

NORFOLK ARCHAEOLOGICAL TRUST SPRING NEWSLETTER 2017

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

Imagined Land: Tasburgh and Burnham Norton

The success of our Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF) application for the Imagined Land project was confirmed in late November. This innovative 2-year project will offer local people the chance to explore and celebrate the heritage of the sites at the heart of their communities.

The appointed Project Manager is Simon Floyd. Simon ran SHARE Museums East for 8 years - the regional museum development programme funded by Arts Council England and hosted by Norfolk Museum Service; and also has extensive experience of developing Community Theatre projects, including the acclaimed *The Common Lot* co-production of 'A Midsummer Night's Dream' with the Royal Shakespeare Company at Theatre Royal Norwich in 2016.



Fig 1: Imagined Land logo.

The Imagined Land project consists of a research strand, working with Norfolk Archaeological and Historical Research Group (NAHRG), Caistor Roman Project (CRP) and Norvic Archaeology; and a community arts strand working with Sara Helen Binney, supplied through Writers Centre Norwich; and other professional artists (to be appointed).



Fig 2: Tasburgh Village Hall public meeting. Over one hundred local people attended February's public meeting in Tasburgh to find out more about the project; and the majority of them signed up for activities including documentary research, test-pit digging, and creative work. *Photo: Simon Floyd*

In 2017 activities will be focused on Tasburgh, with the project transferring to Burnham Norton in 2018. Geophysical survey of the two sites has been undertaken by David Bescoby during February and March. Documentary research has begun with members of NAHRG coming forward to mentor volunteers. In the early summer members of CRP will mentor new volunteers as they undertake a programme of test-pits in Tasburgh, supervised by Giles Emery from Norvic Archaeology. Results from this research will be used as the starting point for creative activities – writing, music and craft making – culminating in a historical pageant devised and created with local communities, including schools. The aim of the project is to provide opportunities for everyone in each community to get involved.

The Trust will receive £74,700 from the HLF, with additional contributions from Historic England (Heritage Schools); Writers Centre Norwich, Norfolk County Council 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 on the project, and how to get involved, follow the ‘Imagined Land’ links from the Tasburgh and Burnham Norton webpages on the Trust’s website, or phone Simon Floyd on Tel: 07896 781574.

Burnham Norton

Repairs to precinct walls

Work continued on the repair of the precinct walls at St Mary’s Friary up until Christmas.

The work to stabilise the east section of wall (along the bottom of the site), and re-form broken wall heads and wall faces to improve weathering, has been completed. This section of wall is currently wrapped up in tarpaulins to protect it from the weather.

Work to the remains of the fallen north wall has started. The natural soft-capping that has developed on the face of the wall (now horizontal) is being left as it is. Repair work here will focus on re-pointing/rough-racking the breaks between wall sections. The main intervention has been the installation of a buttress to support the section of upstanding wall at the east end.

Archaeological recording has continued throughout the repairs, and it is hoped that the findings will be available for inclusion in the Annual Report later this year.



Fig 4: Burnham Norton, repaired section of east wall



Fig 5: Burnham Norton. Natural soft capping of north wall.

The project will also see an update of the interpretation panel on site by September, the content of which will reflect the findings of the archaeological analysis, as well as the geophysical survey which is being completed under the ‘Imagined Land’ project.

The conservation works are being funded under a Higher-level Stewardship Agreement with Natural England.



Fig 6: Burnham Norton. New buttress installed to support the standing section of north wall.



This project has been funded through Environmental Stewardship

Caistor

River bank restoration

As reported previously, successive winter flooding at the Roman Town had caused bank erosion on either side of the pedestrian bridge. Works in October saw the installation of brushwood facines, to re-establish the line of the bank, which were back filled with soil taken from the river bed. The archaeological watching brief recorded no significant finds.



Fig 7: Caistor. River bank repairs.

The west bank section south of the bridge is inhabited by water voles and so repairs to this part of the bank have been adapted to avoid blocking burrows, as required by the Environment Agency. Back-fill has been partial in this area, but posts supporting the fascines have been tied back into the bank to provide extra strength.

The works were largely funded by a grant from South Norfolk Council; Norfolk County Council, the Worshipful Company of Dyers, and a generous private donation.



Fig 8: Caistor. New kissing gate

Maintenance works

In November, a volunteer team from South Norfolk Council took down the old wooden steps at the south-east corner of the site as these had become unstable. It was decided not to replace them, to help prevent continued erosion from rabbits which have sheltered under the structure. Works to repair this erosion, which require scheduled monument consent, are in the pipeline. At the same time the volunteers removed the section of hedge in front of the interpretation shelter next to the car park. Once these works are finished the main entrance and new interpretation route around the town will be clearer for visitors.

Regular visitors to the Roman Town may also have noticed a new kissing gate on the southern boundary of Dunston Field leading into North End lane. This has been provided by Stoke Holy Cross Parish Council Footpath Action Group as part of their project to develop a circular village walk.



