



The Northumbrian Language Society



PATRON: His Grace the Duke of Northumberland.

Newsletter 23

Editor: Terry Common.

March 1995

Annual Meeting & Reed Supper: see page 1

Well, here we are with the first newsletter of 1995. Hope you all enjoyed your festive season and are going great guns this new year. It had a good prelude:-

Yule Meet 3 Dec. 1994

Atteended by about 17 tae 20 fine Northumbrian folk, but unfortunately not by wor chairman, Roland Bibby, who waas a bit off the crooks on that day. His leadership, wit ind chairm wore sadly missed. He seems tae be perkin up again ind whu aal weesh him weel. Aah reckon he'll be firin on aal fower be the time the cuckoo returns.

We had a few recitals and Bob Bolam gave us a sang. The Northumbrian dialect competition was entered with much enthusiasm. Wuh aal hed a nice bit tae eat (mince pies in' aal), aal weshed doon wee sum fine punch provided be Miss Dickson. Most people got a prize from the weel supported raffle. We also had a song from what must be our youngest member, Elizabeth Bibby-Wilson---one to watch for the future?

The afternoon ended with a slide show by Janet Brown, showing the efforts of the Ulgham school-children providing a Nativity play, not in the local church or school but around the village and surrounding fields. A simple but very enjoyable afternoon!

---The Editor

* **New Members.**

While those I speak to agree wholeheartedly with our Society and what it stands for, many are reluctant to become members, perhaps (I think) because they feel they may get involved in something they may not be able to give enough time to. I feel it is important to emphasize our informality, and that those who can only take part, or offer information, very occasionally, are still most welcome.

---The Editor

The Northumbrian Language---use it or we lose it!

Northumbriana Posters.

Half a dozen of these are on sale at Appleby's Bookshop, 60, Newgate St., Morpeth, and were on display across the road for some weeks--just about opposite. Black and gold, they cost 20p at the shop or 30p by post from Westgate House, Dogger Bank, Morpeth.

The *Northumberland Charter* describes the county's status as a genuine community and region in its own right. *The Last Land of All England*, Roland Bibby's verses on the same theme. *The Northumbrian's Curse* on destroyers of Northumbrians' identity and awareness. *The Twa Corbies*, *Northumbrian Pipes* and *The Lynn* are fine poems by Fred Reed.

Another Northumbriana poster harks back to Charles Dickens & company's show in 1852 at the Old Assembly Rooms, Newcastle. Full of character and interest it is 9" by 20", red and black---£2 each (£2.50 by post) from Kim Bibby-Wilson's home (see address below).

The Secretary's New Address.

Mrs. K.M. Bibby-Wilson, 36 Auburn Gardens, Fenham, Newcastle,
NE4 9XQ (0191--2747756).

NOTICE OF ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

TO ALL MEMBERS:

You are cordially invited to the 1995 Annual Meeting, to be held at the Black Swan, Stobhillgate, Morpeth, on Thurs. 4th May at 7.30 p.m.. The Reed Supper ticket will have a street map on its back and there is ample parking at the hostelry. The Choppington and Tynemouth buses, and local Stobhill mini-coaches to and from

Morpeth 'bus station, pass close by.

AGENDA.

1. Apologies for absence.
2. Minutes of 1994 Annual Meeting.
3. Executive's Report for 1994-5.
4. Treasurer's Report for 1994-5.
5. Election of Officers:
 - a) President (1994-5 Hon. Ald. Mrs. E. Mitchell O.B.E., who is now ill and unable to continue).
 - b) Vice-President (Mrs. Janet Brown)
 - c) Chairman (Mr. R. Bibby)
 - d) Vice-Chairman (Mr B. Robinson)
 - e) Secretary (Mrs. K.M. Bibby-Wilson)
 - f) Asst. Secretary (Miss M. Burdon)
 - g) Treasurer (Miss H. Dickson)
 - h) Bibliographer (Mr. G. Wallace)
 - i) Newsletter Editor: (Mr. T. A. Common)
 - j) Hon. Auditor (Mr. T.H. Horne)
6. Election of Executive: 5 persons (1994-5, Mesdames J. Brown, A. Dickie, V. McLean, Miss M. Burdon, Mr. G. Johnson).
7. Other Elections (if proposals received):
 - a) Fellows of the Society
 - b) Hon. Life Past Presidents (Chairman proposes Mrs. E. Mitchell)
 - c) Hon. Past Vice-Presidents
 - d) Hon. Life Members.
8. Any other Business.

The Eleventh Reed Supper.

