



EC Rider

Summer and Autumn 2025



You just never know what
you might discover when
you get out using your
bus pass.
Enjoy exploring!



Here is the latest EC Rider, which was first produced by Mervyn Dixon and Bill Ions. It provides some ideas for days out using public transport and your Concessionary Travel Pass and Metro Gold Card (£12). A senior citizen railcard with a 33% discount will enable travel further afield (costs £35 for a year). Remember that local bus fares have been capped at £2.50 or £3 if you wish to make an early start to the day. We are fortunate to live in a beautiful part of the country with a wide variety of places at a short distance from home. The current and previous editions of EC Rider are available on our website: <https://www.elderscouncil.org.uk>

Some important advice before you travel

Check times before you travel especially for any infrequent service. At the time of writing the information is up to date but operators can change times; operators aim to publish this on their websites.

- Check the opening times of any attractions you wish to visit and whether you may have to pre-book.
- Up to date travel information can be obtained by calling **TRAVELINE on 0871 2002233**, visiting their website, bus operators' websites or timetable leaflets on operators' vehicles.

Journey Suggestions

I hope this list caters for a range of interests and mobility:

- Beautiful locations such as Alnwick
- Interesting attractions such as the museums at Bishop Auckland
- Interesting scenery such as between Morpeth and Rothbury
- And, for those with a good level of fitness, some walks such as Alnmouth to Warkworth.

This 2025 version has some new ideas for days out. Due to the constraints of space, in order to accommodate these, a number of last year's trips have been deleted. If you have kept this document, you will find that these trips are still possible. The cost of some of the more expensive visits are listed and, where known, the nearest toilet to the bus station or interchange point is shown in brackets. (M)=Market Place; (MH)=Market Hall; (MU) = Museum; (CG) = Cathedral Green; (RS) = Rail Station; (B) = Bus Station.

Most journeys from Newcastle are by Arriva or Go North East and start from Eldon Square Bus Station and times, where given, relate to Monday to Saturday, unless otherwise stated. If a journey commences at the Haymarket Bus Station, this is specifically noted. **Bill Harbottle**

EC Rider needs your support!

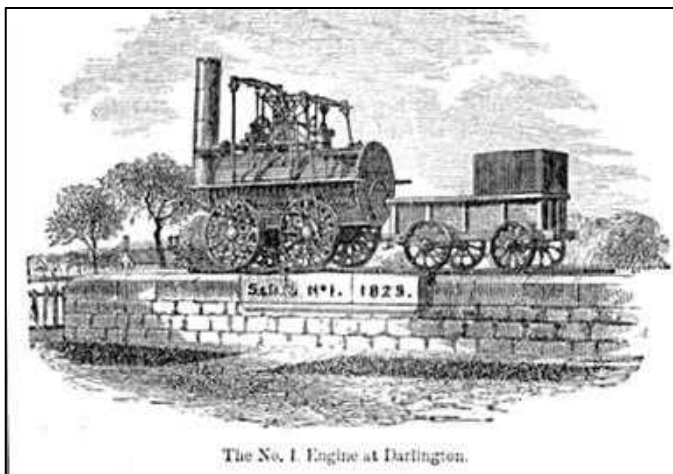
EC Rider is produced by volunteers, but there is still a cost to printing and distribution. We would really appreciate donations (big and small) to ensure we can continue to produce this valuable booklet. Our bank details are: Sort Code: 08 92 99 Account: 65079623 Elders Council of Newcastle.

1 DURHAM CITY (CG) X12 and X21 leave regularly and take about 55 minutes. You can also take the slower 21.

There is so much to see in Durham with the highlight obviously being the impressive Castle and Cathedral beneath which there are lovely riverside walks – stroll over the old bridges Framwellgate, Elvet and Prebends. You may also like to visit the Botanical Gardens and Oriental Museum – catch Service 6. You could also catch the regular 56/58/59/X12 to the first stop in Shincliffe alighting at the Rose Tree. Cross the road and it is a short walk to a lovely garden centre/café. It is also possible to walk along the river to Shincliffe from Durham, about 2 miles. You would also love Crook Hall Gardens. In April, there is a wonderful display of tulips.

