

Once the Trust has acquired the property, it will draw up a draft management plan, as it did for St Benets Abbey, and it will consult widely before making any changes. The issues to focus on primarily concern routine management of the grassland and hedges and a method of providing safe public access up the mound. As the site is so close to a housing estate, it is important that the local residents have an opportunity to be aware of what we propose to do.

This is a charming little site, well deserving Trust ownership, and it will complement the National Trust's ownership of another small motte and bailey at Denton Castle in south Norfolk.



Middleton Mount. The Norman motte survives well, and the outline of the bailey in front is outlined by the surrounding hedgerows
Photo Peter Wade-Martins

Binham Priory North aisle excavated

The excavation of the four western bays of the north aisle, funded by Binham PCC, English Heritage and the Norwich Diocese, took place in August with interesting results. The north wall proved to have massive foundations, well able to carry the small visitor building to be erected over it. The buttresses proved to be much later than the wall, probably fourteenth century, and built from a much higher ground level than the original Norman one. No trace of original floor levels was found inside the aisle, and the natural subsoil surface was just below the modern concrete. The excavation was inspected at a well-attended meeting with representatives of English Heritage, the Diocesan



Excavation of the north aisle of Binham Priory church, by Archaeology Project Services of Lincolnshire, was designed to expose the north wall and buttresses. The church community intend to use the first four bays of the aisle to create a new church entrance, display area and toilets.
Photo Peter Wade-Martins

Advisory Committee, SPAB and other bodies, and in the lively discussion which followed, all seemed to be in favour of the new building being inserted into the aisle, provided that the detailing of the north arcade was left exposed and the north nave windows were not obscured by the new roof. The PCC can now feel able to apply for all the necessary consents which it will need to do before it can begin fundraising.



The Norman foundations of the north wall proved to be massive, well able to support the modern structure to be placed upon it.
Photo Peter Wade-Martins

Meanwhile, the Trust's plans for conserving the medieval gatehouse are progressing, and we will soon be having detailed discussions with English Heritage and the PCC on how best to provide a more lively and interesting interpretation scheme for the priory as a whole.

Burgh Castle Architect's design finalised

Martin Hall Associates have produced detailed drawings for the new car park and visitor building, and we are soon to go out to tender for contractors to quote for the work so that new grant applications can be made. It still requires quite a lot of effort to put all the funding in place for the new facilities, but it will be well worth the effort involved.

A Date for Diaries

The spring Members' Field Visit will be by river to Burgh Castle and Berney Arms from Great Yarmouth on the "Southern Belle" on **25th May**. We hope to see you all then.

Text by Peter Wade-Martins Design by Sue White

NORFOLK ARCHAEOLOGICAL TRUST REPORT TO MEMBERS 2004/5



The fully-restored riverbank at St Benets Abbey. It is worth comparing this picture with the one on the cover of the 2004 annual report showing the site before work began. As the new ground settles it may be necessary to spread some more topsoil over the new matting, and it will then be re-seeded.
Photo Peter Wade-Martins

This annual report is distributed to members prior to the 2005 AGM which will be held on 18th October. Since the Spring Newsletter the Trust has made great strides on a number of fronts, and in this report we review our achievements over the past year.

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

St Benets Abbey Riverbank repairs completed

For many years the serious erosion caused by the wash from river traffic has been creating great inroads into the site's archaeology. With the completion of the new riverbank designed by Broadland Environmental Services Ltd, the abbey is now safe from further river damage. The new engineering works have been funded mostly by the Environment Agency, with some additional support from English Heritage and the Archaeological Trust.

The next stage is to construct a new flood protection bank along the west end of the abbey, from the river to the gatehouse and then to level out the river silt which has been pumped into the old pond close to the gatehouse. This will ensure that the foundations of the gatehouse are not undermined by future flooding. Work will resume in the spring as soon as we have dry weather and then the area will be grass seeded.

Once all the earthmoving has finished and the archaeology is safe, it will be time to plan the next stage of the Trust's management plan, which is to improve visitor facilities and to draw up a specification for any repairs necessary to the gatehouse, windmill and precinct wall.

St Benets is very much an icon of Norfolk's heritage. The Trust is proud to own it, and it is good to see how much the Trust has achieved during the relatively short time it has been in our ownership.



