

Britain's historic ghost villages

Most of Britain's ghost towns were abandoned after a previous pandemic — the Black Death — wiped out entire populations from hundreds of villages. The greatest losses were in Norfolk and Suffolk, often the landing points for plague-infested ships.

Coastal erosion also contributed to settlements in these counties disappearing into the sea. The most famous, Dunwich, was a thriving port, equivalent in size to 14th-century London, before the sea swallowed it and its eight churches, earning Dunwich the name England's Atlantis. While the majority of British "ghost villages" have all but disappeared, a few still offer rewards — and warnings — for the curious.

At the outbreak of the second world war, the Ministry of Defence **commandeered** several villages for target practice and **maneuvers**. Imber, in Wiltshire, is still used for this purpose. On Open Days, visitors can wander deserted streets lined with skeletal houses, a Norman church and a bullet-**riddled** pub.

commandeer 征用; 霸占

maneuver 机动; 演习

riddle 谜语; 许多小孔; 布满

eerie 可怕的; 怪异的

Equally **eerie** is Tyneham in Dorset. Six days before Christmas in 1943, it was requisitioned for D-day landings practice by order of Winston Churchill. On the day they left, residents pinned a note to the church door: "We have given up our homes where many of us lived for generations, to help win the war... We shall return one day and thank you for treating the village kindly."

Churchill's promise of a postwar return was never kept. In the schoolroom, pupils' nature books remain open from their final lesson: a study of **corvids**, **archetypal harbingers** of doom.

corvid 鸦科

archetypal 原型的; 典型的

harbinger 先驱; 前兆

Abandoned or drowned villages are bound to attract ghost stories. The bells of Dunwich are said to peal below the water at midnight, while children's voices ring in empty village buildings.