

Grunta Beach Mortehoe Devon

Grid Reference SS458453



Beach Profile for Coastwise North Devon
Marjorie Heath

INTRODUCTION

Grunta Beach is a small cove situated to the south of the village of Mortehoe and the ever famous landmark of Morte Point. Mortehoe is steeped in history with the Anglican Church dating back to the 13th Century. The bell tower and carved pews and the "de Tracy" tomb are medieval. (Wm.de Tracey, a former rector, who founded the chantry in 1308). Morte Point being the site of many shipwrecks (one of which - a ship carrying a cargo of live pigs ran aground - the pigs ran ashore grunting - thereby naming the cove Grunta. Because of the dramatic landscape and forbidding weather conditions, Morte Point has been referred to by the local people as "the place God made last and the Devil will take first". In former years Mortehoe was the haunt of smugglers and wreckers but in later years became more of a farming community.

Mortehoe Heritage Centre located in the centre of Mortehoe Village acts as a local tourist information office. Bull Point Lighthouse is a short walk along the South West Coast Path from Mortehoe. Morte Point offers spectacular coastal scenery.

The beach lies within the North Devon Voluntary Marine Conservation Area established in 1994 and also falls within the North Devon Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty.

It is a west facing cove which is truly exposed to the strong Atlantic winds making it a rugged area.



Access/Man's Impact

From Mortehoe Village access to the Cove is by coastal path (owned and managed by the National Trust)

Note: There is no access to the beach at high tide

The Natural Trust have built into the rock structure several steps to assist in the difficult approach to the upper beach from the coastal path.



PHYSICAL CHARACTERISTICS

The cliffs are of key geological importance with distinctive jagged features outlining the settlement patterns. The majority of rocks are sedimentary from the Devonian Period. (i.e. they were formed by marine sediments deposited on a shallow delta front platform which covered this area between 350m and 400 million years ago).



COMPOSITION OF BEACH - ROCKS

The Upper and Mid-shores areas are mainly shingle covered in large grey boulders and slates resulting in rockfall from the cliffs above due to prevailing weather conditions. The lower shore area is rock and at extreme low tide sand is revealed.



FLORA

There is very little evidence of flora flourishing amongst the slates but clover and thrift can be found





Along the coastal path many species - some protected from the prevailing winds are abundant - for example - rock samphire, ferns, tree mallow, white clover, honeysuckle, orchids and many more which are identified during the various seasons.

The SHORE

Upper Shore - marine life is scarce due to the barren landscape

Mid Shore - consists mainly of rocks/large pebbles and boulders which lead onto numerous sized rock pools which are exposed with the outgoing tide and are a haven for many species such as snakelock and beadlet anemones (below).



Bladder wrack seaweed is in abundance on the mid-shore rocks

Snapshot of Animal & Plant life of Grunta Beach April-September 2008

Mid-Lower Shore & RockPools

Animals

Snakelock Anemone	R
Beadlet Anemone	F
Limpets	O
Mussels	O
Barnacles	F
Common Prawns	F
Dulse	O
Periwinkle	O

Plants

Bladderwrack	A
--------------	---

Occasional sighting of Porpoises seen off Grunta Cove