



KING'S LYNN CIVIC SOCIETY

www.kingslynncivicsociety.co.uk



ANNUAL REPORT
2023 – 2024

Chairman's report

Alison Gifford

The small Civic Society committee has worked hard over the last year to keep up with the many and various initiatives requiring consultation and comment coming our way. It would help if we understood the language but we struggle through it because of course we want the best for our town. Anna Gunn, our secretary, well versed in this after the grand promises and eventual flop of the Heritage Action Zone (£4m), does her best to unravel and interpret the latest missives, and to keep track of which firm of outside consultants has been appointed to baffle the locals this month. See page 27 for an update.

Kim Leonard has been constantly on our bank's case; the incompetence of this company (supported by your money) is apparently nationwide as a letter in the EDP confirmed. The High Street banks don't want charities and societies on their books. Yet to look at their advertisements on TV, they project an image of community cheery support. When voluntary treasurers of charities, societies, churches and other small but essential local institutions simply can't cope with the frustration and hours of form-filling, then another part of our society will be lost.

Sandra Colman is our membership secretary. There is a plea from her to check your standing order is up to date and to let her have your email address on page 28. If the annual fee for membership to the Civic Society increases, please make sure you alter your standing order. Despite careful husbanding of our resources, we must make sure the Society stays solvent into the future.

You may have read that over the last few months the Society has tried to have Silfield House listed. Liz James has worked to achieve this. It's important that the Gayton Road retains some cohesion as a gateway into the town and is not crammed full of new builds or large care homes.

Helen Russell Johnson took over the work of Ian Price on the planning subcommittee, it's a learning curve with all the different planning decisions but she is supported by the planning sub-committee with Julian Litten as adviser. We encourage the re-use of empty buildings over greenfield expansion and are frustrated that so few proposed projects which are passed by planning actually result in more town centre accommodation. See page 8 for an update from the planning sub-committee.

Robert Fayers, Liz James and I have a wonderful project to unveil about former street name signs on page 7.

We had some good lectures over the autumn/winter 2023/4. Read about them on page 21.

Please find an invitation to a Civic Society fund-raising lunch on 4th July on page 6.

During the last few years the Friends of the Walks Group gradually faded away except for several stalwarts like Edith Reeves who kept going virtually alone but there have not been enough volunteers to help with maintenance and to open the Red Mount to the public. The Civic Society has managed to restart this group and we hope to open the Red Mount this summer. See page 26 for more details about giving time to this worthwhile group. We also helped with buying and planting bulbs along Hardings Way.

It would be much better I believe if the Borough Council had control over all aspects of town governance but Norfolk County Council have worrying control over parts of our town where you may think the Borough Council can say what happens. For example, the decision to take the tree down outside Kenneth Bush in New Conduit Street came from NCC and two years later it is still a tarmac mess. The important seating has never been replaced. We understand that NCC policy is not to have trees in Lynn and that seems to be the case. I call them deciding what should happen in Lynn colonisation! “The action or

process of settling among and establishing control over the indigenous people of an area”. They want to do us good, I’m sure, but perhaps we don’t want to be the recipients of do-goodery.

As for the ambitious and expensive new schemes now being consulted upon – we’ve seen it all before. Since the Millenium Project on the riverfront there has been one proposed scheme after another. Meanwhile, street paving is unfinished, car parks dominate, bins or cars are on pavements all the time, there is a dazzling spotlight in High Street, our markets have failed, the Purfleet is neglected, charity collection bins mar the nice toilet block on Baker Lane, weeds grow in side streets – does anyone who can make a difference ever actually walk around the town?

The best change comes from the bottom, from local people and enterprises. If these large projects help the town, that’s good but as they say, seeing is believing.

John Loveless

Alison Gifford

John Loveless was a friend to many organisations, especially those involved in nature and conservation. Tributes flooded in when he died on the 27th January 2024, aged 82. He missed his late wife Pam after her death but he had a wide circle of family and friends.

He was a Lib Dem Borough councillor for over 25 years and became an Honorary Alderman in 2016. John left a legacy of green projects across West Norfolk. These included an area of woodland at Gaywood and daffodil bulbs planted all around the town including the Walks and along Lynn’s northern bypass. He tackled environmental matters in a practical way and would often be seen with carrier bags as he collected discarded bottles and cans to recycle.

John had been a member of King’s Lynn Civic Society for more than 30 years, spending the last five as vice-president – a position he

certainly deserved through his diligent and quiet work supporting the society and the town.



