



Caistor Roman Project



ANNUAL REPORT
2018-2019

Chairman's Statement – Alan Pask

CRP has continued to make good progress with all our main aims over the last year. Our research plans as set out in the Business and Research Plan, which we reviewed last year, have steadily moved forward both in the immediate environs of the Roman Town and in the wider catchment area. Trustee reports which follow in this annual report outline in more detail some of the key achievements of the year.

Excellent organisation and teamwork were evident at the Temple Field excavation, notable for the large number of members who participated in all roles. This part of the project clearly demonstrated the major steps taken in developing volunteers' skills over the years, through training and practical experience. Several experienced and notable visitors to the site commented on the excellence of the organisation and enthusiasm during the excavation.

Heritage Lottery Funding has again been an important part of our work over the last year – an extension of the grant until December 2019 enables us to excavate again at the Temple Field this summer and undertake the all important follow up analysis and reporting work. Progress has been made with the Historic Buildings element of the HLF funded project (more on this later in this report) in particular in training the group members in key techniques.

The Landscape Group reports steady progress in recent months. This is a key part of our researches in the wider landscape surrounding the Roman Town. Work has begun in studying how the landscape has developed on a parish by parish basis, in conjunction with the UEA – and we plan further community involvement as part of the process, and a field walking programme to evolve (much missed by many members!).

The past year has seen our work with key partners evolve too. As well as the HLF fund, we have been delighted to develop closer links with the Norfolk and Norwich Archaeological Society, not least including a five year grant funding agreement. The Norfolk Archaeological Trust remains a key partner and following their 'Onwards and Upwards' project we anticipate closer joint working and revised arrangements for Caistor volunteers to be developed in the coming year.

We have a number of challenges to face in the coming year, not least in finding new sources of finance for the future as well as evolving our organisation and continuing to develop our volunteer members, both new and established. Finally, many thanks to all those who have worked so hard over the year to make CRP a success – our supporting professionals and all those members and supporters who have engaged enthusiastically in many tasks.

Of particular note again, is the hard work and long hours put in by the CRP trustees group who do so much to ensure our success as a community archaeology group.

A message from our Patron, Antony Jarrold.....

The success of the Caistor Roman Project, measured in terms of members pursuing activities, and the post excavation work on recording, cleaning, identification and archiving has been an immense success. Indeed the volume of work generated has raised challenges that have also been successfully managed.

I regret that I have been unable to participate on the ground during the weeks of projects and excavations but I have had the good fortune to be present and observe so much on my own ground at the Old Hall Caistor St Edmund; this has given me the opportunity to meet and get to know so many members in the CRP, an organisation which thrives on good management, enthusiastic volunteers and great help from professionals, all with serious objectivity, seeking and sharing knowledge and with copious measures of humour. All enjoyment and sometimes aided by perfect weather conditions!

The summer of 2018 included some exciting projects, particularly the Temple site beside Caistor Lane and future forecasts, and possibilities for new projects in the area around Venta Icenorum look to be ever more stimulating.

Fieldwork in 2018 – Mike Pinner, *Project Manager*

It's been a very full on year! It feels like an age ago that we went back to Old Hall to investigate an anomaly that we'd noticed on the geophysics after our 2017 work – and which we asked Dave Bescoby to re-interpret. Having ended 2017 with signs of Saxon industry in our trenches, we thought that the anomaly to the north of our trench was almost certainly some kind of furnace. We got that one wrong – and instead uncovered remains of two Roman pottery kilns. I have to admit that we weren't really ready for the level of complexity involved in uncovering one of the kilns. The rain kept beating down and our friends from Lakenheath got us two large canopies so that we could continue the work. Unfortunately they were red and we had to abandon them as it proved impossible to determine burnt deposits when everything was..well, red! And of course, there was our Roman skeleton cut in two by the foundation trench of a Saxon building! We await professional reports for precise dating but what we are starting to see is a general pattern of industry between the ditch system and the walls of the Roman town which extends from the 2nd century to the early Saxon period. In the summer of 2018 we undertook a

large and very well organised excavation in Temple field to the north east of the walled town. We were successful in uncovering the eastern end of a Roman building – probably with at least two storeys judging by the thickness of the walls – and containing a well worn tessellated pavement and the remains of brightly coloured plaster from the walls. Two other areas were probed and extensive work on the findings continues. This was our largest and most comprehensive excavation since 2012 and revealed how far the group has come in terms of competence and skills. The dig was undertaken with the support of Giles and Andy as our resident professionals and both visitors and those who took part were delighted to see the way in which we approached the task. I felt very proud! As well as pushing forward in terms of excavation and the necessary preparation for the work, there have been huge moves in terms of competency to record and to develop reporting on finds. Last year's work on the ditches in Wymer field have borne fruit in terms of a well supported group of members learning skills in recording and reporting on animal bones and other groups looking at CBM and other finds.

