

# A Pilgrimage Trail of King's Lynn

## Welcome to the King's Lynn Civic Society

A society for people who think only the best is good enough for King's Lynn. As part of the work to support and improve our town, the King's Lynn Civic Society has made this Pilgrimage Trail. It builds on the work of the small leaflet published by the Norfolk Museums Service to highlight the steel plaques which are fixed to five prominent Pilgrimage sites in the town. The trail and new plaques have been supported by the Borough Council of King's Lynn and West Norfolk and Historic England through their Heritage Action Zone grant aid.

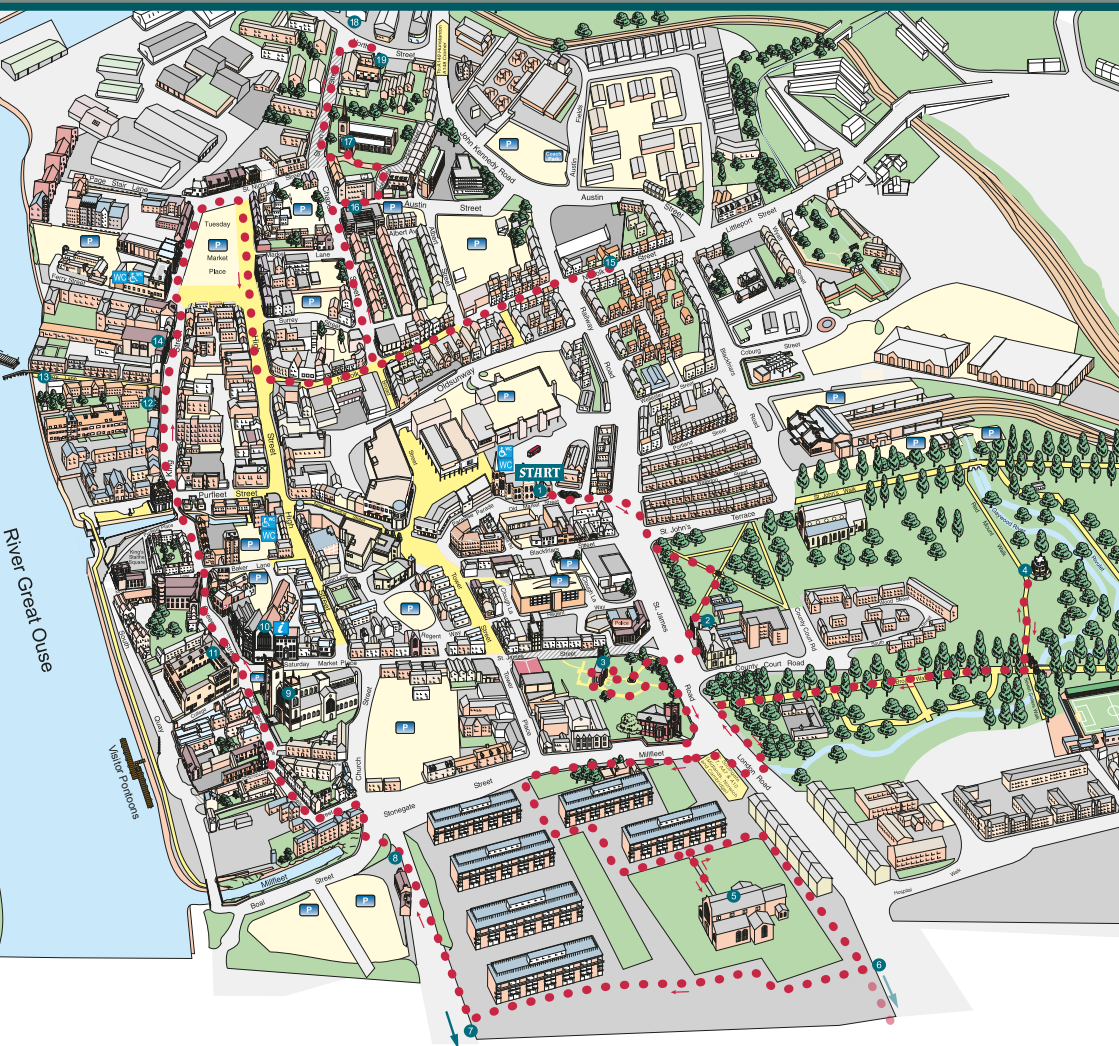
The King's Lynn Civic Society was founded over 70 years ago to protect our town's rich heritage and to influence the way our town evolves to meet challenges and change. We want King's Lynn to blend historic and modern in the best ways possible and our aim is to make Lynn a pleasant and rewarding place in which to live and work and visit. There is always work to do; and we respond as best we can by challenging damaging developments and projects, while encouraging and celebrating good plans and energetic forward-thinking ideas for our historic town.



The King's Lynn Civic Society logo is the Lynn Coat of Arms. The pelican [of piety] is a symbol of the Eucharist, and the three dragons' heads pierced by crosses represent St. Margaret overcoming evil. The Lynn Corporation seal has St. Margaret on one side and on the reverse an eagle, symbol of St. John the Evangelist, accompanied by the opening words of his Gospel 'In Principio Erat Verbum' ['In the beginning was the Word']. This text is sometimes also found with the Lynn crest.



[www.kingslynncivicsociety.co.uk](http://www.kingslynncivicsociety.co.uk)



## Key to map and trail

Walking directions in sage-coloured blocks

1 – 19 Principal religious buildings and sites in the text

● ● ● The Trail Route

WC

Yellow square icon

Bus icon

P

Information icon

Toilet

Pedestrian Area

Bus Station

Car Park

Tourist information centre



## Tears, prayers and pilgrims in medieval Lynn

The lives of our medieval forebears were lived within the cycle of the Church Calendar – fast and feast – and amid the daily presence of priests, monks, nuns, friars and pilgrims, together with their churches, chapels and friaries. By following the trails of buildings and sites, you enter the world of Margery Kempe, the extraordinary pilgrim and visionary, the mystic anchorites of All Saints' Church and hundreds of pilgrims on their way to Walsingham thronging the bustling streets of Bishop's Lynn familiar from Chaucer's Canterbury Tales. The trails take in three fine medieval churches, the unique Red

Mount Chapel, the Greyfriars Tower and other remnants and sites of monastic buildings, the Halls of Lynn's great guilds, as well as the Lynn Museum and its fine collection of pilgrims' badges.

### *How to follow this trail*

Central features of the trail are the five steel engraved stainless steel plaques by artist Lyndall Phelps. On them are motifs taken from four religious buildings in Lynn: a wooden ceiling boss showing a seated Christ from All Saints' Church, a dog pictured on a monumental brass from King's Lynn Minster, mouldings from the fine ceiling





of the Red Mount Chapel, a decorated stone corbel from Greyfriars Tower and a carved ship on a wooden bench end from St. Nicholas' Chapel. The fifth plaque is an image of a medieval cogge bringing pilgrims across the Wash.

The plaques are on or near the building they are associated with.

Along the way are a series of green plaques which describe the sites, locations and houses of pilgrimage and religious interest highlighted on the maps which guide you through the town.

Other buildings of note which you will see on the trail have been included and some little oddities which may enhance your walk.

Words by: Robert Fayers, Alison Gifford, Elizabeth James

Photographs by: Colin James

Illustrations courtesy of Norfolk Museums Service and private collections

To make the trail easier to walk, it divides into four parts:

### **The First Medieval Town**

Founded by Bishop Losinga of Norwich in about 1100. The Minster, the Saturday Market Place and Trinity Guildhall are central to this early small settlement.

Although not part of this first town or even built until much later (C15), the Red Mount Chapel is in this first medieval

town walk. Not only is it unique, but the lovely historic parkland on the east side of the town is well worth visiting.

### **The Newland**

So successful was this first town that a second was founded about 50 years later. St. Nicholas' Chapel, the Tuesday Market Place and the Guildhall of St. George are found within this larger second settlement.

### **South Lynn**

Once under the lordship of the Earl of East Anglia, briefly King Harold II, it was bestowed upon Ralph de Toeni following the Norman Conquest. However, the name 'South Lynn' is not known to have come into use until the C13 to distinguish it from Bishop's Lynn. The parish extended south to Seche Parva (Saddlebow) and was largely agricultural. Formerly known as 'All Hallows,' the old English name for All Saints, the church is the oldest foundation in the town. This parish, the area of town known as The Friars, was an independent village prior to 1555, when it became part of the town of King's Lynn.

### **Further Afield**

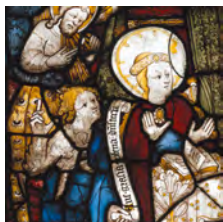
For those who enjoy walking, some religious and pilgrim sites further afield have been included.



## Medieval People

Bishop's Lynn (as it was known, only becoming King's Lynn in the reign of Henry VIII in 1537) was one of the most prosperous towns and ports in medieval England. The town was home to these important characters.

