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1st. AUGUST

Fever-pitch Blyth will go flat-out for British glory

Words...ROB FAWCETT...Pictures...RAY DUNN

By PETER WARD

IF enthusiasm has anything to do with it, then Blyth are already home and dry in their international heat in the Jeux Sans Frontieres contest at Bristol next Wednesday.

The town's team of 12 men and eight women will compete against teams from Germany, France, Switzerland, Italy, Belgium and Holland.

Sunderland footballers hoisted the North-East's flag in no uncertain manner when they won the Cup Final, and now Blyth are in a position to carry on the good work.

And what is more, the North-East is probably in a unique position of having two of its towns taking part in the international contest.

Roar

It was a throw of a dart which decided who should go through when Blyth met Ashington in the rain sodden spectacle a few months ago. Blyth lost.

Both teams were level on game points with ten apiece. The huge crowd held its breath as Blyth trainer Albert Grant threw a single dart for victory in the play off.

"Six" roared the spectators. Then it was the turn of Ashington's Alan Mole.

Not a sound apart from the beating rain. Alan stepped to the throwing mark. Poised, took aim.

"Double 11" the voice came over the relay system. Then all hell broke loose. Ashington supporters jumped for joy, hugged each other.

But for Blyth it was not the end of the road. Far from it. As highest losers they too qualified.

And as soon as everyone had regained their breath, then plans began to form for Bristol.

And Blyth has seized this golden opportunity to put the town and the

North-East in the frontline for obtaining the maximum amount of publicity which this international competition offers.

The red and white goose which paraded itself on the hallowed turf at Wembley and which had its feathers bedraggled in the rain "on the night" was refurbished, done and dusted, and there is now no finer mascot ready for Bristol.

Shake

Can the goose lay another golden egg? "Yes," shout thousands of voices in Blyth.

Enthusiasm is at fever pitch. It is not only Blyth going to the South-West of this country but it is Blyth being seen by "ambassadors" of the continental countries.

If the Blyth organisers have their way, people in Bristol and elsewhere will know all about Blyth and the North-East.

It is not just a case of sending a team there with little else. The attendant razzmatazz will shake our cousins whom until now may have never heard of Blyth.

The team leave for Bristol on Sunday, July 29, in a gaily decorated coach, arriving back at Newcastle Airport about 8.30 p.m. on August 2.

And the send-off from Blyth should be something for it is anticipated that the townsfolk will give them a real Georgie "haway the lads and lassies."

Of course, the Mayor of Blyth, Coun. Jack Donohoe, and Corporation officials will be there as the coach leaves to provide a civic God-speed.

But the vanguard will have been doing their stuff in Bristol days before with, it is hoped, window dis-

plays in prominent stores in Bristol of North-East wares and products.

Albert Grant, a former professional spring champion, has trained the Blyth team assisted by Pam Brown, a PE teacher at Blyth Grammar School.

Should, by some mischance, someone drop out, they will fill the gap in the team.

What form the games will take is a closely guarded secret. They are not divulged until the day.

Then all teams have an opportunity to go through them on the morning and afternoon. And this is where the highly skilled "snoopers" have a field day.

They try to find out the weaknesses of their opponents. After all, a great deal hangs on such "intelligence" tactics. The burning question is when to play the Joker. Strategy is worked out. Which of the other teams are weakest in a particular game, or the strongest.

Stronger

It is no use playing the Joker if the remaining teams are stronger. Stakes are high so the Joker, when double points are awarded, is of paramount importance.

But why has Bristol been chosen for the contest? It so happens that Bristol is celebrating its 600th anniversary and the city has events going on all the year, a number of which are being held during the first week of August.

Such things as medieval banquets, jousts, knights on horseback and so forth.

The BBC are spending about £34,000 on the sets for the contest which are

all designed with a medieval slant — castles, drawbridges and the like.

The BBC also provides the costumes — a colourful spectacle, indeed, especially for the torchlight procession through the city.

And while the heat is taking place at Bristol, other heats will be taking place on the Continent.

The highest scoring British team will go to the final in Versailles in September.

If Blyth win, that will mean two teams, both from the North-East, on the Continent.

But let's get over the first hurdle which, incidentally, will be watched by upwards of 200m. viewers, for the contest will be screened on the Continent as well as in this country.

Blyth want to win. That is why they are training four or five nights a week and have been so doing for the past month.

