

# A Brief History of Norfolk

**By Phil Hartshorne**

Norfolk people can be dated back to the New Stone Age, where flint was mined to use as tools and weapons. Flint knives and arrow heads can still be found in the area on local walks where open grassland still remains that were once villages. You will also notice that flint is still used today in buildings and knapped flint can be seen on the Guildhall in King's Lynn.

As the Bronze Age came, flint was still used as well as iron. This is when we discover the Iceni tribe. They inhabited this area when the Romans invaded in 43 AD. The Roman invasion brought conflict with the Iceni tribe, and from this tribe, Boudicca the Queen of the Iceni, held a revolt against the Romans. This was repressed with severe consequences.

\* Visit the Iceni Village in Swaffham and Grimes Graves in Thetford forest.

The Romans made ports and roads and this is where The Peddars Way comes from. It was probably used as a military path and built after the uprising of Boudicca to help monitor and patrol the area. A fort was built at Branodunum in Brancaster. A notice board can be seen down by the board walks showing what it would have looked like and a few aerial shots showing what is evident there now.

\* Visit the Roman Fort site. Leave Deepdale Backpackers and walk down The Drove. From here, walk down the dirt track and turn left. Keep walking past the back of the White Horse pub and up to the Staithe. (A Staithe is a local word for a landing place.) Cross here and walk through a gate along the board walk until you come to the notice board on your left with all the information about the site. Walk further into the village and have a look at the 14<sup>th</sup> Century Brancaster church where some of the remains of the Roman camp were used to help build it.

As the Roman rule was coming to an end, the Norfolk coast was beginning to be raided by the Saxons. Forts were built along the coast to defend the area but this did not work as by 500 AD, Norfolk was under the rule of the Saxons. The people became known as East Angles after their homeland in Germany and Scandinavia.

During this time, England was divided into separate Kingdoms. East Anglia had its own king, King Edmund. Christianity was introduced into the region, and the king was converted.

By the middle of the 9<sup>th</sup> Century, the Vikings raided the East Anglian Coast. In 869 AD the Viking army set up camp in Thetford during the winter. The army attacked King Edmund and captured him. It is said that he was tied to a tree and had arrows shot at him. They tried to get him to denounce his Christian beliefs and also to hand over his kingdom, but he wouldn't do this and died for his cause. He is honoured as a Christian martyr.

\* Visit the cliffs in Hunstanton called St Edmunds Point, the ruins of St Edmunds Chapel and St Edmunds church in town. Have a look at the stained glass windows which depict his life.

These new settlers built the round tower churches that still stand in local villages today. The local church at Burnham Deepdale, as well as Burnham Norton and Titchwell are examples of these Saxon towers and are open every day. The Deepdale church also has an excellent example of a Norman font.

\*[Walk across the road from Deepdale Backpackers to see the Deepdale Church. You can walk along our Stewardship path to get to Norton church or catch a Coast Hopper bus to Titchwell church.](#)

After the Viking invasions, came the Norman Conquest. During this time, many castles were built. Two examples of Norfolk castles are at Norwich and Castle Rising near Kings Lynn.

\* [You can visit Castle Rising by catching a Coast Hopper bus and getting off in the village of Castle Rising.](#)

Before the Middle Ages a little trading settlement had started to emerge at the junction of the Rivers Nar and Great Ouse. This was known as Lynn. The word Lynn means a pool. Bishop De Losinga granted permission to hold a market and an annual fair and the town became known as Bishop's Lynn. Both market and fair are still held to this day. In 1204, King John granted Bishop's Lynn a charter, a document granting the townspeople certain rights. By the end of the 13<sup>th</sup> Century, the town was protected by a stone wall. The South Gate still stands.

The town became known as King's Lynn in the reign of Henry VIII at the time of the Dissolution of the Monasteries.

\* [A market still exists in Kings Lynn. Every February the Lynn Mart is held where you can buy local foods and craft and also have a great time on the fun fair rides. Visit the Old Gaol in Kings Lynn to see a copy of the charter.](#)

Religion played a big role during the Middle Ages. The church set up monasteries and priories. There are many sites remaining around the area. Castle Acre, North Creake, Binham and Burnham Norton all have ruins. Pilgrims visit Walsingham where the holy well and the shrine of Our Lady are located.

\* You can visit Walsingham and see both Anglican and Roman Catholic shrines as well as the Abbey remains and the Slipper Chapel. Castle Acre Priory and Binham Priory are well worth a visit as is the abbey at North Creake. The ruins in Burnham Norton are quite small and can be found on Friar's Lane in Burnham Norton.

