
9 Sugar Sands Bay

Theme: Ancient rivers, seas and life

Location

Near Low Stead Farm [NU 258 163], 2 kilometres east-northeast of Longhoughton. Walk north along the foreshore.

Description

This bay is a fantastic place to see the different layers of rock that were once sand, peat, mud and coral reefs and the fossils of the animals and plants that lived here 325 million years ago in the Carboniferous period.

All these different layers of sandstone, shale, limestone and coal tell us that the environment repeatedly changed from fast flowing rivers, to swampy forests, coastal lagoons, to coral seas. They also show that sea level kept rising and falling many times; probably because the Earth's polar ice caps were melting and then expanding. So we know that climate change has happened before — many times.

As well as fossils of sea shells (brachiopods) you can find fossil corals, sea lilies (crinoids) and the burrows of ancient animals.

The Bay is well-known botanically as a site for seaside centaury, and several sedges including distant sedge, which is not common in Northumberland. In the autumn Agrimony can be found and several salt loving plants such as orache.

Photographs

(Photo 09-1) Brachipod in rocks, Sugar Sands bay.

(Photo 09-2) Alternating sedimentary rock layers in Sugar Sands Bay cliff.



(Photo 09-1) Brachipod in rocks, Sugar Sands bay.



(Photo 09-2) Alternating sedimentary rock layers in Sugar Sands Bay cliff.