




King's Lynn u3a History Trails



Notable People Trail no 2

Notable People Part 2, The North Town The site of the current town of King's Lynn is barely mentioned in the Domesday Book of 1086 so the town developed post-Norman conquest over the centuries to become a vibrant international trading port, and many notable people have lived, worked, traded, sailed from, and banked here over that time. We look at just some of these, both locally and nationally notable. You may wish to investigate our Hanse history for more information.


This is a circular walk in two parts, each one starting at **Saturday Market**. The route takes you across roads which may sometimes be busy – take care when crossing. Look out for the **green information plaques** on many of the buildings. The characters with a plaque are indicated by 

With Stories of Lynn to your back turn right, past the Trinity Guildhall (also the Town Hall), and enter **Queen Street**.

On the left is **College Lane**, where there used to be a house belonging to -

1. Francis Shaxton (early 1530s- around 1600), Seen as a respected merchant and Trinity Guildsman, Shaxton served as Alderman and Town Mayor. However, as seems to have been the custom, he managed to avoid paying full duties for years, but he was later informed on and brought to trial. Luckily he escaped prison by paying a hefty fine. This did not prevent Shaxton from serving as Mayor for the second time, but another tax avoidance scam proved his downfall when the ship containing his gains was wrecked on its return journey.

Stop at the ornate doorway just along **Queen Street** and enter through the gate -

2.  Thomas Thoresby (1435/40-1510) paid to build this College, which has a plaque marking the 1968 restoration next to the splendid early 16th century gate. Born in the family house opposite the west door of St Margaret's, Thomas maintained a successful trading business benefitting the town. A member of the Holy Trinity Guild, meeting in the nearby Guildhall, he was elected mayor three times, as well as becoming alderman, the principal officer of the guild. In 1474, whilst acting as deputy Mayor, the 1st Treaty of Utrecht was negotiated. This was an Anglo-Hanseatic agreement and Thoresby made property available next to his own, for the building of the Hanseatic Kontor as agreed in the Treaty.

Notable bequests after his death included the provision of a priest to teach six children in a room above the charnel house attached to St Margaret's, and the priest and children would spend some time praying for the souls of the donor and others. This was the origin of the Grammar School. The second bequest was the foundation of Trinity (or Thoresby) College for the accommodation of the 13 chantry priests of the Trinity Guild and private priests for the Thoresby family. The Queen Street door has a Latin inscription carved above the door, which translates as "Pray for the soul of Thomas Thoresby, founder of this place" though the first 3 words were removed at the dissolution of both Guilds and Chantries in the reign of Edward VI.

In danger of demolition by the 1960's it was bought in 1963 by

3. Ruth, Lady Fermoy, mother of **Frances Shand Kidd**, the mother of **Princess Diana**; and presented to the King's Lynn Preservation Trust. The restoration plaque of the college was unveiled in 2008 by **HM The Queen**.

Leaving the college, a little further up on the right are Burkitt Homes which are mentioned in the Alms houses Walk. Continue along **Queen Street** finding the barley twist doorposts of Clifton House. It has a C14th undercroft and a later Elizabethan tower behind the door.

This was the home of

4. Sir Simon Taylor (1633-1689), who was a wine merchant trading in Oporto. He served as MP for the town with **Sir John Turner** through many upheavals of the later Stuart reign and both were knighted by Charles II in 1684. The house was remodelled by his son **Samuel Taylor**, aided by **Henry Bell**.

Proceed left down **Kings Staithe Lane**, noting the "Lynn Angel" high on the wall to your right, by sculptor **Andrew Schumann**, in 1997, which reflects the maritime wealth of the town. Turn right into **King's Staithe Square**, where the Bankhouse Hotel, with the statue of Charles I over the door, is on your left.

