

Southwold



Southwold lighthouse; H Alker Tripp

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1 Yeoman

A charming little seaside town, with beautifully planned gardens, a pier and stretches of golden sands-such is Southwold, which, standing upon a hill but a stone's throw from Dunwich, the ancient capital of East Anglia, has prospered exceedingly, whilst its once famous neighbour has practically disappeared. Not that Southwold has been without trouble of its own, as much money has been expended in protecting the town from the forces of Nature, when the sea has been lashed to fury and storms have played havoc with the coast; whilst in 1659 a terrific fire destroyed the market house and town hall, besides between two and three hundred dwelling-houses and the major portion of goods belonging to the inhabitants. This immense conflagration not only ruined over three hundred families, but also: caused damage to the extent of some £40,000, which amount, tremendous even in these days, was at that time colossal. Because of this catastrophe a great number of people left the place never to return, whilst the loss of so many buildings failed to improve the town from an architectural point of view. Fortunately, however, the magnificent old church of St. Edmund was spared, and this noble edifice, with its hundred feet tower, is a place of absorbing interest, and the Mecca of everybody except the most casual visitor.

Consisting of chancel, nave with seven bays, aisles and South porch and Western tower, the latter containing a clock and eight bells, St. Edmund's, the register of which commences in 1602, stands in an attractive position facing trimly kept greens, whilst in its churchyard a number of rose-trees, planted in rows like sentinels, make a splash of colour infinitely pleasing and original. Outside the gates are the ancient stocks, and in the churchyard itself is the tomb of Thomas Gardner, the famous historian of Dunwich, who passed away in 1769, and is buried between his two wives, the epitaphs of whom begin with "Honour" and "Virtue," thus giving point to the quaint verse which adorns his stone:

"Between Honour and Virtue here doth lie
The remains of old antiquity."

Another grave of interest contains the remains of Agnes Strickland, authoress of an account of the Queens of England, who died in 1874. A magnificent South porch, on the door of which is some fine carving, including the head of St. Edmund, leads into the church, and above this is a chamber supposed to have originally been used as the town arsenal. In this is a very real reminder of the past in the shape of a massive iron-bound chest. Worm-eaten it is indeed, but this is not to be wondered at, for it is believed that the chest was here at the time the church was erected-that is, some four hundred and fifty years back, when nothing but the best was considered good enough and things were made to last. The roof of the chancel is beautifully decorated with figures of angels holding scrolls, whilst its deep blue colouring, in which silver stars are gleaming, is almost awe-inspiring in its splendour. On the South wall is a monument to Jenney, the widow of Captain James Welsh, R.N. She died in 1832, and it is recorded that "Her Manners were Elegant, Delicate, Social. Her Conduct Religious, Charitable, Affectionate"-a tribute which scorns somewhat strange to modern ideas.

Perhaps some of the finest work is in connection with the screens, which are some of the most magnificent, not only in the Eastern Counties, but in all England. Wonderfully carved and painted with, amongst other figures, representations of the Prophets and Apostles, they never fail to excite the admiration of the spectator, and go to prove how competent were the craftsmen of old. Another example of the skill of these men is seen in the pulpit, which, although restored and repainted some years back, still retains more than a trace of the ancient glory it originally possessed. Unfortunately, the same cannot be said of the font, which formerly had various carvings on its eight sides-carvings which have disappeared these many years, probably owing to the activities of Will Dowsing, who also destroyed a large number of "superstitious pictures," as he termed the stained glass windows. However, some ancient pieces of the latter were discovered centuries later, and can now be seen decorating a window in the South aisle. In this aisle are several floorstones, one of which bears the following:

"Here lyeth The Body of Mary Rich Relict of John Rich of London gent who Departed this Life the 29th of November ann 1677 aged 77."

