

# NORFOLK ARCHAEOLOGICAL TRUST ANNUAL REPORT 2014

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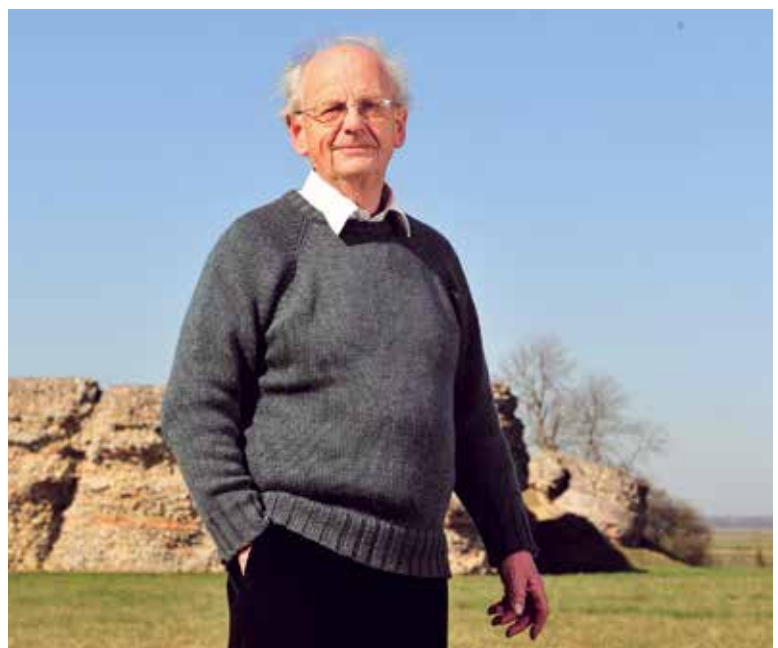


The flowering hay meadow at Dunston Field on a misty September morning, taken from the newly installed bench. The Roman Fort can be seen in the distance.

**There have been some significant changes in personnel at the Trust during 2014 with the appointment of the new chairman Peter Griffiths (as reported in the Spring newsletter), the retirement of Dr Peter Wade-Martins, and the appointment of Caroline Davison as the new Director. Two important projects – at Castle Acre and St Benet’s Abbey – have been completed, and new Higher Level Stewardship Schemes have been agreed at Trust sites.**

## Retirement of Peter Wade-Martins

August 2014 saw the retirement of Dr Peter Wade-Martins, after more than 30 years of sterling service to the Trust - as Director and in his previous role as County Archaeologist - which included the acquisition of the Trust’s flagship sites at Caistor, Burgh Castle and St Benet’s Abbey. As a result of his work all the archaeological sites in the Trust’s portfolio have been protected, conserved, and interpreted, biodiversity has been encouraged, and public access has been greatly increased. During his Directorship the Trust has developed a significant role in the management of Norfolk’s historic environment – an impressive legacy. The Trust’s Council is hugely grateful for all he has achieved and wishes him a very happy retirement.



Dr Peter Wade Martins retired as Director in August.

*Photo: EDP*

## Caistor Roman Town

Visitors to Caistor this summer have been treated to the magnificent sight of the Dunston Field hay meadow in full bloom. The wildflower mix, sown as part of the Higher Level Stewardship scheme agreement with Natural England, has established very successfully. A bench has been installed at the top end of the field to provide rest and an excellent view of the whole site.



Dunston Field hay meadow in July. *Photo: Sue Walker White*

A new shelter has been installed in the car park as the first part of the new interpretation scheme due to be installed in 2015.



The wild flower rich South bank of the town with the new shelter in the distance. *Photo: Sue Walker White*

Conservation repairs to the north wall will start again in the spring.

## Castle Acre Priory

The conservation of the precinct walls at Caistor was completed by R& J Hoggs during the summer. The works to clear the vegetation and repair the fabric have revealed the former extent of the walls, and will assist visitors in understanding the extent of the monastic precinct. Repairs have included the use of soft capping on some sections of low wall. Despite the dry weather during the first part of the summer this appears to have established well.



