

A HISTORIC ASSESSMENT REPORT

for

THE ALFRED CORRY MUSEUM,
BLACKSHORE HARBOUR,
SOUTHWOLD, SUFFOLK



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Southwold lifeboat men and women



Intentions of the document

This report is produced as required under the National Policy Framework (NPPF). It provides a written and photographic record at English Heritage (2006) Level 2 of a museum building at the harbour entrance, Southwold, Suffolk. It is intended to inform and accompany a planning application for alterations.

This report is produced to establish the context and history of the building with its major parts and to assess its purpose, function and relationships to adjoining buildings, together with phases of development. The significances of the building and its major parts and context are summarised.

The document is not a support or justification for a particular design or any proposals.

The Brief

Alan Greening architect was instructed by the museum to; visit and inspect the building; to conduct an investigation, purely visually, and without opening up fabric. A brief report was produced from the visual evidence found. Initial internet historic desktop-research was undertaken.

Limitations

This report is an Historic Assessment document for the purposes of ascertaining the architectural history and development of the building only and should not be used for any other purpose.

Acknowledgements

I am grateful to the following who have kindly helped by providing information or perspectives on the aspects of the building:

The Staff of the Suffolk Records Office, Lowestoft, with their usual friendly and knowledgeable help,

Harry Cooper and the Trustees of the museum for commissioning me to undertake the assessment and who have kindly offered information and access.

The author

Alan Greening is a Chartered, Registered and Conservation-Accredited (AABC) architect. He operates a conservation-architect's practice from Southwold, Suffolk, providing services throughout East Anglia and Kent. Current consultancies are to the Churches Conservation Trust plus parish churches and he has previously been a "Commissioned Architect" to English Heritage.

He is a Tutor and Lecturer at Cambridge University, Madingley Hall, on their Building-Conservation course and he has been the Organiser, Tutor and Lecturer on the Architectural Association's Building Conservation course.

SUMMARY






The C19 Alfred Corry lifeboat and museum is housed in a re-used Lifeboat-Station shed, which was originally erected on the end of the pier at Cromer in 1923, to house their new motor-driven lifeboat and launch it down a ramp directly into the sea. Between 1997-1999 a new lifeboat shed was rebuilt at Cromer required the taking down of the old building which was cut into two, placed on coastal barges and towed to Lowestoft where it was auctioned and purchased by the new museum trustees. It was then towed around the coast to Southwold and erected on a new concrete base and the Alfred Corry lifeboat installed.

Today the museum displays the lifeboat in its original format together with a display of lifeboat, harbour and local-marine history, for visitors and to groups including schools.

The proposals are for a new entrance porch to be added to the west, main entrance end of the building, to provide extra space within, that will enable the museum to carry out its mission to inform and educate, particularly to groups and schools.

The Coast and Risk

As well as the foundering of ships and boats offshore, the major shipping hazard was the blowing of ships into the shallow seas off Southwold in gales, then being beached and broken by the storms either on the shore or on the bar; deaths were inevitable.

 <p>PRINCESS AUGUSTA SUNK IN THE SHALLOW SEAS OFF SOUTHWOLD, JANUARY 1838</p>	
<p>The Princess Augusta 1838</p>	<p>The Idun 1912</p>
	 <p>CREW OF THE IDUN, RESCUED AT SOUTHWOLD, JAN 17 1912</p>
<p>The figurehead of The Princess Augusta</p>	<p>The saved crew of the Idun</p>
	<p>The loss of the Martina Maria and nine of her crew on Southwold Shoal, January 1881 Southwold Sailors' Reading Room</p>

In 1838 the Princess Augusta was on her maiden voyage laden with hemp from St. Petersburg and was beached during a storm. Her cargo was subsequently removed by the 'companies' of Southwold fishermen. In 1912 the 395-ton Norwegian barque Idun, was wrecked below Southwold lighthouse at the height of a SE gale in 1912 while the Alfred Corry was attending a schooner that had been driven ashore near Sizewell. The nine crew of Idun were rescued by Southwold Coastguard and bundled into the Red Lion inn. Both ships were dismantled and sold by auction on the beach together with their cargoes.

The Development of the Southwold Lifeboat service

The Companies

There has been, 'time-out-of mind' the organisation of groups of longshore beach fishermen engaged in 'looking-out' for ships in distress along the coast. The main reason for this was not altruistic, but rather to assist boats entering the harbour by providing pilots to guide them in, or for the salvage of stricken vessels for their goods and any money that may be had from their sale. The saving of lives came a poor third, often with an awkward (or not-so-awkward) moral dilemma.

The fishermen banded together in groups along the shore to form 'companies' of men, usually with a main-sponsor, often a local publican, to provide capital in boats, watch-towers, pilots boatmen, so that the operations could be undertaken. Shares in the companies could be purchased to provide the capital for the endeavours and to take a share of the returns. These Beach Companies date back, at least, the late 18th century, James Maggs records in his famous diary that a New York Cliff-House existed in 1760. The origin of these American place names is still shrouded in mystery.

Trinity pilots and publicans held shares in the Companies, for example, the publican of the Pilot Boat Tavern had a half share in one yawl and the landlord of the Nelson had 32 out of 64 shares in their boat called 'Nelly'. Each Company had its own pilot house or communal watch tower. The boats used by the Beach Companies were mainly yawls and gigs. In 1810 the Long Island Company owned a 50-foot yawl, the Jubilee. The North Cliff Company had a yawl in 1847 called Swiftsure; by 1850 the gigs Cricketer, Mayflower and Covehithe had been added. In 1851 a new yawl was built, the Friendship, paid for by public subscription.

There were three Southwold Companies, named after the sections of beach they occupied; the North, or Kilcock Cliff Company. The Long Island Cliff Company and the New York Cliff Company. The names Klondike and California refer to area of beach to the north and south of the town respectively and not to beach companies.

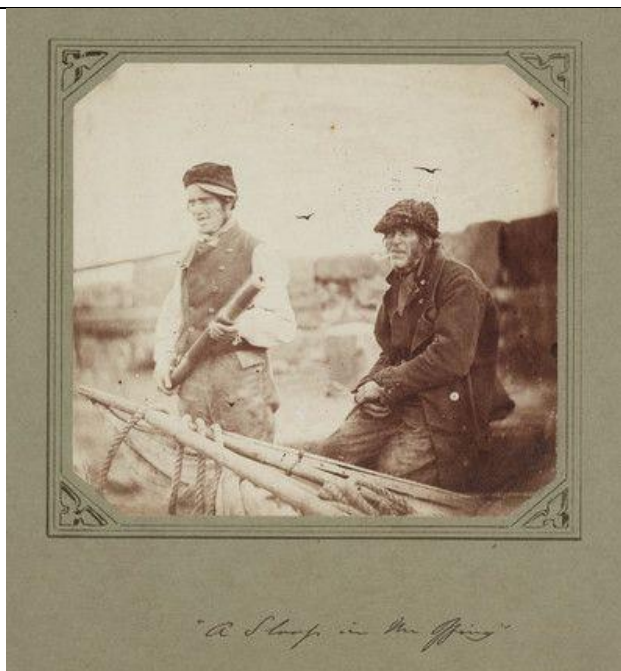
On the 1st series Ordnance Survey sheet of 1884 the North or Kilcock Cliff Company are shown with its Watch House below the Guardship on the end of St. James's Green. Long Island Cliff Company was located at the end of East Street, whose watch tower is indicated in front of the Reading Room and the New York Cliff Company was at the upper end of South Green.



