

Members' Newsletter

**Number 117
Spring 2021**

"Keepin Ahad O Wor Tung"

Important News From the Chairman

**We are planning to hold an on-line
AGM at 7pm on Friday 7th May
2021. This will be a Zoom meeting,
a first for us.**

An AGM 'pack' containing :-

**Agenda,
Executive Report 2020-2021,
Accounts 2020-2021**

**will be sent later in April to those
who usually receive the Newsletter
by email, any other member that
supplies me with an email address,
and posted to other members.**

**(There are no 2020 AGM Minutes as the
AGM meeting was cancelled.)**

**My contact details are on this page
in the NLS Contacts column.**

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@phoncoop.coop

Our Websites:-

northumbriana.org.uk

northumbrianlanguagesociety.co.uk

Subscriptions

Aye Hinnies, it's that time o thi year agyen!! Yor subscriptions is due. Thi good news is that thi subscription is thi syem as last year. In thi Newsletter yous'll finnd aall th'information about how ti pay an wheor ti send it. If yuh pays income tax, yuh can also sign thi form whaat says yor willin fer thi tax man ti give wor Treasurer some mair munny ivory year ti help wuh with wor work an aall! Whaat's not ti like, eh?Wuh knaas that wuh hevvent been yebble ti dee ower much thi past year, but wuh hope yuh still want ti help wuh keep wor tung alive, so thi sooner yuh fill in thi forms an send them back ti wor Treasurer, thi bettor!! Ta, varry much!!

Dialect News

This article appeared in a recent edition of The Journal. What do you think? Comments???

A new poll suggests Geordie is the UK's most popular regional accent - but we ask 'what is a Geordie?' and whether even the accepted definition should be broadened. It will come as no surprise to the folk of Tyneside - ye knaa what 'a mean - but the Geordie accent has been voted the UK's most listenable. And at the same time, the Cockney accent has been deemed the most irritating.

TV viewers, it seems, warm to the tones of **Ant and Dec**, **Alan Shearer** and **Cheryl Cole**, while those of Danny Dyer, Ray Winstone and co leave them cold.

Researchers asked more than 2,000 adults from around the country to listen to a variety of regional accents and to tell them how long it took for each one to get on their nerves.

Cockney and the Queen's English were the most irritating, apparently, while folk found Geordie and Yorkshire accents much easier on the ear.

Skills training company The Knowledge Academy polled 2,357 adults. This is how long each accent took before it began to annoy people:-

Essex: 1 min 51 secs

South Wales: 2 mins 17 secs

Birmingham: 2 mins 34 secs

Liverpool: 2 mins 41 secs

Yorkshire: 3 mins 1 sec

Glasgow: 3 mins 27 secs

Plain English: 4 mins 11 secs

Geordie: 4 mins 19 secs

All well and good, but while we're on the subject, what about the term 'Geordie' itself - where did it come from? It's a perennially much-debated subject and there is no proven answer.

Some believe it derives from George Stephenson who invented the miners' lamp in 1815. Over time, the lamps and the miners themselves became known as Geordies.

Another theory maintains it was a term of abuse - "you stupid Geordie!" This definition dates from the reigns of George III, who suffered from mental illness, and his unpopular playboy son George IV in the 18th and 19th centuries.

And another explanation dates from 1745 and the time of the Jacobite rebellion. Far from supporting the challenge to the throne by Bonnie Prince Charlie, the people of Newcastle were resolute supporters of King George II - or King Geordie.

But what is a Geordie? How do you qualify? Is it a person born in Newcastle? Or on Tyneside? Or in the wider North East? Or do you need to have been born within earshot of a shipyard buzzer? (Which is a problem today as the shipyards are sadly all gone).

For the writer of this story, born in Elswick and brought up in Gateshead and Jarrow, I'd like to think I qualify to be a member of the exalted Geordie nation!

Historian Dr Dan Jackson, author of the best-selling **The Northumbrians**, believes the term 'Geordie' deserves a much broader, more inclusive definition. He says: "There is much tedious debate about who qualifies as a Geordie, but the truth is that in the absence of any adjudicating authority we must look to the historical record, and that tells us that 'Geordies' were always those from the industrial areas of the old counties of Northumberland and Durham - possibly because they favoured George 'Geordie' Stephenson's miners lamp over Humphrey Davy's rival version. It's hard to believe now, but until fairly recently 'Geordies' applied to Wearsiders too - until an alternative 'Mackem' identity started to gain traction from the 1980s onwards. In short, being a Geordie is now a matter of self-identification - and that's anyone from the North East, but especially Tyneside, Wearside and the old coalfield areas qualifies as one. Incidentally, because the term has become so contentious of late, it's why I chose 'Northumbrians' in the title of my best-selling history - as a more inclusive term for those from the land between the Tees and the Tweed."

