



# Discover Dunwich

**Dunwich Museum newsletter Issue 2 June 2020** coming out of lockdown special

## Welcome

WELCOME to the Covid-19 special of *Discover Dunwich*, the newsletter for and by Dunwich Museum volunteers, staff, trustees and visitors and the Dunwich community.

This newsletter's emailed to to our mailing list and is linked via the website. We also hope to have free print copies in the Museum for visitors.

The deadline for the next edition will be **10 September 2020**. Submissions to: [news@dunwichmuseum.org.uk](mailto:news@dunwichmuseum.org.uk) or c/o Dunwich Museum, St James St, Dunwich, Suffolk, IP17 3DT.

When the Museum reopens, volunteers are always needed at the Museum – contact details are below.

*Matt Salusbury, editor*



**Volunteer Sally Taylor working at the Museum in the times Before Covid, proudly showing a mammoth leg bone found on the beach at Dunwich Heath. We look forward to the Museum's reopening, we can't say yet when it will be.**

**DUNWICH MUSEUM**  
01728 648796 or 07979  
428058  
**manager@**  
**dunwichmuseum.org.uk**  
schools bookings:  
**schools@dunwichmuseum.org.uk**  
**www.dunwichmuseum.org.uk**

## **MUSEUM CLOSED**

**As we go press, the date of the Museum's (social distancing) re-opening is unknown. In normal times, it's open daily 11.30-4.30 in the summer and at weekends until the end of October. Check [www.dunwichmuseum.org.uk/when](http://www.dunwichmuseum.org.uk/when)**

## Exploring the Dunwich Bank Wreck

by Stuart Bacon, who led the Dunwich Dives of the 1970s and 1980s

THE MAIN problem with working on the Dunwich Bank Wreck and medieval Dunwich is underwater visibility caused by sediment in suspension. This material comes from the River Blyth to the north and the (Sizewell) Nuclear Power Station to the south.

For most of the year the seabed is black, on rare occasions there is some visibility (1-2m) normally in the spring. Divers working on either sites must be able to operate by touch and sound.

The Dunwich Bank Wreck is marked by a surface buoy, a line from this buoy is secured to a cannon on the wreck. After leaving the surface there is about 2-3 metres of grey water before it becomes black. Lights are of little use and most divers do not use them. As you go down, sometimes you have to clear your ears, I myself have to stop about one or two metres of the seabed because of intense pain in my left ear. This eased by going up and down over the last few metres.

On reaching the cannon on the seabed there are a selection of ropes leading off the

cannon in different directions, each rope is marked by a knot every metre, by counting the knots you know the distance you are moving (these ropes, often in different sizes, are the pathways.) On reaching the area you wish to survey, you slip a 10m thin line to the main bottom line allowing you to explore. In order to measure items on the wreck, you can use the thin line, making knots or for smaller items your hand span.

### Exploring Medieval Dunwich

The site is extensive, up to a square mile and any debris, ruins etc that are covered with sand shingle and sediment.

The seabed is mobile and any items can be explored one day and covered a few days later. Divers have to be able to work by touch and sound. They carry metal probes 1m long enabling them to penetrate the sub-bottom.

Parts of the major ruins such as All Saints or St Peter's churches are exposed most of the time and easy to detect.

Unlike the Dunwich Bank Wreck, grids  
*DIVES – to back page*

# Recent revelations

New research data, and the Museum's new acquisitions

## Core blimey!

**KATHERINE CHANT** tells how the presence of hemp in a core sample may lead to a re-assessment of the importance of Dunwich in late Saxon times, before the Norman Conquest

DURING THE 9th and 10th centuries, Dunwich would have been ravaged by Scandinavian raiders. Dunwich recovered from these upheavals and during the 11th century became a thriving town, one of the largest ports in England with a population of 4000 in 13 parishes. It was a trading port a religious centre and borough with a royal charter.

Documentary sources like the *Domesday Book* entry (1086) confirm that the pre-conquest history of Dunwich is very important but until recently archaeological investigation has not been able to support this.

This changed a few years ago with "Touching The Tide" Dunwich Land based Archaeological Survey: 2014-15 when Professor David Sear extended his underwater research to the land and took core samples in the marshy land to the North of the village street (Dingle Marshes).

Excitingly, the sample with date 1025 has pollen which shows activity associated with rope making such as would be needed for a significant port.

