

Seaham Harbour Marina



Visitor Information



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Front cover picture courtesy of Paul Levitt

Background

After the demise of the pits in the early 1990s the North Dock fell into a semi derelict state. The redevelopment of the Dock was one of the key objectives of the Seaham Regeneration Strategy undertaken in 1994. The aim being to boost local enterprise, jobs and income, increase visitor numbers to the town and wider area, and transform the North Dock (now known as Seaham Harbour Marina) into a new modern marina with facilities and amenities to rival any across the North East.

In 2006 the restoration of the limekilns, viewing areas and secondary sea defense work were completed.

By 2012, the flagship building 'The Waterside' (comprising 12 commercial units) had been created and now offer first class businesses such as cafes, ice cream parlour, gift shop and a travel agent. The construction of a marina using floating pontoons to accommodate up to 96 leisure craft was also completed, along with the reinstatement of the dock gates (located to the original position of the abandoned dock gates) and improvements to the public access, boat storage facility, slipway and launch facilities.

In partnership with East Durham Heritage Group, we have developed the former lifeboat house into a visitor attraction which is now home to the restored George Elmy lifeboat.

2017 saw the completion of 'The Castleside' building, home to a café, fitness studio, beach school and outdoor activity centre.

Red Acre Point was the site of the port's first lighthouse and later became a defensive gun emplacement during the Second World War. In 2022/23 the steps leading up to the viewing platform were replaced through the National Lottery Heritage fund programme, enabling access to a viewing platform where visitors can enjoy the breath taking views of the coastline.

Management of the Marina

Seaham Harbour Marina is managed by a Community Interest Company (CIC) which is a not-for-profit organisation. Its principal objective is for a sustainable development that will serve the community. The CIC also aims to provide, and continually improve, facilities for maritime activities.

Introduction

The construction of the harbour at Seaham began in 1828 and was completed in 1831. It was created and owned by the Marquess of Londonderry to facilitate the shipment of coal from his East Durham coalmines. The harbour was further developed in 1898 with extensions which included the addition of the North and South outer breakwaters.

The North Dock was designed as a high tide harbour in which the coal ships entered at high tide, the dock gates were then closed to retain the depths required, then the laden ships departed at high tide.

Due to the constant damage to the dock gates they were removed in 1952 and the North Dock became a small fishing harbour which dried out on low tides. Coal exports were then concentrated to the larger and deeper South Dock.

After the demise of the pits and the decline of the fishing industry through the 1990's the North Dock fell into a semi derelict state. By 2005 there were only 4 fishing boats left operating from the North Dock.

The redevelopment of the Dock was one of the key objectives of the Seaham Regeneration Strategy undertaken in 1994. It was agreed the most appropriate way to bring about the restoration of North Dock was for it to be developed as a marina for leisure craft and as a visitor attraction.

In recent years Durham County Council has worked with Seaham Harbour Dock Company, Friends of North Dock Seaham and the local community to bring about the regeneration of Seaham North Dock.



The North Dock, 1930



The North Dock, 1987



The North Dock today

In 2006 the Council completed phase one of the redevelopment. This phase involved the undertaking of public accommodation works, restoration of the limekilns, viewing areas and secondary sea defense work.



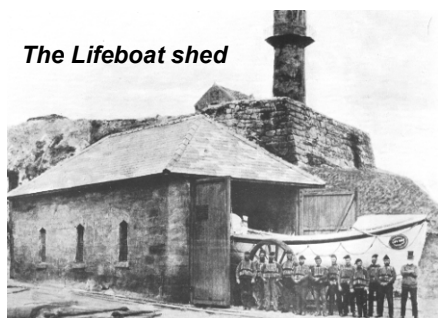
The second phase of the redevelopment completed in 2012, aimed to bring economic life back to the North Dock, by creating conditions to support a working marina.

This includes the creation of the flagship building 'The Waterside' (comprised of 12 commercial units), construction of a marina using floating pontoons to accommodate up to 96 leisure craft, reinstatement of the dock gates, improved slipway and improved public access to areas of the North Dock.



Heritage Centre and Lifeboat

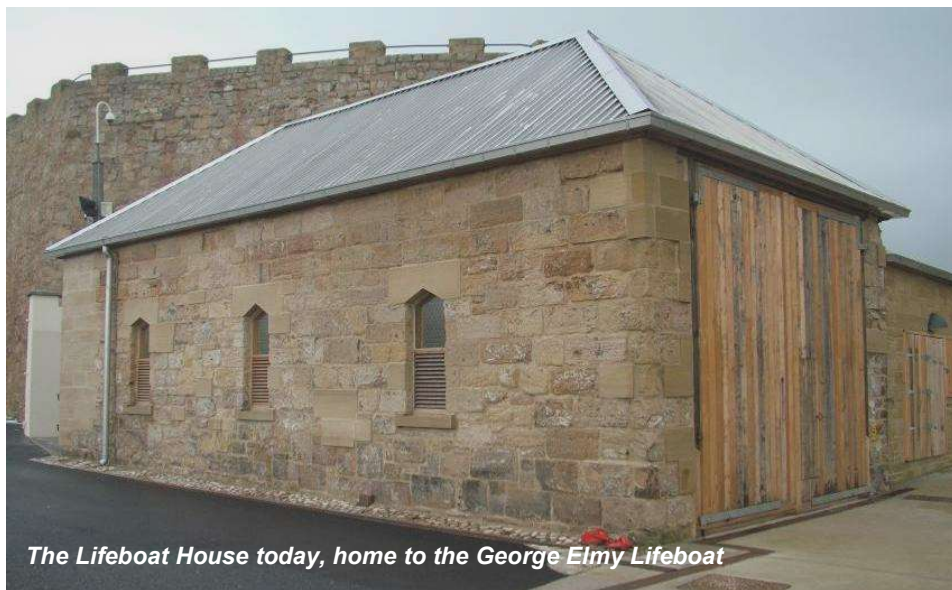
In partnership with East Durham Heritage Group, we have developed the former lifeboat house into a tourist attraction which has become home to the restored George Elmy lifeboat



