

KICK THE DUST WANTS TO TELL YOU MORE...

Our book bench trail takes you all around King's Lynn and to Downham Market and Hunstanton. There is so much history around you but maybe you would like to know more. We have found some amazing facts that we hope you will enjoy.



KING'S LYNN

1. SATURDAY MARKET PLACE

The Saturday Market Place sits in one of the most historic areas of King's Lynn. Cobbled streets on one side and important cultural buildings on the other. Like the Tuesday Market Place, locally sourced fish has been sold here for hundreds of years. Fishing stalls and fleets also had strong links to the Hanseatic League. There's history everywhere you look at the Saturday Market Place.

It is a beautiful setting for food markets and small businesses. Surrounded by the Old Gaol House, Town Hall and St. Margaret's Church, the marketplace feels like a small time machine.

St. Margaret's Church stands in the centre of Saturday Market Place.

The church is much bigger than any other Norfolk church at 235 feet long from end to end! Originally a Norman Priory in 1101, much of the church was rebuilt in the 13th century. The Priory had been dissolved in 1530's, like many others during Henry VIII's Reformation.

Due to an unfortunate storm in 1741, the church was destroyed and took five years to rebuild, under the watch of the man who built Holkham Hall, in Norfolk. Inside the church, the large space absorbs all sounds. It has a silent and peaceful atmosphere, perfect for private prayer or just visiting.

St. Margaret's is a beautiful but complicated building. It has tall arches and colourful windows. You could stand there for hours without getting bored. There's history in every corner.

The Old Gaol House, on the side of the Saturday Market Place is an interesting building. Now the 'Stories of Lynn' exhibition, the Old Gaol House shows the history of crime and punishment in the King's Lynn area. With old cells and the pillory, criminals were kept here from 1784. The design of the entrance was based on London's new Newgate prison in the 1780's.

King's Lynn Town Hall is an authentic historic setting, built between 1422 and 1428. The Town Hall has had lots of history layered into its walls. Jacobean and Elizabethan interiors have been built and replaced in the archways and staircases in 1644.

The Town Hall was visited by members of the Royal family in 1946, including Queen Mary, Queen Consort Elizabeth and Princess Elizabeth (our current Queen). This visit was called the "visit of the three Queens". Now in the 21st century, the Town Hall holds weddings and other events, including historical dances and other interesting exhibitions on Heritage Day.

A LITTLE EXTRA ON THE WAY...

CLIFTON HOUSE, KING STREET

On the way between Tuesday Market Place and King's Staithe Square you will see Clifton House's distinctive tower and front door with barley twist pillars on King Street.

Clifton House stands tall by the river as a reminder of King's Lynn's rich history dating back to the 13th century. Currently a Grade I listed building, Clifton House is one of the few surviving merchant's houses.

In 1250, construction began. Since the 13th century, Clifton has housed Tudor, Elizabethan and Georgian interior designs. In 1708, the building that is currently standing in King's Lynn, was under construction.

The Elizabethan Tower provides beautiful views over The Wash and the town of King's Lynn. Clifton House feels like stepping back in time, with a long, spiral staircase and its historic kitchen, with original pots, pans and utensils.

2. KING'S STAITHE SQUARE



Imagine you are living in King's Lynn at the start of the 16th-century. King Henry VIII is on the throne. What do you think you would see? Most likely, you would have seen this area at the height of King's Lynn's mercantile history.

King's Lynn was one of England's most important trading towns from as early as the 12th-century, with vessels sailing up the river Ouse into the quayside. The square in front of you would have been full of traders known as merchants, who would assemble to make trade deals from across the continent.

Commodities such as wool and cloth were regularly exported, in return for wine, timber and luxury items from across Europe and the Middle East. The area remained popular for merchants until the 18th-century, when trade was disrupted by the Napoleonic Wars (1803-1815), followed by the arrival of railway services to the town.

Across the street, you will see **the Customs House**, a merchants' exchange centre to help regulate trade in the port. The building was designed by the architect Henry Bell in 1683, becoming the first classically styled structure in King's Lynn. The building was used as a customs house until 1989.