The vestry contains a chest, on which is a very fine representation of St. George and the Dragon. There are also some excellent old stalls with the usual carvings. In the doorway of the rood-loft is "Jack-Smite-the-Clock," which formerly stood in the tower. Clad in armour, and holding a sword and battle-axe, at one time it worked mechanically, but now the pulling of a cord is necessary to make it perform its duty -that of striking a bell at the time of Divine service. There are two chapels, North and South, the former being dedicated to the Holy Trinity and the latter to the Virgin Mary. In the roof of the South chapel are carved the faces of Charles Brandon, Duke of Suffolk in the time of Henry the Eighth, and his wife, Mary Tudor, sister of the King and grandmother of the ill-fated Lady Jane Grey. Previous to becoming the wife of the Duke she had contracted a marriage with Louis the Twelfth of France, who died three months later, and according to some accounts 'his widow was very far from being sorry. In this chapel is also a piscina, whilst there is another and a sedile in the sanctuary. An object of interest, showing Southwold's association with maritime matters, is the model of a lifeboat suspended from the roof of the North aisle.

It seems that the first religious edifice was erected in Southwold during the reign of King John, but this was subordinate to the church at Reydon, or Rissemere as it was then called. In fact, only the ordinary form of service was allowed, and to obtain the benefit of the sacraments and for marriage and other ceremonies, the inhabitants were compelled to journey to Reydon, apparently a more important place then than it is at the present day, as Southwold was merely a hamlet of its neighbour. In the first quarter of the fifteenth century, however, the original building was destroyed by fire, and although the erection of a new structure gave the parishioners privileges they had hitherto failed to enjoy, it was not until 1751 that it became a separate curacy, and over a hundred years later before it possessed an incumbent of its own.

Mention has already been made of the dreadful fire which well-nigh brought Southwold to the dust, and through this event many ancient records were lost, and much that would throw

light upon its early history was destroyed. One curious incident emerged from this, which proves that even such a tragedy may have its brighter side for some folk, as it appears that through the destruction of the court-baron rolls the majority of copy-holders in the town became freeholders-a thing which would scarcely happen to-day!

Originally a mere collection of fishermen's huts, Southwold afterwards became a place of some importance, and Henry the Seventh "in consideration of the industry and good services of the men of Southwold" made the town a free borough, after which it was governed by two bailiffs, a recorder and various lesser officers. About the same time the inhabitants were engaged in the fishing industry on a large scale, their ships going as far afield as Iceland. After a time, however, this declined, but improved again in the middle of the eighteenth century when two piers were erected and docks built, and through these improvements not only did the fishermen come into their own, but an extensive trade in merchandise was carried on, whilst as long ago as the early part of the nineteenth century it commenced to attract visitors in the Summer-although scarcely in the same numbers as it does at the present.

Perhaps the most famous episode in connection with the town is that terrific battle which raged between the English and French fleets on one side and the Dutch on the other. The English ships were at anchor in Sole—a corruption of Southwold-Bay on May 28th, 1672, under the command of the Duke of York, afterwards James the Second, and this officer apparently considered the Dutch had no intention of attacking, for many of his men were ashore, and had even gone so far afield as Framlingham to enjoy the delights of the Whitsun Fair. These sailors, rudely awakened by the sound of gun-fire, hurried post-haste to the coast, but none of them were able to rejoin their ships, and thus had the mortification of hearing all the turmoil of battle without being able to assist their comrades-a mortification which was probably intensified by the fact that a thick fog hid the scene from their anxious eyes. Apparently the only officer of the English Navy who realised the hazardous position in which the vessels were placed was the Earl of Sandwich, commander of one of the squadrons, who warned the Duke of the danger, only to be contemptuously repulsed and sneered at for a coward -which he most certainly was not, as was to be proved later.

What a battle that must have been, and what a thrill for the anxious inhabitants of shore! One can imagine their feelings as the guns thundered forth and the flashes pierced the fog-how they swayed, alternating between hope and fear, wondering whether their men would manage to keep the shores of Suffolk inviolate, or if presently a battered and torn remnant would make the harbour, pursued by the triumphant ships of de Ruyter's Dutchmen. All day long the struggle raged, now one way, now the other, and in that grim contest the French played an inglorious part. Although nominally our allies, they refused to give battle, and it is believed that they were acting under orders from their Government, whose laudable intention was to allow the English and Dutch to cut each other's throats, so to speak, and then bring both to heel.