The Lifeboat shed



Before restoration



The Lifeboat House today, home to the George Elmy Lifeboat

The George Elmy Lifeboat



The George Elmy found on the beach, 17 November 1962

The lifeboat capsized during a rescue off Seaham in November 1962 in which 5 volunteer crew members tragically lost their lives as well as 4 of 5 fishermen who had just been rescued.



Arriving at the docks before restoration

The lifeboat was thought to have disappeared entirely after it had been removed from Seaham by the RNLI after the tragedy. However one of the members of the East Durham Heritage Group spotted the lifeboat for sale on eBay in 2009 and the money was raised to buy it and return it to Seaham.



Being lifted from the water ready to be housed in the Heritage Building, June 2013

A flotilla of RNLI lifeboats from Sunderland, Tynemouth and Hartlepool provided a guard of honour when it sailed back into the Seaham Harbour Marina.

Then and Now

The North Dock has seen many changes over the years. Below are a few of the improvements.



THE MARINA ACCESS ROAD is a relatively new road first established for private vehicle access in the early 1980s. Prior to the road being constructed the only means of access was for pedestrians via the steps at the south west corner of the dock basin.

The small photo on the left shows the improvised access road in the late 1970s in which you can see the coast guard station on top of Red Acre Point and the picture far left showing the road in 2004 following much needed resurfacing works.

THE EAST QUAY was an integral part of the north dock for many years. It held some fairly substantial infrastructure for the dock gate operations, engine room and pumping station, and later for the old steam crane to lift out and store fishing boats. You can see from the small inset picture, taken in the 1950s, of what it was used for. Nowadays the east quay does not represent a storage area but can be seen as an area that creates an excellent viewing platform for the marina, surrounding historic dock walls and seascape. The East Quay has now created public interest with the installation of the Helmsman by the East Durham Heritage Group.



THE SLOPE BEACH used to be the main area of Red Acre until it was enclosed due to the building of the North Pier in 1905. The area is of great importance because of the laying of the foundation stones. The first in 1830 and the 2nd in 1898 which still can be seen near the access steps to the beach.

The area also holds a lot of history due to the creation of the Swimming Club in the 1800s which survived until the 1970s. Many local children learned to swim in this area during nearly a century of the swimming clubs existence.

Between the 1950s and the 1990s it wasn't unusual for fishermen to build cabins in the most unlikely of places as proven in the picture above which was taken in 2004, before the start of the redevelopment of the marina. The area is now used as a viewing area.



RED ACRE POINT was the site of the port's first lighthouse and later became a defensive gun emplacement during the Second World War. This landmark has a fascinating history behind it and now serves as a viewing platform where visitors can enjoy the coastline.

The steps leading up to the viewing platform have been replaced thanks to SeaScapes, Seaham Marina Community Interest Company and National Lottery players through the National Lottery Heritage Fund programme.



Steps to the viewing platform completed in 2023

Businesses at the Waterside



The Waterside

THE WATERSIDE has a fantastic range of cafes, restaurants and shops

- You can book your next holiday with **Hello Sunshine**
- Arrange a mortgage or Will with **Taylor Hall**
- Young children would love the fun sessions on offer at **Playology Beach School & Learning Studio**.
- Enjoy holistic therapy at **Dark of the Moon Wellness Hub**.

- **The LookOut Café**
- **Bulan Burger Joint**
- **Nicey Icey**
- **The Pancake Kitchen**
- **Seaside Chic**
- **Sea View Sweets 'n' Gifts**.



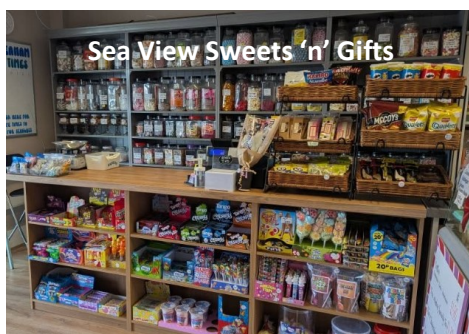
Nicey Icey



Bulan Burger Joint



The LookOut Cafe



Sea View Sweets 'n' Gifts



Seaside Chic



DOTM



PLAYOLOGY



Businesses at THE CASTLESIDE

THE CASTLESIDE is home to **East Coast Fitness** offering boot camps and personal training, and **Adventure Access** at **Seaham Harbour** delivering watersports activities including kayaking and stand-up-paddle boarding.