So noo wuh knaa...

Northumbrian Language Society

Subscription Renewal/Application Form

(Subscriptions are due on the 1st of April every year)

Individual Members: £12

Joint members: £18

Concessions: £8

(unwaged adults, and young people under 18)

Name:

Address:

.....

Postcode: **Phone:**

Email:

(giving us your email address helps us to keep postage costs down, and it makes it possible for us to contact you quickly)

NB: Please note that your membership details will be held on a computer database for Northumbrian Language Society use only, and will not be made available to any other organisation without your consent.

Ways to Pay:-

1. By cheque or postal order made payable to "Northumbrian Language Society"
2. By BACS or Standing Order (**Please include your membership number or full name as a reference.**) Bank details - Lloyds. Sort code: 30-90-89. Account number: 52777968.

Please return this form to :

Mr John Davidson
10 Burnhouse Road, Wooler,
Northumberland, NE71 6EE

If you are a UK taxpayer, and you would like to help us by making your membership subscription bigger, at no extra cost to yourself, why not fill in the Gift Aid form overleaf and return it to the Treasurer?

Charity Gift Aid Declaration

Please fill in this form and return it to the Northumbrian Language Society Treasurer, John Davidson at his address overleaf.

Boost your donation (your membership subscription) by 25p of Gift Aid for every £1 you donate. Gift Aid is reclaimed by the charity (Northumbrian Language Society) from the tax you pay during the current tax year. Your address is needed to identify you as a current UK taxpayer.

In order to Gift Aid your donation, you must tick this box

I want to Gift Aid my donation (your membership subscription) of £..... and any donation I make in the future or have made in the past 4 years to the Northumbrian Language Society.

I am a UK taxpayer and understand that if I pay less Income Tax and/or Capital Gains tax than the amount of Gift Aid claimed on all of my donations in that tax year it is my responsibility to pay any difference.

My details: Title: First name or initials:

Surname:

Full Home Address:

.....

Postcode: Date:

Please notify the Northumbrian Language Society if you want to cancel this declaration, change your name or home address, or do not pay sufficient tax on your Income and/or Capital Gains.

If you pay Income Tax at the higher rate, or additional rate, and you want to receive the additional tax relief due to you, you must include all your Gift Aid donations on your Self-Assessment tax return, or ask HM Revenue and Customs to adjust your Tax Code.

All your contributions go to support the work of the Society in promoting Northumbrian prose, poetry, song, music and dance. We publish a regular members' Newsletter, books, CDs and other merchandise. We provide speakers and put on events like the Reed Neet and the Yule Meet. We sponsor dialect competitions at the Morpeth Northumbrian Gathering, and work with children and teachers in schools.

For more information on the work of the Society, please visit our websites at www.northumbriana.org.uk/langsoc or www.northumbrianlanguagesociety.co.uk

The following letter on Geordie loquaciousness appeared in The Guardian newspaper some time ago :-

Ludwig Wittgenstein and the Tractatus of talkative Geordies

“Geordies like to talk ... allow at least 10 minutes just to buy a newspaper,” advises Harry Pearson ([The UK's best city: in praise of Newcastle upon Tyne, theguardian.com](#), 22 November).

Wittgenstein worked as a lab assistant in Newcastle's Royal Victoria Infirmary during the second world war. His Jesmond landlady said he was chatty in the morning, to the annoyance of the other lodgers, but morose in the evenings.

From the poem “Geordie Henderson replies to the biographer of Ludwig Wittgenstein” (Mugs Rite, Bay Press, 1996), by the recently late poet, eccentric and bibliophile Mike Wilkin:

“Div aa knaa oot more
about him? Fella, arl else
aa remember, is that
the only gala time
aa got im near a pint,
knaaing he was a Delphi
Oracle, aa askt him
if the Magpies would ever
climb back to the Shangri-La
of Division One. And he wrote
doon arl magisterially
on a raggy beer mat
(which is clagged-up
in wor netty yet!)
“Whereof one cannot spowt
Thereof one must say nowt.”