As Mr Mike Pattinson, honorary publicity officer, and one of four Round Tablers asked to run the squad, says: "Training has been stepped up to almost a maximum amount now."

"We are taking this contest very seriously indeed because it is realised what a tremendous amount of goodwill and publicity for Blyth can come from this."

And, let's face it, the Continentals realise the importance in no small way. International sporting contests are seen by them as great publicity vehicles for their own areas and countries.

"Events in the past with some of the continental teams have been near to professionals, with the Germans being particularly strong."

"The Germans have been in the habit of taking about 100 team members and putting the best team in."

In a bid to make the contest fair in every respect, teams have to be notified to the officials before the type of games are announced. This is to avoid last minute substitutes.

It would be true to say that no finer cross-section of the community can be found in any team as there is in the Blyth contingent.

Cheer

Building workers, teachers, policemen, chiro-podists, schoolgirls, trainee teachers, college students... They are all there — all amateurs, all as keen as mustard to do their home town proud.

Great care has gone into the selection of the contents of the gift packs to be given to the continental teams.

"We have to find 120 gift packs for presentation and they will include items with strong North-East connections," says Mr Pattinson.

In the forefront of all the wildly cheering crowds, our own Blyth cheer girls will be shouting louder than anyone.

"Before the event they will have jobs to do in Bristol helping to publicise Blyth and the North-East."

"We are hoping that one or two shops in the city will let them take part in publicity spots which we are working on and also to assist in the distribution of the Blyth News supplement," he said.

Last minute preparations are now being made, although all the major organisation and so on has long since been achieved.



JUMPING INTO EUROPE — the Blyth squad at a training session this week.

Tension mounts as squad prepare to meet the big Six!

WHEN Blyth set off on the trail to Europe they never imagined what a hard and dusty road it could be.

But, with a struggle and a bit of luck, they made it to the international heat of Jeux Sans Frontieres and they will not be satisfied just to take part in it, writes ROB FAWCETT.

In true Northumbrian style the lads and lasses of Blyth are out to win, and show Great Britain that the North-East is not one

of the Southern Counties of Scotland (although I am sure they have nothing against the Scots).

When they get into their costumes for the final recording of the programme the Blyth squad will be thinking of many things: How will I scale this piece of equipment, does my costume look OK, etc.

But above all, you can bet your life they will be considering how they can expend every ounce of energy beating the other teams to a pulp.

Yet if they don't do so well in the final recording, they are such a good hu-

moured bunch that they will applaud the winning team and wish them every success in the future.

But that is looking too far into the future, and at the moment stands the task of beating teams from Switzerland, Belgium, Germany, France, Italy and Holland.

And to add to the pressure, they now know the target they are aiming for.

Last week came the knock me over and see if I get up again news that Ely, who played Hertford in the It's A Knockout competition, won their international Jeux Sans Frontieres heat in Holland.

Until then Blyth knew that in order to get through to the international heat in Paris they would have to beat Manchester's score of 46 and position of second in the heat.

Who goes through to the final is judged on two things. The first is the position that is reached in the heat and the second is the number of points the team gets for landing in that position.

So not only do the Blyth team know that they have to beat the other teams in the heat and come first (no mean feat) but they have to score more than 41 points in doing it.

And afterwards there is a big celebration at the Mecca Rooms, Bristol, where they can either toast their success or drown their sorrows.

The biggest shock would be if Blyth won the Bristol heat with 41 points and drew with Ely — I wonder how they would decide that one?

I remember the coldest days of my life at Ashington on one of the wettest days in May, when Albert Grant, the Blyth team captain stood with ten points and the Blyth crowd behind him, poised to throw that ill fated dart. He scored six, while the Ashington team coach, who denied he was a darts champ, threw 22 (double 11).

Of course there is always the slim chance that Ashington and Blyth will meet again for another play off to decide who goes to Paris in a few weeks. Let's hope Albert has practised his darts!

But Blyth have one great advantage in their favour — they are on home soil. Blackpool were at home as the highest losers when they scored the greatest amount in their European heat and went on to the international final. They became the European champions — could Blyth do the same?

Jeux Sans Frontieres itself is just a game, but behind the scenes, a meeting place for European towns has provided an ideal opportunity for making foreign friends and trying to interest teams in local produce.

Blyth as representatives of the host nation will present 120 Union Jack bags filled with "goodies" to all other competitors.

