

## **ANNUAL HOLIDAY MAY 2014 TO NORTHUMBERLAND**

**Report by Brian Buckingham, Hon. Treasurer.**

**Sunday 18<sup>th</sup> May Lymington – Newcastle – Ashington  
– Doxford Hall Hotel**

To save a long coach drive up to Northumberland, 22 of us were picked up at our usual bus stops early on Sunday morning and taken to Southampton Airport where we boarded a Flybe flight to Newcastle. ( One brave soul drove up and met us there). We sensed we were going to foreign parts when we were asked to show our passports. This was re-inforced on arrival at Newcastle when we were met by a guide and a coach driver. The guide gave us a potted introduction to the area as we were driven to Ashington and the Colliery Museum at Woodhorn. The guide's dialect was so strong that some translation was necessary. The Woodhorn Museum painted a very good picture of life in the coal mining areas in its heyday and include the history of it demise in the 1970's.



We arrived at our hotel for the week, Doxford Hall, late in the afternoon and settled into our luxurious surroundings. Mitchellwood Travel did us well with the choice of hotel which had splendid spacious rooms and their friendly staff served us good meals, although there was little choice at dinner time.

Below is a brief resume of the visits made during the holiday.



**Monday 19<sup>th</sup> May. Alnwick Castle and Gardens**

**This property is owned by the Duke of Northumberland. The gardens were tended by a willing band of volunteers with such love and attention that there was not a weed to be seen. The main features were a network of gardens and a spectacular cascading water display with ever changing fountains.**

**Tuesday 20<sup>th</sup> May. Cragside House.**

**This visit to a National Trust property was once the home of Lord Armstrong. He was famous for his inventive engineering skills and for the companies he set up to manufacture everything from nuts and bolts to aircraft and munitions. It was the first house in the world to use hydroelectric power. It also boasts the largest rock garden in the country. We drove home via Seahouses, the home of Grace Darling, and some took the opportunity to visit the museum in her memory and the RNLI lifeboat station.**

**Wednesday 21<sup>st</sup> May. Bamburgh Castle and Lindisfarne.**

**We had perfect weather for this trip; sunshine all the way. Having given Cragside to the NT in payment of death duties, Lord Armstrong bought Bamburgh Castle and completely re-built it. It now houses an impressive display of artifacts from Victorian kitchen equipment to early hand weapons (pikes, muskets and lances).**

**From here the coach took us across the causeway to Lindisfarne, where we explored another castle on Holy Island and Lindisfarne Priory. (The home of St Cuthbert)**

**Thursday 22<sup>nd</sup> May. Durham**



**This was the only really wet day we had, but as we were under cover in the Cathedral and the Town Hall much of the time, it didn't matter. Here the link to St**

Cuthbert was made again as his shrine is in the cathedral.

A lovely university town and well worth a visit. We drove back to the hotel via the Angel of the North and through Newcastle to see some of the sights such as the impressive St James Park Newcastle United football stadium and the Millenium bridge.

Back at the hotel, after dinner we were entertained to Northumberland pipe and fiddle music by Andrew and Margaret Watchorn which made a fitting end to our stay there.

Friday 23<sup>rd</sup> May,



After a leisurely breakfast, we were on our way back to the airport via another NT property. This was Wallington House, walled garden and estate. A quick flight back to Southampton in the afternoon and we were back home by seven.

Many thanks to David Jones for organising a splendid holiday in an area he knows well and thanks to the entertaining guides and coach driver whose local knowledge exceeded all expectation.

Brian Buckingham