

NORFOLK ARCHAEOLOGICAL TRUST

ANNUAL REPORT

2017

www.norfarchtrust.org.uk



Image 1: Imagined Land pageant.

This newsletter reports on the conservation works at Burnham Norton Friary; the Imagined Land community and volunteer engagement project at Tasburgh; and promoting interest in conservation through school visits, public events and new research and interpretation at several of our sites.

Imagined Land Project

The success of our Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF) application for the Imagined Land project was reported in the Spring newsletter. The project started in January and since then the people of Tasburgh have taken up with gusto the opportunity to explore and celebrate the history of the village, centred on Tasburgh Earthworks at its heart. Working with existing volunteer organisations has been a key strength of the project. Dr John Alban, formerly the Norfolk County Archivist, led a team of mentors from the Norfolk Archaeological and Historical Research Group (NAHRG) who assisted local volunteers in their research on all aspects of Tasburgh's past, including the historic landscape, manors, non-conformity, charities and occupations. A flavour of this research was reflected in a travelling exhibition, launched at Preston Primary school in July, before moving to the church and then to Long Stratton library for the summer.



Image 2: Exhibition launch.

Full summaries of the research can be viewed and downloaded from the project website: <https://sites.google.com/site/imaginedlandprojectnorfolk/tasburgh-research>

Another key partner has been the Caistor Roman Project (CRP) who provided mentors for volunteers participating in the 15 test-pits carried out around the village under the professional supervision of Giles Emery, Norvic Archaeology. More than 45 people took part in the first Dig Weekend, and over 50 in the second, both in May. 25 Scouts and Young Archaeologists plus 12 adults took part in a children's dig over another weekend, and more than a 100 children, plus volunteers, took part in a week of activities at Preston Primary school.



Image 3: School participation.

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Image 4: A 19th century Temperance Medallion made of white-metal. Found during the test-pit programme. It depicts the good Samaritan on one side and the legend 'GO FORTH AND DO LIKEWISE'. Photo: Giles Emery.



Image 5: One of the test-pits in a local garden.

Just over one-thousand individual artefacts of a wide range of material types were collected including worked prehistoric flints, pottery sherds, butchered animal bone, oyster shells, clay tobacco pipe, coins, buttons, ceramic building materials and iron smelting slag. Around three hundred and fifty individual pottery sherds were found including fabrics from vessels of Prehistoric, Roman, Saxon/Early Medieval, Medieval, Post-medieval and modern periods. Norvic Archaeology will produce a full post-excavation report on the test-pits finds which will be available from the project website.

Preston Primary School has been another key partner in the project, devoting much of its summer term to exploring the history of Tasburgh, through creative writing, test-pitting and recording oral histories from local residents. Pupils made lanterns for the village pageant, and participated enthusiastically in the final performance. The school was also very generous in lending the project its hall for workshops and for the launch of the exhibition. Pupil reports on the summer term activities can be read on the project website: <https://sites.google.com/site/imaginedlandprojectnorfolk/preston-primary-blog>



Image 6: The village pageant in rehearsal.

As part of the research strand, geophysical survey was completed at Tasburgh and Burnham Norton (which will be the focus for the second year of the project). A summary of the survey at Tasburgh is included later in this report.



Image 7: Creative writing group discussing test pits finds with Giles Emery.

Results from the research were used as the starting point for creative activities– writing, music and craft making – which formed the second strand of the project.

Sara Helen Binney, supplied through Writers Centre Norwich, led creative writing workshops in the school and the wider community during the summer, and musician Charlie Caine developed songs, including 'The Song of Tasburgh' with local singers and musicians. Ali MacKenzie, of Norwich-based Tin House, led workshops which produced 70 lanterns, four beautiful village banners, and three huge sheep for the village pageant, designed and made by local participants.

All this research and creativity culminated in a village pageant which took place at Tasburgh Earthworks on the evening of Saturday September 16th. The Pageant told the story of the village through four episodes which focused on the Victorian, Medieval and Saxon periods and the Iron Age, accompanied by specially written stories and music, all developed by local people. Almost 150 local people took part in the project, as well as every pupil at the school, with around 200 people participating in the pageant. The evening ended with a ceilidh at the Village Hall.

The first year of the Imagined Land project has been successful in raising local awareness of the value of the monument at the centre of Tasburgh village, and many new connections and friendships have been made. In particular, local researchers are keen to continue their work.

The project will now transfer to Burnham Norton where the focus will be on the Carmelite Friary – please get in touch with Simon Floyd, Project Manager, if you would like to get involved (contact details on next page).



Image 8: Village pageant.



Image 9: Singers, lanterns, banners and sheep: the pageant on its way to the earthworks..

