

# THE MERRY MAWKIN

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SPRING 2016

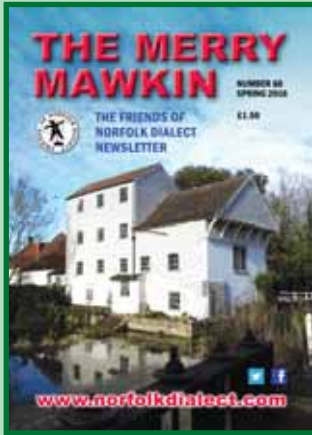


THE FRIENDS OF  
NORFOLK DIALECT  
NEWSLETTER

£1.50



[www.norfolkdialect.com](http://www.norfolkdialect.com)



A time for reflection at Marlingford mill, near Norwich.

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## Chairman's report

WELL, THE WORLD OF FOND keeps on going and I'm enjoying taking an active part in it. Being chairman has definitely been an experience so far; I'm certainly learning new things and I've had many interesting emails and adventures.



I had an exciting adventure in the BBC 'One Show' studio, just before Christmas. The 'One Show' ran a piece about the Devonshire dialect and then had three representatives of other local dialects in the studio quizzing Shirley Bassey. One representative was from Lancashire, another from the Black Country, and me from Norfolk! We had to say a line from a Shirley Bassey song in dialect and then she had to try and work out which song it was from. She needed a lot of hints! It was all good fun and gave the Norfolk dialect an airing to a large TV audience. It was also interesting to meet other dialect enthusiasts and, in the future, I look forward to working with them again.

Interesting emails include one from *The Times* asking for an opinion on an article about the use of Norfolk dialect in Arthur Ransome's book, *The Coots of the North*. This request I was able to pass on to our president, Peter Trudgill, whose response then sparked a media discussion in various newspapers. You can read his response, more in depth, on pages 22–25 of this *Mawkin*.

Another email put me back in touch with my A-level Biology teacher, who is now retired and lives in Somerset, and happened to get in contact when he was browsing our informative website and left a message in the guest-book.

My first 'dew' as chairman was the FOND panto, 'Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs'. I was extremely pleased with the success of this and a BIG 'thank you' to all those who worked so hard to help make it happen. It was great to see so many people there, despite the change in venue – I'm glad you pay attention to what's in your *Mawkin*! The colourful action photographs and lively report in the centre of this edition certainly show the fun that was had by all.

The Trosher competition winners were also announced at the panto; well done to these, and I hope you enjoy reading their stories on pages 18–21 of this *Mawkin*. To encourage more people to enter the Trosher competition I'm looking to open it up to other forms of composition, as well as short stories. We will be launching the competition at the next

'dew' in Cromer and more information will be available in the next *Mawkin*, once things have been finalised, but do you start getting your thinking caps on!

FOND is again going to be part of the fringe events at the Cromer 'Folk on the Pier Festival', where we will be hosting a session of dialect-themed monologues, poems, songs and music at the Cliftonville Hotel on the afternoon of Sunday, 8 May, 2016. We're assuming we will be there at the same time as last year – 12.15pm to 1.15pm. The FOND 'dew' will be part of the fringe events of the Folk Festival and will precede the Shrimp Davies Memorial session, where things such as Norfolk step dancing will take place.

If you wish to know more about the event in Cromer, please contact me or keep an eye on the 'Folk on the Pier' website for the finalised timings: <http://www.folkonthepier.co.uk/Artists/>

We hope you can come for an afternoon out and maybe even join in with some of your own dialect entertainment (please get in touch if you're interested in doing this, so we may have a rough idea of numbers).

I look forward to there being lots more exciting things in the future for FOND, and, in order to keep moving forward, maybe some of you would like to come on board and join the committee, perhaps even take on a role such as membership secretary or help to maintain FOND's Twitter page.

Alternatively, you might just be somebody who could give a talk about the Norfolk dialect, as I'm looking to create a list of people willing to do this. Whatever you are prepared to do, please help us by continuing to talk about FOND to your friends and neighbours and help promote the work we do. But most of all be proud of *our* dialect.

**DIANA**

PS: My mother she do say, "Thass all very well the chairman describing me as her right-hand woman, but I don't know my left from my right!"

### MICK WHITMAN

IT WAS WITH GREAT SADNESS that, in early January, we learned of the death of Mick Whitman of Harlequin Colour Print of Gressenhall, printers of *The Merry Mawkin*, and their excellent quality of printing has resulted in the highly-acclaimed magazine we now enjoy.

Mick was a true gentleman and a great friend to FOND and will be greatly missed. We send our sincere condolences to his family, his business partner Ian, and to all his friends and colleagues.

**TED PEACHMENT**



## THE MERRY MAWKIN

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# Treasurer's report

TONI REEVE

APPROXIMATELY two years ago I agreed to take the position of treasurer for an interim period of two years, pending the nomination of a permanent appointment, but, unfortunately, to date, no replacement has come forward.

FOND's largest individual expense is the production of the quarterly *Merry Mawkin*, with current printing costs and postage accounting to £5.60 per copy per annum. This does NOT include the design, editing and production work, or the packaging and mailing, which are currently done FREE of charge by our members. These costs are liable to rise in the future however, with likely increases in printing costs and postal rates.

Some members are still paying their annual subscriptions at the old rate via standing order,

having not informed their banks of the increase which came into force in 2013! May I point out that amendments to standing orders can only be made to the bank by individual members.

Whilst, previous requests have yielded no response it is unfair to members, including new ones, who pay the correct subscription rate. **To those to whom this applies please respond immediately and settle your outstanding debt.**

At time of writing, thirty-four members have renewed, some *still* at the old rates! Whilst payment is not due until 1 April 2016, please complete your details in this edition of the *Mawkin* and return prior to issue of the summer edition, **which will only be sent to fully paid-up members.**



## COME YOU ALONG TO OUR Celebration of Norfolk Dialect Dew



At the Cliftonville Hotel, Cromer,  
on Sunday, 8 May, 2016

Come along and perform any song, monologue,  
or musical piece which has a Norfolk link

## LET'S CELEBRATE OUR HERITAGE!

PART OF THE CROMER 'FOLK ON THE PIER' FRINGE EVENT





# Wordsearch: Hemsby and district

BRENDA BIZZELL

HEMSBY AND DISTRICT features in this wordsearch puzzle from Brenda – can you locate all the streets and regions? You'll find the solution on page 25.

Buttermere

California

Chimney Springs

Dene

Easterley

Fakes

Filby

Firs

Foster

Gannet

Haycroft

Leath

Longton

Main

Mill

Newport

Nightingale

North

Pedlars

Pine

Pippin

Rottenstone

School

Scratby

Seagull

Spruce

Sweetacres

Symonds

Wapping

West

N	B	E	R	E	M	R	E	T	T	U	B	C	E	E
I	F	A	R	A	N	D	W	I	D	W	O	N	N	N
A	S	Y	M	O	N	D	S	S	G	I	E	O	I	I
M	E	N	E	C	U	R	P	S	U	D	T	N	P	G
F	A	K	E	S	L	I	L	W	E	S	T	E	S	H
S	G	N	I	R	P	S	Y	E	N	M	I	H	C	T
W	U	B	S	R	A	L	D	E	P	G	C	A	R	I
E	L	G	A	N	N	E	T	D	O	N	L	Y	A	N
E	L	L	O	N	G	T	O	N	M	I	O	C	T	G
T	L	H	T	R	O	N	R	U	F	P	O	R	B	A
A	I	D	E	R	E	N	S	O	N	P	H	O	Y	L
C	M	F	O	S	T	E	R	U	P	A	C	F	Y	E
R	F	I	L	B	Y	N	I	A	M	W	S	T	A	N
E	N	I	P	P	I	P	F	O	P	L	E	A	T	H
S	U	B	E	A	S	T	E	R	L	E	Y	N	E	W



Do yew keep on sendin'...

... your letters, anecdotes and poems (preferably with *some* Norfolk dialect) to the editor:

**Ashley Gray, 37 Ashleigh Gardens, Wymondham,  
Norfolk NR18 0EY** – or by email to:

**[friendsofnorfolkdialect@btinternet.com](mailto:friendsofnorfolkdialect@btinternet.com)**

Material for the summer issue no later than **Monday 9 May 2016**, please. I look forward to hearing from you, tergether!

