



Caistor Roman Town

Results of Public Consultation on the 4 Options

Over the winter South Norfolk Council, which manages the Roman town for the Trust, consulted widely using public meetings, exhibitions and leaflets to set out options for the future of the site. The results of these extensive consultations were presented to the Trust at the end of May and were as follows:

Option 1: Do nothing new	122
Option 2: Provide a small information building, toilets, disabled access and enhanced site interpretation near the present car park	160
Option 3: Similar to Option 2, but in a different location at the "The Beeches", on the hill across the valley	36
Option 4: An ambitious scheme involving a major visitor centre on "The Beeches"	162
Total:	480

Option 4 caused much heated debate because there were strong local fears that it would do unacceptable damage to this attractive part of the Tas valley. Concerns were also expressed repeatedly at public meetings that the 68,000 visitors a year needed to make Option 4 viable would destroy the site's tranquil atmosphere much loved by so many people. One seldom met anyone who supported Option 4, so it was a surprise that it got (just) the highest number of votes.

After the results were made available the Council of the Trust decided on Option 2, bearing in mind that its landscape impact could be minimal and it could incorporate the extra facilities requested by those who took part in the consultation exercise. South Norfolk Council members would, however, prefer to see something a little more ambitious which they call "Option 2+" located on "The Beeches". Both parties have rejected Option 4.

South Norfolk will need to commission a landscape architect to look at their suggestions in more detail before a final decision, which both the Trust and the Council can support, can be taken. Meanwhile, the Roman walls at Caistor are still in need of urgent repair. South Norfolk Council have kindly agreed to fund trial work this summer to explore ways of conserving the stonework without altering its character. The results of the trials will then be assessed before the main conservation work on the walls can begin in 2004, provided sufficient funding can be found.

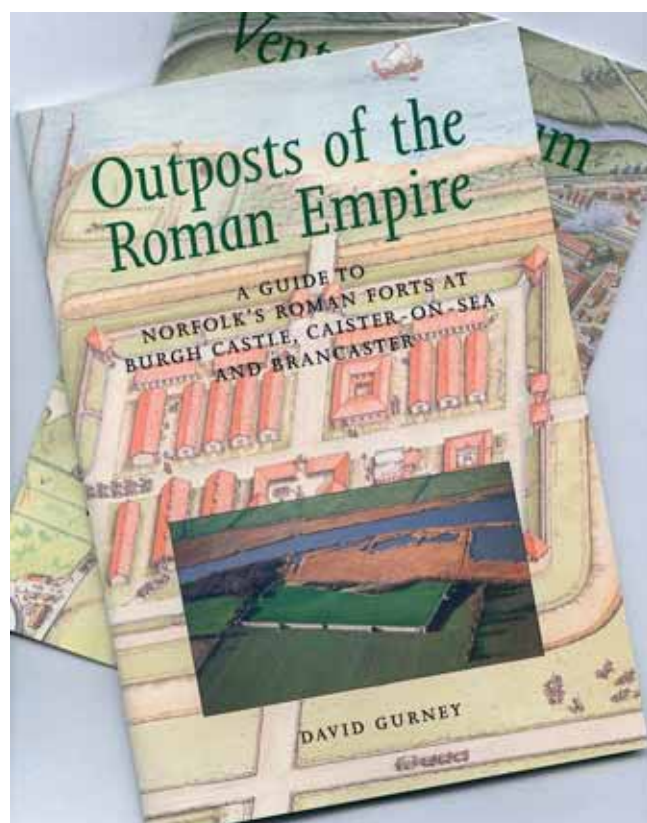
The Everett Bequest

In the Spring Newsletter we reported that the Trust had received a bequest of £10,000 from the estate of the late Professor Douglas Everett from Bristol. Since then the Trust has received a second payment from his executors bringing the total bequest to a wonderful £23,812. The first payment was used to assist with the purchase of Bloodgate Hill, South Creake, and the second will be used as part of the match funding for the contribution we hope to receive from the Heritage Lottery Fund for our proposals to improve visitor facilities at Burgh Castle.

There is much the Trust can do to protect Norfolk's fragile archaeological remains and to make them more accessible. When you make your will, do, please, bear the Trust in mind.

New guidebook for Burgh Castle

The Trust has cooperated with the National Trust, English Heritage and Great Yarmouth Borough Council in publishing a new guidebook by David Gurney entitled *Outposts of the Roman Empire* (ISBN 0-9540676-1-4). This features all three Late Roman Shore Forts in Norfolk at Burgh Castle, Caister-on-Sea and Brancaster. It is thicker than our Caistor guidebook, because it covers three sites, and it is a good read and excellent value at £3.99. Ask your local bookshop to order you one.



More information on the internet

The Trust's website, www.norfarchtrust.org.uk, has been expanded with the addition of St Benets Abbey and with the re-writing of the section on Binham Priory. Anyone visiting our sites would benefit from making the appropriate printouts first.

Text by Peter Wade-Martins Design by Sue White

NORFOLK ARCHAEOLOGICAL TRUST REPORT TO MEMBERS 2002/3



Members of the Trust and the Norfolk and Norwich Archaeological Society at Bloodgate Hill, 25th September 2003 *Photo Peter Wade-Martins*

This Annual Report is distributed to members prior to the 2003 AGM to be held on 21st October. Although the report is strictly for the year 2002/3, some of the Trust's more recent achievements are also included to keep members up to date with developments.

