



The Northumbrian Language Society



Newsletter 26



Patrons: Their Graces the Duke and Duchess of Northumberland

Editor: Terry Common

November 1996

Christmas Event: YULE MEET 14th December Details p. 3

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How are ye dein? Wiv gitten in hard this time. Aah knaa Kim's on form, ind hes promised us she's ganna flud the region wi this newsletter jist directly. *(Secretary's note: Divvent speak too seun, Terry hinny, since ye handed this ower thi compyoota hes been on the blink an' the fambly's bin wrrrracked wi' torments an pestylences.)*

The village of Harbottle in the Coquet Valley (ye knaa thet place jist ablow Alwinton) (twice the size but not as weel knaan cos it hesn't is big a show) -- never mind, apart from its excellent pub, Star Inn, and pleasant landlady, Anne Dunn, it has lacked in recent times somewhere to get a sandwich or cake along with a non-alcoholic drink, tea/coffee, etc.. With the opening this summer of the Craft Shop and Tea Rooms, incidentally directly opposite the Star Inn, this has changed. A nice little place, clean and full of light (faces sooth ye knaa), very reasonable prices and a chance to browse over some very talented local art and craft without any pressure to buy. Unfortunately it is now closed for winter except weekends but will open daily again aboot Easter. Worth a luck. Proprietors Jackie and Ruddi Bickmore.

In our last newsletter I printed a little article on the unusual pronunciation of certain Northumberland place names. Some members expressed a wish to have a bit more of the same, so here are a few more. Last week my good lady and I traypsed up to Craster ti enjoy crab sandwiches and bring home some of the world-renowned kippers. It may be very Northumbrian to caal the place Crraster with a very guttural "r" but our coastal friends and those in the near inland of Craster would usually refer to it as Crraister. Foreigners posing as Northumbrians beware of this one!

While my intention is to provide some (hopefully) interesting pronunciation it tends very easily to encroach in history. Of course we have in our chairman Roland, an historian I could never hope to ? ? ? immolate *(Sec's note: Hing aboot, are ye serious? Aah'll fettle ye....)* and don't intend to try, although I am sure he would agree that some strange place names occur simply because in past times they had a different

name which has remained with the local folk. So while I will endeavour to avoid this subject which so easily can become controversial as to whether origins were Celtic, Roman, Anglo-Saxon, etc., please excuse if sometimes I drift into such. I will attempt in the next 2 or 3 newsletters to (hopefully) provide some insight into place names while containing (hopefully, I use this word a lot) a little humour also. I will be more than happy to "stop" when the masses or even the majority of readers say "enough"!

Fourstones can really only be pronounced one way but the reason for its name was a medieval form of measuring distance used by stones, therefore: one stone to two stones to three stones and arriving at four stones. However this may have been Roman in origin. Here I am delving into history when I promised I wouldn't! Nivvor mind, why would anyone caal a place Goodwife Hot? I'll tell you about it next newsletter.

Were you at Alwinton -- Allington (lit's git it reet) Show this year? Aah wis... Dye want tae knaa about eet? O.K. then, Aah'll tell ye nexct time.

If Aah divvn't see ye afore, hev i nice Christmas.

Keep ahead.

Terry Common.

Useful Addresses

Editor: Terry Common, 34 Middlegate, Loansdean, Morpeth, NE61 2DD (tel. 01670 515967)

Secretary: (N.B. this new address differs from the one on your membership card) Mrs. Kim Bibby-Wilson, 36 Auburn Gardens, Fenham, Newcastle upon Tyne, NE4 9XQ (tel. 0191 2747756)

Treasurer: Miss H. Dickson, 95, Rosalind St., Ashington, NE63 9BW

Chairman: Mr. J.R. Bibby, Westgate House, Dogger Bank, Morpeth, Northumberland, NE61 1RF (tel. 01670 513308)

Society News

Hexham Branch: regular meeting details from George Johnson (01434 605413). Branch A.G.M. will be held on Wed. 5 Feb.'97.

Newcastle Branch: meeting details from George Wallace (0191 2583105). Branch Christmas social Wed. 11 December.

Reed Supper and Society AGM: put the date Wed. 30 April 1997 into your new diaries. Venue to be announced.

Links with other language societies: the Society has written to all known language societies in Britain and has so far received a very positive response from our friends in Lakeland. A joint meeting is suggested for 1997 at Alston. Watch this space!

Publications: slow progress with the Moody book on MidNorthumberland Dialect, mainly because of difficulties in

funding for a 700-or-so page book reproducing the text of Moody's great work. The original plan to publish still holds good, but the price will no doubt be different from the first quoted some years ago. Any members' suggestions will be welcome.