PS: I could do with some pictures, or old postcards, if you have them!



# Dorn't know if thass Christmas or Easter

THE BOY COLIN



D'YER KNOW Oi believe th'ow world is upside down someoimes.

Dew Oi look outside at the garden thare's geraniums from last yare still in blume alongside o' daffodils just breakin' inter loife. Oi dun't spuz we're got a Ministry of

Weather, dew we could put the blearme on them. Still we're gotta be thankful hare in Norfolk, when yew see what other parts o' the country hev had ter put up with 'gards to floods a'washin' things away and a'muckin' up peoples houses and loives. Then them folks over in 'Merica had a load o' snow ter put up with last week. (Just you think Oi'm a'gorn loopy Oi shud tell yer that Oi'm writin' this hare at the end of Jan'ry. Ashley hev bin on moi barrer ter get suffin' dun in good toime!)

Hoop yew orl hed a good toime over Christmas. Gal June and me spent toime with orl our family, which was werry noice. Leastways June din't hatter dew na cooking which pleased har. Every Christmas wot cum 'round moi moind ollus go back ter 1950 and 1951 when Oi wuz in Jarmany in the Air Force. We hed a smashing toime 'speshully on

*A drink in the old The Green Dragon, Wymondham.*



Christmas Day when the orrficers and sargents dished our grub up for us. Bein' up in North Jarmany meant we hed snow over Christmas, which med evrawhere look loike a Christmas card. Fer Christmas 1951 Oi spent a bit o' toime with a Jarman family seein's Oi wuz gorn out wi' thare daughter. They hed a hard loife at that toime. The house they lived in wuz the only one left standin' on thare street 'corse the RAF hed knocked the rest onnem down. Oi 'member hevin' moi tea with 'em on Christmas Day. They dished me up wi' ham, taters and pickled cabbage – not very festive yew moight think but thass orl they hed. Over December and January thare wuz a grit ow fair, which they called the Dom, set up in the St Pauli district, and me and the gal Waltraud spent a few noights thare. Dew yew know every toime Oi get a whiff of cigar smoke and sausages cookin' that bring back those dears.

Another Christmas Day wot stick out in moi moind was when Oi decided ter hop on the bus tearkin' Dereham football team over ter play at Wymondham. Oi han't told moi parents where Oi wuz a'goin'. Little did Oi realise that, arter the gearme, the team took themselves orf tew the pub. Oi din't get hoom till the middle o' the arfternoon. Cor, blarst, din't moi mother and father hev a go at me. Howsomever, they had kept moi dinner hot for me.

Now the New Yare is hare and, afore yew kin say Jack Robinson, that'll be spring with us agin. Evenings are drawing out a bit and thass still fairly mould so we shell hev ter keep our fingers crorst that we're broke the back o' winter.

Hare yew go tergether – salary supe is on the tearble. Belearnt wishes fer a Happy New Yare.



# 'appy noo year ter orl onyer

SHARON INGLE



UM BACK AGIN, like a bad penny. See a penny, pickut up, orl that day yewl hav good luck. I seem ter find more pennies these days, I spooz people dra'pum an' carn be bothered ter pickem up. I do, I swoop onem like a seagull on a chip.

Superstition I spooz. My nan wooz superstitious. If she spilt salt she'd be chucking handfuls over her shoulder, else tha' wooz unlucky. I reckon that wooz unlucky if yew hetta sweep har floor up. She yewster add a lotta salt ter har vegetables when she wooz cookin' them, ter git ridda the germs. I ken remember havin' a little salt onna bald egg but I onla havut on fish an' chips now; thass added to jist about everything alredda.

In the 1970s we yewster be urged ter go ter work on an egg. We yewster say we'd rather go on our bike cors we wooz orl comedians then. Now jarbs are harder ter cum by and eggs git overlooked as an everyday feast. They yewster be sized 0-7. Now yew git meedyum or large and they costa packet. As sure as eggs is eggs, we yewster say if we wooz sartun a suffen.

Another slogan wooz 'Drinka Pinta Milka Day'. Moust households hed a milkman and my Dad'd hatta git up ully on a Satdee morning ter pay 'im. Dad'd yewslly be riddy laying in weart but sumtimes he overslep and the milkie oud be bangin on the door and me dad oud charge downstairs still in his nightwear. Them days, milk cum in glars bartles and the cream wooz on tarp. If yew gart that on yer cornflearks yew wooz in luxshry. Now milk cum skim, semi-skim, no fat and tha' dornt tearsta nuthin. If we ran outta milk, we yewster open a tinna evapareated milk, that meard yer cuppa tea go orange.

Households yewster hev milk jugs, sugar

bowls, and sugar tongs if yew wooz posh (we woont). Now teaparts are becummin obsleet, teabags git dunked in a mug. Tea mearkin wooz a rityool: leaves, strainer, time ter brew. Me and my nan allus read our leaves arter we'd drained our cups. I yewster like PG Tips, not fer the tea but fer tha monkeys. Wunna my unkel's wooz manager a Fine Fare and he give me a set a promotional monkey toys mearda foam rubber. I wooz over the moon cors I'd nevva haddem otherwise an' probbly hetta save up loadsa tokens or suffen. I kep 'em for years an' years, but the foam rubber crumbled away and my monkey family wooz no more.

Tha' wooz handy having an unkel manage a foodstore; when sugar wooz rationed in the ully seventies, we nevva run out. Yew wooz onla allowed one bag at a time and sumtimes the sharp dint hev any. My partner reckon that wooz his mum what caused the sugar shortage, cors she hed a cupboard full onut which she used ter meark jam. She bearked a lotta cearks anorl, that wooz normal, long afore Gret British Beark Orf. I meark buns or half a sponge ceark – I're onla gart one ceark tin so I meark one sponge layer, cut it in half an' put the two tergetha wi' jam. My nan tort me howter beark a ceark, thass a good jarb I listened that day cors I do like eating onem.

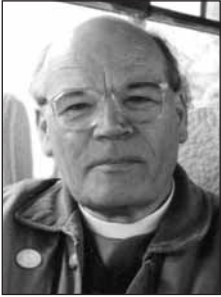
Our newsairgents wooz good cors they let us buy 2oz a sweets when we cournt afford a quarta. They woont spoozter, tha' wooz suffen ter do wi' prices and weights displayed. but kids dint care nuthun about that. We jist whattered our pineapple chunks or sweet peanuts. Yew could buy small bricksa vanilla icecream an' they would unwrap ut for yew and put it in a rectangala cone. That wooz a rare treat, as we dint have a freezer at hoom them dearz.

Oh well, um orf down the garden ter dew a bit. Orl the bulbs are early, our bluebell clumps tunned up in December though no flours yit. Dornt know what happened ter winter, praps that'll cum learter. Orla best, tergether.



# Ha you got a compooter, bor?

CANON PETER NICHOLSON



HA YOU got them there compooters up there in Norfolk yit? I spuz they're got as far as you b'now. My son gev me his old 'un so I hen't looked back since I got it. Silver sarfer, me!

One day a little white flag cam up and that say Oi can upgrade

ter Winders 10 if Oi want to. I dussen't do that in cearse I lorst everything and then Oi'd howl moi eyes out! Howsoever, one day I thought Oi'd hev a go so I clicked on the flag just ter see what would happen. That wuz at half arter eleven in the morning. Little did Oi know that it would a quarter ter three before I got moi cottage pie! Thass how long it took. Oi din't hatter do narthin – just set there and watch

*The Market Cross, Bungay.*



coarse thass ortermatic, you see. Well, bor, thass hully good that new website and Oi din't lose narthin from before. So do you try it.

Do you git all them there photos of the Norfolk Broads on yer compooter? They're hully good. All the old windmills and the wherries. There's Albion an all! I're got one on moi desktop ter remind me of the good old days. So ivery toime Oi tarn on my compooter I am back in Norfolk.

Then there's 'The Captain's Blog'. Ha you sin that, any on yer? There's a young man who's creazy about the Broads and he come up from London about four toimes a year and hire a boat and go orf all over the plearce. Beauty on it is you can go along with him all over the rivers and even down to Bungay! Once he hed one a them there 'lectric boats and that wuz so quiet that din't scare away the bards!

