

Members' Newsletter

Number 114
Autumn 2020

"Keepin Ahad O Wor Tung"

Events Cancelled

Following the recent announcement by the government of the new restrictions after the increase in new virus cases throughout the country, it is almost certain that there will be no further public events this year organised by the Northumbrian Language Society.

Unless there is a last-minute change to government policy, we have reluctantly decided to cancel both of our remaining outstanding events -

The Roland Bibby Lecture, and the Yule Meet.

Happnins in 2020

Saturday 10 October -

Roland Bibby Memorial Lecture,
THIS EVENT HAS BEEN CANCELLED

Weekend 23-24 October -

National Dialect Festival -
THIS EVENT HAS BEEN CANCELLED.

Saturday 5 December -

Yule Meet,
THIS EVENT HAS BEEN CANCELLED

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Newsletter

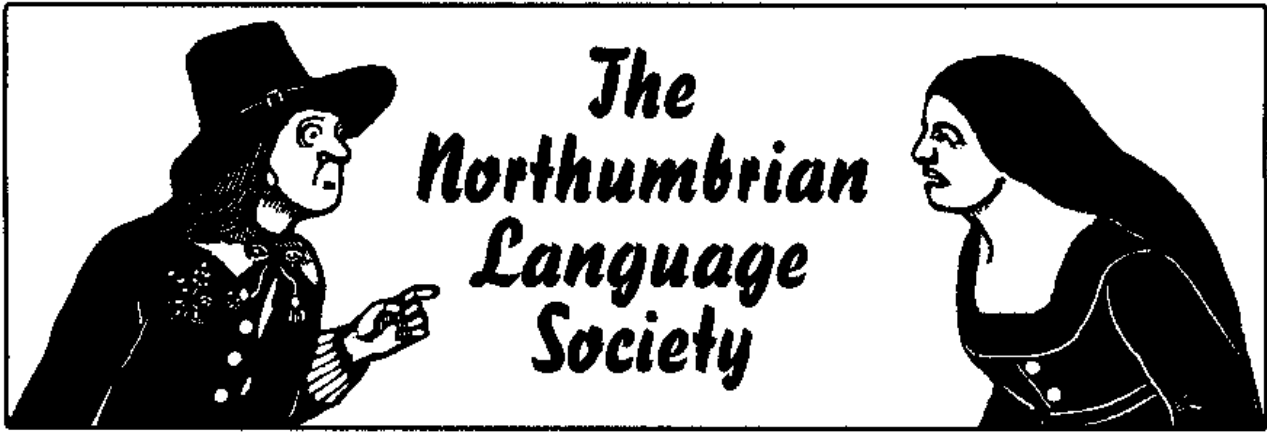
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www.northumbriana.org.uk

A Dire Warning!

Kim's friend Lucille Hindmarch tells the tale that her Granda Hindmarch used to berate people betraying their linguistic roots with "Ye canna be Coopen Square one minnit an Berkeley Square the next!"



Keepin ahad o wor tung

We regret that because of Covid-19
The 2020

Roland Bibby Memorial Dialect Lecture
will not be taking place as originally planned in October

We hope at a future date to be able to present

Dr Warren Maguire
(The University of Edinburgh)

with his talk

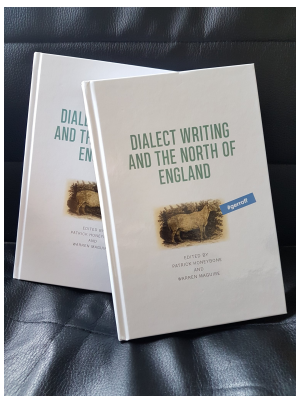
“The Pitman’s Pay”:

Early 19th century Tyneside dialect writing and its pronunciation

Further details: Mrs Kim Bibby-Wilson, Westgate House, Dogger Bank,
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Website: www.northumbriana.org.uk

Breaking News from Warren Maguire: *“Very pleased to receive my copy of this book today. **“Dialect Writing and the North of England”**, edited by Patrick Honeybone and myself.*



It's a substantial collection of cracking articles on everything from the writings of Thomas Bewick to non-standard spellings on Twitter, from all over the North, including Liverpool, Bolton, Yorkshire, Tyneside, Nottingham and the Black Country.”

*Publisher: Edinburgh University Press; ISBN: 9781474442565
Number of pages: 320; Dimensions: 234 x 156 mm; £95*

From the archives - "Northumbriana" No. 19, Spring 1980

FRED REED on - The New Northumberland Exhibition

An expansive area of soothing greenery rippling in the breeze, dotted with picnic parties, and surrounded by the lords of the landscape, beech, oak, elm and chestnut trees, met my gaze as I drove through the wide gateway of the new Northumberland Exhibition Park and entered the huge parking area. This reminded me of Brock Park in the Lake District.

