



Discover Dunwich



Dunwich Museum Newsletter Issue 5 June 2025

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.

Editors: Matt Salusbury,
Simon MacDowall.

Museum opening hours

11.30am-4.30pm daily until 31
October.

Christmas opening
27 December - 2 January.

We reopen 14th -22nd February
2026, 2pm-4pm and weekends
in March 2026 2pm-4pm

Daily opening from 1 April 2026.

Contact Dunwich Museum

01728 648796 or 07979 428058

manager@dunwichmuseum.org

School bookings:

schools@dunwichmuseum.org.uk

Family events:

chronicles@dunwichmuseum.org.uk



'Jock' Horsfall holds cups won during the 1946 Belgian Grand Prix

© Aston Martin Heritage Trust

Dunwich's own James Bond?

by Cliff Nicholson

St. John Ratcliffe Stewart 'Jock' Horsfall lived at Cliff House in Dunwich from 1911 to 1940. He spent his formative years tinkering with motorbikes and racing around the grounds. A self-taught engineer, Jock learnt to take apart motorbikes and cars – rebuilding them to go faster. The country lanes around Dunwich echoed to the roar of Jock Horsfall's latest engine rebuild.

In 1934 he won a Special Award at Brooklands motor racing circuit. He seldom wore race leathers or a helmet, preferring to turn up for events in a shirt, tie and sleeveless pullover.

During World War Two, Sir Eric Holt-Wilson, formerly of the Secret Service Bureau, wanted a driver who was discreet and could drive fast. Holt-Wilson knew the Horsfalls, they'd been tenants of one of his relatives in Redgrave, North Suffolk. Jock was recruited to chauffeur British agents and important German prisoners to secret meetings.

Jock's skills resulted in an assignment to collect a cargo in his Ford van, tuned to reach 100 mph, and drive from London to Holy Loch, Scotland (430 miles) as fast as possible. This cargo was a body stored in dry ice, dressed in a naval uniform. In its pockets were identification papers, letters from a fiancée and restaurant receipts. This gave a new identity to the real deceased, Welsh vagrant Glydwr Micheal. A locked briefcase was chained to the body's wrist. Driving at night with blacked-out headlamps, Jock delivered the body to the submarine HMS Seraph, which silently slid out of port.

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Recent Acquisitions

The ship's timber that came ashore last winter around Walberswick Sluice has been carried by two volunteers all the way to Dunwich Museum, where it now rests outside in the front garden, next to the survey ship's anchor and the short-barrelled cannon.

As we go to press, we've received a Museum Development South East grant to catalogue our Stuart Bacon Suffolk Underwater Studies Collection - stonework and other artefacts, some from Dunwich's lost churches recovered on Stuart's Dunwich Dives. There's also a cabinet full of photos from Stuart's dives along the Dunwich coast. We believe the documentation for these photos went to the Suffolk Records Office, we're investigating as part of the project.

We have recently had many of our maps, oil paintings and watercolours of Dunwich professionally restored.

Below are watercolours of the still extant stained-glass windows at Holy Trinity Church, Blythburgh, not far from Dunwich. They were painted around 1860 by Hamlet Watling. He was the schoolteacher at Dunwich and a historian of the lost town.



By the time you are reading this, we expect that an interpretation board will have been installed next to Dunwich's last surviving World War Two pillbox, an asymmetrical "Type 52" pillbox in Dunwich Beach Car Park.

The sign, which was in place in time for the VE Day 80th anniversary on 8 May, gives information on our pillbox and on anti-invasion defences in the area.

The sign was created in partnership with the Dunwich Town Trust. The text was written with input from Robert Liddiard, a local historian and archaeologist of World War Two defensive architecture on the Suffolk coast.

What's On

To coincide with our ongoing special exhibition on pilgrim badges and pilgrimage in Dunwich, we have a secular pilgrimage walk on **Friday 25 July**, St James's Day. The pilgrimage walk starts at St Peter's Church, Westleton and progresses along the ancient road, the old straight track known as the "Roman Road" than runs through Westleton Heath to St James's Church, Dunwich



There's a programme of events funded by SCC Cultural Fund, Suffolk & Essex Coasts and Heaths and the Dunwich Town Trust. This includes "Bioblitz" biological surveys led by expert naturalists, geology, beach and erosion experiments, water testing and archaeology dig days.

