

Crossing the airwaves



■ **January 1928:** The emerging Tyne Bridge looms above the Swing Bridge as work nears completion.

THE Tyne Bridge, newly-illuminated and still basking in post-Tall Ships plaudits, has a long-forgotten claim to fame.

The famous landmark had a radio play written about it which coincided with the royal opening in 1928.

My thanks to Christopher Goulding, Newcastle-based local historian, currently researching *Hidden Newcastle* (to be published by Newcastle City Libraries next summer), who finds a connection with the late Nancy Spain (this page, July 16 and 17).

He reports the radio play was called *The Bridge of Tyne* and was a fantasy written by Nancy's father, George Redesdale Booker Spain, of Tankerville Terrace, Jesmond.

The play was broadcast from the old 5NO Newcastle station of the infant BBC on the evening of October 9, 1928, the day before King George V came to open the bridge.

The radio fantasy featured a narrator, plus a large cast and orchestra, who told the story of the river — and its various bridges — throughout the ages.

It opened with the Emperor Hadrian praying for his new Pons Aelius “that the future may bring prosperity and trade to this new port”.

The cast included Arthur Kay, a former chairman of the People's Theatre, while the music for the production was created by Tyneside composer Olive Tomlinson.

George Spain was a colonel in the Northumberland Fusiliers during the Great War and was later Lord Derwentwater's land agent. He was a prominent member of Newcastle's 'Lit and Phil' as well as the Society of Antiquaries. He died in 1961.