5. Samuel Gurney Cresswell (1827-1867) was born here. His father Francis married **Rachel Fry**, the daughter of **Elizabeth Fry** (nee Gurney, the famous prison reformer) and her husband Joseph. Francis worked in the family bank founded here in the 1780s by **Joseph Gurney**, which later merged with other banks to form Barclays Bank. Samuel was not destined for finance and went to sea at 14, spending time in the China seas. In 1848 and 1850 he joined the crew of the "Investigator" in a search for information on the earlier Franklin expedition and the North-west passage.

Samuel had risen to the rank of sub-lieutenant by the second trip. With supplies for 5 years the ship approached from the West but got trapped in the ice for 3 winters. During this time the crew explored the area and discovered the Winter Harbour to the east. Here they managed to communicate with other ships and it was agreed for Samuel to transport the most poorly sailors over land to reach the rescue ships on the east side. This was achieved and Samuel was declared the first naval officer to cross the North-west passage.

Samuel returned safely home and the family paid for the East window of St Margaret's in gratitude. Samuel returned to naval duties afterwards and achieved the rank of Captain before his health started to fail and he resigned in 1863 returning to his family home, dying just before his 40th birthday.

Take the footbridge over the **Purfleet** and at the far side near the river note the compass set into the pavement, with the many enterprises in our history and the names of the many famous men who sailed from here, amongst whom were **George Vancouver** and **James Burney**.

6. James Burney (1750-1821) joined the navy around the age of 10, starting out as a captain's servant. It was through his father Charles' friendship with the Earl of Sandwich, the first Lord of the Admiralty, that he secured a position on both the second and third voyages of Captain Cook, progressing from able seaman to 2nd Lieutenant. He stayed with the navy until late **1784** when his active career ended due to ill health. He married the next year and had 2 surviving children. This did not stop him from eloping with his half sister in **1798**, though he returned to his wife after 5 years and started his literary career. He wrote several books on his naval service and explorations and, incongruously, a book on whist! He was able to mix in both naval and literary circles, much of the latter in common with both his sister Fanny and father. He attained the rank of Rear-Admiral on the retired list in **1821**, a few months before he died.

Continue towards the statue.

7. **Admiral George Vancouver** (1761-1797).



Probably born in Lynn, his Dutch born father was Deputy Collector of Customs in the nearby Custom House as well as Collector of the Town Dues.

In **1771** George also sailed with **Captain Cook**, possibly helped to the position by his neighbour **James Burney**. They both sailed with Cook again on his ill-fated 3rd voyage and they were among the officers sent under a flag of truce to try to retrieve the bodies of Cook and other murdered seamen. By **1780** George had become a Lieutenant in the Royal Navy serving on the "Martin" around the Caribbean for 7 years, showing himself as a competent officer and "first rate maritime surveyor".

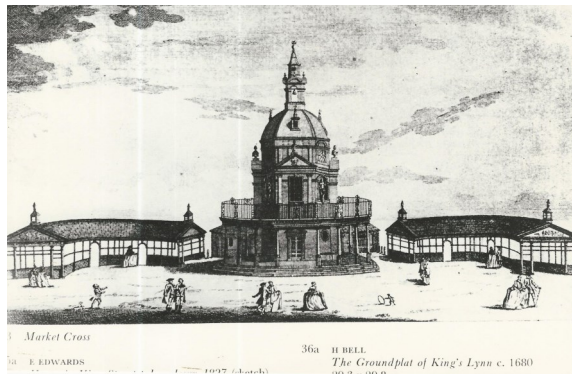
In **1790** he was given the task of taking 2 ships on a voyage to chart the west coast of North America, also touching on the coast of Australia and New Zealand. Despite difficulties, the task was eventually completed in **1795**. Virtually unnoticed on his return due to war with France, George settled to write his reports. He was harassed by a midshipman who had been sailing with him but he had sent back early after several punishments had proved insufficient for discipline. His health declined and he died before completing his report in **1798**.

Walk past the statue to the **Custom House** with the statue of **Charles II** above the door, which commemorates the knighthood of John Turner and Simon Taylor. This building was commissioned by Sir John Turner and built by Henry Bell and is described by architectural historian Nikolaus Pevsner as “one of the most perfect buildings ever built”.

