

# NORFOLK ARCHAEOLOGICAL TRUST

## ANNUAL REPORT

### 2016

[www.norfarchtrust.org.uk](http://www.norfarchtrust.org.uk)



Image 1: Heritage Open Day event at Burgh Castle on 12th September showing Comitatus demonstrating Roman period horsemanship.  
*Photo by Colin Dowse*

## Strategic Plan 2016 - 2021

**The Strategic Plan was adopted by the Council at its meeting in April.**

**The Plan sets out three main aims:**

- **To conserve archaeological sites in Norfolk**
- **To facilitate opportunities for community and volunteer engagement**
- **To encourage and promote interest in the conservation of Norfolk's sites and objects of archaeological and historical importance**

The Strategic Plan is now available on the Trust website [www.norfarchtrust.org.uk](http://www.norfarchtrust.org.uk).

This report sets out some of the ways in which the Trust has been meeting these aims in the past twelve months through conservation works at Burnham Norton Friary and Caistor Roman Town; community and volunteer engagement projects at Burgh Castle, Caistor and St Benet's Abbey; and promoting interest in conservation through school visits, public events and new research and interpretation at Burgh Castle and Caistor.

## Burgh Castle Fort:

### Life outside the walls

Following our successful Sharing Heritage bid to the Heritage Lottery Fund, this project got underway in May, with enthusiastic support from local people. A public meeting at Burgh Castle village hall really got the project started - over 60 people attended and many of them signed up for one or more of the four different strands of training: test-pitting, oral history, visitor guiding, and leading school visits.





Image 2: Volunteers at the Burgh Castle test-pit training day.  
Photo by volunteer

During the following three months a programme of training enabled local people to take part in digging 11 archaeological test-pits in village gardens; record the memories of 7 people who grew up in the village during the 20th century; lead site visits from 400 children from 8 different Norfolk primary schools; and provide guided tours of the site during the Heritage Open Days event on Saturday September 10th. As well as the new guided tours, this event included Roman cavalry re-enactment; storytelling; a 'live' test-pit; a new display in the church of finds from the project, and the geophysical survey (see below for more on this); and a 'listening post' of resident memoirs. Over 300 people attended the day. Feedback included the comment *'Fantastic event. I will remember this day'*.



Image 3.1: One of the school visits to Burgh Castle.



Image 3.2: Roman cavalry re-enactment at the Heritage Open Day event.



Image 3.3: Visitors enjoying a Roman Myth told by Jim Kavanagher at the Heritage Open Day event.



Image 4: Some of the Burgh Castle visitor guide team.

The volunteers involved have been extraordinarily committed to supporting the activities which all had to be delivered within a short period and required significant amounts of their time – thanks goes out to all of them. In particular our volunteer supervisors deserve a special mention. They organised and supervised the test-pit programme with meticulous attention to detail, as well as assisting the geophysical survey and supporting the school visits. A report on the test-pit findings will be produced over the winter.

Although the funding for this project has ended, many of the activities will continue. Several residents have offered their gardens for test pits in the future, and the school visits and guided tours will continue to be led by the new volunteer teams. The exhibition on the archaeological research during the project has a permanent home in the church, and the oral history recordings will be deposited in the Norfolk Sound Archive.

For more detail on the project, including the project blog follow the link from [www.norfolktrust.org.uk/burghcastle](http://www.norfolktrust.org.uk/burghcastle)

### Geophysical Survey

The aim of the 'Life outside the walls' project was to find out more about the settlement that grew up outside the fort. As well as digging test-pits to help build a picture of the boundaries and development pattern of the settlement, we also commissioned Dr David Bescoby to carry out geophysical survey of two of the fields on the site, with some exciting results. The following is an extract of the conclusions from the report:

- There is some limited evidence for the existence of Roman landscape organisation predating the establishment of the shore fort, matching in alignment an extensive arrangement of co-axial fields and road/trackways to the south. Otherwise

there appears to be little evidence of Iron Age or early Roman settlement activity in the immediate vicinity.

