



## Newsletter 34

November 1999

Society Patrons: Their Graces the Duke and Duchess of Northumberland

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**Next Event: Yule Meet 2 pm Sat. 11th December  
(see back)**

**Society Shop: Christmas cards and books by mail  
(details and order form inside)**

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### Secretary's Grovel:

At last, heor's wor newsletter. Sum o' the informayshun is prehistoric bi noo, soe it's mair leyk an aadsletter. Poor Tarry Common, wor Editor, got hissel varnigh skumfished scrafflin tigither the reports fa orlier i the year, but then producsheun an distribyushun wes fettled when Aa hed umpteen porsonal gliffs an hikey-pokeys wi the computer (whaat's Northumbrian for *computer crash*?: Aa've b\*\*\*\*\*d the boggle-box?), an whaat wi hevin te organise moots an meets, an tryin to shore up the local branches, wey, it aal gat i the wey o myekin progress wiy owt else.

Hooivvor, theor's gud news aboot wor speshul new byeuks an CD an Aa hope ye'll aal porchus a canny few Christmus cards for te help us publisize the Society an orn a few bob fa the coffors. That canny lad Peter Arnold, wor Chairman, hes offad te tyek on the next newsletta soe please send yor contributions te him (meynd, we *do* need them: divvent leave it te The Few) at the address on the last pyage.

### From Terry Common:

Why hellow agin. We got wor spring festivities nicely ower with the usual success and happy times had by aal. The Gatherin' Weekend waas another grand weekend wi aal its competitions, concerts, etc.

The Reed Supper sorry Neet (wor gud Tresura Hazel Dickson doesn't like eet tae be caaled supper) waas held this year at Woodhorn Colliery, vary appropriately, for the launch of a special book containing Fred Reed's poems and writing, caaled "The Northumborman". Ah hope ye aal hev a copy! If not ind ye fancy, contact Kim on Morpeth 513308 (also see advert page inside).



The evening started with the AGM, follad by Peypin in the Muckle Greet Stotty, the address, the pie ind peas, then sum entortainin' bits n' pieces be thase present (offishal speeches bi Hazel Dickson, Raymond Reed, Heather Ging & Allan Wood). We hed i wonderful presentation by Katrina Porteous of her ain work of poetry, based on the "blethor" iv wor ain Northumbrian fisherfolk weel accompanied on the pipes be Chris Ormston.

Noo Ah didn't mention wor Tresura arlier jist fer the fun on't, oh no, eet waas tae remind sum iv ye gud souls, whe may hev overlooked eet that your subscriptions for the Society were due in April. Send yor £3 (£2 seenya citteezins) te Hazel, address on the back pyage.

Mind, a grand weekend waas enjoyed it my auld neck iv the woods, Harbottle ind Clennel on the weekend 26th-28th February. A local "Pantomime Group"?? caalin thimselves the "Upper Coquet Thespians"! presented a Coquet Christmas Carol or "a rite carry on up the Coquet". This waas loosely (vary loosely) based on a novel by Charles Dickens (who?), written and directed by John Gilbertson. An entertaining weekend was enjoyed by many with a really polished performance. So successful was it that another is planned for next year. Manwiv got talent aal ower wor coonty.

Noo divn't forget onybody whe hes ony gud ideas for wor next Christmas card or jist cards generally for other occasions, wiv a cartoon and/or caption, git them forwarded tae Brian James at Alnwick (address at end). Divn't worry hoo poor yor draain' is, is lang is Brian kin git the gist iv eet, he's an export it puttin them taegithor.

Till Ah see ye aal agin. Keep ahad,

Terry Common.

### Thomas Bewick Exhibition

There's a fascinating display of Bewick's drawings, blocks and engravings at the Hatton Gallery, Newcastle University, till 22nd January. It focusses on his tailpieces and vignettes, miniature masterpieces reflecting life two hundred years ago. Included is the robust scene "The Pigsty Netty". A query about the title revealed that this was a recently-coined title for identification purposes and unfortunately not an 18th-century written source for "netty". What is the earliest date anyone can find for the word? Also on show is a witty proclamation for a "jubilee" granted to two of his printers in honour of the new century. In these days as we approach the disputed changeover date to a new millennium, it is interesting to note that 200 years ago the new century was thought to begin in 1801 and not the change from 1799 to 1800. Bewick's printers were encouraged to drink "malt liquor", "abstain from all kinds of spirits", eat well and behave in a civilised manner.

### Reports and Reviews

Brief mentions of events earlier this year:

At the **AGM** in May the officers and most committee members were re-elected; congratulations to Bob Bolam who was awarded the Fellowship of the Society for his services to the language, and new Honorary Life Members George Johnson and George Wallace who were rewarded for their work as the Society's branch secretaries. (George Johnson was presented his certificate at a subsequent special "retirement" party at Hexham.) A welcome to Heather Ging who was elected to the main committee.

