

# King's Lynn Under Siege

## An English Civil War Archaeological Project

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A Presentation to the Fortress Study Group

23<sup>rd</sup> June 2018

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# Context

- Conflict archaeology focuses on battles even though fortress warfare leaves a larger archaeological footprint
- To investigate an ECW siege has been the ambition of a group of archaeologists and historians for several years
- Challenge has been finding a suitable site (looked at Newark, Shropshire, and Bristol)
- Lynn Museum's South Gate project was the spark which ignited the project in King's Lynn



# Historical Context - 1



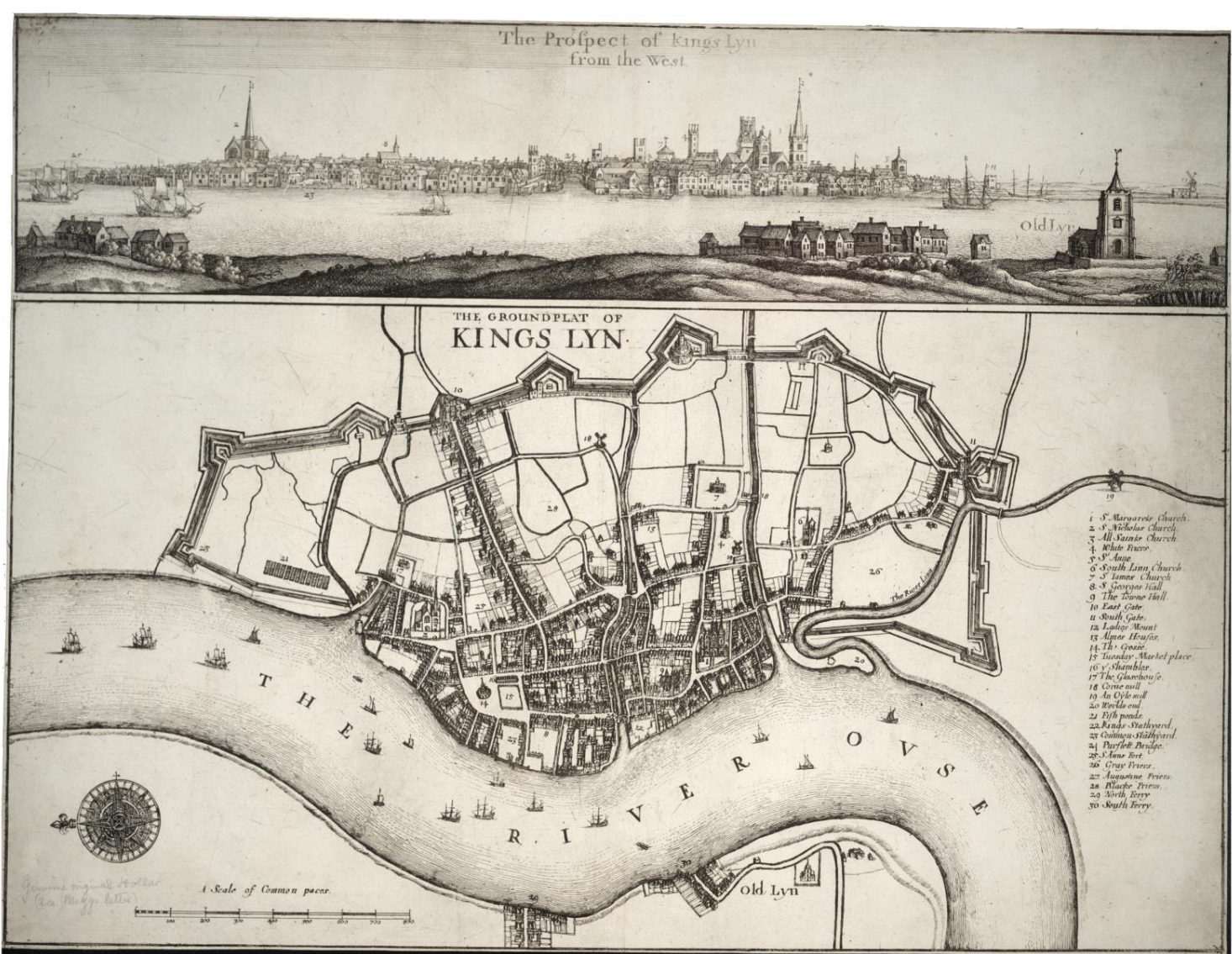
- King's Lynn – an important port (North Sea, and inland waterways)
- Medieval fortifications supplemented by some Tudor defences
- At the outbreak of the English Civil War, King's Lynn was lukewarm in its support for Parliament – Oliver Cromwell's 'visit' to the town in March 1643 strengthened the town's resolve
- Existing fortifications improved, and town re-armed

