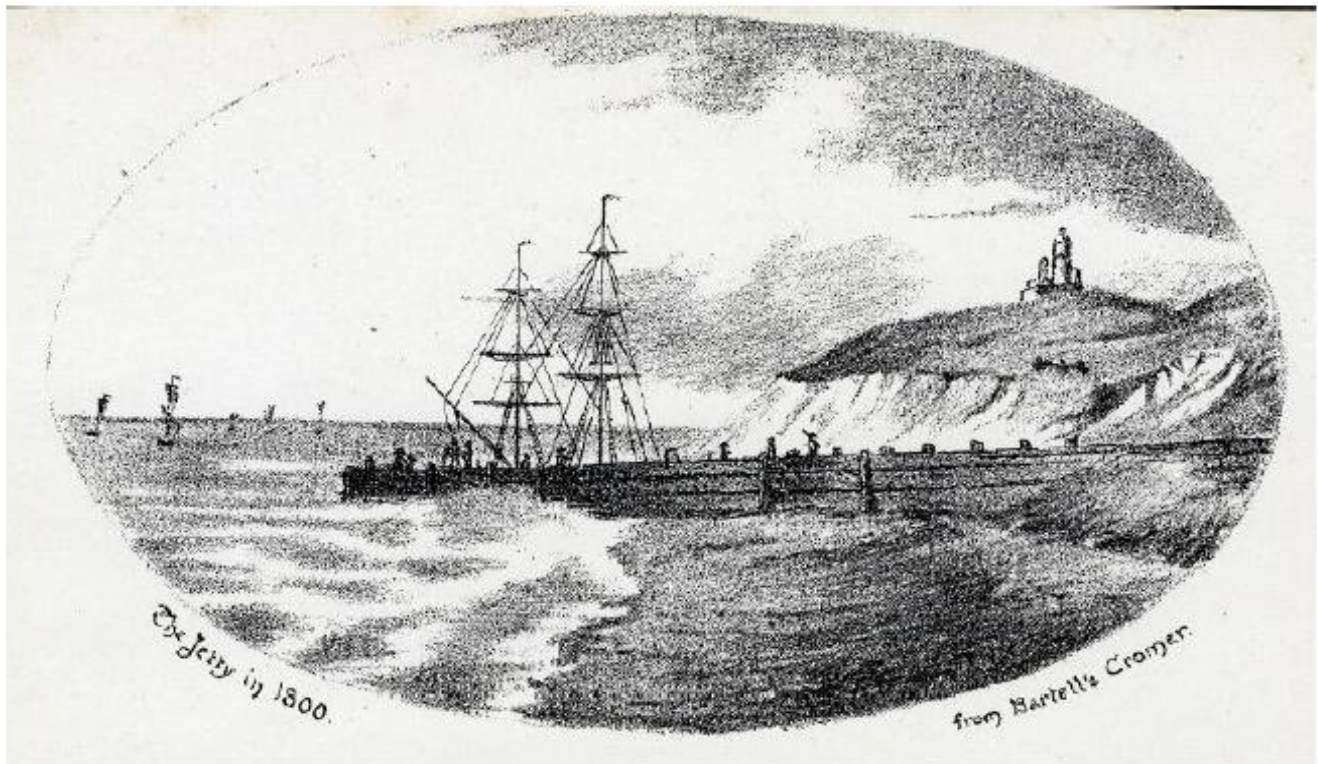


Cromer Seafront Heritage

The sea defences at Cromer protect the town from the force of the North Sea. They were built in various phases as the town expanded, the earliest dating back to 1836. Over the years the walls and groynes have withstood many storms and have been maintained, enhanced and repaired as and when required. The current scheme is part of Cromer's long history with the sea; the current work on sea defence is a continuation of that on-going relationship.

