

SITE

Name: Northam Burrows

Parish: Northam

Local Authority: Torridge

National Grid Ref: SS 445 305

OS Sheets: 1:50K, 180, 1:10K, SS43 SW, SS42 NW

Locality Description: Situated along the coast and on the estuary of the River Taw, north of Westward Ho!

Nature and Status of Site: Pebble ridge with low-lying alluvial deposits and sand dunes. The site is designated as a [Site of Special Scientific Interest](#) (SSSI).

Summary of Geological / Geomorphological Interests: The pebble ridge is the most notable feature due to the size of the sediments. This has formed at the back of an extensive sandy intertidal zone, and sand dunes have developed behind.

Northam Burrows is managed as a Country Park by Torridge District Council (and formerly by Devon County Council) and is also occupied by the Royal North Devon golf club. The Burrows are of considerable wildlife importance.

Safety Considerations: None, except the golf course.

Educational Age Groups: Primary, Secondary, College/6th Form, University.

Parking and Access: From Northam follow the signs for the Country Park. Entrance to the Burrows is free; however there is a toll for access via car. Alternatively, enter the Country Park from the western of Westward Ho! and park alongside the track.

There is a regular bus service from Barnstaple (which also has a main line rail station) and the site is within walking distance of the stop at Golf Links Road. For timetable details, visit www.traveline.org.uk. Additionally, the South West Coast Path provides access on foot.

The visitor centre is open May – September, however, someone is available to take enquiries out of season. The Burrows Centre at Northam Burrows has educational facilities for students and they should be contacted prior to a visit on 01237 479708.

Can be linked with a visit to Westward Ho! cliffs or Mermaid's Pool to Rowden Gut (see separate entries in Register).

References

Edmonds, E.A., Williams, B.J. and Taylor, R.T. (1979). Geology of Bideford and Lundy Island. Memoirs of the Geological Survey of Great Britain.

Keene P. (1997). Northam Burrows; Estuary Environments. Thematic Trails, School of Social Sciences, Oxford Brookes University.

Keene P. and Keene J. (1997). *Westward Ho!: against the sea*. Thematic Trails, School of Social Sciences, Oxford Brookes University.

May, V J & Hansom, J D (2003). *Coastal Geomorphology of Great Britain*. *Geological Conservation Review Series 28* (Joint Nature Conservation Committee, Peterborough)

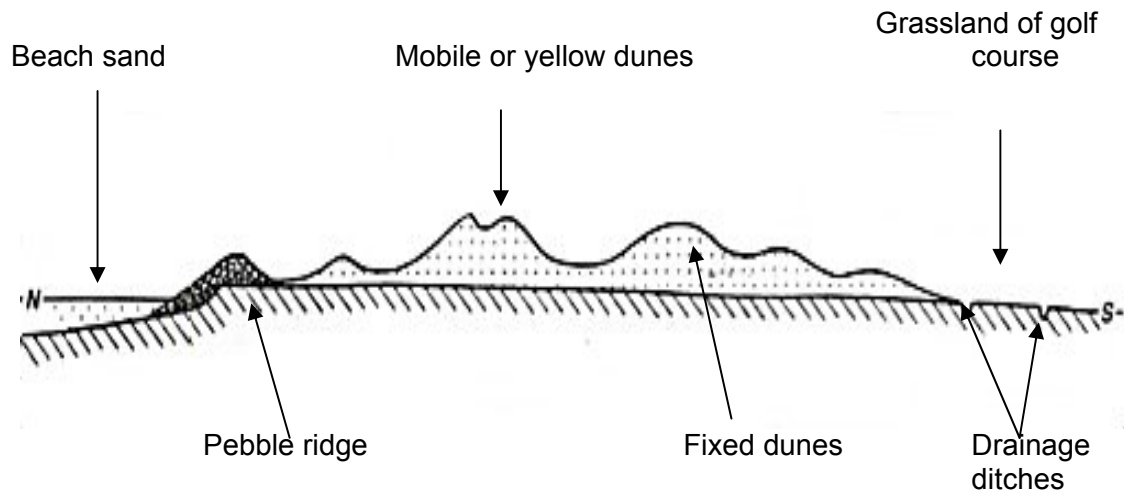
Detailed Geology: Few spits in Britain are formed of large cobbles. The supply of material has derived from the south with the aid of wind and wave action. However, dissipating wave energy at the mouth of the River Taw has ended any further northward movement and an accumulation of material has built up forming a spatulate feature at the distal end of the spit. The pebbles are made of hard, fine-grained sandstone, which outcrops in the cliffs west of Westward Ho! A small system of sand dunes lies trapped between the ridge and a golf course to the east. The dunes near the ridge are still mobile, whilst those near the golf course are now fixed due to natural vegetation and planting by man.

