

Erupting News

SIR, I was amused to read your travel article last week promoting the thrill of a week's holiday in the shadow of Mount Etna.

South Shields has rather an awkward treasure. The coal-pits have thrown out heaps of culm, or coal refuse; not good enough for sale, but, still, so rich in fuel-stuff that it might pay to cook it for gas. Anyway, the culm-heaps were good enough fuel to catch fire on their own account, smouldering for at least twenty years, in defiance of the mayor and corporation.

Time and again rows of dwellings have been built on top of the culm. Then the fire would break out and burn a street or two. The South Shields volcano has been behaving itself for some years, but it is not by any means proved to be extinct, and a new outbreak would cause much excitement on the Tyneside.

Yours etc., ROBERT WALKER

At Ease

SIR, I would like to take issue with your article last month regarding the morphology of sand dunes. You stated that the angle of repose of dry sand is 25° – this is incorrect and is actually the angle of repose for moist sand.

The steepest angle of descent of the slope relative to the horizontal plane for dry sand is actually 34°.

I hope that you will publish this letter, so as to save any unnecessary suffering to those basing their efforts on your poor research.

Yours etc., MR. W. I. KIPPY

ERRATA

In the last edition of the *Sandpaper* we incorrectly stated that 'the Bents are the owners of Bentley House'. This should have read 'the Bentleys are the owners of Bents House'. We apologise for any problems caused.



NATURE DIARY

A late-summer squall moved in from the North Sea as I stood on South Pier watching a mixed group of terns at the tide line. As so often with birds, one is amazed by their feats of endurance – among this group were a couple of the less common roseate terns that will be over-wintering in Ghana. For now, though, they were enduring the buffeting of an English summer!

If the rain wasn't enough to faze our feathered friends, it wasn't encouraging me to stay. I cut through the dunes towards the Donkey Track. It was a shame the weather was as it was, as one could lose one's self for many a happy hour botanising this patch.

It holds nothing exceedingly rare but is studded with colour and variety of texture. Look closer and you will find bird's foot trefoil, cock's foot, red fescue and common restharrow. More obvious are the clumps of marram grass and the blueish-hued lyme grass.

Historically the seeds of this latter grass were milled to make flour, and indeed the Vikings cultivated this plant for just such a purpose when they settled in Iceland. Cultivation continued there up until the early 1900s. Maybe the ghosts of the crew of the Viking ship lost on Herd Sands come by night to gather the seed heads. Next time you are down that way, stop and listen.

CLASSIFIED

FOR SALE 125 tons of sand £100. Prefer to sell as one lot but will accept £1 a ton. Buyer collects. Not suitable for building.

Call Keith on Shields 76587

SOFT SANDAL SHUFFLE

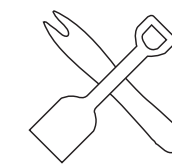
New Craze Hits Shields

If you go down to the beach today you're in for a big surprise. Dance enthusiasts among the local residents are hauling improvised dance-floors out onto the sands, setting up gramophones and dancing their cares away.

People of all backgrounds, colours and ages are present and there is never any trouble – the music unites them. Keith, a collier at Westoe, tells us "there is nothing better than a good boogie to forget the trials of a long shift and to meet new friends". He continues, "when I get down to the beach, the darkness of my day is lifted".

Sometimes a live band is present to perform the latest tunes and really get the beach jumping. Betty, a clerk at the Corporation, also sings in a band. "Oh, yes" she says "our band plays down here quite often – I think they like us!".

Shields is beginning to get a name for itself, and dancers from further afield are coming along to join in the fun. We met Joan from Sunderland. She gets the bus along with a group of friends and doesn't mind mixing with the locals, or 'Sand Dancers' as they jokingly call them. Careful Joan, aren't you now a 'Sand Dancer' too?!



