



The Bastion at Caistor
Roman Town.
Photo: Nick Stone

Chairman's Report

Upon my appointment as Chairman in July 2020 I set myself some objectives which would guide me throughout my time as Chairman. One of these was to achieve a step change in income for NAT. We are a small charity and typically break even on annual basis which provides little room for contingency or discretionary spending.

We are anxious to maintain our policy of not charging admission fees to our sites but it seemed to me it would be appropriate to introduce car parking charges at some locations. I am most grateful to Professor Owen Warnock and a small sub-committee whose efforts have resulted recently in planning permission being granted to install charging equipment at Burgh Castle Fort. This should become operational very shortly and we will now turn our attentions to Caistor Roman Town where we would like to do the same. I am hopeful this will make a significant difference to our finances in due course.

Another objective has been to resolve a dispute with English Heritage and the Charity Commission over the terms of a legacy left for the benefit of Binham Priory. After 4 years of discussion and negotiation I am pleased to report that a scheme introduced in 2012 which permitted some of the legacy to be spent on sites other than Binham will be changed so that those funds spent elsewhere will be repatriated and the legacy of £2m will be spent solely at Binham.

This will secure the long term future of the magnificent church and surroundings including the monastic ruins. Two of our

trustees, Peter Foster and Matthew Martin, have made an unstinting effort to secure this outcome and this together with their legal guidance has been invaluable to the NAT Board.

I also want to say a huge thank you to our Director, Natalie Butler, who assumed office a year ago and has quickly climbed the learning curve. Natalie is ably supported by Jules Armour as our Volunteer Co-ordinator and Administrator and between them they are running the day to day activities of the Trust efficiently and effectively.

Finally I wish to thank our 90 volunteers who regularly visit our sites. I am sorry to say there has been an increasing incidence of anti social behaviour which concerns us greatly and I am grateful to the Volunteers for their time and input in sometimes difficult circumstances.

Jonathan Sisson – Chairman NAT



Aviva volunteers at work
at Burgh Castle Fort

Aviva teams return in 2022

NAT was delighted to welcome teams of volunteers from Aviva to our sites last year. Supporting us at Burgh Castle Fort and Caistor Roman Town, each team spent a day on a variety of tasks to help us keep the sites in good order.

As part of the company's corporate social responsibility, staff are encouraged to spend up to 3 workdays a year supporting local charities and community groups. On NAT sites the teams helped on a range of activity including litter picking, keeping nettles at bay and restoring benches back to good order. For many this was their first experience of our sites, and one they thoroughly enjoyed.

Due to a combination of great weather, wonderful scenery and a break from the office as well as providing assistance, they all plan to return to both sites again in 2022. If you see them out at Burgh Castle Fort or Caistor Roman Town do stop and say hello.

We offer company and team volunteering across all our sites – if you, or anyone you know, is interested in finding out more please email Jules on jules.armour@norfarchtrust.org.uk



New volunteer teams at NAT

Under new Volunteer Co-ordinator, Jules, and with volunteering returning in full after the pandemic, we are delighted to advise of the expansion of the NAT volunteer team. Alongside our onsite volunteers, we were keen to expand opportunities to as many people as possible.



One of those new teams is the Research team, launched 6 months ago. This virtual team allows individuals to volunteer from home, with the opportunity to also conduct research at a variety of physical locations should they wish to (such as Record Offices). This home based role allows volunteers to support our work regardless of location (we now have volunteers from outside Norfolk) or situation – allowing people who may not be able to volunteer on our sites to join the team. The purpose of the role is to support NAT and other volunteer teams in providing research capacity regarding not only our sites and activity, but also in the wider context of Norfolk and British history. The team provides help to both our events and social media activity and is currently also working on planning for NAT's centenary next year.

Our second new team is the Events team. Again a virtual team to allow volunteering to take part in both home based and onsite

activity as suits. Event research and planning is key to this team, and they are currently supporting us on Festival of Archaeology and Heritage Open Days plans. The ability to have a pool of volunteers for events on both NAT and third party sites will allow us to extend our community engagement and raise awareness of our sites.

Both teams have developed from the use of improved technology within NAT and has given us the opportunity to open up volunteering to a wider diversity than we have been able to do so before. Developments in volunteering will continue, to extend to greater opportunities including family and micro volunteering.



St Benet's Abbey update

The St Benet's Abbey site with its mill over the gatehouse and large wooden cross is situated within Horning Parish and is owned by the Norfolk Archaeological Trust (NAT) with a lease over the abbey church area, which is still consecrated ground and owned by the Diocese of Norwich.

The site is constantly being monitored, and repairs carried out where needed. The Norwich District Angling Association help with some of the site maintenance and will be repairing the track at the entrance to the small carpark, which has become potholed. The large oak cross in the care of the Diocese of Norwich is leaning but a recent survey assessed it as safe.

Unfortunately, there has been several incidents of antisocial behaviour, metal detecting and criminal damage (graffiti) at the site, with the police notified on each occasion. The site is so isolated that it is difficult to monitor all visitors, but we are now very fortunate to have some volunteer Site Wardens who visit at random times, and do a great job of checking the site and reporting back to NAT. They also undertake tidying and site maintenance.

St Benet's Abbey has thousands of visitors each year and this number has increased over the last 2 years. We currently have a small team of volunteers who are either Tour Guides, Meet & Greeters or Site Wardens, as previously mentioned.

Free Tours are at 2pm on Saturdays, Sundays & Wednesdays from 1st May to the end of September. They can be booked through the NAT website or people can just turn up at the tour start point near the gatehouse/mill for 2pm to hear the stories and history of St Benet's Abbey brought to life by the guides. The guided tours were able to go ahead in 2021 but had to be pre booked initially to ensure numbers were limited, and for test & trace purposes.

St Benet's Abbey recently featured on the tv series, 'The World's Most Scenic River Journeys' on Channel 5. Reverend David Smith, Rector of Horning Benefice and Prior of St Benet's, spoke about its founding by King Cnut in 1019.

The annual open-air service that is led by the Bishop of Norwich, who is also Abbot of St Benet's Abbey, is to be held at 3.30pm on 24th July this year. This service attracts many hundreds of visitors.

Marion Jackson
St Benet's Abbey Guide Coordinator

St Benet's Abbey needs more volunteers

To enable this historic and atmospheric site to be looked after and enjoyed, NAT need more volunteers, who can choose to take on as much or as little as they feel able to do.

You could be a tour guide with full training and resources given to you for the role. You could meet & greet some of the thousands of visitors and make them feel welcome.

Or you could be a Site Warden, looking after this precious historical site and keeping it looking cared for and inviting.

If you think you may be interested, please contact NAT Volunteer Coordinator, Jules Armour on julesarmour@norfarchtrust.org.uk for more information. She would love to hear from you.

St Benet's Abbey in 1831
by John Sell Cotman



Wildlife

We are so fortunate and delighted that NAT's sites are a haven for wildlife. In fact, two of our sites contain County Wildlife Sites and the Glebe marshes at Burgh Castle Fort is part of the Breydon Water SSSI.

We are thrilled that this year, Skylarks have chosen to nest at almost every one of our sites. This is so hugely important, as they are on the red list and a protected species. Next time you are visiting one of our sites, look out and listen for the Skylarks – they nest on the ground, so be sure to follow the site rules for keeping all visitors (including wildlife and livestock) safe throughout the year.

Membership

As part of our strategic plan we are reviewing our membership offer to give you, our members, more opportunities.

The review will be completed this year and launched in 2023. Our Director, Natalie, would love to hear from you about what you would like to receive as part of the package of your membership to NAT.

All ideas and suggestions considered! Please contact Natalie directly – nataliebutler@norfarchtrust.org.uk

YANA

YANA is a mental health charity that has been supporting people working in agriculture and related rural businesses locally for the last 13 years.



We work to improve mental health amongst those working in the sector through:

- Providing a confidential helpline & free counselling
- Building a better understanding of mental health to reduce stigma and encourage conversations
- Investing in Mental Health First Aid training
- Running a national suicide prevention campaign called '7 Tractor Facts to Save a Life'

In 2021 we provided 204 hours of free counselling and received a staggering 88% more calls to our helpline than the previous year. The pressures that farmers and farmworkers are under are well documented and it is no surprise that support services are hearing increasingly about the struggles people face.

If you, or someone you know, feels unable to cope, is feeling down or having thoughts about self-harm or suicide, talking can really help. The helpline number is 0300 323 0400 or email helpline@yanahelp.org.

If you would like some leaflets or posters with details of YANA's helpline, please email admin@yanahelp.org. YANA will be running more Mental Health First Aid courses in 2022. These are ideal for people who have regular contact with those working in the sector; if you would like to find out more, please visit www.yanahelp.org.



Sheep grazing at
Bloodgate Hill Fort.
Photo: Nick Stone, 2019.

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

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.

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

