



Members' Newsletter No 104
Winter 2018

“Keep Ahad O Wor Tung”

Next Happnin
Yule Meet

Saturday 8th December
at 2pm
Morpeth Chantry Museum

Join us for our traditional Yuletide celebration, with a shared meal (provided by those attending), Hazel's powerful punch, raffle, merchandise on sale, songs, recitations, tung bletherin, “Whe's Tellin Hoafies?”, and finishing with our own NLS Yuletide carol. How can you possibly miss it?

Lift access to the first floor meeting room

NLS Contacts

If you want to get in touch with us about any of the items in this Newsletter, or about a dialect query, or to volunteer to help, contact:-

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or visit our website at:- www.northumbriana.org.uk

Dates For The Diary

Friday-Sunday 26th-28th April 2019
 52nd Morpeth Northumbrian Gathering

The dates for the following events in 2019 are to be confirmed, but are likely to be held on or near the dates listed. We hope to be able to confirm them soon.

- Monday 13 May** - AGM and Reed Neet?
- Saturday 12th October** - Lecture ?
- Friday-Sunday 18-20 October** - National Dialect Festival ?
- Saturday 7 December** - Yule Meet?

Yule Meet Guest

At this year's Yule Meet, there will be a guest performance by Sue Rutherford of Morpeth St George's Community Players.

She will be reciting her uncle Ossie's tale from Hexham, called “Hannah Lammen's Bairn”.

Ossie was Oswald Porteous, the brother of her paternal grandfather, and she remembers asking him to tell her the tale often because she liked the melodramatic nature of it!

NLS News

National Dialect Festival 2018

This annual event was held in Blackpool, Lancashire this year towards the end of October. It was well attended, with about 50 people from all over the country, including nine from the Northumbrian Language Society. Other dialect groups came from Cumbria, Yorkshire, Lincolnshire, Devon, the Black Country, and Lancashire.

The entertainment put on by our Lancashire hosts on the Friday evening was well received by an enthusiastic audience.

The two talks on the Saturday morning provoked some lively discussion, as the guest speakers outlined the role of local newspapers in the late 19th century promoting the use of dialect in Lancashire and Yorkshire, and the success of getting the BBC Radio 4 network to broadcast the use of dialect earlier this year, Northumberland being one of the areas chosen.

The afternoon saw the regular dialect competitions. There were a larger number of entries this year in all the categories, and the standard of dialect used, and the interesting uses to which it was put, was very impressive.

However, despite Stuart Lawson and Peter Arnold representing us with great credit, we were unable to bring home any trophies this year.

The final event was the Saturday night's entertainment which was enjoyed by a very enthusiastic audience. The trophy for the best group performance went, this year, to the Black Country.

We understand that next year's event is likely to be held in Lancashire again, and probably in the same venue, the Savoy Hotel.



The Sparrow and the Hall

This is the title of a new novel by an American writer, Donald Mace Williams. It is set in 7th Century Northumbria, and tells the tale of a local churl and his relationships with his family, and with those of the nobility who rule his life from the fortress at Bamburgh.

It is available through Amazon, and Meg Wilson has written this review of the book :

The Sparrow and The Hall by Donald Mace Williams is a newly-published work set in seventh century Northumbria. It follows the life of Edgar, a humble farmer, as he raises his family with wife Gwenda and mother Ethel, navigates religious upheaval and deals with the fallout from lordly intrigue at home. The book is epic in scale, charting Edgar's life from young newlywed to old man, but at no point does the story feel unwieldy. Williams zooms in on three important events in Edgar's life - a battle, a trial and illness - and their surrounding years, that encapsulate Edgar's development as a character.

Williams has clearly done his historical research. His setting is evocative and full of authentic detail. But rather than dumping historical fact through paragraphs of exposition, as some historical authors are wont to do, Williams expertly weaves details into his characters' actions and thought processes, creating a rich environment that absorbs the reader. This is subtly done, and leaves the reader feeling part of the period, almost smelling the woodsmoke at feasts. I also don't know if the author has visited the area surrounding Bamburgh, where the majority of the book is set, but his descriptions ring true to any local, and the beauty of the landscape is deftly conveyed.

One notable aspect of the tale is the returning theme of religious uncertainty. As the official religion changes between Christianity and paganism depending on the choice of the current ruler, Williams effectively depicts the doubts different characters have about both belief systems. The contrast between aged, stubbornly-pagan Ethel, initially-secret Christian Gwenda, and Edgar, who eventually comes to his own conclusions, is notable and all their attitudes feel realistic to the reader.

One criticism is that the book's blurb gives a bit too much away. If you have an excellent memory for blurbs and devour the whole book straight away, then some of the turns of the story won't be a surprise to you.

The Sparrow and the Hall is an enjoyable story full of memorable characters and excellent historical detail that is a worthy addition to any Anglo-Saxon aficionado's bookshelf.



Obituary - Rosemary Halsey

Kim Bibby-Wilson writes :

Sadly, Rosemary Halsey died recently and I was pleased to represent the NLS at her funeral on 24th October.

Born in 1923, Rosemary was a founding member of the Newcastle branch of the NLS in the 1980s along with her husband Alfred, who predeceased her, and together they attended many of the Society's general meetings. She was also a leading light of the Fawdon and Coxlodge Local History Society.

Her background was fascinating – she was the niece of the first miner MP, Thomas Burt, who represented the Morpeth constituency, and her interest in language was clearly stimulated by her having spent the first ten years of her life in France thanks to her father's work.

On returning to the NE she was a pupil of Thomas Moody, the respected and formidable Coxlodge schoolmaster who compiled "The Mid-Northumbrian Dialect" dictionary which the Society published.

