

Annual Trip to Guisborough and Whitby - Written by Heather Page



Once again we were looking forward to our annual bus trip on Saturday, 30 June. Our destination this year was to the market town of Guisborough for a coffee stop, then on to the glorious seaside town of Whitby situated at the mouth of the River, Esk.

As usual we met at Church to board a Chris Cooper luxury coach greeted by our cheerful driver Chris (his jokes don't get any better!!). They are saying this summer is as good as in 1976 so we were very happy the sun was shining and off we went. After the short coffee stop at Guisborough we arrived at Whitby to the majestic site of the abbey, the harbour and hundreds of visitors!

① When we got off the coach some of us decided to board an open topped tour bus. The bus took us through the town right up to the abbey so we didn't have to walk the 199 steps to the top! There were stops on the way so we could get on and off as we wished. Our knowledgeable tour guide gave us a pocket-sized history of Whitby and its influential sons and daughters.

② The earliest record of a permanent settlement is in 656, and it was the place where Hilda founded the first abbey. The monastery was destroyed by Viking raiders in 867 and another monastery was founded in 1078 by the Normans. It was in this period that the town gained its current name, *Whitby* (from the Norse, "white settlement")

③ Whitby has an established maritime, mineral and tourist heritage. The fishing port developed during the Middle Ages supporting important herring and whaling fleets and it was at the nearby fishing village of Staithes that Captain Cook learned seamanship. In the mid 18th-19th century there were bustling shipyards, roperies and sail yards in Whitby and ships such as HMS Bark, Endeavour, Resolution and Adventure were built there. But by the mid the 19th century the shipbuilding and whaling industries were in decline.

④ Tourism started in Whitby during the Georgian period and developed further on the arrival of the railway in 1839. Its attraction as a tourist destination is enhanced by the North York Moors National Park and its Heritage Coastline.

⑤ Whitby is of course famous for its association with the horror novel *Dracula*. The Victorian writer Bram Stoker spent several holidays here. He would stay in the Duke of York at the bottom of the 199 steps – the very spot where *Dracula* would reach England's shores aboard a shipwrecked boat in the 1897 classic Gothic novel. There are evening *Dracula* Tours with Whitby Walks, and the famous twice-yearly goth music festival, the Whitby Goth Weekend.

⑥ Whitby Jet was mined by the Romans and Victorians and became fashionable as jewellery during the 19th century. It comprises an unusually pure and hard form of fossilised wood from a species of monkey puzzle tree. Jet not only occurs beneath much of the National Park landscape, but is also more accessible by being exposed in the cliffs. It is regarded as a semi-precious stone which, when polished, takes on an intense waxy lustre of the deepest opaque black, hence the use of the term 'jet-black' in literature since the eleventh century. The rich black colour never fades, and the shine which can be achieved is such that polished jet was even used as mirrors in medieval times.



⑦ After our bus tour we took a stroll along the pier and **checked out the local gift shops! We had built up quite an appetite so of course we had to sample the fish and chips at the famous Magpie Café which is housed in a distinctive black and white building overlooking the harbour, abbey and St. Mary's Church. The café has a long association with fishing and the shipping industry. It was built in 1750 as a Merchant's House and during its history was owned by a member of the Scoresby whaling family. The building later became a shipping office and it is from that time the Magpie ghost, Albert, is reputed to have originated. The premises were converted into a café round about 1939. And the fish and chips were well worth waiting for before our journey home!!

Back to the bus, and on the way home we had to have our obligatory sing-along to our driver's CD collection, so ending another lovely trip with the members of North Shields and friends. Roll on next year!

'Annual Trip to ...Whitby. Right or Wrong?

1. Which different ways can you get up to the abbey?
2. Which came first, the town of Whitby or the monastery?
- 3a. Whitby was important for fishing in the Middle Ages. How did this develop further?
- 3b. What is the connection between Captain Cook, who 'discovered' Australia, and Whitby?
4. Which technical invention helped Whitby to develop as a tourist resort?
5. 'Dracula' tells the story of Dracula's attempt to move from Transylvania to England so that he may find new blood and spread the undead curse. Where does Dracula land in England?
6. What was Whitby jet used for in the nineteenth century? How do you make it look good?
7. What is the name of the most famous fish and chip shop in Whitby?