



Boston Bulletin DAILY is FREE. Spread the word. Tell your relatives, friends and neighbours to email [emma.staff@boston.gov.uk](mailto:emma.staff@boston.gov.uk) so they can get their own personal copy Monday to Friday.

# Rejoining the club? After 700-year break

**Boston has taken another step towards rejoining the Hanseatic League that it was last associated with more than 700 years ago.**

Yesterday Boston Borough Council's Cabinet recommended that the town should join Die Hanse, the modern-day Hanseatic League.

Boston was a main player in the 13th Century when the port was thriving and it had main trading partners across the North Sea and was an important member of the Hanseatic League.

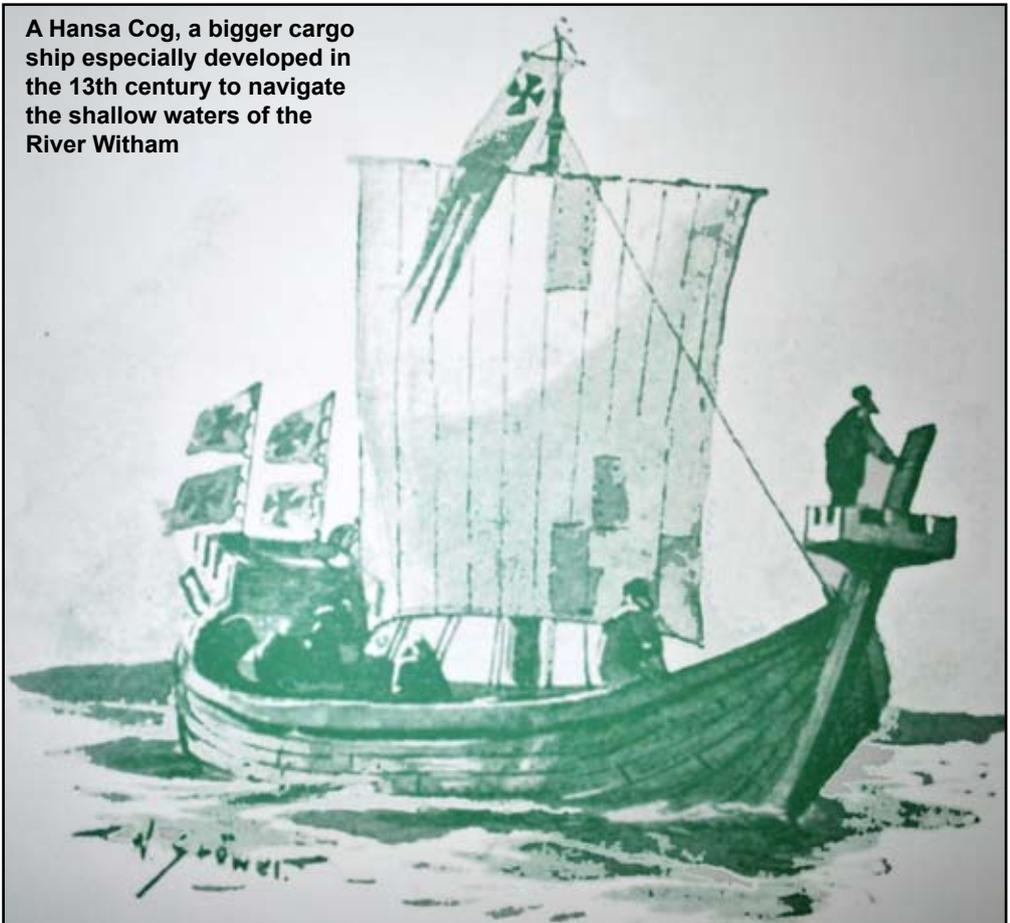
The league was revived in 1980 and current members in the UK include King's Lynn, Kingston Upon Hull and Aberdeen, connected through the Hanse with 183 towns and cities across 16 countries. They enjoy social and cultural alliances as well as closer economic ties. Boston's ancient associations qualifies it for Hanse membership.

Councillors heard that King's Lynn has been a member since 2005 and has benefited, particularly in promotion of arts, culture and heritage, positively impacting on tourism and the visitor economy. They heard that these, too, were areas where Boston could benefit. King's Lynn has membership of a Business Hanse and Boston could develop links for local businesses to develop.

One suggestion was to investigate joint promotional activities with neighbouring areas "from the Humber to The Wash".

It is hoped that partners and stakeholders

A Hansa Cog, a bigger cargo ship especially developed in the 13th century to navigate the shallow waters of the River Witham



already identified in Boston could take the project forward, with some assistance from the council.

There is no cost for Joining the Hanse. The business sub-group membership is a one-off joining fee of £200 and then annual subscription of £150.

Leisure services portfolio holder, Cllr Yvonne Gunter, said Boston's membership would be straightforward in view of the town's history.

