

Annual report 2019

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nat
norfolk archaeological trust



nat
burnham
norton friary

*Aerial view of Burnham
Norton, August 2019.
Christopher Taylor
Aerovisuals*

Onwards & Upwards: Creating a sustainable future for the Norfolk Archaeological Trust

As you will see from the new look of our Annual Report the Norfolk Archaeological Trust has re-branded! This has been completed as part of the Onwards and Upwards review which identified that raising the public profile of the Trust is a priority, in order to attract more support for our work.

Consultant Oliver Vicars-Harris of Connecting Culture provided a strong brief for Norwich-based designer Nick Stone to produce a look that is bright, welcoming and engaging. A survey of Norfolk's crowded landscape of heritage organisations which share one or more of the three words in our name, together

with the difficulty many people experience when trying to spell or say 'archaeological', led to the decision to adopt the acronym NAT for the logo and for everyday communication.

On-site surveys last year found that many visitors are familiar with NAT sites, but know little or nothing about how we protect

and manage them. To emphasise our role, the branding includes site-based logos which people will recognise, connected to the NAT acronym.

Nick also designed our new website which is focused on explaining NAT's mission and inviting support for our work. This doesn't mean we have cut down on historical information and research - detailed guides can be downloaded for each site by clicking on the green 'guide' box. If you haven't seen the new website already, please do explore it soon.
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Onwards & Upwards: Creating a sustainable future for the Norfolk Archaeological Trust

During the past year our consultants, Architrave, led by Dr Simon Thurley, have produced a series of reports and reviews of our work in consultation with Council members. Subjects included branding and digital strategies, income generation, membership, governance, visitor surveys, acquisitions, fundraising and audience development. These reports have fed into the development of a Strategic Plan and a draft Business Plan designed to deliver NAT's new strategic goals and objectives. These plans mark the beginning of an important new phase for NAT during which we aim to build greater security of funding for our work. The plans will be considered by Council in October and we will report on this in more detail in the Spring newsletter.



As the 18-month long *Onwards and Upwards* project draws to a close we will be saying goodbye to Neil Featherstone, who has been managing our sites on a consultancy basis, and has provided numerous good ideas for the business plan; and Katie Phillips, who many of you will have met in her full-time Volunteer co-ordinator role. Katie has done a great job of supporting our existing volunteers and recruiting new ones, while also pulling together a suite of policies and procedures which will help us support our valued volunteers in the future. We will miss her greatly but wish her well in her new job at The Woodland Trust. The *Onwards and Upwards* project is funded by the National Lottery Heritage Fund (formerly the Heritage Lottery Fund).



St Benet's Abbey: 1000 years!

Over the course of the last year, the Friends of St Benet's Abbey have worked tirelessly on delivering the St Benet's Abbey: 1000 years! project, funded by the National Lottery Heritage Fund. The project kicked off with a history day held in Ludham village hall.

Over 100 people attended and had the opportunity to hear four presentations on different aspects of the site, including the architectural history of the gatehouse and church, the abbey in its wider landscape context, the history of the windmill and the history of tourism at the site. One of the highlight nuggets of information came from Professor Julian Luxford, who pointed out that a small number of stone flags from the original cloister can still be seen in parts of the abbey church's south wall.



Following the history day, the Friends worked with theatre company Parrabolla on devising and presenting a community play. The play, which drew on the 1000 year history of the site, was hugely successful, with many people travelling to St Benet's by river to watch it on site. This was swiftly followed by

Above: The procession at the play to the abbey church. Alan Fisher.

Below: Willow monks at St Benet's Abbey



an excellent exhibition in St Catherine's church Ludham, which explored not only the abbey, but the other churches and parishes that were linked to the abbey when it was a monastery. The summer also brought with it four huge wicker monks. The monks, designed by Withy Arts and created with input from the local community, made for an impressive sight across St Benet's, processing to the abbey along the current permissive path in much the same way visitors to the abbey would have done 1000 years ago.

The Friends have not only managed and delivered a public programme of events, but they have also organised training for their volunteers, including Forward Planning and Guide training – and have recruited a number of new guides.

To round off the year of celebrations, NAT has published a new guidebook for St Benet's, and put on an exhibition in the Cathedral Library which celebrates the history of the abbey and builds on the link between St Benet's and the cathedral.

Overall, it has been a busy year at the site, and a successful year – and our thanks go to the Friends for all their hard work.