Southwold 'Gun-Hill' longshore fishing



The Nelson steps 'Long-Island' lookout.



"Sighting" for piloting or salvage



The 'Kilcock' lookout and score below St. James's Green

The Preventative Water Guard

In 1809 the Preventative Water Guard was established, which may be regarded as the immediate ancestor of HM Coastguard. Its primary objective was to prevent smuggling, but it was also responsible for giving assistance to shipwrecks. For this reason, each Water Guard station was issued with Manby's Mortar, the mortar fired a shot with a line attached from the shore to the wrecked ship for the saving of sailors and was used for many years. The small cannon still exists on the St. James's Green.

The 'Guardship' building was constructed for both the look-out for ships in distress and the protection against the smuggling of contraband. Men and their families were housed in St. James's Green and Victoria Street.



The beach houses and workshops below St James's Green, late-C19.

The Preventative Guardship building to the right, with their boat shed on the beach below it.

The Coastguard Service

In 1822 the Preventative Water Guard was transferred from HM Treasury to the Board of Customs and assimilated into the Coastguard Service. In 1856 they became part of the Royal Navy to also defend the coast and put onto a more naval-service and disciplined basis.

The first Southwold 'services' boat

The first dedicated boat, in part to the saving of lives, was as part of the 'Preventative Water Guard'. It was housed in a shed at the foot of the score. James Maggs was a Southwold schoolmaster and auctioneer and from 1818 to 1876 he kept a chronicle of local events, recording the fortunes and (more often) misfortunes of the seafarers, small tradesmen and others who were his fellow townsmen. He records many natural disasters including this one in 1827: "An extraordinary high tide... The walk from Gun Hill to New York Cliff lost from 6 to 7 feet in width... A boathouse used by the Preventative Service standing upon the beach near New York Cliff was entirely swept away." Each storm or tidal surge over the years swept away fishermen's huts and boat sheds from the beaches and caused damage to the cliff face. In 1906, just three years after the timber sea defences had been renewed, part of the cliff path was washed away.

The Royal Humane Society

This charity promotes lifesaving intervention. It was founded in England in 1774 as the *Society for the Recovery of Persons Apparently Drowned*, for the purpose of rendering first aid in cases of near drowning. In 1773, physician William Hawes (1736–1808) began publicising the power of artificial respiration to resuscitate people who superficially appeared to have drowned. Thomas Cogan, another English physician, joined Hawes in his crusade. In the summer of 1774 Hawes and Cogan each brought fifteen friends to a meeting at the Chapter Coffee-house, St Paul's Churchyard, when the Royal Humane Society was founded. Gradually, branches of the Royal Humane Society were set up in other parts of the country, mainly in ports and coastal towns where the risk of drowning was high and by the end of the 19th century the society had upwards of 280 depots throughout the UK, supplied with life-saving apparatus.

The Royal National Lifeboat Institution

This is the largest charity that saves lives at sea around the coasts of the UK, Ireland, the Channel Islands and the Isle of Man as well as on some inland waterways.

in 1824 as the *National Institution for the Preservation of Life from Shipwreck*, the RNLI was granted Royal Charter in 1860 and is a charity in the UK and Republic of Ireland. Queen Elizabeth II is Patron. The RNLI is principally funded by legacies and donations with most lifeboat crew members being unpaid volunteers.

The RNLI has 237 lifeboat stations and operates 444 lifeboats. Crews rescued on average 22 people a day in 2015. RNLI Lifeguards operate on more than 200 beaches. They are paid by local authorities, while the RNLI provides

equipment and training. The Institution has saved some 140,000 lives since its foundation, at a cost of more than 600 lives lost in service.

The Lifeboat Station and shed

The present Southwold Lifeboat Station is an RNLI operated lifeboat station located at the harbour of the town on the northern edge of the outlet of the River Blyth to the sea. The station operates an Atlantic 85-class lifeboat called *Annie Tranmer* the third generation Rigid Inflatable Boat.

History



The first lifeboat station and lifeboat, were built in 1841 by the Southwold Lifeboat Society which was formed on 12th December 1840, following a public meeting chaired by the Earl of Stradbroke. The sum of £385.7.2d was raised and the first Chairman was Dr Robert Wake, Mayor. The boat *Solebay* was ordered from Messrs Teasdel of Yarmouth, and the boathouse was built at the foot of the score steps leading down from St James' Green, in other words on the beach below the cliff where later the lighthouse would be built. The total cost of boat, house and outfit was just under £400. The boat and boathouse gave excellent service for 11 years but by this time the *Solebay* was showing her age and the Society decided to replace her.

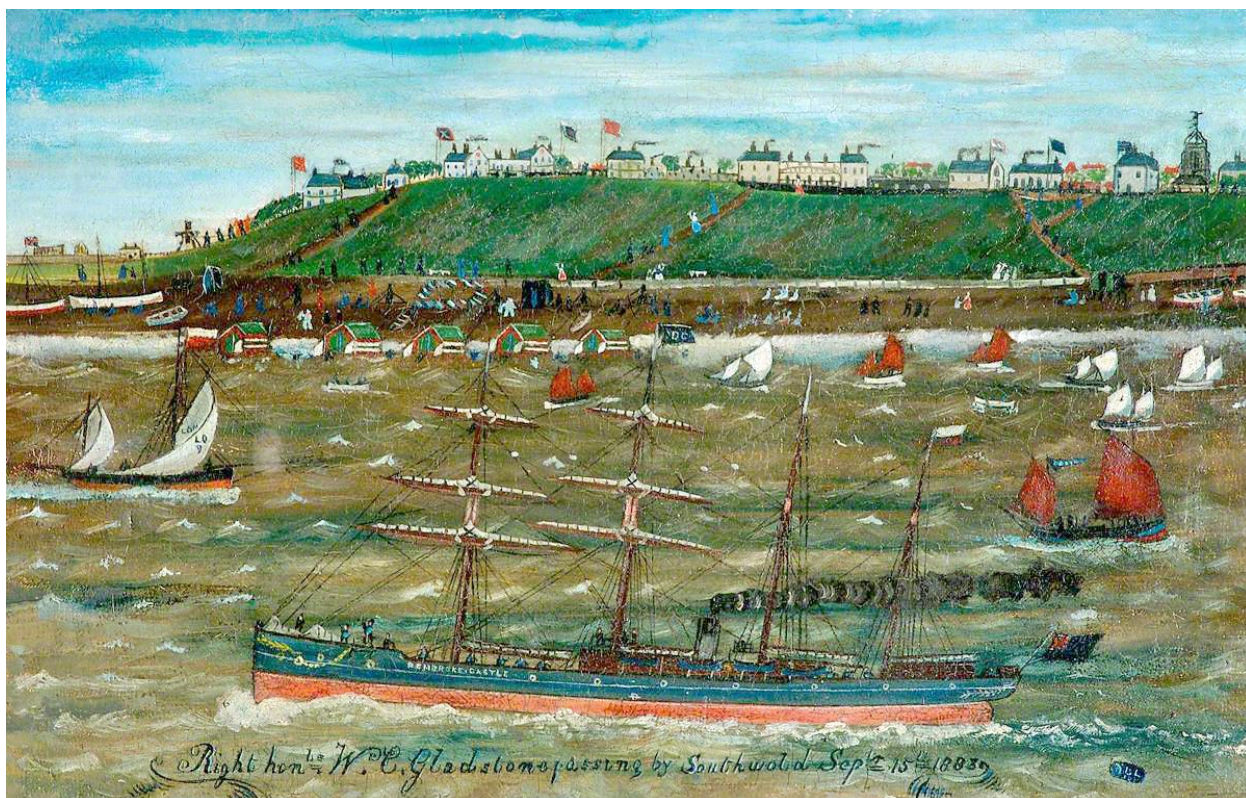
Once again a subscription list was opened and the new boat *Harriett* arrived on 8th October 1852. It cost £280. The boat was 'self-righting' and had been ordered by the Committee without consulting the crew; the men refused to go to sea in her. The matter was resolved by applying to the RNLI who agreed to take over the Society and provide £200 towards the cost of a new boat, provided the local community built the new boat and