In June the second **joint meeting** with the Lakeland Dialect Society took place at Lanercost, this time hosted by the NLS. Recitations, raffle and refreshments were provided by both groups and again the Lakeland folk outnumbered the Northumbrians. Next year Lakeland say they will run a different sort of meeting and venue: we'll keep you posted.

**Hexham** branch had three well-publicised meetings on poetry. Raymond Reed from Ashington attracted a record two dozen to hear his father's and his own poetry, Katrina Porteous held a spell-bound audience with her extracts from our new publication "The Wund an' the Wetter" and descriptions of her work with the fishing community in Beadnell. The most recent meeting, with Johnny Handle, is reviewed below. Next Hexham meeting: branch AGM the first Wednesday in February. Venue to be fixed.

At **Alnwick**, committee members manned a stall for one day at Alnwick Fair and provided two stage spots, with piping members Brian James, Ann Sessoms and Kim Bibby-Wilson helped by Alasdair Turnbull on fiddle, and Ray Reed reciting. Later a Hot Trod evening to highlight the Society's activities and interests was held, and despite a low turnout it is still hoped to get an active branch going in the North. Brian will be contacting members in the Alnwick/Rothbury/Wooler areas to set up a meeting.

The Society had a presence in September at the **Seahouses** Sea Shanty Festival, with a wind-swept stall and the launch in the evening of the book/CD of Katrina's "Wund & Wetter".

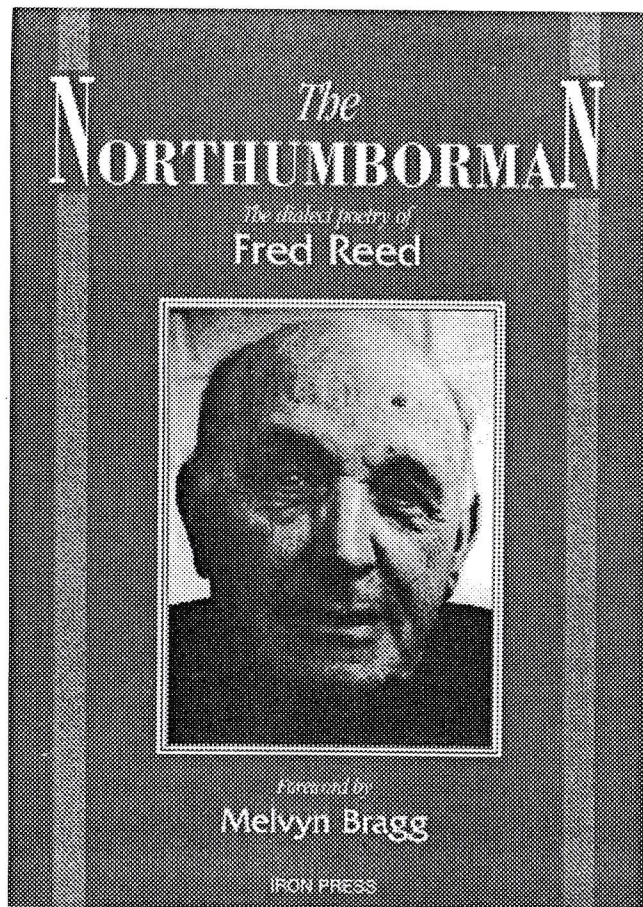
Meanwhile, **Nick Short** (Hexham) is busy with a Millennium project involving placing twelve inscribed stones around the Kielder area.

### Second Roland Bibby Memorial Lecture

**Sat. 9th October, County Hall, Morpeth**

A well-attended meeting heard a wide-ranging and very interesting lecture by Ray Stephenson, entitled "Geordies on Wax". This was an illustrated talk by one of Roland Bibby's former teaching colleagues of early recordings of Northumbrian performers mainly from the first three decades of the present





*"He is a poet  
whose words  
speak aloud  
from the  
page... He  
would all but  
sing his poems  
and even  
those of us  
without a  
smattering of  
the North-  
Eastern  
tongue can  
find a tune  
there" -  
Melvyn Bragg*

Fred Reed died in 1985 leaving a rich legacy of his native Northumbrian verse. Since his death his reputation has grown. He's been called 'the English Burns', and his work has been compared to that of MacDiarmid.

The poetry - with a fiercely optimistic heartbeat in contrast to much of modern poetry's fashionable bleakness - is collected in one volume for the first time.

