



## 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.kingslynn townhall.com/>)

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

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

### KLUS web-site launched

Not long after the project's initial meeting on 26<sup>th</sup> 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>)

## What is Conflict Archaeology?

Conflict Archaeology is a rapidly developing sub-discipline within the traditional field of archaeology that has emerged in the last few years. As the name suggests, its focus is on battlefield and military archaeology, although, it does tend to focus on the investigation of battles. This is despite the fact that, since sieges tended to last considerably longer than battles, sieges leave a much greater archaeological footprint.

To conduct a thorough investigation of an English Civil War siege has been the desire of a group of archaeologists and military historians for several years.

Towards the end of 2017, the Lynn Museum, seeking a fortress-warfare 'expert' to assist with its South Gate project, got in touch.

The rest, as they say, is history...

## South Gate project

The South Gate is an important landmark for King's Lynn and is a rare survival of a medieval town gatehouse still in use.



This grade one listed building and scheduled ancient monument dating from the 15th century was researched and restored in the 1980s. Information boards were put up and access provided for visitors to explore the site. Since then a dedicated team of volunteers has been welcoming visitors each season, with the busiest day of the year being the Heritage Open Day in September.

Now more than 30 years following an invitation from a member of the volunteer team, a successful application for funding to the Heritage Lottery Fund has been made with match funding from the Borough Council and the *Friends of the Walks*. A team from the Norfolk Museums Service and the Borough Council

has been busy working on a project to enhance the interpretation and display of the South Gate.

A building conservation plan brings together information about the architectural, historical and archaeological significance of the site. The new displays will include interactive elements to engage with the visitors. There will be trying on of helmets, brass rubbing, a hands-on model, new graphic panels, smells, audio and improved lighting. As well as information about the long history of the building, visitors will experience aspects of the story of the siege of King's Lynn of 1643 during the English Civil War.

Once permissions for work on the building are achieved, the new displays are planned to open in the summer. In addition to the displays, there will be an activities programme to stimulate further interest during the 2018 season and the team will also be involving schools and young people.

(Thanks to Oliver Bone for the above article. If you would like to contribute to a future issue, please contact the project – see below).

## Dates for your diary

- 16 September 2018: King's Lynn Heritage Open Day.
- 22 September 2018: *Century of the Soldier Conference*, Royal Armouries, Leeds (details from [charlesjsingleton@yahoo.co.uk](mailto:charlesjsingleton@yahoo.co.uk))
- Once a month through the spring, summer and autumn a group of volunteers meet to help keep the Harding's Pits in good heart for people and wildlife. Contact the organiser at [enquiries@hardings-pits.org](mailto:enquiries@hardings-pits.org) if you'd like to join any work party.

## Coming next time

Richard Clampe and Wenceslaus Hollar produced the only known contemporary plans of the English Civil War fortifications of King's Lynn. The next issue will look at both.

*Siegeworks* is produced by KLUS - the King's Lynn Under Siege English Civil War Archaeological Project. To learn more about the project and how to get involved e-mail [kingslynnundersiege@outlook.com](mailto:kingslynnundersiege@outlook.com)