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BAWDESWELL HEATH

Up to two hundred years ago the village lay in the middle of a large Common stretching westwards to Billingford and eastwards almost half-way to Reepham. Of Chaucer's Reeve we read *'He had a lovely dwelling on a heath, shadowed in green trees above the sward...'* The old Roman Road, known as Common Lane, ran alongside and across it.

In the year 1808 a private Act of Parliament caused the enclosure of the Common Land around Bawdeswell, resulting in the gathering up of arable land into very few hands.

This had been happening everywhere for some years as farming methods were changing from strip-farming to field farming - due to the modern methods being introduced by people like Thomas Coke of Holkham and Townsend of Raynham.

In the same year, 1808, provision was made to set aside two acres for gravel and 35 acres of woodland 'for the poor' - this is the Bawdeswell Heath we know today.

Bawdeswell's old strip-field system lay either side of the bridleway that runs from the (Roman) Billingford Road down to the Heath.

The Roman Road was a main east/west route and can be traced from beyond Peterborough, across the Fen Causeway to Denver and eastwards across Norfolk, fording the Wensum at Billingford, and passing through Bawdeswell towards Smallburgh.

Toll House - In 1663 there was a Highways Act. It provided for the repair of certain important roads and the introduction of tolls. One of the earliest was the Wymondham to Attleborough Turnpike, opened in 1695. The Norwich to Fakenham Turnpike opened in 1823.

By 1936 the Ministry of Transport had taken over responsibility for roads and few toll roads remained.

Tangleford, The Street, Bawdeswell. (Near the Tollhouse) - Coaching horses were changed here.

The Bell Inn - Former Georgian Coaching Inn which in 1823 also became a staging post on the Norwich to Fakenham Turnpike.

Coaching Routes listed in 1811 - Lynn to North Walsham, by Litcham, Reepham, Cawston and Aylsham. **Stopping at Bawdeswell Bell.**

Cromer to London by East Dereham, Watton, Brandon, and Newmarket,

Stopping at Bawdeswell Bell.

(So setting out from Lynn, you changed at Bawdeswell for London.)

Bawdeswell Hall - Built in 1683 by Henry Eglinton. A gracious building with Dutch Gables and fine chimneys. Since 1912 the private home of a branch of the Gurney family, co-founders of Barclays Bank.

The Plane Crash - 1944

A Mosquito from 608 Squadron set out from *RAF Downham Market* to attack Gelsenkirchen in Germany on 6th November 1944. Cloud and icing conditions were encountered. KB364 is thought to have become severely iced-up during the return descent over Norfolk. The aircraft hit some electricity cables in the Reepham Road and struck All Saints Church, setting it on fire. Parts of the aircraft carried on and hit Ash Villa (Barwick House) and Chaucer House, causing considerable damage to both.

The pilot and navigator died.



Bawdeswell is the home of Chaucer's Reeve

*"Of Northfolk was this Reve of which I telle,
byside a toun men clepen Baldeswelle."*

Canterbury Tales 14C

The village is mentioned in the Domesday Book of 1086 and again in the 'Norwich Domesday Book' of 1291. Evidence has been found of a church here since about 1100.

Six roads met here. In times past there were four Inns, a turnpike toll gate and much earlier an important Roman road passed along the main street.

It has been a busy stopping off point for the changing of horses and coaches, for travellers and for Walsingham pilgrims.

Today, visitors come to Bawdeswell for its General Store, Butchers Shop, Garden Centre and Old Workhouse Bar.

Like many villages in the area it has become a dormitory for Norwich, Dereham and Fakenham. In recent times many people have moved here to live, work and some to retire.

The Neo-Georgian church is unique in Norfolk. It was built in 1953/54, and is listed Grade II*. The earlier crumbling Medieval church was replaced by the Victorians. It in turn was the only church to be destroyed in WWII in the county.