John was a founder member of both Harding's Pits Community Association and the Friends of the Walks. He was always fit, cycled everywhere and was a great supporter and regular participant in the GEAR 10km and Parkrun.

He remained curious about all aspects of life and loved to hear about new ideas and any issues relating to King's Lynn and Norfolk, regularly attending local talks and exhibitions. He was particularly interested in planning matters and sat on the Borough planning committee for many years. He wasn't afraid to remain independent in his views (and the joke on the planning committee was that he would find a reason to object to his own application!).

He was always the last into Civic Society lectures which I teased him about, but John didn't mind. Thank you for all your work in the community John, you will be missed.

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@kingslynn-civicsociety.co.uk or 01553 849957.



Autumn Lecture Series

The dates for the autumn lectures are:

Thursday 03 Oct

Thursday 07 Nov

Thursday 05 Dec

We are currently finalising the programme and will put it on our website in due course. Anna will also send out an email with details – please email info@kingslynncivicsociety.co.uk to let her have your email address if you haven't already done so.

All lectures at Thoresby College, South Quay at 7.30. Members free.
Visitors £2.50

Annual General Meeting

This year's AGM will be held on

Thursday 23 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.

Civic Society Members are invited to a
**Fund-raising sit-down lunch on
Thursday 4th July at 1pm**

in a town centre garden – enter through
Clifton House door.

Price **£15** includes a visit to Clifton House
tower.

Bring your own beer or wine (glasses and soft
drinks provided).

Raffle

Email alison.gifford@btinternet.com for more
details or telephone 01553 763983

New and Refurbished Former Street Signs

Our project for 2024 is to refurbish 12 old former street name signs and commission 18 new ones. The new street plaques are blue with white letters to match the historic plaques from 1970 which will return with a slight darker blue background. As part of the work to support and improve our town, King's Lynn Civic Society is making two street names trail for adults and children. Robert Fayers, Liz James and Alison Gifford are the sub-committee.

The Audrey Stratford Trust gave a generous grant to enable this work by the Society and to print the two new trails. King's Lynn Town Guides gave useful financial help as part of their annual grant making. St Margaret's and St Nicholas Parish Trust also gave a welcome grant. The Borough Council of King's Lynn and West Norfolk were helpful partners in the essential job of fixing the plaques and the associated work involved. Their help has made the project so much easier to achieve.

A town like Lynn would have been almost self-supporting with gardens and fields within the town walls. Trade with the Baltic towns through partnership with the Hanseatic League brought wealth and status to medieval Lynn.

The medieval origins of our urban street names tell a story of a time when the town was busy with hawkers and traders while brewers, tanners and bakers occupied premises near the fleets which crossed the town.

They tell us where trades flourished, now obsolete, where buildings stood, long since demolished and the names of great men of the time who ruled the town. Many medieval street names reflected their primary industry, or the goods being sold there. Baxter's Plain and Baker Lane tell us that here every morning would be the delicious smell of bread and buns being baked for the day. The spiced buns they made each had a cross inserted on the top, and became known as 'Hot

Cross Buns', especially for eating on Good Friday. This cross was inserted into baker to make the word Baxter. For a freshly made pudding you would be tempted into Pudding Lane next to the Tuesday Market Place, while that end of High Street was known as Cooks Row.

There's much more to learn and we hope to invite you to the launch of the trails when we have a date. Meanwhile here is a picture of the some of the new signs on Robert Fayer's table!



Planning round-up 2023–2024

Planning sub-committee

It has been another busy year for the planning group, although we have paced ourselves with the number of letters submitted in relation to applications – only 21 to date. The applications for large developments are particularly difficult to keep track of – especially when there are several stages to the application, multiple revisions and planning conditions that can be discharged over several years. We are only volunteers! However, we do feel bound to try to monitor what is going on in the town, as we suspect there is often insufficient scrutiny from Borough Councillors and many residents simply find the planning process too complicated to follow.

Our planning committee circulate new applications for King's Lynn each week. We focus mainly, but not exclusively, on the Conservation Areas, listed buildings, buildings on the Local List, proposed large builds and industrial units. Planning applications in other areas usually have input and pressure from neighbours to tweak them or

occasionally to lead to permission refused. It is always pleasing to see comments from neighbours as this is an important part of the democratic process.

Some interesting trends have been evident in the last year, that of houses in multiple occupation (HMO). It is always good news to hear that some are being upgraded, providing improved facilities. Some are reverting to larger units of housing for sale and there is the occasional building being converted into HMOs. Overall, there is little or no change in the number of rooms available.