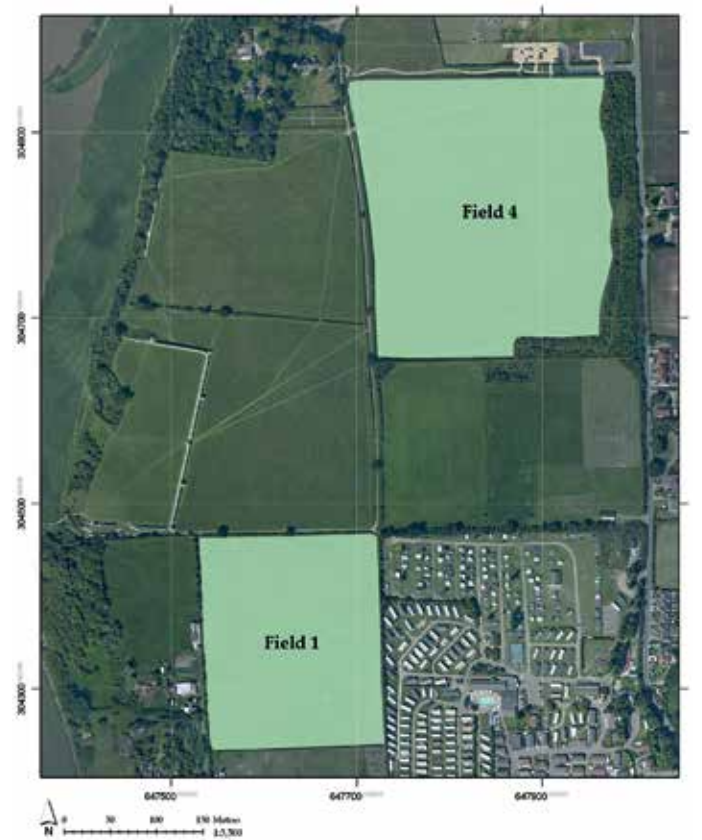


Image 5: Aerial Photograph of the study area, showing the locations of Fields 1 and 4 where geophysical survey was undertaken.

- An appreciable number of detected ditches and associated trackways follow the same alignment as the shore fort, also matching that of extensive crop-mark evidence to the south of Field 4, and these together are seen to indicate the likely planned layout of the vicus associated with the fort.





Image 6: Linear ditch features in Field 4 (blue) conforming to the same alignment as Roman field systems to the south.