2 DARLINGTON (M – Dolphin Centre) Go to Durham and then take Service 7 every 15 minutes – total journey time from Newcastle is about 2 hours. Darlington has good shops and market. Alight the number 7 at Morrison's on the journey into

town to visit the interesting railway museum.



In time for the 200th anniversary of the Stockton and Darlington Railway, this museum has been considerably enlarged and redeveloped. Now known as Hopetown,

it is adjacent to North Road Station on the line to Bishop Auckland. Admission is free to a number of buildings telling the story of railways in our region.

There is also a viewing platform where you can see a new steam engine being built. (*Image by Samuel Smiles digitised by Project Gutenberg*)

3 SUNDERLAND (MU and Bridges) has rarely been



mentioned in EC Rider but there is plenty to see and do here. Reached by Metro in about 30 minutes, Go-Ahead service 56 from Market Street (every 12 minutes; journey time 80

minutes) or Stagecoach X24 from Pilgrim Street (every 30 minutes; journey time 40 minutes). I would highly recommend the Winter Gardens. In addition to tropical plants, there are nice exhibitions on coal mining, pottery and other industries associated with Sunderland. Adjacent is Mowbray Park. Near St Peter's Metro is a small railway museum (Monkwearmouth) and south of here is St Peter's Church (part of which dates back to 674AD) (check website for opening times [St. Peter's Church, Monkwearmouth, Sunderland - Monkwearmouth Parish](#)). Walk down from the Church towards the river and you will come to the [National Glass Centre](#) which has exhibitions and glass-making demonstrations.

4 PENSHAW MONUMENT This folly, built on a hill above the village of the same name, looks like a mini-Acropolis. It commemorates John Lambton, who was Governor General of British North America (1792-1840) and was built between 1844-45. Located adjacent to one of the roads between Washington and Sunderland, it is visible for miles and, although steep, it is only a short walk from a nearby bus stop.

On the opposite side of the road is Herrington Country Park created on the site of a former colliery where there are some lovely walks on the flat, a lake, café and farm shop.

Catch the Go North East X1 which runs every 15 minutes from Eldon Square to Washington Galleries and transfer to the 2/2A which runs every 20 minutes. Total journey time between 45 minutes to an hour. The 78 from Consett/Chester-le-Street also passes the monument.

5 MIDDLESBROUGH, (B) REDCAR AND SALTBURN The X10 leaves at 10 minutes past the hour and takes 105 minutes to Middlesbrough. Middlesbrough is the starting point for the X3/X4 buses which operate regularly to Redcar and Saltburn. At Redcar you can visit the Vertical Pier and the Zetland Lifeboat Museum. Saltburn is a lovely place with its Cliff Tramway, Pier, Beach and views of the cliffs and North York Moors. It is possible to walk back to Redcar along the beach – about 90 minutes.

6 USHAW COLLEGE (MU) A religious establishment built in the late 19th century in a rural setting 4 miles west of Durham. It contains examples of works of Pugin and other architects in gothic revival style. There is a beautiful refectory, hall and library and stunning chapel surrounded by nice gardens. Reached by service 52 from Durham Bus Station at 11.00 am and 1.30 pm (20-minute journey). Buses return at 1.08, 3.34 and 5.20 pm.

7 BISHOP AUCKLAND (M) SHILDON (MU) and STANHOPE (MU) The X21 runs every half hour to Bishop Auckland and takes 90 minutes. If you like art/culture/history this is a must and a good place to visit on a wet day. Alight the bus at the Market Place. Within a few minutes walking distance are the Spanish Art Gallery (fantastic collection of masterpieces), Auckland Castle (former home of the Prince Bishops of Durham and see the Zurbaran paintings of Jacob and his twelve sons), Faith Museum, Auckland Tower and Mining Art Gallery. You can walk the gardens and the Deer Park and there is a lovely café in the Castle. It is £30 (£27 on line) BUT your pass is valid for a year.

