

The Tolhouse Museum, Row III Houses and Time and Tide Museum, Great Yarmouth

Following lunch on the quay we set off to view the outside of the Tolhouse museum. Built as a Norman merchant's house, it became a toll house, a court room, police station and finally a 19th-century prison.

Many of us went on a town walk, taking in the surviving brick city walls including one tower with interesting chequer work in stone, later converted into a house and nearby a 17th-century house actually built into the city wall. On the way to the vast marketplace, the Dutch influence in the older architecture became apparent. We passed two houses occupied by Sir Astley Cooper (1768–1841), inventor of that instrument of child torture, 'The Department Chair', until we arrived at the Fisherman's Hospital founded in 1702 with ten attractive and diminutive almshouses, restored in 1985. In the shadow of Great Yarmouth Minster we found the timber-framed birthplace of Anna Sewell, author of *Black Beauty*. A return route through the narrow Rows took us past the site of the workshop of William Absolon (1751–1815), the Yarmouth glass engraver. We emerged in front of the baroque redbrick St George's church, recently successfully converted to a theatre after years of being at risk; the damaged plaster ceiling imaginatively removed to expose a fine timber roof. In the excellent Time and Tide Museum, a recreated Georgian Row demonstrated authentically how these shops were furnished in the 19th century. But the museum, created in a Victorian smokehouse, is primarily devoted to the history of the Yarmouth herring fishing industry where 24,000 fish could be smoked at a time. The museum still retains a faint smell of kippers. In 1913 the herring fishing reached its peak with 17 million tons landed and sold, mainly to Germany and Russia. Girls came down from Scotland every autumn to do the gutting, salting and packing, greatly swelling the local population.

On our return to Leiston we briefly stopped at Blythburgh church to admire its delightfully light and airy, spacious interior in the late afternoon sunlight.

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