



## **The Elders Council of Newcastle**

### **Transport Working Group**



#### *Introduction.*

*In response to many questions from members, the Transport Working Group of The Elders Council encouraged one of the members of the working group, Mervin Dixon, in preparing some notes about possible journeys which older people could make using their concessionary bus pass. These are his thoughts but we should emphasise that they are only suggestions – 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.*

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

*Bill Ions*

*Co-ordinator – Transport Working Group*

### **Summer Outings in 2009 with a Concessionary Bus Pass**

Hello,

Now that the summer is here, at least according to the calendar, we can plan how best to use our bus passes for days out, whether you are looking for interesting destinations or, like me, also enjoy the journey.

May I put forward a few ideas, though some of the longer ones can best be taken on a Saturday or Sunday when we can use our passes before 9.30am, but some routes are quite crowded at these times.

Longer trips can be made to Keswick, Scarborough, Berwick and Penrith with intermediate ones to Carlisle, Wooler, Whitby or Barnard Castle. Interesting places that can be reached within about an hour and a half include Stockton, Middlesbrough, Hartlepool, Bishop Auckland, Alnwick, Hexham and Durham.

In most cases I have given alternative routes so that you can go out one way and come back another, though this may take a little longer. Furthermore, you can often break your journey, either outward or return, to visit somewhere on route, or simply for a rest or refreshment. The times I have given generally relate to Monday to Saturday services as Sunday buses are less frequent, but in any case, **please check all times as changes are made.** I have not usually given return times so also check these, especially after 6pm when most services are sparse.

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Let's start with a few long distance services ideal for a summer day out.

Perhaps the best is a coach trip on Wright's 888 to KESWICK running daily between 3<sup>rd</sup> July and 27<sup>th</sup> September. It leaves Newcastle Coach Station (if you can find it) at 9.20am so passes can't be used Monday to Friday but you could board at Throckley at 9.35am. Arrival in Keswick is 12.30pm having had a 35 minute stop in Alston where you could get a coffee or explore England's highest market town. On Sunday the coach leaves Newcastle at 10.05am, arriving in Keswick at 1pm with a 20 minute stop in Alston.

The route is really spectacular with the steep hairpin descent from Hartside to Melmerby and an equally impressive one at Staward between Langley and Whitfield. It is one of the most attractive bus rides in England. The coach also passes through Penrith, well worth a visit, though possibly more easily reached via Carlisle.

Keswick is of course well known but did you know about the interesting Pencil Museum, or that you could take a boat trip around Derwentwater?

There are also some fantastic local bus rides, especially the 77/77A Honister Rambler which I rate as England's best. It is a circular mini-bus tour taking about one and a half hours including Honister and Whinlatter passes and viewing Buttermere and Crummock Water, two of the highest lakes.

If you fancy something more gentle, take the 78 open top bus up Borrowdale and back along the east shore of Derwentwater. (The 77/77A goes on the west side of this lake).

The coach back to Newcastle leaves Keswick daily at 4.30pm getting to Newcastle at 7.30pm with a 20 minute break in Alston.

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Also to the west, CARLISLE is a “must”- a small City with a Cathedral, Castle (English Heritage), Museum and shops. The 685 leaves Eldon Square Bus Station at 45 minutes past each hour and usually takes 2 hours 11 minutes. Note that the last 685 back is 5.54pm, with a late bus at 8.07pm Friday and Saturday. On Sunday you have to change buses at Hexham both ways where services 85 and 685 connect, giving a total journey time of 2 hours 55 minutes.

A most attractive way to return is to take the Stagecoach AD122 which follows Hadrian’s Wall (started in AD122) finishing in Hexham near the Tourist Office – a five minute walk to the bus station for the 685 or 602 back to Newcastle. This bus leaves Carlisle Citadel (not the bus station) at 1.45pm and 4.25pm arriving in Hexham 2 hours 8 minutes later. In the other direction the AD122 leaves Hexham Tourist Office at 11.30am and 2pm.

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From Carlisle there is an hourly 104 to PENRITH at 5 minutes past each hour with a 40 minute journey time. Penrith is yet another pleasant market town where, on Saturday, there is a free bus to a large out of town flea market. There is a ruined castle and a nice free museum. From July to September you might be able to take the very scenic journey back on Wright’s 888 via Alston, leaving Penrith at 5.40pm and arriving in Newcastle at 7.30pm.