The Trust received a grant of £74,700 from the HLF to support the 2-year project, with additional contributions from Historic England (Heritage Schools) Norfolk County Council and Norfolk and Norwich Archaeological Society (NNAS), Writers Centre Norwich and Norwich Arts Centre, as well as vital in-kind support from Caistor Roman Project (CRP),

Norfolk Historical and Historical Research group (NAHRG) and local volunteers.

For more information, please contact the Project Manager, Simon Floyd: Tel: 07896 781574
Email: imaginedland1@gmail.com
Project website: <https://sites.google.com/site/imaginedlandprojectnorfolk>



Image 10: Imagined Land logo, and logos of project supporters.



Image 11: Remains of the encircling defensive ditch and possible rampart.

Tasburgh Geophysical Survey

A geophysical survey was undertaken by Dr David Bescoby at Tasburgh Earthworks in February. The survey revealed a large number of surviving sub-surface elements relating to probable multiple periods of former settlement and land use. The report outlined the following conclusions:

- The survey mapped the western portion of the bank and ditch, the latter measuring c. 10 m across, along with the clay rampart and/or associated paved pathway, identified in the 1948 excavations. An apparent break in the rampart might relate to an entrance way into the enclosure along this section of the defences. The survey also identified the likely location of the 1948 trench, some 55 m to the south of its presumed position (Image 11).
- There is some limited evidence from the centre of the surveyed area for a network of ditches that pre-date the mid-late Saxon settlement evidence revealed during excavations to the south of Church Hill in the late 1970s.
- An elongated, sub-rectangular enclosure orientated towards a hypothesised SW entrance into the hillfort is not inconsistent with Iron Age/Romano British

examples seen in Norfolk and appears separate from the strongly defined network of enclosing ditches to the south, enclosing the later Saxon settlement (Image 12).

- A well-defined enclosure ditch defines an area of c. 0.6 ha, with Church Hill lane forming a southern boundary. Within, a large number of features relate to numerous pits, internal sub-divisions, two small hearths, a possible post-build structure and Sunken Feature Building (SFB). This area of activity no doubt represents an extension of the Mid- to Late-Saxon settlement in the vicinity of the parish church, effectively divided by Church Hill lane, which might well have originated from this time. The possible SFB is interesting as this building form is generally more a feature of early Saxon settlement (Image 13).
- Within the central area surveyed a large area of industrial activity was identified, most likely associated with a kiln and in all probability with the nearby Saxon settlement to the south.

The report indicates some potential evidence for an Iron Age date for the fort, as well as strong indications of the Mid-Late Saxon settlement around the church.



Burnham Norton

Repairs to the precinct walls

Works to repair the precinct walls, which began at St Mary's Friary in summer 2016, recommenced after a winter break, and will be completed during the autumn. The works included completion of repointing/rough-racking of the breaks between

sections of the fallen north wall; and remedial works to stabilise structural movement to the east face of the Gatehouse, and to the remains of the buttress on the west side of the free-standing church wall.

