



The Northumbrian Language Society



Newsletter 33

Patrons: Their Graces the Duke and Duchess of Northumberland

Editor: Terry Common

March 1999

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AGM & REED NEET Sat. 1st May see p. 2

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Hoo are ye aal gannin on?

I'm afraid your Editor has been a poor attendor at meetin ind do's this last six to nine months. This was mainly due tae worldwide travellins. Mind, Ah wadn't iv been away as often if Ah hedn't kept gitten driven back be sum iv the more unsociable peole in this world, like Saddam Hussein, Col Gadaffi, Salvachops Misilovic (Ah think Ah spelt that yin wrang) but Ah think ye knaa wat Ah mean. Therefore Ah.m leavin some of the details tae "wor Kim". I would have had to leave it to Kim as regards the Fred Reed Neet as she is in charge of the venue this year which I'm sure she'll explain to you, along with the Gathering weekend which is always her "baby".

Future Events for your Diary

- 9th-11th April 1999: 32nd Morpeth Northumbrian Gathering
- Sat.1st May: Reed Neet (plus Fred Reed Book launch) preceded by Society AGM
- Sat. 19th June: Joint Meeting with Lakeland Dialect Society at Lanercost (more details in next Newsletter)
- Sat. 9th October: 2nd Roland Bibby Memorial Lecture
- Sat. 11th December: Yule Meet.

Morpeth Gathering 9th-11th April

The Gathering's full-colour brochure, giving full programme details, is enclosed with this newsletter. The language will be featured in the "Morpeth's Music" concert at 7.30 pm on Friday 9th April (poetry and monologues by Raymond Reed and Gordon Carr); the Winners' Concert at 6.30 pm on Sat. 10th April (Raymond again, and one Terry Common) and of course during the Dialect session at St. Robert's (Collingwood House) from 1.30 pm on the Saturday. It is surprising that few NLS members actually attend this event, yet it begat the Society. Haway, get yersels along an support the Gatherin an buy a few beuks an tapes at the

morchandise staall (an divvent forgit them scrumpshus Clock Tower biscuits!).

AGM and Reed Neet Sat. 1st May at Woodhorn Colliery

Always an important event in the Society's calendar, this year our AGM and commemoration of the life of the poet Fred Reed sees a special book launch. Since Fred's three volumes from the 1970s have been out of print for some time, it was suggested that the NLS should re-publish them in one volume, along with Fred's poetic contributions to the first 50 "Northumbriana" magazines. Iron Press have collaborated with the NLS to produce this new volume, called "The Northumborman". The launch features a specially-commissioned composition blending poetry and pipes. Please book your Reed Supper NOW to ensure your place. Form enclosed: please send Reed Supper bookings to the Hon. Secretary, Kim Bibby-Wilson, Westgate House, Dogger Bank, Morpeth, Northumberland, NE61 1RF (last-minute applicants ring 01670 513308 to check place availability).

Subscription Reminder.

Subscriptions are due for renewal on 1st April (£3 waged, £2 unwaged). A form is enclosed. This year, please send your subscription in advance of the AGM if at all possible. Applications for Reed Suppers should also be paid in advance to save time on the night. Please send renewals to the Hon. Sec. (see above) this year.

NOTICE OF ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING: TO ALL MEMBERS:

You are cordially invited to the 1999 Annual Meeting, to be held at the Function Room, Woodhorn Colliery Museum, Ashington on **Saturday 1st May, 1999** at 7.00 pm.

AGENDA

1. Apologies for absence.
2. Minutes of 1998 Annual Meeting.
3. Executive's Report for 1998-9.
4. Treasurer's Report for 1998-9.
5. Election of Officers: (last year's office holders in brackets)
 - a) President (Mr. Tom Hadaway)
 - b) Vice-President (Mrs. Janet Brown)
 - c) Chairman (Mr. Peter Arnold)
 - 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. Common)

- e) Secretary (Mrs. K.M. Bibby-Wilson)
 - f) Hon. Auditor (Mr. T.H. Horne)
6. Election of Executive: (5) (Miss J. Wood, Mr. B. James, Mr. G. Johnson, Mr. N. Short, Mr. G. Simpson).
7. Other Elections:
- a) Fellows of the Society: the Executive Committee proposes Mr Robert Bolam, poet, story-teller, wampishtwardsmith and performer without parallel
 - b) Hon. Life Past Presidents (none proposed)
 - c) Hon. Past Vice-Presidents (none proposed)
 - d) Hon. Life Members: The Executive Committee will be considering nominations at their meeting on 14th April.
8. Any Other Business.