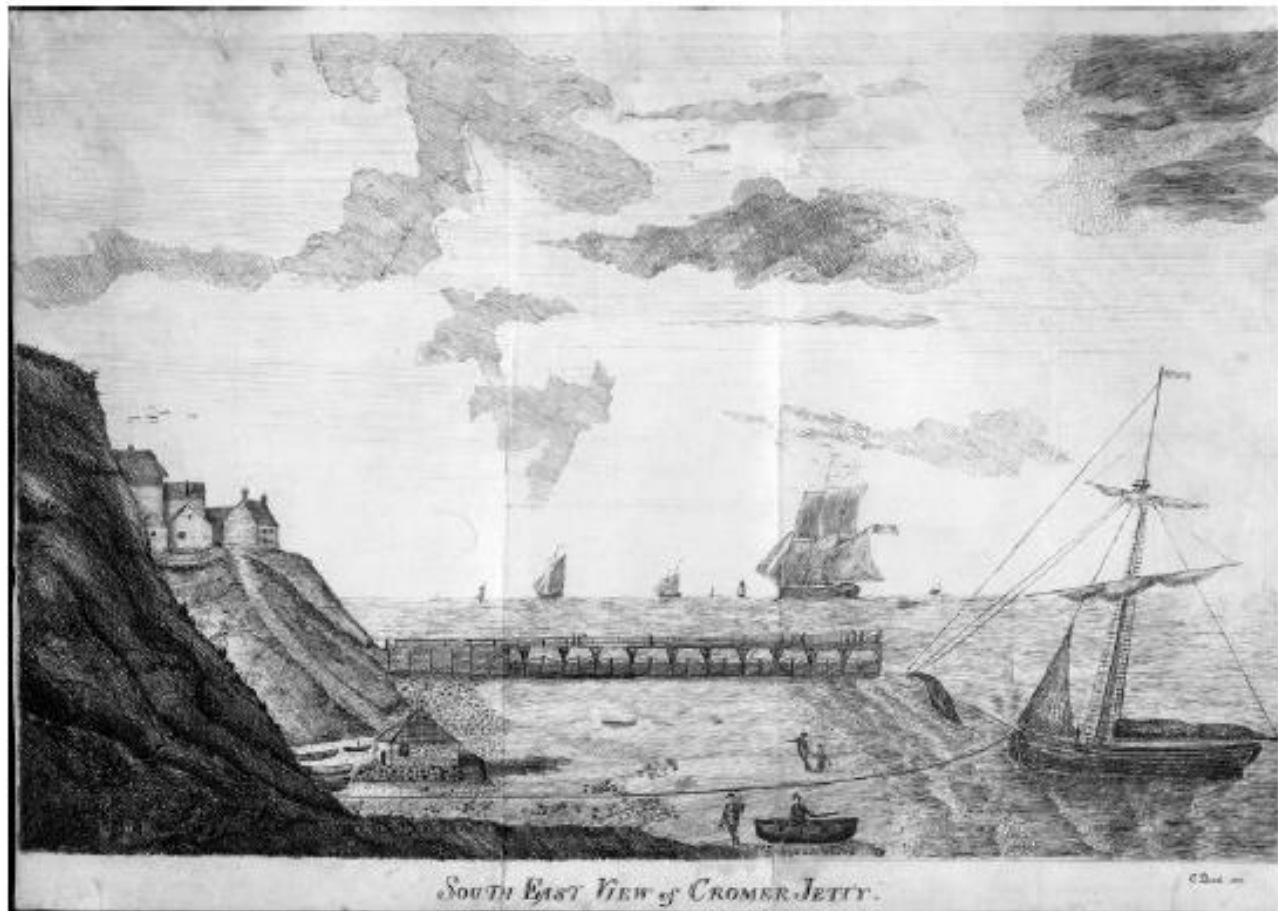
This booklet draws on local archives and provides a background to the interactions between the sea and the town over the past two centuries. Thanks to Cromer Museum and George Baker for their kind permission to use some of the images.





Cromer Jetty, 1800.
With thanks to Cromer Museum for the image.

A jetty of some form has been present since 1391. This drawing shows that the jetty was used to assist with the loading and unloading of ships. This jetty appears with closed boards and the accumulation of beach material to the right, suggesting it is acting like a groyne. As the 19th century and industrialisation progressed deliveries by sea were ever more important until the arrival of rail. The lighthouse depicted above the naturally slumping cliffs fell into the sea in 1866. At the time of this drawing there would have been no effective defences at the base of the cliff.



