



"Keepin Ahad O Wor Tung"

Members' Newsletter, Number 78, Summer 2011

Wot's On

IMPORTANT ANNOUNCEMENT

THE DIALECT CHURCH SERVICE PLANNED FOR SUNDAY 7TH AUGUST HAS BEEN POSTPONED.

The reason is that we have not been able to devote enough time to it to do the job properly, and we would rather postpone it, probably until next year, rather than put on an incomplete project. Please accept our apologies.

Thursday 6th October - National Poetry Day : watch out for details in our next newsletter of our activities to celebrate this event.

Saturday 15 October - Roland Bibby Memorial Lecture – Morpeth Town Hall, starting at 2pm, doors open at 1.30. This year's lecture will be given by Karen Lowing from Newcastle University, who will report on a project studying the dialect use of youngsters in the borders. More information will be available later.

Saturday 22 October – English Dialect Day in Louth, Lincolnshire. This event is part of a campaign by several dialect groups to preserve our distinctive English dialects. There will be people from all over the English speaking community there. We hope to be represented. Perhaps our members living in the Midlands, and in Lincolnshire, can get to this very interesting event. Please let Kim know if you hope to attend so we can notify the organisers. Don't forget that we are hosting the Dialect Day in 2012!

Saturday 10 December - Yule Meet, our seasonal, pre-Christmas event, starting at 2pm in the Chantry Mueum in Morpeth.

Northumbrian Language Society

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*"Ye mon press yor lug t' thi grund onywheors
in Northumborland an heor thi futsteps o men
lang deid."*

Anon

Executive Committee Report given at the AGM, 7th May 2011

Introduction - the Executive Committee has met on a number of occasions in the last year to deal with the normal business of the Society. Details of the major projects we have been involved in are given later in this report. The Society is a member of the National Council for Voluntary Organisations (NCVO), which means we get advice and support in our role as a charity. The finances are in a sound state, and details will be in the Treasurer's report.

Annual Calendar - our main activities are the language competitions at the Morpeth Gathering, the Reed Neet, the Memorial Lecture, and the Yule Meet. In addition, members of the Society gives talks on the language to local groups, and some members also enter some of the competitions organised by other heritage organisations, such as the Alnwick Gathering and the Rothbury Festival.

Dictionary - work on this project is proceeding. We now have a draft that is beginning to look like a "proper" dictionary. There is a section of Northumbrian into Standard English, and a section of Standard English into Northumbrian. The next step is to go through the whole thing to check that the words in each part are also in the other part. This will be a slow process, and it will be some time before the draft then goes out for some more consultation and discussion.

Dialect Church Service - this was planned for Sunday 7th August in St Andrew's Parish Church, Newgate Street, Newcastle. It has been postponed to enable us to organise the event properly. It involves more work than we had thought originally. Apologies to those who were looking forward to the event, which we hope to put on next year.

Noah's Ark - this single surviving text from the medieval Newcastle Mystery Cycle is being translated into Northumbrian, and expanded a bit, because there are some parts missing. The hope is that it might be ready for public performance at next year's Morpeth Gathering, so we hope to be able to find a group willing to stage it.

National Poetry Day - we were not able to take part in this event in 2010, but we hope to

do so in 2011. We have also discovered that there is now a World Poetry Day on 20th March, so we are going to have to think carefully about how to get involved without overstretching ourselves.

National Dialect Day - this event was begun by our friends in the Lancashire Dialect Society in 2009, and it will take place this year in Louth in Lincolnshire on Saturday 22nd October. We hope to be represented, so that we can learn how to plan the event in 2012, when it will be hosted by us here in the North-East. This looks as though it may need to be added to our annual calendar of regular events in the future.

British Library Dialect Project - we were involved in this national project on a number of levels. Our Secretary, Kim, went to some of the events in London. The Gaffer represented us at the local launch event in Newcastle. Two of our members, Hazel Dickson and Alex Swailes, were the star turns at a public event, also in Newcastle.

Morpeth Northumbrian Gathering - for some years now, the Gathering has struggled to make ends meet as a number of organisations which have provided funding have ended their support. There are many reasons for this, such as changes in the grant regimes of some national organisations, local government changes here in the North-East, and the difficult economic times over the past two to three years. We have agreed to help the Gathering by giving them £300 a year for the next three years, to help plug the gap.

