

"Keepin Ahad O Wor Tung"

Members' Newsletter No: 66, Autumn 2008

Charity Number: 515147

President: Katrina Porteous FNLS

Patrons: Their Graces the Duke and Duchess of Northumberland

NEXT HAPNIN

Saturday 25 October 2008

Roland Bibby Memorial Lecture

Lecturer: Dr Bill Lancaster, Northumbria University

Subject: "Wor Tung" Research Project and the work of the late Dr Bill Griffiths

Morpeth Town Hall at 2pm (Doors open at 1.30pm for refreshments)

GAFFOR'S GRUMLINS

Deor Reedor Hinny,

The forst thing Aah want ti say is thet it's been a tarrible time fer mony folks becos o the fluddin. It must hev been varry frightnin, especially watchin yor hoos getting covered wi wettor, an ivvrything gettin ruined. Wor sympathy gans oot tiv aall them wot hev suffered. A consequence is thet sum o wor hapnins is getting shifted tiv other places, so keek carefully at thi Meetins an Happnins bit o thi Newsletter, an mek a note o wot's diffrent. Theor's a canny bit o reading in this eedishon o thi Newsletter, an Aah hope yuh find summat ti yor fancy like.

Keep ahad

The Gaffor

"High As A Kite" by George Carrick

Dialect Prose Winner, Morpeth Northumbrian Gathering 2008

Two pieces of wood, snaffled from the farmer's owld hut at the back of the farm, then more stealth to get me grandfather's saw from the weshhouse when he wasn't looking. As climbed ower the netties and set off on me new project (as was always hevin projects when the wasr was on. It was a case of showing the rest of the lads as could still mek things with me dad away to fight Adolf's mob when theirs were still here doon the pit.)

Aa tied the two pieces of wood into a cross using the threads from an owld weshin line, and aa pasted paper and attached it ti the frame. String trailers with paper ribbons at strategic intervals. The ball of string was made up of odd bits of wool, string, twine and out elase that looked strong enough, knotted at regular intervals by necessity. Oh aye ind a wooden cross piece to wrap the string roond. Multi splashes of colour painted on the kite, using whatever coloured compound was available (divvent ask).

Its maiden flight awaited. Me peers, both the few 'fors' and the many 'againsts' standing around in assorted poses gaping, everybody agog. Into the farmer's field, a cornfield just efter threshing, its short stalks like a bed of nails them fakirs used to walk ind lie on. Haystacks pointing skyward in triumph about to witness my greatest feat.

Aa led the way (naturally and in style anaal), and they aall followed ahint is. Aa handed the kite to me best mate, who had a worried look on his fyece, and aa climbed with difficulty onto the sack, he handed is the projectile and held on to me string. With a whirling motion aa horled it into the blue yonder, the sun searing me skin aa waas that high up —Aa followed its trajectory — up --- up ---- Panic as a slid doon, got straw up me underpants, it hort anaal, it was swooping doon, lower and lower, doon, doon.

Aa waas dreading the embarrassment of a crash landing straight efter the take off. Aa ran as fast as the wind (efter heving carlin peas), faster and faster, sweat and fear together drove is on, just like the Roger Bannister blokie, cos aa could never fyece them again if it ends up in humiliation.

It straightened oot, was gathered by the thermals, it waas nearly torn oot of me hands as a greet big gust sent it soaring into the sun. It swayed, twittered, as the tail lashed from side ti side, until it was plucked up to another level as aa shored oot the very last of the string. The kite glided majestically through the assorted cheers and yells as we aall followed it movement, where only Spitfires have gone before.

There was a hush cos it seemed to curtsey and bow to its fascinated audience, those ant like creatures beneath it who for a moment in time had dooted its ability on this, its maiden flight. Finally, me fyece a picture, aall those boond ti terra firma were convinced, they applauded and cheered.

Aerodynamics? Some one once said "Aren't they dynamite chocolates?" Aa knaa me fyece was a picture, it's a joyous moment of me youth, triumphant, ind yi knaa, aa absolutely milked it. As aa torned ti tek the plaudits, seeing the atonishment on their faces, the awe and wonder whey, they weren't looking at me. They were staring gobs open up into the heavens. That they dared ti doubt me! I, a pioneer, a designer, as well as a manufacturer of flying machines. At lang last aa'm somebody ti reckon with.

