

If Music Be The Food Of Love Results

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Enjoyment, participation, discipline and sometimes boisterous community singing are words that can be associated with culture. I treasure many songbooks including the Labour party one that includes *The Man that Waters the Worker's Beer*. The *winesforthepeople* blog suggests comparisons with some wines.

The Daily Express collection of songs was not needed by the 100,000 who would sing at Wembley before the Cup Final. In those days, people knew the words and the choruses or chants were acceptable to all.

But for the social distancing, our family and friends would have an evening around a log fire singing old favourites. Everyone knew whom Lloyd George knew, each child could sing bubbles to the sky and their introduction to vintage was through the trampling of the grapes of wrath.

One year there was a garden performance of *HMS Pinafore*. The person who sang *For He Is An Englishman* was French, the chorus was a collection of sisters, cousins and aunts and as the captain demoted to seaman I ended in the arms of an elderly widow who had not held a man since her husband died in bed 15 years earlier.

There was a running August story about singing traditional words from James Thomson's poem set to music by Thomas Arne. The tune for *Rule, Britannia* comes from the 1740 masque about Alfred the Great who died in 899: the king's statue in the Royal Gallery at the Palace of Westminster shows him holding a long ship as a symbol of resisting the Vikings. The Scottish lyricist can be credited with helping to make a stronger Britain from the English, Irish, Welsh and the Scots. Where is the follow up about 1066 when three Viking descendants disputed the English throne?

James Thomson's earlier tragedy was about a Carthaginian princess who killed herself rather than submit to becoming a slave to the Romans. You may agree this was in mind for the refrain that Britons never will be slaves. Popular adaptation repeated the never twice more.

William Shakespeare used music in his plays. In 1602's *Twelfth Night* he has the Duke of Orsino declaim: *If music be the food of love, play on/ Give me excess of it, that surfeiting/ The appetite may sicken, and so die . .*

Excess eating may or may not remove an appetite for food. We can doubt that too much music would cure the Duke's obsession with love. When I sing, the audience tires before I do. Perhaps I should serenade the London protestors.

At the previous Extinction blockade, protestors lost their composure when I counted rather too loudly the plastic bottles lying around them. One was upset when I read airline labels on the rucksacks: they had flown 4,700 miles overnight from Vancouver in western Canada. That shows dedication to a sit-in. If they can take a little ribbing, let me remember the Friends of the Earth meeting I attended years ago. The FoE chair(person) arrived later because his car was stuck in traffic. I came by tube. We then established that my little car used unleaded fuel. The one driven by the FoE director did not.

The Extinction mob holding up ambulances and buses were reported to be singing the Russian national anthem. I wonder. Their first, chosen in 1816, *The Prayer of the Russians* was set to the melody of *God, Save the King*. In 1917 the revolutionaries adopted their version of *La Marseillaise* and 20 years ago Vladimir Putin brought new lyrics to Joseph Stalin's 1944 anthem tune.

Constituents know our work never stopped. This week our Westminster and Worthing West teams returned to offices.