

## FOLK SESSION – Howard Arms, Brampton

Many thanks to everyone who turned out to lift the darkness of winter with music and song on 21<sup>st</sup> January in the Howard Arms, on the theme of 'Scotland/all things Scottish'. A particular welcome to Ruby on accordion, joining us for the first time, and Charlie on fiddle, back after a long absence.

We had a rich variety of instrumental music. Ruby and Charlie kicked off with *Loch Lomond; Coming through the Rye* and *Ye Banks and Braes* and continued later with the music hall delights, *The Northern Lights of Old Aberdeen* and *I Belong to Glasgow*. Adrian on melodeon found devious Scottish links for his tunes: *Duncan McGillivray* is a Canadian tune written for the Scottish pipes, and *The Banks of the Dee* is an English morris tune about a Scottish river! Sally Hardaker on recorder played *Flatwater Fran* (Scottish composer) and *Da Lounge Bar* (a Shetland tune). She and Richard on tin whistle joined together in the waltz, *Alloa House*. Charlie gave us some fine solos (in which all the other instrumentalists in the room joined): *Major Graham of Inchbrackie* and *Lady Baddinscough's Reel*.

Our pretext for the theme was the approach of Burns' Night, so Les wrote *Burns Night Blues* for the occasion. Gerda sang a revamped version of *Go Fetch to Me a Pint o' Wine*. In more traditional mode, Richard commemorated Burns' brief visits to the Highlands with *My Heart's in the Highlands*; Jane lamented that *It Was a' for our Rightful King* and Katy celebrated the birth of *Ranting, Roving Robin*.

Nostalgia and homesickness are popular among Scots abroad, so Steve longed to return to *Caledonia* and, more specifically, to the *Valley of Strathmore*. John's *Hearts of Olden Glory* looked back to Scotland's past, while Sally longed for her lost love on *The Isle of Eigg*. On a lighter note, the *Skyscraper Wean* (Charles) regretted moving to a 20-storey flat.

Seduction and romantic love are widespread subjects in any country! Sometimes tragic: *Mary Hamilton* (Sally) was hanged for infanticide; *Bogie's Bonny Belle* (Chris) was separated from the father of her child; the heroine of *Fear a Bhata* (Gerda) waits with dwindling hope for her lover's return. Phil decided he preferred a drinking companion to his *Star of the Bar*. A happier outcome awaited the young couple who spent the night at *Rarie's Hill* (Gerda); Alan invited his sweetheart to pick *Wild Mountain Thyme* (and generated some brisk discussion about whether the song is Scottish or Irish!) and Jane's hero wished he were a *Baron's Heir* in order to lavish riches on his beloved.

Some connections were ... tenuous. John sang the hymn *Only Remembered* because its author was a Free Kirk minister; *Skimbleshanks the Railway Cat* (Charles) rides the night train to Dumfries; *Oud Rimbant* (Anne) alludes to the alleged parsimony of the Scottish people; Les's *Crystal Dragon of Eryri* takes us right round the British Isles; Alan's *People Get Ready* was squeezed in because it had been covered by Rod Stewart 'who has a Scottish surname'. Phil's *Best of the Barley* tells the story of a Falkirk man who hustled for survival in the USA during the Depression and Chris, quite frankly, cheated with his folktale *Eilidh and the Banshees* (were the banshees on holiday from Ireland, Chris?)

We next meet in the **Howard Arms, Brampton, at 8pm on 18<sup>th</sup> February** with the theme 'Stories/Storytellers'. **ALL WELCOME!**