

Gun Rocks

Natural History

This small outcrop of rock, which lies to the west of Staple Island, and within Staple Sound, is covered at high tide. It has been marked on maps since 1778 as Gun Rocks, likely earning its name following a ship wreck event. Archive data provides evidence of a 40 cannon Dutch merchant ship having foundered here, in the late 17th early 18th century. But none of the evidence is conclusive.

What we do know is that the cannon have lain here for a very long time, in an area which is swept by strong currents, particularly on northerly winds. As a result the marine life here is abundant. This leaflet only gives a small snapshot of the critters which can be found here. As part of the Gun Rocks Project, we are not only recording and trying to decipher the history of the cannon, but also to record the marine life which occurs here. The results of the marine recording have been collated through Seasearch; a long running citizen science project.

Front cover images are top: a sun star and bottom sea urchins and dead man's fingers growing on a cannon.



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Further Information

If you are interested in finding out more about the Gun Rocks Project, or perhaps even helping with some of the investigation of the site, then please visit the website:

www.gunrocks.co.uk

On the website you can find:

- ♦ Blog with project updates
- ♦ Details of the Gun Rocks dive trail
- ♦ Downloadable dive maps
- ♦ Marine identification guides
- ♦ History of Gun Rocks
- ♦ Theories on where the ship(s) came from and how the cannon arrived on Gun Rocks!
- ♦ Downloadable past survey reports
- ♦ A gallery of images old and new

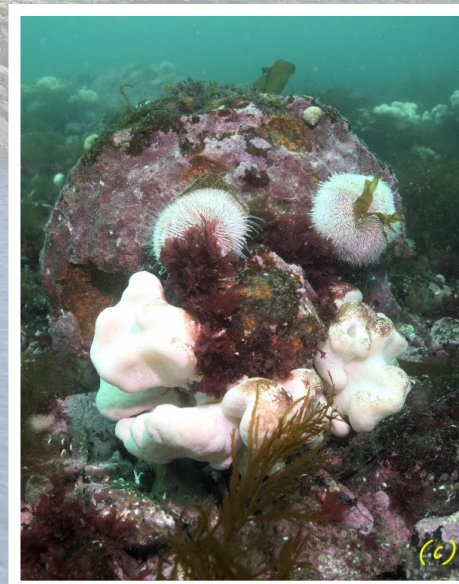
You can also contact us through the website if you have a question or some information relating to Gun Rocks.



Gun Rocks

Marine Life

Farne Islands



www.gunrocks.co.uk





Right: Gun Rocks is uncovered at low tide and covered at high tide, presenting a hazard to shipping as it sits in a channel known as Staple Sound. The tide flows through the Sound at up to 4 knots: it is this current which encourages so much life to grow on the rocks, including soft corals called dead men's fingers!



Below: Two Polycera nudibranchs. Nudibranchs are a type of sea slug, and come in a range of colours including pink, yellow, orange and purple. In the photograph they are eating a bryzoan, or sea moss, which is growing on kelp. Bryzoans are also animals not plants.

Above: There are plenty of lobsters on the cannon site, as well as lots of relatives of the lobster including porcelain crabs, shrimps and edible crabs!



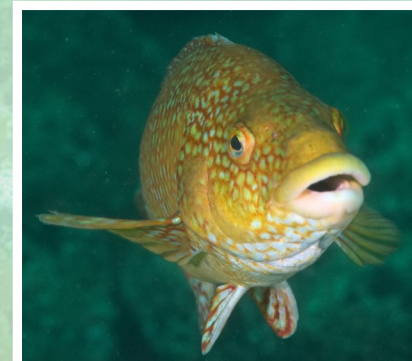
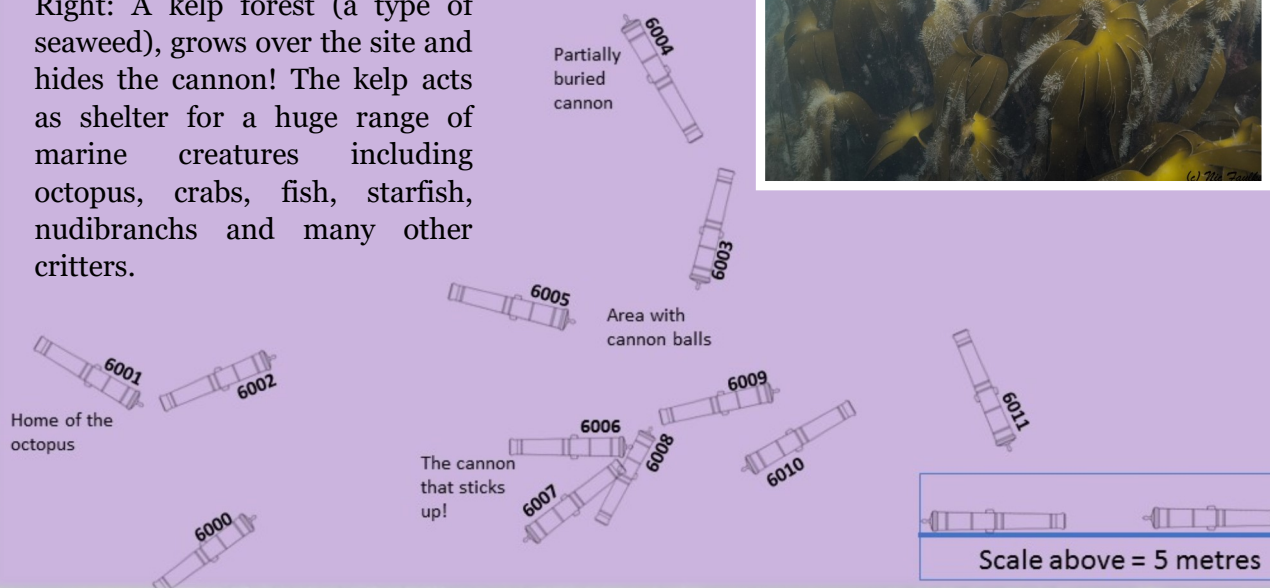
Above: Grey seals often visit the cannon alongside divers. When the weather is calm, they haul out and sunbathe on top of Gun Rocks at low tide.

The Gun Rocks Cannon Map

The cannon lie scattered on a shallow part of the seabed.

Right: A kelp forest (a type of seaweed), grows over the site and hides the cannon! The kelp acts as shelter for a huge range of marine creatures including octopus, crabs, fish, starfish, nudibranchs and many other critters.

Map of Gun Rocks



Left: Two elegant anemones; although they look like flowers, they are in fact animals. They often come in a range of colours.

Right: The really pretty ones are called dahlia anemones.



Above: A ballan wrasse; always inquisitive, friendly to divers, and so colourful.

Left: An octopus; one of the cannon often has an octopus underneath.