

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

July 2019
Issue 5

Welcome to this issue of *Siegeworks*, the newsletter of KLUS – the King's Lynn Under Siege English Civil War Archaeological Project.

It has been several months since the previous newsletter, which is a reflection that it has been a quiet few months whilst the project prepared for its first 'field' activity.

Although this is the first issue of *Siegeworks* this year, news on the project has appeared in *Arquebusier* (Pike and Shot Society, Volume XXXVI/III), *Battlefield* (Battlefields trust, Spring 2019), and *Casemate* (Fortress Study Group, May 2019).

Harding's Pits – background to the investigation

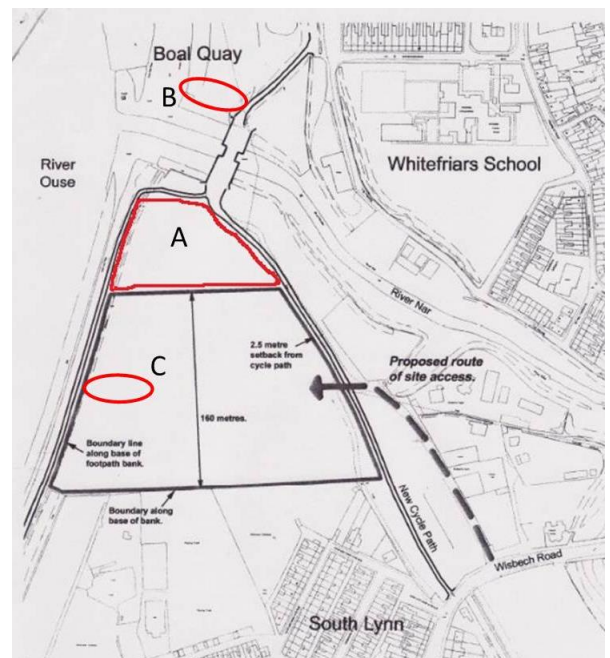
The initial focus of KLuS has been the fortifications constructed after the 1643 siege, which ran from the South Gate to the River Ouse. This was driven by the existence, in the Borough archives, of a detailed plan of the fortifications (by Richard Clampe), and this document provided to be the key in the project's investigations.

The resulting desk-top research, not only plotted the likely course of the line of fortifications (the project's findings placed the line of the fortifications in a slightly different location to that recorded on OS maps, which are ultimately based on a mid-17th century plan by Wenceslaus Hollar, a man who probably didn't actually visit King's Lynn. On the other hand, Richard Clampe was a native of King's Lynn.

However, all visible traces of these southern defences have been lost to centuries of industrial activity, meaning that any traces could only be discovered through the use of archaeological technology

Harding's Pits – the investigation

Following the desktop research, two sites were identified as offering the best chance of actually discovering traces of the defences. These are marked as 'A' and 'B' on the plan.



Having received permission from the Local Authority (the areas in question being public land), the investigation took place on 17th May.

The investigation proceeded with the knowledge that during the 18th century, the site was partly occupied by a whale oil factory and shipyards were also located in the vicinity. Additionally, in the mid-19th century, a railway was constructed across the site and remained in use until the 1960s. As a result, the area was likely to be heavily disturbed, and any results may not have given any definitive answers as to the exact positioning of the Civil War fortifications.

So, prior to undertaking the survey, a metal detector was used over the ground (without digging any

targets). Both areas gave constant signals for metal within the ground, and whilst these could be largely modern rubbish, it is not unreasonable to assume that some of the signal were also large items – probably larger pieces of rusting metal that would be associated with previous uses of the area.



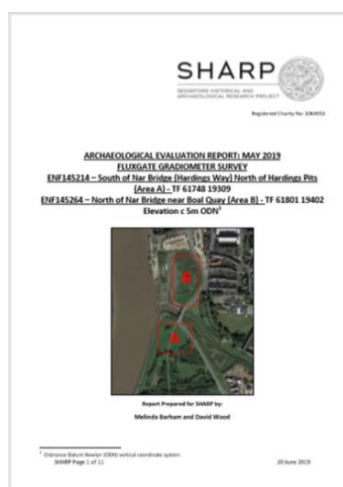
Due to the nature of the potential archaeology likely to be exposed within the survey area and the sedimentary geology of the site, a magnetometer was used for the survey.

The magnetometer was also taken over both areas in 'scan' mode – usually used prior to undertaking a survey to adjust the machine to the local settings.

However, the outcome of this was disappointing. Outputs were displayed beyond the normal maximum local ambient variation. Occasional positive and negative readings indicated that the area was too congested with extremely large magnetic flux readings which completely negating the use of this type of survey method.

Thus, the investigation proved unsuccessful, and it is unlikely that the use of other types of technology (Ground Penetration Radar for instance) would produce a different result.

Therefore, it has been decided to close the investigation in this site and move the investigation to a different area.



To view the full report, visit <https://drive.google.com/open?id=1boezbXGaY6dAGMSn24n-KOQy2cqt-U8A>

Where next?

King's Lynn is blessed with a number of sites from the English Civil War and as a result, KLuS has no shortage of options where to investigate. So, the disappointment of Harding's Pits presents the opportunity to look elsewhere.

The accompanying picture illustrates the array of known sites in and around King's Lynn. Therefore, the next task for KLuS is to look at the potential of these, to decide where to investigate next. Again, this will be, initially, largely a desktop exercise.



If you have any thoughts ('local' knowledge is particularly important here) on any of the sites, please get in touch.

Richard Clampe

A biography of Richard Clampe, designer of the town's fortifications in the aftermath of the 1643 siege, has just been published in *Fort*, the journal of the Fortress Study Group (Volume 46, 2018 – see <https://fsgfort.com/shop-all/all-publications/fort/>). A PDF version of this essay will be available soon.

Siegeworks is the newsletter of the King's Lynn Under Siege English Civil War Archaeological Project. To contact the project, e-mail kingslynnundersiege@outlook.com or see the project's website at <https://www.militaryhistorylive.co.uk/mhl-kings-lynn-under-siege.html>