GOLDEN SHIELDS

“North East's finest stretch of beaches”

South Shields is rightly proud of its sandy beaches, so we sent our correspondents out on to the Promenade to find out what makes this mile-long stretch of coast so special. Things didn't start too well though, as Darlington surveyor Richard Richardson gave us his view:

“Some of the land is occupied as a garden. This is very barren, being all sandy land and broken ground; in wet weather it keeps small sheep and young cattle.”

We left Mr. Richardson to his

surveys and approached a more contented group of visitors. They were enjoying a drink or two at one of the sea-front hostelries and told us of their delight at how popular Shields has become “with all who delight in Old Neptune's salty embraces that ample facilities are provided to ensure extracting the maximum of health and happiness from the sea.”

A group of doctors at the next table couldn't resist joining in the conversation adding that “the climatic and hygienic resources of the place are such as are calculated

to brace up and invigorate the frames of sojourners in the large towns and dusty interior.”

Everybody was becoming quite merry by this point, so we made our excuses and left. Next we dropped into the Tourist Information Centre where they told us that South Shields has “Everything for the family” and “the North East's finest stretch of beaches.” A bit biased perhaps, but confirmed by our next interviewee.

A group of businessmen were sat enjoying the view from the elevated walkway and one of their number was only too happy to offer that: “South Shields boasts a very active Corporation, who have done much to make the town what it is – the ‘Brighton of Durham’.”

We finished our ad-hoc consultation with the wise words of local man Billy Purvis, who told us not to forget that “North Shields is the sunny side, but South Shields the money side”. Well, today Billy, it was sunny here too!

GRIT SAND

This current edition of *The South Shields Sandpaper* was commissioned by Grit & Pearl for South Tyneside Council as part of the South Shields Seafront Interpretation Project 2011. Thanks to Seachange and Arts Council England for their support.

Thanks also to staff at South Tyneside Local Studies Library for their help with research and images.

All stories researched and edited by artist Stuart Mugridge.



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SAND GLORIOUS SAND!

South Shields' Fine Grain



Oh dear! Some people can't seem to just relax and take it easy on the beach. I was enjoying some down-time on South Beach recently and couldn't help but notice a little group on their hands and knees peering intently at the ground. I was intrigued. Were they praying? Had they lost a contact lens?

I approached them and asked what they were up to and they introduced themselves as the North East branch of the British Society of Arenophiles – that's sand collectors to you and me! They were enjoying a day out on their local patch, but were happy to interrupt their day and tell me more about the grainy stuff.

Apparently there is an International Standard (ISO 14688 in case you are interested) that categorises sand as a material consisting of particles between 0.063 and 2.0mm in diameter. Any finer and it's silt or any larger it is gravel. It's an exact science.

The arenophiles were a mixed bunch but all were passionate about their hobby. In fact one of their number, Bill Blake, became quite poetic and bade me farewell with the following lines: "To see a World

in a Grain of Sand, And a Heaven in a Wild Flower, Hold Infinity in the palm of your hand, And Eternity in an hour". Very poetic sir!

So, next time you are on the beach, don't take what's under your feet for granted, get a little closer and appreciate its finer side.

ANGLERS VICTORIOUS

Brigantes 'Dance'

There was a strong and competitive field for the annual Mouth of the Tyne angling competition last week.

This year's competition was held on the 'money side' and Team Brigantes from South Shields certainly played to home advantage. Despite the quality of the competition they were ahead from the off and never looked back.

Sam Gryles from the regional development squad had this to say: "That bunch were a joy to watch. The way they cast... it was as though they were dancing. We'll certainly be keeping an eye on them for the national squad".

SANDSTORM IN A TEACUP

Steps Taken

With the continuing unpredictability of our climate, boffins have been consulted by the Corporation to devise a scheme that will protect the South Shield's foreshore from the worst ravages of the weather.

"It's about time!" said one local resident. "I walk my dog along here all through the year if I can, but last winter the sand had been blown, right up onto Sea Road, and had buried the old promenade, its balustrade, steps and everything."

The resident – who refused to be named – continued: "If it carries on like this we'll have no beach left and the sea will be lapping at the doors of businesses on Ocean Road!"