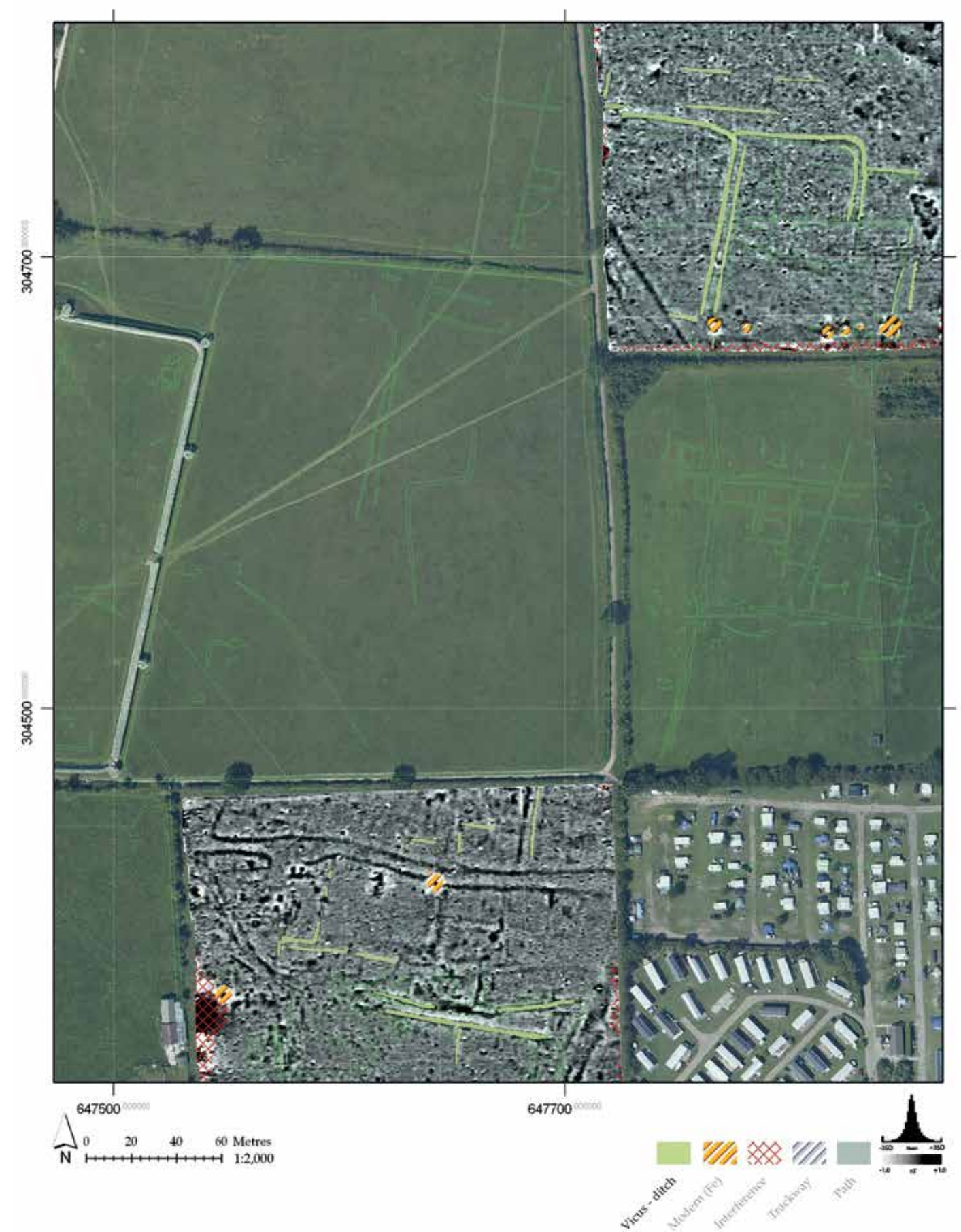


Image 7: Large enclosures and ditches detected in Field 4 (top right) aligned with the shore fort. Cropmark evidence from the field to the south can also be seen aligned with fort.





Image 8: The remains of buildings located in Field 1

- In Field 1 there is good evidence for the surviving remains of a number of buildings aligned with the fort and therefore thought likely to be contemporaneous with it.
- A large double ditched droveway with a number of small enclosures along its southern flank dominates the northern portion of Field 4. Based on its alignment and apparent course through earlier buildings, it is assigned a probable post-Roman date, although this is somewhat tentative.

