



Charity No: 515179

Patrons: Their Graces the Duke and Duchess of Northumberland

**Members' Newsletter No. 61 – Summer 2007**

---

## **NEXT HAPPNINS**

**Poems, Patter, Pipes and Hoafies**

**Thursday 16<sup>th</sup> August 11 am -4 pm**

**Bailiffgate Museum, Alnwick**

\*\*\*\*\*

## **DIALECT SOCIETIES' BIG MEETING**

**Saturday September 15<sup>th</sup> at 1pm**

**Professor Paul Kerswill of Lancaster University  
will speak on**

**'Studying Dialect in the Modern Age'**

**Venue probably Regional Resources Centre  
Beamish Open Air Museum**

**But this is to be confirmed nearer the time.**

---

*Passionate* about dialect

north east  
england

## OBITUARY - ROBERT ALLEN FNLS

Robert Allen, a founder member of the Northumbrian Language Society and one of the first Fellows, died recently at the age of 85. He was a well-known and respected gentleman, both in the North Tyne area and in the wider region of Northumberland. Born in Bellingham, he spent much of his childhood in Haydon Bridge before leaving the area to pursue his education and study Classics at Cambridge. A military career then took him as far afield as India and Burma where he served his country faithfully in the Reconnaissance Regiment.

However, Robert did not enjoy the 'crooded orban scenes,' preferring the quiet of the countryside as expressed in these words from his poem, 'On Wor Own.'

*'O spare us from the horror o' yon maze,  
Wheor life's played oot i'clashy minor keys  
An' Derg-eat-Derg's the ownly law that's known.  
Just set us canny but, some quiet place,  
Wheor aors is scented sweet bi whisp'rin' trees,  
Ti stand, an' look an' listen,- on wor own.'*

In his warm and wonderful poems, he dealt with many themes, always from the heart, and used our rich dialect to good effect. These poems are a treasury for all who love 'wor tongue.'

His desire for the peace of the countryside brought him back to his home county of Northumberland where he took up farming and became the owner of Redesmouth Farm near the meeting of the waters of the North Tyne and the Rede. It was at this point in his life that he met and married Angela, who was to be his 'wife for almost sixty years.

Robert's life near the meeting of the waters continued to be rich and productive as a range of interests converged in his own life. His enthusiastic involvement in local activities brought him into contact with many individuals and organisations. He was a regular winner at the Morpeth Northumbrian Gathering as well as at festivals in Newcastle and Rothbury. He made longstanding friendships during the early years of the Gathering and became a judge, keen to encourage and support other writers. He served his community as a parish councillor for a while and also became a committed member of the Bellingham cricket team and a member of the West Tyne League Management Committee. He joined the Bellingham and District Amateur Dramatic Society and discovered a flair for comedy. The church was an important part of his life and he was a churchwarden at St. Cuthbert's Church for many years. He loved the twelfth century church and wrote an informative account of its history.

Although he was dubbed 'The Bard of Bellingham' he did not relish this epithet preferring to be known simply as 'Robbie Allen.' In the words of Kim Bibby-Wilson, he was a 'kind, astute, witty and altogether admirable gentleman.' He will be sorely missed not only by his immediate family but by members of our two organisations and many other unnamed Northumbrians who have known and appreciated his poetry and his commitment to our county. Robert's dearly loved wife of almost sixty years, Angela, was to predecease him by several weeks. Our thoughts are with his family in their double bereavement.

---

# **40<sup>th</sup> Morpeth Northumbrian Gathering 2007**

## **DIALECT COMPETITION RESULTS**

### ***GROUP B : WRITING & COMPOSING***

B3a Novice Northumbrian Verse: 1, "Noo and Then" Diane Green (Ashington).

B3b Open Northumbrian Verse: 1, "The Dandy Sands" Nick Short (Hexham); 2, "The Dusty Deck Chaioir" Bob Bolam (Prudhoe); 3, "Carols at the Low Lang Hoose" Nick Short; HC, "Scattered Pictures – When Aa was a Lad" George Carrick (Cramlington); "Fishing at Eachwick" Lawrence Tait; Comm., "Durham Miners' Gala 2006" Meg Stephenson (North Shields).

B5 Northumbrian Prose: 1, "A Lady Retorns to Whaat was hor Ho-ume" N Short; 2, "Another Bike Story" Maisie Polwarth" (Morpeth); 3, "Birds and a Long Bee" G Carrick.

No junior entrants this year.

### ***GROUP C : PERFORMING***

C18 Fine Northumbrian Speech: 1, Raymond Reed (Stakeford); 2, Hazel Dickson (Ashington); 3, Nick Short; HC, Meg Stephenson.

C22 Story-Telling: 1, Raymond Reed; 2, Bill Stephenson; 3, Nick Short.

