

KING'S LYNN WORFOLK BOAT TRUST



True's Yard Fisherfolk Museum
North Street
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Model Boats collection in Lynn

True's Yard is the much-treasured remains of King's Lynn's old fishing community in the North End. The museum enables visitors to discover and enjoy the North End's heritage through its remarkable buildings and collections. At the museum's heart is the last surviving yard, with Grade 2 Listed fisherfolk cottages. There is also a Victorian smokehouse and the fishing smack 'Activity'.

The museum is home to a large collection of model boats, which is currently in the process of being photographed and catalogued. A number of these models were built by Frank Castleton, the first Chairperson of The North End Trust which runs the museum. Frank's models, which include replicas of the 'Baden Powell', 'Queen Alexandra' and his own boat, the 'Agnes C', can be found throughout the museum. The model of the 'Baden Powell' is on permanent display in the museum's Smithy.

The Museum is open 10am-4pm Tuesday to Saturday. For admission costs and more information see the website: www.truesyard.co.uk.

Rebecca Rees, Deputy Manager



Frank Castleton building his model of the Agnes C.

A Norfolk whelker

IN 1900, seventeen whelking smacks worked the waters north-west of King's Lynn. Berthed together in a convenient corner of the Alexandra Dock, they remained afloat and at the ready. On Sunday evenings or Monday mornings – whichever offered the kindlier combination of wind and tide – they'd set out, towing their small boats, towards the soft-bottomed whelking grounds, forty miles from home.

If conditions were calm, the smacks would row the Cut, out to the Wash. Two men, each wielding the end of an enormous oar, trudged up and down the deck, driving their ship to sea with ponderous, monotonous strokes.

The 4-man crews that worked these craft were an inseparable and impenetrable enclave. Working, drinking and fighting alongside one another they certainly looked the part: leather-booted to the thigh, clad in guernseys and oilskins, capped and ear-ringed, neckerchiefs were knotted at the neck and 'tied off' to their braces. They smoked plugs of Dutch tobacco in stunted clay pipes, upside-down to ward off the spray. Dutch rum kept out the cold, and Dutch drops eased their aches and pains.

At the time Lynn's whelkers were cutter-rigged, setting vast gaff mains'ls, jack tops'ls, and three jibs riding the long sprits. They set their wicker pots off the Dudgeon, the Pull, the Race and Dowsing banks.

Their deadline for arrival back at Lynn was Thursday noon, in order to have the catch off-loaded, carted, boiled, cooled, bagged and dispatched by rail to London on Friday in time for the weekend markets.

In 1914 the Norfolk family was commissioned by their eccentric brother-in-law Alfred Rake (he married Charlotte Norfolk) to produce the largest and last class one whelking smack ever to come out of Friar's Yard on the River Nar. He named her Britannia. With a deck length of 58ft and beam of 13ft, Alfred paid the Norfolks £290 for her, and she was launched in 1915.

Now the Britannia's restoration is progressing at Winkleigh in north Devon, (see www.britanniasailingtrust.gov.uk) guided by Sam and Vicki Samuels and a team of volunteers. Completion is scheduled for 2024, and they are hoping to undertake a celebration tour of the country – including a visit to King's Lynn. She will make an impressive addition to our pontoons along with the Baden Powell.

This history is taken from an article written by India Guest, with input from Stephen Norfolk, whose grandfather Gerald Norfolk was just finishing his apprenticeship in 1915 and must have helped in constructing the Britannia along with his brother Bill. Their father Walter started the boat building business in Lynn in 1900 after moving down from Yorkshire with his family.

Vicki Samuels, who with her husband Sam has been key in bringing Britannia to her current positive situation, says that on completion of the restoration in north Devon in 2024 they are hoping to sail her round the British Isles to visit ports where she has associations. So there's every chance we'll see her at the King's Lynn pontoons next to the Baden Powell, and only yards from the River Nar, where both boats first hit the water. See britanniasailingtrust.org for more information.

Skipper training for Baden Powell

by Howard Phillips

On a cold Tuesday morning in February five intrepid regular crew from Baden Powell made their way to Terrington St John to start their mission to become qualified skippers of the boat. Four days of intensive study followed, under Mike Brown, the principal of Eastwind Marine. This was the theory part of the Royal Yachting Association's Day Skipper qualification.

We learned about nautical terms, anchor work, safety, collision regulations, navigational charts, compass work, charts and navigation, tides and tidal streams,

meteorology, passage planning and pilotage amongst other subjects. It's pleasing to report that we all passed this phase of our training.