There will be a copper engraved map of Northumberland, and LP of Northumbrian songs and a goblet for women and a tankard for men.

They will take with them a full supporting cast of cheer leaders and of course their mascot — an enormous red and white goose.

Feathers will be flying in Bristol on Wednesday.

BLYTH SQUAD

THE Blyth squad that will travel to Bristol is:

Albert Grant, team captain, physiotherapist and chiro-podist of Marine Terrace, Blyth.

Pam Brown, team coach, schoolteacher of Plessey Road, Blyth.

George Armstrong, 30, schoolteacher of Hillcrest, Monk-seaton. Henry Armstrong, 29, student teacher of Alnwick Avenue, Whitley Bay. Walter Appleby, 26, policeman, of Newsham Road, Blyth. Tom Brooks, 24, Eskdale Avenue, Cowpen, Blyth.

Michael Simpson, 16, measure cutter of Devonworth Place, Cowpen. Blyth. Jim Norris, 19, joiner of Leaholme Crescent, Blyth. Alan Peel, 25, policeman of Collingwood Terrace, Blyth. Alan Robson, 30, plumber of Leholme Crescent, Blyth.

Jim Smith, 23, civil servant of Union Street, Blyth. Ian Thompson, 23, farmer, of Gloucester Lodge Farm, Blyth. Adrian Cartie, 23, machine operator, Malton Close, Cowpen Estate, Blyth. Arthur Thurbon, 27, hod carrier, Beal Close, Cowpen Farm.

David Cordes, 23, electronic engineer, of Avondale Close, Behside, Blyth. David Campbell, 26, building worker of Claremont Terrace, Blyth.

Maureen Bland, 24, physical education teacher of Jubilee Crescent, Gosforth. Ann Marley, 19, assembly hand of Claremont Terrace, Blyth. Ann McCabe, 17, clerk / typist of Anton Place, Cramlington. Alison Roper, 17, student of River View Cose, Bank Top, Bedlington.

Janet Roberts, 20, student of Seaford Road, Blyth. Julie Wilson, 17, schoolgirl of Chantry Drive, Woodlands Park Estate, Wideopen.

Ann Finlay, 17, student of Cypress Gardens. Christine Lambert, 17, schoolgirl, of Axwell Drive, Cowpen Estate, Blyth. Jennifer Orton, 20, Ridley Avenue, Blyth.

And the full supporting cast:

Ron McCall, leader of the party, Jimmy Bell, an organiser. Mrs Leonora Bell, cheerleaders' trainer. Cheerleaders: Mrs Una Ord, Miss Jacqueline Lambert, Miss Elizabeth Dunn, Miss Angela Weddle, Miss Lynn Worth, Miss Cynthia Foy, Miss Wendy Taylor, Mrs Mary Baxter, Mrs Brenda Gibson.

Team boss prays for good luck

"IT is all a matter of luck," said Blyth team captain, Albert Grant, this week.

"We have got the members of the team fitter than ever before, and they are a match for anyone."

"But we will not know until the morning of the event who will be in which games. After the final rehearsals the numbers of the competitors go into a hat and they are drawn out for each game."

"So it is impossible to say how the team will perform — but they will know we have been there."

ANSWERS

(See facing page)
Answers: 1-b, 2-a, 3-c, 4-a, 5-c, 6-b, 7-b, 8-b, 9-a — our be-ver, c-go.