Family-friendly events including arts and crafts, live music and poetry, family archaeology days, tours of medieval Dunwich, and some spooky events around Halloween continue throughout the summer season until daily opening ends on 31 October.

This year's craft fair is on **Saturday 28 June** and our art fair is on **2, 3 and 4 August**.

Dunwich Museum will also host a recorded online talk on the woodwoses and wildmen of Suffolk, planned in the **second half of October**.

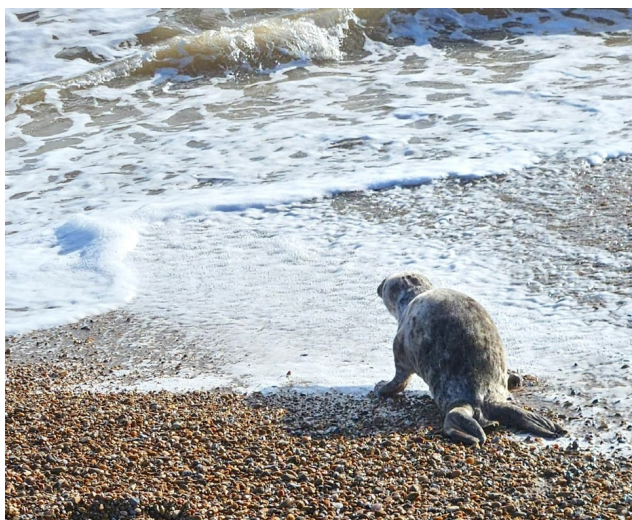
Saturday 25 October is the provisional date of the first AGM for the Dunwich Community Heritage Centre, the charity than runs the Museum.

There will be more details of all these events nearer the time at www.dunwichmuseum.org.uk/events/. See also "Dunwich Museum" on Facebook and Insta and [@DiscoverDunwich](https://twitter.com/DiscoverDunwich) on Twitter/X and BlueSky for updates.

Scan to view
more details on
Dunwich Museum



Coastal Processes Update



There has been a recent increase in seal pups being stranded on Dunwich Beach in storms.

Photo: © Roger Bulkely

The coastline of Norfolk and Suffolk is “bearing the scars of the winter storms of 2024-2025”, according to the excellent Altered Coast blog www.alteredcoast.blog/ which examines the causes and effects of coastal erosion on our region. We thank Altered Coast for their help with this article.

At the end of November 2024, a storm blew down four trees in Dunwich Forest onto power lines, causing a power cut in Dunwich Village for a day. Storm Darragh, which peaked on 6 December 2024, caused local outdoor Christmas markets to be cancelled, including those at Saxmundham and Halesworth. The New Year’s Eve fireworks at Westleton were among those also cancelled due to high winds and bad weather.

Several seal pups were stranded during storms on Christmas Day and Boxing Day 2024. Dunwich’s volunteers, who had received training by British Divers Marine Life Rescue, assisted. This increase in young seals being stranded during storms at Dunwich could be connected to Suffolk’s first seal colony in modern times which has established itself at Orford Ness. A young seal was also found stranded on the beach following another storm in early February 2025 – it eventually managed to get back into the sea on its own.

Stormy seas brought a tide of litter ashore on Dunwich’s beaches on 20 February 2024, so much of it that there was speculation that a landfill site in Norfolk or on the Continent of Europe had been breached by the sea.



Children learn about coastal erosion at one of our activity days. Photo: © Jane Hamilton

Volunteers carried out an emergency beach clean with the help of an electric vehicle lent by Dunwich Heath National Trust. There were noticeable quantities of rope, string, fishing line, lengths of plastic tubing and fragments of smashed plastic crates among the rubbish.

There were flood warnings issued by the Environment Agency for “Lowestoft to Bawdsey” – the section of the Suffolk coast that includes Dunwich on 17 November 2024 and on 6 and 7 December 2024 and 30 March 2025.

