

Silecroft - Sunsets and Seascapes

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Silecroft

The natural beauty of Silecroft beach with its impressive backdrop of Black Combe Fell has always had a strong recreational pull for both locals and visitors alike. And whilst today the mainstay of the local economy is still tourism, because of its location within the national park and the natural environment, this belies its industrial past.

Working Past

Before the Furness Railway reached Silecroft, the village was self-reliant with all but one resident (William Johnson, Shopkeeper) making their living through agriculture. When the railway came to Silecroft in the mid 19th Century industry was also allowed to flourish and Silecroft could boast both an iron works and a brickworks. The Silecroft Tile & Brick Company flourished because of an abundance of local clay and the rail service enabled the transport of the bricks to the surrounding towns and villages - many of Millom's Victorian terraces are built with Silecroft bricks.

There are very few signs of the old brickworks today as the site is now the home of the Caravan Park.

Holidays by the Sea

The beach has always been a popular destination for locals, day trippers and visitors from further afield. People put on their best outfits for a day at the beach, and once the rail line connected Millom to Silecroft the beach became especially popular with day trippers from Millom.

Appreciating the health benefits of fresh air, in 1936 the education authority built a Summer School Camp on the fields opposite the caravan park entrance. The long wooden huts could house 96 11-14 year olds at any one time between April and October. School groups from across the county enjoyed outdoor exercise classes, nature study rambles and visits to the shore – an of course most groups would attempt a scramble to the top of Black Combe. By the end of a weeks stay children the children would have healthy rosy cheeks and on average had put on a couple of pounds due to the popularity of the canteen! The camp was later run by the YMCA who attracted international visitors to the camp offering fresh air and exercise next to the Irish Sea.

The wild nature of the beach has always been retained, however an enterprising Mr Wilson used to run a small kiosk at the beach selling 'hot water' to those who brought their own tea and coffee to enjoy a warm drink by the sea.

Wildlife

The coast at Silecroft is home to a variety of wildlife including scarce and unusual species. Two Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) are designated behind the beach and the coastline itself provides important habitat.

Cumbrian coast is home to 50% of the national population of Natterjack Toads. Natterjacks spawn in shallow sandy-bottomed pools between April and May. Listen out on warm still spring nights for the call of male adults attracting females. Natterjacks are Britain's noisiest amphibian.

Birds which can be seen in large numbers at certain times of year include swallows, gannets and oystercatchers. At low tide the large expanse of beach provides plenty of food for a variety of wading birds.

The area is also popular with fishermen as local club records list 36 different species having been caught out of Silecroft including Bass, Gurnard and Mackerel. Lugworm and Peeler Crab can also be collected.

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