At the end of the year, we were pleased to gain permission from HLF to extend our three year bid for a further six months to allow a further excavation in the summer of 2019. We have effectively paved the way for increasing co-operation with the Norfolk Archaeological Trust by supporting their work at Caistor and other sites and engaging in educational visits to schools and village groups. Our original aim – to create, develop and empower a thriving and cohesive community archaeological group with a sustainable future – has moved ever closer to fulfilment. What is developing is real teamwork in all that we are doing coupled with huge support from the larger archaeological community as we move forward. Without the support from owners of the land that we have "invaded" (the Skinner family and their tenants at High Ash and the Jarrod family at old Hall) we would have had plenty of good intentions without fulfilment! And then there are our friends who offered geophysical and radar penetration skills, professionals from near and far who visited us and offered advice and encouragement and, of course, our marvellous members who make everything possible. Our grateful thanks to all!



Report from the Barn – Chrissy Sullivan

As always, I start this report with saying that it has been another successful year with everything that has happened at the Kirby Bedon barn and also when we are on the move out into the field.

The team has been enriched this year by new members who are enthusiastic with the time they give and their effort even in the smallest of jobs, but then they have joined a friendly hard working group many of whom have been with the project since we started. Personally, I would choose one of my high spots from the past year as the day we came to Temple Field to set up the camp pre-dig. We had not erected the marquee since 2012 but with the group working together (most of the time) it went up in hours..... after we had retrieved the bits left behind at the barn. Thank you to all those who took part and I will let you know when I need you to do the same thing again this year. After the dig, processing worked like clockwork. We had thankfully been able to process the enormous amount of CBM on site and return it to the trenches. The remainder and our town store of processed cbm made its way to a good home at High Ash Farm. In addition, we've managed a bit of retro archaeology with the processing of the Dunston Field fieldwalking finds. Hopefully we will be able to report on them by the end of the year.

In March, several members attended a fun and interesting First Aid course in a extremely cold Boudicca Hotel. We are now first aid rich for both the barn and site.

A big thank you to Barbara (who we hope will soon be back) Margaret, Linda and Roger for all the help they have given me this year.

Finds from 2018 Excavation



Education and Community Matters – Caroline Lowton

Raising the profile of Caistor Roman Town through volunteer activity is an important part of CRP's remit, and our enthusiastic volunteers have worked hard to enhance enjoyment of the site at the Roman town and facilitate a greater understanding of its historical significance. We broke new ground in 2018 – site tours throughout the summer were very popular, with visitors attending every tour, and a small core group of volunteers have even guided on Sunday afternoons in conjunction with the Church offering cream teas.

There is increasing interest from local primary schools for on-site and in-school visits, and great strides have been made to improve how we teach Roman (and more specifically Caistor) history in the class environment. We have had positive feedback, and not surprisingly children participate with interest in how the Romans lived – dormice on the menu figures large, as does Seneca's bathhouse, clay coil pot making and seeking out Roman 'treasure' from the sandpit.

The 2018 Heritage Open Day in September was hugely successful, with over 200 visitors turning up for tours and entertainment. Thanks go to all the CRP volunteers, to NAT and Giles Emery (plus his skeleton), all of whom helped lead the tours, man the stalls, steward the car park and entertain children and adults alike. Plans are afoot for another Open Day event in September 2019.

In May, CRP supervisors spent a great week in North Norfolk excavating for the second phase of the Imagined Land Burnham Norton project, with test pits at Burnham Norton Primary School and land in and around the Friary and the Church. A keen young metal detectorist found a superb object, identified as a zoomorphic copper alloy strap end, depicting a wolf's head with silver studs for eyes – possibly from the 9th century, and a high-status Late Saxon object. The web page for Giles's full report on the Burnham site is <https://sites.google.com/site/burnhamnortonimaginedland/home>.

