

Members' Newsletter

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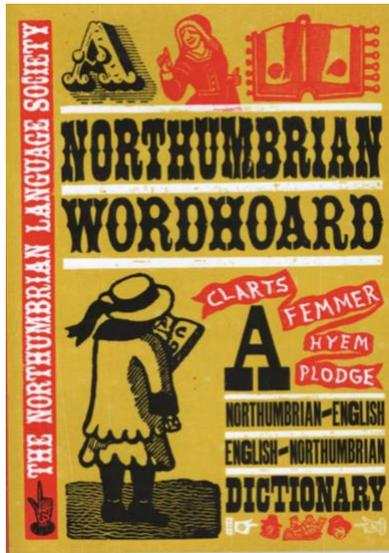
"Keepin Ahad O Wor Tung"

The Roland Bibby Memorial Lecture

Graham Bell: *'Aroond the Rugged Rock'*

Preceded by *A Northumbrian Wordhoard's* formal launch by Ian Lavery MP

Saturday 14 October from 1pm
Morpeth Town Hall



Hev a keek

at page 2

fer aall ye need t'knaa!

Happnins in 2023 and whit we knaa o' 2024

Saturday 14 October

The Roland Bibby Memorial Lecture

and launch of *A Northumbrian Wordhoard* by Ian Lavery MP
Mair on page 2

weekend of 20-22 October **The National Dialect Festival** in Bridlington, East Riding of Yorkshire

Saturday 9 December, lunchtime **The Yule Meet**, at the Morpeth Chantry

October 2024

The National Dialect Festival

on our ain turf! Somewhere in Northumbria. Watch this space. And can ye lend a hand?



Northumbrian Dialect Dictionary Launch +
The 2023 Roland Bibby Memorial Lecture

SAT. 14th OCTOBER from 1 pm

"A Northumbrian Wordhoard"

A new two-way dialect dictionary will be launched
by Society member **Ian Lavery MP**

followed at 2 pm by Graham Bell

Morpeth-bred farmer and dialect songwriter:

"Aroond the Rugged Rock":

a songwriter's journey through the cornfields
and coalfields of Northumberland

**Morpeth Town Hall, Market Place, Morpeth,
NE61 1LZ (change of venue from earlier publicity)**

FREE admission Full disabled access

Details: Tel. 01670 513308

Websites: www.northumbriana.org.uk northumbrianlanguagesociety.co.uk

More on the Dictionary

Even members of the Society might find it useful to refresh their knowledge of the tung from time to time. So:

Are you a mort or a gadgy? Can you tell your galluses from your gallowas? Is it polite to bowk?

This is the most definitive up-to-date dictionary produced by the Society. It contains not only 1,250 of the commonest Northumbrian dialect words with their meanings, a reverse list of Standard English items translated into Northumbrian and a brief history of the language, but also a handy list of the basic 140 words needed to get by in Northumbrian today.

So if you are new to the area and want to find out what we are talking about, or a native who just wants to refresh their vocabulary, this is the book for you.

The Dictionary will be available in all good bookshops. But, if you happen to know a good bookshop where it *isn't* (yet) available, please get in touch with the Chairman and he'll be happy to put them right.

Dialect in Action

It's good to see the tung still on the streets. This comes from Durham.

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Our Websites

northumbria.org.uk
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Keepin Ahad
Just as a reminder:

13th National Dialect Weekend

hosted by

The Yorkshire Dialect Society

Fri 20th – Sun 22nd October 2023

at

Expanse Hotel
North Marine Drive
BRIDLINGTON
YO15 2LS

Opening address by Colin Speakman

Competitions for:

- **Writing in Any English Dialect • Writing in the Yorkshire Dialect •**
 - **Performance of any Dialect Piece •**

****No piece to be longer than 5 minutes****

Song, story and prose accepted

Weekend residential ticket from £155, day passes available.

Contact sid@sidcalderbank.co.uk or 07778933879 for more info.

For bookings email info@yorkshiredialectsociety.org.uk

or phone 07771 855334

Recent Happnins

St Oswald's Day Service

The Summer is quiet, of course, but we did have the Dialect Service for St Oswald's Day (6 August) at St Andrew's Church, Gallowgate, led by the Reverend David Grosch-Miller. We were made most welcome, and particular thanks needs to go to Rosemary Hall for putting us in touch with an organist and for her and her helpers in proving refreshments after the service.

St Andrew's is a truly beautiful church (the oldest in Newcastle) and has a chapel dedicated to the Northumbrian saints Cuthbert, Oswald and Hilda. We discovered too late, such are the demands of post-Covid times, that we could have had the service recorded and even live-streamed, as they had to start catering for distance services once people couldn't attend in person. Apparently they had a soldier in Iraq watching their morning service that morning!