New Site Purchased Iron Age Hillfort, Bloodgate Hill, South Creake

The purchase of this eroded Iron Age hillfort was eventually completed on 4th August 2003 after prolonged negotiations. Funding for the purchase came mainly from the Heritage Lottery Fund, with valuable additional contributions from English Heritage, the Everett Bequest, West Norfolk Council, a private donation, the Scarfe Charitable Trust and Bernard Matthews. A special thanks is due to all for their support.

The next step was to carry out a geophysical survey of the whole site to look for buried features. There was then an excavation to investigate the defences to see what evidence has survived for their construction. Some limited trenching in the interior of the fort was designed to pick up buried features located during the geophysical survey. This was carried out by GSB Prospection of Bradford.



Geophysical Survey at Bloodgate Hill

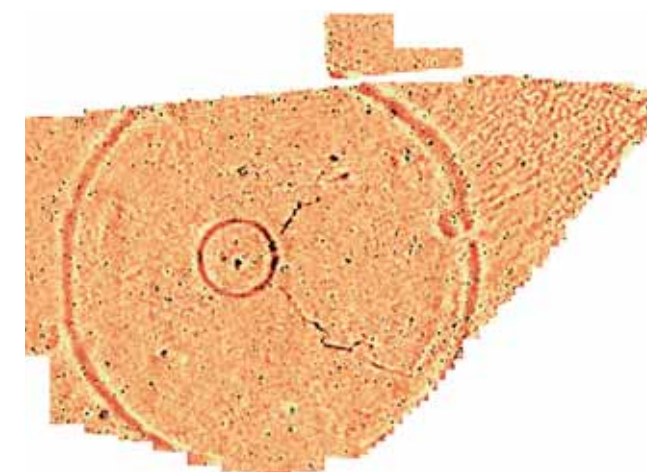
Photo Sue White

Trust members visited the site on 25th September to see the results of the geophysical survey and the excavation in progress run by the Norfolk Archaeological Unit.



Soilmark of the Iron Age hillfort, looking North

Photo Derek Edwards. Norfolk Museums & Archaeology Service



Results of the recent geophysical survey of the Bloodgate Hill fort. North is at the top of the image. The data was recorded using a magnetic gradiometer. Areas of low magnetism are shown as light tones and high magnetism as dark tones

Image supplied by Dr Chris Gaffney of GSB Prospection



Reconstruction of an Iron Age Fort by Sue White

During this autumn, or in the early spring, the field will be ploughed for one last time and then a mix of old-fashioned grasses will be sown to create a hay or grazing meadow. Two interpretation panels, drawing on the results of the survey and excavation will be designed over the winter to be ready for the formal opening, probably in May. Because the site has been ploughed for so long and the earthworks are so heavily eroded, it will not be one of our more spectacular sites. Nevertheless, we hope to create an interesting interpretation scheme. The fort can be compared with a similar, but much better preserved one owned by the Holkham Estate not far away at Warham. Visitors may well wish to visit the two together.



Early stages of the excavation of the large defensive ditch of the Iron Age fort at Bloodgate Hill Photo Sue White

Binham Priory

Purchase of Gatehouse

The Trust completed the purchase of the priory gatehouse, precinct wall and adjoining meadow, which contains a number of interesting earthworks, on 11th December 2002. Most of the money for the purchase was generously provided by English Heritage. While the cloisters and surrounding priory buildings have been kept in good repair over the years by English Heritage, the gatehouse, through which visitors have to drive to reach the site, has been strangely abandoned. The gatehouse, which is derelict and covered in ivy, is on the English Heritage "Buildings at Risk Register", and the Trust has applied to English Heritage for a grant to cover most of the repair costs.

Community Support for Trust's Proposals

It has been most encouraging to find at Binham remarkable community support for our proposals for the priory. At a joint meeting in the church with members of the Parochial Church Council, the Parish Council and the Binham History Society in June our suggestions for improved access and better interpretation won complete approval.



Binham Priory Photo Sue White

Since then, they have expressed a wish to work with us in order to provide disabled access to the church and some toilets, which will serve both the church and the priory. Finding a place for these which will have everybody's support won't, however, be easy.



Well attended meeting at Binham Priory Church in June

Rare Plant Growing on Binham Precinct Wall

Following the announcement of this purchase in the Spring Newsletter, the Trust office was contacted by one of our members, Gillian Beckett, co-author of the Flora of Norfolk, to warn us that the precinct wall is the only habitat in all of North Norfolk for a rare plant called Wall Bedstraw.



The rare Wall Bedstraw growing on the precinct wall at Binham Photo Sue White

It was extremely lucky that we were told in time, since the plant is quite inconspicuous, and could well have been removed in the course of wall repairs without us knowing it was there. Gillian has since kindly agreed to advise us on the specification for wall repairs to ensure that the plant does survive, and she has collected some seed as an extra safety measure.

St Benets Abbey

Purchase of Gatehouse & Windmill Progressing

Sometimes the legal processes involved in acquiring property seem to take much longer than expected. This is certainly true in the case of St Benets where we are waiting to complete the purchase of the medieval gatehouse and eighteenth-century windmill and to lease the site of the abbey church from the diocese.



Once this is done we can then manage the site as a single property. As a first step we will issue a draft management plan for consultation to interested parties to allow for full debate on all issues concerned with public access, interpretation and site management. But one learns to be patient!

Riverbank Repairs Approved

In the meantime, we continue our discussions with the Broadland Environmental Services and the Environment Agency about the need for urgent repairs to the riverbank, since we believe that this is an area where no further debate is needed. An engineering design involving stone-filled wire baskets to create a new river bank has been approved, and estimates are awaited. It is expected that the Environment Agency will be making a significant contribution to the costs involved.



The eroding riverbank at St Benets Abbey Photo Sue White