Then, at 8. 30 pm, members and friends are invited to:
**The Fifteenth Reed Supper
Programme**

Celebrating 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.

Peypin in the Muckle Greet Stotty Cyek.
Sarrimoanyil Forst Hack bi the Preseedint,
The Stotty Cyek Weesh bi the Chairman.
Tradeeshnal Suppor o' Peys an' Peas, an' thin Stotty
Address ti the Muckle Greet Stotty bi Mistriss Hazel Dickson
Ripley on eets bihaaf bi Maistor Raymond Reed
Address ti the Baard, wor ain Fred, bi Mistriss Heather Ging
Ripley on hees bihaaf bi Maistor Allan Wood
Bits an' Pieces, hwen aal willin is axed ti hoy in tha bits o' varse,
tyales, sangs an' owt else thit entortyains aal gud Northumbrians.
Wi' the forst sightin of the new beuk of Fred's varse, an sum new
poetry and piping bi Mistriss Katrina Porteous (words) and Maistor
Chris Ormston (smallpipes)
Bennydikshin, canny and tradishnal, bi Fred Reed.

Reports

Memorial Lecture 17th October 1998

The following press report sums up the success of this event:

The Council Chamber of County Hall in Morpeth was packed on Saturday afternoon when national dialect expert Stanley Ellis gave the first Roland Bibby Memorial Lecture, organised by the Northumbrian Language Society. The success of the event was a fitting climax to the Northumberland Traditional Music Week which had demonstrated the vitality of the local cultural scene.

NLS chairman Peter Arnold commented: "The response to this inaugural lecture has been overwhelming. We never expected so many people to turn up. It's a marvellous show of affection for the memory of our founder Roland Bibby who did so much to keep our unique Northumbrian language alive. And it's also a mark of respect for the work Stanley Ellis has done over the years that so many people came from all over the region to listen to his review of the dialect as it has developed and grown in the last century." Society Secretary Kim Bibby-Wilson, the founder's daughter said: "Stanley Ellis was the ideal person to give this first lecture in our annual series. His wide knowledge, vast common-sense and good humour were just what was needed to remind people of the strength and vitality of our Northumbrian heritage. And it was wonderful to hear again some of his research recordings made nearly half a century ago. He will be a hard act to follow next year."

At the end of the lecture, Northumbrian piper Ann Sessoms played two tunes especially written to commemorate the life of Roland Bibby. The first, "The Gentleman", was composed by his son John, and the second, "The Northumbrian", was written by Roy Hugman.

(Kim's note: The best bit for me was the audience response when Mr. Robinson of Newbiggin stood up during the questions at the end and announced that he was sitting next to the daughter of one of the ladies whom Stanley had recorded in the 50s and whose taped voice we had heard earlier in the day.)

Trip to Durham

I missed the trip to Durham on 25th November. "No, Ah wasn't abroad it that time," Ah wis at No. 1 son's graduation day at Telford which had to include a couple of nights with sum owld freends in a little place (but getting bigger) caalled Penkridge in Staffordshire. Mind, thev sartinly lorned taek wor language doon yonder since Avril ind me's been gannin theor. However, I did receive an informative letter from our member and friend *Brian James* from Alnwick who was on the trip. Here's his report:

On 25th November last Kim Bibby-Wilson, Janet Brown and Brian James spent a busy but worthwhile day in Durham. In the morning Kim gave a talk to children in the Bluecoats School, which is situated on a modern housing estate on the outskirts of the city. Trying out several Northumbrian words on them, she found that the only one they recognised - and then only vaguely - was "clarts". None of them knew what a "netty" was. After the talk Kim was interviewed for that night's BBC TV Look North programme by Chris Stewart, recently in the news for his exposure of the discovery that William Shield of Swalwell wrote the music commonly used for "Auld Lang Syne."