One very disappointing trend that continues from year to year is the number of applications to split houses into tiny dwellings with no outside space. Unfortunately, the UK allows much smaller dwellings than all our European neighbours resulting in flats with little storage space, often in curious configurations. They may meet minimum government standards for area but provide poor quality housing. Those on attic floors are at serious risk of overheating in hot spells in our increasingly unpredictable summers.

On the industrial front there are still applications being made for speculative building of new units in spite of the large number of empty units in all the industrial areas.

We try to raise environmental concerns – especially in relation to the quality of landscape design (frequently poor), and consideration of sustainable buildings and renewable energy. One question we have posed this year is – should people be applying to fit new wood-burning stoves within the town centre? It would seem to be somewhat retrogressive after the clean air acts of the 1950s, 60s and 90s!

We have also tried to keep pace with changes to national policy (the National Framework was reissued last December) and a range of new regulations that are being phased in – not least the new requirements for biodiversity net gain (BNG). This guidance was introduced in

February requiring developers to ensure that sites provide 10% more ‘biodiversity’ after development than before.

Unfortunately, that rule is not backdated – so if an application was submitted prior to February 2024, it is not required to meet the metric. This is particularly disappointing for some of the large urban extension sites that are coming forward around Lynn. Many people have reported their sadness at seeing so many trees removed along Edward Benefer Way as part of the development at South Wootton, and the same has happened at Knights Hill. Unfortunately, although nothing has happened on the ground at West Winch and North Runcton yet, the applications have been awaiting determination for several years and will not be required to meet the BNG requirements. We estimate that well over 30 hectares of semi-natural scrub and secondary woodland will be removed just for the Hopkins Homes site at Hardwick (ref 13-01615-OM) – which seems to make a mockery of national and county tree planting aspirations.

Another application which has recently been validated is from the County Council for the 1.5 mile ‘West Winch Housing Access Road’. Presently costed at £85m (September 2023), these road works will also alter the Hardwick roundabout and, together with the housing growth area, will fundamentally alter perceptions of Lynn. So don’t think these are not related to the town – in years to come they will be the town!

Last, but not least, we attended the most recent hearing sessions of the Local Plan examination, mainly to monitor progress. Assuming that the examiners will be persuaded to find the document ‘sound’, BCKLWN officers hope that the document will be adopted in 2025. It will then be the main local planning guidance for the period until 2040. It is proposed to deliver new housing at the rate of 554 units year.

As we have concluded before in these pages, we think there is far too much emphasis on simply delivering housing and not nearly enough emphasis on the provision of infrastructure, on quality of build and on

creating sustainable, happy communities. We remain unconvinced that our Local Plan is in any way aspirational or even adequate in addressing the many very real challenges ahead.

Conservation Areas Advisory Panel

CS Representative Kim Leonard

The volunteer members of the Conservation Area Advisory Panel (CAAP) have a wide range of experience and knowledge in the fields of architecture, history, building techniques, heritage, conservation and civic and planning administration. The CAAP considers planning applications from all 44 Conservation areas across West Norfolk which include the five covering King's Lynn. Not all members live in King's Lynn and the additional benefit of this is that they can give a fresh view to some of our applications and likewise those who live in Lynn can do the same for theirs.

The CAAP is chaired by the King's Lynn and West Norfolk Borough Council's Principal Conservation Officer assisted by the Conservation Team and the Planning Department.

There are five Conservation Area's 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 that might have an impact within or on these Conservation Areas is brought before the CAAP to assess the effect on the individual building or the wider area and to ensure that our heritage and history is protected. Unfortunately, in some cases despite the CAAP opposing an individual application, these can still lead to approval by the Borough Council's Planning Committee as the recommendations of the CAAP are advisory only.

Members of the Civic Society's Planning Committee monitor all planning applications made and apart from being represented on the CAAP, we submit 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 <https://online.west-norfolk.gov.uk/online-applications>

Members can keep track of the progress of all planning applications on the website using the 'Simple Search' facility.

This last year (April 2023 to March 2024) has seen a fall in the overall number of applications we have considered, but for the King's Lynn's Conservation Areas it has been one of the busiest years for some time. However, to put the work of the CAAP into context there were a total of 1,491 planning applications in the same period.

Year	Total applications heard by CAAP	King's Lynn Conservation Area applications
2020/2021	13	5
2021/2022	53	9
2022/2023	36	5
2023/2024	32	12

What this is down to is difficult to put one's finger on and may be a combination of factors, which I will leave for you to discuss amongst yourselves.