Again we celebrate the life and work of the late Fred Reed F.N.L.S., poet and student of Northumbrian, for years editor of *Ashington Colliery Magazine*, and co-founder of *Northumbriana Magazine* and of this Society. Because the Birthday (30th April) is at a holiday week-end*, the Supper takes place on Thursday 4th May, at about 8.15 p.m., at the Black Swan, Stobhillgate, Morpeth (see Annual Meeting notice above). (*Well, so we all expected!)

PLEASE SEND your Ticket Application and payment

(including family and friends) in good time, by **MONDAY MORNING 1st May** (we have to order the number of meals that day). The **COST** is £3.50 per person. **Late Application tickets** may be kept at the door for you, not posted.

The 11th Reed Supper Programme.
Peypin in the Muckle Greet Stotty Cyek.
Sarrimoanyil Forst Hack bi the Vice-Preseedint.
Stotty Cyek Weesh bi the Chairman.
Tradeeshnal Suppor o' Peys an' Peas, Stotty an' Caffee.
Address ti the Muckle Greet Stotty bi Maistor Bill Weeks,
famed expoondor on this an' that.
Ripley on eets bihaaf bi Maistor Berb Bolam, weel
kent tellor o' ootlandish tyales.
Address ti the Baard, wor ain Freed Reed, bi Maistriss
Jane Smailes, prized lass o' Newcassel Branch.
Ripley on hees bihaalf by Maistriss Linda McCullough-Thew,
poetess an' wreytoress.
Bits an' Pieces, hwen aal willin is axed ti hoy in tha
bits o' varse, vorse, tyales, sangs an' owt else
thit entortyains aal gud Northumbrians.
Bennydikshin, canny and tradishnal, bi Freed Reed.

Morpeth Northumbrian Gathering 21-23 April 1995
Full programme details, entry forms & tickets from Morpeth Chantry Bagpipe Museum (01670 519466) Queries to Kim Bibby-Wilson (0190 2747756). Included in the weekend of crafts, music, archive films, workshops,concerts & street events:
LANGUAGE EVENTS:
THE POETRY OF FRED REED: the Gathering's opening concert, **8 pm Friday 21 April** at the Morpeth Chantry Bagpipe Museum, celebrating the writings of the Society's late founding Vice-President, described by Melvyn Bragg as England's leading dialect poet. Performers include Anne & Alex Swailes, Joe Gling, Mike Kirkup, music by Derek Hobbs and friends. Tickets £2 (concessions £1).
Voice Workshop: free chance to join Benny Graham singing local songs 11.15 am Sat. 22 April Black Bull; at the same time **Stories** for children at the Library.
Competitions: closing date for writing classes 1st April. Come & listen to (or enter!) Northumbrian speaking competition 1.30 pm Saturday 22 April Collingwood House; poetry and prose recital and

general writing competition awards 2.30 pm Collingwood House.
Ticket for all competitions including music & clog £1 (60p).
Winners' Concert 6.30 pm Bagpipe Museum with 1994 winners £2.50 (£1.50).

News from the Branches.

Hexham. The meeting night has been changed to the **first Wednesdays** of February, April, June, September and November, at Priestpopple House (secretary Geo Johnson, 01434-605413), Several new members have joined of late, thanks to publicity by poster, handbill and the *Hexham Guardian*. At the 5th April meeting, Dr John Chapman will speak about old buildings in Northumberland.

Newcastle. Meetings on **second Wednesday** of all months, usually at Spital Tongues Community **Centre** (secretary, Geo Wallace, 0191-2583105). April 12: Colin Eley on "Dialect in local songs." May 10:: Members' Night.

Society members in general should note that they are welcome at any branch's meetings, subject to paying any room fee the branch members pay.

Publications

Progress has been slow, *Moody's Glossary* because Grahame Binless has moved from a damaged arm to an eyesight trouble. About a quarter of the whole text is still to be word-processed. Thanks to Roland Bibby's recent illnesses, one book of the late Joe Holland's work and memories, and Dr Hull's Tyneside dialect glossary, have been delayed.

A new **Northumbriana**, no. 47, is now on sale. This is very much the Society's house journal, as well as the Morpeth Gathering's, with its Language Survey, and writing competition entries. Certain helpful shops stock it, or you can subscribe what you like and receive issues until at length you get a reminder to resubscribe. It costs £1.30 per issue (post & packing 45p).

Meyk an' Moas.



There are still copies available of the notable Northumbrian version of the German classic of the two boys and their monkey tricks---and their just fate in the end. 50 pages

with many original illustrations by Wilhelm Busch---£2.75 (£3.28 by post) from Westgate House, Dogger Bank, Morpeth NE61 1RF.

