

Southwold



Southwold originally had its own Municipal Borough Council which ceased to exist in the Local Government reforms of 1974 being merged into Waveney District Council. It continued however, to have its own Town Council, which between 1974-1978 had a Chairman, returning to a Town Mayor in 1978-79.

Waveney District

Waveney was a local government district in Suffolk, England, named after the River Waveney that formed its north-east border. The district council was based in Lowestoft, the major settlement in Waveney. The district was formed on 1 April 1974, under the Local Government Act 1972, as a merger of the municipal boroughs of Beccles, Lowestoft and Southwold, along with Bungay and Halesworth urban districts, Wainford Rural District and part of Lothingland Rural District.

Waveney district was merged with Suffolk Coastal district on 1 April 2019 to form the new East Suffolk district.

East Suffolk District

East Suffolk is a local government district in Suffolk, England, which was established on 1 April 2019, following the merger of the existing Suffolk Coastal and Waveney districts. At the 2011 census, the two districts had a combined population of 239,552.

The main towns and villages in the district include Aldeburgh, Beccles, Bungay, Felixstowe, Framlingham, Halesworth, Leiston, Lowestoft, Saxmundham and Southwold as well parts of the wider Ipswich built-up area including Kesgrave, Martlesham and Woodbridge.

The district covers a smaller area compared to the former administrative county of East Suffolk, which was abolished by the Local Government Act 1972.

Southwold is a seaside town and civil parish on the English North Sea coast in the East Suffolk district of Suffolk. It lies at the mouth of the River Blyth within the Suffolk Coast and Heaths Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty. The town is about 11 miles (18 km) south of Lowestoft, 29 miles (47 km) north-east of Ipswich and 97 miles (156 km) north-east of London, within the parliamentary constituency of Suffolk Coastal. The "All Usual Residents" 2011 Census figure gives a total of 1,098 persons for the town. The 2012 Housing Report by the Southwold and Reydon Society concluded that 49 per cent of the dwellings are used as second homes or let to holiday-makers.

History

Southwold was mentioned in Domesday Book (1086) as a fishing port, and after the "capricious River Blyth withdrew from Dunwich in 1328, bringing trade to Southwold in the 15th century", it received its town charter from Henry VII in 1489. The grant of the charter is marked by the annual Trinity Fair, when it is read out by the Town Clerk. Over following centuries, however, a shingle bar built up across the harbour mouth, preventing the town from becoming a major Early Modern port: "The shingle at Southwold Harbour, the mouth of the Blyth, is ever shifting," William Whittaker observed in 1887.

Southwold was the home of a number of Puritan emigrants to the Massachusetts Bay Colony in the 1630s, notably a party of 18 assembled under Rev. Young, which travelled in the Mary Ann in 1637. Richard Ibrook, born in Southwold and a former bailiff of the town, emigrated to Hingham, Massachusetts, along with Rev. Peter Hobart, son of Edmund Hobart of Hingham, Norfolk. Rev. Hobart had been an assistant vicar of St Edmund's Church, Southwold, after graduating from Magdalene College, Cambridge. Hobart married in America Rebecca Ibrook, daughter of his fellow Puritan Richard Ibrook. The migrants to Hingham were led by Robert Peck, vicar of St Andrew's Church in Hingham and a native of Beccles.

A fire in 1659 devastated most of the town, creating spaces that were never built on again. Today this "series of varied and very delightful village greens" and the restriction of expansion by the surrounding marshes, have preserved the town's tidy appearance.

On the green just above the beach, descriptively named Gun Hill, six 18-pounder cannon commemorate the Battle of Sole Bay, fought in 1672 between English and French fleets on one side and the Dutch (under Michiel de Ruyter) on the other. The battle was bloody but indecisive and many bodies were washed ashore. Southwold Museum has a collection of mementos of the event. These cannon were captured from the Scots at Culloden and given to the town by the Duke of Cumberland, who had landed at Southwold in October 1745 having been recalled from Europe to deal with the Jacobite threat. In World War II they were prudently removed, reputedly buried for safety, and returned to their former position after hostilities.

On 15 May 1943, low-flying German fighter-bombers attacked the town and killed eleven people.

With the 1 April 2019 amalgamation of the Waveney and Suffolk Coastal districts into a new East Suffolk district, Southwold became an expanded ward with Reydon and Walberswick, represented by a single councillor. Previously, the Southwold and Reydon ward, under Waveney District, elected two councillors.