Suggested Questions

1. At low tide, compare the ridge to the sand beach. Why is the ridge so steep?
2. Considering the golf course behind the dune system and the management of the pebble ridge, can this site still be considered to be natural?

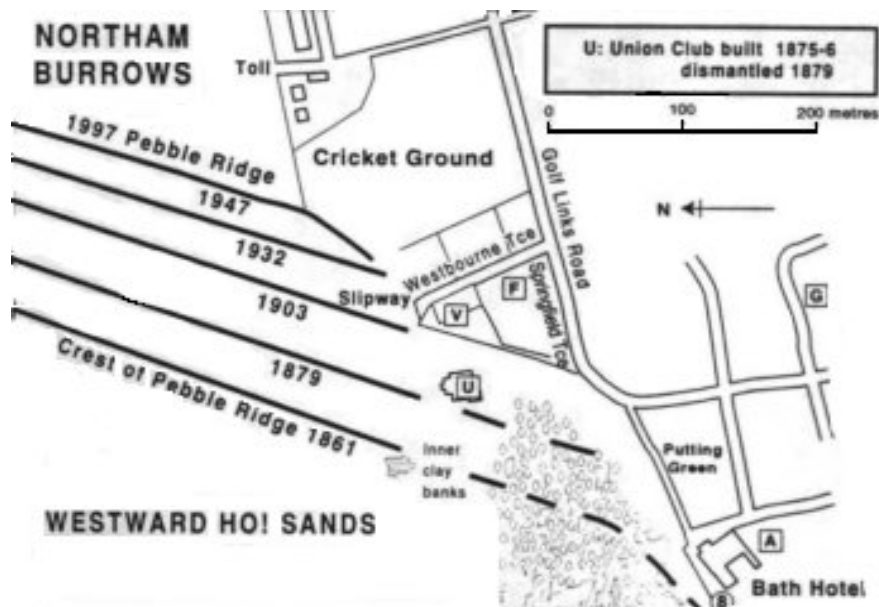
Northam Burrows SSSI

Diagram of a profile view through the Sand Dunes at Northam Burrows



The 'Wandering Nature of the Pebble Ridge at Northern Burrows

The diagram shows the past locations of the pebble ridge along the sea front at Westward Ho! due to storm activity. Such movement is limited in Northern Burrows due to the presence of the dune system, but it can be seen that the ridge is a dynamic feature affected by the sea.