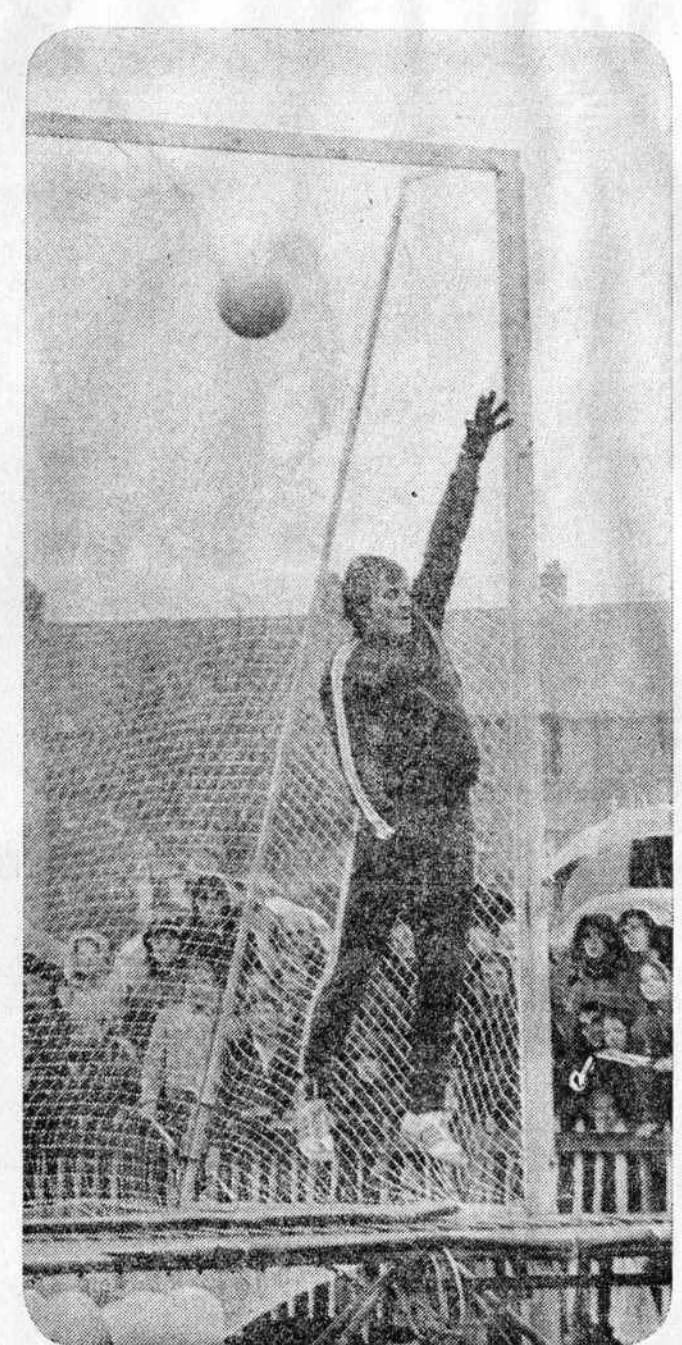
Nine right — Watcha Georgie; eight — so ye divn't no about Hadrian's Wall; seven — Ye nivvor wor much gud a'tistorical kweshans; six — Ye'y nivvor bin north o' Leeds.



ALBERT GRANT — Team captain



PAM BROWN — Coach



FLASHBACK — The Ashington Knockout competition was just out of Blyth's reach — not by this ball, but by a single dart.

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Teams spectacle

SIX teams will travel from the Continent to take part in the Jeux Sans Frontieres spectacular and will also put on displays of the towns they represent, hoping to attract foreign markets for their local produce.

Cheer from Italy has organised a special evening out for all the immediate cast and production staff of the Euro-vision competition.

The other teams taking part are: Koekelburg (Belgium), Sargans (Switzerland), Harburg (Germany), Cognac (France), Kapelle (Holland).

RUNDOWN OF EVENTS

ON SUNDAY the team will arrive in Bristol and from then they will have a non-stop schedule until Wednesday night, when the competition will be staged.

These are some of the things the team will be doing:

SUNDAY

8.30 p.m. — Procession of all competitors from University to Bristol 600 Exhibition site.

9 p.m. — Reception for teams and production staff where gifts will be exchanged.

MONDAY

9.00 — Team present passports and are fitted with identity bracelets.

10.15 — Demonstration of games on site by neutral team.

12.00 — Draw for lanes made by international judges.

9.5 p.m. — Full camera and team rehearsal of whole programme.

11 p.m. — Reception for commentators and TV officials given by town of Chieri at the Mecca Centre.

TUESDAY

Mainly free, but some extra rehearsals if necessary.

WEDNESDAY

9.30 — Team captains, judges and production staff meet for rules meeting.

11.00 — Commentators meeting.

2 p.m. — Costume fitting at hall of residence.

7.30 p.m. — Team captain collect costumes for their team from wardrobe department on the site.

