



KING'S LYNN CIVIC SOCIETY

www.kingslynncivicsociety.co.uk



What future for Baxter's Plain?

ANNUAL REPORT 2022 – 2023

Chairman's report

Alison Gifford

A round-up of Civic Society activities over the last year tells me that the committee has been as busy as usual. In fact, in response to a request from Civic Voice (the national charity for Civic Societies), we listed all of the activities we have been undertaking and found there had been at least 15 streams to our work over the last year. These include one-off projects like the Pilgrimage Trail, ongoing reviews and analysis such as looking at planning applications and the Town Deal projects and of course administering our own society.

In respect of our planning, administration and general affable support, we will sorely miss Ian Price on the planning sub-committee and as our Treasurer. You will find a tribute to him and another long-term member and friend, June Howling, in this newsletter.

Implementation of the Pilgrimage Trail project is still ongoing as the green plaques need to be put in place and that involves getting permissions, which is time-consuming especially when owners of walls are difficult to track down, but we are getting there.

Working with the Tourism Department, we were pleased to contribute the wording and pictures to the new town information boards and to review the wording for the new fingerposts. They are a big improvement and one of the few positive structural outcomes of the last year.

I know all officers and councillors have the health, wealth and general good of the town and its people first and foremost in their activities. What baffles and puzzles me is that multi-million-pound projects are endlessly discussed as if they are the panacea to all our apparent ills (low educational achievement, pay, 'connectivity', health, etc.), while the little things, not cutting down town centre trees, getting rubbish bins off the pavements, cars parked on pavements, signs stuck up on listed buildings, a nice little park destroyed to make a storage area, tarmac put down instead of setts, poles with no reason, empty

shops/more charity shops, the pretty little toilet block on Baker Lane defaced with bins and fencing— you get the idea – are simply left. The town looks increasingly poor and neglected. Some Town Deal Board aspirations look increasingly overblown. This is the strap line of the Multi-User Community Hub (Argos building), where the town library is to be re-located away from its historic Carnegie home. It will *‘Transform the landscape of the town centre with an aspirational building and associated public realm to encourage a sense of identity and pride in a local place.’* Unless the associated public realm can restore the old Post Office building and chop off the end of the H&M shop to replant the tree that was taken down and never replaced, and make something of the ugliest thoroughfare in town ironically called Paradise Parade, this is fanciful to say the least. We have ‘pride in local place’ already in our historic buildings, streets and green spaces, we don’t need an expensive consultant’s report to suggest we need to be chivvied into a sense of pride and identity by a revamped old shop. As this project is driven by Norfolk County Council, perhaps that is the Norwich view of our town and its people? In the last newsletter, I likened the process to a cake where the top is constantly iced, but no one cares what kind of cake it is, and now I think it’s like being asked to admire a new greenhouse while the actual house gently decays.

We retain representation on several Borough Council panels:

- ‘Public realm’ design panel and have been consultees on several other key projects. We provide a short report later.
- A Borough panel which manages a ‘green infrastructure’ fund. This panel has not met recently – but hopefully after the local elections a new meeting will be called.
- We send a committee member to the West Norfolk Cultural Board.
- We have a representative on the Conservation Areas Advisory Panel (see report).
- We now have committee members on several other local organisations including the Preservation Trust, Jewish Cemetery management group and the King’s Lynn / Hunstanton Railway Reopening campaign.

Although we had patchy attendance at our lecture series this year (post-Covid concerns still?), we did have several very good turnouts. This year we have included a summary of those events in this newsletter. We are widening our publicity for the lectures, producing posters and flyers as well as promoting on Instagram and Facebook. Although lectures have always been part of the Civic Society year, your membership fee is not solely to pay for lectures, but to make it possible to pay for projects, to run our website, send out newsletters and pay for our membership of Civic Voice. Twenty members also attended the Christmas Lunch in Queen Street in December. We would like to have an annual fundraising lunch – which may in future be a summer event.