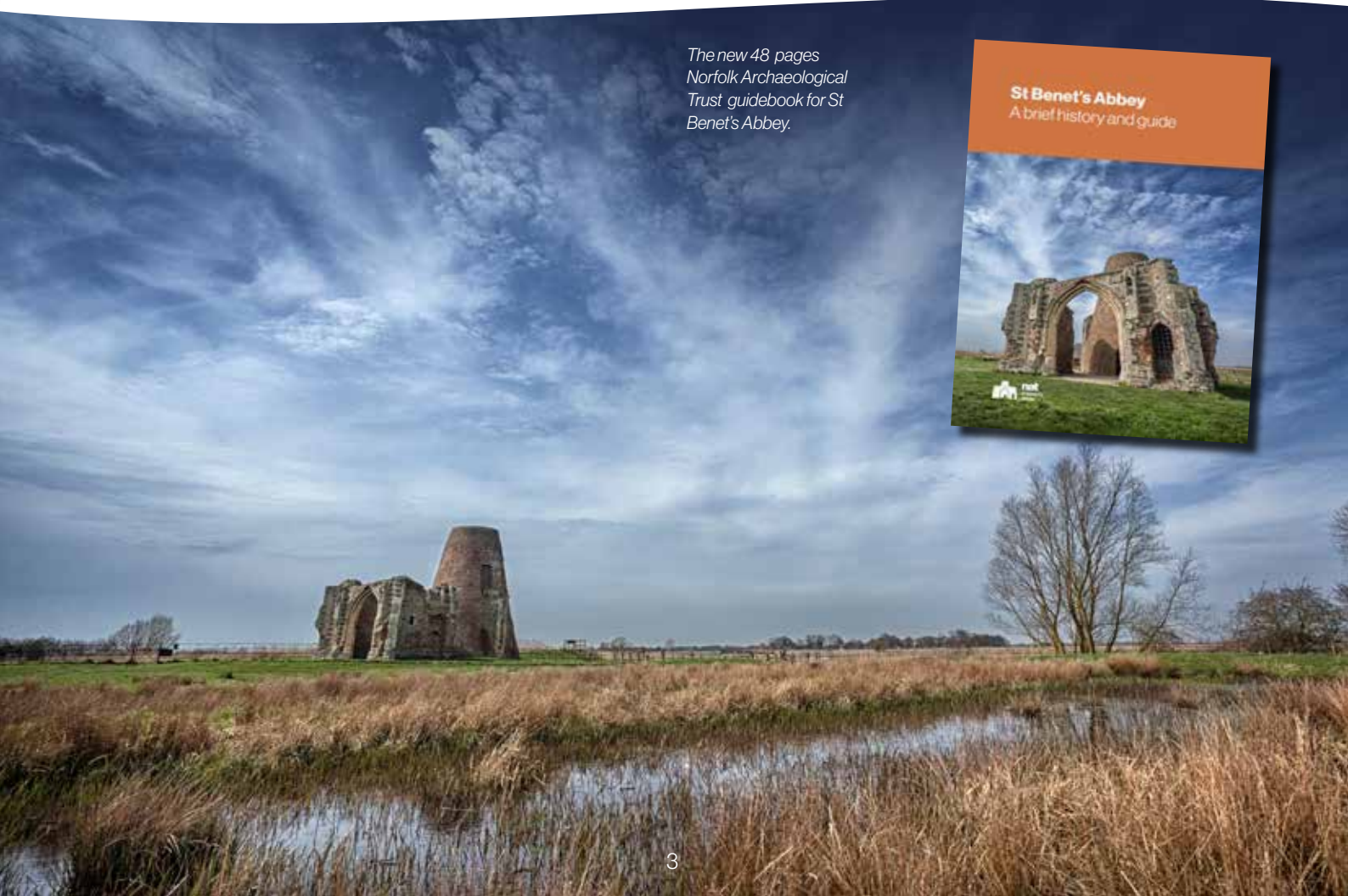
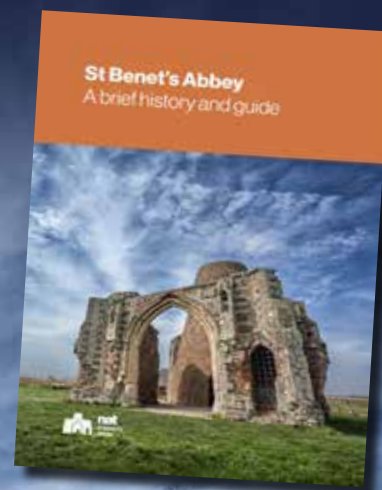


Above: The exhibition in the Cathedral Library ran throughout September.