# Historical Context - 2

- However, with the Royalist Northern army in Lincolnshire, a Royalist coup saw the town declare for the King under the governorship of Sir Hamon Le Strange
- In August, Parliament sent an army to Kings Lynn under the Earl of Manchester, and a fleet under the Earl of Warwick into the Wash
- The Royalists further improved the town's medieval walls and added earthworks and bastions.
- But blockaded by sea and besieged by land, the town surrendered to Parliament on 16<sup>th</sup> September 1643.
- Following its recapture, Parliament set about the re-fortification of the town, which would turn King's Lynn into the strongest fortress in East Anglia.
- Fortifications almost certainly designed by Richard Clampe
- The town was critical to the Eastern Association's campaigns in Lincolnshire and Yorkshire

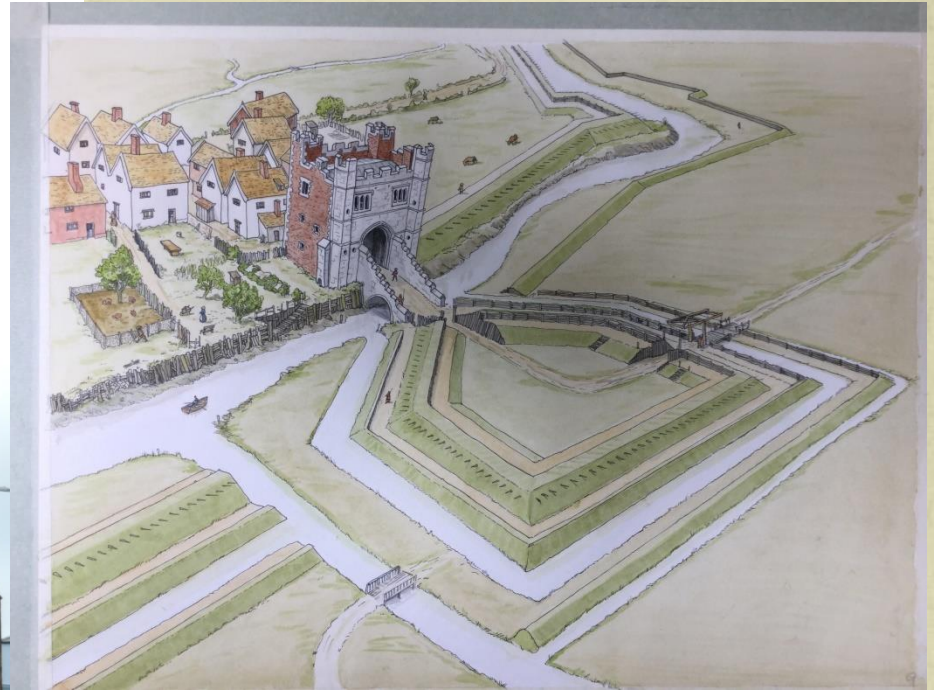


# The new defences - overview



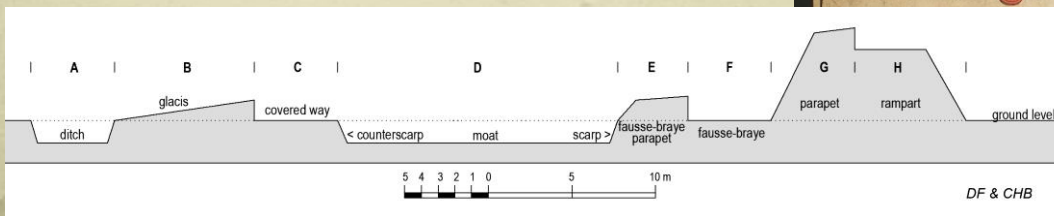
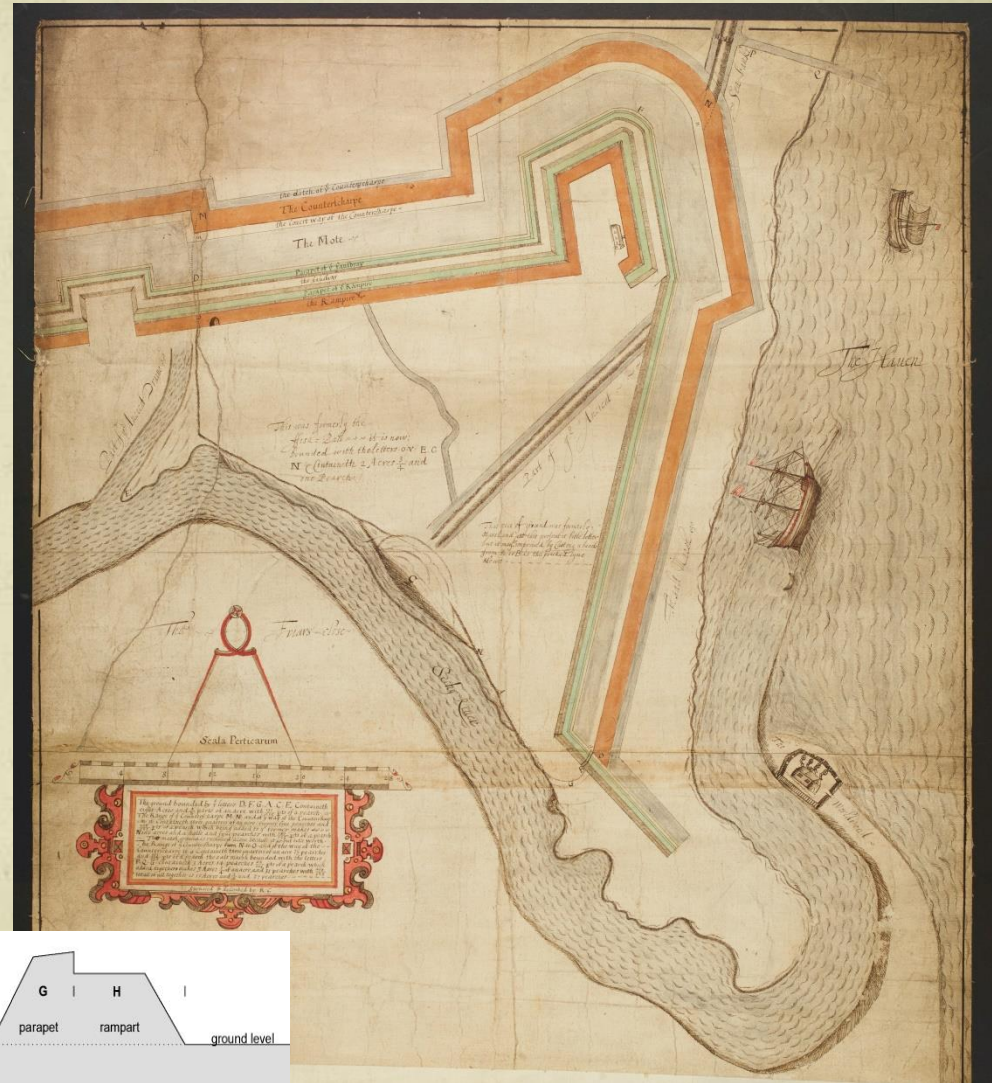
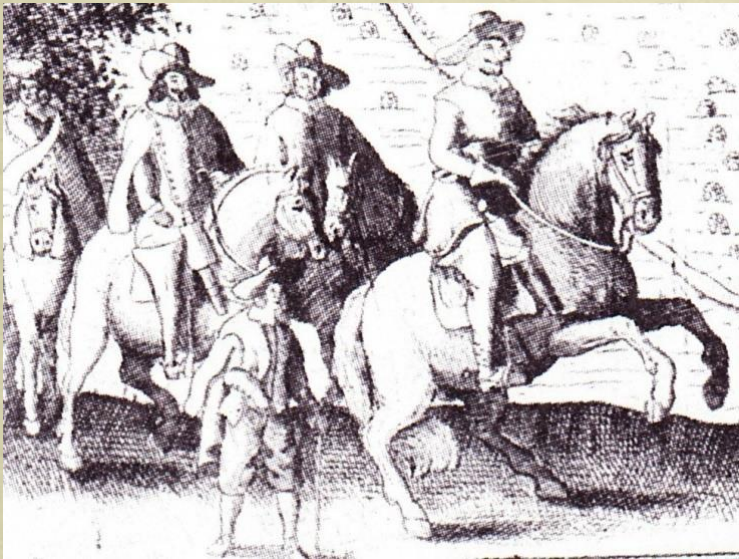


