

Bawdsey Recorder's Report for 2025

The most significant events in the village this year relate to the coast. Bawdsey lies at the end of the Wilford peninsula at the mouth of the Deben estuary and so faces the elements on every side. East Suffolk Council has launched an initiative called Stay Safe on the Coast, reminding people not to climb cliffs, to keep well back from the cliff edges and bases of cliff because of the serious dangers of cliff falls.

The east coast of England is the fastest eroding coastline of the UK and over the past ten years, the sea has considerably undermined the cliffs of red crag and sand at East Lane, causing the pine trees on the clifftop to topple on to the beach to join the WW2 pill boxes which now lie out at sea. More ominous are the cliff falls in front of and behind Bawdsey Manor and the Cold War site on which once stood Bloodhound Missiles. The perimeter fence fell on to the beach during the last month of the year. The proximity of the Radar Museum on the manor grounds, formerly the transmitter block, is a cause of concern with just 40m between it and the cliff edge.

The beach at East Lane has been experiencing a tremendous loss of shingle following the installation of rock armour around the Martello Tower W in 2012. At low tide the beach presents a scoured and muddy landscape of London clay. Photo posts are used to monitor this phenomenon over the course of each year.

Planning permission was granted for new protection works to protect the frontage of Bawdsey Manor from further erosion and to stabilise the beach. The 200 metres stretch of protection will include the repair and reinforcement of the existing steel sheet piling, revetment works and shingle recharge.

At Bawdsey Quay in addition to cliff falls, there has also been a slow creep of shingle loss at the river mouth close to the entrance to Bawdsey Haven Yacht Club boat park. This rapid loss of shingle has made the beach narrower, and this has impacted both the public footpath and access to the boat park. This autumn it became temporarily impassible and volunteers worked tirelessly on interim repairs funded by a GO FUND ME page. Further funding will be needed in the long term to repair the old groynes and install a permanent barrier. (See Parish Council notes)

The Deben Marine Centre is situated in the old bus shelter at the Quay and opens from Easter to October twice a week to correspond with the openings of the radar museum. Manned by volunteers, it showcases the history of this fragile and windswept coast from medieval times and explains how it is constantly changing. The recording of coastal erosion is undertaken by a team of volunteers who measure the height of the shingle at certain points on a weekly basis between the Quay and north of the Manor. A chart at the DMC shows it can fluctuate dramatically sometimes by a metre in a week. On average Bawdsey Beach has lowered by 2 metres between 2013-2024. In 2025 visitor numbers exceeded 600 despite the closure of the café. A weather station has recently been moved from the Manor grounds to the DMC site which is monitored by scientists at UCL.

On 12th December, a study day was held at Bawdsey to explain and discuss the current situation and the historical trends. A visit to East Lane exposed the current

situation as described above. Interestingly the low tide revealed a line of wooden stakes which resembled medieval fish traps below the sea wall, but which were later identified as part of old sea-defence revetements, built to slow erosion in C19-C20.

Closure of the Boathouse Café at Bawdsey Quay: After 16 years, Diane Clouting decided to hang up her apron and begin a new chapter in her life. The café, formerly the boat house for the RAF, had been leased from PGL, the adventure holiday company which now owns the Manor. The loss of this popular amenity is a huge blow to the community and to the many hundreds of visitors who thronged to the Quay during the summer months.

King Charles 111 England Coastal Path National Trail: This new coastal path at 2,700 miles long will be the longest managed coastal path in the world. This summer a new stretch was completed linking Bawdsey Quay to Ramsholt. The path continues up the river Deben to Woodbridge before returning to Felixstowe Ferry via Martlesham Creek, Waldringfield and Hemley, a distance of around 23 miles.

East Anglia 3 Wind Farm: Bawdsey serves as the crucial landfall point for Scottish Power Renewables East Anglia EA1 and EA3 offshore wind farms. Massive subsea cables bring generated power ashore using underground ducts laid down in 2017-18 to transport the energy 37km inland to a converter station at Bramford. In the spring of 2024, a new construction site was established by the River Deben for the purpose of installing cables for EA3 in the existing ducts. This entailed converting a farming track opposite 45/46 Ferry Road into a tarmac access road to the site. This work is now nearing completion and has proved much less disruptive than the initial works.

Bawdsey Radar Museum: Since its modernisation in 2017, the radar museum has gone from strength to strength with the addition of new exhibitions and initiatives, ensuring visitor numbers have kept steady. New records are constantly being added and those connected with RAF Bawdsey are invited to share family information in a project called Bawdsey Radar Connections.

