

Introduction

Contacts

Harbour Master 01553 773411 or 07784 548842

Kings Lynn is located on the Great Ouse three and a half miles up from its entrance at the Southern Corner of the Wash. It is always amazing to look at ports like this and be awed by the navigational skills of sailors from previous centuries who could penetrate such a place under sail as a matter of course. Given that this was one of the most important ports on the East Coast one tends to wonder "Why"; dangerously tidal, sand banks scattering the approach and a harbour in what seems to be the back of beyond.

To understand this one has to factor in the fact that the roads were even worse and that the Great Ouse basically forms a navigable highway into the centre of the region at Ely and that it was cheaper & easier to put your grain into a boat, transfer to a coastal vessel at Kings Lynn and sail it round to the Thames or to the Continent rather than put it in a horse and cart and carry it overland to London. Thus it was that Kings Lynn became part of the Hansiatic League (a sort of North Sea & Baltic Free Trade Area) with export/import routes right to Russia and Northern Germany (Prussia) and which wielded considerable power in the sixteenth and subsequent centuries.

Today the remnants of that history can be seen in Kings Lynn in its historical buildings and, when you know what to look for, the numerous creeks (known as "fleets") along the side of the river which used to house the wharfs and unloading quays. It was here that vessels loaded and unloaded trade goods to be carried inland on the Ouse; it was here that the import/export companies found and distributed cargoes in the same way as they did on the Thames and the Humber.

Mind you, those venturing into these waters did so at tremendous risk and it was the loss of a steamer in the approaches to Lynn in 1889 that brought about the formation of the present day Kings Lynn Conservancy Board which is responsible for maintaining the safety of ships coming into Lynn. It is of interest that it was the cost of raising and clearing the wreck which brought this about, not the loss or danger to human life!! (The same night two other ships went down in the English Channel with the loss of two dozen lives and got a one line report in The Times the next day!)

Kings Lynn still carries a fair amount of cargo having handled nearly one ship per day carrying some 700,000 tonnes of cargo in 2010, mainly "natural" products (timber, aggregates etc) and agricultural products. Apart from anything else it does mean that the leisure sailor is more likely than not to encounter a coastal trader as he traverses these waters.

Until last year (2013) a leisure sailor would not have found Kings Lynn a particularly welcoming spot; the South Quay wall was built with steel sided merchant ships with gangways in mind so that the yachtsman would spend his time alongside rubbing up and down barnacled dolphins, boarding up and down muddy ladders and lying on a muddy bottom which, in all probability, had him listing outwards at an alarming angle.

That all changed in 2013 when they opened a set of pontoons against the South Quay fitted with shore power and water which can accommodate eight yachts (depending on size) This will make a tremendous difference as there is a minimum depth of 1.5m so most yachts will stay afloat on an even keel and the crew will be able to walk ashore.

Update 2020. The pontoon here was extended down river in 2020 so that there are now berths on both sides before the tower bridge on to the pontoon

A link to their web site can be found here

<http://www.kingslynnport.co.uk/>

There is also a good drone shot here [\(133\) Kings Lynn River Great Ouse Drone - YouTube](#)

Approach

There was a Small Craft Guide available....

..... from the Tourist Information Office but the chances are that it is out of date. The present Admiralty chart is also out of date so is the buoyage on the charts supplied by us for your chart plotter.

Coming round from Wells next the Sea there are a couple of tempting "inshore" routes and it is entirely up to you whether you route outside the Bridgirdle and Woolpack PHM before turning into the Wash or stay inshore and slip through between the Middle Bank and Sunk Sand. It is worth noting that the sounding information on the Admiralty chart is over fifty years old in some places on the inshore route and that the outside route is only two miles longer so, unless you are racing, common sense would suggest "go the long way round"! Also be aware that all the soundings on your "infallible" Navionics chart plotter are derived from UKHO charts and so are equally out of date.

From the North there is no reason why a yachtie can't come down inshore of the wind farm, stay on a heading East of South for about an hour once the windmills are cleared and then head for the Roaring Middle Light Float when the North Well Racon is well astern on the port quarter. The problem with doing this is that there are few visual references, so if your GPS is out, you are going to have to do some very clever "guessing" as to how far off the flat coastline you are, once clear of the windfarm, in order to avoid the extensive shallows on the North shore of the Wash; the deeper, safer water without a GPS is to buoy hop round the outside of the windfarm.

