



Visit by the Norwich Diocesan Advisory Committee and others to Binham Priory on 16th October 2003 to view options for disabled access and possible location of toilets. *Photo Peter Wade-Martins*

Bloodgate Hill, South Creake

Site opening soon

Since the members' Field Visit in September the excavations of the Iron Age defences have been backfilled, the fort has been ploughed for the last time, fresh hedgerows have been planted, and the new grass is just coming through. A small car park has been built, and as soon as ground conditions permit, fencing and gates will be installed.

This will be followed by two interpretation panels drawing upon the results of the excavation. We are waiting for the dates of samples from the defences which have been sent to New Zealand for radio-carbon dating. Only then can the results of the excavations be fully assessed. The most interesting question is whether the ring feature within the fort seen most clearly in the geophysical survey (Report to Members 2002/3) is an inner Iron Age defensive structure, as the pottery from this ditch suggests, or Bronze Age. Once the dating can be ascertained, the panels can be designed, and the site prepared for a formal opening.



The Oxford Archaeology Laboratory taking samples at Bloodgate Hill, South Creake for dating the ditch deposits, November 2003. Unfortunately, this technique of measuring the electrical charge held by quartz particles didn't produce a credible result for the main defences, so radio-carbon dating is now being tried instead. *Photo Sue White*



The full excavation by the Norfolk Archaeological Unit of the 4-metre deep Iron Age defensive ditch at Bloodgate Hill, South Creake, October 2003. *Photo Sue White*



Hope springs from an empty landscape at Bloodgate Hill. The remains of the surviving Iron Age earthwork, nearly two meters high, on the left, freshly cultivated land with the grass seed just coming through and the newly planted hedgerow marking the boundary of our latest acquisition, May 2004. *Photo Peter Wade-Martins*

The Trust's web site

Don't forget that in addition to our guidebooks, there is more information about our sites on the internet at www.norfarchtrust.org

Text by Peter Wade-Martins Design by Sue White

NORFOLK ARCHAEOLOGICAL TRUST SPRING NEWSLETTER 2004



Members of the Trust and the Norfolk and Norwich Archaeological Society visiting The Beeches overlooking the Roman town at Caistor St Edmund, 20th May 2004. *Photo Sue White*

This is our second Spring Newsletter, which we hope you will enjoy. We aim to keep members up to date with developments, and it is gratifying to report real progress on a number of Trust properties.

St Benets Abbey

Gatehouse and windmill purchased

We were able to complete the purchase of the well-known medieval gatehouse and attached eighteenth-century windmill from the Norwich Diocese on 13th January. At the same time the trust signed a 199-year lease with the

Diocese for the site of the abbey church which stands within this fine earthwork monument. The whole of this remarkable place is now under Trust management. At the time of writing a draft management plan is ready for distribution to all interested parties, and there are about twenty organisations to be consulted on the future of the monument.



St. Benet's Abbey 1813
Painting by Miles Edmund Cotman



St Benet's Abbey

Photo Peter Wade-Martins

Filling the pond

Visitors to the site will be aware of a large shallow depression between the river and the gatehouse. This always fills with water in wet weather, and it is feared that the water lapping against the medieval walls of the gatehouse may be undermining the foundations. So, an extra job will be to fill this depression with river dredgings provided by the Broads Authority.

Riverbank repairs

It has been distressing to see the riverbank being severely eroded by the wash from river cruisers, but we now have a design for a new riverbank fully approved and costed. This will consist of a line of stone-filled wire gabions, with the space between the gabions and the old river edge packed with clay. All materials will be brought in by river in order not to damage the earthworks. Most of the £100,000 this will cost will be provided by the Environment Agency, with smaller sums coming from English Heritage and the Trust. Once English Heritage have confirmed their grant this summer, engineering works can begin in the autumn.

Burgh Castle

Lottery bid submitted

The Trust's bid for a major grant to improve visitor facilities at the Roman fort was delivered to the Heritage Lottery Fund's office in Cambridge in March.



Burgh Castle

Photo Sue White

Putting the bid together was itself a major task, with 57 supporting papers in addition to the application form. The cost with VAT and contingency is £752,000, and the Trust is asking for 90%, leaving £75,200 to find from elsewhere. The project will provide a new access road off Butt Lane, a new car park, a small information building with toilets as well as an interpretation scheme covering the fort, Saxon monastery and Norman castle. The setting of the fort, with the Roman estuary, the marshes and the wildlife will all be covered too.

Caistor Roman Town

Debate about improved visitor facilities

The debate over what extra facilities, if any, there should be at Caistor has continued, with considerable press interest. The outcome of the public consultation was summarised in our Report to Members 2002/3. This showed as many people favouring minimal improvement as there were those wanting a major visitor centre on The Beeches on the hill across the valley from the town. But, when the votes of those who wanted nothing more at all were taken into account, there was a clear majority against The Beeches.



The Beeches viewed from Caistor Roman town Photo Sue White

When the results of the public consultation were known in May 2003, the Council of the Trust decided to opt for Option 2, which would involve a small information building and toilets near the present car park rather like the one we plan to build at Burgh Castle, but nothing more. South Norfolk Councillors, who commissioned the consultants' report which came up with the idea for a major scheme, decided to pursue a compromise suggestion (Option 2+) for a scaled-down scheme still on The Beeches.