This year a new initiative with Bawdsey Manor has proved to be a successful means of boosting the museum's income now that the £1million lottery grant has been spent. PGL has allowed access to the manor in the winter months when no children are present, allowing a 90-minute walking tour to take place through the grounds and into the historic downstairs rooms for £25.

Another way of sharing the knowledge of Bawdsey's crucial role in the development of radar is through entertainment. Black and White Productions based at Trimley came to the block in September with their touring production of "Operation Radar" by Suzanne Hawkes. With key characters such as Watson Watt, Winston Churchill and Hugh Dowding, it told the story of how Britain was able to win the Battle of Britain through the development of radar from 1936 once the political will was in place.

A new podcast series by BBC Radio Suffolk Georgie Jamieson, "Echoes of Bawdsey, The Story of Radar" is being developed with the first one now available.

VE Day was celebrated in May with vintage teas served in a pop-up café and a children's trail. In August BRT along with the Defence Electronics History Society had

a study day at Adaystral Park to celebrate the first airborne radar experiment at Martlesham Heath and to see replicas of the original airborne radar equipment.

. **St Mary's Church** Although church attendance is not high, St Mary's is much loved and plays a significant part in community life. The highest attendance is at the Christmas carol service, Easter and on Remembrance Day when the church is always beautifully decorated. At Easter, a number of family activities took place in the village hall. Home-made hot cross buns were served with tea and coffee on Good Friday, with an Easter Egg Hunt for children. On Saturday the Hall was full of busy children making Easter arts and crafts. Because the local primary school is a COE establishment, pupils visit the church several times a year. A three-year partnership under the Forest School ethos ended this summer and has been much enjoyed by the children who have explored nature within the churchyard as well as engaging in other outside activities.

Like many small parish churches, St Mary's relies on a small cohort of parishioners to raise money throughout the year to maintain the church fabric and to address issues relating to the churchyard. Taming the ivy and rogue elders and lifting the lower branches of the numerous yews have been key priorities this year. East Suffolk Council donated lots of spring bulbs and the churchyard looked beautiful in early spring with carpets of snowdrops. A new bench replaced the derelict one outside the porch.

The annual Flower Festival in June, always well attended by villagers and visitors alike, raised £2,374, up £481 from last year. The theme this year was The Glories of Suffolk and most displays featured coastal scenes around Bawdsey.

Other successful fundraising events included A Gardeners' Question Time and a Guitar Concert by notable classical guitarist, James Woodrow. Because of the closure of the café at the Quay, a new initiative of providing tea and cake in the churchyard on Sundays in August took place which raised just under £700 towards the redecoration of the church. The annual Suffolk Churches Sponsored Cycle ride raised £245 divided between St Mary's and the Suffolk Historic Churches Trust.

It was decided reluctantly to cancel the Harvest Suppers because of lack of support, but a Lenten lunch took place in the Hall, and the church provided lunch for the annual Pilgrim Cross walkers at Easter. A new member of the PCC was recruited.

Bawdsey Village Hall and Recreation Ground: The Village Hall is the hub of the village and is used by many different groups over the year. Bawdsey Market takes place every month now, selling local produce and supporting local businesses. A new chess club, Pawns on the Peninsula, was established in April, meeting twice a month and attracting a variety of age groups. A long-standing craft group also meets twice monthly and holds a Christmas Fair and coffee morning.

Two exercise classes use the hall: Chair-based exercise class for senior citizens which has gone from strength to strength, and a yoga class. The Bawdsey Haven Yacht Club hosts winter talks on sea-related topics including one on the rebuilding of the Sutton Hoo longboat at the Long Shed in Woodbridge.

A dedicated committee looks after both entities and organises the annual Bank Holiday Fete, the proceeds of which pays in part for the insurance of both hall and Rec. This year Bawdsey Manor offered the use of the manor grounds for the site of the fete along with the use of its young personnel to put up and dismantle stalls. A record amount of £10,000 was made, £9,000 of which was profit due to the rise in visitor numbers. Queues for entry to the manor went back as far as the beginning of the village. The radar museum pioneered its new tours of the manor.

With some of the proceeds of the fete, the heating in the village hall has been improved with new halogen infra-red wall heaters and a secure ramp for disabled visitors. A new metal shed has replaced the old wooden one and a generator socket has been installed as part of the Hall's role as a Rest Centre in emergencies.

