

## Burgh Castle

### Setback for Trust's proposals

The Heritage Lottery Fund at a meeting on the 9th September decided not to approve a 90% grant for our proposals to improve visitor facilities at Burgh Castle, but they have suggested that we may wish to discuss ideas with them further.

In their decision letter, HLF say that while they acknowledge the heritage importance of the site, they feel that our proposals offered insufficient value for money against their priorities in terms of public access, and offered limited benefit relating to conservation and site enhancement. They say that there is little justification for new facilities on the scale proposed, particularly the provision of toilets, the new access road and car park. We had tried to demonstrate that a new access road and car park were essential because the present road to the church is very narrow, a view endorsed by County Highways who are not prepared to see increased use of Church Lane by visitors to the monument. With regards to toilets, all visitors to the site tell us that these are essential.

We must await further discussions with HLF, to see what can be achieved. What we are sure is that the present poor access, minimal car parking near the church, no toilets and very limited site interpretation is just not acceptable on a monument of such outstanding national importance. We must keep trying.



Burgh Castle Roman Fort at sunset.

Photo Sue White

## Caistor Roman Town

### Wall repairs to be funded by DEFRA

While the debate about visitor facilities at Caistor continues, the Trust has been finalising a specification for the much-needed repairs to the Roman town walls, following the trial repairs highlighted in the Spring Newsletter. Dr David Watt, a specialist in historic building conservation, has taken on the demanding task of drawing up the specification and obtaining quotes from suitable contractors.



As a part of the members' Field Visit to Caistor in May, there was a stimulating debate after lunch at which the Caistor Parish Council, Caistor PCC and the Tas Valley Society all voiced their reservations about putting visitor facilities on "The Beeches", the hill across the valley visible in this picture. Photo Peter Wade-Martins

DEFRA have generously offered an 80% grant towards the costs of wall repairs since the Roman town is within one of their Countryside Stewardship Schemes. This is a national first for DEFRA funding of a conservation scheme which is entirely archaeological, and it is very gratifying that they have offered 80%, since their normal grant for special projects is 50%. We can feel very pleased with the outcome.

Because of the importance of avoiding frosty weather for mortar repairs, it is now likely work will not start until the spring.



Dr David Watt explained during the Caistor Field Visit how he proposes to conserve the Roman walls following the trial work carried out with funding from South Norfolk Council in October 2003. Photo Peter Wade-Martins

Text by Peter Wade-Martins Design by Sue White

## NORFOLK ARCHAEOLOGICAL TRUST REPORT TO MEMBERS 2003/4



The riverbank at St Benet's Abbey showing the damage caused by the wash from holiday cruisers which will soon come to an end.

Photo Peter Wade-Martins

**This Annual Report is distributed to members prior to the 2004 AGM, which will be held on Tuesday 19th October. We aim to keep members informed about the work of the Trust, and there have been a number of significant achievements over the last year.**

There will be a short presentation on recent activities at the AGM to which all members are cordially invited.

### St Benets Abbey

#### Site management plan approved

Since the purchase of the famous gatehouse and windmill from the Norwich Diocese in January 2004 the whole of this remarkable site has been under Trust management. This has enabled us to draft a Site Management Plan covering all issues relating to site conservation, public access and site interpretation. The Management Plan was distributed in early June to the dozen or so organisations with an interest in the site and with views on its future. This was then followed by a consultation meeting in July at which all our main proposals were fully endorsed. Indeed, the organisations represented seemed delighted with the Trust's suggestions.

The next step is to develop these ideas in preparation for a bid to the Heritage Lottery Fund and to other potential sponsors. Thankfully, the gatehouse, windmill and church foundations are all in reasonable repair, so there is no great urgency. Repairing the riverbank has been our immediate task.

### Riverbank repairs now under way

In mid August English Heritage confirmed its grant for the riverbank work. It was then possible to give the go-ahead to Broadland Environmental Services Ltd (BESL), who are co-ordinating the engineering works. Nuttalls are the contractors, and they will be working on the river from late September until December. The protective wire gabions are due to be fully installed by Christmas. The project has been made possible thanks to very generous support from the Environment Agency, supplemented with smaller sums from English Heritage and the Trust. For years people have been concerned about the damage being caused by the wash from river cruisers, and it is gratifying to know that a solution is now in hand.



At the time of going to press, the fencing has been erected, and Nuttalls are due to start work any day. All work is being carried out from the river so as not to damage the site's fine earthworks.