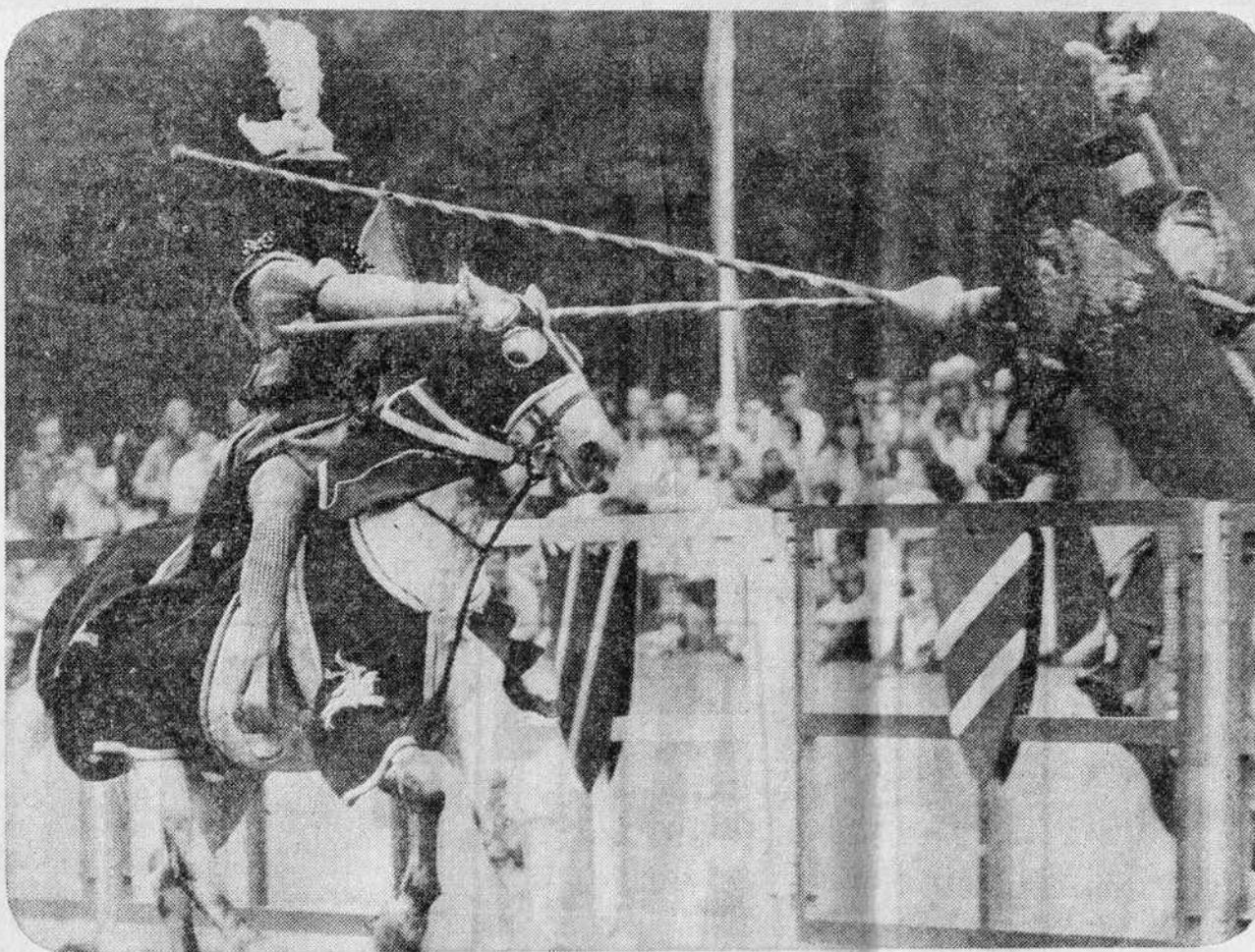
8.30 — All teams to be on the site and dressed.

9.5 p.m. — Transmission/recording.

11 p.m. — Celebration Party in Mayfair Suite.

THURSDAY

Return to Blyth.



Questions to K.O. the Southerners

FOR those who have the competitive spirit but are not quite athletic enough to be taking part in the Jeux Sans Frontieres games here are a few light-hearted

Geordie questions that will only test your brain muscles.

1 Which is the second largest port in Northumberland? (a) Tyne, (b) Blyth, (c) Tees.

2 Who was the pioneer of steam locomotives and lived in Killingworth, Northumberland? (a) Stephenson, (b) Brunel, (c) Watt.

3 What is the main group of islands off the Northumberland coast called? (a) Shetland Islands, (b) Virgin Islands, (c) Farne Islands.

4 What was the name of the heroine who rescued shipwrecked sailors from the rocks of the Northumberland coast? (a) Grace Darling, (b) Bodecia, (c) Florence Nightingale.