Through the terraces bedecked with blooms and shrubs, I climbed the steps and pathway to a level-topped eminence on which a large, rambling single-storey building stood. From here I could see across the picnic grounds to a glinting lake beyond, with its wheeling and curtseying sailing dinghies.

I passed the cafe entrance and that of the bookshop filled with Northumbrian lore and handicraft souvenirs, and entered the Exhibition Hall.

Beyond the lobby I was in semi-darkness in a long, low passage, like a tunnel, along one side of which were large picture-windows from floor to ceiling. Deep shadow lay behind them, but when I pressed the appropriate buttons, as invited by notices, I was surprised and delighted with the seeming actuality of the now brilliantly lighted and very big coloured scenic views displayed in a series of ten. How wonderfully real they seemed! First Coquet Valley from the Simonside Hills, with Kelpie's Strand, Scotsman's Knowe and the Muckle Cheviot as background, and white clouds day-dreaming across the blue above. There was a wide view of the coloured country from Bardon Mill near Beltingham, and others of the fell country near Kirkhaugh, the Cheviot country north-west of Wooler, the Farnes, Holy Island itself, those "ancient haunts of rural peace", our little villages, and of our castles.

With the flood of light also came the mellow tones of the Northumbrian pipes and plaintive fiddles.

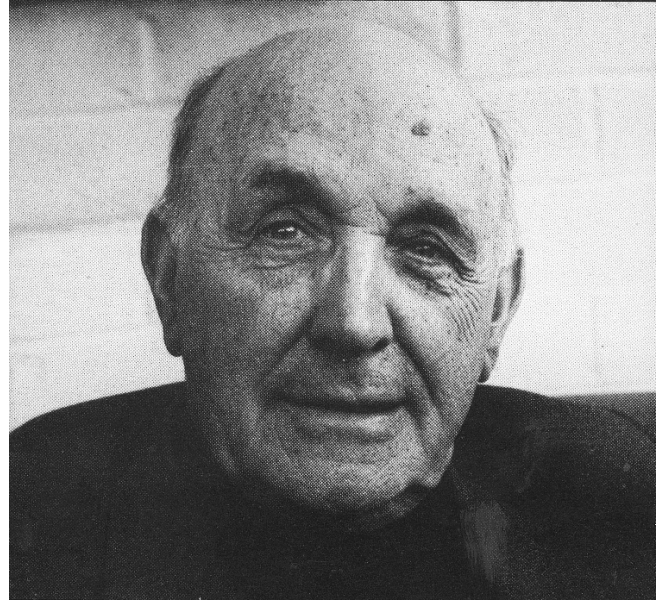
And the Bird and Animal Hall was captivating. One pressed the appropriate button to see, brightly illumined and each in turn in its native habitat, our birds, and one heard the song of the feathered creature, or the cry of the animal, as it appeared.

The Hall of Industry displayed scenes of iron foundries old and new, shipbuilding ancient and modern, farming, sea-fishing and sheep rearing, with mining scenes both of far-off and modern times. Beyond this were realistic tableaux of historic events and, as one gazed at a battle scene, one heard the ancient slogans: "Esperance! A Percy! A Percy!-A Berwyke! A Berwyke!-A Fenwyke!A Fenwyke!-A Bulmer! A Bulmer!" This was the way to teach history!

In the projection room I saw how our ancestors lived, but commentaries were not needed, though printed translations appeared at the base of the picture when the characters spoke in the tongue of their day. The place was crammed with silent school children.

Finally I entered a sound-proofed room and sat in dim blue light listening to Northumbrian minstrelsy. The full realism of the old ballads brought their pictures into the mind and carried the atmosphere of distant striving and vicissitudes that made us what we are.

Yes, of course, the tense is all wrong in the foregoing. But, surely, that can be corrected'?



Fred Reed

Northumbrian bard still young at heart at 85 years

(article written by David Coulter of the Hexham Courant, 2nd September 2020)

A well-known poet from the Tyne Valley has marked his 85th birthday. Nick Short, of Hexham, is well-regarded for his poems written and spoken in traditional Northumbrian verse, and he has scooped various trophies over the years for his work.

Three years ago, Mr Short was recognised for his dedication over 25 years of raising money for armed service charities when he was awarded a Hexham Community Champion Award. The awards, handed out by Hexham's MP Guy Opperman, recognises extraordinary charitable, community, educational, business and sporting achievements throughout the Hexham and Ponteland constituency.

