



PATRON: His Grace the Duke of Northumberland.

Newsletter 24

Editor: Terry Common

September 1995

Autumn Event: PIT PARTY 30th September
Christmas Event: YULE MEET 2nd December
Details on page 8

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Gathering Postscript

One thing about the Newsletter at this time of year, it should be "gie fule". This follows one of the more interesting times for us Northumbrians, what with the Gathering and all it stands for, followed closely by our remembrance of our own great Northumbrian poet and dialect writer Fred Reed at the now well-established, annual "Fred Reed Supper Neet".

While I would like to leave some comments and details to Roland and Kim regarding the Gathering, certainly many enjoyed the weekend.

As it is not possible for this one individual to attend all the functions being held, one does listen to the comments of others and they were favourable.

The turnout at Collingwood House for the dialect recital and awards for dialect work seemed to be better attended than for the last couple of years and it was pleasing to see, listen to and hear of new entrants, especially youngsters from the school entries. There is much untapped talent in our county.

Even though yours truly was a speaker on the occasion it is true to say that the Saturday night concert held at the Bagpipe Museum and attended by the Mayor

and Mayoress of Castle Morpeth (and the Town Council Chairman with his wife) was a very professional performance. It was also a sell-out. Least, from wat ah cud see ah divn't think wuh cud i gotten any mair in.

Note from the Chairman and Secretary

Bob Lyon did a grand job as presenter of the afternoon dialect session, and a special mention should go to the story-telling judge, Chris Bostock, who delivered an entertaining series of comments laced with accents from all over the British Isles, though not, interestingly enough, Northumbrian (which he obviously decided to leave to the experts). The previous night saw another full house for the Fred Reed poetry evening, with Alex Swailes and others performing poems and stories by Fred, including four pieces set to music. The success of the evening, the first to be presented since Fred's death, led the Society's AGM to discuss the possibility of a "complete works" being published. Sponsors welcomed!

The Live Theatre Company

The listings I receive for the above don't always coincide with the release of our Newsletter but I can remind you all again that every month there up to twelve shows on from as little as £2 per ticket. Venue: 27, Broad Chare, Quayside, Newcastle. Office: 7/8 Trinity Chare, Quayside. Tel.: 0191 261 2694. Fax.: 0191 232 2224. They will be glad to inform you and/or send you details.

Alan Plater's new play, "Shooting the Legend", about a Londoner's preconceptions of the North East, and disentangling the truth from the legend, stars Tim Healy and is currently being presented at the Theatre Royal, Newcastle, in a co-production with Live Theatre.

The Story

My father told me a story which had been handed down by his grandfather dating from the first half of the

19th century. "The Hunt" were meeting up the valley and it was rumoured that important guests of the Duke of Northumberland would be riding out. A certain small landowner (not many of them in those days) did not relish the thought of so many horses galloping across his land and therefore deployed the "young laddie" of the farm to make certain naebody came through the bottom gate. After a while a group of riders arrived at the gate whereupon the young lad told them they couldn't come through. The chap at the front of the group enquired of him what right he had to refuse them entry.

"By the instructions of my maister, sir," he replied.

"What can you do to prevent us?" said the rider.

"Whatever in my power," stated the youngster.

"You will do this because your master said you must?"

"Yes, sir," said the boy.

After a short silence the horseman put his hand inside his tunic and presented the lad with a crown (five bob) (25 pence), almost a fortune to someone so young in those days.

"Work well for your master, my lad, and tell him on your return that today you did what the great Bonaparte couldn't do -- you turned the Duke of Wellington."

With that he pulled his horse around and rode off followed by the rest of the riders.

How true the story is I cannot be sure, but a lovely tale anyway.

Shepherds meet Cowboys

A national tour of the finest Cowboy Poets comes to Alnwick shortly, on Thursday 14th September at 7.30 p.m. The Americans bring their campfire poetry and big-hearted ballads to the Northumberland Hall, supported by three of the finest Northumbrian poets: Graham Dick, singer and shepherd, Andrew Miller, National Park Ranger and Alan Wood, shepherd and born and bred

countryman, one of the first winners of the dialect competitions at the Morpeth Gathering. Tickets are available at the door (£3/£2) or in advance -- details from 01665 602689.

Bondagers

The Northumberland Theatre Company's new touring play is about a year in the life of Victorian women landworkers. Watch out for details in the local press.

1944 Remembered

I have pleasure in telling you that one of our Hexham members, Nick Short, had the honour to be invited to represent the RAF Association at the unveiling of the memorial in the College Valley in memory of some 35 Allied air crew who lost their lives due to air crashes on Cheviot during the war. Nick himself felt proud also to be representing our Language Society on this occasion. Members may recall he asked in Newsletter 22 for their help in providing information on the incident referred to below.

During a blizzard in December 1944 an American B17 Flying Fortress crashed. It is history now that a major part of the survivors' rescue was carried out by two local shepherds, Frank Moscrop (still with us today) and John Dagg, sadly departed but represented at the ceremony by his son, John, with his father's B.E.M.. They, along with a collie dog, Sheila, searched and found in terrible conditions the stricken air crew. Sheila was the first "civilian" dog to receive the Dicken Medal (a dog's V.C.). Nick was fortunate after the ceremony to meet the pilot and his radio operator from the doomed flight of 50 years ago, have a bit "crack" and a few photos.

For anyone interested in seeing the plaque to commemorate the visit and the roll of honour to those who lost their lives on Cheviot, Allied and German, they are on display at Cuddystone Hall.

Thank you, Nick, for this information.

News from the Branches

Hexham: next meetings: Wednesday 6th September (David Simpson on placenames and dialects); Wed. 1st November. Venue: Priestpoppo House. Details from George Johnson 01434 605413.