Below: A view across the fishponds towards the Abbey gatehouse and windmill ruin. Nick Stone.



The new 48 pages Norfolk Archaeological Trust guidebook for St Benet's Abbey.



Caistor Roman Town Temple dig

Caistor Roman Project excavated a temple over the course of seventeen days in August, which lies just under 1km to the north east of Caistor Roman town.



*The temple walls at
Caistor Roman Temple.*

Previous geophysical survey of the temple and minor excavations in 1957 suggested a substantial temple structure, with foundations of up to 1.8m in depth. Excavations this summer, funded by the National Lottery Heritage Fund, have demonstrated that this is the case.

The temple cella and ambulatory walls were exposed in two trenches, while a third trench uncovered part of a rubble-filled hollow-way alongside the temple. The tile and flint walls measured around 1m or more in thickness, and despite numerous plough-scars the extent of their survival demonstrates the solid nature of Roman concrete.

As would be expected, a great deal of ceramic building material has been recovered from the site, along with numerous fragments of painted plaster (including a variety of colours and foliate designs). Smaller finds include a late iron age glass bead, early coinage, brooches of late iron age to early Roman date and two twisted copper-alloy necklet or armlets placed as possible votive deposits. A fragment of a bronze votive leaf has also been recovered.

The ground penetrating radar survey hinted at walls which were hoped could relate to an earlier, smaller temple. The wall footings of an earlier cella and ambulatory wall were indeed present, sealed beneath the make-up for the larger rebuild.

This Phase 1 temple appears to date from the 1st century AD and was constructed of timber and clay with flint footings, in a similar method to early buildings within

the nearby town. A series of purposefully placed coins recovered from directly above the demolished wall currently suggest that the temple was demolished by the early 2nd century AD.

The larger masonry temple was built upon the same spot, which may have been part of a major aggrandisement of the site with the addition of the villa sized building to the north-east, the construction of an enclosing temenos wall and a monumental western gateway to the complex.

The site appears to have remained as an important focus of religious activity linked to the town until sometime in the mid to late 3rd century AD when the town walls cut off direct access to the site via the long-lived roadway, originally established as part of the initial layout for the town.

Having completed this season's excavation, Caistor Roman Project will now spend the next few months reviewing the evidence from this year's work, with the aim of establishing the life history of the temple and how it relates to the development of Caistor Roman town.

(Thanks to Giles Emery of Norvic Archaeology for his notes on the excavation)



Top: Excavation at the Temple Field, Caistor.

Above: Tile, flint and concrete - the make-up of the Roman temple wall



Caistor temple site is a Scheduled Monument. Excavations at the site were undertaken with the consent of Historic England.



Historic England

*Caistor Roman Project
Temple dig*



Almanac Project Burgh Castle Fort

The Restoration Trust (TRT) continues to run monthly visits to Burgh Castle Fort with regular follow-up sessions at Time and Tide museum, as part of the Almanac project – an archaeology, creativity and wellbeing programme for people with mental health issues.



Extra activities have included a recent visit to the Thames Discovery Programme where participants found out about the ancient practice of ‘mudlarking’; and the collaborative construction of a piece of art for the Waveney Valley Sculpture Trail.

Laura Drysdale, the Director of TRT, and Almanac participants have been successfully advocating the project's methods in a variety of settings, including the All Party Parliamentary Group on Culture Health and Wellbeing round table, chaired by Lord Howarth.

This project is part of the Broads Authority's Water, Mills and Marshes Landscape Partnership project funded by the National Lottery Heritage Fund.

*Above: Burgh Castle walls from inside the fort.
Nick Stone*

Left: Burgh Castle Almanac: part of installation at Waveney Valley Sculpture Trail



Guided walks and Heritage Open Days in 2019

This year we ran three events as part of the national Heritage Open Days event supported by local volunteers.

At Caistor Roman Town, Caistor Roman Project volunteers ran another successful Family Fun day – *Who made Caistor great?* – which included digging up a (plastic) skeleton, guided tours and a look at the new virtual reality app being developed by the University of Nottingham.

We also opened the upper room of Burnham Norton Friary's gatehouse where visitors could view the exhibition produced as part of the Imagined Land project.

The Friends of St Benet's Abbey led special guided walks from Ludham Bridge through the historic landscape to the Abbey site. Thanks to all the volunteers involved in making these events happen!

Caistor Roman Town Fun Day





Keeping in touch

We are always 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 us at info@norfarchtrust.org.uk or Telephone 01603 462987

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

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