



Members' Newsletter

**Number 113
Summer 2020**

"Keepin Ahad O Wor Tung"

Keep Safe, Stay Healthy

As far as we know, our Roland Bibby Memorial Lecture will still be going ahead in October, as will our regular Yule Meet in December.

However, the lecturer for the October event has been ill recently, and there is some doubt as to whether he will still be able to attend.

We will let you know if there are any further changes to the programme.

Happnins in 2020

Saturday 10 October -

Roland Bibby Memorial Lecture,
Morpeth Town Hall

Weekend 23-24 October -

National Dialect Festival -
THIS EVENT HAS BEEN CANCELLED.

Saturday 5 December -

Yule Meet,
Morpeth Bagpipe Chantry Museum

NLS Contacts

Chairman

Stuart Lawson

phone: 01670 820387

email: stulawson@btinternet.com

Secretary

Avril Common

email: avril_common@yahoo.org.uk

Treasurer/Merchandise

John Davidson

phone: 01668 281462

email: iamnlstreasurer@gmail.com

Dialect

Kim Bibby-Wilson

phone: 01670 513308

email: kim@northumbriana.org.uk

Newsletter

Peter Arnold

phone: 01434 608230

email: pja13@phonecoop.coop

**or visit our website at
www.northumbriana.org.uk**

Report from NLS Chairman Stuart Lawson :-

The Executive Committee has had a recent email Committee meeting, exchanging information concerning the Society during the last three months. A document was produced which lists where actions are required, and a Committee Record, in the style of the usual Committee Minutes, has been filed as a reminder for future meetings, when normal activities are resumed. The information in the Reports and Committee Record concerning the cancellation of the AGM, and the reasons for that, satisfy the current requirements of the Charity Commission. Consideration is being given about when to have an AGM and what form it should take. Meanwhile Committee Members are still doing what is required to keep the Society functioning.

Obituary - Grahame Binless

Kim Bibby-Wilson writes ...

I'm very sad to report that earlier in the year Grahame Binless died in Leeds, after a non-Covid-related illness. He and his wife Barbara had been fundamental in the process which led to the publication of Moody's glossary, the project which began just after the NLS's inception in the 1980s when Moody's family travelled to Northumberland to find a specialist publisher for their late father's dictionary of what he called the Mid-Northumbrian dialect.



Although no longer living in the North-East where Grahame had been the English Folk Dance and Song Society regional co-ordinator in the 1960s and 1970s, the two of them offered to word-process the massive 700+ pages of Moody's hand-written manuscript, in the days before everyone had a home computer. On a voluntary basis over many years they devoted spare time to typing out the original two volumes, travelling up from their home in Yorkshire to bring my father the proofs of the latest section, combining the springtime trip with a visit to the Morpeth Gathering, where Grahame from the festival's earliest years was caller at the Saturday night Barn Dance.

Much to-ing and fro-ing took place by post and later by floppy disk on the knotty issues of proof-reading, amending and standardisation of the text, particularly in achieving a consistent style of format and punctuation. Barbara and Grahame carried on cheerfully, with a pause after the death of my father, till I took on his role as overseer of the project. Eventually, when the book finally rolled off the presses, all the Binlesses requested was a complimentary copy of the published tome. The copies that were bought by individuals and lodged in Northumberland's schools and libraries are a lasting legacy of the devotion of these good friends of the Northumbrian Language Society.

Grahame is much missed by his many friends in the traditional folk dance world, including the thousands who enjoyed the Whitby Folk Week which he ran for many years. The Northumbrian Language Society sends its heartfelt condolences to Barbara and family.

Please Remember - Don't Forget.....

to renew your subscription to the Northumbrian Language Society as soon as possible. All the details are on the forms included in Newsletter, No 111 - and it will help a lot if you could spare a few minutes to complete the forms and send them back to our Treasurer, John Davidson.