raised the balance of the funds. This was agreed on 21st October 1854 and the Southwold station became the Southwold Branch of the RNLI. The new boat also named *Harriett* was delivered on 31st December 1855 and was worked from the same house.

On the night of 20th March 1863 a terrific gale swept away most of the cottages on the beach and a third of the lifeboat house collapsed. The RNLI built a new boathouse in the summer of 1863 and the lifeboat was moved to this new position on the Denes, south of the town, on the Ferry Road shingle-spit, half-way to the harbour near to the Dutch Barn. A temporary lighthouse was also built on the shingle spit, replaced by the permanent one within the town in 1890 that has become a well-known landmark.

In 1866 a small lifeboat *Quiver* was added and housed in a second house alongside the existing one as seen in the photograph above. The first motorised boat being put into service in 1926.

The station's lifeboat, *Mary Scott*, took part in the Dunkirk evacuation in 1940. After ferrying soldiers from the beach to mother ships she was abandoned on the beach, recovered and returned to service with the RNLI at Southwold. The original timber lifeboat station and its addition, built in 1841 is shown in the painting of Gladstone passing Southwold on SS *Pembroke Castle* of 1883 and the lower lighthouse is also shown. This building was blown over by a parachute bomb dropped on the land of the now caravan site in 1941. A new inshore lifeboat station equipped with a D class lifeboat was established in 1963.



Both the 1863 lifeboat station and Lower Light can be seen in the painting of the the Right Honourable W.C.Gladstone passing by Southwold in 1883, as part of his electioneering tour around the coast.

The lighthouse is at the end of the town seen above the pilot boat on the left of the picture.



The 1841 lifeboat shed can be seen in the painting on the shingle spit near to the Dutch Barn, as can the Lower Light.

The longshore beach can be seen as more level then than now, allowing the life-boat to be man-handled into the surf by a long-pole. It was banked up after the Great Surge of 1953.

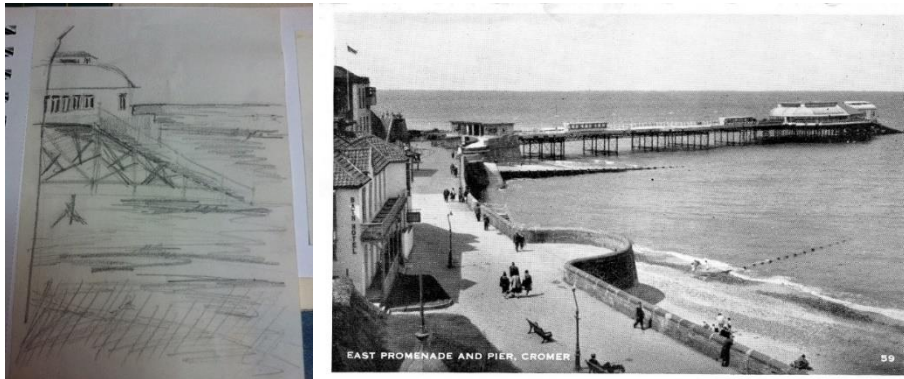


Ferry Road looking south in the 1905 high tide. The lifeboat station shed top-left.

The Museum Building

Cromer Lifeboat Station History

From 1804 the privately operated service was funded by a subscription fund which was administered by a local committee. In 1857, the Royal National Lifeboat Institution took over the Cromer station along with other Norfolk Association stations. A new lifeboat station was built in 1923 for the next generation of diesel-engine lifeboats that could be launched down a steep ramp directly into the sea rather than being hauled across the beach and manhandled into the surf. This is the station-shed that was taken down in 1999; put on sea-barges and towed around the coast to Lowestoft and which eventually became the museum building.



An original sketch of the Cromer lifeboat-station; a 1950's postcard of the pier and the lifeboat station on the end of the pier.





The shed at Cromer



The shed at Southwold as the Museum

When removed in 1999 the building was sectioned into two halves and when re-erected at Southold, placed on new foundations with the parts repaired back together again. The doors are replacements dating from 1940, the originals having been blown off in a gale and renewed. They slide sideways and concertina to provide a wide opening.

The building has become a fundamental part of the Southwold town scene, viewed from the “cliffs” at the east edge of the town and forming a focus building with the long-distance-view down to the east harbour at the end of the grass and sand dunes of Ferry Road. It is the first and last building seen when entering or exiting the harbour and is an important landmark for this sea-ward corner of the estuary.

The shed has a history and heritage of lifeboats second to none in the United Kingdom. It has seen the coming and going of a number of lifeboats, the saving of over 1000 lives, and of its association with the most highly decorated life-boatman of the R.N.L.I., Coxswain Henry George Blogg, who was a life-boatman from this shed for 53 years. He was awarded the Gold medal of the Institution (which was only given for extreme gallantry) three times, the Silver medal four times, and he held the George Cross and British Empire Medal.

The steel frame and wooden building was the first of its type to be constructed by the RNLI. Built in 1923 at a cost of £15,000 it had withstood the rigours of the North Sea for 75 years, but the main structure was still sound. The 52 ton shed had been cut in two, to aid the removal from the pier at Cromer. The Trust repaired the building in 1998/99 with a small team of volunteers and funded by a substantial sum of money donated by Mr. & Mrs. M. Rockall and others, mentioned later in the report. Mr. Richard Leon contributed with his boatbuilding skills.



The view looking back across the river.

The Southwold Lifeboats

The original R.N.L.I lifeboat, 'Solebay', was a 40ft. Norfolk and Suffolk class boat for pulling and sailing, built in 1841 and housed in the original shed below St. James's Green.

In 1852 she was replaced by the first 'Harriett' of the same size and class of boat. The new 'Harriet' was renamed as 'London Coal Exchange' in 1869, again of the same class. In 1893, the 'Alfred Corry' was built to replace her, again of the same class but slightly longer at 44ft.



Sam May, the Coxswain of the Alfred Corry






Launching into the surf

The History of the Lifeboat "Alfred Corry"

In 1892 it was discovered that the current Southwold No.1 lifeboat, 'Coal Exchange', the ex-Harriett 11 was showing signs of structural weakness, having been in service since 31st December 1855, so the RNLI agreed to provide a new boat.

The RNLI first discussed with the local life boatmen the type, dimensions and shape of boat to be provided, also her sail plan, ballasting arrangements etc., before an order was placed with the builders. The specification called for "a boat with a full bow for launching from an open beach, a hull shape to make her fast and safe and dry when sailing off the wind". She would be clinker built the same as the local fishing and working boats.

	
<p>The Alfred Corry on the beach</p>	<p>In the water</p>
	
<p>In the 1841 shed</p>	

At this time the Coxswain-Superintendent of the Southwold lifeboats was John Cragie, and the second Coxswain was Samuel May, and they were chiefly responsible for the boat's specifications which were as follows;

Improved Norfolk and Suffolk Type, non-self-righting, Sailing and Rowing, Length 44 ft 01 ins, Beam 13 ft (plus width of "wale" making total 15 ft 02 ins) Water ballast in 4 tanks (Total weight approx. 5tons), Relieving Tubes 18, Scuppers 8 Masts 2, Dipping lug on foremast, standing lug on mizzen, (i.e. the same rig as on the Beach Yawls & fishing punts), and 14 Oars. (As built. 16), Weight of Boat (without gear, ballast or crew) 8.3 tons.

The boat was built by Beeching Bros. of Great Yarmouth, and cost a total of £490.7s.4d. The RNLI provided this money from a legacy left to them by the late Mr. A. J. Corry of Putney, and hence the boat was named "Alfred Corry".

Mr. Corry had no connection with Southwold. Who was Alfred Corry?

Alfred James Corry was born in Kensington in 1858, his parents had come from Dublin, his father becoming a prosperous copper merchant, and by 1860 the family was living in some style in Wandsworth. Young Alfred was educated at the Oratory School in Edgbaston, also in Belgium and at the age of 18 began a career as a civil engineer with the Vauxhall Water Company. During his brief career he became an Associate of the Institute of Naval Architects in 1885. He died at Wandsworth in 1892, at the early age of 34.

His last will and testament instructed, "To the Treasurer for the time being of the Royal National Lifeboat institution the sum of fifteen hundred pounds the whole of which sum I direct to be expended on the building fitting out and equipment of one lifeboat." He gave no instructions as to where the boat should be based, the decision to use the legacy for the provision of a new boat for Southwold and the choice of name for her was made by the R.N.L.I.

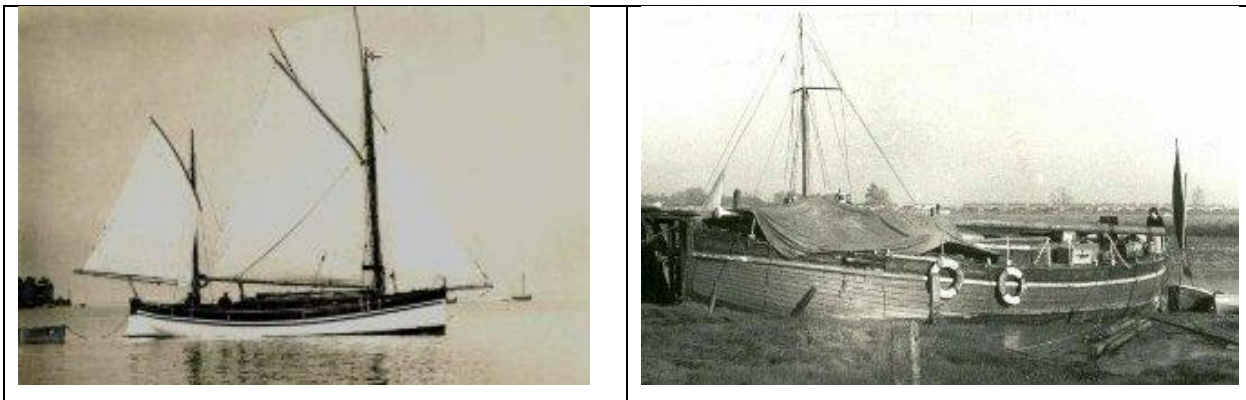
The formal naming and handing over ceremony took place on the beach at the Southwold lifeboat station on Easter Monday, April 3rd 1883, after which she served as the Southwold No.1 boat for 25 years, during which time she was launched 41 times on service, and saved 47 lives.



Her first Coxswain, John Cragie, retired, aged 70, in 1898, and was succeeded by Sam May, who remained her coxswain for the next 20 years, retiring a few months before the boat left the service in 1918. Her Coxswain for the last few months was Charles Jarvis.

In 1908, following the rebuilding of the harbour piers, which had taken place in 1906, the beach in the vicinity of the lifeboat sheds became 'bad for launching' and so a slip was built for her in the harbour downstream of the chain ferry. 'From there she was worked down the harbour and hauled off to-seaward, by means of a warp laid out to anchor off the south harbour pier. In 1913, after the boat had been in service for 20 years, the Secretary, Major E. R. Cooper, had a model made of the boat, to be placed in Southwold Church. The model still hangs there today over the North aisle.

In August 1918, following much hard work during the Great War, it was found that the boat, though basically sound, was in need of considerable repair. The RNLI was hoping to start building motor lifeboats, so it was not considered worthwhile spending such an amount on a 25-year old boat, so she was condemned and sold out of the service. She left Southwold for Lowestoft, where she was stripped out at J. Chambers' yard and sold to Lord Albemarle the following year. Here she was converted to a ketch rigged yacht and named "Alba", and became a "Gentleman's Yacht", complete with paid hands. An engine was fitted.



About 1921 the Earl sold her, and a succession of owners followed, using her as a cruising yacht, mainly on the South and East coasts. In 1939 she was laid up in a mud berth at West Mersea, Essex, for the duration of the war, re-emerging, still as a well-found yacht at the end of hostilities.

In 1949 the third phase of her life began when she had another name change, this time becoming "Thorfinn" and became principally a houseboat in such places as Ipswich, Burnham-on-Crouch, Rochester, and finally Maldon Essex. but as she got older she began to suffer defects. By 1976, abandoned by her then owner, she appeared ready to join the fleet of derelict "tore-outs" on the banks of the River Blackwater, She was re-discovered by chance. John "Wiggy" Goldsmith, a local Southwold man who tells of how he first heard of the boat's existence, when he received a phone call from Wally Upcraft at the harbour in 1972 saying a gentleman had called in looking for a model of the Lifeboat "Alfred Corry"; he knew it was somewhere in the



town. Wally told him the model hung in St. Edmund's Church, He asked him of his interest. This unexpected reply was "I used to own and sail her", Wally obtained the news that she was moored at Maldon in Essex and the gentleman then left for the church. The next morning 'Wiggy' and Terry Oddy left for Maldon to search for the owner and the boat. They found five old lifeboats and they returned again with Roger Trigg and met the owner of the "Thorfinn" and went aboard. The workmanship and design was evident.

John Goldsmith 7th September, 1994

She changed hands once more. this time being bought by John Cragie and Family, the Great Grandson of her first Coxswain, and the fourth phase of the boats' life was about to begin. In November 1976 she was towed, a derelict hulk, to the boatyard of Ian Brown Ltd., at Rowhedge, Essex, where a programme of restoration was set in motion.

After 4 years of hard work she re-emerged as a fully seaworthy vessel, proudly bearing her original name of "Alfred Corry". Externally she still retained to a great extent the yacht appearance of the previous 60 plus years, her internal layout, however, had been altered, a 108 HP diesel engine fitted, and though still carrying her ketch rig, the sail area had been reduced considerably to allow handling by a smaller complement. In September 1980 she set off on her first cruise, and made for Southwold, entering the harbour for the first time after sixty-two years, Amazingly, among the crowd at the harbour as she arrived was the son of her last Coxswain, Charles Jarvis, who, as a boy had been taken by his father for the trip from Southwold to Lowestoft when the old boat had been taken out of service, and now stepping aboard as she returned 62-years later.

During the following years the boat cruised the South and East coasts, together with some voyages to the near Continent, and, though based in Essex for most of this time, calling frequently at Southwold. At the same time a constant programme of improvement and maintenance was carried out.

As her 100th birthday approached, and the cost of caring for such a boat spiraled, it became apparent that the efforts of one family alone, also growing older, could not ensure the boat's future, and a fifth phase would have to be found if she was to survive.

After looking at a number of alternatives, it was finally decided that the best option to ensure the boat's future was, despite the fact that she was still basically sound, to retire her from active seagoing, restore her to her original lifeboat form, and install her in her own Museum in Southwold, where she belonged. To this end the boat was presented by the Cragie family to Southwold.

John Craigie discovered that the National Maritime Museum at Greenwich had retained her original plans on negative in their archives and we were able to obtain a copy of them from the Curator of Ship Technology who was also able to supply copies of drawings of various details of construction of parts of contemporary boats, for the restoration of the boat.



To this end the Craigie family employed solicitors to establish a Charitable Trust which was set up to care for the boat, the first stage of the restoration being carried out at the Boatbuilding Training Centre at Lowestoft, namely the removal of the "yacht" keel which had been added in 1919. At the same time a steel cradle was constructed and assembled under the boat, to support her during transport, and during the restoration which would follow. After this on Friday 12th August 1994, she returned to Southwold by road and was installed in the Southwold Chandlery boatshed at the Harbour.

The next phase took place, namely the stripping out of the hull, leaving the original lifeboat shell ready for restoration as per the plans of 1892. A small amount of necessary hull repair was carried out at this time, and more importantly, six replica thwarts were fitted to strengthen the hull, which together with the steel cradle, would prevent the empty shell from distorting. After this was completed in 1995, the boat remained stored there and the Trust was extremely grateful to Mrs. J. Phillips for the use of the Southward Chandlery Boat shed while the search for a permanent home got under way.

It was obvious to the Trustees that due to the size of the Alfred Corry, there was no suitable accommodation available in the Southwold area, and they were left with no alternative but to raise funds, obtain a suitable site, and erect a new building.

Fortunately, the history and heritage of the Alfred Corry, being very dear to the townspeople of Southwold, it was not long before the Southwold Trust and the Adnams Charity indicated their interest in providing funds towards the cost of a new building. Initially it was thought that a small modern industrial type building, relatively cheap to produce and within the funding available, would be acceptable on the site at Southwold Harbour. However, the impact of such a building on the Heritage Coast and Area of Natural Beauty was unacceptable to the local planning authority. A large number of constraints were imposed on the type of building that would be approved, resulting in escalating costs, and funding beyond that available to the Trust.

Despite efforts to provide a new shed facility, the size required and its location in an environmentally sensitive location proved difficult. The tireless efforts of the Trust in the person of Dennis Ball, all seemed lost, until the Trust was informed that the old Cromer Lifeboat Shed was to be replaced, and the building was being transported by sea to Lowestoft, where it was to be offered up for sale. The Trust expressed an interest in the building, which was eminently suitable as a home for the Alfred Corry, and the local planning authority confirmed that that planning permission would be granted if successful with its purchase, which it was.

On the 12 April 1998 the shed arrived by sea, docked in Southwold Harbour and shortly afterwards was positioned on its new concrete foundation.

SUPPORTING DETAILS

UNDERSTANDING THE ASSET

SOUTHWOLD THE TOWN

Topographical Setting

Southwold is situated in Suffolk, on the North Sea coast, 56 km (35 miles) north of Ipswich, 21 km (13 miles) south of Lowestoft and 51 km (32 miles) south-east of Norwich. The village of Reydon is 1 km (1/2 mile) to the north-west, and Walberswick 1 km (1/2 mile) to the south. (See fig 1).

The town lies within a soil region known as the Sandlings and is set on a low hill formed from hard sand and gravel, surrounded on three sides by marsh and low cliffs and Sole Bay and the sea to the east. The area of the parish is 263 ha (650 acres) and in mid-2005 the population was 1380.

Southwold lies within the Heritage Coast, and its built up area is surrounded by a Special Landscape Area, and the Suffolk Coasts & Heaths Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty. The enclosing landscape comprises of reed beds, rivers, mud flats and dyke-lined grazing marsh. It also contains 4 County Wildlife Sites at Buss Creek, Southwold Denes, Town Marshes and Walberswick Salt Marsh.

Landscape Setting

Southwold is a seaside town built on a low hill taken by the sea in the east to expose low cliffs and sandy beaches, and surrounded by lush grazing marsh drained by reed-filled dykes. To the north of the town the cliffs dip down to the level of the sea where inland is Buss Creek and its marshes, forming the northern boundary of the town. To the south the cliff falls steeply to a long wide sandy beach east of the Town Marshes. At the southern end is Southwold Harbour. South-west of the town is The Common, probably one of the medieval common-fields, now an extensive area of grass used as a golf course, and dominated by the town's two water towers, side by side. The land descends west across the common to Buss Creek, running in a curve from the Harbour Inn to the coast north of the pier and forming the western boundary to the town.

Reference: Waveney District Council's Conservation Area Appraisal.

Archaeology

Few archaeological finds have been found within the town of Southwold, the largest area for pre-historic evidence is found to the North from Easton Bavents to Pakefield, some of national importance. Southwold area archaeology is more local and found in scattered finds of prehistoric worked flints (CRN 9129) and medieval pottery (CRN 1864 & 1867) which are recorded in the Suffolk County Sites & Monuments Record (SMR). 13 Also recorded in the SMR are the following:

Palaeolithic; worked flint (CRN 1141) & fossil remains (CRN 1141 & 1142). Neolithic axes; stray finds of CRN 9128,1144,1145,1146,9130; worked flint (CRN 1143) and an implement CRN 1147. Roman; coins, CRN 1139,1148 and pottery 1149;

Medieval crossbow bolt (CRN 1150), buckle (CRN 1152) seal (CRN 1158) and post medieval bowl (CRN1151) bottle (CRN 1153), coin (CRN 1154) brooch (CRN 1155), ring (CRN 1156) clock (CRN 1157) artefact (CRN 1295), and token (CRN 1518).

Southwold Longshore and Harbour History

The Image



Joseph Southall, Southwold beach, 1920



Joseph Southall, Southwold beach

The reality



Southwold Harbour at work



C19 Blackshore Harbour, the Harbour Inn

The Harbour

The harbour buildings now are informal, a tensioned balance between a working harbour and a tourist attraction, it is functional and follows a narrow strip on the north side of the river, with timber landing stages at the water's edge, an unmade access road and informal parking, widest adjacent to the Harbour Inn. There are then many small plain black tarred huts and sheds and some larger industrial structures for boat building and repair, ranged along the north east side. Off-shore. Coastal and longer-range fishing boats are berthed continuously along the north shore from the life-boat station to the Harbour Inn, with recreational boats upstream and across the river on the Walberswick side.

History and Development

The estuary allowed for the movement of people and goods inland and for some Roman occupation, but particularly Saxon migration and settlement with medieval inland development such as at Blythburgh and the Henham estate with royal connections.

The River Blyth flowed downstream from Walpole through Halesworth, around Walberswick and the south of Southwold, before being diverted southwards by the long shingle spit which formed from Southwold, south to Dunwich, where the river entered the sea through that medieval town and harbour.

The outlet to the sea at Dunwich harbour was constantly moving and silting up with disastrous consequences for that town. Its harbour was blocked by great storms in 1286-7, 1328 and again in 1347, just before the outbreak of the 'Black Death' plague. The town began to be encroached by the sea and by 1540 had lost hundreds of houses and its marketplace to the German Ocean.

The merchants and sailors of Dunwich had a reputation for piracy against its neighbours and Great Yarmouth. There were disputes between Dunwich and the towns-peoples of Southwold and Walberswick who had to pay taxes to Dunwich for their ships and boats using Dunwich harbour for their access to the sea. In the C14 Southwold and Walberswick, acting together, cut their own channel through the shingle spit, just below Walberswick, by-passing Dunwich and the matter was finally decided by King Henry V11, who in 1489, transferred the status as a 'Royal Harbour' for the king's ships, from Dunwich to Southwold. He also granted Southwold a Borough Charter, the town then expanding as a fishing and trading town and was able to pay for the building of a great new church, St. Edmund's King and Martyr.

Southwold's medieval harbour was on a side branch of the river, looping to the west and northwest of the town known as Woodsend and Buss Creek, originally cutting the town off as an island. Trading ships harboured here and the herring fishing boats or 'Herring Buss', when not moored in the creek, were pulled up on the beach onto the sand and shore, now occupied in part by the allotments. The rudders of two Saxon or Viking-period ships are displayed in the local Southwold Town Museum, one having been dredged up and the other washed-up on the beach at Easton Bavents.

Many boats travelled to Iceland for the cod fisheries there and trading up and down the east coast and to London for the supply of Newcastle coal and local corn and butter. In good weather it was less-than a day's sailing to London, much quicker than the long and difficult roads through Suffolk, Essex to the capital. In this sense Southwold was closer to London than its inland Suffolk towns and villages and was able to profit by providing ease of access for the communities along the Blyth river and inland.

The marshes which developed behind the shingle spit of Southwold, running down Ferry Road to the harbour, contains fields called 'The Haven' and 'Cuba Marsh' reflecting the protective water behind the spit in earlier times, but which has since become fenny marshes, now drained and owned by the town for the use of pasture.

In the C18, following the Dutch Wars and the 'Battle of Solebay' in 1672, the British Government, decided that the strong Dutch hold on shipping and trade should, at least, be contained to enable the British merchants and fleets to expand and to develop. The Dutch had a near monopoly of fishing in the German Ocean (North Sea) and British fishing and trade was declining as a result. The Government decided to develop centres of fishing and trade along the east and west coasts, the existing Southwold harbour was chosen as one location, it's existing cod, corn, timber and coal trade to be protected and expanded.

In 1741 the Southwold Corporation with local landowners and merchants held an Assembly at which it was decided to block up the old harbour and develop a new 'haven'. In 1746 The Southwold Harbour Act was passed by parliament to develop the harbour and in 1757 the River Blyth Navigation Act was passed to develop the estuary and the river up to Halesworth, increasing access to the hinterland and opportunities for trade. These were private acts financed by local landowners and merchants. Money was raised and a new harbour created on the north bank of the River Blyth, called 'Blackshore. It remains today as the working harbour for fishing, boatbuilding and repair.

As well as improvements to facilities and jetties the bend of the river around Walberswick. was cut through to provide a straightened, wide channel with direct access into the sea from the new harbour. The piers

were constructed flanking the mouth of river and Black Shore Quay formed. These were lengthened and repaired in 1805 and the extended in 1906.

The depth of water in front of the new harbour outlet was not great and a submerged bar developed across the mouth of the harbour, drifting south across the entrance then curving around out to sea, northwards, as the waters from the River Blyth exited. This situation created hazards and many ships and boats have foundered in the shallows and on the bars over the following centuries. Sea-going ships could not enter the harbour and smaller boards were employed as 'lighters' to off-load produce from the ships, bring them into the harbour and vice-versa.



With the development of the Industrial Revolution a great need developed for the corn and fishing trades to supply London and the expanding towns and cities. In the C19 there also developed the fishing industries at Ipswich and Lowestoft which drew down the Scottish trawlers in the season, mainly catching herring.

Southwold, which had once again fallen into dereliction, was proposed as a port for the overflow traffic. For the implementation of the scheme the port commissioners vested the harbour in the Corporation who in 1906 sold it to Anthony Fasey & Sons, a public works contractor who built a new harbour with longer timber-piled pier heads, concrete harbour walls and gutting stations, pickling plots and market offices. The river was dredged. Southwold, with its harbour, took advantage of this and a new Southwold fish market building was constructed as part of the Corporation's major initiative to redevelop the harbour, enabling Southwold to compete as a leading herring port. The new harbour works and market hall (affectionately known as the 'Kipperdrome') were complete in 1907-8, situated on the opposite side of the end of Ferry Road where the museum is now located. Much of the catch was exported to Germany, the fish arriving by drifter and leaving by sea in barrels of cured herrings.



By the 1908-9 herring season, about 300 drifters were landing catches at the harbour and teams of itinerant Scottish fish girls were employed to gut, salt and pack them in barrels ready for sale. Southwold's herring boom lasted only about six years and the herring trade with Germany was ended by the outbreak of the 1st world war. The fish market blew down in the early 1920's.



The Longshore

Fishing was largely reduced to longshore boats with small crews, the boats hauled into and out of the water, as continues at Aldeburgh today. The existing longshore activity along the shore below the Southwold town 'cliffs' expanded and groups of fishermen collected as communities working together in sections of the beach and to look out for rowing out to salvage stricken boats and vessels. These were all named after American locations such as 'California Cliff', "Yukon", and "Long Island".



Looking north to Gunhill and Northcliffe beyond.



In the C20 the longshore fishermen and their boats mingled with the increasing and thriving 'seaside-trade', providing visitors with tall-tales, bathing huts, boating trips and refreshment huts.