To take advantage of the public's increasing awareness of the Caistor Roman Town project the Education team, in conjunction with NAT, plan to enhance volunteer activity and professionalism by streamlining the management and support of our volunteer group; this will involve further training, volunteer legislation and revised best practice and policy procedures. Guiding and school visiting is a great opportunity to be involved in an alternative aspect of CRP's work – not everybody has 'the knees' for digging! Our volunteer numbers have, encouragingly, increased as the year has gone on, but new volunteers are always welcome. Do come and join us!

Standing Buildings Group



Standing Buildings group meeting, chaired by Dr Richard Hoggett (left)

As with the Landscape Project, this group has made good progress. On a chilly morning in February the Group had a really interesting day with the Standing Buildings Group in Southwell, near Nottingham. We were accompanied by Dr Will Bowden and Dr Chris King from Nottingham University and we were able to see some of the buildings studied by their group and to hear about their experiences when recording them.

Following this visit our group commenced training with Dr Richard Hoggett in March and April. So far this has involved hands-on surveys and the recording of ecclesiastical, domestic and vernacular buildings. Special thanks go to Antony and Ann Jarrold for letting us study Caistor Old Hall.

Landscape Project – Wendy Shanks

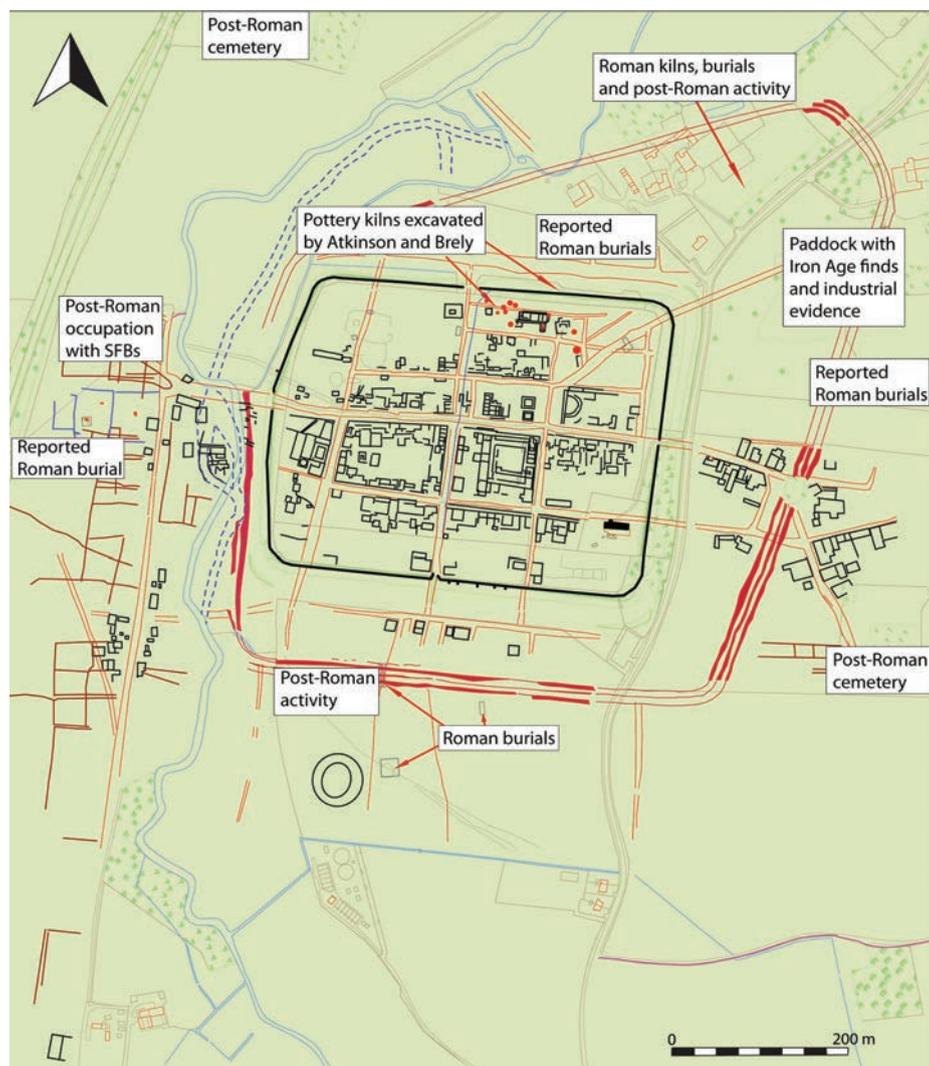
The Landscape Project has made steady progress over recent months. Research undertaken online and at the Norfolk Records Office (NRO) has produced a wide range of maps and data for the parishes closest to Caistor St Edmund. Sarah Spooner from the University of East Anglia kindly organised a review at the NRO and GIS training will be offered to five group members in July/August.