### Margery Kempe



Margery Kempe was a mystic, visionary and pilgrim. She was born about 1373, the daughter of a successful and influential Lynn merchant. Following her marriage and the birth of her first child (the first of 14), she had frequent visions of Christ and conversations with Our Lady and other saints. She was extraordinary in many ways, and travelled widely, including making pilgrimages to Jerusalem, Rome and Santiago di Compostela. So concerned was she for her parish church that when fire was destroying the nearby Hall of the Trinity Guild (1421) and threatened to burn down St. Margaret's, she encouraged the parish priest to raise the Holy Sacrament (consecrated Host) before the fire, as she prayed with loud weeping; soon after, she gave praise to God when snow came down, miraculously dousing the conflagration.

She was accused of heresy, but defended herself from this charge, was granted the 'gift of tears', and finally had her life story written down in her own words, the first autobiography in English. One of the most intriguing aspects is her ordinariness. She was a middle-class woman from a prosperous town. The experiences of people like this rarely survive from the Middle Ages, and it is the unashamed honesty and earthiness of Margery's Book that has captivated readers since the discovery of the only surviving manuscript of her work in 1934. Had it not been for this chance discovery, we would have little sense of this woman and her astonishing life nor the insights into the domestic life of the time that she reveals. There is a bench in her name on the Saturday Market Place which was commissioned by the Civic Society.

### William Sawtre



William Sawtre was a priest at St. Margaret's who endorsed Lollard beliefs. He rejected the prayers of the saints, the need for priests and disputed Christ's presence in the Sacrament of the

Eucharist. This was considered to be undermining the teaching of the Church

and the faith of ordinary people, and as adherents grew, Church authorities felt strong action had to be taken. Interrogation and encouragement to recant was pursued, but the national unrest caused by Lollard views led to Parliament passing a bill whereby the unrepentant could be executed. William Sawtre was held to be in error and on the order of the Bishop of Norwich, induced to recant and to publicly renounce his erroneous teaching, which he did in the church of the Hospital of St. John the Baptist here in Lynn. However, on leaving Lynn and moving to London, he again expounded Lollard views, and in consequence was burnt to death at Smithfield in February 1401; the first so punished in England.

### **Friar Nicholas de Lenne**

Born in Lynn and member of the Carmelite community here, he moved to Oxford and developed a great reputation for his scientific work, notably in the publication of a *Kalendarium* of astronomical tables. Geoffrey Chaucer wrote very approvingly of this work and made much use of it and refers to the friar as ‘that reverend clerk, frere Nicholas de Lenn.’ Later claims that Nicholas was the Franciscan who voyaged to Iceland and reputedly discovered the Americas are now questioned. He died in 1369.

### **Prior John Capgrave**

He was born in Lynn about 1393 and lived in the town for most of his life, although he studied theology in London and Cambridge, and lectured at Oxford University. John joined the Augustinian Order in c.1410 and was

ordained 1416/17. By 1446, he had become Prior of the Friary in Lynn, and as subsequent Provincial of his Order had responsibility for 41 friaries throughout England. He was author of 45 works, including assembling the first comprehensive collection of the lives of English saints. In addition, he wrote Biblical commentaries, historical works, including *The Chronicles of England* and the *Illustrious Henries*, as well as *The Solace of Pilgrims*, a pilgrims’ guide to Rome completed shortly after his own pilgrimage there in 1450. He is reckoned to have been one of medieval England’s most prolific authors. John died in Lynn in 1464.

### **Master Allan**

Master Allan of Lynn (?1348-1421 or 1428) was described by Margery Kempe as “a worshipful doctor of divinity, named Master Aleyn, a White Friar”. Master Allan is said to have been born in Lynn and obtained his doctorate at Cambridge. He is believed to be the prodigious contemporary compiler of indexes to religious works, and, if that is so, Anthony Goodman in *Margery Kempe and her World* says “Margery had as one of her mentors one of the most diligent and learned scholars among the religious of England of his day”. He is almost certainly the “Master Aleyn” who was associated with the leper Hospital of St. Mary Magdalene in Gaywood. Margery says he “informed her in questions of scripture when she would ask him”. For a while he was forbidden by his superiors to associate with her, but when he fell ill during this time, she “ran into the choir” at St. Margaret’s and knelt before the



Sacrament to pray for his recovery. He did recover and in time they were allowed to resume their friendship.

## Prior Spynke

William Spynke was appointed Prior at St. Margaret's Priory in 1480 after some years as Prior at Great Yarmouth. Like all his fellows at St. Margaret's Priory, he was a monk of Norwich Cathedral Priory and when he left in 1490, it was to become Prior at the Cathedral Priory itself. During his time in Lynn, St. Margaret's chancel clerestory was rebuilt in its present form, but his major innovative project was the foundation of the pilgrim Chapel of St. Mary on the Mount, known today as Red Mount Chapel and still a major feature of The Walks, built as a devotional station for the overland pilgrimage to Walsingham. Although the precise character of what visiting pilgrims would see there is still imperfectly known, an early C16 Norwich will gave funding for a pilgrimage to it and certainly its offertory box provided a much needed source of income for St. Margaret's Priory for a number of years until the Reformation.

## Geoffrey Chaucer

We learn from a sixteenth-century manuscript in Norwich library that;

"Lyn had the honour to present the world With GEOFFREY CHAUCER, Capgrave and the Curled Pate Allanus de Lenna, John Berstone, John Thompson, Thomas Lambe and did afford The court a jester, Hugh of Lyn was he All famous in thyre time, Lyn, nursed by thee."

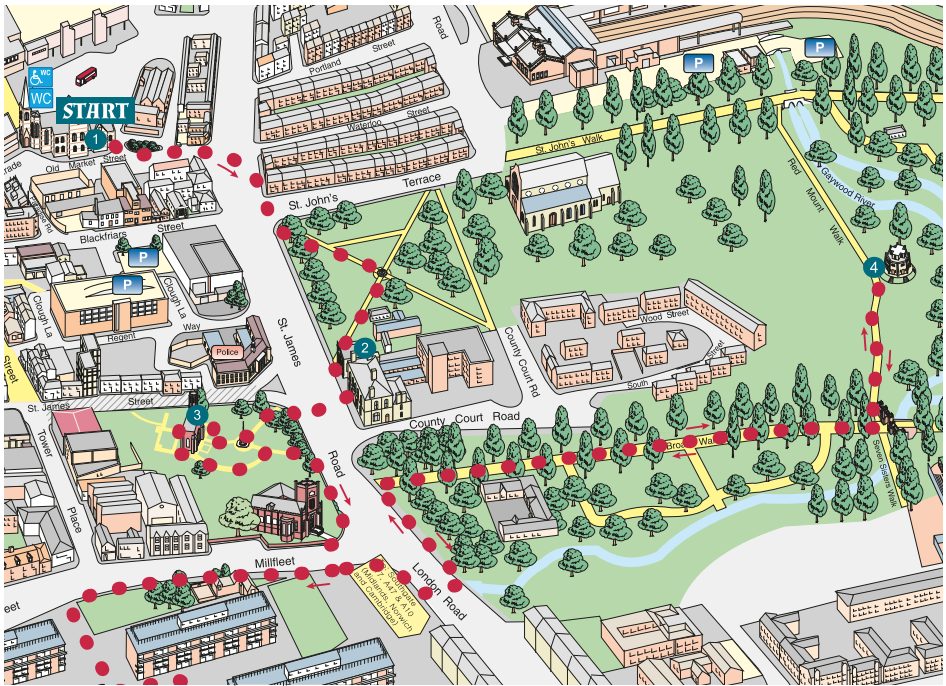
A tradition that still lingers in King's Lynn is that it was the birthplace of Geoffrey Chaucer. In *Chaucer for Schools* (1881) Mrs H. R. Haweis writes that "Chaucer lived in London. Whether he was born there or at Lynn in Norfolk, with which city and county his family were connected is not known". Alfred Allan Kern, *The Ancestry of Chaucer*, 1906 writes "The poet may well have been born in Lynn while his father, who came from a family of Collectors and Customs Officers at Ipswich, London and elsewhere was temporarily stationed there".

To the Author. (left)

WHEN whole-sale Men are bankrupt, & none  
To trade in wit, but those who do't by the ft;  
Such as retail rime weekly by a sheet,  
To gain perhaps the Counter or the Fleet:  
In such a Fancy-famin not to raife,  
But make wit cheap; deserves a double Bayes.  
This thou hast done in these thy works, nay more,  
For thou hast brought *Pernassus* to our shore:  
Salt Owls a fresh Muse has, when *Cam's* are falt  
*Jyn* has a capering Nymph, when *Oxford's* halt:  
Warehouse of Wit, fill still, let others gain,  
By fetching Fortunes goods from France or Spain!  
Thou hast a higher trade, which none o'them uses;  
Thy stock is verse, thy factors are the Muses,  
Thy returns Fame; thine is such Merchandize,  
As feeds not Custom, and quite starves Excize:  
Trade on wits Merchant, give the world to know  
Chaucer was bred in *Lyn*, and so wert Thou,  
Raptim  
Tho. Toll junior, Gent.