The next but one beach up the coast from Dunwich is Southwold. On the northern end of Southwold Pier, repairs scheduled for early 2026 had to be brought forward by a year to fill voids and replace slabs following the collapse of a section of promenade in March 2025. These earlier than scheduled repairs also took in the “toe” (the base) of the sea wall.

Just up the coast from Southwold is Covehithe, where cracks were visible on the coastal footpath at the Benacre Nature Reserve from the second half of January 2025. The public were “advised not to walk on the path,” according to the *East Anglian Daily Times*.

The sea defences at Benacre Sluice were strengthened from April 2024 after winter storms had left the low-lying area “vulnerable to a breach from the sea.”

by Matt Salusbury

The Near Leiston Horde

Late Saxon Dunwich was already a thriving port. A late Saxon coin hoard has been discovered near Leiston, less than 5 miles (9 km) from Dunwich.

The coin hoard was unearthed in 2023 during excavations by Oxford Cotswold Archaeology around the Sizewell C development. The hoard has 321 silver coins – nearly all silver pennies – issued between 1036 and 1044. The coins were wrapped in lead sheeting.

The hoard's total value of 320 pence would at the time have bought around 16 cows. So it would have been the savings of somebody affluent with local influence, perhaps a wealthy farmer.

The coins were issued during the reigns of Harold I "Harefoot" (1036-40), Harthacnut (1040-2) and the first two years of Edward the Confessor's long reign (1042-66).

The "tails" of the coins name the more than 30 mints where they were struck, with approximately 40% of the hoard's coins struck in London. Others were struck at more local mints including Thetford, Norwich and Ipswich. (More detail at www.tinyurl.com/Sizewellhoard.)

Why was the hoard buried?

Several other coin hoards are known from 1042-44, buried across England. One likely explanation is instability following the accession of Edward the Confessor to the English throne in 1042.

The House of Wessex returned as England's ruling dynasty, following over 25 years of control by Danish king Cnut then his sons Harold and Harthacnut.

Some may have been concerned with the changed political situation and feared reprisals or chaos. Edward exiled several high-status individuals early during his reign, confiscating their property. Perhaps people of lower status worried this might happen to them.

There have already been "pop-up" displays locally of artefacts from the Sizewell C digs. Dunwich Museum is in discussions around the possibility of hosting a temporary display of artefacts in the future.

by Matt Salusbury

Made possible by



The Leiston hoard. Saxon silver pennies wrapped in lead. © Oxford Cotswold Archaeology

Dunwich's own James Bond?

(continued from p. 1)

On 30 April 1943, the body was lowered into the sea off the south coast of Spain, where it was found by a fisherman and taken to the authorities. They identified the body as that of Major William Martin, Royal Marines. German Intelligence opened the case and sent copies of its contents to Berlin. The body and case were then handed to the British consul for burial.

This mission was codenamed Operation Mincemeat. The documents in the briefcase detailed a planned Allied invasion of Sardinia and Greece, with a diversionary attack on Sicily. This deception caused the Germans to move over 100,000 troops to Sardinia and Greece. When the actual invasion of Sicily started ten weeks later, the Nazis still believed it was a diversion.

After the war Jock returned to motor racing. He won the Grand Prix Automobile de Belgique in "The Black Car", his Aston Martin, and won the 1946 and 1948 Belgian Spa Grand Prix.

In August, 1949, at Silverstone, Jock's car clipped a straw bale on a corner and rolled several times, killing him instantly. He was just 39. He's buried at St. James's Church, in Dunwich. Cliff House is now a holiday park. The Aston Martin Owners Club still has a Horsfall Trophy event.

Ian Fleming, creator of James Bond, worked in naval intelligence with MI5 on Operation Mincemeat. He and Jock possibly met. Could Jock's dress code, privileged lifestyle, spying and Aston Martins have been the inspiration for Bond?

There's a longer, more complete version of Jock's story online at www.dunwichmuseum.org.uk/news/discover-dunwich/.

Dunwich
Town Trust

