



KING'S LYNN CIVIC SOCIETY

www.kingslynncivicsociety.co.uk



**NEWSLETTER
AUTUMN 2021**

Chairman's report

Alison Gifford

Well, we did quite a lot since the Annual Report was published telling you about our planned events and hoping they might happen. We opened the Custom House, cut the ribbon when the Fanny Burney bench was at last installed, had face-to-face committee meetings, an AGM and a proper lecture with an audience. People came to lunch and raised over £500 for our funds and Heritage Open Day was wonderful again and packed with people eager to have a day out with family and friends almost as if normal has returned. We even planted daffodil bulbs on the verges at Harding's Pits. What a wonderful town centre space that is, wild and natural (almost) and a great complement to the formality of the Walks. There can't be many towns lucky enough to have two such great open spaces. But we must be vigilant, open spaces make developers unhappy and there have been and will be attempts to rationalise building on Harding's Pits and open up the bus/bicycle lane through it to traffic in the future, I'm sure.

Within this Newsletter you will find reports on the Custom House (page 6) and the bench (page 17). Other reports on the Pilgrims and Green Plaques trail and Heritage Open Day are also included.

Some of your committee caught up with Cllr Stuart Dark and Cllr Graham Middleton (Council Leader and Deputy) at a useful meeting at King's Court on 9 November. We know that working with the Council is essential for any schemes or ideas we may have to progress and were pleased that consultation

and co-operation were to be central to their dealings with outside bodies. They acknowledged that members of the Civic Society had experience of nearly everything they could suggest over many years and on most things 'We have heard it all before' from riverside regeneration to changing the one-way traffic system. But this time we are slightly more positive that there will be actual change for the better. And it must be for the better not just because a pot of money has been given and must be spent by next month!

When we build, it must be with local materials using local craftsmen, architects and builders, we must build to last for centuries (St George's Guildhall, Custom House, South Gate), it must add wealth to future generations, require very little new infrastructure and be accessed on foot. Low energy requirements of course.

New buildings must not be dilapidated or in landfill in 30 years (hospital, shopping centre), such buildings do nothing for future generations, they must not require a lot of infrastructure (roads/car parks) and above all they must be human scale and please the eye.

A thriving town needs people; living, working and visiting. York is full of tourists and scores highly, as a good place to live not because of shopping, but because it offers much more. We need theatres, cinemas, museums, an art gallery, a riverside promenade that is not a busy road, visiting historic ships, good quality town events, restaurants, pubs and cafés, flowers and green spaces. Trees planted in the ground and not in pots. The desire of car drivers to never have to walk anywhere cannot override the good things that come from having less and slower traffic. These are better air quality,

improved road safety, more walking and cycling, improved health and well-being and a greater sense of community.

How is this achieved? By working together. Asking people who are going to have to live with the results and crucially taking notice of what they say. The greatest good for the people of the town, not the gas board, water and electricity companies or Norfolk County Council transport department, or Openreach, or McDonald's delivery lorries or any other individual concern but us, ordinary everyday us.

West Norfolk Wins Lottery

On the next page, you will see an advert for West Norfolk Wins lottery. We have registered as a 'good cause' and hope that you will join the lottery – for a chance to win £25,000! – but also as a way to help support King's Lynn Civic Society. It's easy to join and can cost as little as £1 per week. If you have any queries, contact our secretary Anna on info@kingslynncivicsociety.co.uk or 01553 849957.



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KING'S LYNN CIVIC SOCIETY
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WE'VE LAUNCHED OUR LOTTERY PAGE

Buy Your Tickets From Our Page - We Get 50%

- We now have a West Norfolk Wins page!
- Support local causes and win prizes of up to £25,000!
- 50% of all tickets sold from our page go to us!
- PLUS 10% goes to other good causes in west Norfolk!
- Tickets only cost £1 per week!
- Support us and win prizes - WIN WIN!

To Start Supporting, Visit:
www.WestNorfolkWins.co.uk

And Search For:
King's Lynn Civic



Supporters must be 16 years of age or older

Spring 2022 Lectures

Thursday 3 February – film: A Glorious Festival Town; celebrating the 70th anniversary of the town's festival

Thursday 3 March – Norfolk's Deep History Coast

The Deep History Coast is an area that embraces the whole of the coastal county of Norfolk – from the Bronze Age 'Seahenge' near King's Lynn, to the Neanderthal site at Lynford near Thetford. The foreshore at Happisburgh is the oldest archaeology site in northern Europe, and West Runton revealed the largest and oldest nearly complete mammoth skeleton ever found in the UK. Norfolk is also the only county in the UK to have evidence of four different human species in the past. Finds across the county have been vital in helping us to understand our own deep history.

