

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Measured Response

SIR, It always irks me to hear or see in print the measure of sand conveyed as a length. In your last edition you reported Sandhaven as being a 'mile-long stretch' of coast.

As a former council operative regularly responsible for clearing the promenade of storm-strewn sand I can assure you that the correct measure of sand should be expressed in 'tons'.

Yours etc., GEORGE RAIN

Thank You

SIR, I would like to take this opportunity to thank all the friendly folk of South Shields who attended my recent lecture on psammophiles.

There was a packed house at The Captains Suite and I found the audience a very enquiring and knowledgeable one. Just a reminder that my new book, *Fine Grain*, will be published in early October.

Yours etc., SAMUEL MOSS

SAND ON THE RUN

The annual 'Sand Race' was held on Herd Sands last Saturday. There was a 500-strong field competing for the trophy and £20 first prize.

Conditions were ideal for the thirty-seventh running of the event, which takes in one lap of a clockwise circuit on the beach from north to south.

The early jostling for position gave way to a four-man lead group who pushed home their advantage until the cat-and-mouse tactics kicked in near to the finish line. First man home in a time of 19min 02sec was Andy Taylor from Whitley Bay Wanderers, followed two seconds later by Shields Harrier Dean Well.

First female home in a new record time of 20:44 was local lady C. Cookson running in the colours of Wingless Birds AC.



NATURE DIARY

High summer on the sands and the flocks of waders have been replaced by crowds of plodgers, sunbathers and fun-seekers. On quieter days the lucky ornithologist may just spot a late kittiwake heading out to ocean but otherwise we might be best finding other entertainment.

For me, summer is a time to concentrate on things closer to hand, or closer to foot to be precise. The northern dunes and pier area is alive at this time of year with a carpet of flowers - the immediate reward is in the collective rather than the individual specimen.

There is nothing particularly rare here although there have long been rumours of narrow-leaf pepperwort, evening primrose, the deadly thorn apple and other aliens that have sprung up from seed brought with the foreign ballast, and which are elsewhere unknown in this county. Common or not, these plants deserve our attention.

As we focus in on this pointillist's masterpiece we can pick out a variety of grasses studded with the white of clover, the blushing yellow of bird's foot trefoil and the pink of common restharrow. This latter was once a great treat for local children who chewed on the liquorice-tasting roots.

As I raise my head and adjust my eyes to the distance I catch a glimpse of a harbour porpoise a little way out to sea. Binoculars rummaged for in my rucksack and the creature has kindly stayed long enough for me to study.

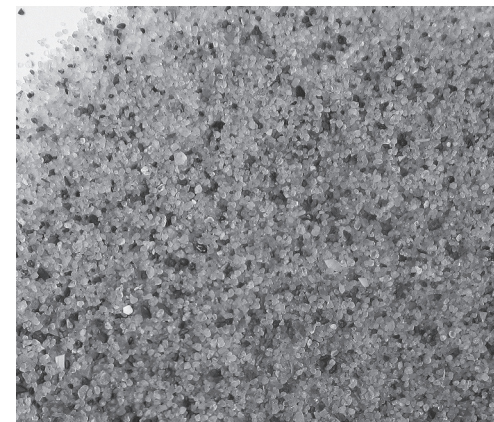
A great end to the day and a good reminder to keep an eye on what is round about you as well as right under your nose!

SAND FOCUS

The first in a new Sandpaper column sees a lovely sample sent in by Mrs. L. of Westoe. Here's Mrs. L. to tell you in her own words:

"I collected this sample on a lovely sunny day last August. I found it near the old first aid post up at the far end of the sands. The day was quite breezy but even so the sand was warm to the touch.

"When I got the sample home and looked more closely I was amazed by the variety of the grains. The colours range from almost black, through oranges and peaches, to almost clear. The grains are striped, green, smooth, rounded... really varied and between 0.3 and 0.6mm across. This is a really good reminder of a lovely day on the sands."



Have you got a sand sample like Mrs. L.? Then send it in and share your experience.

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COMPETITION WINNER

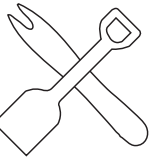
The winner of last edition's 'Spot the Beach Ball' competition is Mr. Idle of Harton Village. Your prize will be on its way to you very soon.

The South Shields



SandPaper

Stuart Mugridge - editor



Summer 2012

there's more than a grain of truth in every story

Free

END OF A GOLDEN ERA?

Analysts to Study Our Sands



Visitors to the town's beaches this summer have been bemused to see huddled groups of figures animatedly discussing what's under their feet.

