



The Elders Council of Newcastle

Transport Working Group



Introduction.

For the last two years we have prepared a leaflet giving some ideas for days out using a concessionary bus pass. This was very popular and over 500 copies were issued.

With all the changes, we were unsure whether to prepare one this year. However, we have decided to do so but we emphasise that you must check the details of your journeys before you travel.

You can check at the Nexus Travel Centres in Newcastle or by calling the bus operators direct.

Once again, we are again grateful to Mervin for all his hard work and we hope that you find this leaflet useful and that you have many happy days out.

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Co-ordinator – Transport Working Group*

Summer Outings in 2011 with a Concessionary Bus Pass

Hello.

For this, our third year, it may seem at first like a repeat, but, although most of the suggested destinations are the same, there are several important changes to the bus times and even to the routes.

Surprisingly, there are a number of improvements even though 2011 is a year of cuts, especially in subsidies for rural bus services. Some of our previous suggestions are no longer possible and there may be further changes so it is very important, as we have said earlier, to check before you travel.

I have, however, included two new ideas for the more adventurous: visits to Maryport and Shildon.

Most journeys from Newcastle are run by Arriva or GoNorthEast, who can provide up-to-date information. All routes listed depart from Eldon Square Bus Station except where otherwise mentioned.

As before, most times relate to Monday-Saturday and return times are not always given.

Let's start with an old favourite – KESWICK – because this year we have a new way of getting there. Take the 9.45am service 685 from Eldon Square Bus Station to Carlisle, due in at 11.56am but sometimes a few minutes late; then Stagecoach 553/554 at 12.15pm getting to Keswick at 1.35pm.

Between 1st July and 25th September, Wright Bros 888 runs direct to Keswick from Newcastle Coach Station (St. James Boulevard) at 9.20am so you can't use your pass Mon – Fri, but you can board the coach at 9.35am at Throckley. This gets to Keswick at 1.00pm after a really spectacular journey via Alston, where there is a 20-minute break.

The best way to return from Keswick is undoubtedly the Wright's 888 at 4.30pm getting into Newcastle at 7.30pm. You don't have to go right to the Coach Station; you could drop off at, say, the General Hospital for other buses.

If you travel before 1st July or after 25th September you have two options, early or late. The X50 from Keswick at 3.20pm or 6.20pm to Penrith; then the 104 at 4.14pm or 7.17pm to Carlisle and finally the 685 at 5.07pm or 8.07pm to Newcastle arriving 7.18pm or 10.07pm. The latter is very late but does give a lot more time in Keswick.

Whilst you are in Keswick, I recommend a boat trip on Derwentwater; the round trip takes 50 minutes and the boats leave every half hour. Also, perhaps a visit to the Pencil Museum.

Probably the best bus route in England is the Honister Rambler minibus 77 or 77A. This takes about 1 hour 40 mins for a circular tour leaving Keswick at 1.30pm, 2.35pm or 3.30pm. The more sedate open-top 78 to Seatoller and back takes nearly an hour; check times at Keswick Bus Station.

CARLISLE is well worth a visit, a small and very pleasant City with a cathedral, a castle (English Heritage), two museums and a good shopping centre. The bus from Newcastle is the 685 leaving at 45 minutes past each hour. Return times should be checked with the timetable but note that there is an inconvenient gap between 5.54pm and 8.07pm. Most buses take 2 hours 11 minutes.

Another way to return is on the Alba Travel service AD122 via the Roman Wall, which leaves Carlisle Citadel (not bus station) at 2.30pm. Get off at Hexham Railway Station at 4.35pm and wait for the 684 at 4.52pm which follows an attractive route via Beaufront, Corbridge and Wylam getting into Newcastle one hour after leaving Hexham.

Carlisle is also the stepping-off point for other interesting places such as PENRITH – a nice town with a pleasant free museum and a ruined castle. It is a 40-minute ride from Carlisle on the 104, which leaves at 5 minutes past each hour. The last convenient bus back leaves Penrith at 4.18pm but between 1st July and 25th September the best way home is on Wright's 888, which calls at Penrith at 5.40pm, arriving Newcastle at 7.30pm.

A new suggestion for 2011 is MARYPORT, a quiet little town with an interesting museum near the harbour. Bus 300 leaves Carlisle at 10 minutes past each hour and takes just over an hour via Wigton. There is a little (hilly) walk to the harbour. Buses back are at 54 minutes past the hour and the last with a decent connection at Carlisle is the 3.54pm. (Newcastle 7.18pm).

If you're a real explorer, try the 60, run by Rae's Coaches from Maryport at 2.35pm or 5.35pm to SILLOTH, then a 38 to Carlisle for the 685 arriving in Newcastle at 7.18pm or 10.07pm. The ride from Maryport to Silloth is up the Solway Coast with views across to Scotland; ride on the left (seaward) side of the bus for the best views.

Also to the West, but much nearer, is HEXHAM, famous for its Abbey. Market days are Tuesday and Saturday. Whilst the quickest bus (51 minutes) is the 685 at 45 minutes past each hour, there are now several alternatives with more interesting routes.