Join Dr David Waterhouse (Senior Curator of Natural History and Geology, Norfolk Museums Service) for an illustrated talk about the finds and the project to protect and promote this unique environment.

Thursday 7 April – Michael Begley on Father Bridge and his travels and slides

The talk will cover his interest in early and unusual Italian Romanesque architecture and European Baroque – his trek through the Samaria Gorge in Crete and wildflower expeditions. Closer to home, his slides of the King John Cup.

Please note our Covid guidelines:

- Please consider wearing a face covering when moving around the venue
- Respect social distance
- Please do not attend a lecture if you have any symptoms of Covid-19, or if you have tested positive or been advised to self-isolate

Custom House exhibition

Sandra Coleman

Having been invited by Councillor Liz Nockolds to put on an exhibition in the Custom House, we opened on Wednesday 21 July and closed on Sunday 12 September. Downstairs we had an exhibition about the work of the Civic Society; as well as the usual exhibition upstairs, we had paintings by Emily Chapman. Apart from the last day, which was Heritage Open Day, we were open on Wednesdays and Saturdays. We opened for 16 days and had almost 1,600 visitors, about 100 per day.

As well as a ‘quiz’ to encourage visitors to prioritise ideas for appropriate investment in King’s Lynn, the visitors were also encouraged to leave comments on the exhibition.

146 of these visitors left comments on our forms. Of these 103 were visitors and 43 from the local area. The visitors came from all over the country as well as from Germany, New Zealand and the USA.

Most local people were pleased to see the building open again and lots of them left the comment – Good to see the building open, should be open all the time.

Other comments included:

- Must be kept open for public viewing. It is the iconic building of the town and represents so much
- A unique building that has been silent for too long. This is one of King's Lynn's finest assets
- Sad not to find the Tourist Information Office here any more – an obvious location
- Beautiful building, so happy to see it open again. Hope it stays that way
- Lovely to see a part of local history re-opened
- Keep open – so important for all ages

Visitors also left some interesting comments:

- Well worth the visit
- Very interesting to see the building at last
- Very interesting, keep it open
- Pevsner said that this is the finest building in England and he knew*

* Actually, Pevsner said it was 'one of the finest late c17 public buildings in provincial England' – and that it was the only building in England to use the three orders of classical architecture correctly. Ionic, Doric and Corinthian. We also believe it was the first **secular** grade 1 listed building in England. All other buildings which aspired to grade 1 listing subsequently had to have the same attributes.

- Pleased to see the building open. Would like to see it used for small focused exhibitions
- Thank you to the Civic Society of King's Lynn for giving us the opportunity to see the inside of this lovely building. Please keep it open for others
- A wonderful and interesting building – the excellent Tourist Information Centre should move back
- I've known about this building since I was at school – iconic in Norfolk and nationally
- A real asset to the town
- So important to preserve this heritage

In the last week of opening, we had a group of architecture students visit:

- Great to be able to see inside, often studied from the outside
- Wonderful building of great historic, architectural and aesthetic value. Glad it was accessible

We also gathered names of a number of people who would be willing to be volunteer stewards at this and other King's Lynn landmarks (South Gate, Red Mount Chapel) and would like to speak with BCKLWN officers further about how this can be facilitated.

However, this is not a task to be taken lightly. In all we had to organise volunteers to cover 64 slots over the 16 days – which requires logistical planning!

King's Lynn Heritage Open Day – 12 September 2021

Sandra Coleman, Kim Leonard, Anna Gunn



This year we had 38 properties open (ranging from the small – Live and Let Live, in Windsor Road, to the very large – the Minster), as well as outdoor spaces like Hardwick Road Cemetery, the Jewish Cemetery and Hampton Court secret garden. Visitor numbers varied. Hardwick Cemetery recorded 40 visitors (although there may have been more) and the Friends of Hardwick Road Cemetery, who ran the day there, declared themselves happy with that number; the Custom House had over 1,400, as did the Minster. Over 2,000 visited the Town Hall. The feedback we have received so far from property owners and managers has been very positive. Here is a breakdown of the numbers we have received (not everyone had the time to record numbers, or chose not to):