Ha you ever watched 'Train Cab Roides'? You can set longside the driver and go all over the world in them there trains. I're bin in the snow in Switzerland and across Canada and Australia just a-settin' hare in moi armchair. Thass wonderful if you're ninety loike me and can't git about! I're bin ter more plearces this year than ever before and thet hen't corst me a penny piece.

Moi late wife's sister live in North Wales; they don't seem ter hev compooters there yit. Least she hen't got one. So she ring me up and give me all the crossword clues she can't do like 'Who wrote a certain book' or 'Who starred in a certain film'. Wer, with that there Wickedpedia Oi can find her all the answers in half an hour! She can't git over that!

Now, if you're loike me and love music especially brass bands, you can go up ter Yorkshire on Whit Friday and listen to all the bands in that there competition they allus hev. Ter hear the Black Dyke Band playing 'Knight Templar' mearke yer spine tingle. No wonder they win so many prizes. Coarse, you can watch 'Trooping the Colour' all the year round if you loike. Oi do! How do the massed bands



do that there spin wheel? Playing a musical instrument, marching and watching yer dressing and covering must be quite a feat, but they do it. Spuz the ole sergeant-major mearke sure they git it roit. Backbone a the army, them!

You can git news from round the world and thet searve yew a buying a pearper, don't it? Oi still git moi 'I' newspearper iverly day, so Oi can do the codeword and the crossword and keep moi brain a-tickin' over.

Howsomever, Oi don't bother with the rest on it much as thass so depressing, en't it. Somebody say suffin and somebody knock it down immediatly. Thass how that go nowadays. 'News and Comment', they say. Oi don't moind the 'news'. Thass the 'comment' Oi don't loike. We can do without that, can't

we? Thass why I listen ter Radio 3. Just a minute a two on the half hour and thass all. Coarse, you can git all the news you want on the compooter, if you loike. But Oi doan't really wanter know if Japan ha bought umpteen war planes! Thass what thet say terday!

Well, I're sent all my Jacquie Lawson Christmas cards by compooter and good they are an all. About £7 a year and you can send as many as you loike. No postage. All animated and good fun. She do an Advent Calender an all (*an' thass hoolly good an' orl, that is! – Ed*).

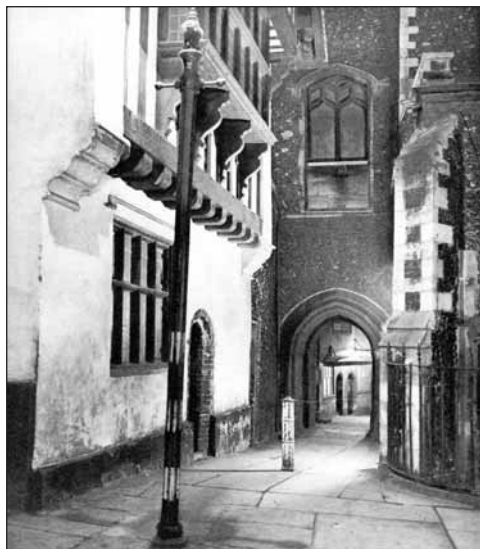
Well, Oi'm glad ter see you're got a Catfield gal as yer new chairman. She'll be good. I're known her since she wuz a bearby. Give har moi love, won't yer?



## Boy Colin's Norfolk quiz

### TEST YOUR LOCAL KNOWLEDGE

- 1 Who founded Norwich's Maddermarket Theatre?
- 2 Who opened it?
- 3 Which recent award-winning film was shot in and around Norwich?
- 4 What was Wighton Halt?
- 5 If you've been 'higging' what have you been doing?
- 6 Which team did Norwich City beat in the first round of the F.A. Cup in the 1959 campaign?
- 7 Which pub did Alan Breeze (Billy Cotton's singer) keep?
- 8 What did Harry Cox and Sam Larner have in common?
- 9 Where are the Carnegie Rooms?



*The ancient alley under St John Maddermarket.*

10 Where is the English Whisky Company?

**How did you do? Find out on page 25**



# Our own tongue

IDA FENN



GRANNER mearde some master good wine. Some o' all sorts – orange, t' put a little kick in tew ye, black curren fer colds an sore trutts o' the winter, danderlion fer yer blood i' the spring, an a little parsnup, jest fer a nice drink like.

All onnut, arter thart'd done warkin', wooz putt inter bourtles an stood up in the wine cupboard. Now, this here wine cupboard, thart wooz a quare little pleerce in the corner o' the frutt rume. Right up high thart wooz an orl.

Folks used t' seer thart wooz meant f' monner, not wine. But us not hevvin n' monner, well what wooz the use? 'Sides, Granner reckont a drop o' good wine, when ye felt like utt, wooz warth more'n all the monner. Not that she werrer orfen indulged, onler when sitch as the parson, or the packman, cam. Thart wooz known far an near, what Granner's wine wooz like. Thart woon't dew t' hev more'n a little totter glaass – not thart ye arver git the chance, as Graffar used ter seer. An' Uncle, he reckont, thart woon o' these times, he'd accidentler, fer the parpuss-like, knock tham siller little glaasses off o' the shalf, an breerk tham.

"That'll be a bad joub fer yow if yow dew," Granner seer, "'cause I shorn't buy n' more, than yow 'on't git n' wine attall."

Howsumaaver, there thart allust wooz, all shet up an locked in thart little high-up cupboard. When Granner wooz younger, an fairler nimble, she used ter git up on a chair, teerke out the key, from a-hind the tin on the mantle piece, an onlock thart funner little door, an hev a peerke inside.

"Woon, tew, tree o' orange," she'd whisper out loud, "yiss, thaas right."

Ye see, as Granner used ter tell me, "Where min are, yow naaver kin tell."

As time went on, an Granner daasent git up on t' thart there chair, she used t'seer, "Come yow here, my woman, let me lift yow up. Now, git out thart there key, an onlock thart there door. Git me a bourtle o' black curren, 'cause this is the deer the doctor is a gorn ter bring my white iles, an he's werrer parsh'll ter thart black curren."

Now, there cam a deer, when I got humm from scule, ter find Granner'd gone t' the Mothers' Meetin'. Graffar wooz right away ter ploigh somewhere, but Uncle, he wooz a harrer in the fild front o' the house.

"I'll go long o' Uncle," I seer ter mersaalf, "jest till Granner come humm." Thart wooz o' the summer time, an werrer hot.

"I'm suffen huller dry," Uncle seer. "Go indoors an see if there be n'tea left in the pot."

Well I waant t'hev a see, but there stood the teapot, all empter an clean, ridder fer tea. I looked in the beer cellar, onder the stairs, but there worn't nourthen there. I'll hetter teerke him some water, I thowt, an I fillt a bourtle at the pump.



## The Norfolk Magazine

Jan/Feb 1954

Published by the Norfolk Magazine, Queen Street, Norwich, and West Norfolk Newspapers, King's Lynn.

COVER:  
The old Market House, Wymondham, by Brian Ollington.

Now, tham old blue tits allust built in our pump, an the water ha'ter be strained ivvery time, ter git out the moss what fluted there.

"Woss thart all ye c'd find?" Uncle seer. "I aren't gorn ter drink thart. Look at all the muck in utt."

"Wuh," I seer, "if yow be dry thart'll go down all right."

But he hummed an haa-ed, so I no more t'dew but tipped up the bourtle out on the hiddland. Arter gorn anourther round o' tew, Uncle begun t' mobb agin. Than he tied up his hosses, an waant indoors jest ter see if so be I'd told him right. No, there worn't ner tea, ner yit ner beer, an the water wooz full o' muck.

"How 'bout a drop o' wine?" I seer. "If yow lift me up, I'll git utt for ye."

"No," Uncle seer, "thowld leerder'll huller gi' me what for."

"She 'on't know," I seer, "we kin fill utt up wer water."

Uncle he thowt fer a time, till his dry got the master onnum, an he lifted me up.

"What sort would ye like?" I seer, knowin' right well he'd seer orange, 'cause thart wooz the strongest. He had a good swill at utt, than I fillt the bourtle up wer water, an off we go. Uncle he harrered an sung, an we wore right happer.

Nexter deer, the tailor, he cam. Thart there nice, sorft speakin' man, what Granner wooz ser fond on. He'd browt Graffar's new sleeve wuskit.

"You'll have a drop of my orange wine, afore you go?" Granner seer.