There were about 20 people all-told at our service and Rev. Grosch-Miller rose to the occasion to conduct his part of the service in broad Geordie. The readings in Northumbrian were well received and we are grateful to St Andrew's for saying they would enjoy having us back!

In view of that, we would still welcome more translations of hymns and Bible passages into Northumbrian, for use in services at the Morpeth Northumbrian Gathering and St Oswald's Day 2024. If that's something you would enjoy, please get in touch.

New poetry by James Tait: *Golden Times, Golden Seasons*

News has reached the Society of the launch of James Tait's new book of Northumbrian-language poetry, *Golden Times, Golden Seasons*. The book is available from all good bookstores, and also from James' website:

<https://jamestaitmusic.com/products/golden-times-golden-seasons>

There's also a video of the poet reciting the poems of the book:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fJxewhbz1YM>

James' voice is wonderful: relaxing and rhythmical, and with a soft Northumbrian burr, to boot. Highly recommended for a calm evening.

News of Northumbria and Northumbrians

The following items have already been sent out to members for whom we have an e-mail address. This is a new service offered by the Society: occasional e-mails about news and events that fall between Newsletters, but need to be communicated quickly. These e-mails will then be repeated, if still relevant, in the following Newsletter. If we normally communicate with you by e-mail, but you didn't get the two messages below, please let the Editor know on editor@northumbrianlanguagesociety.org.uk

Andy Bogle, RIP

The Society regrets to have to announce the passing of our member Andy Bogle, whom other members may have known. The Society of Antiquaries of Newcastle have sent us the following notice, which contains a short biography of Andy, and details of his Memorial Celebration.

'We are sad to announce the death of our member Andy Bogle on 17 August, at the age of 75. Andy was born in South Shields, and retained strong links with Tyneside and Northumberland all his life, while working in the oil industry in the US. He ran the Northumberland Words website, and was currently working on a biography of Oliver Heslop, Newcastle's nineteenth-century historian and lexicologist. His family have arranged a Memorial Celebration for him in the UK in South Shields on 13 October, which anyone who knew Andy is welcome to attend. Contact Chris Bogle by e-mail on chris@chrisbogle.com if you would like details.'

Research survey on Northumbrian

Dr Matthew Cummins of the University of Leipzig and his colleague Dr Carol Fehringer of Newcastle University are doing a research project on the tongue. They call it North Eastern English, but please forgive them! The survey should take about 10 minutes. Here's what the authors ask you to do:

'Please read the following sentences and tick YES if they sound normal to you or NO if they sound odd. This is not about "correct English" - there are no right or wrong answers. We are interested in understanding how natural or unnatural these constructions sound to native speakers.

Note: It's important that we get your gut reaction, so please do not think too long about the answers but answer as QUICKLY as possible.'

If you're able to complete this survey, Dr Cummins and Dr Fehringer will be very grateful, and also linguistic science will thank you. As the survey preface says, there are no right or wrong answers--they are just interested in what sounds natural to Northumbrians.

Here's the link:

<https://docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLSeCDNpEmyLiz8w9neqIAcAh24EA41PWtOAbIMBpE6i2NhABvw/viewform>

Many thanks, if you can spare the time!

Book Review

Pies and Prejudice: in search of the North by Stuart Maconie. London: Ebury Press. Published 2007.

Stuart worked for the BBC in London and eventually became upset with the Corporation for having a 'North of England' reporter for their news bulletins as if 'The North' was a foreign country needing a 'Washington Correspondent' or the like. He was particularly aggrieved there was no corresponding 'South of England' reporter. He decided to tour the north of England to find out what made it so distinctive and special in his eyes and the book is an easy, informative and very entertaining account of

those travels.

As a lad from Lancashire he survived pretty well in that county, Cheshire, Cumbria and Yorkshire but it was only when he recounts his encounter with the North East that he realised he was out of his depth.

Below is the glorious extract of his account when a native speaker from Newcastle visits a mate from the north-east whilst he's at college from pages 289-90 in the book.

"Am I a true northerner? I beg your pardon, Tarquin? Perhaps you'd like to ask me that question again in the car park. I'm sure Sebastian here will hold your blazer and your spritzer...

Sorry. Red mist. Conforming to all regional stereotypes, I know. But the cheek. Am I a true northerner? Of course I am. I like pies. I am childishly pleased when Chelsea, Fulham and Arsenal lose. I say 'bath' and 'care' properly. I have my dinnertime and supper in my dressing gown. But in my quieter moments, when the fire is guttering and the last dram of the evening has slipped down, I am plagued with doubts. Dark memories return unbidden and with them a sudden chill.

It's the early 1980s and I'm in the college bar one Friday night. My mate Stod from Gateshead enters with two of his friends from home, who are visiting for the weekend. After introductions, one of them hands me a pint and cheerily engages me in conversation. Or rather, tries to.

'Haddaway yous and Newky Broon divna gannin wor marra.'