Applications considered by the CAAP relating to King's Lynns Conservation Areas

A summary of the CAAP conclusions for each of the 12 applications is given below.

22/02248/F: 4 proposed residential units on vacant land at Everard Mews, 16 North Everard Street. The application was to build residential units in a terrace with a stepped design. The land was currently vacant and had been for about 60 years and with flats to the front of the site. The case officer displayed site photographs to the Panel including the vacant land, street-scene and existing flats. One Panel member felt that this was not an appropriate scheme, it was overdevelopment, and the design had no merit.

He added that the Conservation Area Appraisal was clear that it was a set of very nice streets with important spaces at the back of the houses. The other problem related to parking on both sides of the street and would only be exacerbated by adding 4 additional dwellings with no parking. The Planning Officer added that County Highways had raised concerns about the access during construction, so she felt that they were aware of the parking issues, which was not necessarily a Conservation Area issue, but it was something that would be considered from a planning perspective.

Conclusion: The Panel objected to the application in terms of overdevelopment and design of the units, and that it was contrary to the Conservation Area Appraisal.

Latest position: Application Refused

23/00600/F: Variation of planning permission 19/00510/F: Construction of 9 Apartments at 25 Old Sunway. The Principal Conservation Officer explained they had a previous application on this which was granted in 2019 and that these 9 apartments were in an industrial warehouse type of style and worked quite well within that environment. A variation was submitted to change the design details of the roof.

The Panel viewed the plans which were permitted in 2019 and compared the variation in the roof design. The Panel agreed that the revised development was out of place for its context and that it looked overly domestic and not bespoke to its location.

Conclusion: The Panel felt they should revert back to the former design.

Latest Position: Application Permitted – building work in progress

23/00457/F: Proposed development of 9 flats at rear of 7–13 Tower Street. The application was for 9 flats. The Assistant Conservation Officer outlined the location of the site via Google Earth and presented the plans to the Panel. The Panel were asked for their views around the principle of something being built on the site as well as the design of what was being proposed.

The Panel considered the application, and it was agreed that something could be possible in this location but something of a more appropriate and sensitive scale and form to its surrounding historic environment.

Conclusion: The Panel objected to the application as it currently stands in terms of the form, scale of mass and design.

Latest position: Awaiting decision

23/01449/F & 23/01450/LB: Construction of dwelling following demolition of outbuildings at 5 Saturday Market Place. There were two applications for this proposed development. One related to the erection of a small house in the yard at the rear of the property. The Principal Conservation Officer explained to the Panel it would be replaced with a free-standing building but as the small building that was already there is attached to the walls, it therefore required listed building consent for the demolition of outbuildings.

Conclusion: The Panel felt it was not an appropriate form of development in this small area and that there would be the inappropriate loss of a historic industrial building on the plot that may have been a laundry room.

Latest Position: Application Refused

23/01343/F: Demolition, recladding and extension works to the existing timber merchant buildings, erection of a new consignment bay and timber building, improved access arrangements, alongside the provision of a new site entrance and other associated

infrastructure at Pattrick & Thompsons Ltd, Page Stair Lane. The case officer presented the application and explained the proposals to the Panel. This involved the erection of new buildings on the site, recladding of existing buildings and a new access further along Stair Lane.

The Panel were presented with the plans and were also able to see the extent of the improvements by comparing them to the existing Google Earth image.

The Civic Society suggested having some planting along the side of Page Stair Lane in place of the fence to prevent cars parking and to help soften the area and the Panel agreed with having some planting but suggested it be low maintenance.

Conclusion: The Panel felt the scheme overall was not harmful and agreed with the principle but would want to see a different way of expressing the boundary treatment and maybe conditions relating to the materials.

Latest Position: Application Permitted

23/01497/F: Proposal for 2 pop-up buildings, 2 storage boxes, trees/planters and bench seat at Purfleet Street and 23/01411/A: Advertisement application for one high level street signage to identify Purfleet Street. The Principal Conservation Officer provided an overview of the application relating to the pop-up shipping containers (reference 23/01497/F) and explained the application had been put forward by the Council as part of the Rail to River Regeneration Scheme. This application was to be read in conjunction with the street signage (reference 23/01411/A) which was part of the same development but required a separate planning application.