Photo Peter Wade-Martins

## New St Benet's Abbey guidebook

It is perhaps fitting that the guidebook originally written by Joan Snelling in 1971 and revised by W.F. Edwards in 1983 should have just gone out of print. This has given the Trust an opportunity to invite Tim Pestell, assisted by Stephen Heywood, to write a new text, drawing on much of the original material. An artist's reconstruction by Sue White based on all the archaeological evidence currently available will also be included. The book will be designed by Mike Fuggle, who did such an excellent job designing our Caistor and Burgh Castle publications. Fundraising is now under way, and it is hoped that the new guidebook may be ready for publication in the spring of 2005.



The Bishop of Norwich holding his annual service as Abbot of St Benets Abbey on 1st August, 2004. *Photo Sue White*

## Bloodgate Hill, South Creake Conservation work completed

This site, which the Trust has re-claimed from the arable, is now looking good. The new property is all fenced, the young hedgerows are growing well, thanks to the damp summer, and sheep are grazing the freshly-sown grass.



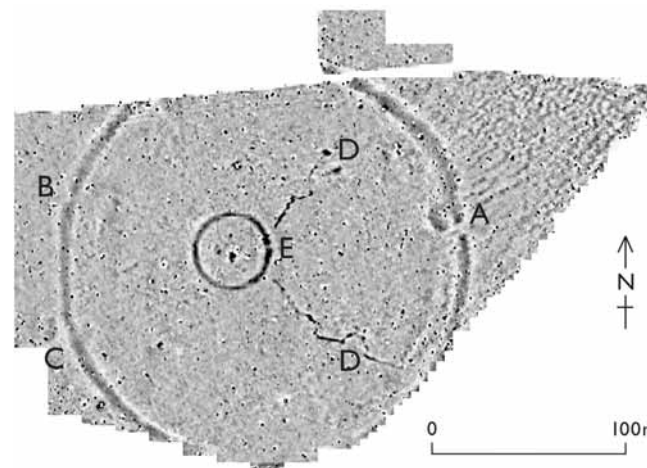
Savory Fencing, the contractors, erecting new fencing. *Photo Peter Wade-Martins*



Construction of disabled access kissing gate at the new car park at Bloodgate Hill, June 2004. *Photo Peter Wade-Martins*

## Site interpretation

Members will recall that there has been much discussion about whether the internal ring feature, which shows so clearly both on the air photos and on the geophysical survey, is Bronze Age or Iron Age - if Iron Age, it is likely to be of the same date as the fort itself. While a charred cereal grain from its fill provided an Early Bronze Age radiocarbon date centred on 1630 BC, the Iron Age pottery from the ditch suggests that this was an earlier contaminant and that the ring-ditch is actually Iron Age. The project shows how much can be learned from combining limited excavation with non-destructive geophysical survey. Careful study of the geophysical plot has revealed a remarkably symmetrical internal layout, with the entrance to the inner ring lying directly opposite the main fort entrance to the east. Ongoing research by Trevor Ashwin and Sue White will culminate in illustrated reconstructions of the fort's possible appearance in the Iron Age, to be presented on the two site interpretation panels.



Results of geophysical survey, showing:  
A - 'main' entrance with major inner defensive earthwork; B and C - west-facing entrances; D - possible internal walls or screen, probably of palisade type; E - inner ring ditch, with entrance on its eastern side and possible traces of a large circular building within.

We already know far more about this fascinating monument than we did a year ago, when excavation ended. It is proposed to have a small site opening ceremony when the two panels are in place.