Property name	Numbers
Hardwick Road Cemetery	40
South Gates	
Church of Our Lady of the Annunciation	80
Live and Let Live	62
London Road Methodist Church	77
All Saints' Church	
The Jewish Cemetery	107
The Library	76
St John the Evangelist Church	118
St John's House (King's Lynn Winter Night Shelter)	335
The Red Mount Chapel	
Majestic Cinema	265
Lynn Museum	471
King's Lynn Town Hall and Guildhall	2175
Stories of Lynn	1031
Wenns Chop and Ale House	
King's Lynn Minster	1420
Friarscot	320
Hampton Court secret garden	499
Greenland Fishery	600
Friends Meeting House	77
Hanse House	
Marriott's Warehouse	84
Thoresby College	1,000+
Clifton House	680
Bank House	107
Custom House	1425
GroundWork Art Gallery	109
9 King St	955
28–32 King St	310

Property name	Numbers
St Peter's Church, West Lynn	40
Guildhall of St. George	835
Pilots' Office	216
19 Tuesday Market Place	173
Corn Exchange	
St Nicholas Chapel	745
True's Yard	573
King Edward VII Academy	
St Faith's	

Of course, we would not be able to have so many buildings open without the support of the Borough Council and Alive Leisure, amongst other organisations – the King's Lynn Preservation Trust, the museum staff, the church staff and all of the many volunteers who helped out on the day.

We offered a range of entertainment – Morris dancers, Baroque dancers, shantymen, a ukulele band, King's Lynn Under Siege civil war re-enactors, East Coast Militia Napoleonic war re-enactors, the Knights of Skirbeck, King's Lynn Town Band, falcons, lacemakers, strings, singers and others. As ever, the vintage bus service proved very popular. Also popular were the Baden Powell and river trips from the Pontoons and the West Lynn ferry service. The Town Guides offered free walks around the historic town centre. Doreen Leventhall, Chair of the Town Guides, said, 'We were astonished at the success of our walks. When Peter Jackson and I arrived at just before 11 for the first one, wondering if we would both be needed, we were greeted by over 40 people waiting. And so it went on all day. For each of the four walks we had enough customers for two guides and we took just

over 160 people on the tours!’ The support of organisations like the Town Guides is invaluable to the success of the day.

We had our usual market of Norfolk producers in the Saturday Market Place.

Many visitors were local, from King’s Lynn, Downham Market, Gayton, Snettisham, Sedgeford, Swaffham, Shouldham, Heacham, Stow Bardolph, West Walton, Grimston.

Others came from further afield – London, Wisbech, Ely, Skegness, Leicester, Liverpool, Peterborough, Ipswich, Sussex, Glasgow, Shropshire, Malvern and even France, Menorca, Heidelberg, the USA and Canada.

We asked how people found out about our Heritage Open Day. Answers ranged from ‘online’, to ‘newspaper’, ‘local knowledge’, ‘church newsletter’, ‘leaflet’, ‘Facebook’, ‘friends’, ‘at the classic car rally’ and even ‘walking about’ and ‘walked past’!

Some visitor comments:

‘Beautiful building, wonderfully preserved. Wonderful to get to see it’ (Greenland Fishery)

‘A lovely space which needs to be protected’ (Jewish Cemetery)

‘Waited 50 years to visit – thank you’ (Jewish Cemetery)

‘An incredible opportunity to visit a lovely house’ (Friarscot)

‘Gorgeous house! A real gem! (Friarscot)

‘Very welcoming. Lovely building’ (London Road Methodist Church)

‘A beautiful secret garden. Didn't know it existed’ (Hampton Court Garden)

‘A beautiful building.’ (Town Hall)

‘What a lovely town. It is important that buildings such as this remain open to the public.’ (Custom House)

‘Great and interesting building and knowledgeable guides. Please have more of these festivals during the year’ (Custom House)

‘This building must remain available to open – it belongs to everyone’ (Custom House)

‘A warm welcome and a beautiful space’ (All Saints Church)

‘A good introduction to medieval King’s Lynn’ (Marriott’s Warehouse)

‘Lovely space – very interesting information given’ (Hampton Court Secret Garden)

Two Proposed Trails

Alison Gifford, Robert Fayers, Liz James

The Visual Image subcommittee have asked for a grant from the Heritage Action Zone funding pot to make two town trails which will be printed as little booklets but also available in digital form on our own website and the Borough Council's 'Visit West Norfolk'.