2022 New Channel Inbound

Once you have identified the Roaring Middle Light Float you can leave it a couple of miles to starboard and head for our waypoint which is the New No 1 Buoy . From there it is a matter of following the buoyage in. You should make contact with Kings Lynn harbour on Channel 14 (c/s Lynn Docks) before continuing inbound and for the very latest information on this buoyage you should go to:

Kings Lynn [Charts & Surveys |](#)

and download the Navigational aids pdf as we are advised, this buoyage can change on a weekly basis and there are no paper charts available to keep up with it. From quite a long way out you should be able to see the tall white grain silo located at the Kings Lynn docks and before that two tall pylons spanning the channel halfway between Kings Lynn and the entrance to the river. From the West Stones inwards there is a stone bank on the starboard side and red buoyage on the port side. Click on the thumbnail chart on the left to see (roughly) where the buoyage was in May 2022.

Once you are inside the Lynn Cut you can put your hand bearing compass away and follow the yellow brick road (so to speak)

As you get closer to Kings Lynn keep a good listening watch for activity on Channel 14 (C/s Lynn Docks) so that you are aware of any shipping movements.

Berthing

Moorings here must be booked 24 hours in advance;.....

..... call the local Tourist Information on 01553 763044

The pontoon is well along the river, past the dock entrance, past the Purfleet with the Customs House building at its end and on the port side near the end of the South Quay.. Like most sailors you will have planned to come up on the flood so the likelihood is that you will have a considerable current under your hull (it can run past here at up to 6 knots) and will need to turn round and come alongside starboard side to or you'll go flying past creating mayhem in the process.

I know, this is common knowledge, but there are those, often sailing out of marinas, who have never met this situation and will try to stem a four knot tide going astern in a boat whose maximum stern speed is about two knots - doesn't work; turn it round and ferry glide in under power.

There are berths on both side of the pontoon but, with the new extension the bridge out to the pontoon is situated in the middle of the pontoon. This means that there is a shore side berth at the down river side of the pontoon before

the bridge and shore side berths on the upriver side. If you have been brave enough to come in after sunset be aware of this,

There are navigation lights at each end of the pontoon (2FR(ver)) but there is so much street light around that you will probably be able to see the pontoon quite easily at night; what might not be so easily seen at night is the tower bridge out to the pontoon in the middle of the pontoon so if the outside of the pontoon is full you will have to go round to the other end to get on the inside berths at the far end of the pontoon.

This tower bridge is a real hazard to masted yachts trying to manoeuvre in or out of the inside berths with a tide running; get it wrong and it's not your hull that will take the brunt, it's your mast and it'll come down, no bother. You need to secure your boat with a full set of heads, sterns, breasts and springs here and, if rafting becomes permissible the outside boats must secure to the shore.

The charge for 2022 will be £1.75 per metre per night with a minimum charge of £9.00.

Facilities

At present (2019) the pontoons are fitted with water and shore power (prepaid cards from Tourist Info or the Marriot Museum) but, other than that, there are no visiting yacht dedicated facilities. For toilets you will have to use either the Museum (open at 1000am) or the public toilets at Bakers Lane (open at 0730 to 1800).

[Visitors Pontoon, Kings Lynn to Public Toilets, King's Lynn PE30 1HY](#)

The other alternative is at the Bus Station but that's a good bit further away. There are no showers or pump out facilities.

The good news is that they are "considering" a toilets/shower block in future plans, but no one has said "when" We are informed that they are very aware of this limitation and are intending to address it

The nearest Chandlery is at Wisbech on the River Nene

<http://www.visitmyharbour.com/harbours/north-east-england/wisbech-marina/expanded.asp>

Calor Gas and Camping Gaz can be ordered from Economy Gas at Bawsey for next day delivery (tel 01553 630573) or there is an hourly bus service out there from the bus station (takes about fifteen minutes)

If you need fuel that has to be obtained in cans and the nearest outlet is Morrisons about fifteen minutes walk away; that is also your nearest supermarket.

What To Do

Kings Lynn is a popular tourist destination so there is plenty to do and see; there are several museums, a cinema and a wide range of restaurants and pubs. There is also a theatre called the Corn Exchange. You should obtain the Kings Lynn Borough Council's leaflet "Small Craft Guide"

<http://sailthewash.com>

That has a pictorial map of Kings Lynn showing where everything is (including the toilets!!)

For further restaurant info try

[Restaurants & Places to Eat in King's Lynn - Tripadvisor](#)

<http://www.beerinthevening.com/pubs/results.shtml?l=Kings+Lynn>

History