8. Henry Bell (1647-1711) was the son of a Lynn Freeman, also named Henry.

Graduating from Cambridge at 18 and in **1665** he was assisting in the replanning and re-modelling of parts of Northampton, following a disastrous fire. He is thought to have gone on the Grand Tour of Europe around **1670**, either to get away from plague or possibly to check on his fathers' overseas clients.

Returning to Lynn he continued with his father's business, gained the Freedom of the borough, married and had a family. He was closely linked to Sir John Turner in Lynn, commissioned to design the Custom House (as a Merchant Exchange), The Duke's Head Hotel and a Market Cross in Tuesday Market Place (later demolished due to subsidence), as well as redesigning some merchant houses such as Clifton House for Samuel Taylor.



“Market Cross” - Image courtesy of Trues Yard Fisherfolk Museum

Turn left onto **King Street**.

9. Thomas Melchbourne lived on the site of No 1. He was part of a major ship-building family in the 14th century, as well as successful wool merchants. He was appointed by **Edward III** in **1336**, to build, equip and arm a naval galley, which he accomplished in 15 weeks, including sourcing and acquiring all the materials needed and employing the workmen. It is thought that as ship builders the materials and workforce were already to hand.

The vessel's maiden voyage was a diplomatic mission to Holland to retrieve the crown jewels of England that had been pawned by the King when in need of money and the mission was entrusted solely to the Melchbournes.

Later the site was taken over and a new house built by

10. ● Sir John Turner (1632-1712), a successful wine merchant, 3 times mayor, and MP, often alongside neighbour Simon Taylor for King's Lynn, especially during the turbulent times of the later Stuarts. He was knighted in 1684 alongside Simon Taylor. His brother Charles Turner (1648-1711) acted as an attorney, was mayor and the 2 of them acted as patrons to Henry Bell, and Charles had a mansion built on the corner of Tuesday Market-place opposite the Globe Hotel, (later Hogge House). Within 3 generations of the family there were 6 Johns and 4 Charles; showing that keeping family names was firmly ingrained.

11. ● Alexander Musgrave had a house on the site of number 5. At the time of the Spanish Armada, circa **1588**, England had a very small standing navy and relied on ship-owners to man and arm their ships. Musgrave was such a shipowner and took his own ship, "The Mayflower", to sail for Elizabeth. He is said to have sailed with 4 other ships of the town and received £100 in payment – roughly £20,000 nowadays.

The white building across the road was the site of the **Bagge family** brewery. (**Thomas and William Bagge** are spoken of within the **South Town walk**).

Continue along **King Street** towards **Tuesday Market Place**.

A metal sign above an archway by number 19 shows the entrance to the Aickman foundry. Note the unusual spelling of the sign.



12. John Aickman (1779-1843) was born in Scotland and moved to England as a young man, but able to buy property on a main merchant street when he arrived in Lynn. The Foundry is first mentioned in **1822** in trade directories and made agricultural implements, decorative ironwork and items needed for ships. John was a non-conformist and later became a Freemason, becoming the 13th Worshipful Master in **1835**. Without children of his own, on his death he left the business in trust to his wife's niece Elizabeth, highly unusual at the time. When she married John's nephew William it ensured that the business remained in her control though run by William. The company seemed to have disappeared by **1900**.

Pass the cream building, the old King's Lynn High School for Girls, now private residences. Nos 23-25 has a plaque to the history of the house and was named after

13. Lady Joan Evershed (1908-1985). She was passionate about the town and its buildings and was appointed Chairman of the Management Committee of the newly founded King's Lynn Preservation Trust in **1958** a position she held till shortly before her death. In this she proved tireless in campaigning, fundraising and enthusing others in the work. Lady Evershed was the daughter of a Barrister and Justice of the High Court; she married Francis Raymond Evershed, 1st Baron Evershed in **1928**. He was a judge and served as Master of the Rolls till **1962** then became a Law Lord till his death in **1966**.

Close by is **St George's Guildhall**.

