Devon County Geological Sites

Site reference no. SX84SW  Name: Beesands (Sunnydale) Quarry

District: South Hams  Parish: Stokenham

National grid ref: 822415  OS sheets: 1:50k 202 1:25k OL 20 1:10k SX84SW GS 1:50k 355/6

GridRef x y Lat Long
SX822415 282200 41500 50.261699 -3.6540425

Locality description (address): Quarry with entrance in cliff face 1km north of Beesands.

Nature of site: Quarry (D) medium-large very overgrown with small paths through undergrowth.

Geological / geomorphological features:
Lower Devonian Meadfoot beds. Uniform medium grey slate with scattered thin ferruginous lenses of iron carbonate in the cleavage. There are occasional localised bands of segregation quartz veining. The well developed cleavage dips 58°N in and strikes 100° in contrast with the southerly dip prevalent in the north of the district. At the western end, faint ferruginous banding formed by transposed bedding picks out first phase isoclinal folding in the slate on joint faces normal to the dip. The lineation of the bedding/cleavage intersection indicates folds plunging west at 24°. On the side of the cutting forming the entrance, the bedding trace dips less steeply than the cleavage across several metres of slate indicating the presence of folds of large size. There may be a large antiformal fold in this cutting, with the hinge concealed by a development of quartz veins, as there is a steeper dipping bedding trace at the southern, seaward end, than further to the north. A small scale crenulation folding of the cleavage plunges east at 20°, and a weak kink-band folding has axial planes dipping between vertical and 80° W and striking 175°. Toppling failure is leading to collapse of the slates at the top of the face along the north side of the pit.

Reasons for registration as a Regionally Important Geological / Geomorphological Site:
The quarry shows a range of fold structures affecting the Meadfoot beds which here have the uniform character suitable for slate working. The working of this old quarry and its closure in 1855 is documented.

Site sensitivity: None

Safety: Generally safe with care. Some of the paths covered with loose slate debris are slippery, even when dry.


Access and Parking: Walk north to quarry entrance in cliffs from car parking for cars and minibuses at Sunnydale Cottages. Drive north from Beesands along rough track at the back of the beach. Also possible to walk south along coastal footpath from car park at southern end of Slapton Ley. Enter quarry from footpath at southern end (steep). This may be the best access during storms or high spring tides.

Date of assessment (V = visited): V 30th August 1995 R T Taylor

Site owner: The National Trust.

Other comments: Some careful clearance of undergrowth in the quarry would improve access to features of geological interest. The geology of the coast north of the quarry entrance is also of interest with igneous rock in the slate at Dun Point.

References: