

# Annual report 2021

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The church of St Edmund  
at Caistor Roman Town.  
Photo: Nick Stone 2021

## Impact of the Pandemic

**It has been wonderful, in the last few months to see the return of guided tours, events and school/education group visits across NATs sites. The restrictions bought about by the Covid pandemic has meant that these activities have been on hold.**

Earlier this year NAT successfully achieved the 'We're Good to Go' Industry Standard mark demonstrating that we had adapted to ensure that we were in line with respective Government and public health guidance. Once we had a COVID-19 risk assessment in place, we were able to allow guided tours to return – albeit in small, pre-booked groups only.

As the year has continued, and always following public health guidance, we increased our guided tours, saw a return of a small quantity of education group

visits and we were able to run an event at Caistor Roman Town and the popular Heritage Open Days. The pandemic has bought more visitors to our sites as people enjoyed getting outdoors and this trend has continued since the restrictions have lifted. However, with more visitors comes the cost of more regular maintenance, plus additional issues with litter, anti-social behaviour, criminal damage, and theft.

We have been working closely with Historic England and the Norfolk Constabulary to manage these challenges.

## Heritage Open Days

**This year we ran Heritage Open Days at four of our sites supported by local volunteers.**

At Caistor Roman Town, Caistor Roman Project volunteers ran guided tours entitled 'What was it like living at Venta Icenorum?'. Norfolk Archaeological Trust volunteers also ran similar guided tours at Burgh Castle Fort and St Benet's Abbey.

We also ran a special talk on the apple and pear trees at Fiddlers Hill Barrow, which was successful, albeit very wet.

# Conservation work St Benet's Abbey

A condition survey in 2020 identified a package of conservation works required to consolidate the flint walls to stabilise and protect the masonry on the church ruins at St Benet's Abbey. We were fortunate enough to be awarded an Historic England Grant - Covid-19 Emergency Heritage at Risk Response Fund to enable the repairs to be completed during 2021.

Much of the damage to low lying walls had been caused by visitors climbing on the ruins, but also taking flints to create a cairn on the altar. There was a risk of losing the surviving 15th century flushwork on the north exterior wall.

Conservation repair work took place throughout the warmer months of the year and is now completed. These works included cutting or treating and removing invasive vegetation from masonry, brushing off loose and spalled mortar and carrying out consolidation as required to stabilise and protect masonry, re-setting loose or missing flints, and re-pointing.

There has also been an extension to the windmill rainwater chute, to encourage the water to fall away from the brickwork. NAT is very grateful to Historic England for their Covid-19 Emergency Heritage at Risk Response Fund.



*St Benet's Abbey church ruins and cross.*



# New Steps coming soon at Caistor Roman Town

Scheduled Monument Consent (SMC) has been granted for the construction of approximately 10 steps.

This will provide improved access from the kissing gate located at the bottom of the moat or ditch adjacent to the entrance track to Caistor St Edmund Parish Church just off Stoke Road.

We are grateful to South Norfolk District Council who are funding the steps through our management agreement. These steps will make public access easier, particular during the winter months.



*Looking west across Caistor Roman Town.  
Photo: Nick Stone 2021*

## Changing faces at NAT

**It has been a year of change for NAT. Director Caroline Davison left us earlier this year, to concentrate on her writing career. Natalie Butler took over from Caroline having previously worked for NAT as the Volunteer Co-ordinator.**

Jules Armour joined us in April as the new Volunteer Co-ordinator. Sadly, Helen Evans – our Administrator is leaving us at the end of November, we thank her for her hard

work in the last year and we wish her well for the future.

We are also saying a sad goodbye to Heather Bolt. Heather has been a Trustee

of NAT for 18 years – her knowledge, enthusiasm and creativity has been a tremendous support. We thank her for her time and dedication.

In early 2022, we will be recruiting for new Trustees to join NAT. If you fancy a new challenge and have time and experience to join us, please do get in touch.





An aerial view of Burgh Castle Fort.  
Photo: Debra Stokes 2018.