Cromer with no sea walls or promenade, 1821.
With thanks to Cromer Museum for the image.

The Gangway, even in 1821, is a prominent feature and provides important access to the shore for the local fishing vessels and the delivery of goods. There are no significant sea defences and the cliffs are natural, cut with paths from the town which is precariously balanced above.



Slumping and overhanging cliffs with little protection from the sea, 1822.
With thanks to Cromer Museum for the image.

Steep cliffs to the west of the town are depicted in this 1822 drawing. Sections overhang and debris from earlier cliff falls can be seen on the beach. No sea defences are evident other than what appears to be a small timber groyne in the foreground. A two day storm in 1836 caused considerable damage and some of the cottages depicted here on the cliff edge were lost. This picture also identifies the church; this was begun in the 1390's after the earlier Saxon church was lost to the sea.



The gangway busy with the towns fishing fleet, as it still is today. 1831.
With thanks to Cromer Museum for the image.

This 1831 scene is recognisable today, church, smart terraced houses, the gangway busy with activity. The Bath House at the base of the cliffs shown in this print was washed away in the storm of 1836, the small walls and timber palisades provided little protection from the force of the North Sea.

Following a storm of 1836, Cromer's first sea wall was built, extending roughly from the position of the present pier to the base of the Gangway. Following another severe storm in 1845, the Cromer Protection Commissioners were founded and authorised to levy a 'protection rate' to cover the cost of sea defences. As a consequence the sea wall was extended to the west between 1845 and 1846.



The Jetty built in 1846 and sea walls protecting the town, 1890's.
With thanks to Cromer Museum for the image.

Residents and visitors to Cromer had affection for the jetty built in 1846. The structure was badly damaged by a severe storm in November 1897, following which the remains of the jetty were sold. Sea defences were enhanced from 1893-4 with the building of a low wall to the east of the gangway.



An unusual shot with no jetty or pier, 1898.
With thanks to Cromer Museum for the image.

The photo here of about 1898 shows no jetty and no pier whilst the substantial walls protect the expanding town above. The bastion on the sea wall to the right of the photo appears to have been recently repaired and the ramps are still in existence.



Cromer promenade and sea wall, with the pier under construction, 1900.
With thanks to Cromer Museum for the image.

Following the loss of the jetty, the pier was constructed and the central sea walls were substantially enhanced from 1899-1902. The photograph shows the pier half built with a temporary 'works' building at its landward end. A railed steam crane is moving materials for the sea wall construction. These sea walls are substantially what the promenade is based upon today.



Storm Surge Damage, 1953.
With thanks to George Baker for the image.

Although it is easy to marvel at our achievements at taming nature, storms can still pose threats as experienced during the 1953 North Sea surge. There was a great deal of damaged and flooding along the East Anglian coast.



Continued investment in coastal protection following the 1953 storm, 1950's – 1960's.
With thanks to George Baker for the image.

Concrete, steel and timber are not indestructible and the sea defences require regular maintenance and rebuilding. Here a photograph of the 1950/60 depicts 'shuttering' in place ready for new concrete to be poured to shape a new face to the sea wall. This is a method still in use today.



Concrete worn away by the action of the sea, 2013.
NNDC Image.

The North Sea throws stones and sand at the defences and over time the surface is worn away. The photo taken in 2013 shows reinforcing steel work exposed to the sea, when built this steel would have been encased by concrete. The new concrete at beach level is a mix which is especially hard.

The current Cromer Coast Protection Scheme is a continuation of centuries of living with the sea. This scheme with continued maintenance should provide protection from the waves for the next 50-100 years, even taking into account the current predictions for sea level rise. Cromer is fortunate to attract sufficient funds to enable the scheme to go ahead; other locations on the East coast have to consider other approaches which involve enabling the coast to realign and managing the consequences.

Thanks to George Baker and Cromer Museum for the kind permission for the use of the historical drawings and photographs.

If you would like to find out more about local history and life or would like a good day out, why not visit Cromer Museum located next to the Cromer Parish Church opposite Jarrolds.