Fig 9: Burgh Castle. The new boardwalk being installed. *Photo: Su Waldron*

Burgh Castle

Boardwalk

An award to the County Council's Norfolk Trails team from WREN (Environmental Body which funds projects eligible under the Landfill Communities Fund) has allowed a new disability access project to go ahead at the fort site. The Trust supported the project with a contribution towards the funding package. The project involved the construction of a 600 metre timber boardwalk along the Angles Way below the fort, where the path has been damaged by flooding. The new boardwalk will link with other paths around the Fort to re-instate the access-for-all circular route, with views of the ruins and Halvergate marshes. The work has been delivered by Pathmakers, a new charity dedicated to making the countryside more accessible for communities across Norfolk, and will be opened in the spring.

School visits and guided tours

After the successful season of school visits led by volunteers last year, as part of the HLF-funded 'Burgh Castle: Life outside the walls' project, we have worked together to produce resources and support documents which can now be downloaded by schools from the Trust website. The group will continue to lead school visits in partnership with the Time & Tide Museum, between May and October – an excellent legacy of the lottery-funded project.

Guides trained under the project led a walk at Burgh Castle in support of the county council's Autumn Walking Festival. Regular guided tours are also planned at the site – news of this will be posted on the website nearer the time.

The Friends of St Benet's Abbey (TFoSBA)

Guided tours

Guides from TFoSBA also took part in the county council's Winter Cycling Festival with a guided tour of the Abbey, and a visit to Horning Church. Regular guided tours of the site will begin again in May – see the Trust website for details.



Fig 10: The winter cycle tour gathers for a guided tour at St Benet's Abbey. *Photo: Una Watson.*

Visitors can also book boat tours to the site through the Fairhaven Garden Trust and Norfolk Wildlife Trust.

Planning for 1000th anniversary

2019 will be the 1000th anniversary of the foundation of St Benet's Abbey and TFoSBA are already planning how to mark the occasion. They would like to collaborate with other local groups and organisations, and are open to ideas for events and activities. If you have an idea please contact tfosba@gmail.com.

Caistor Roman Project (CRP)

As well as helping the Trust deliver the Imagined Land project, CRP are in the middle of their own exciting HLF-funded project, and in January they also organised, with the University of Nottingham, a really fascinating conference: 'A town of the Iceni?: 10 years of research at *Venta Icenorum*', sponsored by the British Academy. The conference was free to Norfolk Archaeological Trust members.



Fig 11: Caistor Conference. *Photo: Peter Wade-Martins*

The conference brought together the archaeologists and materials specialists who have been involved in research at *Venta Icenorum* since 2006.

Speakers used the different types of material recovered in the excavations to comment on the lives of the town's inhabitants, looking at economy, diet, and material culture and produced many new insights into the way people lived there. It was a great opportunity for members to learn more about one of our most significant sites.

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!
Email: carolinedavison@norfarchtrust.org.uk
Tel: 01603462987

You can also follow us on Twitter @NorfArchTrust and we regularly update the news page of the website www.norfarchtrust.org.uk.

*Text and photographs by Caroline Davison unless otherwise stated
Design by Sue Walker White*

A poster for a conference titled 'A town of the Iceni? 10 years of research at *Venta Icenorum*'. The poster features a photograph of a Roman town reconstruction. The text on the poster includes: 'A one-day conference presenting the results of new survey and excavation at Caistor Roman town', 'Saturday January 14th 2017 (9.30-5.30)', 'Thomas Paine Study Centre (UEA - Norwich)', 'Entrance £12 (including refreshments) (£6 students). An optional buffet lunch is available. For booking details see <https://ventaicenorum.eventbrite.co.uk> Email: info@caistorromanproject.org Entrance free to members of CRP and the Norfolk Archaeological Trust. Advance booking is essential for all attendees'. Logos for the British Academy, Caistor Roman Project, and The University of Nottingham are at the bottom.

Trust Annual excursion

CRP Associate Members also featured heavily in the Trust's annual excursion which took place on Saturday October 15th. The two organisations worked together to organise a coach tour of three Trust sites in north Norfolk – Bloodgate Hillfort, Burnham Norton Friary and Binham Priory, as well as Warham Camp (owned by the Holkham Estate).

Ken Penn and Stephen Heywood accompanied the group of around 30, and helped spark and inform our conversations about each site. John Hogg, Director of R&J Hogg, met us at the Friary to explain the approach to repairs of the precinct wall, and David Frost from Binham PC explained the recent partnership project there. It was a packed day with a very nice lunch at the Three Horseshoes, Warham, shoe-horned in; and despite complicated arrangements to replace our first coach, which had a damaged door, we arrived back in Norwich on time!

If you have an idea for the annual excursion next year please let me know



Fig 12: John Hogg discussing repair techniques with the group at Burnham Norton