The two shipping containers would be clad in perforated Corten steel material. The pop-ups would be used for a number of different purposes but the main function would likely to be street food or an

entertainment venue and as part of this, it was proposed to put tables and chairs on the car park side which could be easily packed away.

The Panel raised concerns that the shipping containers would restrict the view of the Custom House and would interfere with an iconic view of the town. Comments were made about the type of lighting in the area and the Principal Conservation Officer explained lighting had been considered.

Conclusion: In principle, the Panel were happy with the proposal for two pop-up buildings in that location. The Panel did have concerns about the view down to the Custom House from the town through this scheme but on balance, the Panel felt this would benefit the area and therefore would recommend a 5-year permission be granted.

Latest Position: Application Permitted – Pop-ups on site

Referring to the application for the signage, the Principal Conservation Officer explained that the sign was designed by local schoolchildren. She explained the sign would be situated between Cashino and Boots. With the help of images of the proposed sign, it was explained the colour scheme would be black and gold which would be in keeping with the corporate colour scheme in the directional signage across the town and highlighted to the Panel that this could be an enhancing feature to the character of the Conservation Area and draw people down Purfleet Street.

The Panel suggested putting lighting on the sign to enhance the look of the sign.

Conclusion: In principle, the Panel were happy with the design of the sign.

Latest Position: Application Permitted

23/01723/F: Installation of public art on the forecourt of King's Lynn Station at King's Lynn Railway Station, Blackfriars Road; 23/01902/F: Installation of public art on the facade of St James' Swimming Pool, Blackfriars Street. As the applications were similar the Panel agreed to consider both applications together.

The Principal Conservation Officer and the case officer introduced the applications supported by photographs of the proposed artwork.

The artwork on the forecourt of the King's Lynn Railway Station was proposed to be two separate feathers in black Corten steel material. The artwork on the facade of St James' Swimming Pool represented the River Great Ouse, land and movement along with a quote from a play by Shakespeare on the right-hand side of the artwork.

Conclusion: Artwork on the forecourt of King's Lynn Station The Panel considered that a piece of artwork would be suitable for the location but not as proposed. The Panel felt the artwork was irrelevant and had other connotations and suggested that any artwork installed should be relevant to the railway.

Artwork on the facade of St James' Swimming Pool The Panel felt it was a good piece of artwork in a reasonable location and therefore supported it. The Panel suggested that the artists name should not be included on the artwork but a QR code could help to interpret the artwork.

Latest Position: Applications Permitted

23/01741/FM: Demolition and clearance of existing building and the construction of a new Specialised Supported Housing scheme comprising a two-storey residential building containing 10 self-contained supported living apartments together with seven self-contained supported living bungalows, and associated open space, access roads, parking and external landscaping at Kettlewell House, Kettlewell Lane. The Principal Conservation Officer

introduced the item and explained that outline permission was granted in January 2023 for a scheme on the site.

An aerial view, along with a Google Streetview image of the site, was shown to the Panel. The site is on the edge of a conservation area which is immediately to the South. A section of King's Lynn's town wall, a scheduled monument, is nearby in Kettlewell Lane.

One Panel member raised a question in relation to the history of the site specifically in terms of its archaeological history. The Principal Conservation Officer shared a historic Ordnance Survey map of the site with the Panel. The Principal Conservation Officer confirmed they would go back and check whether the developer mentioned about the archaeology and if they hadn't, would check with them how they would deal with that.

The Panel raised a number of concerns specifically around the design of the houses and the materials used and agreed a red brick would be a better contrast compared with the grey brick. It was also suggested that instead of the uniform and bland design currently proposed, a street scene similar to that in nearby Sir Lewis Street might be a better solution. The Panel agreed the design was inappropriate to the character of the area surrounding it and felt this needed to be improved.

Conclusion: The Panel supported the scheme in principle but felt the materials and design which were proposed was inappropriate and were therefore unable to support the application.

Latest position: Awaiting decision

23/01023/FM: Demolition and redevelopment of Providence Street Community Centre and Hillington Square flatted blocks known as Aiken House, Norris House and Chestnut House excluding electrical substation. Development of 65 new dwellings and 1,106 square metres of class E commercial/community floorspace and associated soft landscaping, vehicle and cycling

parking, refuse stores, improvements to the public realm and associated infrastructure, including relocation of electrical substation at Chestnut House, Hillington Square. An extraordinary meeting of the CAAP was held to consider this major development. Site plans were presented to the Panel showing both the existing and proposed developments for visual comparison.

The proposal was to replace the 6 buildings with 5 new buildings in block form.