My favourite is 74, the longest, taking 1 hour 26 minutes on a largely rural route. It calls at Newcastle Airport then goes via Ponteland, Darras Hall, Stamfordham, Matfen, Great Whittington and Oakwood. Buses leave at 10.30am, 12.30pm and 2.30pm with returns from Hexham at 1.00pm and 4.00pm; also, on Fridays and Saturdays, at 7.30pm.

Another new and pleasant route is the 684 via Wylam, Ovingham, Corbridge and Beaufront leaving at 10 minutes past each hour and taking 1 hour 10 minutes. Return buses leave Hexham Bus Station at 50 minutes past each hour until 4.50pm.

The route South of the Tyne is also interesting via Metrocentre, Prudhoe, Riding Mill and Corbridge and is now served by service 10 leaving at 10 minutes, 30 minutes and 50 minutes past each hour with a journey time of 1 hour 18 minutes.

Something else new for 2011 is the chance to use the concessionary pass on Classic's AD 122 to Hexham via the eastern part of the Military Road from Central Station at 9.30am taking 1 hour; it goes on to Haltwhistle but does not make a reasonable connection to Carlisle. The AD122 back from Hexham (Tourist Office – not the Bus Station) is at 6.30pm.

Last year we recommended a return from Hexham via Consett but this service has suffered a severe cut so that, Monday to Friday, there is only one journey at 1.11pm and the route is now number 689. On Saturday there is a better choice with buses leaving Hexham at 11.45am, 2.20pm and 4.20pm; the journey to Consett is very attractive and takes 54 minutes. There are plenty of buses from Consett to Newcastle.

CORBRIDGE, on the way to Hexham, is worth a short visit; buses 684 and 10 go right into the centre while the 685 stops on the edge of the town at "The Angel". In Corbridge, St Andrew's Church is of Saxon origin whilst the adjacent Vicarage is in a Pele Tower built of Roman stones. There is also an interesting Market Cross of cast iron and several old buildings. Nearby, on the 684 route, are the remains of the Roman garrison town (English Heritage).

My favourite bus ride in Northumberland is still by coach to WOOLER using service 710 from St. Thomas Street opposite Haymarket Bus Station. It is operated by Glen Valley Tours and leaves at 11.30am throughout the year but only on Wednesdays. This is a very comfortable ride arriving in Wooler 12.50pm in time for lunch. Wooler is a small town and, at the North end, has a very good tourist office and library. The coach returns at 3.40pm getting into Newcastle about 5pm.

Alternatively, for a change of route, you could get the 470 at 1.45pm to Alnwick and you would reach Newcastle at 4.20pm – or later if you spend some time in Alnwick.

ALNWICK is well worth a visit with both the Castle and the Gardens open to the public but with rather high admission charges. Views of the Hotspur Gate, the Market Place and the old railway station are free and the station houses “Barter Books” with a huge selection of second hand books; it is 3 bus stops from the Bus Station towards Newcastle.

From Newcastle, Haymarket Bus Station, there are three services: the 501 and 505 (Berwick buses), which run direct at half past each hour with a journey time of about 1 hour 15 minutes. Service 518 takes 1 hour 49 minutes and departs at 45 minutes past the hour. It travels between Morpeth and Alnwick by a really attractive route via Amble, Warkworth and Alnmouth, all of which merit a stop; then pick up a bus an hour later, or, from Amble or Warkworth take the 472 to Alnwick via Shilbottle. I suggest you take the 518 in at least one direction.

BERWICK-upon-Tweed is the farthest North we can travel with a Tyne and Wear bus pass. (Northumberland passes are valid on some Scottish routes). Berwick is an old Georgian Market Town and is one of the three towns in England where you can walk (almost) right round the old walls – and without charge! It has a lovely Anglo-Scottish atmosphere with some interesting buildings including a ruined castle, an impressive Town Hall of 1754 and the early 18th Century Barracks (English Heritage).

From Haymarket Bus Station the direct bus is the 505, which largely follows the A1 and takes 2 hours 21 minutes leaving at half past the even hour (10.30am, 12.30pm etc). A longer route is the 501 leaving at half past the odd hour (9.30am, 11.30am etc) taking 3 hours 15 minutes.

If this is too long, you can break your journey at Alnwick, Seahouses or Bamburgh, where you might continue your journey to Berwick on Travelsure 411 (Seahouses 1.20pm, Bamburgh 1.29pm). The 501 and 411 follow a most attractive coastal route through Craster (501), Seahouses (there are boat trips to the Farne Islands) and Bamburgh (for its Castle and Grace Darling Museum). It's worth trying the 501 at least in one direction – and get a seat on the seaward side for the best views.