It shows the organic sediments from a hemp retting pit, overlain with saltmarsh and mudflat sediments. There is a dominance of hemp (*Cannabis sativa*) pollen in the sediment. Such high pollen values are rare and only occur where cultivation and processing has taken place for rope/cordage and ship's caulking. Here, it appears that this site from which this core was obtained was used for retting to obtain fibre for rope making.

Traditionally, hemp crop was left in ponds and wet ditches for some weeks or months adjacent to places of cultivation to separate the fibres. This was clearly the case at this site. This would have been especially important for rope production in Dunwich and most probably for maritime use. Seeds of hemp were also found and radiocarbon dated. Thus, it is clear that fields adjacent to this sample site were used for cultivation in 1025



Dunwich Dig volunteers drive a core into the soil in 2015. Photo: Jane Hamilton

and the adjacent wetland used for retting of fibre.

In summary we have in Dunwich an example of a retting pit for the production of hemp fibres used in rope and sail making. The association with a major international port is highly likely. The period of retting appears to continue from early Saxon to early medieval, before a major storm action around the 13th-14th century, resulted in a change to salt marsh and mudflat environments at the site as today.

You can see an example of a core sample upstairs in the Museum.

## Hydrometer

A HYDROMETER? What's that? It's a device for measuring the density of alcohol. It's basically a metal ball with weights attached to the bottom and a measuring scale coming out of the top. You put some of the alcohol in a flask and drop the hydrometer in. It sinks into the liquid – how far depends on how much alcohol there is in the solution.

Taking a reading from the scale, you looked in your *Sykes Tables*, which is a thin book full of algorithms, from which you worked out the density (the proof).



The Museum's hydrometer, acquired last year, now on display resting on its box.

### *HYDROMETER – continued*

Why was it so important to measure how dense alcohol was? The Navy acting in a customs enforcement role needed to charge the appropriate excise duty on it.

Hydrometers were handmade by tool-makers and were usually coated with brass, although our magnificent specimen had lost its brass coating after being

at sea for so long. It was found, with its box, among wreckage on Dunwich beach in 1939 by Royal Artillery Observer Julian-Cory Wright. It probably came from a Navy ship lost to enemy action.

Cory-Wright's descendents kindly donated it to the Museum last year. It's now proudly on display upstairs in the cabinet in the corner as you come in.

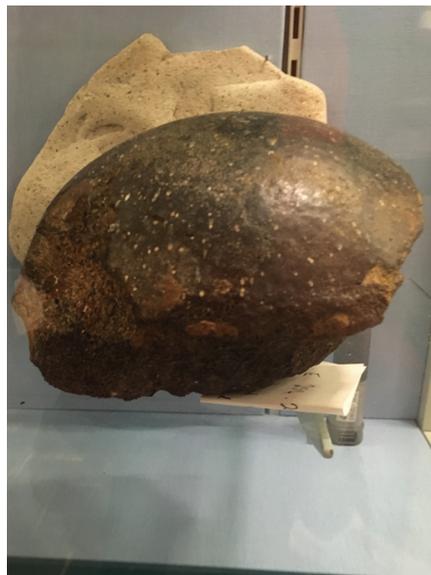
# More mammoth bits (probably)

**Matt Salusbury writes**

OUR Museum is already blessed with a few mammoth parts – its tiny paleontology display by the back door has the shoulder blade of a Southern mammoth. In our stores there is also a fragment of the leg bone of a mammoth, which is occasionally brought out to become an item on the handling table. (See photo on page 1.) This mammoth leg bone has quite a backstory – it was found on the beach at Dunwich Heath by a dachshund!

We are very pleased that – temporarily at least – our Museum is blessed with two additional mammoth bits. We hope that visitors will be able to see at least one of them again soon.

The first one (photo top right) is on loan from Stuart Bacon, leader of the Dunwich Dives (see page 1). As well as uncovering some fragments of Dun-



(photo below left) was a broken piece of a tooth, handed in by a visitor who stayed last summer in Dunwich and has a particularly good eye for fossil bits when she goes beachcombing.

This fossil fragment could be more clearly identified. Professor Lister told me “it does look like a rolled fragment of a single plate of a mammoth tooth – probably *Mammathus meridionalis* from the thick enamel.”