Aa could nearly hear the hush, followed by a combined gasp, hands held firmly ower their mooths, aa turned feeling the slackening of the string. It fell like a stone. It had brocken up in the ferocity of the elements, as clouds scurried by ower the sun, the pitter-patter of rain signalled the demise of the performance in the now angry sky. It waas the inadequacy of the paste, paper and gash string. Drawing board adjustments must soon follow. In fact aa get the feeling that Mark 2 is upon us!

Five minutes of fame, the object of which was now lying in a sorry mess, torn, brocken, its remnants across on the far haystack inort, without style or grace (whey at least it made the crows and starlings scarper real quick). Even the crash had been summick special, the pieces coming doon as a Heinkel would it a Spit or a Hurricane had given it a borst up its backside.

Aa've flown many times on holiday and through my work. Aa've witnessed many sights in the air and from the ground, but that time was summick special to me and it's lain in the war corner of my mind, where so many awful things happened. That was the lighter side of that terrible war.

Aa made the Mark 2 some time later but me heart waas never in it, even though this time it stayed in one piece, and it flew for langer anaal. It also disappeared due to the string snapping (mebbee aviation wasn't my forte efter aall!). However, nothing has exceeded that maiden flight, the meeting of expectation, the personal achievement of one so young, witnessed by that select audience, many of whom are long gone now. It was my forst kite expedition!

It was really a disaster, but what a glorious one, and from that day on, still in short pants, as got the nickname 'Johnsie'. WE Johns wrote the Biggles books, and the nickname has remained so for over sixty years.

Aa'm sure as would hev sorted oot yon bouncing bomb for the dam busters if aa'd had the time. Noo what about summick that gans ti the bottom of the sea? Jules Verne, as as recall, had similar ideas as me. It's small wonder him with that puny black tache never bothered us much up here in wor patch during the waar. As reckon his spies warned Hitler off, just in case folk like me got mad ind got wor heeds around some of the greet muckle ideas yi get at that age.

Northumbrian Language Society Development Plan

"What's yon?" div Aah heor yuh say? Whey man, it's a plan wot wuh wrote doon in 2002 settin oot sum o the things wuh would like ti dee ti spreed thi word aboot wor tung. It's writ in posh slaver, but divvent let that put yuh off. Hev a gan at it an see wot yuh think. Then let wuh knaa wot you think should be changed. A lot hes happened sin them days, and sum of the ideas mebbees dissent fit noo. Please let wuh hev yor feedback. Yuh can write to thi Gaffor, or to Kim.

Development Plan 2002 - 2012

1. Object

To encourage people to use, study and enjoy the Northumbrian language in all its forms through publication, promotion and performance.

2. Definition

Northumbrian is an Anglian language, and one of the original English dialects which led to the creation of Standard English, and it is the first language of those who live mainly between the Tweed and the Tees.

3. Proposal

- a. To publish a definitive dictionary of modern Northumbrian usage.
- b. To create an archive of spoken Northumbrian.
- c. To create a library of written material relating to the Northumbrian language.
- d. To publish historically significant Northumbrian texts so as to maintain the continuity of the language.

- e. To commission and publish texts exemplifying the wide range of modern literature in Northumbrian.
- f. To produce educational and publicity material which spreads knowledge and use of the language.
- g. To promote and organise the study and dissemination of Northumbrian through conferences and seminars.
- h. To employ such professional assistants as may be required to carry through any or all these proposals.
- i. To assist in the creation of a Northumbrian Studies Institute that will bring together all groups, societies and associations interested in the use, study and enjoyment of Northumbrian culture and heritage in all its forms.

SOCIETY NEWS

Overdue Subscriptions

Please have a careful look at the address label on the envelope this edition of the Newsletter came in. If there is a star after your name, it means that you are behind with your subscription to the Society. The membership subscription is due on the 1st of April every year, and a reminder was sent to all members at the time. If you are in arrears, please put this right as quickly as you can by filling in the subscription form enclosed with this Newsletter. If by the time the next Newsletter is produced at the turn of the year, you are still in arrears, then your name will be taken off the list.

Book Review

"Fishing and Folk - Life and Dialect on the North East Coast" by Dr Bill Griffiths

This book is the last in the series compiled by the late Bill Griffiths studying three different aspects of life and language in the north east. The first was "Stotty n Spice Cake – the story of North East Cooking". This was followed by "Pitmatic – The Talk of the North East Coalfield". This last volume deals with the life of fisherfolk, and the language they used.