The tailor, he hummed an haa-ed, reckonin' he'd got a new nag ter drive ter deer, woon what wooz werrer mettlesome, but Granner seer, "Jest a little totter drop," an I wooz lifted up, an out cam our bourtle.

## SPRING CLEARANCE

*Thass spring, less clean an' freshen this room*

*Wash down the windas, dispense wi' the gloom*

*We'll pearnt the walls an' buy noo chairs*

*We'll get noo carpet fer in here, an' the stairs*

*We'll have a good fye out, get ridda this truck*

*Fumigate, disinfect and shift orl the muck*

*Rally the troops, will yew help me? Yew must*

*If not, yew really ont see me fer dust*

*Minimise clutter, less clear the decks*

*Polish an' scrub, remove every speck*

*The house smell sa fresh that rarely must be spring*

*I know that is 'cos I carn't find a thing*

SHARON INGLE

Granner screwed up har eyes at utt, "there's a fow bits a floatin' in utt, but thaas the sugar," she seer, an she poured thart out. The tailor thanked har, an laafed, sayin if his nag runned away w'him, that'd be Granner's fault.

Now, Graffar, he cam in not long arter, an seein the bourtle, he hung out his tongue.

"Oh, ah!" Granner seer, but she poured him out some. Graffer teersted ut, an he seer, "so ye water ut down ridder fer me, did ye?"

"Wudd ye mean?" Granner seer, an I runned off. But thart night there wooz a rare ter dew. Granner, she mobbed, "I'll naaver be eerble ter look that tailor in the feerce," she seer. "What must he think o' me?"

## IT'S TIME TO RENEW YOUR MEMBERSHIP – DUE ON 1 APRIL

You'll find a renewal form in this *Mawkin*. Please complete and return it with your cheque for either £7 (single member), or £12 (family membership), made out to 'FOND'. If paying by Standing Order, please ensure it has been updated to the correct amount. Your prompt co-operation is greatly appreciated and saves FOND from sending out reminders. Thank you.



# Educatin' Yorkshur

HERB SYMONDS



I'RE SENT THIS acorse when I sent in my bit about my Norfolk honeysuckle I wer a talking to the editor about how t' spell Norfolk wads, as we both went to the Paston School at North Walsham.

I mensioned how the Singin' Poostman spelt wads in his songs and that I wor givin' a tork about him up hair. So he arsked me to write a report about the talk as I wuz advertising Norfolk in a forrin' territory. The Singin' Poostman also went to the Paston School.

I're bin retired sum fourteen year now an' I live in Harrogut in North Yorkshur but thas only acos my wark wer up hair in Leeds. All my family for gennerashuns hev been born an bred and lived in Norfolk an warked on the farm, an a lot o' my wife's as well were a born down there, so we dew try to git back as much as we can. Yew all know what I'm a sayin' when I'm down there. They dornt up hair and they allus pronounce my name wrong.

My charch has a group what meet of a Wensd'y night and we hev very interestin' speakers who take us all round the world an' tell us about all sorts o' things and teach us a lot of stuff we never new we didn't know afore. We arnt a told any squit at our meetin's.

But that dew git harder to find speakers to cum along (well those what don't want a payin'). One o' the members, he give a talk on the poet John Clare and a listening to him I thort 'What about Allan Smethurst, the Singin' Poostman?' So I told the secretary and he sear 'Thas good you c'n dew that'! I hev gi'n two talks about Norfolk afore. The fust wer about my childhood in Wickmere and then one on the history of my little village school. I hed to give the last one twice corse some people couldn't

git thar and really wanted to hear it. O' corse some unkind people sear I hed to give that twice corse no one understood me the fust time.

Well I spent a lotta time a gettin' my tork together. I thowt that I ortta use subtitles so they understood what he's a singun' about. I wort sure how they'd teark to larnin' that Allan Smethurst were born in Lancashur. The Wars o' the Roses hent been over that long.

Anyhow I got a video about him from that there East Anglian Film Archives an' I bort some more o' them CD's from Anglian Music o' him a singing his songs. That tork seem to go down a treat. I think that were acors with the video and orl the recordin's I played I dint hetter say too much m'self.

O'cors I hetter explain sum of the words used, like mawther. My mother told me that when she cum up to fourteen, in 1914, she left Wickmere scool to help her mother run the little sub-poostorffice that wor held in our front room. Mother hatter go up to Aylsham to git har fust pair o' glasses as she couldn't see tew well. She cranked up thar on her ol' bike and got them glasses and then she cranked orl the way back to Wickmere a wearin' on 'em. She told me she felt very conspikuos in them thare glasses.

When she got back t' Wickmere she met Muriel who went t' school along o' har. Muriel wor to becum famous locally when she grew up acorse she allus spoke proper Norfolk. She see my mother a cummun an' she hollered out 'My hat Mawther! Dornt yew look a sight in spetakuls!' My mother sare that didn't dew nouthin' to help her morals.

Well a few days arter that tork, one of the people thare cum up and asked me if I'd give it t' another group that she went to. Others they keep a comin' up to me and a sayin': "Hev yew got a loight, Boy!" and "Moind Yer Hid!" So that look as though I'm a goin' to hetter keep on a spreadin' the wad up hair!





# Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs

2016 FOND PANTOMIME



## SNOW WHITE AND THE SEVEN DWARFS – THE PLAYERS –

*Clockwise, from left:*

Narrator/Mirror	<i>Colin Burleigh</i>
King	<i>Ted Peachment</i>
Prince	<i>Angela Collins</i>
Snow White	<i>Diana Rackham</i>
Huntsman	<i>Norman Hart</i>
Snow White's Mother	<i>Jean Eaglen</i>
Stepmother	<i>Monica Rackham</i>
Dwarf Billy	<i>David Rackham</i>
Dwarf Wenn	<i>Himself</i>
Dwarf Ware	<i>Himself</i>
Dwarf Mawkin	<i>Tina Chamberlain</i>
Dwarf Watt	<i>Himself</i>
Dwarf Hugh	<i>Himself</i>
Dwarf Trosher	<i>Alan Smith</i>

ON SUNDAY 10 January 2016, the Friends of Norfolk Dialect (FOND) presented their pantomime **Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs** at the Village Hall, East Tuddenham.

Almost at the last moment it had become necessary for a change of venue to that originally advertised. This was due to emergency building works taking place at Lincoln Hall, Hingham, as structural damage had been noticed, and we had been told the works were unlikely to be finished in time for the panto. However, East Tuddenham proved to be a most successful venue, providing comfortable seating for the audience of almost 180 people, for what proved to be one of FOND's most successful pantomimes and greatly enjoyed by all those present.



The afternoon began with the presentation of prizes to the winners of the **Trosler Short Story competition**, followed by the reading of the three prize-winning entries. This was done in reverse order, with Ann Reeve reading Peter Pipe's story, 'Our Armistice', in third place as, living in America, Peter was unable to attend.

Ann English, runner up, was next and after Diana Rackham, FOND chairman, had presented her with the second prize – a framed certificate and a cheque for £50 – Ann entertained us by reading her story 'We are all brothers under the skin'.

Finally, Diana presented Rod Rumsby with the first prize of £100, together with his certificate, for 'Tale from the churchyard'.

Diana then read Rod Rumsby's story for him.

Next on stage was Paddy Seligman, who told the audience about her charity, the 'We Care Appeal', and about the numerous unpaid carers in Norfolk. She thanked FOND for permitting her to bring the 'We Care' buckets, for which any donations would be greatly appreciated.

Then followed refreshments, during which Norman Hart announced the prize-winning raffle ticket numbers and, when all the audience were seated, the highlight of the afternoon began with musical accompaniment provided throughout by David Frost.

As is tradition with FOND, the pantomime script – wittily composed by Monica and Diana





Rackham – was handed out shortly before the performance, which amounted to much ad-libbing adding to the mirth and entertainment! Appropriately, one of the mirror scenes was taken from the late-Tony Clarke’s original panto of the same name.

Following the performance, Diana Rackham, FOND chairman, said: “Thank you for all the hard work from everyone involved in putting on another successful panto. It was great to see everyone enjoying themselves and celebrating the Norfolk dialect.”

Ted Peachment, former chairman, suitably responded by thanking Diana and Monica, her mother, for all they’d done in making their first joint panto such a great success!

