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'ATLANTIS' SCIENTISTS FIND CHURCH RUINS

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Scientists looking for Britain's "Atlantis" said today they had made a significant breakthrough after finding the ruins of a medieval church.

The village of Dunwich, in Suffolk, was once a thriving metropolis before being swallowed up by the North Sea more than five centuries ago.

Now, as part of a ?25,000 project, experts are using the latest acoustic imaging technology to uncover clues about the lost city.

Stuart Bacon, 75, director of Suffolk Underwater Studies, said: "We've found the ruins of a medieval church called St John's, which was the biggest in Dunwich.

"I've been looking for it for about 35 years so it's very exciting."

Mr Bacon, who is working alongside a team from the University of Southampton, led by Professor David Sear, said the 13th century church tumbled down the cliffs in about 1540.

"Over the years, I've had hundreds of divers accompany me to look for it. We knew roughly where it was but have never been able to uncover it until now," he said.

Mr Bacon said the team had been hindered by thick layers of silt, up to two metres deep, covering the debris.

"It's like doing a survey from the air when there has been a thick covering of snow - only the tallest structures stick out," he said.

"We've got a lot more work to do to analyse the data we've collected before we can say what else is down there."

Prof Sear said the seabed surveys, which were concluding today, would be used to produced a more detailed map of the city, which was once among Britain's largest ports.

"We will be using this data for a further diving survey that will extend our knowledge further," he said.

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