

NORTHERN ARCHITECTURAL HISTORY SOCIETY

www.northernarchitecturalhistory.org.uk

TOUR OF RECENT WORKS AT BELSAY HALL NORTHUMBERLAND

By kind invitation of English Heritage
Wednesday 10th April 2024



Built by the de Middletons, Belsay castle is a tower house dating from the 14th century, to which the same family added a manor house in the early 17th century. Despite extensive remodelling in the mid-nineteenth century it subsequently fell into disuse.

Having returned from a honeymoon tour of Germany and Greece, in 1807 Sir Charles Monck (born Middleton) abandoned the castle in favour of building anew to his own designs clearly influenced by the classical and neo-classical architecture he had seen and sketched on his travels. The result is the austere but beautifully proportioned Belsay Hall, an essay in the then not-quite-yet-fashionable Greek Doric style. The quality of its (sandstone) masonry set a new standard both regionally and nationally.

With its medieval castle, Grecian hall and 30-acre Grade I-listed gardens, Belsay is a jewel in the North East. However, in recent years time had begun to take its toll. Consequently English Heritage launched the 'Belsay Awakes' project in autumn 2021 to conserve this historic site.

The ancient masonry of the Castle was in desperate need of repair. In the classical Hall the unique architectural design had caused damp issues for over two hundred years, while in the gardens much of the original planting material had been lost.

The two-year conservation project was completed last August. The castle's medieval stonework has been repaired and the hall's original roof has been replaced. The dilapidated 18th Century Coach House has been transformed into a family friendly café, powered by renewable energy sources. An adventure playground has been created within the woodland with an outdoor classroom and new interpretation across the site. In addition, the gardens have been brought back to their best, maintaining their historic character and restoring previously lost historic views along Crag Wood's scenic walk.

This is an opportunity not to be missed as we have been specially invited to tour the site to view the recent works, guided by Cheryl Moore of English Heritage. Further information is included on the accompanying booking form.

The tour will commence at 10:00 a.m. on Wednesday 10th April 2024 and is expected to last for three hours. If this tour is fully booked (limited to a group of 15) another will be arranged to commence at 2:00 p.m. on the same day. Please try to arrive on site some 10-15 minutes before the tour starts and foregather at the admissions point. Tour(s) will start promptly at the time(s) set.

Belsay is approximately 14 miles north-west of Newcastle on the A696. Transport to and from the site is to be by members' own means – public transport is not available. There is ample free parking on site. For SatNav use NE20 0DU.

Those able to offer - and those needing - lifts are asked to indicate this on the booking form.

The café and shop on site will both be open.

There will be no charge for this tour, although donations towards the work of English Heritage will no doubt be welcome.

NAHS Visit to Belsay Wednesday 10th April 2024 – Booking Form

Please return this form (electronically or by post) to:
Chris Downs, 8 Holmside Place, Heaton, Newcastle upon Tyne NE6 5AJ
E-mail: chris-downs@outlook.com Tel: (0191) 2760060

Book early to avoid disappointment (and to give me time to arrange lifts and a second tour if needed) and by **Wednesday 3rd April 2024** at the very latest.

Name/s.....

Address.....

Contact E-mail..... Phone No.....

I/We would like a lift to (and return from) Belsay from.....

I/We are able to offer lifts to persons from general area of

Any pre-existing medical conditions of which emergency services may need to be informed in the event of accident or illness (This information will be retained by the organiser for the purposes of this tour only and will be divulged to medical personnel only in the event of an incident occurring) and any person we should contact in the event of emergency:

Condition:

Emergency Contact:

All bookings received will be acknowledged. If you do not receive an acknowledgement your booking has not been registered.