**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**

Total: 122

**Option 2: Provide a small information building, toilets, disabled access and enhanced site interpretation**

Total: 160

**Option 3: Similar to Option 2, but in a different location at “The Beeches”, on the hill across the valley**

Total: 36

**Option 4: An ambitious scheme involving a major visitor centre on “The Beeches”**

Total: 162

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.

**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.

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 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.

**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.
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.

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. 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.

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.

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.

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.