

A visit to East Yorkshire: Whitby, Scarborough and Robin Hood Bay



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Title page: Whitby, Scarborough Harbour and Robin Hood's Bay and Beach

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Michael Pierre de Villiers was born in Durban, South Africa. He was trained to World Meteorological Organization class one meteorologist and multi-discipline weather forecaster in the South African Weather Service where he reached the rank of Director. He served on a weather ship in the South Atlantic. He served on World Meteorological Organization expert teams and was World Meteorological Organization rapporteur for the Africa region. He was also a commercial pilot and flying instructor. More recently he was a weather forecaster in the United Arab Emirates, then in England. Now retired.

M. P. de Villiers
PhD MSc MDip (FRMetS CMet retired)
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July Saturday 6th returned Wednesday 10th 2019, we went to Whitby and Scarborough in East Yorkshire. Bus to Birmingham International Station, local train to Birmingham New Street Station. Then Cross Country Trains to York, £136.60 for two off-peak return. All went according to plan. Thoroughly enjoyed the trip. Preferred Whitby to Scarborough.



Our Transdev Coastliner at Whitby about to return to Leeds via York.

From York we travelled on the Transdev Coastliner 840 bus to Whitby a 2 hours 17 minutes trip excluding a comfort stop after 52 minutes at Malton bus station. The busses operate from Leeds, via York to Whitby and Scarborough. Excellent busses. 69 semi-reclining seats, 4g Wi-Fi and USB points (not that we used them), automated GPS managed guide talk of interesting places along the route, scrolling screens showing next stop and audio announcements to assist visually impaired passengers. Isringhausen ISRI seats are installed. Ega coach type upstairs and Civic V3 downstairs. ISRI seats are

ergonomically shaped to ensure a comfortable seating position for long journeys. Windows are tinted double glazed with skylight roof panels, including an emergency exit window incorporated in one of the roof panels. All this in a scheduled bus service, not a touring bus!

While waiting for the bus at the York Station bus stop, there was an interesting example of no nonsense Yorkshire people. Waiting passengers were in a queue. We were near the front. When the bus arrived a small group of teenagers that had been standing off to one side moved to the front of the queue to board first. A 30s something mother with two children was having none of this. Told them to get to the back of the queue and made it clear she was not going to brook any dissent. One could see the other passengers agreed. They obeyed.



Approaching Goathland. The local heritage railway station is in the valley next to the bridge.

Interesting, at times bleak, scenery on the trip to Whitby with the big bus having to negotiate narrow roads through country villages as well as sharply turning and steep sections of the road, such as approaching Goathland with its local heritage railway station on the North Yorkshire Moors Railway that operates between Pickering and Whitby. On the way we passed RAF Fylingdales located on Snod Hill, North York Moors. A radar base that is part of the intelligence-sharing UK and USA Ballistic Missile Early Warning System (BMEWS). Its primary purpose is to give warning of an impending ballistic missile attack (the Cold



The moor with Fylingdales in the distance.

War 4 minutes warning). Its secondary role is the detection and tracking of orbiting objects. It is part of the USA Space Surveillance Network. The third function is a UK Satellite Warning Service for the UK. It tracks foreign spy satellites, so that secret UK activities in the UK can be carried out when they are not overhead. Data is used by the armed services, defence manufacturers, research organisations and universities. This is not spying. The information is freely available on the Internet.

From the bus stop in Whitby next to the railway station, it was a few minutes walk to the narrow Loggerhead's Yard alleyway where we spent 2 nights at the charming and old, narrow 2 story Thimble Cottage with narrow winding stairs. Price £281 for 2 nights. Best we could get at fairly short notice.



The small entrance in Baxtergate Road.

At the opposite end of the lane at the Baxtergate Road, entrance is via a small opening one has to stoop to get through, which is part of the Old Smuggler, now a café. Previously the Old Ship, it is believed to have been built in 1401. The narrow entrance and lane are believed to be part of the many ginnels (a Yorkshire and Lancashire word for narrow passageways or alleys) found in Whitby that were perfect places not to be spotted when smuggling alcohol. Attached to the building is an old figurehead, all that remains of a French smuggling lugger that was captured in the early 1800s and demolished. Hence the alley name Loggerheads Yard.



The living statue artist.