From Bishop take bus 1 or 5 (30 minutes) going to Darlington which stops outside Locomotion in Shildon, which is part of the

National Railway Museum and well worth a visit. There will be a number of special events this year to commemorate the 200th anniversary of the Stockton-Darlington railway. From Bishop you could also go to Stanhope (Weardale Motor Services – 45 minutes). A very attractive, small town in Upper Weardale – there are lovely river walks, church and the Dales Centre has a good selection of guides and information about the area. You can go further to explore Upper Weardale – get the 102 (from Stanhope) at 1.00 pm to Rookhope, back at 1.30 pm or the longer 101 up to Cowshill at 1.45 pm, back at 2.45 pm. On your return from Stanhope, you could alight the 101 at Crook from where there are regular buses to Durham.

Another nice village between Bishop Auckland and Stanhope is Wolsingham – café, riverside walk and occasional heritage trains on the preserved Weardale Railway and there is a nice walk of a couple of hours on a quiet country road to the Tunstall Reservoir.

8 BARNARD CASTLE, STAINDROP, RABY CASTLE (MU) and MIDDLETON IN TEESDALE A really interesting place to visit with a castle high above the river and the wonderful Bowes Museum. It is a nice walk to the ruins of Egglestone



Abbey. You can travel here from either Darlington (X75/X76) from outside the Town Hall at 13 and 43 minutes past the hour or Service 85 from Bishop Auckland. This runs less frequently at 9.55 am, 11.55 am and 1.55 pm returning at 3.00 and 5.00 pm. This service stops at the gates of Raby Castle.

Built in the thirteenth century, this well-preserved castle, set among 200 acres of deer park, is privately owned. Castle open all day Wednesday to Sunday. A visit to the Castle and Park costs £21.00. From the Castle, it is a short walk to the lovely village of Staindrop – church, cafes and village green. Buses return to Bishop Auckland at 5.10 pm, a couple of minutes later from the Castle. The X76 also services Staindrop returning to Darlington at least hourly. Journey times to Barnard Castle vary but are approximately an hour.

You may like to consider a ride to Middleton in Teesdale (cafes and river walks) on the 95/96 from Barnard Castle. Trip takes 30 minutes going through some delightful villages (Cotherstone and Romaldskirk). Departures at 10.50, 11.50 am, 12.50 and 1.50 pm with returns at 1.18, 2.20 and 3.43 pm. (Check which side of the road as the bus runs alternatively clockwise/anti-clockwise through the village.)

9 BEAMISH MUSEUM

Bus 28/29 leave every half hour for Beamish and take about an hour. On Sundays departs 20 minutes past and returns 19 minutes past each hour. Beamish is open every day in the summer but does close on certain days in the winter. It is described as the Living Museum of the North and has old trams, school, churches, housing, shops, pithead and old country manor. There are regular themed events during the year such as a Wartime Weekend. The admission price is £21.25 BUT this is an annual pass.

10 CONSETT (B) to LANCHESTER I would recommend a ride on the X70 from Eldon Square to Consett. This service is usually operated by double deckers and climbs high up into County Durham offering lovely views even as far as the Cheviots. As an alternative the X45 travels along the lovely River Derwent through Rowlands Gill and Shotley Bridge. Once in Consett you would also enjoy the bus ride to Durham through Lanchester (X5/X15) which takes 45 minutes and runs every 30 minutes.

Lanchester is a lovely village with a nice old church, village green and shops where you could break your journey. It is a lovely 6 mile walk along the disused railway path between Consett and Lanchester.

11 HEXHAM (B) and the TYNE VALLEY (BYWELL) There are a number of routes to Hexham from Eldon Square, all providing scenic journeys. The 684 and 685 go to the north of the Tyne and are the quickest taking less than an hour. The 684 goes through Wylam where George Stephenson was born. The 10 travels along the south bank through Prudhoe (ten-minute walk to the castle). Alight at Mickley for a short walk to Cherryburn where Bewick, the engraver, lived. The 74 runs less frequently at 11.35 am and 2.35 pm from Newcastle, returning at 4.05 pm it passes through Stamfordham and Matfen.