Removing the obtrusive timber fencing and creating better visitor arrangements is the next stage once all earthmoving for flood defences is completed in the spring.
Photo Peter Wade-Martins

Bloodgate Hill, South Creake Site opened to the public

On 24th June the Lord Lieutenant of Norfolk, Richard Jewson, formally opened the hillfort on Bloodgate Hill for public access. The ceremony and the walk around the site coincided with a break in the rain we had that day, and it was altogether a very pleasant occasion.

The field is now all fenced and grassed over, there is a small car park, picnic table and two interpretation panels, designed by Sue White and Trevor Ashwin, which explain the Iron Age forts of Norfolk and how Bloodgate Hill fits into the overall pattern of Iron Age forts in the county. The geophysical survey and the excavation results have been used to provide an artist's reconstruction of what the fort may have looked like while in use.



Richard Jewson, the Lord Lieutenant of Norfolk, unveiling the interpretation panel at the car park at Bloodgate Hill, with the chairman of the Trust, Matthew Martin. *Photo Peter Wade-Martins*



On the left is Kenneth Penn who ran the excavations at Bloodgate Hill, explaining the site to Richard Jewson and the assembled gathering. Representatives of most of the agencies who have supported the project were present. *Photo Peter Wade-Martins*



The second interpretation panel at Bloodgate Hill shows the results of the excavation and the geophysical survey all included in the artist's reconstruction. The geophysical survey, in particular, produced very significant results which greatly assisted the interpretation.

Caistor Roman Town Wall repairs well under way



The key meeting in October 2004 between officers of DEFRA and the Trust's building surveyor, David Watt (centre), which led DEFRA to confirm a generous 80% grant towards wall repairs. *Photo Peter Wade-Martins*

Members who have visited Caistor over the summer will be familiar with W.S.Lusher & Son working on scaffolding against the north wall of the town. Their aim is to remove all the soil and loose mortar from between the flints and then to apply a new mortar mix in such a way that the flintwork is stabilised and the water runs off the wall so it doesn't seep in thus causing further frost damage. When the wall is cleaned down and the crevasses washed out, it is fascinating to see the lines between the different layers of work the Roman builders left behind.



The horizontal layering or "day lifts" in the Roman wall construction has become evident as the wall has been cleaned down prior to re-pointing. *Photo Peter Wade-Martins*

The plan is to have the whole north wall finished and to make a start on the south wall well before the frosts arrive.

Meanwhile, South Norfolk Council has concluded that the ideas originally formulated by consultants for a visitor centre on The Beeches across the valley do not stack up financially, and all such proposals have been dropped. The intention is to have an upgraded but relatively low key interpretation scheme based on the existing car park. It may be possible to link this to ongoing research, in particular a geophysical survey of the whole town and some limited excavation of the areas dug but never adequately published in the 1930s. A very good case will have to be made for

excavation before there is any chance of English Heritage will give their support for such ground disturbance. Before any excavated walls can be left open for the winter English Heritage will need a cast-iron guarantee that there will be resources available in the long term to ensure that they can be maintained. Discussions on these issues are now taking place.



Work on re-pointing the Roman flintwork in progress. The mortar is placed so that it slopes down to shed water from the wall, thus reducing frost damage. *Photo Peter Wade-Martins*

Garsett House The building sold

It was with great sadness that Council decided to sell Garsett House in Norwich. The decision was taken with reluctance because of its long association with the Archaeological Society and its library on the first floor. However, it was proving impossible to let the ground and second floors of the building for a rent which was sufficient to ensure that the building could be maintained in good order for the long term. The Society moved out its library before the sale, and has found very adequate alternative accommodation in The Close.

Under the terms of the original purchase, if the Trust was ever to sell the building it was required to sell it back to the Society for £1, which would then be in a position to realise its full market value. The outcome is that the Society now has a substantial sum which will generate significant revenue for the future, and the Trust has its £1 which it must invest wisely. By co-incidence, the Trust has just agreed (subject to contract) to buy the Norman motte and bailey castle at Middleton from the County Council for £1!

Middleton Mount Site to be purchased

Dating from the late 11th or early 12th centuries, the castle motte is very well preserved. Indeed, it is probably the best of all the small mottes in Norfolk. The bailey does not survive as an earthwork, but its outline is known from air photographs and excavation. The County Council have owned the site since 1992, but it has found it increasingly difficult to look after the castle with all its other commitments. To transfer the castle to the Trust seemed the obvious solution.