Later, Paddy Seligman sent an email to say: “Thank you all for yet another splendid pantomime this afternoon. They truly do get better and better every year. Keep up the good work and my congratulations to you all. I thought everyone performed magnificently – *even* the ‘four’ dwarfs!

“Thank you for once again allowing me to bring my buckets [*You Care Appeal*]. They have yielded £137.25 – a princely sum and testament to the generosity of the gathering.

“With best wishes to you all for a happy new year. It was great seeing so many familiar faces, although hard to countenance that a year has gone by since the last panto.”

**EDITOR**



# A piggy tearle

THE GAL JILLY



HORRY'S FATHER kept pigs, as he wuz allus interested in a-rearin' on 'em. One day his father asked the boy to feed the ole boar pig when he came outa school, as he wuz a-gorn out. Well, the boy got in there but that ole boar tarned on him

a-frorthin' at the mouth an' a-tryin' to bite him. So, Horry shinned up the manger into the hay-rack an' there he wuz, stuck up onnit for two an' a half hours until his dad come home an' rescued him.

Years learter, 1954 that wuz, Horry come home from Korea, streart from the Army arter he'd bin a-doin' his National Sarvice, and went back to the farm. His stay in the Army woon't a happy one, that woon't! Stuck in the Beds & Herts Horry wuz, the only one from a hundred intake in Norwich.

**Right:**

*Boar Jimma awaits another treat from Gal Jilly and her grandson Michael.*

**Facing page:**

*Gal Jilly's son, Hughie, aged three, with a sow on the field in 1964.*

Trains din't run right an' he coon't git home for three months, so he allus got stuck on guard duty weekends – an' din't they tearke the Mick outa his Norfolk accent! If he hen't bin a good goal-keeper an' got in the Army team, I think they might have had a bit of revolt! Any rate, back to the pigs.

A large white boar called 'Jimma' wuz the start, an' although he wuz huge he wuz a good ole boy. My grandson, Michael, useter come out wi' me an' give Jimma a bun, what he loved. As you can see, that amused Michael so that when he grew a bit bigger the contents of my cearke tin would go over the pigsty wall pretty orfen!

The sows wuz Welsh breed, quiet an' no trouble – except for one. There's allus one, en't there? She wuz a vicious ole devil an' would set about anyone what went inta har sty.

We hatta be hoolly careful of har, we did.

One of the feed reps came round one day, who thought he wuz a big man an' say: "Never sin a pig yit wot I coon't handle!"







We told him streart: “You keep outa there!” But in he went, all brave an’ cocky. Bor, that woon’t many seconds afore he shot outa agin, white as a sheet an’ a-shearkin’. That ole gal had flew at his throat, a-cuttin’ his necktie orf right agin the knot, clean as a whistle! Another inch an’ she woulda hed his throat cut open. We’d never sin anything like it, afore or arter!

My brother lived wi’ us arter Mother died. He wuz sittin’ there a-hevin his breakfast one morning when he hallered: “Come you an’ hev a look here!”

One of the ole sows had got out an’ had wandered in through the back door an’ inta the kitchen, an’ wuz weartin’ for a tit bit at the tearble. She wuz a gret ole gal, wi’ har head and shoulders over the tearble, an’ we hatta tempt har out wi’ a bit of bread an’ butter to git har back inta har sty. En’t very orfen a pig come in for breakfast, but I wuz jist glad she din’t do a ‘whoopsie’ on the carpet!

We had a nice Welsh gilt in a farrowin’ crate weartin’ to pig, when she went a bit berserk an’ bruk the farrowin’ lamp an’ set the straw alight an’ the sty afire. We got har out but she wuz badly burned an’ hed to be put down.

We useter move the sows inta the ole cow house to pig ’em down. I went in there one morning an’ there wuz two blokes in there, both on ’em Lundeners they wuz. They reckon they had come down for spuds an’ eggs, but they wuz interested in what went on.

One say to his mate: “They must mearke a fortune outa them pigs. I know for a fact thass the fourth lot thass hed this month!” Cor, if ony, I thought.

Years passed and pig-keepin’ got into the big boys’ hands. These firms bring the store pigs in their hundreds onto the farms. They supply the grub an’ the vets’ fees, an’ the farmers find the straw. Sometimes the pigs are on slats wi’ no straw; an’ the slurry pits – what a stink! They call it progress, but you don’t hatter like it, do you? But, wi’ our growin’

population, it had to come or we woon’t hev enough sausages to go round, would we?

Well, thass it for now.

### THE OLE MAWKIN

*A farmer’s ole mawkin at Watton,  
wuz stitched tergether with cotton;  
he spent his days,  
in filds o’ maize –  
’til the rearn mearde his cotton go rotten.*

*Now the farmer he wuz hully raw,  
as t’wot in his filds he saw;  
no soine on his mawkin,  
ony baads squeakin an’ squarkin –  
a’peckin’ his maize to the core.*

*Well, that farmer he hunted around,  
’til that ole mawkin wuz found;  
orl in pieces he lay,  
“Cum on, ole paartner,” he say –  
as tergether with binder twine that mawkin  
he bound.*

*Once again, that ole mawkin did stand,  
a’lookin’ so proud and so grand;  
not a baad wuz in soite,  
he’s a’warkin’ orl roight –  
thanks to binder twine an’ the farmer’s  
firm hand!*

LIL LANDIMORE



# Tale from the churchyard

ROD RUMSBY



COR THET WARE suffin hot, I ran tha owld dwile corrst my hed, but thet ware orlreddy sookin wet an dint dew no good.

I lent owld Granfer's scythe agin a gearvstun, an looked back at wot I'd dun, goo ter hell iffen thet warnt a rite owld site, bits of grass stickin up orl oova, an grate owld chips owta orl thar greavestuns.

Well thas my own fawlt, shoonta sed at tha Chuch meetin thet yew dint wont a mower tew git the Chuchyard orl tricolearted up, yew shud dew wots allus bin dun an cut it with a scythe. Cos tha owld Wicker, he gi me a luk an sed, "What a good idea, Sid, best you get stuck in then, my good man."

Orl I cud think on just now was I cud dew wi a pint o suffin strong an cold, wen orl of a suddin I herd sumwun say, "Thas warm wuk ole partna."

*Diana Rackham reading Rod Rumsby's story 'Tale from the churchyard'.*



I tunned rownd and thare stud this owld boy, orl dressed in his Sunder best, black sewt, gitten a bit green wi earge, an a gret owld cap ornnis hed. No collar on his shut, but he looked orl rite ter me, sprised I dint recnise him, cos thar int menny peepal live in tha willage tha dearz, an I thort I new 'em orl.

I'd clord howld o tha scythe by now an wus reddy ter give it anutha goo, wen he held owt his hand and say ter me he say, "Dew yew want a hand wi hare, chap?"

"Why yis," I say, "yew carnt dew no wuss, wos yore nearm by tha way?"

"Yew can corl me Billy," he say, "Billy Davis."

He tuk tha scythe an run his thumb oova tha edge an shook his hed, an nodded tew tha rub inna my pocket. I gi it tew him an I cud see he new wot he was a dewin, cos he jist ran tha rub oova tha owld bleard an that wholly sang. He gi it tha thumb test agin an, arta settin tha handles, he set orf acorse tha grownd wot I hent dun yit.

I sware he nivva pawsed an thet owld bleard went streart threw tha stuns along tha way, an he nivva left a bleard o grass standin. In harf an hour he'd dun wot tuk me harf tha morning. I sorta cum ahind wi my hook lookin ter see iffen he'd missed enny, but he hent. He kep o gooin till thar was oonly a little owld bit in tha corna, an he stood an lent on the scythe till I cum up ter him. He gi me the scythe an wen I looked at him he hent even bruk inta a swet.

He shew me tha bit he hent dun an sed, "Dew yew teark care in thet corna, owld partner," he say, "thas gotta lot my people in there."

I tunned an looked fer grave stuns, cos I coont member thare beein menny alonga thet bit. Howsumeva, I tunned back ter thank him fer orl his gud wuk, an he hed gorn. I corled owt "Billy", but he wunt no-ware ter be sin. Thas a rummin, I thort, how cum he shot orf wi owt sayin cheero.

I cort howld o tha scythe and got stuck inter the little owld bit he'd left. I coont meark owt wot heed dun tew tha owld scythe, but I coont dew a thing wrong an thet jist flew threw tha bit wot wus left.