The Panel were reminded of the previously refused scheme which went to Planning Committee and advised it was refused because of the impacts on All Saints Church.

The application was in a very sensitive area as it is on the boundaries or in the vicinity of 3 different Conservation Areas and the Grade 2* listed All Saints Church and Grade 2 listed buildings were adjacent to the site.

The Panel was asked to consider the appearance, materials, form and scale of the buildings on the impact of the historic environment and were then invited to make comments on the application.

Members of the Panel made comments in relation to the appearance and types of material used. The Panel agreed with Historic England and shared their concerns about the use of grey brick and felt that a red brick would be a better contrast and reflect the local architecture better. The Panel agreed that the lower scheme was much more preferable and welcomed the reduction in height from the previous scheme to retain the view of All Saints Church from Millfleet which the Panel felt was very important. The Panel explained that replacing the community area with a three-storey building blocked the view of the church and needs to be reconsidered with a single storey. Maintaining the view of the church would be a positive benefit to the Conservation Area and the church itself.

Overall, the Panel welcomed the redevelopment of the existing blocks and reduction in height following the refused scheme. The Panel agreed that the types of material used should be of a high quality and would be key to the success of any scheme on the site. The Panel agreed the refurbishment of the existing buildings had been well done with contrasting materials making sure the development fit in with the character of the existing Conservation Areas.

Conclusion: The Panel broadly support the proposals but have concerns relating to the materials and the single storey element being raised.

At a subsequent meeting, the Principal Conservation Officer gave an update on developments since the Panel commented at the extraordinary meeting on 27 July 2023. The Panel were reminded of the comments and concerns from the minutes of that meeting. Google images of the site were displayed which illustrated what the existing refurbished buildings looked like at Hillington Square, what was being proposed and the new proposal. The Principal Conservation Officer explained they had not been able to do anything about the raising of the single-storey section to the left-hand side of the building as it required a minimum number of units to ensure the economic viability of the scheme but advised the materials had changed to a red brick and red cladding.

The Principal Conservation Officer asked the Panel whether they had any comments on the application or whether they were happy with how it was progressing. The Panel agreed subject to a landscaping condition, the application had improved.

One Panel member raised a concern regarding parking during the construction process and wondered whether parking rules could be enforced. The case officer explained a Construction Management Plan could be looked into.

The Principal Conservation Officer asked the Panel whether they would want to see any protection for the churchyard and church throughout the works. The Panel agreed and the Principal Conservation Officer confirmed they would suggest that going forward.

Latest position: Application Permitted

This year's Civic Society lectures

An interesting range of speakers for our lecture series was reflected by good turnouts for most.

In October our new **Borough Conservation Officer, Lynette Fawkes** came along to introduce herself and spoke about some of the challenges and goals she is trying to address in her new role. The Borough is obviously large in area with a wealth of heritage assets to consider. Reviewing planning applications takes a lot of officer time. She is impressed by the 'Local List' that KLCS members have put together and would like to see us develop it further – especially considering landscape assets. BCKLWN are still not willing to adopt it as their own document but they are in the process of adding it to their GIS mapping platform so that all planning officers will have the information at hand when considering applications.

Lynette gave us some homework by inviting us to assist her on developing better shop-front design guidance for King's Lynn. Many Planning Authorities have quite detailed design guidance – especially for High Street areas, but this is something BCKLWN have never developed. We are presently reviewing examples of guidance from elsewhere.

In her round-up she also touched on the challenges of 'non-traditional' building development in Conservation Areas and in heritage property – not least uPVC doors and windows and the introduction of renewable energy systems.

In November our own Kim Leonard gave a humorous account of the life and times of **Herbert de Losinga – ‘The Founder of Lynn’**, who was a significant religious and political figure in early medieval England. Born and educated in Normandy, he was brought to England by William II to be Abbot of Ramsey Abbey.

However, he was evidently a capable and ambitious leader and soon became first Bishop of Thetford and later Norwich. He is attributed with planning the construction of Norwich cathedral, Norwich School, St Nicholas in Yarmouth and St Margaret’s in Lynn. He travelled in Europe, visiting the Vatican on more than one occasion, and also wrote extensive letters and sermons.

Kim also noted that he was not above some dodgy dealing, once needing to officially seek forgiveness from the Pope, and also being implicated in the untimely death of William II in a suspicious hunting accident.

Our December lecture was ***The Christmas Dinner Table*** with **Kathy Hipperson**, writer and ‘historical interpreter’, who has become a YouTube star by playing ‘Mrs Crocombe’, the Victorian cook at Audley End. This is part of Historic England work to bring history to a greater audience.