During the 1500s, new farming policies were introduced by landlords. Land owners turned from growing crops to raising sheep. Common land was enclosed by hedges so that livestock could not roam. The local people held an uprising against this as their right to roam on common land had been taken away from them. Hedges surrounding this common land were destroyed. One land owner who admitted that enclosing the land was wrong was a man called Robert Kett. He gathered an army of around 16,000 people and marched upon Norwich. They stormed the walls and took control of the city. King Edward VI sent a representative to Norwich called John Dudley, and a large army, to discuss their demands. Kett led his army out and fought the King's army where around 3,000 of Kett's men were killed and Kett himself was captured and executed for treason.

\* Visit Norwich Castle to see the story of Robert Kett. You can also visit our local common called Barrow Common. You can walk on our Stewardship paths, alongside hedgerows up to it.

By the 17<sup>th</sup> Century, Kings Lynn port was one of the busiest ports in Norfolk because it belonged to the Hanseatic League. This organisation helped promote trade between England and Europe. Large country houses were starting to be built now and into the 18<sup>th</sup> Century. Felbrigg Hall, Holkham and Houghton Hall are a number of local houses that are open to the public during the year.

Sandringham House, the Queen's Country residence, was built in the 19<sup>th</sup> Century and the house and gardens can be visited as well. The house closes during Christmas and the New Year as Her Majesty stays here with her family.

\* [Medieval Hanseatic warehouses can still be seen along the river. All of the above houses can be visited during the year. Brochures can be picked up at Deepdale Information Centre.](#)

The 19<sup>th</sup> Century saw the Battle of Trafalgar. Here the Norfolk born British hero Horatio Nelson was killed during the battle. Nelson was born in Burnham Thorpe in 1758. His father was the vicar at the local church. The church still stands, however Nelson's birthplace house has been pulled down, but there is a plaque to commemorate his birth. It is well worth a visit. There is a local pub called The Lord Nelson.

Norfolk has produced famous sailors down the ages. Captain Richard Woodget was one such sailor. He was born in the Burnham's and lived in Flagstaff Cottage in Burnham Overy Staithe. He became master of the Cutty Sark.

\* [You can catch a bus to Burnham Market and then walk to Burnham Thorpe. The walk will take around 30mins. In the Deepdale Information Centre, we have books and brochures on Nelson.](#)

World War II saw a big population growth in Norfolk. Around 30 airfields were built in the area. Docketing is our closest one. You can still see remnants from the war around the area. There are tank barriers down The Drove, an antenna base on Barrow Common also a "pill box" on the causeway between Burnham Norton and Burnham Overy Staithe. Local farming grew and you can see this at Deepdale Farm, which is still a working arable farm.

\* You can walk around Barrow Common and see the 2 buildings left from World War II. Visit Great Bircham Cemetery where there are War Graves of servicemen from the local area and Commonwealth countries. There are some German soldier's graves as well. We sell books in the Information Centre on the airfields. Come in and have a chat with the staff about farm walks with the local farmer.

21<sup>st</sup> Century. Over the many years the face of Norfolk has changed dramatically. In the village of Burnham Deepdale, tourism plays a big part in keeping the village alive. The village still has local fishermen which bring in seasonal harvests of mussels, cockles and oysters.

There are a few local farms still working growing potatoes, sugar beet, barley, wheat and carrots. Our two local pubs serve excellent food sourced from local produce. So why not come and visit us, stay at Deepdale Backpackers, and enjoy Norfolk.

\* Enjoy eating at our local pubs, The White Horse and the Jolly Sailors, both in walking distance from Deepdale Backpackers.

## Places to visit

### **Deepdale Backpackers**

Burnham Deepdale  
Norfolk  
PE31 8DD  
Tel: 01485 210256

[www.deepdalefarm.co.uk](http://www.deepdalefarm.co.uk)

### **Iceni Village**

Cockley Cley  
Swaffham  
Norfolk  
PE37 8AG  
Tel: 01760 724588

### **Grimes Graves**

The Exhibition Building  
Lynford  
Norfolk  
IP26 5DE  
Tel: 01842 810656

### **Castle Rising**

Castle Rising, King's Lynn  
Norfolk  
PE31 6AH  
Tel: 01553 631330

### **Old Gaol House**

Saturday Market Place  
King's Lynn  
Norfolk  
PE30 5DQ  
Tel: 01553 774297

### **Walsingham**

Tel: 01328 820255 or Tel: 01328 820217

### **Castle Acre**

Near Swaffham  
Tel: 01760 755394

### **Binham**

South of Stiffkey

### **Norwich Castle**

Norwich  
Norfolk  
NR1 3JQ  
Tel: 01603 493636

### **Felbrigg Hall**

Felbrigg  
Norfolk  
NR11 8PR  
Tel: 01263 837444