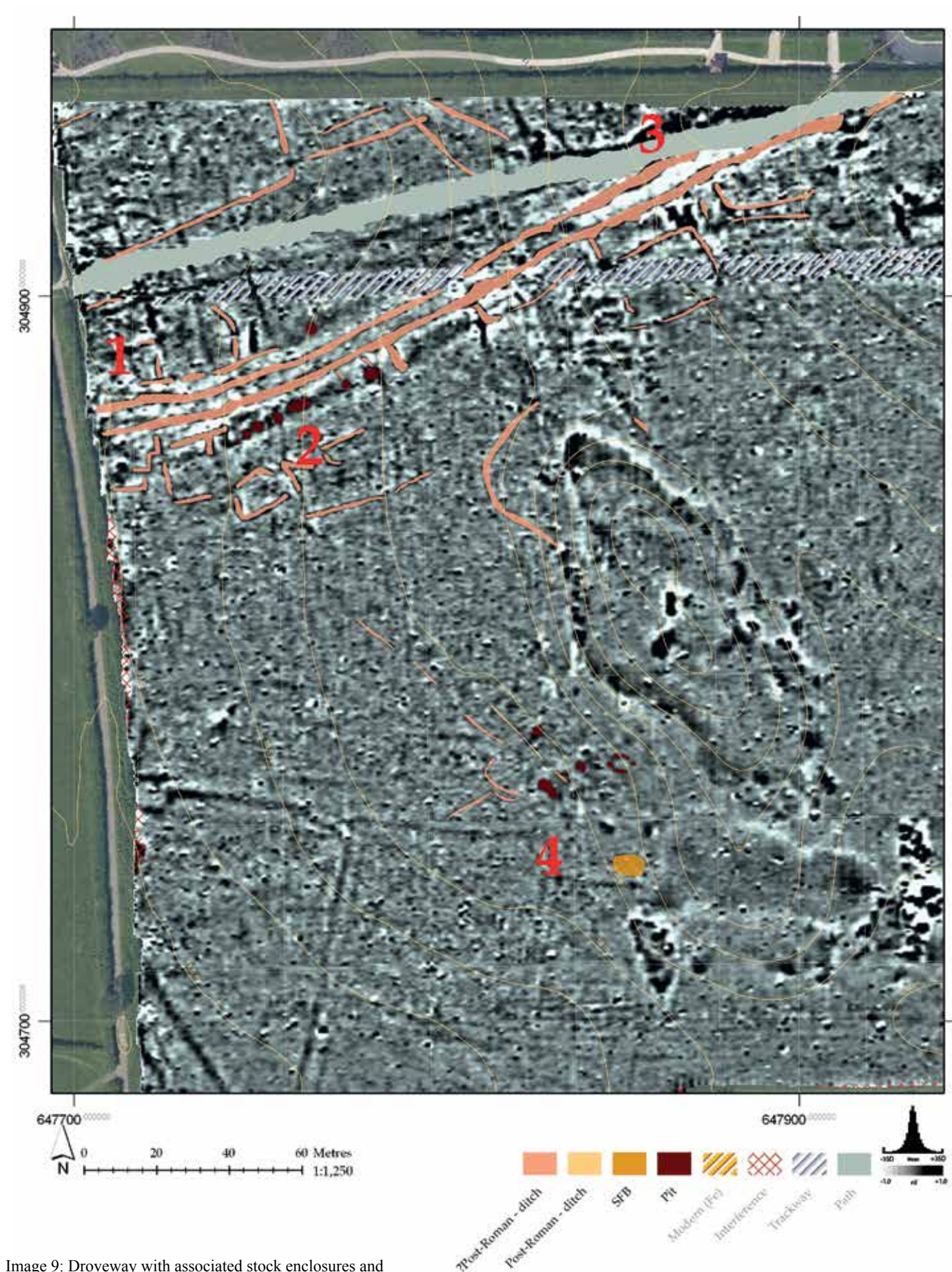


Image 9: Droveway with associated stock enclosures and possible evidence of Saxon settlement in Field 4 (4).

- Further post-Roman activity in the form of a double-ditched triangular enclosure and associated trackways, appear to form part of a wider landscape reorganisation and may link with similarly aligned elements along the eastern margins of the vicus, identified as a series of

cropmarks including a possible post built structure. In the SW portion of Field 1 an area of possible Saxon settlement has been identified, including two proposed SFBs and associated pits.