Fortunately, however, this piece of knavery came to nought, chiefly through the gallantry and desperate bravery of the man whom the Duke of York had dubbed a poltroon, because he had eyes to see where his commanding officer could not. Recklessly, yet with purposeful

courage, the Earl of Sandwich hurled himself into the fray, engaging ship after ship of the enemy, until eventually only a handful of the original thousand men composing his crew were left, and his vessel, riddled with shot and sinking, was an inferno of flame and smoke. At this the gallant commander plunged into the sea, but his body was afterwards recovered and buried in Westminster Abbey.

That the Dutch were soundly thrashed is proved by the fact that they ran away in disorder at the last, and their casualties were so tremendous that their publication was forbidden. In connection with this battle it is interesting to note that the somewhat weird-looking sign on that well-known inn, the Martlesham Lion, is believed to have been the figurehead of one of the captured vessels. A house still exists in Southwold High Street which was the residence of the Duke of York for some years previous to the victory.

Another famous battle-but a land affair this time-is recalled by six guns on Southwold cliffs, which are alleged to have been recaptured by the Duke of Cumberland at Culloden in 1746, the Young Pretender having taken them in a previous engagement, although whether this is true, has been questioned by some people.

It has been suggested that near Southwold Ptolemy, the geographer, marked the eastern boundary of the Roman province during the second century, whilst there is also a link with later invaders by the supposed site of a Danish camp.

Although somewhat inaccessible, Southwold is very far from lagging behind the rest of the world in the march of progress, and despite the fact that its railway is only a single line, and a narrow gauge one at that every year it brings increasing numbers of visitors to the town, whilst many more are landed at the pier. From a sporting point of view there is little at which to grumble, for apart from the attractions of sea-bathing, Southwold has some excellent golf links and tennis courts. Religiously, the town is well provided for, as besides St. Edmund's, there is the Roman Catholic "Church of the Sacred Heart," Congregational and Wesleyan Chapels, and a Brethren's Meeting Place, thus embracing several shades of opinion.

Indeed, it would be difficult to find a healthier or more attractive place. All around are rolling heaths, sometimes purple with the tint of heather or flaming yellow when the gorse is out. And then there is the sea, rolling up to the portals of the town, and bringing with it breezes which flush the cheek, and brighten the eye. Heath or sea, either way the wind blows sweet and clean-a tonic for the body and an inspiration to the mind.

YEOMAN.

September 2nd, 1927.

2 Dutt's Suffolk, 1927

Southwold, one of the quietest and most delightful watering-places on the E. coast, is 110 m from London by rail. (A narrow-gauge railway branches off from the G.L.R. main line at Halesworth and has stations at Wenhaston, Blythburgh, Walberswick, and Southwold.) It is a healthy place, standing on fairly high ground commanding a good sea view, and having a breezy common on the S. side and very picturesque surroundings. For the visitor with archeological and rambling inclinations it is a good centre, for, within easy walking distance of it are the ruined churches at Covehithe and Walberswick and the ruins of the decayed town of Dunwich. The sea-front provides a charming promenade along the crest of the cliffs, and a small pier has been built, at which the passenger steamers call as they ply between London and Yarmouth. There is a quaint beachmen's colony of wooden sheds bordering a road leading to Walberswick Ferry: this, to many visitors, is by far the most interesting part of the town.