Other VH events: The annual jumble sale has been suspended due to poor returns but a pre-loved sale in March made £150 for a charity supporting those with learning difficulties and their families. A VE day tea was held in the hall in May with lots of bunting and union Jack hats. Pop-up Pubs featured throughout the year with varying degrees of support, most enthusiastically by young people working at Bawdsey Manor. In early December the Christmas tree lights were turned on, and mulled wine and mice pies were served. The village Christmas Lunch took place as usual with everyone bringing a plate of food and a Secret Santa present. Later in the month, carol singing took place with the Rev Cake in the hall and a New Years' Party rounded off 2025.

Bawdsey Church of England Primary School: The school changed from a local authority-maintained school to be part of a multi-academy trust in April, called the Tilian Partnership which controls twelve church schools in Suffolk. The school which has 72 on the roll expects to keep its identity as a rural school with a nurturing family atmosphere and small class sizes. At its last Ofsted inspection in 2024, it maintained its Good status. Attendance is higher than the Suffolk and National averages and there is a daily Breakfast Club which is subsidised at £2 per head. The school provides nursery places from a government-funded scheme from the age of 3 years and a weekly playgroup which it is hoped will ensure a full roll in the near future. Before and after school care is available from 8.15am-5.15pm.

The school offers a forest and beach school element, cooking lessons, choir, swimming lessons plus numerous after-school clubs. The school maintained its Platinum Suffolk Schools Games sports award in 2025 and participated in a number of sporting competitions and sporting visits such as Wimbledon. In the summer it performed The Jungle Book and had a residential trip to PGL at Bawdsey Manor.

Transport: There has been no bus service in Bawdsey for many years. The Coastal Accessible Transport System (CATS) provides a Dial-a-Ride wheelchair accessible transport system in a minibus for shopping and trips to hospital or medical appointments. A Good Neighbour scheme for individuals is also available.

This year an informal WhatsApp scheme was set up to transport residents to and from Melton Station on a voluntary basis which has proved popular. Residents who

like to go over to Felixstowe can get a discount card for the Bawdsey ferry which runs from 1 May to 30th September daily.

Artists on the Peninsula: Like many coastal areas, Bawdsey attracts a lot of artists who host Open Studios and who add to the richness of the community. This year the village gained another potter to add to the two existing resident potters, a husband-and-wife pair of artists and a silversmith. In April seven villages on the peninsula joined forces and put on an exhibition entitled *Peninsula Hidden Delights* in Alderton Church, the largest church in the area, showcasing local talent both professional and amateur. There was a huge variety of art including paintings, sculpture, ceramics, photography and crafts. Entry was free but donations from the public raised £400 and each artist contributed £5. This was shared between the church and FIND, a local charity which supports prisoners when they have been released. The neighbouring village of Hollesley has a prison and some inmates contributed to the exhibition.

Shingle Street: The small settlement of Shingle Street near Hollesley is actually part of Bawdsey Parish although it is 5 miles away by road. Before the road between Hollesley and SS was built, it was connected to Bawdsey via the coastal path from East Lane, a stretch of just over two miles.

An important SSSI site on account of its variegated shingle beach and astonishing wealth of biodiversity, the Shingle Street Settlement Company has recently acquired an area of marshland on the right-hand side of the road leading down to the sea which it is in the process of rewilding. The marshes are already home to skylarks, snipe and brown hares but the plan is to restore some ancient lagoons and channels to create new habitats for visiting waders and wild fowl. Hedge planting and sowing wildflower seeds is also planned to restore biodiversity. See shinglestreet.org for more information.

The telephone box at the settlement has been adopted by Bawdsey Parish Council for £1 and now houses a defibrillator.

By the side of the telephone box is a plaque put up in the last year dedicated to two women of Shingle Street, sisters Kate Burwood and Daisy Norton nee Lucock who campaigned to be able to return to the settlement after the war. They also wanted compensation to rebuild their homes. They had been evacuated prior to the outbreak of WW2 with just 48 hours' notice and their houses lay derelict. They were eventually allowed to return in December 1949 ten years since their evacuation.

Bawdsey Parish Council Like in many rural villages, one key concern for BPC relates to highways, namely the state of the roads and paths, flooding and speeding. With agricultural vehicles becoming even longer and heavier and more vehicles servicing Bawdsey Manor including coaches bringing children down for courses, the road's surface including faded white lines delineating speed limits is worsening. Many children walk to school in Bawdsey from Alderton and the pavement has become overgrown and sandy which limits the available width of the path.

77 per cent of the precept is spent on adult social care and children's services leaving a scant 23% available for roads, libraries, fire services etc. This means the parish has had to pay for basic improvements for the benefit of residents.