You may like to break your journey at Stocksfield on the Go-Ahead 10 Hexham service (half hourly or train hourly stopping service to Hexham). It is a pleasant walk of about half an hour to the hamlet of Bywell. No shops or cafes but there are two lovely ancient churches and a fifteenth century castle (not open to the public). However, the reason for inclusion is that in May (24th) the wonderful Northumberland County Show is held here. Also check websites as the churches and castle may be open and events take place on certain days during the summer. In Hexham visit the Abbey with its excellent free museum and surrounding parkland or the Old Gaol and walks along the river towards Warden (about 3 miles) where there is a lovely old church, part of which is Anglo Saxon.

12 BELLINGHAM (MU) Service 680 leaves Hexham at 11.30 and 1.30 pm for a pleasant journey of around an hour up the pleasant North Tyne Valley – return buses are at 2.20, 4.40

6.40 and 7.40 pm. Bellingham is a quiet country town with places for lunch and a really good Heritage Centre at the old Railway Station where the 680 terminates. There are also nice walks.

13 ALLENDALE and ALLENHEADS are 25 and 45 minutes south of Hexham. Bus 688 leaves Hexham for Allendale and Allenheads at 9.16 am, 11.16 am, 2.16 pm and 3.36 pm. This is a lovely run across the moors. There are shops and cafés in Allendale and a nice heritage centre/café at Allenheads. Return from Allenheads at 12.03, 2.03, 4.23, 6.23 and 7.23 pm. 15 minutes later from Allendale.

14 HADRIAN'S WALL (MU) AD 122 now runs all year but only every 2 hours, departing Hexham at 8.30 am, 10.30 am, 12.30 pm, 2.30 pm and 4.30 pm returning from Haltwhistle at 10.01 am, 12.01 am, 2.01 pm, 4.01 pm and 6.01 pm. It calls at several Roman sites: Chesters, Housesteads, Vindolanda and Walltown for the Roman Army Museum. The visitor centre, the Sill, at Once Brewed is well worth a visit and has some lovely exhibits about the landscape, culture, history and heritage of Northumberland.

For those who are active, it is possible to walk long stretches by the side of the wall using the AD 122 as a drop off-pick up point. Really recommended for the views/exercise, but you must be fit. There is a lot of climbing over stony ground and it can be very muddy. Housesteads is nice to visit but it is a 15-minute climb over rough ground to the site.



15 CARLISLE Service 685 takes 2 hours 30 minutes departing from Newcastle at 35 minutes past each hour and returns at 05 minutes past the hour. For most of the day, there are two trains an hour – it takes 90 minutes. Carlisle, an attractive, small city, has a red sandstone Cathedral and an intact castle (English Heritage.)

There is also Tullie House Museum which is highly recommended, a good shopping centre and some nice parks. There is also another picturesque bus route, the 93/93A circular trip from Carlisle at 12.30 pm, arriving back at 2.30 pm. (Do not alight mid route as buses are infrequent.) It runs across the Solway marshes to Bowness, then back via Cardurnock, Anthorn and Kirkbride. It is also possible to use your pass to visit Gretna from Carlisle.

16 PENRITH (B) Service 104 leaves Carlisle at 06 and 36 minutes past the hour taking almost an hour. The train takes 15 mins. Buses return from Penrith at 02 and 30 minutes past the hour.

Penrith is a pleasant town with a ruined castle and a small, free museum. There is a lovely bus journey, the 508, which runs down the side of Ullswater past Pooley Bridge, Glenridding and Patterdale (about 50 minutes). The 508



runs from Penrith at 11.32 am, 1.32 and 3.32 pm returning at 2.20 and 4.20 pm (hourly Saturdays, Sundays, Bank Holidays and School Holidays).

Some buses continue over Kirkstone Pass to Windermere. However, this takes two hours and you would spend most of the day travelling.

17 KESWICK (Booth's) Keswick is a beautiful town with plenty to keep you occupied – lakeside walks, boat trips on the lake, museums. When you arrive go inside Booths Supermarket where you will find plenty of tourist information and bus timetables. There are a number of spectacular bus routes from Keswick. The 78 open top service up Borrowdale to Seatoller and back takes about an hour; the 77 and 77A circular routes to Buttermere climbing Honister and Whinlatter passes and the 555 down to Grasmere, Rydal and Ambleside.