5 What is considered to be the Geordie National Anthem? (a) The Drinking Song, (b) Little Brown Jug, (c) The Blaydon Races.

6 Where is the ancestral home of the Duke of Northumberland? (a) Newcastle, (b) Alnwick Castle, (c) Bamburgh Castle.

7 What is the name of the wall built by the Romans from the Solway Firth to Wallsend, Northumberland? (a) Great Wall of China, (b) Hadrian's Wall, (c) Berlin Wall.

8 What was the name of the Northumbrian admiral who played a significant role in Nelson's victory at Trafalgar? (a) Raleigh, (b) Collingwood, (c) Cabot.

9 What is the meaning of the following Northumbrian words? (a) Wor, (b) Ivvor, (c) Gan.

(Answers on facing page)

One of the more dangerous Jeux Sans Frontieres games? — No, but these mediaeval jousts can be seen in Bristol next week. They are part of the Bristol 600 Exhibition celebrations, which recalls the last 600 years since the county was formed. As part of the exhibition the Eurovision competition will be based on a mediaeval theme and competitors will have to dress in historic gear. If you think these jousts are joking, the impact speed is 50 mph — which still makes for a dangerous sport.

Greetings

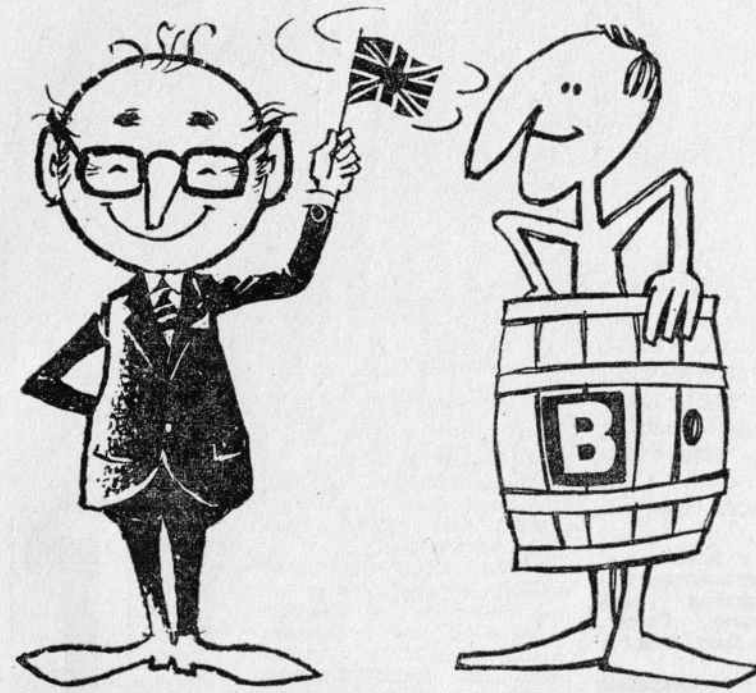
BLYTH Mayor, Coun. Jack Donohoe, sent this letter to the civic heads of the other six European towns in Wednesday's heat.

IT is with great pleasure that I take this opportunity to send to you on behalf of the townspeople of Blyth, cordial greetings and the wish that the Jeux Sans Frontieres contest in Bristol on August 1 will be a great success.

Blyth is very proud to represent Great Britain in

this contest and I am sure that your town too regards the participation in the contest as a great honour.

I will be in Bristol with the Blyth team and I'm looking forward very much to meeting you and the civic heads of the other towns taking part.



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GLORIOUS BEAUTY IN NORTH 'PARK'

THE British possess a peculiar ignorance of the geography of their own country.

A random survey anywhere, quiz games at a party or a general knowledge contest will reveal a surprising lack of knowledge particularly of the whereabouts of a particular place, its physical characteristics, its customs and its history.

Who, for instance, south of York or north of Glasgow could accurately tell you where Northumberland is on a map and, even more important, describe its physical features?

Old habits die hard and the commonest descriptions of Northumberland inevitably incorporate an all prevailing industrial scene combined with drabness and poverty. And yet, as the increasing number

of tourists to the holiday kingdom are quickly finding out, nothing could be further from the truth.

Nine-tenths of Northumberland has more sheep than people! The forty mile stretch of coastline between the Scottish Border and the River Coquet — a few miles north of Blyth — is officially designated as "An Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty".