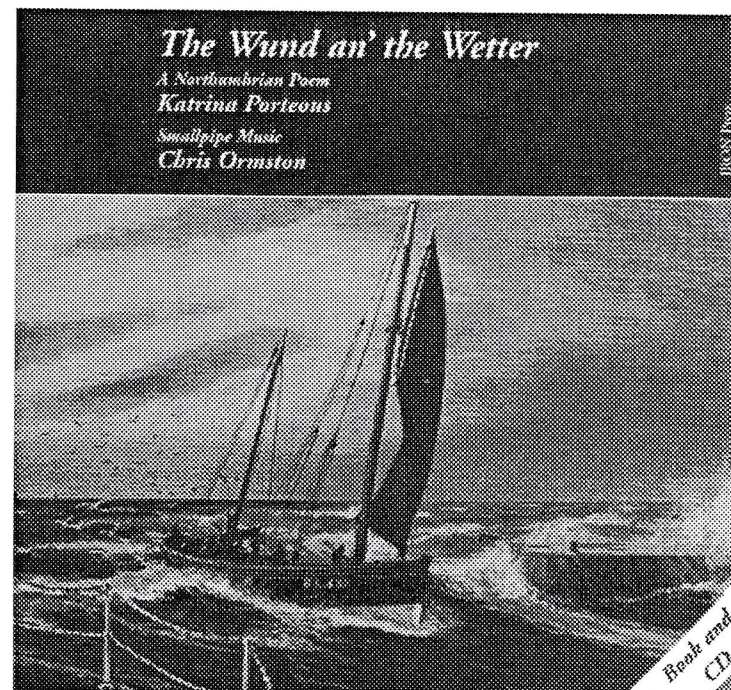
*Copies of the book are available at £7.99 plus 75p postage from:*

N.L.S. WESTGATE HOUSE  
DOGGER BANK  
MORPETH  
NORTHUMBERLAND  
NE61 1RF  
TEL: 01670 513308



5 Marden Terrace, Cullercoats, North Shields, NE30 4PD, UK.  
Tel/Fax: +44 (0)191 253 1901

**T**he Wund an' the Wetter is an extraordinary collaboration written in the dialect of the dwindling fishing community of north Northumberland. This is more than a glance back at a vanishing world. The words and music carry Northumbrian tradition forward to interrogate the present and the future. The book and CD are issued in collaboration with the Northumbrian Language Society.



**E**arly in 1999, poet Katrina Porteous and piper Chris Ormston were commissioned by IRON Press to write new words and music to be performed at the launch of *The Northumborman*, the collected dialect poems of Fred Reed. The result was Chris's melody *Mind Yor Language* - music in dialogue with speech - and a 237 line poem which moves as close to music as the spoken word can.

*Copies of the book/CD are available at £8.00 plus 75p postage from:*

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century.

Many of the illustrations were of music-hall performers, whose songs and sketches were recorded on wax cylinders and shellac discs, and played on a range of authentic equipment from those early days. Whilst it was occasionally difficult to make out everything that was played, it was fascinating to hear the range of accents used by the early music-hall stars. It was also very instructive to hear the differences between the native Northumbrian speakers and the other performers who tried to speak or sing in what they thought was Northumbrian.

One of the highlights of the afternoon was to listen to a very early recording of "The Blaydon Races" using a version of the tune that was clearly different from the one we use today. The original tune was in more of a folk music style than the modern one, which has been made more robust as a result of being used in the music halls.

What will next year's lecture bring?

### **An Evening with Johnny Handle**

**Wed. 3rd November, Royal Hotel, Hexham**

A very select group attended this evening of entertainment organised by the Hexham branch. Johnny Handle used material from his latest recording "A Good Line of Patter" to illustrate his theme that almost any aspect of life can be turned into a poem or song. He gave us the background to many of the poems from this collection, which he then recited; and he also showed how the style of the verse influenced the way a song was performed.

To prove how easy it was to turn everyday experience into verse, he made up as he went along a series of verses telling the story of why he was late getting to the meeting, because he'd had to go up and down the street several times to find a place to park his car! The audience was extremely impressed by this display of skill, and for many of us, it was the highlight of the evening.

### **History Fix**

**Mon. 15th November, BBC Digital Knowledge Channel.**

This programme, mainly concerned with the origins of the smallpipes, covered other aspects of Northumbrian culture, including a good section on the language, with the ubiquitous Raymond Reed reciting in front of St. Mary's Lighthouse and then teaching presenter Rory McGrath some of our expressions. Rory and the production team were very friendly and well-informed (after Kim had pointed the researchers in the right directions). A video tape of the programme will be shown during the Yule Meet.

### **Press and Public Relations**

At the AGM Brian James was appointed to a new NLS post of P & PR Officer. He would like to be informed of anything which appears in any of the media concerning language and dialect which might be of interest to and/or require a response from the NLS and about any approaches from any of the media for information. Brian can be contacted on (01665) 603364 (please leave a message).