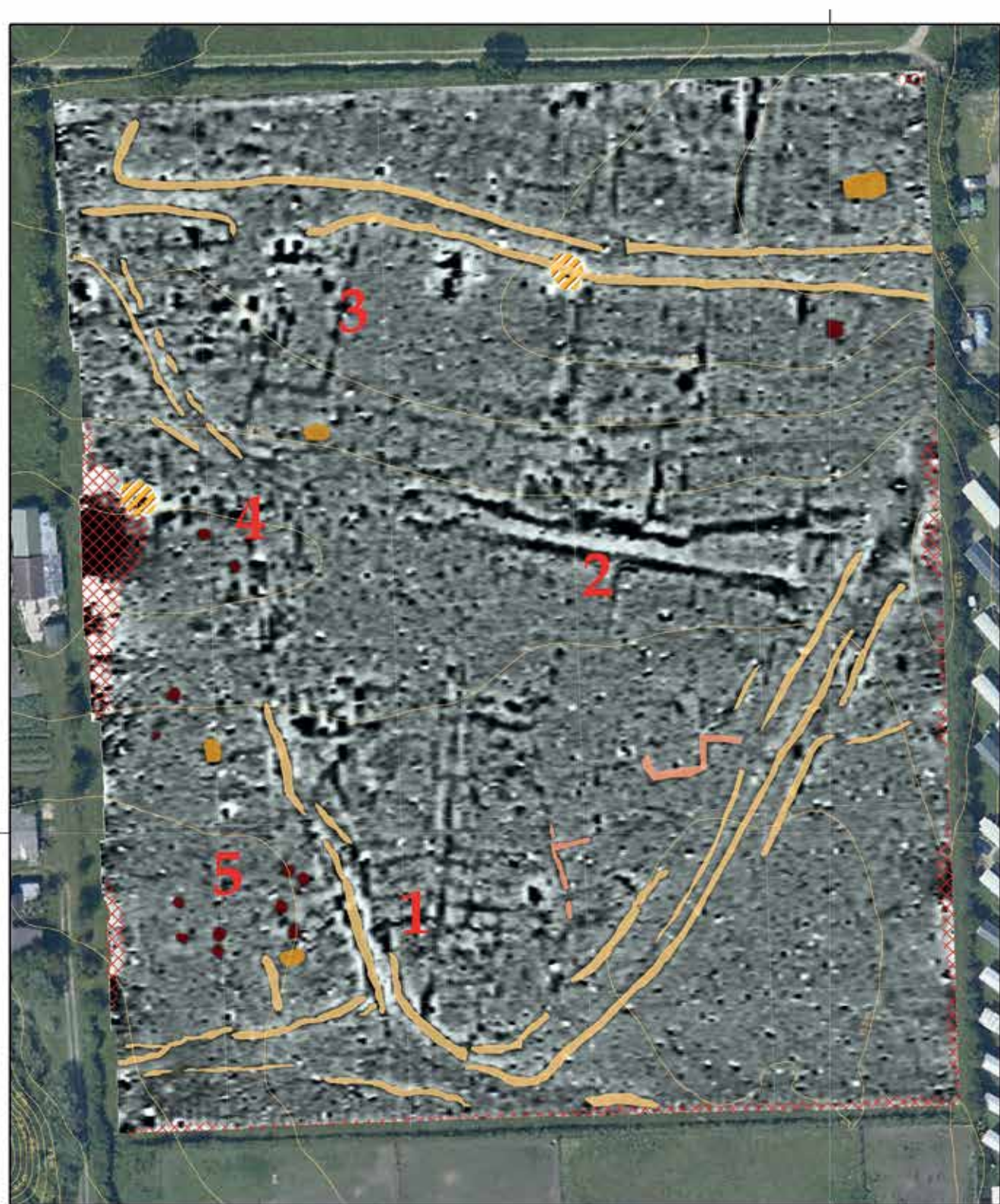


Image 10: Large triangular enclosure detected in Field 1 with probable evidence of Saxon occupation (5).

- The centre of Field 4 contains topographical evidence of former quarrying and the geophysical survey has identified a belt of possibly associated industrial activity flanking the eastern margins. A more extensive concentration of industrial activity was also identified to the SE. Dating this activity remains problematic.

The survey has enormously extended our understanding of the phases and location of the settlement that developed outside the fort, and has established a foundation from which to conduct future investigation.