Ferry Road looking to the harbour 1920's
Looking South from Gunhill



The original 1841 lifeboat station and shed, enlarged view

In 1932 the Southwold Corporation bought back the harbour and in 1939 it reconstructed the harbour entrance in reinforced concrete. The north pier was designed to bend east-north-east forming a bell shaped entrance mouth. A closed pile concrete wall was built on the southern side through to a new outlet of Dunwich

Creek at Walberswick. The entrance was not an outstanding success, tending to trap the seas which in moderate winds travelled up the harbour in an increasing velocity resulting in structural damage. In 1939 a 90 ft. gap was made in south pier to eliminate accelerating wave motion.

The port continued to be used by local fishermen and for the importation of coal.

The present Blackshore harbour runs back from the sea entrance westwards up the Blyth Estuary, it flows downstream from the inlet at Woods End, Buss Creek, under the railway bridge to the berths passing the Harbour Inn with Sailing Club and entering the working harbor at the Harbour Master's Office, down to the sheds of Harbour Marine Services and on to the slight bend opposite Walberswick to enter the recently re-constructed pier for fishing boats and the present Lifeboat Station at the end of Ferry Road. The Alfred Corry Museum is conveniently located in the graveled public car park-with tea kiosk in front of the lifeboat station and with public toilets, opposite the caravan park.

The Museum

To the northeast of the lifeboat station lies a public car-park in which the Museum building is 'placed'.

Surrounded by marshland and dunes, out of season the harbour's wider environment is watery and remote, with long views out to sea and south, across what is known as Walberswick Bay. Walberswick village lies on a low hill among trees lies Walberswick fronted by sand-dunes descended to the bay with long views to the hills of Dunwich with, beyond, the Sizewell nuclear-power station.

To the north are fine views of Southwold, with two church towers, a lighthouse and two water towers spread across a low hill profile rising above the marshes; very attractive.

East and north of the museum lie the coastal sand dunes, enhanced and heightened by a sand-levee built-up as defence following the 1953 floods. This has created a flat sand and grass area from the Museum building running north to Gun Hill and the town in front of which lies the beach. This has extended further out into the sea within the last year, probably as a result of erosion and lowering of the beach at Easton Bavents, to the north, and the southern-drift of the sands.

Inland the reed beds and water meadows of the Southwold Marshes are made up of grazing marsh, fields of deep lush grass, enclosed by deep ditches, some filled with flag iris sedge or bushes of elder. There are raised levees; earth ridges devoid of trees and between the marsh and the sea is a strip of sand dunes and a wide beach through which the harbour channel passes.

In the summer increasing numbers of visitors arrive on a daily basis, to visit the harbour or stay within the camping and static homes of the caravan park on the opposite side of Ferry Road, together with the convenience of the public toilets.

Transport and access

Ferry Road is a tarmaced road providing vehicle access down from the town, southwards along the shingle spit to the caravan part and lifeboat station, where it turns through 90 degrees to follow the edge of the river and the new concrete fishing frontage and car park. Beyond this It then becomes an un-adopted and unmade road along the working harbour to the Harbour Inn, where York Road rises over the levee and travels north across the marshes, passing the golf club before rising to the water towers and into the west of the town. The public car cark in which the museum sits is gravelled and accessed from the tarmacked Ferry Road.

The Conservation Area

The conservation area is within the Suffolk Coast & Heaths Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty and Suffolk Heritage Coast designations and the beach is a County Wildlife Site. The Town Marshes immediately to the north are a Site of Special Scientific Interest.

The banks of the river on both sides have been built up to form levees containing the marshes behind, those at Southwold with wide drainage ditches. On the Southwold side the northern marsh edge is bounded by the rolling grass common and golf-course, most likely the south common-field of the medieval town.

Spatial Analysis

Around the conservation area are the wide open spaces of the coastal marshes. There are long views over the sea to the east; over the Town Marshes towards Southwold to the north and the Reydon Marshes to northwest.

Spatially the harbour breaks down into two parts; the first, the informal rectangular space once occupied by Walberswick Quay and now a Car Park; and second, the informal linear space along the north side of Southwold Harbour.

The first space is to the east where the boundary of Walberswick Quay is formed by the meandering muddy Dunwich River and the sand dunes beyond. The space is enclosed by its many houses and cottages, partially hidden within the trees. Much of the area is a sandy graveled car park, though there is visual interest in

the groups of black timber huts mostly in small groups near the edge of the quay. The long vistas reinforce the perception of remoteness, and the muddy streams enhance the sense of escape from the town.

The second space follows the road and parking areas from west of the Harbour Inn, eastwards to Ferry Road. There are clustered timber jetties, along the water's edge. Running parallel with the harbour edge, is an unmade road surfaced of gravel with the black stained timber huts and industrial buildings, tightly packed together between the roadway and the ditch and bank that follows the edge of the marsh. At the Blackshore Quay are the sailing club and Harbour Inn.

There are fine views from several locations along the access road: looking north to Southwold and its churches and lighthouse, views over the Reydon and Tinker's Marshes with the drainage wind pump tower and, importantly, views up and down the river with the clustered jetties, boat masts and moored craft. Looking south across the Harbour from several locations, are the buildings of Walberswick and the tower of the parish church seen above the trees.

Character Analysis

The conservation area has easily discerned character areas, the Southwold Harbour Area and the Walberswick Quay Area.

The 19th century harbour is shown on Walker's Map of 1840. The 2nd Edition Ordnance Survey map of 1904 shows it little changed, with wide muddy banks with mooring posts. Contemporary postcards also show boats dragged up on the harbour shore and the area of hard standing retained by a timber revetment that formed the quay.

The visual effect of the stages and jetties is now enhanced by moored yachts and fishing boats. Together with the accumulation of black-sheds and boat-repairing yards. Described accurately by the Countryside Commission in April 1993 as 'a ramshackle collection of jetties, huts and sheds' the harbour huts are an attractive group of buildings that contribute positively to the character of the conservation area for the following reasons:

Archaeology

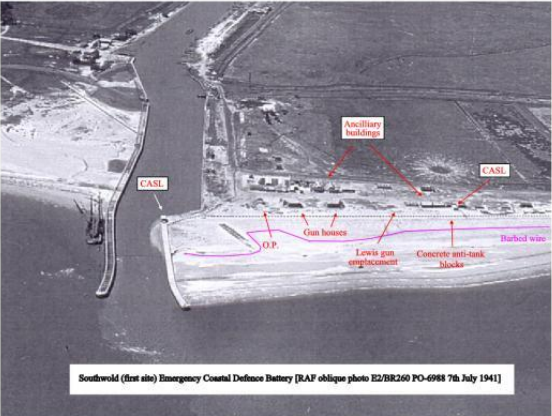

There is no known archaeology or records available for the site until WW11 when the shoreline and inland area of Walberswick and Southwold were defended by fortifications, pill-boxes and gun emplacements. The University of East Anglia has carried out extensive investigations and produced reports on these, particularly on the Walberswick side of the harbour.

WW11 Coastal Defences

The initial war positions of the 2nd/4th South Lancashire Regiment were put in place soon after the German invasion of France in 1940. The first phase was the digging of entrenchments and the placing of barbed wire on the beach areas, parallel to the sea, just above high water level. Similar entanglements were also placed around the infantry positions. Subsequently sluices were opened so that the surrounding marshes were flooded and bridges over drainage dykes were destroyed or removed. Two trawlers were sunk at the mouth of the Blyth to prevent craft entering the harbour.