Website - there has not been much progress on the new website in the last twelve months. The first draft, however, is more or less complete, and we are in touch with the people who host our current website (www.northumbriana.org.uk) about what needs to be done to delete the current website and replace it with the new one. We expect the changeover to happen later in 2011.

Thanks - the Northumbrian Language Society is a voluntary organisation. We have no premises, or machinery, or employed staff. Everything is done by volunteers, and we would like to thank all the Executive members for their support and work over the last year, and to the many members of the Society who have supported our activities.

44th Morpeth Northumbrian Gathering 2011

DIALECT COMPETITION RESULTS

B3a Novice Northumbrian Verse: 1, "Me n' the Balrn", "Ode ti Sascha", "Bereavement" all by Herbert Savory (Kibblesworth).

B3b Open Northumbrian Verse: 1, "On Bein Feyor'd" Alan C Brown (Newcastle); 2, "Thi Wolfen Howl" Nick Short (Hexham); 3, "If We'd Only Had Time" George Carrick; HC "I Will go to Live in Berwick" Beth Lister.

B5 Northumbrian Prose: 1, "Dole Day" George Carrick (Cramlington); 2, "The Wolf Fang Rock" Nick Short; 3, "Hirsute" George Carrick.

C18 Fine Northumbrian Speech: 1, Bob Bolam; 2, Nick Short.

C22 Story-Telling: 1, Chris Jones (Wall); 2, Terry Common; 3, Nick Short.

Full results of writing and other classes on www.northumbriana.org.uk
or send a s.a.e. to Kim requesting results leaflet.

We reproduce below the winning entries from classes B3b and B5:-

On Bein Feyor'd by Alan C Brown

Aa's net afeyor'd uv vampire bats nor ghosts,
Nor whun it's vaary dark, uv telegraph posts
That creak in a caad wind, jist like the noise
Uv lood gunshots, or ancient gallows diz.
Aa's net afraid uv rats nor bats as scoots
Aboot in paid oot attics thaats smells uv soot.

Aa's net afeyor'd iv lowpin grews as growls,
Nor shaddas on a waal, nor screachin owls;
Aa's nivvaa scared iv forktails thon crawls
Aboot in wor back yard, nor agyen't waals.
Aa divvent mind bein left aal an me ain,
Wiv nowt te dee but heor the soond uv rain.

But cum the neet Aa's ofen sair afeyor'd
Uv things a canna see, but yet leuks weird;
Praps ye thinks Aa's jist a glaky fyul,
Daft as a bairn in short breeks still at skul?
But Aa', an aad man, wee is seldom scared
As wance Aa wez, whun at us summat satred
Wiv horrible an bludshot saasa eyes,
An baaldy crutt, aheyte in livvid skies.

Dole Day by George Carrick

The lang waalk to the owld building everybody knew aboot but never spoke of. The place neebody wanted to be seen near. It waas dole day.

Squeezed between dull, drab, tenements ower ind aback of that new council estate with iron gates, forbidding entry unless permitted. Everybody knaaing why yi were there, when yi pushed them open on Tuesdays it nine thorty am. (it always seemed ti rain that day.) Ironically the chorche's massive spire blocked aall sunlight tiv it, me shadow shrunk into oblivion as aa approached the offensive door. The dole office sparse and dark, Aa had ti squint along its corridors in the dim light. Wooden floors that squeaked, my echoing footsteps announcing me presence, telling aall ind sundry who yi were, ind why yi were here! The dreaded desk, its approach smelling of mildew, dust motes hiding ahint ancient radiators that were nivver on anyway. Dettol disinfectant from the ower used toilets, that never did hide the aawful smaells of the place. Saying me name in a hushed silence, it echoing off ivvery waall of wood ind stone along narrow corridors where secrecy ind dignity had yit ti be discovered.

"Name and address", it rung oot; neebody could fail to hear it. Aa cringed. Ears, eyes, torned heeds, self-satisfied smiles, Aa stood robotic-like, tiv attention, hoping the lang shadows wad cover me fyace, ind me embarrassment. Aa had been one of the forst there so Aa wadn't hev ti queue in the lang line that reached reet along the street, aall eyes pointing ti the groond. In them days a cap was a pre-requirement, hands in pockets, ind a feeling of complete emptiness.

Them hev'n been afore me feeling the pittance burning a hole deep in their pocket and soul, lounged on corners with others alike, smoking nipped Woodbines doon ti the last end. Hoyin the end in their waistcoat pocket ti make shag for their pipes.