I also need to remind members about our website www.kingslynncivicsociety.co.uk which is the way to keep up to date with events and check any changes. If Sandra Coleman can have your email address (secoleman@btinternet.com), then we can more easily keep in touch with members. Your address is not shared with any organisations outside the Society.

Look out for a piece about our Volunteers Day on Saturday 17 June at the Town Hall. This is an idea we have developed in conjunction with BCKLWN as we agree that our community needs volunteer power! Post-pandemic, many organisations and initiatives have struggled to get up and active again. This reduces what we can offer as a town – whether it is opening historic buildings, planting trees or serving on the committee of local societies!

I also use this newsletter to welcome a new Conservation Officer to the Borough. Lynette Fawkes has taken over from Steven King. Some committee members had a recent meeting with Lynette and we were impressed by her knowledge and commitment to working with colleagues in the Council and the public to achieve the right result for our historic buildings, streets and green spaces in King's Lynn and West Norfolk.

Volunteers Fair

A National Civic Day Event

Saturday 17 June 10.00 a.m. – 4.00 p.m.
King's Lynn Town Hall

King's Lynn Civic Society will host a 'Volunteering Fair' at the Town Hall on Saturday 17 June in a bid to attract new supporters for key heritage and environmental groups in the town.

The event is being organised in conjunction with the Borough Council and will allow residents to match their skills and interests with local heritage and environmental organisations needing more help and local participation. The event will include keynote speakers, as well as stalls and presentations by local groups showcasing their work, goals and future plans.

The pandemic disrupted many local groups and other organisations have dwindled over recent years due to their failure to recruit new members. Some of our unique buildings like the Red Mount Chapel and South Gate will not be able to open on all the proposed days during the summer unless more volunteers are recruited.

The Friends of the Walks group used to help monitor our nationally important town park, promoting and protecting the space and activities within it – but this group is now inactive.

The Council alone cannot support these important community assets and initiatives. Things work best when they are organised and run by local people, for the benefit of locals and visitors alike.

With so much demand on public money nowadays, we need to encourage more local residents to utilise their knowledge, skills and energy to help support their community and its assets.

Some of the groups that will be at the event include King's Lynn Town Guides, Friends of Hardwick Road Cemetery, True's Yard Fisherfolk Museum, Marriott's Warehouse Trust and Harding's Pits Community Association, amongst others.

As part of the event, local historian Dr Paul Richards will give a presentation highlighting the unique heritage assets within the town, whilst BCKLWN Cultural Officer Tim Fitzhigham will outline opportunities for volunteering at St George's Guildhall as plans are developed for its restoration.

Environmental activities will also be showcased at the event. Managing our green spaces is important for our amenity, wildlife, environment and health – and you get fit and meet new people too! The Civic Society and Borough Council are also hoping to expand tree planting in the town and would like to recruit people who are willing to help look after trees they live near.

Ian Price

We were saddened and shocked by the death of Ian Price on 24 February. He was a popular figure in the many societies in which he



played a large part. Ian was an enthusiastic member of the King's Morris, a Town Guide and a hard worker on the Civic Society committee. He had a complete understanding of the arcane workings of the planning system and kept the planning sub-committee up to date on what was planned, which decisions had been made and why and could almost instantly recall the progress of the many planning applications large and small which were of concern to the Civic Society. He represented us on the CAAP (Conservation Areas Advisory Panel) until a stroke last year slowed him down. Despite this, he reported last year (and each year) on the empty shops in town and how many new shops were tattoo

parlours, charity shops or hopeful cafés. This was then put into a grid to easily see how the town was faring as shops and our High Street economy tells us about the general wellbeing of the town.

Ian was also our treasurer. His attention to detail was reassuring. He applied for and paid our dues to the Civic Trust and got money reimbursed by the Gift Aid scheme. Yet unlike some treasurers looking after a Society's finances, he was happy for us to spend the money we had. He was ably helped by Sandra Coleman, the membership secretary.

Others will rally round and help to continue the work Ian did for this Society – but his abilities, uniquely suited to the role he played in planning and finance, will be very hard to fill.