14. William Shakespeare (1564-1616), possibly performed here with his troupe, the "Lord Chamberlains Men", in **1593** when the plague closed the theatres in London. After the Second World War, the Guildhall was threatened with demolition, but was bought in auction by -

15. Alexander Penrose (1896-1950). He was related to the **Peckovers**, a Quaker banking family of Wisbech. When visiting the area he saw the notice of auction and determined to save the building. This he managed to do, raising funds for the restoration, and presenting the building to the National Trust, though he died before the grand re-opening in the presence of **Queen Elizabeth**, the future Queen Mother, an occasion which was the origin of the **King's Lynn Festival**.

During the restoration and ensuring the theatrical future of the hall, he was assisted by -

16. Lady Fermoy (1908-1993) Ruth Sylvia Gill was born in Aberdeenshire and studied music with the hope of becoming a concert pianist until she married Maurice Roche, the **4th Baron Fermoy** in **1931**, MP for King's Lynn, as well as Mayor the same year and the couple settled in Norfolk eventually at Park House on the Sandringham estate. Lady Fermoy became Woman of the Bedchamber to Queen Elizabeth, later the Queen Mother, and in **1960**, her daughter, Frances was also instrumental in the Guildhalls restoration, often working together with Lady Evershed to preserve the town. She purchased the warehouses behind the Guildhall after her husband's death, in order to develop them as a centre for the Arts in his memory. There are presently plans to restore and make the whole riverside site a self-sufficient commercial venture to include the theatre; this has the backing of many notable actors including **Stephen Fry, Sir Ian McKellen and Tim FitzHigham**, as well as many local politicians and historians.

Pass the **Globe** pub and enter **Tuesday Market Place**.

The large house on the left is named Hogge House for the dynasty of wealthy merchants and shipowners called

17. ● **George Hogge**, who lived in a house on this site, which was formerly for **Charles Turner**. The original house burnt down but subsequent builds tried to maintain a semblance of the original design.

One of the Georges was involved with the towns whaling industry with fellow merchants but over the years they spent more time with their brewing interests including wine and spirit trading, eventually merging with another merchant family called Seppings to form the Hogge and Seppings brewery. The Hogges chose to change the family name to Archdale in **1866**.

On the northwest corner is **No 18**, which was the home of

18. ● **William Bagge**, the brother of **Thomas** who lived in **Nelson Street** and is mentioned in the South Town section.

Continue along the north side of the Marketplace, noting the **engraved heart** above the **central window** of the red building, no 15, a reminder of the persecution of people accused of witchcraft.



19. In **1583** **Mother Gabley** was the first local person condemned under the **1563** Act Against Conjurations, Enchantments and Witchcrafts, accused of causing the deaths of 13 men who had been sailing back from Spain, by boiling eggs in cold water and stirring them vigorously in order to raise a storm. She was **hanged** in the town, probably in this market-place.

20. Matthew Hopkins (1620-1647) was employed in **1646** by the town council as Witchfinder General, to hunt out witches. He accused 9 but only Grace Wright and Dorothy Lee died by hanging in the Tuesday Marketplace. Following the convictions, Matthew Hopkins received a further £2 in payment, on top of the £15 he had already been given on 2nd September.

Hopkins came from Suffolk and started his activities in Manningtree in Essex in **1644**. In the 3 years he operated he may have caused the deaths of around 300 people. There is a belief that he was himself accused of witchcraft and died when being subjected to his favoured torture of the “swimming test” but, more likely, he died following a long period of illness.

Continue ahead and into **St Nicholas Street**.

Woolmarket House, the timbered jettied building on your left, has a plaque to the artist

21. ● Gustav Metzger (1926-2017), who lived here between **1953-1959**. The son of Polish/Jewish parents, Metzger came to Britain in **1939** as a refugee. He later studied at the Royal Academy of Fine Arts in Antwerp and became a leading exponent of the Auto-Destructive Art movement. Rock musician **Pete Townsend** studied with him and in the **1960's** Metzger's work was projected on screens at The Who concerts.