What's On---the Live Theatre Company

The Live Theatre provides so many shows it is not practical to try to print it all in the Newsletter. The venue is 27 Broad Chare, Quayside, Newcastle, and the office is 7/8 Trinity Chare, Quayside, Newcastle NE1 3DF; tel. 0191-261 2694; Fax, 0191-232 2224. They have many and varied shows and are all well worth a visit. Prices range from approx. £3 - £10.

The Story.

An old roadman friend of mine of many years ago, alas long departed, used to strive hard on winter days in the Coquet Valley to make sure the banks and difficult parts of the roads were "ahlwis weel gritteed", to make sure local folk with their cars got oot ti wawk or wherever else they were going. One particularly snowy-icy morning on a notorious local hill, a young man who had only recently come to live in the area, attempted to drive up the rather steep hill. Jack, as usual, was there to help, shovelling grit beneath the car wheels, but eventually the car stuck.

"Ah think ye better torn back," said Jack.

The young man protested, saying, "C'mon, man, I'm half-way up."

"Aye," sayd Jack, "but y'ore also half-way doon."

A canny reply from someone who had difficulty trying to write his own name!

Contributions.

We could have bigger, healthier Newsletters if you readers sent more parcels---short articles, letters, comments, jokes, potted wisdom---as they occur to you or you meet them. Action, please! Don't leave it all to Charlie Dickens and yon lot---win eternal fame through these pages.

Fred Reed's Verdict.

T' speak wor language theeor's wan gud job---

Ye'll hev nee side an' canna be a snob.

Plain common sense t' it is elwis wed;

It forces ye t' caall a spyed a spyed.

A Reprint of Interest from the *Morpeth Herald*, 23 March:

BY FONT & WANSBECK, by Roland Bibby:

PROGRESS AT LAST.

A little, but very encouraging in the teeth of disinterest and inertia when campaigning for recognition of True Northumberland, Tweed to Tyneside, as a genuine community and region. It survives as it has done for 14 centuries, but nowadays in a wilderness of false, misleading Northumbrias, Norths and North-Easts---and "Tyne & Wear"---with their multitude of diverse meanings and absolutely no signposts to guide the confused public.

The Northumbrian Language Society is a prominent campaigner for the cause, and so is well used to banging its head against a variety of stone walls, even though regionalism is firmly on the political scene these days.

Now, at last, a national periodical has recognized the Society's case in an article which otherwise sees little evidence of "*strong, coherent, regional feelings*" in England, with "*a few notable exceptions*", i.e. Cornwall, Yorkshire's core and Greater London. It adds that the European Regionalist Network co-ordinator, after four years of seeking for true regions, has given up the search!

But, the article says, "*the Northumbrian Language Society argues strongly, and with much historical and linguistic evidence, that Northumberland is a coherent entity in its own right, which stretches down the east coast from Tweed to Tyneside.*"

It may be so that there are only a few coherent entities left in England, but they are precious for their diversity, their differences, their firm roots in their history, language and culture, and they deserve protection as much as our castles, churches and landscapes do.

Merging with other areas in sham regions is the worst treatment, for a mad demand for unity, uniformity and standardization, a single "image", sooner or later appears, accompanied by propaganda and pressure in that deeply depressing direction. Genuine, and so naturally different, regions get much more than enough of that treatment from the State, which longs for cosy, uniform, biddable subjects.

Foes of regionalism hold forth against "another tier of government", but the quite splendid principle of subsidiarity (power to the lowest practical level) insists that regional government should take over very much of state government's work (can you hear the screams?) and give it local expression, to the immense benefit of the citizens.

We need to follow up this progress in conversation and in writing, **writing to** Cabinet Ministers and Commissioners mentioned in the news in connection with regionalism or county boundaries; **writing to** the boards, quangoes and companies that invent their own "regions" and use titles for them that belong to other, genuine regions; **using** "Northumberland" (or "Co. Durham"), not "Tyne & Wear" on envelopes; **practising** our splendid Northumbrian language zealously, and using it cheerfully and confidently amongst Northumbrians (or to impress aliens from elsewhere!); **reading** (and writing) verse, stories etc. in our language (Northumbrian has a worthy literature too, and its own rich music, instruments, dances and crafts---quite a community and region!)

Fred Reed.'s Tungue o' Heestory.

*When the Northumbrian speaks t'ye, ye see,
He's taalkin in the tungue o' heestory.
He disn't wave wi' wild gesticulations;
Ye'll knaa jist whaat he means be intonations.*