There are numerous ways to reach Keswick – all of them scenic and enjoyable. To Carlisle 685 bus (hourly; 150-minute journey) or train (every half hour – 90-minute journey time). Then to Penrith, Service 104 (half hourly – 50-minute journey time) or train (between one and two each hour – 15 minutes) then onto Keswick service X4/5 every 30 minutes – 50-minute journey. There is a direct service 554 from Carlisle to Keswick but it is infrequent and takes 90 minutes.

In the middle of the summer there is a direct 888 Newcastle to Keswick service via Alston run by Wright Brothers, departing from Newcastle Coach Station. This operates Fridays to Mondays 18th July to 29th September. Check [website](#) for times. This will also allow you to visit Alston and Penrith.

I like to go to Keswick for the day but always use the train to Carlisle/Penrith to increase the amount of time to enjoy there on arrival and certainly outside the peak summer when Wright Bros do not operate.

18 ALNWICK and NORTH NORTHUMBERLAND (M) X15 from Haymarket at 38 minutes past each hour takes 82 minutes. For a scenic ride take the X18 at 8 minutes past each hour via Amble, Warkworth (for an English Heritage castle) also Alnmouth for pleasant seaside walks. The X20 at 38 minutes past also goes to Alnwick via Ashington, Amble and Warkworth. It is a walk of about a mile to the beach at Warkworth but it is well worth it for lovely walks admiring the dunes and sea birds.



Alnwick is an interesting town to walk around. Visit the Castle and the famous Gardens. (Prices vary and you may have to book in advance.) Barter Books in the old station has a huge collection of 2nd hand books.

From Alnwick catch the X18 at 12.05 to the coastal towns of Craster (harbour and kippers and a nice walk along the cliffs to

Dunstanburgh Castle), Seahouses and Bamburgh (Castle and Grace Darling Museum). Times below are arrivals using the 12.05 bus and return departures when the bus returns from Berwick at 2.03 pm arrives in Alnwick at 4.08 pm.

	Arrive	Depart
Craster	12.37 pm	3.32 pm
Seahouses	1.04 pm	3.04 pm
Bamburgh	1.16 pm	2.52 pm

This service north of Alnwick is well worth doing but it is infrequent. If you caught the train to and from Berwick and travelled south there is an X18 at 10.03 and a return north from Alnwick at 4.15 pm which would allow you to spend more time on the coast. In addition, there are some other services you could use operated by [Borders Buses](#). (check Traveline or Border Buses website).

For next spring, I would recommend you go to Warkworth to see the daffodils around the castle and the beautiful cherry blossom in Alnwick Gardens.

19 ROTHBURY (Bridge Street) The X14 takes 1 hour 13 minutes at 9.23, 10.23, 11.23 am and 1.23 pm from Haymarket. Buses return from Rothbury to Newcastle at 1.00, 2.55 and 5.05 pm. Rothbury is a pleasant small town with a large green, church and several tea shops.

It is possible to do some lovely walks on the flat along the Coquet. You would enjoy Great Tosson (about 2 miles), a small hamlet with the ruins of a medieval fortified Bastle tower.

The X14 also serves Craggside (National Trust). If you use the bus there are deductions from the entry price. Catch the 09.23, 10.23 or 11.23 am from Haymarket. Return at 2.01, 3.01 or 5.16 pm.



20 WOOLER This is a nice small town with an Anglo-Saxon Museum and whisky distillery [English Whisky Distillery](http://EnglishWhiskyDistillery.com) & [Northumberland Visitor Attraction \(adgefirin.co.uk\)](http://NorthumberlandVisitorAttraction.com). It is reached from Alnwick in an hour by the very scenic service 473 operating via Whittington, Powburn and Chillingham.