## Binham Priory

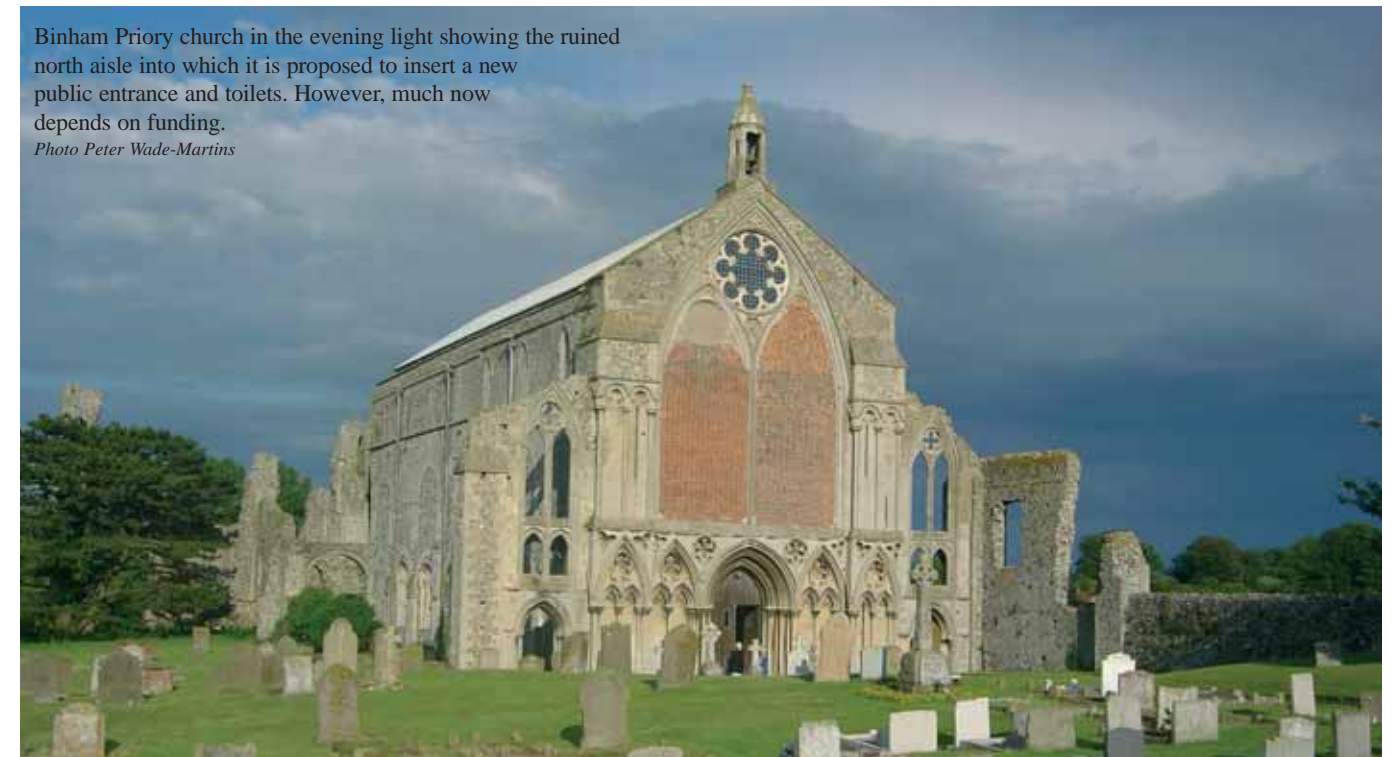
### The Binham Project gears up the next stage

The consultation stage of the project has been concluded with a decision to place the new toilets in the demolished north aisle of the church, and with agreement on routes for disabled access to the priory ruins and to the church. Detailed drawings are now being prepared by the architects acting for the Parochial Church Council, while the Trust seeks consent for the repairs to the priory gatehouse and precinct wall.



A meeting in May 2004 with English Heritage representatives Michael Wingate (left) and John Ette (centre) and Stephen Heywood, historic buildings advisor to the Trust, to discuss in detail how best to repair the crumbling medieval precinct wall which the Trust has recently purchased as a conservation measure. *Photo Peter Wade-Martins*

This project is now very much a joint undertaking between the Trust and Binham PCC, with both sides benefiting from a closely integrated approach to common problems. We anticipate being able to submit an application for both the conservation work and the visitor facilities to the Heritage Lottery Fund during 2005.



Binham Priory church in the evening light showing the ruined north aisle into which it is proposed to insert a new public entrance and toilets. However, much now depends on funding. *Photo Peter Wade-Martins*



A critical meeting at Binham Priory in July 2004 between David Frost (left), chairman of Binham PCC, Chris Brown, chairman of the Norwich Diocesan Advisory Board, Matthew Martin and Roger Bellinger, chairman and vice-chairman of the Trust with Peter Wade-Martins to agree the best way forward on providing improved visitor facilities for the church and for the monument.



One of a series of evening concerts held each year in Binham Priory church, this one by Trevor Pinnock on Harpsichord in July 2004. Events like this show the importance of installing proper disabled access and toilets to serve both the church and the monument. *Photo Peter Wade-Martins*