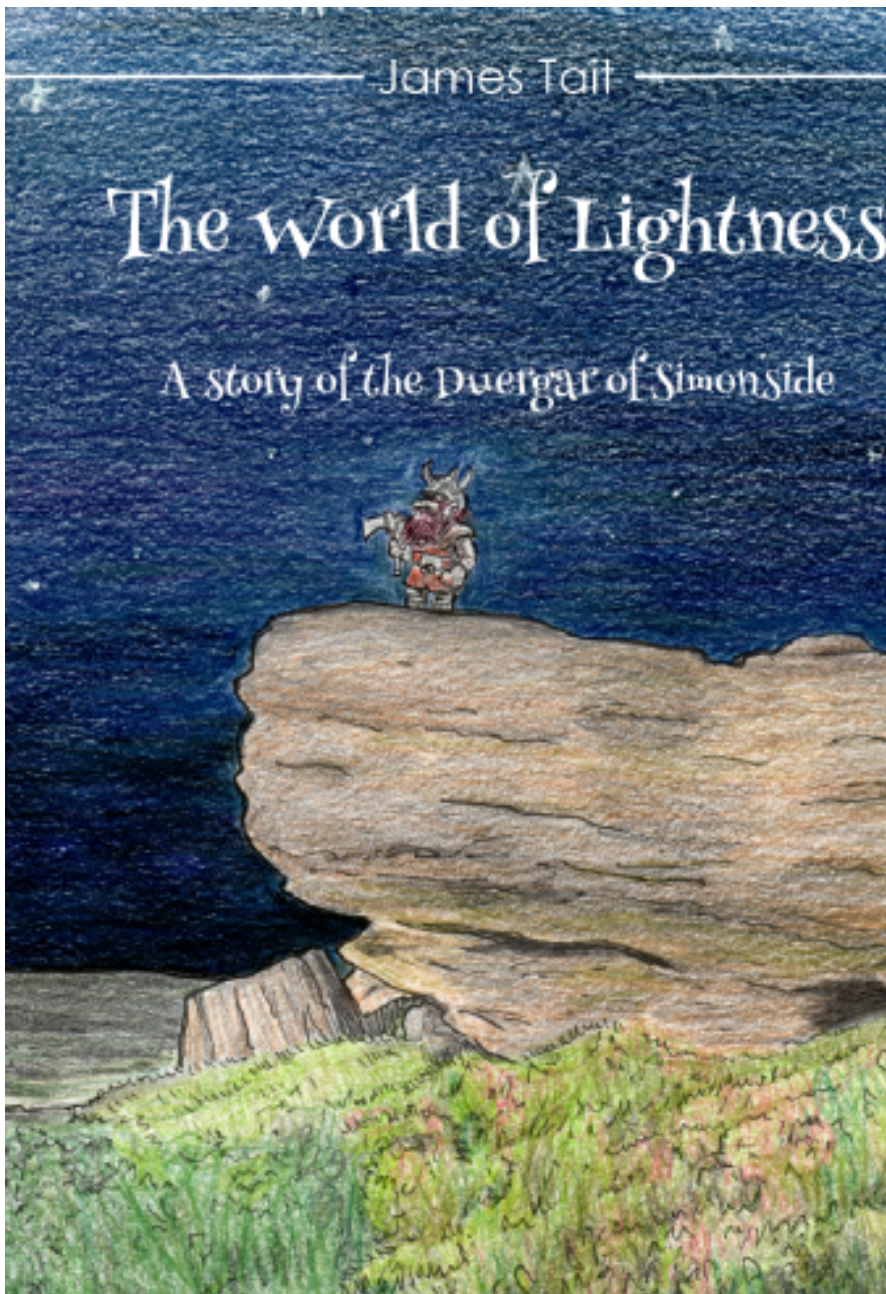
Joan Hewitt (@TurkishBathsNCL)
Tynemouth



The World of Lightness

The World of Lightness is Northumbrian poet James Tait's first attempt at writing fiction and is aimed mainly at children aged around 8-12 years old. It stems from a dialect musical project he did with local schools, funded by the North East Endowment for Musical Traditions fund, at the Community Foundation. The story is based on the fabled 'Duergar of Simonside,' and tells of their history and redemption.