In the thirteenth century Southwold was a hamlet of the neighbouring parish of Reydon, and the abbot of Bury was lord of the manor. It received its charter of incorporation from Henry VII, and became somewhat prosperous on account of the decay of Dunwich, the choking up of the harbour there resulting in shipping making use of that of Southwold which in turn became almost unapproachable. William Waynfleet, writing in 1666, said: "Southwold being an island environed with salt water, might be made the strongest in those parts; it has nine good guns, but only four fixed, and not ammunition enough for two hours skirmishing; the town is poor, and cannot do what it would, and the country does not help, though they say it would be their destruction if the town were held by an enemy; it is the nearest town in England to Holland, and the best bay." Six years later (on May 26th, 1672) the Battle of Sole bay was fought off Southwold between the allied fleets of England and France, under the Duke of York, Lord Sandwich, and Admiral D'Etrees, and the Dutch fleet under De Ruyter. The allied fleet, numbering 101 ships, were surprised by De Ruyter (who had 91 men of war, 54 fire-ships, and 23 tenders) while at anchor. The French ships, attacked by Bankert, soon sheered off, and the fighting was mainly between the English and Dutch. The Dutch vice-admiral Von Ghent, was killed, and De Ruyter was wounded, and lost three of his ships; on the English side the Earl of Sandwich was blown up with his flag-ship the Royal James, and five other ships were lost. An old ballad writer relates:

They battered without let or stay
Until the evening of that day,
'Twas then the Dutchmen ran away;
The Duke had beat them tightly";

but the assertion made in the last line is not quite in accordance with the facts of the case. By this fight the town was only the better off in the possession of a few stray cannon-balls; but as a result of a subsequent land battle-that of Culloden -it became possessed of a battery of guns; for the Duke of Cumberland, on his way home from Scotland, landed at

Southwold, and presented to the town some 18-pounders which had been taken from the English at Prestonpans and recaptured at Culloden. These guns are now on the Gun Hill.

The church (of St Edmund) is a large and handsome Perp. building, erected on the site of an earlier one destroyed by fire about 1430. It has a fine tower, with unusually constructed belfry windows: they are divided down the centre by a narrow buttress. The W. doorway and window are worthy of attention: above the latter is the inscription " Sct Edmund ora p. nobis." The S. porch is very elaborate, and has a room with a groined ceiling, and lighted by two windows on the S. Above the aisle windows is a cornice of grotesque figures, heads, and quatrefoils. The clerestory has a splendid range of lights, and is surmounted by a light, open lantern. At the W. end of each aisle is an ornamental turret, by which access can be obtained to the roof. The W. window has very good tracery; that of the E. window is modern. Within, the rood-screen, which has fine carved work and fretted spirelets, at once attracts attention. The paintings on the panels have been restored. At the N. end of the screen is an old carved wooden figure, or "Jack in Armour," which formerly stood on a bracket over the W. arch, where it was connected with the clock. This figure holds in its left hand a sword and in its right hand a small battle-axe, with which, when a cord is pulled, it smites a bell and announces to the organist that the minister is about to leave the vestry. Note also (1) the stalls and misereres in the chancel; (2) the paintings on the chancel roof; (3) the pulpit; and (4) a carved oak chest.

In the churchyard are the graves of Agnes Strickland, historian of the Queens of England, and her sister and biographer, Jane Strickland. also that of Thos. Gardner, the historian of Dunwich, having on the stone the epitaph :

"Betwixt Honour and Virtue here doth lie
The remains of old antiquity,"

3 Topography



Fro= Frostenden; Sco=South Cove; Wan=Wangford; Rey=Reydon; Eas=Easton Bavents;

This remarkable system of creeks was responsible for the settlement of 8 communities, each of which in Saxon times had its own quay and access to the sea. The two inland villages of Wangford and Reydon maintained trading quays on the Blyth well into the middle of the 19th century.

Over the centuries, coastal erosion and the deposition from rivers and streams has led to the blocking of the northern inlets serving South Cove and Frostenden turning them into extensive freshwater marshes.

Now, only the port of Southwold is accessible through the mouth of the Blyth that was first cut through the shingle bank in the 16th century. Before then, Southwold and Walberswick could only access the sea via the natural mouth of the Blyth at Dunwich.

It is likely that at one time, Southwold was an island community, being cut off from the mainland by the tidal inlet now known as Buss Creek. 'Buss' was the name of a particular type of medieval Dutch trading vessel.