## Burgh Castle Fort Car Park

**One of NATs strategic aims is to “Develop a sustainable business model through greater entrepreneurship, improved financial management and rejuvenated governance.”**

The Onwards and Upwards project highlighted that a new stream of revenue which could seriously support our charitable work could be introducing car parking charges at some of our sites. This year we have conducted local public consultation regarding our proposal to introduce car parking charges at the Burgh Castle Fort car park. Taking on board comments we

received, we have now submitted a planning application to Great Yarmouth Borough Council for the installation of a pay machine, ANPR camera and associated signage. The feedback, an example of which is shown here, focused on ensuring the charges were reasonable, and included an opportunity for local, regular visitors to be able to purchase a yearly permit.

“I think it’s important to preserve the site and if charging for parking is one way to raise money for this, then reluctantly I would agree you have to go ahead. I think the charges seem reasonable compared to other places and the good standard of the carpark.”

We are hopeful for a decision in early 2022. Being able to introduce car parking charges at this site will make such a huge difference to what we will be able to achieve.



# Successful introduction of new volunteer Meet & Greet role

As NAT grows the volunteering opportunities at the charity increase too, and in part due to increased visitors at many of our sites, this year we introduced a new role of Meet & Greet Volunteer.

Launched at Burgh Castle Fort and Caistor Roman Town, followed by St Benet's Abbey, the role of these volunteers has been to engage with visitors during the peak months. Sharing their knowledge of the history of the sites and the wildlife who call it home, these new volunteers have also been part of the strategy to increase a visible NAT presence across sites.

As part of their role, they have been asked to advise the public on how to help us care for these special places, which includes taking litter home and not to climb on the ruins. Our Meet & Greet volunteers are part of our reporting mechanism looking out for metal detecting and anti social behaviour. As we end the summer season and the role stands down for the winter, we will review the role with regards to 2022.

Initial feedback from volunteers and visitors is that the public are pleased to see volunteers on site and are happy to have the opportunity to talk to NAT – whether that be questions or to provide feedback. The aim is that this role becomes an established part of the NAT volunteer team, and one that can be rolled out to other sites as visitor numbers require.



Volunteers at Burgh  
Castle Fort.  
Photo: Natalie Butler 2021.



# Heritage Crime Awareness and Family Fun event at Caistor Roman Town

The Heritage crime awareness event was moved from July to September to avoid the extended covid restrictions.



It was a very successful day, and many organisations came along to support us including Norfolk Constabulary, the RSPCA, Portable Antiques Scheme and the Norfolk Wildlife Trust. Guided tours of the Roman Town were run throughout the day, there were children's activities, a trail, and an artist in residence. We sold guidebooks, recruited volunteers and raised the awareness of NAT. Many thanks to all the volunteers and organisations which supported us on the day.

## Norfolk Archaeological Trust - Trustee Role Profile

Would you like to apply to be a Trustee of NAT?

As a Trustee you will bring leadership skills, knowledge and experience, independence and objectivity of judgement.

Your role includes:

- To act as an ambassador for NAT, opening doors and making introductions.
- To help shape the strategies and associated plans; to highlight issues of importance or concern that should be reflected within them; and once set, to challenge and support their delivery.
- To debate major issues affecting NAT.
- To act as a critical friend to NAT including reviewing performance against an agreed set of performance indicators.

For a Trustee Recruitment Pack – please get in touch with Natalie – [nataliebutler@norfarchtrust.org.uk](mailto:nataliebutler@norfarchtrust.org.uk)



### 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: [info@norfarchtrust.org.uk](mailto:info@norfarchtrust.org.uk)

#### You can also follow us on social media:

Twitter: @NorfArchTrust,

Instagram: [norfolkarchaeologytrust](https://www.instagram.com/norfolkarchaeologytrust)

Facebook: [facebook.com/NorfArchTrust](https://www.facebook.com/NorfArchTrust)

[facebook.com/burghcastlefort](https://www.facebook.com/burghcastlefort)

[facebook.com/stbenetsabbeynorfolk](https://www.facebook.com/stbenetsabbeynorfolk)

We also regularly update the website news and events pages [www.norfarchtrust.org.uk](http://www.norfarchtrust.org.uk).

Text and photographs by Natalie Butler unless otherwise stated. Design by Nick Stone at Starfish <http://www.starfishlimited.co.uk>

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norfolk archaeological trust