BPC is fortunate in having a CIL fund, money donated by developers who have built two small housing estates the village over the past six years which can be used for infrastructure and maintenance. Social housing is exempt from CIL payments but three houses in Bawdsey Farm Estate were eligible for CIL. County councillors also assist with monies from their budgets,

In 2025 BPC spent some of this money on two new speeding indicator devices which come with a solar panel thus saving money on batteries to deter speeding. The footpath between Alderton and Bawdsey has been cleared of weeds and sand and hedges have been cut back. Hedges within the village will be cut to improve visibility for motorists and pedestrians. A grit bin has been purchased to salt the roads around the school and persistent flooding in East Lane is to be addressed. The faded 30mph roundels along the Street will be repainted together with the white lines at junctions.

Another key focus is Bawdsey Quay. Parking has now been limited to 4 hours on the quay itself and in the two parking bays along the river which is not universally popular. Staff from East Suffolk council have been regularly policing the parking to deter overstays but late in 2025 the signs designating the limits were taken down by persons unknown. There were a few incidents of loud music from vehicles during the summer which caused a nuisance.

On the positive side, the council signed a licence for the DMC to continue using the bus shelter for two more years. PGL agreed to move their defibrillator from the Manor to outside the Lodge at the Quay to make it available for any emergencies there. The council has agreed to give a grant to BHYC towards hiring the services of a consultant engineer to support the design of coastal defences around the boat park to ensure safe access to the beach and provide a long-term solution. In response to requests for commemorative benches along the river front, BPC together with PGL have agreed to facilitate these. The need for a formal sign warning walkers of cliff falls has been urgently flagged up, and BPC is willing to cover the cost for this although finding a position to erect it is proving problematic. The coastguards have taken on the role of advising any walkers they see near the cliffs.

Green Agenda: Tree planting is another priority for BPC. A number of trees were donated to the council in 2025 via a network of Tree Wardens working for the Tree Council. Thirty trees were planted at the radar museum and 20 on land on Flood Cell 1. Of trees planted in 2024 beside the private road leading up to Bawdsey Farm Estate, four died and have been replaced this year. PGL hopes to acquire more trees in order to plant a grove of trees on its perimeter in 2026, and this will be facilitated by the council.

New green bins are coming on stream in 2027 with designated bins for food waste and bottles to be included in kerbside collections. The tetrapack bin by the village hall has been removed since they will be included in the ESC recycling bins from June 2026. BPC was disappointed that the cost of a green bin has risen this year.

Emergency Plan: A new Emergency Plan is in the throes of being formulated after surveying local needs. The village hall is the designated Rest Centre and has a new plug put in for an emergency generator paid for by the council. First responders from Hollesley gave a CPR training course in September which was well attended. A new defibrillator has been installed in the telephone box at Shingle Street with a grant from the British Heart Foundation. The council bought the phone box from BT for £1.

Those we lost:

Julie Dovey 27/12/1961-16/04/2025 Julie was a much-valued member of the community, working for many years as a special needs support at Bawdsey School. Following a bout of a rare throat cancer, Julie instigated the annual New Year's Day Swim which collects money for cancer charities. A keen runner with the Woodbridge Shufflers, Julie was often seen running along the coast. In 2021 she ran the London Marathon and raised £2,390 in aid of Chordoma UK,

Jill Mercer 10/12/1929-24/08/2025 Although Jill had moved to Woodbridge five years ago, she will be remembered for having served as a hard-working parish councillor for many years and together with her husband for having renovated the old Methodist chapel into a residence in the 1970s.

George Mark 13/02/1931-01/12/2025 George was born in 4 Fern Terrace and later moved to one of the model cottages on the Street with his family. He worked for Fisons for years in Ipswich. He was also a well-regarded stalwart of Bawdsey cricket club, captaining the team in the local leagues, winning many trophies and mentoring young players including his two sons.

House Prices

Interestingly there were only six house sales in Bawdsey in 2025 between January and March mirroring the national picture of a slowdown in the housing market. However, it may also reflect the slowness in which the land registry works.

In 2024 only five houses were sold but these were more spread out during the year. The figures for each of these years are half the number sold in 2023, namely 10.

8th January: 11 Martello Close 4 beds - detached £605,000 (new build)

5th February: 15 The Street 2 beds- semi-detached £432,770

28th February: 48 East Lane, 4 beds - semi-detached £475,000

3 March: Mulberry Cottage, The Street 4 beds- semi-detached £525,000

28 March: White House, Beach Lane detached 4 beds £385,000

11 July: Dunlin, The Street, Detached 3 beds £512,500