Whilst living in Lynn between **1953-1959**, Metzger saw the loss of some of the older town buildings in the North End and became active in trying to save the area from the bulldozer, starting up the North End Society with the aim of stopping the road building that was the reason behind the demolition. He later said “Everything I know about activism, I learned in King's Lynn”.

22. In **1860** the foundry works of **Frederick Savage (1828-1897)** were next door before moving to reclaimed land nearer the docks in **1872**, a move almost bankrupting Savage. The new premises turned his fortunes around, but nothing of either premises survives. Frederick Savage was Norfolk born: his parents were weavers but when Savage was 10 his father was deported to Tasmania for poaching, and he became a wage earner as a farm labourer, later working with machine makers. Moving to Lynn in **1848** he set up his own works 2 years later.

Savage was quick to exploit steam power for agricultural work, also developing the steam powered fairground rides that were becoming popular at that time. These rides were shipped worldwide and provided a highlight for the annual Mart in Lynn, that started the Showmen's year. There is an example of one of his rides in the Town Museum.

Savage and his wife were keen to promote the town's prosperity and well-being, whilst assisting the poor. He was a town councillor and mayor in **1889**. He was so well thought of that the town erected a statue of him by the South Gate in **1892**, five years before his death, an event that led to a grand funeral procession to the Hardwick cemetery where he is buried.



Statue of Frederick Savage
Facing South Gate on **London Road**

At the end of **St Nicholas Street** you will see ahead of you the **C13th St Nicholas Chapel**, not a church but the country's largest chapel-of-ease. (please check - visitchurches.org.uk - for opening times of the chapel)

23. Daniel Defoe (1660-1731) the well known writer, pamphleteer, journalist, trader and possible spy, visited the town in **1724** whilst travelling the country for his book "A tour through the whole island of Great Britain". In that he wrote that he found the town "hugely impressive with good company". Inside the chapel can be found ledger stones of the Cruso family, including **Robinson** and **Defoe** may well have met the family during his visit.

*For an extension to the walk, which adds about another mile, turn to the left to find **True's Yard**, the museum of the North End and the fisherfolk and further round, the town docks – named **Alexandra** and **Bentinck**.*

24. ● **Ralph Vaughan Williams** (1872-1958)

*The English composer visited the town for a week in January **1905** while collecting the folk songs around the country. He was introduced to the fisherfolk of the North End by the curate of St Nicholas. He was accepted enough to hear the songs sung in the pubs and inns of the area like this one, by local fishermen like Duggie Carter and the elderly Joe Anderson. Vaughan Williams published some of the collections but chose to incorporate others into his music, like Norfolk Rhapsody No.1. In **1952** Vaughan Williams returned to Lynn to give a lecture at the 2nd King's Lynn Festival.*

*The right-hand dock, **Alexandra** is named for the Danish Princess Alexandra, the wife of the future King Edward VIII, as the couple opened the dock 1n **1869**. The later **Bentinck** dock was opened **by William Cavendish-Bentinck**, the 6th Duke of Portland in **1863** and named in recognition that the family had often represented the town in Parliament, being involved in the reclamation of land from the sea in the local area.*

Retrace your steps to return to the main walk.

Turn right from **St Nicholas Street** onto **Chapel Street**.

The modern build on the corner with **Austin Street, Juniper House**, is the site of an earlier Georgian building, the home of

25. Ezekiel Walker (1740-1834) who is little known, though he contributed many scientific papers for publication. His interests included astronomy, chemistry, electricity, magnetism, horology and light, using the parabolic reflector for lighthouses in the early 19th century. He was also working on using clock pendulums to measure latitude and longitude. It is said that when Ezekiel's house was being demolished the lower floors were discovered to have strange symbols on the walls, leading to the belief that he dabbled in alchemy and satanism.

Just down **Austin Street** to the side of the council offices can be seen an archway, a remnant of the Austin friary.



26. Friar John Capgrave (died 1464),

the writer of the first comprehensive collection of the lives of English saints, was Prior in this friary.