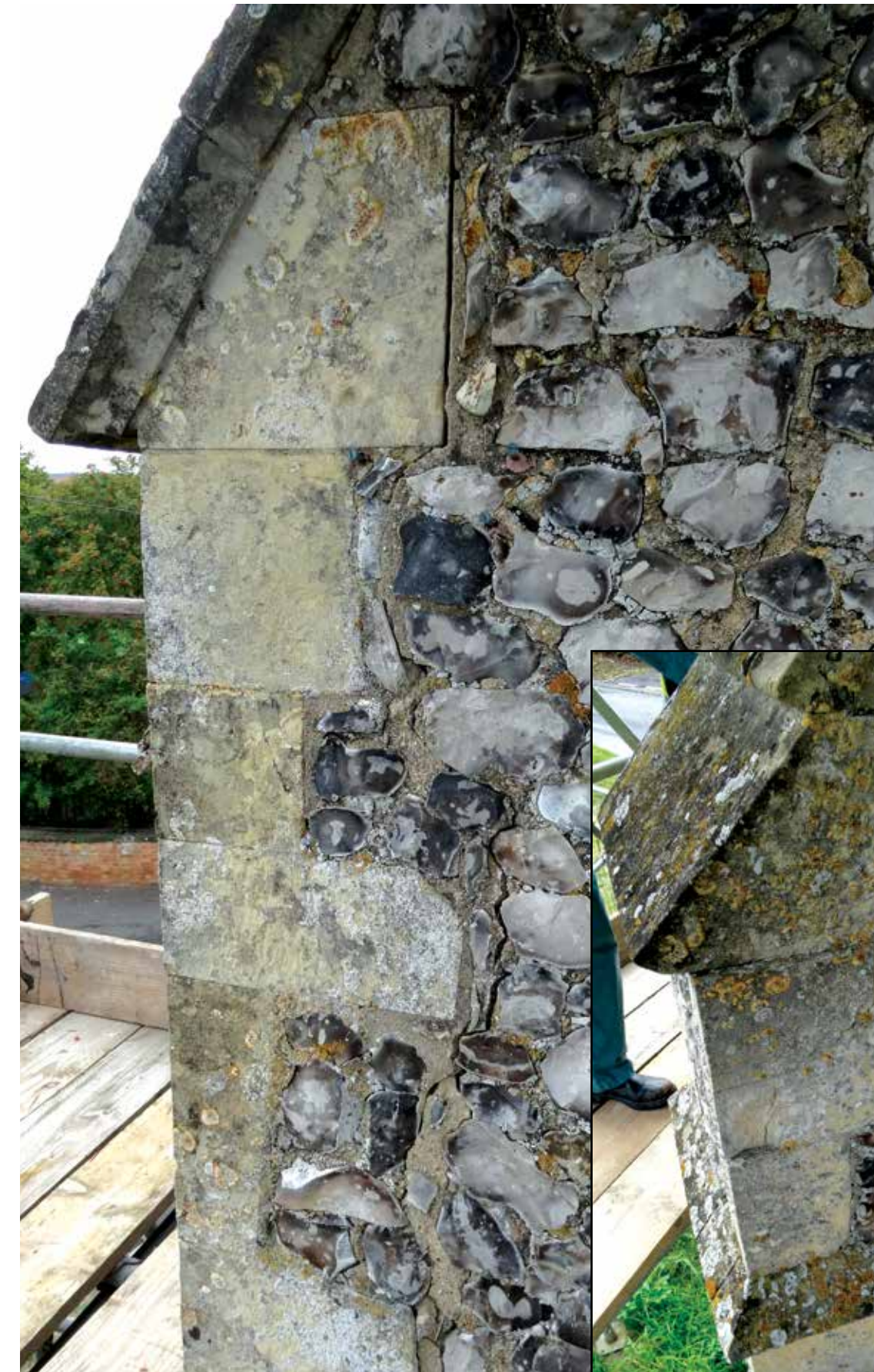




Image 16a: New buttress. *Photo: Giles Emery*

A section of wall leading to the lost north-east corner of the precinct wall was suffering from a significant lean. To support the surviving section from further movement required the addition of a supporting sub-surface brick buttress (with a concrete base).

Shallow excavations against the wall revealed a significantly wider foundation than presumed, which may account for its survival. Following this work a hand excavated investigation was made to establish if the corner wall footings survived below the current ground surface, where currently only a 1.5m friable section of wall stood. The corner wall section was revealed intact, forming a curious wide U-shaped connection between the north and west walls, with no distinct corner angle.

The fabric included reused fragments of limestone, a few medieval brick fragments and a few larger pieces of architectural stone and faced building flints. This reused material was probably sourced from a demolished medieval building of possible 13th to 14th century date.



Image 16b: Corner wall section. *Photo: Giles Emery*



Image 17: New interpretation panel.

In September a new interpretation panel was installed at the site, which aims to provide visitors with an idea of how the Friary may have appeared in the medieval period, and includes information from the geophysical survey completed under the 'Imagined Land' project (this survey will be discussed in the spring newsletter).

The conservation works and the panel were funded under a Higher-level Stewardship Agreement with Natural England.



Image 18: Natural England logo



Image 19: New interpretation panel.

Caistor

Two new kissing gates have been installed on the north side of the site to improve visitor circulation (in addition to the gate installed on the road boundary in Dunston, previously reported). One allows visitors to take a short cut back to the church if they are caught out in the rain in the middle of the town – especially useful for school trips – and the other replaces a stile in the east ditch. This means that visitors with reduced mobility can avoid the steps up the north bank on their way back to the car park. In addition the decayed timber vehicle bridge over the ditch to the south of the site has been replaced by a culvert – these works were organised and funded by South Norfolk Council under the Management Agreement.

As a further measure to help visitors find their way around the site, we will shortly be installing a number of timber finger posts which will be part funded by a generous grant from South Norfolk Council.

Donation posts

Regular visitors to St Benet's Abbey or Caistor Roman Town will have noticed that donation posts have been installed at these sites to provide people with the opportunity to contribute towards the upkeep of the sites they visit.

We would love to hear from you if you could collect regularly from the donation post at Caistor Roman Town. If you can help, please get in touch!



Image 20: New kissing gate on east side, Caistor Roman Town.



Image 21: Mark Cocker opening the boardwalk at Burgh Castle.