Tha owld sun ware still a beatin down, but thet wus reel cowld in that corna, an wen I'd dun thet little bit an hed a look at a cuppla hedstuns thet hed bin leard flat in tha grass, blarst me thet wholly tunned reel cowld wen I red wun stun, thet sed:

Here Lies  
William (Billy) Davis  
Died 8th February 1938  
Aged 78  
Gone but not forgotten

Thas sarten I sharnt fergit yew Billy, owld partna, thas fer shure.



## We are all brothers under the skin ANN ENGLISH



MOLLY WAS RELAXING after dinner by looking at the news on T.V. while Tom grumbled about Norwich City as he read the *Pink Un*.

"I reckon thas terrible the way them poor refugees and immigrants hev t' trek all them miles wi' hardly any food and water. Look at them poor little ow toddlers bein' dragged along. They're tired out."

"There's one on 'em on the farm now," Tom informed her. "He're took over my plearce. Wadda he know bout calibreatin' the seed drill in the new tractor. Don't spose he's ever sin the sort of machinery we got."

"Boss ask me if I'd like to stay on a week or two and show 'im the ropes. I told him that as they hed retired me I wunt a goin back to show the ropes to some furriner."

Molly looked thoughtful.

"I thought they might give the job to our Jason," she mused.

"Our Jason?" bellowed Tom, slapping the *Pink Un* down on the table and waking up Suzie the dog, who had been snoozing under his chair. "That idle gret lummo. He never held a job, nor a gal friend, for more an three months at a time. If there wus a spit of rearn he'd hatta stay inside dew that ruined his hair."

"He int that bad," commented his doting mother.

"No, he's wus!" was Tom's final judgement.

"I think I'll go for a stroll and hev a look at wot they're up to on Fifteen Acres."

He was soon back again.

"There's a little lad sittun on the wall a blahrin'. Don't know who he is. Don't look like any of the varmints what live up the lane."

Sure enough there was a little boy sitting outside the next cottage along the lane sobbing his heart out. Suzie nuzzled him. She did not like to see anyone upset. The boy flung his arms round her as she licked away his tears.

"Teddy!" he shouted and then chatted to the dog in a language that Molly did not understand.

"Well, my little man, you can't sit out here. You'll hatta cum in with me until your dad comes to find you." Molly took him by the hand and pulled him up. "Thas better. We'll go and hev a bit of apple cake and a glass of my special ginger beer."

They had just got settled at the table, with the boy tucking into the apple cake, when Tom cum back.

"That furrin bloke just went cuttin' up the lane on his bike a hollerin' – I reckon he's looking for that boy."

"Well, go an tell him he's here."

Tom did as instructed.

"Good afternoon," said the man in perfect English. "I am Hussein and this is my son,



Ann English reading her story 'We are all brothers under the skin'.

Samir. I am so sorry but the taxi that brought him from school was a half an hour early."

Samir pulled at his father's jacket and pointed to Suzie. "Teddy," he insisted.

"Why does he think the dog is Teddy?" asked Molly.

"Samir remembers our dog Teddy. He played with him all the time and when we had to leave Teddy came with us."

"Why did you have to leave?" Molly wanted to know.

"Our house was bombed and, when we went back to try to rescue passports and photographs, the soldiers started shooting at us so we just ran as fast as we could."

"What happened to Teddy? Was he shot?"

"No, he followed us for days but we had no food for him and he got very tired. Then one morning we just could not find him. We called and called but he was gone. I think Samir cried all that day. Teddy was his best friend."

Molly looked across at Tom. He was dabbing his eyes with his hankerchief.

"Are you piping your eye, Tom Barker?"

"Just got a bit of that ow straw dust in it."

"I wonder if you can please give me some advise? Is there a taxi in the village? I have to fetch my wife from the hospital."

"Fraid not," said Tom. "I tell you what. I'll give you a lift."

Molly covered up her surprise at this show of generosity by asking Hussein what was wrong with his wife.

"She was giving most of the food that we had to Samir so, by the time we actually reached England, she was so weak and tired that she was taken to the hospital. Now she is much better."

When the car arrived, Samir was the first to rush in to give Molly a hug. Hussein introduced his wife, Amira, a slim pretty girl wearing a blue *habib*. "Thank you for looking after Samir," she said.

"Nonsense, he's a good little soul," Molly replied.

"What work did you do at home?" Molly asked Hussein.

"Do stop asking so many questions woman!" Tom ordered.

"No, it is quite right that you should know about us furriners," said Hussein with a grin. "Oh yes, we *know* what you call us."

It was Tom's turn to look sheepish.

"We are foreigners with different languages and customs, but, deep down, what matters to us is our family and being able to work to earn money to keep them. When I was at home I was a University lecturer in Agriculture, and Amira was a curator in our local museum. We both learned to speak English because we had lots of tourists from all over the world. Now, sadly, that is all gone and our beautiful country is in ruins."

Amira added, "When we get things sorted we will buy a little car and visit some of the places in England that we would really like to see."

"Till then," put in Tom, "dew you ever need a lift I kin usually fit yew in as, apart from th'allotment, I hin't got much else ter dew now I'm retired."

Hussein added, still smiling, "If you have



any time to spare you could come over to the farm and 'show me the ropes'."

"Right yew are, my ow bewty, I'll see yew termorra mornin, seven o'clock sharp." Tom's smile was almost as wide as Hussein's.

"Remember", said Molly, "anything you need, just let me know, and I'll baby sit for Samir any time."

Amira smiled and whispered in Molly's ear. Molly smiled as well and gave her a hug.

"What was she a whisperin' to you about?" asked Tom.

"You'll just hev ter wait an see!" replied Molly.



## Our armistice

PETER PIPE



THAT WUZ DURIN' the War, when me and my hubby wuz listenin t' the wireless and a farmer was sayin' as how yew can git more eggs from yor hins if you make the days longer by keepin' a light on.

George say, "We c'd dew that. I'll put a bulb in the hinhouse 'n' a wire from the kitchen and we c'd switch it on in the evenin'."

So he did.

Couple days later, my neighbour, Bessie, come bangin' on the door. She was woolly riled.

"That light in the hinhouse," she say, "them Germans'll see that and drop a bomb on us.

"Yu'll hatta stop that," she say.

"Woy?" I say. "We arst the warden 'n' he looked 'n' said it wuz orright."

I shut the door on her.

A week later, back she come. Same ow' story.

I say, "It worked. We got four extra eggs last week."

And she say, "Two can play at this game."

Next evenin' she left her winder open with the wireless turned up loud – Henry Hall and all that kinder stuff. Drove us barmy.

Arter a couple o' days, there she was knockin' on the door again.

"And how do yer like my entertainment?" she say.

"I don't," I say. "I can do without that."

And I wracked my brain what to do next. We're bin friends and good neighbours for a



Ann Reeve reading Peter Pipe's story 'Our armistice'.

lotta years. And all of a sudden it come to me.

"Bessie," I say. "We got four more eggs this week. How about if I give you half the extra eggs and you shut off that row on the wireless?"

"All right," she say. "Tha's a deal."

And tha's how we got 'Peace in Our Time'!

**Don't forget – the 2016 Trosher Competition will be launched at the next 'dew' in Cromer, on Sunday 8 May – Editor.**



# Arthur Ransome and the Norfolk dialect

PETER TRUDGILL, PRESIDENT OF FOND



THE *Boy John Letters* represent a body of Norfolk dialect work, as I've written before, "of not a little genius". The letters were printed in the *EDP* between 1946 and 1958, and later published in a booklet entitled *The Boy John*.

The writer was Sidney Grapes (born 1888), who had a small business in Potter Heigham, where he lived nearly all of his life. He sent his letters to the paper when he felt like it, and always signed them "The Boy John". The letters were little masterpieces which were supposedly reports of events in the Boy John's village; and Grapes was, by common consent, a superb writer of the dialect.

Sadly, this opinion isn't shared by Graeme Davis, who does not think that Grapes was a superb writer of the dialect. Extraordinarily, Davis asserts that the *Boy John Letters* are "not an accurate reflection of the dialect of that time or any time", though he does magnanimously concede that "the dialect can be glimpsed" in the *Letters*. He would rather give the accolade for writing our dialect to the novelist Arthur Ransome (born 1884), who grew up in Yorkshire and went to a Public School.