Rosemary wrote Northumbrian poetry, contributing to the "Northumbrian Words and Ways" booklets produced by Newcastle University's Centre for Continuing Education.

She is survived by her son Michael.



"Immortalised" - an Exhibition

Our President, Katrina Porteous writes :

Just a note to let you know about Historic England's 'Immortalised' exhibition in London, questioning who and how we remember:
<https://historicengland.org.uk/get-involved/help-write-history/immortalised/competition/>

I thought you might like to know that the Northumbrian Language is represented in the exhibition. Among the exhibits are ten specially-commissioned new memorials from around the country, and I was one of the artists selected to produce work. My piece, a collaboration with sound artist and composer Peter Zinovieff, is called 'The Long Line' and is an audio memorial to the fishing communities of north Northumberland.

As well as new poetry, the piece features archive recordings of Northumbrian dialect speakers and the voice of fisherman John Dixon singing a Northumbrian folksong.

Details of the exhibition are in the link above, and here is a little more about our piece below:-

The Long Line – by Katrina Porteous and Peter Zinovieff

The Long Line is a sound installation consisting of five minutes of poetry and electronic soundtrack, commemorating the fishing communities of the Northumberland coast, who for centuries worked the 'long lines' from boats called 'cobles'. This type of fishing involved an intimate, sustainable relation to nature, but came at a terrible cost, especially to women, whose unpaid job it was to bait 1,400 hooks a day. The first engines, introduced into sailing cobles in 1918, marked the beginning of mechanisation, which eventually freed women, but which also had wider, ultimately unsustainable, consequences.

Peter's electronic soundscape uses Katrina's archive recordings of local voices, and derives instrumental sounds from a traditional Northumbrian folksong, sung by fisherman John Dixon.



LAING ART GALLERY TO HONOUR JOE WILSON (Wednesday, November 21)

The historic Laing Art Gallery in Newcastle will honour Joe Wilson by naming him as the writer of *Aw Wish Your Muther Wad Cum*, the song that inspired Ralph Hedley's 1890 masterpiece *Come Geordie Ha'ad the Bairn*.

The painting, which hangs in the Northern Spirit gallery, depicts Joe's song *Aw Wish Your Muther Wad Cum*, which is a tribute to working class women.

Tyneside artist Ralph Hedley called the painting *Geordie Ha'ad the Bairn*, which was commissioned in the autumn of 1890 by the editor of the *Newcastle Chronicle* who wanted

an image based on the song for the paper's Christmas edition.

The *Newcastle Chronicle* noted that: "Wilson was a household name on Tyneside and his songs were popular in every part of the world where Tynesiders are accustomed to gather together."

The new plaque reveal, naming Joe Wilson, will take place on **Wednesday, November 21, at 1pm** in the Northern Spirit on the ground floor of the Laing Art Gallery.

There will be a brief talk about Joe Wilson, and Micky Cochrane (*The Great Joe Wilson*) will sing *Aw Wish Your Muther Wad Cum* in front of the picture.

Free entry to the Laing event. All welcome.



THE JOE WILSON NIGHT (Thursday, November 29)

The songs have been sorted and the line up is fantastic. Trust me, this is set to be the best yet!

Every Joe Wilson Night is different and this year's show will also feature songs by modern Geordie greats like Alan Hull, Judy Dinning, Pete Scott, Johnny Handle and Billy Mitchell as well as Geordie comedy.

Compered by Billy Mitchell, Joe Wilson Night 2018 will be held at the Tyneside Irish Centre in Newcastle on November 29, to mark the 177th anniversary of the birth of "The Bard of Tyneside".

The event, at the Irish Centre in Stowell Street is only 20 yards from where Joe Wilson was born on November 29, 1841 (opposite Rosie's Bar).

The show, on **Thursday, November 29, starts at 7.30pm** and tickets - limited to 150 - cost £16 via www.wisecrackproductions.co.uk or the box office (0191) 4247788.



Peter Arnold writes : I've been reading "**Curlew Moon**" by Mary Colwell which describes how modern farming methods in the British Isles are destroying the habitat that curlews need to survive. Numbers are plummeting everywhere, and soon there will be no curlews left. It reminded me of this poem by member Nick Short FNLS -

Thi Caal o thi Corloo

Aa'll hike this trod oot ower thi fell,
Ower land that nivvar saa thi ploo;
Aa'l travval it wi mi gibby-stick,
An lissun for thi lone corloo.

Bi mossy hag, aal spagnum green,
An black heaps that thi minors hyoo,
Bi cotton grass an bleeberry clumps
Ti thi plaintive caals o thi sad corloo.

Bi thi wind-blaan rowan, sair tilteed,
An sprags dectt oot wi fah'n sheep woo',
Bi bull-snoots an hairy hewborts ti
Thi haantin caal o thi leythe corloo.

Thi goose aar swattin i thi heathor;
A distant fox o reddish hyoo;
A grey heron at thi quary poo'ul,
An liltin caals o thi heugh corloo.

Rocks shyapd bi thi hand o teyme
Bi thi schar wheer brackin groo;
A cairn built bi thi herds ov auld,
Melodyus caals fre thi sweet corloo.

Bent-grass blahin i thi wind,
An thi watta staid an ambor hyoo;
Pluvvor an sneype flee fast o thi wing
Ti thi ripplin sang o thi wan corloo.

Noo, aa've tramped thi trod ower thi fell;
Thi tyuns o naichor mi heed run throo -
Thi soarin laark, thi shy peewit,
An thi liquid bubblin sweet corloo.