He missed his wife Teresa very much when she died just two years ago and was a loving stepfather and grandfather. A man of many parts who was liked and respected by all who knew him.

June Howling

On 30 March 2023, June Howling died peacefully at home, aged 90. She had suffered for a number of years with Alzheimer's. June and her husband Bryan were supporters of the Civic Society for decades and even when June was becoming forgetful, they would turn out for all our lectures. June was a founding Town Guide and was the last of a formidable quartet of dutiful, public-spirited women – June Howling, Jill Price, Jean Tuck and Janet Johnstone. I don't think we make them like that any more.

June was married to Bryan for 66 years who tirelessly supported her in her illness. A mother and grandmother who was very well liked in King's Lynn and in her home village of Terrington.

Annual General Meeting

This year's AGM will be held on

Thursday 25 May at 7.30 p.m.

Thoresby College, South Quay

The business of the meeting will be followed by an update on what Civic Society has done this year.

Autumn Lecture Series

Thursday 05 Oct: Civic Society are pleased to introduce Lynette Fawkes, the new Conservation Officer for the Borough Council of King's Lynn & West Norfolk.

Thursday 02 Nov: Herbert de Losinga – the founder of Lynn



Come and listen to Kim Leonard tell you about the life and times of a man who has been described as ‘one of the most remarkable men of the 12th century.’ A wealthy man of letters, a great leader, builder of churches and cathedrals and a traveller with a bit of bribery, torture and a beheading thrown in for good measure.

Thursday 07 Dec: The Victorian Dinner table – upstairs and downstairs Kathy Hipperson gives this light-hearted talk in character costume. Followed by mince pies and mulled wine.

All lectures at Thoresby College, South Quay at 7.30. Members free. Visitors £2

Planning round-up 2022–2023

Planning sub-committee

If you follow the national news regarding government planning policy, you will know that the big plans proposed in the 2020 planning white paper have largely been dropped – and that an alternative ‘vision’ put forward in the ‘Levelling-up and Regeneration Bill’ is still causing a lot of concern.

The Royal Town Planning Institute (RTPI) wrote a response to government in March 2023 stating that they thought public confidence

in the planning system was now at an all-time low and outlining, amongst other things:

- Local authority planners will not be able to balance incompatible government goals.
- The climate emergency and environment have largely been an afterthought in the proposals.
- National policies may not be viable in all regions and discourage local innovation.
- Local Plans need to be simple and accessible for local communities – but that doesn't mean less rigorous. Good planning needs good design guidance.

These sentiments brought to mind a Civic Voice webinar some of us joined earlier in the year when Professor Matthew Carmona (Bartlett School of Planning, UCL) summarized the findings of a national audit of new residential development his team undertook a few years back.

Based on 17 criteria (relating to the external appearance and environment rather than building quality), they concluded that the great majority of housing development delivered in England was now 'poor' or 'mediocre'.

But interestingly they could not find a link to particular developers (who seemed capable of producing a 'good' scheme in one place and a 'poor' one somewhere else), or region, or even 'affluent' and 'less affluent' areas.

They identified the main culprit as being the quality of guidance provided by local authority planning departments. As the RTPI note above – good planning needs good design guidance (and enforcement!).

Clearly this is challenging for local authorities that have been consistently wrestling with funding cuts and staff shortages for many years. But BCKLWN have for many years eschewed producing detailed planning design guidance – and this is a particularly notable

omission on some of the larger land allocations now coming forward around the town.

The problem is writ large by the ‘Framework Masterplan’ produced by NCC/BCKLWN for the ‘West Winch Growth Area’ (WWGA) last year and adopted in January as a supplementary planning document. Other local authorities have produced similarly titled documents that set out a detailed design approach and design requirements for growth and regeneration areas.

The WWGA ‘Framework Masterplan’ really only manages to reproduce a plan first produced by consultants working on behalf of the landowner promoting the scheme. It adds little or no detail and no binding design standards for outcomes. The long-term prognosis for design quality is not good.