# South Gate





# Richard Clampe's Southern defences



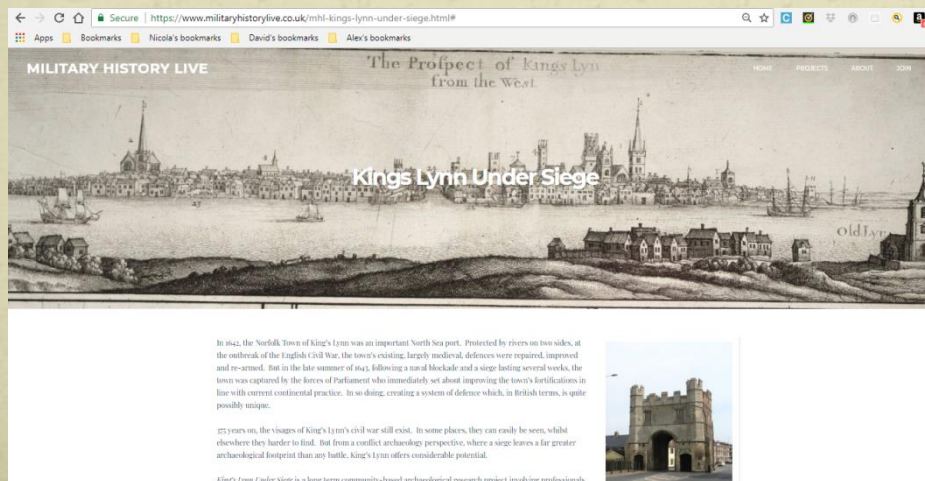
# The Project

- Research into the South Gate expanded into a re-evaluation of defences as a whole and particularly those to the south
- Southern course of defences located in what is now a community green space – offering potential
- Proposal to undertake a community-based archaeological project supported (local museums, community groups, local politicians, local council plus others)
- Established community archaeological project at near by Sedgeford
- KLUS Project established at the end of January 2018



# Since then

- Media interest
- Launch of *Siegeworks* – quarterly project newsletter (right)
- Mapping the defences – desktop
- Mapping the defences – fieldwork
- Launch of web-site (below)



The newsletter of the King's Lynn Under Siege  
English Civil War Archaeological Project

April 2018  
Issue 1

**Welcome** to Siegeworks, the newsletter of KLUS – the King's Lynn Under Siege English Civil War Archaeological Project. Siegeworks is a primary way to keep everyone who is involved and interested in the project up to date with what is going on.

#### The Project

In 1643, King's Lynn was hit by the full force of the English Civil War. That summer, the Royalists staged a bloodless coup and took control of the town, but just weeks later, blockaded by sea and besieged by land, the town was captured by the Parliamentarians who immediately went about re-fortifying the town, transforming it into East Anglia's strongest fortress.

375 years on, King's Lynn still shows the scars of the conflict. In places these are very apparent, in others, harder to see, and elsewhere, they have vanished almost completely. The fact that King's Lynn had pre-Civil War fortifications, was besieged and then re-fortified means that, from an archaeological perspective, the town offers considerable potential.

Discovering the town's Civil War past is the aim of King's Lynn Under Siege, a long term archaeological research project, involving professionals, academics, students, volunteers and the local community. It will deploy a full range of techniques and approaches to the understanding of the lived human experience of the Civil Wars and its impact upon the people and fabric of King's Lynn.

Formed in January 2018, amongst the aims of KLUS is to further the knowledge and understanding of King's Lynn during the English Civil War. Building on the town's already notable heritage tradition, something reflected in the make-up of KLUS (see the useful contacts section, below), the project will bring the town and its experiences during the war to a wider local, national and even international audience.

The project will be formally launched at the Heritage Open Day on Sunday 16th September. But before then, there is much already underway, including researching and mapping King's Lynn's fortifications, to identify the sites for further investigation.

The launch of KLUS is timely as nationally there is increasing interest in English Civil War urban fortification, with various projects now underway in Bristol, Chester, Gloucester, London, Oxford, and Worcester. KLUS is indeed in good company.

#### Useful contacts

Harding's Pits Community Association

(<http://hardings-pits.org.uk/>)

Lynn Museum

(<https://www.museums.norfolk.gov.uk/lynn-museum/>)

KLUS (<https://www.militaryhistorylive.co.uk/mhl-kings-lynn-under-siege.html>)

Sedgeford Historical and Archaeological Research Project (<https://www.sharp.org.uk/>)

Stories of Lynn / Borough Archives

(<https://www.kingslynnmuseums.com/>)

True's Yard Fisherfolk Museum (<https://truesyard.co.uk/>)

West Norfolk and King's Lynn Archaeological Society (<http://wnkias.gresham.org.uk/>)

#### KLUS web-site launched

Not long after the project's initial meeting on 26th January, its own web-page went live (thanks to Roger Ward for the design). Hosted by Military History Live (a specialist field unit devoted to conflict archaeology), the project's web page can be visited at (<https://www.militaryhistorylive.co.uk/mhl-kings-lynn-under-siege.html>)