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SCARBOROUGH can be reached daily by taking the X9 or X10 to Middlesbrough then the 93 – but it takes up to 4 hours so leaves little time in Scarborough.

In the summer school holidays, (19th July to 6th September) the X60 runs daily direct from Eldon Square Bus Station at 9.15am taking 3 hours – passes can't be used Monday to Friday but they can from Heworth Metro at 9.36am. The return from Scarborough is at 4.50pm. This bus can be very busy both ways. It also runs on Sundays and Bank Holidays from 31<sup>st</sup> May. It is not worked by a coach but an ordinary double decker – good for the views.

The X60 can also be used to visit Whitby – possibly returning via the 5 or 93 to Middlesbrough. See later.

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Now to Northumberland, a trip that is not so well known is by coach to WOOLER, service 710 operated by Glen Valley Tours from St. Thomas Street opposite Haymarket Bus station. It leaves at 11.30am but only on Wednesdays – showing a destination Kelso. This is a really comfortable ride arriving in Wooler 12.50pm in time for lunch. Wooler is a small town but has, at the North end, a good tourist office with a display about the surrounding area. The coach returns at 3.40pm getting into Newcastle about 5pm. If you fancy a different, but less comfortable, route home there are buses on routes 470 and 473 to Alnwick at 2.45pm and you would reach home at 5.20pm or later if you take a break in Alnwick.

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For a longer journey BERWICK is well worthwhile, with an Anglo-Scottish atmosphere and plenty of character. Like Chester and York you can walk around the ancient walls. Buses from Haymarket are 505 direct at half past the even hour and 501 at half past the odd hour by the coastal route through Seahouses and Bamburgh with superb views especially if it is a double decker. This takes 3 hours 10 minutes compared with 2 hours 45 minutes on the 505. – if this seems a long time on the bus you could stop off for an hour or so in Alnwick. I recommend travel by 501 at least in one direction – and get a seat on the seaward side!

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STOCKTON is just 1 hour 7 minutes by the Go North East X10 (on the hour) or 1 hour 40 minutes on the Arriva X1 (9.32am then 5 and 35 minutes past each hour) via Durham, both from Eldon Square. Stockton is famous for its street market (Wednesday and Saturday) but I really recommend the “steamer” trip up the Tees to Yarm, a pleasant little town, where you can either stay on the boat for the return trip which gives a view of the Tees Barrage or come back to Stockton on the frequent bus. The boat also stops both ways at Preston Park which has an open air museum with vintage shops but is better connected to Stockton or Yarm by frequent bus. (Service 7, 7A) The boat is the Teeside Princess and “concessionary” fares are £4.25 single to Yarm or £6.50 round trip. It leaves Stockton at 10.15am and 2pm but not every day – telephone 01642 608038 to find out more!

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The X10, on the hour, goes on to MIDDLESBROUGH as does the X9 at half past each hour, this one running via Peterlee, which is possibly worth a break for an hour or two. The X10 is usually a double decker (good for views), the X9 a coach (for comfort)- both take one hour 20 minutes. My wife says Middlesbrough is good for shopping. It is also the place to change buses for Redcar, Saltburn (don't miss the Cliff Lift), Whitby or even Scarborough.

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Buses to WHITBY leave Middlesbrough at 20 past most hours on the 93 (Scarborough bus) across the moors taking 1hr 6 minutes or on the hour by service 5 by the scenic coastal route – journey time 1 hour 37 minutes. The X9 makes connections with either. 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, at 25 minutes past the hour – then, if you feel really fit, walk back down the 199 steps to the town – otherwise, bus back at half past each hour. The 97 does not run on Sundays.

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HARTLEPOOL may not sound an attractive destination and there are no through buses from Newcastle – but catch the X9 to Peterlee then X35, a total journey time of 1 hour 22 minutes. There is a very interesting free museum at the Historic Quays or you can spend most of the day at the main exhibition with many realistic displays and “shows” of Nelson’s time – admission charge.