Her presentation included her preparing food as she explained the ingredients, techniques and popular tastes of Victorian Christmas cuisine. The talk, accompanied by some mulled wine and mince pies set us all up well for the festive season.

In February we had another KLCS member, Bill Lindsay, come to talk to us about his extraordinary but now little known great-great grandfather, ***William Schaw Lindsay – Victorian entrepreneur***.

Orphaned by the age of 10, his Presbyterian uncle provided him with some schooling, but he had run away to sea by the age of 15. After spending some time living on the streets of Liverpool, he managed to

get a job as unskilled labour on ships that were plying the south and north Atlantic trade routes. In a business where, at the time, simply staying alive was a mark of success, he learned his trade and became a ship's captain at the age of 23.

However, he quickly decided that his future lay in the business side of shipping, rather than sailing, and managed to get a job marketing coal for a new colliery at Hartlepool. Although it was not the best quality coal, he worked tirelessly to build up the business (King's Lynn being one of his primary trading ports).

He then went on to start his own highly successful shipping brokerage, becoming a Victorian millionaire, owning and designing his own ships and eventually entering parliament as MP for Tynemouth. Along the way he met and became personal friends with a variety of famous Victorians including Brunel, Nightingale, Livingstone, Disraeli, and Queen Victoria herself. He also had business and political links to the US – meeting several Presidents and helping the Confederate States plan and deliver their own navy in the American Civil War!

Having nearly worked himself to death, his doctors advised he should take a back seat in his business, giving him time to write – which is one reason Bill has been able to research his story and produce a fascinating book, now available through Amberley Publishing. Well worth a read!

We were lucky that Alison managed to persuade **Dr. Francesca Saggini** to visit King's Lynn and provide our March lecture. She is an internationally recognised professor of English literature, with a particular interest in the gothic novel. One of her specialist areas is the life and work of Fanny Burney and in researching the work of her and her contemporaries, Dr Saggini had become particularly interested in the way authors were (and still are) 'marketed'. Gothic novels frequently have a frontispiece picture of the author, often 'verified' with the author's signature. Of course, as now, the style and nature of the illustration were frequently presented to help sell the book. Dr

Saggini brought this up-to-date with a discussion of a mural in Streatham (purportedly of Burney – but in an unashamedly modern style). Burney once lived in South London and satirised the local literary circle as the ‘Streatham Worthies’. It was a thought-provoking talk, but we had perhaps hoped there might be more about the Burney family and their time in Lynn...

Our last lecture of the year gave a chance for Marsha Parker (Jewish Cemetery Friends Association) to tell us about her continuing research on the *Jews of King's Lynn*, a topic on which she hopes to publish a book in coming years. Although there is little evidence of a Jewish community in the UK before 1066, the Normans certainly brought Jewish expertise with them to help ‘monetise’ what they had conquered. Marsha described the Jewish community as the medieval ‘cash converters’ thanks to their experience with commerce. A medieval Jewish community is known to have established in the busy medieval town of Lynn. Unfortunately, the fervour whipped up by the first crusade meant that Jewish ancestry was quickly linked to middle-eastern sentiment. Jews were ostracised and attacked across western Europe and King's Lynn has the unedifying distinction of being the location of one of the first recorded pogroms in 1189.

Marsha then explained the re-emergence of a Jewish community in Lynn in the mid-eighteenth century. She has found a fascinating paper which purports to be an official King's Lynn ‘settlement’ document agreed by Jewish families in London. A synagogue once existed on Tower Street and of course the Jewish cemetery still remains on Millfleet. Although the community was involved in a variety of commerce for over a century it seems that the opportunities appearing in other parts of the Victorian world were too tempting for the younger generation. Jewish families from Lynn are known to have settled in South Africa, and by the mid-nineteenth century the synagogue had been sold. We look forward to the pending book!

A brief round-up of the year

Recruiting Volunteers: As reported in the Autumn newsletter, last June's 'Civic Day' event was a volunteer recruitment event open to local civic-related societies to come and promote their activities and seek new recruits. We would have liked a larger attendance on the day but some good things have come out of it.

One is that we have re-established the Friends of the Walk group (more below). Another is that the Heritage Open Day team will now organise the annual Tea Party which, as you probably know, is an annual small 'thank you' a range of volunteer groups across the town including Heritage Open Day stewards and the Town Guides.