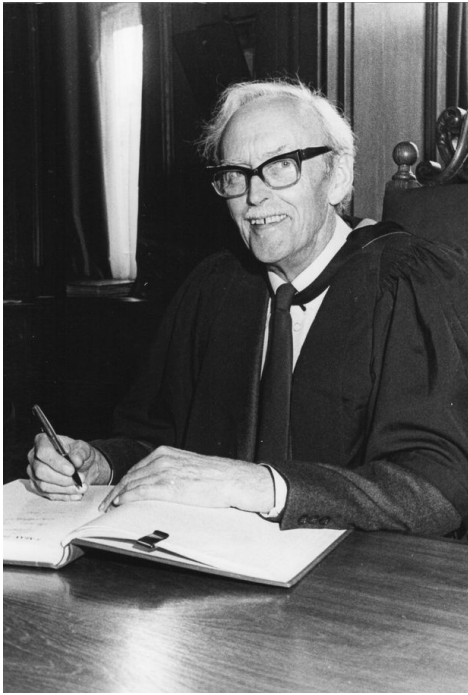
Mr Short received the recognition after collecting money for the RAF Wings Appeal, which supports serving and former RAF personnel and their families, and the Royal British Legion, over the decades. As a reward for the award, he was invited to attend an annual event at the House of Commons.

Mr Short is familiar throughout the county as a veteran dialect poet, and he hit the heights in 2017 when he scooped a personal record haul of trophies at the annual Morpeth Northumbrian Gathering.

Dressed in his traditional Northumbrian shepherd's plaid, which he inherited from his father, he won four categories at the festival for his writing work, and was highly commended in two others.

The bard, who hadn't missed a Morpeth Gathering for the best part of 20 years, impressed judges with his writing style, based on Northumbrian dialect. He won the Northumbrian Prose Trophy, the M.N.G Lowford Cup, the M.N.G.C. Ashington Arts Festival Cup and the English Verse Trophy, to go with the two commendations at the event





From the archives

The Northumbriana magazine's first-ever editorial by the founder, Roland Bibby, published in 1975

"Come your ways ben, hinnies!" That is the old greeting to guests at a Northumbrian's door, and we cheerfully extend it to you and every reader at the ever-open portal of NORTHUMBRIANA, this new periodical devoted to "Northumbrian-ness".

In the pages of Northumbriana, as time goes on - or so we intend - you will find much of history, language, literature, art, music, crafts, architecture, landscapes, and traditions, dead and alive. You will find songs and melodies, and prose and verse, old and new. You will see illustrations and read book reviews, play notices and reports of festivals and shows. Almost any topic may turn up - but not any place or any people. If our net is a wide one, we tend to cast it in one spot, and in one spot only.

NORTHUMBRIANA is concerned with Northumberland, not the truncated local-government version, but the true, natural old shire,

"whose storied fame

*Is echoed in the drums and trumpets of her name,
Northumberland."*

With Northumberland, and its community, past and present, of course we associate the Borderland and Tyneside, which share the kinship of language, literature, music, tradition and way of life. Here, we hope, will be the particular interest and value of NORTHUMBRIANA to its readers.

We hope, too, to hear no cries of "Chauvinism!" "What's wrong with the North Riding, then?" or what's so wonderful about Geordies?" Whatever our secret beliefs in the unique worthiness of Northumbrians and Northumberland, NORTHUMBRIANA has a perfectly rational policy!

Nowadays, more than ever, the world is shrinking and forcing us all towards a neat common mould. Education, travel, entertainment, mass administration, mass production, mass advertising, all such potent influences drive us into wan uniformity, wearing away character and individuality, thought and discrimination, critical sense and creative endeavour. Of course, the process is not complete - there are still ten years or so before 1984 - but it proceeds.

NORTHUMBRIANA would counter the process, slow the downward rush, and do so by recalling and underlining the features of Northumbrian individuality and character, human and environmental. We rejoice in the differences between these and other communities' and areas' characters, not because of any sense of superiority, but because differences and variety are important, socially healthy and good. We should like to see every natural regional community with its own native equivalent of NORTHUMBRIANA, and its own lively interest in its own survival as a distinguishable community with its own unique pattern of living traditions, some its very own, some shared with others.

This does not at all prevent a Northumbrian, or a Devonshire or Kentish man, being English, British, European, and a world citizen also. It has to do with the quality of life, not with racial and social barriers.