From a Northumbrian language perspective, this is the best of the three books, because it considers the language used by fishermen and their families from the whole of the Northumberland and Durham coastline. The previous books concentrated on the language as it was used in county Durham, with comparatively little reference to the language as it was used north of the Tyne.

The book has a user-friendly list of contents, which gives a very clear picture of what is to be found in the rest of the book. Each section is a mixture of word lists and anecdotes from fisherfolk. This juxtaposition adds life to the text, because it is far more than a simple dictionary. It is also a record of the life of the people who spoke this language, told through poetry, song and prose. This mixture of language and literature is appealing, as is the historical perspective, and the interviews with the people who experienced the rigours of the sea.

This is a book to dip into. It is full of revealing insights into a way of life that is now part of our past. Our President, Katrina Porteous, in her poem "The Wund an the Wettor" documents the decline of the language alongside the traditional ways of life that gave rise to so many of the words in the first place. Bill Griffiths in this book records the same process, through the text, but also through the photographs and sketches.

As the industries have declined, so has our use of the language. From our point of view, the loss of the language is the greater loss, because our language defines who we are as a people. Without our language, we are indistinguishable from everybody else. That is why Bill Griffiths' books are so important. They remind us of our history and heritage, which is so rich and well worth preserving. Bill may have died, but his legacy lives on, and we must see what we can do, individually and collectively, to honour his memory by carrying on his work of recording, and using, the Northumbrian language.

MEETINS AN HAPPNINS

Saturday 25 October – Roland Bibby Memorial lecture – see the last page of this Newsletter for all the details.

Saturday 13 December – Yule Meet: the Society hosts its traditional pre-Christmas gettogether. This year, the venue has changed. We usually hold the Meet in the Chantry, but the building was badly damaged in the floods. This year, we will be meeting in St Robert's Church Hall, Oldgate, Morpeth from 2pm until 4pm. (That's the place where we hold the spoken language competitions on the Saturday afternoon of the Morpeth Northumbrian Gathering.) We will be featuring the all-new "Whe's Tellin Hoafies?" word-bluffing game. All are welcome. Free entry, but please bring food to share with those present.

17 – 19 April 2009 – Morpeth Northumbrian Gathering. Please put this date in your diaries now for next year's extravaganza of everything Northumbrian!

Early Notice for 2010!!!! – You will remember that in the year 2000 we celebrated Oswaldtide with a Northumbrian Chorch Sarvice. We had another one in 2005. We are planning to have another one in 2010, probably in the run-up to Christmas. Organising one of these Northumbrian church services takes a lot of work, and we're hoping to set up a planning group quite soon. If you have any ideas or suggestions about what might be included, please get in touch with either the Gaffor or Kim.

NLS CONTACT DETAILS

Chairman: Peter Arnold,

30 Chapel Grange, Westerhope, Newcastle upon Tyne, NE5 5N; Phone/Fax: 0191 264 4811; Email: pia13@btinternet.com

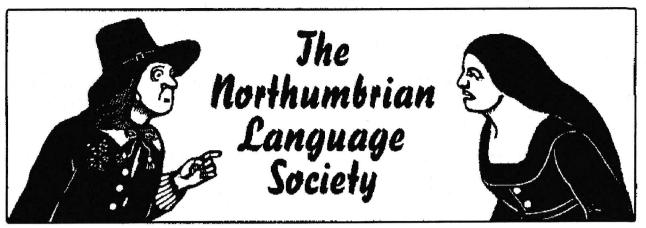
Secretary: Kim Bibby-Wilson,

Westgate House, Dogger Bank, Morpeth, Northumberland, NE61 1RE; Phone: 01670 513308

Treasurer: John Davidson,
10 Burnhouse Road, Wooler, Northumberland, NE71 6EE;
Phone: 01668 281462

Website: www.northumbriana.org.uk

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"Keepin Ahad O Wor Tung"

The 2008 Roland Bibby Memorial Lecture Saturday 25th October

The Northumbrian Language Society presents

Dr Bill Lancaster on "Wor Tongue"

- the work of the late Dr Bill Griffiths

and the NE Dialect Project

2 pm - Morpeth Town Hall Ballroom Free admission. Stepped access. Doors open and free drinks 1.30 pm

Further details: Hon. Sec. NLS: Mrs. Kim Bibby-Wilson, Westgate House, Dogger Bank, Morpeth, Northumberland, NE61 1RE. Tel.: 01670 513308 E-mail: enquiries@northumbriana.org.uk