Departures from Alnwick at 8.40 and 10.40 am and 12.40 pm. Journey takes an hour returning at 11.50 am, 1.50 and 5.05 pm

En route to Wooler you may wish to alight at Chillingham to visit the castle and it may also be possible to see the wild cattle but check times before you travel both of the attractions and the bus times.

21 MORPETH Direct buses on services X14, X15, X16 and X18 leave Haymarket taking 33 minutes. In Morpeth visit the free Bagpipe Museum, walk in the park and along the riverside. It is possible to walk to Mitford along the side of a quiet road where there is a lovely church and ruined castle (about 3 miles). The church grounds are flooded with snowdrops and crocuses in late winter – an uplifting sight with the castle ruins in the background.

22 WASHINGTON OLD HALL This picturesque stone manor house with its gardens and nuttury lies in a tranquil setting at the heart of the historic village. The building incorporates parts of the original medieval home of George Washington's direct ancestors and it is here that the family took their surname of Washington. There is a café and toilet at the hall (check opening times).

Catch the X1 from Eldon Square and alight at Washington Galleries Bus Station changing onto service 4 (Houghton-le-Spring), 8 (Chester-le-Street), 82 (Barmston) alighting at Parkway for a short walk.

Whilst in the area, you may also like to visit the Washington Wetland Centre – a haven for wildlife set on the banks of the River Wear. It is home to a range of rare wildfowl, exotic birds and otters and is open all the year round.

Admittance is circa £8.

From Washington Galleries, catch the Go North East service 8 (direction Sunderland). Journey time about 10 minutes.

23 SEAHAM HARBOUR (M) The most convenient way to travel to Seaham is from Sunderland Park Lane Interchange where there are regular buses (60/X6) taking 20-30 minutes. Use either Go North East 56 (takes an hour and 15 minutes from Market Street) or X24 from Pilgrim Street (takes 40 minutes) or the Metro to Sunderland Park Lane.

Seaham has some nice seafront walks, look out for Tommy, a steel statue by a local artist commemorating WW1 and the impressive Londonderry Offices. Elsewhere is St Mary the Virgin Church, part of which is Anglo Saxon. Check times.

24 WOODHORN COLLIERY and NORTHUMBERLAND LINE (MU) Accessibility to the museum by public transport is not good but it is a gentle walk of about 30 minutes from the centre of Ashington. The museum [website](#) does give directions and when I have visited the locals are very friendly and will assist.



Located on the outskirts of Ashington on the site of a former colliery, you will find winding engines, stables and other buildings/equipment wonderfully restored from the days of mining. Pictures are on display from "The Ashington Group of Painters" showing everyday life at work and play years ago. There is a fine display of miners' banners as well.

I would recommend combining this trip with a ride along the recently re-opened (after 60 years) Northumberland Passenger Rail Line from the Central Station. Trains run half hourly and take about 35 minutes. There are lovely views when you go over the viaducts across the River Blyth and Wansbeck.

25 NEWBIGGIN Just beyond Woodhorn. The Arriva X21 leaves from the Haymarket and operates every 20 minutes, the journey takes just over an hour. Newbiggin is a lovely seaside resort with some pleasant walks. Look out for the statues facing the sea. There is an information centre with a small museum and café and plenty of other places to eat.

26 SEATON SLUICE Regular 308/309 and X7 bus services from Haymarket Bus Station (journey time less than an hour). Seaton Sluice has a nice harbour and a reputation for good fish and chips.

There are some nice beach walks north of Seaton Sluice towards Blyth Beach. The X7 goes past Seaton Delaval Hall



– a National Trust property with nice gardens but limited opening times (check before you travel). [Seaton Delaval Hall | Northumberland | National Trust](#)

27 BERWICK A few miles south of the Border this is a lovely town. It can be reached by bus from the Haymarket. The X15 leaves Haymarket Bus Station at 10.38 am and 12.38 pm (journey times 2 hours and 22 minutes). The last X15 of the day departs Berwick at 7.25 pm. The X18 via the coast also has journeys at 10.08 am (journey time 3 hours and 52 minutes).