In the afternoon an audience of about 50 with a good age and sex balance attended our talk, well accommodated and publicised by librarian Joan Weighell, in Durham City Library. The talk was punctuated by piping, song and recitation and some of the audience hung back at the end to ask about the NLS and give us a few "new" old words. There is obviously an appetite for such presentations.

Brian also tells us:

North East Constitutional Convention

At a public meeting in Morpeth on 19th January to discuss the role of the NECC in the formulation of proposals for a regional assembly, speakers mentioned the problem of getting the views of the general public as opposed to the corporate views of the many organisations with whom they are in contact. This is of vital importance to everyone in the region (Northumberland, Tyne & Wear [where?], Durham and Cleveland) and all views are sought, even those totally opposed to a regional assembly. If you would like to know more and/or obtain a consultative questionnaire, contact NECC, 140-150, Pilgrim St., Newcastle-upon-Tyne, NE1 6TH (tel. 0191 245 0825).

The Yule Meet 1998

Now sadly I missed the Yule Meet also, ind this is a yin Ah reely like, but again after approaching our gud chairman *Peter Arnold* he agreed to provide me with an excellent letter describing how the afternoon had gone. Peter, tho' unaccustomed, has written this article in his best Northumbrian. He gave me his full permission to change it in whatever way I wanted to make it into decent Northumbrian, but this of course I did not wish to do. As has been stated many times this is a great variation among our Northumbrian dialects, so "who cares" how it is spelt, certainly at the present. Well done, Peter, and keep it up, as we all hope to hear some of your entries at the forthcoming Gathering!

Our traditional pre-Christmas gathering - the Yule Meet - was held at the Chantry Museum in Morpeth on the afternoon of Saturday 5th December 1998. There were a canny few there like, an' wuh aal had a geet gud time! Wuh kicked off with Hazel's wonderful punch (both alcoholic and very gentle!). This was followed by recitations, poems and songs hoyed in be members of the congregation. Efter that, wuh got stuck intiv the scran browt along be thi assembled thrang, ind Kim waadunt let wuh giv ower until wuh had eaten it aall! Then wor chairman played "Whe's Tellin' Hoafies?" which was a reet scream Ah cin tell yuh. It was vary interestin watchin aal them important fowk in wor society tellin'

hoafies - an' keepin' seck a straight fyece an all! Ah've seen nowt like it for a lang time Ah cin tell yuh! Folks was laffin' aal over the place! Ind then, in keepin with the season like, wuh sang wor Northumbrian Carol penned be wor ain tresuror Hazel Dickson. Mind, it wes a canny way to end the proceedins like, and folks went hyem happy.

Society Christmas Cards

One of our most popular innovations this year was the Society's Christmas card, designed and produced by committee member Brian James. It had very colourful, computer-generated graphics on the theme of "While shepherds watched their flocks....." with a guest appearance by the Gateshead Angel of the North, and with the text in Northumbrian. They were so popular we had to have a second print run done, and we could sold a lot more. We've been so pleased with the reaction to this first attempt, that we've decided to do another set of cards for Christmas 1999. This is where YOU come in. We need some new designs, either humorous or traditional, with all the words in Northumbrian. So if you've got a good idea, why not jot it down, and send it to our chairman Peter Arnold who lives at 14 Dilston Terrace, South Gosforth, Newcastle-upon-Tyne, NE3 1XX, as soon as possible, so we can make arrangements for this year's festive season! Go on... have a go,,, I know you're just itching to give it a try!

Live Theatre and Northern Dance 1999

I continue to receive dates and information from Live Theatre Newcastle. I now have the Spring programme to hand. It is not possible to print it all in our Newsletter but if you need more information please give me a call. Information Line - 0191 261 0505.

From Nick Short (Hexham)

Quotes about folk who get up early in the morning.