Burgh Castle

As previously reported the Trust is participating in the Broads Authority's HLF-funded Water, Mills and Marshes Landscape Partnership project which is currently awaiting a decision on its delivery stage bid. The project aims to further conserve and enhance the built and natural heritage of the area between Norwich, Great Yarmouth, Lowestoft, Acle and Loddon following the course of the rivers Yare, Bure and Waveney. While we await the HLF's decision, the Trust-led Burgh Castle Almanac project has been sustained by our project partner The Restoration Trust through newsletters and an outing to the site for potential participants.

In addition, we have had the opportunity to speak about the project at the launch of the Broads Plan in July, and we also discussed the project with Lord Gardiner (then Parliamentary Under Secretary of State at the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, now Parliamentary Under Secretary of State for Rural Affairs and Biosecurity) when he visited Burgh Castle in March, as well as highlighting our concerns regarding the future of farming payments.



Image 22: Lord Gardiner during his visit to Burgh Castle.
Photo: Broads Authority

Working with volunteers

We have continued to benefit from the support of volunteers this year. Volunteers at Burgh Castle Fort and Caistor Roman Town led visits from five different school groups. Burgh Castle volunteers also offered guided tours on Sunday afternoons throughout the summer, as well as providing tours at the boardwalk launch.

Caistor Roman Project volunteers ran guided tours at the Roman Town in partnership with the Trust during the Festival of Archaeology in July and the Heritage Open Day weekend in September. This latter event included a new exhibition for the Global Perspectives exhibition, an AHRC-Funded Project exploring British archaeology & heritage - including Venta Icenorum - in a broad international context, led by the Sainsbury Institute for the Study of Japanese Arts and Cultures (SISJAC). More information on this can be found at www.global-britisharchaeology.org



Image 23: SISJAC Global Perspectives exhibition at the church during Heritage Open Day at Caistor.

The Friends of St Benet's Abbey (TFoSBA) provided three guided tours a week, from May until the end of September, which included visitors on weekly boat trips from the Fairhaven Garden Trust, as well as special guided walks during the Heritage Open Days weekend. The Norfolk Wildlife Trust also ran weekly boat trips to the site. In addition, TFoSBA ran another successful Southern Comfort Paddle Boat trip from Horning to the annual service at the Abbey, led by the Bishop of Norwich; and volunteers continue to carry out monthly wildlife surveys.

Visitors can now walk from Ludham Bridge along the bank of the River Ant to the Abbey since the new permissive path was opened by the Broads Authority in May. This lovely footpath link makes it possible to walk a circular route from How Hill, and provides the opportunity to see St James' Hospital Chapel on the other side of the river, and the surviving causeway which once linked the two sites.

Other individual volunteers continue to carry out an invaluable site wardening role at most of our sites, by alerting the Trust if issues arise such as a broken gate latch or a litter problem.

This year we have worked in partnership with several other volunteer organisations – CRP and NAHRG as part of Imagined Land; Bure Valley Conservation Group at St Benet's Abbey and Gaywood Valley Conservation Group at Middleton Mount; The Conservation Volunteers (TCV) and Great Yarmouth Green Gym at Burgh Castle Fort; and South Norfolk Council volunteers, and the Norwich Fringe Project at Caistor Roman Town.



Images 24: BVCG at St Benet's.

Strategic Plan update

When the Strategic Plan was adopted in 2016 an Action Plan was produced which set out a timetable for implementing the main actions relating to the objectives of the Strategic Plan. A review in April of the first year showed that the Action Plan is currently being implemented as planned, including completion of repairs to the precinct walls at Burnham Norton, production of an updated Acquisition Policy and a Fund-raising Strategy; installation of donation posts at Caistor and St Benet's Abbey, establishment of a programme of 'quinquennial'-type surveys of Trust above-ground sites; and successful bids to HLF for the 'Burgh Castle: Life outside the walls' project and the 'Imagined Land' project.

*Text and photographs by Caroline Davison with thanks to David Bescoby and Giles Emery for contributions on Tasburgh and Burnham Norton.
Design by Sue Walker White*

Council membership changes

In October last year Antony Jarrold stood down after nearly twenty-four years of supporting the Trust as a Council member, and in January this year Chris Brown stood down after nearly fourteen years. The Trust Council is grateful for their long service, to Chris for his wise counsel as vice chairman, and to Antony for his ready support of NAT's work at Caistor over the years.

At the last AGM Council was pleased to welcome Dr. Sarah Spooner as a new member. Sarah is a Lecturer in Landscape History and Engagement at the University of East Anglia. She is involved in a number of research and public engagement projects through the AHRC Connected Communities programme. Recent projects have included the Ideas Bank, supporting local history groups funded by the Heritage Lottery Fund, and Pathways to History, a research project investigating the history of footpaths and rights of way in Norfolk. She also undertakes consultancy work as part of The Landscape Group, relating to the history of country houses, and the development of the rural landscape.



Images 25: Sarah Spooner.

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 and we regularly update the news page of the website www.norfarchtrust.org.uk.