



"Keepin Ahad O Wor Tung"

Members' Newsletter No 70 – December 2009

NEXT happnin

Yule Meet

Saturday 12th December 2009

2pm in the Chantry Museum, Morpeth

Our traditional pre-Christmas celebration, with audience contributions, food (please bring something to share), Hazel's punch, "Whe's Tellin Hoafies?", the raffle, NLS stall and the communal singing of the Society's own Christmas Carol. How can you possibly stay away?

Deor Reader Hinny,

Heor's thi nyoosletta thet's not as lang as it shuld be cos Aah've been ower busy agyen, an left it ti thi last minute. Aah's sorry aboot that, an Aah'll try varry hard ti dee a proper big un next time. Onyroad, Aah hope yous'll aall cum alang ti the Yule Meet next Satdu. It's a canny do, an a varry relaxin way ti kick off thi festiv season. Keep ahad.

The Gaffer

Obituary

Stanley Ellis (1926-2009)

It is with regret that we announce the death of Stanley Ellis at the age of 83 on 31st October.

Stanley's main claim to fame was his work to promote the study and recording of the regional dialects of English. He was an authority on the subject, and his radio broadcasts aroused a lot of interest in the subject. He was also a pioneer in the recording of authentic dialect speakers, and his work set the standard for others to follow.

Stanley Ellis was born in Bradford, Yorkshire, and after school, national service, and university, he became a university lecturer, eventually becoming a senior lecturer at Leeds University.

His special interest was in linguistics, in which he was recognised as a national expert. It was this interest that led him to record regional dialects all over the country. He started off touring on a motor bike with a sidecar, and he and his wife would travel all over the place recording local speakers.

This work established a bank of recordings which eventually took him into forensic science, where his unrivalled expertise enabled him to identify the place of origin of suspects in criminal investigations. His most famous contribution in this field was the infamous Yorkshire Ripper case, where a telephone caller to the police claimed to be the murderer. Stanley Ellis proved that the caller in fact came from Castletown near Sunderland, and that the call was a hoax.

As far as we are concerned, Stanley Ellis was the foremost dialect expert in the country, and that is how he will be remembered. His work aroused concern about the state of regional English dialects, and helped to lead to the setting up of dialect societies, including the Northumbrian Language Society. He worked with our Society's founder, Roland Bibby, and Stanley gave the first Roland Bibby Memorial Lecture at County Hall in Morpeth in 1998.

Short Notices

Memorial Lecture

This year's Roland Bibby Memorial Lecture was given by Peter Athey on Saturday 17th October in the newly refurbished Morpeth Town Hall. His theme was lost words, and his talk was based around poems he had written over the years which used Northumbrian words and phrases no longer in common use. The lecture was well received by the audience, and it was followed by questions and comment. Peter also announced that he was donating the stock of one of his books to the Society.

The Journal

*There was a flurry of interest in our Northumbrian language recently when The Journal published a story about the proposed new Collins Dictionary of English dialect. The article focused on Northumbrian words which were going out of use, and this resulted in a number of people contacting us expressing support for the language and our work. One of these was the MP for Hexham, Peter Atkinson, who listed words that he heard in his constituency, like **netty**, **spelk**, **oxter** and **henspeckle**.*

Foreign Affairs

We mentioned before our links with a Brazilian college lecturer who has an interest in endangered regional languages. She is particularly interested in Northumbrian, and she has links to others interested in the topic in other countries as well. One thing she would like more information about is whether local pop music groups write and perform songs in Northumbrian. Does anyone know of any? Please get in touch if you do.