Fishing Day: Unfortunately the planned Fishing Theme Day at Seahouses in September was cancelled because the response was low as too many other events fell on the same weekend. The idea was felt to be too good to be dropped, and it is hoped to reschedule the day for some time in May. Members attending the Yulemeet will be asked about possible dates or clashes---if you can't attend please notify the secretary of any problem dates.

Northumbriana No. 50

The golden (well, orange is the nearest colour we could arrange for the cover) issue of "Northumbriana" magazine is now available. It features the usual range of articles on Northumberland's heritage and new dialect literature, with features on Lordenshaws, the county shield, the Northumbrian pipes and Joe Wilson. Look out for the front cover, which repeats the original design from issue no. 1, Stan Creighton's drawing of a fisherwoman carrying her creel on her back, on the shelves of the usual stockists (cover price £1.40) in Northumberland. If you're in Newcastle, Waterstone's and Fenwick's hold the largest stocks, though it is also on sale at Thorne's (so enquiries there would help to boost their order in future). W.H.Smith and Steedman's no longer take "Northumbriana", but again if customers start asking for copies the management might rethink their policies!

Those wishing to order the magazine by post currently pay £1.57 for a single copy (covering discounted price and postage). If you prefer to pay a subscription you send whatever sum you wish and issues will be received till that amount runs out, whereupon a renewal reminder is sent to you. Please send mail order enquiries to the Chairman (address and tel. on p. 2).

Yule Meet

The Society's Christmas get-together will be held on Saturday 14 December from 2 to 4 pm at Morpeth Chantry Bagpipe Museum (seminar room). The Treasurer will provide festive punch and alcohol-free fruit cup; members are asked to bring mince pies or other fare to share; our new carol (see last newsletter) will be sung; tasteful games will be played, including "Whe's Tellin Hoafies?", a Northumbrian version of "Call My Bluff" (we were going to call it "Mind You're Kiddin", but then the Editor hit upon the word "hoafies" which none of the rest of the Committee knew!). Two volunteers are required to be team members for this exciting game -- please contact the Secretary (address p.2) if

you're daft enough/willing.

The Yule Meet is always very enjoyable, so please try to get along and bring all your marras. A small contribution of £1 to cover prizes and punch will be payable on the afternoon. It would be helpful if those planning to attend could contact the Secretary (see p.2) so we've an idea of numbers.

Letters

Space dictates extracts only:

1. **Wartime Memories** (from the Assoc. of Northumberland Local History Societies). We invite your members to write their memories, such as where they were at the outbreak of war, any unusual happenings, such as evacuation, call-up, food, clothes-rationing, and movements. Civilian memories would be as important as military ones. Your society may well wish to concentrate on memories of happenings in your area, or...wherever they happened to be... between 1938 and 1946. (The ANLHS suggests any memories are collated by each society to pass on to their project organisers. Presumably writings are expected in Standard English, but our members may like to put theirs in Northumbrian with transcripts/glossaries as appropriate. Anyone interested please send their pieces to the Editor (address p.2)

2. **Evolving Language** (from Pete Elliott). Reading through the Colin McNaughton piece (last newsletter) I was reminded that like any viable and lively language, Geordie (or Northumbrian, if you want to be posh, and slightly inaccurate, unless you take Northumberland to include a canny bit of aad Durham), keeps on evolving and changing. This was brought forcibly to mind over the last Xmas holidays when I was enjoying a cigar and jocularly asked my grandbairns if they wanted my "dump". The ensuing laughter far exceeded my expectations, and when it subsided they explained that nowadays a "dump" has nothing to do with a tab end or cigar, but is what you might do when you visit the netty. The old word "ket", which our parents used to berate us for buying with our tuppence pocket money, has been transmogrified into meaning sweets ("Giz a one o' yer kets."). Even the word "manky" which was quoted in the McNaughton piece (and not quoted in Heslop incidentally) has changed in meaning. In my young days it was used to describe someone who was bone idle. Nowadays it has almost replaced the word "hacky" to describe a scruffy person or situation. I also hear the word "mingin" to describe a place or person so scruffy that they stink to high heaven. To "ming" is obviously to reek. Finally, a usage nowadays that sounds totally strange to my ears is when one youngster says to another, "Can Aa lend a pund off y'?" The word "borrow" has almost disappeared from their vocabulary. The dialect survey, whilst tracking down the survival of old words, should also try to keep abreast of the evolution of our native tongue.