
46 Lynemouth Beach

Theme: Heritage and mining

Location

Lynemouth Beach is about 5 kilometres northeast of Ashington [NZ 305 910].

Description

Along many beaches on the Northumberland coast, from Tynemouth to Berwick-upon-Tweed, are stretches of coal and black coaly shale debris in the sand. At Lynemouth Beach they can be extensive.

The coal and shale are Carboniferous — so around 320 million years old, but they have been washed up by recent tide and wave action. The coal comes mainly from colliery waste which only a few decades ago was dumped into the sea from coal mines near the coast. Coal is lighter than almost all other rocks and so it separates out and gets deposited last by the tide. The other source of some of the coal could be coastal and undersea outcrops of coal seams.

Sea coal may have a wider meaning elsewhere and historically, but here in the northeast it describes the coal deposited on the beaches, which was shovelled into horse-drawn carts taken down to the edge of the sea.

In the summer of 2021 man-made waste other than coal was still evident here; an old colliery landfill site was actively being eroded by the sea. So while this may not be the prettiest photograph in the book, it does serve to remind us of the enduring damage we are capable of causing to this precious environment, and that humans are, knowingly and unknowingly, creating their own unappealing geological period — the Anthropocene. A clean-up operation is being undertaken by Northumberland County Council, but until it is complete this is not the most picturesque place to watch rocks or wildlife.

Photographs

(Photo 46-1) Manmade waste, colliery landfill, at Lynemouth Beach

(Photo 46-2) Sea coal on the beach at Lynemouth.



(Photo 46-1) Manmade waste, colliery landfill, at Lynemouth Beach



(Photo 46-2) Sea coal on the beach at Lynemouth.