King's Lynn Under Siege

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April 2018



# The entire defences



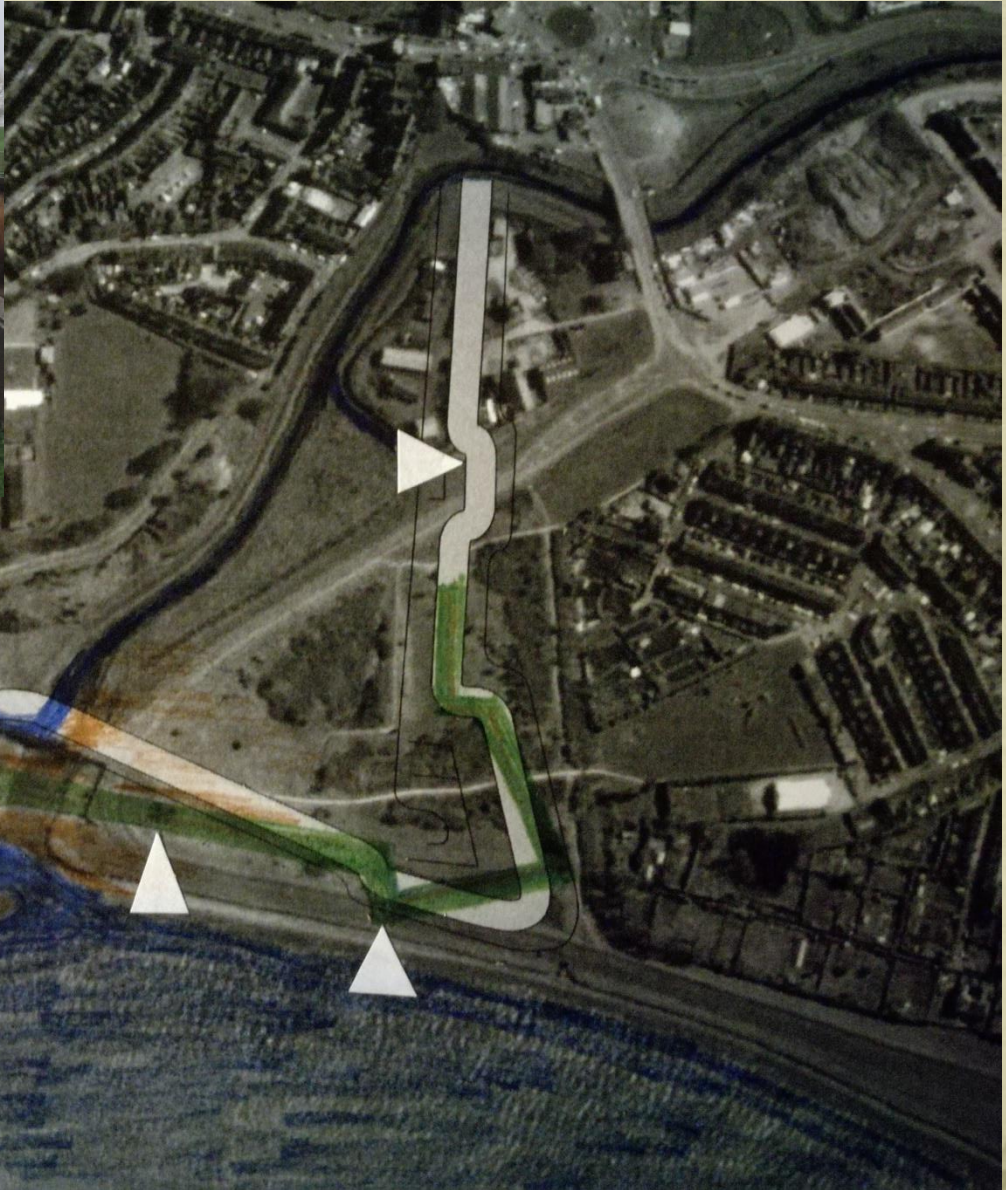


# The Clampe overlay





# The fieldwork





# Challenges – Harding's Pits

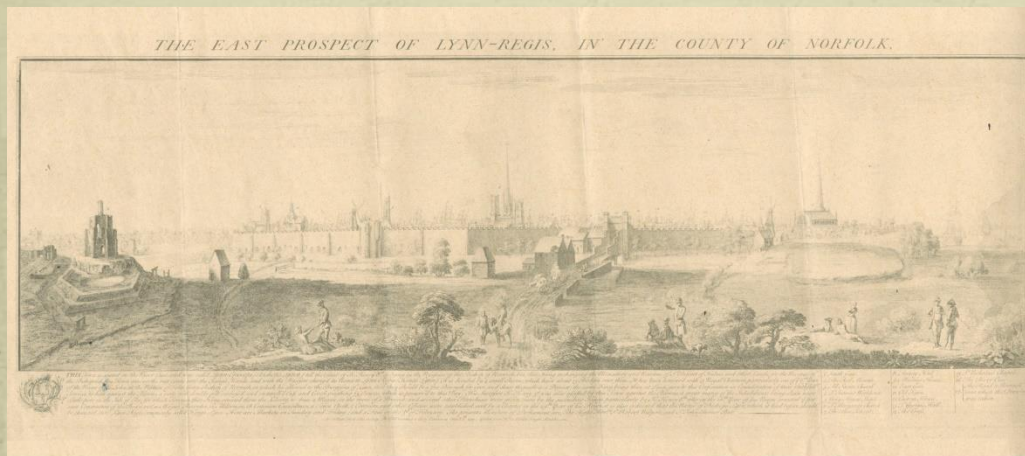
- Brownfield site with a history of industrial activity
- No surface features
- Vested interests of several involved parties
- 'Mis'-aligned course of fortifications (Hollar onwards) is entrenched and proving difficult to shift. 2009 archaeological investigation based on this misalignment – this failed to find anything significant (but has still convinced people that there is nothing to be found)

# Next steps

- Proposed 'targets' to be presented to project group next week
- Then proposal to go to local council for licences
- Geophys investigation of targets – possible test-pitting as well
- Formal public launch of project at Civic heritage day on 16<sup>th</sup> September
- On-going investigation of features elsewhere in King's Lynn



# Other Sites



# Further information

- Visit our web-site at <https://www.militaryhistorylive.co.uk/mhl-kings-lynn-under-siege.html>
- E-mail us at [kingslynnundersiege@outlook.com](mailto:kingslynnundersiege@outlook.com)
- Visit us at the South Gate during the Heritage Open Day on 16 September 2018 (see <http://www.kingslynncivicsociety.co.uk/heritage-open-day.asp>)