The train, on average, only takes 45 minutes and there is at least one an hour. There are lovely walks along the River Tweed under the Royal Border Bridge in one direction and in the other towards the old bridge leading to Spittal, the Elizabethan town walls, barracks and old Town Wall.

In previous editions I gave a list of bus trips you could make from Berwick: Kelso, Eyemouth, St Abbs, Holy Island, Bamburgh/Seahouses and Etal/Ford. All of these are still possible, but, before travelling, you should check times which are likely to have changed.

For journeys into Scotland, your English Bus Pass can be used as far as Eyemouth, Kelso, Duns and Galashiels.

Kelso is a lovely place. On the banks of the Tweed, it is a nice walk in the summer of about two miles to Floors Castle (check [website](#) for ticket prices) where you will also find picturesque gardens and a nice café. The 67 bus departs Berwick at 10.05 and 12.05 returning at 3.40 pm and 5.15 pm.

28 BELSAY/WALLINGTON On Summer Saturdays, the X75 should operate from the Haymarket (Stand N) to Wallington calling on the way at Belsay and Bolam Lake. Departures are at 9.30 and 11.30 am, 2.00 and 4.00 pm, returning at 10.30 am, 1.00, 3.00 and 5.00 pm. Highly recommended.

29 RICHMOND (MH) Buses X26/X27 leave Darlington centre and rail station every 30 minutes. For a scenic ride take Service 29 at 1.10 pm, returns 4.30 pm from the Town Centre.

Richmond is an attractive town with a castle (English Heritage), narrow streets, several museums, a square worth exploring and riverside walks with a waterfall. Market Day is Saturday.

Cross the river to the old railway station where there is a café, retail outlets, a small cinema and a small historical display. There is a nice walk along the old railway to the ruins of Easby Abbey and the old parish church with some wonderful 12th century wall paintings which takes about 30 minutes.



There are some lovely journeys you can make further up into the Yorkshire Dales. Leyburn is a lovely market town reached in 35 minutes. Depart Richmond at 12.32 pm, 1.47 pm, 2.02 pm. Return at 1.32 pm, 2.27 pm 4.19 pm.

Some local walks

30 NORTH TYNESIDE Catch the metro to Cullercoats, the nearest station to the coast. There are some nice cafes here and plenty of bench seats overlooking the sea.

Last year, we walked south, this year go north. It will take you about 30 minutes to reach Spanish City at Whitley Bay where it is another 45-60 minutes next to or along the beach to St Mary's Lighthouse – you can cross the causeway at low tide. Further on, after about an hour, you come to the nice harbour at Seaton Sluice (which has a good reputation for fish and chips). Further on for another hour on the path next to the beach you would arrive at Blyth.



Walking along the whole of this coastline is gentle and you can do short sections as the 309/310 from the Haymarket parallels the coast from Whitley Bay to St Mary's Lighthouse and Seaton Delaval to Blyth. There is also the option of catching the X7 to visit Seaton Delaval Hall (a short distance from Seaton Sluice) which then goes on to the Haymarket Bus Station.

31 ALNMOUTH TO WARKWORTH From Alnmouth there is a lovely walk of about 6 miles south to Warkworth in the summer (can be muddy in the winter). To commence your journey, you need to walk about half a mile out of the village on the road up towards the Railway Station. The coastal path is then clearly signposted. Full details of this walk are on the [website](#).

Discover, in particular, the history behind the ruined church and warehouse used to store guano (bird poo from Peru). There are lovely views of Alnmouth, Coquet Island and wading birds. Walk along the sands approaching Warkworth, then the river, see the old medieval bridge and castle (its banks surrounded by daffodils in the Spring).

The X18 to Warkworth & Alnmouth departs the Haymarket at 08 minutes past the hour, return from Warkworth at 31 minutes past (later in the afternoon). Journey takes about 90 minutes.

32 CHRISTMAS

The EC Rider primarily provides journeys that can be made in Spring and Summer. There are nice days in early winter and here are some suggestions for trips that I made last year to enjoy Xmas Morpeth – highlights Rutherford Department Store with a Xmas display including a traditional nativity scene; Sanderson Arcade, and, albeit artificial, the lovely Xmas tree outside Marks and Spencer. There is also a lovely Xmas tree in front of the Medieval Tower.