Beneath the majestic Simonside Hills, dwells an ancient civilisation - a race of dwarfs known as the Duergar. Said to play tricks on those who dare to walk the hills at night, they are thought to be mere legend. One night, Talitha learns otherwise. What do they want with her Wishing Star, the tiny pendant one day found lying on her windowsill? Are they as sinister as the legends say? And what else lies in wait across those windswept hills?



Interested?

To find out more, and how to purchase a copy, go to James' website :-

<https://jamestait.co.uk/page16.html>



The Bairn bi Bob Bolam

Aa wunda when thi bairn'll come,
An wharrit'll be like
Tha might be some delay if aall
Them norses gan on strike.

Aa've had a lantern lescher,
Tellin aall about thi wash,
An whaat ye shud an shuddent dee;
At least it's not ti poss.

Aa'm gettin kinda narvous
About drivin ti thi plyace;
She says Aa winnit panic,
But thor'll be an aaful race.

Aa hope it's not a noisy bairn,
That yells an blares aal neet,
Or gets its toe fast in thi crib,
Or suffers with thi heat.

We want a kinda friendly bairn,
That gives its mother hugs,
An we'll keep wor fingers crossed
An hope it hesn't got my lugs!

It's yon Burr agyen!!

You may recall that in our December Newsletter No. 115, member Peter Weightman suggested how the rolling Northumbrian “r” might have arrived in our dialect. What do you think? Member Andy Bogle has written the following response :-

Peter Wightman's letter regarding the iconic Northumbrian burr (or borr as it is said in Northumberland) wondered if it could have stemmed from the language of the ancient Britons. While there are many theories as to where it originated, none support its roots as being in the Celtic language of the ancient Britons. Surprisingly, the burr was not totally confined to the borders of Northumberland; in the 1800's its range extended south of the Tyne and would be commonly heard on the streets of Newcastle, Gateshead and Jarrow.

Popular belief, reinforced by Shakespeare in Henry IV Part 1, associated the burr with the speech of the famous 12th century knight, Harry Hotspur, who supposedly had a speech impediment that made it difficult for him to pronounce the letter 'r'. It was claimed that people imitated his speech pattern as a sign of respect for their Northumbrian hero, thus giving birth to the burr.

Dr. Dennis Embleton, a prominent Newcastle physician and philologist, suggested an even earlier source. In an 1887 lecture¹, he placed its origin with the 6th century invasion of the Angles from Sleswic, the southern region of what is now Denmark. His theory was largely derived by a process of elimination in which he concluded that the presence of the burr in Northumbria, and its absence elsewhere, was due solely to the predominance of Angle settlement in the region.

However, the philologist and lexicographer, Richard Oliver Heslop, argued that its introduction occurred much later². Citing contemporary research³, Heslop places the source of the burr to France in the middle of 17th century, where the tonsillar 'r' became a popular aspect of French speech, (think of the French pronunciation of the word 'Paris' for example), a pattern which then trended northwards to Germany and Denmark where Heslop claims its use was widespread. It would have then spread to Northumberland via the region's extensive sea trade with northern Europe.

And then we have Richard Dawes, M.A., who was headmaster of the Royal Grammar School in 1767. Doubtlessly confounded by his dialect-speaking pupils, he wrote a brief satirical verse in which he implies the burr was served upon the people of Newcastle on account of their wickedness:

*“But Heav'n in vengeance for their crimes
Decreed that in future times,
They shou'd be branded by a mark
By which you should know them in the dark;
For in their throat a burr is placed,
By which this blessed crew is traced.”*

Andy Bogle, Dec 2020

¹ *On Certain Peculiarities of the Dialect. Archeologia Aeliana, Vol XIII.* Newcastle Society of Antiquaries. 1887

² *Northumberland Words.* English Dialect Society. 1892

³ Professor Moritz Trautman. *Anglia, vol iii.* 1880

MORPETH NORTHUMBRIAN GATHERING



**2021
Online**



Saturday 10th April

Gathering Goes Online – with Special Dialect Events

Saturday 10th April sees the 2021 Online Morpeth Northumbrian Gathering – a day of internet events using YouTube, Zoom and Facebook. There'll be a programme of pre-recorded concerts, Zoom dance activities, stories, drama and craft presentations, picture galleries and archive films – all to keep the flag flying for the regional festival of music, dialect, dance, craft and heritage while “real” events can't take place during Covid.