So it is that NORTHUMBRIANA's history is that of Northumberland and the Borderland; its language is the dialect, a descendant of the ancient speech of the Flamebearer's Angle invaders, modified to some extent by the Celtic tongue of the Cheviots; its literature is in that same language, and so are its songs; its music, its landscape, its architecture have the idiom of Northumberland: but we do not expect or demand insularity. There is no tidy communal frontier; dialects overspill, tunes are borrowed and lent, crafts ignore frontiers; and yet, we fancy, there is a characteristic grouping of elements, which is Northumberland's, a Northumbrian emphasis or overtone which could and should be preserved, a special quality in a thought expressed in the dialect, which would be lost or lessened in English or in another dialect.

The Editor comments - Reading this now, 45 years later, points to the value of Roland Bibby's vision. Almost all of what he wrote then is still relevant today, but perhaps even more necessary. The process of turning us all into a homogenous mass has proceeded relentlessly, and many of us feel we are heading for a linguistic desert of sameness and uniformity. What do you think?

PS : Copies of "Northumbriana" are still available from Kim Bibby-Wilson, whose contact details are on the front page of this Newsletter. We have run out of some numbers, but we are hoping to reprint these soon.

A selection of dialect poetry from the archives ...

A Toast

Let's aal lift up wor glasses
Ti drink a humble toast,
Ti aal wor lads and lasses,
The ones we luv the most;
And when they fetch their bairns up,
Let's hope with great respect,
They'll larn each little Geordie
Ti taalk the dialect.

Mrs G Jeffrey

The Cyuk

Aw, hinny, will ye stop yor clartin on?
At fancy cyukin, lass, ye've nivvor shone.
Forget yon Delia Smith an Fanny Craddock
An let wuh hev sum chips an batteored
 haddick
Wi pickled onions an sum stotty cyek,
Or leeky broth like muthor used t mek.
Aa tell ye, lass, Aa've had aboot eneuf
Of fancy mixchors, yon dog's vomit stuff,
An in ma byeuk a cyuk is aye a good'n
If she can mek a good owld suet puddin.

A Simpson

The Weddin

They say dry bargains stand for nowse,
However honest the intent;
That a the pairs suin joggle lowse
Withoot some barleycorn cement.

But bless ye, weddin's nowadays
Are nowse to what we had them then;
We didn't slink through private ways
For fear that onybody ken.

Wors warrent hugger-mugger things,
For fifty folks cud scarce be hidden;
And scrapers, te, on fiddle strings
Amang the rest wer a'ways bidden.

The bride-cyek neist byeth sweet and short
Was tossed in platefuls ower the bride;
The lads an lasses scrammel'd for it
With airms an mouths stretched far an wide.

Thomas Wilson

When Aa was a Bairn

When Aa was a bairn, the days war lang,
An wi me frinds Aa played amang
The mucky middens, until a shoot
Sent is aal fleein: "Git yersels oot!
That's nee place t play!" Me muther was reet,
Ye cud smell them closets aal ower the street.

At the corna end, wor next place o caal,
'aad men war leanin agyen the waal,
Crackin aboot whippits, footbaal an leeks,
An sum things that left is wi bornin cheeks.
A clip ower the lugs an off w went
T see hoo the rest of the day cud be spent.

The best spot of aal was the aad pit heap,
Wi neuks an crannies, dark an deep -
Cooboys an Indjuns, sowljars, the lot,
Till aal wor folk wundaad wheor w had got,
An when the time cum t fetch is fer bed,
Many a thousand teors wad be shed.

Ellen Thompson

Cullacoats Fishwife

Will ye buy me fine fish, hinny? Buy sum the day,
Browt up this mornin from Cullacoats Bay;
Haddicks an codlin mek a grand meal;
Just tek yer pick, hinny, heor i me creel.

Will ye buy a fine crab, hinny? Buy one from me.
Only two hours since, they swum i the sea.
Mebbe sum willicks t howk wi a pin,
A pair o fresh kippas, or a bit o smoked fin?

Will ye buy me fine fish, hinny? Nowt tyeests se
 grand.
Aal fer a bob that Aa howld i me hand?
Fry it or byek it, a tyeesty fish pie?
Aa'm the Cullacoats fishwife, heed t me cry!

Ellen Thompson

A Canny Tale

Ye're a canny lad, but if ye're gannin,
It's a canny step doon a clarty lonnin.
Be canny that the clarts ye dodge,
Cause if ye divvent ye'll hev t plodge,
An if ye de, ye'll git aal claggy,
An hev t strip t yer nakey-shaggy!

Ellen Thompson