We attended the Local Plan examination in December 2022 and put forward our concerns about a number of the growth plans around the town – not least the West Winch scheme and its dependence on roads and road transport, surely not now compatible with government ‘carbon-neutral’ development?

The examiners subsequently adjourned the examination in January and have asked for more evidence from BCKLWN officers on a number of key issues – one relating to West Winch: *‘As yet, therefore, we are unable to conclude that the proposed allocation for up to 4,000 dwellings at the WWGA, in Policy E2.1, is justified as appropriate based on the evidence, nor that it would deliver sustainable development in accordance with national policy’.*

Over the last year, we have written another 30 letters on different applications affecting the town, including a new wind turbine in North Lynn. We didn’t object to that, but noted that more than 10 years after KLCS first raised it, BCKLWN still haven’t got a clear policy position on tall structures around the town. The scheme has now been permitted

– although with some possibly tricky conditions to discharge. No officer report has yet been published on the portal.

We have again commented on various applications for very small flats in re-purposed buildings, typically with no outdoor space (not even a balcony) and minimal storage space. We are sure this type of development is building in social problems for the future (and imagine living in one in a future pandemic lockdown). Another issue coming down the line is the government requirement for all rental properties to be EPC grade C by 2028 (new rentals by 2025). We suspect a lot of rental property will not make the grade. And home efficiency ratings will actually have to be better by 2050 if we are to be ‘carbon neutral’.

We have carried on raising concerns about uPVC windows and doors (especially after a planning inspector ruled in favour of an appeal after BCKLWN refused consent for uPVC windows in the Conservation Area). As well as aesthetic concerns, we remain of the view that some time in the future, disposing of uPVC will become a massive environmental management problem.

On this matter and others (including High Street signage), we went to meet Lynette Fawkes, our new BCKLWN Conservation Officer. We felt we had a very productive discussion and trust that we can work closely with Lynette in future to try to get the best heritage conservation outcomes for our town.

We must not take having a Conservation Officer for granted. Historic England have reported that the number of full time COs fell from 1,224 to 526 in the last 15 years. At a time when we are facing so many of the challenges outlined above, we do need BCKLWN to have ‘in-house’ technical expertise.

Conservation Areas Advisory Panel

CS Representative Kim Leonard

Conservation Areas are local areas with a distinct character which we wish to conserve and improve. There are 44 Conservation Areas in

West Norfolk, which includes five covering King's Lynn. These are The Friars; The Walks; Norfolk Street area; St Nicholas area and the St. Margaret's area.

Any planning application within or that might have an impact on these Conservation Areas is brought before the Conservation Areas Advisory Panel (CAAP) to assess the effect on the Conservation Area and to ensure that our heritage and history is protected.

The findings of the CAAP are advisory and are taken into account by the Borough Council's Planning Committee when the application is considered for approval. Unfortunately, in some cases despite the real concerns over the acceptability of an individual application, these can still lead to approval.

In addition to being represented on the CAAP, the Civic Society submits many letters during the year to the Council with our concerns, recommendations and support of applications. These letters are held on the Council's Planning Portal on its website.

Members can keep track of the progress of all planning applications on the Borough Council website – just click on 'View and track planning applications' under 'Planning and development' and search for relevant applications.

Between April 2022 and the end of March 2023, the CAAP considered a total of 36 applications, of which five related to the King's Lynn conservation areas.

As you will see from the table on page 12, this was fewer than in the previous year; however, it should be noted that in 2021/22 there would have been a catch-up of those applications that were delayed in the previous year due to the Covid pandemic.

Year	Total applications heard by CAAP	King's Lynn related applications
2020/2021	13	5
2021/2022	53	9
2022/2023	36	5

Applications considered by CAAP

A summary of the five King's Lynn applications follows:

22/00274/F: Proposed redevelopment of fire-damaged building at 119 High Street, incorporating change of use of upper floors from Commercial Retail to Residential Apartments. Commercial Retail use retained at ground floor

The application site was that of the Sue Ryder Charity Shop which had caught on fire several years ago. The application was to rebuild the shop.