1 A Pilgrims' Trail. 'Tears, Prayers and Pilgrims in medieval Lynn'

The lives of our medieval forebears were lived within the cycle of the Church Calendar – fast and feast – and with the daily presence of priests, monks, nuns, friars and pilgrims, together with their churches, chapels and friaries. By following the trails of buildings and sites, you enter the world of Margery Kempe, the extraordinary pilgrim and visionary, the mystic anchorites of All Saints' Church and hundreds of pilgrims on their way to Walsingham thronging the bustling streets of Bishop's Lynn familiar from Chaucer's Canterbury Tales. The trail takes in three fine medieval churches, the unique Red Mount Chapel, the Greyfriars Tower and other remnants and sites of monastic buildings, the Halls of Lynn's many one-time guilds, as well as the Lynn Museum and its fine collection of pilgrims' badges.

Central to this Pilgrims' Trail are five steel engraved plaques by artist Lyndall Phelps. They are motifs taken from four religious buildings in Lynn and the image of a medieval kogge bringing the pilgrims across the Wash. A wooden ceiling boss showing a seated Christ from All Saints' Church.

A dog pictured on a monumental brass from King's Lynn Minster. Designs from the fine ceiling of the Red Mount Chapel. A decorated stone corbel from Greyfriars Tower. A carved ship on a wooden bench end from St Nicholas Chapel. We will also install some new plaques which commemorate not just buildings and events from our Christian past, but those of our lost Jewish community (Jews Lane – now Surrey Street) and the execution of women who were so-called witches in the Tuesday Market Place.

A group connected to The Minster are working with Norwich Cathedral to make a cross-country trail from Lynn to Walsingham and our guide will be the starting point for this ancient pilgrims' way.

2 Green Plaques Trail. 'People and Places, the Making of King's Lynn'

Around the town are over 70 green plaques, which have been installed to commemorate many of the notable locations and people who have helped shape the history of King's Lynn, from King John (1166–1217) to Gustav Metzger (1936–2018) and from our earliest market place to modern Juniper House and the new housing complex on the site of the old Pilot Cinema.

A self-guided walk along any street in the town will show the depth and scale of events, buildings and people from the past writ large in these numerous green plaques.

Sailors and explorers, musicians, artists and architects have lived and worked in our fine historic town and knowing how

they contributed to local and national history is the aim of the proposed town tours.

The funding will enable some additional plaques to be added to tell more about the history of our town.

What we hope to achieve

As the traditional use of our towns as shopping destinations continues to decline and change, towns need to keep attracting visitors and local people into their streets, pubs, shops, restaurants and other leisure businesses and activities. We want the trails to encourage visitors into parts of the town not obviously 'touristy' and provide leisure interest. They are also good for health by encouraging walking. For young people and children, it is possible to tie in the local history of Lynn with the wider school curriculum from the Normans through to the Reformation and to the discovery of the New World (Captain George Vancouver). Celebration of our unique King's Lynn past through these trails is important, as our High Streets change from primary shopping places to more leisure use; for the remaining businesses to thrive, continued footfall is essential. We hope to bring extra interest to our streets by showing how the past is still part of our living present.

The Fanny Burney bench

Alison Gifford



In 2018, the Civic Society committee commissioned the Margery Kempe bench to acknowledge the life of that remarkable Lynn woman whose book, when rediscovered in the 1930s, astonished the literary and religious world. It is recognised as the first autobiography written in English.

On 12 August 2021, we celebrated another unique writing woman born in Lynn in 1752 in the same way. This is Frances Burney, known as Fanny. She knew the busy town of Lynn intimately. Her novel, *Evelina*, written in 1788, was an immediate best-seller and for the first time, a woman was

celebrated as a great writer. She wrote novels, plays and a diary spanning her long and interesting lifetime. Writers who followed, from the Brontës and Jane Austen, based their work on her idea of the courtship novel. Fanny Burney was ‘the mother of English fiction.’

It has been a difficult and tortuous journey to finally organise the ceremony (which should have happened on Norfolk Day 2020), but it finally happened thanks to all the people and groups who supported with practical help and financial donations towards the bench.