---

All other competition results at website: [www.northumbriana.org.uk](http://www.northumbriana.org.uk)

---

### **keep in Touch!**

Should you wish to contact us for further details or to enquire about subscriptions, the main contacts are as follows:-

**Chairman: Peter Arnold**

30, Chapel Grange, Westerhope, Newcastle upon Tyne NE5 5NF  
Phone/fax 0191 2644811 email [pja@beeb.net](mailto:pja@beeb.net)  
(for general information about the Society)

**Secretary: Kim Bibby-Wilson**

Westgate House, Dogger Bank, Morpeth Northumberland NE61 1RE  
Phone 01670 513308  
(for details of events)

**Treasurer: Hazel Dickson**

95, Rosalind Street, Ashington Northumberland NE63 9BW  
Phone 01670 811697  
(for queries about subscriptions)

# **Society News**

## **ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING AND REED NEET**

The **AGM** was held on Saturday 19<sup>th</sup> May at Craik Park Football Club. During the meeting, a minute's silence was held in honour of Robert Allen, Fellow of the Northumbrian Language Society. The following members were elected as officers.

Mrs. Janet Brown will continue to be Vice-President and Mr. Peter Arnold will continue as Chairman. Mrs. Kim Bibby-Wilson remains as Secretary and Miss Meg Burdon, Assistant Secretary. The Treasurer's position was filled, once again, by Miss Hazel Dickson.

Other posts were filled as follows:

Bibliographer, Mr George Wallace; Hon. Auditor, Mr. T. H. Horne;

Press/Publicity, Mr. Brian James; Audio-visuals, Mr. Iain Elliott

Brian James is, reportedly, still in hospital. We wish him well.

The positions of President and Vice-Chairman remain vacant.

After the AGM the 23<sup>rd</sup> **Reed Neet Supper** took place. Ann Sessoms piped in the Muckle Greet Stotty Cyek. Our thanks go to Gebhards who provided the largest stotty ever seen. Bob Lyon addressed the Stotty and John Davidson replied on its behalf, taking listeners on a journey from Tyneside to New Zealand, then back to rural Northumberland. The Address to the Bard was given by Hazel Dickson and was dedicated to Robert Allen this year. Raymond Reed replied on behalf of the bard and read what Fred Reed had said at the very first Supper in 1985.

---

## **PITMATIC: The Talk of the Northern Coalfield**

Compiled by Bill Griffiths. Northumbria University Press £9.99

We have just received a review copy of this thorough and fascinating book which is now on sale in the shops. A review will be included in the next newsletter.

## **SUBSCRIPTIONS\*SUBSCRIPTIONS\*SUBSCRIPTIONS**

Thanks to those who have sent in subs. and, in particular, to those who have included top-up subs. for previous lapses. We always send newsletters for at least a year after you have lapsed, hoping that they will jog memories to keep membership going

# FLAT CAPS AND WHIPPITS

by  
John Dahm

"Afore ye gan!" Afore ye gan! Soonds that funny duzzint it? "Afore ye gan". . .repeat it ti yasell a few times an' it begins ti soond like a forrin langwidge... which it nearly is o'corse. Ye see it's hu thi' taak up there nigh on Scotland. . .In Geordieland, top o' thi country. Yi'll nee doot hev hord aboot it evin if ye divvint knaa much aboot the place itsell. It's where thi' Geordies live, Newcastle way. . .Northumberland... pit heeps... Broon Ail... flat caps and whippits.

'Cordin' ti aal thi reports ivirrybody what lives up there hez a flat cap an' a whippit and thi spend tha' dais suppin Broon Ale an' getting pallatick. Nu, my fatha nivver had a whippit, not ti my nollidge anyway. Flat cap aye, whippit definitely NO! Cum ti think on it, aa nivver knew enybody's faatha what had a whippit. Plodger's faatha nivver had a whippit as far as aa knaa. Fact! Plodger's faatha nivver had nowt septin a bad heed from ower much boozin' . . . in that he had reggla. Sayin' that mind aa knaa tuns of Uncles what had whippits. Fathers nivver had whippits but Uncles elwis seemed ti' hev planty. Funny that! Didler's Uncle Tom had a whole menagary o' them at won time. Used ti' parade thim up an doon the street on lang leeders wi' that geet top coat o' his on. . . thi won wi' thi' fore collar. . . med im luk like Nanook o' thi North. . .septin' e didn't hev a sledge. Whey nee body had sledges then, bits of currogatid iron mevvies fo' slydin doon the pit heap but nee sledges. Nee body had sledges. . .far ower deer!!

Getting' back ti the whippits aa personally wuddint hev one. Not cos aa divving like dergs cos aa dee, aa like aal dergs. It's just that aa waddn't knaa what ti' dee wiv a whippit if ivver aa had won. . .if ye see what aa meen. Tha not what ye'd caal a pictsharesk derg, won ye'd like aal the bairns tii see ye wi, like a Saint Bornard or a Red Setter, them what aa call reel dergs. But whippits. Why man tha skinny fo' a start. . .ribs aal stickin oot an luckin as if a gud feed wud fettle thim. Gan doon the street wiv a won o' them and ye'll hev Inspektaas from thi RSPCA efter ye like a shot!