The full programme and timings are still being developed, but will be published online nearer the date, along with the links to the different events. Using a mixty-maxty of special home videos and professionally made films, the hope is to show some of the types of activities that would normally happen across the Muckle Day of the festival weekend. There'll be a welcome in dialect from the Morpeth Gadgy, scenes of the street procession, family shows, an evening music concert, virtual art display with a public vote on people's favourite painting, an aall manner of things!

While our normal live speaking competitions can't be staged, the results of the pre-judged writing classes will be announced on the day, and good news! As we write there's filming gannin on for a special spoken word afternoon concert, te be fair chocka wi the dialect. The expected line-up should include Johnny Handle, Bob Bolam, Peter Armstrong, Graham Bell, Eileen Beers, James Tait and Pat Dunn. Pat – the Ashington-born actress well known for her appearances

in Coronation Street, Vera, Hebburn and a host of stage plays, will not only be reciting a couple of her favourite Fred Reed poems but later on will have her own slot in the evening with a monologue from “Elsie”, her one-woman show written by Tom Kelly, which had been scheduled for last year’s live events at the Gathering but had to be postponed.

Find the programme details and all the links to events on :-

Gathering Facebook page: <https://www.facebook.com/morpeth.gathering>

Gathering website: www.northumbria.org.uk/gathering

The Morpeth Gathering Virtual Art Gallery 2021 is now online at <https://youtu.be/PmI7LHceFYI> . Vote for your three favourite pictures at GatheringArt@outlook.com by Wednesday 31st March. The top ten artworks will be shown in the Virtual Exhibition on Saturday 10th April during the main online Gathering.

Buried Treasure

Last year, you’ll mind on Aah went ti Lunnon ti taalk ti thi Kween. Whan Aah got back hyem, Aah waas that full o mesel wor lass tellt is ti gan in thi gardin an dee sum diggin.

So, theor Aah waas, howkin a bit space for wor beans an onions, whan aall ov a sudden Aah sees coins in amang aall thi clarts, so Aah shooted fer wor lass.

“Hey up!” shu says, pickin one o them up, an keekin at it: “These isn’t yor modern coins. This isna thi Kween’s heed, cos shu’s not got a beord, has shu?”

“Aye, yor reet theor” Aah says, but Aah thowt Aah’d seen thi fyec on thi coin afore, so Aah slipped it inti me breeks, an Aah kept keekin at it ti see if’n Aah cud put a nyem ti thi fyec.

Then Aah seen summat else stickin oot thi grund. “Whaat’s yon?” Aah says.

“It looks like a byen” shu says.

“Is’t animal, vegetable or mineral?” Aah says.

“Aah divvent knaa” shu says. “Yuh’ll hatta phone yon clivvor folks at thi Roman Museum. They’ll knaa whaat ti dee”. So that’s whaat wuh did.

Whey, the waas that excited bi me findins, like, the dug aall ower thi gardin an the fund mair coins, an byens, an aall sorts, then the led it off ti Vindolanda ti resarch it. Aah kept keekin at that coin Aah’d fund, but, tryin ti jaloos whe’s fyec it waas.

An then, one mornin as Aah waas shavin, it hit is. Thi fyec on thi coin waas the syem as thi one i thi mirror! “Bugger me!” Aah says, an wor lass axed is whaat waas wrang. So Aah tellt hor.

“It’s tekkin yuh a lang time ti jaloos it” shu says. Aah axed hor whaat shu ment.

“Whey” shu says. “Aah’d cut yor hair thi day wuh fund thi coins an stuff. Sum a thi lowsens must hev faallen on thi byens, cos thi folks at Vindolanda cuddent jaloos wheor thi hairs had cum frae, so the rang is up. The axed is fer a sample a yor hair, an whan the tested it, the fund it waas varry like thi DNA frae thi byens.”

“Gerraway!” Aah says. “How di yuh knaa that?”

“Whey, Aah got a letter t’otha day,” shu says, “an the sayd thi byens waas frae thi last king a Northumbria, an the rekkon yor related.”

“Gerraway!” Aah says agyen. “But, whaat for did yuh say nowt tiv is?”

Shu says “Aah didn’t tell yuh cos Aah jist knaad yuh’d be a reet pain i thi arse if’n yuh’d knaan yuh waas ganna be thi next king a Northumbria!”

Whey, yuh cud a dunshed is doon wiv a stotty.

Waad yuh beleev it?

Me! Thi next king a Northumbria!