There were several species of mammoth, *Mammathus meridionalis* was one of the biggest ones, about 4m (13ft) at the shoulder and weighing over 10 tonnes. It lived around two million to 700,000 years ago, during a relatively warm period, so we’re not sure whether it was covered in thick fur or not.



wich’s lost churches (see photo on the back page) the Dives also brought a smooth, round lump identified as the tip of the hip joint of a mammoth, the end of the ball that fits into a ball and socket hip joint. It’s about 13cm across at its widest point.

The Natural History Museum’s mammoth expert, Professor Adrian Lister, emailed me in response to my enquiry to tell me that it was most likely the “proximal femur of an elephantid”, he wasn’t able to say with certainty just by looking at the photo whether it was from a mammoth or prehistoric elephant. He could only say that whatever species of elephant or mammoth it was, it was from its back leg.

The second fragment of a fossil “elephantid” that came the Museum’s way

**DIVES – from page 1**  
are used on the medieval site, some circular with a 36m diameter. Others are square, built of scaffolding and portable. Using grid references divers can work in the grids and after a dive are debriefed, recording any finds. All of the work carried out was before the arrival of GPS.

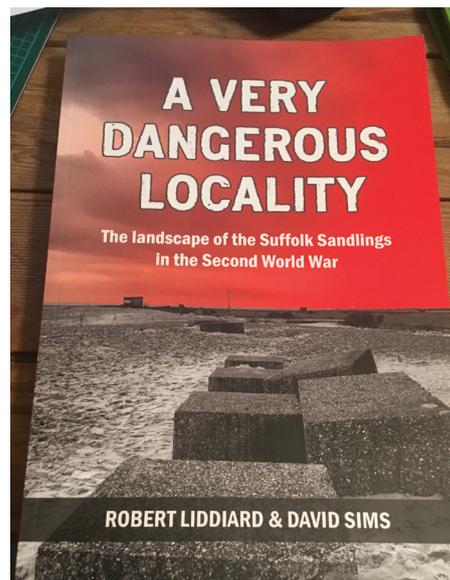
When recovering large objects such as the quarter-ton matrix situated in the entrance to Dunwich Museum, this was lifted by a number of air-filled lifting bags, then a 40-metre long rope attached and then a row of about 20 people dragged the matrix along the near shore where one of the fisherman’s winches was used to pull it up to the beach. After cleaning, to the Museum (1979!)

Over some 21 years we recovered many worked stones from various ruins and on display in the Museum. A selection of stonework not suitable for display is at Rose Cottage, Dallinghoo, my home.

**Stuart R Bacon**

# A Very Dangerous Locality

book review



**Robert Liddiard & David Sims, University of Hertfordshire Press, 2018**

THE “VERY dangerous locality” of the title is the Suffolk coast from Lowestoft to Felixstowe, where a German invasion was expected at the start of World War Two.

Liddiard and Sims, two landscape archaeologists, give a comprehensive survey of the anti-invasion defences of the Suffolk coast – those that have gone, and those that have left traces still visible today.

And yes, Dunwich features – not only the “anti-invasion scaffolding”, whose scaffolding clips can still easily be found on the beach, but the long disappeared Dunwich gun emplacement disguised as a Dutch barn.

There was even a type of pillbox unique to Suffolk, known as the Suffolk Square.

Suffolk’s hastily improvised coastal defences were a bit rubbish. By 1941, anti-invasion tactics had changed and parts of the lines of pillboxes had already been abandoned.

These obsolete defences quickly became training grounds in preparation for the invasion of occupied Europe. These included a fake German defensive line which the Royal Engineers spent months practising how to blow up. This local line of faux fortifications was even given a fake German place name – Kruschen.

If you’ve ever wondered why some of the landscape features around Minsmere and Westleton look a little strange, it’s because they’re the craters where these pretend German bunkers and ditches used to be.

Then in 1944 came the German V1 and V2 rockets, and a hastily thrown-up line of anti-aircraft gun batteries appeared on the coast, including one at Dunwich.

The book’s in places a bit academic in tone, but nonetheless fascinating.

**Matt Salusbury**

# Dunwich Bank Cannon's sibling

**Matt Salusbury**

OUR MAGNIFICENT bronze cannon, on display in the Museum, comes from a Spanish Armada ship that went down off Dunwich Heath in 1588 after an unsuccessful attempt by Hapsburg Spain to invade Tudor England. It was raised from the seabed by Stuart Bacon in 1994 (see page 1) and later seized by the Admiralty's Receiver of Wrecks and taken to Plymouth. After many years and a friendly question in the House of Lords, it finally ended up in the Dunwich Museum.