Retracing our steps out of the lane, one is immediately in the harbour area. Being a sunny and warm summer's day, the place was packed with day trippers from inland with ice cream sellers, pleasure cruise operators and a particularly good living statue artist on a tricycle who played an amusing jingle when one dropped money in his collection container, which pleasantly startled the giver.

After a long afternoon walk around the harbour area, we went to the cliff top ridge above Whitby Sands to the Whalebone Arch.

It commemorates the time when Whitby was an important whale processing port. Also there, is a memorial statue to the famous Captain Cook who served his sailing apprenticeship at Whitby. We then bought fish and chips and retired to our accommodation with wine and cider bought at the nearby Co-operative supermarket.



British Rail Pacer arriving at Whitby.

Sunday morning, after a light breakfast and while Roz was getting prepared for the day out, I went across the road to the train station to see the arrival of the first suburban Northern Trains train of the day, a British Rail (Derby built) Pacer class 142 diesel multiple-unit passenger twin car train. Seating capacity is 74 passengers per two car set. The Pacer was intended as a short-term solution to a shortage of rolling stock some twenty years ago. The body is based on a Leyland National bus chassis. Excessive flange squeal can be heard on tight curves

due to the long wheelbase and lack of bogies. It has a double axle truck directly attached to the chassis at each end of the car and often results in a rough ride. One axle per truck is powered. All Northern Trains Pacers were withdrawn in November 2020. I am not a train spotter.



Whitby view from St Mary's Church and the abbey ruins.

We then set off over the River Esk to the south via the Bridge Street swing bridge and up the steep 199 steps to St Mary's church (dating back to 12th century Norman times) where there is a bird's eye view of riverside Whitby then a walk around the nearby Abby ruins that dominates the eastern skyline. The Grade 1 listed Whitby Abbey was a 7th-century Christian monastery, later a Benedictine abbey. The Abbey contents were confiscated by the crown under Henry VIII during the Dissolution of the Monasteries (1536 and 1545). The ruined abbey continued to serve as a landmark for the river entrance to Whitby. December 1914, the abbey sustained considerable further damage when it was shelled by two German battlecruisers. Apparently,

they were aiming for the nearby coastguard signal station. Next to the abbey is the Whitby Brewery. We resisted the temptation to partake of their hospitality and ales, being cider and wine imbibers.



A tree stump wood carving in Pannett Park.

We returned to Whitby wharf side via Aelfleda Terrace and the quaintly named Caedmon's Trod, a paved path with steps at intervals through a narrow greenbelt. Caedmon's Trod is named after the earliest recognised English poet who lived at the abbey. After lunch seated at the wharf, we

walked uphill through the west side of the town to Pannett Park. The Park, in existence since 1928, was bought by Robert Elliot Pannett who bought the land to prevent it falling into the hands of speculative builders. In his will he left the land to the town for the creation of a public park and a building to house and preserve his collection of works of art, which is now the Whitby Museum and Pannett Art Gallery. Apart from an excellent view of surrounding Whitby the extensive paths are ideal for a good exercising walk while viewing some large stone statues, such as one of a crab (not that interesting) and wood carvings made from the remains of old tree stumps.

Back at the lodging, I again went across the road to the station to see the late afternoon arrival of North Yorkshire Moors Railway train from Pickering. The train consisted of carriages in the post 1948 British Railways two tone crimson and cream livery. The engine was the London North Eastern Railway (LNER) B1 class 61264, built in 1947. It was one of the wartime utility mixed-traffic locomotives built for general passenger and freight duties from 1942 to 1952. The first engine of the class was named "Springbok" in honour of a visit by the South African leader Jan Smuts. This locomotive was withdrawn from service in 1965 and restored to its original LNER black by the Thompson B1 Locomotive Trust (LNER).



LNER locomotive and British Railway train at Whitby and the very popular Duke of York pub.

That evening, we returned to the east side of the river to the northern end of Church Street to the Duke of York pub near the 199 steps and overlooking the Whitby harbour entrance. We had a window table with an excellent view and excellent food.

The next day we were at the bus stop to our next destination, 2 nights at Scarborough. Travelled on the Arriva double decker Volvo Wright Eclipse MAX bus service from Middlesbrough. Busses also good, but not as good as the Coastliner. Trip 1 hour and 10 minutes. The bus terminus is next to the railway station. So, I had to pop in to see if there were any trains. Waiting to depart was a First Transpennine Express class 185 Desiro diesel multiple-unit (DMU) in an attractive livery. Built by Siemens in Germany for First Transpennine Express who operates them either as 2 or 3 car units. Also at the station (unpowered), was a First



Diesel unit and DMU at Scarborough.