The picture shows a poem written in 1650 by Nicholas Murford of Lynn called *Fragmenta Poetica: or Miscellanies of Poetical Musings, Moral and Divine*. The poem is a panegyric to Murford by Thomas Toll of Lynn, an active parliamentarian and Lynn Burgess and Mayor, but note the last line.

# The First Medieval Town



**Start: Lynn Museum**  
The Lynn Museum near the bus station is the start of our walk.

The Lynn Museum opened in 1904 in a converted Union Baptist Chapel. By the entrance are the five steel plaques which are a theme throughout the walk. Just inside the window facing out is a cross taken from the Dominican friary.

## I Dominican Friary



Known as Blackfriars because they wore black habits or robes. All that remains are the street names Blackfriars Street and Road, and on the latter is the railway station. The construction of the railway line to London destroyed what remained of their ruined friary incorporated into the town defences. These preaching friars of the order of St. Dominic were known to have been in Lynn by 1272 and their friary was dissolved in 1539.



The Lynn Museum has a nationally regarded collection of pilgrims' badges from many shrines in England and abroad. The street to the left of the museum entrance is called Paradise Parade. Though it doesn't look much today, at one time the gardens of the Dominican Friary which were here formed an earthly Paradise. All were destroyed during the Reformation.

The number of religious houses built by the mendicant friars is, as always, a sign of the importance of a town, and in Lynn they arrived early and in numbers: the Greyfriars in about 1230, the Blackfriars in 1272, the Austin friars in 1293 and the Whitefriars in about 1260.

Turn right outside the Museum and walk past the "Lord Kelvin" towards a large road named Railway Road and turn right. Be careful: the road is very busy. Cross at the lights.

Here is St. James Park. Go in through the little gate and walk past the fountain then head out towards the road.





## 2 **Saint James' Chapel**



Here was a chapel-of-ease to St. Margaret's, built between 1121 and 1144, at the behest of Eborard, 2nd Bishop of Norwich, as part of the town's eastward expansion. The nave and eastern part of the chancel were destroyed in 1559. The remaining parts, transepts and truncated chancel, were used for the manufacture of baize. In the 1680s, it was turned into a new workhouse, designed by our celebrated architect Henry Bell. Following the sudden collapse of the central bay and tower in 1854, and demolition of the remaining structure in 1910, all that remains to see is the north transept's C16 window with medieval stone surround from the earlier chapel. A new and larger workhouse, bearing the same name, was built in 1856 to the east of The Walks in Extons Road.

### **Saint James' Park**

Where the park is now were allotments and gardens, but they were made into a cemetery in 1803, the churchyards of the three town churches being full. In 1805, a little circular chapel was built, since demolished, and in 1844–6, St. John's Church was built, contemporary with the railway station to its north-east. Finally, in 1902–3, St. James' Park was laid out

on the burial ground and the headstones relocated to one corner of the park.

### **Saint John the Evangelist Church**

In 1844–6, St. John's Church was built in the Early English style designed by Anthony Salvin. The windows are by William Wailes. St. John's was commissioned at a cost of £6,100, aided by the second parliamentary grant which aimed to provide state-aided grants to build Anglican churches, especially in the new manufacturing towns.

Architectural historian, Nikolaus Pevsner, records that the consecration of the church emphasised the role of the church in providing free Anglican seats for the poor, in 'competition', with the Roman Catholic and non-conformist chapels of the town. In the other town churches, seats were paid for or allocated to particular houses in the parish.

### **London Road Methodist Chapel**

Built in 1858–9 with a gault rounded arched windows on three bays, centre bay projecting. Turning Italianate. Inside, a gallery runs round the chapel. Fine building inside and out.

Cross the road outside the Methodist Chapel and enter the little park known as Tower Gardens. Here is the Greyfriars Tower. When you leave, walk towards the library on the corner exit by the gate. Across the road is the entrance to the Walks. Ahead is the Broad Walk. This is the direct route to the Red Mount; it's a few minutes' walk but central to the history of Pilgrimage in Lynn.

### 3 The Greyfriars Tower



Greyfriars (they wore grey habits) Tower was part of a Franciscan Friary. They were preaching friars of the order of St. Francis who were believed to have arrived in Lynn in 1264 or soon after. Their friary was dissolved in 1539. In recent years, the stonework has been excavated to then enable the outline of the friary buildings to be made.

The arches in the garden are a transplant from a C14 arcaded warehouse in Bank Lane off the Tuesday Market Place. Here seen in situ.



View of the "Thirde Archers" from the North-West, Bank Lane (1977).

The bell tower remains which you see date to the later C15 and feature many fine carved bosses and corbels, one of which features in the plaque. The tower survived the Reformation as a seamark guiding ships into port. The Tower Gardens were laid out in 1911. In 1921, the War Memorial was erected with the names of the 564 men from Lynn who were killed in WWI.

When you leave the park, you may decide to walk to the Red Mount Chapel. To the right of the entrance to The Walks are the Framingham Almshouses.

### Framingham Almshouses

Framingham's Hospital, originally built off Broad Street in the 1670s, but relocated to the present site – near London Road, opposite the public lending library – in 1848. The history of almshouses stretches back to medieval times, when religious orders cared for the poor. Originally called hospitals or bede houses, in the sense of hospitality and shelter. Later rich philanthropists, such as Henry Framingham, built almshouses in the Christian tradition to support the poor and indigent usually in old age or widowed.

#### 4 **The Chapel of Our Lady of the Mount (Red Mount)**



This striking chapel is one of the most peculiar late-medieval Gothic structures in England, built to an octagonal plan and standing three storeys high. The chapel was probably modelled on the Church of the Holy Sepulchre, the site of Christ's tomb and ultimate goal of pilgrims to Jerusalem. It was a popular place for pilgrims on their way to Little Walsingham. It was built in 1483 as a wayside chapel for pilgrims landing here at King's (then Bishop's) Lynn; a place to stop and pray and make an offering before undertaking the overland journey to Walsingham, or to pray before leaving England after a visit to the shrine. It was known as the Chapel of Our Lady of the Mount. What was the relic in here we do not know, but perhaps it was the skull of St. Margaret?

The upper section of the chapel exterior was built later by Robert Currance for the Benedictine prior of St. Margaret's Church. The upper chapel with its fine fan-vaulted roof was added in 1506, possibly by Simon Clerk and John Wastell, the mason responsible for the fan-vaulted ceiling in King's College Chapel, Cambridge. It was so popular that the stairs were

designed so the pilgrims did not have to cross each other going up and down. It is a unique one-way system.



The Benedictine Priory (but not the Parish Church of St. Margaret's) was suppressed by Henry VIII in 1537. Surprisingly, the chapel was not destroyed, though later it was robbed of tiles and bricks for building materials. In 1586, it was converted into a study for the vicar of St. Margaret's Church. During the Civil War, it was used to store gunpowder by the Royalists, and during an outbreak of plague in 1665, it was used as a charnel house. Around 1780, the chapel was a stable, then in 1783 it was converted into an astronomical observatory. The chapel narrowly survived a bombing raid in 1942 when German bombs fell in The Walks nearby. After the war, it was used briefly as a place for interdenominational worship, but this ceased when the local Catholic church found the terms of the lease too costly. It is now cared for by the Borough Council of King's Lynn and West Norfolk.

Curiously, though it formed a part of the popular pilgrim's route to one of the most sacred sites in Europe, the Red Mount Chapel only served as an active religious building for just about 50 years of its history.



You have visited the Red Mount. Cross the road carefully towards the library.

## The Central Library



On the corner plot is the carrstone and terracotta library built in 1905 with a grant from Andrew Carnegie, a Scottish-American steel magnate. This fine library has a collection of rare early books which once formed the libraries of both St. Margaret's Church and St. Nicholas' Chapel. Among about 2,000 volumes is a Nuremberg Chronicle, an illustrated encyclopaedia consisting of world historical accounts, as well as accounts told through Biblical paraphrase. Subjects include human history in relation to the Bible, illustrated mythological creatures, and the histories of important Christian and

secular cities from antiquity. Finished in 1493 after years in the making, it is one of the best-documented early printed books – an incunabulum (books from the early 'cradle period') – and one of the first to successfully integrate vivid illustrations into the text.

When you cross this very wide road, turn left.

The road is wide because it once had a waterway along the south side, but it was covered over in 1897 "to prevent the spread of cholera". It is called Millfleet after the water mill which once operated along its route. It is the outfall into the river Great Ouse of the Gaywood River.