We've had several reports of these strangers in town and their suspicious goings-on so we thought it was time to dig deeper. Our beach correspondent takes up the story:

It's a lovely bright summer's day at Sandhaven and the sands are busy with all the usual beach activities. But look a little closer and it is clear that some people aren't here just to relax and have fun. Small groups are moving along the beach and collecting samples of sand. What are they up to?

It turns out that they are part of a team of colour analysts from a local university. Apparently this research

project has come about due to the proliferation of this nation's beaches that are, these days, assuming the title of 'golden sands'. It is hoped that this study will help South Shields rise above the masses with a new epithet for our lovely sands.

One of the analysts explains: "We are collecting samples of sand at a number of locations along the shore and at different times of day. The samples will be sent for scanning and their colour averaged to give us a set of colour wavelength data. These data will then be matched to a universally recognised system.

"The colour match will be passed to our designation department to give the sand a unique title. This title can then be used to promote South Shields' unique sands".

We went out onto the sands to ask a

few people for their thoughts:

One seafront businessman, who didn't want to be named, felt that this was a "dumbing down of the sands" and that people ought to appreciate the massive variety of colours that the sands contain. Finally, Mr. Turner, visiting from London, offered enigmatically "light is therefore colour".

This study is set to continue stirring up a lot of discussion locally but you will have to wait until the new year to discover the final results of the research and what colour sand you'll be walking on. 'The Purple Sands of Shields' anyone?

HIGHWAYS NEWS

The cinder path at Tyne Dock will be closed for re-surfacing work the week commencing 23rd May. Travellers are urged to find an alternative route whilst this essential work takes place.

The work is part of wider townscape improvements and will hopefully be a catalyst for further investment.

GRIT SAND

This edition of *The South Shields SandPaper* was commissioned by Grit & Pearl for South Tyneside Council as part of the South Shields Seafront Interpretation Project 2011/2. 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.

DINING OUT

German Cottage Inn



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In the first of a new feature our food correspondent visits the German Cottage Inn on Ocean Road:

I visited this externally unprepossessing hostelry one Saturday night last month. It was murder getting a table – I hadn't booked – but I was able to use my charm with the friendly front-of-house staff and was soon seated at a little table with a sea view.

The promising Ann Metcalfe and her son JW are currently running the Inn. A lively atmosphere was present and I'm guessing that not everybody was here to eat. An excellent glass of house white helped me digest the menu.

All locally sourced I started my meal with an exquisite terrine of rabbit with 'wild dune salad'. The rabbit melted in the mouth and the salad leaves gave a delicately bitter counterpoint to the richness.

Smuggled past the drinkers (who unfortunately were becoming rather too rowdy for my liking) was a splendidly presented fillet of sole Veronique with seasonal vegetables. Again, faultless.

By dessert I was feeling quite intimidated by the other customers and was urged to leave while they did a little business. My date with a sumptuous-looking lemon torte will have to wait for another time.

Hurrying out I settled up and was on my way. Perfect food marred only by the clientele. If Mrs. M. can sort out that problem she's onto a winner.

GREYHOUND RUNS AGROUND

Local pilot Timothy Hogg has run into trouble with the Ministry of Defence for guiding one of their warships onto the sands at South Shields.

Mr. Hogg of Sea Way was piloting The Greyhound into The Tyne last Tuesday morning when the accident happened. It is understood that there was insufficient water under the keel as he led the 424-ton vessel over Herd Sands leaving it stranded on a sand bar.

Many local people were present on the sands when the incident occurred and were able to help evacuate the ship's crew. Several local men, including James Bushell, have been credited by the MoD for their part in saving the ship's 42 guns.



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Hogg, a pilot of 52 year's experience is due to appear before a court martial later in the summer. His defence team are appealing for leniency given his age and previously exemplary service to the maritime community.

LOST & FOUND

LOST on South Beach last week: 3 tonnes of silver sand. Please contact *The SandPaper* with any information. Reward offered.

TAKING SAND TO SHIELDS

We've all heard the old idiom of 'taking coals to Newcastle' but how about 'taking sand to South Shields'? I think we will find most folks in agreement that the town has a goodly supply of the grainy stuff. Or has it?

Many readers will be staggered, I'm sure, to learn that the town's glass industry frequently imports silver sand from Fontainebleau in France.

A group of locals got wind of this trade and asked local MP James Cochran Stevenson to challenge this seemingly pointless activity.

Mr. Stevenson has got right behind the campaign and is petitioning local glass manufacturers to answer his plea of 'what is wrong with our golden sand?'

There was nobody available for comment at any of the companies we contacted but we hope to bring you news of developments in the next edition of *The SandPaper*.