### Burgh Castle Almanac

This was not the only project which took place at the Fort this summer. As reported in the Spring Newsletter the Trust's proposed project the *Burgh Castle Almanac* is included in the Broads Landscape Partnership *Water, Mills and Marshes* scheme. Working with our partners, The Restoration Trust, Stonham Home Group and Time & Tide Museum, this project aims to provide education, skills, health and wellbeing benefits for people in recovery and being supported to live independently.

To do this, the longer-term project will provide a framework of regular training and creative activities at Burgh Castle Roman Fort over a year. If successful it is intended that this pilot can be used as a model at other sites around the country.

During May and June we ran four 'taster' sessions to test out the viability of this model, as preparation for the delivery stage. A group of eight clients took part, and they were introduced to techniques of recording the walls; recording flora using a technique being rolled out by the Norfolk Wildlife Trust to survey county wildlife sites; and creative photography techniques



Image 11: Photo taken of Burgh Castle Fort by Almanac participant.

Site visits were followed by sessions at Time & Tide museum for collating recording work and developing creative work – for example editing photos, drawing, painting, or writing. In the delivery stage it is intended to exhibit the work produced through the project at Time & Tide Museum.

The feedback from clients and support workers on these four sessions was very positive, and has provided us with a good model for development in the delivery phase timetabled for 2018.

For information on the work of The Restoration Trust see: [www.restorationtrust.org.uk](http://www.restorationtrust.org.uk)

For information on the Broads Landscape Partnership see: <http://www.broads-authority.gov.uk/looking-after/projects/water,-mills-and-marshes>

### St Benet's Abbey

Over the summer Withy Arts have been working with artists from Barrington Farm, a Day Services Centre for adults with learning difficulties based at Walcot, using the story of the Ludham Dragon as inspiration. The lottery-funded 'Reawakening the Ludham Dragon' project saw the artists create a 'Wurm' from willow which was installed at St Benet's Abbey Gatehouse (where the dragon is alleged to live) throughout August, during which time the project was blessed by the Bishop of Norwich and visitors were given the opportunity to help finish the sculpture by making willow 'scales'.

This project, together with the Burgh Castle 'Almanac' project, has provided new opportunities to explore our sites for groups who otherwise would find it difficult to visit them.

See <https://withyarts.org/blog> for more information on the project.

Image 12: The Ludham Dragon sculpture at St Benet's Abbey.





### St Benet's Abbey Conference

This conference was the result of a collaboration between the Trust, The Norfolk Archaeological & Historical Research Group (NAHRG) and the Centre of East Anglian Studies (CEAS) and was intended as a drawing together of research and interpretation that emerged during the recent Conservation Access and Community project at the site. An audience of over eighty people enjoyed an interesting and varied programme of lectures ranging from the documentary evidence for the development of the monastery and the post-Reformation site, including the mill; art historical analysis of the gatehouse; evidence from archaeological excavation; and geophysical survey. Special thanks must go to Tony Bradstreet of NAHRG who organised the conference; and to the contributors, Charlie Rozier, Julian Luxford, Stephen Heywood, Dave Bescoby, Giles Emery and Alison Yardy



Image 13: St Benet's Abbey conference audience.

### Burnham Norton

Work has progressed at St Mary's Friary on the repair of the precinct walls which run along the north and east boundaries of the site. Following archaeological recording of the walls, R&J Hogg began work in August by creating a culvert across the ditch at the east end of the site which will provide future access for maintenance vehicles.



Image 14: Precinct walls cleared and ready for repair, with new culvert on right hand side of picture.

The aim of the work to the walls is to stabilise standing wall sections, reinstate missing fabric to assist in achieving stability, re-form broken wall heads and wall faces to improve weathering, protect surviving facework and present the wall as a coherent linear site feature. If the weather is kind, the works could be completed before the end of this year.

Archaeological recording will continue during the repairs, and watching briefs are in place for the culvert work, and for the installation of proposed buttressing which will support upstanding sections of the north wall.

The project will also see an update of the interpretation panel on site, the content of which will reflect the findings of the archaeological analysis during the project.