Then came short wave radio usage which would lead to the GMDSS Short Range Certificate. Again, all passed.

Next up, in May, we packed our bags and set off for Portsmouth to join the good ship Golden Vanity. She is owned by First Class Sailing, a company based in Southampton which turned out to be not only very professional but also really helpful to us. Golden Vanity was to be our school and home for five days while we sailed in the Solent – tricky with its strong winds and four tides a day creating some quite startling seas on occasion. Needless to say your Baden Powell crew proved their competence in all sorts of conditions.

Golden Vanity is a gaff-rigged cutter, similar to Baden Powell, but about ten feet longer overall. She sports five sails to Baden Powell's three, so there was lots of ropework. The week included navigational exercises, passage planning, anchoring, night sailing and navigating.

We put into a different port of call each evening – our favourite being Bucklers Hard on the Beaulieu River – something to do with the Master Builders pub on the hard? Accommodation was basic. The writer assures you that the wooden bunks were not designed for 6ft 3in people of a certain age lacking some flexibility. It can be said that the crew got to know each other very well!

All signed off successfully from the practical course, then just three final tasks.

The full seafarer's medical involved travelling to Sleaford. Then we had to sit our Professional Practices and Responsibilities exam, and finally our Survival at Sea practical at a facility in Norwich. If you've seen the lifeboatmen training in the specialist pool at their Poole headquarters, or indeed if you've seen some of the training aircrew do in a tank in case of ditching in the sea – that's what we were put through! After a thoroughly exhausting day we drove home with some relief – all having passed the tests.

Now we have the paperwork endorsements, and we're all ready to set out and skipper the Baden Powell with confidence. So long as we have the co-operation of the weather, the tide, the daylight, and all those other variables!



The BP five with Golden Vanity at Bucklers Hard.

Skipper and First Mate are far left and third from left.

Others are Baden Powell crew, from left Stuart Miller, Tim Clayton, Chris Ward, Howard Phillips and Matt Kelly.

Picture:
Chris Ward .

Heritage Open Day

Sunday September 11 is the day you can really experience the history of King's Lynn. Buildings that have been here for centuries will be open to visitors. Many of them are now private homes or occupied as business premises, so don't open their doors except to friends or customers.

But Heritage Open Day is when the general public can experience the fascinating interiors of many of them. There are more than 50 opening this year, from 10am to 4pm. The Custom House, South Gate, Clifton House, Red Mount Chapel, the Town Hall and the Guildhall of St George are just some of those opening their weather-worn doors to visitors.

The town is always crowded with families and curious visitors on these occasions, and the King's Lynn Civic Society has organised the day for some years now. There is usually some old building open for the first time, so the programme is worth studying.

Baden Powell will be at the pontoons, with a booth on the South Quay packed with information about Lynn's maritime history. The 0730 high tide means we can't offer visitors trips on the river this year, but seeing the boat up close will be possible.

Heritage Harbours

The Maritime Heritage Trust and National Historic Ships have a joint initiative called Heritage Harbours, based on similar concepts in the Netherlands, Belgium, France and Germany. The purpose is to recognise the value of ancient ports and harbours.

'We think that a Heritage Harbour should reflect the story of an area's maritime heritage, offer a safe haven for local and visiting vessels, and connect with the local community' says a joint statement.

Sounds like King's Lynn?

Medway & Sheerness, Faversham & Oare, Maldon & Heybridge and the Port & Haven of Sandwich are already registered, as well as some in the south west.

Time for King's Lynn to join them? More information can be found by searching for Heritage Harbour Project.

Lynn's Hanse history – and its future

Our Chairman Dr Paul Richards has another history book for your shelves, titled King's Lynn and the German Hanse 1250-1550. Paul describes how in the early years of the Hanseatic League relationship some towns and cities in northern Europe developed political ties, and following some friction there was actually a short Anglo-German war.

The war was settled by a peace treaty in 1474, which agreed the setting up of a German trading post in King's Lynn. Hanse House, as it is now known, is still on the South Quay here, the only surviving reminder of the Hanseatic League in England.

There is now a revival of interest in the League among some 200 towns and cities in sixteen northern European towns and cities, in which Lynn is taking a leading role through community cooperation.

Buy the book from True's Yard for £9.95, or from the web by post from poppylandpublishing.co.uk for considerably more.

Ken Hill