Two hundred square miles of National Park, and the largest man made forest in Europe are just some of Northumberland's proud boasts. And all this lies in one of Britain's drier areas.

It is perhaps the unique combination of the scenic beauty, the historic heritage and the "canny" folk which visitors find most appealing. The first tourists in Northumberland came almost 2,000 years

ago when the Roman Emperor Hadrian built what is now an international tourist attraction — Hadrian's Wall.

Following the Romans, the ancient Kingdom of Northumbria which, in those days was bounded by the Humber in the south and the Forth in the north, became 'the Cradle of Christianity' and it is still possible today to visit romantic Lindisfarne, an offshore island where Christianity had such an important flowering.

The second major wave of 'tourists' to realise the potential of Northumberland was the Vikings who crossed the North Sea to raid and burn and plunder.

Later skirmishes between the English and the Scots ensured that England's border county could boast a unique and romantic history.

The hardware of history lies all around Northumberland — a county of castles, some in superb preservation, others gaunt ruins. Saxon churches, ruined monasteries like Lindisfarne and Tyne-mouth and abbeys like Hexham all have their own story to tell.

Just as rural and urban find harmony in Northumberland so do the ancient and modern. Towns and cities like the regional capital Newcastle upon Tyne with a variety of interests ranging from an ultra-modern, award winning Civic Centre to the world's only Bagpipe Museum, three live theatres and it is said the finest nightlife outside London, typify the region.

But it is perhaps the county's people that are its greatest asset. Since time immemorial Northumbrians have been renowned for their pioneer spirit. The world of invention, the arts, science, politics would all be the poorer if it were not for the Geordies among their ranks.



FLASHBACK — The teams were evenly balanced at Ashington and so was Maureen Bland who helped to win this marathon and keep Blyth in the running.