The Northumbrian Dialect Goes World-Wide

We have been approached by an organisation asking us to participate in an international project which is recording the dialects of different languages across the world. There is a common text, which is a short tale called “The North Wind and the Sun”, which we have to translate into Northumbrian. NLS member Bob Bolam has volunteered to take part in the project, and we set out below the original story, and Bob’s dialect version of it.

The North Wind and the Sun

The North Wind and the Sun were disputing which was the stronger, when a traveller came along wrapped in a warm cloak.

They agreed that the one who first succeeded in making the traveller take his cloak off should be considered stronger than the other.

Then the North Wind blew as hard as he could, but the more he blew the more closely did the traveller fold his cloak around him; and at last the North Wind gave up the attempt. Then the Sun shone out warmly, and immediately the traveller took off his cloak.

And so the North Wind was obliged to confess that the Sun was the stronger of the two.

The North Wind and the Sun bi Bob Bolam

The North Wind and the Sun wor mekkin thor jaas gan as t’ whee wes the stranga when a little aad wizzened chep happt in a muckle geet muffler come on the scene.

“Aye noo, here’s me chance” says the wind. “Aam ganna show ye whee’s gaffer here. If aa can git that little bugger t’ tek off ees muffler and mevvie even ees ganzie, wad ye agree that aam the stranga?”

“Aa daur say,” says the sun. “Divvent rax yor sinnions.”

So the North Wind sets eesel away and blaas and blaas and blaas as hard as ee could. It put ye in mind o the wulf and the three little gissy pigs. Aye but the harder the wind blew the tighter went the muffler roond the gadgie’s neck - var nigh chowked im an ee nivvor once thowt aboot tekkin off ees ganzie. At lang last the North Wind give ower. By, ee wes in the huff, ee wes, lad.

“Cleor the decks,” says the sun. “Aa’ll show ye hoo t gan on.” An ee shone and shone and filled the whole plyce wiv a happy glow, Ye wad just think Newcastle had won a corner! As for the gadgie, ees off wi the muffler in nee time and afore lang ees off wi the ganzie n aall. Ee even lowsed ees gallasus.

“Reet,” says the sun. “Whees gaffer then?” But the wind sayed nowt. Ee’d bugged off t somewhere fresh. Just a wind bag ye knaa.

Waat di yuh caal it ... ?

What word do you use to describe the woodlouse? Do you refer to slaters or similarly named beasties? Warren Maguire (recovering from Covid-19) has circulated on the Scots Language Forum this survey web address on local names for a particular little common crawling creature. The survey would like to receive more responses from the North East of England and the Borders, so if you can answer the handful of questions in the survey that would be helpful:

http://icge.co.uk/twitter_surveys/isopods



Another Query ...

Hello. Hope you well and safe. I just have a question regarding the origins and or history of the accent. I have been told that it was something to do with an old King of Northumbria who's son had a speech impediment and a French nanny. And so he spoke in a certain way. So the story goes he was so loved by the people they began to speak like him adapting the rolling R sound and accent. Is there any truth in this, because I can't find anything related?

Thank you.

Kyle Foy

Here's the reply from Kim Bibby-Wilson ...

Dear Kyle,

Thanks for the query – this looks like the story that Harry Hotspur, eldest son of the Earl of Northumberland in the Middle Ages, had a speech impediment and that the local people copied him out of deference – but that is really taking the feudal system too far.

It's far more likely to be the case that Hotspur spoke with the local speech pattern common to people in the region, using the very strongly pronounced guttural letter R, or burr, and the outsiders – the king's court – thought this inferior, or a speech defect, to their ears. Shakespeare has Hotspur in his play Henry IV Part I and refers to him having a "thick" tongue. He was certainly a great warrior during the Hundred Years War in the 14th century, and is remembered in the ballad of Chevy Chase concerning the Battle of Otterburn in 1388.