Transpennine Express Class 68 No. 68031 Felix in the same livery. The Class 68 is a mainline mixed traffic diesel-electric locomotive.

Happy with that, we walked to our lodging about half a kilometre away at the Marine Residence in Belmont Road where we left our light luggage as it was too early to check in and went walk about. We headed south along the Esplanade, which is on top of the rather high ridge adjacent to the beach, passing the Spa complex below to the South Sands Cliff Lift, actually a funicular, down to the beach. When created in 1873, it was the first funicular in the UK. Originally it used water as a counterweight. Two gas engines pumped sea water to the upper station to fill the top car. Steam pumps were installed in 1879. By 1947 it was electrified, refurbished and automated in 1997.



View of Scarborough from the funicular and passing the upward car.

We then walked northward along the beach beyond the Spa complex where orchestra performances take place in the Sun Court Enclosure, past the Spa Footbridge where there were many Kittiwakes nesting in ledges on the piers supporting the arch across the road to the foreshore, then on to the beachfront and the Royal National Lifeboat Institute house before buying a late take away lunch at Tesco and returning to our lodging to check in.

Later in the afternoon we headed north again along the foreshore and uphill to 12th century St Mary's Church where novelist Anne Bronte is buried. The church was badly damaged in the civil war, rebuilt in the 17th century and restored in the 19th century.



Views from the Castle ruin. The harbour to the south and the coast to the north.

Then it was onward and upward again to the ruins of Scarborough Castle. Set on a high headland jutting out to sea eastward of the town there is an excellent view of Scarborough and the coasts to the north and south. Within a large walled area with strategic turrets, is the most prominent remain of the castle, the castle keep situated in the westernmost part. A keep is a fortified tower within a castle. It was the Lord's residence as well as a last line of defence.



The Scarborough Castle Keep remains.

Notice boards provide comprehensive information. The keep was built between 1158 and 1164 by order of King Henry II. It had a basement with three floors above. The four corners had turrets extending to about 30 metres above ground. It was badly damaged during the Civil War in 1645 while the west wall was demolished by order of the Cromwell Parliament in 1649. Dotted around the walled area are foundation remains of the King's Hall, a King John's Chamber Block and a Roman signal station. There is also evidence of a Bronze Age settlement. The

Gatehouse is still in existence, serving as the entrance and tourist shop. The Master Gunner's House, built in 1748, is now a tearoom serving hot and cold snacks, cakes, tea and coffee. The same day Whitby Abbey was fired on by two German warships during World War I, 16 December 1914, they fired more than 500 shells at the town and castle, killing 17 people and seriously wounding 80 (Wilkinson, 2016).



Views during the walk down to the bay.

The next morning, we were back at the bus terminus and on a bus back to Whitby, but only as far as Robin Hood Bay just over a half an hour away. The wider extent of Robin Hood's Bay is a small town. Its real attraction is the original small Robin's Hood Bay village. Set in a steep ravine it consists of a maze of tiny streets that is reached by a steep and narrow road to the sea.

The village had a tradition of smuggling with a reputed network of subterranean passageways linking the houses. Smuggling to avoid tax duty was rife along the Yorkshire coast late in the 18th century. Ships brought rum, brandy, gin, expensive wines, tobacco, tea and luxury items such as perfumes and silk from the continent that was distributed by contacts on land. Wool would be smuggled outbound. At the height of the smuggling Robin Hood's Bay, for its size, was said to be the wealthiest place in England (Labistour, 2015).

Back in Scarborough we had time to walk in the Italian Gardens. Begun in 1911 the gardens are Grade II listed. Features include an ornate lily pond and two large classical pavilions at either end of the gardens that lead to a series of terraces down to an area of formally laid flower beds. A soothing and peaceful walk.



Wednesday morning 10th it was a one hour and 45 minutes 843 Coastliner bus trip back to York and an uneventful reverse of our outbound trip by train to home. A most enjoyable trip. Sunny and warm in Whitby, mostly cloudy but warm and dry in Scarborough.

Back at York Railway Station.

References

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