Conclusion

The Panel welcomed the application which would restore the building to its previous use. The Panel also welcomed the inclusion of two good quality residential flats which would add to the rejuvenation of the High Street.

Latest position: Application approved.

22/00143/PREAPP Redevelopment of the site for 6 homes at Stuart House Hotel, 35 Goodwins Road

The Assistant Conservation Officer highlighted the location of the site to the Panel and explained the proposal. Because it was a pre-application, there was little information provided. The proposal was to demolish the existing hotel on site and redevelop the site with 6 residential units. The site was outside the Conservation Area, but on the edge of it.

Conclusion

The Panel felt that 6 residential units would be too many in general. The Panel also felt that care needed to be taken with regard to the style, size and materials of the proposed residential units.

Latest position: Awaiting more detailed proposals.

22/00158/PREAPP: King's Lynn Library

As this was a pre-application, there was little information provided. The suggestion is to extend at the back and turn it into a 'creative space.' The focus was on the extension, which was shown as a white block with a pitched roof and with a height of three storeys. The block is on the library car park and will house 'dance studios and ancillary rooms' and cover an area of 200m².

There is a link building between it and library on the portacabin site. Overall dimensions of the two seem to be about 700m². There would be a public café. There were concerns over scale: the three storeys didn't look like they'd go with either the library or the old school next door.

Latest position: Awaiting more detailed proposals.

22/00156/PREAPP: Redevelopment of Baker Lane Car Park

Again, as this was a pre-application, there was little information provided. The proposal is to re-vamp the toilets and build a 'travel hub' on the back for bicycles with the result that this will lose a few parking spaces.

The proposed building was thought not to add to or really detract from the surroundings.

Latest position: Awaiting more detailed proposals.

20/01761/FM: Demolition of existing car showroom and workshop, and construction of residential units at Favorit Motor Company, 16 London Road

In August 2022, the CAAP considered the above application for the second time. It had originally been reviewed in May 2021. Please see below for continuity the report from the 2021/2022 Civic Society Annual Report.

May 2021 submission

In principle the Panel had no objection to the demolition of the existing car showroom and workshop. Any contaminated land issues would need to be investigated.

The Panel had concerns with the scale and intensity of the development, particularly the height and impact on the corner of London Road and Hospital Walk. The Panel noted that there was no allowance for car parking within the proposals and the increase of cars parked on the street would have a detrimental impact on the Conservation Area.

The Panel had no objections to the two town houses included as part of the proposal; however, they asked that consideration be given to using this area for car parking spaces.

The Panel also considered the render to be out of place in the Conservation Area, noting that surrounding buildings were not rendered. They also considered uPVC windows to be inappropriate in the Conservation Area.

Current position: Awaiting decision

August 2022 Submission

The Conservation Officer presented the proposal and explained that this was an amended application and had been brought back to the Panel for further consideration. Previously the Panel had commented that they did not like the design, particularly the design of the corner. The Panel discussed the application and felt that the design had improved, but still felt it was overdevelopment of the site and there was a lack of parking.

Conclusion

The Panel drew attention to the inaccuracy of the diagram relating to the shape of the corner. The Panel still feel that this application would be overdevelopment of the site and would cause harm to the Conservation Area through increased pressure on surrounding parking areas. The Panel were unhappy with the car parking offered in the proposal and had concerns on the impact of delivery and service vehicles to the retail units. The Panel also felt that there was a shortage of open and amenity space on the site, and highlighted the small garden spaces which overlooked London Road.

Latest position: The application is expected to be approved, but a Section 106 agreement is required for the affordable housing contribution and so discussions on the legal agreement are under way.



CREATIVITY UNWRAPPED

Heritage Open Day 2023

Sunday 10 September 10.00 a.m. – 4.00 p.m.

The national Heritage Open Days theme this year is ‘Creativity Unwrapped,’ and we are hoping to be able to showcase as many local artists and creators as we can. We are hoping to have a wide range of buildings open, from churches and museums to restaurants and private homes. We will have our market of local producers in Saturday Market Place, as well as a selection of entertainers. There will be activities in The Walks and on South Quay, the Purfleet and King’s Staithe Square. Do come and join us!