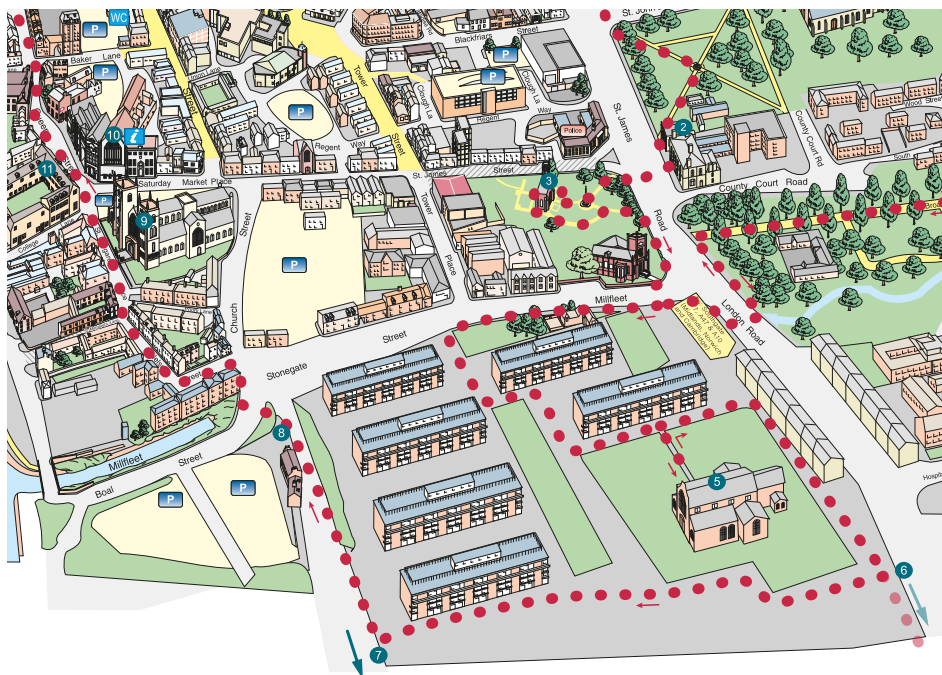
The Town Mill probably stood at the top of the Millfleet near the Framingham Almshouses. The mill was a single-storey stone building with the two-storey miller's house adjacent.

The first reference to a mill in this area is in 1101. At this time, the fleet was known as Mayorsfleet, while the bridge crossing it was called both Mayor's bridge and Sunolf's (who was an early mayor) bridge. Later the stream became known as The Millfleet.

The Trinity Guild took it over as a commercial concern in 1448.

The Millfleet was strongly tidal and had a relatively small flow of its own water, which meant that the mill was constantly running out of water at low tide. A series of new cuts were made to try and provide additional water, but when these also failed, windmills were built to take over the work. The mill was probably demolished to make way for London Road in the 1800s.

## South Lynn



### *The Jewish Cemetery, Millfleet*

Within these walls is the cemetery of the community of German and Dutch Jews who lived in Lynn 1740–1846. This small burial ground was leased by the Jewish community which by 1842 comprised only seven families. The minute book and charity register kept until 1845 is now preserved in the archive of the United Synagogue. The cemetery was well cared for until 1898 by Lewis Emmanuel, some of whose relatives are buried there. The community then faded

away. The brick compound is C16 with headstones 1811–46. It is now cared for by the local Jewish community. The artwork is modern and has the Kaddish or Prayer for the Dead inscribed on it.

Jews Lane (now Surrey Street) was where a much earlier group of Jews lived before a local massacre and later expulsion of the entire population of English Jews by Edward I in 1290.

## 5 *All Saints' Church*



All Saints' Church is the oldest building in the town, probably an Anglo-Saxon foundation, although the earliest parts now visible date back to c.1090. It was rebuilt in the late Middle Ages while under the patronage of West Acre Priory and contained the altars of several guilds. Its roof dates from this period as does the remnant of an apostles' rood screen, the only example of a medieval painted panel to survive in the town. Beside the high altar is an anchorhold, the cell of an urban recluse, whose counsel and prayers were highly regarded. Anchorites chose to be enclosed within this small room and devote themselves to perpetual prayer. The tower fell in 1764 and was later replaced by the Victorian bellcote.

The plaque by the door was inspired by the wooden ceiling boss showing a seated figure of Christ in Majesty.

The church was restored by the Victorians. Some fine stained glass windows date from this period and the early C20, including the parish war memorial.

South Lynn parish led an independent life until 1555, when it was integrated with King's Lynn. The Millfleet marks the northern boundary. Until the 1860s, South Lynn was a maritime community and the home of many master mariners; shipbuilding was carried out on the River Nar. Victorian headstones in the churchyard display maritime connections.

Walk south through the church gate into Church Lane and turn right into All Saints Street, where you will see the Whitefriars Gate. Keeping the modern flats on your right, ahead you will see the Friends Meeting house in an old pub called the Hulk. On your left you can see the Whitefriars Gate.

OR on leaving the Church, walk left into London Road, then right and a short way down on the right is the Roman Catholic Church of Our Lady of the Annunciation. On the left you will see where the local Islamic Community now meet. The building was converted from the Queen's Head Public House.





## 6 **The Church of Our Lady of The Annunciation**



The Roman Catholic parish church of the Annunciation is away from the old town centre. It was rebuilt in 1897 of carrstone reusing some of the stones from an earlier church by A.W. Pugin, in particular the stained-glass window which he designed. The then Prince of Wales (later King Edward VII) contributed to the expense, as the King and Queen of Spain, and other foreign royal guests attended Mass there when staying at Sandringham.

The original shrine at Walsingham was destroyed under Henry VIII. It was first re-established here under Pope Leo XIII, and is contained in the Holy House, modelled on the one in Loreto, Italy. The

medieval Slipper Chapel at Houghton St. Giles – the start of the Holy Mile walk to Walsingham – was declared the National Roman Catholic Shrine of Our Lady in 1934, but London Road Pontifical Shrine still receives pilgrims making their way to Walsingham.

### **Friends Meeting House**

Bridge Street, now a cul-de-sac, was part of the main road from the South Gate into Lynn until London Road was built (1803–1806) so the building that we now know as the Quaker Meeting House stood for centuries on a busy main thoroughfare. The Society of Friends who became known as Quakers was started by George Fox (1634–1691).

The house is a Grade 2 listed building and when repairs were being done in 2009, the outside rendering was removed revealing that the house was probably built of reused materials from the Carmelite Friary which was demolished after it was dissolved in 1538.

At some point the building became an inn and lodging house for seamen. In 1736, it was known as Ships Hulk. It closed as a public house in 1970.

The Religious Society of Friends (Quakers) in King's Lynn bought the house in 1986, since then it has been used as a Quaker Meeting House and as a venue hired by organisations in the town. However, the stained glass windows with the words "Bar Parlour" and "Smoke Room" are reminders of its past.

## 7 Whitefriars Gate



This striking brick and stone C15 gate at the northern entrance is all that survives above ground of the extensive Carmelite Friary, founded in Lynn in 1261 and dissolved in 1538. The astronomer, Friar Nicholas of Lynn, and Friar Allan, befriender and supporter of Margery Kempe, were among the distinguished members of this community. Despite the austerities of the South Lynn Carmelites – they were said to have slept in their coffins – in 1528, they gave hospitality to the Duke of Suffolk and his wife, Mary, sister of Henry VIII, who was the widowed 'French Queen'.



All this area is called The Friars with the local streets named after the friary. Following demolition of medieval dwellings, the houses are mostly post-1810 with a few early C17 in its street plan.



Pictured here is the C14 circular seal (4.5cm) of the Carmelite Friary showing two canopied niches. On the left is the standing Virgin and Holy Child and on the right is the standing figure of St. Margaret trampling the dragon and piercing his head with a cross. It was dug up on the Isle of Sheppey C19 and passed through the Wickins and Fowle families until Michael Fowle decided it should return to Lynn and donated it to All Saints' Church (2021).

From Whitefriars Gate, turn back into the town through Bridge Street past the Greenland Fishery, a fine timbered building connected to the Greenland Whaling fleet. Ahead you will see a bridge over the Millfleet which divides the parish of South Lynn from the parish of St. Margaret and St. Nicholas (the towns of Bishop Losinga and Bishop Turbe). Cross carefully.

### Greenland Fishery

'Atkin's Mansion' was built in 1605 by wealthy merchant John Atkin, who was twice mayor of the borough. The house was built in a prominent position on what was then the main route into King's Lynn from the south. It remained in the Atkin family until his grandson, Thomas Atkin 'of London' sold it. It was certainly a grand house, possibly the last great timber-framed house to be built in Lynn,

with enormous brick chimney stacks. The first-floor hall ran the length of the building and was lit by oriel windows. The interior features an important series of Jacobean wall-paintings depicting the figures of Spes and Fides and Dives and Lazarus in Heaven and Hell seen here copied by Thomas Baines in 1864.