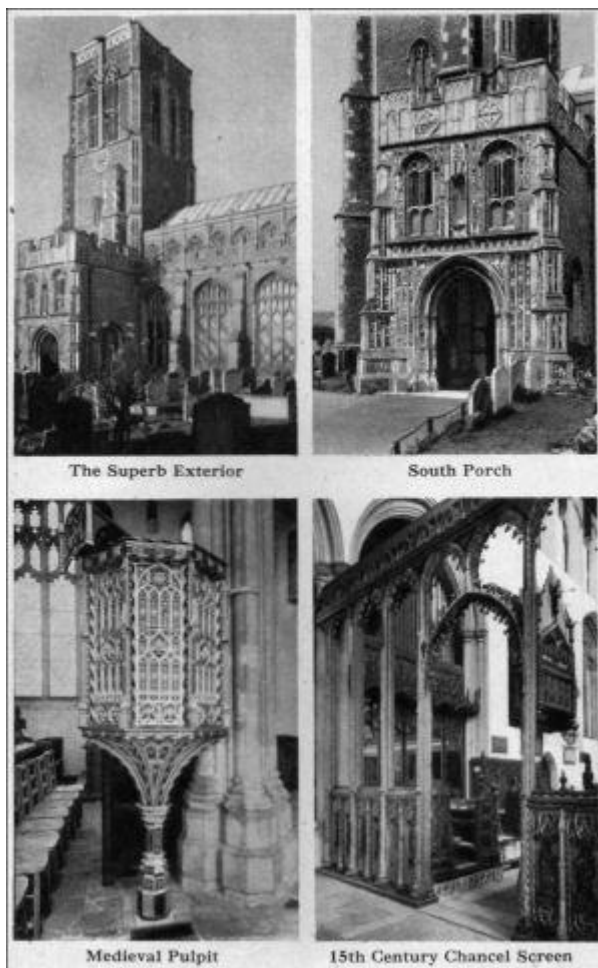
4 Picture Gallery

http://www.suffolkkemps.info/soutwold_gallery/

5 St Edmunds Parish Church

..... the pride of Southwold today is in the church which was its pride 500 years ago. A forlorn-looking place when our century opened, it has been lovingly restored so that we see it much as it was when the rich wool merchants built it. A veritable delight to look upon, it is one of the most perfect barn churches in the land, its nave and chancel and aisles enclosed in walls without a break, its windows magnificent, its medieval tower rising 100 feet with chequer work of coloured flints and stone, giving it a beauty not to be forgotten. Above it swings a fisherman's boat as a weathervane. An inscription in stone with a crown over each letter begs St Edmund to pray for us, and on the arch of the tower door below is a dragon and a leopard.

All round the church is a fine array of heads.



The white wolf of Henry the Seventh, who gave Southwold its charter, is on the archway of the two-storeyed porch, a place magnificent, with a grand old door carved on both sides. It has richly panelled battlements and a canopied niche between its upper windows, and in the roof are badges and bunches of fruit, while in a panel is a crowned head and the figure of a cock below the arrows of St Edmund's martyrdom. In the upper room (with a secret latch) is a small museum with the stocks and whipping-post (of which copies are on the little green outside) and a 14th century chest. Inside

and outside of this church are about a hundred mason marks, some of them finely cut initials and some curiously like insects.

The splendid porch brings us into a splendour greater still, a church 144 feet long and 56 wide, with the peak of a glorious roof 66 feet above the floor. "What a place to sack" the fanatic Dowsing must have said as he rams in with his hatchets and hammers to smash these windows, to break up these saints and angels, and to wreck what he could of the woodwork. Splendid it all is in spite of him ; the great east window, with 50 figures in its glass, has 20 tons of stone in its framework. 'The nave roof' is a masterpiece, with its wooden angels jutting out from the hammer beams.

The church is rich beyond most churches in its screens, for it has three of the 15th century. The wonderful chancel screen runs across the church, one of the richest and daintiest pieces of medieval woodwork in Suffolk. It has 30 painted panels, which have been restored so that we may see them as their 15th century artists left them; one has a picture of the old church before this. In the panels between the nave and the chancel arc the Twelve Apostles. The lady chapel screen has 12 Old Testament figures, and the Holy Trinity screen has archangels and symbolical figures. The Apostles are all shown with their emblems and a quaint touch is given to the panel of St Paul by a picture of a dog chasing a duck.