3. TUESDAY MARKET PLACE

The Tuesday Market Place is one of the most popular places for locals to spend time in the summer and to experience local culture all year round. The marketplace holds wartime, Georgian, and medieval to early modern history. It is a traditional marketplace which has sold fish in King’s Lynn for hundreds of years from local fishing fleets.

In July 1529, King Henry VIII had granted another Charter to King’s Lynn - saying the town could have two markets a week - which is most likely the beginning of Tuesday Market Place.

Under the car park itself lies a Second World War air raid shelter, attracting visitors every year when it is open. The two structures would have protected locals during an air raid. It is believed that the shelter was built between 1940-41. It could fit around 350-400 people!

The Duke’s Head Hotel on the side of the marketplace shows King’s Lynn’s elegant Georgian history. It’s powder blue front and white outer decorations draw much attention making it an interesting part of the marketplace.

The historic Corn Exchange on the Tuesday Market Place had provided services since the Victorian times. It was first built in 1854, but in the 1990's it was repurposed for community events. The 750-seater venue has long been a place for comedy, concerts and entertainment.

4. BUS STATION



How often do you catch the bus? Once a month? Once a week? Every day? For years, people have been doing just the same as you, but not from this spot! The original bus station in Lynn was situated on Millfleet Street, between the library and the quayside. The bus station moved to where it is today in the late 1960s.

Today, the bus station remains an important destination for tourists and locals. Buses connect King’s Lynn with other nearby towns like Wisbech and Swaffham, as well as major cities like Norwich, Peterborough and Cambridge. Most of the Stagecoach services in the area have been terminated, leaving most services in the town operated by Lynx Buses or Go To Town.



5. RAILWAY STATION

King's Lynn station opened in 1846. The wooden station was rebuilt in 1872 for the Great Eastern Railway by Robert Skipper of Dereham. Further alterations were made in 1910.

On the 25th October 1847 the line from King's Lynn was extended to link the town directly with London.

Traffic was quickly transferred to the new railway, with more than 10,000 tons of coal being carried in the first year.

Have a look at photographs of stations of the Hunstanton line
<http://www.hunstantonrail.org.uk/history/>

Take time to watch this film of the journey from King's Lynn to Hunstanton with Sir John Betjeman.

<https://player.bfi.org.uk/free/film/watch-john-betjeman-goes-by-train-kings-lynn-to-hunstanton-1962-online>

6. RED MOUNT CHAPEL



Have you ever travelled hundreds of miles to pay homage to a saint? Your answer is probably no. Back in the Medieval period, however, travellers, known as pilgrims, did just this. Established between 1483 and 1485, the Red Mount Chapel was built by Robert Curraunt for the Benedictine Prior of Lynn, William Spynke. The chapel's main function was to serve as a wayside chapel for pilgrims on their way to the shrine of Our Lady of Walsingham, offering a place to stop and pray.

The shrine at Walsingham was of particular importance to pilgrims, becoming the second most popular pilgrimage destination after Canterbury Cathedral. Red Mount Chapel was well used during the Medieval period, however, after the dissolution of the monasteries in the 1530s, the chapel was closed for worship and became the town council's property.

Following this period, the council started to dismantle the chapel, using it for water storage; as a gunpowder store during the Civil War; as a study; a stable; and even as an astronomical observatory! Inevitably, by the 19th-century, the chapel was in poor condition. Restoration work started in 1828, with further improvements being made in the 1920s and 1930s. The most recent restoration work took place in 2007, which saw the chapel re-roofed and improved the entry passage.



7. THE MAJESTIC CINEMA

What was the last film you went to see? Did it have sound? Was there a lot of colour? If so, it probably wasn't the same film that first aired here at the Majestic! Built in 1928, the cinema was originally called the 'Picture House.' It opened in May of the same year, showing the silent version of Ben Hurr: A Tale of the Christ, starring Ramon Novarro. Interestingly, the cinema not only gained a reputation as place for watching films but was also popular with royalty on occasion. What is known today as Screen Three used to be a ballroom. The ballroom was often used as a party venue by King George V after a day's hunting on the Sandringham estate.

As well as many successes, the cinema has also faced many challenges. In 2001, plans were made to demolish and replace the cinema with a multiplex. However, the scheme was denied, and the cinema was made a Grade II listed building, guaranteeing its future security. Today, the cinema is independently run and has expanded to house four film screens. Despite facing many trials and tribulations over the years, it continues to be a central leisure spot within the community.