But this is where the boffins come in. They recognise the importance of the sand dunes as a sea defence and a spokesperson told the *Sandpaper* that a Dunes Management Plan is to be implemented to stabilise the dunes for at least the next 25 years.



the lost promenade

COMPETITION WINNER

The Winner of last edition's 'Spot the Beach Ball' competition is Mr. R. Scott of South Shields.

SHIELDS WALK 3 with R Walker as your guide

Town and Beach

Distance: 2.5 miles Grade: Easy

Our walk starts at South Shields Metro station, which was opened in 1984. From the bridge that carries the tracks over King Street, one can see east towards the sea-front which is where we'll head now.

Descend the station stairs to King Street and turn right. Pass the Museum and Art Gallery before you reach the crossroads with Mile End Road. Above street level, note the fine detailing of the buildings around you before continuing your walk eastwards to German Street.

This is a good place to stop if you need a bite to eat, as the stretch along here is resplendent with all manner of eateries.

Revivified, continue east through Night Fold and between the Marine Parks (which are, by the way, amongst the most beautiful in the North) until you reach the Union Workhouse on your left, and German Cottage Inn on your right.

From here we will shortly turn south along the Sea Banks but before we do this, let us pass some time in the seafront amusements and, between the dunes, get our first proper sighting of the German Ocean.

Now, let's continue south along the Foreshore. In the distance you will see the promontory of Trow Rocks, and stretching between you and the rocks are almost a mile of golden sands to the left and Bents Recreation Ground to the right.

Once a barren waste, the Foreshore has now been developed for the purposes of recreation and bathing.

The Corporation has placed bathing machines on Herd Sands, and has set apart a certain portion of the foreshore for the use of ladies. The firm sand is also witness to an annual running race. Inshore Mr. Suggett of Bent House Farm has

made the land good, and keeps small sheep and young cattle grazing hereabouts. Bent House was built after the Bentleys had problems accessing their land from the public highway but you won't have that trouble today.

We're near the end of our walk now but can spend a little while exploring the headland of Trow Rocks and enjoying the view back along our route.

This promontory has always been an important defensive position for the Tyne area and has seen various military installations over the years, including an experimental gun that recoiled into a pit once fired.

Now, forget those times of conflict and head back to the foreshore for the end of our walk at the termination of the Shieldsheugh Estate.

HEAD TURNER

Much excitement was caused last week after word got out that Joseph Mallord William Turner was in town.

The renowned brush man was seen taking a pint in the German Cottage after a hard day's work in the area. It is believed that Mr. Turner was making sketches for his forthcoming painting entitled '*Shields on the Tyne*'.

The work is due for release early next year.

CORPORATION NOTICE

SSCA 1896 / VII / 58 - Power to make bye-laws for the protection of bathers

The Corporation may from time to time make bye-laws requiring the owner or lessee of any bathing machine to provide or employ boats boatmen and attendants and to provide life saving apparatus for the purpose of ensuring the safety of bathers and prescribing the qualifications of such boatmen and attendants and the Corporation may employ and pay boatmen for the purpose of protecting persons whilst bathing.

POEM No. 32 by Jake Campbell

Your Move

He stood at the margin
of the waning tide,
jeans rolled up,
socks and shoes hoyed aside.

Seashore fizzed and spumed
away like a slackened
skipping rope, un-plodging
his sepia ankles.

Magnetised by the polished
ten pence piece of the moon
the water had no choice
but to retreat.

Dissipating from beneath
him, the sand lost density
the way a sucked Slush Puppie
loses its syrup.

Wash lines jettied
from the imprints of his toes.
The sea was on a treadmill
and it couldn't keep up.

The thick moulds round his feet
reminded him of years ago, swaying
unsteady as he clopped around
in his father's shoes.

Twice he had to right himself
with neatly flapped arms.
Staring at the horizon, he imagined
her shingle-whipped lasso.

As the tide pivoted
on the North Sea, he looked up
and whispered
your move.