TOP IDEA

A local businessman has come up with a unique solution to those changeable days on the beach.

Mr. Elliott of Market Place, South Shields is offering for sale waterproof silk hats. They look set to become all the rage this summer as they combine style with practicality.

ARTIST'S EASE

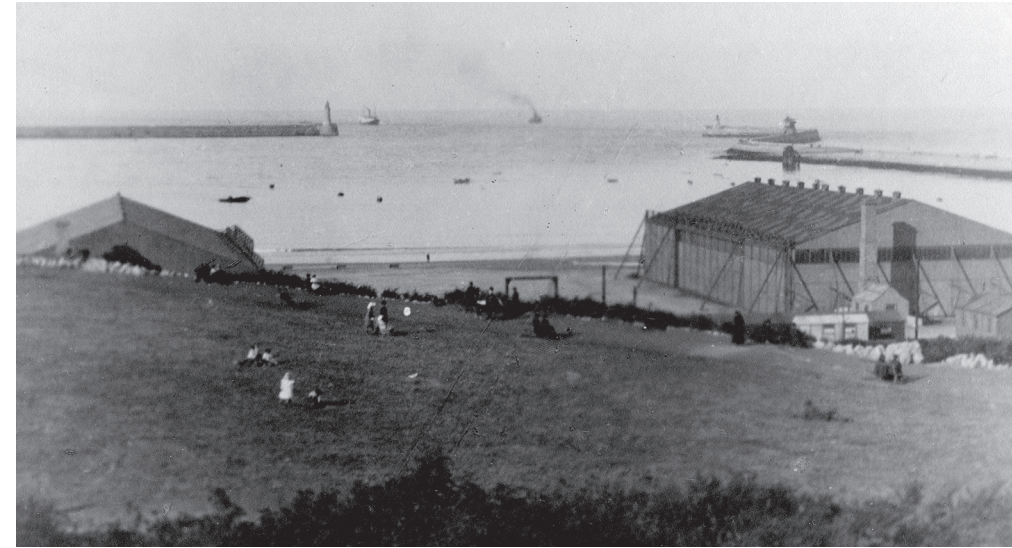
Eminent artist H. G. Gawthorn was in South Shields last week.

Mr. Gawthorn took a break from working on his latest piece, 'For Happy Seaside Outings', when he hired a deckchair on the sands.

With his trademark pipe, white pumps and rolled-up trousers Mr. Gawthorn appears to have enjoyed a relaxing hour or so before returning to his canvas.

PLANE SAILING

Award for Town Airport?



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The town's seafront airport is in the running for a design and excellence award being promoted by the government's architectural advisory board.

A spokesperson for the airport's developers, Furious LLP, said, "We are delighted to finally receive recognition for what we believe is a ground-breaking model of sustainable transport built in partnership with the regional development agency.

We are through to the final round of the competition but there are some very strong contenders in the short list so we are not home and dry yet."

The development, which took two months to complete, is located at the town's North Beach and boasts an array of first-class facilities for the discerning traveller but at affordable prices.

Five seaplanes operate out of state-of-the-art hangars with a dedicated take-off ramp sloping down across the beach. The airport currently offers flights to a handful of European destinations but has plans to broaden its scope.

The development also embraces a selection of intelligently selected

commercial partners who, in tandem with local businesses, offer the traveller all they might need before their flight.

DON'T BE A NELLY



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A touch of the exotic came to South Shields last week as one local entrepreneur unveiled his latest money-making scheme - elephant rides along the seafront.

Initially the rides will operate at weekends from May to September but, if they are successful, it is believed that they could become a regular feature.

The venture is aimed at offering children an alternative to the traditional donkey rides but could spark a scramble to come up with increasingly more adventurous options. Albatross flights anyone?

PLODGING

A 'How To' Guide

The SandPaper has received several letters of confusion from visitors to South Shields due to an article in its Winter Edition.

It seems that the term 'plodging' has left many folks scratching their heads rather than enjoying the German Ocean lapping and splashing round their ankles. To clear up this muddle we asked the Corporation's Officer for Leisure to give us a lesson in plodging:

"First you need some shallow water, this could be a puddle in the street but the sea shallows of the beach are best. If on the beach (and once you have checked for rocks and other submarine hazards) remove any footwear and socks and, if required, roll trouser legs up to knee-height.

"Next proceed into the water to about mid-shin depth and walk to and fro in the water. If you wish you can walk arm in arm with a companion. There is no time limit to plodging but just be alert for any hypothermic sensations if the conditions are particularly bracing. Happy plodging!"



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