Another potentially positive development is that Borough Councillors have asked 'how do you think volunteers could and should be encouraged and supported across the town?' To which we have provisionally answered:

- **Recognition:** BCKLWN Councillors and officers need to know about the groups. Know what they do and who to contact if their ideas/experience/assistance is needed.
- **Development:** Think about how the skills and resources of local volunteer organisations can be enhanced – in particular, by providing or offering training or briefings and by promoting them and their events and activities to other residents.
- **Listen/Integrate:** Fully involve local groups/volunteers in town development initiatives, so that they understand what is going on and can recognise (and help to identify) opportunities and constraints. This is building the 'civic wealth' of the community (which I think is a lot of what the High Streets Task Force are talking about). More knowledgeable people in the community who feel empowered and engaged to 'work for the community' must be a good thing?
- **Thank:** Develop incentives and 'thank-yous' for the work of volunteers.

We would be interested in hearing what members think about these suggestions and whether you have any other practical ideas. Please email: info@kingslynncivicsociety.co.uk with any thoughts.

Friends of the Walks: We have officially reconstituted this group in association with BCKLWN Councillors and the Walks Management team. We have a provisional committee, a new constitution and some immediate projects to get up and running – one being setting up a rota of volunteers to open the Red Mount Chapel to visitors on Wednesday and Sunday afternoons between May and September. If you would like to offer your time to be a Red Mount steward for a few hours a month, please email secretaryfow@gmail.com

One immediate success was the coordination of a reception for the Walsingham Pilgrims at the Red Mount chapel as they made their way through Lynn at Easter – an 800-year tradition that has been overlooked in recent years. The Mayor received them and they were duly fed and watered in exchange for a choral rendition. Thanks to Edith Reeve for suggesting this and Gary Walker for coordinating it at short notice.

If you want to find out more about the Friend of the Walks, follow the website www.thewalks.uk.

High Street Task Force: We reported in the Autumn that an adviser from this national initiative had visited Lynn and held a short workshop at which KLCS was represented. A second workshop was held in March that we also attended.

The discussion, which was well attended by a variety of Borough officers, local groups and some business representatives, considered engaging new ‘ambassadors’ for the town, developing a clear ‘King’s Lynn Experience’ for visitors and seeking new ways to promote and enhance the town centre.

This is all laudable stuff, but not astounding news. Arguably the Civic Society have been doing this for 75+ years and all of our projects this year essentially meet the brief. However, we will support the process and hope that new ‘town activists’ can be enlisted to bring positive and sustainable ideas to the table.

Town Deal Board: We continue to try to follow the Town Deal project and be supportive where we can. You might have read that the Board Chairman, Graham Purkins, stood down and there have been other changes, with the new Borough Council administration now represented by Councillors Simon Ring, Alistair Beales and Deborah Heneghan. The acting Chairman is Vicky Etheridge (BID), but an advertisement for a permanent replacement was recently in the paper. In the Spring Budget the Chancellor suddenly announced that King’s Lynn would receive another £20m. Where and how this can be best spent has to be decided and is likely to fall on the Town Board (although no doubt there will be a lot of fine print for Borough officers to try to decipher).

A recent study by a public policy think tank concluded that the government has fallen short on most of its own ‘levelling up’ targets and that these ‘grant bid’ initiatives tend to be a very inefficient way of spending public money. Some local authorities have had to give money back because they have been unable to deliver the projects they proposed.

KLCS committee members attended an exhibition regarding the design for the ‘Multi-user Community Hub’ (former Argos building) in the autumn. This turned out to be largely a discussion of cladding types for the exterior of the building. We have recently been asked to review ‘Pre-app’ documents for a pending planning application.

Similarly, we attended an exhibition regarding plans for the Riverfront in November and await a planning application for that. We generally consider the proposals for a mini-park adjacent the Millfleet to be the best proposal for that area to date – although it still seems to be putting

the cart before the horse when there is no clear plan for the Sommerfeld and Thomas and silo site.

We still await news of any progress in relation to the South Gate Masterplan.

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



Heritage Open Day 2024

Sunday 8 September

10.00 a.m. – 4.00 p.m.

The national Heritage Open Days theme this year is ‘**Routes – Networks – Connections.**’ 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. And of course, the ever-popular buses will be travelling their usual routes. 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

King's Lynn Civic Society

Registered charity 298916

President: Heather Bolt

Chairman: Alison Gifford

Vice Chairman: Helen Russell-Johnson

Secretary: Anna Gunn

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