Nods, whispered greetings, idle chatter, talking aboot needs ind wants. Most on bikes, not a car in sight, the suits' vehicles locked oot the way, cos we were vandals in their eyes.

Dorty watter running doon gutters, pub doors opening, bookies' runners tapping shpoulders. Loan men on the fringe looking menacing, yit never moving in the crowd, unless there was two or three of them together. Aa peered into the street, turned me fyace ti the aall as Aa made me way yem. As wor door slammed shut, hoping neeboidy had seen is coming in, yet Aa knew curtains had eyes aback of them, ind the gossiping wad start. Off would come me stone grey suit, me dole claes, that wad come oot again on the enxt Tuesday payoot.

Aa felt shame, aye and pent up anger at the society Aa was part of, ind the people in power who just didn't care. Aa handed ower the pound note, ind the few coppers; wor lass's eyes said it aall. Aa knew it was neewhere near what we needed ti survive. How land could we gan on like this?

When the desl man had looked up ti me this morning, (the only time Aa wad feel superior ti him) his eyes said it aall. Aa waas nowt ti him, only a number on his ledger sheet; blokes like me didn't exist in his idea of life. He had dismissed me.

Aa stood there looking doon on him, turned and took a step, looked back at him behind that desk, and nearly exploded, needing ti satisfy me frustrations.

Hate isn't the reet word, cos he wasn't the one. He was the servant of the state. But yi see, he's aall Aa've got ti vent ower. What made it worse this morning waas, after me, an owld man stood afront of "the suit", shaking in his boots, leaning on an owld walking stick. He handed ower some papers, the desk-bloke shuffled them aboot, shook his heed, gave him them back, and shooted "Next!" The owld chap shuffled away, tears or drool dripping from his face, Aa divvent knaa which. Mr Desk looking so smug, smiling. Another victory for the state. He smoothed his greasy hair, staring off into space, preparing for the next in line, nee doubt another idler. That's where Aa learned how easy it would be to become violent, to let rage and revenge take ower. He felt me staring at him. Aa grimaced at him, and saw the sad look on his fyace, those impenetrable eyes. He half shook his head, shrugged, and momentarily lifted his hands, palms up. Jolted by his own reaction he resumed his blank expression and mask of coldness – "Next!"

That's when Aa felt sorry for him. He was deeing his job, in work, of a kind he detested, dealing with people like me. Yi see, there thoosands of us and only a handful of him.

Aa could kill for a job, a proper, regular paid job. Aa divvent care what it is. Aa just hev ti feed me family. The luv Aa feel for them overwhelms is when Aa hear them asking their mam for summick to eat. She whispers ti them "Divvent let Da hear yi." Ind that is a whole lot worse. Aa feel as though Aa'm letting them doon. What else can Aa dee, for God's sake, ti get a job ind feed wor lass ind me little innocent bairns?

Yit despite that, ind the way we've struggled, Aa've got faith that summick will turn up – it has tee, cos Aa wad never want ti be like that Mr Desk. Perversely, me heed felt high that day, ind whenever trouble courts is, Aa hark back to the "suit", his black tie ind them aawful sad eyes. Aa only hope Aa live to see the day when Aa am in work, ind he's not, cos there's nee line of "idlers" in front of him looking for a hand oot.

PS: Aa've heard rumours that the lads around Jarrow, ower the watter, are thinking aboot setting off ti fyace wor government. There's taalk of them marching doon ti London. Aa find it hard ti believe, but me in a few of the lads are gannin ti find oot what it's aall aboot. Wor lass (bless hor sowl) hes agreed, it's aboot time for drastic action. It's either the march doon sooth, or as another group hev talked aboot, and that involves violence and breaking the law. Aa've decided we've got nee choice in the matter noo!

THEM NORTHUMBRIAN HILLS

Me heort's adift among them hills
That roll below Northumbrian skies;
Thor noble tumult heaves an fills
The farmost keekin u me eyes.
Ti crags wheor heathor cowps an spills,
An windy bentlands ferl an rise,
Me varry bein lowps an thrills,
Me sowl wi teors u pleasore cries.

Yon music floatin sweet forlorn,
The matin whaup-bord corlee cry,
Theor echoes thro the springin morn,
The overture u fell an sky.
Bi time an weather kindly worn,
The hills gi back me whispored sigh -
"God, bi whase will Aah heor wes born,
Grant heor Aah end me days forbye."

Robert Allen

Passionate about dialect

north east
england