The house was subsequently divided into two, the southern portion becoming a public house called 'The Fisherman's Arms' or 'The Waterman's Arms'. By 1796, it had been renamed 'The Greenland Fishery Inn' to mark the importance of the whaling industry to the town during those years (1770s–1820s) when a small fleet was sent out to Greenland and the Davis Straits to fish for whales and seals. Later it was a private museum and is now a house. The property is owned by the King's Lynn Preservation Trust. Here an information board gives an overview of old South Lynn.

## 8 Chapel of Our Lady of the Bridge



Here is the site of the Chapel of Our Lady of the Bridge. This stood by the bridge that crossed the Millfleet linking South Lynn to Bishop's Lynn from c.1329 until 1549, eventually converted to a dwelling before road widening led to its demolition in 1806. The Millfleet was covered over by another road in 1897 which is why this road, still known as Millfleet, is double width. The Millfleet was once a thriving commercial basin.

## The First Medieval Town

When you cross over the Millfleet Bridge, you leave South Lynn and re-enter the First Medieval Town. If you take a diversion left into Nelson Street (Lath Street), you will see a local landmark.

## Devil's Alley



Devil's Alley runs down to the South Quay. Legend tells us that the devil's footprint was planted at the entrance when he stalked the land terrifying the population while searching for godless souls to take.

At the end of Nelson Street is a fine view with the Minster on your right and on your left the Hanse House.

### Hanse House

This is the only Hanse House (c.1480) to survive in England. The east coast ports north of London accounted for a considerable slice of England's medieval foreign trade and the Wash ports were particularly involved with the German Hanse. Edward IV granted the freehold titles of the existing kontors at London and Boston and to a new house in Lynn to the Hanseatic towns in the Treaty of Utrecht (February 1474). Lynn's merchant rulers were amongst the foremost members of the growing urban bourgeoisie which was accumulating wealth and power in medieval England.

Pilgrims from Bremen and other Hanse ports thronged the decks of the cogges coming to Lynn during Easter time when pilgrimage to Walsingham was most popular. The Hanse House by the river Great Ouse embodies Lynn's Hanseatic associations past and present.

On your right you will see some charming cottages

### Priory Cottages



About 1101, Losinga, the Bishop of Norwich, sent Benedictine monks to build a church in Lynn, St. Margaret's, to establish a tangible church presence in the far west of his diocese. He could also see financial gain from this newly expanding town and port. The priory buildings renovated by the King's Lynn Preservation Trust survive as cottages bordering the churchyard.

This range, built in the C14 and altered in the C15, is the last remaining part of the Benedictine Priory.

At some time after the dissolution of the priory, the building was converted into cottages, with doors leading out into Priory Lane. The great archway, which had formerly led into the priory, was blocked up and incorporated into one of the dwellings. By 1970, the cottages were dilapidated and deemed unfit for habitation. In 1972, the King's Lynn Preservation Trust purchased the cottages and an ambitious restoration project commenced, supported by grants, loans and public donations. Between the front doors and the churchyard wall, a pleasant private garden space was created.



## 9 King's Lynn Minster



King's Lynn Minster is dedicated to St. Margaret of Antioch, St. Mary Magdalene, and all the Virgin Saints, an impressive dedication indicating its significance, St. Margaret's for short. It was granted Minster status in 2011.

It was founded by Herbert de Losinga, first Bishop of Norwich, in 1101. The Priory was served by a cell of the Norwich Benedictine Priory at the cathedral. In addition to monastic use, it was also a parish church. It has a fine C13 chancel, with C14 oak screens with some delightful small figures, and the misericords (tip-up seats, used by the monks) have impressive carvings that include King Edward III and his Queen, Philippa, their son, Edward the Black Prince, and the warlike Bishop Despenser, and with the Chapel of the Holy & Undivided Trinity (north-east), and a south-east aisle where the famous brasses are sited, form the distinctive monastic part of the church. The Trinity Chapel was founded by members of the Holy Trinity Guild and was once much larger. It is said the Guild owned a reliquary believed to contain the skull of Saint Margaret, enshrined in

this Chapel. The reredos behind the high altar has statues of the four Latin Doctors (St. Augustine of Hippo, St. Ambrose, St. Jerome & St. Gregory), as well as St. Felix, regarded as the Apostle of East Anglia, believed to have landed at nearby Babingley. The large west window depicts images of saints associated with the parish, arms of the town's major guilds, and key events in Lynn's history. Foundations of the hexagonal chapter house are seen in the churchyard, by the south transept.



The Norman church survives only in the impressive south-west tower. In the C13, the rest seems to have been totally rebuilt. The north-west tower had to be rebuilt again in 1453; apparently subsidence into the soft silty ground had caused its predecessor to lean dangerously. It was built a mere stone's throw from the water's edge.

The nave and aisles had to be rebuilt completely after a devastating "tempest" in 1741 blew down the lead spire which crowned the south-west tower, badly damaging the central lantern (similar to Ely Cathedral), which had to be taken down. A fine Georgian interior was made by Matthew Brettingham, who was employed at Houghton by Robert Walpole.



There are two fine medieval brasses in the church. One from 1364 shows Robert Braunch, a former mayor of Lynn, with his first and second wives, Letitia and Margaret. The dog sitting at Letitia's feet provided the inspiration for the steel plaque fixed to the railings. A dog was the symbol of fidelity or devotion. The picture shows the Peacock Feast which is depicted at the foot of the brass. The Victorian restoration of 1874, under the direction Sir George Gilbert Scott (pictured) cleared out galleries installed over the aisles, moved the 1754 Sneltzler organ from the blocked-up west window to its present site, removed the Georgian plaster ceiling and "opened" the church from end to end, leaving it much as it appears now.



The Minster is situated in the historic heart of King's Lynn. Outside, in the paving of the Saturday Market Place, you will also see metal shapes which indicate where the foundations of the medieval Charnel Chapel were uncovered during improvements to this fine public space in 2014.



Here the bones of previous generations of people buried in the graveyard were removed and stacked up inside to make room for new burials. The Charnel Chapel was demolished in 1779. The graveyard was closed and parishioners were then buried at St James' Cemetery (page 11) until Hardwick Road Cemetery opened in 1856.



On the other side of the Saturday Market Place is...

## 10 **The Trinity Guildhall**

King's Lynn's historic town hall began as a meeting place for a religious guild of merchants known as the Guild of the Holy and Undivided Trinity, sometimes referred to as the Great Guild. Their C15 meeting place, more commonly known as Trinity Guildhall, stands directly across from King's Lynn Minster on the north side of the Saturday Market Place. All religious guilds were prohibited by 1547 and the members of this Guild became the town rulers renamed "The Corporation", taking over all the property of the other guilds as well as civic functions. The upper hall dates from 1423 after fire destroyed the previous building. Its flushwork frontage, a chequer of limestone and Norfolk flint, is a constant theme carried through all the additional buildings up to the 1895 offices and council meeting chamber.



In the undercroft, you can see the wonderful King John Cup – a fine secular loving cup of c.1340. It is not contemporary with King John, but possibly bought by the members of the Trinity Guild to toast King John, who gave the first charter (1204) to the town bestowing some autonomy from the power of the Bishop of Norwich.



King's Lynn is probably unusual in its allegiance to a king regarded as "Bad King John" as this picture of him with a lop-sided crown shows.

Here on the Saturday Market Place you will see a bench commemorating Margery Kempe who worshipped at St. Margaret's Church opposite and whose childhood home was almost certainly in the top end of the High Street where the shop plots are still based on medieval foundations.

### **The Guilds**

In the C14 Lynn had about 60 merchant and craft guilds, more than any other town save London and Norwich. These guilds were valued for the social and spiritual welfare they gave to their members and their families, as well as for regulating trade standards, giving support to the needy, and at the funerals of guildsmen, ensuring prayers and Masses were offered. The Trinity Guild had considerable influence in the running of the town, and important trading links with other parts of northern Europe. Each guild was placed under the patronage of a saint or 'mystery' of the Christian faith, having a guild altar in one of the Lynn churches. Only the three wealthier guilds had their

own meeting hall, whereas the less wealthy would be allowed use of this facility, or members would meet in each other's homes. The abolition of the guilds in the C16 had a devastating effect on the life of townspeople.

## II **Thoresby College**

Originally named Trinity College, this building was the creation of Thomas Thoresby, burgess, merchant and three-times Mayor of the Borough. Building started in about 1508 and was still in progress when he died in 1510. He left money for its completion and his executors saw that his intentions were met.

Thoresby's object was to provide accommodation and a simple form of collegiate life for 13 priests employed as chantry chaplains by the powerful Trinity Guild of Lynn, who were to pray for him and his family 'as long as the world shall endure.' With the Reformation, the college was sold and was adapted for domestic and commercial use. Look at the door and you will see the words "pray for the soul" have been scratched out by later Protestant reformers, but Thomas Thoresby's name still endures.