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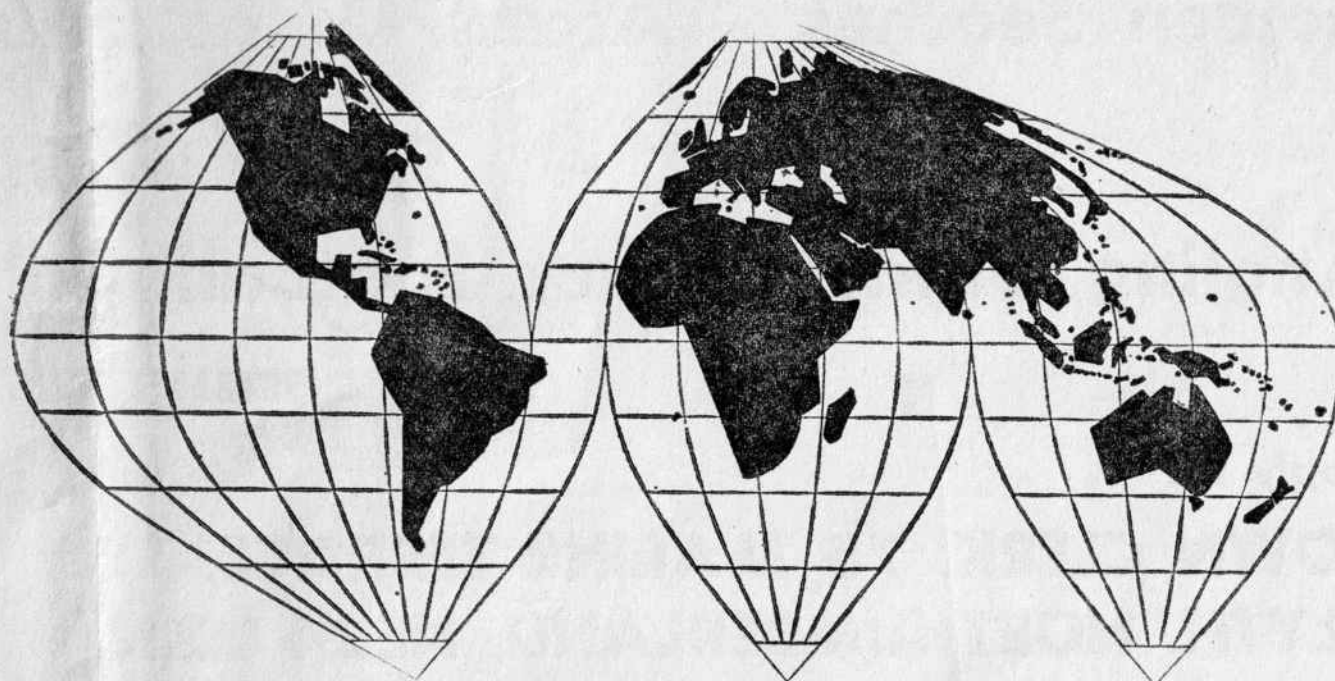
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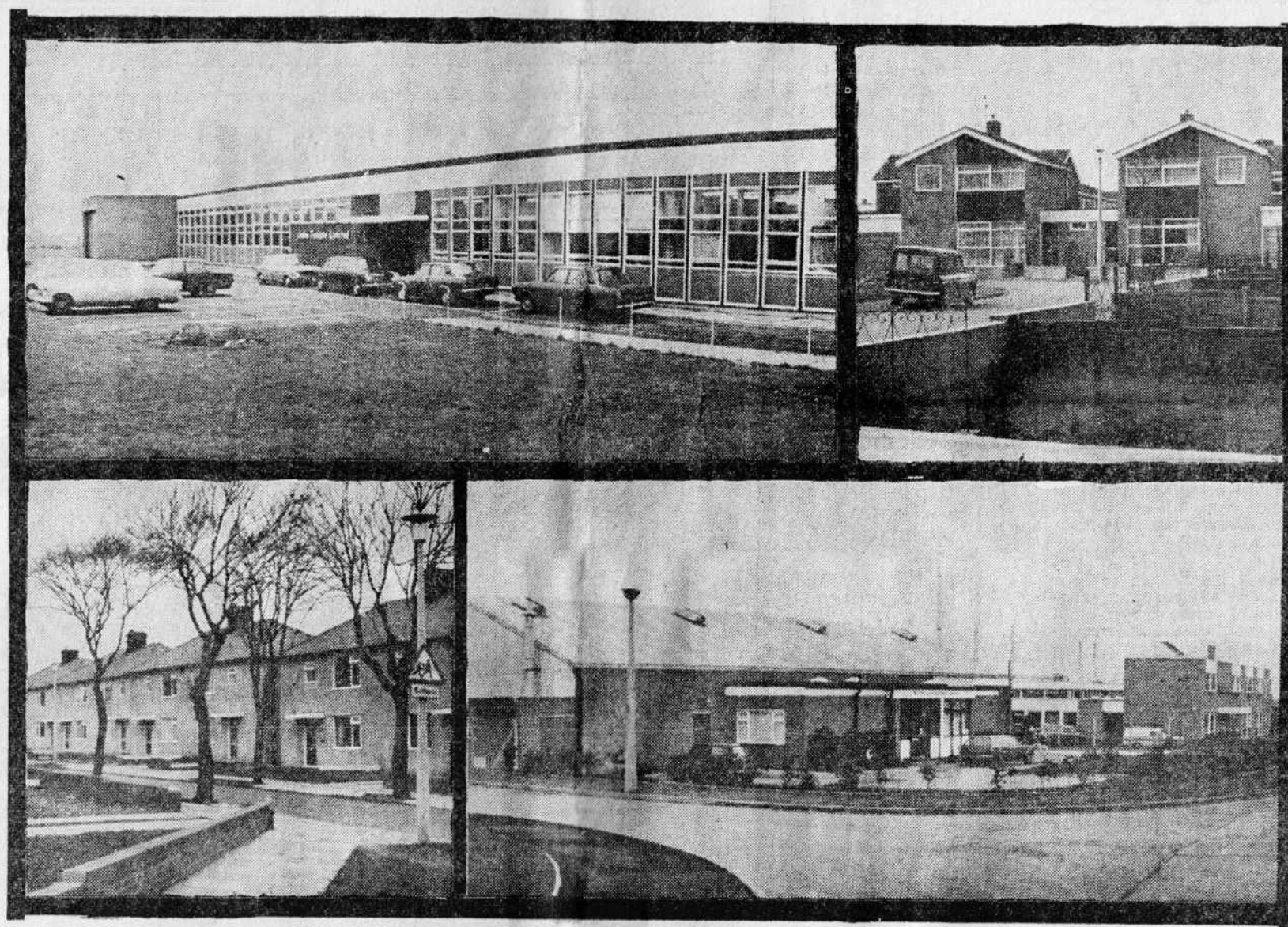
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