The stalls of the chancel are carved with a richness reminding us of those in Henry the Seventh's Chapel in Westminster Abbey. On the arm-rests arc angels, grotesques, and animals, and on one stall is a carving of the mouth of hell. The sedilia and a rather unusual piscina are 15th century. The organ is supported by two flying angels and has three trumpeting angels on the top.

The medieval pulpit draws all eyes to it with its vivid colour. It is one of the finest pulpits in the country, its tracery outlined in gold with flowers and other rich ornament all splendidly restored in our time by the daughter town of Southwold in America. It stands on a slender post which grows into a fan, and each of its eight sides is covered with the delicate craftsmanship of its time. The lofty pinnacled cover of the font is a copy of this old craftsmanship. It rises 33 feet from the floor and is a lovely spectacle in red, green, and gold, crowned by a slender spire. The font itself is one of the medieval group illustrating the Seven Sacraments, of which there are about 40 in the country and 12 in Suffolk. The carving on the huge walnut chest, a splendid figure of St George full of energy, was done more than 500 years ago; the chest itself is one of the best in England. The lectern is a copy of an old one in York. The altar table (with a lovely embroidered modern cloth) is Elizabethan, and above it are five panels painted by a modern artist. Four golden angels hold candles at the corners of this reredos.

Two remarkable portraits on wooden bosses the medieval artists have left us here, looking down from the roof of the lady chapel. One of the bosses is that sister of Henry the Eighth who lies by the sanctuary of St Mary's in Bury St Edmunds, the princess who was driven to marry the king of France, became a widow in a month or two, and married the Duke of Suffolk. The other is the duke himself. Both look down from bosses in this roof, he with a curious forked beard, she with a remarkable square headdress. She was the Queen of France for 80 days, and grandmother of poor Lady Jane Grey, who was Queen of England for nine days.

All through the long life of this great church has stood here a young soldier called Jack the Smiter. He has kinsmen at Dennington, Wells, Wimborne, and other places, and his duty is, like theirs, to strike an hour bell with a sword or battleaxe. Southwold Jack is about four feet high, carved in wood, and wears armour of about 1470. His head is made to turn by the same mechanism that raises his arm to strike the bell. He is in armour of the days of the Wars of the Roses, is curiously painted in the original colourings, his cheeks red, his eyes black and white, and in one hand he holds a sword and in the

other a battleaxe. Jack the Smiter, a queer helmeted fellow, is one of the most popular figures in Suffolk.

Hanging from a roof not far from Jack is a perfect model of a lifeboat in full sail, a copy of the Alfred Corry, which was dedicated to this church. It is a thank-offering for 20 years of faithful service, almost a record for this dangerous coast. Preserved in the church is a stone with a reference to two wives, and in the churchyard is the grave of two sisters. The wives were those of Thomas Gardner, a Customs Officer who wrote a history of Dunwich, the stone referring to his book and his wives in this way:

Betwixt Honour and Virtue here doth lie
The remains of Old Antiquity.

The two sisters are Agnes Strickland and her biographer Jane. Agnes, the best known of the nine children of the Strickland family, is famous with her sister Elizabeth for the work they wrote together on the Lives of the Queens of England. Their father lived at Reydon Hall near Southwold, but Agnes was born in London in 1796. The father lost most of his fortune and so it became needful for the daughters to earn their living, and they earned it by writing. Agnes was the most prolific author, and wrote many books on kings and queens and other historic figures. The Lives of the Queens has been steadily read for nearly a hundred years. It is a work of great industry rather than of distinction. Elizabeth, strongly objecting to publicity, refused to have her name on the title page, so that the work is generally attributed to Agnes. Both died in the same year, and the biography of Agnes was written by her sister Jane, who lies with her in this churchyard.

Based on the 1930s entry in Arthur Mee's 'THE KING'S ENGLAND; SUFFOLK'

[See Also Suffolk Churches Database](#)

6 Harbour Timeline

1590

A new mouth of the Blyth was excavated through the shingle bar to give the river Blyth boats of Walberswick and Southwold a more or less straight line of access to the sea. Dunwich men had to sail south from the site of their former town quay in order to use the new exit to the sea.