The paintings of the doors of Thoresby College and Clifton House are by Christopher Thomas Page (1866–1932).



## **Burkitt Homes**

These 12 almshouses were built in 1909. They were built for and endowed by William Burkitt in memory of his uncle of the same name. They are built in a quadrangle around a charming small garden.

Walk down Queen Street, formerly known as Wyndgate (winding street as you will see). On the way, you will notice the fine doorway of Clifton House with its barley sugar columns.



## Clifton House



A merchant's house in the heart of the town, it retains an amazing series of historic interiors dating from the C13. Features of interest include two tiled floors from the later C13 (the largest in-situ tiled floors of that age in any secular building in Britain); the C14 vaulted wine cellar; the five-storey Elizabethan tower and a series of rooms on the street range created by Henry Bell in 1708. Now a private house.

A little way further on you come to a small bridge. Here is the Purfleet inlet dividing Losinga's Lynn from **The Newland** to the north.

## Custom House



Here is the Custom House, built in 1683 as a Merchants' Exchange by Henry Bell. In 1741, the arches were infilled and it was used by Customs and Excise until 1989, when it was sold into private ownership. The Borough Council secured a long lease on the building in 1999. This little limestone masterpiece features sea god masks, Bacchus for wine and Ceres for corn represented on the west elevation.

Captain George Vancouver (1757–1798), whose statue is on the quay, would have known this building very well as a boy. His father was the Deputy Customer here.

## The Purfleet

The Purfleet was wider in medieval times. Here ships, many trading with the German Hanse, disembarked hundreds of pilgrims on their way to Walsingham and it is here the collection of pilgrims badges now in the Lynn Museum was found in c.1900 by local jeweller, Thomas Pung, who paid small boys to pick them from the mud at low tide.

## Pilgrimage

Journeys to holy places were undertaken from motives of devotion, to obtain Divine help or as acts of penance or thanksgiving. Pilgrimage is common in most religions due to a desire to visit places associated with inspiring holy lives, and in the deep-seated conviction that certain localities are favoured by God, manifested by prayer answered, and guidance or healing given. In Christianity, the belief that God became human in Jesus Christ, the Incarnation, and the land where He was crucified and rose again, led to the early custom of pilgrimage to Palestine.

Veneration of the Apostles, especially St. Peter & St. Paul in Rome and St. James in Compostela (Spain), also led to their tombs and relics becoming places of pilgrimage. Our own Margery Kempe journeyed to all three. In England, Canterbury, its cathedral being the site of the martyrdom of Saint Thomas Becket, and Walsingham with its Holy House revealed in a vision, were venerated by pilgrims in the Middle Ages.



Pilgrimage was banned in 1538 by Henry VIII (pictured) and Thomas Cromwell even though Henry had made two pilgrimages to Walsingham. However, Pilgrimage has become increasingly popular especially today as an aid to contemplation and well-being, and above all traditional devotion.

The five steel plaques are on the wall next to the large floodgate which will keep water confined in the Purfleet basin when closed.





Here you have a view across the river of the little spire of St. Peter's, West Lynn. It is noted for its Seven Sacraments font, C15 arch-braced and tie-beamed roof with Apostolic supporters and Jacobean pulpit and priest brass.



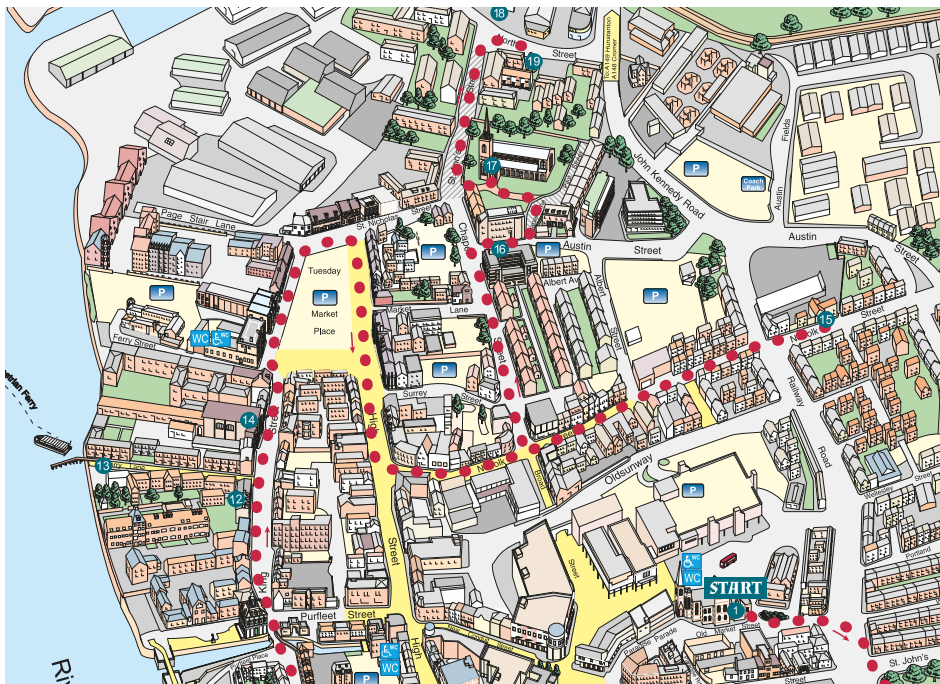
When Lynn was besieged by Cromwell's forces in August 1643, having declared for the King, cannon shot was fired into the town from the tower of this church, shattering the window of St. Margaret's Church and terrifying the congregation. It is said this cannon ball is the one hanging in the doorway of Hampton Court in Nelson Street.

Cross over the bridge into the "Newe Lande" and continue down King Street, which was called Stock Fish Row in medieval times and, after the Custom House (or Exchequer) was built, it was called Chequer Street. This provides the most undiluted architectural view of Lynn. Georgian remodelled merchants' houses unifying Losinga's Lynn.





## Newland



Losinga's town became a significant regional trading centre and expanded so rapidly that by the middle of the C12 the 'neue lande' to the north, between the Purfleet and the Fisherfleet, was developed by his successor, Bishop Turbe. A second grander town was laid down with a 4-acre market space open to the river on its west side. St. Nicholas' Chapel constructed as a chapel-of-ease to St. Margaret and the Guildhall for this second town was dedicated to St. George. Now Lynn was a twin medieval town with two great churches, two marketplaces and three guildhalls (two survive).



In 1707, a fine Market Cross was erected in the square designed by Henry Bell. It suffered from subsidence and was only taken down in 1831.



### No 7–9 King Street

Late C14 hall house, altered in the C15 and considerably since. L-plan, with hall range in the rear wing to the north of the courtyard. Yellow brick with stone dressings. The 7-bay east facade on the street is c.1830. Note the little medieval window in the south wall. Research suggests it may have been a property owned by the Corpus Christi Guild close by.

### 12 Old School Court

The site of the Hall of the **Corpus Christi Guild** of wealthy merchants, founded shortly after the Black Death (1349) on an extensive site with warehouses running down to the river and their own quay. After the Dissolution in 1548, it was owned by the wealthy Le Strange family from Hunstanton Hall and later redeveloped by a succession of merchant owners, until the buildings became the Girls' High School in 1891. It is now desirable housing around a courtyard with a lawn and gazebo overlooking the river Great Ouse.

Opposite is

### 28–32 King Street



A timbered building, unique in this street. Some early domestic buildings and those with dual domestic and commercial use have survived in Lynn, the earliest being the stone-built Norman hall house at 28–30 King Street, which, when new, looked straight out over the river on the other (west) side of the street, the west side only being built upon later on land gained from the river as it shifted westwards.

### 15 Here is the Ferry



Since at least 1265 come rain, shine, tide and storm, a ferry has carried passengers across Lynn's river. The ferry service was vital to save a twelve-mile walk over the nearest river bridge at Wigganhall Saint German's. In 1392, the powerful merchants of the Trinity Guild acquired the right to run the ferries. It was a profitable acquisition for the guild and essential for trade and commerce. The ferrymen would pay a very substantial fee of several hundred pounds to the Guild for the privilege of operating a ferry. Three ferry boats plied across the river with pilgrims, farmers, livestock and servants coming to Lynn markets with one ferry plying from the Purfleet (the picture by R.W. MacBeth 1892 "Late for the Ferry" shows this route), one from the Common Staithe

(hence Ferry Street), but the oldest ferry was, and is, that of Ferry Lane which is a continuation of an ancient route via Norfolk Street to Norwich. After the Reformation of Henry VIII which destroyed so many religious institutions, the Trinity Guild ceased to be and consequently lost the privilege of the ferry rights. The Mayor and Corporation eagerly took over as the ferry owners and now the franchise is let by the Council to intrepid people who operate a commuter service from West Lynn.

After exiting Ferry Lane, turn to your left.