Writ bi an Owld Radgie Gadgie

Mair Vorse About Northumberland

The changin fyec o Northumberland,
Far reachin from Tweed ti Tyne,
Is bonny, an mony the sight t behowld
In this wonderful coonty o mine,
Wheor past an prisint stand cheek t jowl,
An beauty runs wild an free,
Se strangely inique, but nivvor t seek
In the spot that means hivvin t me.

The gintle fyec o Northumberland,
Smilin thru medda an vale,
Is waamin, disaamin, an catches the breeth
With a magic that nivvor can fail.
Fer nyen van visit this northern scene
An bide unmoved be its spell,
Sich boontiful land, the work o God's hand,
An he hes created it well.

The rugged fyec o Northumberland
Thus fashioned be time an tide,
Is raora an faora in aal of its ways;
Can yuh wundaa Aa'm borstin wi pride
Fer rowlin hills an heathor-clad moors,
Majestic beyond compare,
Aboondin wi green, in woodland an dene -
Se much an a canny bit mair?

But ony fyec o Northumberland
Gies plishur ti them that waak
Its highways an byeways, or doon be the shore,
Mebbe bidin a minute ti taak
Wi folk that rate the salt o the orth
An caal ivry spade a spade.
This coonty o mine has mowlded them fine -
Northumbrians are born here, not made.

Ellen Thompson

Wor Cat & Yor Cat

Wor cat is sleek and black;
Yors the colour of grey slack.

Wors laps cream and fish from tins;
Yors drinks broon and scraps from bins.

Wor cat sleeps on velvet chairs;
Yor cat kips below the stairs.

Wor cat's dainty, light of tread;
Yors a bully with a tommy head.

Wor cat's in love and sings to the moon;
Yor cat's a rake, out on the toon.

Wor cat's in kittens, due this May;
Yor cat's obviously had his way.

Brenda Whitelock

Deor England,

Ye bugs! Yi left us aal these cinturies,
Ti poverty an memory an deeth,
Ti keep thi Scots craas oot o yor rich vales ...
Yi let us fill oor skey wi smoke an leeve
Bilaa thi smouldrin pit heaps i th clairts,
Ti build yor ships an fill yor grates,
Ti mek yi cannon, injins, gaaden gyates;
Wi tyek yor slumps an feyght yor waars;
Wi've swallad pylons, an peype-leyns;
Wi've waatcht thi Forestri Cummishun
Hoy pines aal roond withoot pormishun;
An thin, forbye, yor dams an blasts
Bedivil mair an mair wor land
An teor it inti hidyis wounds;
Yor grite macheenes streyd taal as masts
Cross meyles uv aaful oppen-casts ...
An still yi're not content, yi bugs!
Yi waant a tomic poo'r-hoose noo
I Druridge Bay ... i Druridge Bay!
Hev ye nee notion o thi gaall yi show -
Hoo menny meyles o luvly land-scip lone
Yon freak wad blight? Noo, hada-an play
In sum sad plyace thit's speylt aa'riddy,
Not wun yo're stealin frum thi baiorns,
An bords an coos an thorstin orban foak -
An wheyle yi're at it tek yor Cheevyit plan
An stot doon it doon yor motaway nern-stop -
Drill for yor 'tomic dump doon theor,
At Westminstor - thi abbey - or Sint Paal's!
An keep in meynd, for us, yi see,
Thi Cheevyits are wor ain cathedral heygh;
Thi boondin graishus corves its airches,
Thi lofty summits speyres an soarin vaalts,
Th'immacullate vorjin slopes wor aaltor-clerth,
Thi whole, deor moontins, lowpin ti thi skey,
Ti croon wi grace an aawe thi views wi ha'
Frum ivry corner uv Northumborlan -
Yi bugs! Yi shoorly must - can understan
It's sacreelij, this Cheevyit plan!

Yors grudginly

Northumberland

Spring

Noo when Aa sleep sumtimes mi sowl awakes
And frum the little deith in song will fly
Inta celestial leit that throbs and quakes
Ower high plateaux aneath a wide, wide sky.
And theor are polars high of Lombardy,
And silvor grasses faantin in the breeze,
The little soonds aall soft in symphony
Amang the jubilation of the trees,
And aall the flashin grasses doon the hill,
And coontless buttorcups that glint and glow.
Aa gaze doon wiv a warm supornal thrill
On spring's explosion hoyed aboot belaa.

Fred Reed