1. Up afore the tram lines are laid doon.
2. Beaten the knocker upper.
3. Thoo must hev filled thee hippon the day, eh?
4. Neebody lyin ion thee sark tail this mornin, eh?
5. Hup afore the lintie.
6. Hev ye nee bed te gan tee?
7. Thoo's gannin to git yoked sharp the day.

Thanks, Nick. Perhaps material like this would be better suited as fillers for "Northumbriana" magazine, but thanks anyway (Note from Kim: Seeing that the poor magazine is still not yet

relaunched this is the only outlet!).

15th Cowboy Poetry Gathering 1999

Some of you may have noticed in the national press, Sunday Telegraph and then later in the Newcastle Journal, that two of our talented Northumbrian poets/singers were invited to the 15th Poetry Gathering in the United States. A Rothbury member of the Society, *Tony Sandford*, kindly prepared an article for me giving an account of the lads' exciting trip. We include it completely unabridged in our Newsletter. Thanks, Tony.

This January, two sons of the Coquet had an invite to perform at the above event, in Elko Nevada California USA. Allan Wood (poet) and Graham Dick (singer) hadn't even flown in an aircraft before, let alone gone abroad! So it was quite a trip. Katrina Porteous was on hand to make all the arrangements with the organisers, and then to look after them on their seven-day adventure.

Elko is about an hour's flight west from Salt Lake City, virtually in the middle of nowhere, and could be described as an old-fashioned cow town, complete with hitching rails and saloon bars, but cheek-by-jowl with a modern casino and big banks.

The gathering was held in Salt Lake City the first two years, but Elko is now its permanent home. Folk come to perform from all over the States, and it's the biggest of its kind going. The main emphasis is on poetry, (with also singing and instrumental music) and in particular Anglo-Saxon. This year they invited two Scottish singers and two Aussie poets apart from Allan and Graham, as well as hordes of performers from the home country. Allan thought the latter were mainly professionals; he felt that their poems had little depth, and had a very simple, repetitive style, very consistent with many Country and Western songs. The subjects dealt mainly with the past and tradition.

Apart from the on-stage performances, they had craft workshops in making ropes, cooking, leatrher work, etc., all connected with dying traditions. Allan and Graham were also invited to take part in workshops, explaining the background to their songs and poetry and way of life back home. They did similar workshops in schools throughout the week.

Their main performances took place in a 2000-seater civic auditorium, plus in a hotel, and the "Folk Life Centre", which apart from being a permanent museum, had its own theatre (seating 500), bar, shop and offices. On most nights they were

given a theme and were also encouraged to give a bit of crack on the background of the songs/poetry and local tradition and history.

Allan felt very strongly that they were there as an interest in comparisons, and the link with mainly Celtic forefathers. He thought the organisation was first-class and the folk throughout extremely friendly and helpful.

Maybe they might give us some crack on their impressions at the Reed Neet, or some future occasion.

From Hexham Branch

The next meeting of the branch will be held on Wednesday 7th April in the offices of Messrs Nicholson, Wood & Gregg, Priestpople House, Hexham at 7.30 pm. At the meeting it is hoped to find a new Secretary and Treasurer. Nick Short will entertain with preview renderings of his entries to the Morpeth Gathering and some of Robert Allen's recordings will be played, followed by discussion. At the following meeting, on Wed. 2nd June, Raymond Reed has offered to recite some of his own and his father's poetry.

Membership Survey

A while ago it was decided that we should ask members their opinions and needs. The enclosed questionnaire is an attempt to find out what you think. Please fill it in or add your own comments on what you think we should be doing, and how. Please send to the Secretary along with your subs and Reed Neet applications.

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Ah seem tae hev rambled on a lot considerin Ah sed Ah knew nowt that wis gannin on when Ah starteet. However it has been nice to receive articles and information from our members. It helps us to make this our Newsletter and not the "Editor's". Thanks to you all. Mind, this might encourage me tae gan on mair roams around the world seein ye can aal menidge sae weel without us! Mind Ah will be heor fur the Gatherin so Ah'll see ye aal then.

Keep ahad,

Terry Common