#### 14 **Saint George's Guildhall**

The Guild of St. George existed by 1376 and in 1406 acquired land reclaimed from the river in order to build its hall, known to have been in use by 1428. Following the Dissolution of the Guilds in 1547, the Hall became the property of the Corporation, serving as a 'Common Hall,' and put to many uses, including that of a theatre. The earliest record of theatrical use is a Nativity play in 1445. After the Dissolution, companies of players used it and local tradition supports research that William Shakespeare probably played here with the Earl of Pembroke's Men in 1593, when London theatres were closed by the plague. Lynn-born Robert Armin (green plaque in High Street) was a strong influence on Shakespeare, being a leading comedy actor of the time. St. George's is the oldest and largest surviving medieval guildhall in England and has the longest association with drama of any building in England.



After the Second World War, the building was used to store scenery, but when the business ceased, the dilapidated building was put up for sale. A motor engineering firm was interested in buying the property and clearing the site so it could be developed as a garage. In 1946, publicity about this proposal attracted the interest of Alexander Penrose of Bradenham Hall, Norfolk, who bought the property privately for about £4,000, to save it from demolition. He later gave it to the National Trust. To mark the restoration of the Guildhall and to complement the Festival of Britain, Lady Fermoy organised a triumphant festival. She was a close friend and lady-in-waiting to the Queen – later to become Queen Elizabeth, the Queen Mother – who agreed to be the Festival's patron and in July 1951 officially opened the newly-restored Guildhall. The success of this first festival determined Lady Fermoy and the Queen to make it an annual event. The photograph shows them attending an event here. The Queen Mother was an enthusiastic and active supporter who remained the Festival's patron until her death in March 2002. The festival still continues with an annual programme of music and arts.

Ahead is the Tuesday Market Place. Walk past the Corn Exchange, now a theatre towards the north side.

### **“The Witch’s Heart House”**



The vigorous pursuit of witchcraft accusations in the late C16 and early C17, leading to widespread trials and executions, is sometimes attributed to the adverse effects of sweeping religious changes after the Reformation, when the reassuring comfort of age-old religious practices was swept away and replaced by new and sometimes less comfortable doctrines, while the times themselves seemed bedevilled by uncertainties. It was easy to believe that misfortunes after a cross word with an unpopular neighbour might be the result of vengeful witchcraft and to point the finger at the suspect. The newly available English Bible made it quite clear in Exodus chapter 22: “Thou shalt not suffer a witch to live” and more stringent legislation provided the means.

Above the first-floor window of Nos 14–15 can be seen the outline of a heart incised into the brickwork. Tradition says that the heart of a witch burst out while she was being burned outside, and this is where it hit the

wall! Four locally convicted witches are named in Mackerell’s 1738 *History of Lynn*, but were executed by hanging, the usual punishment in England for witchcraft, contrary to popular belief. Burning – or in one Lynn case boiling – to death indicated a woman executed for petty treason, the legal term for murder by whatever means of an employer or household head. Indeed, by the time this frontage was built in the early C18, times were more settled and the witch hunt phenomenon had, mercifully, largely subsided!

Head round the square towards the Duke’s Head Hotel. Next to this fine building is Market Lane.

### **Market Lane**

Formerly Pillory Lane running from Chapel Street, by the Lattice House Public House (for several years home of Parish Clerks) to the Tuesday Market Place which was also a place of punishment and execution.

### **The Duke’s Head**



This fine coaching inn (1686) was designed for Sir John Turner by Henry Bell to complement his Exchange (Custom House). On it you can see Turner’s coat of arms. As built, it was in finest rich red brick dressed with pale limestone; the foliate head

lintels to the first-floor windows are memorable. It was rendered later in the C19. It is named for James, Duke of York, who had gained national respect as a naval commander. But as James II (on the death of his brother Charles II), his Roman Catholicism and that of his wife was troubling to the established Church of England. In 1688, Mary (James' daughter) and her husband, the Protestant Duke of Orange in the Netherlands, were invited to take the throne as joint monarchs, William and Mary.

### **Jews Lane (Surrey Street)**



Medieval Lynn's status as a major port attracted a Jewish community which settled on the eastern side of today's Tuesday Market Place. Until the mid-C19, the area east of Tuesday Market Place was named Jews Lane Ward, and Surrey Street was named Jews Lane from at least the C13. Despite royal protection, the Jewish trading community in Lynn was massacred and their property probably burnt by sailors on their way to The Third Crusade in 1190. See also the Jewish cemetery in South Lynn where a much later generation of Lynn Jews are buried.

You could also follow the map, take a walk into Norfolk Street which will bring you close by Hayloft Court, and in this vicinity stood the

### **15 Hospital of St. John the Baptist**

Norfolk Street was known as Damgate. The site of the Hospital of St. John the Baptist was an early and significant religious foundation. Its large community consisted of a Master and brethren, with its own church, hospital, hall, chambers, houses and court. In 1399, its chapel was the scene of the public recantation of William Sawtre, priest of St. Margaret's, who had been accused of heresy. The hospital was dissolved at the Reformation and the site cleared.

Now retrace your steps until you see Chapel Street on the right. Further down is an ancient inn called the Lattice House which was once lodgings for parish clerks at St. Nicholas' Chapel. Walk past the modern Council offices and in Austin Street you will see an old gate.

### **16 The Augustinian Friars**



The Gate of the Augustinian Friary is all that remains of the Friary which occupied the site from 1293 to 1539.



The extensive monastery was the home of Prior John Capgrave (1393–1464), whose *Chronicles of England to 1417* is a very early history in English. Kings Henry V, VI, and VII are known to have stayed here and no doubt entered through this gateway. Royal visitors included those on pilgrimage to Walsingham. Today it is commemorated in the Austin Street name.

Opposite is Chapel Lane. On the corner is the Exorcist's House. You are now in Pilot Street, which was the High Street of the North End fisherfolk quarter. Here is an information board which gives a useful overview of this part of King's Lynn. Return and go through the gate by the Exorcist's House across the churchyard and out into St. Ann's Street.

### ***Exorcist's House***



7 Chapel Lane, on the south side of St. Nicholas' Chapel yard. This C17 house, believed to have been built on the site of the dwelling of a medieval cleric in minor holy orders, has a good example of a Dutch gable on its north side, and is one of several reminders in Lynn of past links between East Anglia and the Netherlands.

The house has many local ghost stories. See the suggested reading list.

### ***Pilot Street***



Once the heart of Lynn's old fishing community and the 'High Street' of the North End. Until c.1800 this was known as Dowshill Street, a corruption of Deucehill, meaning 'Devil's Hill.' At its northern end it had a bridge that crossed the old Fisher Fleet and Lynn's long-gone northern gate. More about the North End fishing community will be found at True's Yard Fisherfolk Museum. The painting by S. Winearls shows a romanticised Fisher Fleet before the Docks were built.

### **17 *Saint Nicholas' Chapel***



The chapel of St. Nicholas is the largest parochial chapel in England, founded by Bishop Turbe in 1146. This light-filled

church was actually built as a chapel of ease (easy to get to) for St. Margaret's Church. The bulk of the chapel was built by 1410, though the tower of the first rebuild is a century earlier as revealed by the lower ground level.



By contrast, the slender spire (the earlier one blew down in the 'tempest' of 1741) is entirely Victorian, added by the ubiquitous Sir George Gilbert Scott, who seems to have had a hand in almost every major ecclesiastical rebuilding of the C19! The most immediately striking features are the porch, with its ornate carvings on the exterior, and lovely vaulting inside, and the two magnificent windows – one with clear glass (west) and the other with stained glass (east) adorn the chapel. Inside the chapel itself, the timber queen post roof is quite superb, with ornately carved angels overlooking the scene. Look closely and you will see that many angels are playing a musical instrument. The Chapel possesses one of only 45 medieval eagle lecterns in the country. One very unusual feature is to be found in the north-west corner, where benches have been set around a table to form space for an early C17 consistory court. This particular church court was presided over by the Archdeacon, who decided on

matters of ecclesiastical law, including divorce cases and marriage disputes. The chapel interior has impressive C17 monuments to local merchants and their families, notably the Brownes and Greenes; C15 priests' stalls with circular motifs, e.g. Our Lady on the sickle of the moon, a Bishop, a figure in a whelk shell with a nearby fish looking out of the water at him. The monks of St. Margaret's denied the Chapel the right to celebrate baptisms so all baptisms (and the payment of fees) took place at St. Margaret's. Therefore, the first font dates from the C17. Two windows from St. James' Chapel were inserted over the central south aisle door.

The chapel is not used for regular worship and is now in the hands of the Churches Conservation Trust, but is occasionally open to visitors throughout the year. It provides a wonderful venue for exhibitions and concerts.