A NOTE FROM KICK THE DUST RESEARCH TEAM: WHITEFRIARS GATEWAY

If we had been able to have one more bench, we would have chosen to put it at Whitefriars Gate as it is a small, symbolic remnant of the early history of Lynn's friar community.

Despite changing circumstances, Whitefriars gateway has stood the test of time and remains a unique but, nonetheless, hidden gem within the locality. Established around 1260, Whitefriars Gate is all that remains of King's Lynn's White friar community.

Can you imagine you are a friar walking through the gate? Can you visualise living in a society without the NHS?

Unlike monks, friars were expected to live and work in the town. In an age before free healthcare, friars not only preached but tended to the needs of lay society.

By the 13th-century, the monastic community had expanded in Lynn, with Greyfriars established in 1272, Blackfriars in 1272 and the Austin Friary in 1293.

The gateway to Whitefriars is built of brick and ashlar and is dated 15th-century. What makes the gateway particularly special is that it survived the rest of the friary's dissolution in 1538, under the orders of King Henry VIII.

DOWNHAM MARKET



Downham Market became a market town in Saxon times, and it is one of Norfolk's oldest market towns. Its name translates as 'settlement on a hill'. Because it stood on one of the few areas of land that was above the level of the Fens, it was immune from the floods that, until 300 years ago, made the surrounding flat area an expanse of desolate marsh land.

Downham was an agricultural centre, developing as a market for the produce of the Fens with a bridge across the Ouse. During the Middle Ages, it was famed for its butter market, which survived into the 18th century. At its peak, the market sold 2,000 casks of butter, which were carried to Cambridge by boat and then on to London,

In the marketplace is a striking black and white town clock tower, a gift in 1878 of James Scott, a local grocer. The clock was designed by William Cunliffe of London.

Also, in the marketplace is the town hall, built in 1887 of local brick and carrstone. Many of the elegant 19th-century houses in Downham Market are also made of the carrstone, which was quarried in the town. The stone is a distinctive colour, and its frequent use led to Downham Market being dubbed 'the Gingerbread Town'.

Centuries ago, one of the biggest horse-trading fairs took place in this town. At its height, thousands of people would flock to Downham Market to buy and sell horses on St Winnold's Day (March 3) with as many as 10,000 animals being sold.

Dealing would take place in the streets and in the Howdale field over three days, where many thousands of horses were supplied to the armed forces during the First World War to tow gun carriages.

The Downham Market sign even features horses to commemorate the town's horse-trading heritage.

HUNSTANTON



Hunstanton, known to many as “Sunny Hunny”, is one of the finest surviving examples of the British seaside resort in Norfolk, which began in 1845.

Henry Le Strange, a local landowner, wanted to create a bathing resort south of the village of Hunstanton, to be called 'New Hunstanton', with the original village becoming 'Old Hunstanton'. He personally designed the resort at New Hunstanton, centred around the distinctive triangular green, flanked by buildings on either side, and sloping down towards the sea.

One of our benches is located at the top of the Le Strange green triangle near the medieval cross that has been set on modern steps. This cross originally stood at Gipsies' Green, Old Hunstanton, but was moved to its present location during the 19th century.

Bathing resorts were very popular in Victorian times and in 1862 the Great Eastern Counties Railway built a line from King's Lynn to Hunstanton, making the resort instantly accessible to day-trippers who, on alighting from the station, were able to step out directly onto the seaside promenade.

In 1870 the Hunstanton Pier was erected, with a pavilion added in 1890. This was a typical long Victorian pleasure pier, with a miniature steam railway running up and down to the pavilion.

Unfortunately, the pier suffered fire damage in the 1930s and 1950s, before almost being washed away entirely in the storm of 1978. A bowling alley and amusement arcade now stand on the spot of the pier that was eventually destroyed by a fire in 2002.

Our second Hunstanton bench can be found at The Spinney. This space is green, pleasantly tree-shaded and pedestrianised. It is next to Café Legge at the end of the High Street in Hunstanton town centre. The Spinney hosts live music and community entertainment.