### **North East Constitutional Convention**

Brian is also NLS representative to the NECC, which has produced recommendations for a regional assembly, and is a member of the Working Group looking into "Maximising Democratic Participation". He will report developments in future issues of the newsletter. It is coming across clearly, at this early stage, that there is a demand for an assembly similar to the devolved Scottish Parliament, that this demand springs from a strong sense of identity (in which language plays its part) and feeling of alienation from Westminster politics and that people are heartily sick of adversarial party politics and want a more consensual form of government on which the individual citizen can have a direct influence. Anyone with anything relevant to raise can reach Brian on the above number.

*(While the NLS is a non-political society, the NECC includes culture in its remit and surely we should be keeping an eye on any group which claims to speak for the cultural sector.)*

### **Rowl Up! Rowl Up! Git Yor NLS Goodies Heor!**

Last year's popular (silly) **Christmas card** featuring the Angel of the North giving a gliff to the shephords and the yows has been reprinted, and we've a new (sensible) card giving the full words and music of the Northumbrian Carol by Hazel Dickson, "Sing haway, me lad". They are going well; if you can't get to our Yule Meet where both will be on sale, please use the enclosed form.

Our two **new books**, which have received very good reviews, are "The Northumborman" by Fred Reed (nicely plugged on the back of the County's autumn Trad. Music Festival brochure) and, as I think we've already mentioned, "The Wund an' the Wetter" (with CD). We are delighted to have collaborated on these with Peter Mortimer and Iron Press.

*See the advert pages, and please send orders with your name and address either to Iron, or better still for our funds, to our Secretary Kim (address at end).*



## CHRISTMAS CARD ORDER FORM

The  
Northumbrian  
Language  
Society

Westgate House  
Dogger Bank  
Morpeth  
Northumberland  
NE61 1RF

Card	Quantity	Price	Total Per Order
Angel Of The North		@ £1.50	.
Northumbrian Carol		@ £1.50	.

Telephone (01670) 513308	Plus P & P
Reg. Charity No. 515179	Order Total
	£ .

Name : .....

Address : .....

.....

.....

Telephone No. ....

Total payment of £ ..... p is attached.

Please make cheques payable to The Northumbrian Language Society.  
Please do not send cash through the post.

FOR NLS USE ONLY		
Dispatched		
Accounted		

### The Yule Meet

**Sat. 11th Dec. 2pm- 4 pm, Morpeth Chantry Bagpipe Museum**  
(Just by the Telford Bridge at the end of Bridge Street. Please ring 01670 519466 for directions to museum. We are sorry there is no lift to the museum at the Chantry.)

The Society's Christmas chin-wag with food & entertainment, featuring stories and poems from members, a showing of the "History Fix" video and the annual game of "Whe's Tellin Hoafies?", the Northumbrian version of "Call My Bluff ". Please come along to this FREE event, bringing a few mince pies, or other bait bits. Non-alcoholic and alcoholic punch will be provided and a raffle will be held in aid of the Society (any prizes welcomed).

### Future Events

Next Dictionary Working Group: **10 am** on Mon. 10th Jan. 2000.

Next Executive Committee Meeting: **11 am** on Mon. 17th Jan.

Hexham Branch AGM (will anyone volunteer as branch secretary?) 7.30 pm Wed. 2nd Feb., venue most probably Priestpople House.

Northumbrian Concert with Alistair Anderson, Ray Reed, Katrina Porteous, Blue Moon Band, High Level Ranters (performers to be confirmed): 7.30 pm Fri. 10th March, Morpeth Town Hall.

33rd Morpeth Northumbrian Gathering: 28th to 30th April.

AGM & Reed Supper: Sat. 6th May, probably at Woodhorn.

Stall at Northumberland Millennium Festival, Alnwick Castle: planned as a huge event: Sat. and Sun. 24th and 25th June.

Northumbrian Church Service: Sun. 6th August. Details later.

### Addresses

Most of you will have a number after your name on the envelope in which this newsletter arrived. It is nothing sinister, but is to help us with our computerised membership records. Also it's a useful reminder when it's time to renew subscriptions and we ask you to quote your membership number. If you want to contact anybody mentioned in the newsletter, here are their addresses:

**Peter Arnold (Chairman, newsletter contributions):** 14 Dilston Terrace, South Gosforth, Newcastle upon Tyne, NE3 1XX

**Kim Bibby-Wilson (Secretary, mail order requests, events details and all other queries):** Westgate House, Dogger Bank, Morpeth, NE61 1RF

**Hazel Dickson (Treasurer, Subscriptions):** 95 Rosalind Street, Ashington, NE63 9BW

**Brian James (Publicity, NECC):** The Old Forge, 7 Upper Dodds Lane, Alnwick, NE66 1XN