

History & Heritage

Although beaches are now mainly used as places for relaxing and having fun, people have exploited the wealth of natural resources of the coastal zone since they first settled in Dumfries and Galloway. Sandyhills Bay is no exception. There is evidence both hidden and visible, of a number of past activities in and around this sheltered sandy bay.

The Notorious Barnhourie Banks

In the 19th and early 20th centuries the Solway Firth was a major shipping channel, serving the ports of Dumfries. The Barnhourie bank of shifting sand in the Solway channel off Sandyhills Bay is the site of many recorded shipwrecks.

Shipwrecks include:

- the *William Levitt* bound from Quebec to Greenock, via Cumbria carrying a cargo of timber. In 1888 she was at anchor off Workington, and was to be towed into Maryport. The tow broke and she was lost from sight, running aground at Barnhourie the next day. Four days later only the tops of her masts could be seen and she soon broke up with wreckage being scattered along the coast. The figurehead was recovered at Sandyhills and was kept at Dalbeattie for many years.
- the *Village Belle* bound from Penzance to Glasgow with a heavy cargo of porcelain clay. In January 1914, in bad weather and fog she drifted for two days into the Solway Firth where she ran aground at Barnhourie. Her timbers opened, water poured in and she was stuck on a ridge of hard sand. Rocking with each swell the weight of the cargo broke her back. The crew took to the ship's boat and rowed till it too ran aground. They then walked 3 miles across the sand to the Southwick Burn, where they were assisted by a local farmer.
- the *St Patrick* bound from Bangor, Wales with a cargo of slates ran aground in a gale on 7 January 1866. Four days later when the weather had improved one of the crew was found alive, clinging to the rigging.



The Cairngill Pygmy Pot

During building work in 1926 at one of the houses at the back of Sandyhills Bay, the remains of a Bronze Age cremation burial, about 3,500 years old, was found in a low burial cairn. The *Cairngill Pygmy Pot*, so called because this type of vessel is very small, is now in Dumfries Museum.



Stake Nets

Tide fishing was one of the earliest methods of catching fish on these shores. A hollow in the sand trapped the fish in the pool of water created when the tide went out, so they could be easily caught. As time passed these fish traps became more sophisticated using rocks, hurdles and eventually nets with apertures which opened in the flood tide and shut when the tide receded. The stake nets which are now a distinctive element of the Colvend coast were developed in the early 1800s. Nets are fixed to stakes to form a labyrinth or a zig-zag line with chambers which have narrow openings which are easy for salmon to enter and difficult to exit.



Saltpan Rocks

The rocky headland on the west side of the bay is named Saltpan Rocks. Saltmaking survived as a seasonal sea shore industry until the early 1800's in Galloway. Salt was used for preserving meat, bacon and hams, all exported from the region in the late 1700's to early 1800's.

Barnhourie Mill

The picturesque waterwheel of Barnhourie Mill can be seen from the road bridge over the Barnhourie Burn. Such small country mills were once a common sight in Galloway.



in and around Sandyhills Bay



RAF Bombing Targets

If you look out to sea you will be able to spot the large RAF Bombing Target. This was used by the Number 10 Bombing and Gunnery School which was based at the World War 2 airfield at Heathall, Dumfries. There are other targets and observation posts nearby in the Nith Estuary including at Carsethorn.



East Stewartry Coast National Scenic Area

Worth enjoying, worth looking after

