



PATRON: His Grace the Duke of Northumberland.

# Newsletter 25

Editor: Terry Common

August 1996

## Autumn Event: FISHING DAY 14th September

Details on page 7

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Well, folks, another year gone by. Funny hoo quick they cum arond. Since the last newsletter in September 1995 we've had the Pit Party in October which I was unable to attend due mainly to Silver Wedding celebrations (yes, 25 years). Then in December the Yule Meet when this correspondent was in India. I tried a bit of Northumbrian ower yonder but soon gave up as I felt so sorry for those gentle young Indian people who could speak English so well, then suddenly thought that they couldn't. So I'll leave the outcome and information from those two events to be explained to you by our good friends the Bibbys.

### Notes from the Secretary

Firstly I must apologise again to Terry for the delay in producing his newsletter, which was originally scheduled for the New Year, got pushed back by preparations for the Morpeth Gathering and was further fettled by my own family commitments, a bairn who still disturbs me a couple of times a night and my own general incompetence.

The Pit Party proved to be a Grand Day Out, with the programme as anticipated in Newsletter 24 but with the addition of appropriate mining tunes on the Border pipes by Matt Seatie of Newbiggin, hilarious anecdotes from Edwin Grieve and live extracts from Mike Kirkup's play about the Woodhorn pit disaster. Pat and Pete Elliott gave a splendid concert of mining songs and George Wallace's word quiz provoked much discussion.

The Yule Meet passed pleasantly, in a rather congested Bagpipe Museum gallery, with seasonal refreshments and entertainment provided by the membership. The only disruption occurred when the raffle appeared (the bairn seems to think that you have to give out the folded tickets individually to all present,

and that when urged not to do this the best course of action is to run off with the container, screaming). Hazel Dickson won the competition for a Northumbrian carol (see page 8).

N.B. I should remind you that my address unfortunately has not been updated on your membership card: please delete the Wallace Street address on your records and replace with Kim Bibby-Wilson, 36 Auburn Gardens, Fenham, Newcastle upon Tyne, NE4 9XQ; tel. (0191) 274 7756.

And while I have your attention, does anyone want to buy a small cream two-door gas Rayburn? Any offers considered.

### 1996 Morpeth Northumbrian Gathering Competitions

Full details of all writing, performing and crafts competitions are given in the Awards Leaflet, available (s.a.e., please) from the Chairman or from Morpeth Chantry Bagpipe Museum. Winners of the dialect classes were:

Novice Verse: 1, Nick Short; 2, Tom Nesbit; 3, Kirsten Lyon.  
Open Verse: 1, Alan C Crown; 2, Bob Lyon; 3, Don Passmore; highly commended, Margaret Emmett, Alan C Brown; comm'd, Bob Bolam, Val Morrison, Alan C Brown.

Prose: 1, Terry Common; 2, Nick Short; 3, Terry Common; commended, Nick Short. Fine Northumbrian Speech: 1, Terry Common; 2, Minnie Selkirk; 3, Bill Stoker.

Story-telling: 1, Minnie Selkirk; 2, Terry Common; 3, Dave Iredale.

(Secretary's note: divvent think wor Edeetah is blaain his ain trumpet, cus it waasn't his decishun te hincle these pleycins) Preparations are well under way for next year's Gathering, the 30th, including the addition of a refreshment interval during the Dialect Session on the Saturday afternoon (5th April 1997) and the possible inclusion of more literary events in conjunction with the County Library.

### Notes from the Chairman Northumbrian Plaids

Mr Nick Short of Hexham's very smart turn-out at Morpeth on Gathering Saturday, in Northumbrian trews, plaid and bonnet, created a great impression, which was given voice at the Society's Annual Meeting, and so inquiries are now going on. Otterburn Mill has the cloth only, but a miller at Alston offers made-up garments, and the County Council Tourist Dept. is retailing these. The Tourist Officer is willing to include any requirements of the Society in his next order.

A full plaid may well be 13'6" by 4'6" (reaching to just below the knee at front and back). The nearest to this in size in the catalogue is a wrap, 84" x 24", @ £26.99. The shawl is 48" square @ £26.99. The scarf, for man or woman, is £9.99. All, of course, are in the black and white shepherd's check. We hope to track

down more garments, ornaments and prices.

Meanwhile, do think about the idea. A full plaid or wrap, folded, hung over one shoulder and clasped at the side, is an impressive expression of what it means to be Northumbrian. If you think you may well want one of the garments, please ring the chairman (Morpeth 513308) so that we can estimate the interest (this would NOT be a firm order).

### A Reverse Dictionary

This was suggested at the Annual Meeting and aroused considerable interest as one means of helping Northumbrians to recapture their fine old language. Since then a first experimental research sheet has gone to Survey Correspondents. It is an alphabetical list of words from the Concise Oxford English Dictionary---and, alongside each, Northumbrian words or phrases with the same meaning that occur to the Chairman. Comments and other suggested Northumbrian words/phrases are requested. Dealing with such a sheet could well make an enjoyable meeting or part-meeting for a Branch.