Pardon?

'Howay the tabs bonnie lad wor Jackie Milburn.'

Sorry?

'Clarty South Shields hinny wor high level bridge down the netty, pet.'

Or something like that. Basically, I can't understand a word he's saying. No, that's not true. I can grasp the odd word here and there, as a drowning man might clutch at a bit of driftwood. But the overall sensation is a torrent of alien sound. It's like listening to a kind of Norse Doppler effect; stretched vowels, random emphasis and arcane dialect flow from his mouth and right over the top of my head. I feel acutely uncomfortable. This is the sort of difficulty an effete fop from Purley or Esher would have but not a kindred spirit. Stod notices my difficulty and starts to translate. All seem

amused. I'm mortified and say so. After all we are all northern brethren here. A small bout of genial scoffing ensues. 'Nah, bonnie lad, divn't say yor from the north. Yor from the Midlands alreet."

Have you read any good books with reference to the north-east and its culture? Why not submit a review?

editor@northumbrianlanguagesociety.co.uk

A bit o' varse

Before the next Newsletter is out, the nights will draw in, and we will be remembering gunpowder, treason and plot. So what better for the continuing serialisation of Joseph Smith's 1923 *Tyneside Dialect Poems on Topical Subjects* than his poem:

Guy Faaks

Thor's lots o' things in history
That issent reet b'chaalks,
So Aa'll clear up the mystery
Thor is about Guy Faaks.
At forst he struggled wiv his cares
The syem as other men,
But when he studied railway fares
He nivver smiled agyen.

An' then ye knaa he got the pip,
An' myed a bonny fuss,
Disgyed his-sel', an' teuk his nip
T' London iv a 'bus.¹
United's often gyen, y'knaa,
T' finals for the Cup,
But Faaks, he said, 'Aa'll gan an' blaa
The ruddy show reet up.'

So doon he went t' Parlyment
T' blaa them t' the skies;
Ye see it was his kind intent
T' gie them aall a rise.
He got a lot o' pooder sacks
Shoved doon the cellar grates,
As heavy as the income tax,
An' nigh as big as rates.

Noo, just as on his knees he dropped
T'set the train aleet,
A bobby cried, 'Cum oot, yor copped',
An' dragged him tiv his feet.
In Broadmoor 'sylum noo he bides,
An' sits an' groans an' glares,
An' studies nowt but railway guides,
An' curses rates an' fares.



Joseph E Smith

¹ When this poem was published, buses were still such a recent invention that people still remembered that the word was an abbreviation for *omnibus*, so Smith still gave it an apostrophe.

Gaffer's Crack

Wot cheor, marras? Wot fettle thi day? It's the time when the nights are drawing in and suddenly we're reminded it will be Christmas soon. However, there's plenty happening between now and December 25th as you can see from this newsletter. It was nice to see some of you at the Church service in August and we hope to see more of you in Morpeth at the Lecture and the official launch of the dictionary by Ian Lavery MP. Sales of *A Northumbrian Wordhoard* are going really well and we are negotiating for Waterstone's to stock it so it could soon have a wider audience.

As you will read elsewhere here, we are very sorry to have lost our member Andy Bogle. His passion for the language was backed by action and he set up the Northumbrian Words website to collate various strands of our North East patois. (<https://northumbrian-words.com>) He was working with our society to develop an education project for schools so that the next generation could discover the history of who we are today through materials that represent the past of the region and to get them interested in the origin of words we still use. This is a bold ambition and if anyone has a background in education or language, please consider coming forward to offer to help.

This brings me to yet another plea for members to help the committee with the task of running the society. There are six of us left on the Executive and spreading the work of the day to day running of the society among them doesn't leave much time or energy to take on big projects like this. Please consider helping with any of your skills to lighten that load. We meet every two months in Newcastle for a couple of hours so it wouldn't be a great drain on your time. Some of the tasks might not even require you to attend the meetings. For instance, there is a vacancy for a press officer. If you have the skill to draft press releases and a willingness to develop contacts in the media then you could work from home. Does that sound like you? What about being our bibliographer? We would like to build a reference library of publications about the region and its language which could be compiled just as easily by you in front of your PC at home. The society needs a succession strategy or it may not have a future!

As you know, the Northumbrian Language Society is hosting the National Dialect Festival next year so we would be grateful if anyone could volunteer to help out on a one-off basis with this showpiece for our language to the rest of the dialect societies in England. We have begun negotiating with venues and caterers but perhaps that is part of your background and expertise? We will need help with stewarding and back-room organisation so, although it is twelve months away, it will soon be here!

Finally. Next year is the 50th anniversary of the founding of the Society. We would welcome ideas on how you think we might mark the occasion. Please send me any suggestions at iamnlstreasurer@gmail.com. We would like it to be great occasion and I'm sure it will be with your help.

Gan canny. The Gaffer.