



Discover Dunwich



Dunwich Museum Newsletter Issue 6 May 2026

Welcome

This newsletter is available for Museum visitors to take away (donations welcome) and is posted to Dunwich Community Heritage Centre members.

PDF and back issues may be downloaded at:

www.dunwichmuseum.org.uk/news/discover-dunwich/

Article submissions to:

news@dunwichmuseum.org.uk

or c/o Dunwich Museum,
St James St, Dunwich,
Suffolk, IP17 3DT

Volunteers are always needed –
contact details below.

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Simon MacDowall



Stuart Bacon – leader of the Dunwich Dives that recovered many artefacts now in the Museum – points to human remains exposed by eroding cliffs at Dunwich in around 1980. The photo is in our Bacon Collection, now being catalogued. (See page 2.) Photo: Estate of Ernest Graystone/Dunwich Museum.

Museum opening hours

11.30am-4.30pm daily until 31 October.

We reopen 13th-21st February 2027, 2pm and 4pm and weekends in March 2027, 2pm-4pm.

Daily opening from 28th March 2027.

Contact Dunwich Museum

01728 648796 or 07979 428058

manager@dunwichmuseum.org

School bookings:

schools@dunwichmuseum.org.uk

Family events:

chronicles@dunwichmuseum.org.uk

An Abundance of Archaeology

The region immediately to the south of Dunwich has in the last few years produced many archaeological finds of great importance. More such finds continue to be uncovered.

The Sizewell C project involves building another nuclear power station, together with a huge amount of infrastructure – link roads, workers' campuses, park and rides for the workforce. Also under construction is infrastructure bringing ashore cabling from offshore wind farms. It's all been something of a nightmare for locals of late.

Journey times have greatly increased with lowered speed limits and new roundabouts, country lanes are blighted by fenced-off temporary lorry parks. About the only good thing to have come out of this so far seems to be the cornucopia of new archaeology.

Neolithic settlements with storage pits have been unearthed locally, along with signs of Bronze Age settlements. An Iron Age wooden ladder is among the finds uncovered at Goose Hill.

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Recent Acquisitions



The top half of a face on a Bellarmine jug, one of the many items from the Bacon Collection.

The Museum was bequeathed the Bacon Collection, artefacts collected by Stuart Bacon. Stuart led the Dunwich Dives (see *Discover Dunwich 4*) which brought up from the seabed many artefacts now in the Museum including our bronze cannon and most of the stonework from Dunwich churches on display there. We are currently in the process of photographing, digitising and cataloguing all these treasures.

Other Bacon Collection artefacts include some wooden rigging blocks and pulleys from ancient shipping. And there's the neck of a Bellarmine jug or Bellarmine jar, a type of salt-glazed stoneware bottle frequently imported from Germany in the 16th and 17th that had a comic bearded face on its neck and often found in shipwrecks. Bellarmine jars were often used as magical "witch bottles" into which pins, human hair, nails, urine, various charms and curses written on scraps of paper would be placed.

Numerous photos and negatives are included in the Bacon Collection, showing Stuart and his team of volunteer divers at work on the Dunwich Dives over three decades. These include our cover photo, there are also shots of Stuart and others in their diving gear, clambering aboard dinghies and with the then numerous Dunwich fishermen on their boats. Images of many of these will be viewable on our e-hive account eventually – bit.ly/ehivedunwich

We've also recently had handed in to the Museum a semi-fossilised bone from the leg of a what is tentatively identified as being from a primeval prehistoric wild horse.

What's On

This year's exhibition is on Dunwich's Jock Horsfall and the role he played in a famous World War Two covert operation. (See *Discover Dunwich*, issue 5.) There will be a talk on to coincide with our exhibition on **Saturday 23 May**.

There's a recorded Dunwich Museum talk on The Woodwoses and Wildmen of Suffolk on YouTube at https://youtu.be/ntVPfS_xhql. More Museum talks are planned.

Events for 2026 include the St James's Day pilgrimage walk from Westleton to Dunwich on **Thursday 25 July**. Other planned family-friendly events feature arts and crafts, live music, poetry and tours of medieval Dunwich. There will be a Halloween ghost walk on **Saturday 31 October**. This year's craft fair is **27 June**, our art fair is on **3, 4 and 5 August**.

For Details and updates on all our events go to www.dunwichmuseum.org.uk/events. See also "Dunwich Museum" on Facebook and Insta and **@DiscoverDunwich** on Twitter/X and BlueSky.

During the summer, there are also exhibitions at The Fisherman's Hut, next to the Flora Tearooms.



Dunwich is the midpoint of the recently opened King Charles III England Coast Path's Suffolk section, from Shotley Gate to Corton. The photo shows the new signposted car-free route through St James's Church car park and over a brand-new footbridge crossing the Dunwich River and onward onto the track towards Walberswick.

Scan to view
more details on
Dunwich Museum



Coastal Processes Update



Mystery object on Dunwich Beach on 13 February 2026 – not a landmine! Photo: Sue Alderman.

A loggerhead turtle found close to death on the beach at Dunwich after a storm in February 2026 is recovering at Sea Life aquarium in Hunstanton, Norfolk.

Loggerhead turtles are not native to UK waters but are reported here more frequently, possibly due to climate change as the waters around the UK warm up.