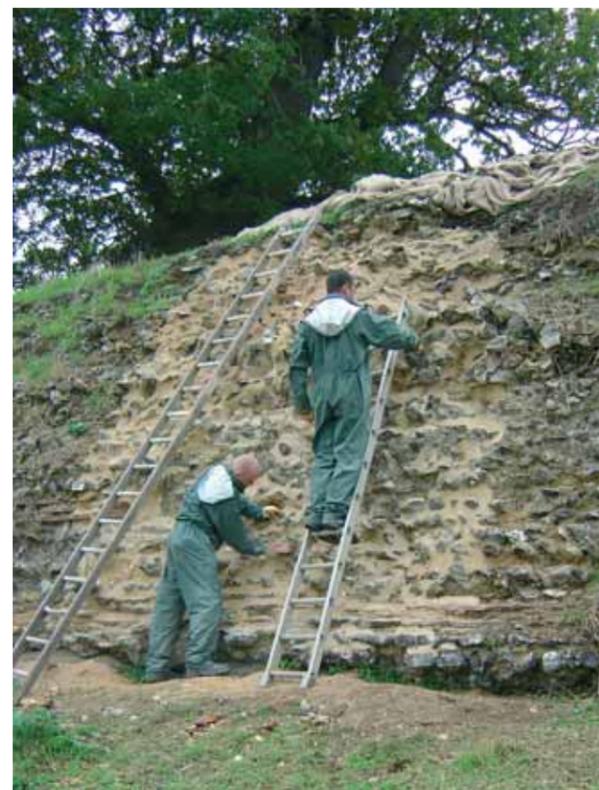
However, when the outline drawings for South Norfolk's proposal were produced in February there were soon strong reactions from Caistor Parish Council, Caistor PCC and the Tas Valley Society all opposing the idea. In the light of this reaction the Council of the Trust has made a firm decision to stick with Option 2. This has clearly been a disappointment for South Norfolk, and there are those who still see Caistor as Norfolk's answer to Sutton Hoo.

The Trust's present view is that limited development of facilities near the present car park linked to an ongoing excavation programme and a Caistor research project, building up public interest gradually, is the most sustainable way to promote and develop the site as an educational resource.

The Trust's annual Field Visit this year was held at Caistor to give members the opportunity to see the view from The Beeches for themselves and to hear the arguments for and against the scheme. A lively debate followed the site tour.

Trial wall repairs

Recent visitors to the site will have noticed two test areas of wall repairs carried out using a variety of mortar mixes. These were to establish the best methods of wall conservation. The main lesson to be learnt from the work is that the long sections of wall which have earth banks behind them seldom dry out and that any new mortar added to these walls takes a very long time to set, making the mortar very vulnerable to frost damage. As a result of these experiments it has been decided to use a fast drying hydraulic lime and to ensure the repairs have set thoroughly before they are exposed to frost.



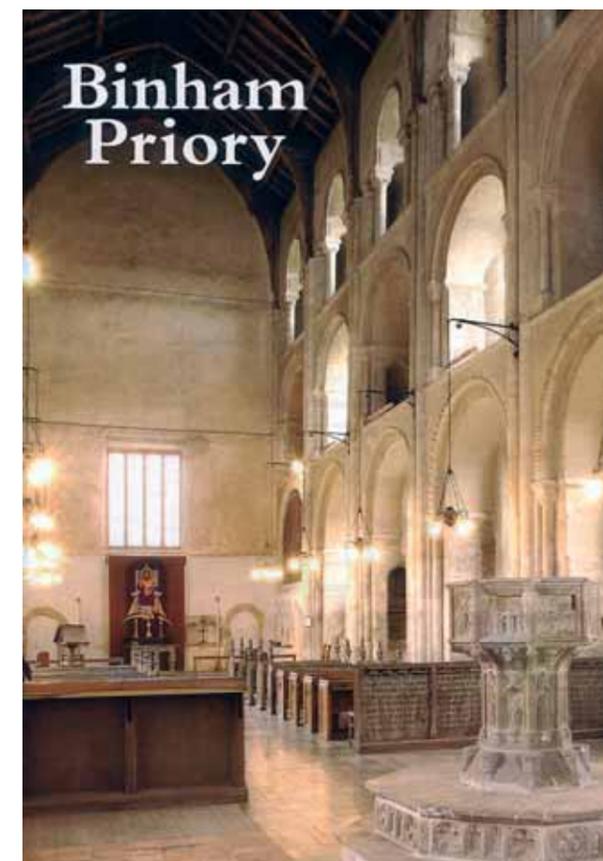
Trial repairs to the north wall of Caistor Roman town, October 2003. Photo Peter Wade-Martins

Binham Priory

New Binham Priory guidebook

Binham is a very special place which means a lot to many people. The PCC should be congratulated on the production of a revised and enlarged guidebook, which now includes information on the priory remains excavated

by Henry Neville in the 1930s and owned by the Trust. The inclusion of more old engravings and paintings providing previously unpublished views of the site from the eighteenth century onwards is also a welcome development. Copies are on sale in the church priced £2, and the Trust will be holding a stock as well.



Cover of the new guidebook

The Binham project

The Trust has worked closely with Binham PCC on the details of a scheme to make the church and priory remains more interesting and accessible to visitors. This is linked to proposals to conserve the recently purchased gatehouse and precinct wall. Inevitably, the debate about where to put the toilets has taken much time. Toilets are needed for visitors to the priory and for those who attend the glorious concerts in the church on summer evenings. Eight possible options were considered by the Diocesan Advisory Committee which came to learn about the scheme on October. The Committee preferred two possible options: one in the demolished north aisle and one in the north west corner of the priory ruins, an area well screened by flint walls. Both are being investigated further. The close bond which has developed between the Trust and members of Binham PCC has made the development of this project a most enjoyable process.

Meanwhile, discussions with English Heritage on how to repair the gatehouse and precinct wall and how to interpret the site for visitors continue.