1614

The periodic blocking of the Blyt still continued and was highlighted in a pamphlet written by Tobias Gentleman of Southwold which described the situation as:

In the Towns of Southwold, Dunwich and Walberswick is a very good breed of fishermen... but these men are greatly hindered and in a manner undone by reason that their Haven is so bad and in a manner often stopped up with beach and shingle stone.... it is pitiful the trouble and damage that all the men of these towns do daily sustain by their naughty harbour.

1688

The jurisdiction of the port of Southwold was defined as from Covehithe to Thorpeness. Southwold's Blackshore quay was declared the legal staithe from which goods could be landed and embarked for export.

1740

Reydon Quay built

1746

An Act of Parliament established a board of Commissioners to take control of Southwold Harbour from the Borough. The Commissioners were empowered to raise funds by mortgages secured on the proceeds of harbour dues.

1749-52

North and South Piers built to secure the harbour entrance.

1753

The headquarters of the Free British Fishery transferred from London to Southwold. This company had been formed by London merchants as a commercial device to compete with Dutch fishermen. The fishery was operated with 67 45-80 ton, square rigged boats, constructed on the same lines as the Dutch busses. The Southwold fleet was based on a quay and premises at Wood's End Creek (Buss Creek) with warehouses at Blackshore, and was engaged in exporting herrings, sprats, and also malt and corn.

1757

Act passed to make the River Blyth navigable by wherries from Southwold to Halesworth for the export of malt and import of coal.

1772

The Free British Fishery was a commercial failure.

1805-18

Harbour had to be dug out 13 times

1884

Halesworth Navigation closed. Southwold Borough regained control of the harbour.

1908

Harbour opened for the East Coast herring fleet after widening the harbour mouth and extending the piers with concrete. The new harbour and its shoreline facilities could accommodate several hundred herring drifters. Barrels of cured herrings were exported to Germany.

1914

The harbour was a commercial failure, despite Southwold having a rail connection with Halesworth.

1932

Twenty colliers used the harbour to import 3,000 tons of coal. This was a commercial speculation that did not continue.

1974

Ownership of the harbour passed from the Borough Council to Waveney District Council

1986

A proposal by the District Council to back a commercial marina and holiday village on the Town Marshes was rejected by a public meeting held in St Edmunds Church.

1998

There were between 30-40 fishing boats registered at Southwold.

2008

East Anglian Daily Times; 20th February

4.5m harbour Repairs needed'

Users' Association: Fears over lower cost options

By Staff Reporter

The future of a popular north Suffolk harbour will be in serious jeopardy if council bosses pursue cheaper options to carry out vital repairs, it has been claimed.

The Southwold Harbour Users' Association estimates £4.5million is needed to bring the crumbling north dock wall back into use, but fears Waveney District Council is now looking at lower cost options.

Chairman Graham Hay Davison said the repair of the wall is vital to the future prosperity of the harbour and has urged council bosses to protect the site for at least another century.

"The wall is now in imminent danger of collapse and has been classified as a dangerous structure, incapable of, being used for the purpose for which it is intended," he said.

"The future of the harbour is of paramount importance, not only for the town, but also in support of the up-river sea wall defences."

He insisted a £4.5m scheme that involves placing steel piling about half a metre into the river and filling the gap; with concrete is the only suitable solution.

However, after recent talks with a council official, he has been led to believe other, cheaper, options are being considered, including collapsing the north dock wall into the river.

"Wasting time devising cheaper courses of action, which take out the dock wall, are simply not acceptable" he said. "The harbour cannot survive without this facility"

Mr Hay Davison said another £800,000 was needed to carry out repairs to the harbour's south training arm and urged the district council to seek European Union funding.

The north dock wall has been fenced off since 2006 and a subsequent Waveney council bid for European funding was turned down.

The harbour is also facing up to a new threat after the Environment Agency announced proposals to withdraw maintenance of flood defences along the Blyth Estuary over the next two decades.