More volunteers needed!

Several of the buildings require stewards. We need more people to offer two hours of their time to ensure that we can continue to organise a successful Heritage Open Day. If you haven’t already offered to volunteer and would like to participate, please contact Laura Gunn. laurajg237@btinternet.com

Other projects

Rick Morrish has remained on a panel in relation to the ‘public realm’ funding stream of the Town Investment Plan. We remain concerned about aspects of the funding allocation process for the Town Deal money (and certainly think more could have been usefully allocated to ‘public realm’ projects).

A part of the public realm money has been allocated to ‘public art’ along the ‘Rail to River’ corridor and a call for artists went out a few months ago. It was gratifying that 24 artists submitted proposals and three were shortlisted for interview. A preferred artist team has now been selected to develop two features along the route. Public art can be a ‘marmite’ subject. But if you compare Lynn to many towns and cities you might visit, we are certainly lacking the public art features that many other communities enjoy.

Proposals are also advanced for a ‘feature’ metalwork arch to span Purfleet Street adjacent Boots the chemist and for metal-clad ‘pop-up shops,’ seats and planters in that area. A temporary ‘cycle hub’ is also proposed on the opposite side of the Purfleet (Baker Lane car park).

Baxter’s Plain workshop: A workshop was held in November to talk about opportunities and constraints for public realm enhancement in Baxter’s Plain. This included NCC and BCKLWN officers, a number of councillors and members of the public realm panel. There is presently no money allocated for enhancing this space, but it is seen as an important element of the proposed MUCH development (see Alison’s introduction to this newsletter). The subsequent KLCS contribution was to prepare a potted history of Baxter’s Plain (which is actually more interesting historically than any of us realised!). We would hope that this history will be used in any future brief to consultants who might be appointed to look at this area.

Riverfront workshop: A second workshop was held in March to talk about plans for enhancement of the riverfront – which includes Custom House, King’s Staithe Square and the quay along to Millfleet.

The broad brief is to use some of the Town Deal money to increase the use and attraction of the riverfront – but to do that in a meaningful and sustainable way with many constraints and landowners to consider is not straightforward. Even before you consider the current rate of inflation on building works ... Borough Councillors raised (legitimate) concerns about aspects of the project. Heritage impact and the fact that Custom House is actually owned by a private entity are other major issues.

South Gates: It was great news in January that BCKLWN had been awarded £24m toward regeneration of the South Gates area from the government ‘levelling-up fund’. The money is also meant for enhancement of the so-called ‘gyratory’ (i.e. the Railway Road/Blackfriars Road ‘roundabout’ – where the original plan was to enhance the pedestrian and cycling environment). There has been recent ‘discussion’ about whether the schemes will ‘improve the traffic.’ Here is a heads-up. Nothing will ‘improve the traffic’ except less traffic. And we will not get less vehicular traffic in the town until we start to put in the public transport, cycling and walking infrastructure that will make these other modes of transport a credible alternative to driving. We hope that this money can be used as efficiently as possible and will continue to take a strong interest in these projects.

HAZ: We still await a final report regarding the Heritage Action Zone – which ended in July 2022. We are quite determined to get to the bottom of what King’s Lynn ‘achieved’ with £4m! We were recently impressed and saddened in equal amounts to see what Lowestoft have apparently managed to achieve with their HAZ money.

Street Trees for Lynn: This project is not dead! The last BCKLWN tree officer left his role shortly before Christmas and we have yet to meet the new appointment. But we will begin a process to resuscitate this initiative and we already have several ideas.

Hunstanton Railway Campaign: This project is not dead! Although the campaign failed to get one of the £50k pots of money that the government were handing out for ‘feasibility studies’ two years ago, we continue to promote the potential value and sense of reinstating this line. (See <https://www.hunstantonrail.org.uk/>)

The total traffic gridlock in King’s Lynn over the recent Easter weekend (notably after a tragic accident at the Hardwick Roundabout) underlined for the umpteenth year that getting people up to the seaside on a train would be extremely attractive for many people and for many reasons ... The petition you can find on the website is sneaking up towards 10,000 people.