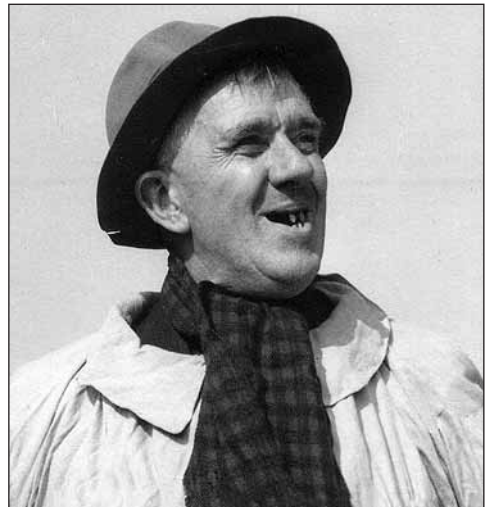
Davis published a paper entitled 'Arthur Ransome and the dialect of Norfolk' in the *Buckingham Journal of Language and Linguistics*. Davis works at the private University of Buckingham, and is himself editor of the journal in question, which is published from his university. It's not a journal I normally read – I hadn't even heard of it, and neither had any of my linguistics colleagues – but I was alerted to the article by the Education Editor of *The Times*, Greg Hurst. He contacted me, through FOND, because he wanted my

views on Davis's paper, which I was then able to find on the internet.

From his article I learnt something about Ransome, the famous author of children's novels like *Swallows and Amazons*, that I didn't know: Ransome had started a novel, set partly in Norfolk and with Norfolk characters, which he never completed. The early chapters were discovered after Ransome's death by Hugh Brogan, Ransome's biographer. Brogan called it *Coots in the North* – it was a follow-up to the famous *Coot Club*, which is set in the Norfolk Broads. Brogan edited the chapters and in 1988 published them in a book called *Coots in the North and Other Stories*. The tale starts on the Norfolk Broads and then moves to the Lake District.

Davis has done everyone interested in our dialect a service in his paper by reproducing eight pages of dialogue as spoken by the Norfolk characters in the novel. From these I learnt a couple of Norfolk words that I hadn't heard of before. *Bonker* refers to anything large – something I confirmed by checking the

*The Boy John.*





*Sidney Grapes and his wife, Ella, outside his Service Station at Potter Heigham.*

*English Dialect Dictionary* (published in 1898), which says that the word is East Anglian, it is also spelt *bonka*, and it means ‘anything very large; a big, strapping person, frequently applied to young girls’. I also learnt that *buttle* meant a bittern. This appears in the *EDD* spelt *buttal*; the dictionary says that it was found in Cheshire, Sussex, and East Anglia. I did feel obliged to check, however, because to anyone who knows the Norfolk dialect it’s clear from the dialogues that Ransome wasn’t actually very good at all at representing Norfolk speech in writing.

When Hurst wrote the story up in *The Times* on 4 January 2016 he stated that: “A linguistic expert [Davis] believes that a *Swallows and Amazons* adventure that Ransome abandoned contains the longest credible example of dialogue in Norfolk dialect from the last generation to speak it. ‘They are quite a special record of the Norfolk dialect,’ Dr Davis said.”

Davis states that Ransome has provided us with an “extensive and reliable source for 1930s Norfolk, perhaps the best single source now available”. That’s an extremely strong claim, and one Davis gives absolutely no

evidence for. It’s not usual in academic linguistics circles to treat novelists as reliable sources for linguistic data: they are usually content with a bit of local colour, and have no interest in achieving accuracy. Ransome is no exception.

I told Greg Hurst this when he emailed me, and said that he could quote me as saying I saw no reason to change the view which I had formed when I read *Coot Club* in the 1950s at the age of about 10, which was that Ransome’s representation of our dialect is poor, especially when it comes to grammar. (People who agree with me about this include Ted Peachment, Keith Skipper, and Ashley Gray.)

Davis’s only argument in favour of Ransome being “best” is that everyone else who has written in the Norfolk dialect is unreliable, including Sidney Grapes! He reckons Grapes used his writings for comic effect (which is true), and they are therefore not reliable (which isn’t). Those brilliant Norfolk speakers and singers the Kipper Family are also “not reliable” for the same reason! Why can humorous writing and performance not provide an accurate reflection of the dialect? Davis provides no evidence or argumentation in favour of his view.

I then had the honour of being reprimanded in one of *The Times*’ leaders on 4 January, which argued that Ransome was entitled to write down what he heard as he wished. Well, yes, of course he was, but that doesn’t mean that what he wrote down was accurate!

The leader-writer continued: “the professor [me] appears to be overlooking two factors in Ransome’s favour. He got to the subject decades before anyone who is immersed in it today. And it is surely the privilege of anyone who bothers to write down what is otherwise only spoken to decide how to transliterate [*sic*] it.”

The first point is not relevant: Norfolk people had been studying and recording the their dialect for many decades before Ransome was even born, notably the Rev. Forby (*b.* 1759) in his posthumous 1830 publication *The Vocabulary of East Anglia*.

The second point is also not relevant. Of course Ransome could decide how to write down what he heard. The only problem is that in very many cases there's no way he could have heard what he wrote down! Here are just a few of the many examples:

*Geewhillikins!*: this is not an exclamation ever used in Norfolk; the *Oxford English Dictionary* says it's American.

*He don't know what that be*: the grammar here isn't East Anglian but from the West Country, where some dialects have *I be, you be, he be* etc. We don't. What we do have – and this is probably what Ransome heard and misanalysed – are special presentative verb forms with *be* such as *Here I be!*; *Where's Bill – ah, there he be*".

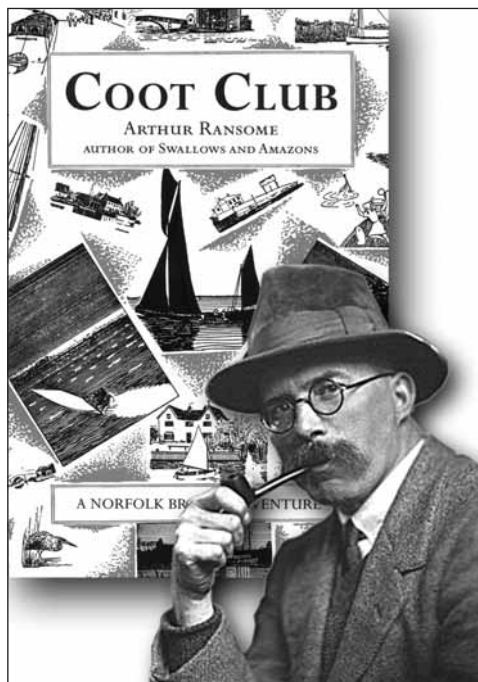
*Shurrup*: you hear this in parts of the north of England, not Norfolk.

*Whiles he come back*: "whiles" isn't a Norfolk dialect form. The *EDD* indicates that it is Scots.

*Ain't*: this is the negative present tense of the verb *to be* and the verb *to have* in very many parts of the English-speaking world – but not in Norfolk. We do not say *He ain't comin* or *I aint got none*. When I carried out my research into the dialect of Norwich in 1968, the almost universally used form was *in't*, while speakers from rural areas also use forms like or *en't* or *hen't*.

*It don't matter*: this is not Norfolk dialect either. We would say *that doon't matters*; and even local people whose speech isn't very dialectal say *that* rather than *it*. You would think that an acute observer of the dialect would have noticed that – it's hardly a matter of "transliteration".

Ransome, Davis says, has provided "an example of the Norfolk dialect as really spoken in the 1930s... an honest reflection of the dialect as actually spoken". This is just plain wrong. Ransome was a remarkable man, and he loved Norfolk. We appreciate that. And he wrote novels which many of us have enjoyed enormously. But that doesn't make him an *expert* on our dialect. Sidney Grapes, on the other hand, was a native speaker and did know



Arthur Ransome, author of 'Swallows and Amazons', and 'Coot Club' (available online at [Amazon.co.uk](http://Amazon.co.uk))

*exactly* what Norfolk people say and don't say. When I read *The Boy John*, I can hear my grandparents speaking. When I read Ransome, I most definitely can't – I hear West Country, Yorkshire, Cockney, with a few Norfolk things thrown in now and then.