We have to find out how large and how slow, and so how practical this project is, by continuing to send out word lists to Correspondents.

A complication is that an English word may have several meanings or usages, requiring several Northumbrian words which, however, are not interchangeable.

### AGM and Reed Supper

At the April AGM, our new President, Tom Haddaway, with his wife and daughter, received a warm welcome and did a highly amusing "spot" during the entertainment following the Reed Supper. The Society was particularly fortunate that he was present as the meeting night fell during the run of his play "The Long Line" at Newcastle Playhouse, during which he was extremely busy giving workshops and talks. The Reed Supper speakers--Richard Pigg (with a marathon poem on stoties, covering all of history and mad stotty disease), Andrew Miller (hot-foot from touring the U.S. with the Cowboy Poets), Edwin Grieve (even hotter-foot from a literary tour of the Lake District) and Mike Kirkup (delving into the records and finding literary gems by British pitmen such as Fred) did the Stotty Cake and Fred Reed proud. The cheerful atmosphere was further enhanced by various people discovering old acquaintances present.

### Other Events

On 18th November Coquet Crafts Harbottle (a new venture) presented a Northumbrian Evening at Clennel Hall with

proceeds going to the Air Ambulance. The programme included some well-known Northumbrian acts: the Boreas Wind Ensemble, the Embleton Handbell Ringers, Terry Common (who's that?), the Davison Family, John Moor, Nervous Breakdown, the Nationals (clog dancers) and John and Sandra Bowden. An enjoyable packed-out evening, showing yet again the talent which exists in our county. An excellent job of work was also performed by the compere, well-known Northumbrian, Ernie Coe.

#### Live Theatre

The Live Theatre continues to send information. Don't forget they are well worth a visit. The Autumn sees their ambitious Newcastle Mystery Plays, including new works on historic and modern themes by several different writers. If anyone has been to productions recently, please send me your comments which we can publish in our newsletter.

#### Radio 4 Poetry Festival

This summer saw the BBC Radio 4 Poetry Festival recording in and broadcasting live from Newcastle. Katrina Porteous of Beadnell read some of her dialect-based pieces during one programme and another, "Poetry Please" included one poem in Northumbrian. The advance publicity for this second show had claimed that it would feature poems with a North-East connection and listeners were asked to send in their requests. Fortunately the poem used was Fred Reed's "Springan", so the quality could not be questioned, but that was the only piece in dialect and most of the others were nothing to do with our area.

#### Futureworld

##### Jane Smailles (Newcastle branch) writes:

On July 24th a small contingent from the N.L.S. were gainin alaang the Scotswood Road to see, not the Blaydon Races, but British Telecom's exhibition of modern technology, Futureworld.

An introductory film about communication showed off the many hi-tech "toys" available today, made possible by fibre optic cables and micro chips. We were more interested in the introduction and live commentary made by noticeably non-local voices. A Scot was the closest they came to our region! Soon we were let loose on state of the art telephones, fax machines and computers. Talk about surfing the internet! Well, yes, we talked about it even though some of us couldn't actually work out how to do it.

We completed a form to apply for £500 grants to finance the work of the Northumbrian Language Society, we completed questionnaires about the exhibition and we completed forms for a

draw to win £10,000. All done using paper and ball points... how modern can you get?

My non-technical brain was having problems keeping up, and I really needed BT's complimentary glasses of red wine to oil my intellectual wheels. I could imagine the farcical situations that might arise using a phone where I could see the person I'm speaking to, and, worse, they could see me, but the idea of being operated on by a surgeon miles away using "hands" he guides via a TV screen was more scary. Most impressive of all was BT's assertion that all of this future technology is available NOW. Like the man says, "It's good to talk" ...

#### Netties

People who surf the internet are apparently called Netties or Internetties. Do they realise? ....

#### Colin McNaughton

is an illustrator and writer of children's books who has had over 80 titles published, such as "Jolly Roger" and "Captain Abdul's Pirate School", many of which are internationally known. He hails from Wallsend, but lives in The Sooth. If you need ideas for presents for any bairns of your acquaintance, look no further than his books, published by Walker, some of which have subtle bits of Northumbrian in the text. In "The Pirates" one character is described as "soft as clarts"; in "Who's That Banging on the Ceiling?" the inhabitants of the block of flats are such characters as Mrs Manky, Mrs Fettle, Mrs Dutz, Mrs Gowk, Mr Plodge and Mrs Gadgee; and in "Here Come the Aliens" there is a page of pictures showing aliens and their strange tongues: "None speak English, French or Greek. They sort of grunt and burp and squeak," but the actual words coming from the speech balloons include, "Whisht lads hadya gobs" and "Eee worrama lyke!"

#### The Story

The story this time has a different format.