A Waveney District Council spokesman said consultants had been commissioned to identify a range of solutions to repair the harbour.

He added: "Based on the recommendations that flow from the conclusion of the technical reporting process, members will make appropriate decisions. Funding will be sought to facilitate the works and, again, a range of options will be considered.

"The harbour wall is 100 years old and we suspect it was never built with such a lifespan in mind."

7 Buss Creek

Buss Creek is the name given to a northern branch of the Blyth estuary that defines the boundary between the greatly marine eroded, sparsely populated parish of [Easton Bavents](#), and the urbanised parts of Reydon and Southwold. The name Buss Creek is said to come from the Dutch sailing craft known as busses which plied the coastal trade of Norfolk and Suffolk. There is a small wharf where the A1095 to Southwold crosses the creek at Might's Bridge and this marks the end of the present day navigable section. To the east beyond Might's Bridge the terminal portion of Buss Creek is represented by a large area of drained marshland with the main channel flowing in a reedbed between two high banks with public rights of way to the carpark behind the coastal defences north of Southwold Pier. This large area of wetland was probably formed by glacial meltwater channelling to the sea through two gullies defined by the Reydon 5 metre contour. At some point in the distant past it was probably a saltwater mere and the site of Southwold was virtually an island. The northern portion between Easton Marshes and the outskirts of Reydon provides summer grazing for cattle. The smaller portion belonging to Southwold is occupied by a reedbed wilderness from which has been constructed a municipal boating lake just beyond the pier.



Sea defences of Easton Marsh

The junction between Easton Marshes and Southend Warren in Easton Bavents has brought this small remnant of eroding coastline to the attention of the national media in relation to the rapid erosion of its 10 metre high cliffs, which begin where the concrete coastal defences of Easton Marshes terminate. In particular, the owner of the property nearest to the cliff edge has been fighting a lone battle against erosion by tipping rubble and concrete blocks onto the beach. Nevertheless, the sea is relentlessly eating a way round the defences, both official and unofficial, which raises questions about the consequences of the sea gaining access to Easton Marshes which are mostly below sea level.



Northern end of sea defences at Easton Cliff; house on the cliff top is a few yards from the cliff edge



Cliff Edge property at Easton Bawents (2008)



Cattle grazing on Easton Marsh, 2008



Easton Barents Sandlings, open air pig production



Wharf at Mights Bridge



Edge of Reydon about 2 m. above sea level



Southwold Marsh: southern edge of town



Easton Bavents plateau from the drainage embankment



Wartime anti-tank blocks



Boating lake at pier end of marsh

These last pictures represent the contrast between wild and tamed nature. Indeed, to walk from the foot of the eroding cliffs at Easton Bavent, along the foot of the sandlings plateau to Reydon's comfortable suburbia, then to the endless flow of traffic across Mites Bridge, and back through the windswept reedbeds along the top of the drainage channel to the multicoloured beach huts at Southwold, is to pass through a whole range of environments summarising the human onslaught on nature. Here is exemplified the futility of fighting the sea and climate change; the seminatural bird-rich habitats of extensive agricultural systems, and the relentless come back of nature to reclaim untended human enterprises. Finally, there is the sharp break between the crowded leisure facilities of holidaymakers and the loneliness of shingle, sand and marsh where it is rare to encounter another human. Buss Creek is a good example of where nature is allowed to be wild and manage itself. It has a high biological diversity but it is not a nature reserve.

Buss Creek and the surrounding area is designated under the Suffolk Coasts and Heaths Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) for its nationally important landscape. There are a number of designated sites of nature conservation interest in or around the study area, the two most relevant sites being [Easton Marshes County Wildlife Site](#).

Unlike a similar habitat further down the coast at [Aldeburgh](#), there is no overall management plan, no defined ecological outcomes, and there is an acceptance of natural dynamics, immigrations and extinctions. As such it is a good place to debate the philosophy of '[let it be](#)', that is to say deciding whether or not to intervene when protecting ecosystems and species.

8 Notes on the Sheriffe Family

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