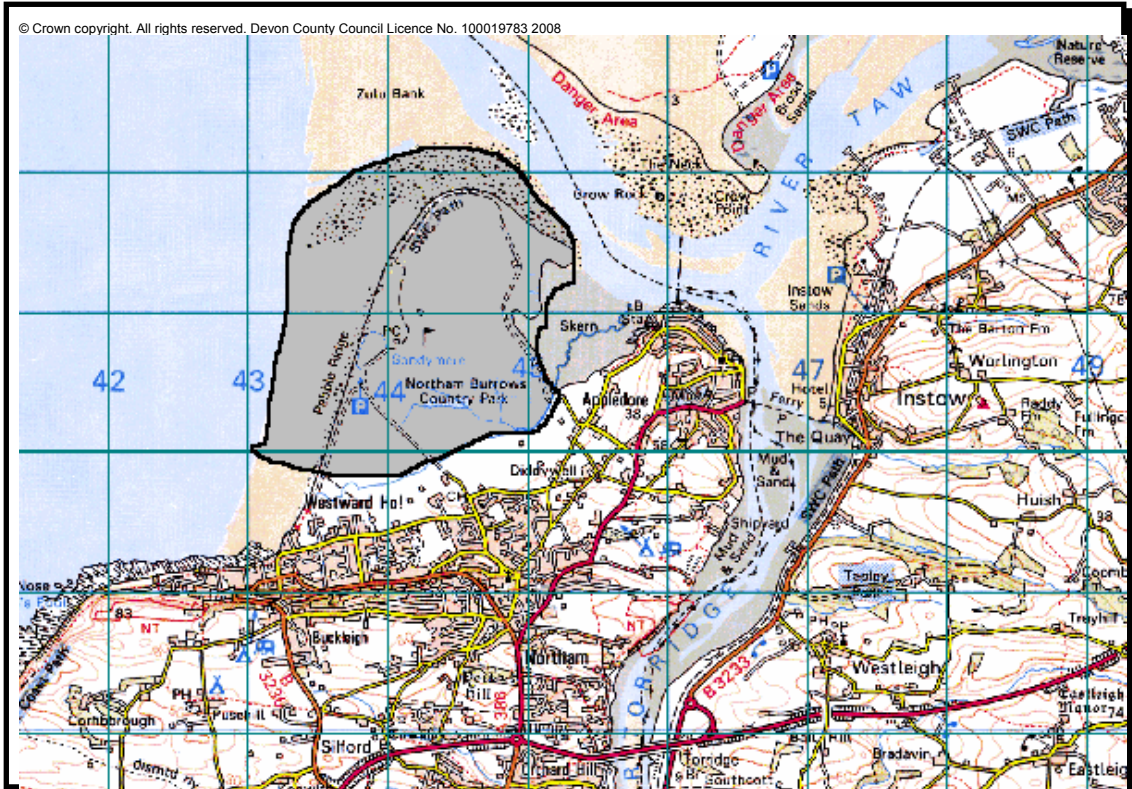


Adapted from Keene and Keene Westward Ho! Coastal Landscapes, Thematic Field Guide.

LOCATION PLAN

NORTHAM BURROWS, SSSI NORTHAM, TORRIDGE

National Grid Ref: SS 445 305



Site locality

Scale 1: 50,000

Parking and Access

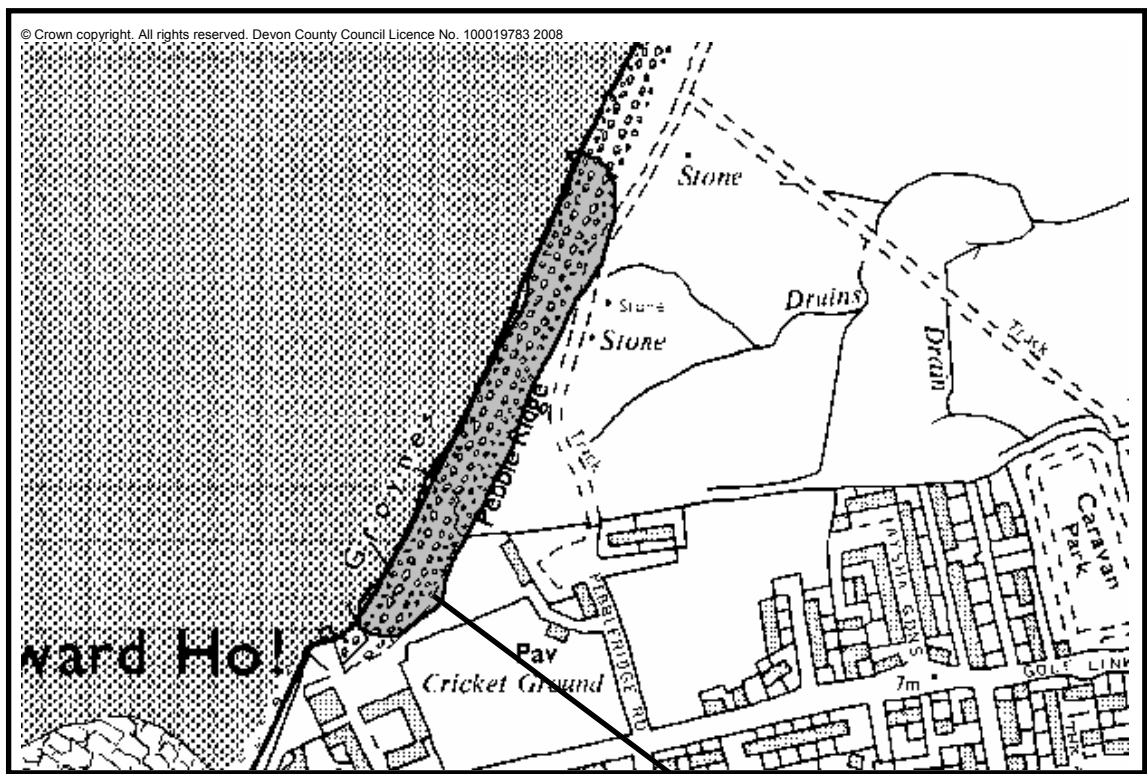
- A regular bus service from Barnstaple (which also has a main line rail station) and the site is within walking distance of the stop at Golf Links Road. For timetable details, visit the [traveline](#) website.
- From Northam follow signs for the Country Park. Car parking is available at Sandymere close to the Visitor Centre,

or alongside the track if entering from the western end via Pebble Ridge Road.

SITE PLAN

NORTHAM BURROWS NORTHAM, TORRIDGE

National Grid Ref: SS 445 305



Scale 1: 5,000

Pebble Ridge, located on the western coast.

Main Points of Interest:

The pebble ridge:

- An excellent illustration of a natural coastal process, resulting in an impressive coastal landform.
- The large pebbles that form the ridge are of fine-grained sandstone eroded from the cliffs to the west of Westward Ho!

NORTHAM BURROWS



Two views of Northam Burrows pebble ridge



Broad shore area to the W of the pebble ridge



Northern part of the pebble ridge