An Emergency Coastal Defence Battery was established at Southwold in June 1940 which gave a much greater degree of protection to the harbour. The beach was mined and rows of anti-tank cubes were in place to the battalion's coastal front, including those at Walberswick and Southwold. The provision for field artillery was also increased. Halfway from Dunwich to Southwold, some five field guns were able to fire from this part of the coast. By mid-July, this number had increased to thirteen.

An observation point and two gun houses were built at the entrance to the harbour on the Southwold side, in the area of the museum.

	
<p>WW11 harbour-entrance defences</p>	<p>Observation post, local houses and Southwold town in the background</p>

Stand-down

Following the defeat of the Luftwaffe in the Battle of Britain in September 1940 the immediate threat of German invasion diminished. The diminishing likelihood of an at least imminent German invasion did not mean that coastal defence was neglected or troops stood down; rather, the years up to 1943 saw considerable effort put into strengthening defensive works.

The surrender of Germany in May 1945 brought an end to the necessity for the wartime coastal defences, which soon became an unpleasant reminder of the events of 1939-45. The removal of at least the most obvious defences at the most popular pre-war beaches and tourist resorts was undertaken relatively rapidly.

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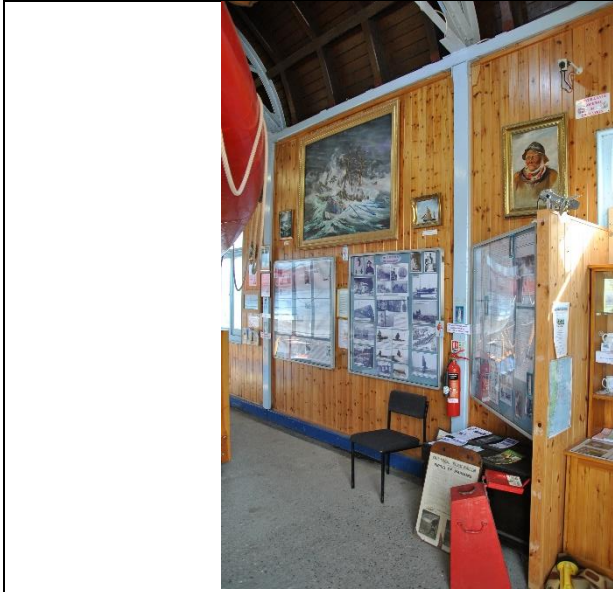
The Building



The building is one of the new R.N.L.I. designs created for the new generation of motorized lifeboats and is constructed of a steel-post and truss roof structure, with steel formers to profile the roof and to support the upper lookout clerestory. It has a timber-framed roof of simple trusses with paneled framing to the coved corners, formed around the curved ends of the steel trusses.



The walls construction cannot be seen but is reasonably assumed to follow the same type of paneled-framing for rigidity in the exposed original location set on the end of the pier. The walls are lined with pine boarding internally, varnished for a clear timber finish and vertical boarding is used externally.



The external boarding windows and doors are painted. The roof finish is of traditionally-detailed lead panels-with-rolls, now waterproofed.

Just visible above the coved lead roof profile are the clerestory windows for the lookout, located internally within the roof-space, supported by the roof trusses.

The Proposals

As described to the author the difficulty the museum is experiencing is the lack of space for people to gather, even for a small group of visitors and school educational groups within the museum in order to present the lifeboat and its history.

The Trustees are rightly very concerned about Health and Safety issues especially when groups of children have to sit on the floor under the bows of the boat. The museum has even had to cancel school groups and visits at very short notice in bad weather as the heavy doors are not rain proof and enormous puddles gather on the floor. Small groups of children have to sit beneath the prow to be able to make use of educational visits, while visitors have to squeeze around them. Due to limited space, plus health and safety considerations, the museum is forced to close to the public while school trips, talks and activities take place.

In order to resolve this a new porch is proposed, designed by David Cragie's son, John, incorporating ideas expressed by guides and helpers at the shed. This is to be added to the front entrance (west) to gain space for safe entering and exiting and for the easier collection of groups of people for study or enjoyment.

The rear of the building, in symbolic terms, faces the wrong way, the front doors of the shed should face sea-ward, as if for launching and it is proposed to re-locate the existing concertina doors on the rear end of the building to show more clearly a relationship between the building and the sea, albeit on flat land now, not at the top of a ramp. The doors will remain 'open' during the day so as to not block the present fire-escape door and to suggest the launching of the lifeboat. A glass door could replace the existing solid door to allow visitors to see the stern of the boat from the sand-dunes, when walking along to and from the harbor entrance.



The shed from the seaward side, rear.

Significances

1

The re-used Cromer lifeboat-shed building has been used as the centre-piece of the museum providing information, displays and activities based on Southwold mariners and marine trade. It has become the main centre for displaying and disseminating Southwold's maritime history and the sailing and trade history of the Blyth estuary and harbour; expanding, complimenting and enhancing the Southwold Town Museum's display and curating of the town's history.

2

The use of this shingle spit for traditional shore fishing and the salvaging of shipwrecks.

3

A history of lifeboat stations and temporary lighthouses on the shingle spit with marshes behind, leading from the town down to the harbor.

4

The construction, scale and drama of a surviving man-rowed lifeboat, originally man-handled into the sea.

5

The history and significance of the Alfred Corry lifeboat.

6

The significance of the first-type of this RNLI lifeboat shed for motor driven lifeboats launched down a ramp directly into the sea.

7

The redeployment of many of the longshore sheds and facilities to the Black-shore following the destructive gale of which swept away the beach houses, workshops and huts.

8

The Edwardian and early-C20 'sea-side' tourist development of the longshore beach.

9

World War 11 coastal defences and gun emplacements along the shore including near to the museum site.

10

The commercial and recreational development of the harbour in the later-C20.

Risk

Having inspected the building, researched its history and assessed its 'Significances', the author has reached his conclusion that there is nothing in the proposals that puts any of the above 'Significances' at risk. The existing pairs of concertina doors are replacements to the original blown off in a gale in 1940, of only moderate significance in that they have been part of the functioning Cromer lifeboat shed since that date until its taking down and relocating at Southwold harbour.

Indeed, it can be argued that in order to retain their 'authenticity', they should be placed on the seaward side, which is proposed, rather than towards the land. They can be placed, fixed, in a semi-open position retaining the existing escape door, that could be glazed so that the stern of the lifeboat can be displayed to the coast and seen by visitors on the beach-side in that presentation. Dramatic lightning and a glass door, could be designed to emphasise this aspect and the stern of the lifeboat, presenting to the beach.

Enhancement

This will be a creative enhancement to the beach and harbor entrance. The new entrance area will provide much-needed internal space in which to present to groups and schoolchildren the museum's display tours and dramas that are provided for visitors and locals alike.

Mitigation

The author does not believe that any mitigation is required, as no loss of historic fabric or alteration of character will result, the proposals being additive not subtractive. Rather, that the work of the museum as a local, regional and important marine-history asset will be expanded in its mission to inform and educate. Like the Southwold Sailors' Reading Room, it has already become a much-loved local plus regional asset and will become of greater importance in time, with the necessary facilities to expand.

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