### 18 *Saint Ann's Chapel*



A medieval chapel is likely to have stood in this vicinity and given its name to the Napoleonic fort, gate and street so named. No doubt the chapel was here for travellers to give thanks on arrival or ask for safety on their journey

from the town. In the early C20, a side chapel dedicated to St. Ann was created in St. Nicholas' Chapel with a window depicting St. Ann and her daughter, the Virgin Mary. On the old map illustrated here, we can see the only depiction of Saint Ann's Gate. This map was made in 1588 during the reign of Elizabeth I. In fact, it is a small part of a large map showing Castle Rising Chase. It is the first pictorial image of King's Lynn.



Remnants of St. Ann's Fort walling are to be seen at the back of the yards across North Street from True's Yard.

## 19 The Sackfriars



In this vicinity stood the Friary de Sacco (Sackfriars). Henry Hillen, in his *History of King's Lynn* (1907) says they had "premises to the north of the Chapel (St. Nicholas) on the eastern side".

From the latter half of the C13, in this vicinity stood the church and friary of this short-lived penitential order. The friars were identified by their formless habit of coarse sackcloth and they walked either barefoot or wore simple wooden pattens. The friars of the order never ate meat and were only allowed to drink water. Rather than living in grand, isolated abbeys, mendicants spread the gospel in towns and cities. They were active in community life – teaching, ministering to the sick, poor and destitute, and hearing confession in homes and streets. Unlike monks, friars were not bound by a *votum stabilitus* (vow of permanency) to any one place and travelled widely, often internationally. In contrast to generally ill-educated parish priests, many friars were impressive orators and townspeople flocked to hear them preach, identifying with the friars' poverty, which generally mirrored their own lot in life.

Although in 1274 at the Council of Lyons, Pope Gregory X suppressed all mendicant orders, with the exception of the Dominicans, Franciscans, Carmelites and Augustinians, the

Sackfriars carried on until just after 1300. Their last prior in Lynn was Roger de Flegg, who was Superior of the whole Order in England, which had 122 friaries.

### **True's Yard Fisherfolk Museum**

This part of Lynn is known as the North End and was the living quarter of the fisherfolk for hundreds of years. St. Nicholas' Chapel was 'their' church after 1850. This Museum tells the story of the North End fisherfolk. Two cottages remain, an unusual survival of artisan domestic dwellings. The large table-top model by Fred Hall of Tudor Lynn in the reception area is a good illustration of this part of the town and its vanished waterways and yards. Other models of lost Lynn buildings can be found on the first floor of Marriott's Warehouse on the South Quay. The Museum has a café and garden.

We hope you have enjoyed your walk around Pilgrimage Lynn and encourage you to visit sites further afield.





## Further Afield

Other outlying sites include:

### **Saint Edmund's Church, North Lynn**

Dedicated to the King and Martyr, Patron Saint of East Anglia, originally situated on the west bank of the Great Ouse, this church was washed away by the incursions of the sea in 1271 and nothing remains to be seen.

Victorian changes to the course of the river to aid navigation put the site on the east bank. It is possible to walk by the Fisher Fleet to the unmarked site, which is now an industrial site.

### **East Gate**



Pilgrims must have streamed through this gate on the way to Walsingham. Probably built about 1300 as a means of defence and protection of the town, it originally had a drawbridge. By 1800, it was a hindrance to traffic and taken down.

### **Saint Katherine's Hermitage & Chapel**

It was defaced before 1560, but stood close to the East Gate. The name is recalled in the nearby St. Katherine's Court, a sheltered housing complex, at Dodman's Close, off Gaywood Road. Prayers for a safe journey to Walsingham were made by the devout travellers.

### **Saint Mary Magdalen's Hospital**

Now the site of almshouses on Gaywood Road. It was founded in C12, designed to accommodate a chaplain, twelve brethren and sisters, three of whom must be leprous. The community was not dispersed at the Dissolution, but the Hospital was largely destroyed at the time of the siege of Lynn by Parliamentary troops during the Civil War and rebuilt in 1649.

### **Saint Lawrence's Hospital**

On the road that would have led to Hardwick Church, will be found the Victorian Hardwick Road Cemetery, which is well worth a visit. Close to the present Hardwick Bridge stood the long-disappeared Saint Lawrence Hospital with its chapel. It was burned down by 1477. It was one of 6 or 7 local leper hospitals, to which the devout bequeathed money in their wills. In his will of 1432, Stephen Guybon donated 12d to every house of lepers in the Lynn area. The houses were at West Lynn, North Runcton, Setchey, Gaywood, and Cowgate (today's Common Staithe).

## South Gate

No doubt pilgrims walking overland from London would have passed through the South Gate and stayed in the town before walking the pilgrim's way to Walsingham.



## The Shrine of Our Lady of Walsingham

27 miles by road. Tradition has it that in 1061, Richeldis de Faverches, wife of the Lord of the Manor of Walsingham Parva, had a vision in which the Blessed Virgin Mary asked her to erect a replica of the Holy House in Nazareth, where the Annunciation took place and the Holy Family lived; and a spring of water would be the sign of where it should be built. The small wooden structure was soon enclosed in a stone church, becoming a very popular place for pilgrimage from all over England and northern Europe, saving many in this country from the dangers and cost of travelling to the Holy Land, itself a journey which often took months and even years to undertake. Pilgrims from northern Europe often disembarked at Lynn. Pilgrim badges have been found here, especially in the Purfleet. Many of England's medieval kings, queens and princes made

pilgrimage to 'England's Nazareth', several stayed in Lynn and received hospitality from the Austin Friars. Henry VIII himself made pilgrimage to the shrine in earlier years of his reign, but later ordered its destruction. Devotion to Our Lady of Walsingham, pilgrimage, and the re-founding of the Shrine (albeit one Anglican and one Roman Catholic) were revived in the last century, and once again flourish.

Look out for Heritage Open Day in early September when many buildings usually closed will be open. This popular busy day is organised by the King's Lynn Civic Society. See the website [www.kingslynncivicsociety.co.uk](http://www.kingslynncivicsociety.co.uk)

## Useful addresses

King's Lynn Tourist Information Centre,  
Stories of Lynn,  
King's Lynn Town Hall, Saturday Market  
Place, PE30 5DQ.  
Tel: 01553 774297  
[kings-lynn.tic@west-norfolk.gov.uk](mailto:kings-lynn.tic@west-norfolk.gov.uk)

King's Lynn Borough Archive  
The Old Gaol House  
Saturday Market Place  
PE30 5DQ  
Tel: 01553 774297  
[norfrec@norfolk.gov.uk](mailto:norfrec@norfolk.gov.uk)

The Shrine of Our Lady of Walsingham  
(Anglican)  
2 Common Place, Walsingham  
NR22 6EE  
Tel: 01328 830355  
[www.walsinghamanglican.org.uk](http://www.walsinghamanglican.org.uk)

Basilica of Our Lady of Walsingham –  
Catholic National Shrine of Our Lady  
(Roman Catholic)  
informally known as the Slipper Chapel,  
Houghton St Giles, Little Walsingham  
Walsingham, NR22 6AL  
Tel: 01328 820217  
[www.walsingham.org.uk](http://www.walsingham.org.uk)

## Recommended reading

History Of King's Lynn. Paul  
Richards (Phillimore 1990)

1000 Years of Lynn. King's  
Lynn Town Guides

The Book of Margery Kempe (Penguin)

Walsingham: A Place of Pilgrimage  
for All. Claude Fisher

Ghosts and Legends of Lynn. Alison  
Gifford (True's Yard Publications)

[https://britishpilgrimage.org/portfolio/  
pilgrim-ways-to-walsingham](https://britishpilgrimage.org/portfolio/pilgrim-ways-to-walsingham)

<https://www.klprestrust.org.uk>



# Glossary

## **Anchorites, Anchoresses and Hermits**

People living solitary lives, the former living in cells often within the curtilage of a church building and sometimes having servants, whereas the latter wandered at large, but devoted their lives to prayer and giving spiritual counsel in exchange for subsistence alms.

## **Cogge**

A small medieval sailing ship with a large hold for trading.

## **Dissolution**

The dissolution of the monasteries was the set of administrative and legal processes between 1536 and 1541 by which Henry VIII disbanded monasteries, priories, convents and friaries in England, Wales and Ireland, expropriated their income, disposed of their assets, and provided for their former personnel and functions.

## **Habit**

The simple robe worn by a monk or nun.

## **Host**

Host is the consecrated bread of the Eucharist or Mass. This eucharistic bread was baked in appropriately reverent circumstances in religious houses.

## **Kontor**

Hanseatic trading post.

## **Lollard**

The popular derogatory nickname given to those without an academic background, educated (if at all) only in English, who were reputed to follow the teachings of John Wycliffe in particular, and were certainly considerably energised by the translation of the Bible into English.

## **Reformation**

The English Reformation took place in C16 when Henry VIII removed the English Church from the authority of the Pope and broke the near one-thousand-year link with the Church of Rome.