This year’s Civic Society lectures

We haven’t generally reviewed our lecture series in the newsletter – but it seems like an omission. So here is the first of what will hopefully become an annual round-up of some great presentations.

In October, we welcomed Karoline Newman and Louise Tiplady from the ***Lettering Arts Trust***. We made contact with Karoline at the Festival Summer Exhibition, which featured a number of small hand-carved plaques on the subject of *Nereids* (water sprites). The Trust’s mission is to ensure that the heritage craft of hand-carved lettering continues to flourish. Wherever you look, you will see examples of the lettering arts – or at least examples of lettering in writing, signage, on screens, building facades, packaging and publications. For the most part, it goes unnoticed, invisible in full view. But occasionally a beautiful example of lettering will make you stop and take a second look. Why is it so arresting? Careful consideration has been given to convey the sentiment through its composition: the design of the letter form; the size and rhythm of the script; the choice of material; the message inscribed with intent to leave a lasting impression.

The Lettering Arts Trust is an advocate for the lettering arts which can be found in diverse media from stone and wood carving to calligraphy, letterpress, glass etching and metalwork. The charity champions those

specialist artists who have honed their individual skills and inherited their precious craft from a direct line of artisans that has passed from master to pupil. It was a pleasure to listen to these craftswomen talking with such passion about an art form which is in danger of disappearing as new technology takes over.

November saw our own Liz James, along with well-known BBC Norfolk reporter Jill Bennett, talk about their new book ***A Norfolk Rhapsody, Ralph Vaughan Williams in King's Lynn*** (published October 2022), which recounts the story of the celebrated English composer coming to West Norfolk in 1905 to 'collect' local folk songs.

During the second half of the 19th century, as the industrial age gathered pace, there was a realisation that many traditional arts and traditions were being lost – including regional folk music. This led to a number of eminent musicologists and composers committing to find and record tunes and lyrics that had often been passed down the generations without being committed to paper.

Vaughan Williams was directed to the fishing community of North Lynn where he heard and wrote down many of the favourite folk songs. Although elements of the tunes and lyrics might have been common to other regions, particular communities and singers often put a local spin on them.

It says something of Vaughan Williams that he was evidently accepted and invited in to homes to record these tunes by the prominent fisherman singers and musicians of the day – all at a time when their livelihoods, lifestyle and entire communities were beginning to disappear.

Not only did the folk songs influence the subsequent musical output of Vaughan Williams, but the work of Vaughan Williams and others is attributed with reigniting an interest in folk music which still continues today.

Everyone who attended our December lecture not only enjoyed Nicky Crown's entertaining reflections on setting up the King's Lynn based ***WhataHoot distillery*** with her husband Jason, but also some samples of their excellent spirits!

Hearing their story of entrepreneurial endeavour, from getting planning consent to open the distillery in a listed building in the heart of one of our Conservation Areas, to weathering the pandemic within their first months of operation (they used a lot of the alcohol they had to produce hand sanitiser) was really very inspiring.

The WhataHoot business has now branched out with a range of new products, a gin-making 'school' and a bar. We all agreed that we need to encourage and support these sorts of local business ventures in our town.

There was standing room only at our February lecture, when Professor Robert Nicholls (Director of the Tyndall Centre for Climate Change Research at the University of East Anglia) presented ***The Future of Norfolk Coastal Communities***. He gave an excellent summary of the science of climate change and the most likely scenarios for future warming and resulting sea-level rise.

In short, the best models available at present suggest we can expect a sea-level rise of at least two metres in the next 100–150 years – irrespective of what the international community manages to organise to combat climate change in coming decades. (This must be considered alongside the knowledge that we have only had 20cm of sea-level rise over the last century.)

If we fail to be 'carbon neutral' by 2050 (which is the internationally agreed target, but which few national governments are presently on track to achieve), then Professor Nicholls outlined very bleak scenarios of anything up to 15m sea level rise in coming centuries.