STOCKTON is just 1 hour 7 minutes by the Go North East X10 on the hour or 1 hour 47 minutes on the Arriva X2/X1 via Durham, which departs at 25 minutes and 55 minutes past each hour. The famous street market takes place on Wednesdays and Saturdays but my choice is to take the “Teesside Princess” steamer trip up the Tees to Yarm, a pleasant little town, where you can stay on the boat for the return trip, which includes a visit to the Tees Barrage. Alternatively, stay for a while in Yarm then return to Stockton on the service 7 or, if you fancy a country route, take the Leven Valley service 507 at 4.18pm getting to Stockton via Kirklevington, Maltby and Thornaby at 5.12pm in good time for the 5.53pm X10 from the North end of the High Street. The concessionary fare on the Teesside Princess is £5.29 single or £7.45 return – well worth it. It sails from Stockton at 2pm but not every day so please check beforehand by phoning 01642 608038. Another interesting place in Stockton is Preston Park on the way to Yarm (service 7), where there is a nice museum with a parade of vintage shops.

MIDDLESBROUGH is served by the X10 on the hour and the X9 via Peterlee and Billingham at half past the hour; both take 1 hour 20 minutes. Middlesbrough has a good shopping centre and is also the place to change buses for Redcar, Saltburn (don't miss the Cliff Lift), Guisborough, Whitby or Scarborough.

From Middlesbrough to WHITBY we have a choice of two routes. The more direct 93 Scarborough bus across the moors takes 1 hour 10 minutes. Most journeys leave Middlesbrough at 20 past each hour so the X9 from Newcastle gives the best connection. The X 5 via the scenic coastal route takes 1 hour 36 minutes leaving Middlesbrough at 15 minutes and 45 minutes past each hour, so either the X9 or X10 from Newcastle would do.

Both routes go through Guisborough, which is a nice place for a break with a ruined Abbey (English Heritage, but largely visible from the road).

Whitby is a picturesque harbour town with a famous ruined Abbey on the East Cliff. There is a town mini-bus service to it, the 97, probably at 25 minutes past the hour but check as this might have changed. Then, if you feel really fit, walk back down the 199 steps to the town; otherwise, take the bus back, probably at half past each hour. The 97 does not run on Sundays. If you go to Whitby on the 93, why not come back on the X5, or vice versa?

SCARBOROUGH is as far as you can reasonably get for a day trip though I have been further. You take the X9 at 9.30am to Middlesbrough then the 93 from Middlesbrough to Scarborough arriving at 1.30pm, but on Saturday you could leave Newcastle at 9.00am on X10 and get to Scarborough on the X93 by 12.30pm. Return buses from Scarborough are rather erratic but the last ones are at 4.20pm, 4.50pm and 5.20pm getting to Newcastle at 8.00pm, 8.30pm and 9.00pm respectively. In the school summer holiday period, there will be a direct bus, the Arriva X60 at 9.15am picking up concessionary passholders at Heworth at 9.36am. The bus arrives in Scarborough at 12.15pm and departs at 4.50pm. It also runs on Saturdays and Sundays from the end of May. The X60 also serves Whitby.

HARTLEPOOL may not sound a very inviting destination but it has a free museum and you could easily spend a day at the "Historic Quays", which has many displays and shows of Nelson's time; there is a charge but it's well worth it. To reach Hartlepool, take the X9 from Newcastle and change at Peterlee to the X35 and alight at Marina Way, the terminus. The total journey time from Newcastle is 1 hour 21 minutes but PETERLEE merits a short visit when you change buses – there are frequent buses from there to Hartlepool.

The 21 goes every half hour to BISHOP AUCKLAND, leaving Newcastle at 26 minutes and 56 minutes past the hour (you can pick up the 9.26am service at 9.31am at the old Odeon in Pilgrim Street). The journey from Newcastle takes 1 hour 39 minutes. Market Day is Thursday but the pride of the town is the Bishop's Palace open on Sunday and Monday

afternoons (reasonable charge) surrounded by extensive parkland – free! There is a good Tourist Office in the town centre.

Going on further I recommend BARNARD CASTLE with the famous Bowes Museum (admission charge) and the extensive ruined Castle (English Heritage). This year the only bus from Bishop Auckland is the 85, leaving there at 12.30pm and 2.30pm taking 47minutes and passing Raby Castle; look out for the deer. Buses back to Bishop Auckland are at 3.35pm, 5.38pm and 6.48pm.

Another suggestion for 2011 is SHILDON. Have you heard of it? The main attraction is “LOCOMOTION”, which is the overflow of the National Railway Museum at York. Admission is free and is interesting – not only to railway buffs. Nearby is a small exhibition in the house of Timothy Hackworth, a railway pioneer. To get to Shildon, take the 5 or 5A bus, which starts at Durham at 5 minutes and 35 minutes past the hour taking about an hour. Alternatively, pick up the 5 or 5A in Bishop Auckland at 13 minutes and 43 minutes past the hour with a journey time of about 25 minutes. Ask the driver for the nearest stop to “Locomotion”.

There is, of course, an almost unlimited choice of places to visit and journeys to take. I'd like to know about your favourites and I would be pleased to pass on other ideas – just phone me on 0191 285 5843.

Wherever you go, I hope you have a good trip.

Mervin Dixon – May 2011

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