Caistor outside the walls – Will Bowden

The work of CRP since 2014 has focused on understanding the Roman town outside its late Roman walls, which did not exist for the first 200 years of Venta Icenorum's existence. Although it has long been known that remains of the town (including the streets) stretch beyond the walls, the defences have long formed a conceptual barrier as well as a physical one, encouraging people to think of the town as an isolated entity.

The walls shaped the idea of the town as the "Roman Camp" as it is locally known and as it appears on the early OS maps. They also contributed to early erroneous views of the town as associated with the Roman military, an idea that has been current since at least the 1680s. Although William Camden's *Britannia* described it as a town, Edmund Gibson's later additions to *Britannia* describe Caistor as "a famous Roman camp, which agrees exactly with the description given by Polybius, Vegetius and others, concerning the Roman ancient way of encamping". This view of Caistor as a military site persisted until the late 19th century and indeed the idea of Roman remains as being essentially military was commonly held in Britain in this period. Despite the view of Caistor's walls keeping a hostile native population at bay, it always been recognised that there is material beyond the walls of the town and most of the earliest recorded encounters with antiquities and excavations took place outside the town. CRP's work since 2014 represents a systematic attempt to integrate study of the area outside the walls with that on the inside. This work has significantly increased our knowledge of the extra-mural areas in both the Roman and post-Roman periods. It is now apparent that the area to the north of the walled town (but within the 2nd century triple ditches) was used for industrial activity from the late Iron Age. Natasha Harlow's doctoral thesis has highlighted the evidence of brooch manufacture dating to AD 40-70 from the paddock of Caistor Hall Hotel (recovered during Surgeon Commander Mann's work in this area). Intriguingly the bronzesmiths at this site were producing a type of brooches supposedly characteristic of the Trinovantian territory so why are they being manufactured at Caistor?

The evidence from Caistor Hall suggests



the presence of industrial activity flanking the roads to the NE of the town. Mann excavated at least two furnaces of unknown function. His trenches were left open and were apparently still discernible in 1977 (and were known locally as Roman graves). Earlier antiquarian discoveries also indicate pottery production to the north of the town, while early pottery kilns were excavated by Atkinson within the walled area to the north although predating the walls. A further pottery kiln was excavated just outside the north wall by Michael Brely in 1958. The recent CRP excavations in Caistor Old Hall have also added to this picture of pottery production with the discovery of two new kilns. The locating of kilns and industrial activity on the peripheries of Roman towns is quite common, presumably because of the fire risk, while textual sources also note that noxious activities like tanning and cheese-making should also be placed outside the towns because of the smell.