I was talking the other day to a chap whom I first met many years ago during one of his frequent trips to Alwinton. A keen hill walker, he had roamed many hills over the years, but Alwinton area was his favourite. I felt I must tell him (yet again) that although he considered himself very knowledgeable as regards the Upper Coquet valley, he still gave himself away as to not being a local by his pronunciation of Alwinton. Like most others from South Northumberland and Tyneside he pronounced it Al-win-ton instead of one oword, Alwinton. That rectified (at least for the time being), I further confused him by saying he could still not consider himself a local till he could pronounce it in very local

dialect, namely Allington. This is rather like someone going to the Morpeth/Ashington area and referring to Stake-ford as Stake-ford, which would make it obvious they weren't from that locality. There are many strange place names in Northumberland but always a classic is the old pit village of Acomb near Hexham. Strangers could be forgiven for thinking they were lost somewhere on the Scottish borders on hearing the locals talking about "Yec-em". You will only hear this used by people from Acomb, Hexham and the close surrounding area. All harmless but nevertheless interesting, Northumbrian dialect. Incidentally, how do you pronounce ULG-HAM?

#### Branch News

**Hexham:** the next meetings at Priestopple House are: 4th September (Dr. John Chapman on High Shield) and 6th November (Liz Sobell on recordings of the Northumbrian Language). Details from George Johnson (01434 605413)  
**Newcastle:** room charges at Spital Tongues Community Centre are now much increased, and to avoid the extra expense some meetings will be held in members' houses. Currently the Branch is discussing the editing of the series of "Northumbrian Words and Ways" booklets produced by those who participated in Jean Crocker's university courses in order to produce a new dialect-based publication. Meeting details from George Wallace (0191 2583105).

#### It is with sadness

that we record the recent death of Mrs Hazell Sinkenson. Hazell died peacefully after a long and courageously fought illness. She had been a member of the Hexham Branch of the Northumbrian Language Society for many years and was responsible for the Language Survey, in which she had a keen interest. The history of Hexham and especially of Hexham Abbey were among her wide range of interests.

There has also occurred the untimely death of Richard Ridley, son of the Society's founding secretary and long-standing Hexham Branch member, Geoffrey Ridley.

Another sad loss since our last newsletter is that of Joe Ging, wit, raconteur, actor and Music Hall expert. The Secretary remembers first meeting him twenty years ago when his then wife, Heather, was researching her Tyne Tees TV series, "What Fettle". He was always willing to give of his time and expertise, whether to welcome visitors to his home or workplace, to help arrange the loan of several dozen evening suits for a Victorian night or to speak to children on a school trip to Balmbras's music hall. Members will remember his frequent appearances at Society

events, entertaining all at the Reed Suppers and most recently at the memorial concert to Fred Reed at the 1995 Morpeth Gathering, during which Joe gave a scholarly exposition on Fred's poem "Christobel", likening it to the work of the great anonymous Border balladeers.

We extend our sympathy to all three families.

#### Fishing Day Saturday 14th September

Our next theme day is to be held at Seahouses on the above date. Members and friends are requested to meet for coffee from 10.45 am in the Ward Room of the **Olde Ship Hotel** on Main Street. Local speakers have been invited to talk about the life and language of the fishing folk, there will be a word quiz and a visit to the Marine Life and Fishing Heritage Centre and it is hoped that Katrina Porteous will read some of her poetry. Provisional programme:

10.45 am onwards: Coffee  
 11.00: Quiz and local speaker  
 11.45: Museum visit  
 12.45: Lunch (not covered within the costs: The Ship sells bar meals, there are several fish & chip restaurants and the beach is nearby for a picnic)  
 2 pm: More entertainment and quiz results at Olde Ship  
 3.30 pm or thereabouts: Finish

The day will be more costly than usual, as charges for the function room, morning coffee and museum admission force us to ask for £3 from each person attending (payable on the day). Please don't be put off by the price: the Society's theme days are always highly enjoyable, as those who came to last year's Pit Party will testify. The Secretary would like to know how many wish to attend: **please ring (0191 274 7756)** or **send the form below to Kim Bibby-Wilson at 36 Auburn Gardens, Fenham, Newcastle, NE4 9XQ**.

#### FISHING DAY Sat. 14th Sept.

**NORTHUMB. LANG. SOC.**  
 If we wish to attend the Autumn Event at Seahouses, I/we understand that £3 per head will be payable on the day.

No. of people

Name/s

Address

Tel.

**Jim Findlay F.N.L.S.**

We are delighted to report that at the Annual Meeting Mr. Jim Findlay, a long-standing member of the Society and indefatigable writer in both Northumbrian and English, was elected a Fellow of the Northumbrian Language Society and duly presented with his commemorative scroll by the President.

**A New Northumbrian Christmas Carol**  
**Haze! Dickson**

One dark neet in Bethlehem,  
Sing ha way me lad,  
Christ was born in hemmel then,  
Ha way me bonny lad.

He was happt in hippins waarm,  
Sing ha way me lad.  
Mary rocked Him on hor arm,  
Ha way me bonny lad.

Shephords cum te keek at Him,  
Sing ha way me lad.  
God's aan bairn was welcomed in,  
Ha way me bonny lad.

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**Postscript:** The next newsletter should be out in time to give details of our next December Yule Meet, so,

Keep Ahad,

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