Soft-capping on the precinct wall. Research carried out by English Heritage has found that soft capping can provide effective protection from thermal fluctuations and freeze-thaw action.

At the request of the Parish Council a successful open day was held at the end of June, in partnership with R&J Hogg staff, English Heritage, the Holkham estate, and the Parish Council. The main aim was to inform and inspire local people as part of the longer term aspiration to involve the community in future management and conservation of the precinct area. Despite the bad weather two guided tours were attended by an enthusiastic audience of around 70 people.



Local people enjoying the guided tour despite the rain. *Photo: David Watts*

Negotiations are well advanced for the precinct area to be leased to the Trust from the Holkham Estate and it will then be managed as a hay meadow with public access under a new Higher Level Stewardship scheme agreed with Natural England.



Section of repaired full-height precinct wall at Castle Acre Priory.

## New Higher Level Stewardship schemes

New HLS schemes have also been agreed for Tasburgh earthwork fort, and the Carmelite Friary Gatehouse at Burnham Norton, both to commence in October. These replace expiring Countryside Stewardship Schemes. The scheme at Burnham Norton will include substantial capital funding in the first year for the repair of the precinct walls.

## St Benet's Abbey

As reported in the Spring newsletter the Conservation Access and Community project was completed on time and within budget at the end of May. In fact, some significant savings were made during the project and the Heritage Lottery Fund has given the Trust permission to spend this on a number of extra items, currently underway. This includes the production of a new model of the abbey which will be on permanent display in Ludham Church. It is being made from robust acrylic so that visitors will be able to touch it, thus providing enhanced interpretation of the site, particularly for people with visual impairment and for kinesthetic learners (people who prefer to learn through physical activity).



The Conservation Access and Community project was brought to a close at the abbey site in June with one private and one public performance of the choral work *Ideas of Flight* by The Voice Project choir, which included a number of local volunteers. The public performance was sold out, and both performances received enthusiastic reviews. The Lord Lieutenant wrote that 'it was a treat to be at St Benet's Abbey and feel the magic of it', and the Bishop of Norwich described the events as a 'highly effective and memorable celebration of the project'.



The Bishop of Norwich, Abbot of St Benet's, arriving at the private staithe for the annual service in 2013.



Three interpretation lecterns have been installed on site. Two further panels have been produced – one is at Horning village staithe to provide directions to visitors arriving by boat, and the other will be installed close to Horning Hall in the autumn.

In addition, all the necessary consents have been obtained for the refurbishment of the existing private staithe which is positioned at the southern end of the site, where the Bishop alights for the annual service. The new staithe will allow local organisations, such as the Norfolk Wildlife Trust and the Fairhaven Trust, to bring groups to the Abbey and be sure of having space to moor. Work is due to start in early October.

The team of visitor guides, trained during the project, have continued to provide tours throughout the summer, and have reported good attendance – on average around 14 people per tour. The group hopes to work with local organisations to provide additional booked tours next season.

The Friends of St Benet's Abbey (TFOSBA) was successfully launched by volunteers in June, and the Bishop of Norwich has kindly agreed to be patron of the organisation. This dynamic group maintains the new website [www.stbenetsabbey.org](http://www.stbenetsabbey.org), held its first event on site during Heritage Open Days in September and its first AGM on October 15th. Annual membership is only £5 and members will receive regular newsletters and opportunities to attend special events – to join please email [tfosba@gmail.com](mailto:tfosba@gmail.com)

The St Benet's Abbey project is supported by John Jarrold Trust, Geoffrey Watling Charity, Paul Bassham Charitable Trust, Norwich Town Close Estate Charity, The Lady Hind Trust, The Charles Littlewood Hill Trust, The Educational Foundation of Alderman John Norman, Bishop of Norwich and by



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