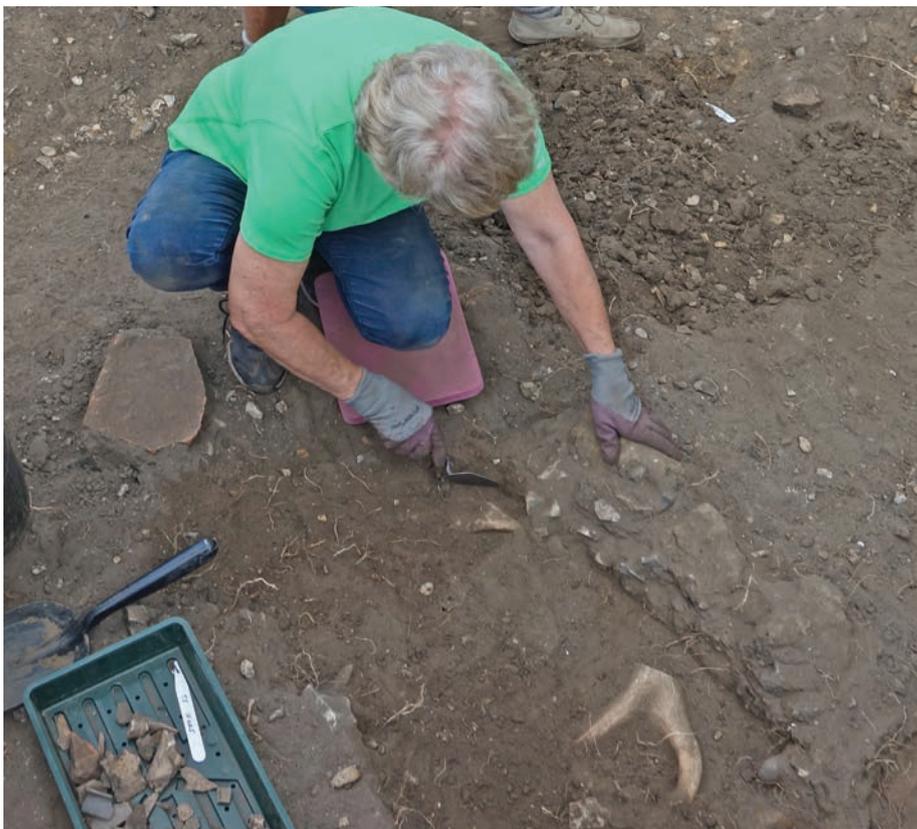
As well as industrial activity, it is common to find burials on the outskirts of towns, and Roman textual sources are explicit that disposal of the dead should take place outside the towns, so as not to pollute the world of the living. Relatively few burials are known from Caistor and it is likely that the Iron Age methods of disposing of the dead (which left very little archaeological trace) continued long into the Roman period. Indeed the point is often made that the relatively small number of cremations and inhumations from Roman Britain as a whole suggests that disposal of the dead in archaeologically visible ways may always have been the exception rather than the norm. Our work in 2009 revealed a number of burials (including a 1st- to 2nd-century cremation) in the South Field. All of the burials are somewhat odd, either very deep or very shallow or placed in unusual positions (for example the severely disabled individual interred within the south ditch).

Caistor outside the walls – Will Bowden



Analysis of stable isotopes from the teeth of these individuals hint at the relatively cosmopolitan nature of Roman Caistor, with two of the analysed burials from the South Field giving readings that suggest they grew up outside the Norfolk area. The CRP excavations at Old Hall also recovered a burial, probably of a fairly robust female (this time of local origin) which gave a radiocarbon date range of date of AD 258-422 (with 86% probability of AD 340-422). It is thus clear that late Roman burials are to be found on the north side of the town.

The discoveries relating to the Roman period so far conform to our expectations of the outskirts of a Roman town in Britain. Perhaps the most important discoveries from the CRP work to date relate to the post-Roman period, which hint at quite intensive use of the area surrounding Caistor from perhaps the mid 5th until the 9th centuries. As well as the sunken-featured building and the coins from Dunstan Field and the cemeteries excavated in the 19th and 20th centuries, we now have evidence of post-Roman activity on the north side of the town, in particular in the grounds of Old Hall with traces of timber structures and evidence of antler working. In particular the careful sieving of topsoil from test-pits has paid dividends, producing a small but significant assemblage of Middle and Late Saxon wares. This reinforces the impression that Caistor remained a place of occupation and political importance into the post-Roman period. Such extensive evidence of post-Roman activity reinforces the importance of the site because it allows us to consider the wider processes by which the Roman town was eventually superseded by Norwich. In this sense, the work of CRP is informing important academic debates about the role of towns in Roman and Medieval Europe.



Researching for the Caistor Roman Project – Judy Booker and Sue Harman

Since 2014 the CRP Archive Team have researched several projects with roots in Caistor St. Edmund. The first of these was the "Growth of the village" based on maps, and included the earliest map we discovered of the parish of Caistor, surveyed in 1795 (showing landowners) through to Faden's map, Bryant's map, the Tithe map, Ordnance Survey maps and Google Earth. This was our first project and necessitated several visits to the Archive Centre. We feel an update of the "Growth of the village" may now be in order.

More research was undertaken in conjunction with the test pits dug in 2016, 2017 and 2018 such as our second project, "A short History of Markshall." We always try to use photographs to add interest and to help readers make links with snippets of information. If we needed clarification of an issue, where possible we conducted interviews with people, such as former residents of the area and, indeed, present day ones.

