theme of ‘water’ that we had 2 months ago), to be developed in any way that takes your fancy: agriculture; burial; mining; landed gentry; sailors returning to shore... ALL WELCOME!

FOLK SESSION – Howard Arms, Brampton

The theme, in honour of autumn and harvest, was 'land' when we met in the Howard Arms on 20th September. A warm welcome to Dave from Hamilton, joining us in person for the first time.

There are of course various ways of tackling the idea of 'land'. All credit to Mary who was the only person to use it as a verb, in her tall tale *The Martians have landed in Wigan*. Sam and Dave both invoked emotional and metaphorical landscapes in, respectively, *Heartland* and *Neverland*. 'Land' can also mean a country or nation, so we heard songs about Egypt and Rome (*The Queen of Egypt* – Jane); England and Spain (*Spanish Ladies* – Phil); *High Germany* (Anne) and Scotland (*Hill Days* – Richard's song about Munro-bagging!). Land ownership, wealth, poverty and dispossession featured in *The Diggers* (John) and *This Land is Your Land* (Sam) and, humorously, in the monologue *Magna Charter* (Richard).

We ranged from the bleak, barren farmland of the Borders (*Bewcastle* - John) to the heat of the American deep south (*Mississippi, You're on my Mind* - Gerda) and the fertile lands of Indiana (*Farewell, Indiana* – Phil). We celebrated crops in Sally Jones' *Ripe and Bearded Barley*, Adrian's *Peas, Beans, Oats and the Barley* and Katy's *Wheat*. Sally Jones' *Inch by Inch* looked forward to making her 'garden grow', while the men who work the land were lauded in *The Guist Ploughman* (Chris); Sally Hardaker's tune on flute (*Curly-Headed Ploughboy*); Adrian's harvest home song, *Drink, Boys, Drink*, and Chris's song about the farmer who leaves the land to serve as a *Man of War*.

Topography was popular: Gerda took us to the land beside the sea with its saltmarsh and sand in *Thrift*. We heard about low-lying land in Anne's *Rattling Bog*, contrasting with hills in Dave's own song *Calton Hill*; Jane's recitation of her poem *Eycott Hill in May*; Adrian's tune on melodeon *Ladder Hill*; Sally's tunes on flute *The Mist-Covered Mountains of Home* followed by *Si Beag Si Mor* ('Little Fairy Hill, Big Fairy Hill').

We meet on **18th October at 8pm in The Howard Arms, Brampton**, with the theme 'Sky' (completing our recent run of 'water' and 'land' themes) – so any tunes/poems/songs about aircraft, birds, sun, moon stars etc or be devious and ingenious! ALL WELCOME!

FOLK SESSION – Howard Arms, Brampton

To complete our set, over recent months, of ‘water, land, sky’, we had the theme of ‘sky’ when we met in the Howard Arms on 18th October. A warm welcome to Margi, making her debut among us, and to Liz, re-joining us after several years.

For what appeared at first to be quite a difficult subject, we came up with an impressive range of material that mentioned the sky itself: *Northern Sky* (Jane); grey skies in *Biggest Little River* (Alan) and a brooding sky in *The Lark Across the Vapour Trail* (Phil). Then we had various activities, plausible or otherwise, in the sky. Adrian, on melodeon, played *The Old Woman Tossed Up in a Basket*, who swept the cobwebs out of the sky; Sally Jones looked forward to *That Perfect Folk Club in the Sky*. Liz in *Dona Dona* looked towards the swallow winging its way through the sky; Richard heard the ‘larks in the sky’ *In Summertime on Bredon* and Chris found a nightingale in *One May Morning early*.

And let us not forget the sneaky introduction of the Isle of Skye: the thin and bony cattle from Skye in *The Lads of the Fair* (Phil) and *The Skye Boat Song*, played on whistle by Sally Hardaker!

The moon featured generously, from Gerda’s song about the hard life led by *The Man in the Moon*, through the moon landing (contrasted with poverty and deprivation on earth) in *Armstrong* (Sam), to a full moon in *After the Gold Rush* (Anne), a ‘swollen, silver moon’ *Far from any Road* (Liz) and a *Harvest Moon* (Alan). Sally Hardaker on whistle celebrated *The Moon and Seven Stars*.

Anne and Sam both worked in planets – Sam complained that *Linda Goes to Mars*, while Venus (the ‘evening star’) guided the farmer home in *Day’s End* (Anne). A rising sun featured in *Country Life* (Chris) and an absence of sun in Gerda’s *California Blue*; references to the sun popped up in Adrian’s *Crow on the Cradle* and in Mary’s *Bread and Fishes*. Sally Jones proved to us that she could *Sing a Rainbow*, in the popular children’s song. Stars shone and faded in Jane’s *Dream a Little Dream of Me* and ‘keeked doon atween’ the bare branches of trees at *Hallowe’en* (Katy).

Both Ruth and Margi ‘thought big’, with magnificent poems, Addison’s *The Spacious Firmament on High* (Ruth) and W B Yeats’ ‘the heavens’ embroidered cloth’ (Margi).

We next meet on **15th November at 8pm in the Howard Arms, Brampton**, with the theme of ‘Towns and Cities’ – any song, tune, poem, story that mentions a town or city by name. **ALL WELCOME!**

FOLK SESSION – Howard Arms, Brampton

We thoroughly enjoyed ourselves on 15th November in the Howard Arms, having fun with the theme of ‘towns and cities’.