After over 400 years under the sea, much of the detail on our beautiful cannon has eroded away. You can barely make out the vague shape of a shield half way up the barrel (photo, top right) which is some sort of coat of arms. The graceful dolphins the form handles on the cannon (bottom left) have lost most of their detail.

However, it turns out the same gunsmith who made the Dunwich Bank Cannon all those years ago made another, very similar cannon, that's on display outside the town hall in the historic town of Enkhuizen in the Netherlands to this day. I had a chance to see it on a visit there late last year.

The Dunwich Bank Cannon's sibling, as a result of not having been underwater for 400 years, is also in much better condition. Some of the details lost on the Dunwich cannon can still be seen on the one in Enkhuizen.



**Coats of arms on the Dunwich cannon (top left) and the Rode Paard cannon in Enkhuizen (top right), dolphin handles on the Dunwich cannon (bottom left) and Rode Paard (bottom right). Photos: Matt Salusbury**

It's called the Rode Paard (the Red Horse), possibly because it was mounted on a red gun carriage and its recoil made quite a kick.

The coat of arms on the Rode Paard's barrel (top right) is still intact, it reveals it to be the double-headed eagle of the Hapsburg Emperor Charles V (ruled 1519-1558).

There's also important surviving detail on the muzzle, which identifies in Roman numerals the date of manufacture (1551) and

the gunsmith, a German known as Remigy de Halut who had an imperial cannon foundry in Belgium.

The Dunwich Bank cannon and the Rode Paard are very similar. Although Halut would have had to make a whole new mould for the Rode Paard, it seems to be a very close copy of his own Dunwich Bank cannon, made maybe a year after, and with some slight improvements to the barrel.

Like the Dunwich Bank Cannon, the Rode Paard has quite a backstory about how it came to be where it is.

It seems one of the cannons of an Armada ship that made it safely back to Spain found its way – over a century later – into the hands of the “Dunkerse Kappers”, notorious pirates in the pay of France who made devastating attacks on Dutch merchant shipping.

In an engagement between the Dunkerke Kappers and a Dutch fleet in 1662, the Kapper's flagship blew up, and one of its ancient cannons was blown onto the deck of a Dutch warship, which took the cannon back in triumph to Enkhuizen.

## Emergency grant

SHORTLY before we went to “press”, Dunwich Museum received an emergency grant, with many thanks to Arts Council England and National Heritage Lottery Fund.

The grant will hopefully help to keep the Museum alive until such time as we can reopen. At the time of writing, the Museum Trustees and Manager were developing a Risk Assessment for a limited social distancing reopening later this year.

The Museum depends on donations from visitors and sales from the gift shop. A donation of £2 per visitor was enough to break even in the times Before Covid. Please consider making a donation via Paypal on [www.dunwichmuseum.org.uk/support-and-shop/](http://www.dunwichmuseum.org.uk/support-and-shop/)

## What's on

The Museum lives online for now, events when it reopens

AT THE time of writing there have been no Museum events this year, the Museum has been closed due to coronavirus. We did have a Christmas craft fair at the beginning of December last year. Some possible virtual Museum talks are being planned, delivered online via Zoom, see the Museum website for details (address below).

We cannot yet say when the Museum will reopen in some socially distanced form. Check the website. Or call us (01728 648796), if we're open, someone will answer.

When the Museum reopens, our special exhibition on the Dunwich Dives continues. This displays finds brought up by Stuart Bacon and his team from the seabed off Dunwich from the 1970s onwards. (See Stuart's article on p1.)

Meanwhile, the Twitter account [@DiscoverDunwich](https://twitter.com/DiscoverDunwich) is acting as a virtual Museum, showcasing online the treasures of the Museum collection. It tries to put online at least one photo a day of objects



**Bits of Dunwich's lost churches, some hauled up during the Dunwich Dives, will be on display in the Museum when it reopens. Photo: Matt Salusbury**

in the Museum.

If you're not on Twitter, you can still see it at [www.twitter.com/discoverdunwich](https://www.twitter.com/discoverdunwich).

Events for 2021 are being planned – check [www.dunwichmuseum.org.uk](http://www.dunwichmuseum.org.uk) and [@DunwichMuseum](https://twitter.com/DunwichMuseum) for updates.