Other projects have been carried out on the older buildings of Caistor such as "The Smithy and Queen Anne's Cottage" and "Caistor Old Hall." For these we have our very own test-pitting evidence but we also identified information from the Heritage Environment Record to follow up and have visited Gressenhall Archive when necessary, especially to find aerial photographs. We also search through articles in old Norfolk and Norwich Archaeological Society publications, found in their library in the Close and some in the Heritage Library at the Forum. Another source of information comes from back copies of local newspapers on microfiche and from the Archant Library at the EDP offices. The census records on line provide valuable data as do church records. Each piece of information is verified as best we can and, if in doubt and we only have one flimsy source, it is not included in the final copy. All of the articles mentioned above can be viewed by members in the CRP Dropbox.

Online sources and books, such as Bloomfield or Rye, or more precise, detailed accounts such as the Pettus Family History volumes and the Paston Letters have all been consulted.

We endeavour to be as accurate we can and to acknowledge all our sources. Lines of research can be frustrating and often lead nowhere but when correlating evidence is unearthed to confirm a notion it leads to a very satisfying way to help the Caistor Roman Project.



Financial Commentary 2018 – Andrew Ray Treasurer

We have, to borrow a phrase from that great contemporary historian, Philomena Cunk, reached a fork in our crossroads. The three year HLF funded project is drawing to a successful close and one of HLF's aims is to put an organisation onto the next stage in its development. It has done that. We have proved ourselves capable of managing a large project from both the archaeological and financial points of view. But if we want to continue we need to find funding to meet our ambitions.

Our expenditure falls into two main categories: we need about £4000 a year just to keep going, renting the barn, paying insurance and so on. Then we need about £15000 to run a dig in either the summer or at Easter, the amount mainly varying by its location and complexity. Digging away from secure storage, electricity and water pushes the costs up a great deal. A complex dig requires greater input from experts both on site and afterwards.

How do we find the funding for each category? The annual fixed costs are easier to fund. Our annual membership fees cover about half the requirement, the Norfolk and Norwich Archaeological Society has promised us £1000 per year for the next five years as part of a partnership agreement and then there are usually small but very useful donations for providing speakers and guides for example. Last year, for example, we received small donations from the East of England Co-Op and Aviva.

Full independently reviewed accounts have been lodged with Companies House and the Charity Commission. They are available to all members on request.

That's the easy bit. The challenge is to draw up a convincing project for Easter and summer next year that will attract funding either from local larger general charities or national ones focussed on the Roman period.

Membership

First, the trustees would like to thank Vicky Hawkes for her invaluable work over the years in maintaining our membership records. She has now relinquished the job and a computerised system, MemberMojo, implemented successfully. It also assists us in complying with the new General Data Protection Regulations (GDPR) keeping members' personal data secure. Some early teething problems have now been solved. We have 84 paid up members and expect that to rise with both this year's digs.

More dispatches from the trenches – 3 Volunteers' personal views



I have had an interest in archaeology since I was a schoolgirl, passing by the Coppergate dig in historical York. Over the years, I watched TV programmes but never found time to do any actual archaeology! I was studying and working as a front-line social worker, then latterly as a Family Court Advisor. When I finally retired in 2017, I enrolled on a course which gave me my archaeology skills passport. I'd caught the bug and searched for archaeological sites nearer home. Caistor St Edmund was the ideal place so in summer 2017 I joined Caistor Roman Project. Digging at Caistor Hall was very exciting, especially finding my first Roman artefact, and taking turns at measuring, drawing, recording, sieving, shifting buckets, emptying wheelbarrows. It was a great introduction to the friendly CRP team. From a personal perspective, concentrating on nothing but the immediate surroundings was and continues to be a salve for the stressed out mind. That winter I joined Chrissy and gang in the barn to learn how to process finds and how not to irritate by putting things in the wrong place. Back at Caistor Hall at Easter in 2018 I was asked to help with the Heritage Open Day, only to find myself co-organising it with NAT. August arrived, the excitement of Temple Field; well, excitement came later, first came horse manure collecting, and being part of the large team setting up for the dig and doing everything in reverse at the end (minus the manure). September brought a very successful Heritage Open Day, a great example of CRP effort and collaboration with NAT. I am really glad I found CRP and am looking forward to this year's digs.