The guttural R is from the original Anglian speech, that particular Old English (Anglo-Saxon) variant spoken by the Angles of Northern Germany/South Denmark who came over the North Sea 1500 years ago. This has survived across the centuries, as the language has evolved, in many of the old words and the distinctive Northumbrian accent with its use of its vowel sounds and the burr, though fewer and fewer people still have the burr nowadays. That R is a back-of-the-throat sound, rather than a rolling tip-of-tongue sound as in Scots, but its guttural sound is indeed like old Parisian French, and can be found in dialects across Northern Europe.



A gadgee born in High Heaton
Thought his birthplace a geet 'un
But to claim the top spot
High Heaton could not
That surely belongs to MONKseaton

Young Gazza who lived in Longfram
During lockdown was missing his Mam
So he signed up for Zoom
Now from his front room
He talks to her on his webcam

Can you guess who wrote these? and it wasn't the Editor! Are there any more out there?



Smiling In The Rain - Four Northumbrian stalwarts staffing the NLS stall at Alnwick Fair, about fifteen years ago. They are, from the left, Meg Burdon, Kim Bibby-Wilson, Hazel Dickson, and Brian James.



The Sang O Thi Cullercoats Toorist Offis

Northumbria is wor habitation,
 An it's heor that wuh aall luv ti dwell,
 An wuh're aall varry prood a wor nation,
 Exactly thi syem as yorsel.

But yor welcome ti mek wuh a visit,
 An ti sample wor beor an wor scran,
 An ti marvel at wor bonny vistas -
 But divvent cum heor fer a tan.

Thi wund blaas aall day, then it mizzles,
 Then thi clouds hide thi sun fer a while,
 Then thi rain lashes doon, then it drizzles,
 Theor's nowt yuh can dee, ceptin smile.

Sum peepul cums heor fer thi blethor,
 An sum fer wor skies an wor views,
 But nyen a them cums fer thi wethor -
 The gan soothwards agyen in lang kyews.

So, haway aall yous canny Bornicians,
 It's nee bother the've aall gon away,
 Cos theor's mair pickins noo fer us'ns,
 Ti giv wuh a grand holiday,

Forgit about aall a yon resorts,
 Or a cruise on thi owld choppy sea,
 Wuh knaas ov a beach that's fer aall sorts,
 It's Cullercoats yous need ti be.

Theor's nee finer plyec in wor nation,
 Fer sea air, an swimmin, an fun,
 An thi chips is thi best fer thi tastin,
 An th'ice cream is second ti non.

But divvent jist tek me word for it,
 Gan alang fer ti see fer yorsels,
 Neewheor roond heor can top it,
 An Aah knaas, cos Aah've been theor mesel.

So divvent feel bad about gannin
 Ti Cullercoats doon bi thi sea,
 Yuh'll soon forgit then about stannin
 In kyews fer yor scran an yor tea.

But divvent tell aall a yon soothrons,
 Hoo smashin it is way up heor,
 Let's keep whaat wuh've got heor fer northrons,
 Tiv enjoy bi worsels, so theor!

Writ bi A Nony Mouse, August 1953



Two Northumbrian folk dancers, a rapper (at the rear), and a clogger (at the front), observing correct social distancing. Photo taken at a recent world championship event!



From the Archives

A Cheviot Mile

Aw, slar's the gait an lang's the mile
 Frae Windy Gate tae Windy Gyle;
 Nae bitty fence nor ae lane stile,
 But hags o peat in tumblin pile,
 An black-faced yowes in stragglin file.
 But langer, sairer still's the gait
 If, forbye, ye gan back tae Gate;
 Ye'll ficht wi winds as dour as Fate,
 Neath glowerin skies as black as slate;
 An ye'll t bed be unco late
 Gin ye get back frae Gyle to Gate.

W A Davies

Coquetdale

Nay historians could do justice
 In a valley such as wors,
 Sae deep are Coquet's secrets,
 As she tyeks a windin course,
 Through lonely hills
 Where the heather fills
 Wor heids wi heavy scent,
 Brocken b the scree an scars
 Te soft green mossy bent.

R A Wood

These poems were entries in the Morpeth Northumbrian Gathering in the early 1970s, and they appeared in the first edition of "Northumbriana" in 1975.