There was some discussion of how best to defend our low-lying Norfolk coastline against future flooding. The problem with big banks and dams (apart from the considerable resources required to implement them) is that if they fail in future, the impacts are likely to be devastating. But equally, managed retreat in areas like the Fens, where so much land and infrastructure are near or even below current sea-level, also seems unthinkable at this time.

Talking with Professor Nichols outside the meeting, the example of Hurricane Katrina in 2005 stuck in the mind. In the US, there had not been significant expenditure on flood defences for many decades before the devastating storm flooded 80% of New Orleans, a city of 1.2 million people. Almost the entire city had to be evacuated, the damage was assessed to cost \$160 billion, and the cost of new flood protection afterwards cost an additional \$15 billion. But by 2020, the New Orleans population had only grown back to 400,000, many of them immigrants who had not lived in the area previously. Much of the expensive flood defences now protect empty land.

The lesson seems clear. If you want to protect your settlements and communities – spend the money sooner rather than later ...

Our March lecture looked back in time rather than to the future – but still considered modern infrastructure spending! In ***Raising the Roof, Medieval Rafters, Rats and Treasures***, Anne Guymer, a King's Lynn Town Guide but also volunteer at Oxburgh Hall, gave an excellent overview of the not inconsiderable £6 million investment in restoring this unique medieval house after previous Victorian renovation works began to collapse in 2016.

When the specialists got to work, they found everything was worse than they feared. This resulted in a six-year project requiring amongst other things over 600 tonnes of sandbags, 30 miles of scaffold plank and replacement of 14,000 roof tiles. Anne described the painstaking work of conservators, recording the debris found below floorboards which literally pinpointed Elizabethan sewing rooms (with hundreds

of lost pins and needles) and the nests of enterprising rodents (made from pieces of robbed cloth).

It is worth reflecting on the Bedingfield family who have retained Oxburgh as their ancestral home for more than 500 years, in spite of their royalist sympathies and catholic beliefs not always chiming with the changing political landscape of history. Evidently, they have been masters of diplomacy.

Our last speaker of the ‘season’ was Judith Chisholm, who came to tell us about the **David Parr House** in Cambridge. David Parr was a Victorian working-class decorative artist who was employed by FR Leach and Sons, Cambridge-based master decorators. The firm was well connected and undertook commissions all over the country for architects and designers including William Morris and Gilbert Scott.

David was taken on as an apprentice and evidently became a skilled and very well-respected artisan in his own right. Unusually for the time, he bought his own small terraced house and in his spare time over 40 years, he began to ‘improve’ every room in the style of the great buildings and homes he worked on during the day. All the patterns and designs were hand-painted, often with paints he mixed himself. He kept a notebook and there is evidence that he was sometimes experimenting with designs on behalf of his employers, recording the time spent and materials used.

After his death, his family protected his legacy for the next 87 years until the house was purchased with grant aid, listed, and turned into a museum and centre for arts in 2014. Everyone at the talk pledged to visit! As well as providing beautiful examples of the arts and crafts design styles, the house provides a fascinating insight into the homelife of a talented Victorian artisan tradesman.

Subscriptions

If you have already paid, thank you very much. Your contribution helps us to continue our valuable work.

If you haven't paid yet, please do so now.

Individual membership £11

Joint membership (two people at one address) £18

Please consider setting up a standing order. Forms available from the membership secretary (see below) or send a cheque to:

Sandra Coleman, 17 Trinity Quay, Page Stair Lane, King's Lynn PE30 1NQ

Membership cards

Following the sad death of our treasurer, Ian Price, it has not been possible to provide membership cards with this mailing. We hope to be able to send them out with the Autumn Newsletter.

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.



KING'S LYNN CIVIC SOCIETY
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Supporters must be 16 years or over

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Vice President: John Loveless

Chairman: Alison Gifford

Vice Chairman: Helen Russell-Johnson

Secretary: Anna Gunn

Treasurer: Kim Leonard

Membership Secretary: Sandra Coleman

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