It's clear to any Norfolk speaker that Davis's lack of knowledge of the Norfolk dialect is quite extensive – which of course is why he is prepared to accept Ransome as an authority. Look at some of the things Davis writes:

"Characteristic of Norfolk is the use of an animate pronoun for inanimate objects: as *we got him* (we have the rope), *wicked he were* (the rope was stiff) and *you take him* (you take the box)."

Here Ransome is quite wrong – and Davis is quite wrong in naively accepting that it's Norfolk. In fact, it's West Country.

The "opposite change is found, with an inanimate pronoun being used for an animate,



as *the bloke what bung the brick* (the man who threw the brick).”

This is the wrong analysis: the fact is that *what* is the all-purpose relative pronoun in our dialect, used in all circumstances.

“Norfolk displays the use of double negatives as intensifiers, rather than the cancelling out that occurs in Standard English, as *that’s not the lot neither, he won’t never.*”

It’s true that Norfolk has this grammatical construction, but there’s nothing intensifying about it – it’s just the normal pattern. And it’s utterly naïve to suppose there’s anything especially Norfolk about it: ALL English dialects all over the world have it, apart from Standard English!

“Ransome offers some unusual conditional constructions:

*‘You ought to have called a Coot Club meeting before we do a thing like this. Had, we’d be talking yet.*

*‘May find something there. Not, there’ll be someone in trouble at Acle Bridge.’*

“The result is a concise and effective way of expressing a conditional and a good example of Ransome’s observation of Norfolk dialect.”

No it isn’t! It’s a good example of how Ransome hears a Norfolk construction and misanalyses it – and of how Davis ingenuously accepts what he says. What Ransome heard were usages like *‘you’d better go to bed now, do you’ll be tired in the mornen’*. But only *do* is used in this way – and for some speakers also *don’t*. The sentences with *not* and *had* are quite wrong.

Davis also blithely tells us that because of Ransome’s dialogues, we know that in Norfolk *weeding* is pronounced ‘weedin’ – he says the g-sound is “changed”: if one of my students had written that, I would have failed them because, as anyone who knows anything about linguistics will tell you immediately (and you will agree when you think about it), there was never a g-sound there in the first place. And Davis really needn’t have bothered to mention this – speakers do this all over the English-speaking world.

Even worse is the argument that Norfolk

omits the ‘t’ in *kep’ watch*. Well of course we do – so do all other English speakers everywhere, including Davis, unless they are speaking very slowly and carefully!

And Davis also makes the startling discovery from Ransome’s writing that in Norfolk we sometimes say *’em* rather than *them!* Again, everybody all over the world does this, as in *‘I’ll get ’m for you’*.

Personally, I don’t mind too much that Ransome got things wrong; and it doesn’t detract too much from the pleasure of reading his books. What I do object to is an academic publishing a paper claiming that Ransome is an expert on our dialect – something he never claimed to be – and then *The Times* newspaper defending him when Norfolk people say he is wrong!

## WORDSEARCH SOLUTION

N	B	E	R	E	M	R	E	T	T	U	B	C	E	E	
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## BOY COLIN’S QUIZ ANSWERS

- 1 Nugent Monck; 2 W.B. Yeats;
- 3 Forty-five Years; 4 A request stop railway station; 5 Bargaining; 6 Ilford;
- 7 Flixton Buck; 8 They were both Norfolk folk singers; 9 Thetford; 10 Roudham.



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# Friends of Norfolk Dialect

## MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION FORM

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Please send completed form (*photocopies accepted*) – together with a cheque made payable to ‘FOND’ – to **Diana Rackham, 41 Neville Road, Sutton NR12 9RP** *Tel:* 01692 584809.

## 2015 TROSHER SHORT STORY PRIZE WINNERS

*Diana Rackham, FOND chairman, presenting a framed certificate and a cheque for £100 to Rod Rumsby for winning the first prize in the 2015 Trosher Short Story competition with his entry: 'Tale from the churchyard'.*



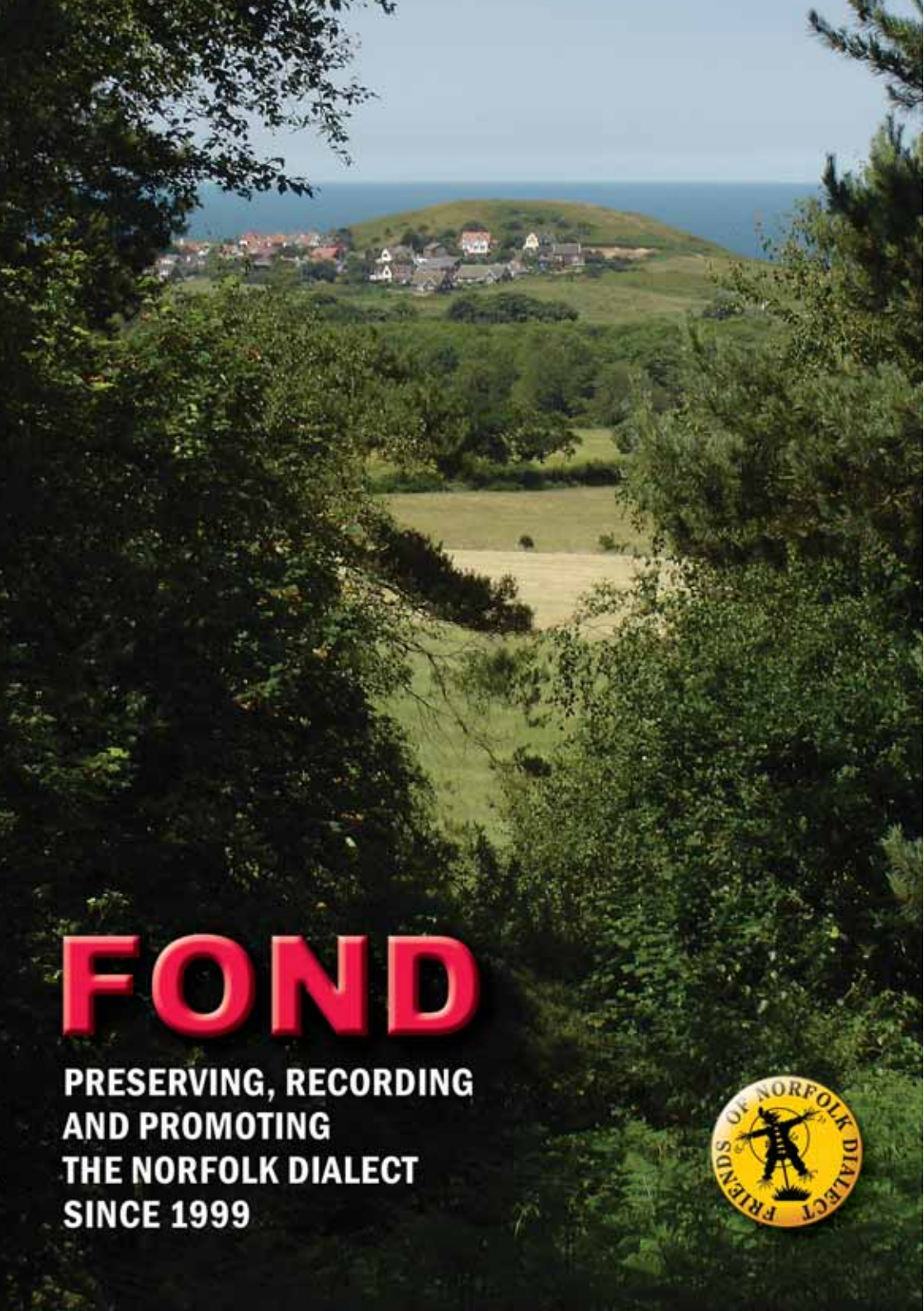
*As runner-up, Ann English received a framed certificate from Diana, as well as a cheque for £50, for her story: 'We are all brothers under the skin'.*

*Later, Ann told us she was donating her prize money to the Syrian Appeal.*

*Peter Pipe, who won third prize in the Trosher Short Story competition for his story 'Our armistice' was unable to receive his prize in person, as he lives in the USA. His certificate was posted to him.*







# FOND

**PRESERVING, RECORDING  
AND PROMOTING  
THE NORFOLK DIALECT  
SINCE 1999**