These are officers of the Borough Council of King’s Lynn and West Norfolk, Norfolk County Council for the engineering works, the Town Guides, the St Margaret and St Nicholas Parish Trust and the Guella Trust. Individual people were generous, giving money and attending fundraising events.

The new excellent bench was made by local craftsman, Toby Winteringham, whose patience was an example, his skill obvious in his work, and Charlotte Howarth cut the beautiful lettering once again. It reads:

‘1752. Fanny Burney. 1840

Author. Playwright. Diarist’

Cllr. Harry Humphries, the Mayor of the Borough of King’s Lynn and West Norfolk, cut the ribbon and we had about 30 guests seated on the Saturday Market Place. Committee members made sandwiches and cake and we raised a glass of prosecco to celebrate.

Now these two benches provide a resting place for visitors to enjoy the fine views of the Town Hall and The Minster. They are sat on all the time.

Planning Sub-committee

We duly submitted our comments on the Local Plan Review in September. These will be reviewed by the planning examiner, but as yet we don't know when the examination will be held. We felt there were some positive additions to the Local Plan – not least a new policy on historic environment and a significant new section considering climate change. But on the whole, we felt the document was light on detail and too general to steer some of the important changes that surely need to happen if we are to move towards a 'carbon neutral' local economy.

Obviously central government must put the support in place to allow our increasingly impoverished local government to implement the infrastructure we need: better public transport; a comprehensive cycle and walking network; a switch to electric vehicles; improvements to building energy efficiency; improved public facilities – the list is long. But planning authorities can and should also be pushing hard for these changes through clear strategic policy.

A bizarre omission in the Local Plan Review seemed to suggest that the Knights Hill development had been dropped as an allocated site – even though planning consent was given for 600 houses at the site in July 2020. In fact, in latest news, the Civic Society have been invited to a public consultation with the new developer – Barratt David Wilson Homes, suggesting the scheme is coming forward. Why the site wasn't indicated in the Local Plan Review document is as yet unclear.

The Planning Sub-committee have considered a variety of applications in recent months and have supported some potentially important schemes for the town – including plans to refurbish the former post office; refurbishment of 23 Tuesday Market Place (formally ‘Gourmet Plaza’) to become the new office for Sowerby’s, and an application for works to stabilise and protect the Sommerfeld and Thomas warehouse. These are all important heritage buildings for our town and these restoration plans are very much welcomed.

Other Projects

As you may recall, we have been invited to join a panel considering public realm enhancement in the town. The works will be paid for with some of the ‘Town Fund’ grant from government – although unfortunately only a small portion of that £25 million! It has been agreed to concentrate on a corridor through the town from the railway station to Purfleet and the Custom House. This was part of the proposals put forward by consultants Graeme Massie in their public realm enhancement study and submitted to BCKLWN at the beginning of this year – a report KLCS thought had a lot of merit.

Suffice to say, less money than we hoped for and a very rapid programme that in our view is not allowing for proper analysis of the opportunities and constraints, does not fill us with optimism – but one must travel hopefully! (?) A very good thing that seems likely to materialise from this project is new finger posts and information signage throughout the

town – something we have long lobbied for and strongly support.

Street Trees for Lynn: We have recently had a meeting with Borough representatives to talk about tree planting. BCKLWN have plans for a larger tree planting scheme at Lynnsport this year – but we also agreed to continue our street tree planting. We will aim to plant more trees, possibly at Raby Avenue in North Lynn, before March – but that may slip until later in 2022. **If you or anyone you know would like to contribute to this scheme, then please contact the Civic Society.** We presently cost a planted street tree at £100 – depending on position.

You may also remember that KLCS support the King's Lynn to Hunstanton Railway Campaign – a project that we believe has the potential to underpin sustainable transport for West Norfolk well into the next century. The campaign was disappointed to learn in October that the Department of Transport did not select the project for a £50k grant for feasibility studies. However, encouragingly, the County Council have indicated they may pay for the study themselves. It must be stressed that this sort of funding would not result in a detailed design plan. It would only be a start to the planning process. But this is not a mad pipedream. In comparison to road building, railways are relatively cheap to construct – especially in gentle landscapes like Norfolk. And recent rail reopening projects across the UK have all exceeded cost benefit expectations. You can read more about the project at <https://www.hunstantonrail.org.uk/>. More than 8,000 people have now signed the petition to bring this railway back.

King's Lynn Civic Society

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