

FLAGGING UP NELSON'S NORFOLK

As a new exhibition focuses on the life and legacy of Nelson, ROWAN MANTELL highlights the places with a particular connection to Norfolk's hero



Burnham Thorpe church



Admiral Lord Nelson, 1801, by William Beechy

Photo: Norfolk Museums Service

BORN IN THE BURNHAMS

Did you know, Horatio Nelson had a brother called Suckling? He grew up with Horatio, and their more conventionally-named brothers including Maurice, Edmund, William and George, and sisters Susannah, Ann and Catherine, at Burnham Thorpe, where their father was rector. In fact our hero, Horatio, was not even the first Horatio in the family – but named for a brother who died aged just three months.

The future admiral was born, prematurely, and baptised within hours, using the marble font which still stands in Burnham Thorpe church. Today the church's rood cross and lectern are made from timber from HMS Victory and the graves of Nelson's parents lie beside the altar.

The family home was Parsonage House where, years later during extended shore leave, Nelson created a ship-shaped pond.

The web of waterways around Burnham Overy Staithe are where Britain's greatest naval commander learned to sail.

SCHOOL IN NORTH WALSHAM

Nelson learned Latin and Greek and had sailing lessons on Barton Broad, while a student at the Paston School, now Paston College.

STAIRCASE AT BRINTON HALL, NEAR MELTON CONSTABLE

Four generations of Jeremy Bagnall-Oakeley's family have lived at Brinton Hall – and used the glorious wooden staircase which is believed to have been moved here from Nelson's London home.

Brinton Hall is open via the Invitation to View scheme on Thursday, August 17, (www.invitationtoview.co.uk) when visitors will be able to climb the staircase, as part of a tour of the house and its beautiful parkland, lake and gardens.

GLORY IN GREAT YARMOUTH

Nelson sailed into and out of Yarmouth several times and it was here that Nelson declared: "I am myself a Norfolk man and glory in being so," the quotation which greets travellers today at the main roads into Nelson's county.

Another famous Yarmouth quote came when the landlady of the town's Wrestlers Arms asked to be allowed to rename the inn The Nelson Arms. "That would be absurd, seeing that I have but one," the great man replied. During that stay Nelson received the Freedom of the Borough. At the swearing-in ceremony he put his left hand on the Bible. The clerk said: "Your right hand, my lord," to which Nelson famously replied: "That is in Tenerife."

Nelson sailed from Yarmouth to take part in the Battle of Copenhagen, during which he refused orders to withdraw, raising his telescope to his dead eye and saying: "I really do not see the signal."

Never mind Trafalgar Square, London. Great Yarmouth has its own Nelson's Column, known as the Nelson, Norfolk or Britannia Monument. More than 20 years older than the London pillar, it offers fantastic views for those with a head for heights, and lungs for its 217-step spiral staircase.

Today the tower stands in an industrial estate but in Nelson's time, the South Denes area was a sandy, grassy military parade ground. And in paintings by JMW Turner the monument is shown on the shore. Legend suggests the superintendent of building work threw himself from the tower because the statue of Britannia, at the top, was facing inland, rather than out to sea, but historians say it was always intended to face inland towards Nelson's birthplace. A £1m restoration project saw the Grade One listed landmark reopened to the public in 2005, the 200th anniversary of the Battle of Trafalgar.

www.nelsonsmonument.org.uk



The Battle of the Nile, 1 August 1798, End of the Action, 1799, by Thomas Whitcombe

Picture: National Maritime Museum, Greenwich



Above: Britannia on top of the Nelson Monument, Great Yarmouth

Below right: Silk picture of Emma Hamilton and Nelson, late 18th century

Picture: National Maritime Museum, Greenwich



The Nelson Bullet: The musket ball that struck down Nelson on the deck of HMS Victory is coming to Norfolk for the very first time
Picture: Royal Collection Trust/
© Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II 2017

The Nelson Museum on South Quay, Yarmouth, is the only museum in the country dedicated to Nelson and tells the story of his boyhood in Norfolk, and his heroic life and death at sea.

The objects which formed the basis of the museum were collected by Nelson enthusiast Ben Burgess, (of the grounds care business of the same name, which is now co-sponsoring the new Nelson exhibition at Norwich Castle.)

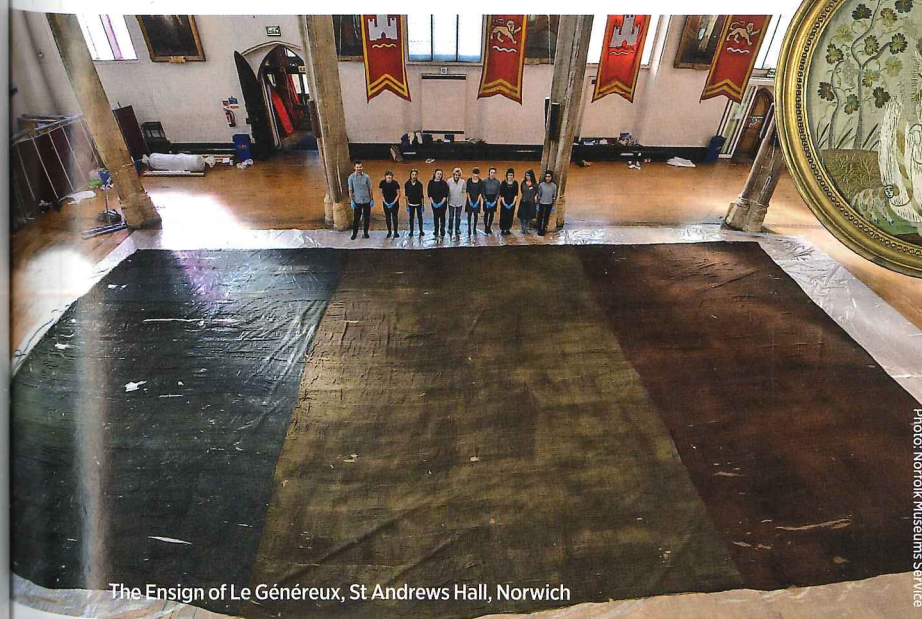
NORWICH

As a young child Nelson was a pupil at what is now the Norwich School in the Cathedral Close and a statue of him now faces the school.

This summer the bullet which killed him and what could be the earliest French tricolour flag in existence are two of the highlights of the Nelson and Norfolk exhibition at Norwich Castle Museum from Saturday, July 29 to Sunday, October 1.

The bullet, removed by the ship's doctor, belongs to the Queen, after being presented to Queen Victoria, and is mounted in a locket alongside scraps of gold lace from the uniform which made Nelson a target. It has never before been brought to Nelson's home county. The huge flag was captured from a ship and this is a rare chance to see it unfurled. ♦

www.museums.norfolk.gov.uk



The Ensign of Le Généreux, St Andrews Hall, Norwich

Photo: Norfolk Museums Service