Carole Rowles



I first joined the Caistor Roman Project in 2008. I had gone to a talk by the novelist Lindsey Davis, and at the end of her talk she introduced Will Bowden, who told us about the project. He then asked for volunteers, so I signed up. From my first tentative field walk, through four digs at the Town, test pitting, Old Hall, Wymer Field and last year's amazing dig at Temple Field, I have learned so much and made a lot of good friends. I have washed, weighed and counted numerous finds and now find identification much easier than in the early days. Friends often ask if we've found anything exciting. To us every find is exciting, linking us as it does with the past. We may not have found a gold hoard, or Boudicca's chariot, but hey, there's always next year.

Margaret Hood



My interest in all things Roman really started when I was living and working in France, where Helen (my wife) and I were frequent visitors to the spectacular museums in Lyon and Vaison. In addition to France, we have also visited Roman sites in Belgium, Italy, Sicily, Tunisia and Jordan. I joined CRP after attending the very interesting review (at UEA) of the ten years of research by the group. My first involvement was learning how to cut special foam to fit into bags for the small finds. This coincided with the CRP volunteers helping with the NAT project "Imagined Lands" in my village of Tasburgh. Then Chrissy, knowing my training as a pathologist, pointed me towards Lynda and the team examining animal bones from the digs. Trying to understand what they can tell us about the life of the people at Caistor over the ages has become a passion, thanks to the support of Lynda, the team and advisor Paul Clarkson.

At recent digs I can often be found in my preferred position, standing at one of the sieves, which is both exciting and sociable. Chrissy noticed my enthusiasm for finding solutions to DIY problems, so I am now involved in buying, building and repairing equipment.

The group, particularly the processing team at the barn, were very welcoming and I was quickly accepted - no doubt helped by Helen's cakes!

Roger Burnett

Publicity – Val Cossey

It's been a moderately good year publicity-wise, the articles in Current Archaeology being the most significant and encouraging. It would be good to get more interest from local television outlets, and I'll keep working on it over the coming year.

July 2018

EDP 12 July, "Norfolk's hidden ruins revealed"

Radio Norfolk 18 July, Edd Smith being given a tour of the Roman town by Andrew Ray

August 2018

Anglia TV News, 18 August, on the start of the Temple field excavation

August 2018

EDP/EEN, 18 August, start of the excavation

Radio Norfolk, 20 August, Paul Hayes interviewing Will on the excavation
Future Radio, interview with Will (date not recorded)

November and December 2018

CURRENT ARCHAEOLOGY, both months. The November issue contained a 4 page article on our dig at Temple Field after the visit of the editor Carly Hilts. In December the journal published a photo of Sue Harman's marvellous end-of-dig cake in their 'Edible Archaeology' slot.

February 2019

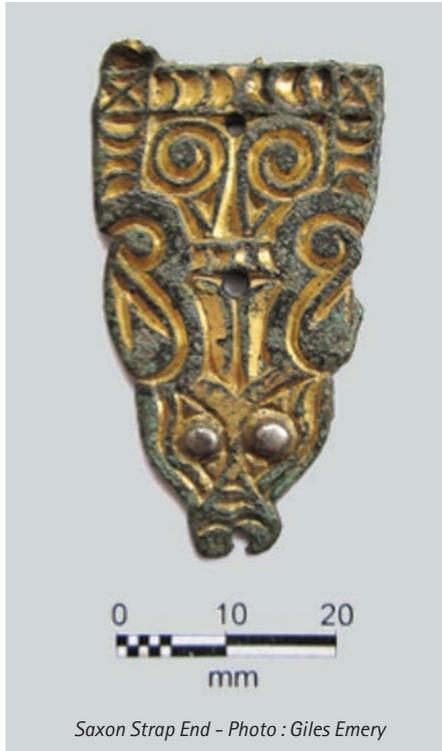
EDP, 5 February, 3 page article on Temple field, "Through the Decades – how a Roman town was found".

Val Cossey, Publicity/Administration



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Saxon Strap End - Photo : Giles Emery

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CAISTOR ROMAN PROJECT

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CRP wishes to acknowledge again the practical support given by Darren Barnes of Kingdom Landscapes, Framingham Pigot, for the use of his digger.

Thanks again to Richard Cogman for his professional expertise in the design of this report.

Photos: (where not accredited) Sue, Ian, Richard.

Cartoons by Jenny Press

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