Alnwick Lights are also a delight and I have heard them described as some of the best in the country. See Santa and his reindeer on top of the Hotspur Tower, lights on the Northumberland Tower, Xmas tree in the Market Square and business themed lights created by local businesses.

Durham Cathedral: carol service in the evening of the 22nd or Christmas Eve afternoon. You don't need a ticket. See the nativity scene carved in wood by a local miner.

Sunderland: no stars or angels, the illuminations depict local heritage – George Washington, Empire Theatre, Mining, Glass, Shipbuilding etc Transport links to all are detailed earlier.

33 WHITBY and the ESK VALLEY RAILWAY

There are two routes from Middlesbrough to Whitby, the X93 over the moors takes about an hour leaving at 20 minutes past each hour while the X4 via Redcar, Saltburn takes about 90 minutes and leaves at 5 and 35 minutes past the hour. For a scenic rail journey, I would recommend the Esk Valley from Middlesbrough to Whitby. To reach Middlesbrough take the train from Newcastle which goes via Sunderland and Hartlepool down the Durham coast.

There are some direct trains but you may have to change at Middlesbrough. The line onwards to Whitby winds its way leisurely through the North York Moors National Park

calling at 17 small stations (an end-to-end distance of 36 miles taking 90 minutes).

Highlights are the distinctive hill – Roseberry Topping at Great Ayton; Battersby where the train reverses; the C17 old Packhorse Bridge named Beggars Bridge at Glaisdale; Grosmont which is the junction with the North Yorks Moors Railway; the high Larpool Viaduct approaching Whitby (disused Scarborough line). Admire all the lovely farm building with their distinctive red tiled roofs, the fast-flowing Esk regularly crossed, lambs in Spring and heather in late Summer. Trains are infrequent so check before travelling:

Newcastle	8.40 am
Middlesbrough	9.58 am change
Middlesbrough	10.19 am
Whitby	11.51 am
Return:	
Whitby	3.57 pm direct
Newcastle	6.52 pm



34 WALKS

Within the above text, a number of suggested walks have been listed separately or included in specific trips which hopefully cover all abilities. Numerous publications are available but one has been specifically mentioned by a member of the Elders Council – **The Tyne and Wear Heritage Way** -

www.tynewearheritage.org.uk which gives nine sections of walks taking in local heritage with information on how to arrive at the start and leave the finish using public transport. These require reasonable fitness being of moderate difficulty and take about a day to complete but are worth doing. Space prevents detailing these but I will mention one section at random:

SECTION 7 BEAMISH TO WASHINGTON OLD HALL

As a variation, instead of starting at Beamish, you could start at caudey Arch which is reached by the Go Ahead X30/31 Newcastle to Stanley service.

Causey Arch is the oldest surviving railway bridge in the world, built to carry horse-drawn coal waggons. Walk to St Andrew's House, the headquarters of the Tanfield Railway – you could have a ride if it is operating (mainly Sundays). From here walk down the track for about 3 miles to Kibblesworth. This used to be worked by rope-hauled trucks and I can remember them rushing up and down the incline. At Kibblesworth you will join the walk to Washington Old Hall.



35 REDUCED MOBILITY For those with reduced mobility who are unable to walk very far, I would recommend you look at the publication from Wellbeing for Life (the Elders Council's group in Jesmond) which is on the Elders Council website. Again, constraints of space prevent too much detail here. However, of the trips listed in the document I recommend:

Bishop Auckland – all the museums are within a short walking distance of the bus stop in the Market Place.

Beamish – bus stops right outside the museum and there is accessible transport between sites.

Alnwick Gardens – a short walk from the bus stop.

A ride on the AD122 along Hadrian's Wall or the bus between Alnwick and Wooler.

Another nice place to visit is **Saltwell Park in Gateshead**. Catch the 53/4 from Market Street – again adjacent bus stop.

Happy travelling! Bill Harbottle!

*Photos: **Nick Lambert** and **Bill Harbottle** and Creative Commons*