BBC News reported that Steve Forman found the turtle on Dunwich Beach and called British Divers Marine Life Rescue (BDMLR), who took the turtle to Sea Life. Named “Steve” after its rescuer (although thought to be a juvenile female), the turtle was at the time of writing expected to be ready for release into the wild in up to a year.

Discover Dunwich contacted Sea Life for an update, we hadn’t heard from them when we went to press. Dunwich now has two residents trained by BDMLR. Strandings of seals and porpoises – dead and alive – are increasing at Dunwich.

Also washed up on Dunwich Beach early in 2026 was a mystery rusty iron object thought to be a World War Two landmine. It was reported to the Coastguard, but it turned out to be harmless.

According to the excellent *Altered Coast* blog it would seem erosion is escalating” on the Suffolk coast.



Due to eroding cliffs and defences, a section of Thorpeness Beach was closed as we went to press in early May 2026.

The severe retreat of the cliffs and dunes at Thorpeness (south of Dunwich) over December 2025 and the first days of 2026, made national news with the loss of nine homes.

Rock bags and rock pilings were installed in an effort to protect the remaining homes near the beach. The same New Year surge at Thorpeness also saw large numbers of starfish and crabs washed up there. Sizewell Beach, near Throrpeness, saw the dunes retreat to within metres of the Sizewell C construction site.

Last winter also saw severe erosion at Bawdsey, bringing the cliff edge just 40 metres from Bawdsey Radar Museum. The cliff path at Corton, near the Norfolk border, was closed following erosion.

At Southwold, not far to the north of Dunwich, late January saw large puddles of sea water in the car park near the pier as sea spray reached over the top of the sea wall.

Some Suffolk beaches have escaped with minor erosion, including Pakefield, which may have benefitted by being sheltered by the movement of the beach just down the coast at Kessingland.

With thanks to Altered Coast Blog
<https://alteredcoast.blog/>

Abundance of Archaeology

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Two organised Roman centres for the industrial production of salt have been found not far from Dunwich at what was then salt marsh at Minsmere and also at Goose Hill. Like the Sizewell C development itself, one of these sites apparently had a “hub” with accommodation for specialist migrant workers brought in from outside the region. It even had a small burial ground for a few salt workers who never made it home. The Link Road site – a bypass between Middleton and Theberton (inland and to the south of Dunwich, beyond Westleton,) revealed other Roman industrial activity – metalworking, pottery firing, grain drying.

An extensive Saxon cemetery has been dug up near Theberton, including a “high status” burial of a man and his horse. A ditch near Leiston, at a location less than four miles from Dunwich, yielded a hoard of late Saxon silver coins including some from local mints. (See *Discover Dunwich 5* for more detail.) From nearby Leiston Abbey comes a spectacular Venetian green glass cameo showing the crucifixion, tentatively dated to the 13th century – the zenith of medieval Dunwich and its hinterland.

Sizewell digs are ongoing, archaeologists are due to go on site at other bits of Sizewell infrastructure where building has yet to start.

Up to now there have only been temporary local exhibitions of Sizewell C finds. One such recent weekend pop-up in Yoxford was visited by an estimated 700 visitors daily, some after queueing for almost an hour at the Village Hall. There is clearly a hunger locally to see more.

Dunwich Museum is in talks around hosting a possible long-term exhibition of some artefacts from the Sizewell digs. We’ve learned that the silver hoard from near Leiston will be in an exhibition at London’s British Library until early 2028, Sizewell finds will eventually be available for museum loans, but there is still much by way of cataloguing, conservation and restoration needed. So we wouldn’t get anything on loan for possibly up to five to nine years from now. Separately, Dunwich Museum is in discussions around a possible travelling exhibition on Roman settlement of the East Coast. Watch this space.



Dunwich
Town Trust



Cannon to the Right of Them

Visitors are often in awe of Dunwich Museum’s bronze cannon next to the entrance – salvaged from the Dunwich Bank Wreck. (See *Discover Dunwich issue 3, 2021*) We have another – less magnificent – cannon in front of the Museum.

Research by Dunwich Museum’s Cliff Nicholson and Hans van Mierlo of the Vestigingsmuseum Naarden, suggests our short-barrelled iron cannon that stands outside the Museum could be a “finbaker”, dating from the first half of the 17th century. This was a short-barrelled gun made for merchant ships that stayed out of fights and only needed to fire at enemy ships closing in at short range. Such cannons could be shorter, cheaper, easier to load and take up less space. The original finbakkers were made in Sweden but English imitations quickly appeared.



*Postcard of the Cannon's Mouth cannon c.1900.
Nicholson Collection, Dunwich Museum*

Old postcards of Dunwich show yet another cannon – known as “the Cannon’s Mouth cannon”, a local landmark which has now disappeared. This was a long iron “culverin” buried in the ground. It stood near what’s now the junction of St James’s Street and the road to the Beach Car Park, serving as a bollard to slow down traffic. It marked the start of the Cannon’s Mouth path leading to a now long-vanished section of the cliffs.

This cannon, cast in 1627, was sold at auction in 1947. In 1989, Charles Trollope of the Ordnance Society tracked down the “Cannon’s Mouth cannon” and was able to see it at an undisclosed location not far from Dunwich.