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Another easy journey from Eldon Square is by service 21 (The Angel) at 28 minutes and 58 minutes past each hour taking one hour 37 minutes to BISHOP AUCKLAND, another pleasant market town (Thursday), the home of the Bishop of Durham’s Palace which is sometimes open. The extensive grounds are always open - ideal for walks or a picnic. The 21 goes through Durham so you can break your journey there.

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Extend from Bishop Auckland by a country route past Raby Castle (look out for the deer) to BARNARD CASTLE on service 8 taking 47 minutes and leaving at half past the even hour – check your return times. “Barney” is a lovely little town with a market on Wednesday, a ruined castle (English Heritage) and the famous Bowes Museum.

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To the north, ALNWICK is a nice place to visit with both the Castle and the famous Garden being open to the public but with quite high charges. If you like “browsing”, try Barter Books, in the old station at the south end of the town (5 minutes walk or 2 bus stops), with a huge selection of second hand books. There are 3 services from Haymarket: the 501 and 505 (Berwick buses) run direct at half past each hour with a journey time of about 1hour 20 minutes while a longer, but very attractive route is the 518 via Amble, Warkworth and Alnmouth. This takes 1hour 49 minutes and departs at 45 minutes past the hour.

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Most of us have been to DURHAM to visit the magnificent Cathedral – the Castle opposite is used by the University but is often open to the public – with an admission charge. Direct buses run frequently from Eldon Square either Go North East 21 or Arriva X1 taking about an hour. An alternative, though rather longer (1hour 40 minutes) route is Go North East’s Diamond service 43 or 44, a quite attractive route via Stanley where you may care to take a break. This service derives its name from the Diamond consortium of bus operators who pioneered the Stanley to Durham part of the route. These buses run every 15 minutes.

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HEXHAM is a lovely market town (Tuesday and Saturday) with a most impressive Abbey Church. The direct 685 bus (to Carlisle) leaves Eldon Square bus station at 45 minutes past each hour and takes 51 minutes. The main alternative is the 602, also from Eldon Square, which takes 1hour 20 minutes travelling south of the Tyne through Blaydon, Ryton, Prudhoe and Stocksfield – it also goes into the attractive centre of Corbridge, unlike the 685. It leaves Newcastle at 5 minutes and 35 minutes past each hour.

If you are feeling a little more adventurous, a really pleasant way back is to take the lovely cross country 870 route from Hexham to Consett. It takes 55 minutes departing 10.15am, 12.15pm, 2.15pm and 5.15pm – or from Consett to Hexham at 11.15am, 1.15pm and 4.15pm. There is a frequent service of buses between Consett and Eldon Square taking about an hour. (45, 46, 70, X70, X71)

Another interesting way back from Hexham, until the end of October, is on the Classic AD122 following the eastern part of Hadrian’s Wall. It leaves Hexham Tourist Office (not the bus station) daily at 5.33pm getting into Newcastle at 6.27pm. The outward journey starts from Central Station at 9am so passes can only be used on Saturdays and Sundays – the bus goes on to Haltwhistle and the Roman Army Museum but not through to Carlisle.

Note that the Stagecoach service AD122 is different from the Classic AD122. Both cover the main part of Hadrian’s Wall between Hexham and Haltwhistle but the former does return journeys from Carlisle to

Hexham and the latter 1 return journey Newcastle to Haltwhistle. Timetables are available from the Newcastle Tourist Office in Market Street. Some journeys are accompanied by guides, details in the leaflet.

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I have personally travelled on all the services mentioned, enjoying both the ride and the destinations. There are many more possibilities, near and far, ranging from Cramlington Market to the railway museums at Darlington and Shildon.

Timetables for most Arriva services are on display at their office at the Haymarket bus station (closed Wednesdays) while timetables for some of the Go North East routes are on a “carousel” in the Eldon Square bus station.

Finally, have a good trip – if you want any further information or ideas or would like to let me know how you get on, please contact me via the Elders Council office using the details given below.

Mervin Dixon

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**Elders Council of Newcastle**  
**2<sup>nd</sup> Floor, MEA House**  
**Ellison Place**  
**Newcastle upon Tyne**  
**NE1 8XS**  
**Tel: 0191 233 0200**  
**Email: [info@qualityoflife.org.uk](mailto:info@qualityoflife.org.uk)**