These works are being funded under a Higher-level Stewardship Agreement with Natural England

### Caistor

#### Making Connections project

The Making Connections project, funded by Historic England, has been completed. This project produced learning materials for schools, trained a group of volunteers to lead school trips, and funded a refreshed exhibition on Roman Norfolk at the Castle Museum. The purpose of this three-pronged approach was to provide integrated information about the site for visitors, and continuity in the use of graphics.

The exhibition in the Museum is in place, and includes finds from the recent excavations, and a fly-through video of the new digital reconstruction. Support materials for school visits to Caistor are now available from the Trust's website, and will shortly be joined by materials for supporting trips to Burgh Castle, developed during the 'Life outside the walls' project.



Image 15: School group exploring the ditch at Caistor Roman Town.

The Caistor volunteer group led visits from Long Stratton and Stoke Holy Cross schools during July. Activities included 'Walking back in time' to the Roman period, imagining the daily lives of the characters from the interpretation scheme, and following the Augmented Reality interpretation trails using school I pads. Feedback from the pupils was very positive with comments such as 'Thank you for running the fantastic school trip yesterday. Our favourite school trip yet.' 'The things we enjoyed most were using the I pads, walking back in time and looking at the wall.' 'We liked finding out about the ditch and how the Romans dug it and how it is still here today'.

Several of the pupils also reported that they enjoyed visiting the church, which Caistor St Edmund PCC kindly made available to us, for shelter and for the use of their facilities.

### Caistor Roman Project (CRP)

As reported in previous newsletter and reports, the Trust and the CRP have been collaborating on a number of activities at the Roman Town and environs, including the school visits, guided tours during this year's Heritage Open Day Festival, and activities during the Festival of Archaeology in July.



Image 16: launch of CRP's Heritage Lottery-funded project.



This closer relationship between the two organisations has been strengthened by the Memorandum of Understanding agreed earlier this year, and Associate Membership of the Trust for CRP members.

In June CRP received confirmation that their latest Heritage Lottery Fund bid for £84,000 – ‘From Roman town to medieval manor: community research and capability development at Caistor St Edmund’ - had been successful. This three year project will investigate the area outside the walls of the Roman town of Venta Icenorum, and the Anglo-Saxon settlement that developed on the town’s peripheries, using geophysical survey and small-scale excavation, and is bound to further extend our understanding of the context of the Trust’s site.

## The Friends of St Benet’s Abbey

TFoSBA have had another successful year of activities. They continued to organise free guided tours three times a week throughout the summer, and during the Heritage Open Day Festival. This year also saw Fairhaven Trust boat trips linking up to guided tours at the site. Special events for Friends included a guided tour of Norwich cathedral and a free day photography workshop. TFoSBA also run monthly wildlife surveys and are building up a useful database of the birds and fauna that visit the site throughout the year. On top of this the group ran a very successful stall at the Horning boat show, and organised another sell-out boat trip to the annual Bishop’s Service. Membership is only £5 – contact [tfosba@gmail.com](mailto:tfosba@gmail.com)

Working with CRP and TFoSBA as well as local people at our other sites has meant that the Trust has benefited from the support of over sixty volunteers this year.



Images 17: Guided tour at St Benet’s for HODs 2016.

This comment was received via Facebook: *‘I just wanted to give a huge ‘thank you’ to your guides today for a fabulously informative visit! I arrived with this ball of excitement in my tummy at the opportunity of walking around this wonderful site and it didn’t disappoint. We have amazing history on our doorstep and it takes days like this for us to visit. What an amazing spot!’.*

*Photo by Anita Turpin.*

## Keeping in touch

We will always be pleased to hear from members about any aspect of the Trust’s work, especially if you are interested in volunteering at one of our sites!

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You can also follow us on Twitter [@NorfArchTrust](https://twitter.com/NorfArchTrust) and we regularly update the news page of the website [www.norfarchtrust.org.uk](http://www.norfarchtrust.org.uk).