In anuther thing, ye dorsint let thim off that leaders cos the'll dee away that sharp. Ye'll nivver get a-haad o thim again. . .at least not unless Taytee Johnny happens ti be nigh hand. Owld Pud used ti tell the tale aboot Taytee Johnny wat used ti hev a brazziya at thi fut o Bedlintin Bank in the winter time. It wuz full ov hot tetties that ee used ti sell ti the horse drivers fo' a penny a piece. Yi see when thi snaa an' ice wuz on the ground the poor horses had a grate deel of diffikilty getting up the bank cos even wi' bits o' sackin roond thaa hooves the still cuddint get a fut-howld. Soooo! Thi drivers wud buy a tette off Johnny an' stick it under the horse's tail...strite oot the fire. Why ye bugs alive!!! The horse got such a gliff it went fleein up the Bank like its tail wuz a-haad.

Won day this driver's horse had gone scuddin up thi bank like a linty when the bloke tors ti Johnny and says, "Let's hev anutha won o' them tayties Johnny."

"What for d'ye want anutha taytie?" sez Johnny. "Ye've just had one fo' ya horse!!"

"This won's not fo'thi horse," says the driver, "it's fo' me sell, aa hedda flee up thi Bank ti catch thi begger!!!!"

# **GANNIES AND GAFFIES**

by

Joan Taylor Phillips

In old Cullercoats, grandparents were known as , 'Gannies' and 'Gaffies.' I never knew me Gaffie Billy, but knew and loved me Gannie; born Elizabeth Taylor and wed to William Storey, she was known in the village as Lizzie Butcher. (Butcher was her mother Jane's maiden name.)

I stayed with me gannies for a few years; I didn't have far to go. We lived at number 34 and she was at number 60. She went away with fish and had a hard life for small rewards. I would just like to share with you a few memories from those years.

One favourite was,

*Bairn, bairn, in your creddle,  
Divvent whine, divvent whine,  
Here's ya dad, he'll draa a pictcha,  
With his vine, with his vine.'*

Vines were usually stubby and not like the long, elegant pencils we have today.

Another, better known, ditty was,

*I'm a Cullercoats fisherwife, both happy and free,  
And I live in a cottage way down by the sea,  
And I sell my fresh fish to the poor and the rich,  
Will you buyee, will you buyee, will you buy my fresh fish?*

I recall the Fairies' cave as being the smallest on Cullercoats sands; apparently, the young fishergirls would stand outside and shout,

*Fairy, fairy cum oot o' your hole,  
Wesh me fish and aa'll give you a sole.'*

Did they have any luck, I wonder!

Gannie sold her fish along the lovely Tyne Valley – Bywell to Wylam, Prudhoe, Mickley, Stocksfield, Ovington and Ovingham, (from where she would cross over the river to serve, 'Mistress Bewick' at Cherryburn.) To all her customers she was known as 'Mrs. Storey' and she is usually mentioned in any memoirs written about the area.

I now have a large portrait of her on my wall, (thanks to the Discovery Museum Exhibition of 2006), in her fisher clothes, smiling, creel and basket on her back. I believe the photograph was taken originally by a national newspaper shortly before she retired at the age of 79. What a canny little woman me Gannie was. I can blow her a kiss now whenever I want!

## **Meetins and Happnins**

### **Thursday 16<sup>th</sup> August Poems, Patter, Pipes and Hoafies**

A dialect day with members of the Northumbrian Language Society at Alnwick's Bailiffgate Museum. There will be stories and poetry, recitations on the hour and activities, songs and small pipe music throughout the day, culminating at 3pm with 'Whe's Tellin' Hoafies?', Northumberland's own word bluffing game. Drop in at any time between 11 am -4 pm.

**Saturday September 15<sup>th</sup>** The Durham and Tyneside Dialect Group, organised by Bill Griffiths, with the Tees Valley Dialect Group, organised by Vic Wood, will host the biennial meeting of the various North of England Dialect Societies on Saturday afternoon. There will be a guest speaker and we have been invited to contribute a stall. The venue may be Beamish Resource Centre, near to Beamish Museum.  
**NB This venue has yet to be confirmed so please check with Kim before the event.**

### **Thursday 4<sup>th</sup> October National Poetry Day**

We hope that our chairman, Peter Arnold, will host an event in Newcastle. Details to be clarified later.

### **Saturday 20<sup>th</sup> October Annual Lecture I the Town Hall**

There will be drinks at 1:30 for a 2 pm start. This year there will be two or three presentations including one from Hazel Dickson in which she will review our first 25 years.

### **Saturday 8<sup>th</sup> December Yule Meet, 2pm at the Chantry**

### **28<sup>th</sup>-30<sup>th</sup> March 2008 Morpeth Gathering**

Closing date for writing competitions, 1<sup>st</sup> March.

---

## **STOP PRESS STOP PRESS STOP PRESS STOP PRESS**

### **MOODY DICTIONARY**

At the AGM, it was mentioned that we had hoped that the Moody Book would be out in July. A subsequent wave of inevitable computer glitches has delayed this. Rest assured that part of the book is already printed and we await completion, including binding and dust jacket. As we are now in the printers' holiday season it seems wise to state that the book should be ready by the start of September. Ya wadn't credit it, wad ya?