As Lynn was a major port where access to the sea was easy, smuggling was an obvious choice for some and a lifeline for impoverished villagers. While the local bigwigs would outwardly condemn the practice it did not stop them buying the goods.

27. Thomas Franklyn Born during the **late 18th**

century, into poverty and hardship in the North End of Lynn, Franklyn was the organiser of the land part of smuggling. In **1781** he received fines of a shilling or less for seriously assaulting customs officials. Finally arrested at his house off Austin Street the next year, he was found Not Guilty at his trial but the fine the Government imposed for lost revenue found his money and support lost and his organisation dismantled.

Pass the **Lattice House** pub and turn right down **Market Lane** and emerge onto the **Tuesday Market Place**, next to the **Maids Head** pub (reputedly a smugglers haunt).

28. William Kemble

Another Lynn born smuggler whose father was a minor town official, Kemble started sailing on merchant vessels but by **1777**, at the age of 25, he was co-owner of a purpose built vessel the "**Lively**". He was successful till **1784** when he was apprehended landing goods near **Old Hunstanton**, an incident that left an Excise man and a dragoon dead. At his trial, Kemble was not convicted of murder but fined for smuggling and disappeared from the local area.

On the other side of the lane is the **Duke's Head** hotel. It was built by **Sir John Turner** and **Henry Bell** and named for the **Duke of York**, later **James II**, for the entertaining of important visitors and locals, including -

29. ● Sir Robert Walpole (1676-1745) who represented Lynn as MP from **1701** till **1742** during which time he attained the post of First Lord of the Treasury and Chancellor of the Exchequer, positions which led to him being described as the first (and longest serving) Prime Minister. Born at the nearby Houghton Hall he eventually rebuilt the hall starting in **1722** to become a magnificent Palladian building which housed an astonishing collection of European art, including works by Rembrandt, Van Dyck and Rubens (much of which was later sold to Catherine the Great of Russia to clear family debts).

Walpole spent time in the Duke's Head hotel, using it as his headquarters during election times and spending freely with the wine merchants in the town with his love of Lisbon white seeing him ordering around 1,000 bottles at a time.

When the spire of St Margaret's was felled by a storm in **1741**, he gave a donation of £1,000 and, due to his close ties to the royal family, he persuaded **George II** to match the amount. Walpole ended his long term in office due to opposition from the Prince of Wales and the outbreak of war with Spain (the War of Jenkins Ear), after maintaining peace throughout his leadership.

Afterwards he took the title of **Earl of Orford** and moved to the Lords. He died aged 68 and is buried in the church in the Houghton Estate.

Continue onto **High Street**, noting the plaques as you walk along.

30. ● Robert Armin (1565-1615) spent his childhood in what is now a Travel Agent. Although his father John was a tailor, Robert was apprenticed to a London goldsmith, though it seems that he was attracted to the theatre more and had joined a troupe of players by **1590**, later moving to the Lord Chamberlain's men (the same troupe as Shakespeare) by **1600**. He wrote his own comedies but is better known as the performer of Shakespeare's "wise fools", possibly created with Armin; roles such as Feste in Twelfth Night, the Porter in Macbeth, and Touchstone in As You Like It.

31. A little further along in what is now a greetings card shop was the home of

● Dr John Exton, an apothecary and merchant who was mayor in **1735** and had a road named after him along with other former mayors.

32. No 84 was the home of **Dr Charles Burney (1726-1814)** and his family. In **1751**, already a well-known and talented musician, composer and musicologist, his poor health drove Charles Burney to bring his young family from London to King's Lynn with his first wife, Esther Sleepe. He took up the post of organist at St. Margaret's Church for the impressive salary of £100 per year – a huge increase on his previous earnings of £30! Charles Burney's cultural influence became pre-eminent in King's Lynn. Music, dancing, books and picture collecting became the new vogue and Burney was soon organising balls at the town hall and teaching music and dancing to the town's elite.

