
Tunstall Hills and Ryhope Cutting [NZ 391 546]

Natural outcrop and quarry

Tunstall Hills managed by Sunderland City Council

Tunstall Hills is a complex site of considerable geological and botanical interest in an urban setting to the south of Sunderland. Its geological interest centers upon numerous rock exposures of the Permian reef which occur on the Maiden Paps, in disused quarries and in cuttings above the reclaimed Ryhope railway line. It is a very good viewpoint.

Proposed action The reef exposures were improved by Sunderland County Council, English Nature and community groups in the 1980s but are now largely degraded. With a very active Tunstall Hills Group today the time is ripe to reevaluate, re-expose and interpret so that fossils can be seen again.

Existing designations SSSI GCR LNR MAGical

Existing on site interpretation Board describing nature reserve with brief information on geology.

Major geodiversity interest Tunstall Hills has been known for many years as one of the best areas for the study of the Middle Magnesian Limestone (Ford Formation) reef and its fossils. Numerous type specimens have been collected from the area and the outcrops display various reef facies not seen at other localities. Several of these are not dolomitised or have only been partially dolomitised. Undolomitised outcrops, particularly those in the reef-base coquina, have yielded a diverse and superbly preserved shelly fauna, including colour-banded gastropods, which are unknown from equivalent carbonate rocks deposited during the first cycle of the Zechstein in northwest Europe. The reef-base coquina also contains a vertebrate fauna.

Biodiversity interest The species-rich grassland which has developed on shallow soils overlying the Magnesian Limestone, is botanically important. A range of other habitats are also represented here, including scrub and woodland. Also good for butterflies.

Other heritage links None

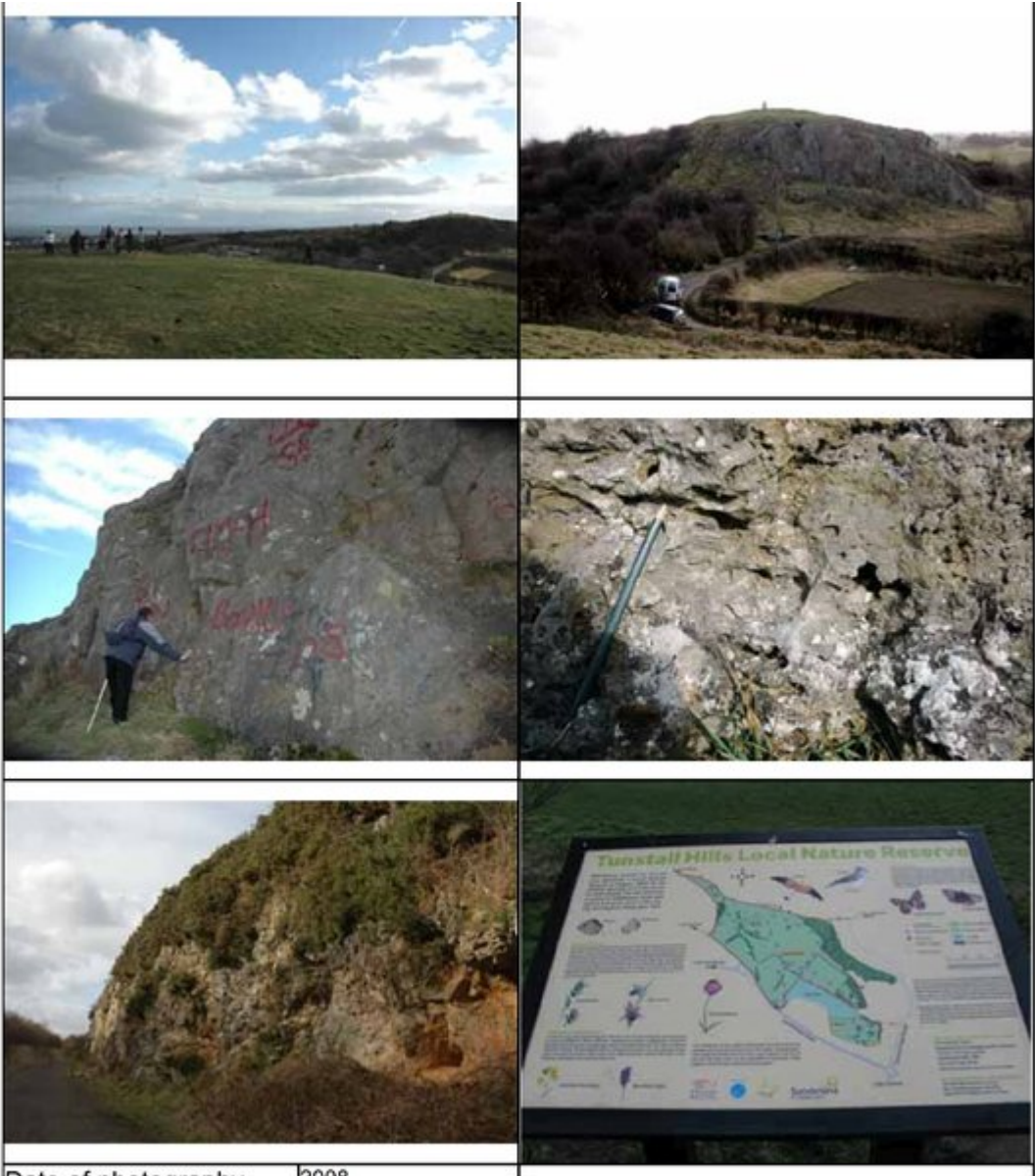
Additional comment None

Date of photography 2008

(Photo 2) Tunstall Hills and Ryhope Cutting.

(Plate 5) Ford Formation Reef Limestone at Tunstall Hill.

[References](#)



(Photo 2) Tunstall Hills and Ryhope Cutting.



(Plate 5) Ford Formation Ref Limestone at Tunstall Hill.