Cllr Mike Gilbert, community portfolio holder, added: "It is a fantastic opportunity  
• continued on page 2

Thu	Fri
 3°C -1°C	 3°C 2°C
<b>Light breeze</b>	<b>Moderate breeze</b>
Sunrise 7.59am Sunset 4.25pm	Sunrise 7.57am Sunset 4.27pm
Low tide 3.06am High tide 7.08am	Low tide 3.50am High tide 7.51am
Low tide 7.18pm High tide 7.23pm	Low tide 3.59pm High tide 8.07pm

## What's On – pick of the day

**Today** – Kirton Brass Band rehearsals for people 13 years and over, 7.30pm to 9.30pm, beginners 6.30pm to 7.30pm at Kirton Methodist Church Hall, everyone welcome  
**Tomorrow** – Singer/songwriter Sandi Thorn, "I Wish I Was A Punk Rocker", Blackfriars Theatre and Arts Centre, 7.30pm, £18.50 per person, box office 363108



## Hanseatic League trader when Boston had country's second biggest port

Boston's connections with nations across the North Sea go back centuries. Trade with the Hanseatic countries was particularly strong in the 13th century, leading to Boston becoming the second most important port in the country with fantastic wealth for a small Fenland market town.

Boston's fine Guildhall and magnificent St Botolph's Church (Boston Stump) point to a time in the town's history when it had power, wealth and influence.

It harks back to a period of history when much of Boston's wealth was built on sheep – millions of them. Trade in wool was more valuable than trade in gold and more fleeces were exported through Boston than any other place in the country.

The Port of Boston was second only to the Port of London and, with the country's wealth based on wool, merchants in the town became fabulously wealthy.

That wealth is reflected in the money they made available in order that The Stump and the Guildhall could be built.

Both buildings were in a different league of grandness so far as public buildings for a town of Boston's size could boast.

The merchants, medieval stockbrokers, made their fortunes by trading home-grown wool supplied by vast estates, many associated with the abbeys.

The buyers were in Europe, and, under a special closed-shop arrangement, only the merchants could sell to traders across the North Sea from Germany, Lowland Europe and the Baltic states – the so-called Hanseatic League. Boston along with a select group of east coast ports was granted

permission by the crown to trade with these Hanseatic merchants and trade from a vast area focused on the town.

Fleeces from Lincolnshire and Yorkshire were channelled through Boston Port – three million between 1280 and 1290.

So good was the product and so high the demand that some Boston merchants were taking payment for fleeces to be supplied as much as 15 years into the future. There were fortunes to be made... and lost by gambling on this ancient futures market. To keep track of all the deals a board was used by Hanse merchants with counters and criss-cross columns, called the Exchequer Board, from which is derived our own title of Chancellor of the Exchequer.

Boston Port continued to grow because of trade with the Hanseatic League. The Hanseatic merchants even developed a special, bigger ship, called a Hansa Cog, to carry two or three times as much cargo, but with a flat bottom and removable keel to cope with shallow waters like those found in the Witham – the eventual undoing of Boston's thriving economy.

With cargo ships arriving in Boston to take away wool, exotic imports became commonplace, including figs and currants, spices and silks, furs and firs – in fact timber used in the construction of the Guildhall came from the Baltic countries. These luxury goods were sold by traders in large medieval marts and fairs, with Boston's annual fair, now celebrated as the May Fair, becoming of such importance that courts in London would shut so their members could attend it.

This massive money machine ground to a halt when the river began to silt up and the large cargo ships could no longer access the port and internal struggles saw the Hanseatic League implode.

Queen Elizabeth I attempted to help the port's plight with the award to the borough of the Charter for the Jurisdiction of the Admiralty of The Wash. This allowed the



**The Charter for the Jurisdiction of the Admiralty of The Wash in 1573**

borough to collect revenue from ships using The Wash so it could generate income for maintenance. Today's Mayor of Boston retains the title Admiral of The Wash.

Cllr Yvonne Gunter, Boston Borough Council's modern-day portfolio holder for leisure services, said: "The historic record shows the close associations Boston enjoyed with Hanseatic trading partners, and the benefits that brought to the town centuries ago.

"The benefits these days have changed, but there is real potential for economic and cultural bonuses by being a part of the modern-day Hanseatic League with its 183 member towns and cities spread across 16 countries.

"Our Wash 'twin', King's Lynn, has said it has benefited from Hanseatic membership with a positive impact on tourism and the visitor economy. I believe Boston has much to offer in this regard and can similarly benefit from links to encourage visitors from the Continent."

**• Towns and cities from member countries of the Hanse are to be found in England (King's Lynn and Kingston Upon Hull), Scotland (Aberdeen), Belarus, Belgium, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Iceland, Latvia, Lithuania, Netherlands, Norway, Poland, Russia and Sweden.**

## Promoting the town to a wider community

### • from front page

for the town to promote itself to the wider European community."

Cllr Derek Richmond, town centre portfolio holder, said it could do "nothing but good" for the borough and urged businesses to get behind the project.

Steve Lumb, the council's head of built environment and development, said Boston has a Hanse club in the making in the shape of the council, the History of Boston Project, Boston Preservation Trust, Boston Area Partnership, Boston Big Local, Boston Visitor Economy Partnership and Lincolnshire Chamber of Commerce, including local membership.



**The seal of Heinrich Kneval, a 14th century Hanseatic merchant. The seal was discovered in South End, Boston, in 2002**