On 13th June the following year, **Frances Burney** known to her family as **Fanny**, was born third of their eventual six children. The family lived first in Chapel Street and Fanny was baptised at St. Nicholas Chapel.

Fanny is spoken of within the **South Town** walk.

Dr Burney married his second wife Elizabeth in **1769**. She was the wealthy widow of Stephen Allen of Lynn, and they had two further children. Other extraordinary members of the Burney family included Fanny's elder brother, **Rear-Admiral James Burney** and the **Rev. Charles Burney**, whose collection of books and manuscripts eventually formed the foundation of the British Library. Fanny's half-sister **Sarah Harriet Burney** (born in Lynn in **1772**) was a novelist but received significantly less recognition than her more famous sibling.

33. Roger Taylor (1949) drummer of the rock band "Queen", was born at West Norfolk & Lynn Hospital in King's Lynn; Queen Elizabeth II opened the new maternity ward where his mother, then a newly delivered mum, was introduced to her. The Taylor family lived in the flat above what is now HMV. Roger's family moved around the town, living later at Beulah Street; his first school was Rosebury Avenue school.

At the crossroads continue on **High Street** but looking left you can see the statue of

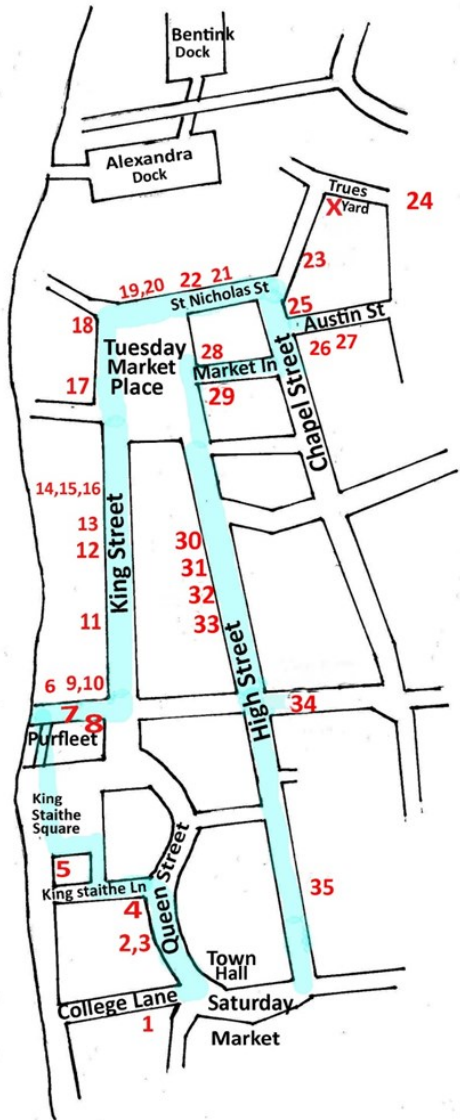
34. King John (1166-1216). This is a recent statue and erected to commemorate the charter that John gave to the town in **1204**. This gave the town rights to govern itself. Lynn was also one of the last places that King John visited before his final journey when he lost the treasure crossing the Wash whilst on his journey to Newark, where he died.

Further down on the left is the empty Debenhams, built on the site of the first department store in Lynn – Jermyns

35. Opened by **Sir Alfred Jermyn (1845-1921)** in **1872**, this was the first Department store in Lynn encouraging customers to enter and browse. Jermyn was a linen draper, upholsterer, furniture maker and undertaker. Disastrous fires in **1884** and **1897** allowed the premises to be rebuilt and expanded. The later fire also led to the widening of High Street and rebuilding of the shops opposite. Sir Alfred was mayor in **1897** and on his death he was buried in the Hardwick cemetery.

On returning to the **Saturday Market** you have completed the walk.

Map of Notable People Trail 2



The walk is approximately 1½ miles, excluding the extension.

We hope you enjoyed this u3a Town Trail. This and other trails are available on the King's Lynn u3a website: www.kingslynnu3a.org.uk Then select 'Town Trails' from the menu. Or just scan the QR Code.