Richard, Sally Hardaker and Adrian were our instrumentalists for the evening, taking us to *Rothbury* (Sally on tin whistle); *Portsmouth* (Adrian on melodeon); the *Carlisle Races* (Sally on flute) and to meet the *Flowers of Edinburgh* (Sally and Richard on tin whistle). And congratulations to Richard on his first performance on whistle in the Howard Arms!

Starting in Cumbria and moving south: Mary’s song *Windermere* complained humorously about the problems of sailing on that overcrowded lake, and Richard described a happy encounter with a *Lish Young Buy-a-Broom* in Kirkby Stephen. Yorkshire and historic Lancashire were both well-represented. Sam recalled his Bradford youth in *Teens*; Richard sang us the history of his great-uncle who went from Halifax to die in the trenches (*The Ballad of John Willie Stell*). *Spencer the Rover* (Jane) experienced a change of heart near Rotherham; John got us singing along with gusto to the none-too-serious war song, *The Battle of Sowerby Bridge*. Moving west to Lancashire, Mary recalled the days of riding the train, *The Blackpool Belle*; Adrian gave a rollicking performance of the risqué music-hall number *The Rawtenstall Annual Fair*. *Bold Riley* (John) sails from Liverpool for Bengal Bay. (Note: prior to 1974, Liverpool was part of the county of Lancashire...just in case anyone was going to pull me up on my geography!)

Moving to the Midlands, Gary sang the nonsense song *Nottamun Town*, and Jane gave us *The King of Rome* (which is actually about a homing pigeon from Derby!) Then on south again, with Sam singing in praise of *London Pride* and Gary reminding us of the darker side of city life in *Streets of London*. Down into the south-west, and Adrian listed the towns and parishes in Devon that took part in *The Northlew Bellinging*; the frigate Amphitrite sailed from Plymouth when *Rounding the Horn* (Katy) and two brothers murdered their sister’s sweetheart in *Bruton Town* (Gary).

Across the Irish Sea, Chris pursued the *Spanish Lady* through the streets of Dublin, and Gerda longed to be in *Carrickfergus* with her love.

Off to more far-flung locations: Chris’s story, *Mrs Hare’s Lucky Day*, comes from Nairobi, radiating desert heat. We went to Monterey in California with Alan (*Don’t Blame the Motorman*); with John to Trenchtown in Jamaica (*No woman, No Cry*); and with Gerda to *Lafayette* in Louisiana (in Cajun French, doubly exotic!). Alan, in *Cargoes*, found a city even more remote in time than in place: Nineveh, capital of ancient Assyria.

We next meet on **20th December in the Howard Arms, Brampton, at 8pm**. The theme will be ‘Christmas/Winter’. **ALL WELCOME!**

FOLK SESSION – Howard Arms, Brampton

Festive feeling was in the air when we gathered in the Howard Arms on 20th December to celebrate the theme of ‘Christmas/Winter’. A warm welcome to Fi on fiddle, joining us for the first time, and welcome back to Steve whom we have not seen for far too long.

Fi set us off in chilly mode with *Snowy Path* on fiddle and followed it later with *Ice on the Water* and *Maison de Glace* (brrrr). Other wintry instrumental tunes included *Dance of the Snowmen* on flute and the Welsh tune *Holly* on whistle (both Sally Hardaker). Adrian warmed us up with a medley of Christmas carols on melodeon (*Good Christian Men, Rejoice; Joy to the World; While Shepherds Watched* etc).

The chilly atmosphere continued with *Winter Winds* (Gary); *Urge for Going* (Jane), about a love who moves on as winter closes in; the old, cold, embers of the year, in Gerda’s *Winding Road*; the frost and snow that can be ignored *When a Man’s in Love* (Richard) and the vicissitudes of a snowman’s life in Phil’s *It’s Cold Being a Snowman*. John yearned for warmer climes on a winter’s day in *California Dreamin’*. Steve chased the dark away in his own song about loss, *I Light a Candle for You* and Gary’s *Pussy Willow, Cat-tails* was similarly inspired by ‘harsh nights and candlelights’. Phil’s *Halsway Carol* urges us to ‘sing for the coming of the longest night’ and Anne’s *The King* celebrates Twelfth Night.

We had a very pleasing mixture of carols, both folk and conventional: on the ‘conventional’ front, John gave us *Sweet Chiming Bells* and Steve sang *In the Bleak Midwinter*; on the ‘folk’ side, we heard the 16th Century Spanish carol *Riu Riu Chiu* from Jane; the American *Rolling Downwards* from Adrian; *The Sans Day Carol* from Katy; *The Truth Sent from Above* (Richard) and *The Carnal and the Crane* (Anne). Sally brought us more up to date with the 1960s carol *Do You Hear What I Hear?*

Unusual ‘takes’ on the Christmas theme included Alan’s parody *Christmastime* and his novel treatment of the Flight into Egypt, *Gotta get out of Bethlehem*. Mary made us laugh with the catastrophes that occurred at *The School Nativity Play*, and Sally complained that *There are no Lights on our Christmas Tree*. Gerda and John both showed the right creative spirit in their choice of material: Gerda sang *Arthur McBride* because the events of the song happened on Christmas morning; John, still more deviously, gave us *Santa Georgia* because of the mention of ‘Santa’! Mary celebrated the gastronomic side of Christmas with the tall tale of *Sam’s Christmas Pudding* (Peninsular War).

And finally, all the instrumentalists played us out with a mixture of well-known carols which the singers tried to keep up with!

We next meet on **17th January at 8pm in The Howard Arms, Brampton**, with the theme of ‘Food and Drink’. **ALL WELCOME!**

For those who like to prepare well in advance, we have also decided on the theme of ‘Animals’ for the February session.