Newcastle: next meeting: Wednesday 13th September (street names) and every second Wednesday of the month at Spital Tongues Community Centre. Details from George Wallace 0191 2583105. Branch members are hoping to produce a small volume of the late Joe Holland's dialect writings, a separate publication from his auto-biography which is still at the proof-reading stage.

News from the Executive Committee

Future dates: see p.8. Next AGM and the annual **Reed Supper** Tuesday 30th April, 1996. 29th Morpeth Northumbrian **Gathering** 12th-14th April, 1996 with dialect session Sat. 13th April. The fund-raising **Barn Dance** is to be held this autumn on Sat. 25th November at Morpeth YMCA Hall (details & tickets from the Bagpipe Museum, 01670 519466).

A Yorkshire publisher has approached the society for assistance in producing a dictionary of Northumbrian dialect and folklore, to continue a series begun with a Yorkshire volume.

An Appeal for Help from members: the society has many projects in hand, and requests your assistance with information:

1. Do you know of any publications or recordings involving Northumbrian language (novels, articles, archives, radio programmes, L.P.s, etc.) which could be added to our lists? Contact the Society's Hon. Bibliographer, George Wallace, 37 Lynn Road, Billy Mill, North Shields (0191 2583105).
2. Do you visit groups or societies speaking or singing in

the Northumbrian language? Do you know of anyone else who does this? Would you be willing to draw up a list of such people for our "Cold Trod" list? Contact the Society's Secretary, Kim Bibby-Wilson, 36 Auburn Gardens, Fenham, Newcastle upon Tyne, NE4 9XQ (0191 2747756).

3. Are you interested in promoting the dialect in schools? Progress has been delayed in producing an educational wallet for children. Contact Kim (see no.2) if you would like to help with ideas about content, production or marketing such a pack

4. Is anyone willing to take on the task of recording the local differences between villages within the Northumbrian language area, perhaps using a basic common topic or text? Contact Kim (see no. 2) again.

5. Have you bought *Meyk an' Moas*, the illustrated dialect verse tale of two scallywags, yet? The more copies are sold, the more the society benefits and the better chance there is of funding a taped version. Details from the Chairman, Roland Bibby (01670 513308).

The next issue of *Northumbria* magazine should be in the shops at the end of this month.

Letter from member Peter Elliott

If members of the N.L.S. wish to further the cause of regional government (following on from Newsletter 23), may I recommend that they join the Campaign For a Northern Assembly, membership £5 waged, £2 unwaged.

It is a non-party organisation whose aims, whilst they are primarily concerned with political matters, considerably overlap those of N.L.S.. Even the ex-bishop of Durham has thrown his weight behind the idea. The secretary is Glenn Simpson, 16 Adderlane Road, Prudhoe, Northumberland, NE42 5HR.

May I also in all seriousness propose that the N.L.S. contacts education committees etc. in the region with the idea of teaching Northumbrian as a second or third language.

I go with my family singing local songs to schools in our immediate area and we are appalled at the rate at which our native language is disappearing. There is still we believe a lot of stigma attached to "not tarkin proper" which would not apply in say Scotland or Ireland. Selected teachers from the N.L.S. could help overcome this as well as introducing kids to the lore and culture of our region.

Finally may I quote the story of the Geordie who had a canny win on the lottery. He said to their lass, "Is there owt y'd like dyun t'mak life betta f' w'?" "Aye, Aa'd like an indoor netty cos Aa'm sick of trailin' ower the yard on caad days." "Nee syunner said than done," and so it was. "Is the' owt else y'd like?" he queried after the alterations. "Aye, Aa'm alwiz hearin' about them barbecues that folks are hevin'. Aa'd luv a geet posh one o' them built." "Nowt's a bother," he replied.

He was having a pint with one of his mates in the local and the bloke asked if the win had made any difference to his life-style. "Why the' is one thing," he replied. "W" used t' eat indoors and gan t' the netty ootside; noo it's the other way roond." --Pete Elliott.

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Well, folks, try to keep the news cummin in, the mair news, the mair newsletters. Details of wuh next soshul events are owerleaf.

Keep ahead, T.C.

Pit Party 30th September

The Society's next "theme" day, following the pattern of last autumn's enjoyable Kern Picnic, is a celebration of coal mining at Woodhorn Colliery Museum, Ashington, from 11 a.m. to about 4 p.m. on Saturday, 30th September. Members are invited to bring their own picnic lunch. The day will include a word quiz, a local speaker (any members who have relevant memories or stories please join in), songs from member Peter Elliott and his wife Pat, of the famous Birtley family, a chance to tour the colliery museum and craft workshops (including miners' banners, proggy and hooky mats) and the opportunity to visit the nearby Woodhorn Church Museum if time permits. The "new" narrow gauge railway may (or may not!) be open by the 30th.

A small fee of perhaps £1 will be charged for printing, prizes, postage, etc., but this will be fixed later and need only be paid on the day. Indoor accommodation will be provided. Full details will be sent to those who indicate they wish to attend by completing and returning the enclosed form to the Secretary (or a phone call will suffice).

Yule Meet

The Society's Christmas gathering will be held from 2 p.m. on Saturday 2nd December at Morpeth Chantry Bagpipe Museum. There will be entertainment, food, competitions (not of the embarrassing sort) and perhaps a raffle. Entry to the party is free, but members should bring a mince pie or other festive fare, while soft drinks and the Treasurer's magnificent punch will be provided. There may not be another Newsletter before the Yule meet, so put the date in your diary now. A note or phone call in due course to the Secretary (see address on accompanying slip) will help us to have an idea of the numbers in advance.