

NORTH Tyneside STEELBAND...

Their longest BUSKING TOUR of the UK yet!

Eleven young members of North Tyneside Steelband planned and completed a nine-day busking tour from Lands End in the South of the UK to Glasgow in the North to raise money for a new minibus.



The venture was the players' idea, as they wanted to do something practical to raise funds. Sixteen year old, Ewan Mood, from Whitley Bay said, "We really enjoyed this, we became quite a slick, efficient unit during the nine days, and planned it so that we were in Newcastle, close to home, on the day our GCSE results came – it was great!"

The tour saw them play for four hours a day in Penzance, Bristol, Birmingham, Sheffield, Leeds, York, Newcastle, Largs and Glasgow; a demanding schedule for any musician.

Each city centre venue was arranged through local councils who were very cooperative; the band has already received enquiries to return from three of these councils. North Tyneside Council generously donated the use of a minibus for this trip. "The trip was hard work for all of us, but it has really raised the profile of the band and North Tyneside around the country as there has been so much positive feedback" said Dave Edwards, musical director. "Busking may seem an odd thing to do for young people, but it is just a development from the troubadours of the middle ages and is a great way of perfecting musical skills in a real environment whilst bringing some live music into lots of peoples' lives."

With their own sponsorship and money collected on route, they have so far raised over £8,000 with some still to come in. Donations are still being accepted at www.justgiving.com or on the bands own website www.northtynesidesteelband.org.uk. This is enough to buy a good used minibus to replace the present one, which is on its last legs and used for outreach activities across the region as well as travelling to around sixty performances a year.

There was no time to rest when they got back home as the band has quite a heavy schedule of rehearsals and gigs. Anyone who would like to learn to play the steel pan as part of the band [there are no age limits] can contact **Dave Edwards** on **0775 360 4281** or dave@steelbandsnorth.org.uk. Practice sessions are on Tuesday evenings at The Langdale Centre, Howdon.